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Thomas De Quincey
Opium-Eater — Reminiscences

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Confessions of an
English Opium-Eater:
Literary Reminiscences

By
Thomas De Quincey

With a Critical and Historical Introduction
by THOMAS DE QUINCEY

Reprinted from a drawing made for this work, after a portrait
the gift of Miss M. J. De Quincey.



New York
D. Appleton and Company
1899



THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

Photogravure from a drawing made for this work, after a portrait
sketched in chalk by James Archer.

Confessions of an
English Opium - Eater.
Literary Reminiscences

By
Thomas De Quincey

With a Critical and Biographical Introduction
by Ripley Hitchcock

Illustrated



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-1864

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

IN point of time, Thomas De Quincey was a child of revolution. He was born in 1785, at Greenhay, a suburb of Manchester, then the home of his much travelled father, a well to do merchant. The dominant Zeitgeist of his formative years was revolt, accompanied by production, while at the end of our own century the time-spirit is essentially critical or expository. During his precocious childhood the influence of Goethe was mounting in Germany, and the ferment of the French Revolution was at work throughout the world. His youth and early manhood were contemporary with impulses like those which had to do with the Grecian War of Independence, with the songs of Byron and of Keats, with the naturalistic movements in French and English letters and the romanticism of letters and art. At the close of our century the attitude of scientific scrutiny holds enthusiasm in leash. It is the fashion of the day to analyze great reputations with what we are pleased to term broad impartiality and to readjust rank, as the modern critics in the last twenty years have reclassified and renamed so many of the works in European picture galleries. New editions fail to reinvest the Byron of to-day with the glory of the century's earlier years, and Wordsworth, once the ark of the covenant, has, like Coleridge, been despoiled of much which it was once deemed sacrilege to touch. Whether we are pleased to call this iconoclasm, or "the new criticism," the tests brought by the time must be met, and we must look at De Quincey with the eyes of to-day, not with those of readers of the "London Magazine" in 1821.

This spirit of inquiry has a virtue sometimes obscured by the

rashness of protagonists searching for crumbling idols in the Pantheon of letters. In spite of standards and canons, each generation, more or less consciously, modifies the judgments of its predecessor and, in general, ultimately reaches a mean between ultra conservatism and such sweeping condemnation of the past as American readers of periodicals have seen from Mr. Howells, and after him by a long interval, Mr. Clemens and Mr. Garland. In the case of De Quincey there have been peculiar obstacles to the attainment of a mean of popular comprehension which should be just to the man and to his work. His lot was cast in a revolutionary period, and yet in many respects he was a conservative, and his purely literary affiliations were with the stately prose writers of the seventeenth century rather than the active unrest of the early nineteenth. Known to most readers as a dreamer, he was capable of the keenest analysis — witness his discussions of Shakspeare and Goethe in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. He has been held to be a rhetorician, a mere painter with words, and yet his analysis of Ricardo was gratefully acknowledged by so unrhctorical an economist as James Stuart Mill. Few writers, seemingly, have shown their personality more frankly in their work. Yet a reserve, of which Jean Paul and Sterne were ignorant, is felt by all who read between the lines, as it was felt by even his rare circle of friends at Grasmere and Edinburgh. This quality of reticence in one who apparently exposed his inner thoughts has led to miscomprehensions second only in consequence to the persistent delusion as to the predominant influence of opium upon De Quincey's contributions to literature. The late James T. Fields, a personal friend, as well as the publisher of De Quincey's collected works in America nearly fifty years ago, innocently encouraged this delusion in the lectures of his later years by constantly exhibiting a page of De Quincey's manuscript bearing the mark of his glass of laudanum. There was the drug, there was the manuscript. *Post hoc, propter hoc*. And so, for many reasons, there has grown up a popular inevitable association of De Quincey's rare and precious genius with the drug of the Orient, an association

more widespread in his case than in that of Coleridge, and therefore to be more earnestly rebutted. There is the testimony of medical science that opium cannot communicate to the brain any power or faculty of which it is not already possessed, and there is the record of his infancy and youth, showing that his dream experiences did not begin with his use of opium. Dr. Eatwell's diagnosis indicates that by palliating De Quincey's gastrodynia and averting a tuberculous predisposition opium probably prolonged his life.

If, then, we are to know the real De Quincey, we must follow him not only through his writings and those of his biographers, among whom Page is easily first, but we must also study the reactions of his individuality upon associates like Coleridge or Christopher North. The memoirs of Professor Wilson, prepared by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon, as well as the more familiar *Noctes*, is of intimate interest to students of De Quincey, even though in the latter we fail to accept the veritude of "The Opium-Eater's" monologues. In the "Confessions" presented complete in this volume there is so much of autobiography that a recurrence to such facts is useful simply as they illustrate the predilections and shaping influences which determined the development and character of his art. The reader of his biography dwells, unconsciously, upon the early evidences of almost abnormal intellectual development and shrinking sensitiveness, upon the profound influence exerted by "the gentlest of sisters," Elizabeth, and by her death, when he was six, and upon the tenderness of his memory of his father, who died in 1792, when the son was only seven. The impressions of these early years, the apparent tuberculous taint revealed in his father and sisters, and his own gastrodynia, if we are to accept Dr. Eatwell's diagnosis, might have darkened all his literary expression but for the intensely vital humanity which was so large a part of his nature. This intense sympathy with his fellow-men makes itself felt even when we are wondering at his early feats of scholastic prowess in the Bath school, his precocious mastery of dead languages, his study of Hebrew and theology with Lady Carbery, and his intimacy with the

Swedenborgian, John Clowes, during the unhappy life at the dull Manchester Grammar School, which he entered in 1801 and left a fugitive. His constant desire to understand the feelings and motives of the rustics with whom he came into contact in the Welsh wanderings which followed his flight from school is no less characteristic than the intellectual hunger which found welcome food even then in an introduction to Richter and German literature. The bitterness of his subsequent days of starvation in London was powerless over this love of mankind, and the pathetic tenderness of his attitude toward the lonely waif in Brunell's house, and toward the unhappy Ann touches us as nearly to-day as it touched the readers of 1812. Yet this is not a generation which weeps with Richardson's sentimental heroines or one which shares the sorrows of Werther.

If it were necessary here to follow De Quincey's life with a minute scrutiny, something must be said of the growth of his attainments and his conversational powers, but "The Confessions" indicates the one and suggests the other. More essential to our purpose are his meeting with Coleridge in 1807 and the intimacy with the "Lake School." Wordsworth he had worshipped from afar since reading "We are Seven" in 1799, but in spite of the intellectual comprehension which Wordsworth acknowledged, in the case of the appendix to the "Convention of Cintra," it was Coleridge who became his chosen friend. It is pleasanter to dwell upon his eager hero worship and his generous pecuniary aid than upon the indiscretion and dubious character of certain of the reminiscences and comments which De Quincey contributed to "Tait's Magazine" from 1834 onward. For these Miss Mitford and many another literary or personal historian of the period has administered chastisement, and yet De Quincey's errors may fairly be ascribed to the sufferings of many kinds which clouded that time. That the Grasmere associations exercised an interacting influence to some extent is no more doubtful than the occasional interaction of the painters associated with Fontainebleau, Rousseau, Diaz and Dupré. That there was no absolute

dependence, no self-surrender, is equally apparent. Both Coleridge and De Quincey were dreamers. Both were poets, although De Quincey is known to us as a writer of prose. The power to dream, which, as Coleridge said to Hazlitt, is essential to a class of poetry, was a power which De Quincey possessed without any adventitious aid. "How came you to dream more splendidly than others?" asks the imaginary reader of "Suspiria de Profundis," and De Quincey answers his own question, "Because (præmissis præmittendis) I took excessive quantities of opium." It is an answer often misinterpreted, although, just before, he has spoken of his main purpose in writing the "Confessions"—"to display the faculty of dreaming itself." There are two sentences of De Quincey's own which should guide his readers: "He whose talk is of oxen will probably dream of oxen," and again, "Habitually to dream magnificently a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie." Let the reader turn from the "Confessions" to the "Vision of Sudden Death," and again to "The Flight of a Tartar Tribe."

There was no "talk of oxen" in those years at Grasmere, but rather the converse of high spirits, who "swept the harps of passion, of genial wit, or of the wrestling and gladiatorial reason." It was at Grasmere that he met Wilson, *fervidus juvenita*, whose companionship on ambrosian nights and in long walks over the beautiful Westmoreland country cemented a lasting friendship. Southey, also, was of the company, but De Quincey's more intimate associations were with Wilson, and Charles Lloyd, Coleridge, and Wordsworth's children. These years, the sunniest of his life, years which brought him like-minded friends and a devoted wife, were unhappily overshadowed toward 1818 by pecuniary losses, change, fruitless journalistic endeavours, and the nemesis of opium. But there was a solace in the affectionate welcome of the Lambs when De Quincey went to London in 1821. Through his gentle friend he entered a circle which numbered Hood, Talfourd, Cornwall and Hazlitt among its numbers, and it was to Elia again that he was indebted for an introduction to the editors

of the "London Magazine." It is desirable to trespass thus far upon the field of biography in order to suggest the characteristics, influences and equipment which preceded his actual entry into the world of letters. A tireless writer, he had seemed content to regard his writings as unfinished and unworthy of the light. A designer of vast intellectual enterprises like his "De Emendatione," and his "Prolegomena of Political Economy," planned under Ricardo's influence, he faltered and finally laid them by. But in London he was impelled by the stimulus of active literary workers, of editors searching for apt material, and of presses asking to be fed. It was then that "The Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" passed from De Quincey's brain to paper.

Of De Quincey's personality at this time, Hood, in his "Reminiscences," has left a charming sketch. "I have often found him at home," wrote Hood, then a sub-editor of the "London Magazine," doubtless on a quest for 'copy,' "I have often found him quite at home, in the midst of a German ocean of Literature in a storm — flooding all the floor, the table and the chairs — billows of books tossing, tumbling, surging, open — on such occasions I have willingly listened by the hour, whilst the Philosopher, standing, with his eyes fixed on one side of the room, seemed to be less speaking than reading from 'a handwriting on the wall.' Now and then he would diverge for a Scotch mile or two to the right or left, till I was tempted to inquire with Peregrine in 'John Bull,' 'Do you never deviate?' — but he always came safely back to the point where he had left, not lost the scent, and thence hunted his topic to the end. But look! We are in the small hours, and a change comes o'er the spirit of that 'old familiar face.' A faint hectic tint leaves the cheek, the eyes are a degree dimmer, and each is surrounded by a growing shadow — signs of the waning influence of that Potent Drug whose stupendous Pleasures and enormous Pains have been so eloquently described by the English Opium-Eater."

The actual writing of the "Confessions" at this time was due to one of the suggestions which the recording

angel may credit to the race of editors, however many sins of indifference or misjudgment must be debited against them. De Quincey, forced to turn from self-pleasing to the practical side of literature, had contemplated a beginning with translations from the German literature wherein he had steeped himself. But the circle which he had entered had heard him describe his initiation into the use of opium in 1804, and the splendid dreams and gloomy phantasma which had accompanied use, abandonment, and relapse. It was suggested, therefore, that his own experiences should be the subject of his first contributions to the magazine. At this time De Quincey, after a brief residence in Soho, had removed to Covent Garden. It was there that he wrote "The Confessions," "in a little room at the back of what later became Mr. H. G. Bohn's premises, No. 4 York street, Covent Garden, where Mr. De Quincey resided in comparative seclusion for several years." In a curious comparison of the effects of opium upon Coleridge and himself, De Quincey has said: "There was one point in which my case differed from that of Mr. Coleridge. It was this — that at times, when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered at times a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. It was in some such artificial respites, from my usual state of distress, and purchased at a heavy price of subsequent suffering, that I wrote the greater part of the "Opium Confessions," in the autumn of 1821." But the print of the glass of laudanum negus on the manuscript must not hide from the reader the words beneath: "He whose talk is of oxen will probably dream of oxen." It is not the opium, but De Quincey who is to be reckoned with above all else.

The profound impression caused by the publication of the "Confessions" is reflected in letters from literary authorities of the time, and in a multitude of printed analyses, eulogies and inquiries. Our own "North American Review" expressed a general feeling when it printed a doubt whether "what is sometimes stated as narrative, is not really meant for brilliant

fiction, or at least for 'fiction founded on fact.'" The demand for the numbers of the magazine containing the "Confessions" led to a reprint in 1822 and a second edition in 1823, with an appendix showing the reduction in the amounts of opium taken day by day. But for some time De Quincey was unwilling to yield to the pressure for a continuation of the "Confessions." Through his friendship with Charles Knight he was led to contribute some translations from the German to the "Quarterly Magazine," and a little later in this time of exile from his Westmoreland cottage and his family he contributed to "Blackwood's" series on the "German Prose Writers" and several of his best essays, among them "Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," his *tour de force* in irony. This connection with Edinburgh led to a visit in 1828 which resulted practically in a transfer of his literary interests to that city where his only novel, "Klosterheim," was published, where he was joined by his family and where Mrs. De Quincey died in 1837. It was within a few miles of Edinburgh at Mavis Bush, a cottage near Lasswade, that he made his home for nearly all the remainder of his life from 1840 until that December morning in 1859 when, with a call to the beloved sister lost in childhood, he fell asleep free at last from pain.

If we are to judge a man by his companions, the few names which have been cited as of De Quincey's company would tell a sufficient story. If we are to take the boy as father of the man, then the precocious intellectual avidity of De Quincey, his extraordinary attainments, his symphonic use of language, and the subtlety of his literary and philosophic appreciation serve to guide the student of De Quincey's life. That this life brought to him more of sorrow than of happiness need not be insisted upon. From his earliest childhood, death was near him, and he escaped its menace only to see the blow fall upon those whom he would have shielded in his arms. Absolutely unworldly, so unversed in the common usages of practical life that a draft or cheque was a source of mystification and even his vast accumulations of papers were sometimes for-

gotten, he found himself constrained after thirty, to face the necessity for winning bread with his pen. Of his physical sufferings from illness in youth, from actual starvation in his youthful vagabondage, and of the black horrors which enshrouded him when opium demanded its penalty, he has told us with the singular intellectual detachment, intentness of self scrutiny and the splendour of rhetoric exhibited in the "Confessions" and the "Suspiria." As to the power of the drug, De Quincey himself in 1855 recorded four relapses, one in 1813-16 before his marriage, another in 1817-18, a third in London in 1824-25, and a fourth between 1841 and 1844. That the stress of these varied assaults had their effect in time may be admitted as we note a certain unreliability and acerbity in portions of De Quincey's later writings, but the admission means the same discrimination and reserve regarding the acceptance of the complete body of De Quincey's works which are applied, in the process of survival and selection, to the literary remains of the masters. When we make this application to De Quincey we may confess at once that his purely analytical and expository discussions have shown far less vitality than his autobiographic and imaginative writings. It is true that the romance "Klosterheim" is seldom read, but the general distinction holds. The "Templar's Dialogues on Political Economy," remarkable though they are, in themselves, and as illustrations of De Quincey's power of close concentrated thinking and clear analysis, are doubtless unfamiliar even to the majority of the class known as cultured readers. It would be easy to multiply the titles of essays in De Quincey's works which are among the literary bequests respected but not read. We may and do count this unfortunate, but it becomes of the greater interest to consider some of the reasons for the persistent vitality of works like "The Confessions."

The causes of this indubitable survival are not disclosed in the obvious fascination of a strange theme and a stranger apparent frankness in self revelation. The charm of style is apparent. A seventeenth century writer, William Drummond,

of Hawthornden, now lost to the view of all save students, has incited Mr. Edmund Gosse to a very interesting comparison with De Quincey as regards "delicate fullness and harmony, and deliberate and studied mellifluousness." That De Quincey, this representative of the second generation of romanticism was "sometimes noisy and flatulent, sometimes trivial, and sometimes unpardonably discussive" are strictures which Mr. Gosse is justified in making, when we take into account the entire range of De Quincey's work, but these divagations, as the critic hastens to point out, fail to dim the mental alertness, melody of style, humour and good sense and "the passionate loyalty to letters" of De Quincey at his best. It is an evident comment that De Quincey was a master of impassioned prose, a discoverer, almost, of a new land midway between prose and lofty verse. Again his expression became simple, almost idiomatic. Yet, although the theme invites definitions and development, it may be postulated bluntly that the generations follow their own gods, and the style of Stevenson is not the style of Addison. The stately phrasing of Milton's time appealed intimately to De Quincey, and yet in an age like ours, so far removed from Milton in point of literary expression, De Quincey retains his charm. To every new reader of "The Confessions," there comes the uplifting consciousness of the impulse due to great and imaginative power. Together with this and impinging more nearly upon the actual orbit of our times there is the consciousness of the man, of the writer's humanity and his lively and sympathetic interest in his kind. In De Quincey's notes on the "Constituents of Happiness," drafted at Everton in 1805, we find the first to be "A capacity of thinking — i. e., of abstraction and reverie," and the second, "The cultivation of an interest in all that concerns human life and human nature." This interest lives throughout "The Confessions." "Plain human nature in its humblest and most homely apparel was enough for me," he writes, referring to the lonely child in Brunell's house, and the key-note struck then is sounded again and again from the friendly communication with the poor in the markets on Saturday night to

the fraternizing with gipsies on Glasgow Green, and the indulgence to beggars at Lasswade, of which his daughter tells us. This was not mere curious observation. De Quincey's sympathetic interest in humanity has been felt and answered by his readers, and therein lies a strong claim upon posterity.

Another reason less strenuous, but enduring, lies in the rare quality of his subtle humour, a humour as quaint and unexpected as that of Lamb though so different in kind and expression that comparison would be profitless. "Essentially and always a humorist," was the definition of one critic entitled to respect, "a humorist of a very rare and delicate order, but one whose very delicacy is mistaken by hard minds for feebleness." It is here, as Page has well said, that De Quincey parts company alike from Coleridge and from Wordsworth. The one aspired to build a complete metaphysical system, the other gathered a wealth of "meditative impression" from nature, and humour in either would have been inconsistent. In Wilson, humorist and humanist, De Quincey had a constant and comprehending friend and their accord illustrates certain persistent traits in De Quincey's character. "Humour," to quote Page again, "in combination with but such modes of intellectual sympathy as are signified by the names of Wordsworth and Ricardo, is one of the most remarkable phenomena on record. But we find it in De Quincey. * * * If this ever-present and kindly humour—this keen sense of the ludicrous and the salient disparities of life—saved him from pedantry, it did so only by making absolutely necessary for him a recurrent contact with real life itself."

Although De Quincey, as he tells us, "well knew that his proper vocation was the exercise of the analytic understanding, he spent perhaps the greater part of his time in the exercise of the imagination, taking profound delight in the sublime and more passionate poets, in the grand lamentations of 'Samson Agonistes,' or the great harmonies of the Satanic Speeches in 'Paradise Regained.'" It would be idle to attempt a parallel between the imagination of De Quincey and that of Poe, or Byron. The splendid conceptions and gorgeous colouring of

De Quincey's dreams, mysterious, yet vivid as actuality, maintain and will preserve their power in the "Confessions," and the "Suspiria." The murderer still stalks at night upon the heath, the Malay lingers a haunting, fearsome figure, and above the earth, vast processions cross the heavens, and there are the symphonies of celestial orchestras and visions of radiant cities not built with hands.

It is natural that the fervour of De Quincey's rhetoric should have enlisted the sympathy of the romantic writers of France, but the unlikeness of the racial point of view could point many a curious moral. The author of *Fleurs du Mal* translated "The Confessions" into French, as he did the tales of Poe, and in spite of the obvious lack of affinity Baudelaire's success was complete, as compared with a singular and little known effort by De Musset, to which I have been introduced by Mr. Walter Littlefield. Up to the meeting with Ann, De Musset's course was comparatively smooth, but that pathetic and innocent relationship was incomprehensible. One can almost see him frowning, hesitating, and finally abandoning his original to substitute a liaison, a titled interloper, a duel, and a triumphant hero. There are few more remarkable contributions than this to the chapter of differences between Anglo-Saxon and Gallic temperamental tendencies. Very recently Arvede Barine, in his *Nervoses*, published in Paris, has grouped De Quincey, Hoffmann, Poe and De Norval, as illustrations of the baleful effects of opium, wine, alcohol and *la folie*. Such easy generalizations have been common since the publication of Nordau's "Degeneration," but the weak point is the impossibility of a complete demonstration. De Quincey with a different physical constitution, might have been De Quincey with a different mind. Without opium his life might have been cut short. A wholly normal life might have left a greater literary monument, and his influence upon letters might have had a weightiness which we must confess it lacks, but these are only curious speculations. M. Barine is fascinated by the mere pathology of genius. "The majority of English critics," to quote Barine's

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sweeping assertion, "have refused to attach any importance to De Quincey's work, in spite of his championship of the Lake School, in spite of all that he did to initiate England into German thought, and these critics are right." Perhaps this quotation is enough to show the poverty of the French writer's method. His summary is equally misleading, "Some jewels of great price among the dust and bones of a tomb, this is what De Quincey has left us, this is the work of opium." Now the weakness of M. Barine, and writers of his class, is that the dust and bones are more significant in their eyes than the jewels. Doubtless it is to be regretted that De Quincey left no lasting impress as philosopher or economist, or even as critic, but when all is said, and all eliminations are made, De Quincey remains one of the few whose purely literary achievement abides with us and retains its charm.

In the qualities which I have emphasized, primarily in imagination and noble eloquence, sympathy with humanity, humour, and indefinable personal charm, the "Confessions" and the "Suspiria" in themselves offer us sufficient reasons for the stability of De Quincey's place in the history of English letters. It is pleasant to recall the early appreciation of this place bestowed in America. The recognition given so generously by the "North American Review" on the first publication of "The Confessions," was followed by many similar comments and analyses in the same periodical. Hawthorne, to whom the subtle fancy of De Quincey appealed with peculiar closeness, is described in one of his daughter's letters as reading De Quincey at Lenox, in the "long beautiful evenings in 1851," and letters from Miss De Quincey in Julian Hawthorne's biography of his father suggest the cordiality of the appreciation on the other side. Mr. Jacox describes a walk with De Quincey in Edinburgh when he stopped to buy a copy of "Mosses from an old Manse," and this led De Quincey "to talk of Hawthorne's genius and to mention a recent visit of Emerson's — to neither of whom could he accord quite the degree of admiration claimed for them by the more thorough going of their respective admirers," although later, De

Quincey read "The Scarlet Letter" "with a great access of admiration.' In 1854 we find Hawthorne making the two sweeping assertions: "In fact no Englishman cares a pin for De Quincey. We are ten times as good readers and critics as they." This was in a letter to Mr. James T. Fields, who had visited De Quincey in 1852, and, despite the non-existence of international copyright, had left behind him a cheque, a share in the profits of the American edition. It was due to the strong appreciation of Mr. Fields and Mr. Ticknor as well that America produced the first complete edition of De Quincey's works, published in twenty-two volumes, 1851-54. The appearance of the present edition of "The Confessions" continues this record of American appreciation of De Quincey's fine and fragrant genius.

RIPLEY HITCHCOCK.

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I HERE present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period of my life; according to my application of it, I trust that it will prove, not merely an interesting record, but, in a considerable degree, useful and instructive. In that hope it is that I have drawn it up; and that must be my apology for breaking through that delicate and honourable reserve, which, for the most part, restrains us from the public exposure of our own errors and infirmities. Nothing, indeed, is more revolting to English feelings, than the spectacle of a human being obtruding on our notice his moral ulcers, or scars, and tearing away that "decent drapery" which time, or indulgence to human frailty, may have drawn over them; accordingly, the greater part of our confessions (that is, spontaneous and extra-judicial confessions) proceed from demi-reps, adventurers, or swindlers; and for any such acts of gratuitous self-humiliation from those who can be supposed in sympathy with the decent and self-respecting part of society, we must look to French literature, or to that part of the German which is tainted with the spurious and defective sensibility of the French. All this I feel so forcibly, and so nervously am I alive to reproach of this tendency, that I have for many months hesitated about the propriety of allowing this, or any part of my narrative, to come before the public eye, until after my death (when, for many reasons, the whole will be published); and it is not without an anxious review of the reasons for and against this step, that I have, at last, concluded on taking it.

Guilt and misery shrink, by a natural instinct, from public notice: they court privacy and solitude; and, even in the choice of a grave, will sometimes sequester themselves from the general population of the church-yard, as if declining to claim fellowship with the great family of man, and wishing (in the affecting language of Mr. Wordsworth)

“ Humbly to express
A penitential loneliness.”

It is well, upon the whole, and for the interest of us all, that it should be so; nor would I willingly, in my own person, manifest a disregard of such salutary feelings; nor in act or word do anything to weaken them. But, on the one hand, as my self-accusation does not amount to a confession of guilt, so, on the other, it is possible that, if it did, the benefit resulting to others, from the record of an experience purchased at so heavy a price, might compensate, by a vast overbalance, for any violence done to the feelings I have noticed, and justify a breach of the general rule. Infirmity and misery do not, of necessity, imply guilt. They approach, or recede from, the shades of that dark alliance, in proportion to the probable motives and prospects of the offender, and the palliations, known or secret, of the offence; in proportion as the temptations to it were potent from the first, and the resistance to it, in act or in effort, was earnest to the last. For my own part, without breach of truth or modesty, I may affirm, that my life has been, on the whole, the life of a philosopher: from my birth I was made an intellectual creature; and intellectual in the highest sense my pursuits and pleasures have been, even from my school-boy days. If opium-eating be a sensual pleasure, and if I am bound to confess that I have indulged in it to an excess, not yet recorded of any other man, it is no less true, that I have struggled against this fascinating enthrallment with a religious zeal, and have at length accomplished what I never yet heard attributed to any other man — have untwisted, almost to its final links, the accursed chain which fettered me. Such a self-conquest may reasonably be set off in counterbalance to any kind or degree of self-indulgence. Not to insist that, in my case, the self-conquest was unquestionable, the self-indulgence open to doubts of casuistry, according as that name shall be extended to acts aiming at the bare relief of pain, or shall be restricted to such as aim at the excitement of positive pleasure.

Guilt, therefore, I do not acknowledge; and, if I did, it is possible that I might still resolve on the present act of confession, in consideration of the service which I may thereby render to the whole class of opium-eaters. But who are they? Reader, I am sorry to say, a very numerous class indeed. Of this I became convinced, some years ago, by computing, at that time, the number of those in one small class of English

society (the class of men distinguished for talent, or of eminent station) who were known to me, directly or indirectly, as opium-eaters; such, for instance, as the eloquent and benevolent —;¹ the late Dean of —;² Lord —;³ Mr. —, the philosopher;⁴ a late under-secretary of state⁵ (who described to me the sensation which first drove him to the use of opium, in the very same words as the Dean of —, namely, “that he felt as though rats were gnawing and abrading the coats of his stomach”); Mr. —;⁶ and many others, hardly less known, whom it would be tedious to mention. Now, if one class, comparatively so limited, could furnish so many scores of cases (and that within the knowledge of one single inquirer), it was a natural inference, that the entire population of England would furnish a proportionable number. The soundness of this inference, however, I doubted, until some facts became known to me, which satisfied me that it was not incorrect. I will mention two: Three respectable London druggists, in widely remote quarters of London, from whom I happened lately to be purchasing small quantities of opium, assured me that the number of amateur opium-eaters (as I may term them) was, at this time, immense; and that the difficulty of distinguishing these persons, to whom habit had rendered opium necessary, from such as were purchasing it with a view to suicide, occasioned them daily trouble and disputes. This evidence respected London only. But, (which will possibly surprise the reader more), some years ago, on passing through Manchester, I was informed by several cotton manufacturers that their work-people were rapidly getting into the practice of opium-eating; so much so, that on a Saturday afternoon the counters of the druggists were strewed with pills of one, two, or three grains, in preparation for the known demand of the evening. The immediate occasion of this practice was the lowness of wages, which, at that time, would not allow them to indulge in ale or spirits; and, wages rising, it may be thought that this practice would cease: but, as I do not readily believe that any man, having once tasted the divine luxuries of opium, will afterwards descend to the gross and mortal enjoyments of alcohol, I take it for granted

“That those eat now who never ate before;
And those who always ate now eat the more.”

Indeed, the fascinating powers of opium are admitted, even by medical writers who are its greatest enemies: thus, for

instance, Awsiter, apothecary to Greenwich Hospital, in his "Essay on the Effects of Opium" (published in the year 1763), when attempting to explain why Mead had not been sufficiently explicit on the properties, counter-agents, etc., of this drug, expresses himself in the following mysterious terms (*Φουγοντια ουνετοιδι*): "Perhaps he thought the subject of too delicate a nature to be made common; and as many people might then indiscriminately use it, it would take from that necessary fear and caution, which should prevent their experiencing the extensive power of this drug; for there are many properties in it, if universally known, that would habituate the use, and make it more in request with us than the Turks themselves; the result of which knowledge," he adds, "must prove a general misfortune." In the necessity of this conclusion I do not altogether concur; but upon that point I shall have occasion to speak at the close of my Confessions, where I shall present the reader with the moral of my narrative.

NOTES

¹ William Wilberforce.

² Isaac Milner. He was nominally known to the public as Dean of Carlisle, being colloquially always called Dean Milner; but virtually he was best known in his own circle as the head of Queen's College, Cambridge, where he usually resided. In common with his brother, Joseph of Huli, he was substantially a Wesleyan Methodist; and in that character, as regarded principles and the general direction of his sympathies, he pursued his deceased brother's "History of the Christian Church" down to the era of Luther. In these days, he would perhaps not be styled a Methodist, but simply a Low-Churchman. By whatever title described, it is meantime remarkable that a man confessedly so conscientious as Dean Milner could have reconciled to his moral views the holding of church preferment so important as this deanery in combination with the headship of an important college. One or other must have been consciously neglected. Such a record, meantime, powerfully illustrates the advances made by the Church during the last generation in practical homage to self-denying religious scruples. A very lax man would not in these days allow himself to do that which thirty years ago a severe Church-Methodist (regarded by many even as a fanatic) persisted in doing without feeling himself called on for apology. If I have not misapprehended its tenor, this case serves most vividly to illustrate the higher standard of moral responsibility which prevails in this current generation. We do injustice daily to our own age; which, by many a sign, palpable and secret, I feel to be more emphatically, than any since the period of Queen Elizabeth and Charles I, an intellectual, a moving, and a self-conflicting age: and inevitably, where the intellect has been preternaturally awakened, the moral sensibility must soon be commensurately stirred. The very distinctions, psychologic or metaphysical, by which, as its hinges and articulations, our modern thinking moves, proclaim the subtler character of the questions which now occupy our thoughts.

Not as pedantic only, but as suspiciously unintelligible, such distinctions would, one hundred and thirty years ago, have been viewed as indictable; and perhaps (in company with Mandeville's "Political Economy") would have been seriously presented as a nuisance to the Middlesex Quarter-Sessions. Recurring, however, to Dean Milner, and the recollections of his distinguished talents amongst the contemporary circles of the first generation in this nineteenth century, I wish to mention that these talents are most feebly measured by any of his occasional writings, all drawn from him apparently by mere pressure of casual convenience. In conversation it was that he asserted adequately his preëminent place. Wordsworth, who met him often at the late Lord Lonsdale's table, spoke of him uniformly as the chief potentate colloquially of his own generation, and as the man beyond all others (Burke being departed) who did not live upon his recollections, but met the demands of every question that engaged his sympathy by spontaneous and elastic movements of novel and original thought. As an opium-eater, Dean Milner was understood to be a strenuous wrestler with the physical necessity that coerced him into this habit. From several quarters I have heard that his daily ration was 34 grains (or about 850 drops of laudanum), divided into four portions, and administered to him at regular intervals of six hours by a confidential valet.

³The first Lord Erskine.

⁴Who is Mr. Dash, the philosopher? Really, I have forgotten. Not through any fault of my own, but on the motion of some absurd coward having a voice potential at the press, all the names were struck out behind my back in the first edition of the book, thirty-five years ago. I was not consulted; and did not discover the absurd blanks until months afterwards, when I was taunted with them very reasonably by a caustic reviewer. Nothing could have a more ludicrous effect than this appeal to shadows — to my Lord Dash, to Dean Dash, and to Mr. Secretary Dash. Very naturally it thus happened to Mr. Philosopher Dash that his burning light, alas! was extinguished irrecoverably in the general melee. Meantime, there was no excuse whatever for this absurd interference such as might have been alleged in any personality capable of causing pain to any one person concerned. All the cases, except, perhaps, that of Wilberforce (about which I have at this moment some slight lingering doubts), were matters of notoriety to large circles of friends. It is due to Mr. John Taylor, the accomplished publisher of the work, that I should acquit him of any share in this absurdity.— 1821.

⁵Mr. Addington, brother of Lord Sidmouth.

⁶Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

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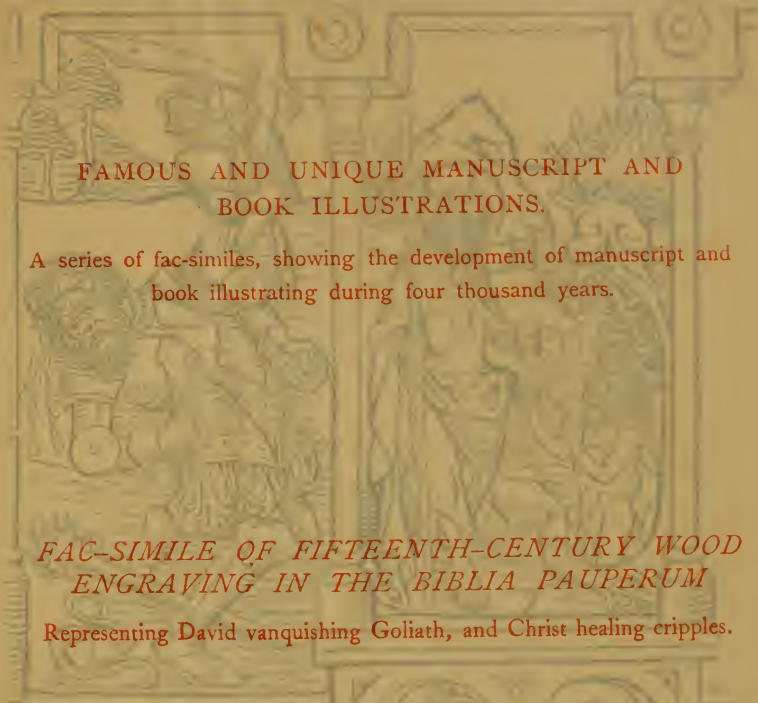
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Gladius et fides
vincunt omnia
et super omnia
vincit
fides



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vo Signato cruce:
saba gitee ille

vo Saba
v. / in regno dno
in cruce victos

vo Fidei virtus ac bono deservio vitis

Gōtrūib pxtos cras & victos fxtos ofront
David
Vlee xiv



v9 Signāste criste:
 gōvā gterit' ille



v9

Sachā
 .ij.
 Qui sāgnctēstā vctō
 tu enūstō victos

Genesi
 .xlv.

v9 fit cristi morte. beat' destructio pxtē

CONFESSIONS

OF AN

ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER

I

PRELIMINARY CONFESSIONS

THESE preliminary confessions, or introductory narrative of the youthful adventures which laid the foundation of the writer's habit of opium-eating in after life, it has been judged proper to premise, for three several reasons:

1. As forestalling that question, and giving it a satisfactory answer, which else would painfully obtrude itself in the course of the Opium Confessions — "How came any reasonable being to subject himself to such a yoke of misery, voluntarily to incur a captivity so servile, and knowingly to fetter himself with such a seven-fold chain?—" a question which, if not somewhere plausibly resolved, could hardly fail, by the indignation which it would be apt to raise as against an act of wanton folly, to interfere with that degree of sympathy which is necessary in any case to an author's purposes.

2. As furnishing a key to some parts of that tremendous scenery which afterwards peopled the dreams of the opium-eater.

3. As creating some previous interest of a personal sort in the confessing subject, apart from the matter of the confessions, which cannot fail to render the confessions themselves more interesting. If a man "whose talk is of oxen" should become an opium-eater, the probability is, that (if he is not too dull to dream at all) he will dream about oxen: whereas, in the case before him, the reader will find that the

opium-eater boasteth himself to be a philosopher; and accordingly, that the phantasmagoria of his dreams (waking or sleeping, day dreams or night dreams) is suitable to one who, in that character,

“*Humani nihil a se alienum putat.*”

For amongst the conditions which he deems indispensable to the sustaining of any claim to the title of philosopher, is not merely the possession of a superb intellect in its analytic functions (in which part of the pretension, however, England can for some generations show but few claimants; at least, he is not aware of any known candidate for this honor who can be styled emphatically a subtle thinker, with the exception of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and, in a narrower department of thought with the recent illustrious exception¹ of David Ricardo), — but also on such a constitution of the moral faculties as shall give him an inner eye and power of intuition for the vision and mysteries of human nature: that constitution of faculties, in short, which (amongst all the generations of men that from the beginning of time have deployed into life, as it were, upon this planet) our English poets have possessed in the highest degree — and Scottish professors in the lowest.

I have often been asked how I first came to be a regular opium-eater; and have suffered, very unjustly, in the opinion of my acquaintance, from being reputed to have brought upon myself all the sufferings which I shall have to record, by a long course of indulgence in this practice, purely for the sake of creating an artificial state of pleasurable excitement. This, however, is a misrepresentation of my case. True it is, that for nearly ten years I did occasionally take opium, for the sake of the exquisite pleasure it gave me; but, so long as I took it with this view, I was effectually protected from all material bad consequences, by the necessity of interposing long intervals between the several acts of indulgence, in order to renew the pleasurable sensations. It was not for the purpose of creating pleasure, but of mitigating pain in the severest degree, that I first began to use opium as an article of daily diet. In the twenty-eighth year of my age, a most painful affection of the stomach, which I had first experienced about ten years before, attacked me in great strength. This affection had originally been caused by the extremities of hunger, suffered in my boyish days. During the season of hope and redundant happiness which succeeded (that is, from eighteen

to twenty-four) it had slumbered: for the three following years it had revived at intervals; and now, under unfavorable circumstances, from depression of spirits, it attacked me with violence that yielded to no remedies but opium. As the youthful sufferings which first produced this derangement of the stomach were interesting in themselves and in the circumstances that attended them, I shall here briefly retrace them.

My father died when I was about seven years old, and left me to the care of four guardians. I was sent to various schools, great and small; and was very early distinguished for my classical attainments, especially for my knowledge of Greek. At thirteen I wrote Greek with ease; and at fifteen my command of that language was so great, that I not only composed Greek verses in lyric metres, but would converse in Greek fluently, and without embarrassment — an accomplishment which I have not since met with in any scholar of my times, and which, in my case, was owing to the practice of daily reading off the newspapers into the best Greek I could furnish extempore; for the necessity of ransacking my memory and invention for all sorts and combinations of periphrastic expressions, as equivalents for modern ideas, images, relations of things, etc., gave me a compass of diction which would never have been called out by a dull translation of moral essays, etc. “That boy,” said one of my masters, pointing the attention of a stranger to me, “that boy could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I could address an English one.” He who honored me with this eulogy was a scholar, “and a ripe and good one,” and, of all my tutors, was the only one whom I loved or revered. Unfortunately for me (and, as I afterwards learned, to this worthy man’s great indignation), I was transferred to the care, first of a blockhead, who was in a perpetual panic lest I should expose his ignorance; and, finally, to that of a respectable scholar, at the head of a great school on an ancient foundation. This man had been appointed to his situation by — College, Oxford; and was a sound, well-built scholar, but (like most men whom I have known from that college) coarse, clumsy, and inelegant. A miserable contrast he presented, in my eyes, to the Etonian brilliancy of my favorite master; and, besides, he could not disguise from my hourly notice the poverty and meagreness of his understanding. It is a bad thing for a boy to be, and know himself, far beyond his tutors, whether in knowledge or in power of mind. This was

the case, so far as regarded knowledge at least, not with myself only; for the two boys who jointly with myself composed the first form were better Grecians than the head-master, though not more elegant scholars, nor at all more accustomed to sacrifice to the graces. When I first entered, I remember that we read Sophocles; and it was a constant matter of triumph to us, the learned triumvirate of the first form, to see our "Archididasalus" (as he loved to be called) conning our lesson before we went up, and laying a regular train, with lexicon and grammar, for blowing up and blasting (as it were) any difficulties he found in the choruses; whilst we never condescended to open our books, until the moment of going up, and were generally employed in writing epigrams upon his wig, or some such important matter. My two class-fellows were poor, and dependent, for their future prospects at the university, on the recommendation of the head-master; but I, who had a small patrimonial property, the income of which was sufficient to support me at college, wished to be sent thither immediately. I made earnest representations on the subject to my guardians, but all to no purpose. One, who was more reasonable, and had more knowledge of the world than the rest, lived at a distance; two of the other three resigned all their authority into the hands of the fourth; and this fourth, with whom I had to negotiate, was a worthy man, in his way, but haughty, obstinate, and intolerant of all opposition to his will. After a certain number of letters and personal interviews, I found that I had nothing to hope for, not even a compromise of the matter, from my guardian: unconditional submission was what he demanded; and I prepared myself, therefore, for other measures. Summer was now coming on with hasty steps, and my seventeenth birth-day was fast approaching; after which day I had sworn within myself that I would no longer be numbered amongst school-boys. Money being what I chiefly wanted, I wrote to a woman of high rank, who, though young herself, had known me from a child, and had latterly treated me with great distinction, requesting that she would "lend" me five guineas. For upwards of a week no answer came, and I was beginning to despond, when, at length, a servant put into my hands a double letter, with a coronet on the seal. The letter was kind and obliging, the fair writer was on the sea-coast, and in that way the delay had arisen; she enclosed double of what I had asked, and good-naturedly hinted, that if I should never repay her, it would not absolutely ruin her. Now, then, I was

prepared for my scheme: ten guineas, added to about two that I had remaining from my pocket money, seemed to me sufficient for an indefinite length of time; and at that happy age, if no definite boundary can be assigned to one's power, the spirit of hope and pleasure makes it virtually infinite.

It is a just remark of Dr. Johnson's (and, what cannot often be said of his remarks, it is a very feeling one) that we never do anything consciously for the last time (of things, that is, which we have long been in the habit of doing), without sadness of heart. This truth I felt deeply when I came to leave —, a place which I did not love, and where I had not been happy. On the evening before I left — forever, I grieved when the ancient and lofty school-room resounded with the evening service, performed for the last time in my hearing; and at night, when the muster-roll of names was called over, and mine (as usual) was called first, I stepped forward, and passing the head-master, who was standing by, I bowed to him, and looking earnestly in his face, thinking to myself, "He is old and infirm, and in this world I shall not see him again." I was right; I never did see him again, nor never shall. He looked at me complacently, smiled good-naturedly, returned my salutation (or rather my valediction), and we parted (though he knew it not) forever. I could not reverence him intellectually; but he had been uniformly kind to me, and had allowed me many indulgences; and I grieved at the thought of the mortification I should inflict upon him.

The morning came, which was to launch me into the world, and from which my whole succeeding life has, in many important points, taken its coloring. I lodged in the head-master's house, and had been allowed, from my first entrance, the indulgence of a private room, which I used both as a sleeping room and as a study. At half after three I rose, and gazed with deep emotion at the ancient towers of —, "drest in earliest light," and beginning to crimson with the radiant lustre of a cloudless July morning. I was firm and immovable in my purpose, but yet agitated by anticipation of uncertain danger and troubles; and if I could have foreseen the hurricane, and perfect hail-storm of affliction, which soon fell upon me, well might I have been agitated. To this agitation the deep peace of the morning presented an affecting contrast, and in some degree a medicine. The silence was more profound than that of midnight: and to me the silence of a summer morning is more touching than all other silence, because, the light being broad and strong, as that of noon-day at other

seasons of the year, it seems to differ from perfect day chiefly because man is not yet abroad; and thus, the peace of nature, and of the innocent creatures of God, seems to be secure and deep, only so long as the presence of man, and his restless and unquiet spirit, are not there to trouble its sanctity. I dressed myself, took my hat and gloves, and lingered a little in the room. For the last year and a half this room had been my "pensive citadel:" here I had read and studied through all the hours of night; and, though true it was, that, for the latter part of this time, I, who was framed for love and gentle affections, had lost my gayety and happiness, during the strife and fever of contention with my guardian, yet, on the other hand, as a boy so passionately fond of books, and dedicated to intellectual pursuits, I could not fail to have enjoyed many happy hours in the midst of general dejection. I wept as I looked round on the chair, hearth, writing-table, and other familiar objects, knowing too certainly that I looked upon them for the last time. Whilst I write this, it is eighteen years ago; and yet, at this moment, I see distinctly, as if it were but yesterday, the lineaments and expressions of the object on which I fixed my parting gaze: it was a picture of the lovely —, which hung over the mantel-piece; the eyes and mouth of which were so beautiful, and the whole countenance so radiant with benignity and divine tranquility, that I had a thousand times laid down my pen, or my book, to gather consolation from it, as a devotee from his patron saint. Whilst I was yet gazing upon it, the deep tones of — clock proclaimed that it was four o'clock. I went up to the picture, kissed it, and then gently walked out, and closed the door forever!

So blended and intertwined in this life are occasions of laughter and of tears, that I cannot yet recall, without smiling, an incident which occurred at that time, and which had nearly put a stop to the immediate execution of my plan. I had a trunk of immense weight; for, besides my clothes, it contained nearly all my library. The difficulty was to get this removed to a carrier's; my room was at an aerial elevation in the house, and (what was worse) the staircase which communicated with this angle of the building was accessible only by a gallery, which passed the head-master's chamber-door. I was a favorite with all the servants; and knowing that any of them would screen me, and act confidentially, I communicated my embarrassment to a groom of the head-master's.

The groom swore he would do anything I wished; and, when the time arrived, went up stairs to bring the trunk down. This I feared was beyond the strength of any one man: however, the groom was a man

“Of Atlantean shoulders, fit to bear
The weight of mightiest monarchies;”

and had a back as spacious as Salisbury Plains. Accordingly he persisted in bringing down the trunk alone, whilst I stood waiting at the foot of the last flight, in anxiety for the event. For some time I heard him descending with slow and firm steps; but, unfortunately, from his trepidation, as he drew near the dangerous quarter, within a few steps of the gallery, his foot slipped; and the mighty burden, falling from his shoulders, gained such increase of impetus at each step of the descent, that, on reaching the bottom, it trundled, or rather leaped, right across, with the noise of twenty devils, against the very bed-room door of the archididascalus. My first thought was, that all was lost; and that my only chance for executing a retreat was to sacrifice my baggage. However, on reflection, I determined to abide the issue. The groom was in the utmost alarm, both on his own account and on mine; but, in spite of this, so irresistibly had the sense of the ludicrous, in this unhappy contretemps, taken possession of his fancy, that he sang out a long, loud, and canorous peal of laughter, that might have wakened the Seven Sleepers. At the sound of this resonant merriment, within the very ears of insulted authority, I could not forbear joining in it, subdued to this, not so much by the unhappy etourderie of the trunk, as by the effect it had upon the groom. We both expected, as a matter of course, that Dr. — would sally out of his room; for, in general, if but a mouse stirred, he sprang out like a mastiff from his kennel. Strange to say, however, on this occasion, when the noise of laughter had ceased, no sound or rustling even, was to be heard in the bed-room. Dr. — had a painful complaint, which sometimes keeping him awake made him sleep, perhaps, when it did come, the deeper. Gathering courage from the silence, the groom hoisted his burden again, and accomplished the remainder of his descent without accident. I waited until I saw the trunk placed on a wheelbarrow, and on its road to the carrier's: then, “with Providence my guide,” I set off on foot, carrying a small parcel, with some articles of dress under my arm: a favorite

English poet in one pocket; and a small twelvemo volume, containing about nine plays of Euripides, in the other.

It had been my intention, originally, to proceed to Westmoreland, both from the love I bore to that county, and on other personal accounts. Accident, however, gave a different direction to my wanderings, and I bent my steps towards North Wales.

After wandering about for some time in Denbighshire, Merionethshire, and Caernarvonshire, I took lodgings in a small neat house in B——. Here I might have staid with great comfort for many weeks; for provisions were cheap at B——, from the scarcity of other markets for the surplus products of a wide agricultural district. An accident, however, in which, perhaps, no offence was designed, drove me out to wander again. I know not whether my reader may have remarked, but I have often remarked, that the proudest class of people in England (or, at any rate, the class whose pride is most apparent) are the families of bishops. Noblemen, and their children, carry about with them, in their very titles, a sufficient notification of their rank. Nay, their very names (and this applies also to the children of many untitled houses) are often, to the English ear, adequate exponents of high birth, or descent. Sackville, Manners, Fitzroy, Paulet, Cavendish, and scores of others, tell their own tale. Such persons, therefore, find everywhere a due sense of their claims already established, except among those who are ignorant of the world, by virtue of their own obscurity; "Not to know them argues one's self unknown." Their manners take a suitable tone and coloring; and, for once that they find it necessary to impress a sense of their consequence upon others, they meet with a thousand occasions for moderating and tempering this sense by acts of courteous condescension. With the families of bishops it is otherwise; with them it is all up-hill work to make known their pretensions; for the proportion of the episcopal bench taken from noble families is not at any time very large; and the succession to these dignities is so rapid, that the public ear seldom has time to become familiar with them, unless where they are connected with some literary reputation. Hence it is that the children of bishops carry about with them an austere and repulsive air, indicative of claims not generally acknowledged, — a sort of *noli me tangere* manner, nervously apprehensive of too familiar approach, and shrinking with the sensitiveness of a gouty man, from all contact with the *οἱ πολλοί*. Doubtless, a powerful

understanding, or unusual goodness of nature, will preserve a man from such weakness; but, in general, the truth of my representation will be acknowledged; pride, if not of deeper root in such families, appears, at least, more upon the surface of their manners. This spirit of manners naturally communicates itself to their domestics, and other dependants. Now, my landlady had been a lady's maid, or a nurse, in the family of the Bishop of —; and had but lately married away and "settled" (as such people express it) for life. In a little town like B—, merely to have lived in the bishop's family conferred some distinction; and my good landlady had rather more than her share of the pride I have noticed on that score. What "my lord" said, and what "my lord" did,—how useful he was in parliament, and how indispensable at Oxford,—formed the daily burden of her talk. All this I bore very well; for I was too good-natured to laugh in anybody's face, and I could make an ample allowance for the garrulity of an old servant. Of necessity, however, I must have appeared in her eyes very inadequately impressed with the bishop's importance; and, perhaps, to punish me for my indifference, or, possibly, by accident, she one day repeated to me a conversation in which I was indirectly a party concerned. She had been to the palace to pay her respects to the family, and, dinner being over, was summoned into the dining-room. In giving an account of her household economy she happened to mention that she had let her apartments. Thereupon the good bishop (it seemed) had taken occasion to caution her as to her selection of inmates; "for," said he, "you must recollect, Betty, that this place is in the high road to the Head; so that multitudes of Irish swindlers, running away from their debts into England, and of English swindlers, running away from their debts to the Isle of Man, are likely to take this place in their route." This advice was certainly not without reasonable grounds, but rather fitted to be stored up for Mrs. Betty's private meditations, than specially reported to me. What followed, however, was somewhat worse:—"O, my lord," answered my landlady (according to her own representation of the matter), "I really don't think this young gentleman is a swindler; because —." "You don't think me a swindler?" said I, interrupting her, in a tumult of indignation; "for the future, I shall spare you the trouble of thinking about it." And without delay I prepared for my departure. Some concessions the good woman seemed disposed to make; but a harsh and contemptuous expression, which I

fear that I applied to the learned dignitary himself, roused her indignation in turn; and reconciliation then became impossible. I was, indeed, greatly irritated at the bishop's having suggested any grounds of suspicion, however remotely, against a person whom he had never seen; and I thought of letting him know my mind in Greek; which, at the same time that it would furnish some presumption that I was no swindler, would also (I hoped) compel the bishop to reply in the same language, in which case, I doubted not to make it appear, that if I was not so rich as his lordship, I was a far better Grecian. Calmer thoughts, however, drove this boyish design out of my mind: for I considered that the bishop was in the right to counsel an old servant; that he could not have designed that his advice should be reported to me; and that the same coarseness of mind which had led Mrs. Betty to repeat the advice at all might have colored it in a way more agreeable to her own style of thinking than to the actual expressions of the worthy bishop.

I left the lodging the very same hour; and this turned out a very unfortunate occurrence for me, because, living henceforward at inns, I was drained of my money very rapidly. In a fortnight I was reduced to a short allowance; that is, I could allow myself only one meal a day. From the keen appetite produced by constant exercise and mountain air, acting on a youthful stomach, I soon began to suffer greatly on this slender regimen; for the single meal which I could venture to order was coffee or tea. Even this, however, was at length withdrawn; and, afterwards, so long as I remained in Wales, I subsisted either on blackberries, hips, haws, etc., or on the casual hospitalities which I now and then received, in return for such little services as I had an opportunity of rendering. Sometimes I wrote letters of business for cottagers who happened to have relatives in Liverpool or in London; more often I wrote love-letters to their sweethearts for young women who had lived as servants in Shrewsbury, or other towns on the English border. On all such occasions I gave great satisfaction to my humble friends, and was generally treated with hospitality; and once, in particular, near the village of Llan-y-styndwr (or some such name), in a sequestered part of Merionethshire, I was entertained for upwards of three days by a family of young people, with an affectionate and fraternal kindness that left an impression upon my heart not yet impaired. The family consisted, at that time, of four sisters and three brothers, all grown up, and remarkable for

elegance and delicacy of manners. So much beauty, and so much native good breeding and refinement, I do not remember to have seen before or since in any cottage, except once or twice in Westmoreland and Devonshire. They spoke English; an accomplishment not often met with in so many members of one family, especially in villages remote from the high road. Here I wrote, on my first introduction, a letter about prize-money, for one of the brothers, who had served on board an English man-of-war; and, more privately, two love-letters for two of the sisters. They were both interesting looking girls, and one of uncommon loveliness. In the midst of their confusion and blushes, whilst dictating, or rather giving me general instructions, it did not require any great penetration to discover that what they wished was that their letters should be as kind as was consistent with proper maidenly pride. I contrived so to temper my expressions as to reconcile the gratification of both feelings; and they were much pleased with the way in which I had expressed their thoughts, as (in their simplicity) they were astonished at my having so readily discovered them. The reception one meets with from the women of a family generally determines the tenor of one's whole entertainment. In this case I had discharged my confidential duties as secretary so much to the general satisfaction, perhaps also amusing them with my conversation, that I was pressed to stay with a cordiality which I had little inclination to resist. I slept with the brothers, the only unoccupied bed standing in the apartment of the young women: but in all other points they treated me with a respect not usually paid to purses as light as mine; as if my scholarship were sufficient evidence that I was of "gentle blood." Thus I lived with them for three days, and great part of a fourth; and, from the undiminished kindness which they continued to show me, I believe I might have staid with them up to this time, if their power had corresponded with their wishes. On the last morning, however, I perceived upon their countenances, as they sat at breakfast, the expression of some unpleasant communication which was at hand; and soon after, one of the brothers explained to me, that their parents had gone, the day before my arrival, to an annual meeting of Methodists, held at Caernarvon, and were that day expected to return; "and if they should not be so civil as they ought to be," he begged, on the part of all the young people, that I would not take it amiss. The parents returned with churlish faces, and "Dym Sassenach" (no English) in

answer to all my addresses. I saw how matters stood; and so, taking an affectionate leave of my kind and interesting young folks, I went my way. For, though they spoke warmly to their parents in my behalf, and often excused the manner of the old people, by saying that it was "only their way," yet I easily understood that my talent for writing love-letters would do as little to recommend me with two grave sexagenarian Welsh Methodists as my Greek Sapphics or Alcaics; and what had been hospitality when offered to me with the gracious courtesy of my young friends, would become charity, when connected with the harsh demeanor of these old people. Certainly, Mr. Shelley is right in his notions about old age; unless powerfully counteracted by all sorts of opposite agencies, it is a miserable corrupter and blighter to the genial charities of the human heart.

Soon after this, I contrived, by means which I must omit for want of room, to transfer myself to London. And now began the latter and fiercer stage of my long sufferings; without using a disproportionate expression, I might say, of my agony. For I now suffered, for upwards of sixteen weeks, the physical anguish of hunger in various degrees of intensity; but as bitter, perhaps, as ever any human being can have suffered who has survived it. I would not needlessly harass my reader's feelings by a detail of all that I endured; for extremities such as these, under any circumstances of heaviest misconduct or guilt, cannot be contemplated, even in description, without a rueful pity that is painful to the natural goodness of the human heart. Let it suffice, at least on this occasion, to say, that a few fragments of bread from the breakfast-table of one individual (who supposed me to be ill, but did not know of my being in utter want), and these at uncertain intervals, constituted my whole support. During the former part of my sufferings (that is, generally in Wales, and always for the first two months in London), I was houseless, and very seldom slept under a roof. To this constant exposure to the open air I ascribe it mainly, that I did not sink under my torments. Latterly, however, when cold and more inclement weather came on, and when, from the length of my sufferings, I had begun to sink into a more languishing condition, it was, no doubt, fortunate for me, that the same person to whose breakfast-table I had access allowed me to sleep in a large, unoccupied house, of which he was tenant. Unoccupied, I call it, for there was no household or establishment in it; nor any furniture, indeed, except a table and a few chairs. But I

found, on taking possession of my new quarters, that the house already contained one single inmate, a poor, friendless child, apparently ten years old; but she seemed hunger-bitten; and sufferings of that sort often make children look older than they are. From this forlorn child I learned, that she had slept and lived there alone, for some time before I came; and great joy the poor creature expressed, when she found that I was in future to be her companion through the hours of darkness. The house was large; and, from the want of furniture, the noise of the rats made a prodigious echoing on the spacious staircase and hall; and, amidst the real fleshly ills of cold, and, I fear, hunger, the forsaken child had found leisure to suffer still more (it appeared) from the self-created one of ghosts. I promised her protection against all ghosts whatsoever; but, alas! I could offer her no other assistance. We lay upon the floor, with a bundle of cursed law papers for a pillow, but with no other covering than a sort of large horseman's cloak; afterwards, however, we discovered, in a garret, an old sofa-cover, a small piece of rug, and some fragments of other articles, which added a little to our warmth. The poor child crept close to me for warmth, and for security against her ghostly enemies. When I was not more than usually ill, I took her into my arms, so that, in general, she was tolerably warm, and often slept when I could not; for, during the last two months of my sufferings, I slept much in the daytime, and was apt to fall into transient dozings at all hours. But my sleep distressed me more than my watching; for, besides the tumultuousness of my dreams (which were only not so awful as those which I shall have to describe hereafter as produced by opium), my sleep was never more than what is called dog-sleep; so that I could hear myself moaning, and was often, as it seemed to me, awakened suddenly by my own voice; and, about this time, a hideous sensation began to haunt me as soon as I fell into a slumber, which has since returned upon me, at different periods of my life, namely, a sort of twitching (I know not where, but apparently about the region of the stomach), which compelled me violently to throw out my feet for the sake of relieving it. This sensation coming on as soon as I began to sleep, and the effort to relieve it constantly awaking me, at length I slept only from exhaustion; and, from increasing weakness (as I said before), I was constantly falling asleep, and constantly awaking. Meantime, the master of the house sometimes came in upon us suddenly, and very early; sometimes not till ten

o'clock; sometimes not at all. He was in constant fear of bailiffs; improving on the plan of Cromwell, every night he slept in a different quarter of London; and I observed that he never failed to examine, through a private window, the appearance of those who knocked at the door, before he would allow it to be opened. He breakfasted alone; indeed, his tea equipage would hardly have admitted of his hazarding an invitation to a second person, any more than the quantity of esculent material, which, for the most part, was little more than a roll, or a few biscuits, which he had bought on his road from the place where he had slept. Or, if he had asked a party, as I once learnedly and facetiously observed to him, the several members of it must have stood in the relation to each other (not sat in any relation whatever) of succession, as the metaphysicians have it, and not of coexistence; in the relation of parts of time, and not of the parts of space. During his breakfast, I generally contrived a reason for lounging in; and, with an air of as much indifference as I could assume, took up such fragments as he had left, — sometimes, indeed, there were none at all. In doing this, I committed no robbery, except upon the man himself, who was thus obliged (I believe), now and then, to send out at noon for an extra biscuit; for, as to the poor child, she was never admitted into his study (if I may give that name to his chief depository of parchments, law writings, etc.); that room was to her the Blue-beard room of the house, being regularly locked on his departure to dinner, about six o'clock, which usually was his final departure for the night. Whether this child was an illegitimate daughter of Mr. —, or only a servant, I could not ascertain; she did not herself know; but certainly she was treated altogether as a menial servant. No sooner did Mr. — make his appearance, than she went below stairs, brushed his shoes, coat, etc.; and, except when she was summoned to run an errand, she never emerged from the dismal Tartarus of the kitchens, to the upper air, until my welcome knock at night called up her little trembling footsteps to the front door. Of her life during the daytime, however, I knew little, but what I gathered from her own account at night; for, as soon as the hours of business commenced, I saw that my absence would be acceptable; and, in general, therefore, I went off and sat in the parks, or elsewhere, until night-fall.

But who, and what, meantime, was the master of the house, himself? Reader, he was one of those anomalous practitioners in lower departments of the law, who — what shall I

say? — who, on prudential reasons, or from necessity, deny themselves all the indulgence in the luxury of too delicate a conscience (a periphrasis which might be abridged considerably, but that I leave to the reader's taste); in many walks of life, a conscience is a more expensive incumbrance than a wife or a carriage; and just as people talk of "laying down" their carriages, so I suppose my friend, Mr. —, had "laid down" his conscience for a time; meaning, doubtless, to resume it as soon as he could afford it. The inner economy of such a man's daily life would present a most strange picture, if I could allow myself to amuse the reader at his expense. Even with my limited opportunities for observing what went on, I saw many scenes of London intrigues, and complex chicanery, "cycle and epicycle, orb in orb," at which I sometimes smile to this day, and at which I smiled then, in spite of my misery. My situation, however, at that time, gave me little experience, in my own person, of any qualities in Mr. —'s character but such as did him honor; and of his whole strange composition, I must forget everything but that towards me he was obliging, and, to the extent of his power, generous.

That power was not, indeed, very extensive. However, in common with the rats, I sat rent free; and as Dr. Johnson has recorded that he never but once in his life had as much wall-fruit as he could eat, so let me be grateful that, on that single occasion, I had as large a choice of apartments in a London mansion as I could possibly desire. Except the Blue-beard room, which the poor child believed to be haunted, all others, from the attics to the cellars, were at our service. "The world was all before us," and we pitched our tent for the night in any spot we chose. This house I have already described as a large one. It stands in a conspicuous situation, and in a well-known part of London. Many of my readers will have passed it, I doubt not, within a few hours of reading this. For myself, I never fail to visit it when business draws me to London. About ten o'clock this very night, August 15, 1821, being my birthday, I turned aside from my evening walk, down Oxford-street, purposely to take a glance at it. It is now occupied by a respectable family, and, by the lights in the front drawing-room, I observed a domestic party, assembled, perhaps, at tea, and apparently cheerful and gay; — marvellous contrast, in my eyes, to the darkness, cold, silence, and desolation, of that same house eighteen years ago, when its nightly occupants were one famishing scholar and a

neglected child. Her, by the by, in after years, I vainly endeavored to trace. Apart from her situation, she was not what would be called an interesting child. She was neither pretty, nor quick in understanding, nor remarkably pleasing in manners. But, thank God, even in those years I needed not the embellishments of novel accessories to conciliate my affections. Plain human nature, in its humblest and most homely apparel, was enough for me; and I loved the child because she was my partner in wretchedness. If she is now living, she is probably a mother, with children of her own; but, as I have said, I could never trace her.

This I regret; but another person there was, at that time, whom I have since sought to trace, with far deeper earnestness, and with far deeper sorrow at my failure. This person was a young woman, and one of that unhappy class who subsist upon the wages of prostitution. I feel no shame, nor have any reason to feel it, in avowing, that I was then on familiar and friendly terms with many women in that unfortunate condition. The reader needs neither smile at this avowal, nor frown; for not to remind my classical readers of the old Latin proverb, "Sine cerere," etc., it may well be supposed that in the existing state of my purse my connection with such women could not have been an impure one. But the truth is, that at no time of my life have I been a person to hold myself polluted by the touch or approach of any creature that wore a human shape. On the contrary, from my very earliest youth, it has been my pride to converse familiarly, more Socratico, with all human beings, — man, woman, and child, — that chance might fling in my way: a practice which is friendly to the knowledge of human nature, to good feelings, and to that frankness of address which becomes a man who would be thought a philosopher; for a philosopher should not see with the eyes of the poor liminary creature calling himself a man of the world, and filled with narrow and self-regarding prejudices of birth and education, but should look upon himself as a catholic creature, and as standing in an equal relation to high and low, to educated and uneducated, to the guilty and the innocent. Being myself, at that time, of necessity, a peripatetic, or a walker of the streets, I naturally fell in, more frequently, with those female peripatetics, who are technically called street-walkers. Many of these women had occasionally taken my part against watchmen who wished to drive me off the steps of houses where I was sitting. But one amongst them, — the one on whose account I have at all introduced

this subject, — yet no! let me not class thee, oh, noble-minded Ann —, with that order of women; — let me find, if it be possible, some gentler name to designate the condition of her to whose bounty and compassion — ministering to my necessities when all the world had forsaken me — I owe it that I am at this time alive. For many weeks, I had walked, at nights, with this poor friendless girl, up and down Oxford-street, or had rested with her on steps and under the shelter of porticoes. She could not be so old as myself: she told me, indeed, that she had not completed her sixteenth year. By such questions as my interest about her prompted, I had gradually drawn forth her simple history. Hers was a case of ordinary occurrence (as I have since had reason to think), and one in which, if London beneficence had better adapted its arrangements to meet it, the power of the law might oftener be interposed to protect and to avenge. But the stream of London charity flows in a channel which, though deep and mighty, is yet noiseless and under ground; — not obvious or readily accessible to poor, houseless wanderers; and it cannot be denied that the outside air and frame-work of London society is harsh, cruel, and repulsive. In any case, however, I saw that part of her injuries might easily have been redressed; and I urged her often and earnestly to lay her complaint before a magistrate. Friendless as she was, I assured her that she would meet with immediate attention; and that English justice, which was no respecter of persons, would speedily and amply avenge her on the brutal ruffian who had plundered her little property. She promised me often that she would; but she delayed taking the steps I pointed out, from time to time; for she was timid and dejected to a degree which showed how deeply sorrow had taken hold of her young heart; and perhaps she thought justly that the most upright judge and the most righteous tribunals could do nothing to repair her heaviest wrongs. Something, however, would perhaps have been done; for it had been settled between us, at length, — but, unhappily, on the very last time but one that I was ever to see her, — that in a day or two we should speak on her behalf. This little service it was destined, however, that I should never realize. Meantime, that which she rendered to me, and which was greater than I could ever have repaid her, was this: — One night, when we were pacing slowly along Oxford-street, and after a day when I had felt unusually ill and faint, I requested her to turn off with me into Soho-square. Thither we went; and we sat down on

the steps of a house, which, to this hour, I never pass without a pang of grief, and an inner act of homage to the spirit of that unhappy girl, in memory of the noble act which she there performed. Suddenly, as we sat, I grew much worse. I had been leaning my head against her bosom, and all at once I sank from her arms and fell backward on the steps. From the sensations I then had, I felt an inner conviction of the liveliest kind, that without some powerful and reviving stimulus I should either have died on the spot, or should, at least, have sunk to a point of exhaustion from which all reascent, under my friendless circumstances, would soon have become hopeless. Then it was, at this crisis of my fate, that my poor orphan companion, who had herself met with little but injuries in this world, stretched out a saving hand to me. Uttering a cry of terror, but without a moment's delay, she ran off into Oxford-street, and in less time than could be imagined returned to me with a glass of port-wine and spices, that acted upon my empty stomach (which at that time would have rejected all solid food) with an instantaneous power of restoration; and for this glass the generous girl, without a murmur, paid out of her own humble purse, at a time, be it remembered, when she had scarcely wherewithal to purchase the bare necessaries of life, and when she could have no reason to expect that I should ever be able to reimburse her. O, youthful benefactress! how often, in succeeding years, standing in solitary places, and thinking of thee with grief of heart and perfect love, — how often have I wished that, as in ancient times the curse of a father was believed to have a supernatural power, and to pursue its object with a fatal necessity of self-fulfilment, — even so the benediction of a heart oppressed with gratitude might have a like prerogative; might have power given to it from above to chase, to haunt, to waylay, to overtake, to pursue thee into the central darkness of a London brothel, or (if it were possible) into the darkness of the grave, there to awaken thee with an authentic message of peace and forgiveness, and of final reconciliation!

I do not often weep; for not only do my thoughts on subjects connected with the chief interests of man daily, nay, hourly, descend a thousand fathoms "too deep for tears;" not only does the sternness of my habits of thought present an antagonism to the feelings which prompt tears, — wanting, of necessity, to those who, being protected usually by their levity from any tendency to meditative sorrow, would, by that same levity, be made incapable of resisting it on any

casual access of such feelings; but also, I believe, that all minds which have contemplated such objects as deeply as I have done, must, for their own protection from utter despondency, have early encouraged and cherished some tranquilizing belief as to the future balances and the hieroglyphic meanings of human sufferings. On these accounts I am cheerful to this hour; and, as I have said, I do not often weep. Yet some feelings, though not deeper or more passionate, are more tender than others; and often, when I walk, at this time, in Oxford-street, by dreamy lamp-light, and hear those airs played on a barrel-organ which years ago solaced me and my dear companion (as I must always call her), I shed tears, and muse with myself at the mysterious dispensation which so suddenly and so critically separated us forever. How it happened, the reader will understand from what remains of this introductory narration.

Soon after the period of the last incident I have recorded, I met, in Albemarle-street, a gentleman of his late Majesty's household. This gentleman had received hospitalities, on different occasions, from my family; and he challenged me upon the strength of my family likeness. I did not attempt any disguise; I answered his questions ingeniously, and, on his pledging his word of honour that he would not betray me to my guardians, I gave him an address to my friend, the attorney. The next day I received from him a ten-pound bank note. The letter enclosing it was delivered, with other letters of business, to the attorney; but, though his look and manner informed me that he suspected its contents, he gave it up to me honourably and without demur.

This present, from the particular service to which it was applied, leads me naturally to speak of the purpose which had allured me up to London, and which I had been (to use a forensic word) soliciting from the first day of my arrival in London, to that of my final departure.

In so mighty a world as London, it will surprise my readers that I should not have found some means of staving off the last extremities of penury; and it will strike them that two resources, at least, must have been open to me, namely, either to seek assistance from the friends of my family, or to turn my youthful talents and attainments into some channel of pecuniary emolument. As to the first course, I may observe, generally, that what I dreaded beyond all other evils was the chance of being reclaimed by my guardians; not doubting that whatever power the law gave them would have been

enforced against me to the utmost; that is, to the extremity of forcibly restoring me to the school which I had quitted; a restoration which, as it would, in my eyes, have been a dishonour, even if submitted to voluntarily, could not fail, when extorted from me in contempt and defiance of my own wishes and efforts, to have been a humiliation worse to me than death, and which would indeed have terminated in death. I was, therefore, shy enough of applying for assistance even in those quarters where I was sure of receiving it, at the risk of furnishing my guardians with any clue for recovering me. But, as to London in particular, though doubtless my father had in his lifetime had many friends there, yet (as ten years had passed since his death) I remembered few of them even by name; and never having seen London before, except once for a few hours, I knew not the address of even those few. To this mode of gaining help, therefore, in part the difficulty, but much more the paramount fear which I have mentioned, habitually indisposed me in regard to the other mode, I now feel half inclined to join my reader in wondering that I should have overlooked it. As a corrector of Greek proofs (if in no other way), I might, doubtless, have gained enough for my slender wants. Such an office as this I could have discharged with an exemplary and punctual accuracy that would soon have gained me the confidence of my employers. But it must not be forgotten that even for such an office as this, it was necessary that I should first of all have an introduction to some respectable publisher; and this I had no means of obtaining. To say the truth, however, it had never once occurred to me to think of literary labors as a source of profit. No mode sufficiently speedy of obtaining money had ever occurred to me, but that of borrowing it on the strength of my future claims and expectations. This mode I sought by every avenue to compass; and amongst other persons I applied to a Jew² named D——.³

To this Jew, and to other advertising money-lenders (some of whom were, I believe, also Jews), I had introduced myself, with an account of my expectations; which account, on examining my father's will at Doctor's Commons, they had ascertained to be correct. The person there mentioned as the second son of —— was found to have all the claims (or more than all) that I had stated: but one question still remained, which the faces of the Jews pretty significantly suggested, — was I that person? This doubt had never occurred to me as a possible one; I had rather feared, whenever my Jewish

friends scrutinized me keenly, that I might be too well known to be that person, and that some scheme might be passing in their minds for entrapping me and selling me to my guardians. It was strange to me to find my own self, materialiter considered (so I expressed it, for I doted on logical accuracy of distinctions), accused, or at least suspected, of counterfeiting my own self, formaliter considered. However, to satisfy their scruples, I took the only course in my power. Whilst I was in Wales, I had received various letters from young friends: these I produced, — for I carried them constantly in my pocket, — being, indeed, by this time, almost the only relics of my personal incumbrances (excepting the clothes I wore), which I had not in one way or other disposed of. Most of these letters were from the Earl of —, ⁴ who was, at that time, my chief (or rather only) confidential friend. These letters were dated from Eton. I had also some from the Marquis of —, ⁵ his father, who, though absorbed in agricultural pursuits, yet having been an Etonian himself, and as good a scholar as a nobleman needs to be, still retained an affection for classical studies and for youthful scholars. He had, accordingly, from the time that I was fifteen, corresponded with me; sometimes upon the great improvements which he had made, or was meditating, in the counties of M— and S— ⁶ since I had been there; sometimes upon the merits of a Latin poet; at other times, suggesting subjects to me on which he wished me to write verses.

On reading the letters, one of my Jewish friends agreed to furnish two or three hundred pounds on my personal security, provided I could persuade the young earl, — who was, by the way, not older than myself, — to guarantee the payment on our coming of age: the Jew's final object being, as I now suppose, not the trifling profit he could expect to make by me, but the prospect of establishing a connection with my noble friend, whose immense expectations were well known to him. In pursuance of this proposal on the part of the Jew, about eight or nine days after I had received the ten pounds, I prepared to go down to Eton. Nearly three pounds of the money I had given to my money-lending friend, on his alleging that the stamps must be bought, in order that the writings might be prepared whilst I was away from London. I thought in my heart that he was lying; but I did not wish to give him any excuse for charging his own delays upon me. A smaller sum I had given to my friend the attorney (who was connected with the money-lenders as their lawyer), to which,

indeed, he was entitled for his unfurnished lodgings. About fifteen shillings I had employed in reestablishing (though in a very humble way) my dress. Of the remainder, I gave one-quarter to Ann, meaning, on my return, to have divided with her whatever might remain. These arrangements made, soon after six o'clock, on a dark winter evening, I set off, accompanied by Ann, towards Piccadilly; for it was my intention to go down as far as Salt Hill on the Bath or Bristol mail. Our course lay through a part of the town which has now all disappeared, so that I can no longer retrace its ancient boundaries: Swallow-street, I think it was called. Having time enough before us, however, we bore away to the left, until we came into Golden-square: there, near the corner of Sherard-street, we sat down, not wishing to part in the tumult and blaze of Piccadilly. I had told her of my plans some time before; and now I assured her again that she should share in my good fortune, if I met with any; and that I would never forsake her, as soon as I had power to protect her. This I fully intended, as much from inclination as from a sense of duty; for, setting aside gratitude, which, in any case, must have made me her debtor for life, I loved her as affectionately as if she had been my sister; and at this moment with seven-fold tenderness, from pity at witnessing her extreme dejection. I had, apparently, most reason for dejection, because I was leaving the saviour of my life; yet I, considering the shock my health had received, was cheerful and full of hope. She, on the contrary, who was parting with one who had had little means of serving her, except by kindness and brotherly treatment, was overcome by sorrow; so that, when I kissed her at our final farewell, she put her arms about my neck, and wept, without speaking a word. I hoped to return in a week at furthest, and I agreed with her that on the fifth night from that, and every night afterwards, she should wait for me, at six o'clock, near the bottom of Great Titchfield-street, which had been our customary haven, as it were, of rendezvous, to prevent our missing each other in the great Mediterranean of Oxford-street. This, and other measures of precaution, I took: one, only, I forgot. She had either never told me, or (as a matter of no great interest) I had forgotten, her surname. It is a general practice, indeed, with girls of humble rank in her unhappy condition, not (as novel-reading women of higher pretensions) to style themselves Miss Douglass, Miss Montague, etc., but simply by their Christian names, Mary, Jane, Frances, etc. Her surname, as the

surest means of tracing her, I ought now to have inquired; but the truth is, having no reason to think that our meeting could, in consequence of a short interruption, be more difficult or uncertain than it had been for so many weeks, I had scarcely for a moment adverted to it as necessary, or placed it amongst my memoranda against this parting interview; and my final anxieties being spent in comforting her with hopes, and in pressing upon her the necessity of getting some medicine for a violent cough and hoarseness with which she was troubled, I wholly forgot it until it was too late to recall her.

It was past eight o'clock when I reached the Gloucester Coffee-House, and the Bristol Mail being on the point of going off, I mounted on the outside. The fine fluent motion of this mail soon laid me asleep. It is somewhat remarkable that the first easy or refreshing sleep which I had enjoyed for some months was on the outside of a mail-coach, — a bed which, at this day, I find rather an uneasy one. Connected with this sleep was a little incident which served, as hundreds of others did at that time, to convince me how easily a man, who has never been in any great distress, may pass through life without knowing, in his own person, at least, anything of the possible goodness of the human heart, or, as I must add with a sigh, of its possible vileness. So thick a curtain of manners is drawn over the features and expressions of men's natures, that, to the ordinary observer, the two extremities, and the infinite field of varieties which lie between them, are all confounded, — the vast and multitudinous compass of their several harmonies reduced to the meagre outline of differences expressed in the gamut or alphabet of elementary sounds. The case was this: for the first four or five miles from London, I annoyed my fellow-passenger on the roof, by occasionally falling against him when the coach gave a lurch to his side; and, indeed, if the road had been less smooth and level than it is, I should have fallen off from weakness. Of this annoyance he complained heavily, as, perhaps, in the same circumstances, most people would. He expressed his complaint, however, more morosely than the occasion seemed to warrant; and if I had parted with him at that moment, I should have thought of him (if I had considered it worth while to think of him at all) as a surly and almost brutal fellow. However, I was conscious that I had given him some cause for complaint, and, therefore, I apologized to him, and assured him I would do what I could to avoid falling asleep for the future, and at the same time, in as few words as pos-

sible, I explained to him that I was ill, and in a weak state from long suffering, and that I could not afford, at that time, to take an inside place. The man's manner changed, upon hearing this explanation, in an instant; and when I next woke for a minute, from the noise and lights of Hounslow (for, in spite of my wishes and efforts, I had fallen asleep again within two minutes from the time I had spoken to him), I found that he had put his arm round me to protect me from falling off; and for the rest of my journey he behaved to me with the gentleness of a woman, so that, at length, I almost lay in his arms; and this was the more kind, as he could not have known that I was not going the whole way to Bath or Bristol. Unfortunately, indeed, I did go rather further than I intended; for so genial and refreshing was my sleep, that the next time, after leaving Hounslow, that I fully awoke, was upon the sudden pulling up of the mail (possibly at a post-office), and, on inquiry, I found that we had reached Maidenhead, six or seven miles, I think, ahead of Salt Hill. Here I alighted; and for the half-minute that the mail stopped, I was entreated by my friendly companion (who, from the transient glimpse I had of him in Piccadilly, seemed to me to be a gentleman's butler, or person of that rank), to go to bed without delay. This I promised, though with no intention of doing so; and, in fact, I immediately set forward, or, rather, backward, on foot. It must then have been nearly midnight; but so slowly did I creep along that I heard a clock in a cottage strike four before I turned down the lane from Slough to Eton. The air and the sleep had both refreshed me; but I was weary, nevertheless. I remember a thought (obvious enough, and which has been prettily expressed by a Roman poet) which gave me some consolation, at that moment, under my poverty. There had been, some time before, a murder committed on or near Hounslow Heath.⁸ I think I cannot be mistaken when I say that the name of the murdered person was Steele, and that he was the owner of a lavender plantation in that neighborhood. Every step of my progress was bringing me nearer to the heath; and it naturally occurred to me that I and the accursed murderer, if he were that night abroad, might, at every instant, be unconsciously approaching each other through the darkness; in which case, said I, supposing I — instead of being as indeed I am, little better than an outcast,

“ Lord of my learning, and no land beside — ”

were, like my friend Lord —, heir, by general repute, to

£70,000 per annum, what a panic should I be under, at this moment, about my throat! Indeed, it was not likely that Lord —, should ever be in my situation; but, nevertheless, the spirit of the remark remains true, that vast power and possessions make a man shamefully afraid of dying; and I am convinced that many of the most intrepid adventurers, who, by fortunately being poor, enjoy the full use of their natural courage, would, if, at the very instant of going into action, news were brought to them that they had unexpectedly succeeded to an estate in England of £50,000 a year, feel their dislike to bullets considerably sharpened,¹⁰ and their efforts at perfect equanimity and self-possession proportionately difficult. So true it is, in the language of a wise man, whose own experience had made him acquainted with both fortunes, that riches are better fitted

“To slacken virtue, and abate her edge,
Than tempt her to do aught may merit praise.”*

I dally with my subject, because, to myself, the remembrance of these times is profoundly interesting. But my reader shall not have any further cause to complain; for I now hasten to its close. In the road between Slough and Eton I fell asleep; and, just as the morning began to dawn, I was awakened by the voice of a man standing over me and surveying me. I know not what he was. He was an ill-looking fellow, but not, therefore, of necessity, an ill-meaning fellow; or, if he were, I suppose he thought that no person sleeping out-of-doors in winter could be worth robbing. In which conclusion, however, as it regarded myself, I beg to assure him, if he should be among my readers, that he was mistaken. After a slight remark, he passed on. I was not sorry at his disturbance, as it enabled me to pass through Eton before people were generally up. The night had been heavy and lowering, but towards the morning it had changed to a slight frost, and the ground and the trees were now covered with rime. I slipped through Eton unobserved; washed myself, and as far as possible, adjusted my dress, at a little public house in Windsor; and, about eight o'clock, went down towards Pote's. On my road I met some junior boys of whom I made inquiries. An Etonian is always a gentleman, and, in spite of my shabby habiliments, they answered me civilly. My friend, Lord —, was gone to the University of —. “Ibi omnis effusus labor!” I had, however, other friends at Eton; but it is not to

*Paradise Regained

all who wear that name in prosperity that a man is willing to present himself in distress. On recollecting myself, however, I asked for the Earl of D——," to whom (though my acquaintance with him was not so intimate as with some others) I should not have shrunk from presenting myself under any circumstances. He was still at Eton, though, I believe, on the wing for Cambridge. I called, was received kindly, and asked to breakfast.

Here let me stop for a moment, to check my reader from any erroneous conclusions. Because I have had occasion incidentally to speak of various patrician friends, it must not be supposed that I have myself any pretensions to rank or high blood. I thank God that I have not. I am the son of a plain English merchant, esteemed, during his life, for his great integrity, and strongly attached to literary pursuits (indeed, he was himself, anonymously, an author). If he had lived, it was expected that he would have been very rich; but, dying prematurely, he left no more than about £30,000 amongst seven different claimants. My mother I may mention with honour, as still more highly gifted; for, though unpretending to the name and honours of a literary woman, I shall presume to call her (what many literary women are not) an intellectual woman; and I believe that if ever her letters should be collected and published, they would be thought generally to exhibit as much strong and masculine sense, delivered in as pure "mother English," racy and fresh with idiomatic graces, as any in our language,—hardly excepting those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. These are my honours of descent; I have no others; and I have thanked God sincerely that I have not, because, in my judgment, a station which raises a man too eminently above the level of his fellow-creatures, is not the most favourable to moral or to intellectual qualities.

Lord D—— placed me before a most magnificent breakfast. It was really so; but in my eyes it seemed trebly magnificent, from being the first regular meal, the first "good man's table," that I had sat down to for months. Strange to say, however, I could scarcely eat anything. On the day when I first received my ten-pound bank-note, I had gone to a baker's shop and bought a couple of rolls; this very shop I had two months or six weeks before surveyed with an eagerness of desire which it was almost humiliating to me to recollect. I remembered the story about Otway; and feared that there might be danger in eating too rapidly. But I had no need for alarm; my appetite was quite sunk, and I became sick

before I had eaten half of what I had bought. This effect, from eating what approached to a meal, I continued to feel for weeks; or, when I did not experience any nausea, part of what I ate was rejected, sometimes with acidity, sometimes immediately and without any acidity. On the present occasion, at Lord D——'s table, I found myself not at all better than usual; and, in the midst of luxuries, I had no appetite. I had, however, unfortunately, at all times a craving for wine; I explained my situation, therefore, to Lord D——, and gave him a short account of my late sufferings, at which he expressed great compassion, and called for wine. This gave me a momentary relief and pleasure; and on all occasions, when I had an opportunity, I never failed to drink wine, which I worshipped then as I have since worshipped opium. I am convinced, however, that this indulgence in wine continued to strengthen my malady, for the tone of my stomach was apparently quite sunk; but, by a better regimen, it might sooner, and, perhaps, effectually, have been revived. I hope that it was not from this love of wine that I lingered in the neighborhood of my Eton friends; I persuaded myself then that it was from reluctance to ask of Lord D——, on whom I was conscious I had not sufficient claims, the particular service in quest of which I had come to Eton. I was, however, unwilling to lose my journey, and,—I asked it. Lord D——, whose good nature was unbounded, and which, in regard to myself, had been measured rather by his compassion perhaps for my condition, and his knowledge of my intimacy with some of his relatives, than by an over-rigorous inquiry into the extent of my own direct claims, faltered, nevertheless, at this request. He acknowledged that he did not like to have any dealings with money-lenders, and feared lest such a transaction might come to the ears of his connections. Moreover, he doubted whether his signature, whose expectations were so much more bounded than those of ——, would avail with my unchristian friends. However, he did not wish, as it seemed, to mortify me by an absolute refusal; for, after a little consideration, he promised, under certain conditions, which he pointed out, to give his security. Lord D—— was at this time not eighteen years of age; but I have often doubted, on recollecting, since, the good sense and prudence which on this occasion he mingled with so much urbanity of manner (an urbanity which in him wore the grace of youthful sincerity), whether any statesman — the oldest and the most accomplished in diplomacy — could have acquitted himself better under the same circumstances. Most

people, indeed, cannot be addressed on such a business, without surveying you with looks as austere and unpropitious as those of a Saracen's head.

Recomforted by this promise, which was not quite equal to the best, but far above the worst, that I had pictured to myself as possible, I returned in a Windsor coach to London three days after I had quitted it. And now I come to the end of my story. The Jews did not approve of Lord D——'s terms; whether they would in the end have acceded to them, and were only seeking time for making due inquiries, I know not; but many delays were made,—time passed on,—the small fragment of my bank-note had just melted away, and before any conclusion could have been put to the business, I must have relapsed into my former state of wretchedness. Suddenly, however, at this crisis, an opening was made, almost by accident, for reconciliation with my friends. I quitted London in haste, for a remote part of England; after some time, I proceeded to the university; and it was not until many months had passed away, that I had it in my power again to revisit the ground which had become so interesting to me, and to this day remains so, as the chief scene of my youthful sufferings.

Meantime, what had become of poor Ann? For her I have reserved my concluding words; according to our agreement, I sought her daily, and waited for her every night, so long as I stayed in London, at the corner of Titchfield-street. I inquired for her of every one who was likely to know her; and during the last hours of my stay in London, I put into activity every means of tracing her that my knowledge of London suggested, and the limited extent of my power made possible. The street where she had lodged I knew, but not the house; and I remembered, at last, some account which she had given of ill treatment from her landlord, which made it probable that she had quitted those lodgings before we parted. She had few acquaintances; most people, besides, thought that the earnestness of my inquiries arose from motives which moved their laughter or their slight regard; and others, thinking that I was in chase of a girl who had robbed me of some trifles, were naturally and excusably indisposed to give me any clue to her, if, indeed, they had any to give. Finally, as my despairing resource, on the day I left London, I put into the hands of the only person who (I was sure) must know Ann by sight, from having been in company with us once or twice, an address to — in — shire, at that time the residence of my family. But, to this hour, I have never heard a syllable about her.

This, amongst such troubles as most men meet with in this life, has been my heaviest affliction. If she had lived, doubtless we must have been sometimes in search of each other. at the very same moment, through the mighty labyrinths of London; perhaps even within a few feet of each other,—a barrier no wider, in a London street, often amounting in the end to a separation for eternity! During some years, I hoped that she did live; and I suppose that, in the literal and unrheterical use of the word myriad, I may say, that on my different visits to London, I have looked into many, many myriads of female faces, in the hope of meeting her. I should know her again amongst a thousand, if I saw her for a moment; for, though not handsome, she had a sweet expression of countenance, and a peculiar and graceful carriage of the head. I sought her, I have said, in hope. So it was for years; but now I should fear to see her; and her cough, which grieved me when I parted with her, is now my consolation. I now wish to see her no longer, but think of her, more gladly, as one long since laid in the grave;—in the grave, I would hope, of a Magdalen;—taken away; before injuries and cruelty had blotted out and transfigured her ingenuous nature, or the brutalities of ruffians had completed the ruin they had begun.

So then, Oxford-street, stony-hearted stepmother, thou that listenest to the sighs of orphans, and drinkest the tears of children, at length I was dismissed from thee!—the time was come, at last, that I no more should pace in anguish thy never-ending terraces; no more should dream, and wake in captivity to the pangs of hunger. Successors, too many to myself and Ann, have, doubtless, since then trodden in our footsteps, inheritors of our calamities, other orphans than Ann have sighed, tears have been shed by other children; and thou, Oxford-street, hast since echoed to the groans of innumerable hearts. For myself, however, the storm which I had outlived seemed to have been the pledge of a long fair weather; the premature sufferings which I had paid down, to have been accepted as a ransom for many years to come, as a price of long immunity from sorrow; and if again I walked in London, a solitary and contemplative man (as oftentimes I did), I walked for the most part in serenity and peace of mind. And, although it is true that the calamities of my novitiate in London, had struck root so deeply in my bodily constitution that afterward they shot up and flourished afresh, and grew into a noxious umbrage that has overshadowed and darkened my latter years, yet these second assaults of suffering were met

with a fortitude more confirmed, with the resources of a maturer intellect, and with alleviations from sympathizing affection, how deep and tender!

Thus, however, with whatsoever alleviations, years that were far asunder were bound together by subtle links of sufferings derived from a common root. And herein I notice an instance of the short-sightedness of human desires,— that oftentimes, on moonlight nights during my first mournful abode in London, my consolation was (if such it could be thought) to gaze from Oxford-street up every avenue in succession which pierces through the heart of Mary-le-bone to the fields and the woods; for that, said I, travelling with my eyes up the long vistas which lay part in 'light' and part in shade, "that is the road to the north, and, therefore, to —, and if I had the wings of a dove, that way I would fly for comfort." Thus I said, and thus I wished in my blindness; yet, even in that very northern region it was, in that very valley, nay, in that very house to which my erroneous wishes pointed, that this second birth of my sufferings began, and that they again threatened to besiege the citadel of life and hope. There it was that for years I was persecuted by visions as ugly, and as ghastly phantoms, as ever haunted the couch of an Orestes; and in this unhappier than he,— that sleep, which comes to all as a respite and a restoration, and to him especially as a blessed balm for his wounded heart and his haunted brain, visited me as my bitterest scourge. Thus blind was I in my desires; yet, if a veil interposes between the dim-sightedness of man and his future calamities, the same vale hides from him their alleviations; and a grief which had not been feared is met by consolations which had not been hoped. I, therefore, who participated, as it were, in the troubles of Orestes (excepting only in his agitated conscience), participated no less in all his supports; my Eumenides, like his, were at my bed-feet, and stared in upon me through the curtains; but, watching by my pillow, or defrauding herself of sleep to bear me company through the heavy watches of the night, sat my Electra; for thou, beloved M., dear companion of my later years, thou wast my Electra! and neither in nobility of mind nor in long-suffering affection wouldst permit that a Grecian sister should excel an English wife. For thou thoughtest not much to stoop to humble offices of kindness, and to servile ministrations of tenderest affection; to wipe away for years the unwholesome dews upon the forehead, or to refresh the lips when parched and baked with fever, nor even when thy own peaceful slumbers had by long sympathy become infected with

the spectacle of my dread contest with phantoms and shadowy enemies, that oftentimes bade me "sleep no more!"—not even then didst thou utter a complaint or any murmur, nor withdraw thy ængelic smiles, nor shrink from thy service of love, more than Electra did of old. For she, too, though she was a Grecian woman, and the daughter of the king¹² of men, yet wept sometimes, and hid her face¹³ in her robe.

But these troubles are past, and thou wilt read these records of a period so dolorous to us both as the legend of some hideous dream that can return no more. Meantime I am again in London; and again I pace the terraces of Oxford-street by night; and oftentimes,—when I am oppressed by anxieties that demand all my philosophy and the comfort of thy presence to support, and yet remember that I am separated from thee by three hundred miles, and the length of three dreary months,—I look up the streets that run northward from Oxford-street, upon moonlight nights, and recollect my youthful ejaculation of anguish; and remembering that thou art sitting alone in that same valley, and mistress of that very house to which my heart turned in its blindness nineteen years ago, I think that, though blind indeed, and scattered to the winds of late, the promptings of my heart may yet have had reference to a remoter time, and may be justified if read in another meaning; and if I could allow myself to descend again to the impotent wishes of childhood, I should again say to myself, as I look to the north, "O that I had the wings of a dove!" and with how just a confidence in thy good and gracious nature might I add the other half of my early ejaculation,—“And that way I would fly for comfort!”

NOTES

¹ A third exception might perhaps have been added; and my reason for not adding that exception is chiefly because it was only in his juvenile efforts that the writer to whom I allude expressly addressed himself to philosophical themes; his riper powers have been dedicated (on very excusable and very intelligible grounds, under the present direction of the popular mind in England) to criticism and the fine arts. This reason apart, however, I doubt whether he is not rather to be considered an acute thinker than a subtle one. It is, besides, a great drawback on his mastery over philosophical subjects, that he has obviously not had the advantage of a regular scholastic education; he has not read Plato in his youth (which most likely was only his misfortune), but neither has he read Kant in his manhood (which is his fault).

² At this period (autumn of 1856), when thirty-five years have elapsed since the first publication of these memoirs, reasons of delicacy can no longer claim respect for concealing the Jew's name, or at least the name which he adopted in his dealings with the Gentiles. I say, there-

fore, without scruple, that the name was Dell; and some years later it was one of the names that came before the House of Commons in connection with something or other (I have long since forgotten what) growing out of the parliamentary movement against the Duke of York, in reference to Mrs. Clark. Like all the other Jews with whom I have had negotiations, he was frank and honorable in his mode of conducting business. What he promised, he performed; and if his terms were high, as naturally they could not but be, to cover his risks, he avowed them from the first.

³ To this same Jew, by the way, some eighteen months afterwards, I applied again on the same business; and, dating at that time from a respectable college, I was fortunate enough to gain his serious attention to my proposals. My necessities had not arisen from any extravagance, or youthful levities (these, my habits and the nature of my pleasures raised me far above), but simply from the vindictive malice of my guardian, who, when he found himself no longer able to prevent me from going to the university, had, as a parting token of his good nature, refused to sign an order for granting me a shilling beyond the allowance made to me at school, namely, one hundred pounds per annum. Upon this sum, it was, in my time, barely possible to have lived in college; and not possible to a man, who, though above the paltry affectation of ostentatious disregard for money, and without any expensive tastes, confided, nevertheless, rather too much in servants, and did not delight in the petty details of minute economy. I soon, therefore, became embarrassed; and, at length, after a most voluminous negotiation with the Jew (some parts of which, if I had leisure to rehearse them, would greatly amuse my readers), I was put in possession of the sum I asked for, on the "regular" terms of paying the Jew seventeen and a half per cent. by way of annuity on all the money furnished; Israel, on his part, graciously resuming no more than about ninety guineas of the said money, on account of an attorney's bill (for what services, to whom rendered, and when,—whether at the siege of Jerusalem, at the building of the Second Temple, or on some earlier occasion,—I have not yet been able to discover). How many perches this bill measured I really forget; but I still keep it in a cabinet of natural curiosities, and some time or other I believe I shall present it to the British Museum.

⁴ Earl of Altamont.

⁵ Marquis of Sligo.

⁶ Mayo and Sligo.

⁷ The Bristol Mail is the best appointed in the kingdom, owing to the double advantage of an unusually good road, and of an extra sum for expenses subscribed by the Bristol merchants.

⁸ Two men, Holloway and Haggerty, were long afterward convicted, upon very questionable evidence, as the perpetrators of this murder. The main testimony against them was that of a Newgate turnkey, who had imperfectly overheard a conversation between the two men. The current impression was that of great dissatisfaction with the evidence; and this impression was strengthened by the pamphlet of an acute lawyer, exposing the unsoundness and incoherency of the statements relied upon by the court. They were executed, however, in the teeth of all opposition. And as it happened that an enormous wreck of life occurred at the execution (no fewer, I believe, than sixty persons having been trampled under foot by the unusual pressure of some brewers' draymen forcing their way with linked arms to the space

below the drop), this tragedy was regarded for many years by a section of the London mob as a providential judgment upon the passive metropolis.

⁹ Lord Altamont.

¹⁰ It will be objected that many men, of the highest rank and wealth, have, in our own day, as well as throughout our history, been amongst the foremost in courting danger in battle. True, but this is not the case supposed. Long familiarity with power has, to them, deadened its effect and its attractions.

¹¹ Lord Desert.

¹² Agamemnon.

¹³ *Ομιμα δειξ εις πεπλον*. The scholar will know that throughout this passage I refer to the early scenes of the *Orestes*,—one of the most beautiful exhibitions of the domestic affections which even the dramas of Euripides can furnish. To the English reader, it may be necessary to say, that the situation at the opening of the drama is that of a brother attended only by his sister during the demoniacal possession of a suffering conscience (or, in the mythology of the play, haunted by the Furies), and in circumstances of immediate danger from enemies, and of desertion or cold regard from nominal friends.

II

THE PLEASURES OF OPIUM

IT is so long since I first took opium, that if it had been a trifling incident in my life, I might have forgotten its date; but cardinal events are not to be forgotten; and, from circumstances connected with it, I remember that it must be referred to the autumn of 1804. During that season I was in London, having come thither for the first time since my entrance at college. And my introduction to opium arose in the following way: From an early age I had been accustomed to wash my head in cold water at least once a day; being suddenly seized with tooth-ache, I attributed it to some relaxation caused by an accidental intermission of that practice; jumped out of bed, plunged my head into a basin of cold water, and, with hair thus wetted, went to sleep. The next morning, as I need hardly say, I awoke with excruciating rheumatic pains of the head and face, from which I had hardly any respite for about twenty days. On the twenty-first day I think it was, and on a Sunday, that I went out into the streets; rather to run away, if possible, from my torments, than with any distinct purpose. By accident, I met a college acquaintance, who recommended opium. Opium! dread agent of unimaginable pleasure and pain! I had heard of it as I had heard of manna or of ambrosia, but no further; how unmeaning a sound was it at that time! what solemn chords does it now strike upon my heart! what heart-quaking vibrations of sad and happy remembrances! Reverting for a moment to these, I feel a mystic importance attached to the minutest circumstances connected with the place, and the time, and the man (if man he was), that first laid open to me the paradise of opium-eaters. It was a Sunday afternoon, wet and cheerless; and a duller spectacle this earth of ours has not to show than a rainy Sunday in London. My road homewards lay through Oxford-street; and near "the stately Pantheon" (as Mr. Wordsworth has obligingly called it) I saw a druggist's shop. The druggist (unconscious minister of celestial pleasures!), as if in sympathy with the rainy

Sunday, looked dull and stupid, just as any mortal druggist might be expected to look on a Sunday; and when I asked for the tincture of opium, he gave it to me as any other man might do; and, furthermore, out of my shilling returned to me what seemed to be a real copper half-penny, taken out of a real wooden drawer. Nevertheless, in spite of such indications of humanity, he has ever since existed in my mind as a beatific vision of an immortal druggist, sent down to earth on a special mission to myself. And it confirms me in this way of considering him, that when I next came up to London, I sought him near the stately Pantheon, and found him not, and thus to me, who knew not his name (if, indeed, he had one), he seemed rather to have vanished from Oxford-street than to have removed in any bodily fashion. The reader may choose to think of him as possibly, no more than a sublunary druggist: it may be so, but my faith is better: I believe him to have evanesced,¹ or evaporated. So unwillingly would I connect any mortal remembrances with that hour, and place, and creature, that first brought me acquainted with the celestial drug.

Arrived at my lodgings, it may be supposed that I lost not a moment in taking the quantity prescribed. I was necessarily ignorant of the whole art and mystery of opium-taking; and what I took, I took under every disadvantage. But I took it; and in an hour,—oh heavens! what a revulsion! what an upheaving, from its lowest depths, of the inner spirit! what an apocalypse of the world within me! That my pains had vanished was now a trifle in my eyes; this negative effect was swallowed up in the immensity of those positive effects which had opened before me, in the abyss of divine enjoyment thus suddenly revealed. Here was a panacea, a *φαρμακον νεπενθες*, for all human woes; here was the secret of happiness, about which philosophers had disputed for so many ages, at once discovered; happiness might now be bought for a penny, and carried in the waistcoat-pocket; portable ecstasies might be had corked up in a pint-bottle; and peace of mind could be sent down in gallons by the mail-coach. But, if I talk in this way, the reader will think I am laughing; and I can assure him that nobody will laugh long who deals much with opium: its pleasures even are of a grave and solemn complexion; and, in his happiest state, the opium-eater cannot present himself in the character of “L’Allegro”; even then, he speaks and thinks as becomes “Il Penseroso”. Nevertheless, I have a very reprehensible way of jesting, at times, in the midst of my own misery; and, unless when I am checked by some more powerful

feelings, I am afraid I shall be guilty of this indecent practice even in these annals of suffering or enjoyment. The reader must allow a little to my infirm nature in this respect; and, with a few indulgences of that sort, I shall endeavor to be as grave, if not drowsy, as fits a theme like opium, so anti-mercurial as it really is, and so drowsy as it is falsely reputed.

And, first, one word with respect to its bodily effects; for upon all that has been hitherto written on the subject of opium, whether by travellers in Turkey (who may plead their privilege of lying as an old immemorial right) or by professors of medicine, writing *ex cathedra*, I have but one emphatic criticism to pronounce,— Lies! lies! lies! I remember once, in passing a book-stall, to have caught these words from a page of some satiric author: “By this time I became convinced that the London newspapers spoke truth at least twice a week, namely, on Tuesday and Saturday, and might safely be depended upon for — the list of bankrupts.” In like manner, I do by no means deny that some truths have been delivered to the world in regard to opium; thus, it has been repeatedly affirmed, by the learned, that opium is a dusky brown in color,— and this, take notice, I grant; secondly, that it is rather dear, which also I grant,— for, in my time, East India opium has been three guineas a pound, and Turkey, eight; and, thirdly, that if you eat a good deal of it, most probably you must do what is particularly disagreeable to any man of regular habits, namely,— die.² These weighty propositions are, all and singular, true; I cannot gainsay them; and truth ever was, and will be, commendable. But, in these three theorems, I believe we have exhausted the stock of knowledge as yet accumulated by man on the subject of opium. And, therefore, worthy doctors, as there seems to be room for further discoveries, stand aside, and allow me to come forward and lecture on this matter.

First, then, it is not so much affirmed as taken for granted, by all who ever mention opium, formally or incidentally, that it does or can produce intoxication. Now, reader, assure yourself, *meo periculo*, that no quantity of opium ever did, or could, intoxicate. As to the tincture of opium (commonly called laudanum), that might certainly intoxicate, if a man could bear to take enough of it; but why? because it contains so much proof spirit, and not because it contains so much opium. But crude opium, I affirm peremptorily, is incapable of producing any state of body at all resembling that which is produced by alcohol; and not in degree only incapable, but even in kind; it is not in the quantity of its effects merely, but

in the quality, that it differs altogether. The pleasure given by wine is always mounting, and tending to a crisis, after which it declines; that from opium, when once generated, is stationary for eight or ten hours: the first, to borrow a technical distinction from medicine, is a case of acute, the second of chronic, pleasure; the one is a flame, the other a steady and equable glow. But the main distinction lies in this, that whereas wine disorders the mental faculties, opium, on the contrary (if taken in a proper manner), introduces amongst them the most exquisite order, legislation, and harmony. Wine robs a man of his self-possession; opium greatly invigorates it. Wine unsettles and clouds the judgment, and gives a preternatural brightness, and a vivid exaltation, to the contempts and the admirations, to the loves and the hatreds, of the drinker; opium, on the contrary, communicates serenity and equipoise to all the faculties, active or passive; and, with respect to the temper and moral feelings in general, it gives simply that sort of vital warmth which is approved by the judgment, and which would probably always accompany a bodily constitution of primeval or antediluvian health. Thus, for instance, opium, like wine, gives an expansion to the heart and the benevolent affections, but, then, with this remarkable difference, that in the sudden development of kind-heartedness which accompanies inebriation, there is always more or less of a maudlin character which exposes it to the contempt of the bystander. Men shake hands, swear eternal friendship, and shed tears,—no mortal knows why; and the sensual creature is clearly uppermost. But the expansion of the benigner feelings, incident to opium, is no febrile access, but a healthy restoration to that state which the mind would naturally recover upon the removal of any deep-seated irritation of pain that had disturbed and quarrelled with the impulses of a heart originally just and good. True it is, that even wine, up to a certain point, and with certain men, rather tends to exalt and to steady the intellect; I myself, who have never been a great wine-drinker, used to find that half a dozen glasses of wine advantageously affected the faculties, brightened and intensified the consciousness, and gave to the mind a feeling of being “*ponderibus librata suis*,” and certainly it is most absurdly said, in popular language, of any man, that he is disguised in liquor; for, on the contrary, most men are disguised by sobriety; and it is when they are drinking (as some old gentleman says in Athenaeus) that men display themselves in their true complexion of character; which surely is not disguising themselves. But still, wine constantly

leads a man to the brink of absurdity and extravagance; and, beyond a certain point, it is sure to volatilize and to disperse the intellectual energies; whereas opium always seems to compose what had been agitated, and to concentrate what had been distracted. In short, to sum up all in one word, a man who is inebriated, or tending to inebriation, is, and feels that he is, in a condition which calls up into supremacy the merely human too often the brutal, part of his nature; but the opium-eater (I speak of him who is not suffering from any disease, or other remote effects of opium) feels that the diviner part of his nature is paramount; that is, the moral affections are in a state of cloudless serenity; and over all is the great light of the majestic intellect.

This is the doctrine of the true church on the subject of opium: of which church I acknowledge myself to be the only member,— the alpha and omega; but then it is to be recollected that I speak from the ground of a large and profound personal experience, whereas most of the unscientific³ authors who have at all treated of opium, and even of those who have written expressly on the *materia medica*, make it evident, from the horror they express of it, that their experimental knowledge of its action is none at all. I will, however, candidly acknowledge that I have met with one person who bore evidence to its intoxicating power, such as staggered my own incredulity; for he was a surgeon, and had himself taken opium largely.⁴ I happened to say to him, that his enemies (as I had heard) charged him with talking nonsense on politics, and that his friends apologized for him by suggesting that he was constantly in a state of intoxication from opium. Now, the accusation, said I, is not *prima facie*, and of necessity, an absurd one; but the defence is. To my surprise, however, he insisted that both his enemies and his friends were in the right. “I will maintain,” said he, “that I do talk nonsense; and secondly, I will maintain that I do not talk nonsense upon principle, or with any view to profit, but solely and simply,” said he, “solely and simply,— solely and simply (repeating it three times over), because I am drunk with opium; and that daily.” I replied, that as to the allegation of his enemies, as it seemed to be established upon such respectable testimony, seeing that the three parties concerned all agreed in it, it did not become me to question it; but the defence set up I must demur to. He proceeded to discuss the matter, and to lay down his reasons; but it seemed to me so impolite to pursue an argument which must have presumed a man mistaken on a point

belonging to his own profession, that I did not press him even when his course of argument seemed open to objection; not to mention that a man who talks nonsense, even though "with no view to profit," is not altogether the most agreeable partner in a dispute, whether as opponent or respondent. I confess, however, that the authority of a surgeon, and one who was reputed a good one, may seem a weighty one to my prejudice; but still I must plead my experience, which was greater than his greatest by seven thousand drops a day; and though it was not possible to suppose a medical man unacquainted with the characteristic symptoms of vinous intoxication, yet it struck me that he might proceed on a logical error of using the word intoxication with too great latitude, and extending it generically to all modes of nervous excitement, instead of restricting it as the expression of a specific sort of excitement, connected with certain diagnostics. Some people have maintained, in my hearing, that they had been drunk upon green tea; and a medical student in London, for whose knowledge in his profession I have reason to feel great respect, assured me, the other day, that a patient, in recovering from an illness, had got drunk on a beef-steak.

Having dwelt so much on this first and leading error in respect to opium, I shall notice very briefly a second and a third; which are, that the elevation of spirits produced by opium is necessarily followed by a proportionate depression, and that the natural and even immediate consequence of opium is torpor and stagnation, animal and mental. The first of these errors I shall content myself with simply denying; assuring my reader, that for ten years, during which I took opium at intervals, the day succeeding to that on which I allowed myself this luxury was always a day of unusually good spirits.

With respect to the torpor supposed to follow, or rather (if we were to credit the numerous pictures of Turkish opium-eaters) to accompany, the practice of opium-eating, I deny that also. Certainly, opium is classed under the head of narcotics, and some such effect it may produce in the end; but the primary effects of opium are always, and in the highest degree, to excite and stimulate the system: this first stage of its action always lasted with me, during my novitiate, for upwards of eight hours; so that it must be the fault of the opium-eater himself, if he does not so time his exhibition of the dose (to speak medically) as that the whole weight of its narcotic influence may descend upon his sleep. Turkish opium-eaters, it seems, are absurd enough to sit, like so many equestrian

statues, on logs of wood as stupid as themselves. But, that the reader may judge of the degree in which opium is likely to stupefy the faculties of an Englishman, I shall (by way of treating the question illustratively, rather than argumentatively) describe the way in which I myself often passed an opium evening in London, during the period between 1804 and 1812. It will be seen, that at least opium did not move me to seek solitude, and much less to seek inactivity, or the torpid state of self-involution ascribed to the Turks. I give this account at the risk of being pronounced a crazy enthusiast or visionary; but I regard that little. I must desire my reader to bear in mind, that I was a hard student, and at severe studies for all the rest of my time, and certainly I had a right occasionally to relaxations as well as other people: these, however, I allowed myself but seldom.

The late Duke of —^s used to say, "Next Friday, by the blessing of Heaven, I purpose to be drunk;" and in like manner I used to fix beforehand how often, within a given time, and when, I would commit a debauch of opium. This was seldom more than once in three weeks; for at that time I could not have ventured to call every day (as I did afterwards) for "a glass of laudanum negus, warm, and without sugar." No; as I have said, I seldom drank laudanum, at that time more than once in three weeks: this was usually on a Tuesday or a Saturday night; my reason for which was this. In those days, Grassini^o sang at the opera, and her voice was delightful to me beyond all that I had ever heard. I know not what may be the state of the opera-house now, having never been within its walls for seven or eight years; but at that time it was by much the most pleasant place of resort in London for passing an evening. Five shillings admitted one to the gallery, which was subject to far less annoyance than the pit of the theatres; the orchestra was distinguished, by its sweet and melodious grandeur, from all English orchestras, the composition of which, I confess, is not acceptable to my ear, from the predominance of the clangorous instruments, and the almost absolute tyranny of the violin. The choruses were divine to hear; and when Grassini appeared in some interlude, as she often did, and poured forth her passionate soul as Andromache, at the tomb of Hector, etc., I question whether any Turk, of all that ever entered the paradise of opium-eaters, can have had half the pleasure I had. But, indeed, I honor the barbarians too much by supposing them capable of any pleasures approaching to the intellectual ones of an Englishman. For music is an intellectual or

a sensual pleasure, according to the temperament of him who hears it. And, by the by, with the exception of the fine extravaganza on that subject in "Twelfth Night," I do not recollect more than one thing said adequately on the subject of music in all literature; it is a passage in the "Religio Medici" of Sir Thomas Browne, and, though chiefly remarkable for its sublimity, has also a philosophic value, inasmuch as it points to the true theory of musical effects. The mistake of most people is, to suppose that it is by the ear they communicate with music, and therefore that they are purely passive to its effects. But this is not so; it is by the reaction of the mind upon the notices of the ear (the matter coming by the senses, the form from the mind) that the pleasure is constructed; and therefore it is that people of equally good ear differ so much in this point from one another. Now opium, by greatly increasing the activity of the mind, generally increases, of necessity, that particular mode of its activity by which we are able to construct out of the raw material of organic sound an elaborate intellectual pleasure. But, says a friend, a succession of musical sounds is to me like a collection of Arabic characters: I can attach no ideas to them. Ideas! my good sir? there is no occasion for them; all that class of ideas which can be available in such a case has a language of representative feelings. But this is a subject foreign to my present purposes; it is sufficient to say, that a chorus, etc., of elaborate harmony, displayed before me, as in a piece of arras-work, the whole of my past life,—not as if recalled by an act of memory, but as if present and incarnated in the music; no longer painful to dwell upon, but the detail of its incidents removed, or blended in some hazy abstraction, and its passions exalted, spiritualized, and sublimed. All this was to be had for five shillings. And over and above the music of the stage and the orchestra, I had all around me, in the intervals of the performance, the music of the Italian language talked by Italian women,—for the gallery was usually crowded with Italians,—and I listened with a pleasure such as that with which Weld, the traveller, lay and listened, in Canada, to the sweet laughter of Indian women; for the less you understand of a language, the more sensible you are to the melody or harshness of its sounds. For such a purpose, therefore, it was an advantage to me that I was a poor Italian scholar, reading it but little, and not speaking it at all, not understanding a tenth part of what I heard spoken.

These were my opera pleasures; but another pleasure I had, which, as it could be had only on a Saturday night, occasion-

ally struggled with my love of the opera; for, at that time, Tuesday and Saturday were the regular opera nights. On this subject I am afraid I shall be rather obscure, but I can assure the reader, not at all more so than Marinus in his life of Proclus, or many other biographers and auto-biographers of fair reputation. This pleasure, I have said, was to be had only on a Saturday night. What, then, was Saturday night to me, more than any other night? I had no labors that I rested from; no wages to receive; what needed I to care for Saturday night, more than as it was a summons to hear Grassini? True, most logical reader; what you say is unanswerable. And yet so it was and is that whereas different men throw their feelings into different channels, and most are apt to show their interests in the concerns of the poor chiefly by sympathy, expressed in some shape or other, with their distresses and sorrows, I, at that time, was disposed to express my interest by sympathizing with their pleasures. The pains of poverty I had lately seen too much of,— more than I wished to remember; but the pleasures of the poor, their consolations of spirit, and their repose from bodily toil, can never become oppressive to contemplate. Now, Saturday night is the season for the chief regular and periodic return of rest to the poor; in this point the most hostile sects unite, and acknowledge a common link of brotherhood; almost all Christendom rests from its labors. It is a rest introductory to another rest; and divided by a whole day and two nights from the renewal of toil. On this account I feel always, on a Saturday night, as though I also were released from some yoke of labor, had some wages to receive, and some luxury of repose to enjoy. For the sake, therefore, of witnessing, upon as large a scale as possible, a spectacle with which my sympathy was so entire, I used often, on Saturday nights, after I had taken opium, to wander forth, without much regarding the direction or the distance, to all the markets, and other parts of London, to which the poor resort on a Saturday night for laying out their wages. Many a family party, consisting of a man, his wife and sometimes one or two of his children, have I listened to, as they stood consulting on their ways and means, or the strength of their exchequer, or the price of household articles. Gradually I became familiar with their wishes, their difficulties, and their opinions. Sometimes there might be heard murmurs of discontent; but far oftener expressions on the countenance, or uttered in words, of patience, hope, and tranquility. And, taken generally, I must say, that, in this point, at least, the

poor are far more philosophic than the rich; that they show a more ready and cheerful submission to what they consider as irremediable evils, or irreparable losses. Whenever I saw occasion, or could do it without appearing to be intrusive, I joined their parties, and gave my opinion upon the matter in discussion, which, if not always judicious, was always received indulgently. If wages were a little higher, or expected to be so, or the quartern loaf a little lower, or it was reported that onions and butter were expected to fall, I was glad; yet, if the contrary were true, I drew from opium some means of consoling myself. For opium (like the bee, that extracts its materials indiscriminately from roses and from the soot^s of chimneys) can overrule all feelings into a compliance with the master-key. Some of these rambles led me to great distances; for an opium-eater is too happy to observe the motion of time. And sometimes, in my attempts to steer homeward, upon nautical principles, by fixing my eye on the pole-star, and seeking ambitiously for a north-west passage, instead of circumnavigating all the capes and head-lands I had doubled in my outward voyage, I came suddenly upon such knotty problems of alleys, such enigmatical entries, and such sphinx's riddles of streets without thoroughfares, as must, I conceive, baffle the audacity of porters, and confound the intellects of hackney coachmen. I could almost have believed, at times, that I must be the first discoverer of some of these terra incognitæ, and doubted whether they had yet been laid down in the modern charts of London. For all this, however, I paid a heavy price in distant years, when the human face tyrannized over my dreams, and the perplexities of my steps in London came back and haunted my sleep, with the feeling of perplexities moral or intellectual, that brought confusion to the reason, or anguish and remorse to the conscience.

Thus I have shown that opium does not, of necessity, produce inactivity or torpor; but that, on the contrary, it often led me into markets and theatres. Yet, in candor, I will admit that markets and theatres are not the appropriate haunts of the opium-eater, when in the divinest state incident to his enjoyment. In that state, crowds become an oppression to him; music, even, too sensual and gross. He naturally seeks solitude and silence, as indispensable conditions of those trances, or profoundest reveries, which are the crown and consummation of what opium can do for human nature. I, whose disease it was to meditate too much and to observe too little, and who, upon my first entrance at college, was nearly falling

into a deep melancholy, from brooding too much on the sufferings which I had witnessed in London, was sufficiently aware of the tendencies of my own thoughts to do all I could to counteract them. I was, indeed, like a person who according to the old legend, had entered the cave of Prophonius; and the remedies I sought were to force myself into society, and to keep my understanding in continual activity upon matters of science. But for these remedies, I should certainly have become hypochondriacally melancholy. In after years, however, when my cheerfulness was more fully reëstablished, I yielded to my natural inclination for a solitary life. And at that time I often fell into these reveries upon taking opium; and more than once it has happened to me, on a summer night, when I have been at an open window, in a room from which I could overlook the sea at a mile below me, and could command a view of the great town of Liverpool, at about the same distance, that I have sat from sunset to sunrise, motionless, and without wishing to move.

I shall be charged with mysticism, Behmenism, quietism, etc.; but that shall not alarm me. Sir Henry Vane, the younger, was one of our wisest men; and let my readers see if he, in his philosophical works, be half as unmystical as I am. I say, then, that it has often struck me that the scene itself was somewhat typical of what took place in such a reverie. The town of Liverpool represented the earth, with its sorrows and its graves left behind, yet not out of sight, nor wholly forgotten. The ocean, in everlasting but gentle agitation, and brooded over by dove-like calm, might not unfitly typify the mind, and the mood which then swayed it. For it seemed to me as if then first I stood at a distance, and aloof from the uproar of life; as if the tumult, the fever, and the strife, were suspended; a respite granted from the secret burdens of the heart; a sabbath of repose; a resting from human labors. Here were the hopes which blossom in the paths of life, reconciled with the peace which is in the grave; motions of the intellect as unwearied as the heavens, yet for all anxieties a halcyon calm; a tranquility that seemed no product of inertia, but as if resulting from mighty and equal antagonisms; infinite activities, infinite repose.

O just, subtle, and mighty opium! that to the hearts of poor and rich alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for "the pangs that tempt the spirit to rebel," bringest an assuaging balm;—eloquent opium! that with thy potent rhetoric stealst away the purposes of wrath, and, to the guilty man, for

one night givest back the hopes of his youth, and hands washed pure from blood; and, to the proud man, a brief oblivion for

“Wrongs unredressed, and insults unavenged;”

that summonest to the chancery of dreams, for the triumphs of suffering innocence, false witnesses, and confoudest perjury, and dost reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges;—thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles,—beyond the splendor of Babylon and Hekatompylos, and, “from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,” callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the “dishonors of the grave.” Thou only givest these gifts to man; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, oh just, subtle, and mighty opium!

NOTES

¹ This way of going off from the stage of life appears to have been well known in the seventeenth century, but at that time to have been considered a peculiar privilege of blood royal, and by no means to be allowed to druggists. For, about the year 1686, a poet of rather ominous name (and who, by the by, did ample justice to his name), namely, Mr. Flat-man, in speaking of the death of Charles II expresses his surprise that any prince should commit so absurd an act as dying; because, says he

“Kings should disdain to die, and only disappear;
They should abscond, that is, into the other world.”

² Of this, however, the learned appear latterly to have doubted; for, in a pirated edition of Buchan's Domestic Medicine, which I once saw in the hands of a farmer's wife, who was studying it for the benefit of her health, the doctor was made to say,—“Be particularly careful never to take above five-and-twenty ounces of laudanum at once.” The true reading being probably five-and-twenty drops, which are held to be equal to about one grain of crude opium.

³ Amongst the great herd of travellers, who show sufficiently by their stupidity that they never held any intercourse with opium, I must caution my readers especially against the brilliant author of “Anastasius.” This gentleman, whose wit would lead one to presume him an opium-eater, has made it impossible to consider him in that character, from the grievous misrepresentation which he has given of its effects. Upon consideration, it must appear such to the author himself; for, waiving the errors I have insisted on in the text, which (and others) are adopted in the fullest manner, he will himself admit that an old gentleman, “with a snow-white beard,” who eats “ample doses of opium,” and is yet able to deliver what is meant and received as very weighty counsel on the bad effects of that practice, is but an indifferent evidence that opium either kills people prematurely, or sends them into a mad-house. But, for my part, I see into this old gentleman and

his motives; the fact is, he was enamored of "the little golden receptacle of the pernicious drug," which Anastasius carried about him; and no way of obtaining it so safe and so feasible occurred, as that of frightening its owner out of his wits (which, by the by, are none of the strongest). This commentary throws a new light upon the case, and greatly improves it as a story; for the old gentleman's speech, considered as a lecture on pharmacy, is highly absurd, but, considered as a hoax on Anastasius, it reads excellently.

⁴This surgeon it was who first made me aware of the dangerous variability in opium as to strength under the shifting proportions of its combination with alien impurities. Naturally, as a man professionally alive to the danger of creating any artificial need of opium beyond what the anguish of his malady at any rate demanded, trembling every hour on behalf of his poor children, lest, by any indiscretion of his own, he should precipitate the crisis of his disorder, he saw the necessity of reducing the daily dose to a minimum. But to do this he must first obtain the means of measuring the quantities of opium; not the apparent quantities as determined by weighing, but the virtual quantities after allowing for the alloy or varying amounts of impurity. This, however, was a visionary problem. To allow for it was simply impossible. The problem, therefore, changed its character. Not to measure the impurities was the object; for, whilst entangled with the operative and efficient parts of the opium they could not be measured. To separate and eliminate the impure (or inert) parts, this was now the object. And this was effected finally by a particular mode of boiling the opium. That done, the residuum became equable in strength; and the daily doses could be nicely adjusted. About 18 grains formed his daily ration for many years. This, upon the common hospital equation, expresses 18 times 25 drops of laudanum. But since 25 is $= \frac{190}{4}$, therefore 18 times one quarter of a hundred is $=$ one quarter of 1800, and that, I suppose is, 450. So much this surgeon averaged upon each day for about twenty years. Then suddenly began a fiercer stage of anguish from his disease. But then, also, the fight was finished, and the victory was won. All duties were fulfilled; his children prosperously launched in life; and death, which to himself was becoming daily more necessary as a relief from torment, now fell injuriously upon nobody.

⁵The late Duke of Norfolk. My authority was the late Sir George Beaumont, an old familiar acquaintance of the duke's. But such expressions are always liable to grievous misapplication. By "the late" duke, Sir George meant that duke once so well known to the nation as the partisan friend of Fox, Burke, Sheridan, etc., at the era of the great French Revolution, in 1789-1793. Since his time, I believe there have been three generations of ducal Howards—who are always interesting to the English nation, first, from the bloody historic traditions surrounding their great house; secondly, from the fact of their being at the head of the British Peerage.

⁶Thrilling was the pleasure with which almost always I heard this angelic Grassini. Shivering with expectation I sat, when the time drew near for her golden epiphany; shivering I rose from my seat, incapable of rest, when that heavenly and harp-like voice sang its own victorious welcome in its prelusive "threttanelo—threttanelo." This is the beautiful representative echo by which Aristophanes expresses the sound of the Grecian phorminx, or of some other instrument, which conjecturally has been shown most to resemble our modern

European harp. In the case of ancient Hebrew instruments used in the temple service, random and idle must be all the guesses through the Greek Septuagint or the Latin Vulgate to identify any one of them. But as to Grecian instruments the case is different; always there is a remote chance of digging up some marble sculpture of orchestral appurtenances and properties. Yet all things change; this same Grassini, whom once I adored, afterwards, when gorged with English gold, went off to Paris; and when I heard on what terms she lived with a man so unmagnanimous as Napoleon, I came to hate her. Did I complain of any man's hating England, or teaching a woman to hate her benefactress? Not at all; but simply of his adopting at second hand the malice of a jealous nation, with which originally he could have had no sincere sympathy. Hate us, if you please; but not sycophantishly, by way of paying court to others.

⁷ I have not the book at this moment to consult; but I think the passage begins, "And even that tavern music, which makes one man merry, another mad, in me strikes a deep fit of devotion."

⁸ In the large, capacious chimneys of the rustic cottages throughout the Lake District, you can see up the entire cavity from the seat which you occupy, as an honored visitor, in the chimney corner. There I used often to hear (though not to see) bees. Their murmuring was audible, though their bodily forms were too small to be visible at that altitude. On inquiry, I found that soot (chiefly from wood and peats) was useful in some stage of their wax or honey manufacture.

III

THE PAINS OF OPIUM

COURTEOUS, and, I hope, indulgent reader (for all my readers must be indulgent ones, or else, I fear, I shall shock them too much to count on their courtesy), having accompanied me thus far, now let me request you to move onwards, for about eight years; that is to say, from 1804 (when I said that my acquaintance with opium first began) to 1812. The years of academic life are now over and gone,—almost forgotten; the student's cap no longer presses my temples; if my cap exists at all, it presses those of some youthful scholar, I trust, as happy as myself, and as passionate a lover of knowledge. My gown is, by this time, I dare to say, in the same condition with many thousands of excellent books in the Bodleian, namely, diligently perused by certain studious moths and worms; or departed, however (which is all that I know of its fate), to that great reservoir of somewhere, to which all the tea-cups, tea-caddies, tea-pots, tea-kettles, etc., have departed (not to speak of still frailer vessels, such as glasses, decanters, bed-makers, etc.), which occasional resemblances in the present generation of tea-cups, etc., remind me of having once possessed, but of whose departure and final fate, I, in common with most gownsmen of either university, could give, I suspect, but an obscure and conjectural history. The persecutions of the chapel-bell, sounding its unwelcome summons to six o'clock matins, interrupts my slumbers no longer; the porter who rang it, upon whose beautiful nose (bronze, inlaid with copper) I wrote, in retaliation, so many Greek epigrams whilst I was dressing, is dead, and has ceased to disturb anybody; and I, and many others who suffered much from his tintinabulous propensities, have now agreed to overlook his errors, and have forgiven him. Even with the bell I am now in charity; it rings, I suppose, as formerly, thrice a day, and cruelly annoys, I doubt not, many worthy gentlemen, and disturbs their peace of mind; but, as to me, in this year 1812, I regard its treacherous voice no longer (treacherous I call it, for, by some refinement of malice,

it spoke in as sweet and silvery tones as if it had been inviting one to a party); its tones have no longer, indeed, power to reach me let the wind sit as favorable as the malice of the bell itself could wish; for I am two hundred and fifty miles away from it, and buried in the depth of mountains. And what am I doing amongst the mountains? Taking opium. Yes, but what else? Why, reader, in 1812, the year we are now arrived at, as well as for some years previous, I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, in the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling, etc. And how, and in what manner, do I live? in short, what class or description of men do I belong to? I am at this period, namely, in 1812, living in a cottage; and with a single female servant (*honi soit qui mal y pense*), who, amongst my neighbors, passes by the name of my "house-keeper." And, as a scholar and a man of learned education, and in that sense a gentleman, I may presume to class myself as an unworthy member of that indefinite body called gentlemen. Partly on the ground I have assigned, perhaps,—partly because, from my having no visible calling or business, it is rightly judged that I must be living on my private fortune,—I am so classed by my neighbors; and, by the courtesy of modern England, I am usually addressed on letters, etc., Esquire, though having, I fear, in the rigorous construction of heralds, but slender pretensions to that distinguished honor;—yes, in popular estimation, I am X. Y. Z., Esquire, but not Justice of the Peace, nor Custos Rotulorum. Am I married? Not yet. And I still take opium? On Saturday nights. And, perhaps, have taken it unblushingly ever since "the rainy Sunday," and "the stately Pantheon," and "the beatific druggist" of 1804? Even so. And how do I find my health after all this opium-eating? in short, how do I do? Why, pretty well, I thank you, reader; in the phrase of ladies in the straw, "as well as can be expected." In fact, if I dared to say the real and simple truth (it must not be forgotten that hitherto I thought, to satisfy the theories of medical men, I ought to be ill) I was never better in my life than in the spring of 1812; and I hope sincerely, that the quantity of claret, port, or "particular Madeira," which, in all probability, you, good reader, have taken and design to take, for every term of eight years, during your natural life, may as little disorder your health as mine was disordered by opium I had taken for the eight years between 1804 and 1812. Hence you may see again the danger of taking any medical advice from Anastasius;¹ in divinity, for aught I know, or law, he may be a safe counsellor, but not in

medicine. No; it is far better to consult Dr. Buchan, as I did; for I never forgot that worthy man's excellent suggestion, and I was "particularly careful not to take above five-and-twenty ounces of laudanum." To this moderation and temperate use of the article I may ascribe it, I suppose, that as yet, at least (that is, in 1812), I am ignorant and unsuspecting of the avenging terrors which opium has in store for those who abuse its lenity. At the same time, I have been only a diletante eater of opium; eight years' practice, even, with the single precaution of allowing sufficient intervals between every indulgence, has not been sufficient to make opium necessary to me as an article of daily diet. But now comes a different era. Move on, if you please, reader, to 1813. In the summer of the year we have just quitted, I had suffered much in bodily health from distress of mind connected with a very melancholy event. This event, being no ways related to the subject now before me, further than through bodily illness which it produced, I need not more particularly notice. Whether this illness of 1812 had any share in that of 1813, I know not; but so it was, that, in the latter year, I was attacked by a most appalling irritation of the stomach, in all respects the same as that which had caused me so much suffering in youth, and accompanied by a revival of all the old dreams. This is the point of my narrative on which, as respects my own self-justification, the whole of what follows may be said to hinge. And here I find myself in a perplexing dilemma:— Either, on the one hand, I must exhaust the reader's patience, by such a detail of my malady, and of my struggles with it, as might suffice to establish the fact of my inability to wrestle any longer with irritation and constant suffering; or, on the other hand, by passing lightly over this critical part of my story I must forego the benefit of a stronger impression left on the mind of the reader, and must lay myself open to the misconception of having slipped by the easy and gradual steps of self-indulging persons, from the first to the final stage of opium-eating (a misconception to which there will be a lurking predisposition in most readers, from my previous acknowledgments). This is the dilemma, the first horn of which would be sufficient to toss and gore any column of patient readers, though drawn up sixteen deep, and constantly relieved by fresh men; consequently that is not to be thought of. It remains, then, that I postulate so much as is necessary for my purpose. And let me take as full credit for what I postulate as if I had demonstrated it, good reader, at

the expense of your patience and my own. Be not so ungenerous as to let me suffer in your good opinion through my own forbearance and regard for your comfort. No, believe all that I ask of you, namely, that I could resist no longer,—believe it liberally, and as an act of grace, or else in mere prudence; for, if not, then, in the next edition of my *Opium Confessions*, revised and enlarged, I will make you believe, and tremble; and, a force d'ennuyer, by mere dint of pandiculation, I will terrify all readers of mine from ever again questioning any postulate that I shall think fit to make.

This, then, let me repeat: I postulate that, at the time I began to take opium daily, I could not have done otherwise. Whether, indeed, afterwards, I might not have succeeded in breaking off the habit, even when it seemed to me that all efforts would be unavailing, and whether many of the innumerable efforts which I did make might not have been carried much further, and my gradual re-conquests of ground lost might not have been followed up much more energetically,—these are questions which I must decline. Perhaps I might make out a case of palliation; but—shall I speak ingenuously?—I confess it, as a besetting infirmity of mine, that I am too much of an Eudæmonist; I hanker too much after a state of happiness, both for myself and others; I cannot face misery, whether my own or not, with an eye of sufficient firmness; and am little capable of encountering present pain for the sake of any reversionary benefit. On some other matters, I can agree with the gentlemen in the cotton trade² at Manchester in affecting the Stoic philosophy; but not in this. Here I take the liberty of an Eclectic philosopher, and I look out for some courteous and considerate sect that will condescend more to the infirm condition of an opium-eater; that are “sweet men,” as Chaucer says, “to give absolution,” and will show some conscience in the penances they inflict, and the efforts of abstinence they exact from poor sinners like myself. An inhuman moralist I can no more endure, in my nervous state, than opium that has not been boiled. At any rate, he who summons me to send out a large freight of self-denial and mortification upon any cruising voyage of moral improvement, must make it clear to my understanding that the concern is a hopeful one. At my time of life (six-and-thirty years of age), it cannot be supposed that I have much energy to spare; in fact, I find it all little enough for the intellectual labors I have on my hands; and, therefore, let no

man expect to frighten me by a few hard words into embarking any part of it upon desperate adventures of morality.

Whether desperate or not, however, the issue of the struggle in 1813 was what I have mentioned; and from this date the reader is to consider me as a regular and confirmed opium-eater, of whom to ask whether on any particular day he had or had not taken opium, would be to ask whether his lungs had performed respiration, or the heart fulfilled its functions. You understand now, reader, what I am; and you are by this time aware, that no old gentleman, "with a snow-white beard," will have any chance of persuading me to surrender "the little golden receptacle of the pernicious drug." No; I give notice to all, whether moralists or surgeons, that whatever be their pretensions and skill in their respective lines of practice, they must not hope for any countenance from me, if they think to begin by any savage proposition for a Lent or Ramadam of abstinence from opium. This, then, being all fully understood between us, we shall in future sail before the wind. Now, then, reader, from 1813, where all this time we have been sitting down and loitering, rise up, if you please, and walk forward about three years more. Now draw up the curtain, and you shall see me in a new character.

If any man, poor or rich, were to say that he would tell us what had been the happiest day in his life, and the why and the wherefore, I suppose that we should all cry out, Hear him! hear him! As to the happiest day, that must be very difficult for any wise man to name; because any event, that could occupy so distinguished a place in a man's retrospect of his life, or be entitled to have shed a special felicity on any one day, ought to be of such an enduring character, as that (accidents apart) it should have continued to shed the same felicity, or one not distinguishably less, on many years together. To the happiest lustrum, however, or even to the happiest year, it may be allowed to any man to point without discountenance from wisdom. This year, in my case, reader, was the one which we have now reached; though it stood, I confess, as a parenthesis between years of a gloomier character. It was a year of brilliant water (to speak after the manner of jewellers), set, as it were, and insulated, in the gloom and cloudy melancholy of opium. Strange as it may sound, I had a little before this time descended suddenly, and without any considerable effort, from three hundred and twenty grains of opium (that is, eight³ thousand drops of laudanum) per day, to forty grains, or one-eighth part. Instantaneously, and as

if by magic, the cloud of profoundest melancholy which rested upon my brain, like some black vapors that I have seen roll away from the summits of mountains, drew off in one day; passed off with its murky banners as simultaneously as a ship that has been stranded, and is floated off by a spring tide, —

“That moveth altogether, if it move at all.”

Now, then, I was again happy: I now took only one thousand drops of laudanum per day, — and what was that? A latter spring had come to close up the season of youth: my brain performed its functions as healthily as ever before. I read Kant again, and again I understood him, or fancied that I did. Again my feelings of pleasure expanded themselves to all around me; and, if any man from Oxford or Cambridge, or from neither, had been announced to me in my unpretending cottage, I should have welcomed him with as sumptuous a reception as so poor a man could offer. Whatever else was wanting to a wise man's happiness, of laudanum I would have given him as much as he wished, and in a golden cup. And, by the way, now that I speak of giving laudanum away, I remember, about this time, a little incident, which I mention, because, trifling as it was, the reader will soon meet it again in my dreams, which it influenced more fearfully than could be imagined. One day a Malay knocked at my door. What business a Malay could have to transact amongst English mountains, I cannot conjecture; but possibly he was on his road to a seaport about forty miles distant.*

The servant who opened the door to him was a young girl, born and bred amongst the mountains, who had never seen an Asiatic dress of any sort: his turban, therefore, confounded her not a little; and as it turned out that his attainments in English were exactly of the same extent as hers in the Malay, there seemed to be an impassable gulf fixed between all communication of ideas, if either party had happened to possess any. In this dilemma, the girl, recollecting the reputed learning of her master (and, doubtless, giving me credit for a knowledge of all the languages of the earth, besides, perhaps, a few of the lunar ones), came and gave me to understand that there was a sort of demon below, whom she clearly imagined that my art could exorcise from the house. I did not immediately go down; but when I did, the group which presented itself, arranged as it was by accident, though not very elaborate, took hold of my fancy and my eye in a way that none of the statuesque attitudes exhibited in the ballets at the

opera-house, though so ostentatiously complex, had ever done. In a cottage kitchen, but panelled on the wall with dark wood, that from age and rubbing resembled oak, and looking more like a rustic hall of entrance than a kitchen, stood the Malay, his turban and loose trousers of dingy white relieved upon the dark panelling; he had placed himself nearer to the girl than she seemed to relish, though her native spirit of mountain intrepidity contended with the feeling of simple awe which her countenance expressed, as she gazed upon the tiger-cat before her. And a more striking picture there could not be imagined, than the beautiful English face of the girl, and its exquisite fairness, together with her erect and independent attitude, contrasted with the sallow and bilious skin of the Malay, enamelled or veneered with mahogany by marine air, his small, fierce, restless eyes, thin lips, slavish gestures, and adorations. Half hidden by the ferocious-looking Malay, was a little child from a neighboring cottage, who had crept in after him, and was now in the act of reverting its head and gazing upwards at the turban and the fiery eyes beneath it, whilst with one hand he caught at the dress of the young woman for protection.

My knowledge of the Oriental tongues is not remarkably extensive, being, indeed, confined to two words, — the Arabic word for barley, and the Turkish for opium (*madjoon*), which I have learnt from Anastasius. And, as I had neither a Malay dictionary, nor even Adelung's "*Mithridates*," which might have helped me to a few words, I addressed him in some lines from the *Iliad*; considering that, of such language as I possessed, the Greek, in point of longitude, came geographically nearest to an Oriental one. He worshipped me in a devout manner, and replied in what I suppose was Malay. In this way I saved my reputation with my neighbors; for the Malay had no means of betraying the secret. He lay down upon the floor for about an hour, and then pursued his journey. On his departure, I presented him with a piece of opium. To him, as an Orientalist, I concluded that opium must be familiar, and the expression of his face convinced me that it was. Nevertheless, I was struck with some little consternation when I saw him suddenly raise his hand to his mouth, and (in the school-boy phrase) bolt the whole, divided into three pieces, at one mouthful. The quantity was enough to kill three dragoons and their horses, and I felt some alarm for the poor creature; but what could be done? I had given him the opium in compassion for his solitary life,

on recollecting that, if he had travelled on foot from London, it must be nearly three weeks since he could have exchanged a thought with any human being. I could not think of violating the laws of hospitality by having him seized and drenched with an emetic, and thus frightening him into a notion that we were going to sacrifice him to some English idol. No; there was clearly no help for it. He took his leave, and for some days I felt anxious; but, as I never heard of any Malay being found dead, I became convinced that he was used^s to opium, and that I must have done him the service I designed, by giving him one night of respite from the pains of wandering.

This incident I have digressed to mention, because this Malay (partly from the picturesque exhibition he assisted to frame, partly from the anxiety I connected with his image for some days) fastened afterwards upon my dreams, and brought other Malays with him worse than himself, that ran "a-muck"^o at me, and led me into a world of troubles. But, to quit this episode, and to return to my intercalary year of happiness. I have said already, that on a subject so important to us all as happiness, we should listen with pleasure to any man's experience or experiments, even though he were but a ploughboy, who cannot be supposed to have ploughed very deep in such an intractable soil as that of human pains and pleasures, or to have conducted his researches upon any very enlightened principles. But I, who have taken happiness, both in a solid and a liquid shape, both boiled and unboiled, both East India and Turkey, — who have conducted my experiments upon this interesting subject with a sort of galvanic battery, — and have, for the general belief of the world, inoculated myself, as it were, with the poison of eight hundred drops of laudanum per day (just for the same reason as a French surgeon inoculated himself lately with a cancer, — an English one, twenty years ago, with plague, — and a third, I know not of what nation, with hydrophobia), — I, it will be admitted, must surely know what happiness is, if anybody does. And therefore I will here lay down an analysis of happiness, and, as the most interesting mode of communicating it, I will give it, not didactically, but wrapt up and involved in a picture of one evening, as I spent every evening during the intercalary year when laudanum, though taken daily, was to me no more than the elixir of pleasure. This done, I shall quit the subject of happiness altogether, and pass to a very different one, — the pains of opium.

Let there be a cottage, standing in a valley,⁷ eighteen miles from any town; no spacious valley, but about two miles long by three quarters of a mile in average width, — the benefit of which provision is, that all the families resident within its circuit will compose, as it were, one larger household, personally familiar to your eye, and more or less interesting to your affections. Let the mountains be real mountains, between three and four thousand feet high, and the cottage a real cottage, not (as a witty author has it) “a cottage with a double coach-house;” let it be, in fact (for I must abide by the actual scene), a white cottage, embowered with flowering shrubs, so chosen as to unfold a succession of flowers upon the walls, and clustering around the windows, through all the months of spring, summer, and autumn; beginning, in fact, with May roses, and ending with jasmine. Let it, however, not be spring, nor summer, nor autumn; but winter, in its sternest shape. This is a most important point in the science of happiness. And I am surprised to see people overlook it and think it matter of congratulation that winter is going, or, if coming, is not likely to be a severe one. On the contrary, I put up a petition, annually, for as much snow, hail, frost, or storm of one kind or other, as the skies can possibly afford us. Surely everybody is aware of the divine pleasures which attend a winter fireside, — candles at four o’clock, warm hearth-rugs, tea, a fair tea-maker, shutters closed, curtains flowing in ample draperies on the floor, whilst the wind and rain are raging audibly without,

“And at the doors and windows seem to call
As heaven and earth they would together mell;
Yet the least entrance find they none at all;
Whence sweeter grows our rest secure in massy hall.”*

All these are items in the description of a winter evening which must surely be familiar to everybody born in a high latitude. And it is evident that most of these delicacies, like ice-cream, require a very low temperature of the atmosphere to produce them: they are fruits which cannot be ripened without weather stormy or inclement, in some way or other. I am not “particular,” as people say, whether it be snow, or black frost, or wind so strong that (as Mr. —⁸ says) “you may lean your back against it like a post.” I can put up even with rain, provided that it rains cats and dogs; but something of the sort I must have; and if I have not, I think myself in a

* Castle of Indolence.

manner ill used: for why am I called on to pay so heavily for winter, in coals, and candles, and various privations that will occur even to gentlemen, if I am not to have the article good of its kind? No: a Canadian winter, for my money; or a Russian one, where every man is but a co-proprietor with the north wind in the fee-simple of his own ears. Indeed, so great an epicure am I in this matter that I cannot relish a winter night fully, if it be much past St. Thomas' day, and have degenerated into disgusting tendencies to vernal appearances;—no, it must be divided by a thick wall of dark nights from all return of light and sunshine. From the latter weeks of October to Christmas-eve, therefore, is the period during which happiness is in season, which, in my judgment, enters the room with the tea-tray; for tea, though ridiculed by those who are naturally of coarse nerves, or are become so from wine-drinking, and are not susceptible of influence from so refined a stimulant, will always be the favorite beverage of the intellectual; and, for my part, I would have joined Dr. Johnson in a bellum internecium against Jonas Hanway, or any other impious person who should presume to disparage it. But here, to save myself the trouble of too much verbal description, I will introduce a painter, and give him directions for the rest of the picture. Painters do not like white cottages, unless a good deal weather-stained; but, as the reader now understands that it is a winter night, his services will not be required except for the inside of the house.

Paint me, then, a room seventeen feet by twelve, and not more than seven and a half feet high. This, reader, is somewhat ambitiously styled, in my family, the drawing-room; but being contrived "a double debt to pay," it is also, and more justly, termed the library: for it happens that books are the only article of property in which I am richer than my neighbors. Of these I have about five thousand, collected gradually since my eighteenth year. Therefore, painter, put as many as you can into this room. Make it populous with books; and, furthermore, paint me a good fire; and furniture plain and modest, befitting the unpretending cottage of a scholar. And near the fire paint me a tea-table; and (as it is clear that no creature can come to see one, such a stormy night) place only two cups and saucers on the tea-tray; and, if you know how to paint such a thing symbolically, or otherwise, paint me an eternal tea-pot,—eternal a parte ante, and a parte post; for I usually drink tea from eight o'clock at night to four in the morning. And, as it is very unpleasant

to make tea, or to pour it out for one's self, paint me a lovely young woman, sitting at the table. Paint her arms like Aurora's, and her smiles like Hebe's; — but no, dear M., not even in jest let me insinuate that thy power to illuminate my cottage rests upon a tenure so perishable as mere personal beauty; or that the witchcraft of angelic smiles lies within the empire of any earthly pencil. Pass, then, my good painter, to something more within its power; and the next article brought forward should naturally be myself, — a picture of the Opium-eater, with his "little golden receptacle of the pernicious drug" lying beside him on the table. As to the opium, I have no objection to see a picture of that, though I would rather see the original; you may paint it, if you choose; but I apprise you that no "little" receptacle would, even in 1816, answer my purpose, who was at a distance from the "stately Pantheon," and all druggists (mortal or otherwise). No: you may as well paint the real receptacle, which was not of gold, but of glass, and as much like a wine-decanter as possible. Into this you may put a quart of ruby-colored laudanum; that, and a book of German metaphysics placed by its side, will sufficiently attest my being in the neighborhood; but as to myself, there I demur. I admit that, naturally, I ought to occupy the foreground of the picture; that being the hero of the piece, or (if you choose) the criminal at the bar, my body should be had into court. This seems reasonable; but why should I confess, on this point, to a painter? or, why confess at all? If the public (into whose private ear I am confidentially whispering my confessions, and not into any painter's) should chance to have framed some agreeable picture for itself of the Opium-eater's exterior, — should have ascribed to him, romantically, an elegant person, or a handsome face, why should I barbarously tear from it so pleasing a delusion, — both to the public and to me? No: paint me, if at all, according to your own fancy; and, as a painter's fancy should teem with beautiful creations, I cannot fail, in that way, to be a gainer. And now, reader, we have run through all the ten categories of my condition, as it stood about 1816 — 1817, up to the middle of which latter year I judge myself to have been a happy man; and the elements of that happiness I have endeavored to place before you, in the above sketch of the interior of a scholar's library, — in a cottage among the mountains, on a stormy winter evening.

But now farewell, a long farewell, to happiness, winter or summer! farewell to smiles and laughter! farewell to peace

of mind! farewell to hope and to tranquil dreams, and to the blessed consolations of sleep! For more than three years and a half I am summoned away from these; I am now arrived at an Iliad of woes: for I have now to record the pains of opium.

“As when some great painter dips
His pencil in the gloom of earthquakes and eclipse.”*

Reader, who have thus far accompanied me, I must request your attention to a brief explanatory note on three points:

1. For several reasons, I have not been able to compose the notes for this part of my narrative into any regular and connected shape. I give the notes disjointed as I find them, or have now drawn them up from memory. Some of them point to their own date; some I have dated; and some are undated. Whenever it could answer my purpose to transplant them from the natural or chronological order, I have not scrupled to do so. Sometimes I speak in the present, sometimes in the past tense. Few of the notes, perhaps, were written exactly at the period of time to which they relate; but this can little affect their accuracy, as the impressions were such that they can never fade from my mind. Much has been omitted. I could not, without effort, constrain myself to the task of either recalling, or constructing into a regular narrative, the whole burden of horrors which lies upon my brain. This feeling, partly, I plead in excuse, and partly that I am now in London, and am a helpless sort of person, who cannot even arrange his own papers without assistance; and I am separated from the hands which are wont to perform for me the offices of an amanuensis.

2. You will think, perhaps, that I am too confidential and communicative of my own private history. It may be so. But my way of writing is rather to think aloud, and follow my own humors, than much to consider who is listening to me; and, if I stop to consider what is proper to be said to this or that person, I shall soon come to doubt whether any part at all is proper. The fact is, I place myself at a distance of fifteen or twenty years ahead of this time, and suppose myself writing to those who will be interested about me hereafter; and wishing to have some record of a time, the entire history of which no one can know but myself, I do it as fully as I am able with the efforts I am now capable of making,

* Shelley's "Revolt of Islam."

because I know not whether I can ever find time to do it again.

3. It will occur to you often to ask, Why did I not release myself from the horrors of opium, by leaving it off, or diminishing it? To this I must answer briefly; it might be supposed that I yielded to the fascinations of opium too easily; it cannot be supposed that any man can be charmed by its terrors. The reader may be sure, therefore, that I made attempts innumerable to reduce the quantity. I add, that those who witnessed the agonies of those attempts, and not myself, were the first to beg me to desist. But could not I have reduced it a drop a day, or, by adding water, have bisected or trisected a drop? A thousand drops bisected would thus have taken nearly six years to reduce; and that they would certainly not have answered. But this is a common mistake of those who know nothing of opium experimentally; I appeal to those who do, whether it is not always found that down to a certain point it can be reduced with ease, and even pleasure, but that, after that point, further reduction causes intense suffering. Yes, say many thoughtless persons, who know not what they are talking of, you will suffer a little low spirits and dejection, for a few days. I answer, no; there is nothing like low spirits; on the contrary, the mere animal spirits are uncommonly raised; the pulse is improved; the health is better. It is not there that the suffering lies. It has no resemblance to the sufferings caused by renouncing wine. It is a state of unutterable irritation of stomach (which surely is not much like dejection), accompanied by intense perspirations, and feelings such as I shall not attempt to describe without more space at my command.

I shall now enter "in medias res," and shall anticipate, from a time when my opium pains might be said to be at their acme, an account of their palsyng effects on the intellectual faculties.

My studies have now been long interrupted. I cannot read to myself with any pleasure, hardly with a moment's endurance. Yet I read aloud sometimes for the pleasure of others; because reading is an accomplishment of mine, and, in the slang use of the word accomplishment as a superficial and ornamental attainment, almost the only one I possess; and formerly, if I had any vanity at all connected with any endowment or attainment of mine, it was with this; for I had observed that no accomplishment was so rare. Players are the worst readers of all: Kemble reads vilely; and Mrs. Siddons,

who is so celebrated, can read nothing well but dramatic compositions; Milton she cannot read sufferably. People in general either read poetry without any passion at all, or else overstep the modesty of nature, and read not like scholars. Of late, if I have felt moved by anything in books, it has been by the grand lamentations of Samson Agonistes, or the great harmonies of the Satanic speeches in "Paradise Regained," when read aloud by myself. A young lady sometimes comes and drinks tea with us; at her request and M.'s, I now and then read Wordsworth's poems to them. (Wordsworth, by the by, is the only poet I ever met who could read his own verses; often, indeed, he reads admirably.)

For nearly two years I believe that I read no book but one; and I owe it to the author, in discharge of a great debt of gratitude to mention what that was. The sublimer and more passionate poets I still read, as I have said, by snatches, and occasionally. But my proper vocation, as I well knew, was the exercise of the analytic understanding. Now, for the most part, analytic studies are continuous, and not to be pursued by fits and starts, or fragmentary efforts. Mathematics, for instance, intellectual philosophy, etc., were all become insupportable to me; I shrunk from them with a sense of powerless and infantine feebleness that gave me an anguish the greater from remembering the time when I grappled with them to my own hourly delight; and for this further reason, because I had devoted the labor of my whole life, and had dedicated my intellect, blossoms and fruits, to the slow and elaborate toil of constructing one single work, to which I had presumed to give the title of an unfinished work of Spinoza's, namely, "De Emendatione Humani Intellectus." This was now lying locked up as by frost, like any Spanish bridge or aqueduct, begun upon too great a scale for the resources of the architect; and, instead of surviving me as a monument of wishes at least, and aspirations, and a life of labor dedicated to the exaltation of human nature in that way in which God had best fitted me to promote so great an object, it was likely to stand a memorial to my children of hopes defeated, of baffled efforts, of materials uselessly accumulated, of foundations laid that were never to support a superstructure, of the grief and the ruin of the architect. In this state of imbecility, I had, for amusement, turned my attention to political economy; my understanding, which formerly had been as active and restless as a hyena, could not, I suppose (so long as I lived at all), sink into utter lethargy; and political economy offers this advan-

tage to a person in my state, that though it is eminently an organic science (no part, that is to say, but what acts on the whole, as the whole again reacts on each part), yet the several parts may be detached and contemplated singly. Great as was the prostration of my powers at this time, yet I could not forget my knowledge; and my understanding had been for too many years intimate with severe thinkers, with logic, and the great masters of knowledge, not to be aware of the utter feebleness of the main herd of modern economists. I had been led in 1811 to look into loads of books and pamphlets on many branches of economy; and, at my desire, M. sometimes read to me chapters from more recent works, or parts of parliamentary debates. I saw that these were generally the very dregs and rinsings of the human intellect; and that any man of sound head, and practised in wielding logic with scholastic adroitness, might take up the whole academy of modern economists, and throttle them between heaven and earth with his finger and thumb, or bray their fungous heads to powder with a lady's fan. At length, in 1819, a friend in Edinburgh sent me down Mr. Ricardo's book; and, recurring to my own prophetic anticipation of the advent of some legislator for this science, I said, before I had finished the first chapter, "Thou art the man!" Wonder and curiosity were emotions that had long been dead in me. Yet I wondered once more: I wondered at myself that I could once again be stimulated to the effort of reading; and much more I wondered at the book. Had this profound work been really written in England during the nineteenth century? Was it possible? I supposed thinking^o had been extinct in England. Could it be that an Englishman, and he not in academic bowers, but oppressed by mercantile and senatorial cares, had accomplished what all the universities of Europe, and a century of thought, had failed even to advance by one hair's breadth? All other writers had been crushed and overlaid by the enormous weights of facts and documents; Mr. Ricardo had deduced, a priori, from the understanding itself, laws which first gave a ray of light into the unwieldy chaos of materials, and had constructed what had been but a collection of tentative discussions into a science of regular proportions, now first standing on an eternal basis.

Thus did one simple work of a profound understanding avail to give me a pleasure and an activity which I had not known for years; — it roused me even to write, or, at least, to dictate what M. wrote for me. It seemed to me that some

important truths had escaped even "the inevitable eye" of Mr. Ricardo; and, as these were, for the most part, of such a nature that I could express or illustrate them more briefly and elegantly by algebraic symbols than in the usual clumsy and loitering diction of economists, the whole would not have filled a pocket-book; and being so brief, with M. for my amanuensis, even at this time, incapable as I was of all general exertion, I drew up my "Prolegomena to all Future Systems of Political Economy." I hope it will not be found redolent of opium; though, indeed, to most people, the subject itself is a sufficient opiate.

This exertion, however, was but a temporary flash, as the sequel showed; for I designed to publish my work. Arrangements were made at a provincial press, about eighteen miles distant, for printing it. An additional compositor was retained for some days, on this account. The work was even twice advertised; and I was, in a manner, pledged to the fulfillment of my intention. But I had a preface to write; and a dedication, which I wished to make a splendid one, to Mr. Ricardo. I found myself quite unable to accomplish all this. The arrangements were countermanded, the compositor dismissed, and my "Prolegomena" rested peacefully by the side of its elder and more dignified brother.

I have thus described and illustrated my intellectual torpor, in terms that apply, more or less, to every part of the four years during which I was under the Circean spells of opium. But for misery and suffering, I might, indeed, be said to have existed in a dormant state. I seldom could prevail on myself to write a letter; an answer of a few words, to any that I received, was the utmost that I could accomplish; and often that not until the letter had lain weeks, or even months, on my writing-table. Without the aid of M., all records of bills paid, or to be paid, must have perished; and my whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy, must have gone into irretrievable confusion. I shall not afterwards allude to this part of the case; it is one, however, which the opium-eater will find, in the end, as oppressive and tormenting as any other, from the sense of incapacity and feebleness, from the direct embarrassments incident to the neglect or procrastination of each day's appropriate duties, and from the remorse which must often exasperate the stings of these evils to a reflective and conscientious mind. The opium-eater loses none of his moral sensibilities or aspirations; he wishes and longs as earnestly as ever to realize what he believes possible,

and feels to be exacted by duty; but his intellectual apprehension of what is possible infinitely outruns his power, not of execution only, but even of power to attempt. He lies under the weight of incubus and night-mare; he lies in sight of all that he would fain perform, just as a man forcibly confined to his bed by the mortal languor of a relaxing disease, who is compelled to witness injury or outrage to some object of his tenderest love:— he curses the spells which chain him down from motion; he would lay down his life if he might but get up and walk; but he is powerless as an infant, and cannot even attempt to rise.

I now pass to what is the main subject of these latter confessions, to the history and journal of what took place in my dreams; for these were the immediate and proximate cause of my acutest suffering.

The first notice I had of any important change going on in this part of my physical economy, was from the reāwaking of a state of eye generally incident to childhood, or exalted states of irritability. I know not whether my reader is aware that many children, perhaps most, have a power of painting, as it were, upon the darkness, all sorts of phantoms: in some that power is simply a mechanic affection of the eye; others have a voluntary or semi-voluntary power to dismiss or summon them; or, as a child once said to me, when I questioned him on this matter, "I can tell them to go, and they go; but sometimes they come when I don't tell them to come." Whereupon I told him that he had almost as unlimited a command over apparitions as a Roman centurion over his soldiers. In the middle of 1817, I think it was that this faculty became positively distressing to me: at night, when I lay awake in bed, vast processions passed along in mournful pomp; friezes of never-ending stories, that to my feelings were as sad and solemn as if they were stories drawn from times before Oedipus or Priam, before Tyre, before Memphis. And, at the same time, a corresponding change took place in my dreams; a theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented, nightly, spectacles of more than earthly splendor. And the four following facts may be mentioned, as noticeable at this time:

I. That, as the creative state of the eye increased, a sympathy seemed to arise between the waking and the dreaming states of the brain in one point,— that whatsoever I happened to call up and to trace by a voluntary act upon the darkness was very apt to transfer itself to my dreams; so that I feared

to exercise this faculty; for, as Midas turned all things to gold, that yet baffled his hopes and defrauded his human desires, so whatsoever things capable of being visually represented I did but think of in the darkness, immediately shaped themselves into phantoms of the eye; and, by a process apparently no less inevitable, when thus once traced in faint and visionary colors, like writings in sympathetic ink, they were drawn out, by the fierce chemistry of my dreams, into insufferable splendor that fretted my heart.

II. For this, and all other changes in my dreams, were accompanied by deep-seated anxiety and gloomy melancholy, such as are wholly incommunicable by words. I seemed every night to descend—not metaphorically, but literally to descend—into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I could ever ascend. Nor did I, by waking, feel that I had ascended. This I do not dwell upon; because the state of gloom which attended these gorgeous spectacles, amounting at least to utter darkness, as of some suicidal despondency, cannot be approached by words.

III. The sense of space, and in the end the sense of time, were both powerfully affected. Buildings, landscapes, etc., were exhibited in proportions so vast as the bodily eye is not fitted to receive. Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable infinity. This, however, did not disturb me so much as the vast expansion of time. I sometimes seemed to have lived for seventy or one hundred years in one night; nay, sometimes had feelings representative of a millennium, passed in that time, or, however, of a duration far beyond the limits of any human experience.

IV. The minutest incidents of childhood, or forgotten scenes of later years, were often revived. I could not be said to recollect them; for if I had been told of them when waking, I should not have been able to acknowledge them as parts of my past experience. But placed as they were before me, in dreams like intuitions, and clothed in all their evanescent circumstances and accompanying feelings, I recognized them instantaneously. I was once told by a near relative of mine, that having in her childhood fallen into a river, and being on the very verge of death but for the critical assistance which reached her, she saw in a moment her whole life, in its minutest incidents, arrayed before her simultaneously as in a mirror; and she had a faculty developed as suddenly for comprehending the whole and every part.¹⁰ This, from some

opium experiences of mine, I can believe; I have, indeed, seen the same thing asserted twice in modern books, and accompanied by a remark which I am convinced is true, namely, that the dread book of account, which the Scriptures speak of, is, in fact, the mind itself of each individual. Of this, at least, I feel assured, that there is no such thing as forgetting possible to the mind; a thousand accidents may and will interpose a veil between our present consciousness and the secret inscriptions on the mind. Accidents of the same sort will also rend away this veil; but alike, whether veiled or unveiled, the inscription remains forever; just as the stars seem to withdraw before the common light of day, whereas, in fact, we all know that it is the light which is drawn over them as a veil; and that they are waiting to be revealed, when the obscuring daylight shall have withdrawn.

Having noticed these four facts as memorably distinguishing my dreams from those of health, I shall now cite a case illustrative of the first fact; and shall then cite any others that I remember, either in their chronological order, or any other that may give them more effect as pictures to the reader.

I had been in youth, and even since, for occasional amusement, a great reader of Livy, whom I confess that I prefer, both for style and matter, to any other of the Roman historians; and I had often felt as most solemn and appalling sounds, and most emphatically representative of the majesty of the Roman people, the two words so often occurring in Livy "Consul Romanus"; especially when the consul is introduced in his military character. I mean to say, that the words king, sultan, regent, etc., or any other titles of those who embody in their own persons the collective majesty of a great people, had less power over my reverential feelings. I had, also, though no great reader of history, made myself minutely and critically familiar with one period of English history, namely, the period of the Parliamentary War, having been attracted by the moral grandeur of some who figured in that day, and by the many interesting memoirs which survive those unquiet times. Both these parts of my lighter reading, having furnished me often with matter of reflection, now furnished me with matter for my dreams. Often I used to see, after painting upon the blank darkness, a sort of rehearsal whilst waking, a crowd of ladies, and perhaps a festival and dances. And I heard it said, or I said to myself, "These are English ladies from the unhappy times of Charles I. These are the wives and daughters of those who met in peace, and

sat at the same tables, and were allied by marriage or by blood; and yet, after a certain day in August, 1642,¹¹ never smiled upon each other again, nor met but in the field of battle; and at Marston Moor, at Newbury, or at Naseby, cut asunder all ties of love by the cruel sabre, and washed away in blood the memory of ancient friendship." The ladies danced, and looked as lovely as the court of George IV. Yet I knew, even in my dream, that they had been in the grave for nearly two centuries. This pageant would suddenly dissolve; and, at a clapping of hands would be heard the heart-quaking sound of "Consul Romanus"; and immediately came "sweeping by," in gorgeous paludaments, Paulus or Marius, girt around by a company of centurions, with the crimson tunic hoisted on a spear, and followed by the alalagmos of the Roman legions.

Many years ago, when I was looking over Piranesi's "Antiquities of Rome," Mr. Coleridge, who was standing by, described to me a set of plates by that artist, called his "Dreams," and which record the scenery of his own visions during the delirium of a fever. Some of them (I describe only from memory of Mr. Coleridge's account) represented vast Gothic halls; on the floor of which stood all sorts of engines and machinery, wheels, cables, pulleys, levers, catapults, etc., expressive of enormous power put forth, and resistance overcome. Creeping along the sides of the walls, you perceived a staircase; and upon it, groping his way upwards, was Piranesi himself. Follow the stairs a little further, and you perceive it to come to a sudden, abrupt termination, without any balustrade, and allowing no step onwards to him who had reached the extremity, except into the depths below. Whatever is to become of poor Piranesi, you suppose, at least, that his labors must in some way terminate here. But raise your eyes, and behold a second flight of stairs still higher; on which again Piranesi is perceived, by this time standing on the very brink of the abyss. Again elevate your eye, and a still more aërial flight of stairs is beheld; and again is poor Piranesi busy on his aspiring labors; and so on, until the unfinished stairs and Piranesi both are lost in the upper gloom of the hall. With the same power of endless growth and self-reproduction did my architecture proceed in dreams. In the early stage of my malady, the splendors of my dreams were indeed chiefly architectural; and I beheld such pomp of cities and palaces as was never yet beheld by the waking eye, unless in the clouds. From a great modern poet,¹² I cite the part of a passage which

describes as an appearance actually beheld in the clouds, what in many of its circumstances I saw frequently in sleep:

“The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,
 Was of a mighty city — boldly say
 A wilderness of building sinking far
 And self-withdrawn into a wondrous depth,
 Far sinking into splendor — without end!
 Fabric it seemed of diamond, and of gold,
 With alabaster domes and silver spires,
 And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
 Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,
 In avenues disposed; there towers begirt
 With battlements that on their restless fronts
 Bore stars — illumination of all gems!
 By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
 Upon the dark materials of the storm
 Now pacified; on them, and on the coves,
 And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
 The vapors had receded — taking there
 Their station under a cerulean sky,” etc. etc.

The sublime circumstance — “battlements that on their restless fronts bore stars” — might have been copied from my architectural dreams, for it often occurred. We hear it reported of Dryden, and of Fuseli in modern times, that they thought proper to eat raw meat for the sake of obtaining splendid dreams: how much better, for such a purpose, to have eaten opium; which yet I do not remember that any poet is recorded to have done, except the dramatist Shadwell; and in ancient days, Homer is, I think, rightly reputed to have known the virtues of opium.

To my architecture succeeded dreams of lakes, and silvery expanses of water: these haunted me so much, that I feared (though possibly it will appear ludicrous to a medical man) that some dropsical state or tendency of the brain might thus be making itself (to use a metaphysical word) objective, and the sentient organ project itself as its own object. For two months I suffered greatly in my head — a part of my bodily structure which had hitherto been so clear from all touch or taint of weakness (physically, I mean), that I used to say of it, as the last Lord Orford said of his stomach, that it seemed likely to survive the rest of my person. Till now I had never felt a headache even, or any the slightest pain, except rheumatic pains caused by my own folly. However, I got over this attack, though it must have been verging on something very dangerous.

The waters now changed their character,— from translucent

lakes, shining like mirrors, they now became seas and oceans. And now comes a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me until the winding up of my case. Hitherto the human face had often mixed in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that which I have called the tyranny of the human face, began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to appear; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces imploring, wrathful, despairing, surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations, by centuries: my agitation was infinite, my mind tossed, and surged with the ocean.

May, 1818.—The Malay had been a fearful enemy for months. I have been every night, through his means, transported into Asiatic scenes. I know not whether others share in my feelings on this point; but I have often thought that if I were compelled to forego England, and to live in China, and among Chinese manners and modes of life and scenery, I should go mad. The causes of my horror lie deep, and some of them must be common to others. Southern Asia, in general, is the seat of awful images and associations. As the cradle of the human race, it would alone have a dim and reverential feeling connected with it. But there are other reasons. No man can pretend that the wild, barbarous, and capricious superstitions of Africa, or of savage tribes elsewhere, affect him in the way that he is affected by the ancient, monumental, cruel, and elaborate religions of Indostan, etc. The mere antiquity of Asiatic things, of their institutions, histories, modes of faith, etc., is so impressive, that to me the vast age of the race and name overpowers the sense of youth in the individual. A young Chinese seems to me an antediluvian man renewed. Even Englishmen, though not bred in any knowledge of such institutions, cannot but shudder at the mystic sublimity of castes that have flowed apart, and refused to mix, through such immemorial tracts of time; nor can any man fail to be awed by the names of the Ganges, or the Euphrates. It contributes much to these feelings, that Southern Asia is, and has been for thousands of years, the part of the earth most swarming with human life, the great officina gentium. Man is a weed in those regions. The vast empires, also, into which the enormous population of Asia has always

been cast, give a further sublimity to the feelings associated with all oriental names or images. In China, over and above what it has in common with the rest of Southern Asia, I am terrified by the modes of life, by the manners, and the barrier of utter abhorrence, and want of sympathy, placed between us by feelings deeper than I can analyze. I could sooner live with lunatics, or brute animals. All this, and much more than I can say, or have time to say, the reader must enter into, before he can comprehend the unimaginable horror which these dreams of oriental imagery, and mythological tortures, impressed upon me. Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical sunlights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Indostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and all her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed, for centuries, at the summit, or in secret rooms: I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia: Vishnu hated me; Seeva laid wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and crocodile trembled at. I was buried, for a thousand years, in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles; and laid, confounded with all unutterable slimy things, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.

I thus give the reader some slight abstraction of my oriental dreams, which always filled me with such amazement at the monstrous scenery, that horror seemed absorbed, for a while, in sheer astonishment. Sooner or later came a reflux of feeling that swallowed up the astonishment, and left me, not so much in terror, as in hatred and abomination of what I saw. Over every form, and threat, and punishment, and dim sightless incarceration, brooded a sense of eternity and infinity that drove me into an oppression as of madness. Into these dreams only, it was, with one or two slight exceptions, that any circumstances of physical horror entered. All before had been moral and spiritual terrors. But here the main agents were ugly birds, or snakes, or crocodiles, especially the last. The cursed crocodile became to me the object of more horror than almost all the rest. I was compelled to live with him;

and (as was always the case, almost, in my dreams) for centuries. I escaped sometimes, and found myself in Chinese houses with cane tables, etc. All the feet of the tables, sofas, etc., soon became instinct with life: the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into a thousand repetitions; and I stood loathing and fascinated. And so often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams, that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way: I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear everything when I am sleeping), and instantly I awoke: it was broad noon, and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside; come to show me their colored shoes, or new frocks, or to let me see them dressed for going out. I protest that so awful was the transition from the damned crocodile, and the other unutterable monsters and abortions of my dreams, to the sight of innocent human natures and of infancy, that, in the mighty and sudden revulsion of mind, I wept, and could not forbear it, as I kissed their faces.

June, 1819.—I have had occasion to remark, at various periods of my life, that the deaths of those whom we love, and, indeed, the contemplation of death generally, is (*cæteris paribus*) more affecting in summer than in any other season of the year. And the reasons are these three, I think: first, that the visible heavens in summer appear far higher, more distant, and (if such a solecism may be excused) more infinite; the clouds by which chiefly the eye expounds the distance of the blue pavilion stretched over our heads are in summer more voluminous, massed, and accumulated in far grander and more towering piles: secondly, the light and the appearances of the declining and the setting sun are much more fitted to be types and characters of the infinite: and, thirdly (which is the main reason), the exuberant and riotous prodigality of life naturally forces the mind more powerfully upon the antagonist thought of death, and the wintry sterility of the grave. For it may be observed, generally, that wherever two thoughts stand related to each other by a law of antagonism, and exist, as it were, by mutual repulsion, they are apt to suggest each other. On these accounts it is that I find it impossible to banish the thought of death when I am walking alone in the endless days of summer; and any particular death, if not more affecting, at least haunts my mind more obstinately and besiegingly, in that season. Perhaps this cause, and a slight incident which I omit, might have been the immediate occasions of the following dream, to which, however, a predispo-

sition must always have existed in my mind; but having been once roused, it never left me, and split into a thousand fantastic varieties, which often suddenly reunited, and composed again the original dream.

I thought that it was a Sunday morning in May; that it was Easter Sunday, and as yet very early in the morning. I was standing, as it seemed to me, at the door of my own cottage. Right before me lay the very scene which could really be commanded from that situation, but exalted, as was usual, and solemnized by the power of dreams. There were the same mountains, and the same lovely valley at their feet; but the mountains were raised to more than Alpine height, and there was interspace far larger between them of meadows and forest lawns; the hedges were rich with white roses; and no living creature was to be seen, excepting that in the green church-yard there were cattle tranquilly reposing upon the verdant graves, and particularly round about the grave of a child whom I had tenderly loved, just as I had really beheld them, a little before sunrise, in the same manner, when that child died. I gazed upon the well-known scene, and I said aloud (as I thought) to myself, "It yet wants much of sunrise; and it is Easter Sunday; and that is the day on which they celebrate the first fruits of resurrection. I will walk abroad; old griefs shall be forgotten to-day; for the air is cool and still, and the hills are high, and stretch away to heaven; and the forest glades are as quiet as the church-yard; and with the dew I can wash the fever from my forehead, and then I shall be unhappy no longer." And I turned, as if to open my garden gate; and immediately I saw upon the left a scene far different; but which yet the power of my dreams had reconciled into harmony with the other. The scene was an oriental one; and there also it was Easter Sunday, and very early in the morning. And at a vast distance were visible, as a stain upon the horizon, the domes and cupolas of a great city — an image or faint abstraction, caught, perhaps, in childhood, from some picture of Jerusalem. And not a bow-shot from me, upon a stone, and shaded by Judean palms, there sat a woman; and I looked, and it was — Ann! She fixed her eyes upon me earnestly; and I said to her, at length, "So, then, I have found you, at last." I waited; but she answered me not a word. Her face was the same as when I saw it last, and yet, again, how different! Seventeen years ago, when the lamp-light fell upon her face, as for the last time I kissed her lips (lips, Ann, that to me were not polluted!), her eyes were

streaming with tears; — her tears were now wiped away; she seemed more beautiful than she was at that time, but in all other points the same, and not older. Her looks were tranquil, but with unusual solemnity of expression, and I now gazed upon her with some awe; but suddenly her countenance grew dim, and, turning to the mountains, I perceived vapors rolling between us; in a moment, all had vanished; thick darkness came on; and in the twinkling of an eye I was far away from mountains, and by lamp-light in Oxford street, walking again with Ann — just as we walked seventeen years before, when we were both children.

As a final specimen, I cite one of a different character, from 1820.

The dream commenced with a music which now I often heard in dreams — a music of preparation and of awakening suspense; a music like the opening of the Coronation Anthem, and which, like that, gave the feeling of a vast march, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies. The morning was come of a mighty day — a day of crisis and of final hope for human nature, then suffering some mysterious eclipse, and laboring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, I knew not where — somehow, I knew not how — by some beings, I knew not whom — a battle, a strife, an agony, was conducting, — was evolving like a great drama, or piece of music; with which my sympathy was the more insupportable from my confusion as to its place, its cause, its nature, and its possible issue. I, as is usual in dreams (where, of necessity, we make ourselves central to every movement), had the power, and yet had not the power, to decide it. I had the power, if I could raise myself, to will it; and yet again had not the power, for the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt. “Deeper than ever plummet sounded,” I lay inactive. Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake; some mightier cause than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms; hurryings to and fro; trepidations of innumerable fugitives. I knew not whether from the good cause or the bad; darkness and lights; tempest and human faces; and at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me, and but a moment allowed, — and clasped hands, and heart-breaking partings, and then — everlasting farewells! and, with a sigh, such as the caves of hell sighed when the incestuous mother uttered the abhorred name of

death, the sound was reverberated — everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated — everlasting farewells!

And I awoke in struggles, and cried aloud — “I will sleep no more!”

But I am now called upon to wind up a narrative which has already extended to an unreasonable length. Within more spacious limits, the materials which I have used might have been better unfolded; and much which I have not used might have been added with effect. Perhaps, however, enough has been given. It now remains that I should say something of the way in which this conflict of horrors was finally brought to its crisis. The reader is already aware (from a passage near the beginning of the introduction to the first part) that the opium-eater has, in some way or other, “unwound, almost to its final links, the accursed chain which bound him.” By what means? To have narrated this, according to the original intention, would have far exceeded the space which can now be allowed. It is fortunate, as such a cogent reason exists for abridging it, that I should, on a maturer view of the case, have been exceedingly unwilling to injure, by any such unaffecting details, the impression of the history itself, as an appeal to the prudence and the conscience of the yet unconfirmed opium-eater, or even (though a very inferior consideration) to injure its effect as a composition. The interest of the judicious reader will not attach itself chiefly to the subject of the fascinating spells, but to the fascinating power. Not the opium-eater, but the opium, is the true hero of the tale, and the legitimate centre on which the interest revolves. The object was to display the marvellous agency of opium, whether for pleasure or for pain; if that is done, the action of the piece has closed.

However, as some people, in spite of all laws to the contrary, will persist in asking what became of the opium-eater, and in what state he now is, I answer for him thus: The reader is aware that opium had long ceased to found its empire on spells of pleasure, it was solely by the tortures connected with the attempt to abjure it, that it kept its hold. Yet, as other tortures, no less, it may be thought, attended the non-abjuration of such a tyrant, a choice only of evils was left; and that might as well have been adopted, which, however terrific in itself, held out a prospect of final restoration to happiness. This appears true; but good logic gave the author no strength to act upon it. However, a crisis arrived for the author's life, and a crisis for other objects still dearer to him, and which will always

be far dearer to him than his life, even now that it is again a happy one. I saw that I must die, if I continued the opium; I determined, therefore, if that should be required, to die in throwing it off. How much I was at that time taking, I cannot say; for the opium which I used had been purchased for me by a friend, who afterwards refused to let me pay him; so that I could not ascertain even what quantity I had used within a year. I apprehend, however, that I took it very irregularly, and that I varied from about fifty or sixty grains to one hundred and fifty a day. My first task was to reduce it to forty, to thirty, and, as fast as I could, to twelve grains.

I triumphed; but think not, reader, that therefore my sufferings were ended; nor think of me as of one sitting in a dejected state. Think of me as of one, even when four months had passed, still agitated, writhing, throbbing, palpitating, shattered; and much, perhaps, in the situation of him who has been racked, as I collect the torments of that state from the affecting account of them left by the most innocent sufferer¹³ (of the time of James I). Meantime, I derived no benefit from any medicine, except one prescribed to me by an Edinburgh surgeon of great eminence, namely, ammoniated tincture of valerian. Medical account, therefore, of my emancipation, I have not much to give; and even that little, as managed by a man so ignorant of medicine as myself, would probably tend only to mislead. At all events, it would be misplaced in this situation. The moral of the narrative is addressed to the opium-eater; and, therefore, of necessity, limited in its application. If he is taught to fear and tremble, enough has been effected. But he may say, that the issue of my case is at least a proof that opium, after a seventeen years' use, and an eight years' abuse of its powers, may still be renounced, and that he may chance to bring to the task greater energy than I did, or that, with a stronger constitution than mine, he may obtain the same results with less. This may be true; I would not presume to measure the efforts of other men by my own. I heartily wish him more energy; I wish him the same success. Nevertheless, I had motives external to myself which he may unfortunately want; and these supplied me with conscientious supports, which mere personal interests might fail to supply to a mind debilitated by opium.

Jeremy Taylor¹⁴ conjectures that it may be as painful to be born as to die. I think it probable; and, during the whole period of diminishing the opium, I had the torments of a man passing out of one mode of existence into another. The issue

was not death, but a sort of physical regeneration, and, I may add, that ever since, at intervals, I have had a restoration of more than youthful spirits, though under the pressure of difficulties, which, in a less happy state of mind, I should have called misfortunes.

One memorial of my former condition still remains; my dreams are not yet perfectly calm; the dread swell and agitation of the storm have not wholly subsided; the legions that encamped in them are drawing off, but not all departed; my sleep is tumultuous, and like the gates of Paradise to our first parents when looking back from afar, it is still (in the tremendous line of Milton) — "With dreadful faces thronged and fiery arms."

NOTES.

¹ The reader of this generation will marvel at these repeated references to "Anastasius;" it is now an almost forgotten book, so vast has been the deluge of novel-writing talent, really original and powerful, which has overflowed our literature during the lapse of thirty-five years from the publication of these Confessions. "Anastasius" was written by the famous and opulent Mr. Hope; and was in 1821 a book both of high reputation and of great influence amongst the leading circles of society.

² A handsome news-room, of which I was very politely made free in passing through Manchester, by several gentlemen of that place, is called, I think, "The Porch;" whence I, who am a stranger in Manchester, inferred that the subscribers meant to profess themselves followers of Zeno. But I have been since assured that this is a mistake.

³ I here reckon twenty-five drops of laudanum as equivalent to one grain of opium, which, I believe, is the common estimate. However, as both may be considered variable quantities (the crude opium varying much in strength, and the tincture still more), I suppose that no infinitesimal accuracy can be had in such a calculation. Teaspoons vary as much in size as opium in strength. Small ones hold about one hundred drops: so that eight thousand drops are about eighty times a tea-spoonful. The reader sees how much I kept within Dr. Buchan's indulgent allowance.

⁴ Between the seafaring populations on the coast of Lancashire, and the corresponding populations on the coast of Cumberland (such as Ravenglass, Whitehaven, Workington, Maryport, etc.), there was a slender current of interchange constantly going on, and especially in the days of press-gangs — in part by sea, but in part also by land. By the way, I may mention, as an interesting fact which I discovered from an almanac and itinerary, dated about the middle of Queen Elizabeth's reign (say, 1579), that the official route in her days for queen's messengers to the north of Ireland, and of course for travellers generally, was not (as now) through Grasmere, and thence by St. John's Vale, Threlkeld (for the short cut by Shoulthwaite Moss was then unknown), Keswick, Cockermouth, and Whitehaven. Up to St. Oswald's Church, Gresmere (so it was then spelled, in deference to its Danish original), the route lay as at present. Thence it turned

round the lake to the left, crossed Hammerscar, up Little Langdale, across Wrynose to Egremont, and from Egremont to Whitehaven.

⁶ This, however, is not a necessary conclusion; the varieties of effect produced by opium on different constitutions are infinite. A London magistrate (Harriott's "Struggles through Life") has recorded that on the first occasion of his trying laudanum for the gout, he took forty drops; the next night sixty, and on the fifth night eighty, without any effect whatever; and this at an advanced age. I have an anecdote from a country surgeon, however, which sinks Mr. Harriott's case into a trifle, and, in my projected medical treatise on opium, which I will publish provided the College of Surgeons will pay me for enlightening their benighted understandings upon this subject, I will relate it, but it is far too good a story to be published gratis.

⁷ See the common accounts in any Eastern traveller or voyager, of the frantic excesses committed by Malays who have taken opium, or are reduced to desperation by ill luck at gambling.

⁸ The cottage and the valley concerned in this description were not imaginary; the valley was the lovely one, in those days, of Grasmere; and the cottage was occupied for more than twenty years by myself, as immediate successor, in the year 1809, to Wordsworth. Looking to the limitation here laid down — viz., in those days — the reader will inquire, in what way Time can have affected the beauty of Grasmere. Do the Westmoreland valleys turn gray-headed? Oh, reader! this is a painful memento for some of us! Thirty years ago, a gang of Vandals (nameless, I thank Heaven, to me), for the sake of building a mail-coach road that never would be wanted, carried, at a cost of £3,000 to the defrauded parish, a horrid causeway of sheer granite masonry, for three quarters of a mile, right through the loveliest succession of secret forest dells and shy recesses of the lake, margined by unrivalled ferns, amongst which was the *Osmunda regalis*. This sequestered angle of Grasmere is described by Wordsworth, as it unveiled itself on a September morning, in the exquisite poems on the "Naming of Places." From this also — viz., this spot of ground, and this magnificent crest (the *Osmunda*) — was suggested that unique line — the finest independent line through all the records of verse

"Or lady of the lake,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance."

Rightly, therefore, did I introduce this limitation. The Grasmere before and after this outrage were two different vales.

⁹ Mr. Anti-Slavery Clarkson.

¹⁰ The reader must remember what I here mean by thinking, because, else, this would be a very presumptuous expression. England, of late, has been rich to excess in fine thinkers, in the departments of creative and combining thought; but there is a sad dearth of masculine thinkers in any analytic path. A Scotchman of eminent name has lately told us, that he is obliged to quit even mathematics for want of encouragement.

¹¹ The heroine of this remarkable case was a girl about nine years old: and there can be little doubt that she looked down as far within the crater of death — that awful volcano — as any human being ever can have done that has lived to draw back and to report her experience. Not less than ninety years did she survive this memorable escape; and I may describe her as in all respects a woman of remarkable and

interesting qualities. She enjoyed, throughout her long life, as the reader will readily infer, serene and cloudless health; had a masculine understanding; revered truth not less than did the Evangelists; and led a life of saintly devotion, such as might have glorified "Hilarion or Paul." [The words quoted are Ariosto's.] I mention these traits as characterizing her in a memorable extent, that the reader may not suppose himself relying upon a dealer in exaggerations, upon a credulous enthusiast, or upon a careless wielder of language. Forty-five years had intervened between the first time and the last time of her telling me this anecdote, and not one iota had shifted its ground amongst the incidents, nor had any the most trivial of the circumstances suffered change. The scene of the accident was the least of valleys, what the Greeks of old would have called an *αγκος*, and we English should properly call a dell. Human tenant it had none: even at noonday it was a solitude; and would oftentimes have been a silent solitude but for the brawling of a brook — not broad, but occasionally deep — which ran along the base of the little hills. Into this brook, probably into one of its dangerous pools, the child fell: and, according to the ordinary chances, she could have had but a slender prospect indeed of any deliverance, for, although a dwelling-house was close by, it was shut out from view by the undulations of the ground. How long the child lay in the water, was probably never inquired earnestly until the answer had become irrecoverable: for a servant, to whose care the child was then confided, had a natural interest in suppressing the whole case. From the child's own account, it should seem that asphyxia must have announced its commencement. A process of struggle and deadly suffocation was passed through half consciously. This process terminated by a sudden blow apparently on or in the brain, after which there was no pain or conflict; but in an instant succeeded a dazzling rush of light; immediately after which came the solemn apocalypse of the entire past life. Meantime, the child's disappearance in the water had happily been witnessed by a farmer who rented some fields in this little solitude, and by a rare accident was riding through them at the moment. Not being very well mounted, he was retarded by the hedges and other fences in making his way down to the water; some time was thus lost; but once at the spot, he leaped in, booted and spurred, and succeeded in delivering one that must have been as nearly counted amongst the populations of the grave as perhaps the laws of the shadowy world can suffer to return.

¹¹ I think (but at the moment have no means of verifying my conjecture) that this day was the 24th of August. On or about that day Charles raised the royal standard at Nottingham; which, ominously enough (considering the strength of such superstitions in the seventeenth century, and, amongst the generations of that century, more especially in this particular generation of the Parliamentary War), was blown down during the succeeding night. Let me remark, in passing, that no falsehood can virtually be greater or more malicious, than that which imputes to Archbishop Laud a special or exceptional faith in such mute warnings.

¹² What poet? It was Wordsworth; and why did I not formally name him? This throws a light backwards upon the strange history of Wordsworth's reputation. The year in which I wrote and published these Confessions was 1821; and at that time the name of Wordsworth, though beginning to emerge from the dark cloud of

scorn and contumely which had hitherto overshadowed it, was yet most imperfectly established. Not until ten years later was his greatness cheerfully and generally acknowledged. I, therefore, as the very earliest (without one exception) of all who came forward, in the beginning of his career, to honor and welcome him, shrank with disgust from making any sentence of mine the occasion for an explosion of vulgar malice against him. But the grandeur of the passage here cited inevitably spoke for itself; and he that would have been most scornful on hearing the name of the poet coupled with this epithet of "great," could not but find his malice intercepted, and himself cheated into cordial admiration, by the splendor of the verses.

¹² William Lithgow; his book is ill and pedantically written; but the account of his own sufferings on the rack at Malaga is overpoweringly affecting.

¹⁴ In all former editions, I had ascribed this sentiment to Jeremy Taylor. On a close search, however, wishing to verify the quotation, it appeared that I had been mistaken. Something very like it occurs more than once in the bishop's voluminous writings; but the exact passage moving in my mind had evidently been this which follows, from Lord Bacon's "Essay on Death:" "It is as natural to die as to be born; and to a little infant perhaps the one is as painful as the other."

APPENDIX

THE proprietors of this little work having determined on reprinting it, some explanation seems called for, to account for the non-appearance of a Third Part, promised in the London Magazine of December last; and the more so, because the proprietors, under whose guarantee that promise was issued, might otherwise be implicated in the blame—little or much—attached to its non-fulfilment. This blame, in mere justice, the author takes wholly upon himself. What may be the exact amount of the guilt which he thus appropriates, is a very dark question to his own judgment, and not much illuminated by any of the masters on casuistry whom he has consulted on the occasion. On the one hand, it seems generally agreed that a promise is binding in the inverse ratio of the numbers to whom it is made: for which reason it is that we see many persons break promises without scruple that are made to a whole nation, who keep their faith religiously in all private engagements,—breaches of promise towards the stronger party being committed at a man's own peril; on the other hand, the only parties interested in the promises of an author are his readers, and these it is a point of modesty in any author to believe as few as possible; or perhaps only one, in which case any promise imposes a sanctity of moral obligation which it is shocking to think of. Casuistry dismissed, however,—the author throws himself on the indulgent consideration of all who may conceive themselves aggrieved by his delay, in the following account of his own condition from the end of last year, when the engagement was made, up nearly to the present time. For any purpose of self-excuse, it might be sufficient to say, that intolerable bodily suffering had totally disabled him for almost any exertion of mind, more especially for such as demand and presuppose a pleasurable and a genial state of feeling; but, as a case that may by possibility contribute a trifle to the medical history of opium in a further stage of its action than can often have been brought under the notice of professional men, he has judged that it might be acceptable to some readers to have it

described more at length. *Fiat in experimentum corpore vili*, is a just rule where there is any reasonable presumption of benefit to arise on a large scale. What the benefit may be, will admit of a doubt; but there can be none as to the value of the body, for a more worthless body than his own, the author is free to confess, cannot be. It is his pride to believe, that it is the very ideal of a base, crazy, despicable human system, that hardly ever could have been meant to be seaworthy for two days under the ordinary storms and wear-and-tear of life; and, indeed, if that were the creditable way of disposing of human bodies, he must own that he should almost be ashamed to bequeath his wretched structure to any respectable dog. But now to the case, which, for the sake of avoiding the constant recurrence of a cumbersome periphrasis, the author will take the liberty of giving in the first person.

Those who have read the Confessions will have closed them with the impression that I had wholly renounced the use of opium. This impression I meant to convey, and that for two reasons: first, because the very act of deliberately recording such a state of suffering necessarily presumes in the recorder a power of surveying his own case as a cool spectator, and a degree of spirits for adequately describing it, which it would be inconsistent to suppose in any person speaking from the station of an actual sufferer; secondly, because I, who had descended from so large a quantity as eight thousand drops to so small a one (comparatively speaking) as a quantity ranging between three hundred and one hundred and sixty drops, might well suppose that the victory was in effect achieved. In suffering my readers, therefore, to think of me as of a reformed opium-eater, I left no impression but what I shared myself, and, as may be seen, even this impression was left to be collected from the general tone of the conclusion, and not from any specific words, which are in no instance at variance with the literal truth. In no long time after that paper was written, I became sensible that the effort which remained would cost me far more energy than I had anticipated, and the necessity for making it was more apparent every month. In particular, I became aware of an increasing callousness or defect of sensibility in the stomach: and this I imagined might imply a scirrhus state of that organ either formed or forming. An eminent physician, to whose kindness I was, at that time, deeply indebted, informed me that such a termination of my case was not impossible, though likely to be forestalled by a different termination, in the event of my continuing the use of

opium. Opium, therefore, I resolved wholly to abjure, as soon as I should find myself at liberty to bend my undivided attention and energy to this purpose. It was not, however, until the 24th of June last that any tolerable concurrence of facilities for such an attempt arrived. On that day I began my experiment, having previously settled in my own mind that I would not flinch, but would "stand up to the scratch," under any possible "punishment." I must premise, that about one hundred and seventy or one hundred and eighty drops had been my ordinary allowance for many months. Occasionally I had run up as high as five hundred, and once nearly to seven hundred. In repeated preludes to my final experiment I had also gone as low as one hundred drops, but had found it impossible to stand it beyond the fourth day, which, by the way, I have always found more difficult to get over than any of the preceding three. I went off under easy sail — one hundred and thirty drops a day for three days; on the fourth I plunged at once to eighty. The misery which I now suffered "took the conceit" out of me, at once; and for about a month I continued off and on about this mark; then I sunk to sixty, and the next day to — none at all. This was the first day for nearly ten years that I had existed without opium. I persevered in my abstinence for ninety hours; that is, upwards of half a week. Then I took — ask me not how much; say, ye severest, what would ye have done? Then I abstained again; then took about twenty-five drops; then abstained; and so on.

Meantime, the symptoms which attended my case for the first six weeks of the experiment were these: enormous irritability and excitement of the whole system; the stomach, in particular, restored to a full feeling of vitality and sensibility, but often in great pain; unceasing restlessness night and day; sleep — I scarcely knew what it was — three hours out of the twenty-four was the utmost I had, and that so agitated and shallow that I heard every sound that was near me; lower jaw constantly swelling; mouth ulcerated; and many other distressing symptoms that would be tedious to repeat, amongst which, however, I must mention one, because it had never failed to accompany any attempt to renounce opium, — namely, violent sternutation. This now became exceedingly troublesome; sometimes lasting for two hours at once, and recurring at least twice or three times a day. I was not much surprised at this, on recollecting what I had somewhere heard or read, that the membrane which lines the nostrils is a prolongation of that

which lines the stomach; whence, I believe, are explained the inflammatory appearances about the nostrils of dram-drinkers. The sudden restoration of its original sensibility to the stomach expressed itself, I suppose, in this way. It is remarkable, also, that, during the whole period of years through which I had taken opium, I had never once caught cold (as the phrase is), nor even the slightest cough. But now a violent cold attacked me, and a cough soon after. In an unfinished fragment of a letter begun about this time to —, I find these words:— “ You ask me to write the — —. Do you know Beaumont and Fletcher’s play of “Thierry and Theodoret” ? There you will see my case as to sleep; nor is it much of an exaggeration in other features. I protest to you that I have a greater influx of thoughts in one hour at present than in a whole year under the reign of opium. It seems as though all the thoughts which had been frozen up for a decade of years by opium had now, according to the old fable, been thawed at once, such a multitude stream in upon me from all quarters. Yet such is my impatience and hideous irritability, that, for one which I detain and write down, fifty escape me. In spite of my weariness and sufferings and want of sleep, I cannot stand still or sit for two minutes together. ‘ I nunc, et versus tecum meditare canoros.’ ”

At this stage of my experiment I sent to a neighboring surgeon, requesting that he would come over to see me. In the evening he came, and after briefly stating the case to him, I asked this question: Whether he did not think that the opium might have acted as a stimulus to the digestive organs; and that the present state of suffering in the stomach, which manifestly was the cause of the inability to sleep, might arise from indigestion? His answer was,—No: on the contrary, he thought that the suffering was caused by digestion itself, which should naturally go on below the consciousness, but which, from the unnatural state of the stomach, vitiated by so long a use of opium, was become distinctly perceptible. This opinion was plausible, and the unintermitting nature of the suffering disposes me to think that it was true; for, if it had been any mere irregular affection of the stomach, it should naturally have intermitted occasionally, and constantly fluctuated as to degree. The intention of nature, as manifested in the healthy state, obviously is, to withdraw from our notice all the vital motions, such as the circulation of the blood, the expansion and contraction of the lungs, the peristaltic action of the stomach, etc.; and opium, it seems, is able in this, as in other

instances, to counteract her purposes. By the advice of the surgeon, I tried bitters. For a short time these greatly mitigated the feelings under which I labored; but about the forty-second day of the experiment the symptoms already noticed began to retire, and new ones to arise of a different and far more tormenting class; under these, with but a few intervals of remission, I have since continued to suffer. But I dismiss them undescribed for two reasons; first, because the mind revolts from retracing circumstantially any sufferings from which it is removed by too short or by no interval. To do this with minuteness enough to make the review of any use, would be indeed "*infandum renovare dolorem*," and possibly without a sufficient motive: for, secondly, I doubt whether this latter state be any way referable to opium, positively considered, or even negatively; that is, whether it is to be numbered amongst the last evils from the direct action of opium, or even amongst the earliest evils consequent upon a want of opium in a system long deranged by its use. Certainly one part of the symptoms might be accounted for from the time of year (August); for though the summer was not a hot one, yet in any case the sum of all the heat funded (if one may say so) during the previous month, naturally renders August in its better half the hottest part of the year; and it so happened that the excessive perspiration, which even at Christmas attends any great reduction in the daily quantum of opium, and which in July was so violent as to oblige me to use a bath five or six times a day, had about the setting in of the hottest season wholly retired, on which account any bad effect of the heat might be the more unmitigated. Another symptom, namely, what in my ignorance I call internal rheumatism (sometimes affecting the shoulders, etc., but more often appearing to be seated in the stomach), seemed again less probably attributable to the opium, or the want of opium, than to the dampness of the house^t which I inhabit, which had about that time attained its maximum, July having been, as usual, a month of incessant rain in our most rainy part of England.

Under these reasons for doubting whether opium had any connection with the latter stage of my bodily wretchedness — (except, indeed, as an occasional cause, as having left the body weaker and more crazy, and thus predisposed to any mal-influence whatever), — I willingly spare my reader all description of it: let it perish to him; and would that I could as easily say, let it perish to my own remembrances, that any future hours of

tranquility may not be disturbed by too vivid an ideal of possible human misery!

So much for the sequel of my experiment; as to the former stage, in which properly lies the experiment and its application to other cases, I must request my reader not to forget the reasons for which I have recorded it. These were two. First, a belief that I might add some trifle to the history of opium as a medical agent; in this I am aware that I have not at all fulfilled my own intentions, in consequence of the torpor of mind, pain of body, and extreme disgust to the subject, which besieged me whilst writing that part of my paper; which part being immediately sent off to the press (distant about five degrees of latitude), cannot be corrected or improved. But from this account, rambling as it may be, it is evident that thus much of benefit may arise to the persons most interested in such a history of opium,—namely, to opium-eaters in general,—that it establishes, for their consolation and encouragement, the fact that opium may be renounced, and without greater sufferings than an ordinary resolution may support; and by a pretty rapid course² of descent.

To communicate this result of my experiment, was my foremost purpose. Secondly, as a purpose collateral to this I wished to explain how it had become impossible for me to compose a Third Part in time to accompany this republication: for during the very time of this experiment, the proof-sheets of this reprint were sent to me from London; and such was my inability to expand or to improve them, that I could not even bear to read them over with attention enough to notice the press errors, or to correct any verbal inaccuracies. These were my reasons for troubling my reader with any record, long or short, of experiments relating to so truly base a subject as my own body; and I am earnest with the reader, that he will not forget them, or so far misapprehend me as to believe it possible that I would condescend to so rascally a subject for its own sake, or, indeed, for any less object than that of general benefit to others. Such an animal as the self-observing valetudinarian, I know there is. I have met him myself occasionally, and I know that he is the worst imaginable heautontimoroumenos; aggravating and sustaining, by calling into distinct consciousness, every symptom that would else, perhaps, under a different direction given to the thoughts, become evanescent. But as to myself, so profound is my contempt for this undignified and selfish habit, that I could as little condescend to it as I could to spend my time in watching

a poor servant-girl, to whom at this moment I hear some lad or other making love at the back of my house. Is it for a Transcendental philosopher to feel any curiosity on such an occasion? Or can I, whose life is worth only eight and a half years' purchase, be supposed to have leisure for such trivial employments? However, to put this out of question, I shall say one thing which will, perhaps, shock some readers; but I am sure it ought not to do so, considering the motives on which I say it. No man, I suppose, employs much of his time on the phenomena of his own body without some regard for it; whereas the reader sees that, so far from looking upon mine with any complacency or regard, I hate it and make it the object of my bitter ridicule and contempt; and I should not be displeased to know that the last indignities which the law inflicts upon the bodies of the worst malefactors might hereafter fall upon it. And in testification of my sincerity in saying this, I shall make the following offer. Like other men, I have particular fancies about the place of my burial; having lived chiefly in a mountainous region, I rather cleave to the conceit that a grave in a green church-yard amongst the ancient and solitary hills will be a sublimer and more tranquil place of repose for a philosopher than any in the hideous Golgothas of London. Yet, if the gentlemen of Surgeons' Hall think that any benefit can redound to their science from inspecting the appearances in the body of an opium-eater, let them speak but a word, and I will take care that mine shall be legally secured to them — that is, as soon as I have done with it myself. Let them not hesitate to express their wishes upon any scruples of false delicacy and consideration for my feelings; I assure them that they will do me too much honor by "demonstrating" on such a crazy body as mine; and it will give me pleasure to anticipate this posthumous revenge and insult inflicted upon that which has caused me so much suffering in this life. Such bequests are not common; reversionary benefits contingent upon the death of the testator are indeed dangerous to announce in many cases. Of this we have a remarkable instance in the habits of a Roman prince, who used, upon any notification made to him by rich persons, that they had left him a handsome estate in their wills, to express his entire satisfaction at such arrangements, and his gracious acceptance of those royal legacies; but then, if the testators neglected to give him immediate possession of the property,—if they traitorously "persisted in living" (*si vivere perseverant*, as Suetonius expresses it), he was highly pro-

voked, and took his measures accordingly. In those times, and from one of the worst of the Caesars, we might expect such conduct; but I am sure that, from English surgeons at this day, I need look for no expressions of impatience, or of any other feelings but such as are answerable to that pure love of science, and all its interests, which induces me to make such an offer.

September 30th, 1822.

NOTES

¹ In saying this, I meant no disrespect to the individual house, as the reader will understand when I tell him that, with the exception of one or two princely mansions, and some few inferior ones that have been coated with Roman cement, I am not acquainted with any house in this mountainous district which is wholly water-proof. The architecture of books, I flatter myself, is conducted on just principles in this country; but for any other architecture, it is in a barbarous state, and, what is worse, in a retrograde state.

² On which last notice I would remark that mine was too rapid, and the suffering therefore needlessly aggravated; or rather, perhaps, it was not sufficiently continuous and equably graduated. But, that the reader may judge for himself, and, above all, that the opium-eater, who is preparing to retire from business, may have every sort of information before him, I subjoin my diary.

FIRST WEEK.		SECOND WEEK.	
Drops of Laud.		Drops of Laud.	
Monday, June 24.....	130	Monday, July 1.....	80
“ 25.....	140	“ 2.....	80
“ 26.....	130	“ 3.....	90
“ 27.....	80	“ 4.....	100
“ 28.....	80	“ 5.....	80
“ 29.....	80	“ 6.....	80
“ 30.....	80	“ 7.....	80
THIRD WEEK.		FOURTH WEEK.	
Drops of Laud.		Drops of Laud	
Monday, July 8.....	300	Monday, July 15.....	76
“ 9.....	50	“ 16.....	73½
“ 10)	Hiatus in manuscript.	“ 17.....	73½
“ 11)		“ 18.....	70
“ 12)		“ 19.....	240
“ 13)		“ 20.....	80
“ 14.....	76	“ 21.....	350
FIFTH WEEK.			
Drops of Laud.			
Monday, July 22.....	60		
“ 23.....	none		
“ 24.....	none		
“ 25.....	none		
“ 26.....	200		
“ 27.....	none		

What mean these abrupt relapses, the reader will ask, perhaps, to such numbers as 300, 350, etc.? The impulse to these relapses was mere infirmity of purpose; the motive, where any motive blended with this impulse, was either the principle of "*reculer pour mieus sauter*"— (for under the torpor of a large dose, which lasted for a day or two, a less quantity satisfied the stomach, which, on awaking, found itself partly accustomed to this new ration),— or else it was this principle— that of sufferings otherwise equal, those will be borne best which meet with a mood of anger; now, whenever I ascended to any large dose, I was furiously incensed on the following day, and could then have borne anything.

SUSPIRIA . DE PROFUNDIS

SUSPIRIA DE PROFUNDIS

A SEQUEL TO THE

“CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER”

I

INTRODUCTION

IN 1821, as a contribution to a periodical work,— in 1822, as a separate volume,— appeared the “Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.” The object of that work was to reveal something of the grandeur which belongs potentially to human dreams. Whatever may be the number of those in whom this faculty of dreaming splendidly can be supposed to lurk, there are not perhaps very many in whom it is developed. He whose talk is of oxen, will probably dream of oxen, and the condition of human life, which yokes so vast a majority to a daily experience incompatible with much elevation of thought, oftentimes neutralizes the tone of grandeur in the reproductive faculty of dreaming, even for those whose minds are populous with solemn imagery. Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie. This in the first place, and even this, where it exists strongly is too much liable to disturbance from the gathering agitation of our present English life. Already, in this year 1845, what by the procession through fifty years of mighty revolutions amongst the kingdoms of the earth, what by the continual development of vast physical agencies,— steam in all its applications, light getting under harness as a slave for man, powers from heaven descending upon education and accelerations of the press, powers from hell (as it might seem, but these also celestial) coming round upon artillery and the forces of destruction,— the eye of the calmest observer is troubled; the

brain is haunted as if by some jealousy of ghostly beings moving amongst us; and it becomes too evident that, unless this colossal pace of advance can be retarded (a thing not to be expected), or, which is happily more probable, can be met by counter forces of corresponding magnitude, forces in the direction of religion or profound philosophy, that shall radiate centrifugally against this storm of life so perilously centripetal towards the vortex of the merely human, left to itself, the natural tendency of so chaotic a tumult must be to evil; for some minds to lunacy; for others to a reagency of fleshy torpor. How much this fierce condition of eternal hurry upon an arena too exclusively human in its interests is likely to defeat the grandeur which is latent in all men, may be seen in the ordinary effect from living too constantly in varied company. The word dissipation, in one of its uses, expresses that effect; the action of thought and feeling is too much dissipated and squandered. To reconcentrate them into meditative habits, a necessity is felt by all observing persons for sometimes retiring from crowds. No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude. How much solitude, so much power. Or, if not true in that rigor of expression, to this formula undoubtedly it is that the wise rule of life must approximate.

Among the powers in man which suffer by this too intense life of the social instincts, none suffers more than the power of dreaming. Let no man think this a trifle. The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy. And the dreaming organ, in connection with the heart, the eye and the ear, compose the magnificent apparatus which forces the infinite into the chambers of a human brain, and throws dark reflections from eternities below all life upon the mirrors of the sleeping mind.

But if this faculty suffers from the decay of solitude, which is becoming a visionary idea in England, on the other hand, it is certain that some merely physical agencies can and do assist the faculty of dreaming almost preternaturally. Amongst these is intense exercise; to some extent at least, and for some persons; but beyond all others is opium, which indeed seems to possess a specific power in that direction; not merely for exalting the colors of dream-scenery, but for deepening its shadows, and, above all, for strengthening the sense of its fearful realities.

The Opium Confessions were written with some slight secondary purpose of exposing this specific power of opium upon the faculty of dreaming, but much more with the purpose of displaying the faculty itself; and the outline of the work travelled in this course. Supposing a reader acquainted with the true object of the Confessions as here stated, namely, the revelation of dreaming, to have put this question:

“But how came you to dream more splendidly than others?”

The answer would have been —

“Because (*præmissis præmittendis*) I took excessive quantities of opium.”

Secondly, suppose him to say, “But how came you to take opium in this excess?”

The answer to that would be, “Because some early events in my life had left a weakness in one organ which required (or seemed to require) that stimulant.”

Then, because the opium dreams could not always have been understood without a knowledge of these events, it became necessary to relate them. Now, these two questions and answers exhibit the law of the work; that is, the principle which determined its form, but precisely in the inverse or regressive order. The work itself opened with the narration of my early adventures. These, in the natural order of succession, led to the opium as a resource for healing their consequences; and the opium as naturally led to the dreams. But in the synthetic order of presenting the facts, what stood last in the succession of development stood first in the order of my purposes.

At the close of this little work, the reader was instructed to believe, and truly instructed, that I had mastered the tyranny of opium. The fact is, that twice I mastered it, and by efforts even more prodigious in the second of these cases than in the first. But one error I committed in both. I did not connect with the abstinence from opium, so trying to the fortitude under any circumstances, that enormity of excess which (as I have since learned) is the one sole resource for making it endurable. I overlooked, in those days, the one *sine qua non* for making the triumph permanent. Twice I sank, twice I rose again. A third time I sank; partly from the cause mentioned (the oversight as to exercise), partly from other causes, on which it avails not now to trouble the reader. I could moralize, if I chose; and perhaps he will moralize, whether I choose it or not. But, in the meantime, neither of us is acquainted properly with the circumstances of the case: I, from

natural bias of judgment, not altogether acquainted; and he (with his permission) not at all.

During this third prostration before the dark idol, and after some years, new and monstrous phenomena began slowly to arise. For a time, these were neglected as accidents, or palliated by such remedies as I knew of. But when I could no longer conceal from myself that these dreadful symptoms were moving forward forever, by a pace steadily, solemnly, and equably increasing, I endeavored, with some feeling of panic, for a third time to retrace my steps. But I had not reversed my motions for many weeks, before I became profoundly aware that this was impossible. Or, in the imagery of my dreams, which translated everything into their own language, I saw through vast avenues of gloom those towering gates of ingress which hitherto had always seemed to stand open, now at last barred against my retreat, and hung with funeral crape.

As applicable to this tremendous situation (the situation of one escaping by some reflux current from the maelstrom roaring for him in the distance, who finds suddenly that this current is but an eddy, wheeling round upon the same maelstrom), I have since remembered a striking incident in a modern novel. A lady abbess of a convent, herself suspected of Protestant leanings, and in that way already disarmed of all effectual power, finds one of her own nuns (whom she knows to be innocent) accused of an offence leading to the most terrific of punishments. The nun will be immured alive if she is found guilty; and there is no chance that she will not, for the evidence against her is strong, unless something were made known that cannot be made known; and the judges are hostile. All follows in the order of the reader's fears. The witnesses depose; the evidence is without effectual contradiction; the conviction is declared; the judgment is delivered; nothing remains but to see execution done. At this crisis, the abbess, alarmed too late for effectual interposition, considers with herself that, according to the regular forms, there will be one single night open, during which the prisoner cannot be withdrawn from her own separate jurisdiction. This one night, therefore, she will use, at any hazard to herself, for the salvation of her friend. At midnight, when all is hushed in the convent, the lady traverses the passages which lead to the cells of prisoners. She bears a master-key under her professional habit. As this will open every door in every corridor, already, by anticipation, she feels the luxury of holding her emancipated friend within her arms. Suddenly she has reached the door;

she descries a dusky object; she raises her lamp, and, ranged within the recess of the entrance, she beholds the funeral banner of the holy office, and the black robes of its inexorable officials.

I apprehend that, in a situation such as this, supposing it a real one, the lady abbess would not start, would not show any marks externally of consternation or horror. The case was beyond that. The sentiment which attends the sudden revelation that all is lost silently is gathered up into the heart; it is too deep for gestures or for words; and no part of it passes to the outside. Were the ruin conditional, or were it in any point doubtful, it would be natural to utter ejaculations, and to seek sympathy. But where the ruin is understood to be absolute, where sympathy cannot be consolation, and counsel cannot be hope that is otherwise. The voice perishes; the gestures are frozen; and the spirit of man flies back upon its own centre. I, at least, upon seeing those awful gates closed and hung with draperies of woe, as for a death already past, spoke not, nor started, nor groaned. One profound sigh ascended from my heart, and I was silent for days.

It is the record of this third or final stage of opium, as one differing in something more than degree from the others, that I am now undertaking. But a scruple arises as to the true interpretation of these final symptoms. I have elsewhere explained, that it was no particular purpose of mine, and why it was no particular purpose, to warn other opium-eaters. Still, as some few persons may use the record in that way, it becomes a matter of interest to ascertain how far it is likely, that, even with the same excesses, other opium-eaters could fall into the same condition. I do not mean to lay a stress upon any supposed idiosyncrasy in myself. Possibly every man has an idiosyncrasy. In some things, undoubtedly, he has. For no man ever yet resembled another man so far, as not to differ from him in features innumerable of his inner nature. But what I point to are not peculiarities of temperament or of organization, so much as peculiar circumstances and incidents through which my own separate experience had revolved. Some of these were of a nature to alter the whole economy of my mind. Great convulsions, from whatever cause,—from conscience, from fear, from grief, from struggles of the will,—sometimes, in passing away themselves, do not carry off the changes which they have worked. All the agitations of this magnitude which a man may have threaded in his life, he neither ought to report, nor could report. But one which

affected my childhood is a privileged exception. It is privileged as a proper communication for a stranger's ear; because, though relating to a man's proper self, it is a self so far removed from his present self as to wound no feelings of delicacy or just reserve. It is privileged, also, as a proper subject for the sympathy of the narrator. An adult sympathizes with himself in childhood because he is the same, and because (being the same) yet he is not the same. He acknowledges the deep, mysterious identity between himself, as adult and as infant, for the ground of his sympathy; and yet, with this general agreement, and necessity of agreement, he feels the differences between his two selves as the main quickeners of his sympathy. He pities the infirmities, as they arise to light in his young forerunner, which now, perhaps, he does not share; he looks indulgently upon the errors of the understanding, or limitations of view which now he has long survived; and sometimes, also, he honors in the infant that rectitude of will which, under some temptations, he may since have felt it so difficult to maintain.

The particular case to which I refer in my own childhood was one of intolerable grief; a trial, in fact, more severe than many people at any age are called upon to stand. The relation in which the case stands to my latter opium experience is this: Those vast clouds of gloomy grandeur which overhung my dreams at all stages of opium, but which grew into the darkest of miseries in the last, and that haunting of the human face, which latterly towered into a curse,—were they not partly derived from this childish experience? It is certain that, from the essential solitude in which my childhood was passed; from the depth of my sensibility; from the exaltation of this by the resistance of an intellect too prematurely developed; it resulted that the terrific grief which I passed through drove a shaft for me into the worlds of death and darkness which never again closed, and through which it might be said that I ascended and descended at will, according to the temper of my spirits. Some of the phenomena developed in my dream-scenery, undoubtedly, do but repeat the experiences of childhood; and others seem likely to have been growths and fructifications from seeds at that time sown.

The reasons, therefore, for prefixing some account of a "passage" in childhood to this record of a dreadful visitation from opium excesses are, first, That, in coloring, it harmonizes with that record, and, therefore, is related to it at least in point of feeling; secondly, That, possibly, it was in part the

origin of some features in that record, and so far is related to it in logic; thirdly, That, the final assault of opium being of a nature to challenge the attention of medical men, it is important to clear away all doubts and scruples which can gather about the roots of such a malady. Was it opium, or was it opium in combination with something else, that raised these storms?

Some cynical reader will object, that for this last purpose it would have been sufficient to state the fact, without rehearsing in extenso the particulars of that case in childhood. But the reader of more kindness (for a surly reader is always a bad critic) will also have more discernment; and he will perceive that it is not for the mere facts that the case is reported, but because these facts move through a wilderness of natural thoughts or feelings: some in the child who suffers; some in the man who reports; but all so far interesting as they relate to solemn objects. Meantime, the objection of the sullen critic reminds me of a scene sometimes beheld at the English lakes. Figure to yourself an energetic tourist, who protests everywhere that he comes only to see the lakes. He has no business whatever; he is not searching for any recreant indorser of a bill, but simply in search of the picturesque. Yet this man adjures every landlord, "by the virtue of his oath," to tell him, and, as he hopes for peace in this world, to tell him truly, which is the nearest road to Keswick. Next, he applies to the postilions,—the Westmoreland postilions always fly down hills at full stretch without locking,—but, nevertheless, in the full career of their fiery race, our picturesque man lets down the glasses, pulls up four horses and two postilions, at the risk of six necks and twenty legs, adjuring them to reveal whether they are taking the shortest road. Finally, he descries my unworthy self upon the road; and, instantly stopping his flying equipage, he demands of me (as one whom he believes to be a scholar and a man of honor) whether there is not, in the possibility of things, a shorter cut to Keswick. Now, the answer which rises to the lips of landlord, two postilions, and myself, is this: "Most excellent stranger, as you come to the lakes simply to see their loveliness, might it not be as well to ask after the most beautiful road, rather than the shortest? Because, if abstract shortness, if τὸ brevity, is your object, then the shortest of all possible tours would seem, with submission, never to have left London." On the same principle, I tell my critic that the whole course of this narrative resembles, and was meant to resemble, a caduceus wreathed about with mean-

dering ornaments, or the shaft of a tree's stem hung round and surmounted with some vagrant parasitical plant. The mere medical subject of the opium answers to the dry, withered pole, which shoots all the rings of the flowering plants, and seems to do so by some dexterity of its own; whereas, in fact, the plant and its tendrils have curled round the sullen cylinder by mere luxuriance of theirs. Just as in Cheapside, if you look right and left, the streets so narrow, that lead off at right angles, seem quarried and blasted out of some Babylonian brick-kiln; bored, not raised artificially by the builder's hand. But, if you inquire of the worthy men who live in that neighborhood, you will find it unanimously deposed — that not the streets were quarried out of the bricks, but, on the contrary (most ridiculous as it seems), that the bricks have supervened upon the streets.

The streets did not intrude amongst the bricks, but those cursed bricks came to imprison the streets. So, also, the ugly pole — hop-pole, vine-pole, espalier, no matter what — is there only for support. Not the flowers are for the pole, but the pole is for the flowers. Upon the same analogy, view me as one (in the words of a true and most impassioned poet)¹ “*viridantem floribus hastas*”— making verdant, and gay with the life of flowers, murderous spears and halberts — things that express death in their origin (being made from dead substances that once had lived in forests), things that express ruin in their use. The true object in my “*Opium Confessions*” is not the naked physiological theme,—on the contrary, that is the ugly pole, the murderous spear, the halbert,—but those wandering musical variations upon the theme,—those parasitical thoughts, feelings, digressions, which climb up with bells and blossoms round about the arid stock; ramble away from it at times with perhaps too rank a luxuriance; but at the same time, by the eternal interest attached to the subjects of these digressions, no matter what were the execution, spread a glory over incidents that for themselves would be — less than nothing.

NOTE.

¹ Caius Valerius Flaccus.

II

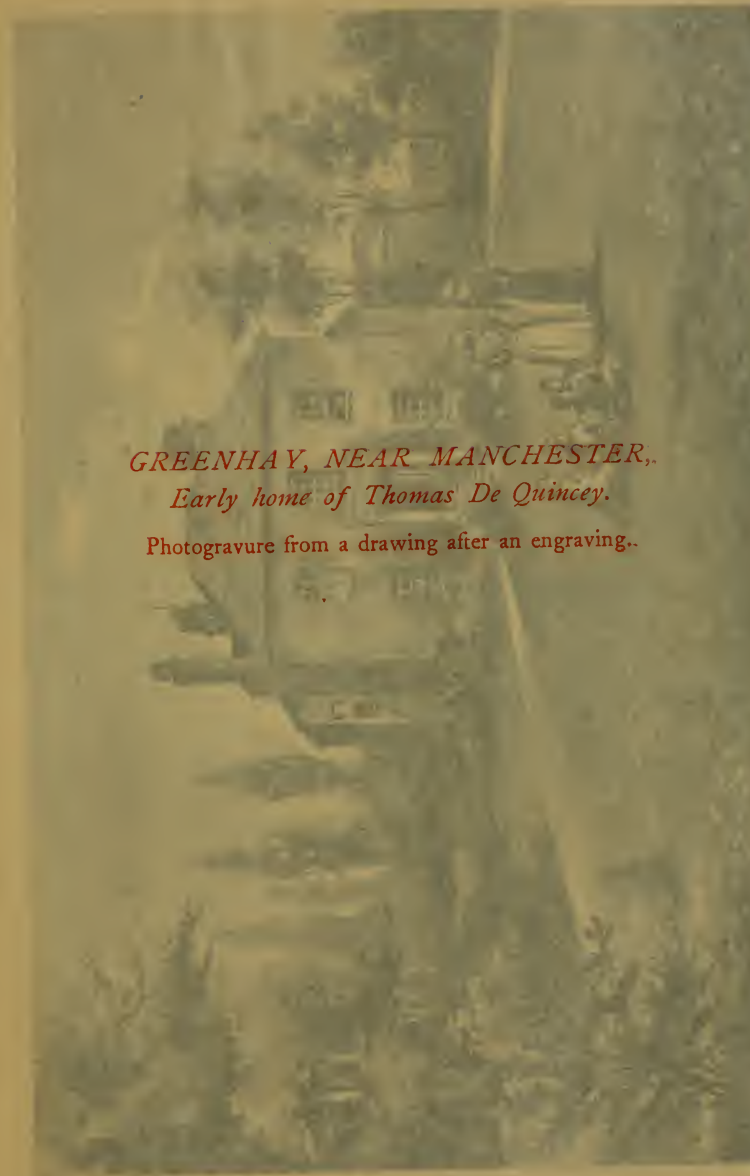
THE AFFLICTION OF CHILDHOOD

IT is so painful to a lover of open-hearted sincerity that any indirect traits of vanity should even seem to creep into records of profound passion; and yet, on the other hand, it is so impossible, without an unnatural restraint upon the freedom of the narrative, to prevent oblique gleams reaching the reader from such circumstances of luxury or elegance as did really surround my childhood, that on all accounts I think it better to tell him, from the first, with the simplicity of truth, in what order of society my family moved at the time from which this preliminary narrative is dated. Otherwise it would happen that, merely by moving truly and faithfully through the circumstances of this early experience, I could hardly prevent the reader from receiving an impression as of some higher rank than did really belong to my family. My father was a merchant; not in the sense of Scotland, where it means a man who sells groceries in a cellar, but in the English sense, a sense severely exclusive — namely, he was a man engaged in foreign commerce, and no other; therefore, in wholesale commerce, and no other — which last circumstance it is important to mention because it brings him within the benefit of Cicero's condescending distinction¹ — as one to be despised certainly, but not too intensely to be despised even by a Roman senator. He — this imperfectly despicable man — died at an early age, and very soon after the incidents here recorded, leaving to his family, then consisting of a wife and six children, an unburthened estate producing exactly £1600 a year. Naturally, therefore, at the date of my narrative, — if narrative it can be called, — he had an income still larger, from the addition of current commercial profits. Now, to any man who is acquainted with commercial life, but, above all, with such life in England, it will readily occur that in an opulent English family of that class, — opulent, though not rich in a mercantile estimate, — the domestic economy is likely to be upon a scale of liberality altogether unknown amongst the corresponding orders in foreign nations. Whether as to the establish-

ment of servants, or as to the provision made for the comfort of all its members, such a household not uncommonly eclipses the scale of living even amongst the poorer classes of our nobility, though the most splendid in Europe — a fact which, since the period of my infancy, I have had many personal opportunities for verifying both in England and in Ireland. From this peculiar anomaly, affecting the domestic economy of merchants, there arises a disturbance upon the general scale of outward signs by which we measure the relations of rank. The equation, so to speak, between one order of society and another, which usually travels in the natural line of their comparative expenditure, is here interrupted and defeated, so that one rank would be collected from the name of the occupation, and another rank, much higher, from the splendor of the domestic menage. I warn the reader, therefore (or, rather, my explanations have already warned him), that he is not to infer, from any casual gleam of luxury or elegance, a corresponding elevation of rank.

We, the children of the house, stood in fact upon the very happiest tier in the scaffolding of society for all good influences. The prayer of Agar — “Give me neither poverty nor riches” — was realized for us. That blessing had we, being neither too high nor too low: high enough we were to see models of good manners; obscure enough to be left in the sweetest of solitudes. Amply furnished with the nobler benefits of wealth, extra means of health, of intellectual culture, and of elegant enjoyment, on the other hand, we knew nothing of its social distinctions. Not depressed by the consciousness of privations too sordid, not tempted into restlessness by the consciousness of privileges too aspiring, we had no motives for shame, we had none for pride. Grateful also to this hour I am, that, amidst luxuries in all things else, we were trained to a Spartan simplicity of diet, — that we fared, in fact, very much less sumptuously than the servants. And if (after the model of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius) I should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of my early situation, these four I would single out as chiefly worthy to be commemorated — that I lived in the country; that I lived in solitude; that my infant feelings were moulded by the gentlest of sisters, not by horrid pugilistic brothers; finally, that I and they were dutiful children, of a pure, holy, and magnificent church.

The earliest incidents in my life which affected me so deeply as to be rememberable at this day were two, and both before I



GREENHAY, NEAR MANCHESTER,
Early home of Thomas De Quincey.

Photogravure from a drawing after an engraving.

ment of various orders to the provision made for the comfort of all the members of such a household with unobscured eclipses the light of being even amongst the poorest classes of our nation. Through the most splendid to be imagined, a fact which, from the period of my infancy, I have not many personal opportunities for verifying both in England and in Ireland. I find a peculiar anomaly, affecting the domestic economy of households, there arises a distinction, and an internal scale or ladder signs by which we measure the distance of rank. The distinction, so to speak, between the more opulent and wealthy, which usually travels in the same way as their comparative expenditure, is here unobscured and disclosed, so that one rank would be collected from the nature of the occupation, and another rank, much lower, from the character of the domestic menage. I warn the reader, however, not to follow my explanations, have already warned him that he is not to infer from the fact that the elevation of the

We, the children of the house, and of our very highest tier. The prayer of Agar — "Give me neither poverty nor riches" — was realized for us. That blessing had we, being neither too high nor too low: high enough to be left in the enjoyment of good manners, obscure enough to be left in the enjoyment of health. Amply furnished with the nobler benefits of health, of intellectual culture, and of moral instruction. On the other hand, we were not of the rank of the great, nor of the rank of the poor. I can remember that we were raised to a position of respect and honor, and that we were much respected by our neighbors. And I have the model of the Roman statesman, Augustus, I thank heaven thanks to Providence for my early situation, these four things: that I lived in solitude; that my education was provided by the gentlest of sisters, not by the sternest of brothers; finally, that I and they were dutiful members of a pure, holy, and magnificent church.

The earliest incidents of the life which affected me so deeply as to be remembered. My age was two, and both before I



could have completed my second year; namely, a remarkable dream of terrific grandeur about a favorite nurse, which is interesting for a reason to be noticed hereafter; and, secondly, the fact of having connected a profound sense of pathos with the reappearance, very early in the spring, of some crocuses. This I mention as inexplicable, for such annual resurrections of plants and flowers affect us only as memorials, or suggestions of a higher change, and therefore in connection with the idea of death; but of death I could, at that time, have had no experience whatever.

This, however, I was speedily to acquire. My two eldest sisters — eldest of three then living, and also older than myself — were summoned to an early death. The first who died was Jane, about a year older than myself. She was three and a half, I two and a half, plus or minus some trifle that I do not recollect. But death was then scarcely intelligible to me, and I could not so properly be said to suffer sorrow as a sad perplexity. There was another death in the house about the same time, namely, of a maternal grandmother; but as she had in a manner come to us for the express purpose of dying in her daughter's society, and from illness had lived perfectly secluded, our nursery party knew her but little, and were certainly more affected by the death (which I witnessed) of a favorite bird, namely, a kingfisher who had been injured by an accident. With my sister Jane's death (though otherwise, as I have said, less sorrowful than unintelligible) there was, however, connected an incident which made a most fearful impression upon myself, deepening my tendencies to thoughtfulness and abstraction beyond what would seem credible for my years. If there was one thing in this world from which, more than from any other, nature had forced me to revolt, it was brutality and violence. Now, a whisper arose in the family that a woman-servant, who by accident was drawn off from her proper duties to attend my sister Jane for a day or two, had on one occasion treated her harshly, if not brutally; and as this ill treatment happened within two days of her death, so that the occasion of it must have been some fretfulness in the poor child caused by her sufferings, naturally there was a sense of awe diffused through the family. I believe the story never reached my mother, and possibly it was exaggerated; but upon me the effect was terrific. I did not often see the person charged with this cruelty, but, when I did, my eyes sought the ground; nor could I have borne to look her in the face — not through anger; and as to vindictive thoughts, how

could these lodge in a powerless infant? The feeling which fell upon me was a shuddering awe, as upon a first glimpse of the truth that I was in a world of evil and strife. Though born in a large town, I had passed the whole of my childhood, except for the few earliest weeks, in a rural seclusion. With three innocent little sisters for playmates, sleeping always amongst them, and shut up forever in a silent garden from all knowledge of poverty, or oppression, or outrage, I had not suspected until this moment the true complexion of the world in which myself and my sisters were living. Henceforward the character of my thoughts must have changed greatly; for so representative are some acts, that one single case of the class is sufficient to throw open before you the whole theatre of possibilities in that direction. I never heard that the woman accused of this cruelty took it at all to heart, even after the event which so immediately succeeded had reflected upon it a more painful emphasis. On the other hand, I knew of a case, and will pause to mention it, where a mere semblance and shadow of such cruelty, under similar circumstances, inflicted the grief of self-reproach through the remainder of life. A boy, interesting in his appearance, as also from his remarkable docility, was attacked, on a cold day of spring, by a complaint of the trachea — not precisely croup, but like it. He was three years old, and had been ill, perhaps, for four days; but at intervals had been in high spirits, and capable of playing. This sunshine, gleaming through dark clouds, had continued even on the fourth day; and from nine to eleven o'clock at night he had showed more animated pleasure than ever. An old servant, hearing of his illness, had called to see him; and her mode of talking with him had excited all the joyousness of his nature. About midnight, his mother, fancying that his feet felt cold, was muffling them up in flannels; and, as he seemed to resist her a little, she struck lightly on the sole of one foot as a mode of admonishing him to be quiet. He did not repeat his motion; and in less than a minute his mother had him in her arms with his face looking upwards. "What is the meaning," she exclaimed, in sudden affright, "of this strange repose settling upon his features?" She called loudly to a servant in another room; but before the servant could reach her, the child had drawn two inspirations, deep, yet gentle — and had died in his mother's arms! Upon this, the poor afflicted lady made the discovery that those struggles, which she had supposed to be expressions of resistance to herself, were the struggles of departing life. It fol-

lowed, or seemed to follow, that with these final struggles had blended an expression, on her part, of displeasure. Doubtless the child had not distinctly perceived it; but the mother could never look back to that incident without self-reproach. And seven years afterward, when her own death happened, no progress had been made in reconciling her thoughts to that which only the depth of love could have viewed as an offence.

So passed away from earth one out of those sisters that made up my nursery playmates; and so did my acquaintance (if such it could be called) commence with mortality. Yet, in fact, I knew little more of mortality than that Jane had disappeared. She had gone away; but, perhaps, she would come back. Happy interval of heaven-born ignorance! Gracious immunity of infancy from sorrow disproportioned to its strength! I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again. Summer and winter came again — crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?

Thus easily was healed, then, the first wound in my infant heart. Not so the second. For thou, dear, noble Elizabeth, around whose ample brow, as often as thy sweet countenance rises upon the darkness, I fancy a tiara of light or a gleaming aureola in token of thy premature intellectual grandeur,— thou whose head, for its superb development, was the astonishment of science,²— thou next, but after an interval of happy years, thou also wert summoned away from our nursery; and the night which, for me, gathered upon that event, ran after my steps far into life; and perhaps at this day I resemble little for good or for ill that which else I should have been. Pillar of fire that didst go before me to guide and to quicken,— pillar of darkness, when thy countenance was turned away to God that didst too truly shed the shadow of death over my young heart,— in what scales should I weigh thee? Was the blessing greater from thy heavenly presence, or the blight which followed thy departure? Can a man weigh off and value the glories of dawn against the darkness of hurricane? Or, if he could, how is it that, when a memorable love has been followed by a memorable bereavement, even suppose that God would replace the sufferer in a point of time anterior to the entire experience and offer to cancel the woe, but so that the sweet face which had caused the woe should also be obliterated, vehemently would every man shrink from the exchange! In the "Paradise Lost," this strong instinct of man, to prefer the heavenly, mixed and polluted with the earthly, to a level experience offering neither one nor the other, is

divinely commemorated. What words of pathos are in that speech of Adam's — "If God should make another Eve," etc.; that is, if God should replace him in his primitive state, and should condescend to bring again a second Eve, one that would listen to no temptation, still that original partner of his earliest solitude —

" Creature in whom excelled
Whatever can to sight or thought be formed,
Holy, divine, good, amiable, or sweet "—

even now, when she appeared in league with an eternity of woe, and ministering to his ruin, could not be displaced for him by any better or happier Eve. "Loss of thee!" he exclaims, in this anguish of trial —

" Loss of thee
Would never from my heart; no, no, I feel
The link of nature draw me; flesh of flesh,
Bone of my bone thou art; and from thy state
Mine never shall be parted, bliss or woe." ³

But what was it that drew my heart, by gravitation so strong, to my sister? Could a child, little above six years of age, place any special value upon her intellectual forwardness? Serene and capacious as her mind appeared to me upon after review, was that a charm for stealing away the heart of an infant? O, no! I think of it now with interest, because it lends, in a stranger's ear some justification to the excess of my fondness. But then it was lost upon me; or, if not lost, was but dimly perceived. Hadst thou been an idiot, my sister, not the less I must have loved thee, having that capacious heart overflowing, even as mine overflowed, with tenderness, and stung, even as mine was stung, by the necessity of being loved. This it was which crowned thee with beauty —

" Love, the holy sense,
Best gift of God, in thee was most intense."

That lamp lighted in Paradise was kindled for me which shone so steadily in thee; and never but to thee only, never again since thy departure, durst I utter the feelings which possessed me. For I was the shyest of children; and a natural sense of personal dignity held me back at all stages of life, from exposing the least ray of feelings which I was not encouraged wholly to reveal.

It would be painful, and it is needless, to pursue the course of that sickness which carried off my leader and companion.

She (according to my recollection at this moment) was just as much above eight years as I above six. And perhaps this natural precedence of authority in judgment, and the tender humility with which she declined to assert it, had been amongst the fascinations of her presence. It was upon a Sunday evening, or so people fancied, that the spark of fatal fire fell upon that train of predispositions to a brain complaint which had hitherto slumbered within her. She had been permitted to drink tea at the house of a laboring man, the father of an old female servant. The sun had set when she returned in the company of this servant through meadows reeking with exhalations after a fervent day. From that time she sickened. Happily, a child in such circumstances feels no anxieties. Looking upon medical men as people whose natural commission it is to heal diseases, since it is their natural function to profess it, knowing them only as *ex officio* privileged to make war upon pain and sickness, I never had a misgiving about the result. I grieved, indeed, that my sister should lie in bed. I grieved still more sometimes to hear her moan. But all this appeared to me no more than a night of trouble, on which the dawn would soon arise. O! moment of darkness and delirium, when a nurse awakened me from that delusion, and launched God's thunderbolt at my heart in the assurance that my sister must die. Rightly it is said of utter, utter misery, that it "cannot be remembered." * Itself, as a remarkable thing, is swallowed up in its own chaos. Mere anarchy and confusion of mind fell upon me. Deaf and blind I was, as I reeled under the revelation. I wish not to recall the circumstances of that time, when my agony was at its height, and hers in another sense was approaching. Enough to say, that all was soon over; and the morning of that day had at last arrived which looked down upon her innocent face, sleeping the sleep from which there is no awaking, and upon me sorrowing the sorrow for which there is no consolation.

On the day after my sister's death, whilst the sweet temple of her brain was yet unviolated by human scrutiny, I formed my own scheme for seeing her once more. Not for the world would I have made this known, nor have suffered a witness to accompany me. I had never heard of feelings that take the name of "sentimental," nor dreamed of such a possibility. But grief even in a child hates the light, and shrinks from human eyes. The house was large; there were two staircases; and by one of these I knew that about noon, when all would be quiet, I could steal up into her chamber. I imagine that

it was exactly high noon when I reached the chamber door; it was locked but the key was not taken away. Entering, I closed the door so softly, that, although it opened upon a hall which ascended through all the stories, no echo ran along the silent walls. Then turning round, I sought my sister's face. But the bed had been moved, and the back was now turned. Nothing met my eyes but one large window wide open, through which the sun of midsummer at noonday was showering down torrents of splendor. The weather was dry, the sky was cloudless, the blue depths seemed the express types of infinity; and it was not possible for eye to behold or for heart to conceive any symbols more pathetic of life and the glory of life.

Let me pause for one instant in approaching a remembrance so affecting and revolutionary for my own mind, and one which (if any earthly remembrance) will survive for me in the hour of death,—to remind some readers, and to inform others, that in the original "Opium Confessions" I endeavored to explain the reason why death, *cæteris paribus*, is more profoundly affecting in summer than in other parts of the year; so far, at least, as it is liable to any modification at all from accidents of scenery or season. The reason, as I there suggested, lies in the antagonism between the tropical redundancy of life in summer and the dark sterilities of the grave. The summer we see, the grave we haunt with our thoughts; the glory is around us, the darkness is within us. And the two coming into collision, each exalts the other into stronger relief. But in my case there was even a subtler reason why the summer had this intense power of vivifying the spectacle or the thoughts of death. And, recollecting it, often I have been struck with the important truth, that far more of our deepest thoughts and feelings pass to us through perplexed combinations of concrete objects, pass to us as involutes (if I may coin that word) in compound experiences incapable of being disentangled, than ever reach us directly, and in their own abstract shapes. It had happened that amongst our nursery collection of books was the Bible illustrated with many pictures. And in long dark evenings, as my three sisters with myself sat by the firelight round the guard of our nursery, no book was so much in request amongst us. It ruled us and swayed us as mysteriously as music. One young nurse, whom we all loved, before any candle was lighted, would often strain her eyes to read it for us; and, sometimes, according to her simple powers, would endeavor to explain what we

found obscure. We, the children, were all constitutionally touched with pensiveness; the fitful gloom and sudden lambencies of the room by firelight suited our evening state of feelings; and they suited, also, the divine revelations of power and mysterious beauty which awed us. Above all, the story of a just man — man and yet not man, real above all things, and yet shadowy above all things, who had suffered the passion of death in Palestine — slept upon our minds like early dawn upon the waters. The nurse knew and explained to us the chief differences in oriental climates; and all these differences (as it happens) express themselves in the great varieties of summer. The cloudless sunlights of Syria — those seemed to argue everlasting summer; the disciples plucking the ears of corn — that must be summer; but, above all, the very name of Palm Sunday (a festival in the English church) troubled me like an anthem. "Sunday!" what was that? That was the day of peace which masked another peace deeper than the heart of man can comprehend. "Palms!" what were they? That was an equivocal word; palms, in the sense of trophies, expressed the pomps of life; palms, as a product of nature, expressed the pomps of summer. Yet still even this explanation does not suffice; it was not merely by the peace and by the summer, by the deep sound of rest below all rest, and of ascending glory, that I had been haunted. It was also because Jerusalem stood near to those deep images both in time and in place. The great event of Jerusalem was at hand when Palm Sunday came; and the scene of that Sunday was near in place to Jerusalem. Yet what then was Jerusalem? Did I fancy it to be the omphalos (navel) of the earth? That pretension had once been made for Jerusalem, and once for Delphi; and both pretensions had become ridiculous, as the figure of the planet became known. Yes; but if not of the earth, for earth's tenant, Jerusalem was the omphalos of mortality. Yet how? there, on the contrary, it was, as we infants understood, that mortality had been trampled under foot. True; but for that very reason, there it was that mortality had opened its very gloomiest crater. There it was, indeed that the human had risen on wings from the grave, but, for that reason, there also it was that the divine had been swallowed up by the abyss; the lesser star could not rise, before the greater would submit to eclipse. Summer, therefore, had connected itself with death, not merely as a mode of antagonism, but also through intricate relations to scriptural scenery and events. Out of this digression, which was almost necessary for the

purpose of showing how inextricably my feelings and images of death were entangled with those of summer, I return to the bed-chamber of my sister. From the gorgeous sunlight I turned round to the corpse. There lay the sweet childish figure; there the angel face; and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that no features had suffered any change. Had they not? The forehead, indeed — the serene and noble forehead,— that might be the same; but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish,— could these be mistaken for life? Had it been so, wherefore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses? But so it was not. I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me; and, whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow,— the most mournful that ear ever heard. Mournful! that is saying nothing. It was a wind that had swept the fields of mortality for a hundred centuries. Many times since, upon a summer day, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, solemn, Memnonian, but saintly swell. It is in this world the one sole audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life I have happened to hear the same sound in the same circumstances, namely, when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day.

Instantly, when my ear caught this vast Æolian intonation, when my eye filled with the golden fullness of life, the pomps and glory of the heavens outside, and turning when it settled upon the frost which overspread my sister's face, instantly a trance fell upon me. A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up forever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft forever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but that also ran before us and fled away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on forever and ever. Frost, gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; I slept — for how long I cannot say; slowly I recovered my self-possession, and found myself standing, as before, close to my sister's bed.

O flight of the solitary child to the solitary God — flight from the ruined corpse to the throne that could not be ruined! — how rich wert thou in truth for after years! Rapture of grief that, being too mighty for a child to sustain, foundest a happy oblivion in a heaven-born dream, and within

that sleep didst conceal a dream, whose meaning, in after years, when slowly I deciphered, suddenly there flashed upon me new light; and even by the grief of a child, as I will show you, reader, hereafter, were confounded the falsehoods of philosophers.

In the "Opium Confessions" I touched a little upon the extraordinary power connected with opium (after long use) of amplifying the dimensions of time. Space, also, it amplifies by degrees that are sometimes terrific. But time it is upon which the exalting and multiplying power of opium chiefly spends its operation. Time becomes infinitely elastic, stretching out to such immeasurable and vanishing termini, that it seems ridiculous to compute the sense of it, on waking, by expressions commensurate to human life. As in starry fields one computes by diameters of the earth's orbit, or of Jupiter's, so, in valuing the virtual time lived during some dreams, the measurement by generations is ridiculous—by millenia is ridiculous; by aeons, I should say, if aeons were more determinate, would be also ridiculous. On this single occasion, however, in my life, the very inverse phenomenon occurred. But why speak of it in connection with opium? Could a child of six years old have been under that influence? No, but simply because it so exactly reversed the operation of opium. Instead of a short interval expanding into a vast one, upon this occasion a long one had contracted into a minute. I have reason to believe that a very long one had elapsed during this wandering or suspension of my perfect mind. When I returned to myself, there was a foot (or I fancied so) on the stairs. I was alarmed; for I believed that, if anybody should detect me, means would be taken to prevent my coming again. Hastily, therefore, I kissed the lips that I should kiss no more, and slunk like a guilty thing with stealthy steps from the room. Thus perished the vision, loveliest amongst all the shows which earth has revealed to me; thus mutilated was the parting which should have lasted forever; thus tainted with fear was the farewell sacred to love and grief, to perfect love and perfect grief.

O, Ahasuerus, everlasting Jew!¹ fable or not a fable, thou when first starting on thy endless pilgrimage of woe,—thou when first flying through the gates of Jerusalem, and vainly yearning to leave the pursuing curse behind thee,—couldst not more certainly have read thy doom of sorrow in the misgivings of thy troubled brain than I when passing forever from my sister's room. The worm was at my heart; and, confining

myself to that state of life, I may say, the worm that could not die. For if, when standing upon the threshold of manhood, I had ceased to feel its perpetual gnawings, that was because a vast expansion of intellect, it was because new hopes, new necessities, and the frenzy of youthful blood, had translated me into a new creature. Man is doubtless one by some subtle nexus that we cannot perceive, extending from the new-born infant to the superannuated dotard; but as regards many affections and passions incident to his nature at different stages, he is not one; the unity of man in this respect is coextensive only with the particular stage to which the passion belongs. Some passions, as that of sexual love, are celestial by one-half of their origin, animal and earthly by the other half. These will not survive their own appropriate stage. But love, which is altogether holy, like that between two children, will revisit undoubtedly by glimpses the silence and the darkness of old age, and I repeat my belief — that, unless bodily torment should forbid it, that final experience in my sister's bed-room, or some other in which her innocence was concerned, will rise again for me, to illuminate the hour of death.

On the day following this which I have recorded, came a body of medical men to examine the brain, and the particular nature of the complaint, for in some of its symptoms it had shown perplexing anomalies. Such is the sanctity of death, and especially of death alighting on an innocent child, that even gossiping people do not gossip on such a subject. Consequently, I knew nothing of the purpose which drew together these surgeons, nor suspected anything of the cruel changes which might have been wrought in my sister's head. Long after this, I saw a similar case; I surveyed the corpse (it was that of a beautiful boy, eighteen years old, who had died of the same complaint) one hour after the surgeons had laid the skull in ruins; but the dishonors of this scrutiny were hidden by bandages, and had not disturbed the repose of the countenance. So it might have been here; but, if it were not so, then I was happy in being spared the shock, from having that marble image of peace, icy and rigid as it was, unsettled by disfiguring images. Some hours after the strangers had withdrawn, I crept again to the room; but the door was now locked, the key was taken away — and I was shut out forever.

Then came the funeral. I, as a point of decorum, was carried thither. I was put into a carriage with some gentlemen whom I did not know. They were kind to me; but naturally

they talked of things disconnected with the occasion, and their conversation was a torment. At the church, I was told to hold a white handkerchief to my eyes. Empty hypocrisy! What need had he of masques or mockeries, whose heart died within him at every word that was uttered? During that part of the service which passed within the church, I made an effort to attend; but I sank back continually into my own solitary darkness, and I heard little consciously, except some fugitive strains from the sublime chapter of St. Paul, which in England is always read at burials. And here I noticed a profound error of our present illustrious laureate. When I heard those dreadful words,—for dreadful they were to me,—“It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;” such was the recoil of my feelings, that I could even have shrieked out a protesting — “O, no, no!” if I had not been restrained by the publicity of the occasion. In after years, reflecting upon this revolt of my feelings, which, being the voice of nature in a child, must be as true as any mere opinion of a child might probably be false, I saw, at once, the unsoundness of a passage in “The Excursion.” The book is not here but the substance I remember perfectly. Mr. Wordsworth argues, that if it were not for the unsteady faith which people fix upon the beatific condition after death of those whom they deplore, nobody could be found so selfish as even secretly to wish for the restoration to earth of a beloved object. A mother, for instance, could never dream of yearning for her child, and secretly calling it back by her silent aspirations from the arms of God, if she were but reconciled to the belief that really it was in those arms. But this I utterly deny. To take my own case, when I heard those dreadful words of St. Paul applied to my sister, namely, that she should be raised a spiritual body, nobody can suppose that selfishness, or any other feeling than that of agonizing love, caused the rebellion of my heart against them. I knew already that she was to come again in beauty and power. I did not now learn this for the first time. And that thought, doubtless, made my sorrow sublimer; but also it made it deeper. For here lay the sting of it, namely, in the fatal words — “We shall be changed.” How was the unity of my interest in her to be preserved, if she were to be altered, and no longer to reflect in her sweet countenance the traces that were sculptured on my heart? Let a magician ask any woman whether she will permit him to improve her child, to raise it even from deformity to perfect beauty, if that must be done at the cost of its

identity, and there is no loving mother but would reject his proposal with horror. Or, to take a case that has actually happened, if a mother were robbed of her child, at two years old, by gypsies, and the same child were restored to her at twenty, a fine young man, but divided by a sleep as it were of death from all remembrances that could restore the broken links of their once tender connection,— would she not feel her grief unhealed, and her heart defrauded? Undoubtedly she would. All of us ask not of God for a better thing than that we have lost; we ask for the same, even with its faults and its frailties. It is true that the sorrowing person will also be changed eventually, but that must be by death. And a prospect so remote as that, and so alien from our present nature, cannot console us in an affliction which is not remote, but present — which is not spiritual, but human.

Lastly came the magnificent service which the English Church performs at the side of the grave. There is exposed once again, and for the last time, the coffin. All eyes survey the record of name, of sex, of age, and the day of departure from earth,— records how useless! and dropped into darkness as if messages addressed to worms. Almost at the very last comes the symbolic ritual, tearing and shattering the heart with volleying discharges, peal after peal, from the final artillery of woe. The coffin is lowered into its home; it has disappeared from the eye. The sacristan stands ready, with his shovel of earth and stones. The priest's voice is heard once more,—“earth to earth,” and the dread rattle ascends from the lid of the coffin; “ashes to ashes,” and again the killing sound is heard; “dust to dust,” and the farewell volley announces that the grave — the coffin — the face are sealed up forever and ever.

O, grief! thou art classed amongst the depressing passions. And true it is, that thou humblest to the dust, but also thou exaltest to the clouds. Thou shakest as with ague, but also thou steadiest like frost. Thou sickenest the heart, but also thou healest its infirmities. Among the very foremost of mine was morbid sensibility to shame. And, ten years afterwards, I used to reproach myself with this infirmity, by supposing the case, that, if it were thrown upon me to seek aid for a perishing fellow-creature, and that I could obtain that aid only by facing a vast company of critical or sneering faces, I might perhaps, shrink basely from the duty. It is true, that no such case had ever actually occurred, so that it was a mere romance of casuistry to tax myself with cowardice so shocking. But,

to feel a doubt was to feel condemnation; and the crime which might have been was in my eyes the crime which had been. Now, however, all was changed; and for anything which regarded my sister's memory, in one hour I received a new heart. Once in Westmoreland I saw a case resembling it. I saw a ewe suddenly put off and abjure her own nature, in a service of love,—yes, slough it as completely as ever serpent sloughed his skin. Her lamb had fallen into a deep trench, from which all escape was hopeless, without the aid of man. And to a man she advanced boldly, bleating clamorously, until he followed her and rescued her beloved. Not less was the change in myself. Fifty thousand sneering faces would not have troubled me in any office of tenderness to my sister's memory. Ten legions would not have repelled me from seeking her, if there was a chance that she could be found. Mockery! it was lost upon me. Laugh at me, as one or two people did! I valued not their laughter. And when I was told insultingly to cease "my girlish tears," that word "girlish" had no sting for me, except as a verbal echo to the one eternal thought of my heart,—that a girl was the sweetest thing I, in my short life, had known,—that a girl it was who had crowned the earth with beauty, and had opened to my thirst fountains of pure celestial love, from which, in this world, I was to drink no more.

Interesting it is to observe how certainly all deep feelings agree in this, that they seek for solitude, and are nursed by solitude. Deep grief, deep love, how naturally do these ally themselves with religious feeling; and all three—love, grief, religion—are haunters of solitary places. Love, grief, the passion of reverie, or the mystery of devotion,—what were these, without solitude? All day long, when it was not impossible for me to do so, I sought the most silent and sequestered nooks in the grounds about the house, or in the neighboring fields. The awful stillness occasionally of summer noons, when no winds were abroad, the appealing silence of gray or misty afternoons,—these were fascinations as of witchcraft. Into the woods or the desert air I gazed, as if some comfort lay hid in them. I wearied the heavens with my inquest of beseeching looks. I tormented the blue depths with obstinate scrutiny, sweeping them with my eyes, and searching them forever after one angelic face that might, perhaps, have permission to reveal itself for a moment. The faculty of shaping images in the distance out of slight elements, and grouping them after the yearnings of the heart, aided by a slight defect

in my eyes, grew upon me at this time. And I recall at the present moment one instance of that sort, which may show how merely shadows, or a gleam of brightness, or nothing at all, could furnish a sufficient basis for this creative faculty. On Sunday mornings I was always taken to church: it was a church on the old and natural model of England, having aisles, galleries, organs, all things ancient and venerable, and the proportions majestic. Here, whilst the congregation knelt through the long litany, as often as we came to that passage, so beautiful amongst many that are so, where God is supplicated on behalf of "all sick persons and young children," and that he would "show his pity upon all prisoners and captives,"— I wept in secret, and raising my streaming eyes to the windows of the galleries, saw, on days when the sun was shining, a spectacle as affecting as ever prophet can have beheld. The sides of the windows were rich with storied glass; through the deep purples and crimsons streamed the golden light; emblazonries of heavenly illumination mingling with the earthly emblazonries of what is grandest in man. There were the apostles that had trampled upon earth, and the glories of earth, out of celestial love to man. There were the martyrs that had borne witness to the truth through flames, through torments, and through armies of fierce insulting faces. There were the saints, who, under intolerable pangs, had glorified God by meek submission to his will. And all the time, whilst this tumult of sublime memorials held on as the deep chords from an accompaniment in the bass, I saw through the wide central field of the windows, where the glass was uncolored, white fleecy clouds sailing over the azure depths of the sky; were it but a fragment or a hint of such a cloud, immediately under the flash of my sorrow-haunted eye, it grew and shaped itself into visions of beds with white awny curtains; and in the beds lay sick children; dying children, that were tossing in anguish, and weeping clamorously for death. God, for some mysterious reason, could not suddenly release them from their pain; but he suffered the beds, as it seemed, to rise slowly through the clouds; slowly the beds ascended into the chambers of the air; slowly, also, his arms descended from the heavens, that he and his young children, whom in Judea, once and forever, he had blessed, though they must pass slowly through the dreadful chasm of separation, might yet meet the sooner. These visions were self-sustained. These visions needed not that any sound should speak to me or music mould my feelings. The hint from the litany, the fragment from the clouds,— those

and the storied windows were sufficient. But not the less the blare of the tumultuous organ wrought its own separate creations. And oftentimes in anthems, when the mighty instrument threw its vast columns of sound, fierce yet melodious, over the voices of the choir,—when it rose high in arches, as might seem, surmounting and overriding the strife of the vocal parts, and gathering by strong coercion the total storm into unity,—sometimes I seemed to walk triumphantly upon those clouds which so recently I had looked up to as mementos of prostrate sorrow, and even as ministers of sorrow in its creations; yes, sometimes under the transfigurations of music, I felt^o of grief itself as a fiery chariot for mounting victoriously above the causes of grief.

I point so often to the feelings, the ideas, or the ceremonies of religion, because there never yet was profound grief nor profound philosophy which did not inosculate at many points with profound religion. But I request the reader to understand, that of all things I was not, and could not have been, a child trained to talk of religion, least of all to talk of it controversially or polemically. Dreadful is the picture, which in books we sometimes find, of children discussing the doctrines of Christianity, and even teaching their seniors the boundaries and distinctions between doctrine and doctrine. And it has often struck me with amazement, that the two things which God made most beautiful among his works, namely, infancy and pure religion, should, by the folly of man (in yoking them together on erroneous principles), neutralize each other's beauty, or even form a combination positively hateful. The religion becomes nonsense, and the child becomes a hypocrite. The religion is transfigured into cant, and the innocent child into a dissembling liar.⁷

God, be assured, takes care for the religion of children, wheresoever his Christianity exists. Wheresoever there is a national church established, to which a child sees his friends resorting,—wheresoever he beholds all whom he honors periodically prostrate before those illimitable heavens which fill to overflowing his young, adoring heart,—wheresoever he sees the sleep of death, falling at intervals upon men and women whom he knows, depth as confounding to the plummet of his mind as those heavens ascend beyond his power to pursue,—there take you no thought for the religion of a child, any more than for the lilies how they shall be arrayed, or for the ravens how they shall feed their young.

God speaks to children, also, in dreams, and by the oracles

that lurk in darkness. But in solitude, above all things, when made vocal by the truths and services of a national church, God holds "communion undisturbed" with children. Solitude, though silent as light, is, like light, the mightiest of agencies; for solitude is essential to man. All men come into this world alone; all leave it alone. Even a little child has a dread, whispering consciousness, that if he should be summoned to travel into God's presence, no gentle nurse will be allowed to lead him by the hand, nor mother to carry him in her arms, nor little sister to share his trepidations. King and priest, warrior and maiden, philosopher and child, all must walk those mighty galleries alone. The solitude, therefore, which in this world appeals or fascinates a child's heart, is but the echo of a far deeper solitude through which already he has passed, and of another solitude, deeper still, through which he has to pass: reflex of one solitude — prefiguration of another.

O, burthen of solitude, that cleavest to man through every stage of his being! in his birth, which has been,—in his life, which is,—in his death, which shall be,—mighty and essential solitude! that wast, and art, and art to be;—thou broodest, like the spirit of God moving upon the surface of the deeps, over every heart that sleeps in the nurseries of Christendom. Like the vast laboratory of the air, which, seeming to be nothing, or less than the shadow of a shade, hides within itself the principles of all things, solitude for the child is the Agrippa's mirror of the unseen universe. Deep is the solitude in life of millions upon millions, who, with hearts welling forth love, have none to love them. Deep is the solitude of those who, with secret griefs, have none to pity them. Deep is the solitude of those, who, fighting with doubts of darkness, have none to counsel them. But deeper than the deepest of these solitudes is that which broods over childhood, bringing before it, at intervals, the final solitude which watches for it, and is waiting for it within the gates of death. Reader, I tell you a truth, and hereafter I will convince you of this truth, that for a Grecian child solitude was nothing, but for a Christian child it has become the power of God and the mystery of God. O, mighty and essential solitude, that wast, and art, and are to be! thou kindling under the torch of Christian revelations, art now transfigured forever, and hast passed from a blank negation into a secret hieroglyphic from God, shadowing in the hearts of infancy the very dimmest of his truths!

"But you forget her," says the cynic; "you happened one

day to forget this sister of yours." Why not? To cite the beautiful words of Wallenstein,—

"What pang
Is permanent with man? From the highest,
As from the vilest thing of every day,
He learns to wean himself. For the strong hours
Conquer him."⁸

Yes, there lies the fountain of human oblivions. It is Time, the great conqueror, it is the "strong hours" whose batteries storm every passion of men. For, in the fine expression of Schiller, "Was verschmerzte nicht der mensch?" What sorrow is in man that will not finally fret itself to sleep? Conquering, at last gates of brass, or pyramids of granite, why should it be a marvel to us, or a triumph to Time, that he is able to conquer a frail human heart?

However, for this once, my cynic must submit to be told that he is wrong. Doubtless, it is presumption in me to suggest that his sneers can ever go awry, any more than the shafts of Apollo. But still, however impossible such a thing is, in this one case it happens that they have. And when it happens that they do not, I will tell you, reader, why, in my opinion, it is, and you will see that it warrants no exultation in the cynic. Repeatedly I have heard a mother reproaching herself when the birth-day revolved of the little daughter whom so suddenly she had lost, with her own insensibility, that could so soon need a remembrancer of the day. But, besides that the majority of people in this world (as being people called to labour) have no time left for cherishing grief by solitude and meditation, always it is proper to ask whether the memory of the lost person were chiefly dependent upon a visual image. No death is usually half so affecting as the death of a young child from two to five years old.

But yet, for the same reason which makes the grief more exquisite, generally for such a loss it is likely to be more perishable. Wherever the image, visually or audibly, of the lost person, is more essential to the life of the grief, there the grief will be more transitory.

Faces begin soon (in Shakespeare's fine expression) to "diminish;" features fluctuate; combinations of feature unsettle. Even the expression becomes a mere idea that you can describe to another, but not an image that you can reproduce for yourself. Therefore it is that the faces of infants, though they are divine as flowers in a savanna of Texas, or as the carolling of birds in a forest, are, like flowers in Texas, and the carolling of

birds in a forest, soon overtaken by the pursuing darkness that swallows up all things human. All glories of flesh vanish; and this, the glory of infantine beauty seen in the mirror of the memory, soonest of all. But when the departed persons worked upon yourself by powers that were intellectual and moral,—powers in the flesh, though not of the flesh,—the memorials in your own heart become more steadfast, if less affecting at the first. Now, in my sister were combined for me both graces,—the graces of childhood, and the graces of expanding thought. Besides that, as regards merely the personal image, always the smooth rotundity of baby features must vanish sooner, as being less individual than the features in a child of eight, touched with a pensive tenderness, and exalted into a characteristic expression by a premature intellect.

Rarely do things perish from my memory that are worth remembering. Rubbish dies instantly. Hence it happens that passages in Latin or English poets, which I never could have read but once (and that thirty years ago), often begin to blossom anew when I am lying awake, unable to sleep. I become a distinguished compositor in the darkness: and, with my aerial composing-stick, sometimes I “set-up” half a page of verses, that would be found tolerably correct if collated with the volume that I never had in my hand but once. I mention this in no spirit of boasting. Far from it: for, on the contrary, among my mortifications have been compliments to my memory, when, in fact, any compliment that I had merited was due to the higher faculty of an electric aptitude for seizing analogies, and by means of those aerial pontoons passing over like lightning from one topic to another. Still it is a fact that this pertinacious life of memory for things that simply touch the ear, without touching the consciousness, does, in fact, beset me. Said but once, said but softly, not marked at all, words revive before me in darkness and solitude; and they arrange themselves gradually into sentences, but through an effort sometimes of a distressing kind, to which I am in a manner forced to become a party. This being so, it was no great instance of that power, that three separate passages in the funeral service, all of which but one had escaped my notice at the time, and even that one as to the part I am going to mention, but all of which must have struck on my ear, restored themselves perfectly when I was lying awake in bed; and though struck by their beauty, I was also incensed by what seemed to me the harsh sentiment expressed in two of these passages. I will cite all the three in an abbreviated form,

both for my immediate purpose, and for the indirect purpose of giving to those unacquainted with the English funeral service some specimens of its beauty.

The first passage was this: "Forasmuch as it hath pleased Almighty God, of his great mercy, to take unto himself the soul of our dear sister here departed, we therefore commit her body to the ground, earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life."

I pause to remark that a sublime effect arises at this point through a sudden rapturous interpolation from the Apocalypse, which, according to the rubric, "shall be said or sung;" but always let it be sung, and by the full choir:

"I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write from henceforth blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; even so saith the Spirit, for they rest from their labours."

The second passage, almost immediately succeeding to this awful burst of heavenly trumpets, and the one which more particularly offended me, though otherwise even then, in my seventh year, I could not but be touched by its beauty, was this: "Almighty God, with whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord, and with whom the souls of the faithful, after they are delivered from the burden of the flesh, are in joy and felicity; we give thee hearty thanks that it hath pleased thee to deliver this our sister out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching thee, that it may please thee of thy gracious goodness shortly to accomplish the number of thine elect, and to hasten thy kingdom."

In what world was I living when a man (calling himself a man of God) could stand up publicly and give God "hearty thanks" that he had taken away my sister? But, young child, understand — taken her away from the miseries of this sinful world. O yes! I hear what you say; I understand that; but that makes no difference at all. She being gone, this world doubtless (as you say) is a world of unhappiness. But for me *ubi Cæsar, ibi Roma* — where my sister was, there was paradise; no matter whether in heaven above, or on the earth beneath. And he had taken her away, cruel priest! of his "great mercy!" I did not presume, child though I was, to think rebelliously against that. The reason was not any hypocritical or canting submission where my heart yielded none, but because already my deep musing intellect had perceived a mystery and a labyrinth in the economies of this world. God, I saw, moved not as we moved — walked not as we walked — thought not as we think. Still I saw no mercy to myself, a

poor, frail, dependent creature, torn away so suddenly from the prop on which altogether it depended. O yes! perhaps there was; and many years after I came to suspect it. Nevertheless it was a benignity that pointed far ahead; such as by a child could not have been perceived, because then the great arch had not come round; could not have been recognized, if it had come round; could not have been valued, if it had even been dimly recognized.

Finally, as the closing prayer in the whole service, stood this, which I acknowledged then, and now acknowledge, as equally beautiful and consolatory; for in this was no harsh peremptory challenge to the infirmities of human grief, as to a thing not meriting notice in a religious rite. On the contrary, there was a gracious condescension from the great apostle to grief, as to a passion that he might perhaps himself have participated.

“O, merciful God! the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life, in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die; who also taught us by his holy apostle St. Paul not to be sorry, as men without hope, for them that sleep in him; we meekly beseech thee, oh Father! to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness; that, when we shall depart this life, we may rest in him as our hope is—that this our sister doth.”

Ah, that was beautiful,—that was heavenly! We might be sorry, we had leave to be sorry; only not without hope. And we were by hope to rest in Him, as this our sister doth. And howsoever a man may think that he is without hope, I, that have read the writing upon these great abysses of grief, and viewed their shadows under the correction of mightier shadows from deeper abysses since then, abysses of aboriginal fear and eldest darkness, in which yet I believe that all hope had not absolutely died, know that he is in a natural error. If, for a moment, I and so many others, wallowing in the dust of affliction, could yet rise up suddenly like the dry corpse^o which stood upright in the glory of life when touched by the bones of the prophet; if in those vast choral anthems, heard by my childish ear, the voice of God wrapt itself as in a cloud of music, saying—“Child, that sorrowest, I command thee to rise up and ascend for a season into my heaven of heavens,”—then it was plain that despair, that the anguish of darkness, was not essential to such sorrow, but might come and go even as light comes and goes upon our troubled earth.

Yes! the light may come and go; grief may wax and wane;

grief may sink; and grief again may rise as in impassioned minds oftentimes it does, even to the heaven of heavens; but there is a necessity that, if too much left to itself in solitude, finally it will descend into a depth from which there is no reascent; into a disease which seems no disease; into a languishing which, from its very sweetness, perplexes the mind, and is fancied to be very health. Witchcraft has seized upon you,— nympholepsy has struck you. Now you have no more. You acquiesce; nay, you are passionately delighted in your condition. Sweet becomes the grave, because you also hope immediately to travel thither: luxurious is the separation, because only perhaps for a few weeks shall it exist for you; and it will then prove but the brief summer night that had retarded a little, by a refinement of rapture, the heavenly dawn of reunion. Inevitable sometimes it is in solitude—that this should happen with minds morbidly meditative; that, when we stretch out our arms in darkness, vainly striving to draw back the sweet faces that have vanished, slowly arises a new stratagem of grief, and we say,—“ Be it that they no more come back to us, yet what hinders but we should go to them?”

Perilous is that crisis for the young. In its effect perfectly the same as the ignoble witchcraft of the poor African Obeah,¹⁰ this sublimer witchcraft of grief will, if left to follow its own natural course, terminate in the same catastrophe of death. Poetry, which neglects no phenomena that are interesting to the heart of man, has sometimes touched a little

“ On the sublime attractions of the grave.”

But you think that these attractions, existing at times for the adult, could not exist for the child. Understand that you are wrong. Understand that these attractions do exist for the child; and perhaps as much more strongly than they can exist for the adult, by the whole difference between the concentration of a childish love, and the inevitable distraction upon multiplied objects of any love that can affect any adult. There is a German superstition (well known by a popular translation) of the Erl-king's Daughter, who fixes her love upon some child, and seeks to wile him away into her own shadowy kingdom in forests.

“ Who is it that rides through the forest so fast?”

It is a knight, who carries his child before him on the saddle. The Erl-King's Daughter rides on his right hand, and still whispers temptations to the infant audible only to him.

“If thou wilt, dear baby, with me go away,
We will see a fine show, we will play a fine play.”

The consent of the baby is essential to her success. And finally she does succeed. Other charms, other temptations, would have been requisite for me. My intellect was too advanced for those fascinations. But could the Erl-king's Daughter have revealed herself to me, and promised to lead me where my sister was, she might have wiled me by the hand into the dimmest forests upon earth. Languishing was my condition at that time. Still I languished for things “which” (a voice from heaven seemed to answer through my own heart) “cannot be granted;” and which, when again I languished, again the voice repeated, “cannot be granted.”

Well it was for me that, at this crisis, I was summoned to put on the harness of life by commencing my classical studies under one of my guardians, a clergyman of the English Church, and (so far as regarded Latin) a most accomplished scholar.

At the very commencement of my new studies there happened an incident which afflicted me much for a short time, and left behind a gloomy impression, that suffering and wretchedness were diffused amongst all creatures that breathe. A person had given me a kitten. There are three animals which seem, beyond all others, to reflect the beauty of human infancy in two of its elements—namely, joy and guileless innocence, though less in its third element of simplicity, because that requires language for its full expression: these three animals are the kitten, the lamb, and the fawn. Other creatures may be as happy, but they do not show it so much. Great was the love which poor silly I had for this little kitten; but, as I left home at ten in the morning, and did not return till near five in the afternoon, I was obliged, with some anxiety, to throw it for those seven hours upon its own discretion, as infirm a basis for reasonable hope as could be imagined. I did not wish the kitten, indeed, at all less foolish than it was, except just when I was leaving home, and then its exceeding folly gave me a pang. Just about that time, it happened that we had received, as a present from Leicestershire, a fine young Newfoundland dog, who was under a cloud of disgrace for crimes of his youthful blood committed in that county. One day he had taken too great a liberty with a prettily little cousin of mine, Emma H——, about four years old. He had, in fact, bitten off her cheek, which, remaining attached by a shred, was, through the energy of a governess, replaced, and subsequently healed without a scar. His name being Turk, he was immediately pro-

nounced by the best Greek scholar of that neighborhood, *ἐπινομιος*, (that is, named significantly, or reporting his nature in his name). But as Miss Emma confessed to having been engaged in taking away a bone from him, on which subject no dog can be taught to understand a joke, it did not strike our own authorities that he was to be considered in a state of reprobation; and as our gardens (near to a great town) were, on account chiefly of melons, constantly robbed, it was held that a moderate degree of fierceness was rather a favorable trait in his character. My poor kitten, it was supposed, had been engaged in the same playful trespass upon Turk's property as my Leicestershire cousin, and Turk laid her dead on the spot. It is impossible to describe my grief when the case was made known to me at five o'clock in the evening, by a man's holding out the little creature dead: she that I had left so full of glorious life — life which even in a kitten is infinite,— was now stretched in motionless repose. I remember that there was a large coal-stack in the yard. I dropped my Latin books, sat down upon a huge block of coal, and burst into a passion of tears. The man, struck with my tumultuous grief, hurried into the house; and from the lower regions deployed instantly the women of the laundry and the kitchen. No one subject is so absolutely sacred, and enjoys so classical a sanctity among servant-girls, as 1. Grief; and 2. Love which is unfortunate. All the young women took me up in their arms and kissed me; and, last of all, an elderly woman, who was the cook, not only kissed me, but wept so audibly, from some suggestion doubtless of grief personal to herself, that I threw my arms about her neck and kissed her also. It is probable, as I now suppose, that some account of my grief for my sister had reached them. Else I was never allowed to visit their region of the house. But, however that might be, afterwards it struck me, that if I had met with so much sympathy, or with any sympathy at all, from the servant chiefly connected with myself in the desolating grief I had suffered, possibly I should not have been so profoundly shaken.

But did I in the meantime feel anger towards Turk? Not the least. And the reason was this: My guardian, who taught me Latin, was in the habit of coming over and dining at my mother's table whenever he pleased. On these occasions, he, who like myself pitied dependent animals, went invariably into the yard of the offices, taking me with him, and unchained the dogs. There were two,—Grim, a mastiff, and Turk, our young friend. My guardian was a bold, athletic

man, and delighted in dogs. He told me, which also my own heart told me, that these poor dogs languished out their lives under this confinement. The moment that I and my guardian (*ego et rex meus*) appeared in sight of the two kennels, it is impossible to express the joy of the dogs. Turk was usually restless; Grim slept away his life in surliness. But at the sight of us,— of my little insignificant self and my six-foot guardian,— both dogs yelled with delight. We unfastened their chains with our own hands, they licking our hands; and as to myself licking my miserable little face; and at one bound they reentered upon their natural heritage of joy. Always we took them through the fields, where they molested nothing, and closed with giving them a cold bath in the brook which bounded my father's property. What despair must have possessed our dogs when they were taken back to their hateful prisons! and I, for my part, not enduring to see their misery, slunk away when their rechaining commenced. It was in vain to tell me that all people, who had property out of doors to protect, chained up dogs in the same way. This only proved the extent of the oppression; for a monstrous oppression it did seem, that creatures, boiling with life and the desires of life, should be thus detained in captivity until they were set free by death. That liberation visited poor Grim and Turk sooner than any of us expected, for they were both poisoned, within the year that followed, by a party of burglars. At the end of that year, I was reading the *Æneid*; and it struck me, who remembered the howling recusancy of Turk, as a peculiarly fine circumstance, introduced amongst the horrors of Tartarus, that sudden gleam of powerful animals, full of life and conscious rights, rebelling against chains:—

“ *Iræque leonum
Vincla recusantum.*”¹¹

Vergil had doubtless picked up that gem in his visits at seeding-time to the caveæ of the Roman amphitheatre. But the rights of brute creatures to a merciful forbearance on the part of man could not enter into the feeblest conceptions of one belonging to a nation that (although too noble to be wantonly cruel) yet in the same amphitheatre manifested so little regard even to human rights. Under Christianity the condition of the brute has improved, and will improve much more. There is ample room. For, I am sorry to say, that the commonest vice of Christian children, too often surveyed with careless eyes by mothers that in their human relations are full of kindness, is

cruelty to the inferior creatures thrown upon their mercy. For my own part, what had formed the ground-work of my happiness (since joyous was my nature, though overspread with a cloud of sadness) had been from the first a heart overflowing with love. And I had drunk in too profoundly the spirit of Christianity from our many nursery readings, not to read also in its divine words the justification of my own tendencies. That which I desired was the thing which I ought to desire; the mercy that I loved was the mercy that God had blessed. From the Sermon on the Mount resounded forever in my ears — “Blessed are the merciful!” I needed not to add — “For they shall obtain mercy.” By lips so holy and when standing in the atmosphere of truths so divine, simply to have been blessed — that was a sufficient ratification; every truth so revealed, and so hallowed by position, starts into sudden life, and becomes to itself its own authentication, needing no proof to convince,— needing no promise to allure.

It may well be supposed, therefore, that having so early awakened within me what may be philosophically called the transcendental justice of Christianity, I blamed not Turk for yielding to the coercion of his nature. He had killed the object of my love. But, besides that he was under the constraint of a primary appetite, Turk was himself the victim of a killing oppression. He was doomed to a fretful existence so long as he should exist at all. Nothing could reconcile this to my benignity, which at that time rested upon two pillars,— upon the deep, deep heart which God had given to me at my birth, and upon exquisite health. Up to the age of two, and almost through that entire space of twenty-four months, I had suffered from ague; but when that left me, all germs and traces of ill health fled away forever, except only such (and those how curable!) as I inherited from my school-boy distresses in London, or had created by means of opium. Even the long ague was not without ministrations of favor to my prevailing temper; and, on the whole, no subject for pity, since naturally it won for me the sweet caresses of female tenderness, both young and old. I was a little petted; but you see by this time, reader, that I must have been too much of a philosopher, even in the year one ab urbe condita of my frail earthly tenement, to abuse such indulgence. It also won for me a ride on horseback whenever the weather permitted. I was placed on a pillow, in front of a cankered old man, upon a large white horse, not so young as I was, but still showing traces of blood. And even the old man, who was both the oldest and the worst of the

three, talked with gentleness to myself, reserving his surliness for all the rest of the world.

These things pressed with a gracious power of incubation upon my predispositions; and in my overflowing love I did things fitted to make the reader laugh, and sometimes fitted to bring myself into perplexity. One instance from a thousand may illustrate the combination of both effects. At four years old, I had repeatedly seen the housemaid raising her long broom, and pursuing (generally destroying) a vagrant spider. The holiness of all life, in my eyes, forced me to devise plots for saving the poor doomed wretch; and thinking intercession likely to prove useless, my policy was, to draw off the housemaid on pretence of showing her a picture, until the spider, already en route, should have had time to escape. Very soon, however, the shrewd housemaid, marking the coincidence of these picture exhibitions with the agonies of fugitive spiders, detected my stratagem; so that, if the reader will pardon an expression borrowed from the street, henceforwards the picture was "no go." However, as she approved of my motive, she told me of the many murders that the spider had committed, and next (which was worse) of the many that he certainly would commit, if reprieved. This staggered me. I could have gladly forgiven the past, but it did seem a false mercy to spare one spider in order to scatter death amongst fifty flies. I thought timidly, for a moment, of suggesting that people sometimes repented, and that he might repent; but I checked myself, on considering that I had never read any account, and that she might laugh at the idea, of a penitent spider. To desist was a necessity, in these circumstances. But the difficulty which the housemaid had suggested did not depart; it troubled my musing mind to perceive that the welfare of one creature might stand upon the ruin of another; and the case of the spider remaining thenceforwards ever more perplexing to my understanding than it was painful to my heart.

The reader is likely to differ from me upon the question, moved by recurring to such experiences of childhood, whether much value attaches to the perceptions and intellectual glimpses of a child. Children, like men, range through a gamut that is infinite, of temperaments and characters, ascending from the very dust below our feet to highest heaven. I have seen children that were sensual, brutal, devilish. But, thanks be to the vis medicatrix of human nature, and to the goodness of God, these are as rare exhibitions as all other monsters. People thought, when seeing such odious travesties

and burlesques upon lovely human infancy, that perhaps the little wretches might be Kilcrops. Yet, possibly (it has since occurred to me), even these children of the fiend, as they seemed, might have one chord in their horrible natures that answered to the call of some sublime purpose. There is a mimic instance of this kind, often found amongst ourselves in natures that are not really "horrible," but which seem such to persons viewing them from a station not sufficiently central:— Always there are mischievous boys in a neighborhood,— boys who tie canisters to the tails of cats belonging to ladies,— a thing which greatly I disapprove; and who rob orchards,— a thing which slightly I disapprove; and, behold! the next day, on meeting the injured ladies, they say to me, "O, my dear friend, never pretend to argue for him! This boy, we shall all see, will come to be hanged." Well, that seems a disagreeable prospect for all parties; so I change the subject; and, lo! five years later, there is an English frigate fighting with a frigate of heavier metal (no matter of what nation). The noble captain has manœuvred as only his countrymen can manœuvre; he has delivered his broadsides as only the proud islanders can deliver them. Suddenly he sees the opening for a coup-de-main; through his speaking-trumpet he shouts, "Where are my boarders?" And instantly rise upon the deck, with the gayety of boyhood, in white shirt-sleeves bound with black ribands, fifty men, the elite of the crew; and, behold! at the very head of them, cutlass in hand, is our friend, the tier of canisters to the tails of ladies' cats,— a thing which greatly I disapprove, and also the robber of orchards,— a thing which slightly I disapprove. But here is a man that will not suffer you either greatly or slightly to disapprove him. Fire celestial burns in his eye; his nation — his glorious nation — is in his mind, himself he regards no more than the life of a cat, or the ruin of a canister. On the deck of the enemy he throws himself with rapture, and if he is amongst the killed,— if he, for an object so gloriously unselfish, lays down with joy his life and glittering youth,— mark this, that, perhaps, he will not be the least in heaven.

But coming back to the case of childhood, I maintain steadfastly that into all the elementary feelings of man children look with more searching gaze than adults. My opinion is, that where circumstances favor, where the heart is deep, where humility and tenderness exist in strength, where the situation is favourable as to solitude and as to genial feelings, children have a specific power of contemplating the truth, which departs as they enter the world. It is clear to me, that children, upon

elementary paths which require no knowledge of the world to unravel, tread more firmly than men; have a more pathetic sense of the beauty which lies in justice; and, according to the immortal ode of our great laureate "On the Intimations of Immortality in Childhood," a far closer communion with God. I, if you observe, do not much intermeddle with religion, properly so called. My path lies on the interspace between religion and philosophy, that connects them both. Yet here, for once, I shall trespass on grounds not properly mine, and desire you to observe in St. Matthew, chapter xxi., and verse 15, who were those that, crying in the temple, made the first public recognition of Christianity. Then, if you say, "O, but children echo what they hear, and are no independent authorities." I must request you to extend your reading into verse 16, where you will find that the testimony of these children, as bearing an original value was ratified by the highest testimony; and the recognition of these children did itself receive a heavenly recognition. And this could not have been, unless there were children in Jerusalem who saw into truth with a far sharper eye than Sanhedrims and Rabbis.

It is impossible, with respect to any memorable grief, that it can be adequately exhibited so as to indicate the enormity of the convulsion which really it caused, without viewing it under a variety of aspects,—a thing which is here almost necessary for the effect of proportion to what follows: first, for instance, in its immediate pressure, so stunning and confounding; secondly, in its oscillations, as in its earlier agitations, frantic with tumults, that borrow the wings of the winds; or in its diseased impulses of sick, languishing desire, through which sorrow transforms itself to a sunny angel, that beckons us to a sweet repose. These phases of revolving affection I have already sketched. And I shall also sketch a third, that is, where the affliction, seemingly hushing itself to sleep, suddenly soars upwards again upon combining with another mode of sorrow, namely, anxiety without definite limits, and the trouble of a reproaching conscience. As sometimes,¹² upon the English lakes, water-fowl that have careered in the air until the eye is wearied with the eternal wheelings of their inimitable flight — Grecian simplicities of motion, amidst a labyrinthine infinity of curves that would baffle the geometry of Apollonius — seek the water at last, as if with some settled purpose (you imagine) of reposing. Ah, how little have you understood the omnipotence of that life which they inherit! They want no rest: they laugh at resting; all is "make believe," as when an infant hides

its laughing face behind its mother's shawl. For a moment it is still. Is it meaning to rest? Will its impatient heart endure to lurk there for long? Ask, rather, if a cataract will stop from fatigue. Will a sunbeam sleep on its travels? or the Atlantic rest from its labours? As little can the infant, as little can the water-fowl of the lakes, suspend their play, except as a variety of play, or rest unless when nature compels them. Suddenly starts off the infant, suddenly ascend the birds, to new evolutions as incalculable as the caprices of a kaleidoscope; and the glory of their motions, from the mixed immortalities of beauty and inexhaustible variety, becomes at least pathetic to survey. So also, and with such life of variation, do the primary convulsions of nature—such, perhaps, as only primary³⁸ formations in the human system can experience—come round again and again by reverberating shocks.

The new intercourse with my guardian, and the changes of scene which naturally it led to, were of use in weaning my mind from the mere disease which threatened it in case I had been left any longer to my total solitude. But out of these changes grew an incident which restored my grief, though in a more troubled shape, and now for the first time associated with something like remorse and deadly anxiety. I can safely say that this was my earliest trespass, and perhaps a venial one, all things considered. Nobody ever discovered it; and but for my own frankness it would not be known to this day. But that I could not know; and for years,—that is, from seven or earlier up to ten,—such was my simplicity, that I lived in constant terror. This, though it revived my grief, did me probably great service; because it was no longer a state of languishing desire tending to torpor, but of feverish irritation and gnawing care, that kept alive the activity of my understanding. The case was this: It happened that I had now, and commencing with my first introduction to Latin studies, a large weekly allowance of pocket money,—too large for my age, but safely intrusted to myself, who never spent or desired to spend one fraction of it upon anything but books. But all proved too little for my colossal schemes. Had the Vatican, the Bodleian, and the Bibliotheque du Roi, been all emptied into one collection, for my private gratification, little progress would have been made towards content in this particular craving. Very soon I had run ahead of my allowance, and was about three guineas deep in debt. There I paused; for deep anxiety now began to oppress me as to the course in which this mysterious (and indeed guilty) current of debt would finally flow.

For the present it was frozen up; but I had some reason for thinking that Christmas thawed all debts whatsoever, and set them in motion towards innumerable pockets. Now my debt would be thawed with all the rest; and in what direction would it flow? There was no river that would carry it off to sea; to somebody's pocket it would beyond a doubt make its way and who was that somebody? This question haunted me forever. Christmas had come, Christmas had gone, and I heard nothing of the three guineas. But I was not easier for that. Far rather I would have heard of it; for this indefinite approach of a loitering catastrophe gnawed and fretted my feelings. No Grecian audience ever waited with more shuddering horror for the anagnorisis¹⁴ of the Oedipus, than I for the explosion of my debt. Had I been less ignorant, I should have proposed to mortgage my weekly allowance for the debt, or to form a sinking fund for redeeming it; for the weekly sum was nearly five per cent on the entire debt. But I had a mysterious awe of ever alluding to it. This arose from my want of some confidential friend; whilst my grief pointed continually to the remembrance, that so it had not always been. But was not the bookseller to blame in suffering a child scarcely seven years old to contract such a debt? Not in the least. He was both a rich man, who could not possibly care for my trifling custom, and notoriously an honourable man. Indeed, the money which I myself spent every week in books would reasonably have caused him to presume that so small a sum as three guineas might well be authorized by my family. He stood, however, on plainer ground; for my guardian, who was very indolent (as people chose to call it),—that is, like his little melancholy ward, spent all his time in reading,—often enough would send me to the bookseller's with a written order for books. This was to prevent my forgetting. But when he found that such a thing as "forgetting," in the case of a book, was wholly out of the question for me, the trouble of writing was dismissed. And thus I had become factor-general, on the part of my guardian, both for his books, and for such as were wanted on my own account, in the natural course of my education. My private "little account" had therefore in fact flowed homewards at Christmas, not (as I anticipated) in the shape of an independent current, but as a little tributary rill, that was lost in the waters of some more important river. This I now know, but could not then have known with any certainty. So far, however, the affair would gradually have sunk out of my anxieties as time wore on. But there was another item in the

case, which, from the excess of my ignorance, preyed upon my spirits far more keenly; and this, keeping itself alive, kept also the other incident alive. With respect to the debt, I was not so ignorant as to think it of much danger by the mere amount,—my own allowance furnished a scale for preventing that mistake;—it was the principle,—the having presumed to contract debts on my own account,—that I feared to have exposed. But this other case was a ground for anxiety, even as regarded the amount; not really, but under the jesting representation made to me, which I (as ever before and after) swallowed in perfect faith. Amongst the books which I had bought, all English, was a history of Great Britain, commencing, of course, with Brutus and a thousand years of impossibilities; these fables being generously thrown in as a little gratuitous extra to the mass of truths which were to follow. This was to be completed in sixty or eighty parts, I believe. But there was another work left more indefinite as to its ultimate extent, and which, from its nature, seemed to imply a far higher range. It was a general history of navigation, supported by a vast body of voyages. Now, when I considered with myself what a huge thing the sea was, and that so many thousands of captains, commodores, admirals, were eternally running up and down it, and scoring lines upon its face so rankly, that in some of the main “streets” and “squares” (as one might call them), their tracts would blend into one undistinguishable blot, I began to fear that such a work tended to infinity. What was little England to the universal sea? And yet that went perhaps to fourscore parts. Not enduring the uncertainty that now besieged my tranquillity, I resolved to know the worst; and, on a day ever memorable to me, I went down to the bookseller’s. He was a mild, elderly man, and to myself had always shown a kind, indulgent manner. Partly, perhaps, he had been struck by my extreme gravity; and partly, during the many conversations had with him, on occasion of my guardian’s orders for books, with my laughable simplicity. But there was another reason which had early won for me his paternal regard. For the first three or four months I had found Latin something of a drudgery; and the incident which forever knocked away the “shores,” at that time preventing my launch upon the general bosom of Latin literature, was this: One day the bookseller took down a Beza’s Latin Testament; and, opening it, asked me to translate for him the chapter which he pointed to. I was struck by perceiving that it was the great chapter of St. Paul on the grave and resurrection. I

had never seen a Latin version; yet, from the simplicity of the scriptural style in any translation (though Beza's is far from good), I could not well have failed in construing. But, as it happened to be this particular chapter, which in English I had read again and again with so passionate a sense of its grandeur, I read it off with a fluency and effect like some great opera singer uttering a rapturous bravura. My kind old friend expressed himself gratified, making me a present of the book as a mark of his approbation. And it is remarkable, that from this moment, when the deep memory of the English words had forced me into seeing the precise correspondence of the two concurrent streams,—Latin and English,—never again did any difficulty arise to check the velocity of my progress in this particular language. At less than eleven years of age, when as yet I was a very indifferent Grecian, I had become a brilliant master of Latinity, as my *alcaics* and *choriambics* remain to testify; and the whole occasion of a change so memorable to a boy, was this casual summons to translate a composition with which my heart was filled. Ever after this he showed me a caressing kindness, and so condescendingly, that, generally, he would leave any people, for a moment, with whom he was engaged, to come and speak to me. On this fatal day, however,—for such it proved to me,—he could not do this. He saw me, indeed, and nodded, but could not leave a party of elderly strangers. This accident threw me unavoidably upon one of his young people. Now, this was a market day, and there was a press of country people present, whom I did not wish to hear my question. Never did a human creature, with his heart palpitating at Delphi for the solution of some killing mystery, stand before the priestess of the oracle, with lips that moved more sadly than mine, when now advancing to a smiling young man at a desk. His answer was to decide, though I could not exactly know that, whether, for the next two years, I was to have an hour of peace. He was a handsome, good-natured young man, but full of fun and frolic; and I dare say was amused with what must have seemed to him the absurd anxiety of my features. I described the work to him, and he understood me at once. How many volumes did he think it would extend to? There was a whimsical expression, perhaps, of drollery about his eyes, but which, unhappily, under my preconceptions, I translated into scorn, as he replied: "How many volumes? O! really, I can't say; maybe a matter of fifteen thousand, be the same more or less." "More?" I said, in horror, altogether neglecting the contingency of "less."

“Why,” he said, “we can settle these things to a nicety. But, considering the subject” [aye, that was the very thing which I myself considered], “I should say there might be some trifle over, as suppose four hundred or five hundred volumes, be the same more or less.” What, then,—here there might be supplements to supplements,—the work might positively never end! On one pretence or another, if an author or publisher might add five hundred volumes, he might add another round fifteen thousand. Indeed, it strikes one even now, that by the time all the one-legged commodores and yellow admirals of that generation had exhausted their long yarns, another generation would have grown another crop of the same gallant spinners. I asked no more, but slunk out of the shop, and never again entered it with cheerfulness, or propounded any frank questions, as heretofore. For I was now seriously afraid of pointing attention to myself as one that, by having purchased some numbers, and obtained others on credit, had silently contracted an engagement to take all the rest, though they should stretch to the crack of doom. Certainly I had never heard of a work that extended to fifteen thousand volumes; but still there was no natural impossibility that it should; and, in any case, in none so reasonably as one upon the inexhaustible sea. Besides, any slight mistake as to the letter of the number could not affect the horror of the final prospect. I saw by the imprint, and I heard, that this work emanated from London, a vast centre of mystery to me, and the more so, as a thing unseen at any time by my eyes, and nearly two hundred miles distant. I felt the fatal truth, that here was a ghostly cobweb radiating into all the provinces from the mighty metropolis. I secretly had trodden upon the outer circumference,—had damaged or deranged the fine threads or links,—concealment or reparation there could be none. Slowly, perhaps, but surely, the vibration would travel back to London. The ancient spider that sat there at the centre would rush along the net-work through all longitudes and latitudes, until he found the responsible caitiff, author of so much mischief. Even with less ignorance than mine, there was something to appal a child’s imagination in the vast systematic machinery by which any elaborate work could disperse itself, could levy money, could put questions and get answers,—all in profound silence, nay, even in darkness, searching every nook of every town and of every hamlet in so populous a kingdom. I had some dim terrors, also, connected with the Stationer’s Company. I had often observed them in popular works threatening unknown

men with unknown chastisements, for offences equally unknown; nay, to myself, absolutely inconceivable. Could I be the mysterious criminal so long pointed out, as it were, in prophecy? I figured the stationers, doubtless all powerful men, pulling at one rope, and my unhappy self hanging at the other end. But an image, which seems now even more ludicrous than the rest, at that time, was the one most connected with the revival of my grief. It occurred to my subtlety, that the Stationers' Company, or any other company, could not possibly demand the money until they had delivered the volumes. And, as no man could say that I had ever positively refused to receive them, they would have no pretence for not accomplishing this delivery in a civil manner. Unless I should turn out to be no customer at all, at present it was clear that I had a right to be considered a most excellent customer; one, in fact, who had given an order for fifteen thousand volumes. Then rose up before me this great opera-house "scena" of the delivery. There would be a ring at the front door. A waggoner in the front, with a bland voice, would ask for "a young gentleman who had given an order to their house." Looking out, I should perceive a procession of carts and wagons, all advancing in measured movements; each in turn would present its rear, deliver its cargo of volumes, by shooting them, like a load of coals, on the lawn, and wheel off to the rear, by way of clearing the road for its successors. Then the impossibility of even asking the servants to cover with sheets, or counterpanes, or table-cloths, such a mountainous, such a "star-y-pointing" record of my past offences, lying in so conspicuous a situation! Men would not know my guilt merely, they would see it. But the reason why this form of the consequences, so much more than any other, stuck by my imagination was, that it connected itself with one of the "Arabian Nights" which had particularly interested myself and my sister. It was that tale, where a young porter, having his ropes about his person, had stumbled into the special "preserve" of some old magician. He finds a beautiful lady imprisoned, to whom (and not without prospects of success) he recommends himself as a suitor more in harmony with her own years than a withered magician. At this crisis, the magician returns. The young man bolts, and for that day successfully; but unluckily he leaves his ropes behind. Next morning he hears the magician, too honest by half, inquiring at the front door, with much expression of condolence, for the unfortunate young man who had lost his ropes in his own zenana. Upon this story I used

to amuse my sister by ventriloquizing to the magician, from the lips of the trembling young man,— “O, Mr. Magician, these ropes cannot be mine! They are far too good; and one wouldn't like, you know, to rob some other poor young man. If you please, Mr. Magician, I never had money enough to buy so beautiful a set of ropes.” But argument is thrown away upon a magician, and off he sets on his travels with the young porter, not forgetting to take the ropes along with him.

Here now was the case, that had once seemed so impressive to me in a mere fiction from a far distant age and land, literally reproduced in myself. For, what did it matter whether a magician dunned one with old ropes for his engine of torture, or Stationers' Hall with fifteen thousand volumes (in the rear of which there might also be ropes)? Should I have ventriloquized, would my sister have laughed, had either of us but guessed the possibility that I myself, and within one twelve months, and, alas! standing alone in the world as regarded confidential counsel, should repeat within my own inner experience the shadowy panic of the young Bagdat intruder upon the privacy of magicians? It appeared, then, that I had been reading a legend concerning myself in the “Arabian Nights.” I had been contemplated in types a thousand years before, on the banks of the Tigris. It was horror and grief that promoted that thought.

O, heavens! that the misery of a child should by possibility become the laughter of adults!—that even I, the sufferer, should be capable of amusing myself, as if it had been a jest, with what for three years had constituted the secret affliction of my life, and its eternal trepidation—like the ticking of a death-watch to patients lying awake in the plague! I durst ask no counsel; there was no one to ask. Possibly my sister could have given me none in a case which neither of us should have understood, and where to seek for information from others would have been at once to betray the whole reason for seeking it. But, if no advice, she would have given me her pity, and the expression of her endless love; and, with the relief of sympathy, that heals for a season all distresses, she would have given me that exquisite luxury—the knowledge that, having parted with my secret, yet also I had not parted with it, since it was in the power only of one that could much less betray me than I could betray myself. At this time,—that is, about the year when I suffered most,—I was reading Cæsar. O, laurelled scholar, sunbright intellect, “foremost man of all this world,” how often did I make out of thy

immortal volume a pillow to support my wearied brow, as at evening, on my homeward road, I used to turn into some silent field, where I might give way unobserved to the reveries which besieged me! I wondered, and found no end of wondering, at the revolution that one short year had made in my happiness. I wondered that such billows could overtake me. At the beginning of that year, how radiantly happy! At the end, how insupportably alone!

"Into what depth thou seest,
From what height fallen."

Forever I searched the abysses with some wandering thoughts unintelligible to myself. Forever I dallied with some obscure notion, how my sister's love might be made in some dim way available for delivering me from misery; or else how the misery I had suffered and was suffering might be made, in some way equally dim, the ransom for winning back her love.

Here pause, reader! Imagine yourself seated in some cloud-scaling swing, oscillating under the impulse of lunatic hands; for the strength of lunacy may belong to human dreams, the fearful caprice of lunacy, and the malice of lunacy, whilst the victim of those dreams may be all the more certainly removed from lunacy; even as a bridge gathers cohesion and strength from the increasing resistance into which it is forced by increasing pressure. Seated in such a swing, fast as you reach the lowest point of depression, may you rely on racing up to a starry altitude of corresponding ascent. Ups and downs you will see, heights and depths, in our fiery course together, such as will sometimes tempt you to look shyly and suspiciously at me, your guide, and the ruler of the oscillations. Here, at the point where I have called a halt, the reader has reached the lowest depths in my nursery afflictions. From that point, according to the principles of art which govern the movement of these Confessions, I had meant to launch him upwards through the whole arch of ascending visions which seemed requisite to balance the sweep downwards, so recently described in his course. But accidents of the press have made it impossible to accomplish this purpose in the present month's journal. There is reason to regret that the advantages of position, which were essential to the full effect of passages planned for the equipoise and mutual resistance, have thus been lost. Meantime, upon the principle of the

mariner, who rigs a jury-mast in default of his regular spars, I find my resource in a sort of "jury" peroration, not sufficient in the way of a balance by its proportions, but sufficient to indicate the quality of the balance which I had contemplated. He who has really read the preceding parts of these present Confessions will be aware that a stricter scrutiny of the past, such as was natural after the whole economy of the dreaming faculty had been convulsed beyond all precedents on record, led me to the conviction that not one agency, but two agencies, had coöperated to the tremendous result. The nursery experience had been the ally and the natural coefficient of the opium. For that reason it was that the nursery experience has been narrated. Logically it bears the very same relation to the convulsions of the dreaming faculty as the opium. The idealizing tendency existed in the dream-theatre of my childhood; but the preternatural strength of its action and colouring was first developed after the confluence of the two causes. The reader must suppose me at Oxford; twelve and a half years are gone by; I am in the glory of youthful happiness: but I have now first tampered with opium; and now first the agitations of my childhood reopened in strength, now first they swept in upon the brain with power, and the grandeur of recovered life, under the separate and the concurring inspirations of opium.

Once again, after twelve years' interval, the nursery of my childhood expanded before me: my sister was moaning in bed; I was beginning to be restless with fears not intelligible to myself. Once again the nurse, but now dilated to colossal proportions, stood as upon some Grecian stage with her uplifted hand, and like the superb Medea standing alone with her children in the nursery at Corinth,¹⁵ smote me senseless to the ground. Again I was in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomps of life rose up in silence, the glory of summer, the frost of death. Dream formed itself mysteriously within dream; within these Oxford dreams remoulded itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber,—the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of "Him that sate thereon;" the flight, the pursuit, the irrecoverable steps of my return to earth. Once more the funeral procession gathered; the priest in his white surplice stood waiting with a book in his hand by the side of an open grave, the sacristan with his shovel; the coffin sank; the dust to dust descended. Again I was in the church on a heavenly Sunday morning. The

golden sunlight of God slept amongst the heads of his apostles, his martyrs, his saints; the fragment from the litany, the fragment from the clouds, awoke again the lawny beds that went up to scale the heavens — awoke again the shadowy arms that moved downward to meet them. Once again arose the swell of the anthem, the burst of the Hallelujah chorus, the storm, the trampling movement of the choral passion, the agitation of my own trembling sympathy, the tumult of the choir, the wrath of the organ. Once more I, that wallowed, became he that rose up to the clouds. And now in Oxford all was bound up into unity; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny glorifying haze. For high above my own station hovered a gleaming host of heavenly beings, surrounding the pillows of the dying children. And such beings sympathize equally with sorrow that grovels and with sorrow that soars. Such beings pity alike the children that are languishing in death, and the children that live only to languish in tears.

NOTES

¹ Cicero, in a well-known passage of his *Ethics*, speaks of trade as irredeemably base, if petty; but as not so absolutely felonious, if wholesale. He gives a real merchant (one who is such in the English sense) leave to think himself a shade above small beer.

² Her medical attendants were Dr. Percival, a well-known literary physician, who had been a correspondent of Condorcet, D'Alembert, etc., and Mr. Charles White, a very distinguished surgeon. It was he who pronounced her head to be the finest in its structure and development of any that he had ever seen, — an assertion which, to my own knowledge, he repeated in after years, and with enthusiasm. That he had some acquaintance with the subject may be presumed from this, that he wrote and published a work on the human skull, supported by many measurements which he had made of heads selected from all varieties of the human species. Meantime, as I would be loath that any trait of what might seem vanity should creep into this record, I will candidly admit that she died of hydrocephalus; and it has been often supposed that the premature expansion of the intellect in cases of that class is altogether morbid, — forced on, in fact, by the mere stimulation of the disease. I would, however, suggest, as a possibility, the very inverse order of relation between the disease and the intellectual manifestations. Not the disease may always have caused the preternatural growth of the intellect; but, on the contrary, this growth coming on spontaneously and outrunning the capacities of the physical structure, may have caused the disease.

³ Among the oversights in the "Paradise Lost," some of which have not yet been perceived, it is certainly one — that, by placing in such overpowering light of pathos the sublime sacrifice of Adam to his love for his frail companion, he has too much lowered the guilt of his disobedience to God. All that Milton can say afterwards does not, and cannot, obscure the beauty of that action; reviewing it calmly, we

condemn, but taking the impassioned station of Adam at the moment of temptation, we approve in our hearts. This was certainly an oversight; but it was one very difficult to redress. I remember, amongst the many exquisite thoughts of John Paul Richter, one which strikes me as particularly touching, upon this subject. He suggests not as any grave theological comment, but as the wandering fancy of a poetic heart, that, had Adam conquered the anguish of separation as a pure sacrifice of obedience to God, his reward would have been the pardon and reconciliation of Eve, together with her restoration to innocence.

“ I stood in unimaginable trance
And agony, which cannot be remembered.”*

⁶ “ Everlasting Jew! ”— *der ewige Jude*— which is the common German expression for “ The Wandering Jew,” and sublimer even than our own.

⁸ The reader must not forget, in reading this and other passages, that, though a child’s feelings are spoken of, it is not the child who speaks. I decipher what the child only felt in cipher. And so far is this distinction or this explanation from pointing to anything metaphysical or doubtful, that a man must be grossly unobservant who is not aware of what I am here noticing, not as a peculiarity of this child or that, but as a necessity of all children. Whatsoever in a man’s mind blossoms and expands to his own consciousness in mature life, must have preëxisted in germ during his infancy. I, for instance, did not, as a child, consciously read in my own deep feelings these ideas. No, not at all; nor was it possible for a child to do so. I, the child, had the feelings; I, the man, decipher them. In the child lay the handwriting mysterious to him; in me, the interpretation and the comment.

⁷ I except, however, one case,—the case of a child dying of an organic disorder, so, therefore, as to die slowly, and aware of its own condition. Because such a child is solemnized, and sometimes, in a partial sense, inspired,—inspired by the depth of its sufferings, and by the awfulness of its prospect. Such a child, having put off the earthly mind in many things, may naturally have put off the childish mind in all things. I thereby, speaking for myself only, acknowledge to have read with emotion a record of a little girl, who, knowing herself for months to be amongst the elect of death, became anxious, even to sickness of heart, for what she called the conversion of her father. Her filial duty and reverence had been swallowed up in filial love.

⁸ “ Death of Wallenstein.” Act v. Scene 1 (Coleridge’s Translation), relating to his remembrances of the younger Piccolomini.

⁹ See the Second Book of Kings, chapter xiii: 20 and 21. Thirty years ago this impressive incident was made the subject of a large altar-piece by Mr. Allston, an interesting American artist, then resident in London.

¹⁰ Thirty years ago it would not have been necessary to say one word of the Obi or Obeah magic; because at that time several distinguished writers (Miss Edgeworth, for instance, in her “ Belinda ”), had made use of this superstition in fiction, and because the remarkable history of “ Three-fingered Jack,” a story brought upon the stage, had made the superstition notorious as a fact. However, so long

*Speech of Alhadra, in Coleridge’s “ Remorse.”

after the case has probably passed out of the public mind, it may be proper to mention, that when an Obeah man — that is, a professor of this dark collusion with human fears and human credulity — had once woven his dreadful net of ghostly terrors, and had thrown it over his selected victim, vainly did that victim flutter, struggle, languish in the meshes, unless the spells were reversed, he generally perished; and without a wound, except from his own too domineering fancy.

¹¹ What follows, I think (for book I have none of any kind when this paper is proceeding), namely: “*et sera sub nocte rudentum,*” is probably a mistake of Virgil’s; the lions did not roar because night was approaching, but because night brought with it their principal meal, and consequently the impatience of hunger.

¹² In this place I derive my feeling partly from a lovely sketch of the appearance, in verse, by Mr. Wordsworth; partly from my own experience of the case; and, not having the poems here, I know not how to proportion my acknowledgments.

¹³ “And so, then,” the cynic objects, “you rank your own mind (and you tell us so frankly) amongst the primary formations?” As I love to annoy him, it would give me pleasure to reply — “Perhaps I do.” But as I never answer more questions than are necessary, I confine myself to saying, that this is not a necessary construction of the words. Some minds stand nearer to the type of the original nature in man, are truer than others to the great magnet in our dark planet. Minds that are impassioned on a more colossal scale than ordinary, deeper in their vibrations, and more extensive in the scale of their vibrations, whether in other parts of their intellectual system, they had or had not a corresponding compass, will tremble to greater depths from a fearful convulsion, and will come round by a longer curve of undulations.

¹⁴ That is (as on account of English readers is added), the recognition of his true identity, which, in one moment, and by a horrid flash of revelation, connects him with acts incestuous, murderous, parricidal in the past, and with a mysterious fatality of woe lurking in the future.

¹⁵ Euripides.

III

THE PALIMPSEST

YOU know perhaps, masculine reader, better than I can tell you, what is a Palimpsest. Possibly, you have one in your own library. But yet, for the sake of others who may not know, or may have forgotten, suffer me to explain it here, lest any female reader, who honours these papers with her notice, should tax me with explaining it once too seldom; which would be worse to bear than a simultaneous complaint from twelve proud men, that I had explained it three times too often. You therefore, fair reader, understand, that for your accommodation exclusively, I explain the meaning of this word. It is Greek; and our sex enjoys the office and privilege of standing counsel to yours, in all questions of Greek. We are, under favour, perpetual and hereditary dragomans to you. So that if, by accident, you know the meaning of a Greek word, yet by courtesy to us, your counsel learned in that matter, you will always seem not to know it.

A palimpsest, then, is a membrane or roll cleansed of its manuscript by reiterated successions.

What was the reason that the Greeks and the Romans had not the advantage of printed books? The answer will be, from ninety-nine persons in a hundred: Because the mystery of printing was not then discovered. But this is altogether a mistake. The secret of printing must have been discovered many thousands of times before it was used, or could be used. The inventive powers of man are divine; and also his stupidity is divine, as Cowper so playfully illustrates in the slow development of the sofa through successive generations of immortal dulness. It took centuries of blockheads to raise a joint stool into a chair; and it required something like a miracle of genius, in the estimate of elder generations, to reveal the possibility of lengthening a chair into a chaise-longue, or a sofa. Yes, these were inventions that cost mighty throes of intellectual power. But still, as respects printing, and admirable as is the stupidity of man, it was really not quite equal to the task of evading an object which stared him

in the face with so broad a gaze. It did not require an Athenian intellect to read the main secret of printing in many scores of processes which the ordinary uses of life were daily repeating. To say nothing of analogous artifices amongst various mechanic artisans, all that is essential in printing must have been known to every nation that struck coins and medals. Not therefore, any want of a printing art,—that is of an art for multiplying impressions,—but the want of a cheap material for receiving such impressions, was the obstacle to an introduction of printed books, even as early as Pisistratus. The ancients did apply printing to records of silver and gold; to marble, and many other substances cheaper than gold and silver, they did not, since each monument required a separate effort of inscription. Simply this defect it was of a cheap material for receiving impresses, which froze in its very fountains the early resources of printing.

Some twenty years ago, this view of the case was luminously expounded by Dr. Whately, the present Archbishop of Dublin, and with the merit, I believe, of having first suggested it. Since then, this theory has received indirect confirmation. Now, out of that original scarcity affecting all materials proper for durable books, which continued up to times comparatively modern, grew the opening for palimpsests. Naturally, when once a roll of parchment or of vellum had done its office, by propagating through a series of generations what once had possessed an interest for them, but which, under changes of opinion or of taste, had faded to their feelings or had become obsolete for their undertakings, the whole membrana or vellum skin, the two-fold product of human skill, costly material, and costly freight of thought, which it carried, drooped in value concurrently—supposing that each were inalienably associated to the other. Once it had been the impress of a human mind which stamped its value upon the vellum; the vellum, though costly, had contributed but a secondary element of value to the total result. At length, however, this relation between the vehicle and its freight has gradually been undermined. The vellum, from having been the setting of the jewel, has risen at length to be the jewel itself; and the burden of thought, from having given the chief value to the vellum, has now become the chief obstacle to its value; nay, has totally extinguished its value, unless it can be dissociated from the connection. Yet, if this unlinking can be effected, then, fast as the inscription upon the membrane is sinking into rubbish, the membrane itself is reviving in its separate import-

ance; and, from bearing a ministerial value, the vellum has come at last to absorb the whole value.

Hence the importance for our ancestors that the separation should be effected. Hence it arose in the middle ages, as a considerable object for chemistry, to discharge the writing from the roll, and thus to make it available for a new succession of thoughts. The soil, if cleansed from what once had been hot-house plants, but now were held to be weeds, would be ready to receive a fresh and more appropriate crop. In that object the monkish chemist succeeded; but after a fashion which seemed almost incredible,—incredible not as regards the extent of their success, but as regards the delicacy of restraints under which it moved,—so equally adjusted was their success to the immediate interests of that period, and to the reversionary objects of our own. They did the thing; but not so radically as to prevent us, their posterity, from undoing it. They expelled the writing sufficiently to leave a field for the new manuscript, and yet not sufficiently to make the traces of the elder manuscript irrecoverable for us. Could magic, could Hermes Trismegistus, have done more? What would you think, fair reader, of a problem such as this,—to write a book which should be sense for your own generation, nonsense for the next, should revive into sense for the next after that, but again become nonsense for the fourth; and so on by alternate successions, sinking into night or blazing into day, like the Sicilian river Arethusa, and the English river Mole; or like the undulating motions of a flattened stone which children cause to skim the breast of a river, now diving below the water, now grazing its surface, sinking heavily into darkness, rising buoyantly into light, through a long vista of alternations? Such a problem, you say, is impossible. But really it is a problem not harder apparently than—to bid a generation kill, but so that a subsequent generation may call back into life; bury, but so that posterity may command to rise again. Yet that was what the rude chemistry of past ages effected when coming into combination with the reaction from the more refined chemistry of our own. Had they been better chemists, had we been worse, the mixed result, namely, that, dying for them, the flower should revive for us, could not have been effected. They did the thing proposed to them: they did it effectually, for they founded upon it all that was wanted; and yet ineffectually, since we unravelled their work; effacing all above which they had superscribed; restoring all below which they had effaced.

Here, for instance, is a parchment which contained some Grecian tragedy, the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus, or the "Phœissæ" of Euripides. This had possessed a value almost inappreciable in the eyes of accomplished scholars, continually growing rare through generations. But four centuries are gone by since the destruction of the Western Empire. Christianity, with towering grandeurs of another class, has founded a different empire; and some bigoted, yet perhaps holy monk, has washed away (as he persuades himself) the heathen's tragedy, replacing it with a monastic legend; which legend is disfigured with fables in its incidents, and yet in a higher sense is true, because interwoven with Christian morals, and with the sublimest of Christian revelations. Three, four, five centuries more, find man still devout as ever; but the language has become obsolete, and even for Christian devotion a new era has arisen, throwing it into the channel of crusading zeal or of chivalrous enthusiasm. The membrana is wanted now for a knightly romance — for "my Cid," or Cœur de Lion; for Sir Tristrem, or Lybæus Disconus. In this way, by means of the imperfect chemistry known to the mediæval period, the same roll has served as a conservatory for three separate generations of flowers and fruits, all perfectly different, and yet all specially adapted to the wants of the successive possessors. The Greek tragedy, the monkish legend, the knightly romance, each has ruled its own period. One harvest after another has been gathered into the garner of man through ages far apart. And the same hydraulic machinery has distributed, through the same marble fountains, water, milk, or wine, according to the habits and training of the generations that came to quench their thirst.

Such were the achievements of rude monastic chemistry. But the more elaborate chemistry of our own days has reversed all these motions of our simple ancestors, which results in every stage that to them would have realized the most fantastic amongst the promises of thaumaturgy. Insolent vaunt of Paracelsus, that he would restore the original rose or violet out of the ashes settling from its combustion — that is now rivalled in this modern achievement. The traces of each successive handwriting, regularly effaced, as had been imagined, have, in the inverse order, been regularly called back: the footsteps of the game pursued, wolf or stag, in each several chase, have been unlinked, and hunted back through all their doubles; and, as the chorus of the Athenian stage unwove through the antistrophe every step that had been mystically woven through

the strophe, so, by our modern conjurations of science, secrets of ages remote from each other have been exorcised¹ from the accumulated shadows of centuries. Chemistry, a witch as potent as the Erictho of Lucanto ("Pharsalia," lib. vi. or vii.), has extorted by her torments, from the dust and ashes of forgotten centuries, the secrets of a life extinct for the general eye, but still glowing in the embers. Even the fable of the Phoenix, that secular bird, who propagated his solitary existence, and his solitary births, along the line of centuries, through eternal relays of funeral mists, is but a type of what we have done with Palimpsests. We have backed upon each phoenix in the long regressus, and forced him to expose his ancestral phoenix, sleeping in the ashes below his own ashes. Our good old forefathers would have been aghast at our sorceries; and, if they speculated on the propriety of burning Dr. Faustus, us they would have burned by acclamation. Trial there would have been none; and they could not otherwise have satisfied their horror of the brazen profligacy marking our modern magic, than by ploughing up the houses of all who had been parties to it, and sowing the ground with salt.

Fancy not, reader, that this tumult of images, illustrative or allusive, moves under any impulse or purpose of mirth. It is but the coruscation of a restless understanding, often made ten times more so by irritation of the nerves, such as you will first learn to comprehend (its how and its why) some stage or two ahead. The image, the memorial, the record, which for me is derived from a palimpsest, as to one great fact in our human being, and which immediately I will show you, is but too repellent of laughter; or, even if laughter had been possible, it would have been such laughter as oftentimes is thrown off from the fields of oceans,² laughter that hides, or that seems to evade mustering tumult; foam-bells that weave garlands of phosphoric radiance for one moment round the eddies of gleaming abysses; mimicries of earth-born flowers that for the eye raise phantoms of gayety, as oftentimes for the ear they raise the echoes of fugitive laughter, mixing with the ravings and choir-voices of an angry sea.

What else than a natural and mighty palimpsest is the human brain? Such a palimpsest is my brain; such a palimpsest, oh reader! is yours. Everlasting layers of ideas, images, feelings, have fallen upon your brain softly as light. Each succession has seemed to bury all that went before. And yet, in reality, not one has been extinguished. And if, in the vel-

lum palimpsest, lying amongst the other diplomata of human archives or libraries, there is anything fantastic or which moves to laughter, as oftentimes there is in the grotesque collisions of those successive themes, having no natural connection, which by pure accident have consecutively occupied the roll, yet, in our own heaven-created palimpsest, the deep memorial palimpsest of the brain, there are not and cannot be such incoherencies. The fleeting accidents of a man's life, and its external shows, may indeed be irrelate and incongruous; but the organizing principles which fuse into harmony, and gather about fixed predetermined centres, whatever heterogeneous elements life may have accumulated from without, will not permit the grandeur of human unity greatly to be violated, or its ultimate repose to be troubled, in the retrospect from dying moments or from other great convulsions.

Such a convulsion is the struggle of gradual suffocation, as in drowning; and, in the original *Opium Confessions*, I mentioned a case of that nature communicated to me by a lady from her own childish experience. The lady is still living, though now of unusually great age; and I may mention that amongst her faults never was numbered any levity of principle, or carelessness of the most scrupulous veracity; but on the contrary, such faults as arise from austerity, too harsh, perhaps, and gloomy indulgent neither to others nor herself. And, at the time of relating this incident, when already very old, she had become religious to asceticism. According to my present belief, she had completed her ninth year, when, playing by the side of a solitary brook, she fell into one of its deepest pools. Eventually, but after what lapse of time nobody ever knew, she was saved from death by a farmer, who riding in some distant lane, had seen her rise to the surface; but not until she had descended within the abyss of death, and looked into its secrets, as far, perhaps, as ever human eye can have looked that had permission to return. At a certain stage of this descent, a blow seemed to strike her, phosphoric radiance sprang forth from her eyeballs; and immediately a mighty theatre expanded within her brain. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, every act, every design of her past life, lived again, arraying themselves not as a succession, but as parts of a coexistence. Such a light fell upon the whole path of her life backwards into the shades of infancy, as the light, perhaps, which wrapt the destined Apostle on his road to Damascus. Yet that light blinded for a season; but hers poured celestial vision upon the brain, so that her conscious-

ness became omnipresent at one moment to every feature in the infinite review.

This anecdote was treated sceptically at the time by some critics. But, besides that it has since been confirmed by other experience essentially the same, reported by other parties in the same circumstances, who had never heard of each other, the true point for astonishment is not the simultaneity of arrangement under which the past events of life, though in fact successive, had formed their dread line of revelation. This was but a secondary phenomenon; the deeper lay in the resurrection itself, and the possibility of resurrection, for what had so long slept in the dust. A pall, deep as oblivion, had been thrown by life over every trace of these experiences; and yet suddenly, at a silent command, at the signal of a blazing rocket sent up from the brain, the pall draws up, and the whole depths of the theatre are exposed. Here was the greater mystery: now this mystery is liable to no doubt; for it is repeated, and ten thousand times repeated, by opium, for those who are its martyrs.

Yes, reader, countless are the mysterious hand-writings of grief or joy which have inscribed themselves successively upon the palimpsest of your brain; and, like the annual leaves of aboriginal forests, or the undissolving snows on the Himalaya, or light falling upon light, the endless strata have covered up each other in forgetfulness. But by the hour of death, but by fever, but by the searchings of opium, all these can revive in strength. They are not dead, but sleeping. In the illustration imagined by myself, from the case of some individual palimpsest, the Grecian tragedy had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced, by the monkish legend; and the monkish legend had seemed to be displaced, but was not displaced, by the knightly romance. In some potent convulsion of the system, all wheels back into its earliest elementary stage. The bewildering romance, light tarnished with darkness, the semi-fabulous legend, truth celestial mixed with human falsehoods, these fade even of themselves, as life advances. The romance has perished that the young man adored; the legend has gone that deluded the boy; but the deep, deep tragedies of infancy, as when the child's hands were unlinked forever from his mother's neck, or his lips forever from his sister's kisses, these remain lurking below all, and these lurk to the last. Alchemy there is none of passion or disease that can scorch away these immortal impresses; and the dream which closed the preceding section,

together with the succeeding dreams of this (which may be viewed as in the nature of choruses winding up the overture), are but illustrations of this truth, such as every man probably will meet experimentally who passes through similar convulsions of dreaming or delirium from any similar or equal disturbance in his nature.³

NOTES

¹ Some readers may be apt to suppose, from all English experience, that the word exorcise means properly banishment to the shades. Not so. Citation from the shades, or sometimes the torturing coercion of mystic adjurations, is more truly the primary sense.

² Many readers will recall, though, at the moment of writing, my own thoughts did not recall, the well-known passage in the "Prometheus"—

*ποντιων τε κυματων
Αηριδμον γελασθα.*

"O multitudinous laughter of the ocean billows!" It is not clear whether Æschylus contemplated the laughter as addressing the ear or the eye.

³ This, it may be said, requires a corresponding duration of experience, but, as an argument for this mysterious power lurking in our nature, I may remind the reader of one phenomenon open to the notice of everybody, namely, the tendency of very aged persons to throw back and concentrate the light of their memory upon scenes of early childhood, as to which they recall many traces that had faded even to themselves in middle life, whilst they often forget altogether the whole intermediate stages of their experience. This shows that naturally, and without violent agencies, the human brain is by tendency a palimpsest.

IV

LEVANA AND OUR LADIES OF SORROW

OFTENTIMES at Oxford I saw Levana in my dreams. I knew her by her Roman symbols. Who is Levana? Readers, that do not pretend to have leisure for very much scholarship, you will not be angry with me for telling you. Levana was the Roman goddess that performed for the new-born infant the earliest office of ennobling kindness, — typical, by its mode, of that grandeur which belongs to man everywhere, and of that benignity in powers invisible which even in Pagan worlds sometimes descends to sustain it. At the very moment of birth, just as the infant tasted for the first time the atmosphere of our troubled planet, it was laid on the ground. That might bear different interpretations. But immediately, lest so grand a creature should grovel there for more than one instant, either the paternal hand, as proxy for the goddess Levana, or some near kinsman, as proxy for the father, raised it upright, bade it look erect as the king of all this world, and presented its forehead to the stars, saying, perhaps, in his heart, "Behold what is greater than yourselves!" This symbolic act represented the function of Levana. And that mysterious lady, who never revealed her face (except to me in dreams), but always acted by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare*, to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana. And hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now, the word *educu*, with the penultimate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word *educu*, with the penultimate long. Whatsoever educes, or develops, educates. By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant,—not the poor machinery that

moves by spelling-books and grammars, but that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works forever upon children,—resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering¹ forever as they revolve.

If, then, these are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief! But you, reader! think,—that children generally are not liable to grief such as mine. There are two senses in the word generally,—the sense of Euclid, where it means universally (or in the whole extent of the genus), and a foolish sense of this world, where it means usually. Now, I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But there are more than you ever heard of who die of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton require that a boy on the foundation should be there twelve years: he is superannuated at eighteen, consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief; but that it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than ever have been counted amongst its martyrs.

Therefore it is that Levana often communes with the powers that shake man's heart: therefore it is that she dotes upon grief. "These ladies," said I softly to myself, on seeing the ministers with whom Levana was conversing, "these are the Sorrows; and they are three in number, as the Graces are three, who dress man's life with beauty; the Parcæ are three, who weave the dark arras of man's life in their mysterious loom always with colours sad in part, sometimes angry with tragic crimson and black; the Furies are three, who visit with retributions called from the other side of the grave offences that walk upon this; and once even the Muses were but three, who fit the harp, the trumpet, or the lute, to the great burdens of man's impassioned creations. These are the Sorrows, all three of whom I know." The last words I say now; but in Oxford I said, "one of whom I know, and the others too surely I shall know." For already, in my fervent youth, I saw (dimly relieved upon the dark back-ground of my dreams) the imperfect lineaments of the awful sisters. These sisters—by what name shall we call them?

If I say simply, "The Sorrows," there will be a chance of

mistaking the term; it might be understood of individual sorrow,— separate cases of sorrow,— whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart; and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations, that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, Our Ladies of Sorrow. I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then? O, no! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves is no voice nor sound; eternal silence reigns in their kingdoms. They spoke not, as they talked with Levana; they whispered not; they sang not; though oftentimes methought they might have sung: for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. They wheeled in mazes; I spelled the steps. They telegraphed from afar; I read the signals. They conspired together; and on the mirrors of darkness my eye traced the plots. Theirs were the symbols; mine are the words.

What is it the sisters are? What is it that they do? Let me describe their form, and their presence; if form it were that still fluctuated in its outline; or presence it were that forever advanced to the front, or forever receded amongst shades.

The eldest of the three is named Mater Lachrymarum, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood, in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation,— Rachel weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened forever, which, heard at times as they tottered along floors overhead, woke pulses of love in household hearts that were not unmarked in heaven.

Her eyes are sweet and subtile, wild and sleepy, by turns; oftentimes rising to the clouds, oftentimes challenging the heavens. She wears a diadem round her head. And I knew

by childish memories that she could go abroad upon the winds, when she heard that sobbing of litanies, or the thundering of organs, and when she beheld the mustering of summer clouds. This sister, the elder, it is that carries keys more than papal at her girdle, which open every cottage and every palace. She, to my knowledge, sat all last summer by the bedside of the blind beggar, him that so often and so gladly I talked with, whose pious daughter, eight years old, with the sunny countenance, resisted the temptations of play and village mirth to travel all day long on dusty roads with her afflicted father. For this did God send her a great reward. In the spring-time of the year, and whilst yet her own spring was budding, he recalled her to himself. But her blind father mourns forever over her; still he dreams at midnight that the little guiding hand is locked within his own; and still he wakens to a darkness that is now within a second and a deeper darkness. This Mater Lachrymarum also has been sitting all this winter of 1844-5 within the bedchamber of the Czar, bringing before his eyes a daughter (not less pious) that vanished to God not less suddenly, and left behind her a darkness not less profound. By the power of her keys it is that Our Lady of Tears glides a ghostly intruder into the chambers of sleepless men, sleepless women, sleepless children, from Ganges to the Nile, from Nile to Mississippi. And her, because she is the first-born of her house, and has the widest empire, let us honour with the title of "Madonna."

The second sister is called Mater Suspiriorum, Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds nor walks abroad upon the winds. She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle; no man could read their story; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops forever, forever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister Madonna is oftentimes stormy and frantic, raging in the highest against heaven, and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This sister is the visitor

of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in the Mediterranean galleys; of the English criminal in Norfolk Island, blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England; of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes forever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for him a step-mother,— as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against him sealed and sequestered;² every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients; every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-time by wicked kinsman, whom God will judge; every captive in every dungeon; all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of hereditary disgrace,— all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem, and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest ranks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third sister, who is also the youngest —! Hush! whisper whilst we talk of her! Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybèle, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes rising so high might be hidden by distance. But, being what they are, they cannot be hidden; through the treble veil of crape which she wears, the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing tide, may be read from the very ground. She is the defier of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles

and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with a tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And her name is Mater Tenebrarum,—Our Lady of Darkness.

These were the Semnai Theai, or Sublime Goddesses,³ these were the Eumenides, or Gracious Ladies (so called by antiquity in shuddering propitiation) of my Oxford dreams. Madonna spoke. She spoke by her mysterious hand. Touching my head, she beckoned to Our Lady of Sighs; and what she spoke, translated out of the signs which (except in dreams) no man reads, was this:

“Lo! here is he, whom in childhood I dedicated to my altars. This is he that once I made my darling. Him I led astray, him I beguiled, and from heaven I stole away his young heart to mine. Through me did he become idolatrous; and through me it was, by languishing desires, that he worshipped the worm, and prayed to the wormy grave. Holy was the grave to him; lovely was its darkness; saintly its corruption. Him, this young idolator, I have seasoned for thee, dear gentle Sister of Sighs! Do thou take him now to thy heart, and season him for our dreadful sister. And thou,”—turning to the Mater Tenebrarum, she said,—“wicked sister, that temptest and hatest, do thou take him from her. See that thy sceptre lie heavy on his head. Suffer not woman and her tenderness to sit near him in his darkness. Banish the frailties of hope, wither the relenting of love, scorch the fountains of tears, curse him as only thou canst curse. So shall he be accomplished in the furnace, so shall he see the things that ought not to be seen, sights that are abominable, and secrets that are unutterable. So shall he read elder truths, sad truths, grand truths, fearful truths. So shall he rise again before he dies. And so shall our commission be accomplished which from God we had,—to plague his heart until we had unfolded the capacities of his spirit.”⁴

NOTES

¹ As I have never allowed myself to covet any man's ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is his, still less would it become a philosopher to covet other people's images, or metaphors. Here, therefore, I restore to Mr. Wordsworth this fine image of the revolving wheel, and the glimmering spokes, as applied by him to the flying successions of day

and night. I borrowed it for one moment in order to point my own sentence; which being done, the reader is witness that I now pay it back instantly by a note made for that sole purpose. On the same principle I often borrow their seals from young ladies, when closing my letters. Because there is sure to be some tender sentiment upon them about "memory," or "hope," or "roses," or "reunion;" and my correspondent must be a sad brute who is not touched by the eloquence of the seal, even if his taste is so bad that he remains deaf to mine.

² This, the reader will be aware, applies chiefly to the cotton and tobacco States of North America; but not to them only: on which account I have not scrupled to figure the sun, which looks down upon slavery as tropical; no matter if strictly within the tropics, or simply so near to them as to produce a similar climate.

³ The word *βεινος* is usually rendered "venerable" in dictionaries; not a very flattering epithet for women. But by weighing a number of passages in which the word is used pointedly, I am disposed to think that it comes nearest to our idea of the sublime, as near as a Greek word could come.

⁴ The reader, who wishes at all to understand the course of these confessions, ought not to pass over this dream-legend. There is no great wonder that a vision, which occupied my waking thoughts in those years, should reappear in my dreams. It was, in fact, a legend recurring in sleep, most of which I had myself silently written or sculptured in my daylight reveries. But its importance to the present confessions is this, that it rehearses or prefigures their course.

V

THE APPARITION OF THE BROCKEN

ASCEND with me on this dazzling Whitsunday the Brocken of North Germany. The dawn opened in cloudless beauty; it is a dawn of bridal June; but, as the hours advanced, her youngest sister April, that sometimes cares little for racing across both frontiers of May, frets the bridal lady's sunny temper with sallies of wheeling and careering showers, flying and pursuing, opening and closing, hiding and restoring. On such a morning, and reaching the summits of the forest mountain about sunrise, we shall have one chance the more for seeing the famous Spectre of the Brocken.¹ Who and what is he? He is a solitary apparition, in the sense of loving solitude; else he is not always solitary in his personal manifestations, but on proper occasions, has been known to unmask a strength quite sufficient to alarm those who had been insulting him.

Now, in order to test the nature of this mysterious apparition, we will try two or three experiments upon him. What we fear, and with some reason, is, that as he lived so many ages with foul Pagan sorcerers, and witnessed so many centuries of dark idolatries, his heart may have been corrupted; and that even now his faith may be wavering or impure. We will try.

Make the sign of the cross, and observe whether he repeats it (as on Whitsunday² he surely ought to do). Look! he does repeat it; but the driving showers perplex the images, and that, perhaps, it is which gives him the air of one who acts reluctantly or evasively. Now, again, the sun shines more brightly, and the showers have swept off like squadrons of cavalry to the rear. We will try him again.

Pluck an anemone, one of these many anemones which once was called the sorcerer's flower,³ and bore a part, perhaps, in this horrid ritual of fear; carry it to that stone which mimics the outline of a heathen altar, and once was called the sorcerer's altar;³ then bending your knee, and raising your right hand to God, say,—“Father, which art in heaven, this lovely anemone, that once glorified the worship of fear, has travelled back into

thy fold; this altar, which once reeked with bloody rites to Cortho, has long been rebaptized into thy holy service. The darkness is gone; the cruelty is gone which the darkness bred; the moans have passed away which the victims uttered; the cloud has vanished which once sat continually upon their graves, cloud of protestation that ascended forever to thy throne from the tears of the defenceless, and the anger of the just. And lo! I thy servant, with this dark phantom, whom for one hour on this thy festival of Pentecost I make my servant, render thee united worship in this thy recovered temple."

Look now! the apparition plucks an anemone, and places it on an altar; he also bends his knee, he also raises his right hand to God. Dumb he is; but sometimes the dumb serve God acceptably. Yet still it occurs to you, that perhaps on this high festival of the Christian church he may be overruled by supernatural influence into confession of his homage, having so often been made to bow and bend his knee at murderous rites. In a service of religion he may be timid. Let us try him, therefore, with an earthly passion, where he will have no bias either from favour or from fear.

If, then, once in childhood you suffered an affliction that was ineffable,— if once, when powerless to face such an enemy, you were summoned to fight with the tiger that couches within the separations of the grave,— in that case, after the example of Judæa (on the Roman coins),— sitting under her palm-tree to weep, but sitting with her head veiled,— do you also veil your head. Many years are passed away since then; and you were a little ignorant thing at that time, hardly above six years old; or perhaps (if you durst tell all the truth), not quite so much. But your heart was deeper than the Danube; and, as was your love, so was your grief. Many years are gone since that darkness settled on your head; many summers, many winters; yet still its shadows wheel round upon you at intervals, like these April showers upon this glory of bridal June. Therefore now, on this dovelike morning of Pentecost do you veil your head like Judæa in memory of that transcendent woe, and in testimony that, indeed, it surpassed all utterance of words. Immediately you see that the apparition of the Brocken veils his head, after the model of Judæa weeping under her palm-tree, as if he also had a human heart, and that he also, in childhood, having suffered an affliction which was ineffable, wished by these mute symbols to breathe a sigh towards heaven in memory of that affliction, and by way of record, though many a year after, that it was indeed unutterable by words.

This trial is decisive. You are now satisfied that the apparition is but a reflex of yourself; and, in uttering your secret feelings to him, you make this phantom the dark symbolic mirror for reflection to the daylight what else must be hidden forever.

Such a relation does the Dark Interpreter, whom immediately the reader will learn to know as an intruder into my dreams, bear to my own mind. He is originally a mere reflex of my inner nature. But as the apparition of the Brocken sometimes is disturbed by storms or by driving showers, so as to dissemble his real origin, in like manner the Interpreter sometimes swerves out of my orbit, and mixes a little with alien natures. I do not always know him in these cases as my own parhelion. What he says, generally, is but that which I have said in daylight, and in meditation deep enough to sculpture itself on my heart. But sometimes, as his face alters, his words alter; and they do not always seem such as I have used, or could use. No man can account for all things that occur in dreams. Generally I believe this,—that he is a faithful representative of myself; but he also is at times subject to the action of the good Phantasmus, who rules in dreams.

Hailstone choruses⁴ besides, and storms, enter my dreams. Hailstones and fire that run along the ground, sleet and blinding hurricanes, revelations of glory insufferable pursued by volleying darkness,—these are powers able to disturb any features that originally were but shadow, and so send drifting the anchors of any vessel that rides upon deeps so treacherous as those of dreams. Understand, however, the Interpreter to bear generally the office of a tragic chorus at Athens. The Greek chorus is perhaps not quite understood by critics; any more than the Dark Interpreter by myself. But the leading function of both must be supposed this— not to tell you anything absolutely new,—that was done by the actors in the drama; but to recall you to your own lurking thoughts,—hidden for the moment or imperfectly developed,—and to place before you, in immediate connection with groups vanishing too quickly for any effort of meditation on your own part, such commentaries, prophetic or looking back, pointing the moral or deciphering the mystery, justifying Providence, or mitigating the fierceness of anguish, as would or might have occurred to your own meditative heart, had only time been allowed for its motions.

The Interpreter is anchored and stationary in my dreams; but great storms and driving mists cause him to fluctuate uncertainly, or even to retire altogether, like his gloomy counter-

part, the shy phantom of the Brocken,—and to assume new features or strange features, as in dreams always there is a power not contented with reproduction, but which absolutely creates or transforms. This dark being the reader will see again in a further stage of my opium experience; and I warn him that he will not always be found sitting inside my dreams, but at times outside, and in open daylight.

NOTES

¹ This very striking phenomenon has been continually described by writers, both German and English, for the last fifty years. Many readers, however, will not have met with these descriptions; and on their account I add a few words in explanation, referring them for the best scientific comment on the case to Sir David Brewster's "Natural Magic." The spectre takes the shape of a human figure, or, if the visitors are more than one, then the spectres multiply; they arrange themselves on the blue ground of the sky, or the dark ground of any clouds that may be in the right quarter, or perhaps they are strongly relieved against a curtain of rock, at a distance of some miles, and always exhibiting gigantic proportions. At first, from the distance and the colossal size, every spectator supposes the appearance to be quite independent of himself. But very soon he is surprised to observe his own motions and gestures mimicked; and wakens to the conviction that the phantom is but a dilated reflection of himself. This Titan among the apparitions of earth is exceedingly capricious, vanishing abruptly for reasons, best known to himself, and more coy in coming forward than the Lady Echo of Ovid. One reason why he is seen so seldom must be ascribed to the concurrence of conditions under which only the phenomenon can be manifested; the sun must be near to the horizon (which of itself implies a time of day inconvenient to a person starting from a station as distant as Elbingerode); the spectator must have his back to the sun; and the air must contain some vapour, but partially distributed. Coleridge ascended the Brocken on the Whitsunday of 1799, with a party of English students from Göttingen, but failed to see the phantom; afterwards in England (and under the three same conditions) he saw a much rarer phenomenon, which he described in the following eight lines. I give them from a correct copy (the apostrophe in the beginning must be understood as addressed to an ideal conception):

“And art thou nothing? Such thou art as when
 The woodman winding westward up the glen
 At wintry dawn, when o'er the sheep-track's maze
 The viewless snow-mist weaves a glistening haze,
 Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
 An image with a glory round its head;
 This shade he worships for its golden hues,
 And makes (not knowing) that which he pursues.”

² It is singular, and perhaps owing to the temperature and weather likely to prevail in that early part of summer, that more appearances of the spectre have been witnessed on Whitsunday than on any other day.

³ These are names still clinging to the anemone of the Brocken, and to an altar-shaped fragment of granite near one of the summits; and it is not doubted that they both connect themselves, through links of ancient tradition, with the gloomy realities of Paganism, when the whole Hartz and the Brocken formed for a very long time the last asylum to a ferocious but perishing idolatry.

“I need not tell any lover of Handel that his oratorio of “Israel in Egypt” contains a chorus familiarly known by this name. The words are: “And he gave them hailstones for rain; fire, mingled with hail, ran along upon the ground.”

VI

SAVANNAH-LA-MAR

GOD smote Savannah-la-mar, and in one night, by earthquake, removed her, with all her towers standing and population sleeping, from the steadfast foundations of the shore to the coral floors of ocean. And God said,—“Pompeii did I bury and conceal from men through seventeen centuries: this city I will bury, but not conceal. She shall be a monument to men of my mysterious anger, set in azure light through generations to come; for I will enshrine her in a crystal dome of my tropic seas.” This city, therefore, like a mighty galleon with all her apparel mounted, streamers flying, and tackling perfect, seems floating along the noiseless depths of ocean; and oftentimes in glassy calms, through the translucent atmosphere of water that now stretches like an air-woven awning above the silent encampment, mariners from every clime look down into her courts and terraces, count her gates, and number the spires of her churches. She is one ample cemetery, and has been for many a year; but in the mighty calms that brood for weeks over tropic latitudes she fascinates the eye with a Fata-Morgana revelation as of human life still subsisting in submarine asylums sacred from the storms that torment our upper air.

Thither, lured by the loveliness of cerulean depths, by the peace of human dwellings privileged from molestation, by the gleam of marble altars sleeping in everlasting sanctity, oftentimes in dreams did I and the Dark Interpreter cleave the watery veil that divided us from her streets. We looked into the belfries, where the pendulous bells were waiting in vain for the summons which should awaken their marriage peals; together we touched the mighty organ-keys, that sang no jubilate for the ear of Heaven, that sang no requiems for the ear of human sorrow; together we searched the silent nurseries, where the children were all asleep, and had been asleep through five generations. “They are waiting for the heavenly dawn,” whispered the Interpreter to himself: “and, when that comes, the bells and the organs will utter a jubilate repeated by the

echoes of Paradise." Then, turning to me, he said,—“ This is sad, this is piteous; but less would not have sufficed for the purpose of God. Look here. Put into a Roman clepsydra one hundred drops of water; let these run out as the sands in an hour-glass; every drop measuring the hundredth part of a second, so that each shall represent but the three-hundred-and-sixty-thousandth part of an hour. Now, count the drops as they race along; and, when the fiftieth of the hundred is passing, behold! forty-nine are not, because already they have perished; and fifty are not, because they are yet to come. You see, therefore, how narrow, how incalculably narrow, is the true and actual present. Of that time which we call the present, hardly a hundredth part but belongs either to a past which has fled, or to a future which is still on the wing. It has perished, or it is not born. It was, or it is not. Yet even this approximation to the truth is infinitely false. For again subdivide that solitary drop, which only was found to represent the present into a lower series of similar fractions, and the actual present which you arrest measures now but the thirty-sixth-millionth of an hour; and so by infinite declensions the true and very present, in which only we live and enjoy, will vanish into a mote of a mote, distinguishable only by a heavenly vision. Therefore the present, which only man possesses, offers less capacity for his footing than the slenderest film that ever spider twisted from her womb. Therefore, also, even this incalculable shadow from the narrowest pencil of moonlight is more transitory than geometry can measure, or thought of angel can overtake. The time which is contracts into a mathematic point; and even that point perishes a thousand times before we can utter its birth. All is finite in the present; and even that finite is infinite in its velocity of flight towards death. But in God there is nothing finite; but in God there is nothing transitory; but in God there can be nothing that tends to death. Therefore, it follows, that for God there can be no present. The future is the present of God, and to the future it is that he sacrifices the human present. Therefore it is that he works by earthquake. Therefore it is that he works by grief. O, deep is the ploughing of earthquake! O, deep”—[and his voice swelled like a sanctus rising from the choir of a cathedral]—“ O, deep is the ploughing of grief! But oftentimes less would not suffice for the agriculture of God. Upon a night of earthquake he builds a thousand years of pleasant habitations for man. Upon the sorrow of an infant he raises oftentimes from human intellects glorious vintages that could not else

have been. Less than these fierce ploughshares would not have stirred the stubborn soil. The one is needed for earth, our planet,— for earth itself as the dwelling-place of man; but the other is needed yet oftener for God's mightiest instrument,— yes " [and he looked solemnly at myself], " is needed for the mysterious children of the earth!"

VII

VISION OF LIFE

THE Oxford visions, of which some have been given, were but anticipations necessary to illustrate the glimpse opened of childhood (as being its reaction). In this further part, returning from that anticipation, I retrace an abstract of my boyish and youthful days, so far as they furnished or exposed the germs of later experiences in worlds more shadowy.

Upon me, as upon others scattered thinly by tens and twenties over every thousand years, fell too powerfully and too early the vision of life. The horror of life mixed itself already in earliest youth with the heavenly sweetness of life; that grief, which one in a hundred has sensibility enough to gather from the sad retrospect of life in its closing stage, for me shed its dew as a prelibation upon the fountains of life whilst yet sparkling to the morning sun. I saw from afar and from before what I was to see from behind. Is this the description of an early youth passed in the shades of gloom? No; but of a youth passed in the divinest happiness. And if the reader has (which so few have) the passion, without which there is no reading of the legend and superscription upon man's brow, if he is not (as most are) deafer than the grave to every deep note that sighs upwards from the Delphic caves of human life, he will know that the rapture of life, or anything which by approach can merit that name, does not arise, unless as perfect music arises, music of Mozart or Beethoven, by the confluence of the mighty and terrific discords with the subtle concords. Not by contrast, or as reciprocal foils, do these elements act, which is the feeble conception of many, but by union. They are the sexual forces in music: "male and female created he them;" and these mighty antagonists do not put forth their hostilities by repulsion, but by deepest attraction.

As "in to-day already walks to-morrow," so in the past experience of a youthful life may be seen dimly the future. The collisions with alien interests or hostile views, of a child, boy, or very young man, so insulated as each of these is sure

to be,— those aspects of opposition which such a person can occupy,— are limited by the exceedingly few and trivial lines of connection along which he is able to radiate any essential influence whatever upon the fortunes or happiness of others. Circumstances may magnify his importance for the moment; but, after all, any cable which he carries out upon other vessels is easily slipped upon a feud arising. Far otherwise is the state of relations connecting an adult or responsible man with the circles around him, as life advances. The network of these relations is a thousand times more intricate, the jarring of these intricate relations a thousand times more frequent, and the vibrations a thousand times harsher which these jarrings diffuse. This truth is felt beforehand misgivingly and in troubled vision, by a young man who stands upon the threshold of manhood. One earliest instinct of fear and horror would darken his spirit, if it could be revealed to itself and self-questioned at the moment of birth: a second instinct of the same nature would again pollute that tremulous mirror, if the moment were as punctually marked as physical birth is marked, which dismisses him finally upon the tides of absolute self-control. A dark ocean would seem the total expanse of life from the first; but far darker and more appalling would seem that interior and second chamber of the ocean which called him away forever from the direct accountability of others. Dreadful would be the morning which should say, “Be thou a human child incarnate;” but more dreadful the morning which should say, “Bear thou henceforth the sceptre of thy self-dominion through life, and the passions of life!” Yes, dreadful would be both; but without a basis of the dreadful there is no perfect rapture. It is a part through the sorrow of life, growing out of dark events, that this basis of awe and solemn darkness slowly accumulates. That I have illustrated. But, as life expands, it is more through the strife which besets us, strife from conflicting opinions, positions, passions, interests, that the funereal ground settles and deposits itself, which sends upward the dark lustrous brilliancy through the jewel of life, else revealing a pale and superficial glitter. Either the human being must suffer and struggle as the price of a more searching vision, or his gaze must be shallow, and without intellectual revelation.

Through accident it was in part, and, where through no accident but my own nature, not through features of it at all painful to recollect, that constantly in early life (that is, from boyish days until eighteen, when, by going to Oxford, practically I became my own master) I was engaged in duels of

fierce, continual struggle, with some person or body of persons, that sought, like the Roman retiarius, to throw a net of deadly coercion or constraint over the undoubted rights of my natural freedom. The steady rebellion upon my part in one half was a mere human reaction of justifiable indignation; but in the other half it was the struggle of a conscientious nature,—disingenuous to feel it as any mere right or discretionary privilege,—no, feeling it as the noblest of duties to resist, though it should be mortally, those that would have enslaved me, and to retort scorn upon those that would have put my head below their feet. Too much, even in later life, I have perceived, in men that pass for good men, a disposition to degrade (and if possible to degrade through self-degradation) those in whom unwillingly they feel any weight of oppression to themselves, by commanding qualities of intellect or character. They respect you: they are compelled to do so, and they hate to do so. Next, therefore, they seek to throw off the sense of this oppression, and to take vengeance for it, by coöperating with any unhappy accidents in your life, to inflict a sense of humiliation upon you, and (if possible) to force you into becoming a consenting party to that humiliation. O, wherefore is it that those who presume to call themselves the “friends” of this man or that woman are so often those, above all others, whom in the hour of death that man or woman is most likely to salute with the valediction — Would God I had never seen your face!

In citing one or two cases of these early struggles, I have chiefly in view the effect of these upon my subsequent visions under the reign of opium. And this indulgent reflection should accompany the mature reader through all such records of boyish inexperience. A good-tempered man, who is also acquainted with the world, will easily evade, without needing any artifice of servile obsequiousness, those quarrels which an upright simplicity, jealous of its own rights, and unpractised in the science of world address, cannot always evade without some loss of self-respect. Suavity in this manner may, it is true, be reconciled with firmness in the matter; but not easily by a young person who wants all the appropriate resources of knowledge, of adroit and guarded language, for making his good temper available. Men are protected from insult and wrong, not merely by their own skill, but also, in the absence of any skill at all, by the general spirit of forbearance to which society has trained all those whom they are likely to meet. But boys meeting with no such forbearance or training in other boys, must sometimes be thrown upon feuds in the ratio of

their own firmness much more than in the ratio of any natural proneness to quarrel. Such a subject, however, will be best illustrated by a sketch or two of my own principal feuds.

The first, but merely transient and playful, nor worth noticing at all, but for its subsequent resurrection under other and awful colouring in my dreams, grew out of an imaginary slight, as I viewed it, put upon me by one of my guardians. I had four guardians; and the one of these who had the most knowledge and talent of the whole—a banker, living about a hundred miles from my home—had invited me, when eleven years old, to his house. His eldest daughter, perhaps a year younger than myself, wore at that time upon her very lovely face the most angelic expression of character and temper that I have almost ever seen. Naturally, I fell in love with her. It seems absurd to say so; and the more so, because two children more absolutely innocent than we were cannot be imagined, neither of us having ever been at any school, but the simple truth is, that in the most chivalrous sense I was in love with her. And the proof that I was so showed itself in three separate modes: I kissed her glove on any rare occasion when I found it lying on a table; secondly, I looked out for some excuse to be jealous of her; and, thirdly, I did my very best to get up a quarrel. What I wanted the quarrel for was the luxury of a reconciliation; a hill cannot be had, you know, without going to the expense of a valley. And though I hated the very thought of a moment's difference with so truly gentle a girl, yet how, but through such a purgatory, could one win the paradise of her returning smiles? All this, however, came to nothing; and simply because she positively would not quarrel. And the jealousy fell through, because there was no decent subject for such a passion, unless it had settled upon an old music-master, whom lunacy itself could not adopt as a rival. The quarrel, meantime, which never prospered with the daughter, silently kindled on my part towards the father. His offence was this. At dinner, I naturally placed myself by the side of M., and it gave me great pleasure to touch her hand at intervals. As M. was my cousin, though twice or even three times removed, I did not feel it taking too great a liberty in this little act of tenderness. No matter if three thousand times removed, I said my cousin is my cousin; nor had I very much designed to conceal the act; or if so, rather on her account than my own. One evening, however, papa observed my manœuvre. Did he seem displeased? Not at all; he even condescended to smile. But the next day he placed M. on the side opposite to myself.

In one respect this was really an improvement, because it gave me a better view of my cousin's sweet countenance. But then there was the loss of the hand to be considered, and secondly there was the affront. It was clear that vengeance must be had. Now, there was but one thing in this world that I could do even decently; but that I could do admirably. This was writing Latin hexameters. Juvenal—though it was not very much of him that I had then read—seemed to me a divine model. The inspiration of wrath spoke through him as through a Hebrew prophet. The same inspiration spoke now in me. "Facit indignatio versum," said Juvenal. And it must be owned that indignation has never made such good verses since as she did in that day. But still, even to me, this agile passion proved a Muse of genial inspiration for a couple of paragraphs; and one line I will mention as worthy to have taken its place in Juvenal himself. I say this without scruple, having not a shadow of vanity, nor, on the other hand, a shadow of false modesty connected with such boyish accomplishments. The poem opened thus:

"Te nemis austerum sacræ qui fœdera mensæ
Diruis, insector Satyræ reboante flagello."

But the line which I insist upon as of Roman strength was the closing one of the next sentence. The general effect of the sentiment was, that my clamorous wrath should make its way even into ears that were past hearing:

"mea sæva quere a
Auribus insidet ceratis, auribus etsi
Non audituris hyberna nocte procellam."

The power, however, which inflated my verse, soon collapsed; having been soothed, from the very first, by finding, that except in this one instance at the dinner-table, which probably had been viewed as an indecorum, no further restraint, of any kind whatever, was meditated upon my intercourse with M. Besides, it was too painful to lock up good verses in one's own solitary breast. Yet how could I shock the sweet filial heart of my cousin by a fierce lampoon or stylites against her father, had Latin even figured amongst her accomplishments? Then it occurred to me that the verses might be shown to the father. But was there not something treacherous in gaining a man's approbation under a mask to a satire upon himself? Or would he have always understood me? For one person, a year after, took the *sacræ mensæ* (by which I had meant the sanctities of hospitality) to mean the sacramental table. And

on consideration I began to suspect that many people would pronounce myself the party who had violated the holy ties of hospitality, which are equally binding on guest as on host. Indolence, which sometimes comes in aid of good impulses as well as bad, favoured these relenting thoughts. The society of M. did still more to wean me from further efforts of satire; and, finally, my Latin poem remained in torso. But, upon the whole, my guardian had a narrow escape of descending to posterity in a disadvantageous light, had he rolled down to it through my hexameters.

Here was a case of merely playful feud. But the same talent of Latin verses soon after connected me with a real feud, that harassed my mind more than would be supposed, and precisely by this agency, namely, that it arrayed one set of feelings against another. It divided my mind, as by domestic feud, against itself. About a year after returning from the visit to my guardian's, and when I must have been nearly completing my twelfth year, I was sent to a great public school. Every man has reason to rejoice who enjoys so great an advantage. I condemned, and do condemn, the practice of sometimes sending out into such stormy exposures those who are as yet too young, too dependent on female gentleness, and endowed with sensibilities too exquisite. But at nine or ten the masculine energies of the character are beginning to be developed; or if not, no discipline will better aid in their development than the bracing intercourse of a great English classical school. Even the selfish are forced into accommodating themselves to a public standard of generosity, and the effeminate into conforming to a rule of manliness. I was myself at two public schools; and I think with gratitude of the benefit which I reaped from both; as also I think with gratitude of the upright guardian in whose quiet household I learned Latin so effectually. But the small private schools which I witnessed for brief periods, containing thirty or forty boys, were models of ignoble manners as respected some part of the juniors, and of favouritism amongst the masters. Nowhere is the sublimity of public justice so broadly exemplified as in an English school. There is not in the universe such an areopagus for fair play, and abhorrence of all crooked ways, as an English mob, or one of the English time-honoured public schools. But my own first introduction to such an establishment was under peculiar and contradictory circumstances. When my "rating," or graduation in the school, was to be settled, naturally my altitude (to speak astronomically) was taken by the proficiency in Greek. But I could

then barely construe books so easy as the Greek Testament and the "Iliad." This was considered quite well enough for my age; but still it caused me to be placed three steps below the highest rank in the school. Within one week, however, my talent for Latin verses, which had by this time gathered strength and expansion, became known. I was honoured as never was man or boy since Mordecai the Jew. Not properly belonging to the flock of the head master, but to the leading section of the second, I was now weekly paraded for distinction at the supreme tribunal of the school; out of which at first grew nothing but a sunshine of approbation delightful to my heart, still brooding upon solitude. Within six weeks this had changed. The approbation, indeed, continued, and the public testimony of it. Neither would there, in the ordinary course, have been any painful reaction from jealousy, or fretful resistance to the soundness of my pretensions; since it was sufficiently known to some of my school-fellows, that I, who had no male relatives but military men, and those in India, could not have benefited by any clandestine aid. But, unhappily the head master was at that time dissatisfied with some points in the progress of his head form; and, as it soon appeared, was continually throwing in their teeth the brilliancy of my verses at twelve, by comparison with theirs at seventeen, eighteen, and nineteen. I had observed him sometimes pointing to myself; and was perplexed at seeing this gesture followed by gloomy looks, and what French reporters call "sensation," in these young men, whom naturally I viewed with awe as my leaders, boys that were called young men, men that were reading Sophocles — (a name that carried with it the sound of something seraphic to my ears),—and who never had vouchsafed to waste a word on such a child as myself. The day was come, however, when all that would be changed. One of these leaders strode up to me in the public play-grounds, and delivering a blow on my shoulder, which was not intended to hurt me, but as a mere formula of introduction, asked me "What the d—l I meant by bolting out of the course, and annoying other people in that manner? Were other people to have no rest for me and my verses, which, after all, were horribly bad?" There might have been some difficulty in returning an answer to this address, but none was required. I was briefly admonished to see that I wrote worse for the future, or else —. At this aposiopesis, I looked inquiringly at the speaker, and he filled up the chasm by saying that he would "annihilate" me. Could any person fail to be aghast at such a demand? I was

to write worse than my own standard, which, by his account of my verses, must be difficult; and I was to write worse than himself, which might be impossible. My feelings revolted, it may be supposed, against so arrogant a demand, unless it had been far otherwise expressed; and on the next occasion for sending up verses, so far from attending to the orders issued, I double-shotted my guns; double applause descended on myself; but I remarked, with some awe though not repenting of what I had done, that double confusion seemed to agitate the ranks of my enemies. Amongst them loomed out in the distance my "annihilating" friend, who shook his huge fist at me, but with something like a grim smile about his eyes. He took an early opportunity of paying his respects to me, saying, "You little devil, do you call this writing your worst?" "No," I replied; "I call it writing my best." The annihilator, as it turned out, was really a good-natured young man; but he soon went off to Cambridge; and with the rest, or some of them, I continued to wage war for nearly a year. And yet, for a word spoken with kindness, I would have resigned the peacock's feather in my cap as the merest of baubles. Undoubtedly praise sounded sweet in my ears also. But that was nothing by comparison with what stood on the other side. I detested distinctions that were connected with mortification to others. And, even if I could have got over that, the eternal feud fretted and tormented my nature. Love, that once in childhood had been so mere a necessity to me, that had long been a mere reflected ray from a departed sunset. But peace, and freedom from strife, if love were no longer possible (as so rarely it is in this world), was the absolute necessity of my heart. To contend with somebody was still my fate; how to escape the contention I could not see; and yet for itself, and the deadly passions into which it forced me, I hated and loathed it more than death. It added to the distraction and internal feud of my own mind, that I could not altogether condemn the upper boys. I was made a handle of humiliation to them. And, in the mean time, if I had an advantage in one accomplishment, which is all a matter of accident, or peculiar taste and feeling, they, on the other hand, had a great advantage over me in the more elaborate difficulties of Greek, and of choral Greek poetry. I could not altogether wonder at their hatred of myself. Yet still, as they had chosen to adopt this mode of conflict with me, I did not feel that I had any choice but to resist. The contest was terminated for me by my removal from the school, in consequence of a very

threatening illness affecting my head; but it lasted nearly a year, and it did not close before several amongst my public enemies had become my private friends. They were much older, but they invited me to the houses of their friends, and showed me a respect which deeply affected me,—this respect having more reference, apparently, to the firmness I had exhibited, than to the splendour of my verses. And, indeed, these had rather drooped, from a natural accident; several persons of my own class had formed the practice of asking me to write verses for them. I could not refuse. But, as the subjects given out were the same for all of us, it was not possible to take so many crops off the ground without starving the quality of all.

Two years and a half from this time, I was again at a public school of ancient foundation. Now I was myself one of the three who formed the highest class. Now I myself was familiar with Sophocles, who once had been so shadowy a name in my ear. But, strange to say, now, in my sixteenth year, I cared nothing at all for the glory of Latin verse. All the business of school was light and trivial in my eyes. Costing me not an effort, it could not engage any part of my attention; that was now swallowed up altogether by the literature of my native land. I still revered the Grecian drama, as always I must. But else I cared little then for classical pursuits. A deeper spell had mastered me; and I lived only in those bowers where deeper passions spoke.

Here, however, it was that began another and more important struggle. I was drawing near to seventeen, and, in a year after that, would arrive the usual time for going to Oxford. To Oxford my guardians made no objection; and they readily agreed to make the allowance then universally regarded as the minimum for an Oxford student, namely £200 per annum. But they insisted, as a previous condition, that I should make a positive and definite choice of a profession. Now, I was well aware, that, if I did make such a choice, no law existed, nor could any obligation be created through deeds or signature, by which I could finally be compelled into keeping my engagement. But this evasion did not suit me. Here, again, I felt indignantly that the principle of the attempt was unjust. The object was certainly to do me service by saving money, since, if I selected the bar as my profession, it was contended by some persons (misinformed however), that not Oxford, but a special pleader's office, would be my proper destination; but I cared not for arguments of that sort. Oxford I was determined to make my home; and also to bear my future course

utterly untrammelled by promises that I might repent. Soon came the catastrophe of this struggle. A little before my seventeenth birthday, I walked off, one lovely summer morning, to North Wales, rambled there for months, and, finally, under some obscure hopes of raising money on my personal security, I went up to London. Now I was in my eighteenth year, and during this period it was that I passed through that trial of severe distress, of which I gave some account in my former "Confessions". Having a motive, however, for glancing backwards briefly at that period in the present series, I will do so at this point.

I saw in one journal an insinuation that the incidents in the preliminary narrative were possibly without foundation. To such an expression of mere gratuitous malignity, as it happened to be supported by no one argument, except a remark, apparently absurd, but certainly false, I did not condescend to answer. In reality, the possibility had never occurred to me that any person of judgment would seriously suspect me of taking liberties with that part of the work, since, though no one of the parties concerned but myself stood in so central a position to the circumstances as to be acquainted with all of them, many were acquainted with each separate section of the memoir. Relays of witnesses might have been summoned to mount guard, as it were, upon the accuracy of each particular in the whole succession of incidents; and some of these people had an interest, more or less strong, in exposing any deviation from the strictest letter of the truth, had it been in their power to do so. It is now twenty-two years since I saw the objection here alluded to, and in saying that I did not condescend to notice it, the reader must not find any reason for taxing me with a blamable haughtiness. But every man is entitled to be haughty when his veracity is impeached; and still more when it is impeached by a dishonest objection, or, if not that, by an objection which argues a carelessness of attention almost amounting to dishonesty, in a case where it was meant to sustain an imputation of falsehood. Let a man read carelessly, if he will, but not where he is meaning to use his reading for a purpose of wounding another man's honour. Having thus, by twenty-two years' silence, sufficiently expressed my contempt for the slander,¹ I now feel myself at liberty to draw it into notice, for the sake, inter alia, of showing in how rash a spirit malignity often works. In the preliminary account of certain boyish adventures which had exposed me to suffering of a kind not commonly incident to persons in my station in life, and

leaving behind a temptation to the use of opium under certain arrears of weakness, I had occasion to notice a disreputable attorney in London, who showed me some attentions, partly on my own account as a boy of some expectations, but much more with the purpose of fastening his professional grappling-hooks upon the young Earl of A——t,² my former companion, and my present correspondent. This man's house was slightly described, and, with more minuteness, I had exposed some interesting traits in his household economy. A question, therefore, naturally arose in several people's curiosity—Where was this house situated? and the more so because I had pointed a renewed attention to it by saying, that on that very evening (namely, the evening on which that particular page of the "Confessions" was written) I had visited the street, looked up at the windows, and, instead of the gloomy desolation reigning there when myself and a little girl were the sole nightly tenants,—sleeping, in fact (poor freezing creatures that we both were), on the floor of the attorney's law-chamber, and making a pillow out of his infernal parchments,—I had seen, with pleasure, the evidences of comfort, respectability, and domestic animation, in the lights and stir prevailing through different stories of the house. Upon this, the upright critic told his readers that I had described the house as standing in Oxford Street, and then appealed to their own knowledge of that street whether such a house could be so situated. Why not—he neglected to tell us. The houses at the east end of Oxford Street are certainly of too small an order to meet my account of the attorney's house; but why should it be at the east end? Oxford Street is a mile and a quarter long, and, being built continuously on both sides, finds room for houses of many classes. Meantime it happens that, although the true house was most obscurely indicated, any house whatever in Oxford Street was most luminously excluded. In all the immensity of London there was but one single street that could be challenged by an attentive reader of the "Confessions" as peremptorily not the street of the attorney's house, and that one was Oxford Street; for, in speaking of my own renewed acquaintance with the outside of this house, I used some expression implying that, in order to make such a visit of reconnoissance, I had turned aside from Oxford Street. The matter is a perfect trifle in itself, but it is no trifle in a question affecting a writer's accuracy. If in a thing so absolutely impossible to be forgotten as the true situation of a house painfully memorable to a man's feelings, from being the scene of boyish dis-

tresses the most exquisite, nights passed in the misery of cold, and hunger preying upon him, both night and day, in a degree which very many would not have survived,— he, when retracing his school-boy annals, could have shown indecision, even far more dreaded inaccuracy, in identifying the house,— not one syllable after that, which he could have said on any other subject, would have won any confidence, or deserved any, from a judicious reader. I may now mention — the Herod being dead whose persecutions I had reason to fear — that the house in question stands in Greek Street on the west, and is the house on that side nearest to Soho Square, but without looking into the square. This it was hardly safe to mention at the date of the published “Confessions”. It was my private opinion, indeed, that there were probably twenty-five chances to one in favour of my friend the attorney having been by that time hanged. But then this argued inversely; one chance to twenty-five that my friend might be unhanged, and knocking about the streets of London; in which case it would have been a perfect god-send to him that here lay an opening (of my contrivance, not his) for requesting the opinion of a jury on the amount of solatium due to his wounded feelings in an action on the passage in the “Confessions”. To have indicated even the street would have been enough; because there could surely be but one such Grecian in Greek Street, or but one that realized the other conditions of the unknown quantity. There was also a separate danger not absolutely so laughable as it sounds. Me there was little chance that the attorney should meet; but my book he might easily have met (supposing always that the warrant of *Sus. per coll.* had not yet on his account travelled down to Newgate). For he was literary; admired literature; and, as a lawyer, he wrote on some subjects fluently; might he not publish his “Confessions”. Or, which would be worse, a supplement to mine, printed so as exactly to match? In which case I should have had the same affliction that Gibbon the historian dreaded so much, namely, that of seeing a refutation of himself, and his own answer to the refutation, all bound up in one and the same self-combating volume. Besides, he would have cross-examined me before the public, in Old Bailey style; no story, the most straightforward that ever was told, could be sure to stand that. And my readers might be left in a state of painful doubt whether he might not, after all, have been a model of suffering innocence — I (to say the kindest thing possible) plagued with the natural treacheries of a schoolboy’s memory. In taking leave of this case and the remembrances connected

with it, let me say that, although really believing in the probability of the attorney's having at least found his way to Australia, I had no satisfaction in thinking of that result. I knew my friend to be the very perfection of a scamp. And in the running account between us (I mean, in the ordinary sense, as to money), the balance could not be in his favour; since I, on receiving a sum of money (considerable in the eyes of us both), had transferred pretty nearly the whole of it to him, for the purpose ostensibly held out to me (but of course a hoax) of purchasing certain law "stamps;" for he was then pursuing a diplomatic correspondence with various Jews who lent money to young heirs, in some trifling proportion on my own insignificant account, but much more truly on the account of Lord A——t, my young friend. On the other side, he had given to me simply the relics of his breakfast-table, which itself was hardly more than a relic. But in this he was not to blame. He could not give to me what he had not for himself, nor sometimes for the poor starving child whom I now suppose to have been his illegitimate daughter. So desperate was the running fight, yard-arm to yard-arm, which he maintained with creditors fierce as famine and hungry as the grave,—so deep also was his horror (I know not for which of the various reasons supposable) against falling into a prison,—that he seldom ventured to sleep twice successively in the same house. That expense of itself must have pressed heavily in London, where you pay half a crown at least for a bed that would cost only a shilling in the provinces. In the midst of his knaveries, and, what were even more shocking to my remembrance, his confidential discoveries in his rambling conversations of knavish designs (not always pecuniary), there was a light of wandering misery in his eye, at times, which affected me afterwards at intervals, when I recalled it in the radiant happiness of nineteen, and amidst the solemn tranquilities of Oxford. That of itself was interesting; the man was worse by far than he had been meant to be; he had not the mind that reconciles itself to evil. Besides, he respected scholarship, which appeared by the deference he generally showed to myself, then about seventeen; he had an interest in literature,—that argues something good; and was pleased at any time, or even cheerful, when I turned the conversation upon books; nay, he seemed touched with emotion when I quoted some sentiment noble and impassioned from one of the great poets, and would ask me to repeat it. He would have been a man of memorable energy, and for good purposes, had it not been for his agony of conflict with pecuni-

ary embarrassments. These probably had commenced in some fatal compliance with temptation arising out of funds confided to him by a client. Perhaps he had gained fifty guineas for a moment of necessity, and had sacrificed for that trifle only the serenity and the comfort of a life. Feelings of relenting kindness it was not in my nature to refuse in such a case; and I wished to. . . . But I never succeeded in tracing his steps through the wilderness of London until some years back, when I ascertained that he was dead. Generally speaking, the few people whom I have disliked in this world were flourishing people, of good repute. Whereas the knaves whom I have known, one and all, and by no means few, I think of with pleasure and kindness.

Heavens! when I look back to the sufferings which I have witnessed or heard of, even from this one brief London experience, I say, if life could throw open its long suites of chambers to our eyes from some station beforehand,—if, from some secret stand, we could look by anticipation along its vast corridors, and aside into the recesses opening upon them from either hand,—halls of tragedy or chambers of retribution, simply in that small wing and no more of the great caravanserai which we ourselves shall haunt,—simply in that narrow tract of time, and no more, where we ourselves shall range, and confining our gaze to those, and no others, for whom personally we shall be interested,—what a recoil we should suffer of horror in our estimate of life! What if those sudden catastrophes, or those inexpiable afflictions, which have already descended upon the people within my own knowledge, and almost below my own eyes, all of them now gone past, and some long past, had been thrown open before me as a secret exhibition when first I and they stood within the vestibule of morning hopes,—when the calamities themselves had hardly begun to gather in their elements of possibility and when some of the parties to them were as yet no more than infants! The past viewed not as the past, but by a spectator who steps back ten years deeper into the rear, in order that he may regard it as a future; the calamity of 1840 contemplated from the station of 1830,—the doom that rang the knell of happiness viewed from a point of time when as yet it was neither feared nor would even have been intelligible,—the name that killed in 1843, which in 1835 would have struck no vibration upon the heart,—the portrait that on the day of her Majesty's coronation would have been admired by you with a pure disinterested admiration, but which, if seen to-day, would draw forth an

involuntary groan,—cases such as these are strangely moving for all who add deep thoughtfulness to deep sensibility. As the hastiest of improvisations, accept, fair reader (for you it is that will chiefly feel such an invocation of the past), three or four illustrations of my own experience.

Who is this distinguished-looking young woman, with her eyes drooping, and the shadow of a dreadful shock yet fresh upon every feature? Who is the elderly lady, with her eyes flashing fire? Who is the downcast child of sixteen? What is that torn paper lying at their feet? Who is the writer? Whom does the paper concern? Ah! if she, if the central figure in the group—twenty-two at the moment when she is revealed to us—could, on her happy birthday at sweet seventeen, have seen the image of herself five years onwards, just as we see it now, would she have prayed for life as for an absolute blessing? or would she not have prayed to be taken from the evil to come—to be taken away one evening, at least, before this day's sun arose? It is true, she still wears a look of gentle pride, and a relic of that noble smile which belongs to her that suffers an injury which many times over she would have died sooner than inflict. Womanly pride refuses itself before witnesses to the total prostration of the blow; but, for all that, you may see that she longs to be left alone, and that her tears will flow without restraint when she is so. This room is her pretty boudoir, in which, till to-night—poor thing!—she has been glad and happy. There stands her miniature conservatory, and there expands her miniature library; as we circumnavigators of literature are apt (you know) to regard all female libraries in the light of miniatures. None of these will ever rekindle a smile on her face; and there, beyond, is her music, which only of all that she possesses will now become dearer to her than ever; but not, as once, to feed a self-mocked pensiveness, or to cheat a half visionary sadness. She will be sad, indeed. But she is one of those that will suffer in silence. Nobody will ever detect her failing in any point of duty, or querulously seeking the support in others which she can find for herself in this solitary room. Droop she will not in the sight of men; and, for all beyond, nobody has any concern with that, except God. You shall hear what becomes of her, before we take our departure; but now let me tell you what has happened. In the main outline I am sure you guess already, without aid of mine, for we leaden-eyed men, in such cases, see nothing by comparison with you, our quick-witted sisters. That haughty-looking lady, with the Roman cast of

features, who must once have been strikingly handsome,— an Agrippina, even yet, in a favourable presentation—is the younger lady's aunt. She, it is rumoured, once sustained, in her younger days, some injury of that same cruel nature which has this day assailed her niece, and ever since she has worn an air of disdain, not altogether unsupported by real dignity towards men. This aunt it was that tore the letter which lies upon the floor. It deserved to be torn; and yet she that had the best right to do so would not have torn it. That letter was an elaborate attempt on the part of an accomplished young man to release himself from sacred engagements. What need was there to argue the case of such engagements? Could it have been requisite with pure female dignity to plead anything, or do more than look an indisposition to fulfil them? The aunt is now moving towards the door, which I am glad to see; and she is followed by that pale, timid girl of sixteen, a cousin, who feels the case profoundly, but is too young and shy to offer an intellectual sympathy.

Only one person in this world there is who could to-night have been a supporting friend to our young sufferer, and that is her dear, loving twin-sister, that for eighteen years read and wrote, thought and sang, slept and breathed, with the dividing-door open forever between their bed-rooms, and never once a separation between their hearts; but she is in a far-distant land. Who else is there at her call? Except God, nobody. Her aunt had somewhat sternly admonished her, though still with a relenting in her eye as she glanced aside at the expression in her niece's face, that she must "call pride to her assistance." Ay, true; but pride, though a strong ally in public, is apt in private to turn as treacherous as the worst of those against whom she is invoked. How could it be dreamed by a person of sense that a brilliant young man, of merits various and eminent, in spite of his baseness, to whom, for nearly two years, this young woman had given her whole confiding love, might be dismissed from a heart like hers on the earliest summons of pride, simply because she herself had been dismissed from his, or seemed to have been dismissed, on a summons of mercenary calculation? Look! now that she is relieved from the weight of an unconfidential presence, she has sat for two hours with her head buried in her hands. At last she rises to look for something. A thought has struck her; and, taking a little golden key which hangs by a chain within her bosom, she searches for something locked up amongst her few jewels. What is it? It is a Bible exquisitely illuminated, with a letter

attached by some pretty silken artifice to the blank leaves at the end. This letter is a beautiful record, wisely and pathetically composed, of maternal anxiety still burning strong in death, and yearning, when all objects beside were fast fading from her eyes, after one parting act of communion with the twin darlings of her heart. Both were thirteen years old, within a week or two, as on the night before her death they sat weeping by the bedside of their mother, and hanging on her lips, now for farewell whispers and now for farewell kisses. They both knew that, as her strength had permitted during the latter month of her life, she had thrown the last anguish of love in her beseeching heart into a letter of counsel to themselves. Through this, of which each sister had a copy, she trusted long to converse with her orphans. And the last promise which she had entreated on this evening from both was, that in either of two contingencies they would review her counsels, and the passages to which she pointed their attention in the Scriptures; namely, first, in the event of any calamity, that, for one sister or for both, should overspread their paths with total darkness; and, secondly, in the event of life flowing in too profound a stream of prosperity, so as to threaten them with an alienation of interest from all spiritual objects. She had not concealed that, of these two extreme cases, she would prefer for her own children the first. And now had that case arrived, indeed, which she in spirit had desired to meet. Nine years ago, just as the silvery voice of a dial in the dying lady's bed-room was striking nine, upon a summer evening, had the last visual ray streamed from her seeking eyes upon her orphan twins, after which, throughout the night, she had slept away into heaven. Now again had come a summer evening memorable for unhappiness; now again the daughter thought of those dying lights of love which streamed at sunset from the closing eyes of her mother; again, and just as she went back in thought to this image, the same silvery voice of the dial sounded nine o'clock. Again she remembered her mother's dying request; again her own tear-hallowed promise,—and with her heart in her mother's grave she now rose to fulfil it. Here, then, when this solemn recurrence to a testamentary counsel has ceased to be a mere office of duty towards the departed, having taken the shape of a consolation for herself, let us pause.

Now, fair companion in this exploring voyage of inquest into hidden scenes, or forgotten scenes of human life, perhaps it might be instructive to direct our glasses upon the false,

perfidious lover. It might. But do not let us do so. We might like him better, or pity him more, than either of us would desire. His name and memory have long since dropped out of everybody's thoughts. Of prosperity, and (what is more important) of internal peace, he is reputed to have had no gleam from the moment when he betrayed his faith, and in one day threw away the jewel of good conscience, and "a pearl richer than all his tribe." But, however that may be, it is certain that, finally, he became a wreck; and of any hopeless wreck it is painful to talk,—much more so, when through him others also became wrecks.

Shall we, then, after an interval of nearly two years has passed over the young lady in the boudoir, look in again upon her? You hesitate, fair friend; and I myself hesitate. For in fact she also has become a wreck; and it would grieve us both to see her altered. At the end of twenty-one months she retains hardly a vestige of resemblance to the fine young woman we saw on that unhappy evening, with her aunt and cousin. On consideration, therefore, let us do this.—We will direct our glasses to her room at a point of time about six weeks further on. Suppose this time gone; suppose her now dressed for her grave, and placed in her coffin. The advantage of that is, that though no change can restore the ravages of the past, yet (as often is found to happen with young persons) the expression has revived from her girlish years. The child-like aspect has revolved, and settled back upon her features. The wasting away of the flesh is less apparent in the face; and one might imagine that in this sweet marble countenance was seen the very same upon which, eleven years ago, her mother's darkening eyes had lingered to the last, until clouds had swallowed up the vision of her beloved twins. Yet, if that were in part a fancy, this, at least, is no fancy,—that not only much of a child-like truth and simplicity has reinstated itself in the temple of her now reposing features, but also that tranquility and perfect peace, such as are appropriate to eternity, but which from the living countenance had taken their flight forever, on that memorable evening when we looked in upon the impassioned group,—upon the towering and denouncing aunt, the sympathizing but silent cousin, the poor, blighted niece, and the wicked letter lying in fragments at their feet.

Cloud, that hast revealed to us this young creature and her blighted hopes, close up again. And now, a few years later,—not more than four or five,—give back to us the latest arrears of the changes which thou concealest within thy draperies.

Once more, "open sesame!" and show us a third generation. Behold a lawn islanded with thickets. How perfect is the verdure; how rich the blossoming shrubberies that screen with verdurous walls from the possibility of intrusion, whilst by their own wandering line of distribution they shape, and umbrageously embay, what one might call lawny saloons and vestibules, sylvan galleries and closets! Some of these recesses, which unlink themselves as fluently as snakes, and unexpectedly as the shyest nooks, watery cells, and crypts, amongst the shores of a forest-lake, being formed by the mere caprices and ramblings of the luxuriant shrubs, are so small and so quiet that one might fancy them meant for boudoirs. Here is one that in a less fickle climate would make the loveliest of studies for a writer of breathings from some solitary heart, or of suspiria from some impassioned memory! And, opening from one angle of this embowered study, issues a little narrow corridor, that, after almost wheeling back upon itself, in its playful mazes, finally widens into a little circular chamber; out of which there is no exit (except back again by the entrance), small or great; so that, adjacent to his study, the writer would command how sweet a bed-room, permitting him to lie the summer through, gazing all night long at the burning host of heaven. How silent that would be at the noon of summer nights — how grave-like in its quiet! And yet, need there be asked a stillness or a silence more profound than is felt at this present noon of day? One reason for such peculiar repose, over and above the tranquil character of the day, and the distance of the place from the highroads, is the outer zone of woods, which almost on every quarter invests the shrubberies, swathing them (as one may express it), belting them and overlooking them, from a varying distance of two and three furlongs, so as oftentimes to keep the winds at a distance. But, however caused and supported, the silence of these fanciful lawns and lawny chambers is oftentimes oppressive in the depths of summer to people unfamiliar with solitudes, either mountainous or sylvan; and many would be apt to suppose that the villa, to which these pretty shrubberies form the chief dependencies, must be untenanted. But that is not the case. The house is inhabited, and by its own legal mistress, the proprietress of the whole domain; and not at all a silent mistress, but as noisy as most little ladies of five years old, for that is her age. Now, and just as we are speaking, you may hear her little, joyous clamour as she issues from the house. This way she comes, bounding like a fawn; and soon she rushes into the

little recess which I pointed out as a proper study for any man who should be weaving the deep harmonies of memorial suspiria. But I fancy that she will soon dispossess it of that character, for her suspiria are not many at this stage of her life. Now she comes dancing into sight; and you see that, if she keeps the promise of her infancy, she will be an interesting creature to the eye in after life. In other respects, also, she is an engaging child,—loving, natural, and wild as any one of her neighbours for some miles round, namely, leverets, squirrels, and ring-doves. But what will surprise you most is, that, although a child of pure English blood, she speaks very little English; but more Bengalee than perhaps you will find it convenient to construe. That is her ayah, who comes up from behind, at a pace so different from her youthful mistress's. But, if their paces are different, in other things they agree most cordially; and dearly they love each other. In reality, the child has passed her whole life in the arms of this ayah. She remembers nothing elder than her; eldest of things is the ayah in her eyes; and, if the ayah should insist on her worshipping herself as the goddess Railroadina or Steamboatina, that made England, and the sea, and Bengal, it is certain that the little thing would do so, asking no question but this,—whether kissing would do for worshipping.

Every evening at nine o'clock, as the ayah sits by the little creature lying awake in bed, the silvery tongue of a dial tolls the hour. Reader, you know who she is. She is the granddaughter of her that faded away about sunset in gazing at her twin orphans. Her name is Grace. And she is the niece of that elder and once happy Grace, who spent so much of her happiness in this very room, but whom, in her utter desolation, we saw in the boudoir, with the torn letter at her feet. She is the daughter of that other sister, wife to a military officer who died abroad. Little Grace never saw her grandmamma, nor her lovely aunt, that was her namesake, nor consciously her mamma. She was born six months after the death of the elder Grace; and her mother saw her only through the mists of mortal suffering, which carried her off three weeks after the birth of her daughter.

This view was taken several years ago; and since then the younger Grace, in her turn, is under a cloud of affliction. But she is still under eighteen; and of her there may be hopes. Seeing such things in so short a space of years, for the grandmother died at thirty-two, we say,—Death we can face: but knowing, as some of us do, what is human life, which of us is

it that without shuddering could (if consciously we were summoned) face the hour of birth?

NOTES

¹ Being almost constantly an absentee from London, and very often from other great cities, so as to command oftentimes no favourable opportunities for overlooking the great mass of public journals, it is possible enough that other slanders of the same tenor may have existed. I speak of what met my own eye, or was accidentally reported to me; but, in fact, all of us are exposed to this evil of calumnies lurking unseen, for no degree of energy, and no excess of disposable time would enable any man to exercise this sort of vigilant police over all journals. Better, therefore, tranquilly to leave all such malice to confound itself.

² Earl of Altamont.

THE ENGLISH MAIL-COACH

THE ENGLISH MAIL-COACH

I

THE GLORY OF MOTION

SOME twenty or more years before I matriculated at Oxford, Mr. Palmer, at that time M. P. for Bath, had accomplished two things, very hard to do on our little planet, the Earth, however, cheap they may be held by eccentric people in comets—he had invented mail-coaches, and he had married the daughter² of a duke. He was, therefore, just twice as great a man as Galileo, who did certainly invent (or which is the same thing,³ discover) the satellites of Jupiter, those very next things extant to mail-coaches in the two capital pretensions of speed and keeping time, but, on the other hand, who did not marry the daughter of a duke.

These mail-coaches, as organized by Mr. Palmer, are entitled to a circumstantial notice from myself, having had so large a share in developing the anarchies of my subsequent dreams; an agency which they accomplished, first, through velocity, at that time unprecedented—for they first revealed the glory of motion; secondly, through grand effects for the eye between lamp-light and the darkness upon solitary roads; thirdly, through animal beauty and power so often displayed in the class of horses selected for this mail service; fourthly, through the conscious presence of a central intellect, that, in the midst of vast distances⁴—of storms, of darkness, of danger—overruled all obstacles into one steady co-operation to a national result. For my own feeling, this post-office service spoke as by some mighty orchestra, where a thousand instruments, all disregarding each other, and so far in danger of discord, yet all obedient as slaves to the supreme baton of some great leader, terminate in a perfection of harmony like that of heart, brain, and lungs, in a healthy animal organization. But, finally,

that particular element in this whole combination which most impressed myself, and through which it is that to this hour Mr. Palmer's mail-coach system tyrannizes, over my dreams, by terror and terrific beauty, lay in the awful political mission which at that time it fulfilled. The mail-coach it was that distributed over the face of the land, like the opening of apocalyptic vials, the heart-shaking news of Trafalgar, of Salamanca, of Vittoria, of Waterloo. These were the harvests that, in the grandeur of their reaping, redeemed the tears and blood in which they had been sown. Neither was the meanest peasant so much below the grandeur and the sorrow of the times as to confound battles such as these, which were gradually moulding the destinies of Christendom, with the vulgar conflicts of ordinary warfare, so often no more than gladiatorial trials of national prowess. The victories of England in this stupendous contest rose of themselves as natural *Te Deums* to heaven; and it was felt by the thoughtful that such victories, at such a crisis of general prostration, were not more beneficial to ourselves than finally to France, our enemy, and to the nations of all western or central Europe, through whose pusillanimity it was that the French domination had prospered.

The mail-coach, as the national organ for publishing these mighty events thus diffusively influential, became itself a spiritualized and glorified object to an impassioned heart; and naturally, in the Oxford of that day, all hearts were impassioned, as being all (or nearly all) in early manhood. In most universities there is one single college; in Oxford there were five-and-twenty, all of which were peopled by young men, the élite of their own generation; not boys, but men; none under eighteen. In some of these many colleges, the custom permitted the student to keep what are called "short terms;" that is, the four terms of Michaelmas, Lent, Easter, and Act, were kept by a residence, in the aggregate of ninety-one days, or thirteen weeks. Under this interrupted residence, it was possible that a student might have a reason for going down to his home four times in a year. This made eight journeys to and fro. But, as the homes lay dispersed through all the shires of the island, and most of us disdained all coaches except his majesty's mail, no city out of London could pretend to so extensive a connection with Mr. Palmer's establishment as Oxford. Three mails, at the least, I remember as passing every day through Oxford, and benefiting by my personal patronage — viz., the Worcester, the Gloucester, and the Holyhead mail. Naturally, therefore, it became a point of some interest with us, whose journeys

revolved every six weeks on an average, to look a little into the executive details of the system. With some of these Mr. Palmer had no concern; they rested upon bye-laws enacted by posting-houses for their own benefit, and upon other bye-laws, equally stern, enacted by the inside passengers for the illustration of their own haughty exclusiveness. These last were of a nature to rouse our scorn, from which the transition was not very long to systematic mutiny. Up to this time, say 1804, or 1805 (the year of Trafalgar), it had been the fixed assumption of the four inside people (as an old tradition of all public carriages derived from the reign of Charles II), that they, the illustrious quaternion, constituted a porcelain variety of the human race, whose dignity would have been compromised by exchanging one word of civility with the three miserable delf-ware outsides. Even to have kicked an outsider, might have been held to attain the foot concerned in that operation; so that, perhaps, it would have required an act of parliament to restore its purity of blood. What words, then, could express the horror, and the sense of treason, in that case, which had happened, where all three outsides (the trinity of Pariahs) made a vain attempt to sit down at the same breakfast-table or dinner-table with the consecrated four? I myself witnessed such an attempt; and on that occasion a benevolent old gentleman endeavoured to soothe his three holy associates, by suggesting that, if the outsides were indicted for this criminal attempt at the next assizes, the court would regard it as a case of lunacy, or delirium tremens, rather than of treason. England owes much of her grandeur to the depth of the aristocratic element in her social composition, when pulling against her strong democracy. I am not the man to laugh at it. But sometimes, undoubtedly, it expressed itself in comic shapes. The course taken with the infatuated outsiders, in the particular attempt which I have noticed, was, that the waiter, beckoning them away from the privileged *salle-à-manger*, sang out, "This way, my good men," and then enticed these good men away to the kitchen. But that place had not always answered. Sometimes, though rarely, cases occurred where the intruders, being stronger than usual, or more vicious than usual, resolutely refused to budge, and so far carried their point, as to have a separate table arranged for themselves in a corner of the general room. Yet, if an Indian screen could be found ample enough to plant them out from the very eyes of the high table, or dais, it then became possible to assume as a fiction of law — that the three delf fellows, after all, were not present.

They could be ignored by the porcelain men, under the maxim, that objects not appearing, and not existing, are governed by the same logical construction.⁵

Such being, at that time, the usages of mail-coaches, what was to be done by us of young Oxford? We, the most aristocratic of people, who were addicted to the practice of looking down superciliously even upon the insides themselves as often very questionable characters — were we, by voluntarily going outside, to court indignities? If our dress and bearing sheltered us, generally, from the suspicion of being “ raff ” (the name at that period for “ snobs ”⁶), we really were such constructively, by the place we assumed. If we did not submit to the deep shadow of eclipse, we entered at least the skirts of its penumbra. And the analogy of theatres was valid against us, where no man can complain of the annoyances incident to the pit or gallery, having his instant remedy in paying the higher price of the boxes. But the soundness of this analogy we disputed. In the case of the theatre, it cannot be pretended that the inferior situations have any separate attractions, unless the pit may be supposed to have an advantage for the purposes of the critic or the dramatic reporter. But the critic or reporter is a rarity. For most people, the sole benefit is in the price. Now, on the contrary, the outside of the mail had its own incommunicable advantages. These we could not forego. The higher price we would willingly have paid, but not the price connected with the condition of riding inside; which condition we pronounced insufferable. The air, the freedom of prospect, the proximity to the horses, the elevation of seat — these were what we required; but, above all, the certain anticipation of purchasing occasional opportunities of driving.

Such was the difficulty which pressed us; and under the coercion of this difficulty, we instituted a searching inquiry into the true quality and valuation of the different apartments about the mail. We conducted this inquiry on metaphysical principles; and it was ascertained satisfactorily, that the roof of the coach, which by some weak men had been called the attics, and by some the garrets, was in reality the drawing-room; in which drawing-room the box was the chief ottoman or sofa; whilst it appeared that the inside, which had been traditionally regarded as the only room tenantable by gentlemen, was, in fact, the coal-cellar in disguise.

Great wits jump. The very same idea had not long before struck the celestial intellect of China. Amongst the presents carried out by our first embassy to that country was a state-

coach. It had been specially selected as a personal gift by George III; but the exact mode of using it was an immense mystery to Pekin. The ambassador, indeed (Lord Macartney), had made some imperfect explanations upon this point; but, as his excellency communicated these in a diplomatic whisper, at the very moment of his departure, the celestial intellect was very feebly illuminated, and it became necessary to call a cabinet council on the grand state question, "Where was the emperor to sit?" The hammer-cloth happened to be unusually gorgeous; and partly on that consideration, but partly also because the box offered the most elevated seat, was nearest to the moon, and undeniably went foremost, it was resolved by acclamation that the box was the imperial throne, and for the scoundrel who drove, he might sit where he could find a perch. The horses, therefore, being harnessed, solemnly his imperial majesty ascended his new English throne under a flourish of trumpets, having the first lord of the treasury on his right hand, and the chief jester on his left. Pekin gloried in the spectacle; and in the whole flowery people, constructively present by representation, there was but one discontented person, and that was the coachman. This mutinous individual audaciously shouted, "Where am I to sit?" But the privy council, incensed by his disloyalty, unanimously opened the door, and kicked him into the inside. He had all the inside places to himself; but such is the rapacity of ambition, that he was still dissatisfied. "I say," he cried out in an extempore petition, addressed to the emperor through the window — "I say, how am I to catch hold of the reins?" — "Anyhow," was the imperial answer; "don't trouble me, man, in my glory. How catch the reins? Why, through the windows, through the keyholes — anyhow." Finally this contumacious coachman lengthened the check-strings into a sort of jury-reins, communicating with the horses; with these he drove as steadily as Pekin had any right to expect. The emperor returned after the briefest of circuits; he descended in great pomp from his throne with the severest resolution never to remount it. A public thanksgiving was ordered for his majesty's happy escape from the disease of broken neck; and the state-coach was dedicated thenceforward as a votive offering to the god "Fo Fo" — whom the learned more accurately called "Fi Fi."

A revolution of this same Chinese character did young Oxford of that era effect in the constitution of mail-coach society. It was a perfect French revolution; and we had good reason to say, *ça ira*. In fact, it soon became too popular.

The "public," a well-known character, particularly disagreeable, though slightly respectable, and notorious for affecting the chief seats in synagogues — had at first loudly opposed this revolution; but when the opposition showed itself to be ineffectual, our disagreeable friend went into it with headlong zeal. At first it was a sort of race between us; and, as the public is usually from thirty to fifty years old, naturally we of young Oxford, that averaged about twenty, had the advantage. Then the public took to bribing, giving fees to horse-keepers, etc., who hired out their persons as warming-pans on the box-seat. That, you know, was shocking to all moral sensibilities. Come to bribery, said we, and there is an end to all morality, Aristotle's, Zeno's, Cicero's, or anybody's. And, besides, of what use was it? For we bribed also. And as our bribes to those of the public were as five shillings to sixpence, here again young Oxford had the advantage. But the contest was ruinous to the principles of the stables connected with the mails. This whole corporation was constantly bribed, rebribed, and often sur-rebribed; a mail-coach yard was like the hustings in a contested election; and a horse-keeper, hostler, or helper, was held by the philosophical at that time to be the most corrupt character in the nation.

There was an impression upon the public mind, natural enough from the continually augmenting velocity of the mail, but quite erroneous, that an outside seat on this class of carriages was a post of danger. On the contrary, I maintained that, if a man had become nervous from some gipsy prediction in his childhood, allocating to a particular moon now approaching some unknown danger, and he should inquire earnestly, "Whither can I fly for shelter? Is a prison the safest retreat? or a lunatic hospital? or the British Museum?" I should have replied, "Oh, no; I'll tell you what to do. Take lodgings for the next forty days on the box of his majesty's mail. Nobody can touch you there. If it is by bills at ninety days after date that you are made unhappy — if noters and protesters are the sort of wretches whose astrological shadows darken the house of life — then note you what I vehemently protest — viz., that no matter though the sheriff and under-sheriff in every county should be running after you with his posse, touch a hair of your head he cannot whilst you keep house, and have your legal domicile on the box of the mail. It is felony to stop the mail; even the sheriff cannot do that. And an extra touch of the whip to the leaders (no great matter if it grazes the sheriff) at any time guarantees your safety." In fact, a bedroom in a

quiet house seems a safe enough retreat, yet it is liable to its own notorious nuisances — to robbers by night, to rats, to fire. But the mail laughs at these terrors. To robbers, the answer is packed up and ready for delivery in the barrel of the guard's blunderbuss. Rats again!—there are none about mail-coaches, any more than snakes in Von Troil's "Iceland;"⁷ except, indeed, now and then a parliamentary rat, who always hides his shame in what I have shown to be the "coal-cellar." And as to fire, I never knew but one in a mail-coach, which was in the Exeter mail, and caused by an obstinate sailor bound to Devonport. Jack, making light of the law and the lawgiver that had set their faces against his offence, insisted on taking up a forbidden seat⁸ in the rear of the roof, from which he could exchange his own yarns with those of the guard. No greater offence was then known to mail-coaches; it was treason, it was læsa majestas, it was by tendency arson; and the ashes of Jack's pipe, falling amongst the straw of the hinder boot containing the mail-bags, raised a flame which (aided by the wind of our motion) threatened a revolution in the republic of letters. Yet even this left the sanctity of the box unviolated. In dignified repose, the coachman and myself sat on, resting with benign composure upon our knowledge that the fire would have to burn its way through four inside passengers before it could reach ourselves. I remarked to the coachman, with a quotation from Virgil's "Æneid" really too hackneyed—

"Jam proximus ardet
Ucalegon."

But, recollecting that the Virgilian part of the coachman's education might have been neglected, I interpreted so far as to say, that perhaps at that moment the flames were catching hold of our worthy brother and inside passenger, Ucalegon. The coachman made no answer, which is my own way when a stranger addresses me either in Syriac or in Coptic, but by his faint sceptical smile he seemed to insinuate that he knew better; for that Ucalegon, as it happened, was not in the way-bill, and therefore could not have been booked.

No dignity is perfect which does not at some point ally itself with the mysterious. The connection of the mail with the state and the executive government — a connection obvious, but yet not strictly defined—gave to the whole mail establishment an official grandeur which did us service on the roads, and invested us with seasonable terrors. Not the less impressive were those terrors, because their legal limits were imperfectly

ascertained. Look at those turnpike gates, with what deferential hurry, with what an obedient start, they fly open at our approach! Look at that long line of carts and carters ahead, audaciously usurping the very crest of the road. Ah! traitors, they do not hear us as yet; but, as soon as the dreadful blast of our horn reaches them with proclamation of our approach, see with what frenzy of trepidation they fly to their horses' heads, and deprecate our wrath by the precipitation of their crane-neck quarterings. Treason they feel to be their crime; each individual carter feels himself under the ban of confiscation and attainder; his blood is attainted through six generations; and nothing is wanting but the headsman and his axe, the block and the saw-dust, to close up the vista of his horrors. What! shall it be within benefit of clergy to delay the king's message on the high road? — to interrupt the great respirations, ebb and flood, systole and diastole, of the national intercourse? — to endanger the safety of tidings, running day and night between all nations and languages? Or can it be fancied, amongst the weakest of men, that the bodies of the criminals will be given up to their widows for Christian burial? Now the doubts which were raised as to our powers did more to wrap them in terror, by wrapping them in uncertainty, than could have been effected by the sharpest definitions of the law from the Quarter Sessions. We, on our parts (we, the collective mail, I mean), did our utmost to exalt the idea of our privileges by the insolence with which we wielded them. Whether this insolence rested upon law that gave it a sanction, or upon conscious power that haughtily dispensed with that sanction, equally it spoke from a potential station: and the agent, in each particular insolence of the moment, was viewed reverentially, as one having authority.

Sometimes after breakfast his majesty's mail would become frisky; and in its difficult wheelings amongst the intricacies of early markets, it would upset an apple-cart, a cart loaded with eggs, etc. Huge was the affliction and dismay, awful was the smash. I, as far as possible, endeavoured in such a case to represent the conscience and moral sensibilities of the mail; and, when wildernesses of eggs were lying poached under our horses' hoofs, then would I stretch forth my hands in sorrow saying (in words too celebrated at that time, from the false echoes of Marengo), "Ah! wherefore have we not time to weep over you?" which was evidently impossible, since, in fact, we had not time to laugh over them. Tied to post-office allowance, in some cases of fifty minutes for eleven miles, could the

royal mail pretend to undertake the offices of sympathy and condolence? Could it be expected to provide tears for the accidents of the road? If even it seemed to trample on humanity, it did so, I felt, in discharge of its own more peremptory duties.

Upholding the morality of the mail, à fortiori I upheld its rights; as a matter of duty, I stretched to the uttermost its privilege of imperial precedency, and astonished weak minds by the feudal powers which I hinted to be lurking constructively in the charters of this proud establishment. Once I remember being on the box of the Holyhead mail, between Shrewsbury and Oswestry, when a tawdry thing from Birmingham, some "Tallyho" or "Highflyer," all flaunting with green and gold, came up alongside of us. What a contrast to our royal simplicity of form and colour in this plebian wretch! The single ornament on our dark ground of chocolate colour was the mighty shield of the imperial arms, but emblazoned in proportions as modest as a signet-ring bears to a seal of office. Even this was displayed only on a single panel, whispering, rather than proclaiming, our relations to the mighty state; whilst the beast from Birmingham, our green-and-gold friend from false, fleeting, perjured Brummagem, had as much writing and painting on its sprawling flanks as would have puzzled a decipherer from the tombs of Luxor. For some time this Birmingham machine ran along by our side—a piece of familiarity that already of itself seemed to me sufficiently jacobinical. But all at once a movement of the horses announced a desperate intention of leaving us behind. "Do you see that?" I said to the coachman.—"I see," was his short answer. He was wide awake, yet he waited longer than seemed prudent; for the horses of our audacious opponent had a disagreeable air of freshness and power. But his motive was loyal; his wish was, that the Birmingham conceit should be full-blown before he froze it. When that seemed right, he unloosed, or, to speak by a stronger word, he sprang, his known resources: he slipped our royal horses like cheetahs, or hunting-leopards, after the affrighted game. How they could retain such a reserve of fiery power after the work they had accomplished, seemed hard to explain. But on our side, besides the physical superiority, was a tower of moral strength, namely, the king's name, "which they upon the adverse faction wanted." Passing them without an effort, as it seemed, we threw them into the rear with so lengthening an interval between us, as proved in itself the bitterest mockery of their

presumption; whilst our guard blew back a shattering blast of triumph, that was really too painfully full of derision.

I mention this little incident for its connection with what followed. A Welsh rustic, sitting behind me, asked if I had not felt my heart burn within me during the progress of the race? I said, with philosophic calmness, No; because we were not racing with a mail, so that no glory could be gained. In fact, it was sufficiently mortifying that such a Birmingham thing should dare to challenge us. The Welshman replied, that he didn't see that; for that a cat might look at a king, and a Brummagem coach might lawfully race the Holyhead mail. "Race us, if you like," I replied, "though even that has an air of sedition, but not beat us. This would have been treason; and for its own sake I am glad that the 'Tallyho' was disappointed." So dissatisfied did the Welshman seem with this opinion, that at last I was obliged to tell him a very fine story from one of our elder dramatists — viz., that once, in some far oriental kingdom, when the sultan of all the land, with his princes, ladies, and chief omrahs, were flying their falcons, a hawk suddenly flew at a majestic eagle; and in defiance of the eagle's natural advantages, in contempt also of the eagle's traditional royalty, and before the whole assembled field of astonished spectators from Agra, and Lahore, killed the eagle on the spot. Amazement seized the sultan at the unequal contest, and burning admiration for its unparalleled result. He commanded that the hawk should be brought before him; he caressed the bird with enthusiasm; and he ordered that for the commemoration of his matchless courage, a diadem of gold and rubies should be solemnly placed on the hawk's head; but then that, immediately after this solemn coronation, the bird should be led off to execution, as the most valiant indeed of traitors, but not the less a traitor, as having dared to rise rebelliously against his liege lord and anointed sovereign, the eagle. "Now," said I to the Welshman, "to you and me, as men of refined sensibilities, how painful it would have been that this poor Brummagem brute, the 'Tallyho,' in the impossible case of a victory over us, should have been crowned with Birmingham tinsel, with paste diamonds, and Roman pearls, and then led off to instant execution." The Welshman doubted if that would be warranted by law. And when I hinted at the 6th of Edward Longshanks, chap. 18, for regulating the precedency of coaches, as being probably the statute relied on for the capital punishment of such offences, he replied drily, that if the attempt to pass a mail really were treasonable, it was a pity

that the "Tallyho" appeared to have so imperfect an acquaintance with law.

The modern modes of travelling cannot compare with the old mail-coach system in grandeur and power. They boast of more velocity, not, however, as a consciousness, but as a fact of our lifeless knowledge, resting upon alien evidence; as, for instance, because somebody says that we have gone fifty miles in the hour, though we are far from feeling it as a personal experience, or upon the evidence of a result, as that actually we find ourselves in York four hours after leaving London. Apart from such an assertion, or such a result, I myself am little aware of the pace. But, seated on the old mail-coach, we needed no evidence out of ourselves to indicate the velocity. On this system the word was, "Non magna loquimur," as upon railways, but "vivimus." Yes, "magna vivimus;" we do not make verbal ostentation of our grandeurs, we realize our grandeurs in act, and in the very experience of life. The vital experience of the glad animal sensibilities made doubts impossible on the question of our speed; we heard our speed, we saw it, we felt it as a thrilling; and this speed was not the product of blind insensate agencies, that had no sympathy to give, but was incarnated in the fiery eyeballs of the noblest amongst brutes, in his dilated nostril, spasmodic muscles, and thunder-beating hoofs. The sensibility of the horse, uttering itself in the maniac light of his eye, might be the last vibration of such a movement: the glory of Salamanca, might be the first. But the intervening links that connected them, that spread the earthquake of battle into the eyeball of the horse, were the heart of man and its electric thrillings — kindling in the rapture of the fiery strife, and then propagating its own tumults by contagious shouts and gestures to the heart of his servant the horse.

But now, on the new system of travelling, iron tubes and boilers have disconnected man's heart from the ministers of his locomotion. Nile nor Trafalgar has power to raise an extra bubble in a steam-kettle. The galvanic cycle is broken up for ever; man's imperial nature no longer sends itself forward through the electric sensibility of the horse; the inter-agencies are gone in the mode of communication between the horse and his master, out of which grew so many aspects of sublimity under accidents of mists that hid, or sudden blazes that revealed, of mobs that agitated, or midnight solitudes that awed. Tidings, fitted to convulse all nations, must henceforwards travel by culinary process; and the trumpet that once announced from

afar the laurelled mail, heart-shaking, when heard screaming on the wind, and proclaiming itself through the darkness to every village or solitary house on its route, has now given way for ever to the pot-walloppings of the boiler.

Thus have perished multiform openings for public expressions of interest, scenical yet natural, in great national tidings; for revelations of faces and groups that could not offer themselves amongst the fluctuating mobs of a railway station. The gatherings of gazers about a laurelled mail had one centre, and acknowledged one sole interest. But the crowds attending at a railway station have as little unity as running water and own as many centres as there are separate carriages in the train.

How else, for example, than as a constant watcher for the dawn, and for the London mail that in summer months entered about daybreak amongst the lawny thickets of Marlborough forest, couldst thou, sweet Fanny of the Bath road, have become the glorified inmate of my dreams? Yet Fanny, as the loveliest young woman for face and person that perhaps in my whole life I have beheld, merited the station which even now, from a distance of forty years, she holds in my dreams; yes, though by links of natural association she brings along with her a troop of dreadful creatures, fabulous and not fabulous, that are more abominable to the heart, than Fanny and the dawn are delightful.

Miss Fanny of the Bath road, strictly speaking, lived at a mile's distance from the road; but came so continually to meet the mail, that I on my frequent transits rarely missed her, and naturally connected her image with the great thoroughfare where only I had ever seen her. Why she came so punctually, I do not exactly know; but I believe with some burden of commissions to be executed in Bath, which had gathered to her own residence as a central rendezvous for converging them. The mail-coachman who drove the Bath mail, and wore the royal livery,³⁰ happened to be Fanny's grandfather. A good man he was, that loved his beautiful granddaughter; and, loving her wisely, was vigilant over her deportment in any case where young Oxford might happen to be concerned. Did my vanity then suggest that I myself, individually, could fall within the line of his terrors? Certainly not, as regarded any physical pretensions that I could plead; for Fanny (as a chance passenger from her own neighbourhood once told me) counted in her train a hundred and ninety-nine professed admirers, if not open aspirants to her favour; and probably not one of the whole brigade but excelled myself in personal advantages. Ulysses

even, with the unfair advantage of his accursed bow, could hardly have undertaken that amount of suitors. So the danger might have seemed slight — only that woman is universally aristocratic; it is amongst her nobilities of heart that she is so. Now, the aristocratic distinctions in my favour might easily with Miss Fanny have compensated my physical deficiencies. Did I then make love to Fanny? Why, yes; about as much love as one could make whilst the mail was changing horses — a process which, ten years later, did not occupy above eighty seconds; but then — viz., about Waterloo — it occupied five times eighty. Now, four hundred seconds offer a field quite ample enough for whispering into a young woman's ear a great deal of truth, and (by way of parenthesis) some trifle of falsehood. Grandpapa did right, therefore, to watch me. And yet, as happens too often to the grandpapas of earth, in a contest with the admirers of granddaughters, how vainly would he have watched me had I meditated any evil whispers to Fanny! She, it is my belief, would have protected herself against any man's evil suggestions. But he, as the result showed, could not have intercepted the opportunities for such suggestions. Yet, why not? Was he not active? Was he not blooming? Blooming he was as Fanny herself.

“ Say, all our praises why should lords — ”

Stop, that's not the line.

“ Say, all are roses why should girls engross? ”

The coachman showed rosy blossoms on his face deeper even than his granddaughter's — his being drawn from the ale cask, Fanny's from the fountains of the dawn. But, in spite of his blooming face, some infirmities he had; and one particularly in which he too much resembled a crocodile. This lay in a monstrous inaptitude for turning round. The crocodile, I presume, owes that inaptitude to the absurd length of his back; but in our grandpapa it arose rather from the absurd breadth of his back, combined, possibly, with some growing stiffness in his legs. Now, upon this crocodile infirmity of his I planted a human advantage for tendering my homage to Miss Fanny. In defiance of all his honourable vigilance, no sooner had he presented to us his mighty Jovian back (what a field for displaying to mankind his royal scarlet!), whilst inspecting professionally the buckles, the straps, and the silvery turrets¹¹ of his harness, than I raised Miss Fanny's hand to my lips, and, by the mixed tenderness and respectfulness of my manner,

caused her easily to understand how happy it would make me to rank upon her list as No. 10 or 12, in which case a few casualties amongst her lovers (and observe, they hanged liberally in those days) might have promoted me speedily to the top of the tree; as, on the other hand, with how much loyalty of submission I acquiesced by anticipation in her award, supposing that she should plant me in the very rearward of her favour, as No. 199+1. Most truly I loved this beautiful and ingenuous girl; and had it not been for the Bath mail, timing all courtships by post-office allowance, heaven only knows what might have come of it. People talk of being over head and ears in love; now, the mail was the cause that I sank only over ears in love, which, you know, still left a trifle of brain to overlook the whole conduct of the affair.

Ah, reader! when I look back upon those days, it seems to me that all things change — all things perish. “Perish the roses and the palms of kings;” perish even the crowns and trophies of Waterloo: thunder and lightning are not the thunder and lightning which I remember. Roses are degenerating. The Fannies of our island — though this I say with reluctance — are not visibly improving; and the Bath road is notoriously superannuated. Crocodiles, you will say, are stationary. Mr. Waterton tells me that the crocodile does not change; that a cayman, in fact, or an alligator, is just as good for riding upon as he was in the time of the Pharaohs. That may be; but the reason is, that the crocodile does not live fast — he is a slow coach. I believe it is generally understood among naturalists, that the crocodile is a blockhead. It is my own impression that the Pharaohs were also blockheads. Now, as the Pharaohs and the crocodile domineered over Egyptian society, this accounts for a singular mistake that prevailed through innumerable generations on the Nile. The crocodile made the ridiculous blunder of supposing man to be meant chiefly for his own eating. Man, taking a different view of the subject, naturally met that mistake by another: he viewed the crocodile as a thing sometimes to worship, but always to run away from. And this continued until Mr. Waterton² changed the relations between the animals. The mode of escaping from the reptile he showed to be, not by running away, but by leaping on its back, booted and spurred. The two animals had misunderstood each other. The use of the crocodile has now been cleared up — viz., to be ridden; and the final cause of man is, that he may improve the health of the crocodile by riding him a fox-hunting before breakfast. And

it is pretty certain that any crocodile, who has been regularly hunted through the season, and is master of the weight he carries, will take a six-barred gate now as well as ever he would have done in the infancy of the pyramids.

If, therefore, the crocodile does not change, all things else undeniably do: even the shadow of the pyramids grows less. And often the restoration in vision of Fanny and the Bath road, makes me too pathetically sensible of that truth. Out of the darkness, if I happen to call back the image of Fanny, up rises suddenly from a gulf of forty years a rose in June; or, if I think for an instant of the rose in June, up rises the heavenly face of Fanny. One after the other, like the antiphonies in the choral service, rise Fanny and the rose in June, then back again the rose in June and Fanny. Then come both together, as in a chorus — roses and Fannies, Fannies and roses, without end, thick as blossoms in paradise. Then comes a venerable crocodile, in a royal livery of scarlet and gold with sixteen capes; and the crocodile is driving four-in-hand from the box of the Bath mail. And suddenly we upon the mail are pulled up by a mighty dial sculptured with the hours, that mingle with the heavens and the heavenly host. Then all at once we are arrived at Marlborough forest, amongst the lovely households¹³ of the roe-deer; the deer and their fawns retire into the dewy thickets; the thickets are rich with roses; once again the roses call up the sweet countenance of Fanny; and she, being the granddaughter of a crocodile, awakens a dreadful host of semi-legendary animals — griffins, dragons, basilisks, sphinxes — till at length the whole vision of fighting images crowds into one towering armorial shield, a vast emblazonry of human charities and human loveliness that have perished, but quartered heraldically with unutterable and demoniac natures, whilst over all rises, as a surmounting crest, one fair female hand, with the forefinger pointing, in sweet, sorrowful admonition, upwards to heaven, where is sculptured the eternal writing which proclaims the frailty of earth and her children.

But the grandest chapter of our experience, within the whole mail-coach service, was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of victory. A period of about ten years stretched from Trafalgar to Waterloo; the second and third years of which period (1806 and 1807) were comparatively sterile; but the other nine (from 1805 to 1815 inclusively) furnished a long succession of victories; the least of which, in such a contest of Titans, had an inappreciable value of position — partly for its absolute interference with the plans of our enemy,

but still more from its keeping alive through central Europe the sense of a deep-seated vulnerability in France. Even to tease the coasts of our enemy, to mortify them by continual blockades, to insult them by capturing if it were but a baubling schooner under the eyes of their arrogant armies, repeated from time to time a sullen proclamation of power lodged in one quarter to which the hopes of Christendom turned in secret. How much more loudly must this proclamation have spoken in the audacity⁴⁴ of having bearded the élite of their troops, and having beaten them in pitched battles! Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place on a mail-coach, when carrying down the first tidings of any such event. And it is to be noted that, from our insular situation, and the multitude of our frigates disposable for the rapid transmission of intelligence, rarely did any unauthorized rumor steal away a prelibation from the first aroma of the regular despatches. The government news was generally the earliest news.

From eight P. M., to fifteen or twenty minutes later, imagine the mails assembled on parade in Lombard Street, where, at that time,⁴⁵ and not in St. Martin's-le-Grand, was seated the General Post-office. In what exact strength we mustered I do not remember; but, from the length of each separate attelage, we filled the street, though a long one, and though we were drawn up in double file. On any night the spectacle was beautiful. The absolute perfection of all the appointments about the carriages and the harness, their strength, their brilliant cleanliness, their beautiful simplicity—but, more than all, the royal magnificence of the horses — were what might first have fixed the attention. Every carriage, on every morning in the year, was taken down to an official inspector for examination — wheels, axles, linchpins, poles, glasses, lamps, were all critically probed and tested. Every part of every carriage had been cleaned, every horse had been groomed, with as much rigor as if they belonged to a private gentleman; and that part of the spectacle offered itself always. But the night before us is a night of victory; and, behold! to the ordinary display, what a heart-shaking addition!—horses, men, carriages, all are dressed in laurels and flowers, oak-leaves and ribbons. The guards, as being officially his Majesty's servants, and of the coachmen such as are within the privilege of the post-office, wear the royal liveries of course; and as it is summer (for all the land victories were naturally won in summer), they wear, on this fine evening, these liveries exposed to view, without any cover-

ing of upper coats. Such a costume, and the elaborate arrangement of the laurels in their hats, dilate their hearts, by giving to them openly a personal connection with the great news, in which already they have the general interest of patriotism. That great national sentiment surmounts and quells all sense of ordinary distinctions. Those passengers who happen to be gentlemen are now hardly to be distinguished as such except by dress; for the usual reserve of their manner in speaking to the attendants has on this night melted away. One heart, one pride, one glory, connects every man by the transcendent bond of his national blood. The spectators, who are numerous beyond precedent, express their sympathy with these fervent feelings by continual hurrahs. Every moment are shouted aloud by the post-office servants, and summoned to draw up, the great ancestral names of cities known to history through a thousand years—Lincoln, Winchester, Portsmouth, Gloucester, Oxford, Bristol, Manchester, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Sterling, Aberdeen—expressing the grandeur of the empire by the antiquity of its towns, and the grandeur of the mail establishment by the diffusive radiation of its separate missions. Every moment you hear thunder of lids locked down upon the mail-bags. That sound to each individual mail is the signal for drawing off, which process is the finest part of the entire spectacle. Then come the horses into play. Horses! can these be horses that bound off with the action and gestures of leopards? What stir!—what sea-like ferment!—what a thundering of wheels!—what a trampling of hoofs!—what a sounding of trumpets!—what farewell cheers—what redoubling peals of brotherly congratulation, connecting the name of the particular mail—“Liverpool for ever!”—with the name of the particular victory—“Badajoz for ever!” or “Salamanca for ever!” The half-slumbering consciousness that, all night long and all the next day—perhaps for even a longer period—many of these mails, like fire racing along a train of gunpowder, will be kindling at every instant new successions of burning joy, has an obscure effect of multiplying the victory itself, by multiplying to the imagination into infinity the stages of its progressive diffusion. A fiery arrow seems to be let loose, which from that moment is destined to travel, without intermission, westwards for three hundred¹⁸ miles—northwards for six hundred; and the sympathy of our Lombard Street friends at parting is exalted a hundred-fold by a sort of visionary sympathy with the yet slumbering

sympathies which in so vast a succession we are going to awake.

Liberated from the embarrassments of the city, and issuing into the broad uncrowded avenues of the northern suburbs, we soon begin to enter upon our natural pace of ten miles an hour. In the broad light of the summer evening, the sun, perhaps, only just at the point of setting, we are seen from every story of every house. Heads of every age crowd to the windows—young and old understand the language of our victorious symbols—and rolling volleys of sympathizing cheers run along us, behind us, and before us. The beggar, rearing himself against the wall, forgets his lameness—real or assumed—thinks not of his whining trade, but stands erect, with bold exulting smiles, as we pass him. The victory has healed him, and says, “Be thou whole!” Women and children, from garrets alike and cellars, through infinite London, look down or look up with loving eyes upon our gay ribbons and our martial laurels; sometimes kiss their hands; sometimes hang out, as signals of affection, pocket-handkerchiefs, aprons, dusters, anything that, by catching the summer breezes, will express an aerial jubilation. On the London side of Barnet, to which we draw near within a few minutes after nine, observe that private carriage which is approaching us. The weather being so warm, the glasses are all down; and one may read, as on the stage of a theatre, everything that goes on within. It contains three ladies—one likely to be “mamma,” and two of seventeen or eighteen, who are probably her daughters. What lovely animation, what beautiful unpremeditated pantomime, explaining to us every syllable that passes, in these ingenuous girls! By the sudden start and raising of the hands, on first discovering our laurelled equipage!—by the sudden movement and appeal to the elder lady from both of them—and by the heightened colour on their animated countenances, we can almost hear them saying, “See, see! Look at their laurels! Oh, mamma! there has been a great battle in Spain; and it has been a great victory.” In a moment we are on the point of passing them. We passengers—I on the box, and the two on the roof behind me—raise our hats to the ladies; the coachman makes his professional salute with the whip; the guard even, though punctilious on the matter of his dignity as an officer under the crown, touches his hat. The ladies move to us, in return, with a winning graciousness of gesture; all smile on each side in a way that nobody could misunderstand, and that nothing short of a grand national sympathy could so

instantaneously prompt. Will these ladies say that we are nothing to them? Oh, no; they will not say that. They cannot deny—they do not deny—that for this night they are our sisters; gentle or simple, scholar or illiterate servant, for twelve hours to come, we on the outside have the honour to be their brothers. Those poor women, again, who stop to gaze upon us with delight at the entrance of Barnet, and seem, by their air of weariness, to be returning from labour—do you mean to say that they are washerwomen and charwomen? Oh, my poor friend, you are quite mistaken. I assure you they stand in a far higher rank; for this one night they feel themselves by birthright to be daughters of England, and answer to no humbler title.

Every joy, however, even rapturous joy—such is the sad law of earth—may carry with it grief, or fear of grief, to some. Three miles beyond Barnet, we see approaching us another private carriage, nearly repeating the circumstances of the former case. Here, also, the glasses are all down—here, also, is an elderly lady seated; but the two daughters are missing; for the single young person sitting by the lady's side, seems to be an attendant—so I judge from her dress, and her air of respectful reserve. The lady is in mourning; and her countenance expresses sorrow. At first she does not look up; so that I believe she is not aware of our approach, until she hears the measured beating of our horses' hoofs. Then she raises her eyes to settle them painfully on our triumphal equipage. Our decorations explain the case to her at once; but she beholds them with apparent anxiety, or even with terror. Some time before this, I finding it difficult to hit a flying mark, when embarrassed by the coachman's person and reins intervening, had given to the guard a "Courier" evening paper, containing the gazette, for the next carriage that might pass. Accordingly he tossed it in, so folded that the huge capitals expressing some such legend as—"GLORIOUS VICTORY", might catch the eye at once. To see the paper, however, at all, interpreted as it was by our ensigns of triumph, explained everything; and, if the guard were right in thinking the lady to have received it with a gesture of horror, it could not be doubtful that she had suffered some deep personal affliction in connection with this Spanish war.

Here, now, was the case of one who, having formerly suffered, might, erroneously perhaps, be distressing herself with anticipations of another similar suffering. That same night, and hardly three hours later, occurred the reverse case. A

poor woman, who too probably would find herself, in a day or two, to have suffered the heaviest afflictions by the battle, blindly allowed herself to express an exultation so unmeasured in the news and its details, as gave to her the appearance which amongst Celtic Highlanders is called "fey". This was at some little town where we changed horses an hour or two after midnight. Some fair or wake had kept the people up out of their beds, and had occasioned a partial illumination of the stalls and booths, presenting an unusual but very impressive effect. We saw many lights moving about as we drew near; and perhaps the most striking scene on the whole route was our reception at this place. The flashing of torches and the beautiful radiance of blue lights (technically, Bengal lights) upon the heads of our horses; the fine effect of such a showery and ghostly illumination falling upon our flowers and glittering laurels;⁷ whilst all around ourselves, that formed a centre of light, the darkness gathered on the rear and flanks in massy blackness; these optical splendours, together with the prodigious enthusiasm of the people, composed a picture at once scenical and affecting, theatrical and holy. As we staid for three or four minutes, I alighted; and immediately from a dismantled stall in the street, where no doubt she had been presiding through the earlier part of the night, advanced eagerly a middle-aged woman. The sight of my newspaper it was that had drawn her attention upon myself. The victory which we were carrying down to the provinces on this occasion, was the imperfect one of Talavera—imperfect for its results, such was the virtual treachery of the Spanish general, Cuesta, but not imperfect in its ever-memorable heroism. I told her the main outline of the battle. The agitation of her enthusiasm had been so conspicuous when listening, and when first applying for information, that I could not but ask her if she had not some relative in the Peninsular army. Oh, yes; her only son was there. In what regiment? He was a trooper in the Twenty-third Dragoons. My heart sank within me as she made that answer. This sublime regiment, which an Englishman should never mention without raising his hat to their memory, had made the most memorable and effective charge recorded in military annals. They leaped their horses—over a trench where they could, into it, and with the result of death or mutilation when they could not. What proportion cleared the trench is nowhere stated. Those who did, closed up and went down upon the enemy with such divinity of fervour (I use the word divinity by design: the inspiration of God must have

prompted this movement to those whom even then he was calling to his presence), that two results followed. As regarded the enemy, this Twenty-third Dragoons, not, I believe, originally three hundred and fifty strong, paralyzed a French column six thousand strong, then ascended the hill, and fixed the gaze of the whole French army. As regarded themselves, the Twenty-third were supposed at first to have been barely not annihilated; but eventually, I believe, about one in four survived. And this, then, was the regiment — a regiment already for some hours glorified and hallowed to the ear of all London, as lying stretched, by a large majority, upon one bloody aceldama — in which the young trooper served whose mother was now talking in a spirit of such joyous enthusiasm. Did I tell her the truth? Had I the heart to break up her dreams. No. To-morrow, said I to myself—to-morrow, or the next day, will publish the worst. For one night more, wherefore should she not sleep in peace? After to-morrow, the chances are too many that peace will forsake her pillow. This brief respite, then, let her owe to my gift and my forbearance. But, if I told her not of the bloody price that had been paid, not, therefore, was I silent on the contributions from her son's regiment to that day's service and glory. I showed her not the funeral banners under which the noble regiment was sleeping. I lifted not the overshadowing laurels from the bloody trench in which horse and rider lay mangled together. But I told her how these dear children of England, officers and privates, had leaped their horses over all obstacles as gayly as hunters to the morning's chase. I told her how they rode their horses into the mists of death (saying to myself, but not saying to her), and laid down their young lives for thee, O mother England! as willingly — poured out their noble blood as cheerfully — as ever, after a long day's sport, when infants, they had rested their wearied heads upon their mother's knees, or had sunk to sleep in her arms. Strange it is, yet true, that she seemed to have no fears for her son's safety, even after this knowledge that the Twenty-third Dragoons had been memorably engaged; but so much was she enraptured by the knowledge that his regiment, and therefore that he, had rendered conspicuous service in the dreadful conflict — a service which had actually made them, within the last twelve hours, the foremost topic of conversation in London — so absolutely was fear swallowed up in joy — that, in the mere simplicity of her fervent nature, the poor woman threw her arms round my neck, as she thought of her son, and gave to me the kiss which secretly was meant for him.

NOTES

¹ This little paper, according to my original intention, formed part of the "Suspiria de Profundis," from which, for a momentary purpose, I did not scruple to detach it, and to publish it apart, as sufficiently intelligible even when dislocated from its place in a larger whole. To my surprise, however, one or two critics, not carelessly in conversation, but deliberately in print, professed their inability to apprehend the meaning of the whole, or to follow the links of the connection between its several parts. I am myself as little able to understand where the difficulty lies, or to detect any lurking obscurity, as those critics found themselves to unravel my logic. Possibly I may not be an indifferent and neutral judge in such a case. I will therefore sketch a brief abstract of the little paper according to my own original design, and then leave the reader to judge how far this design is kept in sight through the actual execution.

Thirty-seven years ago, or rather more, accident made me, in the dead of night, and of a night memorably solemn, the solitary witness to an appalling scene, which threatened instant death, in a shape the most terrific, to two young people, whom I had no means of assisting, except in so far as I was able to give them a most hurried warning of their danger; but even that not until they stood within the very shadow of the catastrophe, being divided from the most frightful of deaths by scarcely more, if more at all, than seventy seconds.

Such was the scene, such in its outline, from which the whole of this paper radiates as a natural expansion. The scene is circumstantially narrated in Section the Second, entitled "The Vision of Sudden Death."

But a movement of horror and of spontaneous recoil from this dreadful scene naturally carried the whole of that scene, raised and idealized into my dreams, and very soon into a rolling succession of dreams. The actual scene, as looked down upon from the box of the mail, was transformed into a dream, as tumultuous and changing as a musical fugue. This troubled dream is circumstantially reported in Section the Third, entitled, "Dream-Fugue upon the Theme of Sudden Death." What I had beheld from my seat upon the mail, — the scenical strife of action and passion, of anguish and fear, as I had there witnessed them moving in ghostly silence; this duel between life and death narrowing itself to a point of such exquisite evanescence as the collision neared, — all these elements of the scene blended, under the law of association, with the previous and permanent features of distinction investing the mail itself, which features at that time lay — first, in velocity unprecedented; secondly, in the power and beauty of the horses; thirdly, in the official connection with the government of a great nation; and, fourthly, in the function, almost a consecrated function, of publishing and diffusing through the land the great political events, and especially the great battles during a conflict of unparalleled grandeur. These honorary distinctions are all described circumstantially in the first or introductory section "The Glory of Motion." The three first were distinctions maintained at all times; but the fourth and grandest belonged exclusively to the war with Napoleon; and this it was which most naturally introduced Waterloo into the dream. Waterloo, I understood, was the particular feature of the "Dream-Fugue" which my censors were least able to account for. Yet surely Waterloo, which, in common with every other great battle, it had been

our special privilege to publish over all the land, most naturally entered the Dream under the license of our privilege. If not — if there be anything amiss — let the Dream be responsible. The Dream is a law to itself; and as well quarrel with a rainbow for showing, or for not showing, a secondary arch. So far as I know, every element in the shifting movements of the Dream derived itself either primarily from the incidents of the actual scene, or from secondary features associated with the mail. For example, the cathedral aisle derived itself from the mimic combination of features which grouped themselves together at the point of approaching collision, namely, an arrow-like section of the road, six hundred yards long, under the solemn lights described, with lofty trees meeting overhead in arches. The guard's horn, again — a humble instrument in itself — was yet glorified as the organ of publication for so many great national events. And the incident of the dying trumpeter, who rises from a marble bas-relief, and carries a marble trumpet to his marble lips for the purpose of warning the female infant, was doubtless secretly suggested by my own imperfect effort to seize the guard's horn, and to blow a warning blast. But the Dream knows best; and the Dream, I say again, is the responsible party.

² Lady Madeline Gordon.

³ Thus, in the calendar of the Church Festivals, the discovery of the true cross (by Helen, the mother of Constantine) is recorded (and one might think — with the express consciousness of sarcasm) as the "Invention of the Cross."

⁴ One case was familiar to mail-coach travellers, where two mails in opposite directions, north and south, starting at the same minute from points six hundred miles apart, met almost constantly at a particular bridge which bisected the total distance.

⁵ "De non apparentibus," etc.

⁶ "Snobs," and its antithesis, "nobs," arose among the internal factions of shoemakers perhaps ten years later. Possibly enough, the terms may have existed much earlier; but they were then first made known, picturesquely and effectively, by a trial at some assizes which happened to fix the public attention.

⁷ The allusion to a well-known chapter in Von Troil's work, entitled, "Concerning the Snakes of Iceland." The entire chapter consists of these six words — "There are no snakes in Iceland."

⁸ The very sternest code of rules was enforced upon the mails by the Post-office. Throughout England, only three outsides were allowed, of whom one was to sit on the box, and the other two immediately behind the box; none, under any pretext, to come near the guard; an indispensable caution, since else, under the guise of a passenger, a robber might by any one of a thousand advantages — which sometimes are created, but always are favoured by the animation of frank, social intercourse — have disarmed the guard. Beyond the Scottish border, the regulation was so far relaxed as to allow of four outsides, but not relaxed at all as to the mode of placing them. One, as before, was seated on the box, and the other three on the front of the roof, with a determinate and ample separation from the little insulated chair of the guard. This relaxation was conceded by way of compensating to Scotland her disadvantages in point of population. England, by the superior density of her population, might always count upon a large fund of profits in the fractional trips of chance passengers riding for short distances of two or three stages. In

Scotland, this chance counted for much less. And, therefore, to make good the deficiency, Scotland was allowed a compensatory profit upon one extra passenger.

⁹ Yes, false! for the words ascribed to Napoleon, as breathed to the memory of Desaix, never were uttered at all. They stand in the same category of theatrical fictions as the cry of the foundering line-of-battle ship *Vengeur*, as the vaunt of General Cambronne at Waterloo. "Le Garde menrt, mais ne se rend pas," or as the repartees of Talleyrand.

¹⁰ The general impression was, that the royal livery belonged of right to the mail-coachmen as their professional dress. But that was an error. To the guard it did belong, I believe, and was obviously essential as an official warrant, and as a means of instant identification for his person, in the discharge of his important public duties. But the coachman, and especially if his place in the series did not connect him immediately with London and the General Post-office, obtained the scarlet coat only as an honorary distinction after long (or, if not long, trying and special) service.

¹¹ As one who loves and venerates Chaucer for his unrivalled merits of tenderness, of picturesque characterization, and of narrative skill, I noticed with great pleasure that the word *torrettes* is used by him to designate the little devices through which the reins are made to pass. This same word, in the same exact sense, I heard uniformly used by many scores of illustrious mail-coachmen, to whose confidential friendship I had the honour of being admitted in my younger days.

¹² Had the reader lived through the last generation, he would not need to be told that some thirty or thirty-five years back, Mr. Water-ton, a distinguished country gentleman of ancient family in Northumberland, publicly mounted and rode in top-boots a savage old crocodile, that was restive and very impertinent, but all to no purpose. The crocodile jibbed and tried to kick, but vainly. He was no more able to throw the squire, than Sinbad was to throw the old scoundrel who used his back without paying for it, until he discovered a mode (slightly immoral, perhaps, though some think not) of murdering the old fraudulent jockey, and so circuitously of unhorsing him.

¹³ Roe-deer do not congregate in herds like the fallow or the red deer, but by separate families, parents and children; which feature of approximation to the sanctity of human hearths, added to their comparatively miniature and graceful proportions, conciliate to them an interest of peculiar tenderness, supposing even that this beautiful creature is less characteristically impressed with the grandeurs of savage and forest life.

¹⁴ Such the French accounted it; and it has struck me that Soutl would not have been so popular in London at the period of her present Majesty's coronation, or in Manchester, on occasion of his visit to that town, if they had been aware of the insolence with which he spoke of us in notes written at intervals from the field of Waterloo. As though it had been mere felony in our army to look a French one in the face, he said in more notes than one, dated from two to four P. M., on the field of Waterloo, "Here are the English — we have them; they are caught en flagrant delit." Yet no man should have known us better; no man had drunk deeper from the cup of humiliation than Soutl had in 1809, when ejected by us with headlong violence from Oporto, and pursued through a long line of wrecks to the frontier of Spain; subsequently at Albuera, in the bloodiest of recorded

battles, to say nothing of Toulouse, he should have learned our pretensions.

¹⁵ I speak of the era previous to Waterloo.

¹⁶ Of necessity, this scale of measurement, to an American, if he happens to be a thoughtless man, must sound ludicrous. Accordingly, I remember a case in which an American writer indulges himself in the luxury of a little fibbing, by ascribing to an Englishman a pompous account of the Thames, constructed entirely upon American ideas of grandeur, and concluding in something like these terms:—"And, sir, arriving at London, this mighty father of rivers attains a breadth of at least two furlongs, having, in its winding course, traversed the astonishing distance of one hundred and seventy miles." And this the candid American thinks it fair to contrast with the scale of the Mississippi. Now, it is hardly worth while to answer a pure fiction gravely, else one might say that no Englishman out of Bedlam ever thought of looking in an island for the rivers of a continent; nor, consequently could have thought of looking for the peculiar grandeur of the Thames in the length of its course or in the extent of soil which it drains; yet, if he had been so absurd, the American might have recollected that a river, not to be compared with the Thames even as to volume of water — viz., the Tiber — has contrived to make itself heard of in this world for twenty-five centuries to an extent not reached as yet by any river, however corpulent, of his own land. The glory of the Thames is measured by the destiny of the population to which it ministers, by the commerce which it supports, by the grandeur of the empire in which, though far from the largest, it is the most influential stream. Upon some such scale, and not by a transfer of Columbian standards, is the course of our English mails to be valued. The American may fancy the effect of his own valuations to our English ears, by supposing the case of a Siberian glorifying his country in these terms:—"These wretches, sir, in France and England, cannot march half a mile in any direction without finding a house where food can be had and lodging; whereas, such is the noble desolation of our magnificent country, that in many a direction for a thousand miles, I will engage that a dog shall not find shelter from a snow-storm, nor a wren find an apology for breakfast."

¹⁷ I must observe, that the color of green suffers almost a spiritual change and exaltation under the effect of Bengal lights.

II

THE VISION OF SUDDEN DEATH

WHAT is to be taken as the predominant opinion of man, reflective and philosophic, upon sudden death? It is remarkable that, in different conditions of society, sudden death has been variously regarded as the consummation of an earthly career most fervently to be desired, or, again, as that consummation which is with most horror to be deprecated. Cæsar the Dictator, at his last dinner party (*cœna*), on the very evening before his assassination, when the minutes of his earthly career were numbered, being asked what death, in his judgment, might be pronounced the most eligible, replied, "That which should be most sudden." On the other hand, the divine Litany of our English Church, when breathing forth supplications, as if in some representative character for the whole human race prostrate before God, places such a death in the very van of horrors:—"From lightning and tempest; from plague, pestilence, and famine; from battle and murder, and from sudden death—Good Lord, deliver us." Sudden death is here made to crown the climax in a grand ascent of calamities; it is ranked among the last of curses; and yet, by the noblest of Romans, it was ranked as the first of blessings. In that difference, most readers will see little more than the essential difference between Christianity and Paganism. But this, on consideration, I doubt. The Christian Church may be right in its estimate of sudden death; and it is a natural feeling, though after all it may also be an infirm one, to wish for a quiet dismissal from life—as that which seems most reconcilable with meditation, with penitential retrospects, and with the humilities of farewell prayer. There does not, however, occur to me any direct scriptural warrant for this earnest petition of the English Litany, unless under a special construction of the word "sudden." It seems a petition—indulged rather and conceded to human infirmity, than exacted from human piety. It is not so much a doctrine built upon the eternities of the Christian system, as a plausible opinion built upon special varieties of physi-

cal temperament. Let that, however, be as it may, two remarks suggest themselves as prudent restraints upon a doctrine, which else may wander, and has wandered, into an uncharitable superstition. The first is this: that many people are likely to exaggerate the horror of a sudden death, from the disposition to lay a false stress upon words or acts, simply because by an accident they have become final words or acts. If a man dies, for instance, by some sudden death when he happens to be intoxicated, such a death is falsely regarded with peculiar horror; as though the intoxication were suddenly exalted into a blasphemy. But that is unphilosophic. The man was, or he was not, habitually a drunkard. If not, if his intoxication were a solitary accident, there can be no reason for allowing special emphasis to this act, simply because through misfortune it became his final act. Nor, on the other hand, if it were no accident, but one of his habitual transgressions, will it be the more habitual or the more a transgression, because some sudden calamity surprising him, has caused this habitual transgression to be also a final one. Could the man have had any reason even dimly to foresee his own sudden death, there would have been a new feature in his act of intemperance — feature of presumption and irreverence, as in one that, having known himself drawing near to the presence of God, should have suited his demeanour to an expectation so awful. But this is no part of the case supposed. And the only new element in the man's act is not any element of special immorality, but simply of special misfortune.

The other remark has reference to the meaning of the word sudden. Very possibly Cæsar and the Christian Church do not differ in the way supposed; that is, do not differ by any difference of doctrine as between Pagan and Christian views of the moral temper appropriate to death, but perhaps they are contemplating different cases. Both contemplate a violent death a *Βιαιωατος* — death that is *Βιαιος*, or, in other words, death that is brought about, not by internal and spontaneous change, but by active force, having its origin from without. In this meaning the two authorities agree. Thus far they are in harmony. But the difference is, that the Roman by the word "sudden" means unlingering; whereas the Christian Litany by "sudden death" means a death without warning, consequently without any available summons to religious preparation. The poor mutineer, who kneels down to gather into his heart the bullets from twelve firelocks of his pitying comrades, dies by a most sudden death in Cæsar's sense; one

shock, one mighty spasm, one (possibly not one) groan, and all is over. But in the sense of the Litany, the mutineer's death is far from sudden; his offence originally, his imprisonment, his trial, the interval between his sentence and its execution, having all furnished him with separate warnings of his fate—having all summoned him to meet it with solemn preparation.

Here at once, in this sharp verbal distinction, we comprehend the faithful earnestness with which a holy Christian Church pleads on behalf of her poor departing children, that God would vouchsafe to them the last great privilege and distinction possible on a death-bed—viz., the opportunity of untroubled preparation for facing this mighty trial. Sudden death, as a mere variety in the modes of dying, where death in some shape is inevitable, proposes a question of choice which, equally in the Roman and the Christian sense, will be variously answered according to each man's variety of temperament. Meantime, one aspect of sudden death there is, one modification, upon which no doubt can arise, that of all martyrdoms it is the most agitating—viz., where it surprises a man under circumstances which offer (or which seem to offer) some hurrying, flying, inappreciably minute chance of evading it. Sudden as the danger which it affronts must be any effort by which such an evasion can be accomplished. Even that, even the sickening necessity for hurrying in extremity where all hurry seems destined to be vain, even that anguish is liable to a hideous exasperation in one particular case—viz., where the appeal is made not exclusively to the instinct of self-preservation, but to the conscience, on behalf of some other life besides your own, accidentally thrown upon your protection. To fail, to collapse in a service merely your own, might seem comparatively venial; though, in fact, it is far from venial. But to fail in a case where Providence has suddenly thrown into your hands the final interests of another—a fellow-creature shuddering between the gates of life and death; this, to a man of apprehensive conscience, would mingle the misery of an atrocious criminality with the misery of a bloody calamity. You are called upon, by the case supposed, possibly to die; but to die at the very moment when, by any even partial failure, or effeminate collapse of your energies, you will be self-denounced as a murderer. You had but the twinkling of an eye for your effort, and that effort might have been unavailing; but to have risen to the level of such an effort, would have rescued you,

though not from dying, yet from dying as a traitor to your final and farewell duty.

The situation here contemplated exposes a dreadful ulcer, lurking far down in the depths of human nature. It is not that men generally are summoned to face such awful trials. But potentially, and in shadowy outline, such a trial is moving subterraneously in perhaps all men's natures. Upon the secret mirror of our dreams such a trial is darkly projected, perhaps, to every one of us. That dream, so familiar to childhood, of meeting a lion, and, through languishing prostration in hope and the energies of hope, that constant sequel of lying down before the lion, publishes the secret frailty of human nature — reveals its deep-seated falsehood to itself — records its abysmal treachery. Perhaps not one of us escapes that dream; perhaps, as by some sorrowful doom of man, that dream repeats for every one of us, through every generation, the original temptation in Eden. Every one of us, in this dream, has a bait offered to the infirm places of his own individual will; once again a snare is presented for tempting him into captivity to a luxury of ruin; once again, as in aboriginal Paradise, the man falls by his own choice; again, by infinite iteration, the ancient Earth groans to Heaven, through her secret caves, over the weakness of her child: "Nature, from her seat, sighing through all her works," again "gives signs of woe that all is lost;" and again the counter sigh is repeated to the sorrowing heavens for the endless rebellion against God. It is not without probability that in the world of dreams every one of us ratifies for himself the original transgression. In dreams, perhaps under some secret conflict of the midnight sleeper, lighted up to the consciousness at the time, but darkened to the memory as soon as all is finished, each several child of our mysterious race completes for himself the treason of the aboriginal fall.

The incident, so memorable in itself by its features of horror, and so scenical by its groupings for the eye, which furnished the text for this reverie upon sudden death, occurred to myself in the dead of night, as a solitary spectator, when seated on the box of the Manchester and Glasgow mail, in the second or third summer after Waterloo. I find it necessary to relate the circumstances, because they are such as could not have occurred unless under a singular combination of accidents. In those days, the oblique and lateral communications with many rural post-offices were so arranged, either through necessity or through defect of system, as to make it requisite for the main

northwestern mail (i. e., the down mail), on reaching Manchester to halt for a number of hours; how many, I do not remember; six or seven, I think; but the result was, that, in the ordinary course, the mail recommenced its journey northwards about midnight. Wearied with the long detention at a gloomy hotel, I walked out about eleven o'clock at night for the sake of fresh air; meaning to fall in with the mail and resume my seat at the post-office. The night, however, being yet dark, as the moon had scarcely risen, and the streets being at that hour empty, so as to offer no opportunities for asking the road, I lost my way; and did not reach the post-office until it was considerably past midnight; but, to my great relief (as it was important for me to be in Westmoreland by the morning), I saw in the huge saucer eyes of the mail, blazing through the gloom, an evidence that my chance was not yet lost. Past the time it was, but, by some rare accident, the mail was not even yet ready to start. I ascended to my seat on the box, where my cloak was still lying it had been lain at the Bridgewater Arms. I had left it there in imitation of a nautical discoverer, who leaves a bit of bunting on the shore of his discovery, by way of warning off the ground the whole human race, and notifying to the Christian and the heathen worlds, with his best compliments, that he has hoisted his pocket-handkerchief once and for ever upon that virgin soil; thenceforward claiming the *jus domini* to the top of the atmosphere above it, and also the right of driving shafts to the centre of the earth below it; so that all people found after this warning, either aloft in upper chambers of the atmosphere, or groping in subterraneous shafts, or squatting audaciously on the surface of the soil, will be treated as trespassers — kicked, that is to say, or decapitated, as circumstances may suggest, by their very faithful servant, the owner of the said pocket-handkerchief. In the present case, it is probable that my cloak might not have been respected, and the *jus gentium* might have been cruelly violated in my person — for, in the dark, people commit deeds of darkness, gas being a great ally of morality — but it so happened that, on this night, there was no other outside passenger; and thus the crime, which else was but too probable, missed fire for want of a criminal.

Having mounted the box, I took a small quantity of laudanum, having already travelled two hundred and fifty miles — viz., from a point seventy miles beyond London. In the taking laudanum there was nothing extraordinary. But by accident it drew upon me the special attention of my assessor on the box, the coachman. And in that also there was nothing

extraordinary. But by accident, and with great delight, it drew my own attention to the fact that this coachman was a monster in point of bulk, and that he had but one eye. In fact, he had been foretold by Virgil as

“*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens cui lumen ademptum.*”

He answered to the conditions in every one of the items:— 1, a monster he was; 2, dreadful; 3, shapeless; 4, huge; 5, who had lost an eye. But why should that delight me? Had he been one of the Calendars in the “Arabian Nights,” and had paid down his eye as the price of his criminal curiosity, what right had I to exult in his misfortune? I did not exult: I delighted in no man’s punishment, though it were even merited. But these personal distinctions (Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) identified in an instant an old friend of mine, whom I had known in the south for some years as the most masterly of mail-coachmen. He was the man in all Europe that could (if any could) have driven six-in-hand full gallop over Al Sirat—that dreadful bridge of Mahomet, with no side battlements, and of extra room not enough for a razor’s edge—leading right across the bottomless gulf. Under this eminent man, whom in Greek I cognominated “Cyclops diphrelates” (Cyclops the charioteer), I, and others known to me, studied the diphrelatic art. Excuse, reader, a word too elegant to be pedantic. As a pupil, though I paid extra fees, it is to be lamented that I did not stand high in his esteem. It showed his dogged honesty (though, observe, not his discernment), that he could not see my merits. Let us excuse his absurdity in this particular, by remembering his want of an eye. Doubtless that made him blind to my merits. In the art of conversation, however, he admitted that I had the whip-hand of him. On this present occasion, great joy was at our meeting. But what was Cyclops doing here? Had the medical men recommended northern air, or how? I collected, from such explanations as he volunteered, that he had an interest at stake in some suit-at-law now pending at Lancaster; so that probably he had got himself transferred to this station, for the purpose of connecting with his professional pursuits an instant readiness for the calls of his lawsuit.

Meantime, what are we stopping for? Surely we have now waited long enough. Oh, this procrastinating mail, and this procrastinating post-office! Can’t they take a lesson upon that subject from me? Some people have called me procrastinating. Yet you are witness, reader, that I was kept here waiting for the post-office. Will the post-office lay its hand on

its heart, in its moments of sobriety, and assert that ever it waited for me? What are they about? The guard tells me that there is a large extra accumulation of foreign mails this night, owing to irregularities caused by war, by wind, by weather, in the packet service, which as yet does not benefit at all by steam. For an extra hour, it seems, the post-office has been engaged in threshing out the pure wheaten correspondence of Glasgow, and winnowing it from the chaff of all baser intermediate towns. But at last all is finished. Sound your horn, guard. Manchester, good-by; we've lost an hour by your criminal conduct at the post-office: which, however, though I do not mean to part with a serviceable ground of complaint, and one which really is such for the horses, to me secretly is an advantage, since it compels us to look sharply for this lost hour amongst the next eight or nine, and to recover it (if we can) at the rate of one mile extra per hour. Off we are at last, and at eleven miles per hour: and for the moment I detect no changes in the energy or in the skill of Cyclops.

From Manchester to Kendal, which virtually (though not in law) is the capital of Westmoreland, there were at this time seven stages of eleven miles each. The first five of these, counting from Manchester, terminate in Lancaster, which is therefore fifty-five miles north of Manchester, and the same distance exactly from Liverpool. The first three stages terminate in Preston (called, by way of distinction from other towns of that name, "proud Preston"), at which place it is that the separate roads from Liverpool and from Manchester to the north become confluent.¹ Within these first three stages lay the foundation, the progress, and termination of our night's adventure. During the first stage, I found out that Cyclops was mortal: he was liable to the shocking affection of sleep—a thing which previously I had never suspected. If a man indulges in the vicious habit of sleeping, all the skill in aurigation of Apollo himself, with the horses of Aurora to execute his notions, avail him nothing. "Oh, Cyclops!" I exclaimed, "thou art mortal. My friend, thou snoorest." Through the first eleven miles, however, this infirmity—which I grieve to say that he shared with the whole Pagan Pantheon—betrayed itself only by brief snatches. On waking up, he made an apology for himself, which, instead of mending matters, laid open a gloomy vista of coming disasters. The summer assizes, he reminded me, were now going on at Lancaster: in consequence of which, for three nights and three days, he had not

lain down in a bed. During the day, he was waiting for his own summons as a witness on the trial in which he was interested: or else, lest he should be missing at the critical moment, was drinking with the other witnesses, under the pastoral surveillance of the attorneys. During the night, or that part of it which at sea would form the middle watch, he was driving. This explanation certainly accounted for his drowsiness, but in a way which made it much more alarming; since now, after several days resistance to this infirmity, at length he was steadily giving way. Throughout the second stage he grew more and more drowsy. In the second mile of the third stage, he surrendered himself finally and without a struggle to his perilous temptation. All his past resistance had but deepened the weight of this final oppression. Seven atmospheres of sleep rested upon him; and to consummate the case, our worthy guard, after singing "Love amongst the Roses" for perhaps thirty times, without invitation, and without applause, had in revenge moodily resigned himself to slumber — not so deep, doubtless, as the coachman's but deep enough for mischief. And thus at last, about ten miles from Preston, it came about that I found myself left in charge of his Majesty's London and Glasgow mail, then running at the least twelve miles an hour.

What made this negligence less criminal than else it must have been thought, was the condition of the roads at night during the assizes. At that time, all the law business, of populous Liverpool, and also of populous Manchester, with its vast cincture of populous rural districts, was called up by ancient usage to the tribunal of Lilliputian Lancaster. To break up this old traditional usage required, 1, a conflict with powerful established interests; 2, a large system of new arrangements; and 3, a new parliamentary statute. But as yet this change was merely in contemplation. As things were at present, twice in the year² so vast a body of business rolled northwards, from the southern quarter of the county, that for a fortnight at least it occupied the severe exertions of two judges in its despatch. The consequence of this was, that every horse available for such a service, along the whole line of road, was exhausted in carrying down the multitudes of people who were parties to the different suits. By sunset, therefore, it usually happened that, through utter exhaustion amongst men and horses, the roads sank into profound silence. Except the exhaustion in the vast adjacent county of York from a contested election, no such silence succeeding to no such fiery uproar was ever witnessed in England.

On this occasion, the usual silence and solitude prevailed along the road. Not a hoof nor a wheel was to be heard. And to strengthen this false luxurious confidence in the noiseless roads, it happened also that the night was one of peculiar solemnity and peace. For my own part, though slightly alive to the possibilities of peril, I had so far yielded to the influence of the mighty calm as to sink into a profound reverie. The month was August, in the middle of which lay my own birthday—a festival to every thoughtful man suggesting solemn and often sigh-born^s thoughts. The county was my own native county—upon which, in its southern section, more than upon any equal area known to man past or present, had descended the original curse of labour in its heaviest form, not mastering the bodies only of men as of slaves, or criminals in mines, but working through the fiery will. Upon no equal space of earth was, or ever had been, the same energy of human power put forth daily. At this particular season also of the assizes, that dreadful hurricane of flight and pursuit, as it might have seemed to a stranger, which swept to and from Lancaster all day long, hunting the county up and down, and regularly subsiding back into silence about sunset, could not fail (when united with this permanent distinction of Lancashire as the very metropolis and citadel of labour) to point the thoughts pathetically upon that counter vision of rest, of saintly repose from strife and sorrow, towards which, as to their secret haven, the profounder aspirations of man's heart are in solitude continually travelling. Obliquely upon our left we were nearing the sea, which also must, under the present circumstances, be repeating the general state of halcyon repose. The sea, the atmosphere, the light, bore each an orchestral part in this universal lull. Moonlight, and the first timid tremblings of the dawn, were by this time blending; and the blendings were brought into a still more exquisite state of unity by a slight silvery mist, motionless and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency. Except the feet of our own horses, which, running on a sandy margin of the road, made but little disturbance, there was no sound abroad. In the clouds, and on the earth, prevailed the same majestic peace; and in spite of all that the villain of a school-master has done for the ruin of our sublimer thoughts, which are the thoughts of our infancy, we still believe in no such nonsense as a limited atmosphere. Whatever we may swear with our false feigning lips, in our faithful hearts we still believe, and must for ever believe, in fields of air traversing the

total gulf between earth and the central heavens. Still in the confidence of children that tread without fear every chamber in their father's house, and to whom no door is closed, we, in that Sabbatic vision which sometimes is revealed for an hour upon nights like this, ascend with easy steps from the sorrow-stricken fields of earth, upwards to the sandals of God.

Suddenly, from thoughts like these, I was awakened to a sullen sound, as of some motion on the distant road. It stole upon the air for a moment; I listened in awe; but then it died away. Once roused, however, I could not but observe with alarm the quickened motion of our horses. Ten years' experience had made my eye learned in the valuing of motion; and I saw that we were now running thirteen miles an hour. I pretend to no presence of mind. On the contrary, my fear is, that I am miserably and shamefully deficient in that quality as regards action. The palsy of doubt and distraction hangs like some guilty weight of dark unfathomed remembrances upon my energies, when the signal is flying for action. But, on the other hand, this accursed gift I have, as regards thought, that in the first step towards the possibility of a misfortune, I see its total evolution; in the radix of the series I see too certainly and too instantly its entire expansion; in the first syllable of the dreadful sentence, I read already the last. It was not that I feared for ourselves. Us, our bulk and impetus charmed against peril in any collision. And I had ridden through too many hundreds of perils that were frightful to approach, that were matter of laughter to look back upon, the first face of which was horror — the parting face a jest, for any anxiety to rest upon our interests. The mail was not built, I felt assured, nor bespoke, that could betray me who trusted to its protection. But any carriage that we could meet would be frail and light in comparison of ourselves. And I remark this ominous accident of our situation. We were on the wrong side of the road. But then, it may be said, the other party, if other there was, might also be on the wrong side; and two wrongs might make a right. That was not likely. The same motive which had drawn us to the right-hand side of the road — viz., the luxury of the soft beaten sand, as contrasted with the paved centre — would prove attractive to others. The two adverse carriages would therefore, to a certainty, be travelling on the same side; and from this side, as not being ours in law, the crossing over to the other would, of course, be looked for from us.⁴ Our lamps, still lighted, would give the impression of vigilance on our part. And every creature that met us, would rely upon us

for quartering.⁵ All this, and if the separate links of the anticipation had been a thousand times more, I saw, not discursively, or by effort, or by succession, but by one flash of horrid simultaneous intuition.

Under this steady though rapid anticipation of the evil which might be gathering ahead, ah! what a sullen mystery of fear, what a sigh of woe, was that which stole upon the air, as again the far-off sound of a wheel was heard? A whisper it was—a whisper from, perhaps, four miles off—secretly announcing a ruin that, being foreseen, was not the less inevitable; that, being known, was not, therefore, healed. What could be done—who was it that could do it—to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses? Could I not seize the reins from the grasp of the slumbering coachman? You, reader, think that it would have been in your power to do so. And I quarrel not with your estimate of yourself. But, from the way in which the coachman's hand was viced between his upper and lower thigh, this was impossible. Easy, was it? See, then, that bronze equestrian statue. The cruel rider has kept the bit in his horse's mouth for two centuries. Unbridle him, for a minute, if you please, and wash his mouth with water. Easy, was it? Unhorse me, then, that imperial rider; knock me those marble feet from those marble stirrups of Charlemagne.

The sounds ahead strengthened, and were now too clearly the sounds of wheels. Who and what could it be? Was it industry in a taxed cart? Was it youthful gayety in a gig? Was it sorrow that loitered, or joy that raced? For as yet the snatches of sound were too intermitting, from distance, to decipher the character of the motion. Whoever were the travellers, something must be done to warn them. Upon the other party rests the active responsibility, but upon us—and, woe is me! that us was reduced to my frail opium-shattered self—rests the responsibility of warning. Yet how should this be accomplished? Might I not sound the guard's horn? Already, on the first thought, I was making my way over the roof to the guard's seat. But this, from the accident which I have mentioned, of the foreign mails' being piled upon the roof, was a difficult and even dangerous attempt to one cramped by nearly three hundred miles of outside travelling. And, fortunately, before I had lost much time in the attempt, our frantic horses swept round an angle of the road, which opened upon us that final stage where the collision must be accomplished, and the catastrophe sealed. All was apparently

finished. The court was sitting; the case was heard; the judge had finished; and the only verdict was yet in arrear.

Before us lay an avenue, straight as an arrow, six hundred yards, perhaps, in length; and the umbrageous trees, which rose in a regular line from either side, meeting high overhead, gave to it the character of a cathedral aisle. These trees lent a deeper solemnity to the early light; but there was still light enough to perceive, at the further end of this Gothic aisle, a frail reedy gig, in which were seated a young man, and by his side, a young lady. Ah, young sir! what are you about? If it is requisite that you should whisper your communications to this young lady — though really I see nobody, at an hour and on a road so solitary, likely to overhear you — is it therefore requisite that you should carry your lips forward to hers? The little carriage is creeping on at one mile an hour; and the parties within it being thus tenderly engaged, are naturally bending down their heads. Between them and eternity, to all human calculation, there is but a minute and a-half. Oh heavens! what is it that I shall do? Speaking or acting, what help can I offer? Strange it is, and to a mere auditor of the tale might seem laughable, that I should need a suggestion from the "Iliad" to prompt the sole resource that remained. Yet so it was. Suddenly I remembered the shout of Achilles, and its effect. But could I pretend to shout like the son of Peleus, aided by Pallas? No: but then I needed not the shout that should alarm all Asia militant; such a shout would suffice as might carry terror into the hearts of two thoughtless young people, and one gig horse. I shouted — and the young man heard me not. A second time I shouted — and now he heard me, for now he raised his head.

Here, then, all had been done that, by me, could be done: more on my part was not possible. Mine had been the first step; the second was for the young man; the third was for God. If, said I, this stranger is a brave man, and if, indeed, he loves the young girl at his side — or, loving her not, if he feels the obligation, pressing upon every man worthy to be called a man, of doing his utmost for a woman confided to his protection — he will, at least, make some effort to save her. If that fails, he will not perish the more, or by a death more cruel, for having made it; and he will die as a brave man should, with his face to the danger, and with his arm about the woman that he sought in vain to save. But, if he makes no effort, shrinking, without a struggle, from his duty, he himself will not the less certainly perish for this baseness of poltroonery. He will

die no less: and why not? Wherefore should we grieve that there is one craven less in the world? No; let him perish without a pitying thought of ours wasted upon him; and, in that case, all our grief will be reserved for the fate of the helpless girl who now, upon the least shadow of failure in him, must, by the fiercest of translations — must, without time for a prayer — must, within seventy seconds, stand before the judgment-seat of God.

But craven he was not: sudden had been the call upon him, and sudden was his answer to the call. He saw, he heard, he comprehended, the ruin that was coming down: already its gloomy shadow darkened above him; and already he was measuring his strength to deal with it. Ah! what a vulgar thing does courage seem, when we see nations buying it and selling it for a shilling a-day: ah! what a sublime thing does courage seem, when some fearful summons on the great deeps of life carries a man, as if running before a hurricane, up to the giddy crest of some tumultuous crisis, from which lie two courses, and a voice says to him audibly, "One way lies hope; take the other, and mourn for ever!" How grand a triumph, if, even then, amidst the raving of all around him, and the frenzy of the danger, the man is able to confront his situation — is able to retire for a moment into solitude with God, and to seek his counsel from him!

For seven seconds, it might be, of his seventy, the stranger settled his countenance steadfastly upon us, as if to search and value every element in the conflict before him. For five seconds more of his seventy he sat immovably, like one that mused on some great purpose. For five more, perhaps, he sat with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt for light that should guide him to the better choice. Then suddenly he rose; stood upright; and by a powerful strain upon the reins, raising his horse's fore-feet from the ground, he slewed him round on the pivot of his hind-legs, so as to plant the little equipage in a position nearly at right angles to ours. Thus far his condition was not improved, except as a first step had been taken towards the possibility of a second. If no more were done, nothing was done; for the little carriage still occupied the very centre of our path, though in an altered direction. Yet even now it may not be too late: fifteen of the seventy seconds may still be unexhausted; and one almighty bound may avail to clear the ground. Hurry, then, hurry! for the flying moments — they hurry! Oh, hurry, hurry, my brave young man! for the cruel hoofs of our horses — they also

hurry! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses. But fear not for him, if human energy can suffice; faithful was he that drove to his terrific duty; faithful was the horse to his command. One blow, one impulse given with voice and hand, by the stranger, one rush from the horse, one bound, as if in the act of rising to a fence, landed the docile creature's fore-feet upon the crown or arching centre of the road. The larger half of the little equipage had then cleared our overtowering shadow: that was evident even to my own agitated sight. But it mattered little that one wreck should float in safety, if upon the wreck that perished were embarked the human freightage. The rear part of the carriage — was that certainly beyond the line of absolute ruin? What power could answer the question? Glance of eye, thought of man, wing of angel, which of these had speed enough to sweep between the question and the answer, and divide the one from the other? Light does not tread upon the steps of light more indivisibly, than did our all-conquering arrival upon the escaping efforts of the gig. That must the young man have felt too plainly. His back was now turned to us; not by sight could he any longer communicate with the peril; but by the dreadful rattle of our harness, too truly had his ear been instructed — that all was finished as regarded any further effort of him. Already in resignation he had rested from his struggle; and perhaps in his heart he was whispering, "Father, which art in heaven, do thou finish above what I on earth have attempted." Faster than ever mill-race we ran past them in our inexorable flight. Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit! Even in that moment the thunder of collision spoke aloud. Either with the swingle-bar, or with the haunch of our near leader, we had struck the off-wheel of the little gig, which stood rather obliquely, and not quite so far advanced, as to be accurately parallel with the near-wheel. The blow, from the fury of our passage, resounded terrifically. I rose in horror, to gaze upon the ruins we might have caused. From my elevated station I looked down, and looked back upon the scene, which in a moment told its own tale, and wrote all its records on my heart for ever.

Here was the map of the passion that now had finished. The horse was planted immovably, with his fore-feet upon the paved crest of the central road. He of the whole party might be supposed untouched by the passion of death. The little cany carriage — partly, perhaps, from the violent torsion of

the wheels in its recent movement, partly from the thundering blow we had given to it — as if it sympathized with human horror, was all alive with tremblings and shiverings. The young man trembled not, nor shivered. He sat like a rock. But his was the steadiness of agitation frozen into rest by horror. As yet he dared not to look round; for he knew that, if any thing remained to do, by him it could no longer be done. And as yet he knew not for certain if their safety were accomplished. But the lady —

But the lady —! Oh, heavens! will that spectacle ever depart from my dreams, as she rose and sank upon her seat, sank and rose, threw up her arms wildly to heaven, clutched at some visionary object in the air fainting, praying, raving, despairing? Figure to yourself, reader, the elements of the case; suffer me to recall before your mind the circumstances of that unparalleled situation. From the silence and deep peace of this saintly summer night — from the pathetic blending of this sweet moonlight, dawnlight, dreamlight — from the manly tenderness of this flattering, whispering, murmuring love — suddenly as from the woods and fields — suddenly as from the chambers of the air opening in revelation — suddenly as from the ground yawning at her feet leaped upon her, with the flashing of cataracts, Death the crownéd phantom, with all the equipage of his terrors, and the tiger roar of his voice.

The moments were numbered; the strife was finished; the vision was closed. In the twinkling of an eye, our flying horses had carried us to the termination of the umbrageous aisle; at right angles we wheeled into our former direction; the turn of the road carried the scene out of my eyes in an instant, and swept it into my dreams for ever.

NOTES

¹ Suppose a capital Y (the Pythagorean letter): Lancaster is at the foot of this letter; Liverpool at the top of the right branch; Manchester at the top of the left; proud Preston at the centre, where the two branches unite. It is thirty-three miles along either of the two branches; it is twenty-two miles along the stem — viz., from Preston in the middle, to Lancaster at the root. There's a lesson in geography for the reader.

² There were at that time only two assizes even in the most populous counties — viz., the Lent Assizes and the Summer Assizes.

³ I owe the suggestion of this word to an obscure remembrance of a beautiful phrase in "Giraldus Cambrensis"—viz., *Suspiriosæ cogitationes*.

⁴ It is true that, according to the law of the case as established by legal precedents, all carriages were required to give way before Royal equipages, and therefore before the mail as one of them. But this

only increased the danger, as being a regulation very imperfectly made known, very unequally enforced, and therefore often embarrassing the movements on both sides.

⁶This is the technical word, and, I presume, derived from the French cartayer, to evade a rut or any obstacle.

III

DREAM-FUGUE

Founded on the Preceding Theme of Sudden Death

“ Whence the sound
Of instruments, that made melodious chime,
Was heard, of harp and organ; and who moved
Their stops and chords, was seen; his volant touch
Instinct through all proportions, low and high,
Fled and pursued transverse the resonant fugue.” *

Tumultuosissimamente

PASSION of sudden death! that once in youth, I read and interpreted by the shadows of thy averted signs!¹ — rapture of panic taking the shape (which amongst tombs in churches I have seen) of woman bursting her sepulchral bonds — of woman’s Ionic form bending from the ruins of her grave with arching foot, with eyes upraised, with clasped adoring hands — waiting, watching, trembling, praying for the trumpet’s call to rise from dust for ever! Ah, vision too fearful of shuddering humanity on the brink of almighty abysses! — vision that didst start back, that didst reel away, like a shrivelling scroll from before the wrath of fire racing on the wings of the wind! Epilepsy so brief of horror, wherefore is it that thou canst not die? Passing so suddenly into darkness, wherefore is it that still thou sheddest thy sad funeral blights upon the gorgeous mosaics of dreams? Fragment of music too passionate, heard once, and heard no more, what aileth thee, that thy deep rolling chords come up at intervals through all the worlds of sleep, and after forty years, have lost no element of horror?

I. Lo, it is summer — almighty summer! The everlasting gates of life and summer are thrown open wide, and on the ocean, tranquil and verdant as a savannah, the unknown lady from the dreadful vision and I myself are floating — she upon a fiery pinnacle, and I upon an English three-decker. Both of us are wooing gales of festal happiness within the domain of

* Paradise Lost, Book xi.

our common country, within that ancient watery park, within that pathless chase of ocean, where England takes her pleasure as a huntress through winter and summer, from the rising to the setting sun. Ah, what a wilderness of floral beauty was hidden, or was suddenly revealed, upon the tropic islands through which the pinnacle moved! And upon her deck what a bevy of human flowers — young women how lovely, young men how noble, that were dancing together, and slowly drifting towards us amidst music and incense, amidst blossoms from forests and gorgeous corymbi from vintages, amidst natural carolling and the echoes of sweet girlish laughter. Slowly the pinnacle nears us, gaily she hails us, and silently she disappears beneath the shadow of our mighty bows. But then, as at some signal from heaven, the music, and the carols, and the sweet echoing of girlish laughter — all are hushed. What evil has smitten the pinnacle, meeting or overtaking her? Did ruin to our friends couch within our own dreadful shadow? Was our shadow the shadow of death? I looked over the bow for an answer, and, behold! the pinnacle was dismantled; the revel and the revellers were found no more; the glory of the vintage was dust; and the forests with their beauty were left without a witness upon the seas. "But where," and I turned to our crew — "where are the lovely women that danced beneath the awning of flowers and clustering corymbi! Whither have fled the noble young men that danced with them?" Answer there was none. But suddenly the man at the masthead, whose countenance darkened with alarm, cried out, "Sail on the weather beam! Down she comes upon us: in seventy seconds she also will founder."

II. I looked to the weather side, and the summer had departed. The sea was rocking, and shaken with gathering wrath. Upon its surface sat mighty mists, which grouped themselves into arches and long cathedral aisles. Down one of these, with the fiery pace of a quarrel from a cross-bow, ran a frigate right athwart our course. "Are they mad?" some voice exclaimed from our deck. "Do they woo their ruin?" But in a moment, she was close upon us, some impulse of a heady current or local vortex gave a wheeling bias to her course, and off she forged without a shock. As she ran past us, high aloft amongst the shrouds stood the lady of the pinnacle. The deeps opened ahead in malice to receive her, towering surges of foam ran after her, the billows were fierce to catch her. But far away she was borne into desert spaces of the sea: whilst still by sight I followed her as she ran before

the howling gale, chased by angry sea-birds and by maddening billows; still I saw her, as at the moment when she ran past us, standing amongst the shrouds, with her white draperies streaming before the wind. There she stood, with hair dishevelled, one hand clutched amongst the tackling — rising, sinking, fluttering, trembling, praying — there for leagues I saw her as she stood, raising at intervals one hand to heaven, amidst the fiery crests of the pursuing waves and the raving of the storm; until at last, upon a sound from afar of malicious laughter and mockery, all was hidden for ever in driving showers; and afterwards, but when I know not, nor how.

III. Sweet funeral bells from some incalculable distance, wailing over the dead that die before the dawn, awakened me as I slept in a boat moored to some familiar shore. The morning twilight even then was breaking; and, by the dusky revelations which it spread, I saw a girl, adorned with a garland of white roses about her head for some great festival, running along the solitary strand in extremity of haste. Her running was the running of panic; and often she looked back as to some dreadful enemy in the rear. But when I leaped ashore, and followed on her steps to warn her of a peril in front, alas! from me she fled as from another peril, and vainly I shouted to her of quicksands that lay ahead. Faster and faster she ran; round a promontory of rocks she wheeled out of sight; in an instant I also wheeled round it, but only to see the treacherous sands gathering above her head. Already her person was buried; only the fair young head and the diadem of white roses around it were still visible to the pitying heavens: and, last of all was visible one white marble arm. I saw by the early twilight this fair young head, as it was sinking down to darkness — saw this marble arm, as it rose above her head and her treacherous grave, tossing, faltering, rising, clutching as at some false deceiving hand stretched out from the clouds — saw this marble arm uttering her dying hope, and then uttering her dying despair. The head, the diadem, the arm — these all had sunk; at last over these also the cruel quicksand had closed; and no memorial of the fair young girl remained on earth, except my own solitary tears, and the funeral bells from the desert seas, that, rising again more softly, sang a requiem over the grave of the buried child, and over her blighted dawn.

I sat, and wept in secret the tears that men have ever given to the memory of those that died before the dawn, and by the treachery of earth, our mother. But suddenly the tears and funeral bells were hushed by a shout as of many nations, and

by a roar as from some great king's artillery, advancing rapidly along the valleys, and heard afar by echoes from the mountains. "Hush!" I said, as I bent my ear earthwards to listen—"hush!—this either is the very anarchy of strife, or else"—and then I listened more profoundly, and whispered as I raised my head—"or else, oh heavens! it is victory that is final, victory that swallows up all strife."

IV. Immediately, in trance, I was carried over land and sea to some distant kingdom, and placed upon a triumphal car, amongst companions crowned with laurel. The darkness of gathering midnight, brooding over all the land, hid from us the mighty crowds that were weaving restlessly about ourselves as a centre: we heard them, but saw them not. Tidings had arrived, within an hour, of a grandeur that measured itself against centuries; too full of pathos they were, too full of joy, to utter themselves by other language than by tears, by restless anthems, and *Te Deums* reverberated from the choirs and orchestras of earth. These tidings we that sat upon the laurelled car had it for our privilege to publish amongst all nations. And already, by signs audible through the darkness, by snortings and tramlings, our angry horses, that knew no fear of fleshy weariness, upbraided us with delay. Wherefore was it that we delayed? We waited for a secret word that should bear witness to the hope of nations, as now accomplished for ever. At midnight the secret word arrived; which word was—"Waterloo and Recovered Christendom!" The dreadful word shone by its own light; before us it went; high above our leaders' heads it rode, and spread a golden light over the paths which we traversed. Every city, at the presence of the secret word, threw open its gates. The rivers were conscious as we crossed. All the forests, as we ran along their margins, shivered in homage to the secret word. And the darkness comprehended it.

Two hours after midnight we approached a mighty Minster. Its gates, which rose to the clouds, were closed. But when the dreadful word, that rode before us, reached them with its golden light, silently they moved back upon their hinges; and at a flying gallop our equipage entered the grand aisle of the cathedral. Headlong was our pace; and at every altar, in the little chapels and oratories to the right hand and left of our course, the lamps, dying or sickening, kindled anew in sympathy with the secret word that was flying past. Forty leagues we might have run in the cathedral, and as yet no strength of morning light had reached us when before us we

saw the aerial galleries of organ and choir. Every pinnacle of the fretwork, every station of advantage amongst the traceries, was crested by white-robed choristers, that sang deliverance; that wept no more tears, as once their fathers had wept; but at intervals that sang together to the generations, saying,

“Chant the deliverer’s praise in every tongue,”

and receiving answers from afar,

“Such as once in heaven and earth were sung.”

And of their chanting was no end; of our headlong pace was neither pause nor slackening.

Thus, as we ran like torrents — thus, as we swept with bridal rapture over the Campo Santo² of the cathedral graves — suddenly we became aware of a vast necropolis rising upon the far-off horizon—a city of sepulchres, built within the saintly cathedral for the warrior dead that rested from their feuds on earth. Of purple granite was the necropolis; yet, in the first minute, it lay like a purple stain upon the horizon, so mighty was the distance. In the second minute it trembled through many changes, growing into terraces and towers of wondrous altitude, so mighty was the pace. In the third minute already, with our dreadful gallop, we were entering the suburbs. Vast sarcophagi rose on every side, having towers and turrets that, upon the limits of the central aisle, strode forward with haughty intrusion, that ran back with mighty shadows into answering recesses. Every sarcophagus showed many bas-reliefs — bas-reliefs of battles and of battle-fields; battles from forgotten ages — battles from yesterday — battle-fields that, long since, nature had healed and reconciled to herself with the sweet oblivion of flowers — battle-fields that were yet angry and crimson with carnage. Where the terraces ran, there did we run; where the towers curved, there did we curve. With the flight of swallows our horses swept round every angle. Like rivers in flood, wheeling round headlands—like hurricanes that ride into the secrets of forests—faster than ever light unwove the mazes of darkness, our flying equipage carried earthly passions, kindled warrior instincts, amongst the dust that lay around us — dust oftentimes of our noble fathers that had slept in God from Crécy to Trafalgar. And now had we reached the last sarcophagus, now were we abreast of the last bas-relief, already had we recovered the arrow-like flight of the illimitable central aisle, when coming up this aisle to meet us we beheld afar off a female child, that rode in a carriage as

frail as flowers. The mists, which went before her, hid the fawns that drew her, but could not hide the shells and tropic flowers with which she played — but could not hide the lovely smiles by which she uttered her trust in the mighty cathedral, and in the cherubim that looked down upon her from the mighty shafts of its pillars. Face to face she was meeting us; face to face she rode, as if danger there were none. “Oh, baby!” I exclaimed, “shalt thou be the ransom for Waterloo? Must we, that carry tidings of great joy to every people be messengers of ruin to thee!” In horror I rose at the thought; but then also, in horror at the thought, rose one that was sculptured on a bas-relief — a Dying Trumpeter. Solemnly from the field of battle he rose to his feet; and, unslinging his stony trumpet, carried it, in his dying anguish, to his stony lips — sounding once, and yet once again; proclamation that, in thy ears, oh baby! spoke from the battlements of death. Immediately deep shadows fell between us, and aboriginal silence. The choir had ceased to sing. The hoofs of our horses, the dreadful rattle of our harness, the groaning of our wheels, alarmed the graves no more. By horror the bas-relief had been unlocked into life. By horror we, that were so full of life, we men and our horses, with their fiery fore-legs rising in mid air to their everlasting gallop, were frozen to a bas-relief. Then a third time the trumpet sounded; the seals were taken off all pulses; life, and the frenzy of life, tore into their channels again; again the choir burst forth in sunny grandeur, as from the muffling of storms and darkness; again the thunderings of our horses carried temptation into the graves. One cry burst from our lips, as the clouds, drawing off from the aisle, showed it empty before us — “Whither has the infant fled? — is the young child caught up to God?” Lo! afar off, in a vast recess, rose three mighty windows to the clouds; and on a level with their summits, at height insuperable to man, rose an altar of purest alabaster. On its eastern face was trembling a crimson glory. A glory was it from the reddening dawn that now streamed through the windows? Was it from the crimson robes of the martyrs painted on the windows? Was it from the bloody bas-reliefs of earth? There, suddenly, within that crimson radiance, rose the apparition of a woman’s head, and then of a woman’s figure. The child it was — grown up to woman’s height. Clinging to the horns of the altar, voiceless she stood — sinking, rising, raving, despairing; and behind the volume of incense, that, night and day, streamed upwards from the altar, dimly was seen the fiery font, and the

shadow of that dreadful being who should have baptized her with the baptism of death. But by her side was kneeling her better angel, that hid his face with wings; that wept and pleaded for her; that prayed when she could not; that fought with Heaven by tears for her deliverance; which also, as he raised his immortal countenance from his wings, I saw, by the glory in his eye, that from Heaven he had won at last.

V. Then was completed the passion of the mighty fugue. The golden tubes of the organ, which as yet had but muttered at intervals — gleaming amongst clouds and surges of incense — threw up, as from fountains unfathomable, columns of heart-shattering music. Choir and anti-choir were filling fast with unknown voices. Thou also, Dying Trumpeter! — with thy love that was victorious, and thy anguish that was finishing — didst enter the tumult; trumpet and echo — farewell love, and farewell anguish — rang through the dreadful sanctus. Oh, darkness of the grave! that from the crimson altar and from the fiery font wert visited and searched by the effulgence in the angel's eye — were these indeed thy children? Poms of life, that, from the burials of centuries, rose again to the voice of perfect joy, did ye indeed mingle with the festivals of Death? Lo! as I looked back for seventy leagues through the mighty cathedral, I saw the quick and the dead that sang together to God, together that sang to the generations of man. All the hosts of jubilation, like armies that ride in pursuit, moved with one step. Us, that, with laurelled heads, were passing from the cathedral, they overtook, and, as with a garment, they wrapped us round with thunders greater than our own. As brothers we moved together; to the dawn that advanced — to the stars that fled; rendering thanks to God in the highest — that, having hid his face through one generation behind thick clouds of War, once again was ascending — from the Campo Santo of Waterloo was ascending — in the visions of Peace; rendering thanks for thee, young girl! whom, having overshadowed with his ineffable passion of death, suddenly did God relent; suffered thy angel to turn aside his arm; and even in thee, sister unknown! shown to me for a moment only to be hidden for ever, found an occasion to glorify his goodness. A thousand times, amongst the phantoms of sleep, have I seen thee entering the gates of the golden dawn — with the secret word riding before thee — with the armies of the grave behind thee: seen thee sinking, rising, raving, despairing; a thousand times in the worlds of sleep have seen thee followed by God's angel through storms; through desert seas; through the dark-

ness of quicksands; through dreams, and the dreadful revelations that are in dreams — only that at the last, with one sling of his victorious arm, he might snatch thee back from ruin, and might emblazon in thy deliverance the endless resurrections of his love!

NOTES.

¹ I read the course and changes of the lady's agony in the succession of her involuntary gestures; but it must be remembered that I read all this from the rear, never once catching the lady's full face, and even her profile imperfectly.

² It is probable that most of my readers will be acquainted with the history of the Campo Santo (or cemetery) at Pisa, composed of earth brought from Jerusalem for a bed of sanctity, as the highest prize which the noble piety of crusaders could ask or imagine. To readers who are unacquainted with England, or who (being English) are yet unacquainted with the cathedral cities of England, it may be right to mention that the graves within-side the cathedrals often form a flat pavement over which carriages and horses might run; and perhaps a boyish remembrance of one particular cathedral, across which I had seen passengers walk and burdens carried, as about two centuries back they were through the middle of St. Paul's in London, may have assisted my dream.

LITERARY REMINISCENCES

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CHARLES LAMB

I

AMONGST the earliest literary acquaintances I made was that with the inimitable Charles Lamb: inimitable, I say, but the word is too limited in its meaning; for, as is said of Milton in that well-known life of him attached to all common editions of the "Paradise Lost," (Fenton's, I think,) "in both senses he was above imitation." Yes; it was as impossible to the moral nature of Charles Lamb that he should imitate another, as, in an intellectual sense, it was impossible that any other should successfully imitate him. To write with patience even, not to say genially, for Charles Lamb it was a very necessity of his constitution that he should write from his own wayward nature; and that nature was so peculiar that no other man, the ablest at mimicry, could counterfeit its voice. But let me not anticipate; for these were opinions about Lamb which I had not when I first knew him, nor could have had by any reasonable title. "Elia," be it observed, the exquisite "Elia," was then unborn; Lamb had as yet published nothing to the world which proclaimed him in his proper character of a most original man of genius:¹ at best, he could have been thought no more than a man of talent — and of talent moving in a narrow path, with a power rather of mimicking the quaint and the fantastic, than any large grasp over catholic beauty. And, therefore, it need not offend the most doting admirer of Lamb as he is now known to us, a brilliant star for ever fixed in the firmament of English literature, that I acknowledge myself to have sought his acquaintance rather under the reflex honour he had enjoyed of being known as Coleridge's friend, than for any which he yet held directly and separately in his own person. My earliest

advances towards this acquaintance had an inauspicious aspect; and it may be worth while reporting the circumstances, for they were characteristic of Charles Lamb; and the immediate result was — that we parted, not perhaps (as Lamb says of his philosophic friend R. and the Parisians) “with mutual contempt,” but at least with coolness; and on my part, with something that might have even turned to disgust — founded, however, entirely on my utter misapprehension of Lamb’s character and his manners — had it not been for the winning goodness of Miss Lamb, before which all resentment must have melted in a moment.

It was either late in 1804 or early in 1805, according to my present computations, that I had obtained from a literary friend a letter of introduction to Mr. Lamb. All that I knew of his works was his play of “John Woodvil,” which I had bought in Oxford, and perhaps I only had bought throughout that great University, at the time of my matriculation there, about the Christmas of 1803. Another book fell into my hands on that same morning, I recollect — the “Gebir” of Mr. Walter Savage Landor — which astonished me by the splendour of its descriptions (for I had opened accidentally upon the sea-nymph’s marriage with Tamor, the youthful brother of Gebir) — and I bought this also. Afterwards, when placing these two most unpopular of books on the same shelf with the other far holier idols of my heart, the joint poems of Wordsworth and Coleridge as then associated in the “Lyrical Ballads” — poems not equally unknown, perhaps a little better known, but only with the result of being more openly scorned, rejected — I could not but smile internally at the fair prospect I had of congregating a library which no man had read but myself. “John Woodvil” I had almost studied, and Miss Lamb’s pretty “High-Born Helen,” and the ingenious imitations of Burton; these I had read, and, to a certain degree, must have admired, for some parts of them had settled without effort in my memory. I had read also the Edinburgh notice of them; and with what contempt may be supposed from the fact, that my veneration for Wordsworth transcended all that I felt for any created being, past or present; insomuch that, in the summer, or spring rather, of that same year, and full eight months before I first went to Oxford, I had ventured to address a letter to him, through his publishers, the Messrs. Longman, (which letter, Miss Wordsworth in after years assured me they believed to be the production of some person much older than I represented myself,) and that in due time I had been honoured by a long answer from

Wordsworth; an honour which, I well remember, kept me awake, from mere excess of pleasure, through a long night in June, 1803. It was not to be supposed that the very feeblest of admirations could be shaken by mere scorn and contumely, unsupported by any shadow of a reason. Wordsworth, therefore, could not have suffered in any man's opinion, from the puny efforts of this new autocrat amongst reviews; but what was said of Lamb, though not containing one iota of criticism, either good or bad, had certainly more point and cleverness. The supposition that "John Woodvil" might be a lost drama, recovered from the age of Thespis, and entitled to the *hircus*, etc., must, I should think, have won a smile from Lamb himself; or why say "Lamb himself," which means "even Lamb," when he would have been the very first to laugh, (as he was afterwards among the first to hoot at his own farce,) provided only he could detach his mind from the ill-nature and hard contempt which accompanied the wit. This wit had certainly not dazzled my eyes in the slightest degree. So far as I was left at leisure, by a more potent order of poetry, to think of the "John Woodvil" at all, I had felt and acknowledged a delicacy and tenderness in the situations as well as the sentiments, but disfigured, as I thought, by quaint, grotesque, and mimetic phraseology. The main defect, however, of which I complained, was defect of power. I thought Lamb had no right to take his station amongst the inspired writers who had just then risen, to throw new blood into our literature, and to breathe a breath of life through the worn-out, or, at least, torpid organization of the national mind. He belonged, I thought, to the old literature; and, as a poet, he certainly does. There were in his verses minute scintillations of genius — now and then, even a subtle sense of beauty; and there were shy graces, lurking half-unseen, like violets in the shade. But there was no power on a colossal scale; no breadth; no choice of great subjects; no wrestling with difficulty; no creative energy. So I thought then; and so I should think now, if Lamb were viewed chiefly as a poet. Since those days, he has established his right to a seat in any company. But why? and in what character? As "Elia:" — the essays of "Elia" are as exquisite a gem amongst the jewellery of literature, as any nation can show. They do not, indeed, suggest to the typifying imagination, a "Last Supper" of Da Vinci, or a group from the Sistine Chapel; but they suggest some exquisite cabinet painting; such, for instance, as that Carlo Dolce known to all who have visited Lord Exeter's place of Burleigh; (by the way, I bar the allu-

sion to Charles Lamb, which a shameless punster suggests in the name Carlo Dolce;) and in this also resembling that famous picture — that many critics (Hazlitt amongst others) can see little or nothing in it. *Quam nihil ad genium, Papiniane, tuum!* Those, therefore, err in my opinion, who present Lamb to our notice amongst the poets. Very pretty, very elegant, very tender, very beautiful verses he has written; nay, twice he has written verses of extraordinary force, almost demoniac force — viz., “The Three Graves,” and “The Gipsy’s Malison.” But, speaking generally, he writes verses as one to whom that function was a secondary and occasional function; not his original and natural vocation; not an *εργον*, but a *παρεργον*.

For the reasons, therefore, I have given, never thinking of Charles Lamb as a poet, and, at that time, having no means for judging of him in any other character, I had requested the letter of introduction to him, rather with a view to some further knowledge of Coleridge, (who was then absent from England,) than from any special interest about Lamb himself. However, I felt the extreme discourtesy of approaching a man, and asking for his time and civility under such an avowal: and the letter, therefore, as I believe, or as I requested, represented me in the light of an admirer. I hope it did; for that character might have some excuse for what followed, and heal the unpleasant impression likely to be left by a sort of fracas which occurred at my first meeting with Lamb. This was so characteristic of Lamb, that I have often laughed at it since I came to know what was characteristic of Lamb. But first let me describe my brief introductory call upon him at the India House. I had been told that he was never to be found at home except in the evenings; and to have called then would have been, in a manner, forcing myself upon his hospitalities, and at a moment when he might have confidential friends about him; besides that, he was sometimes tempted away to the theatres. I went, therefore, to the India House; made inquiries amongst the servants; and, after some trouble, (for that was early in his Leadenhall Street career, and possibly, he was not much known,) I was shown into a small room, or else a small section of a large one, (thirty-four years affects one’s remembrance of some circumstances,) in which was a very lofty writing-desk, separated by a still higher railing from that part of the floor on which the profane — the laity, like myself — were allowed to approach the clerus, or clerkly rulers of the room. Within the railing, sat, to the best of my remembrance, six quill-driving gentlemen; not gentlemen whose duty or pro-

fession it was merely to drive the quill, but who were then driving it — gens de plume, such in esse, as well as in posse — in act as well as habit; for, as if they supposed me a spy, sent by some superior power, to report upon the situation of affairs as surprised by me, they were all too profoundly immersed in their oriental studies to have any sense of my presence. Consequently, I was reduced to a necessity of announcing myself and my errand. I walked, therefore, into one of the two open doorways of the railing, and stood closely by the high stool of him who occupied the first place within the little aisle. I touched his arm, by way of recalling him from his lofty Lead-enhall speculations to this sublunary world; and, presenting my letter, asked if that gentleman (pointing to the address) were really a citizen of the present room; for I had been repeatedly misled, by the directions given me, into wrong rooms. The gentleman smiled; it was a smile not to be forgotten. This was Lamb. And here occurred a very, very little incident — one of those which pass so fugitively that they are gone and hurrying away into Lethe almost before your attention can have arrested them; but it was an incident which, to me, who happened to notice it, served to express the courtesy and delicate consideration of Lamb's manners. The seat upon which he sat, was a very high one; so absurdly high, by the way, that I can imagine no possible use or sense in such an altitude, unless it were to restrain the occupant from playing truant at the fire, by opposing Alpine difficulties to his descent.

Whatever might be the original purpose of this aspiring seat, one serious dilemma arose from it, and this it was which gave the occasion to Lamb's act of courtesy. Somewhere there is an anecdote, meant to illustrate the ultra-obsequiousness of the man: either I have heard of it in connection with some actual man known to myself, or it is told in a book of some historical coxcomb — that being on horseback, and meeting some person or other whom it seemed advisable to flatter, he actually dismounted, in order to pay his court by a more ceremonious bow. In Russia, as we all know, this was, at one time, upon meeting any of the Imperial family, an act of legal necessity; and there, accordingly, but there only, it would have worn no ludicrous aspect. Now, in this situation of Lamb's, the act of descending from his throne, a very elaborate process, with steps and stages analogous to those on horseback — of slipping your right foot out of the stirrup, throwing your leg over the crupper, etc.— was, to all intents and purposes, the same thing as dismounting from a great elephant of a horse. Therefore,

it both was, and was felt to be by Lamb, supremely ludicrous. On the other hand, to have sat still and stately upon this aerial station, to have bowed condescendingly from this altitude, would have been — not ludicrous indeed; performed by a very superb person, and supported by a very superb bow, it might have been vastly fine, and even terrifying to many young gentlemen under sixteen; but it would have had an air of ungentlemanly assumption. Between these extremes, therefore, Lamb had to choose: — between appearing ridiculous himself for a moment, by going through a ridiculous evolution, which no man could execute with grace; or, on the other hand, appearing lofty and assuming, in a degree which his truly humble nature (for he was the humblest of men in the pretensions which he put forward for himself) must have shrunk from with horror. Nobody who knew Lamb can doubt how the problem was solved; he began to dismount instantly; and, as it happened that the very first round of his descent obliged him to turn his back upon me as if for a sudden purpose of flight, he had an excuse for laughing; which he did heartily — saying, at the same time, something to this effect, that I must not judge from first appearances; that he should revolve upon me; that he was not going to fly; and other facetiæ, which challenged a general laugh from the clerical brotherhood.

When he had reached the basis of terra firma on which I was standing, naturally, as a mode of thanking him for his courtesy, I presented my hand; which, in a general case, I should certainly not have done; for I cherished in an ultra-English degree, the English custom (a wise custom) of bowing in frigid silence on a first introduction to a stranger; but, to a man of literary talent, and one who had just practiced so much kindness in my favour at so probable a hazard to himself of being laughed at for his pains, I could not maintain that frosty reserve. Lamb took my hand; did not absolutely reject it; but rather repelled my advance by his manner. This, however, long afterwards I found, was only a habit derived from his too great sensitiveness to the variety of people's feelings, which run through a gamut so infinite of degrees and modes as to make it unsafe for any man who respects himself, to be too hasty in his allowances of familiarity. Lamb had, as he was entitled to have, a high self-respect; and me he probably suspected (as a young Oxonian) of some aristocratic tendencies. The letter of introduction, containing (I imagine) no matters of business, was speedily run through; and I instantly received an invitation to spend the evening with him. Lamb was not one of those who catch

at the chance of escaping from a bore by fixing some distant day, when accidents (in duplicate proportion, perhaps, to the number of intervening days) may have carried you away from the place; he sought to benefit by no luck of that kind; for he was, with his limited income — and I say it deliberately — positively the most hospitable man I have known in this world. That night, the same night, I was to come and spend the evening with him. I had gone to the India House with the express purpose of accepting whatever invitation he should give me; and, therefore, I accepted this, took my leave, and left Lamb in the act of resuming his aerial position.

I was to come so early as to drink tea with Lamb; and the hour was seven. He lived in the Temple; and I, who was not then, as afterwards I became, a student and member of "the Honourable Society of the Middle Temple," did not know much of the localities. However, I found out his abode, not greatly beyond my time: nobody had been asked to meet me, which a little surprised me, but I was glad of it; for, besides Lamb, there was present, his sister, Miss Lamb, of whom, and whose talents and sweetness of disposition, I had heard. I turned the conversation, upon the first opening which offered, to the subject of Coleridge; and many of my questions were answered satisfactorily, because seriously, by Miss Lamb. But Lamb took a pleasure in baffling me, or in throwing ridicule upon the subject. Out of this grew the matter of our affray. We were speaking of "The Ancient Mariner." Now to explain what followed, and a little to excuse myself, I must beg the reader to understand that I was under twenty years of age, and that my admiration for Coleridge (as in, perhaps, a still greater degree, for Wordsworth) was literally in no respect short of a religious feeling: it had, indeed, all the sanctity of religion, and all the tenderness of a human veneration. Then, also, to imagine the strength which it would derive from circumstances that do not exist now, but did then, let the reader further suppose a case — not such as he may have known since that era about Sir Walter Scotts and Lord Byrons, where every man you could possibly fall foul of, early or late, night or day, summer or winter, was in perfect readiness to feel and express his sympathy with the admirer — but when no man, beyond one or two in each ten thousand, had so much as heard of either Coleridge or Wordsworth; and that one, or those two, knew them only to scorn them — trample on them — spit upon them: men so abject in public estimation, I maintain, as that Coleridge and that Wordsworth, had not existed before — have not existed since

— will not exist again. We have heard in old times, of donkeys insulting effete or dying lions, by kicking them; but in the case of Coleridge and Wordsworth it was effete donkeys that kicked living lions. They, Coleridge and Wordsworth, were the Pariahs of literature in those days: as much scorned wherever they were known, but escaping that scorn only because they were as little known as Pariahs, and even more obscure.

Well, after this bravura, by way of conveying my sense of the real position then occupied by these two authors — a position which thirty and odd years have altered, by a revolution more astonishing and total than ever before happened in literature or in life — let the reader figure to himself the sensitive horror with which a young person, carrying his devotion about with him, of necessity, as the profoundest of secrets, like a primitive Christian amongst a nation of Pagans, or a Roman Catholic convert amongst the bloody idolaters of Japan — in Oxford, above all places, hoping for no sympathy, and feeling a daily grief, almost a shame, in harbouring this devotion to that which, nevertheless, had done more for the expansion and sustenance of his own inner mind than all literature besides — let the reader figure, I say to himself, the shock with which such a person must recoil from hearing the very friend and associate of these authors utter what seemed at that time a burning ridicule of all which belonged to them — their books, their thoughts, their places, their persons, This had gone on for some time, before we came upon the ground of “The Ancient Mariner;” I had been grieved, perplexed, astonished; and how else could I have felt reasonably, knowing nothing of Lamb’s propensity to mystify a stranger; he, on the other hand, knowing nothing of the depth of my feelings on these subjects, and that they were not so much mere literary preferences as something that went deeper than life or household affections? At length, when he had given utterance to some ferocious canon of judgment, which seemed to question the entire value of the poem, I said, perspiring, (I dare say), in this detestable crisis — “But, Mr. Lamb, good heavens! how is it possible you can allow yourself in such opinions? What instance could you bring from the poem that would bear you out in these insinuations?” “Instances!” said Lamb: “oh, I’ll instance you, if you come to that. Instance, indeed! Pray, what do you say to this —

“The many men so beautiful,
And they all dead did lie?”

So beautiful, indeed! Beautiful! Just think of such a gang

of Wapping vagabonds, all covered with pitch, and chewing tobacco; and the old gentleman himself — what do you call him? — the bright-eyed fellow?” What more might follow, I never heard; for, at this point, in a perfect rapture of horror, I raised my hands — both hands — to both ears; and, without stopping to think or to apologize, I endeavoured to restore equanimity to my disturbed sensibilities, by shutting out all further knowledge of Lamb’s impieties. At length he seemed to have finished; so I, on my part, thought I might venture to take off the embargo; and in fact he had ceased, but no sooner did he find me restored to my hearing than he said with a most sarcastic smile — which he could assume upon occasion — “If you please, sir, we’ll say grace before we begin.” I know not whether Lamb were really piqued or not at the mode by which I had expressed my disturbance: Miss Lamb certainly was not; her goodness led her to pardon me, and to treat me — in whatever light she might really view my almost involuntary rudeness — as the party who had suffered wrong; and, for the rest of the evening, she was so pointedly kind and conciliatory in her manner, that I felt greatly ashamed of my boyish failure in self-command. Yet, after all, Lamb necessarily appeared so much worse, in my eyes, as a traitor is worse than an open enemy.

Lamb, after this one visit — not knowing at that time any particular reason for continuing to seek his acquaintance — I did not trouble with my calls for some years. At length, however, about the year 1808, and for the six or seven following years, in my evening visits to Coleridge, I used to meet him again; not often, but sufficiently to correct altogether the very false impression I had received of his character and manners. I have elsewhere described him as a “Diogenes, with the heart of a St. John” — where, by the way, the reader must not, by laying the accent falsely on St. John, convert it into the name of Lord Bolingbroke: I meant St. John the Evangelist. And by ascribing to Lamb any sort of resemblance to Diogenes, I had a view only to his plain speaking in the first place — his unequalled freedom from every mode of hypocrisy or affectation; and, secondly, to his talent for saying keen, pointed things, sudden flashes, or revelations of hidden truths, in a short condensed form of words. In fact, the very foundation of Lamb’s peculiar character was laid in his absolute abhorrence of all affectation. This showed itself in self-disparagement of every kind; never the mock disparagement, which is self-praise in an indirect form, as when people accuse themselves of all the vir-

tues, by professing an inability to pay proper attention to prudence or economy — or uncontrollable disposition to be rash and inconsiderate on behalf of a weaker party when suffering apparent wrong. But Lamb's confessions of error, of infirmity, were never at any time acts of mock humility, meant to involve oblique compliment in the rebound. Thus, he honestly and frankly confessed his blank insensibility to music.

" King David's harp, that made the madness flee
From Saul, had been but a Jew's harp to me,"

is his plain, unvarnished admission, in verses admirable for their wit and their elegance: nor did he attempt to break the force of this unfortunate truth, by claiming, which, perhaps, he might have claimed, a compensatory superiority in the endowments of his eye. It happened to him, as I believe it has often done to others — to Pope, perhaps, but certainly to Wordsworth — that the imperfect structure or imperfect development of the ear, denying any profound sensibility to the highest modes of impassioned music, has been balanced by a more than usual sensibility to some modes of visual beauty.

With respect to Wordsworth, it has been doubted, by some of his friends, upon very good grounds, whether, as a connoisseur in painting, he has a very learned eye, or one that can be relied upon. I hold it to be very doubtful, also, whether Wordsworth's judgment in the human face — its features and its expression — be altogether sound, and in conformity to the highest standards of art. But it is undeniable — and must be most familiar to all who have associated upon intimate terms with Wordsworth and his sister — that they both derive a pleasure, originally and organically more profound than is often witnessed, both from the forms and the colouring of rural nature. The very same tests by which I recognize my own sensibility to music, as rising above the common standard — viz., by the indispensableness of it to my daily comfort: the readiness with which I make any sacrifices to obtain a " grand debauch " of this nature, etc., etc. — these, when applied to Wordsworth, manifest him to have an analogous craving, in a degree much transcending the general ratio for the luxuries of the eye. These luxuries Wordsworth seeks in their great original exemplar — in Nature as exhibiting herself amongst the bold forms and the rich but harmonious colouring of mountainous scenery; there especially, where the hand of injudicious art, or of mercenary craft, has not much interfered, with monotonous repetition of unmeaning forms with offensive outlines, or, still more, with harsh and glaring contrasts of colour.

The offence which strikes upon Wordsworth's eye from such disfigurations of nature is, really and without affectation, as keen, as intense, and as inevitable as to other men the pain to the mere physical eye-sight from the glare of snow or the irritations of flying dust. Lamb, on the other hand, sought his pleasures of this class — not, as by this time all the world knows, in external nature, for which it was his pleasure to profess, not merely an indifference, but even a horror which it delighted him to exaggerate with a kind of playful malice to those whom he was hoaxing — but in the works of the great painters: and for these I have good reason to think that both he and his sister had a peculiarly deep sensibility, and, after long practice, a fine and matured taste. Here, then, was both a gift and an attainment which Lamb might have fairly pleaded in the way of a set-off to his acknowledged defects of ear. But Lamb was too really and sincerely humble ever to think of nursing and tending his own character in any man's estimation, or of attempting to blunt the effect of his own honest avowals of imperfection, by dexterously playing off before your eyes some counterbalancing accomplishment. He was, in fact, as I have said before, the most humble and unpretending of human beings, the most thoroughly sincere, the most impatient of either simulation or dissimulation, and the one who threw himself the most unreservedly for your good opinion upon the plain natural expression of his real qualities, as nature had forced them, without artifice, or design, or disguise, more than you find in the most childlike of children.

There was a notion prevalent about Lamb, which I can affirm to have been a most erroneous one: it was — that any flagrant act of wickedness formed a recommendation to his favour. "Ah!" said one man to me, when asking a letter of introduction from him — "ah! that I could but recommend you as a man that had robbed the mail, or the King's exchequer — which would be better. In that case, I need not add a word; you would take rank instantly amongst the privileged friends of Lamb, without a word from me." Now, as to "the King's Exchequer," I cannot say. A man who should have placed himself in relation with Falstaff, by obeying his commands² at a distance of four centuries, (like the traveller, who demanded of the turnpikeman — "How do you like your eggs dressed?" and, ten years after, on passing the same gate, received the monosyllabic reply "poached,") — that man might have presented irresistible claims to Lamb's affection. Shakspeare, or anything connected with Shakspeare might have proved too

much for his Roman virtue. But, putting aside any case so impossible as this, I can affirm that — so far from this being the truth, or approaching the truth. — a rule the very opposite governed Lamb's conduct: — so far from welcoming wicked, profligate, or dissolute people by preference, if they happened to be clever — he bore with numerous dull people, stupid people, asinine people, for no other reason upon earth than because he knew them, or believed them to have been ill-used or oppressed by some clever but dissolute man. That was enough. Sufficient it was that they had been the objects of injustice, calumny, persecution, or wrong in any shape — and, without further question, they had "their place allowed" at Lamb's fireside. I knew some eminent instances of what I am now saying. And I used to think to myself, Were this feature of Lamb's character made known, and the natural results followed, what would he do? Refuse anybody, reject anybody, tell him to begone, he could not, no more than he could have danced upon his mother's grave. He would have received all who presented themselves with any rational pretensions; and would finally have gone to prison rather than reject anybody. I do not say this rhetorically. I knew Lamb; and I know certain cases in which he was concerned — cases which it is difficult to publish with any regard to the feelings of persons now living, but which (if published in all their circumstances) would show him to be the very noblest of human beings. He was a man, in a sense more eminent than would be conceivable by many people, princely — nothing short of that in his beneficence. Many liberal people I have known in this world — many who were charitable in the widest sense — many munificent people; but never any one upon whom, for bounty, for indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb. Considered as a man of genius, he was not in the very first rank, simply because his range was a contracted one: within that range, he was perfect; of the peculiar powers which he possessed, he has left to the world as exquisite a specimen as this planet is likely to exhibit. But, as a moral being, in the total compass of his relations to this world's duties, in the largeness and diffusiveness of his charity, in the graciousness of his condescension to inferior intellects, I am disposed, after a deliberate review of my own entire experience, to pronounce him the best man, the nearest in his approaches to an ideal standard of excellence, that I have

known or read of. In the mingled purity—a childlike purity—and the benignity of his nature, I again express my own deep feeling of the truth, when I say that he recalled to my mind the image and character of St. John the Evangelist—of him who was at once the beloved apostle, and also, more peculiarly, the apostle of love. Well and truly, therefore, did the poet say, in his beautiful lines upon this man's grave and memory—

“Oh, he was good, if e'er a good man lived!”³

Perhaps the foundation for the false notion I have mentioned about Lamb's predilections, was to be found in his carelessness for those social proscriptions which have sometimes occurred in our stormy times with respect to writers, male and female, who set the dominant notions, or the prevailing feelings of men—(feelings with regard to sexual proprieties, to social distinctions, to the sanctity of property, to the sanctity of religious formulæ, etc., etc.)—at open defiance. Take, for example, Thelwall, at one time, Holcroft, Godwin, Mrs. Wolstonecraft, Dr. Priestley, Hazlitt, all of whom were, more or less, in a backward or inverse sense, tabooed—that is, consecrated to public hatred and scorn—with respect to all these persons, feeling that the public alienation had gone too far, or had begun originally upon false grounds, Lamb threw his heart and his doors wide open. Politics—what cared he for politics? Religion—in the sense of theological dogmas—what cared he for religion? For religion in its moral aspects, and its relations to the heart of man no human being ever cared more. With respect to politics, some of his friends could have wished him to hate men when they grew anti-national, and in that case only; but he would not. He persisted in liking men who made an idol of Napoleon, who sighed over the dread name of Waterloo, and frowned upon Trafalgar. There I thought him wrong; but, in that, as one of my guardians used to say of me, he “followed his own devil;” though, after all, I believe he took a secret silent pleasure in the grandeur of his country, and would have suffered in her suffering—would have been humiliated in her humiliation—more than he altogether acknowledged to himself; in fact, his carelessness grew out of the depth of his security. He could well afford to be free of anxiety in a case like this; for the solitudes of jealous affection, the tremulous and apprehensive love, as “of a mother or a child,” (which painful mood of love Wordsworth professes for his country, but only in a wayward fit of passion), could scarcely be thought applicable, even in the worst days of Napo-

leon, to a national grandeur and power which seem as little liable to chance or change, as essentially unapproachable by any serious impeachment, as the principle of gravitation or the composition of the air. Why, therefore, should he trouble himself more about the nice momentary oscillations of the national fortunes in war or council, more than about adjusting his balance, so as not to disturb the equilibrium of the earth?

There was another trait of character about Charles Lamb, which might have countenanced the common notion that he looked indulgently upon dissolute men, or men notorious for some criminal escapade. This was his thorough hatred of all hypocrisy, and his practical display of that hatred on all possible occasions. Even in a point so foreign, as it might seem, from this subject as his style, though chiefly founded upon his intellectual differences and his peculiar taste, the prevailing tone of it was in part influenced (or at least sustained) by his disgust for all which transcended the naked simplicity of truth. This is a deep subject, with as many faces, or facets, (to speak the language of jewellers), as a rose-cut diamond; and far be it from me to say one word in praise of those — people of how narrow a sensibility! — who imagine that a simple (that is, according to many tastes, an unelevated and unrhythmical) style — take, for instance, an Addisonian or a Swiftian style — is unconditionally good. Not so; all depends upon the subject; and there is a style, transcending these and all other modes of simplicity, by infinite degrees, and, in the same proportion, impossible to most men — the rhythmical — the continuous — what, in French, is called the *soutenu*, which, to humbler styles, stands in the relation of an organ to a shepherd's pipe. This also finds its justification in its subject; and the subject which can justify it must be of a corresponding quality — loftier — and, therefore, rare.

If, then, in style — so indirect an expression as that must be considered of his nature and moral feelings — how much more, in their direct and conscious expressions, was Lamb impatient of hypocrisy! Hypocrisy may be considered as the heroic form of affectation. Now, the very basis of Lamb's character was laid in downright horror of affectation. If he found himself by accident using a rather fine word, notwithstanding it might be the most forcible in that place, (the word "arrest," suppose, in certain situations, for the word "catch"), he would, if it were allowed to stand, make merry with his own grandiloquence at the moment; and, in after moments, he would continually ridicule that class of words, by others carried to an

extreme of pedantry — the word “arride,” for instance, used in the sense of pleasing, or winning the approbation — just as Charles Fox, another patron of simplicity, or, at least, of humility in style was accustomed to use the word “vilipend,” as a standing way of sarcastically recalling to the reader’s mind the Latinizing writers of English. Hence — that is, from this intense sincerity and truth of character — Lamb would allow himself to say things that shocked the feelings of the company — shocked sometimes in the sense of startling or electrifying, as by something that was odd; but also sometimes shocked with the sense of what was revolting, as by a Swiftian laying bare of naked shivering human nature. Such exposures of masquerading vanity — such surgical probings and vexings of the secret feelings — I have seen almost truculently pursued by Lamb. He seemed angry and fierce in such cases only; but the anger was for the affectation and insincerity, which he could not endure, unless where they covered some shame or timidity, never where they were masks for attacking an individual. The case of insincerity, above all others, which moved his bile, was where, out of some pretended homage to public decorum, an individual was run down on account of any moral infirmities, such as we all have, or have had, or at least so easily and naturally may have had, that nobody knows whether we have them or not. In such a case, and in this only almost, Lamb could be savage in his manner. I remember one instance, where many of the leading authors of our age were assembled — Coleridge, Wordsworth, Southey, etc., Lamb was amongst them; and when ——— was denounced as a man careless in the education of his children, and generally reputed to lead a licentious life — “Pretty fellows we are,” said Lamb, “to abuse him on that last score, when every one of us, I suppose, on going out this night into the Strand, will make up to the first pretty girl he sees.” Some laughed — some looked grim — some looked grand — but Wordsworth, smiling, and yet with solemnity, said — “I hope, I trust, Mr. Lamb, you are mistaken, or, at least, you do not include us all in this sweeping judgment?” “Oh, as to that,” said Lamb, “who knows? There’s no telling: sad Josephs are some of us in this very room.” Upon which everybody laughed, and Lamb amongst them; but he had been indignant and sincere in this rebuke of the hypocritical sacrifice to decorum. He manifested a fervour of feeling in such cases; not of anger primarily to the assailant — that was but a reaction — his fervour was a movement of intense and conscientious justice towards the person assailed, as in one who felt that he himself

if not by the very same trespasses, had erred and was liable to err; that he also was a brother in human infirmity, and a debtor to the frailty of all flesh, though not possibly by the same overt acts or habits.

In reviewing the life of Lamb, it is almost inevitable that, to a reader not specially acquainted with its events beyond what Serjeant Talfourd has judged it proper to communicate, many things will appear strange and unexplained. In a copy of the Serjeant's work, now lying before me, which had been borrowed for my use from a distinguished literary lady, I find a pencil mark of interrogation attached to the word "chequered," by which, at p. 334, Vol. II, Lamb's life is characterized. This is a natural expression of surprise, under the suppressions which have been here practised; suppressions dictated alike by delicacy for what is too closely personal, and by reverential pity for what is too afflicting. Still it will be asked by those who read attentively, In what sense was Lamb's life chequered? As Wordsworth has scattered repeated allusions to this subject in his fine memorial verses on Lamb, allusions which must, for the present, be almost unintelligible to the great majority of readers; and, as he has done this, notwithstanding he was perfectly aware at the time of the Serjeant's reserve, and aware also that this reserve was not accidental, professing himself, moreover, to be

"Awed by the theme's peculiar sanctity,
Which words less free,"

(viz. the prose narrative of Lamb's biographer, which wanted, of necessity, the impassioned tenderness of a poetic memorial),

"Presumed not even to touch;"

under these circumstances it may be right, whilst still persisting in not raising that veil which has been dropped over this subject by Serjeant Talfourd, out of profound feelings for the surviving lady of the family, that sister of Charles Lamb, who presented so much of his own genius and his own disposition, through a softened or lunar reflection, and who was the great consoler of his affliction — that sister,

"The meek
The self-restraining, and the ever kind,
In whom his reason and intelligent heart
Found — for all interests, hopes, and tender cares,
All softening, humanizing, hallowing powers,
Whether withheld or for her sake unsought —
More than sufficient recompense;"

still persisting, I say, out of veneration for this admirable lady, in refusing to raise the veil, it may yet be lawful so far to assist the reader in penetrating its folds, as that he may apprehend the main features of the case, in a degree sufficient for the application of Wordsworth's else partly unintelligible verses; and the more so, for these two reasons: — First, That several passages in these verses are calculated, at any rate, to pique the curiosity, although they do not satisfy it; Secondly, (which must especially be remembered), A mere interest of curiosity, curiosity vulgar and disrespectful, cannot be imagined in this case. A curiosity which put the question suggested by the word *chequered*, and absolutely challenged by Wordsworth's verses, must be already one that has been hallowed and refined by a tender interest in the subject; since no interest short of that could have attracted a reader to a life so poor in anecdote, or any other vulgar allurements, or, at least, no other could have detained him sufficiently upon its circumstantial parts, to allow of his raising the question.

To approach this question, therefore, in the most proper way, perhaps the very same verses of Wordsworth, which are amongst the parts of the Serjeant's book most fitted to suggest the question, are most fitted to suggest the answer. Being read carefully, without which they will do neither the one nor the other, they indicate their own commentary. One of the most beautiful passages, and, at the same time, of the most significant, is this: —

“ Thus, 'mid a shifting world,
Did they together testify of time
And season's difference — a double tree,
With two collateral stems sprung from one root;
Such were they — such through life they might have been,
In union, in partition only such:
Otherwise wrought the will of the Most High.”

They might have exhibited the image of a double tree, in union throughout their joint lives.⁴ *Diis aliter visum est*. And then the poet goes on to shadow forth their real course through this world, and to hint at the sad cause which occasionally separated them, under the image of two ships launched jointly, and for the same voyage of discovery — viewing each other, therefore, as partners pursuing common objects, under common hazards and difficulties — often divided by stress of weather, often rejoining each other at the fixed place of rendezvous, again to be separated, and again to be reunited: —

“ Yet, through all visitation and all trials,
 Still they were faithful — like two vessels launched
 From the same beach, one ocean to explore,
 With mutual help, and sailing to their league
 True as inexorable winds, or bars
 (Floating or fixed) of polar ice, allow.”

But there is another passage still more distinctly pointing the reader's attention to the recurring cause of separation: —

“ Ye were taught
 That the remembrance of foregone distress
 And the worst fear of future ill, (which oft
 Doth hang around it as a sickly child
 Upon its mother), may be both alike
 Disarmed of power to unsettle present good.”

This mysterious affliction, therefore, of Lamb's life, making that a “chequered” one, which else had been of a character too absolutely tranquil and monotonous — or ruffled, at least, only by internal irritations — was (as we learn from Wordsworth) of a nature to revolve upon him at intervals. One other passage — and this also from a poem of Wordsworth, but one written at the very least, thirty-two years ago, and having no reference at all to the Lambs — may furnish all the additional light which can be needed. It is one of the poems published in 1807, and many of them suggested by personal or local recollections, from a tour then recently performed through Scotland. The poet is speaking of a woman on the Borders, whose appearance and peculiar situation, in relation to a disabled husband, had caught his attention; and the expression of her eye is thus noticed: —

“ I looked and scanned her o'er and o'er —
 The more I looked, I wondered more;
 When suddenly I seemed to espy
 A trouble in her strong black eye —
 A remnant of uneasy light —
 A flash of something over-bright.”

Now, if the reader will ask himself what cause, apt to recur, in some cases, would be likely to leave these morbid appearances in the eye, this uneasy light, and these flashes that were over-bright — he will then apprehend, in silence and reverential sympathy, what was that huge and steadfast affliction that besieged, through life, the heart of Charles Lamb.

If the reader will further understand that this affliction was not, as the heaviest afflictions oftentimes become, a mere remembrance echoing from past times — possibly “a long since cancelled woe;” but that it was a two-headed snake, looking behind

and before, and gnawing at his heart by the double pangs of memory, and of anxiety, gloomy and fearful, watching for the future; and finally, that the object of this anxiety, who might at any moment be torn from his fireside, to return, after an interval of mutual suffering, (not to be measured, or even guessed at, but in the councils of God), was that Madonna-like lady, who, to him renewed the case described with such pathetic tenderness by the Homeric Andromache — being, in fact, his “all the world;” fulfilling at once all offices of tenderness and duty; and making up to him, in her single character of sister, all that he had lost of maternal kindness — all that for her sake he had forborne to seek of affections, conjugal or filial: — weighing these accumulated circumstances of calamity, the feeling reader will be ready to admit that Lamb’s cup of earthly sorrow was full enough, to excuse many more than he could be taxed with, of those half-crazy eccentricities in which a constant load of secret affliction (such, I mean, as must not be explained to the world) is apt to discharge itself. Hence, it might be, in part — but some have supposed from a similar, though weaker taint of the same constitutional malady — that Lamb himself discovered symptoms of irregular feeling or thinking, not such as could have been alarming in a general or neutral case, but in a subject known to be affected by these hereditary predispositions, were alarming, both to his friends, (those of them, at least, who had known the circumstances), and, with far heavier reason, to himself. This also is, therefore, to be added to his afflictions — not merely the fear, constantly impending that his fireside (as I said before) might be rendered desolate, and that by a sudden blow, as well as for an indefinite duration; but also the fear (not equally strong, but equally impending forever) that he himself, and all his splendid faculties, might, as by a flash of lightning, be swallowed up “in darkness infinite.”⁶

Such was the condition of Charles Lamb, and such the temper that in part grew out of it — angelically benign, but also, in a morbid degree, melancholy — when I renewed my acquaintance with him in 1808-14; a period during which I learned to appreciate him better. Somewhere in this period it was, by the way, that I had an opportunity of introducing to his knowledge my brother, “poor Pink.” Lamb liked him; and the more so, from an accident which occurred at the very second interview that he and Pink ever had. It was in Bond street, at an exhibition of two large and splendid pictures by Salvator Rosa; one representing a forest scene, and a forest recluse, (of what character, in Salvator’s intention, may be

doubted; but, in the little printed account of the paintings, he was described as Diogenes.) These pictures were, I should think, twelve feet high, at the least, consequently upon a large scale, and the tone of colouring was peculiarly sombre, or rather cold; and it tended even to the monotonous; one almost uniform cheerless tint of yellowish green, with some little perhaps of a warmish umber, overspread the distances; and the foreground showed little else than a heavy dull-toned black. Pink, who knew as little of painting as the bow'sons of his various ships, had, however, a profound sensibility to some of its effects; and, if he ever ran up hastily and fearfully to London from Portsmouth, it was sure to be at the time when the annual exhibition of the Academy was open. No exhibition was ever missed by him, whether of a public or comparatively private nature. In particular, he had attended, with infinite delight, the exhibition (in Newman Street, I think) of Mr. West's pictures. "Death and his Pale Horse" prodigiously attracted him; and others, from the freshness and gorgeousness of their colouring, had absolutely fascinated his eye. It may be imagined, therefore, with what disgust he viewed two subjects, from which the vast names of the painter had led him to expect so much, but which from the low style of the colouring yielded him so little. There might be forty people in the room at the time my brother and I were there. We had stood for ten or fifteen minutes, examining the pictures, when at length I noticed Charles Lamb, and, at a little distance, his sister. If a creditor had wished to seize upon either, no surer place in London (no, not Drury Lane, or Covent Garden) for finding them, than an exhibition from the works of the old masters. And, moreover, as amongst certain classes of birds, if you have one you are sure of the other, so with respect to the Lambs, (unless in those dreary seasons when the "dual unity"—as it is most affectingly termed by Wordsworth—had been for a time sundered into a widowed desolation, by the periodic affliction,) seeing or hearing the brother you knew that the sister could not be far off. If she were, you sighed, knew what that meant, and asked no questions.

Lamb, upon seeing us, advanced to shake hands; but he paused one moment to await the critical dogma which he perceived to be at that time issuing from Pink's lips. That it was vituperation in a high degree, anybody near us might hear; and some actually turned round in fright upon catching these profane words: "D—— the fellow! I could do better myself." Wherewith, perhaps unconsciously, but perhaps also

by way of enforcing his thought, Pink, (who had brought home from his long sea life a detestable practice of chewing tobacco) ejaculated a quid of some coarse quality, that lighted upon the frame of the great master's picture, and, for aught I know, may be sticking there yet. Lamb could not have approved such a judgment — nor perhaps the immeasurable presumption that might seem to have accompanied such a judgment from most men, or from an artist; but he knew that Pink was a mere sailor, knowing nothing historically of art, nor much of the pretensions of the mighty artists. Or, had it been otherwise — at all events, he admired and loved, beyond all other qualities whatsoever, a hearty, cordial sincerity: honest homely obstinacy, not to be enslaved by a great name — though that, again, may, by possibility, become in process of time itself an affectation — Lamb almost revered; and therefore it need not surprise anybody, that, in the midst of his loud, unrepressed laughter, he came up to my brother, and offered his hand, with an air of friendliness that flattered Pink, and a little misled him: for, that evening, on dining with Pink, he said to me — “That Lamb's a sensible fellow. You see how evidently he approved of what I remarked about that old humbugging rascal, Salvator Rosa.” Lamb, in this point, had a feature of character in common with Sir Walter Scott (at least I suppose it to have been a feature of Sir Walter's mind, upon the information of Professor Wilson,) that, if a man had, or, if he supposed him to have, a strongly marked combination or tendency of feelings, of opinions, of likings, or of dislikings — what in fact, we call a character — no matter whether it were built upon prejudices the most extravagant, or ignorance the most profound, provided only it were sincere, and not mere lawless audacity, but were self-consistent, and had unity as respected itself — in that extent, he was sure to manifest liking and respect for the man. And hence it was, that Lamb liked Pink much more for this Gothic and outrageous sentence upon Salvator Rosa, than he would have liked him for the very best, profoundest, or most comprehensive critique upon that artist that could have been delivered. Pink, on the other hand, liked Lamb greatly: and used, in all his letters, to request that I would present his best regards to that Charles Lamb “who wouldn't be humbugged by the old rascal in Bond Street.”

Thus I had gradually unlearned my false opinions, or outworn my false impressions, about Lamb, by the year 1814. Indeed, by that time, I may say that I had learned to appreciate Lamb almost at his full value. And reason there was that I

should. For, in that year, 1814, occurred a trial of Lamb's hold upon his friends' regard, which was a test case — a test for each side — since not every man could have mastered this offence; and far less could every man have merited that a man should master it. This was the year which closed the great war of wars, by its first frail close — the capture of Paris by the Allies. And of these Allies, all who had any personal weight or interest (the Austrian Emperor, who was, however, expected at one time, is no exception — for his weight was not personal but political) — all, I say, visited London and Oxford. I was at London during that glad tumultuous season. I witnessed the fervent joy — the triumph, too noble, too religious, to be boastful — the rapture of that great era. Coleridge, in the first edition of the "Friend," has described the tempestuous joy of a people, habitually cold in relation to public events, upon occasion of a visit from their Sovereign's wife — the ill-fated Queen of Prussia; and this he does by way of illustrating the proposition which then occupies him — viz. the natural tendency of men to go beyond the demands of any event, whether personal or national, their inevitable tendency to transcend it by the quality and the amount of their enthusiasm. Now, the scenes then acting in London were, in two weighty respects, different. In the first place, the people — the audience and spectators — concerned, were a people as widely opposed to the Prussians in sensibility of a profound nature as it is possible to imagine; the Prussians being really phlegmatic; and the British — as was many hundreds of times affirmed and (as far as the case admitted of proof) proved by the celebrated Walking Stewart, the profoundest of judges on this point — the British being, under the mask of a cold and reserved demeanour, the most impassioned of all nations: in fact, it requires but little philosophy to see, that, always, where the internal heat and power is greatest, there will the outside surface be the coldest; and the mere *primâ facie* phenomenon of heat, spread over the external manner, (as in the French or Italian character, and somewhat in the Irish,) is at once an evidence that there is little concentration of it at the heart. The spectators, then, the audience, were different; and the spectacle — oh, Heavens! — how far it must have differed from any that can have been witnessed for many centuries! Victors, victories, mere martial talents — were these the subjects of interest?

No man, not Lamb himself, could rate at a lower price such national vanities as these, fitted only, as I think, to win a school-boy's sympathy. In fact, I have always entertained and

avowed a theory upon the question of mere military talent, which goes far lower than anybody has yet gone, so far as I am aware; for I have gone so far as to maintain this doctrine — that, if we could detach from the contemplation of a battle the awful interests oftentimes depending upon its issue — if, in fact, we could liberate our minds from the Hartleian law of association, and insulate the mere talent there operating — we should hold the art of fighting a battle to be as far below the art of fighting a game at chess, as the skill applicable to the former case is less sure of its effect and less perfect than the skill applicable to the latter. It is true there are other functions of a commander-in-chief, involving large knowledge of human nature, great energy in action, great decision of character, supreme moral courage, and, above all, that rarest species, which faces, without shrinking, civil responsibility. These qualities, in any eminent degree, are rare. But, confining one's view to the mere art of fighting a battle, I hold and insist upon it, that the military art is (intellectually speaking) a vulgar art, a mechanic art, a very liminary art; neither liberal in its nature, nor elevated (as some mechanic arts are) by the extensive range of its details. With such opinions, I am not a person to be confounded with mere John-Bull exulters in national prowess. Not as victories won by English bayonets or artillery, but as victories in a sublime strife of the good principle with the bad, I entered with all my heart into the fulness of the popular feeling: I rejoiced with the universal nation then rejoicing. There was the "nation of London" (as I have before called it) to begin with; there was also another nation almost, collected within the walls of London at that time. I rejoiced, as I have said: Lamb did not. Then I was vexed.

NOTES

¹ I have, in another place, laid down what I conceive to be the true ground of distinction between genius and talent; which lies mainly in this — that genius is intellectual power impregnated with the moral nature, and expresses a synthesis of the active in man with his original organic capacity of pleasure and pain. Hence the very word genius, because the genial nature in its whole organization is expressed and involved in it. Hence, also, arises the reason that genius is always peculiar and individual; one man's genius never exactly repeats another man's. But talent is the same in all men; and that which is effected by talent, can never serve to identify or indicate its author. Hence, too, that, although talent is the object of respect, it never conciliates love; you love a man of talent perhaps in concreto, but not talent, whereas genius, even for itself is idolized. I am the more proud of this distinction, since I have seen the utter failure of Mr. Coleridge, judging from his attempt in his "Table Talk."

² "Rob me thy father's exchequer."—Falstaff, in Henry IV, Part 1.

⁸ One feature there was in Lamb's charity, which is but too frequently found wanting amongst the most liberal and large-hearted of the charitable, and especially where the natural temper is melancholy or desponding; one, moreover, which, beyond any other aspect of charity, wears a winning grace — one, finally, which is indistinctly pointed out as a duty in our scriptural code of ethics — the habit of hoping cheerfully and kindly on behalf of those who were otherwise objects of moral blame. Lamb, if anybody, plagued as he was by a constitutional taint of morbid melancholy, might have been privileged to fail in this duty; but he did not. His goodness, making it too painful to him to cherish as final conclusions any opinions with regard to any individual which seemed to shut him out from the sympathy or the brotherly feeling of the just and good, overpowered the acuteness of his discernment; and where it was quite impossible to find matter of approbation in the past or the present conduct, he would turn to the future for encouraging views of amendment, and would insist upon regarding what was past, as the accidental irregularity, the anomaly, the exception, warranting no inferences with regard to what remained; and (whenever that was possible) would charge it all upon unfortunate circumstances. Everybody must have felt the profound pathos of that passage in scripture — "Let him that stole, steal no more;" a pathos which rests evidently upon the sudden substitution for a judicial sentence proportioned to the offence, (such as an ordinary lawgiver would have uttered, and such as the listener anticipates), of a heavenly light opened upon the guilty heart, showing to it a hope and an escape, and whispering that for itself also there may be final peace in reversion, where otherwise all had seemed blank despair and the darkness of coming vengeance. The poor benighted Pariah of social life — who durst not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, and, by the angry tone of human laws, as well as of society in general, finds but too much that disposes him to despond, and perhaps makes no effort, merely because all efforts seem likely to be unavailing — will often, in the simple utterance of a cheerful hope on his behalf, see as it were a window opening in heaven, and faces radiant with promise looking out upon him. These words I mean to apply as the distinguishing description of Christian ethics, as contrasted with all other ethical theories. For it is a just inquiry with respect to any system of morals — not merely, What are your substantial doctrines, what is the corpus of your laws? — but also, What is your preparatory discipline? — what are the means at your disposal for winning over the reluctant disciple, the bold recusant, or the timid doubter? And it is worthy of remark that, in this case of hoping on behalf of those who did seem no just objects of hope — the very same absence of all compromise with human infirmity is found, which a distinguished German infidel described as the great distinction of Christianity, and one which raised it *prima facie* above all other codes of morality. There is indeed a descent — a condescension to humanity and its weakness; but no shadow of a compromise — a capitulation — or what in Roman law is called a "transaction" with it. "For," said Immanuel Kant, "here lies the point: — the Stoic maintains the moral principle in its ideal purity; he sacrifices nothing at all to human weakness; and so far he deserves praise. But then, for that same reason, he is useless; his standard is exalted beyond all human reproach. On the other hand, the Epicurean relaxes so far as to make his method of 'holiness' attainable. But how? It is by debasing and lowering the standard. Each, there-

fore, in a different sense, and for different reasons, is useless to human nature as it is. Now comes Christianity, and effects a synthesis of all which is good in each, while she purifies herself from all taint of what is evil. She presents a standard of holiness a 'maximum perfectionis,' (as the scholastic phrase is), no less exalted, no less jealous of all earthly taint or soil, than Stoicism. This, however, she makes accessible to man; not by any compromise or adaptation of its demands to a lower nature; but by means peculiarly her own—by promise of supernatural aid. Thus she is celestial like the one, and terrestrial like the other, but by such a reconciliation as celestial means only could effect." This Kant allowed to constitute a philosophic character for Christianity, which offered itself at the very vestibule. And in this function of hope, as one which is foremost amongst the functions of charity, there is the very same harmony of rigor in the judge, and loyalty to the standard erected, with human condescension and consideration for the criminal.

⁴ There is, however, an obscurity in the expression at this point of the verses; it lies partly in the word such. The only construction of the verses in harmony with the words, seems the following: They might have appeared as a double tree, etc., whether viewed in those circumstances which united them—viz. in the features of resemblance—or viewed in those of difference, as sex and its moral results which made the partition between them. Such they might have seemed; but calamity wrought a more perfect division between them, under which, they seemer no longer one, but two distinct trees.

⁵ "The angel ended his mysterious rite;
And the pure vision closed in darkness infinite."

II

IT was summer. The earth groaned under foliage and flowers — fruits I was going to say, but, as yet, fruits were not — and the heart of man under the burden of triumphant gratitude: man, I say; for surely to man, and not to England only, belonged the glory and the harvest of that unequalled triumph.¹ Triumph, however, in the sense of military triumph, was lost and swallowed up in the vast overthrow of evil, and of the evil principle. All nations sympathized with England — with England, as the centre of this great resurrection; centre for the power; centre, most of all, for the moral principle at work. It was, in fact, on that ground, and because all Europe felt and acknowledged that England had put a soul into the resistance to Napoleon, wherever and in whatever corner manifested — therefore it was that now the crowned heads of Europe, “with all their peerage,” paid a visit to this marvellous England. It was a distinct act of homage from all the thrones of Europe, now present on our shores, actually, or by representation. Certain it is, that these royal visits to England had no other ground than the astonishment felt for the moral grandeur of the country which only, amongst all countries, had yielded nothing to fear — nothing to despondency; and also the astonishment felt, at any rate, by those incapable of higher emotions, for its enormous resources, which had been found adequate to the support, not only of its own colossal exertions, but of those made by almost half of Christendom besides. Never before in this world was there so large a congress of princes and illustrious leaders, attracted together by the mere force of unwilling, and, in some instances, jealous admiration. I was in London during that fervent carnival of national enthusiasm; and naturally, though no seeker of spectacles, I saw — for nobody who walked the streets of western London could avoid seeing — the chief objects of public interest. I was passing from Hyde Park along Piccadilly, on the day when the Emperor of Russia was expected. Many scores of thousands had gone out of London over Blackfriars’ Bridge, expressly to meet him, on the understanding that he was to make his approach by that route. At the moment when I

reached the steps of the Pulteney Hotel, a single carriage of plain appearance, followed by two clumsy, Cossack small-landaus, (or rather what used to be called sociables,) approached at a rapid pace: so rapid, that I had not time to pass before the waiters of the hotel had formed a line across the foot-pavement, intercepting the passing. In a moment, a cry arose—"The Czar! the Czar!"—and before I could count six, I found myself in a crowd. The carriage door was opened, the steps let down, and one gentleman, unattended, stepped out. His purpose was to have passed through the avenue formed for him, in so rapid a way as to prevent any recognition of his person; but the cry in the street, the huzzas, and the trampling crowd, had brought to a front window on the drawing-room story a lady whom I had seen often before, and knew to be the Duchess of Oldenburg, the Emperor's sister. Her white dress caught the traveller's eye; and he stopped to kiss his hand to her. This action and attitude gave us all an admirable opportunity for scanning his features and whole personal appearance. There was nothing about it to impress one very favourably. His younger brother, the present Emperor, is described by all those who saw him, when travelling in Great Britain, as a man of dignified and impressive exterior. Not so with the Emperor Alexander; he was tall, and seemed likely to become corpulent as he advanced in life, (at that time he was not above thirty-seven;) and in his figure there seemed nothing particularly amiss. His dress, however, was unfortunate; it was a green surtout: now, it may be remarked, that men rarely assume this colour who have not something French in their taste. His was so in all things, as might be expected from his French education under the literary fribble, Monsieur La Harpe.

But, waiving his appearance in other respects, what instantly repelled all thoughts of an imperial presence, was his unfortunate face. It was a face wearing a northern fairness, and not perhaps unamiable in its expression; but it was overladen with flesh, and expressed nothing at all; or, if anything, good humour, good nature, and considerable self-complacency. In fact, the only prominent feature in the Czar's disposition was, an amiable, somewhat sentimental ostentation—amiable, I say, for it was not connected with a gloomy pride or repulsive arrogance, but with a blind and winning vanity. And this cast of character was so far fortunate, as it supplied impulses to exertion, and irritated into activity a weak mind, that would else, by its natural tendencies, have sunk into torpor. His extensive travels, however, were judiciously fitted for rescuing him from

that curse of splendid courts; and his greatest enemy had also been his greatest benefactor, though unintentionally, through the tempestuous agitations of the Russian mind, and of Russian society, in all its strata, during that most portentous of all romances — not excepting any of the crusades, or the adventurous expeditions of Cortez and Pizarro, still less the Parthian invasions of Crassus or of Julian — viz. the anabasis of Napoleon. There can be no doubt, to any reflecting mind, that the happiest part of his reign, even to Charles I, was that which was also, in a political sense, the period of his misfortunes — viz. the seven years between 1641 and 1649; three of which were occupied in stormy but adventurous war; and the other four in romantic journeys, escapes, and attempts at escape, checkered, doubtless, with trepidations and anxieties, hope and fear, grief and exultation, which, however much tainted with distress, still threw him upon his own resources of every kind, bodily not less than moral and intellectual, which else the lethargy of a court would have left undeveloped and unsuspected even by himself. Such also had been the quality of the Russian Emperor's experience for some of his later years; and such, probably, had been the result of his own comparative happiness. Yet it was said, that, about this time, the peace of Alexander's mind was beginning to give way. It is well known that a Russian emperor, lord of sixty million lives, is no lord of his own, not at any time. He sleeps always in the bosom of danger, secret, unfathomable, invisible. It is the inevitable condition of despotism and autocracy that he should do so. And the Russian Czar is, as to security, pretty nearly in the situation of the Roman Cæsar.

He, however, who is always and consciously in danger, may be supposed to become partially reconciled to it. But, be that as it may, it was supposed that, at this time, Alexander became aware of some special conspiracies that were ripening at home against his own person. It was rumoured that, just about this time, in the very centre of exuberant jubulations, ascending from every people in Europe, he lost his serenity and cheerful temper. On this one occasion, in the moment of rejoicing a sister, whom he was said to love with peculiar tenderness, he certainly looked happy; but, on several subsequent opportunities that I had of seeing him, he looked much otherwise; disturbed and thoughtful, and as if seeking to banish alarming images, by excess of turbulent gayety, by dancing, or by any mode of distraction. Under this influence it was also, or was supposed to be, that he manifested unusual interest in religious

speculations; diverting to these subjects, especially to those of a quietist character, (such as the doctrines of the English Quakers,) that enthusiasm which hitherto, for several years, he had dedicated to military studies and pursuits. Meantime, the most interesting feature belonging to the martial equipage which he drew after him, was the multitude of Tartar or other Asiatic objects, men, carriages, etc., prevailing in the crowd, and suggesting the enormous magnitude of the empire from whose remote provinces they came. There were also the European Tartars, the Cossacks, with their Hetman Platoff. He had his abode somewhere to the north of Oxford Street; and further illustrated the imperial grandeur, being himself a sovereign prince, and yet a vassal when he found himself in the presence of Alexander. This prince, who (as is well known) loved and honoured the English, as he afterwards testified by the most princely welcome to all of that nation who visited his territories, was, on his part, equally a favourite with the English. He had lost his gallant son in a cavalry skirmish; and his spirits had been much depressed by that calamity. But he so far commanded himself as to make his private feelings give way to his public enthusiasm; and he never withdrew himself from the clamourous applause of the mob, in which he took an undisguised pleasure. This was the man, amongst all the public visitors now claiming the hospitality of the English Regent, whom Lamb saw and talked of with most pleasure. His sublime ugliness was most delectable to him; and the Tartar propensities, some of which had been perhaps exaggerated by the newspapers, (such for instance, as their drinking the oil out of the street lamps,) furnished him with a constant *feu-de-joie* of jests and playful fictions, at the expense of the Hetman; and in that way it was that he chiefly expressed his sympathy with this great festal display.

Marshal Blucher, who still more powerfully converged upon himself the interest of the public, was lodged in a little quadrangle of St. James's Palace, (that to the right of the clock-tower entrance.) So imperious and exacting was the general curiosity to see the features of the old soldier — this Marshal "Forwards," as he was always called in Germany, and who had exhibited the greater merit of an Abdiel fidelity, on occasion of the mighty day of Jena,— that the court was filled from an early hour of every morning, until a late dinner-hour, with a mob of all ranks, calling for him by his name, *tout court*, "Blucher! Blucher!" At short intervals, no longer in general than five minutes, the old warrior obeyed the summons

throughout the day, unless when he was known to be absent on some public occasion. His slavery must have been most wearisome to his feelings. But he submitted with the utmost good nature, and allowed cheerfully for the enthusiasm which did so much honour to himself and to his country. In fact, this enthusiasm, on his first arrival in London, showed itself in a way that astonished everybody, and was half calculated to alarm a stranger. He had directed the postilion to proceed straightway to Carlton House — his purpose being to present his duty in person to the Regent, before he rested upon English ground. This was his way of expressing his homage to the British nation, for upholding, through all fortunes, that sacred cause of which he also had never despaired. Moreover, his hatred of France, and the very name French, was so intense, that upon that title also he cherished an ancient love towards England. As the carriage passed through the gateway of the Horse-Guards, the crowd, which had discovered him, became enormous. When the garden or Park entrance to the palace was thrown open, to admit Blucher, the vast mob, for the first and the last time, carried the entrance as if by storm. All opposition from the porters, the police, the soldiers on duty, was vain; and many thousands of people accompanied the veteran prince, literally “hustling” his carriage, and, in a manner carrying him in their arms to the steps of the palace door; on the top of which, waiting to receive him, stood the English Regent. The Regent himself smiled graciously and approvingly upon this outrage, which, on any minor occasion, would have struck him with consternation, perhaps, as well as disgust.

Lamb, I believe, as well as myself, witnessed part of this scene; which was the most emphatic exhibition of an uncontrollable impulse — a perfect rapture of joy and exultation, possessing a vast multitude with entire unity of feeling, that I have ever witnessed, excepting, indeed, once besides, and that was a scene of the very same kind, or rather a reflection of the same scene. It occurred in Hyde Park, on the following Sunday: Prince Blucher and his master, the King of Prussia; the Hetman of the Cossacks, with his master, the Czar; the Duke of Wellington, with some of the royal Dukes, and a vast cortège of civil and military dignities — in short, the élite of all the great names that had grown into distinction in the late wonderful campaigns — German, Spanish, French — rode into the Park, simultaneously. If there had been any division of their several suites and parties, this had vanished; and all were thrown into one splendid confusion, under a summer sun.

The park was, of course, floating with a sea of human heads. And, in particular, there was a dense mass of horsemen, amounting to six thousand at least, (as I was told by a person accustomed to compute crowds,) following close in the rear. The van of this mighty body, composed of so many "princedom, dominations, virtues, powers," directed their course to Kensington Gardens—into these, as privileged guests, they were admitted—precautions, founded on the Carlton House experience, having been taken to exclude the ignobile vulgus who followed. The impulse, however, of the occasion, was too mighty for the case. The spectacle was absolutely sublime—of hurricane, instantaneous power, sweeping away, like an Alpine lake broken loose, all barriers almost before they were seen. The six thousand horsemen charged into the gardens; that being (as in the other case) the first and also the last intrusion of the kind.

One thing in this popular festival of rejoicing was peculiarly pleasing to myself and to many others—the proof that was thus afforded to so many eminent foreigners of our liberality, and total freedom from a narrow or ungenerous nationality. This is a grave theme, and one which, on account of the vast superstructure reared upon it, of calumnious insult to our national character, requires a separate discussion. Here it may be sufficient to say, that Marshal Blucher, at least, could have no reason to think us an arrogant people, or narrow in our national sensibilities to merit, wherever found. He could not but know that we had also great military names to show—one or two greater than his own; for, in reality, his qualities were those of a mere fighting captain, with no great reach of capacity, and of slender accomplishments. Yet we—that is to say, even the street mob of London—glorified him as much as ever they did Lord Nelson, and more than they ever did the Duke of Wellington. In this crowd, on this memorable Sunday, by-the-by, rode Prince Leopold of Saxe Coburg, as yet obscure and poor, (not having £300 a year,) and seeing neither his future prosperity, nor its sudden blight, nor its resurrection. There also rode the Prince of Orange, and many another, who was to reap laurels in the coming year, but was yet dreaming not of Waterloo as a possibility. With respect to Blucher, however, it is painful to know that he, who was now so agreeably convinced of our national generosity, came afterwards to show that jealousy of us which we had so loudly refused to feel of him, through the mere mortifications practised on his self-esteem, perhaps maliciously, by the French authorities, in pass-

ing by himself and addressing their applications to the Duke of Wellington.

Fouché, Chaboulon de la Râtre, and other writers, have recorded the maniacal rage of Prince Blucher, when despatches from Paris passed through his camp — nay, were forwarded to his head-quarters, in order to gain — what? Audience from him? No. Sanction from him? No. Merely a countersign, or a passport for the messenger; some purely ministerial act of participation in the transit of the courier; the despatches being uniformly for the Duke of Wellington. This, on the part of the French authorities, must have been, in some respects, a malicious act. Doubtless, the English general was known only in the character of a victor; whereas Blucher (and that the old testy hussar should have remembered) had never been known at Paris, for anything but defeats; and, within the week preceding, for a signal defeat, which many think might have been ripened into a smashing overthrow. But, still, there can be no doubt that deadly malice towards the Prussian name was the true ground of the act; for the Parisians bore (and still bear) a hatred to the Prussians, absolutely irrational and inexplicable. The battle of Rosbach can hardly have been the reason, still less the Prussian resumption of the trophies then gathered from France, and subsequently carried off by Napoleon; for, as yet, they had not been resumed. The ground of this hatred must have lain in the famous manifesto of the Duke of Brunswick — for he, as a servant of the Prussian throne, and commanding a Prussian army, was looked upon as a Prussian. This change, however, in Blucher — this jealousy of England, within so short a time — astonished and grieved all who had seen him amongst ourselves. Many a time I met him in the street; four or five times in streets where he could not have been looked for — the streets of the city; and always with a retinue of applauders, that spread like wildfire. Once only he seemed to have a chance for passing incognito. It was in Cheapside. He was riding, as he generally was, in the open carriage (on this occasion a curricule) of some gentleman with whom he was going to dine, at a villa near London. A brewer's wagon stopped the way for two minutes; in that space of time, twenty people crowded about who knew his features: "Blucher! Blucher!" resounded through the street in a moment; an uproar rose to heaven; and the old Marshal's face relaxed from its gravity, or its sternness, (though, to say the truth, there was little of determinate expression in his features; and, if he had not been so memorable a person, one would have

thought him a mere snuffy old German) — relaxing, however, from his habitual tom-cat gravity, he looked gracious and benign. Then, at least, he loved us English; then he had reason to love us; for we made a pet of him; and a pet in a cause which would yet make his bones stir in the grave — in the national cause of Prussia against France. I have often wondered that he did not go mad with the fumes of gratified vengeance. Revenge is a luxury, to those who can rejoice in it at all, so inebriating that possibly a man would be equally liable to madness, from the perfect gratification of his vindictive hatred or its perfect defeat. And, hence, it may have been that Blucher did not go mad. Few men have had so ample a vengeance as he, when holding Paris as a conqueror; and yet, because he was but one of several who so held it, and because he was prevented from mining and blowing up the bridge of Jena, in that way, perhaps, the delirium of his vengeance became less intoxicating.

Now, returning to Lamb, I may remark that, at this memorable season, his wayward nature showed itself more conspicuously than ever. One might have thought that, if he manifested no sympathy in a direct shape with the primary cause of the public emotion, still he would have sympathized, in a secondary way, with the delirious joy which every street, every alley, then manifested, to the ear as well as to the eye. But no! Still, like Diogenes, he threw upon us all a scoffing air, as of one who stands upon a pedestal of eternity, looking down upon those who share in the transitory feelings of their own age. How he felt in the following year, when the mighty drama was consummated by Waterloo, I cannot say, for I was not then in London: I guess, however, that he would have manifested pretty much the same cynical contempt for us children of the time, that he did in all former cases.

Not until 1821, and again in 1823, did I come to know Charles Lamb thoroughly. Politics, national enthusiasm, had then gone to sleep. I had come up to London in a case connected with my own private interest. In the same spirit of frankness that I have shown on other occasions in these personal sketches, I shall here not scruple to mention, that certain pecuniary embarrassments had rendered it necessary that I should extricate myself by literary toils. I was ill at that time, and for years after — ill from the effects of opium upon the liver; and one primary indication of any illness felt in that organ, is peculiar depression of spirits. Hence arose a singular effect of reciprocal action, in maintaining a state of dejection.

From the original physical depression caused by the derangement of the liver, arose a sympathetic depression of the mind, disposing me to believe that I never could extricate myself; and from this belief arose, by reaction, a thousand-fold increase of the physical depression. I began to view my unhappy London life—a life of literary toils, odious to my heart—as a permanent state of exile from my Westmoreland home. My three eldest children, at that time in the most interesting stages of childhood and infancy, were in Westmoreland; and so powerful was my feeling (derived merely from a deranged liver) of some long, never-ending separation from my family, that at length, in pure weakness of mind, I was obliged to relinquish my daily walks in Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, from the misery of seeing children in multitudes, that too forcibly recalled my own. The picture of “Fox-ghyll,” my Westmoreland abode, and the solitary fells about it, upon which those were roaming whom I could not see, was for ever before my eyes. And it must be remembered that distance—the mere amount of distance—has much to do in such a case. You are equally divided from those you love, it is very true, by one hundred miles. But that, being a space which in England we often traverse in eight or ten hours, even without the benefit of railroads, has come to seem nothing at all. “Fox-ghyll,” on the other hand, was two hundred and eighty miles distant; and from the obstacles at the latter end of the journey, (cross-roads and interruptions of all public communications,) it seemed twice as long.

Meantime, it is very true that the labours I had to face would not, even to myself, in a state of good bodily health; have appeared alarming. Myself, I say—for, in any state of health, I do not write with rapidity. Under the influence of opium, however, when it reaches its maximum in diseasing the liver and deranging the digestive functions, all exertion whatever is revolting in excess; intellectual exertion, above all, is connected habitually, when performed under opium influence, with a sense of disgust the most profound for the subject (no matter what) which detains the thoughts; all that morning freshness of animal spirits, which, under ordinary circumstances, consumes, as it were, and swallows up the interval between one’s self and one’s distant object, (consumes, that is, in the same sense as Virgil describes a high-blooded horse on the fret for starting, as traversing the ground with his eye, and devouring the distance in fancy before it is approached)—all that dewy freshness is exhaled and burnt off by the parching effects of opium

on the animal economy. You feel like one of Swift's Strulbrugs, prematurely exhausted of life; and molehills are inevitably exaggerated by the feelings into mountains. Not that it was molehills exactly which I had then to surmount—they were moderate hills; but that made it all the worse in the result, since my judgment could not altogether refuse to go along with my feelings. I was, besides, and had been for some time, engaged in the task of unthreading the labyrinth by which I had reached, unawares, my present state of slavery to opium. I was descending the mighty ladder, stretching to the clouds as it seemed, by which I had imperceptibly attained my giddy altitude—that point from which it had seemed equally impossible to go forward or backward. To wean myself from opium, I had resolved inexorably; and finally I accomplished my vow. But the transition state was the worst state of all to support. All the pains of martyrdom were there: all the ravages in the economy of the great central organ, the stomach, which had been wrought by opium; the sickening disgust which attended each separate respiration; and the rooted depravation of the appetite and the digestion—all these must be weathered for months upon months, and without the stimulus (however false and treacherous) which, for some part of each day, the old doses of laudanum would have supplied. These doses were to be continually diminished; and, under this difficult dilemma—if, as some people advised, the diminution were made by so trifling a quantity as to be imperceptible—in that case, the duration of the process was interminable and hopeless. Thirty years would not have sufficed to carry it through. On the other hand, if twenty-five to fifty drops were withdrawn on each day, (that is, from one to two grains of opium,) inevitably within three, four, or five days, the deduction began to tell grievously; and the effect was, to restore the craving for opium more keenly than ever. There was the collision of both evils—that from the laudanum, and that from the want of laudanum. The last was a state of distress perpetually increasing, the other was one which did not sensibly diminish—no, not for a long period of months. Irregular motions, impressed by a potent agent upon the blood or other processes of life, are slow to subside; they maintain themselves long after the exciting cause has been partially or even wholly withdrawn; and, in my case, they did not perfectly subside into the motion of tranquil health, for several years.

From all this it will be easy to understand the fact—though, after all, impossible, without a similar experience, to under-

stand the amount — of my suffering and despondency in the daily task upon which circumstances had thrown me at this period — the task of writing and producing something for the journals, *invita Minerva*. Over and above the principal operation of my suffering state, as felt in the enormous difficulty with which it loaded every act of exertion, there was another secondary effect which always followed as a reaction from the first. And that this was no accident or peculiarity attached to my individual temperament, I may presume from the circumstance, that Mr. Coleridge experienced the very same sensations, in the same situation, throughout his literary life, and has often noticed it to me with surprise and vexation. The sensation was that of powerful disgust with any subject upon which he had occupied his thoughts, or had exerted his powers of composition for any length of time, and an equal disgust with the result of his exertions — powerful abhorrence I may call it, absolute loathing, of all that he had produced. In Mr. Coleridge's case, speaking at least of the time from 1807 to 1815, this effect was a most unhappy one; as it tended to check or even to suppress his attempts at writing for the press, in a degree which cannot but have been very injurious for all of us who wished to benefit by his original intellect, then in the very pomp of its vigour. This effect was, indeed, more extensive than with myself: with Coleridge, even talking upon a subject, and throwing out his thoughts upon it liberally and generally, was an insurmountable bar to writing upon it with effect. In the same proportion in which he had been felicitous as a talker, did he come to loathe and recoil from the subject ever afterwards; or, at least, so long as any impressions remained behind of his own display. And so far did this go — so uniformly, and so notoriously to those about him — that Miss Hutchinson, a young lady in those days whom Coleridge greatly admired and loved as a sister, submitted at times to the trouble of taking down what fell from his lips, in the hope that it might serve as materials to be worked up at some future period, when the disgust should have subsided, or perhaps in spite of that disgust, when he should see the topics and their illustrations all collected for him, without the painful effort of recovering them by calling up loathsome trains of thought. It was even suggested, and at one time (I believe) formally proposed, by some of Coleridge's friends, that, to save from perishing the overflowing opulence of golden thoughts continually welling up and flowing to waste in the course of his ordinary conversation, some short-hand writer, having the

suitable accomplishments of a learned education and habits of study, should be introduced as a domestic companion. But the scheme was dropped; perhaps from the feeling, in Coleridge himself, that he would not command his usual felicity, or his natural power of thought, under the consciousness of an echo sitting by his side, and repeating to the world all the half-developed thoughts or half-expressed suggestions which he might happen to throw out. In the meantime, for the want of some such attendant, certain it is, that many valuable papers perished.

In 1810, "The Friend" was in a course of publication by single sheets of sixteen pages. These, by the terms of the prospectus, should have appeared weekly. But if, at any time, it happened that Wordsworth, or anybody else interested in the theme, came into Coleridge's study whilst he was commencing his periodical lucubrations, and, naturally enough led him into an oral disquisition upon it, then perished all chance for that week's fulfilment of the contract. Miss Hutchinson, who was aware of this, did her best to throw hindrances in the way of this catastrophe, but too often ineffectually: and, accordingly, to this cause, as a principal one amongst others, may be ascribed the very irregular intervals between the several numbers of "The Friend" in its first edition; and to this, also, perhaps, the abrupt termination of the whole at the twenty-ninth number. In after years, Coleridge assured me, that he never could read anything he had written without a sense of overpowering disgust. Reverting to my own case, which was pretty nearly the same as his, there was, however, this difference — that, at times, when I had slept at more regular hours for several nights consecutively, and had armed myself by a sudden increase of the opium for a few days running, I recovered, at times, a remarkable glow of jovial spirits. In some such artificial respites, it was, from my usual state of distress, and purchased at a heavy price of subsequent suffering, that I wrote the greater part of the "Opium Confessions" in the autumn of 1821. The introductory part, (i. e. the narrative part,) written for the double purpose of creating an interest in what followed, and of making it intelligible, since, without this narration, the dreams (which were the real object of the whole work) would have had no meaning, but would have been mere incoherencies — this narrative part was written with singular rapidity. The rest might be said to have occupied an unusual length of time; since, though the mere penmanship might have been performed within moderate limits, (and in fact under some

pressure from the printer,) the dreams had been composed slowly, and by separate efforts of thought, at wide intervals of time, according to the accidental prevalence, at any particular time, of the separate elements of such dream in my own real dream-experience. These circumstances I mention to account for my having written anything in a happy or genial state of mind, when I was in a general state so opposite, by my own description, to everything like enjoyment. That description as a general one, states most truly the unhappy condition, and the somewhat extraordinary condition of feeling, to which opium had brought me. I, like Mr. Coleridge, could not endure what I had written for some time after I had written it. I also shrank from treating any subject which I had much considered; but more, I believe, as recoiling from the intricacy and the elaborateness which had been made known to me in the course of considering it, and on account of the difficulty or the toilsomeness, which might be fairly presumed from the mere fact that I had long considered it, or could have found it necessary to do so, than from any blind mechanical feeling inevitably associated (as in Coleridge it was) with a second survey of the same subject.

One other effect there was from the opium, and I believe it had some place in Coleridge's list of morbid affections caused by opium, and of disturbances extended even to the intellect — which was, that the judgment was for a time grievously impaired, sometimes even totally abolished, as applied to anything which I had recently written. Fresh from the labour of composition, I believe, indeed, that almost every man, unless he has had a very long and close experience in the practice of writing, finds himself a little dazzled and bewildered in computing the effect, as it will appear to neutral eyes, of what he has produced. This result, from the hurry and effort of composition, doubtless we all experience, or at some time have experienced. But the incapacitation which I speak of here, as due to opium, is of another kind and another degree. It is mere childish helplessness, or senile paralysis, of the judgment, which distresses the man in attempting to grasp the upshot and the total effect (the tout ensemble) of what he has himself so recently produced. There is the same imbecility in attempting to hold things steadily together, and to bring them under a comprehensive or unifying act of the judging faculty, as there is in the efforts of a drunken man to follow a chain of reasoning. Opium is said to have some specific effect of debilitation upon the memory;² that is, not merely the general one

which might be supposed to accompany its morbid effects upon the bodily system, but some other, more direct, subtle, and exclusive; and this, of whatever nature, may possibly extend to the faculty of judging.

Such, however, over and above the more known and more obvious ill effects upon the spirits and the health, were some of the stronger and more subtle effects of opium in disturbing the intellectual system, as well as the animal, the functions of the will also no less than those of the intellect, from which both Coleridge and myself were suffering at the period to which I now refer (1821-25)—evils which found their fullest exemplification in the very act upon which circumstances had now thrown me as the *sine qua non* of my extrication from difficulties—viz. the act of literary composition. This necessity, the fact of its being my one sole resource for the present, and the established experience which I now had of the peculiar embarrassments and counteracting forces which I should find in opium, but still more in the train of consequences left behind by past opium—strongly co-operated with the mere physical despondency arising out of the liver. And this state of partial unhappiness, amongst other outward indications, expressed itself by one mark, which some people are apt greatly to misapprehend, as if it were some result of a sentimental turn of feeling—I mean perpetual sighs. But medical men must very well know, that a certain state of the liver, mechanically, and without any co-operation of the will, expresses itself in sighs. I was much too firm-minded, and too reasonable, to murmur or complain. I certainly suffered deeply, as one who finds himself a banished man from all that he loves, and who had not the consolation of hope, but feared too profoundly that all my efforts—efforts poisoned so sadly by opium—might be unavailing for the end. But still I endured in silence. The mechanical sighs, however, revealed, or seemed to reveal, what was present in my thoughts. Lamb doubtless remarked them; he knew the general outline of my situation; and, after this, he set himself, with all the kindness of a brother, Miss Lamb with the kindness of a sister, to relieve my gloom by the closest attentions. They absolutely persecuted me with hospitalities; and, as it was by their fireside that I felt most cheered, and sometimes elevated into hope, it may be supposed that I did not neglect to avail myself of the golden hours thus benignantly interposed amongst my hours of solitude, despondency, and labour but partially effectual.

Thus then it arose, and at this period, that I had my first

experience of Lamb's nature and peculiar powers. During one part of the time, I, whose lodgings were in York Street, Covent Garden, became near neighbour to the Lambs — who (with a view to the two great theatres, I believe) emigrated for some months from the Temple to Russell Street. With their usual delicacy, the Lambs seemed to guess that, in my frame of mind, society of a mixed character might not be acceptable to me. Accordingly, they did not ask me to their parties, unless where they happened to be small ones; but, as often as they were free of engagements themselves, they would take no denial — come I must, to dine with them and stay as late as I would. The very first time on which these dinner invitations began, a scene occurred with Charles Lamb, which so nearly resembled the Coleridge and "Ancient Mariner" mystification of years long past, that perhaps, with all my knowledge of his character, I might have supposed him angry or offended in good earnest, had I not recurred to the lesson of that early introductory visit to the Temple. Some accident, or perhaps it was Lamb himself, had introduced the subject of Hazlitt. Aware of Lamb's regard for him, and of what I esteemed his exaggerated estimate of Hazlitt's powers, I fought shy of any opinion upon him. The fact is, somewhere about that time — but I am not sure whether this had yet happened — Hazlitt had published a little book which was universally laughed at, but which in one view of it, greatly raised him in my opinion, by showing him to be capable of stronger and more agitating passions than I believed to be within the range of his nature. He had published his "Liber Amoris, or the Modern Pygmalion." And the circumstances of the case were these: In a lodging-house, which was also, perhaps, a boarding-house, in the neighbourhood of Lincoln's Inn, Hazlitt had rooms. The young woman who waited on him, was a daughter of the master of the house. She is described by Hazlitt, whose eye had been long familiar with the beauty (real or ideal) of the painters, as a woman of bewitching features; though one thing, which he confesses in his book, or did confess in conversation, made much against it — viz. that she had a look of being somewhat jaded, as if she were unwell, or the freshness of the animal sensibilities gone by. This girl must evidently have been a mercenary person. Well, if she were not an intriguer in the worst sense — in the sense of a schemer, she certainly was. Hazlitt, however, for many weeks (months perhaps) paid her the most delicate attentions, attributing to her a refinement and purity of character to which he afterwards believed that she

had no sort of pretensions. All this time — and here was the part of Hazlitt's conduct which extorted some sympathy and honour from me — he went up and down London, raving about this girl. Nothing else would he talk of. "Have you heard of Miss ——?" And then, to the most indifferent stranger, he would hurry into a rapturous account of her beauty. For, this he was abundantly laughed at. And, as he could not fail to know this — (for the original vice of his character, was dark, sidelong suspicion, want of noble confidence in the nobilities of human nature, faith too infirm in what was good and great) — this being so, I do maintain that a passion, capable of stifling and transcending what was so prominent in his own nature, was, and must have been (however erroneously planted) a noble affection, and justifying that sympathy which I so cordially yielded him. I must reverence a man, be he what he may otherwise, who shows himself capable of profound love.

On this occasion, in consequence of something I said, very much like what I am now saying, Hazlitt sent me a copy of his "Liber Amoris;" which, by the way, bore upon the title-page an engraved copy of a female figure — by what painter I forget at this moment, but I think by Titian — which, as Hazlitt imagined, closely resembled the object of his present adoration. The issue for Hazlitt, the unhappy issue of the tale, was as follows: The girl was a heartless coquette; her father was an humble tradesman, (a tailor, I think); but her sister had married very much above her rank; and she, who had the same or greater pretensions personally, now stood on so far better ground than her sister, as she could plead, which originally her sister could not, some good connections. Partly, therefore, she acted in a spirit of manœuvring as regarded Hazlitt; he might do as a *pis aller*, but she hoped to do better; partly also she acted on a more natural impulse. It happened that, amongst the gentleman lodgers, was another more favoured by nature, as to person, than ever Hazlitt had been; and Hazlitt was now somewhat withered by life and its cares. This stranger was her "fancy-man." Hazlitt suspected something of this for a long time; suspected, doted, and was again persuaded to abandon his suspicions; and yet he could not relish her long conversations with this gentleman. What could they have to say, unless their hearts furnished a subject? Probably the girl would have confessed at once a preference, which, perhaps, she might have no good reason for denying, had it not been that Hazlitt's lavish liberality induced him to overwhelm her with valuable presents. These she had no mind

to renounce. And thus she went on, deceiving and beguiling, and betraying poor Hazlitt, now half-crazy with passion, until one fatal Sunday. On that day, (the time was evening, in the dusk), with no particular object, but unhappy because he knew that she was gone out, and with some thought that, in the wilderness of London, he might, by chance, stumble upon her, Hazlitt went out; and not a half mile had he gone, when, all at once, he fancied that he saw her. A second and nearer glance showed him that he was right. She it was, but hanging on the arm of the hated rival — of him whom she had a hundred times sworn that she never spoke to but upon the business of the house. Hazlitt saw, but was not seen. In the blindness of love, hatred, and despair, he followed them home; kept close behind them; was witness to the blandishments freely interchanged, and soon after he parted with her for ever. Even his works of criticism, this dissembling girl had accepted or asked for as presents, with what affectation and hypocrisy Hazlitt now fully understood. In his book, he, in a manner, “whistles her down the wind;” notwithstanding that, even at that time, “her jesses” were even yet “his heart-strings.” There is, in the last apostrophe to her — “Poor weed!” — something which, though bitter and contemptuous, is yet tender and gentle; and, even from the book, but much more from the affair itself, as then reported with all its necessary circumstances, something, which redeemed Hazlitt from the reproach (which till then he bore) of being open to no grand or profound enthusiasm — no overmastering passion. But now he showed indeed —

“The nympholepsy of some fond despair.”

Perhaps this furnished the occasion of our falling upon the subject of Hazlitt. What was said will better come in upon another occasion — (viz. that of Hazlitt.) Meantime that Lamb only counterfeited anger, appeared from this — that, after tea, he read me his own fine verses on “The Three Graves;” and, that I might not go off with the notion that he read only his own verses, afterwards he read, and read beautifully — for of all our poets Lamb only and Wordsworth read well — a most beautiful sonnet of Lord Thurlow, on “Lacken Water.”

In answer to what I considered Lamb’s extravagant estimate of Hazlitt, I had said, that the misanthropy which gives so unpleasant a tone to that writer’s works, was, of itself, sufficient to disgust a reader whose feelings do not happen to flow

in that channel; that it was, moreover, a crude misanthropy, not resting upon any consistent basis, representing no great principles, good or bad, but simply the peevishness of a disappointed man. I admitted that such a passion as a noble misanthropy was possible; but that there was an ignoble misanthropy; or, (taking an illustration, which I knew would tell with Lamb better than all arguments,) on the one hand, there was the lofty, nay sublime, misanthropy of Timon; on the other, the low villainous misanthropy of Apemantus. Now, the cynicism of Hazlitt, as also of another writer, who, in our times, affected misanthropy, if not exactly that of Apemantus, was too much akin to it; not built on the wild indignation of a generous nature, outraged in its best feelings, but in the envy of a discontented one. Lamb paused a little; but at length said, that it was for the intellectual Hazlitt, not the moral Hazlitt, that he professed so much admiration. Now, as all people must admit the splendid originality of much that Hazlitt has done, here there might have been a ready means, by favour of the latitude allowed to general expressions, for one, like me, who disliked disputing, to effect a compromise with my opponent. But, unfortunately, Lamb chose to insinuate (whether sincerely and deliberately I cannot say) that Hazlitt was another Coleridge; and that, allowing for his want of poetic power, he was non tam impar quam dispar. This I could not stand. I, whose studies had been chiefly in the field of philosophy, could judge of that, if I could judge of anything; and certainly I felt entitled to say that anything which Hazlitt might have attempted in philosophy—as his “Essay on the Principles of Human Action,” and his polemic “Essay against the Hartleian Theory”—supposing even that these were not derived entirely from Coleridge (as Coleridge used to assert)—could, at the best, be received only as evidences of ingenuity and a natural turn for philosophizing; but, for any systematic education or regular course of reading in philosophy, these little works are satisfactory proofs that Hazlitt had them not. The very language and terminology which belong to philosophy, and are indispensable to its free motion, do not seem to have been known to him. And, whatever gleams of wandering truth might flash at times upon his mind, he was at the mercy of every random impulse; had no principles upon any subject; was eminently one-sided; and viewed all things under the angle which chance circumstances presented, never from a central station. Something of this I said, not wishing or hoping to disturb Lamb’s opinion, but piqued a little by what seemed to me not so

much honour done to Hazlitt as wrong done to Coleridge. Lamb felt, or counterfeited a warmth, that for the moment looked like anger. "I know not," he said, "where you have been so lucky as to find finer thinkers than Hazlitt; for my part, I know of none such. You live, I think, or have lived, in Grasmere. Well, I was once there. I was at Keswick, and all over that wild country; yet none such could I find there. But, stay, there are the caves in your neighbourhood, as well as the lakes; these we did not visit. No, Mary," turning to his sister, "you know we didn't visit the caves. So, perhaps, these great men live there. Oh! yes, doubtless, they live in the caves of Westmoreland. But you must allow for us poor Londoners. Hazlitt serves for our purposes. And in this poor, little, inconsiderable place of London, he is one of our very prime thinkers. But certainly I ought to have made an exception in behalf of the philosophers in the caves." And thus he ran on, until it was difficult to know whether to understand him in jest or earnest. However, if he felt any vexation, it was gone in a moment; and he showed his perfect freedom from any relic of irritation, by reading to me one or two of his own beautiful compositions — particularly "The Three Graves." Lamb read remarkably well. There was rather a defect of vigour in his style of reading; and it was a style better suited to passages of tranquil or solemn movement, than to those of tumultuous passion. But his management of the pauses were judicious, his enunciation very distinct, his tones melodious and deep, and his cadences well executed. The book from which he read, was a folio manuscript, in which he had gathered together a number of gems, either his own, or picked up at random from any quarter, no matter how little in the sunshine of the world, that happened to strike his fancy. Amongst them was one which he delighted to read to his friends, as well on account of its real beauty, as because it came from one who had been unworthily treated and so far resembled himself. It was a sonnet of Lord Thurlow, a young poet of those days, who has, I believe, been long dead. I know not whether there is anything besides of equal value amongst this noble writer's works; but assuredly the man who could have written this one sonnet, was no fair subject for the laughter which saluted him on his public appearance as an author. It was a sonnet on seeing some birds in a peculiar attitude by the side of Lacken Water. And the sentiment expressed was thankfulness to nature for her bounty in scattering instruction everywhere, and food for meditation, far transcending in value, as well as in extent, all the

teaching of the schools. But the point of the whole, which peculiarly won Lamb's approbation, was the way in which the poet had contrived to praise the one fountain of knowledge without disparaging the other. Accordingly, Lamb used always to solicit the hearer's attention, by reading it twice over, to that passage —

“There need not schools, nor the Professor's chair,
Though these be good, to”

This sudden turning aside to disclaim any blame of the one power, because he was proclaiming the all-sufficiency of the other, delighted Lamb, as a peculiarly graceful way of expressing the catholic charity which becomes a poet. For it is a maxim to which Lamb often gave utterance, (see, for instance, his letters to Bernard Barton,) that the genial effect of praise or admiration is robbed of its music, and untuned, by founding it upon some blame or harsh disparagement of a kindred object. If blame be right and called for, then utter it boldly; but do not poison the gracious charities of intellectual love and reverence, when settling upon grand objects, nor sully the brightness of those objects, by forcing the mind into a remembrance of something that cannot be comprehended within the same genial feelings. No maxim could better display the delicacy and purity of Lamb's childlike spirit of love, to which it was a disturbance and a torture even to be reminded that there was anything existing that was legitimately a subject for a frown or a scowl.

About this time it was — the time, viz. from 1821 to 1825 — that Lamb first, to my knowledge, fell into the habit of sleeping for half an hour or so after dinner. These occasions exhibited his countenance in its happiest aspect; his slumbers were as tranquil as those of the healthiest infant; and the serene benignity of his features became, in those moments, as I have heard many persons remark, absolutely angelic. That was the situation for an artist to have chosen, in order to convey an adequate impression of his countenance. The portrait of him, prefixed to Serjeant Talfourd's book, is far from being a good likeness; it has the air of a Venetian senator, and far more resembles Mr. Hamilton Reynolds, the distinguished wit, dressed for an evening party, than Charles Lamb. The whole-length sketch is better; but the nose appears to me much exaggerated in its curve.

With respect to Lamb's personal habits, much has been said of his intemperance; and his biographer justly remarks, that a false impression prevails upon this subject. In eating, he was

peculiarly temperate; and, with respect to drinking, though his own admirable wit, (as in that delightful letter to Mr. Carey, where he describes himself, when confided to the care of some youthful protector, as "an old reprobate Telemachus consigned to the guidance of a wise young Mentor") — though, I say, his own admirable wit has held up too bright a torch to the illumination of his own infirmities, so that no efforts of pious friendship could now avail to disguise the truth, yet it must not be forgotten — first, That we are not to imagine Lamb's frailty in this respect habitual or deliberate — he made many powerful resistances to temptation; secondly, he often succeeded for long seasons in practicing entire abstinence; thirdly, when he did yield to the mingled temptation of wine, social pleasure, and the expansion of his own brotherly heart, that prompted him to entire sympathy with those around him, (and it cannot be denied that, for any one man to preserve an absolute sobriety amongst a jovial company, wears too much the churlish air of playing the spy upon the privileged extravagances of festive mirth) — whenever this did happen, Lamb, never, to my knowledge, passed the bounds of an agreeable elevation. He was joyous, radiant with wit and frolic, mounting with the sudden motion of a rocket into the highest heaven of outrageous fun and absurdity; then bursting into a fiery shower of puns, chasing syllables with the agility of a squirrel bounding amongst the trees, or a cat pursuing its own tail; but, in the midst of all this stormy gayety, he never said or did anything that could by possibility wound or annoy. The most noticeable feature in his intoxication, was the suddenness with which it ascended to its meridian. Half a dozen glasses of wine taken during dinner — for everybody was encouraged, by his sunshiny kindness, to ask him to take wine — these with perhaps one or two after dinner, sufficed to complete his inebriation to the crisis of sleep; after awaking from which, so far as I know, he seldom recommenced drinking. This sudden consummation of the effects was not, perhaps, owing to a weaker, (as Serjeant Talfourd supposes,) but rather to a more delicate and irritable system, than is generally found amongst men. The sensibility of his organization was so exquisite, that effects which travel by separate stages with most other men, in him fled along the nerves with the velocity of light. He had great merit in his frequent trials of abstinence; for the day lost its most golden zest, when he had not the genial evening on which to fasten his anticipations. True, his mornings were physically more comfortable upon this system; but then, unfor-

tunately, that mode of pleasure was all reaped and exhausted in the act of enjoyment, whilst the greater pleasure of anticipation, that (as he complained himself) was wanting unavoidably, because the morning unhappily comes at the wrong end of the day; so that you may indeed look back to it as something which you have lost, through the other hours of the day; but you can never look forward to it as something which is coming.

It is forever to be regretted that so many of Lamb's jests, repartees, and pointed sayings, should have perished irrecoverably; and from their fugitive brilliancy, which, (as Serjeant Talfourd remarks,) often dazzled too much to allow of the memory coolly retracing them some hours afterwards; it is also to be regretted that many have been improperly reported. One, for instance, which had been but half told to his biographer, was more circumstantially and more effectually related thus, in my hearing, at Professor Wilson's, by Dr. Bowring, soon after the occasion. It occurred at Mr. Coleridge's weekly party at Highgate. Somebody had happened to mention that letter of Dr. Pococke, upon the Arabic translation of "Grotius de Veritate Fidei Christ.," in which he exposes the want of authority for the trite legend of Mahomet's pigeon, and justly insists upon the necessity of expunging a fable so certain to disgust learned Mussulmans, before the books were circulated in the East. This occasioned a conversation generally, upon the Mahometan creed, theology, and morals; in the course of which some young man, introduced by Edward Irving, had thought fit to pronounce a splendid declamatory eulogium upon Mahomet and all his doctrines. This, as a pleasant extravagance, had amused all present. Some hours after, when the party came to separate, this philo-Mahometan missed his hat, upon which, whilst a general search for it was going on, Lamb, turning to the stranger, said—"Hat, sir!—your hat! Don't you think you came in a turban?" The fact that the hat was missing, which could not have been anticipated by Lamb, shows his readiness, and so far improves the Serjeant's version of the story.

Finally, without attempting, in this place, any elaborate analysis of Lamb's merits, (which would be no easy task,) one word or two may be said generally, about the position he is entitled to hold in our literature, and, comparatively, in European literature. His biographer thinks that Lamb had more points of resemblance to Professor Wilson, than to any other eminent person of the day. It would be presumptuous to dismiss too

hastily any opinion put forward by the author of "Ion;" otherwise, I confess, that, for my own part, knowing both parties most intimately, I cannot perceive much closer resemblance than what must always be found between two men of genius; whilst the differences seem to me radical. To notice only two points, Professor Wilson's mind is, in its movement and style of feeling, eminently diffusive — Lamb's discontinuous and abrupt. Professor Wilson's humour is broad, overwhelming, riotously opulent — Lamb's is minute, delicate, and scintillating. In one feature, though otherwise as different as possible, Lamb resembles Sir Walter Scott — viz. in the dramatic character of his mind and taste. Both of them recoiled from the high ideality of such a mind as Milton's; both loved the mixed standards of the world as it is — the dramatic standards in which good and evil are intermingled; in short, that class of composition in which a human character is predominant. Hence, also, in the great national movements, and the revolutionary struggles, which, in our times, have gone on in so many interesting parts of the world, neither Sir Walter Scott nor Lamb much sympathized, nor much affected to sympathize, with the aspirations after some exaltation for human nature by means of liberty, or the purification of legal codes or of religious creeds. They were content with things as they are; and, in the dramatic interest attached to these old realities, they found sufficient gratification for all their sensibilities. In one thing, upon consideration, there does strike me, some resemblance between Lamb and Professor Wilson — viz. in the absence of affectation, and the courageous sincerity which belong to both; and also, perhaps, as Serjeant Talfourd has remarked, in the comprehensiveness of their liberality towards all, however opposed to themselves, who have any intellectual distinctions to recommend them.

But, recurring to the question I have suggested of Lamb's general place in literature, I shall content myself with indicating my own views of that point, without, however, pausing to defend them. In the literature of every nation, we are naturally disposed to place in the highest rank those who have produced some great and colossal work — a "Paradise Lost," a "Hamlet," a "Novum Organum" — which presupposes an effort of intellect, a comprehensive grasp, and a sustaining power, for its original conception, corresponding in grandeur — to that effort, different in kind, which must preside in its execution. But, after this highest class, in which the power to conceive and the power to execute are upon the same

scale of grandeur, there comes a second, in which brilliant powers of execution, applied to conceptions of a very inferior range, are allowed to establish a classical rank. Every literature possesses, besides its great national gallery, a cabinet of minor pieces, not less perfect in their polish, possibly more so. In reality, the characteristic of this class is elaborate perfection — the point of inferiority is not in the finishing, but in the compass and power of the original creation, which (however exquisite in its class) moves within a smaller sphere. To this class belong, for example, "The Rape of the Lock," that finished jewel of English literature; "The Dunciad," (a still more exquisite gem;) "The Vicar of Wakefield," (in its earlier part;) in German, the "Luise" of Voss; in French — what? Omitting some others that might be named, above all others, the "Fables" of La Fontaine. He is the pet and darling, as it were, of the French literature. Now, I affirm that Charles Lamb occupies a corresponding station to his own literature. I am not speaking (it will be observed) of kinds, but of degrees in literary merit; and Lamb I hold to be, as with respect to English literature, that which La Fontaine is with respect to French. For, though there may be little resemblance otherwise, in this, they agree, that both were wayward and eccentric humourists; both confined their efforts to short flights; and both, according to the standards of their several countries, were occasionally, and, in a lower key, poets. The brutal "Tales" of La Fontaine do not merit to be considered in such an estimate; for they are simply vulgar and obscene jokes thrown into a metrical version, and are never treated, as indeed they rarely could be treated, poetically. The "Fables"^s are a work of more pretension; and throughout the works of La Fontaine there is an occasional felicity in the use of conversational phrases and conversational forms. But if any reader would wish to see the difference between an inspired writer and a merely naïf writer of unusual cleverness — if he would wish to see the magical effects that may be produced upon the simplest incidents by a truly poetic treatment — I would recommend to his notice the fable of the oak and the broom, as told by Wordsworth, with one on the same subject by La Fontaine. In the one fable, such a soul is introduced beneath the ribs of what else are lifeless symbols, that, instead of a somewhat comic effect, the reader is not surprised to find a pensive morality breathing from the whole, and a genuine pathos attained, though couched in symbolic images. But in La Fontaine we find, as usual, levity in the treatment, levity in the result, and

his highest attainment lying in the naïveté or picturesque raciness of his expressions.

Wordsworth, however, it will be said, is not Lamb. No; but Lamb, although upon a lower scale, has something of the same difference in point of feeling; and his impulses, like those of Wordsworth, are derived from the depths of Nature, not from the surfaces of manners. We need not, indeed, wonder at the profounder feeling, and the more intense, as well as consistent originality of Lamb, when we contrast his character, disposition, life, and general demeanour, as I have here endeavoured to sketch them, with what we know of La Fontaine, viewed under the same aspects. Not only was La Fontaine a vicious and heartless man, but it may be said of him, with perfect truth, that his whole life was a lie, and a piece of hollow masquerading. By some accident, he had gained the character of an absent man; and, for the sake of sustaining this distinction, with the poor result of making sport for his circle, he committed extravagances which argue equal defect of good sense and sincere feeling in him who was the actor, and in those who accredited them. A man, who could seriously affect not to recognize his own son, and to put questions about him as about a stranger, must have been thoroughly wanting in truth of character. And we may be assured, that no depth of feeling in any walk of literature or poetry ever grew upon the basis of radical affectation. The very substratum of Lamb's character, as I have said before, lay in the most intense hostility to affectation. This, however, touches the quality of their social merits; and at present I am merely concerned with the degree; having selected La Fontaine as that one amongst the French classics who best expresses by analogy the true position and relative rank which the voice of posterity will assign to Charles Lamb in the literature of his own country. His works — I again utter my conviction — will be received as amongst the most elaborately finished gems of literature; as cabinet specimens which express the utmost delicacy, purity, and tenderness of the national intellect, together with the rarest felicity of finish and expression, although it may be the province of other modes of literature to exhibit the highest models in the grandeur and more impassioned forms of intellectual power. Such is my own intimate conviction; and, accordingly, I reckon it amongst the rarest accidents of good fortune which have gilded my literary experience, that, although residing too often at a vast distance from the metropolis to benefit by my opportunities so much as I desired, yet, by cultivating those which fell naturally

in my way at various periods, but, most of all, at that period when I may consider my judgment to have been maturest, I reaped so much delight from that intercourse, and so far improved it into a fraternal familiarity, as to warrant me in assuming the honourable distinction of having been a friend of Charles Lamb.⁴

NOTES

¹ It is a favourite doctrine with some of the Radical Reformers (thanks be to God! not with all), to vilify and disparage the war with France, from 1793 to 1815, not (as might, perhaps, consistently be done, during some of its years), but throughout and unconditionally—in its objects, its results, its principles. Even contemplating the extreme case of a conquest by France, some of the Radicals maintain, that we should not have suffered much; that the French were a civilized people; that, doubtless, they (here, however, it was forgotten that this “they” was not the French people, but the French army) would not have abused their power, even suppose them to have gained possession of London. Candid reader! read Duppa’s account of the French reign in Rome; any account of Davoust’s in Hamburg; any account of Junot’s in Lisbon.

² The technical memory, or that which depends upon purely arbitrary links of connection, and, therefore, more upon a *nisus* or separate activity of the mind—that memory, for instance, which recalls names—is undoubtedly affected, and most powerfully, by opium. On the other hand, the logical memory, or that which recalls facts that are connected by fixed relations, and where A being given, B must go before or after—historical memory, for instance—is not much, if at all, affected by opium.

³ By the way, it has been made a matter of some wonder in the annals of literature, why La Fontaine was amongst the very few eminent writers of that age who did not bask in the court sunshine; and La Harpe, with many others, fancies that his “Tales” excluded him. But there is no wonder to those who are acquainted with his “Fables.” The ludicrous picture which he constantly presents of courts, and courtiers, and royalty—in treating many of those fables which relate to the lion, etc.—must have confounded and mortified the pompous, scenical Louis XIV more than the most audacious acts of rebellion; and could not have been compensated by the hollow formality of a few stilted dedicatory addresses.

⁴ Amongst the prominent characteristics of Lamb, I know not how it is that I have omitted to notice the peculiar emphasis and depth of his courtesy. This quality was in him a really chivalrous feeling, springing from his heart, and cherished with the sanctity of a duty. He says somewhere in speaking of himself, under the mask of a third person, whose character he is describing, that, in passing a servant girl even at a street-crossing, he used to take off his hat. Now, the spirit of Lamb’s gallantry would have prompted some such expression of homage, though the customs of the country would not allow it to be literally fulfilled, for the very reason that would prompt it—viz. in order to pay respect—since the girl would, in such a case, suppose a man laughing at her. But the instinct of his heart was—to think highly of female nature, and to pay a real homage (not the hollow demonstration of outward honour, which a

Frenchman calls his "homage," and which is really a mask for contempt) to the sacred idea of pure and virtuous womanhood. The one sole case I remember in which Lamb was betrayed into—not discourtesy—no, that could not be—but into a necessity of publicly professing a hostile feeling, was in the letter (now we may say celebrated letter) to Mr. Southey. To this, however, he was driven not by any hostile feeling towards Southey, but simply by a feeling too animated of sympathy with those who happened to be on questions of public interest hostile to Southey. Lamb, it must be remembered, was—that is, he called himself—a Dissenter. Was he such in reality? Not at all. So far from adopting the distinctions of his religious party, he was not even thoroughly aware of them. But with Lamb it happened, as with many another man, though careless of the distinctions which bound him to a party, still he was in profession faithful to his party, as a principle of honour. I know many men at this day, who, if left to choose a form of religion—left unfettered by old family connections—would much prefer connecting themselves with the Church of England. But they are restrained and kept loyal to their section of dissent, not by religious considerations, but by worldly honour; the appealing look of the clergyman, resting perhaps his influence one-half upon old household recollections—upon the father whom he counselled, the grandfather he prayed with. Such look, such recollections, who could resist—who ought to resist? The only plan is this: When the old minister dies—in the interregnum—whilst as yet the new minister is not—bolt, cut and run. Lamb's situation was difficult; Southey assures us that he knew himself to be wrong; he did not. Your penitent Lamb was for the ear of Southey—he never meant it for the world.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

I

IT was, I think, in the month of August, but certainly in the summer season, and certainly in the year 1807, that I first saw this illustrious man, the largest and most spacious intellect, the subtlest and the most comprehensive, in my judgment, that has yet existed amongst men. My knowledge of him as a man of most original genius began about the year 1799. A little before that time, Mr. Wordsworth had published the first edition (in a single volume) of the "Lyrical Ballads," at the end or the beginning of which was placed Mr. Coleridge's poem of the "Ancient Mariner," as the contribution of an anonymous friend. It would be directing the reader's attention too much to myself, if I were to linger upon this, the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind. Let me say in one word, that, at a period when neither the one nor the other writer was valued by the public — both having a long warfare to accomplish of contumely and ridicule before they could rise into their present estimation — I found in these poems "the ray of a new morning," and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds, teeming with power and beauty, as yet unsuspected amongst men. I may here mention that, precisely at the same time, Professor Wilson, about the same age as myself, received the same startling and profound impressions from the same volume. With feelings of reverential interest, so early and so deep, pointing towards two contemporaries, it may be supposed that I inquired eagerly after their names. But these inquiries were self-baffled, the same deep feelings which prompted my curiosity, causing me to recoil from all casual opportunities of pushing the inquiry, as too generally lying amongst those who gave no sign of participating in my feelings; and, extravagant as it may seem, I revolted with as much hatred from coupling my question with any occasion of insult to the persons whom it respected, as a primitive Christian from throwing frankincense upon the altars of Cæsar, or a lover from giving up the name of his beloved to the coarse license of a Bacchanalian party. It is laughable

to record for how long a period my curiosity in this particular was self-defeated. Two years passed before I ascertained the two names. Mr. Wordsworth published his in the second and enlarged edition of the work; and for Mr. Coleridge's I was "indebted" to a private source; but I discharged that debt ill, for I quarrelled with my informant for what I considered his profane way of dealing with a subject so hallowed in my own thoughts. After this I searched east and west, north and south, for all known works or fragments of the same authors. I had read, therefore, as respects Mr. Coleridge, the Allegory which he contributed to Mr. Southey's "Joan of Arc." I had read his fine Ode, entitled "France," his "Ode to the Duchess of Devonshire," and various other contributions, more or less interesting, to the two volumes of the "Anthology," published at Bristol, about 1799-1800, by Mr. Southey; and, finally, I had of course read the small volume of poems which passed under his name; these, however, as a juvenile and immature work, had in general greatly disappointed me.

Meantime, it had crowned the interest which to me invested his name—that about the year 1804 or 1805, I had been informed by a gentleman from the English lakes, who knew him as a neighbour, that he had for some time applied his whole mind to metaphysics and psychology—which happened to be my own absorbing pursuit. From 1803 to 1808, I was a student at Oxford; and on the first occasion, when I could conveniently have sought for a personal knowledge of one whom I contemplated with so much admiration, I was met by a disgusting assurance that he had quitted England, and was then residing at Malta in the quality of secretary (and occasionally as treasurer) to the Governor. I began to inquire about the best route to Malta; but, as any route at that time promised an inside place in a French prison, I reconciled myself to waiting; and at last, happening to visit a relative at the Bristol Hotwells, in the summer of 1807, I had the pleasure to hear that Mr. Coleridge was not only once more upon English ground, but within forty and odd miles of my own station. In that same hour I mounted and bent my way to the south; and before evening reaching a ferry on the river Bridgewater, at a village called, I think, Stogursey, (i. e. Stoke de Courcy, by way of distinction from other Stoke.) I crossed it, and a few miles further attained my object, viz. the little town of Nether Stowey, amongst the Quantock hills. Here I had been assured that I should find Mr. Coleridge, at the house of his old friend Mr. Poole. On presenting myself, however, to that gentle-

man, I found that Coleridge was absent at Lord Egmont's, an elder brother (by the father's side) of Mr. Percival the minister, assassinated five years after; and as it was doubtful whether he might not then be on the wing to another friend's in the town of Bridgewater, I consented willingly, until his motions should be ascertained, to stay a day or two with this Mr. Poole,—a man on his own account well deserving a separate notice; for, as Coleridge afterwards remarked to me, he was almost an ideal model for a useful member of Parliament. He was 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 upon 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 region of Somersetshire, that for many miles round he was the general arbiter of their disputes, the guide and counsellor of their daily lives; besides being appointed executor and guardian to his children by every third man who died in or about the town of Nether Stowey.

The first morning of my visit, Mr. Poole was so kind as to propose, knowing my admiration of Wordsworth, that we should ride over to Alfoxton,—a place of singular interest to myself, as having been occupied in his unmarried days by that poet, during the minority of Mr. St. Aubyn, its present youthful proprietor. At this delightful spot, the ancient residence of an ancient English family and surrounded by those ferny Quantock hills which are so beautifully sketched in the poem of "Ruth," Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister, had passed the whole of the interval between leaving the University (Cambridge), and the period of his final settlement amongst his native lakes of Westmoreland, except only one year spent in France, some months in North Germany, and a space, I know not how long, spent at Race Down in Dorsetshire.

Returning late from this interesting survey, we found ourselves without company at dinner; and, being thus seated tête-à-tête, Mr. Poole propounded the following question to me, which I mention, because it furnished me with the first hint of a singular infirmity besetting Coleridge's mind: "Pray, my young friend, did you ever form any opinion, or rather—did it ever happen to you to meet with any rational opinion or con-

jecture of others, upon that most irrational dogma of Pythagoras about beans? You know what I mean: that monstrous doctrine in which he asserts that a man might as well, for the wickedness of the thing, eat his own grandmother as meddle with beans."

"Yes," I replied: "the line is in the Golden Verses. I remember it well."

P.—"True: now our dear excellent friend Coleridge, than whom God never made a creature more divinely endowed, yet strange it is to say, sometimes steals from other people, just as you or I might do; I beg your pardon—just as a poor creature like myself might do, that sometimes have not wherewithal to make a figure from my own exchequer: and the other day, at a dinner-party, this question arising about Pythagoras and his beans, Coleridge gave us an interpretation, which, from his manner, I suspect to have been not original. Think, therefore, if you have anywhere read a plausible solution."

"I have: and it was in a German author. This German, understand, is a poor stick of a man, not to be named on the same day with Coleridge: so that, if it should appear that Coleridge has robbed him, be assured that he has done the scamp too much honour."

P.—"Well: what says the German?"

"Why, you know the use made in Greece of beans in voting and balloting? Well, the German says that Pythagoras speaks symbolically; meaning that electioneering, or, more generally, all interference with political intrigues, is fatal to a philosopher's pursuits and their appropriate serenity. Therefore, says he, follower of mine, abstain from public affairs as you would from parricide."

P.—"Well then, Coleridge has done the scamp too much honour: for, by Jove, that is the very explanation he gave us!"

Here was a trait of Coleridge's mind, to be first made known to me by his best friend, and first published to the world by me, the foremost of his admirers! But both of us had sufficient reasons: Mr. Poole knew that, stumbled on by accident, such a discovery would be likely to impress upon a man as yet unacquainted with Coleridge a most injurious jealousy with regard to all he might write; whereas, frankly avowed by one who knew him best, the fact was disarmed of its sting; since it thus became evident that where the case had been best known and most investigated, it had not operated to his serious disadvantage. On the same argument, to forestall, that is to say other discoverers who would make a more unfriendly use

of the discovery, and also, as matters of literary curiosity, I shall here point out a few of Coleridge's unacknowledged obligations, detected by myself in a very wide course of reading.

1. The hymn to Chamouni is an expansion of a short poem in stanzas, upon the same subject, by Frederica Brun, a female poet of Germany, previously known to the world under her maiden name of Münter. The mere framework of the poem is exactly the same,—an appeal to the most impressive features of the regal mountain, (Mount Blanc,) citing them to proclaim their author: the torrent, for instance, is required to say, by whom it had been arrested in its headlong ravings, and stiffened, as by the petrific mace of Death, into everlasting pillars of ice; and the answer to these impassioned apostrophes is made by the same choral burst of rapture. In mere logic, therefore, and even as to the choice of circumstances, Coleridge's poem is a translation. On the other hand, by a judicious amplification of some topics, and by its far deeper tone of lyrical enthusiasm, the dry bones of the German outline have been created by Coleridge into the fulness of life. It is not, therefore, a paraphrase, but a recast of the original. And how was this calculated, if frankly avowed, to do Coleridge any injury with the judicious?

2. A more singular case of Coleridge's infirmity is this:—In a very noble passage of "France" a fine expression or two occur from "Samson Agonistes." Now to take a phrase or an inspiring line from the great fathers of poetry, even though no marks of quotation should be added, carries with it no charge of plagiarism. Milton is presumed to be as familiar to the ear as nature to the eye; and to steal from him as impossible as to appropriate, or sequester to a private use, some "bright particular star." And there is a good reason for rejecting the typographical marks of quotation: they break the continuity of the passion, by reminding the reader of a printed book; on which account Milton himself, (to give an instance,) has not marked the sublime words, "tormented all the air," as borrowed; nor has Wordsworth, in applying to an unprincipled woman of commanding beauty the memorable expression, "a weed of glorious feature," thought it necessary to acknowledge it as originally belonging to Spenser. Some dozens of similar cases might be adduced from Milton. But Mr. Coleridge, in describing France as

"Her footsteps insupportably advancing,"

not satisfied with omitting the marks of acknowledgment,

thought fit positively to deny that he was indebted to Milton. Yet who could forget that semi-chorus in the "Samson," where the "bold Ascalonite" is described as having "fled from his lion ramp?" Or who, that was not in this point liable to some hallucination of judgment, would have ventured on a public challenge (for virtually it was that) to produce from the "Samson," words so impossible to be overlooked as those of "insupportably advancing the footsteps?" The result, as I remember, was, that one of the critical journals placed the two passages in juxtaposition, and left the reader to his own conclusions with regard to the poet's veracity. But in this instance, it was common sense rather than veracity which the facts impeach.

3. In the year 1810 I happened to be amusing myself, by reading, in their chronological order, the great classical circumnavigations of the earth; and, coming to Shelvocke, I met with a passage to this effect: That Hatley, his second captain, (i. e. lieutenant,) being a melancholy man, was possessed by a fancy that some long season of foul weather was due to an albatross which had steadily pursued the ship; upon which he shot the bird, but without mending their condition. There at once I saw the germ of the "Ancient Mariner;" and I put a question to Coleridge accordingly. Could it have been imagined that he would see cause utterly to disown so slight an obligation to Shelvocke? Wordsworth, a man of stern veracity, on hearing of this, professed his inability to understand Coleridge's meaning; the fact being notorious, as he told me, that Coleridge had derived, from the very passage I had cited, the original hint for the action of the poem; though it is very possible, from something which Coleridge said, on another occasion, that before meeting a fable in which to embody his ideas, he had meditated a poem on delirium, confounding its own dream scenery with external things, and connected with the imagery of high latitudes.

4. All these cases amount to nothing at all as cases of plagiarism, and for that reason expose the more conspicuously that obliquity of feeling which could seek to decline the very slight acknowledgments required. But now I come to a case of real and palpable plagiarism; yet that too of a nature to be quite unaccountable in a man of Coleridge's attainments. It is not very likely, that this particular case will soon be detected; but others will. Yet who knows? Eight hundred or a thousand years hence, some cursed reviewer may arise, who having read the "Biographia Literaria" of Coleridge, will afterwards read the Miscellaneous Philosophical Essays¹ of Schelling, the great

Bavarian professor—a man in some respects worthy to be Coleridge's assessor; and he will then make a singular discovery. In the "Biographia Literaria" occurs a dissertation upon the reciprocal relations of the "Esse" and the "Cogitare;" and an attempt is made, by inverting the postulates from which the argument starts, to show how each might arise as a product, by an intelligible genesis, from the other. It is a subject, which, since the time of Fichte, has much occupied the German metaphysicians; and many thousands of essays have been written on it, of which many hundreds have been read by many tens of persons. Coleridge's essay, in particular, is prefaced by a few words, in which, aware of his coincidence with Schelling, he declared his willingness to acknowledge himself indebted to so great a man, in any case where the truth would allow him to do so; but in this particular case, insisting on the impossibility that he could have borrowed arguments which he had first seen some years after he had thought out the whole hypothesis *proprio Marte*. After this, what was my astonishment, to find that the entire essay from the first word to the last is a verbatim translation from Schelling, with no attempt in a single instance to appropriate the paper, by developing the arguments or by diversifying the illustrations! Some other obligations to Schelling of a slighter kind, I have met with in the "Biographia Literaria;" but this was a barefaced plagiarism, which could in prudence have been risked only by relying too much upon the slight knowledge of German literature in this country, and especially of that section of the German literature. Had then Coleridge any need to borrow from Schelling? Did he borrow in *forma pauperis*? Not at all:—there lay the wonder. He spun daily and at all hours, for mere amusement of his own activities, and from the loom of his own magical brain, theories more gorgeous by far, and supported by a pomp and luxury of images, such as Schelling—no, nor any German that ever breathed, not John Paul—could have emulated in his dreams. With the riches of El Dorado lying about him, he would condescend to filch a handful of gold from any man whose purse he fancied; and in fact reproduced in a new form, applying itself to intellectual wealth, that maniacal propensity which is sometimes well known to attack enormous proprietors and millionaires for acts of petty larceny. The last Duke of Anc—— could not obtain from exercising his furtive mania upon articles so humble as silver spoons; and it was the daily care of a pious daughter, watching over the good name of her father, to have

his pockets searched by a confidential valet, and the claimants of the purloined articles traced out.

Many cases have crossed me in life of people, otherwise not wanting in principle, who had habits, or at least hankerings, of the same kind. And the phrenologists, I believe, are well acquainted with the case, its signs, its progress, and its history. Dismissing, however, this subject, which I have at all noticed, only that I might anticipate and (in old English) that I might prevent the uncandid interpreter of its meaning, I will assert finally, that, after having read for thirty years in the same track as Coleridge,—that track in which few of any age will ever follow us, such as German metaphysicians, Latin schoolmen, thaumaturgic Platonists, religious Mystics,—and having thus discovered a large variety of trivial thefts, I do, nevertheless, most heartily believe him to have been as entirely original in all his capital pretensions, as any one man that ever has existed; as Archimedes in ancient days, or as Shakspeare in modern. Did the reader ever see Milton's account of the rubbish contained in the Greek and Latin fathers? or did he ever read a statement of the monstrous chaos with which an African Obeah man stuffs his enchanted scarecrows? or, to take a more common illustration, did he ever amuse himself by searching the pockets of a child — three years old, suppose, when buried in slumber after a long summer's day of out-a-door's intense activity? I have done this; and, for the amusement of the child's mother, have analyzed the contents, and drawn up a formal register of the whole. Philosophy is puzzled, conjecture and hypothesis are confounded, in the attempt to explain the law of selection, which can have presided in the child's labours: stones remarkable only for weight, old rusty hinges, nails, crooked skewers, stolen when the cook had turned her back, rags, broken glass, tea-cups having the bottom knocked out, and loads of similar jewels, were the prevailing articles in this *procés verbal*. Yet, doubtless, much labour had been incurred, some sense of danger perhaps, had been faced, and the anxieties of a conscious robber endured, in order to amass this splendid treasure. Such in value were the robberies of Coleridge; such their usefulness to himself or anybody else; and such the circumstances of uneasiness under which he had committed them. I return to my narrative.

Two or three days had slipped away in waiting for Coleridge's re-appearance at Nether Stowey, when suddenly Lord Egmont called upon Mr. Poole, with a present for Coleridge; it was a canister of peculiarly fine snuff, which Coleridge now

took profusely. Lord Egmont, on this occasion, spoke of Coleridge in the terms of excessive admiration, and urged Mr. Poole to put him upon undertaking some great monumental work, that might furnish a sufficient arena for the display of his various and rare accomplishments; for his multiform erudition on the one hand, for his splendid power of theorizing and combining large and remote notices of facts on the other. And he suggested, judiciously enough, as one theme which offered a field at once large enough and indefinite enough to suit a mind that could not show its full compass of power, unless upon very plastic materials—a “History of Christianity,” in its progress and in its chief divarications into Church and Sect, with a continual reference to the relations subsisting between Christianity and the current philosophy; their occasional connections or approaches, and their constant mutual repulsions. “But, at any rate, let him do something,” said Lord Egmont; “for at present he talks very much like an angel, and he does nothing at all.” Lord Egmont, I understood from everybody to be a truly good and benevolent man; and, on this occasion, he spoke with an earnestness which agreed with my previous impression. Coleridge, he said, was now at the prime of his powers—uniting something of youthful vigour, with sufficient experience of life; with the benefit beside of vast meditation, and of reading unusually decursive. No man had ever been better qualified to revive the heroic period of literature in England, and to give a character of weight to the philosophic erudition of the country upon the Continent. “And what a pity,” he added, “if this man were, after all, to vanish like an apparition; and you, I, and a few others, who have witnessed his grand bravuras of display, were to have the usual fortune of ghost-seers, in meeting no credit for any statements that we might vouch on his behalf!”

To pursue my narrative. It now appeared that Lord Egmont’s carriage had, some days before, conveyed Coleridge to Bridgewater, with a purpose of staying one single day at that place, and then returning to Mr. Poole’s. From the sort of laugh with which Lord Egmont taxed his own simplicity, in having confided at all in the stability of any Coleridgian plan, I now gathered that procrastination in excess, was, or had become, a marked feature in Coleridge’s daily life. Nobody who knew him ever thought of depending on any appointment he might make; spite of his uniformly honourable intentions, nobody attached any weight to his assurances in re futura: those who asked him to dinner or any other party, as a matter of

course sent a carriage for him, and went personally or by proxy to fetch him; and, as to letters, unless the address were in some female hand that commanded his affectionate esteem, he tossed them all into one general dead-letter bureau, and rarely, I believe, opened them at all. Bourrienne mentions a mode of abridging the trouble attached to a very extensive correspondence, by which infinite labour was saved to himself and to Bonaparte, when commanding in Italy. Nine out of ten letters supposing them letters of business with official applications of a special kind, he contends, answer themselves: in other words, time alone must soon produce events which virtually contain the answer. On this principle the letters were opened periodically, after intervals, suppose of six weeks; and, at the end of that time, it was found that not many remained to require any further more particular answer. Coleridge's plan, however, was shorter; he opened none, I understood, and answered none. At least such was his habit at that time. But on that same day, all this, which I heard now for the first time, with much concern, was fully explained: for already he was under the full dominion of opium, as he himself revealed to me, and with a deep expression of horror at the hideous bondage, in a private walk of some length, which I took with him about sunset.

Lord Egmont's information, and the knowledge now gained of Coleridge's habits, making it very uncertain when I might see him in my present hospitable quarters, I immediately took my leave of Mr. Poole, and went over to Bridgewater. I had received directions for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting; and, in riding down a main street of Bridgewater, I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I shall describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight; (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height;) his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large and soft in their expression; and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess, which mixed with their light, that I recognized my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence.

The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him: he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simple perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position amongst daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked, that it might be called gracious. The hospitable family with whom he was domesticated, were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings; they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge, they all testified deep affection and esteem — sentiments in which the whole town of Bridgewater seemed to share; for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him; and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge, on this occasion, by the courteous attentions of young and old.

All the people of station and weight in the place, and apparently all the ladies, were abroad to enjoy the lovely summer evening; and not a party passed without some mark of smiling recognition; and the majority stopping to make personal inquiries about his health; and to express their anxiety that he should make a lengthened stay amongst them. Certain I am, from the lively esteem expressed towards Coleridge, at this time, by the people of Bridgewater, that a very large subscription might in that town have been raised to support him amongst them, in the character of a lecturer, or philosophical professor. Especially, I remarked, that the young men of the place manifested the most liberal interest in all that concerned him; and I can add my attestation to that of Mr. Coleridge himself, when describing an evening spent amongst the enlightened tradesmen of Birmingham, that nowhere is more unaffected good sense exhibited, and particularly nowhere more elasticity and freshness of mind, than in the conversation of the reading men in manufacturing towns. In Kendal, especially, in Bridgewater, and in Manchester, I have witnessed more interesting conversations, as much information, and more natural eloquence in conveying it than usually in literary cities, or in places professedly learned. One reason for this is, that in trading towns the time is more happily distributed; the day given to business, and active duties — the evening to relaxation; on which account, books, conversation, and literary leisure are more cordially enjoyed: the same satiation never can take

place, which too frequently deadens the genial enjoyment of those who have a surfeit of books, and a monotony of leisure. Another reason is, that more simplicity of manner may be expected, and a more natural picturesqueness of conversation, more open expression of character in places, where people have no previous name to support. Men, in trading towns, are not afraid to open their lips, for fear they should disappoint your expectations, nor do they strain for showy sentiments, that they may meet them. But elsewhere, many are the men who stand in awe of their own reputation: not a word which is unstudied, not a movement in the spirit of natural freedom, dare they give way to; because it might happen that on review something would be seen to retract or to qualify — something not properly planned and chiselled, to build into the general architecture of an artificial reputation. But to return: —

Coleridge led me to a drawing-room, rang the bell for refreshments, and omitted no point of a courteous reception. He told me that there would be a very large dinner party on that day, which, perhaps, might be disagreeable to a perfect stranger; but, if not, he could assure me of a most hospitable welcome from the family. I was too anxious to see him under all aspects, to think of declining this invitation. And these little points of business being settled — Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that had been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music — swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive. What I mean by saying that his transitions were “just,” is by way of contradistinction to that mode of conversation which courts variety by means of verbal connections. Coleridge, to many people, and often I have heard the complaint, seemed to wander; and he seemed then to wander the most, when in fact his resistance to the wandering instinct was greatest,— viz. when the compass, and huge circuit, by which his illustrations moved, travelled farthest into remote regions, before they began to revolve. Long before this coming-round commenced, most people had lost him, and naturally enough supposed that he had lost himself. They continued to admire the separate beauty of the thoughts, but did not see their relations to the dominant theme. Had the conversation been thrown upon paper, it might have been easy

to trace the continuity of the links: just as in Bishop Berkeley's "Siris,"² from a pedestal so low and abject, so culinary, as Tar Water, the method of preparing it, and its medicinal effects, the dissertation ascends, like Jacob's ladder, by just gradations, into the Heaven of Heavens, and the thrones of the Trinity. But Heaven is there connected with earth by the Homeric chain of gold; and being subject to steady examination, it is easy to trace the links. Whereas, in conversation, the loss of a single word may cause the whole cohesion to disappear from view. However, I can assert, upon my long and intimate knowledge of Coleridge's mind, that logic, the most severe, was as inalienable from his modes of thinking, as grammar from his language.

On the present occasion, the original theme, started by myself, was Hartley, and the Hartleian theory. I had carried, as a little present to Coleridge, a scarce Latin pamphlet, "De Ideis," written by Hartley, about 1746, that is, about three years earlier than the publication of his great work. He had also precluded to this great work, in a little English medical tract upon Joanna Stephens's medicine for the stone; for indeed Hartley was the person upon whose evidence the House of Commons had mainly relied in giving to that same Joanna a reward of £5000 for her idle medicines — an application of public money not without its use, in so far as it engaged men by selfish motives to cultivate the public service, and to attempt public problems of very difficult solution; but else, in that particular instance, perfectly idle, as the groans of three generations since Joanna's era have too feelingly established. It is known to most literary people that Coleridge was, in early life, so passionate an admirer of the Hartleian philosophy, that "Hartley" was the sole baptismal name which he gave to his eldest child; and in an early poem, entitled "Religious Musings," he has characterized Hartley as —

" Him,
Wisest of men, who saw the mimic trains
Pass in fine surges to the sentient brain."

But at present, (August, 1807,) all this was a forgotten thing. Coleridge was so profoundly ashamed of the shallow Unitarianism of Hartley, and so disgusted to think that he could at any time have countenanced that creed, that he would scarcely allow to Hartley the reverence which is undoubtedly his due: for I must contend that, waiving all question of the extent to which Hartley would have pushed it, (as though the law of

association accounted not only for our complex pleasures and pains, but also might be made to explain the act of ratiocination,) waiving also the physical substratum of nervous vibrations and miniature vibrations, to which he has chosen to marry his theory of association:— all this apart, I must contend that the “*Essay on Man, His Frame, his Duty, and his Expectations,*” stands forward as a specimen almost unique of elaborate theorizing, and a monument of absolute beauty, in the perfection of its dialectic ability. In this respect it has, to my mind, the spotless beauty, and the ideal proportions of some Grecian statue. However, I confess, that being myself, from my earliest years, a reverential believer in the doctrine of the Trinity, simply because I never attempted to bring all things within the mechanic understanding, and because, like Sir Thomas Browne, my mind almost demanded mysteries, in so mysterious a system of relations as those which connect us with another world, and also because the farther my understanding opened, the more I perceived of dim analogies to strengthen my creed; and because nature herself, mere physical nature, has mysteries no less profound; and because the simplest doctrine of motion rests upon an ultimate fact, which all the wisdom of the schools will never explain; and because that vulgar puzzle of Achilles and the Tortoise never was and never will be cleared up,³ and, finally, because I had begun to suspect (what afterwards Coleridge more fully convinced me of) that the unity demanded by the soi-disant Unitarian is a chimera and a total blunder,— being, in fact, not unity, but what the schoolmen call unicity; for, as they insist, without previous multitude (meaning by multitude simply plurality) there can be no proper unity; for, else, where is the union—where is the “*To unitum?*”

For these and for many other “*because,*” I could not reconcile, with my general reverence for Mr. Coleridge, the fact so often reported to me, that he was a Unitarian. A Unitarian, I often exclaimed, and a philosopher! Nay, it cannot be denied, the profoundest of philosophers! and one destined to sound the intellectual depths, and the depths below depths, beyond any other of the children of men. But, said some Bristol people to me, not only is he a Unitarian — he is also a Socinian. In that case, I replied, I cannot hold him a Christian. I am a liberal man, and have no bigotry or hostile feelings towards a Socinian; but I can never think that man a Christian, who has blotted out of his scheme the very powers by which only the great offices and functions of Christianity can be sustained; neither can I think that any man, though he may make him-

self a marvellously clever disputant, ever could tower upwards into a very great philosopher, unless he should begin or should end with Christianity. Kant is a dubious exception. Not that I mean to question his august pretensions, so far as they went, and in his proper line. Within his own circle none durst tread but he. But that circle was limited. He was called, by one who weighed him well, the alles-zermalmender, the world-shattering Kant. He could destroy — his intellect was essentially destructive. He was the Gog and he was the Magog of Hunnish desolation to the existing schemes of philosophy. He probed them; he showed the vanity of vanities which besieged their foundations,—the rottenness below, the hollowness above. But he had no instincts of creation or restoration within his Apollyon mind; for he had no love, no faith, no self-distrust, no humility, no childlike docility; all which qualities belonged essentially to Coleridge's mind, and waited only for manhood and for sorrow to bring them forward.

Who can read without indignation of Kant, that, at his own table, in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever! The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his state thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else, I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the Professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid Ghoulish creed, which privately he professed, in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great King to make him pause. The fact is, that as the stomach has been known, by means of its natural secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed) sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure; so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog — the ape — the worm. But "exoriare aliquis," — and some philosopher, I am persuaded, will yet arise; and "one sling of some victorious arm" will yet destroy the destroyer, in so far as he has applied himself to the destruction of Christian hope. For my faith is, that, though a great man may, by a rare possibility, be an infidel, an intellect of the highest order must build upon Christianity. A very clever architect may choose to show his power by building with suf-

ficient materials, but the supreme architect must require the very best; because the perfection of the forms cannot be shown but in the perfection of the matter.

On these accounts I took the liberty of doubting, as often as I heard the reports I have mentioned of Coleridge; and I now found that he disowned most solemnly (and I may say penitentially) whatever had been true in these reports. Coleridge told me that it had cost him a painful effort, but not a moment's hesitation, to abjure his Unitarianism, from the circumstance that he had amongst the Unitarians many friends, to some of whom he was greatly indebted for kind offices. In particular he mentioned Mr. Estlin of Bristol, I believe a dissenting clergyman, as one whom it grieved him to grieve. But he would not dissemble his altered views. I will add, at the risk of appearing to dwell too long on religious topics, that on this my first introduction to Coleridge, he reverted with strong compunction to a sentiment which he had expressed in earlier days, upon prayer. In one of his youthful poems, speaking of God, he had said,—

“Of whose all-seeing eye
Aught to demand were impotence of mind.”

This sentiment he now so utterly condemned, that, on the contrary, he told me, as his own peculiar opinion, that the act of praying was the very highest energy of which the human heart was capable; praying, that is, with the total concentration of the faculties; and the great mass of worldly men and of learned men, he pronounced absolutely incapable of prayer.

For about three hours he had continued to talk, and in the course of this performance he had delivered many most striking aphorisms, embalming more weight of truth, and separately more deserving to be themselves embalmed than any that are on record. In the midst of our conversation, if that can be called conversation which I so seldom sought to interrupt, and which did not often leave openings for contribution, the door opened, and a lady entered. She was in person full and rather below the common height: whilst her face showed, to my eye, some prettiness of rather a commonplace order. Coleridge turned, upon her entrance: his features, however, announced no particular complacency, and did not relax into a smile. In a frigid tone he said, whilst turning to me, “Mrs. Coleridge:” in some slight way he then presented me to her; I bowed; and the lady almost immediately retired. From this short, but ungenial scene, I gathered, what I afterward learned redundantly,

that Coleridge's marriage had not been a very happy one. But let not the reader misunderstand me. Never was there a baser insinuation, viler in the motive, or more ignoble in the manner, than that passage in some lampoon of Lord Byron's, where, by way of vengeance on Mr. Southey, (who was the sole delinquent,) he described both him and Coleridge as having married "two milliners from Bath." Everybody knows what is meant to be conveyed in that expression, though it would be hard indeed, if, even at Bath, there should be any class under such a fatal curse, condemned so irretrievably, and so hopelessly prejudged — that ignominy must, at any rate, attach, in virtue of a mere name or designation, to the mode by which they gained their daily bread, or possibly supported the declining years of a parent. However, in this case, the whole sting of the libel was a pure falsehood of Lord Byron's. Bath was not the native city, nor at any time the residence of the ladies in question, but Bristol. As to the other word, "milliners," that is not worth inquiring about. Whether they, or any one of their family, ever did exercise this profession, I do not know: they were at all events too young, when removed by marriage from Bristol, to have been much tainted by the worldly feelings which may beset such a mode of life. But what is more to the purpose, I heard at this time in Bristol, from Mr. Cottle the author, a man of high principle, from his accomplished sisters, from the ladies who had succeeded Mrs. Hannah More in her school, and who enjoyed her entire confidence, as well as from other most respectable residents at Bristol, who had passed their lives in that city, that the whole family of four or five sisters had maintained an irreproachable character, though naturally exposed by their personal attractions to some peril, and to the malevolence of envy. This declaration, which I could strengthen by other testimony equally disinterested, if it were at all necessary, I owe to truth; and I must also add, upon a knowledge more personal, that Mrs. Coleridge was, in all circumstances of her married life, a virtuous wife, and a conscientious mother; and as a mother, she showed at times a most meritorious energy: in particular, I remember that, wishing her daughter to acquire the Italian language, and having, in her retirement at Keswick, no means of obtaining a master, she set to work resolutely under Mr. Southey's guidance, to learn the language herself at a time of life when such attainments are not made with ease or pleasure: she became mistress of the language in a very respectable extent and then communicated her new accomplishment to her interesting daughter.

Meantime, I, for my part, owe Mrs. Coleridge no particular civility: and I see no reason why I should mystify the account of Coleridge's life or habits, by dissembling what is notorious to so many thousands of people. An insult once offered by Mrs. Coleridge to a female relative of my own, as much superior to Mrs. Coleridge in the spirit of courtesy and kindness, which ought to preside in the intercourse between females, as she was in the splendour of her beauty, would have given me a dispensation from all terms of consideration beyond the restraints of strict justice. My offense was—the having procrastinated in some trifling affair of returning a volume, or a manuscript; and during my absence at a distance of four or five hundred miles, Mrs. Coleridge thought fit to write a letter, filled with the most intemperate expressions of anger, addressed to one whom she did not know by sight, and who could in no way be answerable for my delinquencies. I go on, therefore, to say, that Coleridge afterwards made me, as doubtless some others, a confidant in this particular. What he had to complain of, was simply incompatibility of temper and disposition. Wanting all cordial admiration, or indeed comprehension of her husband's intellectual powers, Mrs. Coleridge wanted the original basis for affectionate patience and candour. Hearing from everybody that Coleridge was a man of most extraordinary endowments, and attaching little weight, perhaps, to the distinction between popular talents, and such as by their very nature are doomed to a slower progress in the public esteem, she naturally looked to see at least an ordinary measure of worldly consequence attend upon their exercise.

Now had poor Coleridge been as persevering and punctual as the great mass of professional men, and had he given no reason to throw the onus of the different result upon his own different habits,—in that case this result might, possibly and eventually, have been set down to the peculiar constitution of his powers, and their essential non-popularity in the English market. But this trial having never fairly been made, it was natural to impute his non-success exclusively to his own irregular application and his carelessness in forming judicious connections. In circumstances such as these, however, no matter how caused, or how palliated, was laid a sure ground of discontent and fretfulness in any woman's mind, not unusually indulgent, or unusually magnanimous. Coleridge, besides, assured me that his marriage was not his own deliberate act; but was in a manner forced upon his sense of honour, by the scrupulous Southey, who insisted that he had gone too far in his attentions to Miss

Fricker, for any honourable retreat. On the other hand, a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that if ever in his life he had seen a man under deep fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss Fricker, was that man. Be that as it might, circumstances occurred soon after the marriage, which placed all the parties in a trying situation for their candour and good temper. I had a full outline of the situation from two of those who were chiefly interested, and a partial one from a third: nor can it be denied that all the parties offended in point of prudence. A young lady became a neighbour, and a daily companion of Coleridge's walks, whom I will not describe more particularly, than by saying that intellectually she was very much superior to Mrs. Coleridge. That superiority alone, when made conspicuous by its effect in winning Coleridge's regard and society, could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife. However, it was moderated to her feelings by two considerations,—first, That the young lady was much too kind-hearted to have designed any annoyance in this triumph, or to express any exultation; second, That no shadow of suspicion settled upon the moral conduct or motives of either party: the young lady was always attended by her brother: she had no personal charms; and it was manifest that mere intellectual sympathies, in reference to literature and natural scenery, had associated them in their daily walks.

Still it is a bitter trial to a young married woman to sustain any sort of competition with a female of her own age, for any part of her husband's regard, or any share of his company. Mrs. Coleridge, not having the same relish for long walks or rural scenery, and their residence being, at this time, in a very sequestered village, was condemned to a daily renewal of this trial. Accidents of another kind embittered it still further: often it would happen that the walking party returned drenched with rain; in which case the young lady, with a laughing gayety, and evidently unconscious of any liberty that she was taking, or any wound that she was inflicting, would run up to Mrs. Coleridge's wardrobe, array herself, without leave asked, in Mrs. Coleridge's dresses, and make herself merry with her own unceremoniousness and Mrs. Coleridge's gravity. In all this, she took no liberty that she would not most readily have granted in return; she confided too unthinkingly in what she regarded as the natural privileges of friendship; and as little thought that she had been receiving or exacting a favour, as, under an exchange of their relative positions, she would have

claimed to have conferred one. But Mrs. Coleridge viewed her freedoms with a far different eye: she felt herself no longer the entire mistress of her own house; she held a divided empire; and it barbed the arrow to her womanly feelings, that Coleridge treated any sallies of resentment which might sometimes escape her, as narrow-mindedness: whilst, on the other hand, her own female servant, and others in the same rank of life, began to drop expressions, which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or sneered at her as a very tame one.

The reader will easily apprehend the situation, and the unfortunate results which it boded to the harmony of a young married couple, without further illustration. Whether Coleridge would not, under any circumstances, have become indifferent to a wife not eminently capable of enlightened sympathy with his own ruling pursuits, I shall not undertake to guess. But doubtless this consummation must have been hastened by a situation which exposed Mrs. Coleridge to an invidious comparison with a more intellectual person; as, on the other hand, it was most unfortunate for Coleridge himself, to be continually compared with one so ideally correct and regular in his business habits as Mr. Southey. Thus was their domestic peace prematurely soured: embarrassments of a pecuniary nature would be likely to demand continual sacrifices; no depth of affection existing, these would create disgust or dissension; and at length, each would believe that their union had originated in circumstances overruling their own deliberate choice.

The gloom, however, and the weight of dejection which sat upon Coleridge's countenance and deportment at this time, could not be accounted for by a disappointment, (if such it were,) to which time must, long ago, have reconciled him. Mrs. Coleridge, if not turning to him the more amiable aspects of her character, was, at any rate, a respectable partner. And the season of youth was now passed. They had been married about ten years; had had four children, of whom three survived; and the interests of a father were now replacing those of a husband. Yet never had I beheld so profound an expression of cheerless despondency. And the restless activity of Coleridge's mind in chasing abstract truths, and burying himself in the dark places of human speculation, seemed to me, in a great measure, an attempt to escape out of his own personal wretchedness. At dinner, when a very numerous party had assembled, he knew that he was expected to talk, and exerted himself to meet the expectation. But he was evidently struggling with

gloomy thoughts that prompted him to silence, and perhaps to solitude: he talked with effort; and passively resigned himself to the repeated misrepresentations of several amongst his hearers. It must be to this period of Coleridge's life that Wordsworth refers in those exquisite "Lines written in my pocket-copy of the Castle of Indolence." The passage which I mean comes after a description of Coleridge's countenance, and begins in some such terms as these:

"A piteous sight it was to see this man,
When he came back to us, a wither'd flow'r."

Withered he was indeed, and to all appearance blighted. At night he entered into a spontaneous explanation of this unhappy overclouding of his life, on occasion of my saying accidentally that a tooth-ache had obliged me to take a few drops of laudanum. At what time or on what motive he had commenced the use of opium, he did not say; but the peculiar emphasis of horror with which he warned me against forming a habit of the same kind, impressed upon my mind a feeling that he never hoped to liberate himself from the bondage. About ten o'clock at night I took leave of him; and feeling that I could not easily go to sleep after the excitement of the day, and fresh from the sad spectacle of powers so majestic already besieged by decay, I determined to return to Bristol through the coolness of the night. The roads, though, in fact, a section of the great highway between seaports so turbulent as Bristol and Plymouth, were as quiet as garden-walks. Once only I passed through the expiring fires of a village fair or wake: that interruption excepted, through the whole stretch of forty miles from Bridgewater to the Hot-wells, I saw no living creature, but a surly dog, who followed me for a mile along a park wall, and a man who was moving about in the half-way town of Cross. The turnpike gates were all opened by a mechanical contrivance from a bed-room window; I seemed to myself in solitary possession of the whole sleeping country:—the summer night was divinely calm; no sound, except once or twice the cry of a child as I was passing the windows of cottages, ever broke upon the utter silence; and all things conspired to throw back my thoughts upon the extraordinary person whom I had quitted.

The fine saying of Addison is familiar to most readers,—that Babylon in ruins is not so affecting a spectacle, or so solemn, as a human mind overthrown by lunacy. How much more awful, then, and more magnificent a wreck, when a mind so

regal as that of Coleridge is overthrown or threatened with overthrow, not by a visitation of Providence, but by the treachery of his own will, and the conspiracy as it were of himself against himself! Was it possible that this ruin had been caused or hurried forward by the dismal degradations of pecuniary difficulties? That was worth inquiring. I will here mention briefly that I did inquire two days after; and in consequence of what I heard, I contrived that a particular service should be tendered to Mr. Coleridge, a week after, through the hands of Mr. Cottle of Bristol, which might have the effect of liberating his mind from anxiety for a year or two, and thus rendering his great powers disposable to their natural uses. That service was accepted by Coleridge. To save him any feelings of distress, all names were concealed; but in a letter written by him, about fifteen years after this time, I found that he had become aware of all the circumstances, perhaps through some indiscretion of Mr. Cottle's. A more important question I never ascertained — viz. whether this service had the effect of seriously lightening his mind. For some succeeding years he did certainly appear to me released from that load of despondency which oppressed him on my first introduction. Grave, indeed, he continued to be, and at times absorbed in gloom; nor did I ever see him in a state of perfectly natural cheerfulness. But as he strove in vain, for many years, to wean himself from his captivity to opium, a healthy state of spirits could not be much expected. Perhaps, indeed, where the liver and other organs had, for so large a period in life, been subject to a continual morbid stimulation, it may be impossible for the system ever to recover a natural action. Torpor, I suppose, must result from continued artificial excitement; and, perhaps, upon a scale of corresponding duration. Life, in such a case, may not offer a field of sufficient extent for unthreading the fatal links that have been wound about the machinery of health, and have crippled its natural play. Meantime,—to resume the thread of my wandering narrative,—on this serene summer night of 1807, as I moved slowly along, with my eyes continually settling upon the Northern constellations, which, like all the fixed stars, by their immeasurable and almost spiritual remoteness from human affairs, naturally throw the thoughts upon the perishableness of our earthly troubles, in contrast with their own utter peace and solemnity,—I reverted, at intervals, to all I had ever heard of Coleridge, and strove to weave it into some continuous sketch

of his life. I hardly remember how much I then knew; I know but little now — that little I will here jot down upon paper.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the son of a learned clergyman, the vicar of Ottery St. Mary, in the southern quarter of Devonshire. It is painful to mention that he was almost an object of persecution to his mother; why, I could never learn. His father was described to me, by Coleridge himself, as a sort of Parson Adams, being distinguished by his erudition, his inexperience of the world, and his guileless simplicity. I once purchased in London, and, I suppose, still possess, two elementary books on the Latin language by this reverend gentleman; one of them, as I found, making somewhat higher pretensions than a common school grammar. In particular, an attempt is made to reform the theory of the cases; and it gives a pleasant specimen of the rustic scholar's naiveté, that he seriously proposes to banish such vexatious terms as the accusative; and, by way of simplifying the matter to tender minds, that we should call it, in all time to come, the "quale-quare-quidditive" case, upon what incomprehensible principle I never could fathom. He used regularly to delight his village flock, on Sundays, with Hebrew quotations in his sermons, which he always introduced as the "immediate language of the Holy Ghost." This proved unfortunate to his successor; he also was a learned man, and his parishioners admitted it, but generally with a sigh for past times, and a sorrowful complaint that he was still far below Parson Coleridge — for that he never gave them any "immediate language of the Holy Ghost." I presume, that, like the reverend gentleman so pleasantly sketched in "St. Ronan's Well," Mr. Coleridge, who resembled that person in his Oriental learning and his simplicity, must also have resembled him in short-sightedness, of which his son used to relate a ludicrous instance. Dining in a large party, one day, the modest divine was suddenly shocked by perceiving some part, as he conceived, of his own snowy shirt emerging from a part of his habiliments, which we shall suppose to have been his waistcoat. It was not that; but for decorum we shall so call it. The stray portion of his supposed tunic was admonished of its errors by a forcible thrust back into its proper home; but still another limb persisted to emerge, or seemed to persist, and still another, until the learned gentleman absolutely perspired with the labour of re-establishing order. And, after all, he saw with anguish, that some arrears of the snowy indecorum still remained to reduce into obedience. To this remnant of rebellion he was proceeding to

apply himself—strangely confounded, however, at the obstinacy of the insurrection — when the mistress of the house, rising to lead away the ladies from the table, and all parties naturally rising with her, it became suddenly apparent to every eye, that the worthy Orientalist had been most laboriously stowing away, into the capacious receptacles of his own habiliments, the snowy folds of a lady's gown, belonging to his next neighbour; and so voluminously, that a very small portion of it, indeed, remained for the lady's own use; the natural consequence of which was, of course, that the lady appeared almost inextricably yoked to the learned theologian, and could not in any way effect her release, until after certain operations upon the Vicar's dress, and a continued refunding and rolling out of snowy mazes upon snowy mazes, in quantities which, at length, proved too much for the gravity of the company. Inextinguishable laughter arose from all parties, except the erring and unhappy doctor, who, in dire perplexity, continued still refunding with all his might, until he had paid up the last arrears of his long debt, and thus put an end to a case of distress more memorable to himself and his parishioners, than any "quale-quare-quidditive" case that probably had ever perplexed his learning.

In his childish days, and when he had become an orphan, Samuel Taylor Coleridge was removed to the heart of London, and placed on the great foundation of Christ's Hospital. He there found himself associated, as a school-fellow, with several boys destined to distinction in after life, and especially with one who, if not endowed with powers equally large and comprehensive, had, however, genius not less original or exquisite than his own — the inimitable Charles Lamb. But, in learning, Coleridge outstripped all competitors, and rose to be the Captain of the school. It is indeed a most memorable fact to be recorded of a boy, that, before completing his fifteenth year, he had translated the Greek Hymns of Synesius into English anacreontic verse. This was not a school task, but a labour of love and choice; to appreciate which, it is necessary to recall the dark philosophy which constitutes the theme of Synesius. Before leaving school, Coleridge had an opportunity of reading the sonnets of Bowles, which so powerfully impressed his poetic sensibility, that he made forty transcripts of them with his own pen, by way of presents to youthful friends. From Christ's Hospital, by the privilege of his station at school, he was transferred to Jesus College, Cambridge. It was here, no doubt, that his acquaintance began with the philosophic

system of Hartley, for that eminent person had been a Jesus man. Friend also, the mathematician, of heretical memory, belonged to that College, and was probably contemporary with Coleridge. What accident, or imprudence, carried him away from Cambridge before he had completed the usual period of study, or (I believe) taken his degree, I never heard. He had certainly won some distinction as a scholar, having obtained the prize for a Greek ode in Sapphic metre, of which the sentiments (as he observes himself) were better than the Greek. Porson was accustomed, meanly enough, to ridicule the Greek lexis of this ode, which was to break a fly upon the wheel. The ode was clever enough for a boy; but to such skill in Greek as could have enabled him to compose with critical accuracy, Coleridge never made pretensions. He had, however, a far more philosophic insight into much of the structure of that language than Porson had, or could have comprehended.

The incidents of Coleridge's life about this period, and some account of a heavy disappointment in love, which probably it was that carried him away from Cambridge, are to be found embodied (with what modifications I know not) in the novel of "Edmund Oliver," written by the late Charles Lloyd. It is well known that, in a frenzy of unhappy feeling at the rejection he met with from the lady of his choice, Coleridge enlisted as a private in a dragoon regiment. He fell off his horse on several occasions, but, perhaps, not more than raw recruits are apt to do when first put under the riding-master. But Coleridge was naturally ill framed for a good horseman. He is also represented in "Edmund Oliver," as having found peculiar difficulty or annoyance in grooming his horse. But the most romantic incident in that scene of his life was in the circumstances of his discharge. It is said (but I vouch for no part of the story) that Coleridge, as a private, mounted guard at the door of a room in which his officers happened to give a ball. Two of them had a dispute upon some Greek word or passage when close to Coleridge's station. He interposed his authentic decision of the case. The officers started as though one of their own horses had sung "Rule Britannia;" questioned him; heard his story; pitied his misfortunes; and, finally, subscribed to purchase his discharge. Not very long after this, Coleridge became acquainted with the two Wedgwoods, both of whom, admiring his fine powers, subscribed to send him into North Germany, where, at the university of Göttingen, he completed his education according to his own scheme. The most celebrated professor whose lectures he attended, was the far-famed

Blumenbach, of whom he continued to speak through life with almost filial reverence. Returning to England, he attended Mr. Thomas Wedgwood, as a friend, throughout the afflicting and anomalous illness which brought him to the grave. It was supposed by medical men that the cause of Mr. Wedgwood's continued misery was a stricture of some part in the intestines (the colon, it was believed). The external symptoms were torpor and defective irritability, together with everlasting restlessness. By way of some relief to this latter symptom, Mr. Wedgwood purchased a travelling carriage, and wandered up and down England, taking Coleridge as his companion. And, as a desperate attempt to rouse and irritate the decaying sensibility of his system, I have been assured by a surviving friend, that Mr. Wedgwood at one time opened a butcher's shop, conceiving that the affronts and disputes to which such a situation would expose him, might act beneficially upon his increasing torpor. This strange expedient⁴ served only to express the anguish which had now mastered his nature: it was soon abandoned; and this accomplished but miserable man soon sank under his sufferings. What made the case more memorable was the combination of worldly prosperity which had settled upon this gentleman. He was rich, young, generally beloved, distinguished for his scientific attainments, publicly honoured for patriotic services, and had before him, when he first fell ill, every prospect of a splendid and most useful career.

By the death of Mr. Wedgwood, Coleridge succeeded to a regular annuity of £75, which that gentleman had bequeathed to him. The other Mr. Wedgwood granted him an equal allowance. Now came his marriage, his connection with politics and political journals, his residence in various parts of Somersetshire, and his consequent introduction to Mr. Wordsworth. In his politics, Mr. Coleridge was most sincere and most enthusiastic. No man hailed with profounder sympathy the French Revolution; and though he saw cause to withdraw his regard from many of the democratic zealots in this country, and even from the revolutionary interest as it was subsequently conducted, he continued to worship the original revolutionary cause in a pure Miltonic spirit; and he continued also to abominate the policy of Mr. Pitt in a degree which I myself find it difficult to understand. The very spirited little poem of "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," who are supposed to meet in conference, to describe their horrid triumphs, and then to ask in a whisper who it was that unchained them, to which each in turn replies,

“Letters four do form his name!”

expresses his horror of Mr. Pitt personally in a most extravagant shape, but merely for the purpose of poetic effect; for he had no real unkindness in his heart towards any human being; and I have often heard him disclaim the hatred which is here expressed for Mr. Pitt, as he did also very elaborately and earnestly in print. Somewhere about this time, Coleridge attempted, under Sheridan's countenance, to bring a tragedy upon the stage of Drury Lane; but his prospect of success, as I once heard or read, was suddenly marred by Mr. Sheridan's inability to sacrifice what he thought a good jest. One scene presented a cave with streams of water weeping down the sides; and the first words were, in a sort of mimicry of the sound, “Drip, drip, drip!” Upon which Sheridan repeated aloud, “Drip, drip, drip!—why, God bless me, there's nothing here but dripping;” and so arose a chorus of laughter amongst the actors fatal to the probationary play.

NOTES

¹ I forget the exact title, not having seen the book since 1823, and then only for a day; but I believe it was “Schelling's *Kleine Philosophische Werke*.”

² “Seiris” ought to have been the title, i. e., *Σειρίς* a chain; from this defect in the orthography, I did not in my boyish days perceive, nor could obtain any light upon its meaning.

³ So cleared up, I mean, as to make it other than a mystery. Else, in a sense, which, leaving a great mystery behind, clears it of contradiction, it was solved satisfactorily to my mind by Mr. Coleridge—I believe in print; but at any rate in conversation. I had remarked to him that the “sophism,” as it is usually called, but the difficulty as it should be called, of Achilles and the Tortoise, which had puzzled all the sages of Greece, was, in fact, merely another form of the perplexity which besets decimal fractions—that, for example, if you throw $\frac{2}{3}$ into a decimal form, it will never terminate, but be .666666, etc., ad infinitum. “Yes,” Coleridge replied: “The apparent absurdity in the Grecian problem arises thus—because it assumes the infinite divisibility of space, but drops out of view the corresponding infinity of time.” There was a flash of lightning which illuminated a darkness that had existed for twenty-three centuries!

⁴ Which, however, his brother denied as a pure fable. On reading this account, he wrote to me, and in very courteous terms assured me that I had been misinformed. I now retain the story, simply as a version, partially erroneous, no doubt, of perhaps some true anecdote that may have escaped the surviving Mr. Wedgwood's knowledge; my reason for thinking thus being, that the same anecdote essentially, but varied in the circumstances, has reached me at different periods from parties having no connection whatsoever.

II

ABOUT the latter end of the century, Coleridge visited North Germany again, in company with Mr. and Miss Wordsworth. Their tour was chiefly confined to the Hartz forest and its neighbourhood. But the incident most worthy of remembrance in their excursion, was a visit made to Klopstock; whom they found either at Hamburg or, perhaps, at the Danish town (as then it was) of Altona; for Klopstock was a pensioner of the Danish king. An anonymous writer, who attacked Coleridge most truculently in an early number of "Blackwood," and with an acharnement that must astonish those who knew its object, has made the mistake of supposing Coleridge to have been the chief speaker, who did not speak at all. The case was this: Klopstock could not speak English, though everybody remembers the pretty broken English of his second wife. Neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth, on the other hand, spoke German with any fluency. French, therefore, was the only medium of free communication; that being pretty equally familiar to Wordsworth and to Klopstock. But Coleridge found so much difficulty even in reading French, that, wherever (as in the case of Leibnitz's "Theodicée") there was a choice between an original written in French and a translation, though it might be a very faulty one, in German, he always preferred the latter. Hence, it happened that Wordsworth, on behalf of the English party, was the sole supporter of the dialogue. The anonymous critic says another thing, which certainly has an air of truth, viz. that Klopstock plays a very secondary role in the interview (or words to that effect). But how was that to be avoided in reporting the case, supposing the fact to have been such? Now the plain truth is, that Wordsworth, upon his own ground, is an incomparable talker; whereas, Klubstick (as Coleridge used to call him) was always a feeble and careless one. Besides, he was now old and decaying. Nor at any time, nor in any accomplishment, could Klopstock have shone, unless in the noble art of skating. Wordsworth did the very opposite of that with which he was taxed; for, happening to look down at Klopstock's swollen legs, and recollecting his age, he felt touched by a sort of filial

pity for his helplessness. And upon another principle, which, in my judgment, Wordsworth is disposed to carry too far, viz. the forbearance and the ceremonious caution which he habitually concedes to an established reputation, even where he believes it to have been built on a hollow foundation,—he came to the conclusion, that it would not seem becoming in a young, and as yet obscure author, to report faithfully the real superiority he too easily maintained in such a colloquy.

But neither had Klopstock the pretensions as a poet, which the "Blackwood" writer seems to take for granted. Germany, the truth is, wanted a great Epic poet. Not having produced one in that early condition of her literary soil when such a growth is natural and favoured by circumstances, the next thing was to manufacture a substitute. The force of Coleridge's well known repartee—when, in reply to a foreigner asserting that Klopstock was the German Milton, he said, "True, sir; a very German Milton,"—cannot be fully appreciated but by one who is familiar with the German poetry, and the small proportion in which it is a natural and spontaneous product. It has been often noticed, as the misfortune of the Roman literature, that it grew up too much under the oppression of Grecian models, and of Grecian models depraved by Alexandrian art; a fact, so far as it was a fact, which crippled the genial and characteristic spirit of the national mind. But this evil, after all, did not take effect except in a partial sense. Rome had cast much of her literature in her own moulds before these exotic models had begun to domineer. Not so with Germany. Her literature, since its revival in the last century (and the revival upon the impulse of what cattle!—Bodmer on the one hand, and Gottsched on the other!) has hardly moved a step in the freedom of natural grace. England for nineteen, and France for the twentieth of all her capital works, has given the too servile law: and with regard to Klopstock, if ever there was a good exemplification of the spurious and the counterfeit in literature, seek it in the "Messiah." He is verily and indeed the Birmingham Milton. This Klopstockian dialogue, by the way, was first printed (hardly published) in the original, or Lake edition of "The Friend." In the recast of that work it was omitted: nor has it been printed anywhere else that I am aware of.

About the close of the first revolutionary war it must have been, or in the brief interval of peace, that Coleridge resorted to the English Lakes as a place of residence. Wordsworth had a natural connection with that region by birth, breeding, and

family alliances. Wordsworth attracted Coleridge to the Lakes; and Coleridge, through his affinity to Southey, eventually attracted him, Southey, as is known to all who take an interest in the Lake colony, married a sister of Mrs. Coleridge's: and as a singular eccentricity in the circumstances of that marriage, I may mention, that, on his wedding day, (at the very portico of the church, I have been told,) Southey left his bride, to embark for Lisbon. His uncle, Dr. Herbert, was chaplain to the English factory in that city; and it was to benefit by the facilities in that way opened to him for seeing Portugal that Southey now went abroad. He extended his tour to Spain; and the result of his notices was communicated to the world in a volume of travels. By such accidents of personal or family connection as I have mentioned, was the Lake colony gathered; and the critics of the day, unaware of the real facts, supposed them to have assembled under common views in literature — particularly with regard to the true functions of poetry, and the true theory of poetic diction. Under this original blunder, laughable it is to mention, that they went on to find in their writings all the agreements and common characteristics which their blunder had presumed: and they incorporated the whole community under the name of the Lake School. Yet Wordsworth and Southey never had one principle in common. Indeed, Southey troubled himself little about abstract principles in anything; and so far from agreeing with Wordsworth to the extent of setting up a separate school in poetry, he told me himself (August, 1812), that he highly disapproved both of Mr. Wordsworth's theories and of his practice. It is very true, that one man may sympathize with another, or even follow his leading, unconscious that he does so; or he may go so far as, in the very act of virtual imitation, to deem himself in opposition; but this sort of blind agreement could hardly be supposed of two men as discerning and as self-examining as Wordsworth and Southey. And, in fact, a philosophic investigation of the difficult questions connected with this whole slang about schools, Lake schools, etc., would show that Southey has not, nor ever had, any peculiarities in common with Wordsworth, beyond that of exchanging the old prescriptive diction of poetry, introduced between the periods of Milton and Cowper, for the simpler and profounder forms of daily life in some instances, and of the Bible in others. The bold and uniform practice of Wordsworth was here adopted timidly by Southey. In this respect, however, Cowper had already begun the reform; and his influence, concurring with

the now larger influence of Wordsworth, has operated so extensively, as to make their own original differences at this day less perceptible.

By the way, the word colony, reminds me that I have omitted to mention, in its proper place, some scheme for migrating to America, which had been entertained by Coleridge and Southey about the year 1794-95, under the learned name of Pantisocracy. So far as I ever heard, it differed little, except in its Grecian name, from any other scheme for mitigating the privations of a wilderness by settling in a cluster of families bound together by congenial tastes and uniform principles, rather than in self-depending, insulated households. Steadily pursued, it might, after all, have been a fortunate plan for Coleridge. "Soliciting my food from daily toil," a line in which Coleridge alludes to the scheme, implies a condition that would have upheld Coleridge's health and happiness, somewhat better than the habits of luxurious city life as now constituted in Europe. To return to the Lakes, and to the Lake colony of poets: So little were Southey and Wordsworth connected by any personal intercourse in those days, and so little disposed to be connected, that, whilst the latter had a cottage in Grasmere, Southey pitched his tent at Greta Hall, on a little eminence rising immediately from the romantic river Greta and the town of Keswick. Grasmere is in Westmoreland; Keswick in Cumberland; and they are thirteen good miles apart. Coleridge and his family were domiciliated in Greta Hall, sharing that house, a tolerably large one, on some principle of amicable division, with Mr. Southey. But Coleridge personally was more often to be found at Grasmere — which presented the threefold attractions of loveliness so complete, as to eclipse even the scenery of Derwentwater; a pastoral state of society, free from the deformities of a little town like Keswick; and, finally, the society of Wordsworth. Not before 1815, or 1816, could it be said that Southey and Wordsworth were even upon friendly terms: so entirely is it untrue that they combined to frame a school of poetry. Up to that time, they viewed each other with mutual respect, but also with mutual dislike; almost, I might say, with mutual disgust. Wordsworth disliked in Southey the want of depth, as regards the power of philosophic abstraction, of comprehensive views, and of severe principles of thought. Southey disliked in Wordsworth the air of dogmatism, and the unaffable haughtiness of his manner. Other more trivial reasons combined with these.

At this time, when Coleridge first settled at the Lakes, or

not long after, a romantic and somewhat tragical affair drew the eyes of all England, and, for many years, continued to draw the steps of tourists, to one of the most secluded Cumberland valleys, so little visited previously, that it might be described almost as an undiscovered chamber of that romantic district. Coleridge was brought into a closer connection with this affair than merely by the general relation of neighbourhood; for an article of his in a morning paper, I believe, unintentionally furnished the original clew for unmasking the base impostor who figured as the foremost actor in this tale. Other generations have arisen since that time, who must naturally be unacquainted with the circumstances; and, on their account, I shall here recall them. One day in the Lake season, there drove up to the Royal Oak, the principal inn at Keswick, a handsome and well-appointed travelling carriage, containing one gentleman of somewhat dashing exterior. The stranger was a picturesque-hunter, but not of that order who fly round the ordinary tour with the velocity of lovers posting to Gretna, or of criminals running from the police; his purpose was to domiciliate himself in this beautiful scenery, and to see it at his leisure. From Keswick, as his head-quarters, he made excursions in every direction amongst the neighbouring valleys; meeting generally a good deal of respect and attention, partly on account of his handsome equipage, and still more from his visiting cards, which designated him as The "Hon. Augustus Hope." Under this name, he gave himself out for a brother of Lord Hopetoun's, whose great income was well known, and, perhaps, exaggerated amongst the dalesmen of northern England. Some persons had discernment enough to doubt of this; for the man's breeding and deportment, though showy, had a tang of vulgarity about it; and Coleridge assured me, that he was grossly ungrammatical in his ordinary conversation. However, one fact, soon dispersed by the people of a little rustic post-office, laid asleep all demurs; he not only received letters addressed to him under this assumed name — that might be through collusion with accomplices — but he himself continually franked letters by that name. Now, that being a capital offence, being not only a forgery, but, (as a forgery on the Post-office,) sure to be prosecuted, nobody presumed to question his pretensions any longer; and, henceforward, he went to all places with the consideration attached to an Earl's brother. All doors flew open at his approach; boats, boatmen, nets, and the most unlimited sporting privileges, were placed at the disposal of the "Honourable" gentleman: and the hospi-

*NAB COTTAGE, ON RYDAL WATER,
The cottage De Quincey loaned to Coleridge.*

Photogravure from an old print.



tality of the whole country taxed itself to offer a suitable reception to the patrician Scotsman. It could be no blame to a shepherd girl, bred in the sternest solitude which England has to show, that she should fall into a snare which hardly any of her betters had escaped. Nine miles from Keswick, by the nearest bridle-road, but fourteen or fifteen by any route which the honourable gentleman's travelling carriage could have traversed, lies the Lake of Buttermere. Its margin, which is overhung by some of the loftiest and steepest of the Cumbrian mountains, exhibits on either side few traces of human neighbourhood; the level area, where the hills recede enough to allow of any, is of a wild pastoral character, or almost savage; the waters of the lake are deep and sullen; and the barrier mountains, by excluding the sun for much of his daily course, strengthen the gloomy impressions. At the foot of this lake (that is, at the end where its waters issue) lie a few unornamented fields, through which rolls a little brook-like river connecting it with the larger Lake of Crummock; and at the edge of this miniature domain, upon the roadside, stands a cluster of cottages, so small and few that, in the richer tracts of the islands, they would scarcely be complimented with the name of hamlet. One of these, and I believe the principal, belonged to an independent proprietör, called, in the local dialect, a "Statesman;"¹ and more, perhaps, for the sake of gathering any little local news, than with much view to pecuniary profit at that era, this cottage offered the accommodations of an inn to the traveller and his horse. Rare, however, must have been the mounted traveller in those days, unless visiting Buttermere for itself and as a terminus ad quem; for the road led to no further habitation of man, with the exception of some four or five pastoral cabins, equally humble, in Gatesgarth Dale.

Hither, however, in an evil hour for the peace of this little brotherhood of shepherds, came the cruel spoiler from Keswick. His errand was, to witness or to share in the char-fishing; for in Derwentwater (the Lake of Keswick) no char is found, which breeds only in the deeper waters, such as Windermere, Crummock, Buttermere, etc. But whatever had been his first object, that was speedily forgotten in one more deeply interesting. The daughter of the house, a fine young woman of eighteen, acted as waiter.² In a situation so solitary, the stranger had unlimited facilities for enjoying her company, and recommending himself to her favour. Doubts about his pretensions never arose in so simple a place as this; they were overruled before they could well have arisen, by the opinion now

general in Keswick that he really was what he pretended to be: and thus, with little demur except in the shape of a few natural words of parting anger from a defeated or rejected rustic admirer, the young woman gave her hand in marriage to the showy and unprincipled stranger. I know not whether the marriage was, or could have been celebrated in the little mountain chapel of Buttermere. If it were, I persuade myself that the most hardened villain must have felt a momentary pang on violating the altar of such a chapel, so touchingly does it express, by its miniature dimensions, the almost helpless humility of that little pastoral community to whose spiritual wants it has from generation to generation administered. It is not only the very smallest chapel by many degrees in all England, but is so mere a toy in outward appearance, that, were it not for its antiquity, its wild mountain exposure, and its consecrated connection with the final hopes and fears of the adjacent pastoral hamlet—but for these considerations, the first movement of a stranger's feelings would be towards loud laughter; for the little chapel looks not so much a mimic chapel in a drop scene from the Opera House, as a miniature copy from such a scene; and evidently could not receive within its walls more than a half dozen of households. From this sanctuary it was—from beneath the maternal shadow, if not from the altar³ of this lonely chapel—that the heartless villain carried off the flower of the mountains. Between this place and Keswick they continued to move backwards and forwards, until at length, with the startling of a thunderclap to the affrighted mountaineers, the bubble burst: officers of justice appeared: the stranger was easily intercepted from flight; and, upon a capital charge, was borne away to Carlisle. At the ensuing assizes he was tried for forgery, on the prosecution of the Post-office; found guilty, left for execution, and executed accordingly. On the day of his condemnation, Wordsworth and Coleridge passed through Carlisle, and endeavoured to obtain an interview with him. Wordsworth succeeded; but, for some unknown reason, the prisoner steadily refused to see Coleridge; a caprice which could not be penetrated. It is true that he had, during his whole residence at Keswick, avoided Coleridge with a solicitude which had revived the original suspicions against him in some quarters, after they had generally subsided. But for this, his motive had then been sufficient: he was of a Devonshire family, and naturally feared the eye, or the inquisitive examination, of one who bore a name immemorially associated with the southern part of that county.

Coleridge, however, had been transplanted so immaturely from his native region, that few people in England knew less of its family connections. That, perhaps, was unknown to this malefactor; but at any rate he knew that all motive was now at an end for disguise of any sort; so that his reserve, in this particular, was unintelligible. However, if not him, Coleridge saw and examined his very interesting papers. These were chiefly letters from women whom he had injured, pretty much in the same way and by the same impostures as he had so recently practised in Cumberland; and, as Coleridge assured me, were in part the most agonizing appeals that he had ever read to human justice and pity. The man's real name was, I think, Hatfield. And amongst the papers were two separate correspondences, of some length, from two young women, apparently of superior condition in life, (one the daughter of an English clergyman,) whom this villain had deluded by marriage, and, after some cohabitation, abandoned — one of them with a family of young children. Great was the emotion of Coleridge when he recurred to his remembrance of these letters, and bitter — almost vindictive — was the indignation with which he spoke of Hatfield. One set of letters appeared to have been written under too certain a knowledge of his villainy to whom they were addressed; though still relying on some possible remains of humanity, or perhaps, (the poor writer might think,) on some lingering relics of affection for herself. The other set was even more distressing; they were written under the first conflicts of suspicions, alternately repelling with warmth the gloomy doubts which were fast arising, and then yielding to their afflicting evidence: raving in one page under the misery of alarm, in another courting the delusions of hope, and luring back the perfidious deserter — here resigning herself to despair, and there again labouring to show that all might yet be well. Coleridge said often, in looking back upon that frightful exposure of human guilt and misery — and I also echoed his feeling — that the man who, when pursued by these heart-rending apostrophes, and with this litany of anguish sounding in his ears, from despairing women, and from famishing children, could yet find it possible to enjoy the calm pleasures of a Lake tourist, and deliberately to hunt for the picturesque, must have been a fiend of that order which fortunately does not often emerge amongst men. It is painful to remember that, in those days, amongst the multitudes who ended their career in the same ignominious way, and the majority for offences connected with the forgery of Bank notes,

there must have been a considerable number who perished from the very opposite cause — viz. because they felt, too passionately and profoundly for prudence, the claims of those who looked up to them for support. One common scaffold confounds the most flinty hearts and the tenderest. However, in this instance, it was in some measure the heartless part of Hatfield's conduct, which drew upon him his ruin: for the Cumberland Jury, as I have been told, declared their unwillingness to hang him for having forged a frank: and both they, and those who refused to aid his escape, when first apprehended, were reconciled to this harshness entirely by what they heard of his conduct to their injured young fellow-countrywoman.

She, meantime, under the name of "The Beauty of Buttermere," became an object of interest to all England: dramas and melodramas were produced in the London suburban theatres upon her story; and for many a year afterwards, shoals of tourists crowded to the secluded lake, and the little homely cabaret, which had been the scene of her brief romance. It was fortunate for a person in her distressing situation, that her home was not in a town; the few, and simple neighbours, who had witnessed her imaginary elevation, having little knowledge of worldly feelings, never for an instant connected with her disappointment any sense of the ludicrous, or spoke of it as a calamity to which her vanity might have co-operated. They treated it as unmixed injury, reflecting shame upon nobody but the wicked perpetrator. Hence, without much trial to her womanly sensibilities, she found herself able to resume her situation in the little inn; and this she continued to hold for many years. In that place, and that capacity, I saw her repeatedly, and shall here say a word upon her personal appearance, because the Lake poets all admired her greatly. Her figure was, in my eyes, good; but I doubt whether most of my readers would have thought it such. She was none of your evanescent, wasp-waisted beauties; on the contrary, she was rather large every way; tallish, and proportionably broad. Her face was fair, and her features feminine; and unquestionably she was what all the world have agreed to call "good-looking." But, except in her arms, which had something of a statuesque beauty, and in her carriage which expressed a womanly grace, together with some slight dignity and self-possession, I confess that I looked in vain for any positive qualities of any sort or degree. Beautiful, in any emphatic sense, she was not. Everything about her face and bust was negative; simply without offence. Even this, however, was

more than could be said at all times: for the expression of her countenance was often disagreeable. This arose out of her situation; connected as it was with defective sensibility, and a misdirected pride.

Nothing operates so differently upon different minds, and different styles of beauty, as the inquisitive gaze of strangers, whether in the spirit of respectful admiration or of insolence. Some I have seen, upon whose angelic beauty this sort of confusion settled advantageously, and like a softening veil; others, in whom it meets with proud resentment, are sometimes disfigured by it. In Mary of Buttermere, it roused mere anger and disdain; which, meeting with the sense of her humble and dependent situation, gave birth to a most unhappy aspect of countenance. Men, who had no touch of a gentleman's nature in their composition, sometimes insulted her by looks and by words: and she too readily attributed the same spirit of impertinent curiosity to every man whose eyes happened to settle steadily upon her face. Yet, once at least, I must have seen her under the most favourable circumstances: for on my first visit to Buttermere, I had the pleasure of Mr. Southey's company, who was incapable of wounding anybody's feelings, and to Mary, in particular, was well known by kind attentions, and I believe by some services. Then at least I saw her to advantage, and perhaps, for a figure of her build, at the best age; for it was about nine or ten years after her misfortune, when she might be twenty-seven or twenty-eight years old. We were alone, a solitary pair of tourists: nothing arose to confuse or distress her. She waited upon us at dinner, and talked to us freely. "This is a respectable young woman," I said to myself; but nothing of that enthusiasm could I feel, which beauty, such as I have beheld at the lakes, would have been apt to raise under a similar misfortune. One lady, not very scrupulous in her embellishments of facts, used to tell an anecdote of her, which I hope was exaggerated. Some friend of hers, (as she affirmed,) in company with a large party, visited Buttermere, within a day or two after that upon which Hatfield suffered; and she protested that Mary threw upon the table, with an emphatic gesture, the Carlisle paper, containing an elaborate account of his execution.

It is an instance of Coleridge's carelessness — that he, who had as little ill-nature in his temper as any person whom I have ever known, managed, in reporting this story at the time of its occurrence, to get himself hooked into a personal quarrel, which hung over his head unsettled for nine or ten years. A

Liverpool merchant, who was then meditating a house in the vale of Grasmere, and perhaps might have incurred Coleridge's anger, by thus disturbing, with inappropriate intrusions, this loveliest of all English landscapes, had connected himself a good deal with Hatfield during his Keswick masquerade: and was said even to have carried his regard to that villain so far as to have christened one of his own children by the names of "Augustus Hope." With these and other circumstances, expressing the extent of the infatuation amongst the swindler's dupes, Coleridge made the public merry. Naturally the Liverpool merchant was not amongst those who admired the facetiousness of Coleridge on this occasion, but swore vengeance whenever they should meet. They never did meet, until ten years had gone by, and then, oddly enough, it was in the Liverpool man's own house—that very nuisance of a house which had, I suppose, first armed Coleridge's wrath against him. This house, by time and accident, in no very wonderful way, had passed into the hands of Wordsworth as tenant, Coleridge, as was still less wonderful, had become the visitor of Wordsworth on returning from Malta; and the Liverpool merchant, as was also natural, either seeking his rent, or for what other purpose I know not, calling upon Wordsworth, met Coleridge in the hall. Now came the hour for settling old accounts. I was present, and can report the case. Both looked grave, and coloured a little. But Coleridge, requesting his enemy's company in the garden, entered upon a long metaphysical dissertation, which was rather puzzling to answer. It seemed to be an expansion, by Thomas Aquinas, of that parody upon a well known passage in Shenstone, where the writer says—

"He kicked me down stairs with such a sweet grace,
That I thought he was handing me up."

And in the upshot it clearly made it appear that, purely on principles of good neighbourhood, and universal philanthropy, could Coleridge have meditated or executed the insult offered in the "Morning Post." The Liverpool merchant rubbed his forehead, and seemed a little perplexed; but at length, considering, perhaps, how very like Duns Scotus, or Albertus Magnus, Coleridge had shown himself in this luminous explanation, he began to reflect, that had any one of those distinguished men offered a similar affront, it would have been impossible to resent it; for who could think of caning the seraphic doctor? or would it tell to any man's advantage in history that he had kicked Thomas Aquinas? On these principles, therefore, with-

out saying one word, he held out his hand, and a lasting reconciliation followed.

Not very long, I believe after this affair of Hatfield, Coleridge went to Malta. His inducement to such a step must have been merely a desire to see the most interesting regions of the Mediterranean, under the shelter and advantageous introduction of an official station. It was, however, an unfortunate chapter of his life: for being necessarily thrown a good deal upon his own resources in the narrow society of a garrison, he there confirmed and cherished, if he did not there form, his habit of taking opium in large quantities. I am the last person in the world to press conclusions harshly or uncandidly against Coleridge; but I believe it to be notorious that he first began the use of opium, not as a relief from any bodily pains or nervous irritations — for his constitution was strong and excellent — but as a source of luxurious sensations. It is a great misfortune, at least it is a great peril, to have tasted the enchanted cup of youthful rapture incident to the poetic temperament. That standard of high-wrought sensibility once made known experimentally, it is rare to see a submission afterwards to the sobrieties of daily life. Coleridge, to speak in the words of Cervantes, wanted better bread than was made of wheat; and when youthful blood no longer sustained the riot of his animal spirits, he endeavoured to excite them by artificial stimulants.

At Malta he became acquainted with Commodore Decatur and other Americans of distinction; and this brought him afterwards into connection with Allston the American artist. Of Sir Alexander Ball, one of Lord Nelson's captains in the battle of the Nile, and now Governor of Malta, he spoke and wrote uniformly in a lavish style of panegyric, for which plainer men found it difficult to see the slightest ground. It was indeed, Coleridge's amiable infirmity to project his own mind, and his own very peculiar ideas, nay, even his own expressions and illustrative metaphors, upon other men, and to contemplate these reflex images from himself, as so many characters having an absolute ground in some separate object. Ball and Bell* were two of these pet subjects; he had a "craze" about each of them; and to each he ascribed thoughts and words, to which, had they been put upon the rack, they never would have confessed.

From Malta, on his return homewards, he went to Rome and Naples. One of the Cardinals, he tells us, warned him, by the Pope's wish, of some plot, set on foot by Bonaparte, for

seizing him as an anti-Gallican writer. This statement was ridiculed, by the anonymous assailant in "Blackwood," as the very consummation of moon-struck vanity; and it is there compared to John Dennis's frenzy in retreating from the sea-coast, under the belief that Louis XIV had commissioned emissaries to land on the English shore and make a dash at his person. But, after all, the thing is not so entirely improbable. For it is certain that some orator of the Opposition (Charles Fox, as Coleridge asserts,) had pointed out all the principal writers in the "Morning Post," to Napoleon's vengeance, by describing the war as a war "of that journal's creation." And, as to the insinuation that Napoleon was above throwing his regards upon a simple writer of political essays, that is not only abundantly confuted by many scores of analogous cases, but also is specially put down by a case circumstantially recorded in the second tour to Paris, by the celebrated John Scott. It there appears, that, on no other ground whatever, than that of his connection with the London newspaper press, some friend of Mr. Scott's had been courted most assiduously by Napoleon during the hundred days. Assuredly, Coleridge deserved, beyond all other men that ever were connected with the daily press, to be regarded with distinction. Worlds of fine thinking lie buried in that vast abyss, never to be disinterred or restored to human admiration. Like the sea, it has swallowed treasures without end, that no diving-bell will bring up again. But nowhere throughout its shoreless magazines of wealth, does there lie such a bed of pearls confounded with the rubbish and "purgamenta" of ages, as in the political papers of Coleridge. No more appreciable monument could be raised to the memory of Coleridge, than a republication of his essays in the "Morning Post," but still more of those afterwards published in the "Courier." And here, by the way, it may be mentioned, that the sagacity of Coleridge, as applied to the signs of the times, is illustrated by the fact, that, distinctly and solemnly he foretold the restoration of the Bourbons, at a period when most people viewed such an event as the most romantic of visions, and not less chimerical than that "march upon Paris," of Lord Hawkesbury's, which for so many years supplied a theme of laughter to the Whigs.

Why Coleridge left Malta, is as difficult to explain upon any principles of ordinary business, as why he had ever gone thither. The post of secretary, if it imposed any official attendance of a regular kind, or any official correspondence, must have been but poorly filled by him; and Sir Alexander Ball,

if I have collected his character justly, was not likely to accept the gorgeous philosophy of Coleridge, as an indemnification for irregular performance of his public duties. Perhaps, therefore, though on the best terms of mutual regard, they might be mutually pleased to part. At any rate they did part; and poor Coleridge was seasick the whole of his homeward (as he had been through the whole of his outward) voyage.

It was not long after this event that my own introduction to Coleridge occurred. At that time some negotiation was pending between him and the Royal Institution, which ended in their engaging him to deliver a course of lectures on "Poetry and the Fine Arts," during the ensuing winter. For this series (twelve to sixteen, I think,) he received a sum of one hundred guineas. And considering the slightness of the pains which he bestowed upon them, he was well remunerated. I fear that they did not increase his reputation; for never did any man treat his audience with less respect, or his task with less careful attention. I was in London for part of the time, and can report the circumstances, having made a point of attending duly at the appointed hours. Coleridge was at that time living uncomfortably enough at the "Courier" Office, in the Strand. In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber door continually to the printing rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged; and he took more than ordinary doses of opium. I called upon him daily, and pitied his forlorn condition. There was no bell in the room, which for many months answered the double purpose of bed-room and sitting-room. Consequently, I often saw him, picturesquely enveloped in night-caps, surmounted by handkerchiefs indorsed upon handkerchiefs, shouting from the attics of the "Courier" Office, down three or four flights of stairs, to a certain "Mrs. Bainbridge," his sole attendant, whose dwelling was in the subterranean regions of the house. There did I often see the philosopher, with a most lugubrious face, invoking with all his might this uncouth name of "Bainbridge," each syllable of which he intonated with long-drawn emphasis, in order to overpower the hostile hubbub coming downwards from the press, and the roar from the Strand, which entered at all the front windows. "Mrs. Bainbridge! I say, Mrs. Bainbridge!" was the perpetual cry, until I expected to hear the Strand, and distant Fleet Street, take up the echo of "Bainbridge!" Thus unhappily situated, he sank more than ever under the dominion of opium; so that, at two

o'clock, when he should have been in attendance at the Royal Institution, he was too often unable to rise from bed. Then came dismissals of audience after audience with pleas of illness; and on many of his lecture days, I have seen all Albemarle Street closed by a "lock" of carriages filled with women of distinction, until the servants of the Institution or their own footmen advanced to the carriage doors with the intelligence that Mr. Coleridge had been suddenly taken ill. This plea, which at first had been received with expressions of concern, repeated too often, began to rouse disgust. Some in anger, and some in real uncertainty whether it would not be trouble thrown away, ceased to attend. And we that were more constant, too often found reason to be disappointed with the quality of his lecture. His appearance was generally that of a person struggling with pain and overmastering illness. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in colour; and in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labour under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower. In such a state it is clear that nothing could save the lecture itself from reflecting his own feebleness and exhaustion, except the advantage of having been precomposed in some happier mood. But that never happened: most unfortunately he relied upon his extempore ability to carry him through. Now, had he been in spirits, or had he gathered animation and kindled by his own motion, no written lecture could have been more effectual than one of his unpremeditated colloquial harangues. But either he was depressed originally below the point from which any re-ascent was possible, or else this re-action was intercepted by continual disgust, from looking back upon his own ill success; for assuredly he never once recovered that free and eloquent movement of thought which he could command at any time in a private company. The passages he read, moreover, in illustrating his doctrines, were generally unhappily chosen, because chosen at hap-hazard, from the difficulty of finding at a moment's summons, those passages which he had in his eye. Nor do I remember any that produced much effect, except two or three, which I myself put ready marked into his hands, among the "Metrical Romances" edited by Ritson.

Generally speaking, the selections were as injudicious and as inappropriate, as they were ill delivered; for amongst Coleridge's accomplishments good reading was not one; he had neither voice, nor management of voice. This defect is unfortunate in a public lecturer; for it is inconceivable how much

weight and effectual pathos can be communicated by sonorous depth, and melodious cadences of the human voice, to sentiments the most trivial; nor, on the other hand, how the grandest are emasculated by a style of reading, which fails in distributing the lights and shadows of a musical intonation. However, this defect chiefly concerned the immediate impression; the most afflicting to a friend of Coleridge's was the entire absence of his own peculiar and majestic intellect; no heart, no soul, was in anything he said; no strength of feeling in recalling universal truths: no power of originality or compass of moral relations in his novelties — all was a poor faint reflection from jewels once scattered in the highway by himself, in the prodigality of his early opulence — a mendicant dependence on the alms dropped from his own overflowing treasury of happier times. Such a collapse, such a quenching of the eagle's talons never was seen before. And as I returned from one of the most afflicting of these disappointments, I could not but repeat to myself part of that divine chorus,

“ Oh! dark, dark, dark, dark!
Amid the blaze of noon
Irrecoverably dark, total eclipse,” etc., etc.

The next opportunity I had of seeing Coleridge was at the Lakes, in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year. During this period it was, that he carried on the original publication of “The Friend;” and for much the greater part of the time I saw him daily. He lived as a visitor in the house occupied by Mr. Wordsworth; this house was in Grasmere; and in another part of the same vale, at a distance of barely one mile, I myself had a cottage and a considerable library. Many of my books being German, Coleridge borrowed them in great numbers. Having a general license from me to use them as he would, he was in the habit of accumulating them so largely at Allan Bank, (the name of Mr. Wordsworth's house,) that sometimes as many as five hundred were absent at once; which I mention, in order to notice a practice of Coleridge's indicating his very scrupulous honour, in what regarded the rights of ownership. Literary people are not always so strict in respecting property of this description; and I know more than one celebrated man, who professes as a maxim, that he holds it no duty of honour to restore a borrowed book; not to speak of many less celebrated persons, who, without openly professing such a principle, do, however, in fact, exhibit a lax morality in such cases. The more honourable it was to poor

Coleridge, who had means so trifling of buying books for himself — that, to prevent my flocks from mixing, and being confounded with the flocks already folded at Allan Bank, (his own and Wordsworth's,) or rather that they might mix without danger, he duly inscribed my name in the blank leaves of every volume; a fact which became rather painfully made known to me; for, as he had chosen to dub me "Esquire," many years after this, it cost myself and a female friend some weeks of labour to hunt out these multitudinous memorials, and to erase this heraldic addition — which else had the appearance to a stranger of having been conferred by myself.

"The Friend," in its original publication, was, as a pecuniary speculation, the least judicious, both in its objects and its means, I have ever known. It was printed at Penrith, a town in Cumberland, on the outer verge of the Lake District, and precisely twenty-eight miles removed from Coleridge's abode. This distance, enough of itself in all conscience, was at least trebled in effect by the interposition of Kirkstone, a mountain which is scaled by a carriage ascent of three miles long, and so steep in parts, that, without four horses, no solitary traveller can persuade the neighbouring innkeepers to carry him. Another road, by way of Keswick, is subject to its own separate difficulties. And thus in any practical sense, for ease, for certainty, and for dispatch, Liverpool, ninety-five miles distant, was virtually nearer. Dublin even, or Cork, was more eligible. Yet in this town, so situated as I have stated, by way of purchasing such intolerable difficulties at the highest price, Coleridge was advised, and actually persuaded to set up a printer, by buying types, etc., instead of resorting to some printer already established in Kendal, a large and opulent town, not more than eighteen miles distant, and connected by a daily post; whereas, between himself and Penrith there was no post at all. Building his mechanical arrangements upon this utter "upside-down" inversion of all common sense, it is not surprising (as "madness ruled the hour") that in all other circumstances of plan or execution, the work moved by principles of downright crazy disregard to all that a judicious counsel would have suggested. The subjects were generally chosen, obstinately in defiance of the popular taste; they were treated in a style which avowed contempt for the popular models; and the plans adopted for obtaining payment were of a nature to insure a speedy bankruptcy to the concern. Coleridge had a list, nobody could ever say upon whose authority gathered together, of subscribers. He tells us himself that many of these

renounced the work from an early period; and some (as Lord Corke) rebuked him for his presumption in sending it unordered, but (as Coleridge asserts) neither returned the copies, nor remitted the price. And even those who were conscientious enough to do this could not remit four or five shillings for as many numbers without putting Coleridge to an expense of treble postage at the least. This he complains of bitterly in his "Biographia Literaria," forgetting evidently that the evil was due exclusively to his own defective arrangements. People necessarily sent their subscriptions through such channels as were open to them, or such as were pointed out by Coleridge himself. It is also utterly unworthy of Coleridge to have taxed, as he does, many (or all, for anything that appears,) of his subscribers with neglecting to pay at all. Probably nobody neglected. And, on the other hand, some, perhaps, as a most conscientious and venerable female relation of my own, who had subscribed merely to oblige me, and out of a general respect for Coleridge's powers, though finding nothing to suit her own taste: she, I happened to know, paid three times over, sending the money through three different channels according to the shifting directions which reached her. Managed as the reader will collect from these indications, the work was going down-hill from the first. It never gained any accessions of new subscribers: from what source, then, was the continual dropping off of names to be supplied? The printer became a bankrupt: Coleridge was as much in arrear with his articles, as with his lectures at the Royal Institution. That he was from the very first; but now he was disgusted and desponding; and with No. 28 the work came to a final stop. Some years after it was recast, as the phrase was, and republished. But, in fact, this recast was pretty nearly a new work. The sole contributors to the original work had been Wordsworth, who gave a very valuable paper on the principles concerned in the composition of epitaphs; and Professor Wilson, who, in conjunction with Mr. Blair, an early friend, then visiting at his place on Windermere, wrote the letter signed "Mathetes," the reply to which came from Mr. Wordsworth.

NOTES

¹ That is, a 'Statesman, elliptically for an Estatesman—a native dalesman possessing and personally cultivating a patrimonial landed estate.

² Since this was first written, social changes in London, by introducing women very extensively into the office (once monopolized by men) of attending the visitors at the tables of eating-houses, have intro-

duced a corresponding new word, viz. "waitress;" which word, twenty-five years back, would have been simply ludicrous; but now has become as indispensable to precision of language as the words traitress, heiress, inheritrix, etc.

⁹ My doubt is founded upon the varying tenure of these secluded chapels as to privileges of marrying or burying. The mere name of chapel, though, of course, in regular connection with some mother church, does not of itself imply whether it has or has not the power to solemnize a marriage.

' Sir Alexander Ball, Governor of Malta, and Dr. Andrew Bell, the importer into England from Madras of that machinery for facilitating popular education, which was afterwards fraudulently appropriated by Joseph Lancaster. The Bishop of Durham (Shute Barrington) gave to Dr. Bell, in reward of his Madras services, the princely Mastership of Sherborne Hospital. The doctor saved, in this post, £125,000, and with this money founded Trinity College, Glenalmond, in Perthshire. Most men have their enemies and calumniators; Dr. Bell had his, who happened rather indecorously to be his wife—from whom he was legally separated, or (as in Scotch law it is called) divorced; not, of course, divorced à vinculo matrimonii (which only amounts to a divorce in the English sense—such a divorce as enables the parties to contract another marriage), but simply divorced à mensâ et thoro. This legal separation, however, did not prevent the lady from persecuting the unhappy doctor with everlasting letters, indorsed outside with records of her enmity and spite. Sometimes she addressed her epistles thus: "To that supreme of rogues, who looks the hang-dog that he is, Doctor (such a doctor!) Andrew Bell." Or again: "To the ape of apes, and the knave of knaves, who is recorded to have once paid a debt—but a small one, you may be sure, it was that he selected for this wonderful experiment—in fact, it was 4½d. Had it been on the other side of 6d., he must have died before he could have achieved so dreadful a sacrifice." Many others, most ingeniously varied in the style of abuse, I have heard rehearsed by Coleridge, Southey, Lloyd and others; and one, in particular, addressed to the doctor, when spending a summer at the cottage of Robert Newton, an old soldier, in Grasmere, presented on the back two separate adjurations, one specially addressed to Robert himself, pathetically urging him to look sharply after the rent of his lodgings; and the other more generally addressed to the unfortunate person as yet undisclosed to the British public (and in this case turning out to be myself), who might be incautious enough to pay the postage at Ambleside. "Don't grant him an hour's credit," she urged upon the person unknown, "if I had any regard to my family." "Cash down!" she wrote twice over. Why the doctor submitted to these annoyances, nobody knew. Some said it was mere indolence; but others held it to be a cunning compromise with her inexorable malice. The letters were certainly open to the "public" eye; but meantime the "public" was a very narrow one; the clerks in the post-office had little time for digesting such amenities of conjugal affection; and the chance bearer of the letters to the doctor would naturally solve the mystery by supposing an extra portion of madness in the writer, rather than an extra portion of knavery in the reverend receiver.

III

AT the Lakes, and summoned abroad by scenery so exquisite—living, too, in the bosom of a family endeared to him by long friendship and sympathy the closest with all his propensities and tastes—Coleridge (it may be thought) could not sequester himself so profoundly as at the “Courier” Office within his own shell, or shut himself out so completely from that large dominion of eye and ear amongst the hills, the fields, and the woods, which once he had exercised so pleasantly to himself, and with a participation so immortal, through his exquisite poems, to all generations. He was not now reduced to depend upon Mrs. Bainbridge, but looked out from his study windows upon the sublime hills of Seat Sandal and Arthur’s Chair, and upon pastoral cottages at their feet; and all around him, he heard hourly the murmurings of happy life, the sound of female voices, and the innocent laughter of children. But, apparently, he was not happy himself; the accursed drug poisoned all natural pleasure at its sources; he burrowed continually deeper into scholastic subtleties and metaphysical abstraction, and, like that class described by Seneca, in the luxurious Rome of his days, he lived chiefly by candle-light. At two or three o’clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance: through the silence of the night, when all other lights had long disappeared, in the quiet cottage of Grasmere, his lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveller, as he descended the long steep from Dun-mailraise; and at five or six o’clock in the morning, when man was going forth to his labour, this insulated son of reveries was retiring to bed.

Society he did not much court, because much was not to be had; but he did not shrink from any which wore the promise of novelty. At that time the leading person about the Lakes, as regarded rank and station, amongst those who had any connection with literature, was Dr. Watson, the well-known Bishop of Llandaff. This dignitary I knew myself as much as I wished to know him, having gone to his house five or six times purposely that I might know him: and I shall speak of him circumstantially. Those who have read his autobiography,

or are otherwise acquainted with the outline of his career, will be aware that he was the son of a Westmoreland schoolmaster. Going to Cambridge, with no great store of classical knowledge, but with the more common accomplishment of Westmoreland men, and one better suited to Cambridge, viz.—a sufficient basis of mathematics, and a robust, though commonplace intellect, for improving his knowledge according to any direction which accident should prescribe—he obtained the Professorship of Chemistry without one iota of chemical knowledge up to the hour when he gained it: and then setting eagerly to work, that he might not disgrace the choice which had thus distinguished him, long before the time arrived for commencing his prelections, he had made himself capable of writing those beautiful essays on that science, which after a revolution, and a counter-revolution, so great as succeeding times have witnessed, still remain a cardinal book of introductory discipline to such studies; an opinion authorized not only by Professor Thomson of Glasgow, but also, to myself, by the late Sir Humphry Davy. With this experimental proof that a Chemical Chair might be won and honoured without previous knowledge, even of the chemical alphabet, he resolved to play the same feat with the Royal Chair of Divinity; one far more important for local honour, and for wealth. Here again he succeeded; and this time he extended his experiment; for whereas both Chairs had been won without previous knowledge, he resolved that in this case it should be maintained without after knowledge. He applied himself simply to the improvement of its income, which he raised from £300 to at least £1000 per annum. All this he had accomplished before reaching the age of thirty-five.

Riches are with us the parent of riches; and success, in the hands of an active man, is the pledge of further success. On the basis of this Cambridge preferment, Dr. Watson built upwards, until he had raised himself, in one way or other, to a seat in the House of Lords, and to a commensurate income. For the latter half of his life, he—originally a village schoolmaster's son—was able to associate with the magnates of the land, upon equal terms. And that fact, of itself, without another word, implies, in this country, a degree of rank and fortune which one would think a sufficient reward even for merit as unquestionable as was that of Dr. Watson. Yet he was always a discontented man, and a railer at the Government and the age which could permit merit such as his to pine away ingloriously, in one of the humblest amongst the bishoprics, with no

other addition to its emoluments than the richest Professorship in Europe, and such other accidents in life as gave him in all, perhaps, not above seven thousand per annum! Poor man—only seven thousand per annum! What a trial to a man's patience!—and how much he stood in need of philosophy, or even of religion, to face so dismal a condition!

The Bishop was himself, in a secondary way, an interesting study. What I mean is, that, though originally the furthest removed from an interesting person, being a man remarkable indeed for robust faculties, but otherwise commonplace in his character, worldly-minded, and coarse, even to obtuseness, in his sensibilities, he yet became interesting from the strength of degree with which these otherwise repulsive characteristics were marked. He was one of that numerous order in whom even the love of knowledge is subordinate to schemes of advancement; and to whom even his own success, and his own honour consequent upon that success, had no higher value than according to their use as instruments for winning further promotion. Hence it was, that, when by such aids he had mounted to a certain eminence, beyond which he saw little promise of further ascent, by their assistance—since at this stage it was clear, that party connection in politics must become his main reliance—he ceased to regard his favourite sciences with much interest. Even chemistry was now neglected. This above all, was perplexing to one who did not understand his character. For hither one would have supposed he might have retreated from his political disappointments, and have found a perpetual consolation in honours which no intrigues could defeat, and in the gratitude, so pure and untainted, which still attended the honourable exertions of his youth. But he viewed the matter in a very different light. Other generations had come since then, and "other palms were won." To keep pace with the advancing science, and to maintain his station amongst his youthful competitors, would demand a youthful vigour and motives such as theirs. But, as to himself, chemistry had given all it could give. Having first raised himself to distinction by that, he had since married into an ancient family—one of the leaders amongst the landed aristocracy of his own country:—he thus had entitled himself to call the head of that family—a territorial potentate with ten thousand per annum—by the contemptuous sobriquet of "Dull Daniel;" he looked down upon numbers whom, twenty years before, he scarcely durst have looked up to; he had obtained a bishopric. Chemistry had done all this for him; and had, besides,

co-operating with luck, put him in the way of reaping a large estate from the gratitude and early death of a pupil, Mr. Luther. All this chemistry had effected: could chemistry do anything more? Clearly not. And here it was, that, having lost his motives for cultivating it farther, he regarded the present improvers of the science, not with the feelings natural to a disinterested lover of such studies on their own account, but with jealousy, as men who had eclipsed or had bedimmed his own once brilliant reputation. Two revolutions had occurred since his own "palmy days;" Sir Humphry Davy might be right; and all might be gold that glistened; but, for his part, he was too old to learn new theories — he must be content to hobble to his grave with such old-fashioned creeds as had answered in his time, when, for aught he could see, men prospered as much as in this new-fangled world. This was the tone of his ordinary talk; and, in one sense — as regards personal claims, I mean — it was illiberal enough; for the leaders of modern chemistry never overlooked his claims. Professor Thomson, of Glasgow, always spoke of his "Essays" as of a book which hardly any revolution could antiquate; and Sir Humphry Davy, in reply to a question which I put to him upon that point, in 1813, declared that he knew of no book better qualified, as one of introductory discipline to the youthful experimenter, or as an apprenticeship to the taste in elegant selection of topics.

Yet querulous and discontented as the Bishop was, when he adverted either to chemistry or to his own position in life, the reader must not imagine to himself the ordinary "complement" and appurtenances of that character — such as moroseness, illiberality or stinted hospitalities. On the contrary, his Lordship was a joyous, jovial, and cordial host. He was pleasant, and even kind in his manners; most hospitable in his reception of strangers, no matter of what party; and I must say that he was as little overbearing in argument, and as little stood upon his privilege as a church dignitary, as any "big wig" I have happened to know. He was somewhat pompous, undoubtedly; but that, in an old academic hero, was rather agreeable, and had a characteristic effect. He listened patiently to all your objections; and, though steeped to the lips in prejudice, he was really candid. I mean to say, that although, generally speaking, the unconscious pre-occupation of his understanding shut up all avenues to new convictions, he yet did his best to open his mind to any views that might be presented at the moment. And, with regard to his querulous egotism, though it may appear laughable enough to all who contrast his

real pretensions with their public appreciation, as expressed in his acquired opulence and rank; and who contrast, also, his case with that of other men in his own profession — such as Paley for example — yet it cannot be denied that fortune had crossed his path, latterly, with foul winds, no less strikingly than his early life had been seconded by her favouring gales. In particular, Lady Holland mentioned to a friend of my own the following anecdote: “What you say of the Bishop may be very true: (they were riding past his grounds at the time, which had turned the conversation upon his character and public claims;) but to us (Lady Holland meant to the Whig party) he was truly honourable and faithful; insomuch, that my uncle had agreed with Lord Granville to make him Archbishop of York, *sede vacante*; — all was settled; and had we staid in power a little longer, he would, beyond a doubt, have had that dignity.”

Now, if the reader happens to recollect how soon the death of Dr. Markham followed the sudden dissolution of that short-lived administration in 1807, he will see how narrowly Dr. Watson missed this elevation; and one must allow for a little occasional spleen under such circumstances. Yet, what an archbishop! He talked openly, at his own table, as a Socinian; ridiculed the miracles of the New Testament, which he professed to explain as so many chemical tricks, or cases of politic legerdemain; and certainly had as little of devotional feeling as any man that ever lived. It is, by comparison, a matter of little consequence, that, in her spiritual integrity, so little regarding the church of which he called himself a member, he should, in her temporal interests, have been ready to lay her open to any assaults from almost any quarter. He could naturally have little reverence for the rights of the shepherds, having so little for the pastoral office itself, or for the manifold duties it imposes. All his public, all his professional duties, he systematically neglected. He was a Lord in Parliament, and for many a year he never attended in his place; he was a Bishop, and he scarcely knew any part of his diocese by sight — living three hundred miles away from it: he was a Professor of Divinity; he held the richest Professorship in Europe, the weightiest, for its functions, in England, — he drew, by his own admission, one thousand per annum from its endowments, (deducting some stipend to his *locum tenens* at Cambridge;) and for thirty years he never read a lecture, or performed a public exercise. Spheres how vast of usefulness to a man as able as himself! — subjects of what bitter anguish on the death-

bed of one who had been tenderly alive to his own duties! In his political purism, and the unconscious partisanship of his constitutional scruples, he was a true Whig, and thoroughly diverting. That Lord Lonsdale or that the Duke of Northumberland should interfere with elections, that he thought scandalous and awful; but that a Lord of the house of Cavendish or Howard, a Duke of Devonshire or Norfolk, or an Earl of Carlisle, should traffic in boroughs, or exert the most despotic influence as landlords *mutato nomine*, he viewed as the mere natural right of property: and so far was he from loving the pure-hearted and unfactious champions of liberty, that, in one of his printed works, he dared to tax Milton with having knowingly, wilfully, deliberately told a falsehood.¹

Coleridge, it was hardly possible, could reverence a man like this: — ordinary men might, because they were told that he had defended Christianity against the vile blasphemers and impotent theomichrists of the day. But Coleridge had too pure an ideal of a Christian philosopher, derived from the age of the English Titans in theology, to share in that estimate. It is singular enough, and interesting to a man who has ever heard Coleridge talk, but especially to one who has assisted (to speak in French phrase) at a talking party between Coleridge and the Bishop, to look back upon an article in the "Quarterly Review," where, in connection with the Bishop's autobiography, some sneers are dropped with regard to the intellectual character of the neighbourhood in which he had settled. I have been told, on pretty good authority, that this article was written by the late Dr. Whittaker, of Craven, the topographical antiquary; a pretty sort of person, doubtless, to assume such a tone, in speaking of a neighbourhood so dazzling in its intellectual pretensions, as that region at that time!

The Bishop had fixed his abode on the banks of Windermere. In a small but beautiful park, he had himself raised a plain, but handsome and substantial mansion; Calgarth, or Calgarth Park, was its name. Now, at Keswick lived Mr. Southey; twenty miles distant, it is true, but still, for a bishop with a bishop's equipage, not beyond a morning's drive. At Grasmere, about eight miles from Calgarth, were to be found Wordsworth and Coleridge. At Brathay, about four miles from Calgarth, lived Charles Lloyd; and he, far as he was below the others I have mentioned, could not in candour be considered a common man. He was somewhat too Rousseauish; but he had, in conversation, very extraordinary powers for analysis of a certain kind, applied to the philosophy of manners, and the

most delicate nuances of social life; and his translation of "Alfieri," together with his own poems, shows him to have been an accomplished scholar. Then, not much above a mile from Calgarth, at his beautiful creation of Elleray, lived Professor Wilson, of whom I need not speak. He, in fact, and Mr. Lloyd, were on the most intimate terms with the Bishop's family. The meanest of these persons was able to have "taken the conceit" out of Mr. Dr. Whittaker, and all his tribe. But even in the town of Kendal, about nine miles from Calgarth, there were many men of information, at least as extensive as Dr. Watson's, and amply qualified to have met him upon equal terms in conversation. Mathematics, it is well known, are extensively cultivated in the north of England. Sedburgh, for many years, was a sort of nursery, or rural Chapel-of-ease, to Cambridge. Gough, the blind mathematician and botanist of Kendal, was known to fame; but many others in that town had accomplishments equal to his; and, indeed, so widely has mathematical knowledge extended itself throughout Northern England, that even amongst the poor weavers, mechanic labourers for their daily bread, the cultivation of the geometrical analysis, in the most refined shape, has long prevailed; of which some accounts have been recently published. Some local pique, therefore, must have been at the bottom of Dr. Whittaker's sneer. At all events, it was ludicrously contrasted with the true state of the case, as brought out by the meeting between Coleridge and the Bishop.

Coleridge was armed, at all points, with the scholastic erudition which bore upon all questions that could arise in polemic divinity. The philosophy of ancient Greece, through all its schools, the philosophy of the Schoolmen, technically so called, church history, etc., Coleridge had within his call. Having been personally acquainted, or connected as a pupil, with Eichhorn and Michaelis, he knew the whole cycle of schisms and audacious speculations, through which Biblical criticism, or Christian philosophy, has revolved in modern Germany. All this was ground upon which the Bishop of Llandaff trod with the infirm footing of a child. He listened to what Coleridge reported with the same sort of pleasurable surprise, alternating with starts of doubt or incredulity, as would naturally attend a detailed report from Laputa — which aerial region of speculation does but too often recur to a sober-minded person, in reading of the endless freaks in philosophy of modern Germany, where the sceptre of Mutability, the potentate celebrated by Spenser, gathers more trophies in a year, than elsewhere in

a century; "the anarchy of dreams" presiding in her philosophy; and the restless elements of opinion, throughout every region of debate, moulding themselves eternally, like the billowy sands of the desert, as beheld by Bruce, into towering columns, that soar upwards to a giddy altitude, then stalk about for a minute, all a-glow with fiery colour, and finally unmould and "dislimn," with a collapse as sudden as the motions of that eddying breeze, under which their vapoury architecture arose. Hartley and Locke, both of whom the Bishop made into idols, were discussed; especially the former, against whom Coleridge alleged some of those arguments which he has used in his "Biographia Literaria." The Bishop made but a feeble defence; and, upon some points, none at all. He seemed, I remember, much struck with one remark of Coleridge's to this effect: "That whereas Hartley fancied that our very reasoning was an aggregation, collected together under the law of association; on the contrary, we reason by counteracting that law,—just, said he, as in leaping, the law of gravitation concurs to that act in its latter part; but no leap could take place were it not by a counteraction of the law." One remark of the Bishop's let me into the secret of his very limited reading. Coleridge had used the word "apperception;"—apparently without intention; for, on hearing some objection to the word, as being "surely not a word that Addison would have used," he silently substituted another word. Some months afterwards, going with Charles Lloyd to call at Calgarth, during the time when "The Friend" was appearing, the Bishop again noticed this obnoxious word, and in the very same terms: "Now, this word apperception, which Mr. Coleridge uses in the last number of 'The Friend,' surely, surely it would not have been approved by Addison; no, Mr. Lloyd, nor by Swift; nor even, I think, by Arbuthnot." Somebody suggested that the word was a new word of German mintage, and most probably due to Kant—of whom the Bishop seemed never to have heard. Meantime the fact was, and to me an amusing one, that the word had been commonly used by Leibnitz—who is really a classical author on such subjects.

In the autumn of 1810, Coleridge left the Lakes; and—so far as I am aware—forever. I once, indeed, heard a rumour of his having passed through with some party of tourists—some reason struck me, at the time, for believing it untrue—but, at all events, he never returned to them as a resident. What might be his reason for this eternal self-banishment from scenes which he so well understood in all their shifting forms

of beauty, I can only guess. Perhaps it was the very opposite reason to that which is most obvious: not possibly because he had become indifferent to their attractions, but because his undecaying sensibility to their commanding power, had become associated with too afflicting remembrances, and flashes of personal recollections, suddenly restored and illuminated — recollections which will

“ Sometimes leap
From hiding places ten years deep.”

and bring into collision the present with some long-forgotten past, in a form too trying and too painful for endurance. I have a brilliant Scotch friend, who cannot walk on the seashore — within sight of its *ανηριθμον γελασμα*, the multitudinous laughter of its waves, or within hearing of its resounding uproar, because they bring up, by links of old association, too insupportably to his mind, the agitations of his glittering, but too fervid youth. There is a feeling — morbid it may be, but for which no anodyne is found in all the schools from Plato to Kant — to which the human mind is liable at times: it is best described in a little piece by Henry More, the Platonist. He there represents himself as a martyr to his own too passionate sense of beauty, and his consequent too passionate sense of its decay. Everywhere — above, below, around him, in the earth, in the clouds, in the fields, and in their “garniture of flowers” — he beholds a beauty carried to excess; and this beauty becomes a source of endless affliction to him, because everywhere he sees it liable to the touch of decay and mortal change. During one paroxysm of this sad passion, an angel appears to comfort him; and, by the sudden revelation of her immortal beauty, does, in fact, suspend his grief. But it is only a suspension; for the sudden recollection that her privileged condition, and her exemption from the general fate of beauty, is only by way of exception to a universal rule, restores his grief: “And thou thyself,” he says to the angel

“ And thou thyself, that com'st to comfort me,
Wouldst strong occasion of deep sorrow bring,
If thou wert subject to mortality!”

Every man, who has ever dwelt with passionate love upon the fair face of some female companion through life, must have had the same feeling; and must often, in the exquisite language of Shakspeare's sonnets, have commended and adjured all-conquering Time, there, at least, and upon that one tablet of his adoration,

“To write no wrinkle with his antique hand.”

Vain prayer! Empty adjuration! Profitless rebellion against the laws which season all things for the inexorable grave! Yet not the less we rebel again and again; and though wisdom counsels resignation and submission, yet, our human passions, still cleaving to their object, force us into endless rebellion. Feelings, the same in kind as these, attach themselves to our mental powers, and our vital energies. Phantoms of lost power, sudden intuitions, and shadowy restorations of forgotten feelings, sometimes dim and perplexing, sometimes by bright but furtive glimpses, sometimes by a full and steady revelation, overcharged with light — throw us back in a moment upon scenes and remembrances that we have left full thirty years behind us. In solitude, and chiefly in the solitudes of nature; and above all, amongst the great and enduring features of nature, such as mountains and quiet dells, and the lawny recesses of forests, and the silent shores of lakes, features with which (as being themselves less liable to change) our feelings have a more abiding association — under these circumstances it is, that such evanescent hauntings of our past and forgotten selves are most apt to startle and to waylay us. These are positive torments from which the agitated mind shrinks in fear; but there are others negative in their nature, that is, blank mementoes of power extinct, and of faculties burnt out within us. And from both forms of anguish — from this twofold scourge — poor Coleridge fled, perhaps, in flying from the beauty of external nature. In alluding to this latter, or negative form of suffering — that form, I mean, which presents not the too fugitive glimpses of past power, but its blank annihilation — Coleridge himself most beautifully insists upon, and illustrates the truth, that all which we find in Nature must be created by ourselves; and that alike whether Nature is so gorgeous in her beauty as to seem appalled in her wedding garment, or so powerless and extinct as to seem palled in her shroud — in either case,

“O, Lady! we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours, her shroud.

“It were a vain endeavour,
Though I should gaze forever
On that green light that lingers in the west:
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within.”

This was one, and the most common shape of extinguished

power, from which Coleridge fled to the great city. But sometimes the same decay came back upon his heart in the more poignant shape of intimations, and vanishing glimpses, recovered for one moment from the paradise of youth, and from the fields of joy and power, over which for him, too certainly, he felt that the cloud of night had settled forever. Both modes of the same torment exiled him from nature; and for the same reason he fled from poetry and all commerce with his own soul; burying himself in the profoundest abstractions from life and human sensibilities.

“ 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.”

Such were, doubtless, the true and radical causes, which, for the final twenty-four years of Coleridge's life, drew him away from those scenes of natural beauty in which only, at an earlier stage of life, he found strength and restoration. These were the causes; but the immediate occasion of his departure from the Lakes, in the autumn of 1800, was the favourable opportunity then presented to him of migrating in a pleasant way. Mr. Basil Montagu, the Chancery barrister, happened at that time to be returning to London with Mrs. Montagu, from a visit to the Lakes, or to Wordsworth. His travelling carriage was roomy enough to allow of his offering Coleridge a seat in it; and his admiration of Coleridge was just then fervent enough to prompt a friendly wish for that sort of close connection — viz. by domestication as a guest under Mr. Basil Montagu's roof — which is the most trying to friendship, and which, in this instance, led to a perpetual rupture of it. The domestic habits of eccentric men of genius, much more those of a man so irreclaimably irregular as Coleridge, can hardly be supposed to promise very auspiciously for any connection so close as this. A very extensive house and household, together with the unlimited license of action which belongs to the ménage of some great Dons amongst the nobility, could alone have made Coleridge an inmate perfectly desirable. Probably many little jealousies and offences had been mutually suppressed; but the particular spark which at length fell amongst the combustible materials already prepared, and thus produced the final explosion, took the following shape: Mr. Montagu had pub-

lished a book against the use of wine and intoxicating liquors of every sort. Not out of parsimony, or under any suspicion of inhospitality, but in mere self-consistency and obedience to his own conscientious scruples, Mr. Montagu would not countenance the use of wine at his own table. So far, all was right. But doubtless, on such a system, under the known habits of modern life, it should have been made a rule to ask no man to dinner, for to force men, without warning, to a single (and, therefore, thoroughly useless) act of painful abstinence, is what neither I nor any man can have a right to do. In point of sense, it is in fact, precisely the freak of Sir Roger De Coverley, who drenches his friend the "Spectator" with a hideous decoction: not, as his confiding visitor had supposed, for some certain and immediate benefit to follow, but simply as having a tendency (if well supported by many years continuance of similar drenches) to abate the remote contingency of the stone. One day's abstinence could do no good on any scheme; and no man was likely to offer himself for a second. However, such being the law of the castle, and that law well known to Coleridge, he, nevertheless, thought fit to ask to dinner Colonel, then Captain Pasley, of the Engineers, well known in those days for his book on the "Military Policy of England;" and since, for his "System of Professional Instruction." Now, where or in what land, abides that

"Captain, or Colonel, or Knight in arms."

to whom wine in the analysis of dinner is a neutral or indifferent element? Wine, therefore, as it was not of a nature to be omitted, Coleridge took care to furnish at his own private cost. And so far, again, all was right. But, why must Coleridge give his dinner to the Captain in Mr. Montagu's house? There lay the affront; and, doubtless, it was a very inconsiderate act on the part of Coleridge. I report the case simply as it was then generally borne upon the breath, not of scandal, but of jest and merriment. The result, however, was no jest; for bitter words ensued — words that festered in the remembrance; and a rupture between the parties followed which no reconciliation ever healed.

Meantime, on reviewing this story, as generally adopted by the learned in literary scandal, one demur rises up. Dr. Parr, a lisping old dotard, without dignity or power of mind of any sort, was a frequent and privileged inmate at Mr. Montagu's. Him, now, this Parr, there was no conceivable motive for enduring; that point is satisfactorily settled by the pompous

inaneities of his works. Yet, on the other hand, his habits were in their own nature far less endurable; for the monster smoked; — and how? How did the “Birmingham Doctor”² smoke? Not as you or I, or other civilized people smoke, with a gentle cigar — but with shag tobacco. And those who know how that abomination lodges and nestles in the draperies of window curtains, will guess the horror and detestation in which the old Whig’s memory is held by all enlightened women.

NOTES

¹This supposed falsehood respected the sect called Brownists, and occurs in the “*Defensis pro Populo Anglicano*.” The whole charge is a blunder, and rests upon the Bishop’s own imperfect knowledge of Latinity.

²This was a sobriquet imposed on Dr. Parr by “*The Pursuits of Literature*,” that most popular of satires at the end of the eighteenth and opening of the nineteenth centuries. The name had a mixed reference to the doctor’s personal connection with Warwickshire, but chiefly to the doctor’s spurious and windy imitation of Dr. Johnson. He was viewed as the Birming (or mock) Dr. Johnson. Why the word Birmingham has come for the last sixty or seventy years to indicate in every class of articles the spurious in opposition to the genuine, I suppose to have arisen from the Birmingham habit of reproducing all sorts of London or Paris trinkets, bijouterie, etc., in cheaper materials and with inferior workmanship.

IV

FROM Mr. Montagu's Coleridge passed, by favour of what introduction I never heard, into a family as amiable in manners and as benign in disposition, as I remember to have ever met with. On this excellent family I look back with threefold affection, on account of their goodness to Coleridge, and because they were then unfortunate, and because their union has long since been dissolved by death. The family was composed of three members: of Mr. M——, once a lawyer, who had, however, ceased to practise; of Mrs. M——, his wife, a blooming young woman, distinguished for her fine person; and a young lady, her unmarried sister. Here, for some years, I used to visit Coleridge; and, doubtless, as far as situation merely, and the most delicate attentions from the most amiable women, could make a man happy, he must have been so at this time; for both the ladies treated him as an elder brother, or as a father. At length, however, the cloud of misfortune, which had long settled upon the prospects of this excellent family, thickened; and I found, upon one of my visits to London, that they had given up their house in Berners Street, and had retired to a cottage in Wiltshire. Coleridge had accompanied them; and there I visited them myself, and, as it eventually proved, for the last time. Some time after this, I heard from Coleridge, with the deepest sorrow, that poor M—— had been thrown into prison, and had sunk under the pressure of his misfortunes. The gentle ladies of his family had retired to remote friends; and I saw them no more, though often vainly making inquiries about them.

Coleridge, during this part of his London life, I saw constantly — generally once a day, during my own stay in London; and sometimes we were jointly engaged to dinner parties. In particular, I remember one party at which we met Lady Hamilton — Lord Nelson's Lady Hamilton — the beautiful, the accomplished, the enchantress! Coleridge admired her, as who would not have done, prodigiously; and she, in her turn, was fascinated with Coleridge. He was unusually effective in his display; and she, by way of expressing her acknowledgments

appropriately, performed a scene in *Lady Macbeth*—how splendidly, I cannot better express, than by saying that all of us who then witnessed her performance, were familiar with Mrs. Siddons's matchless execution of that scene; and yet, with such a model filling our imaginations, we could not but acknowledge the possibility of another, and a different perfection, without a trace of imitation, equally original, and equally astonishing. The word "magnificent" is, in this day, most lavishly abused: daily I hear or read in the newspapers of magnificent objects, as though scattered more thickly than blackberries; but for my part I have seen few objects really deserving that epithet. *Lady Hamilton* was one of them. She had *Medea's* beauty, and *Medea's* power of enchantment. But let not the reader too credulously suppose her the unprincipled woman she has been described. I know of no sound reason for supposing the connection between *Lord Nelson* and her to have been other than perfectly virtuous. Her public services, I am sure, were most eminent—for that we have indisputable authority; and equally sure I am that they were requited with rank ingratitude.

After the household of the poor M——s had been dissolved, I know not whither Coleridge went immediately: for I did not visit London until some years had elapsed. In 1823-24, I first understood that he had taken up his residence as a guest with Mr. Gillman, a surgeon, in Highgate. He had then probably resided for some time at that gentleman's: there he continued to reside on the same terms, I believe, of affectionate friendship with the members of Mr. Gillman's family, as had made life endurable to him in the time of the M——s; and there he died in July of the present year. If, generally speaking, poor Coleridge had but a small share of earthly prosperity, in one respect at least, he was eminently favoured by Providence; beyond all men who ever perhaps have lived, he found means to engage a constant succession of most faithful friends; and he levied the services of sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, from the hands of strangers—attracted to him by no possible impulses but those of reverence for his intellect, and love for his gracious nature. How, says Wordsworth

"How can he expect that others should
Sow for him, reap for him, and at his call,
Love him, who for himself will take no thought at all?"

How can he, indeed? It is most unreasonable to do so; yet this expectation, if Coleridge ought not to have entertained, at

all events he realized. Fast as one friend dropped off, another, and another, succeeded: perpetual relays were laid along his path in life, of judicious and zealous supporters: who comforted his days, and smoothed the pillow for his declining age, even when it was beyond all human power to take away the thorns which stuffed it.

And what were those thorns? — and whence derived? That is a question on which I ought to decline speaking unless I could speak fully. Not, however, to make any mystery of what requires none, the reader will understand that originally his sufferings, and the death within him of all hope — the palsy, as it were, of that which is the life of life, and the heart within the heart — came from opium. But two things I must add — one to explain Coleridge's case, and the other to bring it within the indulgent allowance of equitable judges: — First, the sufferings from morbid derangements, originally produced by opium, had very possibly lost that simple character, and had themselves reacted in producing secondary states of disease and irritation, not any longer dependent upon the opium, so as to disappear with its disuse: hence, a more than mortal discouragement to accomplish this disuse, when the pains of self-sacrifice were balanced by no gleams of restorative feeling. Yet, secondly, Coleridge did make prodigious efforts to deliver himself from this thralldom; and he went so far at one time in Bristol, to my knowledge, as to hire a man for the express purpose, and armed with the power of resolutely interposing between himself and the door of any druggist's shop. It is true, that an authority derived only from Coleridge's will, could not be valid against Coleridge's own counter-determination: he could resume as easily as he could delegate the power. But the scheme did not entirely fail; a man shrinks from exposing to another that infirmity of will which he might else have but a feeble motive for disguising to himself; and the delegated man, the external conscience, as it were, of Coleridge, though destined — in the final resort, if matters came to absolute rupture, and to an obstinate duel, as it were, between himself and his principal — in that extremity to give way, yet might have long protracted the struggle, before coming to that sort of dignus vindice nodus: and in fact, I know, upon absolute proof, that, before reaching that crisis, the man showed fight; and, faithful to his trust, and comprehending the reasons for it, he declared that if he must yield, he would "know the reason why."

Opium, therefore, subject to the explanation I have made,

was certainly the original source of Coleridge's morbid feelings, of his debility, and of his remorse. His pecuniary embarrassments pressed as lightly as could well be expected upon him. I have mentioned the annuity of £150 made to him by the two Wedgwoods. One half, I believe, could not be withdrawn, having been left by a regular testamentary bequest. But the other moiety, coming from the surviving brother, was withdrawn on the plea of commercial losses, somewhere, I think, about 1815. That would have been a heavy blow to Coleridge; and assuredly the generosity is not very conspicuous, of having ever suffered an allowance of that nature to be left to the mercy of accident. Either it ought not to have been granted in that shape — viz. as an annual allowance, giving ground for expecting its periodical recurrence — or it ought not to have been withdrawn. However, this blow was broken to Coleridge by the bounty of George IV, who placed Coleridge's name in the list of twelve, to whom he granted an annuity of one hundred guineas per annum. This he enjoyed so long as that Prince reigned. But at length came a heavier blow than that from Mr. Wedgwood: a new King arose, who knew not Joseph. Yet surely he was not a King who could so easily resolve to turn adrift twelve men of letters, many of them most accomplished men, for the sake of appropriating a sum no larger to himself than twelve hundred guineas — no less to some of them than the total freight of their earthly hopes? — No matter: let the deed have been from whose hand it might, it was done: *ειργασαι* (it was perpetrated,) as saith the "Medea" of Euripides; and it will be mentioned hereafter, "more than either once or twice." It fell with weight, and with effect upon the latter days of Coleridge; it took from him as much heart and hope as at his years, and with his unworldly prospects, remained for man to blight: and, if it did not utterly crush him, the reason was — because for himself he had never needed much, and was now continually drawing near to that haven, in which, for himself, he would need nothing; secondly, because his children were now independent of his aid; and, finally, because in this land there are men to be found always of minds large enough to comprehend the claims of genius, and with hearts, by good luck, more generous, by infinite degrees, than the hearts of Princes.

Coleridge, as I now understand, was somewhere about sixty-two years of age when he died. This, however, I take upon the report of the public newspapers; for I do not, of my own knowledge, know anything accurately upon that point.

It can hardly be necessary to inform any reader of discernment or of much practice in composition, that the whole of this article upon Mr. Coleridge, though carried through at intervals, and (as it has unexpectedly happened) with time sufficient to have made it a very careful one, has, in fact, been written in a desultory and unpremeditated style. It was originally undertaken on the sudden but profound impulse communicated to the writer's feelings, by the unexpected news of this great man's death; partly, therefore, to relieve by expressing his own deep sentiments of reverential affection to his memory and partly, in however imperfect a way, to meet the public feeling of interest or curiosity about a man who had long taken his place amongst the intellectual potentates of the age. Both purposes required that it should be written almost extempore: the greater part was really and unaffectedly written in that way, and under circumstances of such extreme haste, as would justify the writer in pleading the very amplest privilege of license and indulgent construction which custom concedes to such cases. Hence it had occurred to the writer, as a judicious principle, to create a sort of merit out of his own necessity; and rather to seek after the graces which belong to the epistolary form, or to other modes of composition professedly careless, than after those which grow out of preconceived biographies, which, having originally settled their plan upon a regular foundation, are able to pursue a course of orderly development, such as his slight sketch had voluntarily renounced from the beginning. That mode of composition having been once adopted, it seemed proper to sustain it, even after delays and interruption had allowed time for throwing the narrative into a more orderly movement, and modulating, as it were, into a key of the usual solemnity. The *qualis ab incepto processerit* — the *ordo* prescribed by the first bars of the music predominated over all other considerations, and to such an extent, that he had purposed to leave the article without any regular termination or summing up — as, on the one hand, scarcely demanded by the character of a sketch so rapid and indigested, whilst, on the other, he was sensible that anything of so much pretension as a formal peroration, challenged a sort of consideration to the paper which it was the author's chief wish to disclaim. That effect, however, is sufficiently parried by the implied protest now offered; and, on other reasons, it is certainly desirable that a general glance, however cursory, should be thrown over the intellectual claims of Mr. Coleridge, by one who knew him so well, and especially in a case where those

very claims constitute the entire and sole justification of the preceding personal memoir. That which furnishes the whole moving reason for any separate notice at all, and forms its whole latent interest, ought not, in mere logic, to be left without some notice itself, though as rapidly executed as the previous biographical sketch, and, from the necessity of the subject, by many times over more imperfect.

To this task, therefore, the writer now addresses himself; and by way of gaining greater freedom of movement, and of resuming his conversational tone, he will here again take the liberty of speaking in the first person.

If Mr. Coleridge had been merely a scholar — merely a philologist — or merely a man of science — there would be no reason apparent for travelling in our survey beyond the field of his intellect, rigourously and narrowly so called. But because he was a poet, and because he was a philosopher, in a comprehensive and a most human sense, with whose functions the moral nature is so largely interwoven, I shall feel myself entitled to notice the most striking aspects of his character, (using that word in its common limited meaning,) of his disposition, and his manners, as so many reflex indications of his intellectual constitution. But let it be well understood that I design nothing elaborate, nothing comprehensive or ambitious: my purpose is merely to supply a few hints and suggestions drawn from a very hasty retrospect, by way of adding a few traits to any outline which the reader may have framed to himself, either from some personal knowledge, or from more full and lively memorials.

One character, in which Mr. Coleridge most often came before the public, was that of politician. In this age of fervent partisanship, it will, therefore, naturally occur as a first question, to inquire after his party and political connections: was he Whig, Tory, or Radical? Or, under a new classification, were his propensities Conservative or Reforming? I answer that, in any exclusive or emphatic sense, he was none of these; because, as a philosopher, he was, according to circumstances, and according to the object concerned, all of these by turns. These are distinctions upon which a cloud of delusion rests. It would not be difficult to show, that in the speculations built upon the distinction of Whig and Tory, even by as philosophic a politician as Edmund Burke, there is an oversight of the largest practical importance. But the general and partisan use of these terms superadds to this *πρωτον Ψευδος* a second which is more flagrant. It is this: the terms Whig or Tory,

used by partisans, are taken extra gradum, as expressing the ideal or extreme cases of the several creeds; whereas, in actual life, few such cases are found realized, by far the major part of those who answer to either one or the other denomination making only an approximation (differing by infinite degrees) to the ideal or abstract type. A third error there is, relating to the actual extent of the several denominations, even after every allowance made for the faintest approximations. Listen to a Whig, or to a Tory, and you will suppose that the great bulk of society range under his banner: all, at least, who have any property at stake. Listen to a Radical, and you will suppose that all are marshalled in the same ranks with himself, unless those who have some private interest in existing abuses, or have aristocratic privileges to defend. Yet, upon going extensively into society as it is, you find that a vast majority of good citizens are of no party whatsoever, own no party designation, care for no party interest, but carry their good wishes by turns to men of every party, according to the momentary purpose they are pursuing. As to Whig and Tory, it is pretty clear that only two classes of men, both of limited extent, acknowledge these as their distinctions; first, those who make politics in some measure their profession or trade — whether by standing forward habitually in public meetings as leaders or as assistants, or by writing books and pamphlets in the same cause; secondly, those whose rank, or birth, or position in a city, or a rural district, almost pledge them to a share in the political struggles of the day, under the penalty of being held fainéans, truants, or even malignant recusants, if they should decline a warfare which often, perhaps, they do not love in secret. These classes, which, after all, are not numerous, and not entirely sincere, compose the whole extent of professing Whigs and Tories who make any approach to the standards of their two churches; and, generally speaking, these persons have succeeded to their politics and their party ties, as they have to their estates, viz. by inheritance. Not their way of thinking in politics has dictated their party connections; but these connections, traditionally bequeathed from one generation to another, have dictated their politics.

With respect to the Radical or the Reformer, the case is otherwise; for, it is certain, that in this, as in every great and enlightened nation, enjoying an intense and fervid communication of thought through the press, there is, and must be, a tendency widely diffused to the principles of sane reform — an anxiety to probe and examine all the institutions of the land

by the increasing lights of the age — and a salutary determination that no acknowledged abuse shall be sheltered by prescription, or privileged by its antiquity. In saying, therefore, that his principles are spread over the length and breadth of the land, the Reformer says no more than the truth. Whig and Tory, as usually understood, express only two modes of aristocratic partisanship, and it is strange, indeed, to find people deluded by the notion that the reforming principle has any more natural connection with the first than the last. Reformer, on the other hand, to a certain extent expresses the political creed and aspect of almost every enlightened citizen: but, then, how? Not as the Radical would insinuate, as pledging a man to a specific set of objects, or to any visible and apparent party, having known leaders and settled modes of action. British society, in its large majority, may be fairly described as Reformers, in the sense of being favourably disposed to a general spirit of ventilation and reform carried through all departments of public business, political or judicial; but it is so far from being, therefore, true that men, in general, are favourably disposed to any known party, in or out of Parliament, united for certain objects and by certain leaders, that, on the contrary, this reforming party itself has no fixed unity, and no generally acknowledged heads. It is divided both as to persons and as to things: the ends to be pursued create as many schisms, as the course of means proper for the pursuit, and the choice of agents for conducting the public wishes. In fact, it would be even more difficult to lay down the ideal standard of a Reformer, or his abstract creed, than of a Tory: and supposing this done, it would be found, in practice, that the imperfect approximations to the pure faith would differ by even broader shades, as regarded the reforming creed, than as regarded that of the rigorous or ultra Tory.

With respect to Mr. Coleridge, he was certainly a friend to all enlightened reforms; he was a friend, for example, to Reform in Parliament. Sensible, as he was, of the prodigious diffusion of knowledge and good sense amongst the classes immediately below the gentry in British society, he could not but acknowledge their right to a larger and a less indirect share of political influence. As to the plan, and its extent, and its particular provisions, upon those he hesitated and wavered; as other friends to the same views have done, and will continue to do. The only avowed objects of modern Reformers which he would strenuously have opposed, nay, would have opposed with the zeal of an ancient martyr, are those which respect the Church

of England, and, therefore, most of those which respect the two Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. There he would have been found in the first ranks of the Anti-Reformers. He would also have supported the House of Peers as the tried bulwark of our social interests in many a famous struggle, and sometimes, in the hour of need, the sole barrier against despotic aggressions on the one hand, and servile submissions on the other. Moreover, he looked with favour upon many modes of aristocratic influence as balances to new-made commercial wealth, and to a far baser tyranny likely to arise from that quarter when unbalanced. But allowing for these points of difference, I know of little else stamped with the general seal of modern reform, and claiming to be a privileged object for a national effort, which would not have had his countenance. It is true, and this I am sensible will be objected, that his party connections were chiefly with the Tories; and it adds a seeming strength to this objection, that these connections were not those of accident, nor those which he inherited, nor those of his youthful choice. They were sought out by himself, and in his maturer years; or else they were such as sought him for the sake of his political principles; and equally in either case, they argued some affinity in his political creed. This much cannot be denied. But one consideration will serve greatly to qualify the inference from these facts. In those years when Mr. Coleridge became connected with Tories, what was the predominating and cardinal principal of Toryism, in comparison with which all else was willingly slighted? Circumstances of position had thrown upon the Tories the onus of a great national struggle, the greatest which history anywhere records, and with an enemy the most deadly. The Whigs were then out of power: they were, therefore, in opposition; and that one fact, the simple fact, of holding an anti-ministerial position, they allowed by a most fatal blunder, to determine the course of their foreign politics. Napoleon was to be cherished simply because he was a thorn in Mr. Pitt's side. So began their foreign policy — and in that pettiest of personal views. Because they were anti-ministerial, they allowed themselves passively to become anti-national. To be a Whig, therefore, in those days, implied little more than a strenuous opposition to foreign war — to be a Tory, pledged a man to little more than war with Napoleon Bonaparte.

And this view of our foreign relations it was that connected Coleridge with the Tories, a view which arose upon no motives of selfish interest, (as too often has been said in reproach,) but

upon the changes wrought in the spirit of the French Republic, which gradually transmuted its defensive warfare (framed originally to meet a conspiracy of kings crusading against the new-born democracy of French institutions, whilst yet in their cradle) into a warfare of aggression and sanguinary ambition. The military strength evoked in France by the madness of European kings, had taught her the secret of her own power — a secret too dangerous for a nation of vanity so infinite, and so feeble in all means of moral self-restraint. The temptation to foreign conquest was too strong for the national principles; and, in this way, all that had been grand and pure in the early pretensions of French Republicanism rapidly melted away before the common bribes of vulgar ambition. Unoffending states, such as Switzerland, were the first to be trampled under foot; no voice was heard any more but the brazen throat of war; and after all that had been vaunted of a golden age, and a long career opened to the sceptre of pure political justice, the clouds gathered more gloomily than ever; and the sword was once more reinstated, as the sole arbiter of right, with less disguise and less reserve than under the vilest despotism of kings. The change was in the French Republicans, not in their foreign admirers; they, in mere consistency, were compelled into corresponding changes, and into final alienation of sympathy, as they beheld, one after one, all titles forfeited, by which that grand explosion of pure democracy had originally challenged and sustained their veneration. The mighty Republic had now begun to revolve through those fierce transmigrations foreseen by Burke, to every one of which, by turns, he had denounced an inevitable “purification by fire and blood:” no trace remained of her primitive character: and of that awful outbreak of popular might, which once had made France the land of hope and promise to the whole human race, and had sounded a knell to every form of oppression or abuse, no record was to be found, except in the stupendous power which cemented its martial oligarchy. Of the people, of the democracy — or that it had ever for an hour been roused from its slumbers — one sole evidence remained; and that lay in the blank power of destruction, and its perfect organization, which none but a popular movement, no power short of that, could have created. The people having been unchained, and, as if for the single purpose of creating a vast system of destroying energies, had them immediately recoiled within their old limits, and themselves become the earliest victim of their own statocracy. In this way France had become an object of

jealousy and alarm. It remained to see to what purpose she would apply her new energies. That was soon settled; her new-born power was wielded from the first by unprincipled and by ambitious men; and, in 1800, it fell under the permanent control of an autocrat, whose unity of purpose, and iron will, left no room for any hope of change.

Under these circumstances, under these prospects, coupled with this retrospect, what became the duty of all foreign politicians? of the English above all, as natural leaders in any hopeful scheme of resistance? The question can scarcely be put with decency. Time and season, place or considerations of party, all alike vanished before an elementary duty to the human race, which much transcended any duty of exclusive patriotism. Plant it, however, on that narrower basis, and the answer would have been the same for all centuries, and for every land under a corresponding state of circumstances. Of Napoleon's real purposes there cannot now be any reasonable doubt. His confessions — and, in particular, his indirect revelations at St. Helena — have long since removed all demurs or scruples of scepticism. For England, therefore, as in relation to a man bent upon her ruin, all distinctions of party were annihilated — Whig and Tory were merged and swallowed up in the transcendent duties of patriots — Englishmen — lovers of liberty. Tories, as Tories, had here no peculiar or separate duties — none which belonged to their separate creed in politics. Their duties were paramount; and their partisanship had here no application — was perfectly indifferent, and spoke neither this way nor that. In one respect only they had peculiar duties, and a peculiar responsibility; peculiar, however, not by any difference of quality, but in its supreme degree; the same duties which belonged to all, belonged to them by a heavier responsibility. And how, or why? Not as Tories had they, or could they have any functions at all applying to this occasion; it was as being then the ministerial party, as the party accidentally in power at the particular crisis: in that character it was that they had any separate or higher degree of responsibility; otherwise, and as to the kind of their duty apart from this degree, the Tories stood in the same circumstances as men of all other parties. To the Tories, however, as accidentally in possession of the supreme power, and wielding the national forces at that time, and directing their application — to them it was that the honour belonged of making a beginning: on them had devolved the privilege of opening and authorizing the dread crusade. How and in what spirit they acquitted

themselves of that most enviable task——enviable for its sanctity — fearful for the difficulty of its adequate fulfilment — how they persevered — and whether, at any crisis, the direst and most ominous to the righteous cause, they faltered or gave sign of retreating — history will tell — history has already told.

To the Whigs belonged the duty of seconding their old antagonists: and no wise man could have doubted, that, in a case of transcendent patriotism where none of those principles could possibly apply, by which the two parties were divided and distinguished, the Whigs could be anxious to show that, for the interests of their common country, they could cheerfully lay aside all those party distinctions, and forget those feuds which now had no pertinence or meaning. Simply as Whigs, had they stood in no other relation, they probably would have done so. Unfortunately, however, for their own good name and popularity in after times, they were divided from the other party, not merely as Whigs opposed to Tories, but also upon another and a more mortifying distinction, which was not, like the first, a mere inert question of speculation or theory, but involved a vast practical difference of honours and emoluments: — they were divided, I say, on another and more vexatious principle, as the “Outs” opposed to the “Ins.” Simply as Whigs, they might have coalesced with the Tories quoad hoc, and merely for this one purpose. But as men out of power, they could not coalesce with those who were in. They constituted “his Majesty’s Opposition;” and, in a fatal hour, they determined that it was fitting to carry on their general scheme of hostility even into this sacred and privileged ground. That resolution once taken, they found it necessary to pursue it with zeal. The case itself was too weighty and too interesting to allow of any moderate tone for the abettors or opposers. Passion and personal bitterness soon animated the contest: violent and rash predictions were hazarded — prophecies of utter ruin and of captivity for our whole army were solemnly delivered: and it soon became evident, as indeed mere human infirmity made it beforehand but too probable, that where so much personal credit was at stake upon the side of our own national dishonour, the wishes of the prophet had been pledged to the same result as the credit of his political sagacity. Many were the melancholy illustrations of the same general case. Men were seen fighting against the evidences of some great British victory with all the bitterness and fierce incredulity which usually meet the first rumours of some private calamity: that was in effect the aspect in their eyes of each national tri-

umph in its turn. Their position, connected with the unfortunate election made by the Whig leaders of their tone, from the very opening of the contest, gave the character of a calamity for them and for their party, to that which to every other heart in Britain was the noblest of triumphs in the noblest of causes; and, as a party, the Whigs mourned for years over those events which quickened the pulses of pleasure and sacred exultation in every other heart. God forbid that all Whigs should have felt in this unnatural way! I speak only of the tone set by the Parliamentary leaders. The few who were in Parliament, and exposed to daily taunts from the just exultation of their irritated opponents, had their natural feelings poisoned and envenomed. The many who were out of Parliament, and not personally interested in this warfare of the Houses, were left open to natural influences of patriotic pride, and to the contagion of public sympathy: and these, though Whigs, felt as became them.

These are things too unnatural to be easily believed; or, in a land where the force of partisanship is less, to be easily understood. Being true, however, they ought not to be forgotten: and at present it is almost necessary that they should be stated for the justification of Coleridge. Too much has been written upon this part of his life, and too many reproaches thrown out upon his levity or his want of principle in his supposed sacrifice of his early political connections, to make it possible for any reverencer of Coleridge's memory to pass over the case without a full explanation. That explanation is involved in the strange and scandalous conduct of the Parliamentary Whigs. Coleridge passed over to the Tories only in that sense in which all patriots did so at that time, and in relation to our great foreign interest—viz. by refusing to accompany the Whigs in their almost perfidious demeanour towards Napoleon Bonaparte. Anti-ministerial they affect to style their policy, but in the most eminent sense it was anti-national. It was thus far—viz. exclusively, or almost exclusively, in relation to our great feud with Napoleon—that Coleridge adhered to the Tories. But because this feud was so capital and so earth-shaking a quarrel, that it occupied all hearts and all the councils of Christendom, suffering no other question almost to live in its neighbourhood, hence it happened that he who acceded to the Tories in this one chapter of their policy, was regarded as an ally in the most general sense. Domestic politics were then, in fact, forgotten; no question, in any proper sense a Tory one, ever arose in that era; or, if it had, the public atten-

tion would not have settled upon it; and it would speedily have been dismissed.

Hence I deduce as a possibility, and, from my knowledge of Coleridge, I deduce it as a fact, that his adhesion to the Tories was bounded by his approbation of their foreign policy; and even of that — rarely in its executive details, rarely even in its military plans, (for these he assailed with more keenness of criticism than to me the case seemed to justify,) but solely in its animating principle — its moving and sustaining force, viz. the doctrine and entire faith that Napoleon Bonaparte ought to be resisted, was not a proper object of diplomacy or negotiation, and could be resisted hopefully and triumphantly. Thus far he went along with the Tories: in all else he belonged quite as much to other parties — so far as he belonged to any. And that he did not follow any bias of private interest in connecting himself with Tories, or rather in allowing Tories to connect themselves with him, appears (rather more indeed than it ought to have appeared) on the very surface of his life. From Tory munificence he drew nothing at all, unless it should be imputed to his Tory connections that George IV selected him for one of his academicians. But this slight mark of royal favour, he owed, I believe, to other considerations; and I have reason to think that this way of treating political questions, so wide of dogmatism, and laying open so vast a field to scepticism that might else have gone unregarded, must have been held as evidence of too latitudinarian a creed to justify a title to Toryism. And, upon the whole, I am of opinion, that few events of Mr. Coleridge's life were better calculated to place his disinterested pursuit of truth in a luminous aspect. In fact, his carelessness of all worldly interests was too notorious to leave him open to suspicions of that nature: nor was this carelessness kept within such limits as to be altogether meritorious. There is no doubt that his indolence concurred, in some degree, to that line of conduct and to that political reserve which would, at all events, have been pursued, in a degree beyond what honour the severest, or delicacy the most nervous, could have enjoined.

It is a singular anecdote, after all, to report of Coleridge, who incurred the reproach of having ratted solely by his inability to follow the friends of his early days into what his heart regarded as a monstrous and signal breach of patriotism, that in any eminent sense he was not a patriot. His understanding in this, as in many instances, was too active, too restless for any abiding feelings to lay hold of him, unless when

they coincided with some palpable command of nature. Parental love, for instance, was too holy a thing to be submitted for an instant to any scrutiny or any jealousy of his hair-splitting understanding. But it must be something as sacred and as profound as that which with Coleridge could long support the endless attrition of his too active intellect. In this instance, he had the same defect, derived in part from the same cause, as a contemporary, one of the idols of the day, more celebrated, and more widely celebrated, than Coleridge, but far his inferior in power and compass of intellect. I speak of Goethe: he also was defective, and defective under far stronger provocations and excitement, in patriotic feeling. He cared little for Weimar — and less for Germany. And he was, thus far, much below Coleridge — that the passion, which he could not feel, Coleridge yet obliged himself practically to obey in all things which concerned the world; whereas, Goethe disowned this passion equally in his acts — his words — and his writings. Both are now gone — Goethe and Coleridge; both are honoured by those who knew them, and by multitudes who did not. But the honours of Coleridge are perennial, and will annually grow more verdant; whilst from those of Goethe every generation will see something fall away, until posterity will wonder at the subverted idol, whose basis being hollow and unsound, will leave the worship of their fathers an enigma to their descendants.

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

I

IN 1807 it was, at the beginning of winter, that I first saw William Wordsworth. I have already mentioned that I had introduced myself to his notice by letter as early as the spring of 1803. To this hour it has continued, I believe, a mystery to Wordsworth, why it was that I suffered an interval of four and a half years to slip away before availing myself of the standing invitation with which I had been honoured to the poet's house. Very probably he accounted for this delay by supposing that the new-born liberty of an Oxford life, with its multiplied enjoyments, acting upon a boy just emancipated from the restraints of a school, and, in one hour, elevated into what we Oxonians so proudly and so exclusively¹ denominate a "man," might have tempted me into pursuits alien from the pure intellectual passions which had so powerfully mastered my youthful heart some years before. Extinguished such a passion could not be; nor could he think, if remembering the fervour with which I had expressed it, the sort of "nympholepsy" which had seized upon me, and which, in some imperfect way, I had avowed with reference to the very origin of lakes and mountains, amongst which the scenery of this most original poetry had chiefly grown up and moved. The very names of the ancient hills—Fairfield, Seat Sandal, Helvellyn, Blencathara; Glaramara; of the sequestered glens—such as Borrowdale, Martindale, Mardale, Wasdale, and Ennerdale; but, above all, the shy pastoral recesses, not gairishly in the world's eye, like Windermere, or Derwentwater, but lurking half unknown to the traveller of that day—Grasmere, for instance, the lovely abode of the poet himself, solitary, and yet sowed, as it were, with a thin diffusion of humble dwellings—here a scattering, and there a clustering, as in the starry heavens—sufficient to afford, at every turn and angle, human remembrances and memorials of time-honoured affections, or of passions, (as the "Churchyard amongst the Mountains" will amply demonstrate)—not wanting even in scenic and tragical inter-

est:— these were so many local spells upon me, equally poetic and elevating with the Miltonic names of Valdarno and Val-lombrosa, whilst, in addition to that part of their power, they had a separate fascination, under the anticipation that very probably I might here form personal ties which would forever connect me with their sweet solitudes by powers deep as life and awful as death.

Oh! sense of mysterious pre-existence, by which, through years in which as yet a stranger to these valleys of Westmoreland, I viewed myself as a phantom-self—a second identity projected from my own consciousness, and already living amongst them!—how was it, and by what prophetic instinct, that already I said to myself oftentimes, when chasing day-dreams along the pictures of these wild mountainous labyrinths, which as yet I had not traversed— Here, in some distant year, I shall be shaken with love, and there with stormiest grief?— whence was it that sudden revelations came upon me, like the drawing-up of a curtain, and closing again as rapidly, of scenes that made the future heaven of my life?—and how was it that in thought I was and yet in reality was not a denizen, already, in 1803, 1804, 1805, of lakes and forest lawns which I never saw till 1807?—and that, by a prophetic instinct of the heart, I rehearsed and lived over, as it were, in vision, those chapters of my life which have carried with them the weightiest burthen of joy and sorrow, and by the margin of those very lakes and hills with which I prefigured this connection?—and, in short, that for me, by a transcendent privilege, during the novitiate of my life, most truly I might say

“ In to-day already walked to-morrow? ”

Deep are the voices which seem to call, deep is the lesson which would be taught even to the most thoughtless of men, by “any gladsome field of earth” which he may chance to traverse, if (according to the supposition² of Wordsworth) that field, so gay to him,

“ Show to his eye an image of the pangs
Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod.”

But, if this recall of the real be affecting, much more so to me is this aerial and shadowy anticipation of the future, when looked back upon from far distance through a multitude of years, and when confirmed for the great outlines of its sketches by the impassioned experience of life. Why I should have

done so, I can hardly say; but that I did — even before I had visited Grasmere, and whilst it was almost certain, from the sort of channel in which my life seemed destined to flow, that London would be the central region of my hopes and fears — even then I turned to Grasmere and its dependencies as knit up, in some way as yet unknown, with my future destinies. Of this, were it not that it would wear a superstitious air, I could mention a very memorable proof from the records of my life in 1804, full three and a half years before I saw Grasmere. However, I allude to that fact in this place by way of showing that Oxford had not weaned my thoughts from the northern mountains and their great inhabitants; and that my delay was due to anything rather than to waning interest. On the contrary, the real cause of my delay was the too great profundity, and the increasing profundity, of my interest in this regeneration of our national poetry; and the increasing awe, in due proportion to the decaying thoughtlessness of boyhood, which possessed me for the character of its author. So far from neglecting Wordsworth, it is a fact (and Professor Wilson — who, without knowing me in those or for many subsequent years, shared my feelings towards both the poetry and the poet — has a story of his own experience, somewhat similar, to report) — it is a fact, I say, that twice I had undertaken a long journey expressly for the purpose of paying my respects to Wordsworth: twice I came so far as the little rustic inn (at that time the sole inn of the neighbourhood) at Church Coniston — the village which stands at the north-western angle of Coniston Water; and on neither occasion could I summon confidence enough to present myself before him. It was not that I had any want of proper boldness for facing the most numerous company of a mixed or ordinary character: reserved indeed I was, and too much so, perhaps even shy — from the character of my mind, so profoundly meditative, and the character of my life, so profoundly sequestered: but still, from counteracting causes, I was not deficient in a reasonable self-confidence towards the world generally. But the very image of Wordsworth, as I prefigured it to my own planet-struck eye, crushed my faculties as before Elijah or St. Paul. Twice, as I have said, did I advance as far as the Lake of Coniston, which is about eight miles from the church of Grasmere, and once I absolutely went forwards from Coniston to the very gorge of Hammerscar, from which the whole vale of Grasmere suddenly breaks upon the view in a style of almost theatrical surprise, with its lovely valley stretching in the distance, the lake

lying immediately below, with its solemn boat-like island of five acres in size, seemingly floating on the surface; its exquisite outline on the opposite shore, revealing all its little bays³ and wide sylvan margin, feathered to the edge with wild flowers and ferns. In one quarter, a little wood, stretching for about half a mile towards the outlet of the lake, more directly in opposition to the spectator; a few green fields; and beyond them, just two bowshots from the water, a little white cottage gleaming from the midst of trees with a vast and seemingly never-ending series of ascents, rising above it to the height of more than three thousand feet. That little cottage was Wordsworth's from the time of his marriage, and earlier — in fact, from the beginning of the century to the year 1808. Afterwards, for many a year, it was mine. Catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Coniston, and so to Oxford, *re infecta*.

This was in 1806. And thus far, from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth, I had, for nearly five years, shrunk from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven, I longed. These, the reader will say, were foolish feelings. Why, yes; perhaps they were; but they had a laudable foundation; for I carried my modesty to a laughable excess undoubtedly; but yet it was modesty which co-operated with other feelings to produce my foolish panic. I had lived in profounder solitude than can have fallen to the lot of many people, which arose from the unusual defect of sympathy I found in all around me; and this solitude gave a preternatural depth to my master feelings, which originally were deep enough, and, to speak phrenologically, the organ of veneration must have received an inordinate development in my case. However, say what one can for it, no doubt my conduct was very absurd; and I began to think so myself. I fancied continually a plain, honest, old relative saying to me — "Let the man be a god even, he will show himself very little of a good one if he is not satisfied with a devotion such as yours. You offer him almost a blamable adoration. What more can he require? And if more he does require, hang me if I wouldn't think myself too good for any man's scorn; and, after one trial of it, I would wish him good morning for ever." Still I witnessed a case where a kind of idol had, after all, rejected an idolator that did not offer a splendid triumph to his pride; and with the additional cruelty of slighting this worshipper in behalf of one more brilliant, who seemed

in great doubt whether he should admire or not. And, although I thought better of Mr. Wordsworth's moral nature than to suppose it possible for him to err in this extent, or even with this kind of insolence, yet I could not reconcile myself to the place of an humble admirer, valued, perhaps, for the right direction of his feelings, but practically neglected in behalf of some more gifted companion, who might have the power (which much I feared that I should never have) of talking to him on something like equal terms, as respected the laws and principles of poetry. I could bear well enough to be undervalued, or evenly openly scorned; for, said I to myself, it is the lot of every man in this world to be scorned by somebody; and also, to balance that misfortune, every man has a chance of one worshipper. "I," says Sir Andrew Aguecheek—"I was adored once." Yes, even Aguecheek had his one and there is not that immeasurable fool in this world, but that (according to La Fontaine's consolatory doctrine) he has a fair chance for finding "un plus grand sot que lui-même."

But with all this equanimity in my expectation and demands, philosophically as I could have reconciled myself to contempt, there was a limit. People there were in this world whose respect I could not dispense with: people also there have been in this world (alas! alas!) whose love was to me no less indispensable. Have it I must, or life would have had no value in my eyes. Was I then so deficient in conversational power that I could not hope to acquit myself respectably? In that respect, it is a singularity in which (if I may presume, even for a defect, to compare myself with so great a man) I resembled Wordsworth—namely, that in early youth I laboured under a peculiar embarrassment and penury of words, when I sought to convey my thoughts adequately upon interesting subjects: neither was it words only that I wanted: but I could not unravel, I could not even make perfectly conscious to myself, or properly arrange the subsidiary thoughts into which one leading thought often radiates; or, at least, I could not do this with anything like the rapidity requisite for conversation. I laboured like a Sybil instinct with the burden of prophetic woe, as often as I found myself dealing with any topic in which the understanding combined with deep feelings to suggest mixed and tangled thoughts: and thus partly—partly also from my invincible habit of reverie—at that era of my life, I had a most distinguished talent 'pour le silence.' Wordsworth, from something of the same causes, suffered (by his own report to myself) at the same age from pretty much the same infirmity.

And yet, in more advanced years — probably about twenty-eight or thirty — both of us acquired a remarkable fluency in the art of unfolding our thoughts colloquially. However, at that period my deficiencies were what I have described. And after all, though I had no absolute cause for anticipating contempt, I was so far right in my fears, that since that time I have had occasion to perceive a worldly tone of sentiment in Wordsworth, not less than in Mrs. Hannah More and other literary people, by which they were led to set a higher value upon a limited respect from a person high in the world's esteem, than upon the most lavish spirit of devotion from an obscure quarter. Now, in that point, my feelings are far otherwise; and, though it is praising myself to say so, yet say it I must, because it is mere truth — that, if a fool were so far to honour me as to profess, in Sir Andrew Aguecheek's phrase, even to "adore" me — yes, though it were Sir Andrew himself — I should say, "My poor fool! thy adoration will do me but little good in this world; yet, to know that thy whole heart's wealth is given up to me, that forces me to value thy homage more than I would that of Solomon in all his glory."

Meantime, the world went on; events kept moving; and, amongst them, in the course of 1807, occurred the event of Mr. Coleridge's return to England from his official station in the Governor's family at Malta; my introduction to his acquaintance at Bridgewater, where he was then (summer of 1807) visiting, together with his family, amongst old Somersetshire friends; his subsequent journey to Bristol, near which (at the Hot Wells) I was then staying with a female relation; and, finally, upon discovering that he was anxious to put his wife and children under some friendly escort, on their return homewards to Keswick, (he himself being summoned to execute an engagement to lecture at the Royal Institution during the coming winter,) I offered to unite with Mrs. Coleridge in a post-chaise to the north. My offer was readily accepted, and, at the latter end of October, we set forwards — Mrs. Coleridge, viz. with her two surviving sons — Hartley, aged nine, the oldest; Derwent, about seven — her beautiful little daughter,⁴ about five; and finally, myself. Going by the direct route through Gloucester, Bridgewater, etc., on the third day we reached Liverpool, where I took up my quarters at a hotel, whilst Mrs. Coleridge paid a visit of a few days to a very interesting family, friends of Southey. These were the Misses Koster, daughters of an English gold merchant of celebrity, who had recently quitted Portugal on the approach of the

French army under Junot. Mr. Koster did me the honour to call at my quarters, and invite me to his house; an invitation which I very readily accepted, and had thus an opportunity of becoming acquainted with a family the most accomplished I had ever known. At dinner, there appeared only the family party, several daughters, and one son, a fine young man of twenty, but who was consciously dying of asthma. Mr. Koster, the head of the family, was distinguished for his good sense and practical information; but, in Liverpool, still more so by his eccentric and obstinate denial of certain notorious events; in particular, he denied that any such battle as Talavera had ever been fought, and had a large wager depending upon the result. His house was the resort of distinguished foreigners; and, on the first evening of my dining there, as well as afterwards, I there met, for the first time and for the last, that marvel of women, Madame Catalini. I had heard her repeatedly; but never before been near enough to see her smile and converse — even to be honoured with a smile myself. She and Lady Hamilton were the most effectively brilliant women I ever saw. However, on this occasion the Misses Koster outshone even la Catalini; to her they talked in the most fluent Italian; to some foreign men, in Portuguese; to one in French; and to most of the party in English; and each, by turns, seemed to be their native tongue. Nor did they shrink, even in the presence of the mighty enchantress and siren, from exhibiting their musical skill.

From Liverpool, after about a week's delay, we pursued our journey northwards. We had slept on the first day at Lancaster. Consequently, at the rate of motion which then prevailed throughout England — which, however, was rarely equalled on that road, where all things were in arrear by comparison with the eastern and southern roads of the kingdom — we naturally enough found ourselves about three o'clock in the afternoon, at Ambleside, fourteen miles to the north of Kendal, and thirty-six from our sleeping quarters. There, for the last time, we stopped to change horses, a ceremony which then took half an hour; and, about four o'clock, we found ourselves on the summit of the White Moss, a hill which rises between the second and third mile-stones on the stage from Ambleside to Keswick, and which then retarded the traveller's advance by a full fifteen minutes, but is now evaded by a lower line of road. In ascending this hill, from weariness of moving so slowly, I, with the two Coleridges, had alighted; and, as we all chose to stretch our legs by running down the hill, we had left the chaise behind

us, and had even lost the sound of the wheels at times, when all at once we came, at an abrupt turn of the road, in sight of a white cottage, with two solemn yew-trees breaking the glare of its white walls. A sudden shock seized me on recognizing this cottage, of which, in the previous year, I had gained a momentary glimpse from Hammerscar, on the opposite side of the lake. I paused, and felt my old panic returning upon me; but just then, as if to take away all doubt upon the subject, I saw Hartley Coleridge, who had gained upon me considerably during my pause of hesitation, suddenly turn in at a garden gate; and, just then, the chaise, which had been rattling furiously down the descent, according to the invariable practice of Westmoreland drivers, (for in Westmoreland they never lock down the steepest descents, and therefore rightly keep up their horses at a flying gallop,) suddenly turned a corner of the road and came into sight: at the same moment Mrs. Coleridge waved her hand from one of the front windows; and the direction of this motion to the right, at once confirmed me in my belief that here at last we had reached our port; that this little cottage was tenanted by that man whom, of all the men from the beginning of time, I most fervently desired to see; that, in less than a minute, I should meet Wordsworth face to face. Coleridge was of opinion that, if a man were really and consciously to see an apparition—supposing, I mean, the case to be a physical possibility that a spiritual essence should be liable to the action of material organs—in such circumstances death would be the inevitable result; and, if so, the wish which we hear so commonly expressed for such experience is as thoughtless as that of Semele in the Grecian mythology, so natural in a female, that her lover should visit her en grand costume, and “with his tail on”—presumptuous ambition, that unexpectedly wrought its own ruinous chastisement! Judged by Coleridge’s test, my situation could not have been so terrific as his who anticipates a ghost—for, certainly, I survived this meeting; but, at that instant, it seemed pretty much the same to my own feelings.

Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself; now, however, I did tremble; and I forgot, what in no other circumstances I could have forgotten, to stop for the coming up of the chaise, that I might be ready to hand Mrs. Coleridge out. Had Charlemagne and all his Peerage been behind me, or Cæsar and his equipage, or Death on his

pale horse, I should have forgotten them at that moment of intense expectation, and of eyes fascinated to what lay before me, or what might in a moment appear. Through the little gate I pressed forward; ten steps beyond it lay the principal door of the house. To this, no longer clearly conscious of my own feelings, I passed on rapidly; I heard a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightning, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with the most cordial manner, and the warmest expression of friendly welcome, that it is possible to imagine. The chaise, however, drawing up to the gate at that moment, he (and there needed no Roman nomenclator, to tell me that this he, the owner of this noble countenance, was Wordsworth,) felt himself summoned as master of the hospitalities on the occasion, to advance and receive Mrs. Coleridge. I, therefore, stunned almost with the actual accomplishment of a catastrophe so long anticipated and so long postponed, mechanically went forward into the house. A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; very prettily wainscoted from the floor to the ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly embellished with carving. One window there was — a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered, at almost every season of the year, with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jessamine and other fragrant shrubs. From the exuberant luxuriance of the vegetation around it, and from the dark hue of the wainscoting, this window, though tolerably large, did not furnish a very powerful light to one who entered from the open air. However, I saw sufficiently to be aware of two ladies just entering the room, from a doorway opening upon a little staircase. The foremost, a tall young woman, with the most winning expression of benignity upon her features that I had ever beheld, made a slight curtsey, and advanced to me, presenting her hand with so frank an air that all embarrassment must have fled in a moment, before the native goodness of her manner. This was Mrs. Wordsworth, cousin of the poet; and, for the last five years or more, his wife. She was now mother of two children, a son and a daughter; and she furnished a remarkable proof how possible it is for a woman neither handsome nor even comely, according to the rigour of criticism — nay, generally pronounced very plain — to exercise all the practical power and fascination of beauty, through the mere

compensatory charms of sweetness all but angelic, of simplicity the most entire, womanly self-respect, and purity of heart speaking through all her looks, acts, and movements. Words, I was going to have added; but her words were few. In reality, she talked so little, that Mr. Slave-Trade Clarkson used to say of her that she could only say "God bless you!" Certainly her intellect was not of an active order; but, in a quiescent, reposing, meditative way, she appeared always to have a genial enjoyment from her own thoughts; and it would have been strange indeed if she, who enjoyed such eminent advantages of training, from the daily society of her husband and his sister, not only hearing the best parts of English literature daily read, or quoted by short fragments, but also hearing them very often critically discussed in a style of great originality and truth, and by the light of strong poetic feeling — strange it would have been had any person, though dull as the weeds of Lethe in the native constitution of his mind, failed to acquire some power of judging for himself, and putting forth some functions of activity. But undoubtedly that was not her element: to feel and to enjoy in a luxurious repose of mind — there was her forte and her peculiar privilege; and how much better this was adapted to her husband's taste; how much more adapted to uphold the comfort of his daily life, than a blue-stocking loquacity, or even a legitimate talent for discussion and analytic skill, may be inferred from his celebrated verses, beginning

"She was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;"

and ending with this matchless winding up of an intellectual homage, involving a description of an almost ideal wife

"A perfect woman, nobly plann'd
To warn, to comfort, to command;
And yet"—

going back to a previous thought, and resuming a leading impression of the whole character

"And yet a spirit too, and bright
With something of an angel light."

From these verses, I say, it may be inferred what were the qualities which won Wordsworth's admiration in a wife; for these verses were written upon Mary Hutchinson, his own cousin, and his wife; and not written, as Coleridge's moveable verses upon "Sara," for some forgotten original Sara, and sub-

sequently transferred to every other Sara who came across his path. Once for all,⁵ these exquisite lines were dedicated to Mrs. Wordsworth; were understood to describe her — to have been prompted by the feminine graces of her character; hers they are, and will remain forever. To these, therefore, I may refer the reader for an idea, by infinite degrees more powerful and vivid than I could give him, of what was most important in the partner and second self of the poet. And I shall add to this abstract of her moral portrait these few concluding traits of her appearance in a physical sense. She was tall — that I have already said; her figure was good — except that, for my taste, it was rather too slender, and so it always continued. In complexion she was fair; and there was something peculiarly pleasing even in this accident of the skin, for it was accompanied by an animated expression of health, a blessing which, in fact, she possessed uninterruptedly, very pleasing in itself, and also a powerful auxiliary of that smiling benignity which constituted the greatest attraction of her person. “Her eyes” — the reader may already know — “her eyes” —

“ Like stars of twilight fair;
Like twilight, too, her dark brown hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn.”

But strange it is to tell that, in these eyes of vesper gentleness, there was a considerable obliquity of vision; and much beyond that slight obliquity which is often supposed to be an attractive foible of the countenance: and yet, though it ought to have been displeasing or repulsive, in fact it was not. Indeed all faults, had they been ten times more and greater, would have been swallowed up or neutralized by that supreme expression of her features, to the intense unity of which every lineament in the fixed parts, and every undulation in the moving parts, or play of her countenance, concurred — viz. a sunny benignity — a radiant gracefulness — such as in this world I never saw equalled or approached.

Here, then, the reader has a sketch of Mrs. Wordsworth. Immediately behind her, moved a lady, much shorter, much slighter, and perhaps, in all other respects, as different from her in personal characteristics as could have been wished, for the most effective contrast. “Her face was of Egyptian brown;” rarely, in a woman of English birth, had I seen a more determined gipsy tan. Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth’s, nor were they fierce or bold; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm

and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression by the irrepressible instincts of her temperament, and then immediately checked, in obedience to the decorum of her sex and age, and her maidenly condition, (for she had rejected all offers of marriage, out of pure sisterly regard to her brother and his children,) gave to her whole demeanour and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness. Even her very utterance and enunciation often, or rather generally, suffered in point of clearness and steadiness, from the agitation of her excessive organic sensibility, and, perhaps, from some morbid irritability of the nerves. At times, the self-counteraction and self-baffling of her feelings caused her even to stammer, and so determinately to stammer, that a stranger who should have seen her and quitted her in that state of feeling, would have certainly set her down for one plagued with that infirmity of speech, as distressingly as Charles Lamb himself. This was Miss Wordsworth, the only sister of the poet — his “Dorothy;” who naturally owed so much to the life-long intercourse with her great brother, in his most solitary and sequestered years; but, on the other hand, to whom he has acknowledged obligations of the profoundest nature; and, in particular, this mighty one, through which we also, the admirers and the worshippers through every age of this great poet, are become equally her debtors — that whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendencies, too stern — too austere — too much enamoured of an ascetic harsh sublimity, she it was — the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, and in the dim recesses of German charcoal-burners — that first couched his eye to the sense of beauty — humanized him by the gentler charities, and engrafted, with her delicate female touch, those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature, which have since clothed the forest of his genius with a foliage corresponding in loveliness and beauty to the strength of its boughs and the massiveness of its trunks. The greatest deductions from Miss Wordsworth’s attractions, and from the exceeding interest which surrounded her in right of her character, her history, and the relation which she fulfilled towards her brother, was the glancing quickness of her motions, and other circumstances in her deportment, (such as her stooping attitude when walking,) which gave an ungraceful, and even an unsexual character to

her appearance when out of doors. She did not cultivate the graces which preside over the person and its carriage. But, on the other hand, she was a person of very remarkable endowments intellectually; and, in addition to the other great services which she rendered to her brother, this I may mention, as greater than all the rest, and it was one which equally operated to the benefit of every casual companion in a walk — viz. the exceeding sympathy, always ready and always profound, by which she made all that one could tell her, all that one could describe, all that one could quote from a foreign author, reverberate as it were à plusieurs reprises, to one's own feelings by the manifest impression it made upon her. The pulses of light are not more quick or more inevitable in their flow and undulation, than were the answering and echoing movements of her sympathizing attention. Her knowledge of literature was irregular, and not systematically built up. She was content to be ignorant of many things; but what she knew and had really mastered, lay where it could not be disturbed — in the temper of her own most fervid heart. In whatever I say or shall say of Miss Wordsworth, the reader may understand me to have the entire sanction and concurrence of Professor Wilson. We both knew Miss Wordsworth well; and we heartily agreed in admiring her.

Such were the two ladies, who, with himself and two children, and at that time one servant, composed the poet's household. They were both somewhere about twenty-eight years old; and if the reader inquires about the single point which I have left untouched in their portraiture — viz. the style of their manners — I may say that it was in some points, naturally of a plain household simplicity, but every way pleasing, unaffected, and (as respects Mrs. Wordsworth) even dignified. Few persons had seen so little as this lady of the world. She had seen nothing of high life, for she had seen none at all. Consequently, she was unacquainted with the conventional modes of behaviour, prescribed in particular situations by high breeding. But, as these modes are little more than the product of dispassionate good sense, applied to the circumstances of the case, it is surprising how few deficiencies are perceptible, even to the most vigilant eye — or, at least, essential deficiencies — in the general demeanour of any unaffected young woman, acting habitually under a sense of sexual dignity, courtesy, pure tastes, and elegant enjoyments, assisted by the daily counsel and revision of a masculine intellect, in the person of a brother or a husband. Miss Wordsworth had seen most of life, and even

of good company; for she had lived, when quite a girl, under the protection of a near relation at Windsor, who was a personal favourite of the royal family, and especially of George III. Consequently she ought to have been the more polished of the two; and yet, from greater natural aptitudes for refinement of manner in her sister-in-law, and partly, perhaps, from her more quiet and subdued manner, Mrs. Wordsworth would have been pronounced the more ladylike person.

From the interest which attaches to every person so nearly connected as these two ladies with a great poet, I have allowed myself a larger latitude than else might have been justifiable in describing them. I now go on with my narrative:

I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little dining-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fire-place of this as his

“Half-kitchen and half-parlor fire,”

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and, in other respects, pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet's study and composing room; and so occasionally it was. But far oftener he both studied, as I found, and composed on the high road. I had not been two minutes at the fireside, when in came Wordsworth, returning from his friendly attentions to the travellers below, who, it seemed, had been over-persuaded by hospitable solicitations to stay for this night in Grasmere, and to make out the remaining thirteen miles of their road to Keswick on the following day. Wordsworth entered. And “what-like” — to use a Westmoreland, as well as a Scottish expression — “what-like” was Wordsworth? A reviewer in “Tait's Magazine,” in noticing some recent collection of literary portraits, gives it as his opinion that Charles Lamb's head was the finest amongst them. This remark may have been justified by the engraved portraits; but, certainly, the critic would have cancelled it had he seen the original heads — at least, had he seen them in youth or in maturity; for Charles Lamb bore age with less disadvantage to the intellectual expression of his appearance than Wordsworth, in whom a sanguine, or rather coarse complexion, (or rather not complexion, properly speaking, so much as texture of flesh,) has, of late years, usurped upon the original bronze-tint and finer skin; and this change of hue and change in the quality of skin, has been made fourfold more conspicuous, and more unfavourable in its general

effect, by the harsh contrast of grizzled hair which has displaced the original brown. No change in personal appearance can ever have been so unfortunate; for, generally speaking, whatever other disadvantages old age may bring along with it, one effect, at least, in male subjects, has a compensating tendency—that it removes any tone of vigour too harsh, and mitigates the expression of power too unsubdued. But, in Wordsworth, the effect of the change has been to substitute an air of animal vigour, or, at least, hardness, as if derived from constant exposure to the wind and weather, for the fine, sombre complexion which he once had, resembling that of a Venetian senator or a Spanish monk.

Here, however, in describing the personal appearance of Wordsworth, I go back, of course, to the point of time at which I am speaking. To begin with his figure:—Wordsworth was, upon the whole, not a well-made man. His legs were pointedly condemned by all the female connoisseurs in legs that ever I heard lecture upon that topic; not that they were bad in any way which would force itself upon your notice—there was no absolute deformity about them; and undoubtedly they had been serviceable legs beyond the average standard of human requisition; for I calculate, upon good data, that with these identical legs Wordsworth must have traversed a distance of 175 to 180,000 English miles—a mode of exertion which, to him, stood in the stead of wine, spirits, and all other stimulants whatsoever to the animal spirits; to which he has been indebted for a life of unclouded happiness, and we for much of what is most excellent in his writings. But, useful as they have proved themselves, the Wordsworthian legs were certainly not ornamental; and it was really a pity, as I agreed with a lady in thinking, that he had not another pair for evening dress parties—when no boots lend their friendly aid to masque our imperfections from the eyes of female rigourists—the *elegantes formarum spectatrices*. A sculptor would certainly have disapproved of their contour. But the worst part of Wordsworth's person was the bust: there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulders which became striking, and had an effect of meanness when brought into close juxtaposition with a figure of a most statuesque order. Once on a summer morning, walking in the vale of Langdale with Wordsworth, his sister, and Mr. J——, a native Westmoreland clergyman, I remember that Miss Wordsworth was positively mortified by the peculiar illustration which settled upon this defective conformation. Mr. J——, a fine towering figure, six feet high,

massy and columnar in his proportions, happened to be walking, a little in advance, with Wordsworth; Miss Wordsworth and myself being in the rear; and from the nature of the conversation which then prevailed in our front rank, something or other about money, devises, buying and selling, we of the rear-guard thought it requisite to preserve this arrangement for a space of three miles or more; during which time, at intervals, Miss Wordsworth would exclaim, in a tone of vexation, "Is it possible?—can that be William? How very mean he looks!" and could not conceal a mortification that seemed really painful, until I for my part, could not forbear laughing outright at the serious interest which she carried into this trifle. She was, however, right, as regarded the mere visual judgment. Wordsworth's figure, with all its defects, was brought into powerful relief by one which had been cast in a more square and massy mould; and in such a case it impressed a spectator with a sense of absolute meanness, more especially when viewed from behind, and not counteracted by his countenance; and yet Wordsworth was of a good height, just five feet ten, and not a slender man; on the contrary, by the side of Southey his limbs looked thick, almost in a disproportionate degree. But the total effect of Wordsworth's person was always worst in a state of motion; for, according to the remark I have heard from many country people, "he walked like a cade"—a cade being some sort of insect which advances by an oblique motion. This was not always perceptible, and in part depended (I believe) upon the position of his arms; when either of these happened (as was very customary) to be inserted into the unbuttoned waistcoat, his walk had a wry or twisted appearance; and not appearance only—for I have known it, by slow degrees, gradually to edge off his companion from the middle to the side of the highroad.⁶ Meantime, his face—that was one which would have made amends for greater defects of figure; it was certainly the noblest for intellectual effects that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice. Many such, or even finer, I have seen amongst the portraits of Titian, and, in a later period, amongst those of Vandyke, from the great era of Charles I, as also from the court of Elizabeth and of Charles II; but none which has so much impressed me in my own time.

Haydon, the eminent painter, in his great picture of "Christ's Entry into Jerusalem," has introduced Wordsworth in the character of a disciple attending his Divine Master. This fact is well known, and as the picture itself is tolerably well known to

the public eye, there are multitudes now living who will have seen a very impressive likeness of Wordsworth — some consciously, some not suspecting it. There will, however, always be many who have not seen any portrait at all of Wordsworth; and therefore I will describe its general outline and effect. It was a face of the long order, often falsely classed as oval; but a greater mistake is made by many people in supposing the long face, which prevailed so remarkably in the Elizabethan and Carolinian periods, to have become extinct in our days. Miss Ferrier, in one of her brilliant novels, ("Marriage," I think,) makes a Highland girl protest that "no Englishman with his round face" shall ever wean her heart from her own country; but England is not the land of round faces — and those have observed little indeed who think so: France it is that grows the round face, and in so large a majority of her provinces, that it has become one of the national characteristics. And the remarkable impression which an Englishman receives from the prevalence of the eternal orb of the human countenance, proves of itself, without any conscious testimony, how the fact stands; in the blind sense of a monotony, in this respect not usual elsewhere, lies involved an argument that cannot be gainsaid. Besides receiving this evidence from positive experience, even upon an *à priori* argument, how is it possible that the long face so prevalent in England, by all confession, in certain splendid eras of our history, should have had time, in some five or six generations, to grow extinct? Again, the character of face varies essentially in different provinces. Wales has no connection in this respect with Devonshire, nor Kent with Yorkshire, nor either with Westmoreland. England, it is true, tends beyond all known examples to a general amalgamation of differences by means of its unrivalled freedom of intercourse. Yet even in England, law and necessity have opposed as yet such and so many obstacles to the free diffusion of labour, that every generation occupies by at least five-sixths of its numbers the ground of its ancestors.

The movable part of a population is chiefly the higher part; and it is the lower classes that, in every nation, compose the fundus, in which lies latent the national face as well as the national character. Each exists here in racy purity and integrity, not disturbed in the one by alien intermarriages, nor in the other by novelties of opinion or other casual effects derived from education and reading. Now, look into this fundus, and you will find, in many districts, no such prevalence of the round orbicular face as some people erroneously suppose: and in

Westmoreland especially, the ancient long face of the Elizabethan period, powerfully resembling in all its lineaments the ancient Roman face, and often (though not so uniformly) the face of northern Italy in modern times. The face of Sir Walter Scott, as Irving, the pulpit orator, once remarked to me, was the indigenous face of the Border: the mouth, which was bad, and the entire lower part of the face, are seen repeated in thousands of working men's; or, as Irving chose to illustrate his position, "in thousands of Border horse-jockeys." In like manner, Wordsworth's face was, if not absolutely the indigenous face of the Lake district, at any rate a variety of that face, a modification of that original type. The head was well filled out; and there, to begin with, was a great advantage over the head of Charles Lamb, which was absolutely truncated in the posterior region — sawn off, as it were, by no timid sawyer. The forehead was not remarkably lofty — and, by the way, some artists, in their ardour for realizing their phrenological preconceptions, not suffering nature to surrender quietly and by slow degrees, her own alphabet of signs, and characters, and hieroglyphical expressions, but forcing her language prematurely into a conformity with their own crude speculations, have given to Sir Walter Scott a pile of forehead which is displeasing and cataphysical, in fact, a caricature of anything that is ever seen in nature, and would (if real) be esteemed a deformity; in one instance, that which was introduced in some annual or other, the forehead makes about two-thirds of the entire face. Wordsworth's forehead is also liable to caricature misrepresentations, in these days of phrenology: but, whatever it may appear to be in any man's fanciful portrait, the real living forehead, as I have been in the habit of seeing it for more than five-and-twenty years, is not remarkable for its height; but it is perhaps remarkable for its breadth and expansive development. Neither are the eyes of Wordsworth "large," as is erroneously stated somewhere in "Peter's Letters;" on the contrary, they are (I think) rather small; but that does not interfere with their effect, which at times is fine and suitable to his intellectual character. At times, I say, for the depth and subtlety of eyes varies exceedingly with the state of the stomach; and, if young ladies were aware of the magical transformations which can be wrought in the depth and sweetness of the eye by a few weeks' walking exercise, I fancy we should see their habits in this point altered greatly for the better. I have seen Wordsworth's eyes oftentimes affected powerfully in this respect; his eyes are not, under any circumstances, bright, lustrous, or piercing; but,

after a long day's toil in walking, I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear. The light which resides in them is at no time a superficial light; but, under favourable accidents, it is a light which seems to come from depths below all depths; in fact, it is more truly entitled to be held "The light that never was on land or sea," a light radiating from some far spiritual world, than any the most idealizing light that ever yet a painter's hand created. The nose, a little arched, and large, which, by the way, (according to a natural phrenology, existing centuries ago amongst some of the lowest amongst the human species,) has always been accounted an unequivocal expression of animal appetites organically strong. And that was in fact the basis of Wordsworth's intellectual power: his intellectual passions were fervent and strong; because they rested upon a basis of animal sensibility superior to that of most men, diffused through all the animal passions (or appetites); and something of that will be found to hold of all poets who have been great by original force and power, not (as Virgil) by means of fine management and exquisite artifice of composition applied to their conceptions. The mouth, and the region of the mouth, the whole circumjacencies of the mouth, were about the strongest feature in Wordsworth's face; there was nothing specially to be noticed that I know of, in the mere outline of the lips; but the swell and protrusion of the parts above and around the mouth, are both noticeable in themselves, and also because they remind me of a very interesting fact which I discovered about three years after this my first visit to Wordsworth.

Being a great collector of everything relating to Milton, I had naturally possessed myself, whilst yet very young, of Richardson the painter's thick octavo volume of notes on the "Paradise Lost." It happened, however, that my copy, in consequence of that mania for portrait collecting which has stripped so many English classics of their engraved portraits, had no picture of Milton. Subsequently I ascertained that it ought to have had a very good likeness of the great poet; and I never rested until I procured a copy of the book, which had not suffered in this respect by the fatal admiration of the amateur. The particular copy offered to me was one which had been priced unusually high, on account of the unusually fine specimen which it contained of the engraved portrait. This, for a particular reason, I was exceedingly anxious to see; and the reason was—that, according to an anecdote reported by

Richardson himself, this portrait, of all that was shown to her, was the only one acknowledged by Milton's last surviving daughter, to be a strong likeness of her father. And her involuntary gestures concurred with her deliberate words:— for, on seeing all the rest, she was silent and inanimate; but the very instant she beheld this from a crayon drawing which embellishes the work of Richardson, she burst out into a rapture of passionate recognition; exclaiming—“This is my father; this is my dear father!” Naturally, therefore, after such a testimony, so much stronger than any other person in the world could offer to the authentic value of this portrait, I was eager to see it.

Judge of my astonishment, when, in this portrait of Milton, I saw a likeness nearly perfect of Wordsworth, better by much than any which I have since seen, of those expressly painted for himself. The likeness is tolerably preserved in that by Carruthers, in which one of the little Rydal waterfalls, etc., composes a background; yet this is much inferior, as a mere portrait of Wordsworth, to the Richardson head of Milton; and this, I believe, is the last which represents Wordsworth in the vigour of his power. The rest, which I have not seen, may be better as works of art, (for anything I know to the contrary,) but they must labour under the great disadvantage of presenting the features when “defeatured” in the degree and the way I have described, by the idiosyncrasies of old age, as it affects this family; for it is noticed of the Wordsworths, by those who are familiar with their peculiarities, that, in their very blood and constitutional differences, lie hidden causes, able, in some mysterious way—

“Those shocks of passion to prepare
That kill the bloom before its time,
And blanch, without the owner's crime,
The most resplendent hair.”

Some people, it is notorious, live faster than others; the oil is burned out sooner in one constitution than another—and the cause of this may be various; but, in the Wordsworths, one part of the cause is, no doubt, the secret fire of a temperament too fervid; the self-consuming energies of the brain, that gnaw at the heart and life-strings forever. In that account which “The Excursion,” presents to us of an imaginary Scotsman, who, to still the tumult of his heart, when visiting the “forces” (i. e. cataracts) of a mountainous region, obliges himself to study the laws of light and colour, as they affect the rainbow of the

stormy waters; vainly attempting to mitigate the fever which consumed him by entangling his mind in profound speculations; raising a cross-fire of artillery from the subtilizing intellect, under the vain conceit that, in this way, he would silence the mighty battery of his impassioned brain — there we read a picture of Wordsworth and his own youth. In Miss Wordsworth, every thoughtful observer might read the same self-consuming style of thought. And the effect upon each was so powerful for the promotion of a premature old age, and of a premature expression of old age, that strangers invariably supposed them fifteen to twenty years older than they were. And I remember Wordsworth once laughingly reporting to me, on returning from a short journey in 1809, a little personal anecdote, which sufficiently showed what was the spontaneous impression upon that subject of casual strangers, whose feelings were not confused by previous knowledge of the truth. He was travelling by a stage-coach, and seated outside, amongst a good half dozen of fellow-passengers. One of these, an elderly man, who confessed to having passed the grand climacterical year (9 multiplied into 7) of 63, though he did not say precisely by how many years, said to Wordsworth, upon some anticipations which they had been mutually discussing of changes likely to result from enclosures, etc., then going on or projecting — “Aye, aye, another dozen of years will show us strange sights; but you and I can hardly expect to see them.” “How so?” said W. “Why, my friend, how old do you take me to be?” “Oh, I beg pardon,” said the other; “I meant no offence—but what?” looking at W. more attentively — “you’ll never see threescore, I’m of opinion.” And, to show that he was not singular in so thinking, he appealed to all the other passengers; and the motion passed nem. con. that Wordsworth was rather over than under sixty. Upon this he told them the literal truth — that he had not yet accomplished his thirty-ninth year. “God bless me!” said the climacterical man; “so then, after all, you’ll have a chance to see your childer get up like, and get settled! God bless me, to think of that!” And so closed the conversation, leaving to W. a pointed expression, of his own premature age, as revealing itself by looks, in this unaffected astonishment, amongst a whole party of plain men, that he should really belong to a generation of the forward-looking, who live by hope; and might reasonably expect to see a child of seven years old matured into a man.

Returning to the question of portraits, I would observe, that this Richardson engraving of Milton has the advantage of pre-

senting, not only by far the best likeness of Wordsworth, but of Wordsworth in the prime of his powers — a point so essential in the case of one so liable to premature decay. It may be supposed that I took an early opportunity of carrying the book down to Grasmere, and calling for the opinions of Wordsworth's family upon this most remarkable coincidence. Not one member of that family but was as much impressed as myself with the accuracy of the likeness. All the peculiarities even were retained — a drooping appearance of the eyelids, that remarkable swell which I have noticed about the mouth, the way in which the hair lay upon the forehead. In two points only there was a deviation from the rigorous truth of Wordsworth's features — the face was a little too short and too broad and the eyes were too large. There was also a wreath of laurel about the head, which (as Wordsworth remarked) disturbed the natural expression of the whole picture; else, and with these few allowances, he also admitted that the resemblance was, for that period of his life, (but let not that restriction be forgotten,) perfect, or as nearly so as art could accomplish.

I have gone into so large and circumstantial a review of my recollections in a matter that would have been trifling and tedious in excess, had their recollection related to a less important man; but, with a certain knowledge that the least of them will possess a lasting and a growing interest in connection with William Wordsworth — a man who is not simply destined to be had in everlasting remembrance by every generation of men, but (which is a modification of the kind worth any multiplication of the degree) to be had in that sort of remembrance which has for its shrine the heart of man — that world of fear and grief, of love and trembling hope, which constitutes the essential man; in that sort of remembrance, and not in such a remembrance as we grant to the ideas of a great philosopher, a great mathematician, or a great reformer. How different, how peculiar, is the interest which attends the great poets who have made themselves necessary to the human heart; who have first brought into consciousness, and next have clothed in words, those grand catholic feelings that belong to the grand catholic situations of life, through all its stages; who have clothed them in such words that human wit despairs of bettering them! How remote is that burning interest which settles upon men's living memories in our daily thoughts, from that which follows, in a disjointed and limping way, the mere nominal memories of those who have given a direction and movement to the currents of human thought, and who, by some leading impulse, have

even quickened into life speculations appointed to terminate in positive revolutions of human power over physical agents! Mighty were the powers, solemn and serene is the memory, of Archimedes: and Appolonius shines like "the starry Galileo," in the firmament of human genius; yet how frosty is the feeling associated with these names by comparison with that which, upon every sunny brae, by the side of every ancient forest, even in the farthest depths of Canada, many a young innocent girl, perhaps at this very moment — looking now with fear to the dark recesses of the infinite forest, and now with love to the pages of the infinite poet, until the fear is absorbed and forgotten in the love — cherishes in her heart for the name and person of Shakespeare! The one is abstraction, and a shadow recurring only by distinct efforts of recollection, and even thus to none but the enlightened and the learned; the other is a household image, rising amongst household remembrances, never separated from the spirit of delight, and hallowed by a human love! Such a place in the affections of the young and the ingenuous, no less than of the old and philosophic, who happen to have any depth of feeling, will Wordsworth occupy in every clime and in every land; for the language in which he writes, thanks be to Providence, which has beneficently opened the widest channels for the purest and most elevating literature, is now ineradicably planted in all quarters of the earth; the echoes under every latitude of every longitude now reverberate English words; and all things seem tending to this result — that the English and the Spanish languages will finally share the earth between them. Wordsworth is peculiarly the poet for the solitary and the meditative; and, throughout the countless myriads of future America and future Australia, no less than Polynesia and Southern Africa, there will be situations without end, fitted by their loneliness to favour his influence for centuries to come, by the end of which period it may be anticipated that education (of a more enlightened quality and more systematic than yet prevails) may have wrought such changes on the human species, as will uphold the growth of all philosophy, and, therefore, of all poetry which has its foundations laid in the heart of man.

Commensurate with the interest in the poetry will be a secondary interest in the poet — in his personal appearance, and his habits of life, so far as they can be supposed at all dependent upon his intellectual characteristics; for, with respect to differences that are purely casual, and which illustrate no principle of higher origin than accidents of education or chance

position, it is a gossiping taste only, that could seek for such information, and a gossiping taste that would choose to consult it. Meantime, it is under no such gossiping taste that volumes have been written upon the mere portraits and upon the possible portraits of Shakespeare; and how invaluable should we all feel any record to be, which should raise the curtain upon Shakespeare's daily life — his habits, personal and social, his intellectual tastes, and his opinions on contemporary men, books, events, or national prospects! I cannot, therefore, think it necessary to apologize for the most circumstantial notices, past or to come, of Wordsworth's person and habits of life. But one thing it is highly necessary that I should explain, and the more so because a grand confession which I shall make at this point as in some measure necessary to protect myself from the appearance of a needless mystery and reserve, would, if unaccompanied by such an explanation, expose me to the suspicion of having, at times, yielded to a private prejudice, so far as to colour my account of Wordsworth with a spirit of pique or illiberality. I shall acknowledge, then, on my own part — and I feel that I might even make the same acknowledgment on the part of Professor Wilson — (though I have no authority for doing so) — that to neither of us, though, at all periods of our lives, treating him with the deep respect which is his due, and, in our earlier years, with a more than filial devotion — nay, with a blind loyalty of homage, which had in it, at that time, something of the spirit of martyrdom, which, for his sake, courted even reproach and contumely; yet to neither of us has Wordsworth made those returns of friendship and kindness which most firmly I maintain that we were entitled to have challenged. More by far in sorrow than in anger — sorrow that points to recollections too deep and too personal for a transient notice — I acknowledge myself to have been long alienated from Wordsworth; sometimes even I feel a rising emotion of hostility — nay, something, I fear, too nearly akin to vindictive hatred. Strange revolution of the human heart! strange example of the changes in human feeling that may be wrought by time and chance! to find myself carried by the great tide of affairs, and by error, more or less, on one side or the other, either on Wordsworth's in doing too little, or on mine in expecting too much — carried so far away from that early position which, for so long a course of years, I held in respect to him — that now, for that fountain of love towards Mr. Wordsworth and all his household — fountain profound — fountain inexhaustible —

“ Whose only business was to flow —
 And flow it did, not taking heed
 Of its own bounty or their need ”—

now, I find myself standing aloof, gloomily granting (because I cannot refuse) my intellectual homage, but no longer rendering my tribute as a willing service of the heart, or rejoicing in the prosperity of my idol! Could I have believed, twenty-five years ago, had a voice from Heaven revealed it, that, even then, with a view to what time should bring about, I might adopt the spirit of the old verses, and, apostrophizing Wordsworth, might say — Great Poet! when that day, so fervently desired, shall come, that men shall undo their wrongs, and when every tongue shall chant thy praises, and every heart

“ Devote a wreath to thee —
 That day (for come it will) that day
 Shall I lament to see.”

But no; not so. Lament I never did; nor suffered even “the hectic of a moment” to sully or to trouble that purity of perfect pleasure with which I welcomed this great revolution in the public feeling. Let me render justice to Professor Wilson, as well as to myself: not for a moment, not by a solitary movement of reluctance or demur, did either of us hang back in giving that public acclamation which we, by so many years, had anticipated; yes, we singly — we with no sympathy to support us from any quarter. The public press remains, with its inexorable records, to vouch for us, that we paid an oriental homage — homage as to one who could have pleaded antique privilege, and the consecration of centuries, at a time when the finger of scorn was pointed at Mr. Wordsworth from every journal in the land; and that we persisted in this homage at a period long enough removed to have revolutionized the public mind, and also long enough to have undermined the personal relations between us of confidential friendship. Did it ask no courage to come forward, in the first character, as solitary friends, holding up our protesting hands amidst a wilderness of chattering buffoons? Did it ask no magnanimity to stand firmly to the post we had assumed, not passively acquiescing in the new state of public opinion, but exulting in it and aiding it, long after we had found reason to think ourselves injuriously treated? Times are changed; it needs no courage, in the year of our Lord 1839, to discover and proclaim a great poet in William Wordsworth; it needed none in the year 1815, to discover a frail power in the French empire, or an idol of

clay and brass in the French Emperor. But, to make the first discovery in the years 1801, 1802, the other in 1808, those things were worthy of honour; and the first was worthy of gratitude from all the parties interested in the event. Let me not, however, be misunderstood — Mr. Wordsworth is a man of unimpeached, unimpeachable integrity; he neither has done, nor could have done, consciously, any act in violation of his conscience. On the contrary, I am satisfied, Professor Wilson is satisfied, that injuries of a kind to involve an admitted violation of principle, cannot have occurred in Mr. Wordsworth's intercourse with any man. But there are cases of wrong for which the conscience is not the competent tribunal. Sensibility to the just claims of another, power to appreciate these claims, power also to perceive the true mode of conveying and expressing the appreciation — in a case, suppose, where the claims to consideration are at once real, and even tangible, as to their ground, yet subtle and aerial as to the shape they have assumed — claims, for instance, founded on a personal devotion to the interests of the other party, when the rest of the world slighted them — this mode of appreciating skill may be utterly wanting, or may be crossed and thwarted by many a conflicting bias, where the conscience is quite incapable of going astray. I imagine a case such as this which follows: — The case of a man who, for many years, has connected himself closely with the domestic griefs and joys of another, over and above his primary service of giving to him the strength and the encouragement of a profound literary sympathy, at a time of universal scowling from the world; suppose this man to fall into a situation in which, from want of natural connections and from his state of insulation in life, it might be most important to his feelings that some support should be lent to him by a family having a known place and acceptation, and what may be called a root in the country, by means of connections, descent, and long settlement. To look for this, might be a most humble demand on the part of one who had testified his devotion in the way supposed. To miss it might — but enough. I murmur not; complaint is weak at all times; and the hour is passed irrevocably, and by many a year, in which an act of friendship so natural, and costing so little, (in both senses so priceless,) could have been availing. The ear is deaf that should have been solaced by the sound of welcome. Call, but you will not be heard; shout aloud, but your "ave!" and "all hail!" will now tell only as an echo of departed days, proclaiming the hollowness of human hopes. I, for my part, have long

learned the lesson of suffering in silence; and also I have learned to know that, wheresoever female prejudices are concerned, there it will be a trial more than Herculean, of a man's wisdom, if he can walk with an even step, and swerve neither to the right nor the left.

I shall now proceed to sketch the daily life and habits of those who are familiarly known to the public as the Lake Poets; but, first of all, as a proper introduction to this sketch, I shall trace, in a brief outline, the chief incidents in the life of William Wordsworth, which are interesting, not only in virtue of their illustrious subject, but also as exhibiting a most remarkable (almost a providential) arrangement of circumstances, all tending to one result—that of insulating from worldly cares, and carrying onward from childhood to the grave, in a state of serene happiness, one who was unfitted for daily toil, and, at all events, who could not, under such demands upon his time and anxieties, have prosecuted those genial labours in which all mankind have an interest.

NOTES

¹ At the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, where the town is viewed as a mere ministerial appendage to the numerous colleges—the civic Oxford, for instance, existing for the sake of the academic Oxford, and not vice versa—it has naturally happened that the students honour with the name of “a man,” him only who wears a cap and gown. The word is not used with any reference to physical powers, or to age; but simply to the final object for which the places are supposed to have first arisen, and to maintain themselves. There is, however, a ludicrous effect produced, in some instances, by the use of this term in contradistinguishing parties. “Was he a man?” is a frequent question; and as frequent in the mouth of a stripling under nineteen, speaking, perhaps, of a huge, elderly tradesman—“Oh, no! not a man at all.”

² See the divine passage in “The Excursion,” beginning

“Ah! what a lesson for a thoughtless man,
If any gladsome field of earth.”

³ All which inimitable graces of nature have, by the hands of mechanic art, by solid masonry, by whitewashing, etc., been exterminated as a growth of weeds and nuisances for thirty good years.—August 17, 1853.

⁴ That most accomplished, and to Coleridge most pious daughter, whose recent death afflicted so very many who knew her only by her writings. She had married her cousin, Mr. Sergeant Coleridge, and in that way retained her illustrious maiden name as a wife. At seventeen, when last I saw her, she was the most perfect of all pensive, nun-like, intellectual beauties that I have seen in real breathing life. The upper parts of her face were verily divine. See, for an artist's opinion, the life of that admirable man Collins, by his son.

⁵“Once for all” I say — on recollecting that Coleridge’s verses to Sara were made transferable to any Sara who reigned at the time. At least three Saras appropriated them; all three long since in the grave.

⁶In our Westmoreland highroads, which are so fortunate as to have little breadth beyond that of lanes, there is no side-path, not even on approaching towns; consequently everybody walks at large upon the carriage track.

II

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH was born at Cocker-mouth, a small town of Cumberland, seated on the river Cocker. His father was a lawyer, and acted as an agent for that Lord Lonsdale, who is not unfrequently described by those who still remember him, as "the bad Lord Lonsdale." In what was he bad? Chiefly, I believe, in this — that, being a man of great local power, founded on his rank, on his official station of Lord Lieutenant over two counties, and on a very large estate, he used his power in a most oppressive way. I have heard it said that he was mad; and, at any rate, he was inordinately capricious — capricious even to eccentricity. But perhaps his madness was nothing more than the intemperance of a haughty and a headstrong will, encouraged by the consciousness of power, and tempted to abuses of it by the abject servility which poverty and dependence presented in one direction, embittering the contrast of that defiance which inevitably faced him in another throughout a land of freedom, and amongst spirits as haughty as his own. He was a true feudal chieftain; and, in the very approaches to his mansion, in the style of his equipage, or whatever else was likely to meet the public eye, he delighted to express his disdain of modern refinements, and the haughty carelessness of his magnificence. The coach in which he used to visit Penrith, the nearest town to his principal house of Lowther, was old and neglected: his horses fine, but untrimmed; and such was the impression diffused about him by his gloomy temper and his habits of oppression, that the streets were silent as he traversed them, and an awe sat upon many faces, (so at least, I have heard a Penrith contemporary of the old despot declare,) pretty much like that which may be supposed to attend the entry into a guilty town, of some royal commission for trying state criminals. In his park, you saw some of the most magnificent timber in the kingdom — trees that were coeval with the feuds of York and Lancaster, yews that perhaps had furnished bows to Cœur de Lion, and oaks that might have built a navy. All was savage grandeur about these native forests:

their sweeping lawns and glades had been unapproached, for centuries it might be, by the hand of art; and amongst them roamed — not the timid fallow deer — but thundering droves of wild horses.

Lord Lonsdale, according to an old English writer, (in describing, I think, the Earl of Arundel,) “went sometimes to London, because there only he found a greater man than himself; but not often, because at home he was allowed to forget that there was such a man.” Even in London, however, his haughty injustice found occasions for making itself known. On a court day, (I revive an anecdote once familiarly known,) St. James’s Street was lined by cavalry, and the orders were peremptory, that no carriages should be allowed to pass, except those which were carrying parties to court. Whether it were by accident or no, Lord Lonsdale’s carriage advanced, and the coachman, in obedience to orders shouted out from the window, was turning down the forbidden route, when a trooper rode up to the horses’ heads, and stopped them; the thundering menaces of Lord Lonsdale perplexed the soldier, who did not know but he might be bringing himself into a scrape by persisting in his opposition; but the officer on duty, observing the scene, rode up, and, in a determined tone, enforced the order, causing two of his men to turn the horses’ heads round into Piccadilly. Lord Lonsdale threw his card to the officer — and a duel followed; in which, however, the outrageous injustice of his Lordship met with a pointed rebuke; for the first person whom he summoned to his aid, in the quality of a second, though a friend, and (I believe) a relative of his own, declined to sanction, by any interference, so scandalous a quarrel with an officer for simply executing an official duty. In this dilemma — for probably he was aware that few military men would fail to take the same disapproving view of the affair — he applied to the present¹ Earl of Lonsdale, then Sir William Lowther. Either there must have been some needless discourtesy in the officer’s mode of fulfilling his duty, or else Sir William thought the necessity of the case, however wantonly provoked, a sufficient justification for a relative giving his assistance, even under circumstances of such egregious injustice. At any rate, it is due to Sir William, in mere candour, to suppose that he did nothing in this instance but what his conscience approved; seeing, that in all others his conduct has been such as to win him that universal respect of the two counties in which he is best known. He it was that acted as second; and, by a will which is said to have been dated the

same day, he became eventually possessed of a large property, which did not necessarily accompany the title.

Another anecdote is told of the same Lord Lonsdale, which expresses, in a more eccentric way, and a way that to many people will be affecting—to some shocking—the moody energy of his passions. He loved, with passionate fervour, a fine young woman, of humble parentage, in a Cumberland farm-house. Her he had persuaded to leave her father and put herself under his protection. Whilst yet young and beautiful, she died: Lord Lonsdale's sorrow was profound; he could not bear the thought of a final parting from that face which had become so familiar to his heart; he caused her to be embalmed; a glass was placed over her features; and, at intervals, when his thoughts reverted to her memory, he found a consolation (or perhaps a luxurious irritation) of his sorrow, in visiting this sad memorial of his former happiness. This story, which I have often heard repeated by the country people of Cumberland, strengthened the general feeling of this eccentric nobleman's self-willed character, though in this instance complicated with a trait of character, that argued nobler capacities. By what rules he guided himself in dealing with the various lawyers, agents, or stewards, whom his extensive estates brought into a dependency upon his justice or his moderation—whether in fact he had no rule, but left all to accident or caprice—I have never learned. Generally, I have heard it said, that in some years of his life he resisted the payment of all bills indiscriminately, which he had any colourable plea for supposing to contain overcharges; some fared ill because they were neighbours; and his Lordship could say, that "he knew them to be knaves;" others fared worse, because they were so remote that "how could his Lordship know what they were?" Of this number, and possibly for this reason left unpaid, was Wordsworth's father. He died whilst his four sons and one daughter were yet helpless children, leaving to them respectable fortunes; but which, as yet, were unrealized and tolerably hypothetic, as they happened to depend upon so shadowy a basis as the justice of Lord Lonsdale. The executors of the will, and trustees of the children's interests, in one point acted wisely: foreseeing the result of a legal contest with so potent a defendant as this leviathan of two counties, and that, under any nominal award, the whole estate of the orphans must be swallowed up in the costs of a suit that would be carried into Chancery, and finally before the Lords, they prudently withdrew from all active measures of opposition, confiding the event to Lord Lonsdale's

returning sense of justice. Unfortunately for that nobleman's reputation, and also, as was thought, for the children's prosperity, before this somewhat rusty quality of justice could have time to operate, his Lordship died.

However, for once the world was wrong in its anticipations for the children: the successor to Lord Lonsdale's titles and Cumberland estates was made aware of the entire case, in all its circumstances; and he very honourably gave directions for full restitution being made. This was done; and in one respect the result was more fortunate for the children than if they had been trained from youth to rely upon their expectations: for by the time this repayment was made, three out of the five children were already settled in life, with the very amplest prospects opening before them — so ample as to make their private patrimonial fortunes of inconsiderable importance in their eyes: and very probably the withholding of their inheritance it was, however unjust, and however little contemplated as an occasion of any such effect, that urged these three persons to the exertions requisite for their present success. Two only of the children remained to whom the restoration of their patrimony was a matter of grave importance; but it was precisely those two whom no circumstances could have made independent of their hereditary means by personal exertions — viz. William Wordsworth, the poet, and Dorothy, the sole daughter of the house. The three others were — Richard, the eldest, he had become a thriving solicitor at one of the inns of court in London; and, if he died only moderately rich, and much below the expectations of his acquaintance, in the final result of his labourious life, it was because he was moderate in his desires; and, in his later years, reverting to the pastoral region of his infancy and boyhood, chose rather to sit down by a hearth of his own amongst the Cumberland mountains, and wisely to woo the deities of domestic pleasures and health, than to follow the chase after wealth in the feverish crowds of the capital. The third son, I believe was Christopher, (Dr. Wordsworth,) who, at an early age, became a man of importance in the English church, being made one of the chaplains and librarians of the Archbishop of Canterbury, (Dr. Manners Sutton, father of the late Speaker). He has since risen to the important and dignified station — once held by Barrow, and afterwards by Bentley — of Master of Trinity in Cambridge. Trinity in Oxford is not a first-rate college: but Trinity, Cambridge, answers in rank and authority to Christ Church in Oxford; and to be the head of that college is rightly considered on a level with a bishopric.

Dr. Wordsworth has distinguished himself as an author by several very useful republications, (especially the "Ecclesiastical Biography,") which he has enriched with valuable notes. And in his own person, besides other works more exclusively learned, he is the author of one very interesting work of historical research upon the long agitated question of "Who wrote the 'Eicon Basilike?'" a question still unsettled, but much nearer to a settlement in consequence of the strong presumptions which Dr. Wordsworth has adduced on behalf of the King's claim.⁷ The fourth and youngest son, John, was in the service of the East India Company, and perished most unhappily on the voyage which he had meant to be his last, off the coast of Dorsetshire, in the Company's ship *Abergavenny*. A calumny was current at the time, that Captain Wordsworth was in a state of intoxication at the time of the calamity. But the printed report of the affair, revised by survivors, entirely disproves the calumny; which, besides, was in itself incredible to all who were acquainted with Captain Wordsworth's most temperate and even philosophic habits of life. So peculiarly indeed was Captain Wordsworth's temperament and demeanour, and the whole system of his life, coloured by a grave and meditative turn of thought, that, amongst his brother officers in the Honourable Company's service, he bore the surname of "The Philosopher." And William Wordsworth, the poet, not only spoke of him always with a sort of respect, that argued him to have been no ordinary man, but he has frequently assured me of one fact which, as implying some want of frankness and sincerity, gave me pain to hear — viz. that in the fine lines entitled, "*The Happy Warrior*," in which an analytical account is given of the main elements which enter into the composition of a real hero, he had in view chiefly his brother John's character. That was true, I dare say; but it was inconsistent, in some measure, with the note attached to the lines, by which the reader learns that it was out of reverence for Lord Nelson, as one who transcended the estimate here made, that the poem had not been openly connected with his name, as the real suggester of the thoughts. Now, privately, though still professing a lively admiration for the mighty Admiral, as one of the few men who carried into his professional labours a real and vivid genius, (and thus far Wordsworth often testified a deep admiration for Lord Nelson) yet, in reference to these particular lines, he uniformly declared that Lord Nelson was much below the ideal there contemplated, and that, in fact, it had been suggested by the recollection of his brother. But, surely, in some of the

first passages, this cannot be so; for example, when he makes it one trait of the heaven-born hero, that he, if called upon to face some mighty day of battle

“ To which heaven has join'd
Great issues, good or bad, for human kind —
Is happy as a lover, and attired
With a supernal brightness like a man inspir'd ”

surely he must have had Lord Nelson's idea predominating in his thoughts; for Captain Wordsworth was scarcely tried in such a situation. There can be no doubt, however, that he merited the praises of his brother; and it was indeed an improbable tale, that he should first of all deviate from this philosophic temperance upon an occasion when all his energies, and the fullest self-possession were all likely to prove little enough. In reality it was the pilot, the incompetent pilot, who caused the fatal catastrophe:—“ O pilot, you have ruined me!” were amongst the last words Captain Wordsworth was heard to utter—pathetic words, and fit for him, “ a meek man and a brave,” to use in addressing a last reproach, and summing up the infinite injury, to one who, not through misfortune or overruling will of Providence, but through miserable conceit and unprincipled levity, had brought total ruin upon so many a gallant countryman. Captain Wordsworth might have saved his own life; but the perfect loyalty of his nature to the claims upon him, that sublime fidelity to duty which is so often found amongst men of his profession, kept him to the last upon the wreck; and, after that, it is probable that the almost total wreck of his own fortunes, (which, but for this overthrow, would have amounted to twenty thousand pounds, upon the successful termination of this one voyage,) but still more, the total ruin of the new and splendid Indiaman confided to his care, had so much dejected his spirits, that he was not in a condition for making the efforts that, under a more hopeful prospect, he might have been able to make. Six weeks his body lay unrecovered; at the end of that time it was found, and carried to the Isle of Wight, and buried in close neighbourhood to the quiet fields which he had so recently described, in letters to his family at Grasmere, as a Paradise of English peace, to which his mind would be likely oftentimes to revert, amidst the agitations of the sea.

Such were the modes of life pursued by three of the orphan children—such the termination of life to two. Meantime, the daughter of the house was reared liberally, in the family of a

relation at Windsor; and she might have pursued a quiet and decorous career, of a character, perhaps, somewhat tame, under the same dignified auspices; but at an early period of life her good angel threw open to her a life of nobler prospects, in the opportunity which then arose, and which she did not hesitate to seize, of becoming the companion, through a life of delightful wanderings — of what, to her more elevated friends, seemed nothing short of vagrancy — the companion and the confidential friend, and, with a view to the enlargement of her own intellect, the pupil of a brother, the most original and most meditative man of his own age. William had passed his infancy on the very margin of the Lake District, just six miles, in fact, beyond the rocky screen of Whinlatter, and within one hour's ride of Bassinthewaite Water. To those who live in the tame scenery of Cockermouth, the blue mountains in the distance, the sublime peaks of Borrowdale and of Buttermere, raise aloft a signal, as it were, of a new country, a country of romance and mystery, to which the thoughts are habitually turning. Children are fascinated and haunted with vague temptations, when standing on the frontiers of such a foreign land; and so was Wordsworth fascinated, so haunted. Fortunate for Wordsworth that, at an early age, he was transferred to the very centre of this lovely district. At the little town of Hawkshead, seated on the north-west angle of Esthwaite Water, a grammar school (which, in English usage, means a school for classical literature) was founded, in Queen Elizabeth's reign, by Archbishop Sandys, a member of a very ancient family of that name, still seated in the neighbourhood. Hither were sent all the four brothers; and here it was that Wordsworth passed his life until the time arrived for his removal to college. Taking into consideration the peculiar tastes of the person, and the peculiar advantages of the place, I conceive that no pupil of a public school can ever have passed a more luxurious boyhood than Wordsworth. The school discipline was not, I believe, very strict; the mode of living out of school very much resembled that of Eton for Oppidans; less elegant perhaps, and less costly in its provisions for accommodation, but not less comfortable; and in that part of the arrangements which was chiefly Etonian, even more so; for in both places the boys, instead of being gathered into one fold, and at night into one or two huge dormitories, were distributed amongst motherly old "dames," technically so called at Eton, but not at Hawkshead. In the latter place, agreeably to the inferior scale of the whole establishment, the houses were smaller, and more cottage-like, con-

sequently more like private households; and the old lady of the ménage was more constantly amongst them, providing, with maternal tenderness and with a professional pride, for the comfort of her young flock, and protecting the weak from oppression. The humble cares to which these poor matrons dedicated themselves, may be collected from several allusions scattered through the poems of Wordsworth; that entitled "Nutting," for instance, in which his own early Spinosistic feeling is introduced, of a mysterious presence diffused through the solitudes of woods, a presence that was disturbed by the intrusion of careless and noisy outrage, and which is brought into a strong relief by the previous homely picture of the old housewife equipping her young charge with beggars' weeds in order to prepare him for a struggle with thorns and brambles. Indeed, not only the moderate rank of the boys, and the peculiar kind of relation assumed by these matrons, equally suggested this humble class of motherly attentions, but the whole spirit of the place and neighbourhood was favourable to an old English homeliness of domestic and personal economy. Hawkshead, most fortunately for its own manners and the primitive style of its habits even to this day, stands about six miles out of the fashionable line for the "Lakers."

Esthwaite, though a lovely scene in its summer garniture of woods, has no features of permanent grandeur to rely upon. A wet or gloomy day, even in summer, reduces it to little more than a wildish pond, surrounded by miniature hills; and the sole circumstances which restore the sense of a romantic region and an alpine character, are the knowledge (but not the sense) of endless sylvan avenues, stretching for twenty miles to the seaside, and the towering groups of Langdale and Grasmere fells, which look over the little pastoral barriers of Esthwaite from distances of eight, ten, and fourteen miles. Esthwaite, therefore, being no object for itself, and the sublime head of Conistone being accessible by a road which evades Hawkshead, few tourists ever trouble the repose of this little village town. And in the days of which I am speaking, (1778-1787,) tourists were as yet few and infrequent to any parts of the country. Mrs. Radcliffe had not begun to cultivate the sense of the picturesque in her popular romances; guide-books with the sole exception of "Gray's Posthumous Letters," had not arisen to direct public attention to this domestic Calabria; roads were rude, and, in many instances, not wide enough to admit post-chaises; but, above all, the whole system of travelling accommodations was barbarous and antediluvian for the requisitions

of the pampered south. As yet the land had rest; the annual fever did not shake the very hills; and (which was the happiest immunity of the whole) false taste, the pseudo-romantic rage, had not violated the most awful solitudes amongst the ancient hills by opera-house decorations. Wordsworth, therefore, enjoyed this labyrinth of valleys in a perfection that no one can have experienced since the opening of the present century. The whole was one paradise of virgin beauty; and even the rare works of man, all over the land, were hoar with the gray tints of an antique picturesque; nothing was new, nothing was raw and uncitrized. Hawkshead, in particular, though tamely seated in itself and its immediate purlieus, has a most fortunate and central locality, as regards the best (at least the most interesting) scenes for a pedestrian Rambler. The gorgeous scenery of Borrowdale, the austere sublimities of Wastdalehead, of Langdalehead, or Mardale; these are too oppressive, in their colossal proportions and their utter solitudes, for encouraging a perfectly human interest. Now, taking Hawkshead as a centre, with a radius of about eight miles, one might describe a little circular tract which embosoms a perfect network of little valleys — separate wards or cells, as it were, of one large valley, walled in by the great primary mountains of the region. Grasmere, Easdale, Little Langdale, Tilberthwaite, Yewdale, Elter Water, Loughrigg Tarn, Skelwith, and many other little quiet nooks, lie within a single division of this labyrinthine district. All these are within one summer afternoon's ramble. And amongst these, for the years of his boyhood, lay the daily excursions of Wordsworth.

I do not conceive that Wordsworth could have been an amiable boy; he was austere and unsocial, I have reason to think, in his habits; not generous; and, above all, not self-denying. Throughout his later life, with all the benefits of a French discipline in the lesser charities of social intercourse, he has always exhibited a marked impatience of those particular courtesies of life. Not but he was kind and obliging where his services would cost him no exertion; but I am pretty certain that no consideration would ever have induced Wordsworth to burthen himself with a lady's reticule, parasol, shawl, "or anything that was hers." Mighty must be the danger which would induce him to lead her horse by the bridle. Nor would he, without some demur, stop to offer her his hand over a stile. Freedom — unlimited, careless, insolent freedom — unoccupied possession of his own arms — absolute control over his own legs and motions — these have always been so essential to his

comfort, that in any case where they were likely to become questionable, he would have declined to make one of the party. Meantime, we are not to suppose that Wordsworth, the boy, expressly sought for solitary scenes of nature amongst woods and mountains, with a direct conscious anticipation of imaginative pleasure, and loving them with a pure disinterested love, on their own separate account. These are feelings beyond boyish nature, or, at all events, beyond boyish nature trained amidst the necessities of social intercourse. Wordsworth, like his companions, haunted the hills and the vales for the sake of angling, snaring birds, swimming, and sometimes of hunting, according to the Westmoreland fashion, on foot; for riding to the chase is quite impossible, from the precipitous nature of the ground. It was in the course of these pursuits, by an indirect effect growing gradually upon him, that Wordsworth became a passionate lover of nature, at the time when the growth of his intellectual faculties made it possible that he should combine those thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and the ear.

There is, amongst the poems of Wordsworth, one most ludicrously misconstrued by his critics, which offers a philosophical hint upon this subject of great instruction. I will preface it with the little incident which first led Wordsworth into a commentary upon his own meaning. One night, as often enough happened, during the Peninsular war, he and I had walked up Dunmail Raise, from Grasmere, about midnight, in order to meet the carrier who brought the London newspapers, by a circuitous course from Keswick. The case was this: Coleridge, for many years, received a copy of the "Courier," as a mark of esteem, and in acknowledgment of his many contributions to it, from one of the proprietors, Mr. Daniel Stewart. This went up in any case, let Coleridge be where he might, to Mrs. Coleridge; for a single day, it staid at Keswick, for the use of Southey; and, on the next, it came on to Wordsworth, by the slow conveyance of a carrier, plying with a long train of cars between Whitehaven and Kendal. Many a time the force of the storms or floods would compel the carrier to stop on his route, five miles short of Grasmere, at Wythburn, or even eight miles short, at Legberthwaite. But, as there was always hope until one or two o'clock in the morning, often and often it would happen that, in the deadly impatience for earlier intelligence, Wordsworth and I would walk off to meet him about midnight, to a distance of three or four miles. Upon one of these occasions, when some great crisis

in Spain was daily apprehended, we had waited for an hour or more, sitting upon one of the many huge blocks of stone which lie scattered over that narrow field of battle on the desolate frontier of Cumberland and Westmoreland, where King Dun Mail, with all his peerage, fell, more than a thousand years ago. The time had arrived, at length, that all hope for that night had left us; no sound came up through the winding valleys that stretched to the north; and the few cottage lights, gleaming, at wide distances, from recesses amidst the rocky hills, had long been extinct. At intervals, Wordsworth had stretched himself at length on the high road, applying his ear to the ground, so as to catch any sound of wheels that might be groaning along at a distance. Once, when he was slowly rising from this effort, his eye caught a bright star that was glittering between the brow of Seat Sandal, and of the mighty Helvellyn. He gazed upon it for a minute or so; and then, upon turning away to descend into Grasmere, he made the following explanation:—“I have remarked, from my earliest days, that if, under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances. Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the Lake of Wythburn from the Keswick road: at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instant when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those outlines of massy blackness, fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the Infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances.” He then went on to illustrate the same psychological principle from another instance; it was an instance derived from that exquisite poem, in which he describes a mountain boy planting himself at twilight on the margin of some solitary bay of Windermere, and provoking the owls to a contest with himself, by “mimic hooting,” blown through his hands; which of itself becomes an impressive scene to any one able to realize to his fancy the various elements of the solitary woods and waters, the solemn vesper hour, the solitary bird, the solitary boy. Afterwards, the poem goes

on to describe the boy as waiting, amidst "the pauses of his skill," for the answers of the birds — waiting with intensity of expectation — and then, at length, when, after waiting to no purpose, his attention began to relax — that is, in other words, under the giving way of one exclusive direction of his senses, began suddenly to allow an admission to other objects — then, in that instant, the scene actually before him, the visible scene, would enter unawares

"With all its solemn imagery"—

This complex scenery was — What?

"Was carried far into his heart,
With all its pomp, and that uncertain heav'n received
Into the bosom of the steady lake."

This very expression, "far," by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its capacities of reechoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation. On this, however, Wordsworth did not say anything in his commentary; nor did he notice the conclusion, which is this. After describing the efforts of the boy, and next the passive state which succeeded, under his disappointment, (in which condition it was that the solemn spectacle entered the boy's mind with effectual power, and with a semi-conscious sense of its beauty that would not be denied,) the poet goes on to say

"And I suppose that I have stood
A full half hour beside his quiet grave,
Mute — for he died when he was ten years old."

Wherefore, then, did the poet stand in the village churchyard of Hawkshead, wrapt in a trance of reverie, over the grave of this particular boy? "It was," says Lord Jeffrey, "for that single accomplishment"—viz. the accomplishment of mimicking the Windermere owls so well that not men only — Coleridge, for instance, or Professor Wilson, or other connoisseurs of owl-music — might have been hoaxed, but actually the old birds themselves, grave as they seem, were effectually humbugged into entering upon a sentimental correspondence of love or friendship — almost regularly "duplying," "replying," and "quadruplying," (as Scotch law has it,) to the boy's original theme. But here, in this solution of Lord Jeffrey's, there is, at all events, a dismal oversight; for it is evident to the most careless reader that the very object of the poem is not the

first or initial stage of the boy's history — the exercise of skill which led him, as an occasion, into a rigid and tense effort of attention — not this, but the second stage, the consequence of that attention. Even the attention was an effect, a derivative state; but the second stage, upon which the poet fixes his object, is an effect of that effect; and it is clear that the original notice of the boy's talent is introduced only as a *conditio sine qua non* — a notice without which a particular result (namely, the tense attention of expectation) could not have been made intelligible; as, again, without this result being noticed, the reaction of that action could quite as little have been made intelligible. Else, and but for this conditional and derivative necessity, but for this dependency of the essential circumstance upon the boy's power of mimicry, it is evident that the "accomplishment" — which Lord Jeffrey so strangely supposes to have been the main object of the poet in recording the boy, and the main subject of his reverie by the side of his grave — never would have been noticed. It is difficult, indeed, to conceive a stronger evidence of that incoherency of thought under which Lord Jeffrey must have allowed himself to read Wordsworth, than this very blunder.

But, leaving his Lordship, what was the subject of the poet's reverie? some reader may say. A poem ought to explain itself; and we cannot for a moment admit, as a justifying subject for reverie, any private knowledge which the poet might happen to have of the boy's character, or of the expectations he had chanced to raise amongst his friends. I will endeavour to say a word on this question; but, that I may not too much interrupt the narration, in a note. At the same time, let me remind the reader of one great and undeniable truth: it is a fact which cannot be controverted, except by the very thoughtless and the very unobserving, that scarcely one in a thousand of impassioned cases, scarcely one effect in a thousand of all the memorable effects produced by poets, can, upon any theories, yet received amongst us, be even imperfectly explained. And, especially, is this true of original poetry. The cases are past numbering in which the understanding says, or seems to say, one thing, impassioned nature another; and, in poetry, at least, Cicero's great rule will be found to fail — that "*nunquam aliud natura, aliud sapientia dicit;*" if, at least, we understand *sapientia* to mean *dispassionate good sense*. How, for instance, could plain good sense — how could the very finest understanding — have told any man, beforehand, that love in excess, amongst its other modes of waywardness,

was capable of prompting such appellations as that of "wretch" to the beloved object? Yet, as a fact, as an absolute fact of the experience, it is undeniable that it is among the impulses of love, in extremity, to clothe itself in the language of disparagement — why, is yet to be explained.

" Perhaps 'tis pretty
To mutter and mock a broken charm;
To dally with wrong that does no harm;
Perhaps 'tis pretty to tie together
Thoughts so all unlike each other;
To feel, at each wild word, within,
A sweet recoil of love and pity.
And what if, in a world of sin," etc., etc.

That is Coleridge's solution; and the amount of it is — first, that it is delightful to call up what we know to be a mere mimicry of evil, in order to feel its non-reality; to dally with phantoms of pain that do not exist: secondly, that such language acts by way of contrast, making the love more prominent by the contradictoriness of its expression: thirdly, that in a world of sin, where evil passions are so often called into action, and have thus matured the language of violence in a service of malignity, naturally enough the feeling of violence and excess stumbles into its old forms of expression, even when the excess happens to lie in the very opposite direction. All this seems specious, and is undoubtedly some part of the solution; and the verses are so fancifully beautiful, that they would recommend even a worse philosophy. But, after all, I doubt if the whole philosophy be given: and in a similar attempt of Charles Lamb's, the case is not so much solved as further illustrated and amplified. Finally, if solved completely, this case is but one of multitudes which are furnished by the English drama: but (and I would desire no better test of the essential inferiority, attaching to the French drama — no better argument of its having grown out of a radically lower nature) there is not, from first to last, throughout that vaunted field of the French literature, one case of what I may denominate the antinomies of passion — cases of self-conflict, in which the understanding says one thing, the impassioned nature of man says another thing. This is a great theme, however, and I dismiss it to a separate discussion.

So far, however, as I have noticed it, this question has arisen naturally out of the account, as I was endeavouring to sketch it, of Wordsworth's attachment to nature in her grandest forms. It grew out of solitude and the character of his own mind;

but the mode of its growth was indirect and unconscious, and in the midst of other more boyish or more worldly pursuits; and that which happened to the boy in mimicking the owls happened also to him. In moments of watching for the passage of woodcocks over the hills in moonlight nights, in order that he might snare them, oftentimes the dull gaze of expectation, after it was becoming hopeless, left him liable to effects of mountain scenery under accidents of nightly silence and solitude, which impressed themselves with a depth for which a full tide of success would have allowed no opening. And, as he lived and grew amongst such scenes from childhood to manhood, many thousands of such opportunities had leisure to improve themselves into permanent effects of character, of feeling, and of taste. Like Michael, he was in the heart of many thousand mists. Many a sight, moreover, such as meets the eye rarely of any, except those who haunt the hills and the tarns at all hours,³ and all seasons of the year, had been seen, and neglected perhaps at the time, but afterwards revisited the eye and produced its appropriate effect in silent hours of meditation. In everything, perhaps except in the redundant graciousness of heart which formed so eminent a feature in the moral constitution of that true philosopher; the character, the sensibility, and the taste of Wordsworth, pursued the same course of development as in the education of the Scotch Pedler,⁴ who gives so much of the movement to the progress of "The Excursion."

One of the most interesting among the winter amusements of the Hawkshead boys was that of skating on the adjacent lake. Esthwaite Water is not one of the deep lakes, as its neighbours of Windermere, Coniston, and Grasmere are: consequently, a very slight duration of frost is sufficient to freeze it into a bearing strength. In this respect, Wordsworth found the same advantages in his boyhood as afterwards at the University: for the county of Cambridge is generally liable to shallow waters; and that University breeds more good skaters than all the rest of England. About the year 1810, by way of expressing an interest in "The Friend," which Coleridge was just at that time publishing in weekly numbers, Wordsworth allowed Coleridge to print an extract from the poem on his own life, descriptive of the games celebrated upon the ice of Esthwaite by all who were able to skate: the mimic chases of hare and hounds, pursued long after the last orange gleam of light had died away from the western horizon — oftentimes far into the night — a circumstance which does not speak much

for the discipline of the schools — or rather, perhaps, does speak much for the advantages of a situation so pure, and free from the usual perils of a town, as this primitive village of Hawkshead. Wordsworth, in this descriptive passage — which I wish that I had at this moment the means of citing, in order to amplify my account of his earliest tyrocinium — speaks of himself as frequently wheeling aside from his joyous companions to cut across the image of a star; and thus already, in the midst of sportiveness, and by a movement of sportiveness, half unconsciously to himself expressing the growing necessity of retirement to his habits of thought. At another period of the year, when the golden summer allowed the students a long season of early play before the studies of the day began, he describes himself as roaming hand-in-hand, with one companion, along the banks of Esthwaite Water, chanting, with one voice, the verses of Goldsmith and of Gray — verses which, at the time of recording the fact, he had come to look upon as either in parts false in the principles of their composition, or, at any rate, as woefully below the tone of high poetic passion; but which at that time of life, when the profounder feelings were as yet only germinating, filled them with an enthusiasm which he describes as brighter than the dreams of fever or of wine.

Meanwhile, how prospered the classical studies which formed the main business of Wordsworth at Hawkshead? Not, in all probability, very well; for, though Wordsworth is at this day a very sufficient master of the Latin language, and reads certain favourite authors, especially Horace, with a critical nicety, and with a feeling for the felicities of his composition that probably few have ever felt, I have reason to think that little of this skill had been obtained at Hawkshead. As to Greek, that is a language which Wordsworth has never had energy enough to cultivate with effect.

From Hawkshead, and I believe after he had entered his eighteenth year, (a time which is tolerably early on the English plan,) probably at the latter end of the year 1787, Wordsworth entered at St. John's College, Cambridge. St. John's ranks as the second college in Cambridge — the second as to numbers and influence, and general consideration; in the estimation of the Johnians as the first, or at least as coequal in all things with Trinity; from which, at any rate, the general reader will collect, that no such absolute supremacy is accorded to any society in Cambridge as in Oxford is accorded necessarily to Christ Church. The advantages of a large college are con-

siderable, both to an idle man who wishes to lurk unnoticed in the crowd, and to the brilliant man, whose vanity could not be gratified by pre-eminence amongst a few. Wordsworth, though not idle as regarded his own pursuits, was so as regarded the pursuits of the place. With respect to them he felt — to use his own words — that his hour was not come; and that his doom for the present was a happy obscurity, which left him, unvexed by the torments of competition, to the genial enjoyment of his life in its most genial hours.

It will excite some astonishment when I mention that, on coming to Cambridge, Wordsworth actually assumed the beau, or, in modern slang, the "dandy." He dressed in silk stockings, had his hair powdered; and in all things plumed himself on his gentlemanly habits. To those who remember the slovenly dress of his middle and philosophic life, this will furnish matter for a smile.

Stranger still it is to tell, that, for the first time in his life, Wordsworth got "bouzy" at Cambridge. It is but fair to add, that the first time was also the last time. But perhaps the strangest part of the story is the occasion of this drunkenness; which was in celebration of his first visit to the very rooms at Christ College once occupied by Milton — intoxication by way of homage to the most temperate of men, and this homage offered by one who has turned out himself to the full as temperate! Still one must grant a privilege — and he would be a churl that could frown on such a claim — a privilege and charter of large enthusiasm to such an occasion. And an older man than Wordsworth, at that era not fully nineteen, and a man even without a poet's blood in his veins, might have leave to forget his sobriety in such circumstances. Besides that, after all, I have heard, from Wordsworth's own lips, that he was not too far gone to attend chapel decorously during the very acme of his elevation.

The rooms which Wordsworth occupied at St. John's were singularly circumstanced; mementos of what is highest and what is lowest in human things solicited the eye and ear all day long. If the occupant approached the out-doors prospect in one direction, there was visible through the great windows in the adjacent chapel of Trinity, the statue of Newton "with his silent face and prism," memorials of the abstracting intellect, serene and absolute, emancipated from fleshly bonds. On the other hand, immediately below, stood the college kitchen; and, in that region, from noon to dewy eve, resounded the shrill voice of scolding from the female ministers of the head cook,

never suffering the mind to forget one of the meanest among human necessities. Wordsworth, however, as one who passed much of his time in social gayety, was less in the way of this annoyance than a profounder student would have been. Probably he studied little beyond French and Italian during his Cambridge life; not however at any time forgetting (as I had so much reason to complain, when speaking of my Oxonian contemporaries) the literature of his own country. It is true that he took the regular degree of A. B., and in the regular course; but this was won in those days by a mere nominal examination, unless where the mathematical attainments of the student prompted his ambition to contest the honourable distinction of Senior Wrangler. This, in common with all other honours of the University, is won in our days with far severer effort than in that age of relaxed discipline; but at no period could it have been won, let the malicious and the scornful say what they will, without an amount of mathematical skill very much beyond what has ever been exacted of its alumni by any other European university. Wordsworth was a profound admirer of the sublimer mathematics; at least of the higher geometry. The secret of this admiration for geometry lay in the antagonism between this world of bodiless abstraction and the world of passion. And here I may mention appropriately, and I hope without any breach of confidence, that, in a great philosophic poem of Wordsworth's, which is still in manuscript, and will remain in manuscript until after his death, there is, at the opening of one of the books, a dream, which reaches the very ne plus ultra of sublimity in my opinion, expressly framed to illustrate the eternity and the independence of all social modes or fashions of existence, conceded to these two hemispheres, as it were, that compose the total world of human power—mathematics on the one hand, poetry on the other.

“The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
 ———undisturbed by space or time;
 The other that was a god—yea, many gods—
 Had voices more than all the winds, and was
 A joy, a consolation, and a hope.”

I scarcely know whether I am entitled to quote—as my memory (though not refreshed by a sight of the poem for more than twenty years) would well enable me to do—any long extract; but thus much I may allowably say, as it cannot in any way affect Mr. Wordsworth's interests, that the form of the drama is as follows; and, by the way, even this form is not

arbitrary; but, with exquisite skill in the art of composition, is made to arise out of the situation in which the poet had previously found himself, and is faintly prefigured in the elements of that situation. He had been reading "Don Quixote" by the seaside; and, oppressed by the heat of the sun, he had fallen asleep whilst gazing on the barren sands before him. He dreams that, walking in some sandy wilderness of Africa, some endless Zahara, he sees, at a distance

"An Arab of the desert, lance in rest,
Mounted upon a dromedary."

The Arab rides forward to meet him; and the dreamer perceives, in the countenance of the rider, the agitation of fear, and that he often looks behind him in a troubled way, whilst in his hand he holds two books — one of which is Euclid's "Elements;" the other, which is a book and yet not a book, seeming, in fact, a shell as well as a book, sometimes neither, and yet both at once. The Arab directs him to apply his ear; upon which —

"In an unknown tongue, which yet I understood."

the dreamer says that he heard

"A wild prophetic blast of harmony,
An ode, as if in passion utter'd, that foretold
Destruction to the people of this earth
By deluge near at hand."

The Arab, with grave countenance, assures him that it is even so; that all was true which had been said; and that he himself was riding upon a divine mission, having it in charge

"To bury those two books;
The one that held acquaintance with the stars," etc.

that is, in effect, to secure the two great interests of poetry and mathematics from sharing in the watery ruin. As he talks, suddenly the dreamer perceives that the Arab's

———"countenance grew more disturb'd,"

and that his eye was often reverted; upon which the dreaming poet also looks along the desert in the same direction: and in the far horizon he descries

———"a glittering light."

What is it? he asks of the Arab rider. "It is," said he, "the waters of the earth," that even then were travelling on their

awful errand. Upon which, the poet sees this apostle of the desert riding off,

“With the fleet waters of the world in chase of him.”

The sketch I have here given of this sublime dream sufficiently attests the interest which Wordsworth took in the peculiar studies of the place, and the exalted privilege which he ascribed to them of co-eternity with “the vision and the faculty divine” of the poet — the destiny common to both, of an endless triumph over the ruins of nature and time. Meantime, he himself travelled no farther in these studies than through the six elementary books, usually selected from the fifteen of Euclid. Whatever might be the interests of this speculative understanding, whatever his admiration, practically he devoted himself to the more agitating interests of man, social and political, just then commencing that vast career of revolution which has never since been still or stationary; interests which, in his mind, alternated, however, with another and different interest, in the grander forms of external nature, as found in mountainous regions. In obedience to this latter passion, it was — for a passion it had become — that during one of his long Cambridge vacations, stretching from June to November, he went over to Switzerland and Savoy, for a pedestrian excursion amongst the Alps; taking with him, for his travelling companion, a certain Mr. J——, of whom (excepting that he is once apostrophized in a sonnet, written at Calais in the year 1802) I never happened to hear him speak: whence I presume to infer, that Mr. J—— owed this flattering distinction, not so much to any intellectual graces of his society, as, perhaps, to his powers of administering “punishment” (in the language of the fancy) to restive and mutinous landlords—for such were abroad in those days; people who presented huge reckonings with one hand, and, with the other, a huge cudgel, by way of opening the traveller’s eyes to the propriety of paying them without demur. I do not positively know this to have been the case; but I have heard Wordsworth speak of the ruffian landlords who played upon his youth in the Grisons; and, however well qualified to fight his own battles, he might find, amongst such savage mountaineers, two combatants better than one.

Wordsworth’s route, on this occasion, lay, at first, through Austrian Flanders, then (1788, I think) on the fret for an insurrectionary war against the capricious innovations of the Imperial coxcomb, Joseph II. He passed through the camps then forming, and thence ascended the Rhine to Switzerland; crossed the great St. Bernard; visited the Lake of Como, and

other interesting scenes in the North of Italy, where, by the way, the tourists were benighted in a forest — having, in some way or other, been misled by the Italian clocks, and their peculiar fashion of striking round to twenty-four o'clock. On his return, Wordsworth published a quarto pamphlet of verses, describing, with very considerable effect and brilliancy, the grand scenery amongst which he had been moving. This poem, as well as another in the same quarto form, describing the English lake scenery of Westmoreland and Cumberland, addressed, by way of letter, "to a young lady," (viz. Miss Wordsworth,) are remarkable, in the first place, as the earliest effort of Wordsworth in verse, at least as his earliest publications, but, in the second place, and still more so, from their style of composition. "Pure description," even where it cannot be said, sneeringly, "to hold the place of sense," is so little attractive as the direct or exclusive object of a poem, and in reality it exacts so powerful an effort on the part of the reader to realize visually, or make into an apprehensible unity the scattered elements and circumstances brought together, that, inevitably and reasonably, it can never hope to be a popular form of composition; else it is highly probable that these "Descriptive Sketches" of Wordsworth, though afterwards condemned as vicious in their principles of composition, by his own maturer taste, would really have gained him a high momentary notoriety with the public, had they been fairly brought under its notice: whilst, on the other hand, his revolutionary principles of composition, and his purer taste, ended in obtaining for him nothing but scorn and ruffian insolence. This seems marvellous; but, in fact, it is not so: it seems, I mean, *prima facie* marvellous, that the inferior models should be fitted to gain a far higher reputation; but the secret lies here — that these were in a taste, which though frequently spurious and hollow, had been long reconciled to the public feelings, and which, besides, have a specific charm for certain minds, even apart from all fashions of the day; whereas, the other had to struggle against sympathies long trained in an opposite direction, to which the recovery of a healthier tone (even where nature had made it possible) presupposed a difficult process of weaning, and an effort of discipline for reorganizing the whole internal economy of the sensibilities, that is both painful and mortifying: for — and that is worthy of deep attention — the misgivings of any vicious or unhealthy state; the impulses and suspicious gleams of the truth struggling with cherished error; the instincts of light conflicting with darkness — these are the real causes of that hatred

and intolerant scorn which is ever awakened by the first dawnings of new and important systems of truth. Therefore it is that Christianity was so much more hated than any mere novel variety of error. Therefore are the first feeble struggles of Nature towards a sounder state of health, always harsh and discordant; for the false system which this change for the better disturbs, had, at least, this soothing advantage — that it was self-consistent. Therefore, also, was the Wordsworthian restoration of elementary power, and of a higher or transcendent truth of Nature, (or, as some people vaguely expressed the case, of simplicity,) received at first with such malignant disgust. For there was a galvanic awakening in the shock of power, as it jarred against the ancient system of prejudices, which inevitably revealed so much of truth as made the mind jealous that all was not right, and just so far affected as to be dissatisfied with its existing creed, but not at all raised up to the level of the new creed; enlightened enough to descry its own wanderings, but not enough to recover the right road.

The more energetic, the more spasmodically potent are the throes of Nature towards her own re-establishment in the cases of suspended animation, by drowning, strangling, etc., the more keen is the anguish of revival. And, universally, a transition state is a state of suffering and disquiet. Meantime, the early poems of Wordsworth, that might have suited the public taste so much better than his more serious efforts, if the fashion of the hour, or the sanction of a leading review, or the prestige of a name in the author, had happened to give them a season's currency, did in fact drop unnoticed into the market. Nowhere have I seen them quoted, no, not even since the author's victorious establishment in the public admiration. The reason may be, however, that not many copies were printed at first; no subsequent edition was ever called for; and yet, from growing interest in the author, every copy of the small impression had been studiously bought up. Indeed, I myself went to the publishers (Johnson's) as early as 1805 or 1806, and bought up all the remaining copies, (which were but six or seven of the *Foreign Sketches*, and two or three of the *English*,) as presents, and as future curiosities in literature to literary friends, whose interest in Wordsworth might assure one of a due value being put upon the poem. Were it not for this extreme scarcity, I am disposed to think that many lines or passages would long ere this have been made familiar to the public ear. Some are delicately, some forcibly picturesque; and the selection of circumstances is occasionally very original and felicitous. In

particular, I remember this one, which presents an accident in rural life that must by thousands of repetitions have become intimately known to every dweller in the country, and yet had never before been consciously taken up for a poet's use. After having described the domestic cock as "sweetly ferocious" — a prettiness of phraseology which he borrows from an Italian author — he notices those competitions or defiances which are so often carried on interchangeably from great distances: —

"Echo'd by faintly answering farms remote."

This is the beautiful line in which he has caught and preserved so ordinary an occurrence — one, in fact, of the commonplaces, which lend animation and a moral interest to rural life.

After his return from this Swiss excursion, Wordsworth took up his parting residence at Cambridge, and prepared for a final adieu to academic pursuits and academic society.

It was about this period that the French Revolution broke out; and the reader who would understand its appalling effects — its convulsing, revolutionary effects upon Wordsworth's heart and soul — should consult the history of the Solitary, as given by himself in "The Excursion;" for that picture is undoubtedly a leaf from the personal experience of Wordsworth:

"From that dejection I was roused —
But how?" — etc.

Mighty was the transformation which it wrought in the whole economy of his thoughts; miraculous almost was the expansion which it gave to his human sympathies; chiefly in this it showed its effects — in throwing the thoughts inwards into grand meditations upon man, his final destiny, his ultimate capacities of elevation; and, secondly, in giving to the whole system of the thoughts and feelings a firmer tone, and a sense of the awful realities which surround the mind; by comparison with which the previous literary tastes seemed (even where they were fine and elegant, as in Collins, or Gray, unless where they had the self-sufficing reality of religion, as in Cowper) fanciful and trivial. In all lands this result was accomplished, and at the same time: Germany, above all, found her new literature the mere creation and product of this great moral tempest; and in Germany or England alike, the poetry was so entirely regenerated, thrown into moulds of thought and of feeling so new — so primary — so different from the old worn-out channels in which they had been trained to flow — that the poets every-

where felt themselves to be putting away childish things, and now at length — now first (as regarded the eighteenth century) entering upon the dignity and the sincere thinking of mature manhood.

Wordsworth, it is well known to all who know anything of his history, felt himself so fascinated by the gorgeous festival era of the Revolution — that era, when the sleeping snakes which afterwards stung the national felicity were yet covered with flowers — that he went over to Paris, and spent about one entire year between that city, Orleans, and Blois. There, in fact, he continued to reside almost too long. He had been sufficiently connected with public men to have drawn upon himself some notice from those who afterwards composed the Committee of Public Safety. And, as an Englishman, when the war had once obliterated the too fervent and too indulgent partiality, which, at an earlier period of the revolutionary movement, had settled upon the English name, he became an object of gloomy suspicion with those even who would have grieved that he should fall a victim to undistinguishing popular violence. Already for England, and in her behalf, he was thought to be that spy which (as Mr. Coleridge tells us, in his “*Biographia Literaria*”) afterwards he was accounted by Mr. Pitt’s emissaries, in the worst of services against her. I doubt, however, (let me say it, by the way, without impeachment of Mr. Coleridge’s veracity — for he was easily duped,) this whole story about Mr. Pitt’s Somersetshire spies; and it has often struck me with astonishment, that Mr. Coleridge should have suffered his personal pride to take so false a direction as to court the humble distinction of having been suspected as a spy, in those very years when poor empty tympanies of men, such as G——, Thelwall, Holcroft, were actually recognized as enemies of the state, and worthy of a State surveillance, by Ministers so blind and grossly misinformed, as, on this point, were Pitt and Dundas. Had I been Coleridge, instead of saving Mr. Pitt’s reputation with posterity by ascribing to him a jealousy which he or his agents had not the discernment to cherish, I would have boldly planted myself upon the fact, the killing fact, that he had utterly despised both myself, Coleridge to wit, and Wordsworth — even with Dogberry, I would have insisted upon that — “Set down, also, that I am an ass!” I would have exulted in this fact; it should have been my glory — namely, that two men, whom, in their intellectual faculties, posterity will acknowledge as equal to any age, were scorned and slighted as too contemptible for fear; whilst others, so gross

and vulgar in style of mind as this Holcroft, this Thelwall, this — (what is his name?) — were as brainlessly feared by Mr. Pitt's cabinet as ever Bottom was adored by Titania. What a perversion of pride! that Coleridge should have sought, by lending his ear to fables which Wordsworth's far sterner principle views as lies,^s to gain the fanciful honour of standing upon Mr. Pitt's pocket-list of traitors and French spies; when, after all, they stood confessedly in that list as tenth-rate and most inconsiderable villains. Heavens! that was a strange ambition, that, rather than be wholly forgotten by Mr. Pitt, (in which fate there was, by possibility, a great dignity,) would seek to figure amongst the very rear-guard of his traitors!

In France, however, Wordsworth had a chance, in good earnest, for passing for the traitor, that, in England, no rational person ever thought him. He had chosen his friends carelessly; nor could any man, the most sagacious, have chosen them safely, in a time when the internal schisms of the very same general party brought with them worse hostilities and more personal perils than even, upon the broader divisions of party, could have attended the most ultra professions of anti-national politics, and when the rapid changes of position shifted the peril from month to month. One individual is specially recorded by Wordsworth, in the poem on his own life, as a man of the highest merit, and personal qualities the most brilliant, who ranked first upon the list of Wordsworth's friends; and this man was so far a safe friend, at one moment, as he was a republican general — finally, indeed, a commander-in-chief. This was Beaupuis; and the description of his character and position is singularly interesting. There is, in fact, a special value and a use about the case: it opens one's eyes feelingly to the fact, that, even in this thoughtless people, so full of vanity and levity — nevertheless, the awful temper of the times, and the dread burthen of human interests with which it was charged — had called to a consciousness of new duties — had summoned to an audit, as if at some great final tribunal, even the gay, radiant creatures that, under less solemn auspices, under the reign of a Francis I, or a Louis XIV, would have been the merest painted butterflies of the court-sunshine. This Beaupuis was a man of superb person — beautiful in a degree which made him a model of male beauty, both as to face and figure; and, accordingly, in a land where conquests of that nature were so easy, and the subjects of so trifling an effort, he had been distinguished, to his own as well as the public eyes, by a rapid succession of *bonnes fortunes* amongst women.

Such, and so glorified by triumphs the most unquestionable and flattering, had the earthquake of the revolution found him. From that moment, he had no leisure, not a thought, to bestow upon his former selfish and frivolous pursuits. He was hurried, as one inspired by some high apostolic passion, into the service of the unhappy and desolate serfs amongst his own countrymen—such as are described, at an earlier date, by Madame de Sevigné, as the victims of feudal institutions; and one day as he was walking with Wordsworth in the neighbourhood of Orleans, and they had turned into a little quiet lane, leading off from a heath, suddenly they came upon the following spectacle: A girl, seventeen or eighteen years old, hunger-bitten, and wasted to a meagre shadow, was knitting, in a dejected, drooping way; whilst to her arm was attached, by a rope, the horse, equally famished, that earned the miserable support of her family. Beauvais comprehended the scene in a moment; and seizing Wordsworth by the arm, he said—"Dear English friend!—brother from a nation of freemen!—that it is that is the curse of our people, in their widest division; and to cure this, it is, as well as to maintain our work against the kings of the earth, that blood must be shed and tears must flow for many years to come!" At that time, the revolution had not fulfilled its purposes; as yet, the King was on the throne; the fatal 10th of August, 1792, had not dawned; and, as yet, there was safety for a subject of kings.⁶ The irresistible stream was hurrying forwards. The King fell; and (to pause for a moment) how divinely is the fact recorded by Wordsworth, in the manuscript poem on his own life, placing the awful scenes past and passing in Paris, under a pathetic relief from the description of the golden, autumnal day, sleeping in sunshine—

"When I

Towards the fierce metropolis bent my steps
The homeward road to England. From his throne
The King had fallen"—etc.

What a picture does he give of the fury which there possessed the public mind; of the frenzy which shone in every eye, and through every gesture; of the stormy groups assembled at the Palais Royal, or the Tuilleries, with "hissing factionists" forever in their centre, "hissing" from the self-baffling of their own madness, and incapable from wrath of speaking clearly; of fear already creeping over the manners of multitudes; of stealthy movements through back streets; plotting and counter-plotting in every family; feuds to extermination, dividing chil-

dren of the same house forever; scenes such as those of the Chapel Royal, (now silenced on that public stage,) repeating themselves daily amongst private friends; and, to show the universality of this maniacal possession — that it was no narrow storm discharging its fury by local concentration upon a single city, but that it overspread the whole realm of France — a picture is given, wearing the same features, of what passed daily at Orleans, Blois, and other towns. The citizens are described in the attitudes they assumed at the daily coming in of the post from Paris; the fierce sympathy is portrayed, with which they echoed back the feelings of their compatriots in the capital; men of all parties had been there up to this time; aristocrats as well as democrats — and one in particular of the former class is put forward as a representative of his class. This man, duly as the hour arrived which brought the Parisian newspapers, read restlessly of the tumults and insults amongst which the Royal Family now passed their days; of the decrees by which his own order were threatened or assailed; of the self-expatriation, now continually swelling in amount, as a measure of despair on the part of myriads, as well priests as gentry — all this and worse he read in public; and still as he read,

“his land
 Haunted his sword like an uneasy spot
 In his own body.”

In short, as there never has been so strong a national convulsion diffused so widely with equal truth, it may be asserted that no describer, so powerful, or idealizing so magnificently what he deals with, has ever been a real living spectator of parallel scenes. The French, indeed, it may be said, are far enough from being a people profound in feeling. True; but of all people, they most exhibit their feeling on the surface; are the most demonstrative (to use a modern term); and most of all mark their feelings by outward expression of gesticulation and fervent enunciation: not to insist upon the obvious truth — that even a people of shallow feeling may be deeply moved by tempests which uproot the forest of a thousand years' growth; by changes in the very organization of society, that throw all things, for a time, into one vast anarchy; and by murderous passions, alternately the effect and the cause of that same chaotic anarchy. Now, it was in this autumn of 1792, as I have already said, that Wordsworth parted finally from his illustrious friend — for, all things considered, he may be justly so entitled — the gallant Beaupuis. This great season

of public trial had searched men's natures; revealed their real hearts; brought into light and action qualities oftentimes not suspected by their possessors; and had thrown men, as in elementary states of society, each upon his own native resources, unaided by the old conventional forces of rank and birth. Beauvais had shone to unusual advantage under this general trial; he had discovered, even to the philosophic eye of Wordsworth, a depth of benignity, very unusual in a Frenchman; and not of local, contracted benignity, but of large, illimitable apostolic devotion to the service of the poor and the oppressed — a fact the more remarkable as he had all the pretensions in his own person of high birth and high rank; and, so far as he had any personal interest embarked in the struggle, should have allied himself with the aristocracy. But of selfishness in any shape, he had no vestiges; or, if he had, it showed itself in a slight tinge of vanity; yet, no — it was not vanity, but a radiant quickness of sympathy with the eye which expressed admiring love — sole relic of the chivalrous devotion once limited to the service of ladies. Now, again, he put on the garb of chivalry; it was a chivalry the noblest in the world, which opened his ear to the Pariah and the oppressed all over his mis-organized country. A more apostolic fervour of holy zealotry in this great cause, had not been seen since the days of Bartholomew las Casas, who showed the same excess of feeling in another direction. This sublime dedication of his being to a cause which, in his conception of it, extinguished all petty considerations for himself, and made him thenceforwards a creature of the national will — “a son of France,” in a more eminent and loftier sense than according to the heraldry of Europe — had extinguished even his sensibility to the voice of worldly honour: “injuries,” says Wordsworth —

“injuries
Made him more gracious.”

And so utterly had he submitted his own will or separate interests to the transcendent voice of his country, which, in the main, he believed to be now speaking authentically for the first time since the foundations of Christendom, that, even against the motions of his own heart, he adopted the hatreds of the young Republic, growing cruel in his purposes towards the ancient oppressor, out of very excess of love for the oppressed; and, against the voice of his own order, as well as in stern oblivion of many early friendships, he became the champion of democracy in the struggle everywhere commencing with prejudice or feudal privilege. Nay, he went so far upon the line of

this new crusade against the evils of the world, that he even accepted, with a conscientious defiance of his own inevitable homage to the erring spirit of loyalty embarked upon that cause, a commission in the Republican armies preparing to move against La Vendée; and, finally, in that cause, as commander-in-chief, he laid down his life. "He perished," says Wordsworth

———"perished, fighting in supreme command,
Upon the banks of the unhappy Loire."

Homewards fled all the English from a land which now was fast filling its prisons, and making ready the shambles for its noblest citizens. Thither also came Wordsworth; and then he spent his time for a year and more, in London chiefly, overwhelmed with shame and despondency for the disgrace and scandal brought upon liberty by the atrocities committed in that holy name. Upon this subject he dwells with deep emotion in the poem on his own life; and he records the awful triumph for retribution accomplished, which possessed him when crossing the sands of the great Bay of Morecamb from Lancaster to Ulverstone; and hearing from a horseman who passed him, in reply to his question — Was there any news? — "Yes, that Robespierre had perished." Immediately, a passion seized him, a transport of almost epileptic fervour, prompting him as he stood alone upon this perilous⁷ waste of sands, to shout aloud anthems of thanksgiving for this great vindication of eternal justice. Still, though justice was done upon one great traitor to the cause, the cause itself was overcast with clouds too heavily to find support and employment for the hopes of a poet who had believed in a golden era ready to open upon the prospects of human nature. It gratified and solaced his heart, that the indignation of mankind should have wreaked itself upon the chief monsters that had outraged their nature and their hopes; but for the present he found it necessary to comfort his disappointment, by turning away from politics to studies less capable of deceiving his expectations.

From this period, therefore — that is, from the year 1794-95 — we may date the commencement of Wordsworth's entire self-dedication to poetry as the study and main business of his life. Somewhere about this period, also, (though, according to my remembrance of what Miss Wordsworth once told me, I think one year or so later,) his sister joined him; and they began to keep house together;⁸ once at Race Down, in Dorsetshire; once at Clevedon, on the coast of Somersetshire; then

amongst the Quantock Hills, in the same county, or in that neighbourhood; and, at length, at Alfoxton, a beautiful country-house, with a grove and shrubbery attached, belonging to Mr. St. Aubyn, a minor, and let (I believe) on the terms of keeping the house in repair. Whilst resident at this last place it was, as I have generally understood, and in the year 1797 or 1798, that Wordsworth first became acquainted with Coleridge; though, possibly, in the year I am wrong; for it occurs to me that, in a poem published in 1796, there is an allusion to a young writer of the name of Wordsworth, as one who had something austere in his style, but otherwise was more original than any other poet of the age; and it is probable that this, and knowledge of the poetry, would be subsequent to a personal knowledge of the author, considering the little circulation which any poetry of a Wordsworthian stamp would be likely to attain at that time.

NOTES

¹ Who must now (1854) be classed as the late Earl.

² By the way, in the lamented Eliot Warburton's "Prince Rupert," this book, by a very excusable mistake, is always cited as the "Eicon Basilicon;" he was thinking of the "Doron Bascilicon" written by Charles's father; each of the nouns Eicon and Doron, having the same terminal syllable—"on"—it was most excusable to forget that the first belonged to an imparisyllabic declension, so as to be feminine, the second not so; which made it neuter. With respect to the great standing question as to the authorship of the work, I have myself always held, that the natural freedom of judgment in this case has been intercepted by one strong prepossession (entirely false) from the very beginning. The minds of all people have been pre-occupied with the notion, that Dr. Gauden, the reputed author, obtained his bishopric confessedly on the credit of that service. Lord Clarendon, it is said, who hated the doctor, nevertheless gave him a bishopric, on the sole ground of his having written the "Eicon." The inference, therefore, is—that the Prime Minister, who gave so reluctantly, must have given under an irresistible weight of proof that the doctor really had done the work for which so unwillingly he paid him. Any shade of doubt, such as could have justified Lord Clarendon in suspending this gift, would have been eagerly snatched at. Such a shade, therefore, there was not. Meantime the whole of this reasoning rests upon a false assumption: Dr. Gauden did not owe his bishopric to a belief (true or false) that he had written the "Eicon." The bishopric was given on another account; consequently it cannot, in any way of using the fact, at all affect the presumptions, small or great, which may exist separately for or against the doctor's claim on that head.

³ In particular, and by way of giving an illustration, let me here mention one of those accidental revelations that unfold new aspects of nature; it was one that occurred to myself. I had gone up at all times of the morning and the year, to an eminence, or rather a vast field of eminences, above Scor Crag, in the rear of Allan Bank, a Liverpool gentleman's mansion, from which is descried the deep and gloomy valley of Great Langdale. Not, however, for many years, had

it happened that I found myself standing in that situation about four o'clock on a summer afternoon. At length, and on a favourable day, this accident occurred; and the scene which I then beheld, was one which I shall not wholly forget to my dying day. The effects arose from the position of the sun and of the spectator, taken in connection with a pendulous mass of vapour, in which, however, were many rents and openings, and through them, far below, at an abyss-like depth, was seen the gloomy valley, its rare cottages, and "unrejoicing" fir-trees. I had beheld the scene many times before; I was familiar with its least important features, but now it was absolutely transfigured; it was seen under lights and mighty shadows, that made it no less marvellous to the eye than that memorable creation amongst the clouds and azure sky, which is described by the Solitary in "The Excursion." And, upon speaking of it to Wordsworth, I found that he had repeatedly witnessed the same impressive transfiguration; so that it is not evanescent, but dependent upon fixed and recoverable combinations of time and weather.

⁴ Among the various attempts to justify Wordsworth's choice of so humble and even mean an occupation for his philosopher, how strange that the weightiest argument of all should have been omitted — viz. the privilege attached to his functions of penetrating without offense, and naturally, and at periodic intervals, to every fireside.

⁵ The reader, who may happen not to have seen Mr. Coleridge's "Biographia Literaria," is informed that Mr. Coleridge tells a long story about a man who followed and dogged himself and Mr. Wordsworth in all their rural excursions, under a commission (originally emanating from Mr. Pitt) for detecting some overt acts of treason, or treasonable correspondence; or, in default of either, some words of treasonable conversation. Unfortunately for his own interests as an active servant, capable of bagging a promising amount of game, within a week or so, even in a whole month, that spy had collected nothing at all as the basis of a report, excepting only something which they (Coleridge and Wordsworth, to wit), were continually saying to each other, now in blame, now in praise, of one Spy Nosy; and this, praise and blame alike, the honest spy very naturally took to himself — seeing that the world accused him of having a nose of unreasonable dimensions, and his own conscience accused him of being a spy. "Now," says Mr. Coleridge, "the very fact was, that Wordsworth and I were constantly talking about Spinoso." This story makes a very good Joe Miller; but, for other purposes, is somewhat damaged. However, there is one excellent story in the case. Some country gentlemen from the neighbourhood of Nether Stowey, upon a party happening to discuss the probabilities that Wordsworth and Coleridge might be traitors and in correspondence with the French Directory, answered thus: "Oh, as to that Coleridge, he's a rattle-brain that will say more in a week than he will stand in a twelvemonth. But Wordsworth — that's the traitor; why God bless me, he's so close on the subject, that d——n me if you'll ever hear him open his lips on the subject from year's end to year's end!"

⁶ How little has any adequate power as yet approached this great theme! Not the Grecian stage — not "the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes," in any of its scenes, unfolds such tragical grouping of circumstances and situations as may be gathered from the memoirs of the time. The galleries and vast staircases of Versailles, at early

dawn, on some of the greatest days—the tempestuous gathering of the mobs—the figure of the Duke of Orleans obscurely detected amongst them—the growing fury—the growing panic—the blind tumult—and the dimness of the event—all make up a scene worthy to blend with our time-hallowed images of Babylon or of Nineveh with the enemy in all her gates, Memphis or Jerusalem in their agonies. But, amongst all the exponents of the growing agitation that besieged the public mind, none is so profoundly impressive as the scene (every Sunday renewed) at the Chapel Royal. Even in the most penitential of the litanies, in the presence when most immediately confessed of God himself—when the antiphonies were chanted, one party singing, with fury and gnashing of teeth, “*Salvum fac regem,*” and another, with equal hatred and fervour, answering “*Et Reginam*”—the organ roared into thunder—the semi-chorus swelled into shouting—the menaces into defiance—the agitation into tempestuous fury—again the crashing semi-chorus sang with shouts their “*Salvum fac regem*”—again the vengeful antiphony hurled back its “*Et Reginam*”—and one person, an eye-witness of these scenes, which mounted in violence on each successive Sunday, declares that, oftentimes, the semi-choral bodies were at the point of fighting with each other in the presence of the King.

⁷That tract of the Lake country which stretches southwards from Hawkshead and the lakes of Esthwaite, Windermere, and Coniston, to the little town of Ulverstone, (which may be regarded as the metropolis of the little romantic English Calabria, called Turness), is divided from the main part of Lancashire by the estuary of Morecamb. The sea retires with the ebb tide to a vast distance, leaving the sands passable for a few hours for horses and carriages. But partly from the daily variation in these hours, partly from the intricacy of the pathless track which must be pursued, and partly from the galloping pace at which the returning tide comes in, many fatal accidents are continually occurring—sometimes to the too venturesome traveller who has slighted the aid of guides—sometimes to the guides themselves when baffled and perplexed by mists. Gray, the poet, mentions one of the latter class, as having then recently occurred under affecting circumstances. Local tradition records a long list of interesting cases.

⁸I do not, on consideration, know when they began to keep house together; but, by a passage in “*The Prelude,*” they must have made a tour together as early as 1787.

III

IT was at Alfoxton that Miss Mary Hutchinson visited her cousins the Wordsworths; and there, or previously, in the North of England, at Stockton-upon-Tees and Darlington, that the attachment began between Miss Hutchinson and Wordsworth, which terminated in their marriage about the beginning of the present century. The marriage took place in the North; somewhere, I believe, in Yorkshire; and, immediately after the ceremony, Wordsworth brought his bride to Grasmere; in which most lovely of English valleys he had previously obtained, upon a lease of seven or eight years, the cottage in which I found him living at my first visit to him in November, 1807. I have heard that there was a paragraph inserted on this occasion in the "Morning Post" or "Courier"—and I have an indistinct remembrance of having once seen it myself—which described this event of the poet's marriage in the most ludicrous terms of silly pastoral sentimentality; the cottage being described as "the abode of content and all the virtues," the vale itself in the same puerile slang, and the whole event in a style of allegorical trifling about the muses, etc. The masculine and severe taste of Wordsworth made him peculiarly open to annoyance from such absurd trifling; and, unless his sense of the ludicrous overpowered his graver feelings, he must have been much displeased with the paragraph. But, after all, I have understood that the whole affair was an unseasonable jest of Coleridge's or Lamb's.

To us who, in after years, were Wordsworth's friends, or at least intimate acquaintances—viz. to Professor Wilson and myself—the most interesting circumstance in this marriage, the one which perplexed us exceedingly, was the very possibility that it should ever have been brought to bear. For we could not conceive of Wordsworth as submitting his faculties to the humiliations and devotion of courtship. That self-surrender—that prostration of mind, by which a man is too happy and proud to express the profundity of his service to the woman of his heart—it seemed a mere impossibility that ever Wordsworth should be brought to feel for a single instant;

and what he did not sincerely feel, assuredly he was not the person to profess. Ah, happy, happy days!—in which, for a young man's heart that is deep and fervid in his affections, and passionate in his admirations, there is but one presence upon earth, one glory, one heaven of hope!—days how fugitive, how incapable of return, how imperishable to the heart of all that a man has lived! Wordsworth, I take it upon myself to say, had not the feelings within him which make this total devotion to a woman possible. There never lived the woman whom he would not have lectured and admonished under circumstances that should have seemed to require it; nor would he have conversed with her in any mood whatever without wearing an air of mild condescension to her understanding. To lie at her feet, to make her his idol, to worship her very caprices, and to adore the most unreasonable of her frowns—these things were impossible to Wordsworth; and, being so, never could he, in any emphatic sense, have been a lover.

A lover, therefore, in any passionate sense of the word, Wordsworth could not have been. And, moreover, it is remarkable that a woman who could dispense with that sort of homage in her suitor, is not of a nature to inspire such a passion. That same meekness which reconciles her to the tone of superiority and freedom in the manner of her suitor, and which may afterwards in a wife become a sweet domestic grace, strips her of that too charming irritation, captivating at once and tormenting, which lurks in feminine pride. If there be an enchantress's spell yet surviving in this age of ours, it is the haughty grace of maidenly pride—the womanly sense of dignity, even when most in excess, and expressed in the language of scorn—which tortures a man and lacerates his heart, at the same time that it pierces him with admiration.

“Oh, what a world of scorn looks beautiful
In the repelling glances of her eye!”

And she who spares a man the agitations of this thralldom, robs him no less of its divinest transports. Wordsworth, however, who never could have laid aside his own nature sufficiently to have played his part in such an impassioned courtship, by suiting himself to this high sexual pride with the humility of a lover—and, perhaps, quite as little have enjoyed the spectacle of such a pride, or have viewed it in any degree as an attraction—it would to him have been a pure vexation. Looking down even upon the lady of his heart, as upon the rest of the world, from the eminence of his own intellectual

superiority — viewing her, in fact, as a child — he would be much more disposed to regard any airs of feminine disdain she might assume, as the impertinence of girlish levity, than as the caprice of womanly pride. He would not, indeed, like Petruccio, have hinted a possibility that he might be provoked to box her ears — for any mode of unmanly roughness would have seemed abominable to his nature, with the meanest of her sex; but much I fear that, in any case of dispute, he would have called even his mistress, “Child! child!” and perhaps even (but this I do not say with the same certainty) might have bid her hold her tongue. Think of that, reader, with such lovers as I am placing in ideal contrast with these! — image to yourself the haughty beauty, and the majestic wrath, never to be propitiated after hearing such irreverent language — nay, worse than irreverent language — language implying disenchantment! Yet still, it may be said, can a man forget — absolutely and in all moments forget — his intellectual superiority? You yourself, for example, who write these sketches, did it follow of necessity that the woman you loved should be equal (or seem equal in your own eyes) to yourself in intellect? No; far from it. I could not, perhaps, have loved, with a perfect love, any woman whom I had felt to be my own equal intellectually; but then I never thought of her in that light, or under that relation. When the golden gate was opened, when the gate moved upon its golden hinges that opened to me the paradise of her society — when her young, melodious laughter sounded in my too agitated ear — did I think of any claims that I could have? Too happy, if I might be permitted to lay all things at her feet, all things that I could call my own, or ever hope to do so — yes, though it had been possible that by power divine I should possess the earth, and the inheritance of the earth,—

“The sea, and all which they contain.”

What was intellect, what was power, what was empire, if I had happened to possess them all in excess? These things were not of the nature of, had no common nature with, did not resemble, were no approximation to, the sweet angelic power — power infinite, power deathless, power unutterable, which formed her virgin dowry. O heart, why art thou disquieted? Tempestuous, rebellious, heart! oh, wherefore art thou still dreaming of things so long gone by, of expectations that could not be fulfilled, that, being mortal, must, in some point, have a mortal taint? Empty, empty thoughts! vanity

of vanities! Yet no; not always; for sometimes, after days of intellectual toil, when half the whole world is dreaming — I wrap my head in the bed-clothes, which hide even the faintest murmurs yet lingering from the fretful day —

“The gaudy, blabbing, and remorseful day;”

and then, through blinding tears, I see again that golden gate; again I stand waiting at the entrance; until dreams come that carry me once more to the Paradise beyond.

If, however, no lover, in a proper sense — though from many exquisite passages one might conceive that at some time of his life he was, as especially from the inimitable stanzas beginning —

“When she I loved was strong and gay,
And like a rose in June;”

or perhaps (but less powerfully so, because here the passion, though profound, is less the peculiar passion of love) from the impassioned lamentation for “the pretty Barbara,” beginning —

“’Tis said that some have died for love:
And here and there, amidst unhallowed ground
In the cold north,” etc., etc.: —

yet, if no lover, or (which some of us have sometimes thought) a lover disappointed at some earlier period, by the death of her he loved, or by some other fatal event, (for he always preserved a mysterious silence on the subject of that “Lucy,” repeatedly alluded to or apostrophized in his poems, and I have heard, from gossiping people about Hawkshead, some snatches of tragical story, which, after all, might be an idle semi-fable, improved out of slight materials) — let this matter have been as it might — at all events he made, what for him turns out, a happy marriage. Few people have lived on such terms of entire harmony and affection as he has lived with the woman of his final choice. Indeed, the sweetness, almost unexampled, of temper, which, in her early and middle years, shed so sunny a radiance over Mrs. Wordsworth’s manners, sustained by the happy life she led, the purity of her conscience, and the uniformity of her good health, made it impossible for anybody to have quarrelled with her; and whatever fits of ill temper Wordsworth might have — for, with all his philosophy, he had such fits, though rarely — met with no fuel to support them, except in the more irritable temperament of

his sister. She was all fire, and an ardour, which, like that of the first Lord Shaftesbury,

“ O'er-informed its tenement of clay; ”

and, as this ardour looked out in every gleam of her wild eyes, (those “ wild eyes ” so finely noticed in the “ Tintern Abbey, ”) as it spoke in every word of her self-baffled utterance, as it gave a trembling movement to her very person and demeanour — easily enough it might happen, that any apprehension of an unkind word should with her kindle a dispute. It might have happened; and yet, to the great honour of both, having such impassioned temperaments, rarely it did happen — and this was the more remarkable, as I have been assured that both were, in childhood, irritable, or even ill-tempered; and they were constantly together; for Miss Wordsworth was always ready to walk out — wet or dry, storm or sunshine, night or day; whilst Mrs. Wordsworth was completely dedicated to her maternal duties, and rarely left the house, unless when the weather was tolerable, or, at least, only for short rambles. I should not have noticed this trait in Wordsworth's occasional manners, had it been gathered from domestic or confidential opportunities. But, on the contrary, the first two occasions on which, after months' domestic intercourse with Wordsworth, I first became aware of his possible ill-humour and peevishness, were so public, that others, and those strangers, must have been equally made aware of the scene.

Having brought down the history of Wordsworth to the time of his marriage, I am reminded by that event to mention the singular good fortune, in all points of worldly prosperity, which has accompanied him through life. His marriage — the capital event of life — was fortunate; so were all the minor occasions of a prosperous life. He has himself described, in his “ Leech Gatherer, ” the fears that, at one time, or at least in some occasional moments of his life, haunted him, lest at some period or other he might be reserved for poverty. “ Cold, pain, and hunger, and all fleshly ills, ” occurred to his boding apprehension —

“ And mighty poets in their misery dead.”

“ He thought of Chatterton, the marvellous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in its pride;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
Beside his plough upon the mountain-side.”

And, at starting on his career of life, certainly no man had plainer reasons for anticipating the worst evils that have ever

persecuted poets, excepting only two reasons which might warrant him in hoping better; and these two were — his great prudence, and the temperance of his daily life. He could not be betrayed into foolish engagements; he could not be betrayed into expensive habits. Profusion and extravagance had no hold over him, by any one passion or taste. He was not luxurious in anything; was not vain or even careful of external appearances — (not at least since he had left Cambridge, and visited a mighty nation in civil convulsions;) was not, even in the article of books, expensive. Very few books sufficed him; he was careless habitually of all the current literature, or indeed of any literature that could not be considered as enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary, grandeur of the human intellect. It will be seen, further on, that in this extreme limitation of his literary sensibilities, he was as much assisted by that accident of his own intellectual condition, which the Germans of our day have so usefully brought forward to the consciousness, and by which so many anomalies of opinions are solved — viz. his extreme, intense, unparalleled oneness, (*einseitigkeit*,) as by any peculiar sanity of feeling. Thousands of books, that have given the most genuine and even rapturous delight to millions of ingenuous minds, for Wordsworth were absolutely a dead letter — closed and sealed up from his sensibilities and his powers of appreciation, not less than colours from a blind man's eye. Even the few books which his peculiar mind had made indispensable to him, were not so in the degree which they would have been to a man of more sedentary habits. He lived in the open air; and the enormity of pleasure which both he and his sister drew from the common appearances of Nature and their everlasting variety — variety so infinite, that if no one leaf of a tree, or shrub, according to Leibnitz's principle, ever exactly resembled another in all its filaments, and their arrangement, still less did any one day ever repeat another in all its pleasurable elements — this pleasure was to him, in the stead of many libraries —

“ One impulse from a vernal wood,
 Could teach him more of Man,
 Of moral evil, and of good,
 Than all the sages can.”

And he, we may be sure, who could draw

———“ even from the meanest flower that blows,
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears;”

to whom the mere daisy, the pansy, the primrose, could fur-

nish pleasures — not the puerile ones which his most puerile and worldly insulters imagined, but pleasures drawn from depths of reverie and meditative tenderness far beyond all power of their hearts to conceive: — that man would hardly need any large variety of books. In fact, there were only two provinces of literature in which Wordsworth could be looked upon as well read — Poetry and Ancient History. Nor do I believe that he would much have lamented, on his own account, if all books had perished, excepting the entire body of English poetry, and, perhaps, “Plutarch’s Lives.”¹

With these simple or rather austere tastes, Wordsworth (it might seem) had little reason to fear poverty — certainly not with any moderate income; but meantime he had none. About the time when he left college, I have good grounds for believing that his whole regular income was precisely = 0. Some fragments must have survived from the funds devoted to his education; and with these, no doubt, he supported the expenses of his continental tours, and his year’s residence in France. But, at length, cold, pain, and hunger, and “all fleshly ills,” must have stared him in the face pretty earnestly. And hope of longer evading an unpleasant destiny of daily toil in some form or other there seemed absolutely none.

“For,” as he himself expostulates with himself —

“For how can he expect that others should
Sow for him, build for him, and, at his call,
Love him, who for himself will take no thought at all?”

In this dilemma he had all but resolved, as Miss Wordsworth once told me, to take pupils; and perhaps that, though odious enough, was the sole resource he had; for, with all his immeasurable genius, Wordsworth has not, even yet, and from long experience, acquired any popular talent of writing for the current press; and, at that period of his life, he was gloomily unfitted for bending to such a yoke. In this crisis of his fate, possibly it might be — a fact which a mere accident once caused Miss Wordsworth to mention to me, in a whispering tone, and (as if ashamed of it) she never recurred to it — that Wordsworth, for once, and once only, became a martyr to some nervous affection. That raised pity; but I could not forbear smiling at the remedy, or palliation, which his few friends adopted. Every night they played at cards with him, as the best mode of beguiling his sense of distress, whatever it might be; cards, which, in any part of the thirty-and-one years since I have known Wordsworth, could have had as

little power to interest him, or to cheat him of sorrow, as marbles or a kite — (Scotice, a dragon!) However, so it was; for my information could not be questioned: it came from Miss Wordsworth.

The crisis, as I have said, had arrived for determining the future colour of his life. Memorable it is, that exactly in those critical moments when some decisive step had first become necessary, there happened the first instance of Wordsworth's good luck; and equally memorable that, at measured intervals, throughout the long sequel of his life since then, a regular succession of similar but superior God-sends have fallen in, to sustain his expenditure, duly as it grew with the growing claims upon his purse. A more fortunate man, I believe, does not exist than Wordsworth. The aid which now dropped from heaven, as it were, to enable him to range at will in paths of his own choosing, and

“ Finally array
His temples with the muses' diadem,”

came in the shape of a bequest from Raisley Calvert, a young man of good family in Cumberland, who died about this time of pulmonary consumption. A very remarkable young man he must have been, this Raisley Calvert, to have discerned, at this early period, that future superiority in Wordsworth which so few people suspected. He was the brother of a Cumberland gentleman, whom I have seen; a generous man, doubtless; for he made no sort of objections (though legally, I have heard, he might) to his brother's farewell memorial of regard; a good man to all his dependents, as I have generally understood, in the neighbourhood of Windy Brow, his mansion, near Keswick; and, as Southey always said, (who must know better than I could do,) a man of strong natural endowments; else, as his talk was of oxen, I might have made the mistake of supposing him to be, in heart and soul, what he was in profession — a mere farming country gentleman, whose ambition was chiefly planted upon turning up mighty turnips. The sum left by Raisley Calvert was £900; and it was laid out in an annuity. This was the basis of Wordsworth's prosperity in life; and upon this he has built up, by a series of accessions, in which each step, taken separately for itself, seems perfectly natural, whilst the total result has undoubtedly something wonderful about it, the present goodly edifice of his fortunes. Next in the series, came the present Lord Lonsdale's repayment of his predecessor's debt. Upon that, probably, it was that

Wordsworth felt himself entitled to marry. Then, I believe, came some fortune with Miss Hutchinson; then—that is, fourthly—some worthy uncle of the same lady was pleased to betake himself to a better world, leaving to various nieces, and especially to Mrs. Wordsworth, something or other—I forget what, but it was expressed by thousands of pounds. At this moment, Wordsworth's family had begun to increase; and the worthy old uncle, like everybody else in Wordsworth's case, (I wish I could say the same in my own,) finding his property very clearly “wanted,” and, as people would tell him, “bespoke,” felt how very indelicate it would look for him to stay any longer; and so off he moved. But Wordsworth's family, and the wants of that family, still continued to increase; and the next person—viz. the fifth—who stood in the way, and must, therefore, have considered himself rapidly growing into a nuisance, was the Stamp-Distributor for the county of Westmoreland. About March, 1814, I think it was, that his very comfortable situation was wanted. Probably it took a month for the news to reach him; because in April, and not before, feeling that he had received a proper notice to quit, he, good man, this stamp-distributor, like all the rest, distributed himself and his office into two different places—the latter falling, of course, into the hands of Wordsworth.

This office, which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to speak of as “a little one,” yielded, I believe, somewhere about £500 a year. Gradually, even that, with all former sources of income, became insufficient, which ought not to surprise anybody; for a son at Oxford, as a gentleman commoner, would spend, at the least, £300 per annum; and there were other children. Still it is wrong to say that it had become insufficient; as usual, it had not come to that; but, on the first symptoms arising that it would soon come to that, somebody, of course, had notice to consider himself a sort of nuisance elect—in this case, it was the distributor of stamps for the county of Cumberland. His district was absurdly large; and what so reasonable as that he should submit to a Polish partition of his profits—no, not Polish; for, on reflection, such a partition neither was nor could be attempted with regard to an actual incumbent. But then, since people had such consideration for him as not to remodel the office so long as he lived, on the other hand, the least he could do for “people” in return, so as to show his sense of this consideration, was not to trespass on so much goodness longer than necessary. Accordingly, here, as in all cases before, the *Deus ex machina* who invariably interfered

when any nodus arose in Wordsworth's affairs, such as could be considered vindice dignus, caused the distributor to begone into a region where no stamps are wanted, about the very month, or so, when an additional £400 per annum became desirable. This, or perhaps more, was understood to have been added by the new arrangement, to the Westmoreland distributorship: the small towns of Keswick and Cockermouth, together with the important one of Whitehaven, being severed, under this regulation, from their old dependency, or Cumberland, (to which geographically they belonged,) and transferred to the small territory of rocky Westmoreland, the sum total of whose inhabitants was, at that time, not much above 50,000; of which number, one third, or nearly so, might be collected into the only important town of Kendal; but, of the other two thirds, a larger proportion was a simple agricultural or pastoral population, than anywhere else in England. In Westmoreland, therefore, it may be supposed that the stamp demand could not have been so great, not, perhaps, by three quarters, as in Cumberland; which, besides having a population of 160,000, had more and larger towns. The result of this new distribution, was something that approached to an equalization of the districts — giving to each, as was said in round terms, a thousand a year; but, in more accurate terms, perhaps £900.

Thus I have traced Wordsworth's ascent through its several steps and stages, to what, for his moderate desires and habits so philosophic, may be fairly considered opulence. And it must rejoice every man, who joins in the public homage now rendered to his powers, (and what man is to be found that more or less does not?) to hear, with respect to one so lavishly endowed by nature, that he has not been neglected by fortune; that he has never had the finer edge of his sensibilities dulled by the sad anxieties, the degrading fears, the miserable dependencies of debt; that he has been blessed with competency even when poorest; has had hope and cheerful prospects in reversion, through every stage of his life; that at all times he has been liberated from reasonable anxieties about the final interests of his children; that at all times he has been blessed with leisure, the very amplest that ever man enjoyed, for intellectual pursuits the most delightful; yes, that even for those delicate and coy pursuits, he has possessed, in combination, all the conditions for their most perfect culture — the leisure, the ease, the solitude, the society, the domestic peace, the local scenery — Paradise for his eye, in Miltonic beauty, lying outside his

windows, Paradise for his heart, in the perpetual happiness of his own fireside; and, finally, when increasing years might be supposed to demand something more of modern luxuries, and expanding intercourse with society in its most polished forms, something more of refined elegances, that his means, still keeping pace, in almost arithmetical ratio, with his wants, had shed the graces of art upon the failing powers of nature, had stripped infirmity of discomfort, and (so far as the necessities of things will allow) had placed the final stages of life, by means of many compensations, by universal praise, by plaudits reverberated from senates, benedictions wherever his poems have penetrated, honour, troops of friends — in short, by all that miraculous prosperity can do to evade the primal decrees of nature — had placed the final stages upon a level with the first. This report of Wordsworth's success in life will rejoice thousands of hearts. And a good nature will sympathize with that joy, will exult in that exultation, no matter for any private grievances, and with a non obstante to any wrong, however stinging, which it may suppose itself to have suffered. Yet, William Wordsworth, nevertheless, if you ever allowed yourself to forget the human tenure of these mighty blessings — if, though wearing your honours justly — most justly, as respects A. and B., this man and that man — you have forgotten that no man can challenge such trophies by any absolute or meritorious title, as respects the dark powers which give and take away — if, in the blind spirit of presumption, you have insulted the less prosperous fortunes of a brother, frail, indeed, but not dishonourably frail, and in his very frailty — that is, in his failing exertions — and for the deficient measure of his energies, (doubtless too much below the standard of reasonable expectations,) able to plead that which you never cared to ask — then, if (instead of being sixty-eight years old) you were $\frac{68}{8}$, I should warn you to listen for the steps of Nemesis approaching from afar; and, were it only in relation to your own extremity of good fortune, I would say, in the case of your being a young man, lavish as she may have been hitherto, and for years to come may still be —

“Yet fear her, O thou minion of her pleasure!
Her audit, though delay'd, answered must be,
And her quietus is ——— to render thee.”²

But now, reverting to the subject of Wordsworth's prosperity, I have numbered up six separate stages of good luck — six instances of pecuniary showers emptying themselves into

his very bosom, at the very moments when they began to be needed, on the first symptoms that they might be wanted — accesses of fortune stationed, upon his road, like repeating frigates, connecting, to all appearances some preconcerted line of operations; and, amidst the tumults of chance, wearing as much the air of purpose and design, as if they supported a human plan — so much the more, also, to a thoughtful observer, as the subject of this overflowing favour from the blind goddess, happened, by the rarest of accidents, to be that man whom many of us would have declared the most worthy of that favour, most of us, perhaps, as in the case of Themistocles, would have declared, at the very least, second best. I have come down to the sixth case. Whether there were any seventh, I do not know: but confident I feel, that, had a seventh been required by circumstances, a seventh would have happened. At the same time, every reader will, of course, understand me to mean, that not only was it utterly out of the power or will of Wordsworth to exert any, the very slightest influence upon these cases, not only was this impossible — not only was it impossible to the moral nature of Wordsworth, that he should even express that sort of interest in the event, which is sometimes intimated to the incumbents of a place or church-living by sudden inquiries after their health from eager expectants — but also, in every one of the instances recorded, he could have had not the slightest knowledge beforehand of any interest at issue for himself. This explanation I make to forestall the merest possibility of misapprehension. And yet, for all that, so true it is, that still, as Wordsworth needed a place or a fortune, the holder of that place or fortune was immediately served with a summons to surrender it — so certainly was this impressed upon my belief, as one of the blind necessities, making up the prosperity and fixed destiny of Wordsworth, that, for myself — had I happened to know of any peculiar adaptation in an estate or office of mine, to an existing need of Wordsworth's — forthwith, and with the speed of a man running for his life, I would have laid it down at his feet. "Take it," I would have said — "take it — or in three weeks I shall be a dead man."

Well — let me pause: I think the reader is likely, by this time, to have a slight notion of my notion of Wordsworth's inevitable prosperity — and the sort of lien that he had upon the incomes of other men who happened to stand in his way. The same prosperity attended the other branches of the family, with the single exception of John, the brother who perished

in the Abergavenny: and even he was prosperous up to the moment of his fatal accident. As to Miss Wordsworth, who will, by some people, be classed amongst the non-prosperous, I rank her amongst the most fortunate of women; or, at least, if regard be had to that period of life which is most capable of happiness. Her fortune, after its repayment by Lord Lonsdale, was, much of it, confided with a sisterly affection, to the use of her brother John; and most of it perished in his ship. How much I never felt myself entitled to ask; but certainly a part was on that occasion lost irretrievably. Either it was that only a partial insurance had been effected, or else the nature of the accident, being in home waters, (off the coast of Dorsetshire,) might, by the nature of the contract, have taken the case out of the benefit of the policy. The loss, however, had it even been total, for a single sister amongst a family of flourishing brothers, could not be of any lasting importance. A much larger number of voices would proclaim her to have been unfortunate in life, because she made no marriage connection; and certainly the insipid as well as unfeeling ridicule which descends so plentifully from vulgar minds, upon those women who, perhaps from strength of character, have refused to make such a connection where it promised little of elevated happiness, does make the state of singleness somewhat of a trial to the patience of many; and to many the cruelty of this trial has proved a snare for beguiling them of their honourable resolutions. Doubtless the most elevated form, and the most impassioned, of human happiness, cannot be had out of marriage. But, as the opportunities are rare in which all the conditions concur for such connections, how important it is that the dignity of noble-minded (and, in the lowest case, of firm-minded) women, should be upheld by society in the honourable election they make of a self-dependent state of virgin seclusion, by preference to a heartless marriage! Such women, as Mrs. Trollope justly remarks, fill a place in society which, in their default, could not be supplied, and are disposable for duties requiring a tenderness and a punctuality that could not be hoped from women pre-occupied with household or maternal claims. In another point, Mrs. Trollope is right: few women live unmarried from necessity — few indeed. Miss Wordsworth, to my knowledge, had several offers — amongst them, one from Hazlitt; all, without a moment's hesitation, she rejected decisively. And she did right. A happier life, by far, was hers in youth, coming as near as difference of scenery and difference of relations would permit, to that which was prom-

ised to Ruth — the Ruth of her brother's* creation — by the youth who came from Georgia's shore; for, though not upon American savannas, or Canadian Lakes —

“ With all their fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Amongst the evening clouds ”—

yet, amongst the loveliest scenes of sylvan England, and (at intervals) of sylvan Germany — amongst lakes, too, far better fitted to give the sense of their own character than the inland seas of America, and amongst mountains as romantic and loftier than many of the chief ranges in that country — her time fled away like some golden age, or like the life of primeval man; and she, like Ruth, was for years allowed

“ To run, though not a bride,
A sylvan huntress, by the side ”

of him to whom, like Ruth, she had dedicated her days; and to whose children, afterwards, she dedicated a love like that of mothers. Dear Miss Wordsworth! How noble a creature did she seem when I first knew her, — and when, on the very first night which I passed in her brother's company, he read to me, in illustration of something he was saying, a passage from Fairfax's "Tasso," ending pretty nearly with these words —

“ Amidst the broad fields and the endless wood
The lofty lady kept her maidenhood ”—

I thought that, possibly, he had his sister in his thoughts. Yet, "lofty" was hardly the right word. Miss Wordsworth was too ardent and fiery a creature to maintain the reserve essential to dignity; and dignity was the last thing one thought of in the presence of one so artless, so fervent in her feelings, and so embarrassed in their utterance — sometimes, also, in the attempt to check them. It must not, however, be supposed that there was any silliness or weakness of enthusiasm about her. She was under the continual restraint of severe good sense, though liberated from that false shame which, in so many persons, accompanies all expressions of natural emotion; and she had too long enjoyed the ennobling conversation of her brother, and his admirable comments on the daily reading which they pursued in common, to fail in any essential point of logic or propriety of thought. Accordingly, her let-

ters, though the most careless and unelaborate — nay, the most hurried that can be imagined — are models of good sense and just feeling. In short, beyond any person I have known in this world, Miss Wordsworth was the creature of impulse; but, as a woman most thoroughly virtuous and well-principled, as one who could not fail to be kept right by her own excellent heart, and as an intellectual creature from her cradle, with much of her illustrious brother's peculiarity of mind — finally, as one who had been, in effect, educated and trained by that very brother — she won the sympathy and the respectful regard of every man worthy to approach her. All of us loved her — by which us I mean especially Professor Wilson and myself, together with such Oxford or Cambridge men, or men from Scotland, as either of us or as others introduced to her society. And many a time, when the Professor and myself — travelling together in solitary places, sleeping in the same bedroom, or (according to accidents of wayfaring life) in the same bed — have fallen into the most confidential interchange of opinions upon a family in which we had both so common and so profound an interest, whatever matter of anger or complaint we might find or fancy in others, Miss Wordsworth's was a name privileged from censure; or, if a smile were bestowed upon some eccentricity or innocent foible, it was with the tenderness that we should have shown to a sister. Properly, and in a spirit of prophecy, was she named Dorothy; for, as that name apparently predestines her who bears it to figure rather in the character of aunt than of mother, (insomuch, that I have rarely happened to hear this name, except, indeed, in Germany, without the prefix of aunt,) so, also, in its Greek meaning, gift of God, well did this name prefigure the relation in which she stood to Wordsworth, the mission with which she was charged — to wait upon him as the tenderest and most faithful of domestics; to love him as a sister; to sympathize with him as a confidante; to counsel him as one gifted with a power of judging that stretched as far as his own for producing; to cheer him and sustain him by the natural expression of her feelings — so quick, so ardent, so unaffected — upon the probable effect of whatever thoughts, plans, images he might conceive; finally, and above all other ministrations, to ingraft, by her sexual sense of beauty, upon his masculine austerity that delicacy and those graces, which else (according to the grateful acknowledgments of his own maturest retrospect) it would not have had.

“The blessing of my later years
 Was with me when I was a boy:
 She gave me hopes, she gave me fears,
 A heart the fountain of sweet tears.

And love, and thought, and joy.”

And elsewhere he describes her, in a philosophic poem, still in manuscript, as one who planted flowers and blossoms with her feminine hand upon what might else have been an arid rock — massy, indeed, and grand, but repulsive from the severity of its features. I may sum up in one brief abstract the sum total of Miss Wordsworth's character, as a companion, by saying, that she was the very wildest (in the sense of the most natural) person I have ever known; and also the truest, most inevitable, and, at the same time, the quickest and readiest in her sympathy with either joy or sorrow, with laughter or with tears, with the realities of life or the larger realities of the poets!

Meantime, amidst all this fascinating furniture of her mind, won from nature, from solitude, from enlightened companionship, Miss Wordsworth was as thoroughly deficient (some would say painfully deficient, I say charmingly deficient) in ordinary female accomplishments, as “Cousin Mary,” in Miss Mitford's delightful sketch. French, she might have barely enough to read a plain modern page of narrative; Italian, I question whether any; German, just enough to insult the German literati, by showing how little she had found them or their writings necessary to her heart. The “Luise” of Voss, the “Hermann and Dorothea” of Goethe, she had begun to translate, as young ladies do “Telemaque;” but, like them, had chiefly cultivated the first two pages;⁶ with the third, she had a slender acquaintance, and with the fourth, she meditated an intimacy at some future day. Music, in her solitary and out-of-doors life, she could have little reason for cultivating; nor is it possible that any woman can draw the enormous energy requisite for this attainment upon a modern scale of perfection, out of any other principle, than that of vanity (at least of great value for social applause) or of deep musical sensibility; neither of which belonged to Miss Wordsworth's constitution of mind. But, as everybody agrees in our days to think this accomplishment of no value whatever, and, in fact, unproduceable, unless in an exquisite state of culture, no complaint could be made on that score, nor any surprise felt. But the case in which the irregularity of Miss Wordsworth's education did astonish one, was in that part which respected her literary knowledge.

In whatever she read, or neglected to read, she had obeyed the single impulse of her own heart; where that led her, there she followed; where that was mute or indifferent, not a thought had she to bestow upon a writer's high reputation, or the call for some acquaintance with his works, to meet the demands of society. And thus the strange anomaly arose, of a woman deeply acquainted with some great authors, whose works lie pretty much out of the fashionable beat; able, moreover, in her own person, to produce brilliant effects; able, on some subjects, to write delightfully, and with the impress of originality upon all she uttered — and yet ignorant of great classical works in her own mother tongue, and careless of literary history, unless, where it touched upon some topic of household interest, in a degree which at once exiled her from the rank and privileges of blue-stockings.

The reader may perhaps have objected silently to the illustration drawn from Miss Mitford, that "Cousin Mary" does not effect her fascinations out of pure negations. Such negations, from the mere startling effect of their oddity in this present age, might fall in with the general current of her attractions; but Cousin Mary's undoubtedly lay in the positive witcheries of a manner and a character, transcending, by force of irresistible nature, (as in a similar case recorded by Wordsworth in "The Excursion,") all the pomp of nature and art united, as seen in ordinary creatures. Now, in Miss Wordsworth, there were certainly no "Cousin Mary" fascinations of manner and deportment, that snatch a grace beyond the reach of art; there she was indeed painfully deficient; for hurry mars and defeats even the most ordinary expression of the feminine character, its gentleness: abruptness and trepidation leave often a joint impression of what seems for an instant both rudeness and ungracefulness: and the least painful impression was that of unsexual awkwardness; — but the point in which Miss Wordsworth made the most ample amends for all that she wanted of more customary accomplishments, was, this very originality and native freshness of intellect, which settled with so bewitching an effect upon some of her writings, and upon many a sudden remark or ejaculation, extorted by something or other that struck her eye, in the clouds, or in colouring, or in accidents of light and shade, of form, or combination of form. To talk of her "writings," is too pompous an expression, or at least far beyond any pretensions that she ever made for herself. Of poetry she has written little indeed; and that little not, in my opinion, of much merit. The verses published

by her brother, and beginning — “Which way does the wind come?” meant only as nursery lines, are certainly wild and pretty; but the other specimen is likely to strike most readers as feeble and trivial in the sentiment. Meantime, the book which is in very deed a monument to her power of catching and expressing all the hidden beauties of natural scenery, with a felicity of diction, a truth and strength, that far transcend Gilpin, or professional writers on those subjects, is her record of a tour in Scotland, made about the year 1802. This book, unless my recollection of it, from a period now gone by for thirty years, has deceived me, is absolutely unique in its class: and, though it never could be very popular, from the minuteness of its details, and the luxuriation of the descriptions, yet I believe no person has ever been favoured with a sight of it, that has not regretted that it is not published. Its own extraordinary merit, apart from the interest which now invests the name of Wordsworth, could not fail to procure purchasers for one edition, on its first appearance.

Coleridge was of the party at first; but afterwards, under some attack of rheumatism, found or thought it necessary to leave them. Melancholy it would be at this time, thirty-six years and more from the era of that tour, to read it under the afflicting remembrances of all which has been suffered in the interval by two at least out of the three who composed the travelling party; for I fear that Miss Wordsworth has suffered not much less than Coleridge: and, in any general expression of it, from the same causes — viz. an excess of pleasurable excitement and luxurious sensibility, sustained in youth by a constitutional glow from animal causes, but drooping as soon as that was withdrawn. It is painful to point a moral from any story connected with those whom one loves or has loved; painful to look for one moment towards any “improvement” of such a case, especially where there is no reason to tax the parties with any criminal contribution to their own sufferings, except through that relaxation of the will and its potential energies, through which most of us, at some time or other — I myself too deeply and sorrowfully — stand accountable to our own consciences. Not, therefore, with any more intention of speaking in a monitorial or censorial character, than in passing, after dark, through Grasmere churchyard, and trespassing a little to the left, I could be supposed to have the intention of trampling upon the grave of one who lies buried near the pathway, and whom once I loved in extremity, do I here notice a defect in Miss Wordsworth’s self-education of

something that might have mitigated the sort of suffering which, more or less, ever since the period of her too genial, too radiant youth, I suppose her to have struggled with. I have mentioned the narrow basis on which her literary interests had been made to rest — the exclusive character of her reading, and the utter want of pretension, and of all that looks like blue-stockingism in the style of her habitual conversation and mode of dealing with literature. Now, to me it appears, upon reflection, that it would have been far better had Miss Wordsworth condescended a little to the ordinary mode of pursuing literature; better for her own happiness if she had been a blue-stock; or, at least, if she had been, in good earnest, a writer for the press, with the pleasant cares and solitudes of one who has some little ventures, as it were, on that vast ocean.

We all know with how womanly and serene a temper literature has been pursued by Joanna Baillie, by Miss Mitford, and other women of admirable genius — with how absolutely no sacrifice or loss of feminine dignity they have cultivated the profession of authorship; and, if we could hear their report, I have no doubt that the little cares of correcting proofs, and the forward-looking solitudes connected with the mere business arrangements of new publications, would be numbered amongst the minor pleasures of life; whilst the more elevated cares connected with the intellectual business of such projects, must inevitably have done much to solace the troubles, which as human beings, they cannot but have experienced; and even to scatter flowers upon their path. Mrs. Johnstone, of Edinburgh, has pursued the profession of literature — the noblest of professions, and the only one open to both sexes alike — with even more assiduity, and as a daily occupation; and, I have every reason to believe with as much benefit to her own happiness, as to the instruction and amusement of her readers: — for the petty cares of authorship are agreeable, and its serious cares are ennobling. More especially is such an occupation useful to a woman without children, and without any prospective resources; resources in objects that involve hopes growing and unfulfilled. It is too much to expect of any woman (or man either) that her mind should support itself in a pleasurable activity, under the drooping energies of life, by resting on the past or on the present; some interest in reversion, some subject of hope from day to day, must be called in to reinforce the animal fountains of good spirits. Had that been opened for Miss Wordsworth, I am satisfied

that she would have passed a more cheerful middle-age, and would not, at any period, have yielded to that nervous depression which, I grieve to hear, has clouded her latter days. Nephews and nieces, whilst young and innocent, are as good almost as sons and daughters to a fervid and loving heart that has carried them in her arms from the hour they were born. But, after a nephew has grown into a huge hulk of a man, six feet high, and as stout as a bullock; after he has come to have children of his own, lives at a distance, and finds occasion to talk chiefly of oxen and turnips—no offence to him—he ceases to be an object of any very profound sentiment. There is nothing in such a subject to rouse the flagging pulses of the heart, and to sustain a fervid spirit, to whom, at the very best, human life offers little of an adequate or sufficing interest, unless when idealized by the magic of the mighty poets. Farewell, Miss Wordsworth! farewell, impassioned Dorothy! I have not seen you for many a day—shall never see you again perhaps; but shall attend your steps with tender thoughts, so long as I hear of you living: so will Professor Wilson; and, from two hearts, at least, that loved and admired you in your fervid prime, it may sometimes cheer the gloom of your depression to be assured of never-failing remembrance full of love and respectful pity.

Here ceases my record of the life and its main incidents, so far as they are known to me, of William Wordsworth; to which, on account of the important services which she has rendered him; on account of the separate interest which, apart from those services, belongs to her own mind and character; on account of the singular counterpart which in some features they offer to those of her brother, and, on account of the impressive coincidence and parallelism in this remarkable dedication of Dorothy to William Wordsworth, with that of Mary to Charles Lamb—I have thought that it would be a proper complement of the whole record, to subjoin a very especial notice of his sister. Miss Wordsworth would have merited a separate notice in any biographical dictionary of our times, had there even been no William Wordsworth in existence.

I have traced the history of each until the time when I became personally acquainted with them; and, henceforwards, anything which it may be interesting to know with respect to either, will naturally come forward, not in a separate narrative, but in connection with my own life; for, in the following year, I became myself the tenant of that pretty cottage in which I

found them; and from that time, for many years, my life flowed on in daily union with theirs.

NOTES

¹ I do not mean to insinuate that Wordsworth was at all in the dark about the inaccuracy and want of authentic weight attaching to Plutarch as an historian; but his business with Plutarch was not for purposes of research; he was satisfied with his fine moral effects.

² Shakespeare's Sonnets.

³ So I express it, because so much in the development of the story and situations necessarily belongs to the poet. Else, for the mere outline of the story, it was founded upon fact: Wordsworth himself told me, in general terms, that the case which suggested the poem was that of an American lady, whose husband forsook her at the very place of embarkation from England, under circumstances and under expectations upon her part, very much the same as those of Ruth. I am afraid, however, that the husband was an attorney.

⁴ Of course, therefore, it is essentially the same name as Theodora — the same elements being only differently arranged. Yet how opposite is the impression upon the mind! and chiefly, I suppose, from the too prominent effect of this name in the case of Justinian's scandalous wife.

⁵ Viz. "Calpyso ne savoit se consoler du depart," etc. For how long a period, viz. nearly two centuries has Calypso been inconsolable in the morning studies of young ladies! As Fenelon's most dreary romance always opened at one or other of these three earliest and dreary pages, naturally to my sympathetic fancy the poor unhappy goddess seemed to be eternally aground on this Goodwin Sand of inconsolability. It is amongst the standing hypocrisies of the world, that most people affect a reverence for this book, which nobody reads.

SOCIETY OF THE LAKES

I

I N February, as I have said, of 1809, I quitted Allan Bank; and, from that time until the depth of summer, Miss Wordsworth was employed in the task she had volunteered, of renewing and furnishing the little cottage in which I was to succeed the illustrious tenant who had, in my mind, hallowed the rooms by a seven years' occupation, during perhaps, the happiest period of his life—the early years of his marriage, and of his first acquaintance with parental affections. Cottage, immortal in my remembrance! as well it might be; for this cottage I retained through just seven-and-twenty years: this was the scene of struggle the most tempestuous and bitter within my own mind: this the scene of my despondency and unhappiness: this the scene of my happiness—a happiness which justified the faith of man's earthly lot, as, upon the whole, a dowry from heaven. It was, in its exterior, not so much a picturesque cottage—for its outline and proportions, its windows and its chimneys, were not sufficiently marked and effective for the picturesque¹—as it was lovely: one gable end was, indeed, most gorgeously apparelled in ivy, and so far picturesque; but the principal side, or what might be called front, as it presented itself to the road, and was most illuminated by windows, was embossed—nay, it might be said, smothered—in roses of different species, amongst which the moss and the damask prevailed. These, together with as much jessamine and honeysuckle as could find room to flourish, were not only in themselves a most interesting garniture for a humble cottage wall, but they also performed the acceptable service of breaking the unpleasant glare that would else have wounded the eye, from the whitewash; a glare which, having been renewed amongst the general preparations against my coming to inhabit the house, could not be sufficiently subdued in tone for the artist's eye until the storms of several winters had weather-stained and tamed down its brilliancy. The Westmoreland cottages, as a class, have long been celebrated for their picturesque forms, and very justly so:

in no part of the world are cottages to be found more strikingly interesting to the eye by their general outlines, by the sheltered porches of their entrances, by their exquisite chimneys, by their rustic windows, and by the distribution of the parts. These parts are on a larger scale, both as to number and size, than a stranger would expect to find as dependencies and out-houses attached to dwelling-houses so modest; chiefly from the necessity of making provision, both in fuel for themselves, and in hay, straw, and brackens for the cattle against the long winter. But, in praising the Westmoreland dwellings, it must be understood that only those of the native Dalesmen are contemplated; for as to those raised by the alien intruders — “the lakers,” or “foreigners” as they are sometimes called by the old indigenous possessors of the soil — these being designed to exhibit “a taste” and an eye for the picturesque, are pretty often mere models of deformity, as vulgar and as silly as it is well possible for any object to be, in a case where, after all, the workman, and obedience to custom, and the necessities of the ground, etc., will often step in to compel the architects into common sense and propriety. The main defect in Scottish scenery, the eyesore that disfigures so many charming combinations of landscape, is the offensive style of the rural architecture; but still, even where it is worst, the mode of its offence is not by affectation and conceit, and preposterous attempts at realizing sublime, Gothic, or castellated effects in little ginger-bread ornaments, and “tobacco pipes,” and make-believe parapets, and towers like kitchen or hot-house flues; but in the hard undisguised pursuit of mere coarse uses and needs of life.

Too often, the rustic mansion, that should speak of decent poverty and seclusion, peaceful and comfortable, wears the most repulsive air of town confinement and squalid indigence; the house being built of substantial stone, three stories high, or even four, the roof of massy slate; and everything strong which respects the future outlay of the proprietor — everything frail which respects the comfort of the inhabitants: windows broken and stuffed up with rags or old hats; steps and door encrusted with dirt; and the whole tarnished with smoke. Poverty — how different the face it wears looking with meagre staring eyes from such a city dwelling as this, and when it peeps out, with rosy cheeks, from amongst clustering roses and woodbines, at a little lattice, from a little one-story cottage! Are, then, the main characteristics of the Westmoreland dwelling-houses imputable to superior taste? By no means. Spite

of all that I have heard Mr. Wordsworth and others say in maintaining that opinion, I, for my part, do and must hold, that the Dalesmen produce none of the happy effects which frequently arise in their domestic architecture under any search after beautiful forms, a search which they despise with a sort of Vandal dignity; no, nor with any sense or consciousness of their success. How then? Is it accident — mere casual good luck — that has brought forth, for instance, so many exquisite forms of chimneys? Not so; but it is this: it is good sense, on the one hand, bending and conforming to the dictates or even the suggestions of the climate, and the local circumstances of rocks, water, currents of air, etc.; and, on the other hand, wealth sufficient to arm the builder with all suitable means for giving effect to his purpose, and to evade the necessity of make-shifts. But the radical ground of the interest attached to Westmoreland cottage architecture, lies in its submission to the determining agencies of the surrounding circumstances; such of them, I mean, as are permanent, and have been gathered from long experience. The porch, for instance, which does so much to take away from a house the character of a rude box, pierced with holes for air, light, and ingress, has evidently been dictated by the sudden rushes of wind through the mountain "ghylls," which make some kind of protection necessary to the ordinary door; and this reason has been strengthened in cases of houses near to a road, by the hospitable wish to provide a sheltered seat for the wayfarer; most of these porches being furnished with one in each of the two recesses, to the right and to the left.

The long winter again, as I have already said, and the artificial prolongation of the winter, by the necessity of keeping the sheep long upon the low grounds, creates a call for large out-houses; and these, for the sake of warmth, are usually placed at right angles to the house; whence the effect of making a much larger system of parts than would else arise. But perhaps the main feature, which gives character to the pile of building, is the roof, and, above all, the chimneys. It is the remark of an accomplished Edinburgh artist, H. W. Williams, in the course of his strictures upon the domestic architecture of the Italians, and especially of the Florentines, that the character of buildings, in certain circumstances, "depends wholly or chiefly on the form of the roof and the chimney. This," he goes on, "is particularly the case in Italy, where more variety and taste is displayed in the chimneys than in the buildings to which they belong. These chimneys are as peculiar and char-

acteristic as palm trees in a tropical climate." Again, in speaking of Calabria and the Ionian Islands, he says — "We were forcibly struck with the consequence which the beauty of the chimneys imparted to the character of the whole building." Now, in Great Britain, he complains, with reason, of the very opposite result; not the plain building ennobled by the chimney; but the chimney degrading the noble building; and in Edinburgh, especially, where the homely and inelegant appearance of the chimneys contrasts most disadvantageously and offensively with the beauty of the buildings which they surmount. Even here, however, he makes an exception for some of the old buildings, "whose chimneys," he admits, "are very tastefully decorated, and contribute essentially to the beauty of the general effect." It is probable, therefore, and many houses of the Elizabethan era confirm it, that a better taste prevailed, in this point, amongst our ancestors, both Scottish and English; that this elder fashion travelled, together with many other usages, from the richer parts of Scotland to the Borders, and thence to the vales of Westmoreland; where they have continued to prevail, from their affectionate adhesion to all patriarchal customs. Some, undoubtedly, of these Westmoreland forms have been dictated by the necessities of the weather, and the systematic energies of human skill, from age to age, applied to the very difficult task of training smoke into obedience, under the peculiar difficulties presented by the sites of Westmoreland houses. These are chosen, generally speaking, with the same good sense and regard to domestic comfort, as the primary consideration (without, however, disdainfully slighting the sentiment, whatever it were, of peace, of seclusion, of gayety, of solemnity, the special "religio loci") which seems to have guided the choice of those who founded religious houses.

And here, again, by the way, appears a marked difference between the Dalesmen and the intrusive gentry — not creditable to the latter. The native Dalesmen, well aware of the fury with which the wind often gathers and eddies about any eminence, however trifling its elevation, never thinks of planting his house there: whereas the stranger, singly solicitous about the prospect or the range of lake which his gilt saloons are to command, chooses his site too often upon points better fitted for a temple of Æolus than a human dwelling-place; and he belts his house with balconies and verandas that a mountain gale often tears away in mockery. The Dalesman, wherever his choice is not circumscribed, selects a sheltered spot, (a wray,² for instance,) which protects him from the wind altogether,

upon one or two quarters, and on all quarters from its tornado violence: he takes good care, at the same time, to be within a few feet of a mountain beck: a caution so little heeded by some of the villa founders, that absolutely, in a country surcharged with water they have sometime found themselves driven, by sheer necessity, to the after-thought of sinking a well. The very best situation, however, in other respects, may be bad in one; and sometimes find its very advantages, and the beetling crags which protect its rear, obstructions the most permanent to the ascent of smoke; and it is in the contest with these natural baffling repellents of the smoke, and in the variety of artifices for modifying its vertical, or for accomplishing its lateral escape, that have arisen the large and graceful variety of chimney models. My cottage, wanting this primary feature of elegance in the constituents of Westmoreland cottage architecture, and wanting also another very interesting feature of the elder architecture, annually becoming more and more rare, viz. the outside gallery, (which is sometimes merely of wood, but is much more striking when provided for in the original construction of the house, and completely enfoncé in the masonry,) could not rank high amongst the picturesque houses of the country; those, at least, which are such by virtue of their architectural form. It was, however, very irregular in its outline to the rear, by the aid of one little projecting room, and also of a stable and little barn, in immediate contact with the dwelling-house. It had, besides, the great advantage of a varying height: two sides being about fifteen or sixteen feet high from the exposure of both stories; whereas the other two being swathed about by a little orchard that rose rapidly and unequally towards the vast mountain range in the rear, exposed only the upper story; and, consequently, on those sides the elevation rarely rose beyond seven or eight feet. All these accidents of irregular form and outline, gave to the house some little pretensions to a picturesque character; whilst its "separable accidents" (as the logicians say) — its bowery roses and jessamine clothed in its loveliness—its associations with Wordsworth — crowned it, to my mind, with historical dignity; and, finally, my own twenty-seven years off-and-on connection with it, have, by ties personal and indestructible, endeared it to my heart so unspeakably beyond all other houses, that even now I rarely dream through four nights running, that I do not find myself (and others beside) in some one of those rooms; and, most probably, the last cloudy delirium of approaching death will re-install me in some chamber of that same humble cottage.

“What a tale,” says Foster, the eloquent essayist—“what a tale could be told by many a room, were the walls endowed with memory and speech!” or, in the more impassioned expressions of Wordsworth—

“Ah! what a lesson to a thoughtless man
 ——— if any gladsome field of earth
 Could render back the sighs to which it hath responded,
 Or echo the sad steps by which it hath been trod!”

And equally affecting it would be, if such a field or such a house could render up the echoes of joy, of festal music, of jubilant laughter—the innocent mirth of infants, or the gayety, not less innocent, of youthful mothers—equally affecting would be such a reverberation of forgotten household happiness, with the re-echoing records of sighs and groans. And few indeed are the houses that, within a period no longer than from the beginning of the century to 1835 (so long was it either mine or Wordsworth’s) have crowded such ample materials for those echoes, whether sorrowful or joyous.

My cottage was ready in the summer; but I was playing truant amongst the valleys of Somersetshire; and, meantime, different families, throughout the summer, borrowed the cottage of the Wordsworths as my friends; they consisted chiefly of ladies; and some, by the delicacy of their attentions to the flowers, etc., gave me reason to consider their visit during my absence as a real honour; others—such is the difference of people in this world—left the rudest memorials of their careless habits impressed upon house, furniture, garden, etc. In November, at last, I, the long-expected, made my appearance; some little sensation did really and naturally attend my coming, for most of the draperies belonging to beds, curtains, etc., had been sewed by the young women of that or the adjoining vales. This had caused me to be talked of. Many had seen me on my visit to the Wordsworths. Miss Wordsworth had introduced the curious to a knowledge of my age, name, prospects, and all the rest of what can be interesting to know. Even the old people of the vale were a little excited by the accounts (somewhat exaggerated, perhaps) of the never ending books that continued to arrive in packing cases for several months in succession. Nothing in these vales so much fixes the attention and respect of the people as the reputation of being a “far learn’d” man. So far, therefore, I had already bespoken the favourable opinion of the Dalesmen. And a separate kind of interest arose amongst mothers and daughters, in the knowledge that I should necessarily want what—in a sense

somewhat different from the general one — is called a “house-keeper;” that is, not an upper servant to superintend others, but one who could undertake, in her own person, all the duties of the house. It is not discreditable to these worthy people that several of the richest and most respectable families were anxious to secure the place for a daughter. Had I been a dissipated young man, I have good reason to know that there would have been no canvassing at all for the situation. But partly my books spoke for the character of my pursuits with these simple-minded people — partly the introduction of the Wordsworths guaranteed the safety of such a service. Even then, had I persisted in my original intention of bringing a man-servant, no respectable young woman would have accepted the place. As it was, and it being understood that I had renounced this intention, many, in a gentle, diffident way, applied for the place, or their parents on their behalf. And I mention the fact, because it illustrates one feature in the manners of this primitive and peculiar people, the Dalesmen of Westmoreland. However wealthy, they do not think it degrading to permit even the eldest daughter to go out a few years to service. The object is not to gain a sum of money in wages, but that sort of household experience which is supposed to be unattainable upon a suitable scale out of a gentleman’s family. So far was this carried, that, amongst the offers made to myself, was one from a young woman whose family was amongst the very oldest in the country, and who was at that time under an engagement of marriage to the very richest young man in the vale. She and her future husband had a reasonable prospect of possessing ten thousand pounds in land; and yet neither her own family nor her husband’s objected to her seeking such a place as I could offer. Her character and manners, I ought to add, were so truly excellent, and won respect so inevitably from everybody that nobody could wonder at the honourable confidence reposed in her by her manly and spirited young lover. The issue of the matter, as respected my service, was, why I do not know, that Miss Wordsworth did not accept of her: and she fulfilled her purpose in another family, a very grave and respectable one, in Kendal. She stayed about a couple of years, returned, and married the young man to whom she had engaged herself, and is now the prosperous mother of a fine handsome family; and she together with her mother-in-law, are the two leading matrons of the vale.

It was on a November night, about ten o’clock, that I first found myself installed in a house of my own — this cottage, so

memorable from its past tenant to all men, so memorable to myself from all which has since past in connection with it. A writer in "The Quarterly Review," in noticing the autobiography of Dr. Watson, the Bishop of Llandaff, has thought fit to say that the lakes, of course, afforded no society capable of appreciating this commonplace, coarse-minded man of talents. The person who said this I understand to have been Dr. Whitaker, the respectable antiquary. Now, that the reader may judge of the propriety with which this was asserted, I shall slightly rehearse the muster-roll of our lake society, as it existed at the time when I seated myself in my Grasmere cottage. I will undertake to say, that the meanest person in the whole scattered community was more extensively accomplished than the good bishop, was more conscientiously true to his duties, and had more varied powers of conversation. Wordsworth and Coleridge, then living at Allan Bank, in Grasmere, I will not notice in such a question. Southey, living thirteen miles off, at Keswick, I have already noticed; and he needs no proneur. I will begin with Windermere. At Clappersgate, a little hamlet of perhaps six houses, on its north-west angle, and about five miles from my cottage, resided two Scottish ladies, daughters of Dr. Cullen, the famous physician and nosologist. They were universally beloved for their truly kind dispositions and the firm independence of their conduct. They had been reduced from great affluence to a condition of rigorous poverty. Their father had made what should have been a fortune by his practice. The good doctor, however, was careless of his money in proportion to the facility with which he made it. All was put into a box, open to the whole family. Breach of confidence, in the most thoughtless use of this money, there could be done; because no restraint in that point, beyond what honour and good sense imposed, was laid upon any of the elder children. Under such regulations, it may be imagined that Dr. Cullen would not accumulate any very large capital; and, at his death, the family, for the first time, found themselves in embarrassed circumstances. Of the two daughters who belonged to our lake population, one had married a Mr. Millar, son to the celebrated professor Millar, of Glasgow. This gentleman had died in America; and Mrs. Millar was now a childless widow. The other still remained unmarried. Both were equally independent; and independent even with regard to their nearest relatives; for, even from their brother—who had risen to rank and affluence as a Scottish judge, under the title of Lord Cullen—they declined to receive assistance; and

except for some small addition made to their income by a novel called "Home," [in as many as seven volumes, I really believe,] by Miss Cullen, their expenditure was rigourously shaped to meet that very slender income, which they drew from their shares of the patrimonial wrecks. More honourable and modest independence, or poverty more gracefully supported, I have rarely known.

Meantime, these ladies, though literary and very agreeable in conversation, could not be classed with what now began to be known as the lake community of literati; for they took no interest in any one of the lake poets; did not affect to take any; and I am sure they were not aware of so much value in any one thing these poets had written, as could make it worth while even to look into their books; and accordingly as well-bred women, they took the same course as was pursued for several years by Mrs. Hannah More, viz. cautiously to avoid mentioning their names in my presence. This was natural enough in women who had probably built their early admiration upon French models, (for Mrs. Millar used to tell me that she regarded the "Mahomet" of Voltaire as the most perfect of human compositions,) and still more so at a period when almost all the world had surrendered their opinions and their literary consciences (so to speak) into the keeping of "The Edinburgh Review"; in whose favour, besides, those ladies had the pardonable possessions of national pride, as a collateral guarantee of that implicit faith, which, in those days, stronger-minded people than they took a pride in professing. Still, in defiance of prejudices mustering so strongly to support their blindness, and the still stronger support which this blindness drew from their total ignorance of everything either done or attempted by the lake poets, these amiable women persisted in one uniform tone of courteous forbearance, as often as any question arose to implicate the names either of Wordsworth or Coleridge; any question about them, their books, their families, or anything that was theirs. They thought it strange, indeed, (for so much I heard by a circuitous course,) that promising and intelligent young men — men educated at great universities, such as Mr. Wilson of Elleray, or myself, or a few others who had paid us visits, — should possess so deep a veneration for these writers; but evidently this was an infatuation — a craze, originating, perhaps, in personal connections; and, as the craze of valued friends, to be treated with tenderness. For us therefore — for our sakes — they took a religious care to suppress all allusion to these disreputable names; and it is pretty plain how sincere

their indifference must have been with regard to these neighbouring authors, from the evidence of one fact, viz. that when, in 1810, Mr. Coleridge began to issue, in weekly numbers, his "Friend," which, by the prospectus, held forth a promise of meeting all possible tastes — literary, philosophic, political — even this comprehensive field of interest, combined with the adventurous attraction (so very unusual, and so little to have been looked for in that thinly-peopled region) of a local origin, from the bosom of those very hills, at the foot of which (though on a different side, they were themselves living, failed altogether to stimulate their torpid curiosity; so perfect was their persuasion beforehand, that no good thing could by possibility come out of a community that had fallen under the ban of the Edinburgh critics.

At the same time, it is melancholy to confess that, partly from the dejection of Coleridge; his constant immersion in opium at that period; his hatred of the duties he had assumed, or at least of their too frequent and periodical recurrence; and partly also from the bad selection of topics for a miscellaneous audience; from the heaviness and obscurity with which they were treated; and from the total want of variety; in consequence of defective arrangements on his part for ensuring the co-operation of his friends; no conceivable act of authorship that Coleridge could have perpetrated, no possible overt act of dulness and somnolent darkness that he could have authorized, was so well fitted to sustain the impression, with regard to him and his friends, that had pre-occupied these ladies' minds. "Habes confitentem reum!" I am sure they would exclaim; not perhaps confessing to that form of delinquency which they had been taught to expect — trivial or extravagant sentimentalism; Germanity alternating with tumid inanity; not this, but something quite as bad or worse, viz. palpable dulness — dulness that could be felt and handled — rayless obscurity as to the thoughts — and communicated in language that, according to the Bishop of Llandaff's complaint, was not always English. For, though the particular words cited for blame were certainly known to the vocabulary of metaphysics, and had even been employed by a writer of Queen Anne's reign, (Leibnitz,) who, if any, had the gift of translating dark thoughts into plain ones — still it was intolerable, in point of good sense, that one who had to win his way into the public ear, should begin by bringing, before a popular and miscellaneous audience, themes that could require such startling and revolting words. The Delphic Oracle was the kindest of the nicknames which the

literary taste of Windermere conferred upon the new journal. This was the laughing suggestion of a clever young lady, a daughter of the Bishop of Llandaff, who stood in a neutral position with regard to Coleridge. But others there were amongst his supposed friends, who felt even more keenly than this young lady, the shocking want of adaptation to his audience in the choice of matter; and, even to an audience better qualified to meet such matter, the want of adaptation in the mode of publication, viz. periodically, and by weekly recurrence; a mode of soliciting the public attention which even authorizes the expectation of current topics — topics arising each with its own week or day. One in particular I remember, of these disapproving friends; a Mr. Blair, an accomplished scholar, and a frequent visitor at Elleray, who started the playful scheme of satirical rejoinder to Coleridge's "Friend," under the name of "The Enemy," which was to follow always in the wake of its leader, and to stimulate Coleridge, [at the same time that it amused the public,] by Attic banter, or by downright opposition, and showing fight in good earnest. It was a plan that might have done good service to the world, and chiefly through a seasonable irritation (never so much wanted as then) applied to Coleridge's too lethargic state: in fact, throughout life, it is most deeply to be regretted that Coleridge's powers and peculiar learning were never forced out into a large display by intense and almost persecuting opposition. However, this scheme, like thousands of other day-dreams and bubbles that rose upon the breath of morning spirits and buoyant youth, fell to the ground; and, in the meantime, no enemy to "The Friend" appeared that was capable of matching "The Friend" when left to itself and its own careless or vagrant guidance. "The Friend" ploughed heavily along for nine-and-twenty numbers; and our fair recusants and non-conformists in all that regarded the lake poetry or authorship, the two Scottish ladies of Clappersgate, found no reasons for changing their opinions; but continued, for the rest of my acquaintance with them, to practise the same courteous and indulgent silence, whenever the names of Coleridge or Wordsworth happened to be mentioned.

In taking leave of these Scottish ladies, it may be interesting to mention that, previously to their final farewell to our lake society, upon taking up their permanent residence in York, (which step they adopted — partly, I believe, to enjoy the more diversified society which that great city yields, and, at any rate, the more accessible society than amongst mountain districts —

partly with a view to the cheapness of that rich district in comparison with our sterile soil, poor towns, and poor agriculture,) somewhere about the May or June of 1810, I think—they were able, by a long preparatory course of economy, to invite to the English Lakes a family of foreigners—what shall I call them?—a family of Anglo-Gallo-Americans, from the Carolinas. The invitation had been of old standing, and offered, as an expression of gratitude, from these ladies, for many hospitalities and friendly services rendered by the two heads of that family to Mrs. Millar in former years, and under circumstances of peculiar trial. Mrs. Millar had been hastily summoned from Scotland to attend her husband at Charleston; him, on her arrival, she found dying; and, whilst overwhelmed by this sudden blow, it may be imagined that the young widow would find trials enough for her fortitude, without needing any addition to the load, from friendliness amongst a nation of strangers, and from total solitude. These evils were spared to Mrs. Millar, through the kind offices and disinterested exertions of an American gentleman, (French by birth, but American by adoption,) M. Simond, who took upon himself the cares of superintending Mr. Millar's funeral through all its details; and, by this most seasonable service, secured to the heart-stricken widow that most welcome of privileges in all situations, the privilege of unmolested privacy; for assuredly the heaviest aggravation of such bereavements lies in the necessity, too often imposed by circumstances, upon him or upon her, who may happen to be the sole responsible representative, and, at the same time, the dearest friend of the deceased, of superintending the funeral arrangements. In the very agonies of a new-born grief, whilst the heart is yet raw and bleeding, the mind not yet able to comprehend its loss, the very light of day hateful to the eyes; the necessity, even at such a moment arises, and without a day's delay, and of facing strangers, talking with strangers, discussing the most empty details, with a view to the most sordid of considerations—cheapness, convenience, custom and local prejudice; and, finally, talking about whom? why, the very child, husband, wife, who has just been torn away; and this, too, under a consciousness that the being so hallowed is, as to these strangers, an object equally indifferent with any one person whatsoever that died a thousand years ago. Fortunate, indeed, is that person who has a natural friend, or, in default of such a friend, who finds a volunteer stepping forward to relieve him from a conflict of feeling so peculiarly unseasonable. Mrs.

Millar never forgot the service which had been rendered to her; and she was happy when M. Simond, who had become a wealthy citizen of America, at length held out the prospect of coming to profit by her hospitable attentions, amongst that circle of friends with whom she and her sister had surrounded themselves in so interesting a part of England.

M. Simond had been a French emigrant; not, I believe, so far connected with the privileged orders of his country, or with any political party, as to be absolutely forced out of France by danger or by panic; but he had shared in the feelings of those who were. Revolutionary France, in the anarchy of the transition state, and still heaving to and fro with the subsiding shocks of the great earthquake, did not suit him: there was neither the polish which he sought in its manners, nor the security which he sought in its institutions. England he did not love; but yet, if not England, some country which had grown up from English foundations was the country for him; and, as he augured no rest for France, through some generations to come, but an endless succession of revolution to revolution, anarchy to anarchy, he judged it best that, having expatriated himself and lost one country, he should solemnly adopt another. Accordingly he became an American citizen. English he already spoke with propriety and fluency. And, finally, he cemented his English connections by marrying an English lady, the niece of John Wilkes. "What John Wilkes?" asked a lady, one of a dinner-party at Calgarth, (the house of Dr. Watson, the celebrated Bishop of Llandaff,) upon the banks of Windermere.—"What John Wilkes?" re-echoed the Bishop, with a vehement intonation of scorn; "What John Wilkes, indeed! as if there ever was more than one John Wilkes—*fama super æthera notos!*"—"O, my Lord, I beg your pardon," said an old lady, nearly connected with the Bishop, "there were two; I knew one of them: he was a little, ill-looking man, and he kept the Blue Boar at ——."—"At Flamborough Head!" roared the Bishop, with a savage expression of disgust. The old lady, suspecting that some screw was loose in the matter, thought it prudent to drop the contest; but she muttered, sotto voce, "No, not at Flamborough Head, but at Market Drayton." Madame Simond, then, was the niece, not of the ill-looking host of the Blue Boar, but of the Wilkes, so memorably connected with the parvanities of the English government at one period; with the casuistry of our English constitution, by the questions raised in his person as to the effects of expulsion from the House of Commons, etc., etc.; and, finally, with the

history of English jurisprudence, by his intrepidity on the matter of general warrants. M. Simond's party, when at length it arrived, consisted of two persons besides himself, viz. his wife, the niece of Wilkes, and a young lady of eighteen, standing in the relation of grand-niece to the same memorable person. This young lady, highly pleasing in her person, on quitting the Lake District, went northwards with her party, to Edinburgh, and there became acquainted with Mr. Francis Jeffrey, the present Lord Jeffrey, who naturally enough fell in love with her, followed her across the Atlantic, and in Charleston, I believe, received the honour of her hand in marriage.

I, as one of Mrs. Millar's friends, put in my claim to entertain her American party in my turn. One long summer's day, they all came over to my cottage in Grasmere; and as it became my duty to do the honours of our vale to the strangers, I thought that I could not discharge the duty in a way more likely to interest them all, than by conducting them through to Grasmere into the little inner chamber of Easedale; and there, within sight of the solitary cottage, Blentarn Ghyll, telling them the story of the Greens; because, in this way, I had an opportunity, at the same time, of showing the scenery from some of the best points, and of opening to them a few glimpses of the character and customs which distinguish this section of the English yeomanry from others. The story did certainly interest them all; and thus far I succeeded in my duties as Cicerone and Amphitryon of the day. But throughout the rest of our long morning's ramble, I remember that accident, or, possibly the politeness of M. Simond and his French sympathy with a young man's natural desire to stand well in the eyes of a handsome young woman, so ordered it, that I had constantly the honour of being Miss Wilkes' immediate companion, as the narrowness of the path pretty generally threw us into ranks of two and two. Having, therefore, through so many hours, the opportunity of an exclusive conversation with this young lady, it would have been my own fault had I failed to carry off an impression of her great good sense, as well as her amiable and spirited character. Certainly I did mon possible to entertain her, both on her own account and as the visitor of my Scottish friends. But, in the midst of all my efforts, I had the mortification to feel that I was rowing against the stream: that there was a silent body of prepossession against the whole camp of the lakers, which nothing could unsettle. Miss Wilkes naturally looked up, with some feelings of respect, to M. Simond, who, by his marriage with her aunt, had become her own guardian and

protector. Now, M. Simond, of all the men in the world, was the last who could have appreciated an English poet. He had, to begin with, a French inaptitude for apprehending poetry at all: any poetry, that is, which transcends manners and the interests in social life. Then, unfortunately, not merely through what he had not, but equally through what he had, this cleverish Frenchman was, by whole diameters of the earth, remote from the station at which he could comprehend Wordsworth. He was a thorough knowing man of the world, keen, sharp as a razor, and valuing nothing but the tangible and the ponderable. He had a smattering of mechanics, of physiology, geology, mineralogy, and all other ologies whatsoever; he had, besides, at his fingers' ends, a huge body of statistical facts—how many people did live, could live, ought to live, in each particular district of each manufacturing county; how many old women of eighty-three there ought to be to so many little children of one; how many murders ought to be committed in a month by each town of five thousand souls; and so on ad infinitum. And to such a thin shred had his old French politeness been worn down by American attrition, that his thin lips could, with much ado, contrive to disguise his contempt for those who failed to meet him exactly upon his own field, with exactly his own quality of knowledge. Yet, after all, it was but a little case of knowledge, that he had packed up neatly for a make-shift; just what corresponds to the little assortment of razors, tooth-brushes, nail brushes, hair-brushes, cork-screw, gimlet, etc., etc., which one carries in one's trunk, in a red Morocco case, to meet the casualties of a journey. The more one was indignant at being the object of such a man's contempt, the more heartily did one disdain his disdain, and recalcitrate his kicks.

On the single day which Mrs. Millar could spare for Grasmere, I had taken care to ask Wordsworth amongst those who were to meet the party. Wordsworth came; but, by instinct, he and Monsieur Simond knew and recoiled from each other. They met, they saw, they interdespised. Wordsworth, on his side, seemed so heartily to despise M. Simond, that he did not stir to make an effort to right himself under any misapprehension of the Frenchman, but coolly acquiesced in any and every inference which he might be pleased to draw; whilst M. Simond, double-charged with contempt from "The Edinburgh Review," and from the report (I cannot doubt) of his present hostess, manifestly thought Wordsworth too abject almost for the trouble of too openly disdaining him. More than one of us could have done justice on this malefactor, by meeting M.

Simond on his own ground, and taking the conceit out of him most thoroughly. I was one of those; for I had the very knowledge, or some of it, that he most paraded. But one of us was lazy; another thought it not tanti; and I, for my part, in my own house, could not move upon such a service. And in those days, moreover, when as yet I loved Wordsworth not less than I venerated him, a success that would have made him suffer in any man's opinion by comparison with myself, would have been painful to my feelings. Never did party meet more exquisitely ill-assorted; never did party separate with more exquisite and cordial disgust, in its principal members towards each other. I mention the case at all, in order to illustrate the abject condition of worldly opinion in which Wordsworth then lived. Perhaps his ill-fame was just then in its meridian; for M. Simond, soon after, published his English tour in two octavo volumes; and, of course, he goes over his residence at the lakes; yet it is a strong fact that, according to my remembrance, he does not vouchsafe to mention such a person as Wordsworth.

One anecdote, before parting with these ladies, I will mention, as received from Miss Cullen on her personal knowledge of the fact. There are stories current which resemble this; but wanting an immediate guarantee for their accuracy which, in this case, I at least was obliged to admit, in the attestation of so perfectly veracious a reporter as this excellent lady. A female friend of her own, a person of family and consideration, being on the eve of undertaking a visit to a remote part of the kingdom, dreamed that, on reaching the end of her journey, and drawing up to the steps of the door, a footman, with a very marked and forbidding expression of countenance, his complexion pale and bloodless, and his manners sullen, presented himself to let down the steps of her carriage. This same man, at a subsequent point of her dream, appeared to be stealing up a private staircase, with some murderous instruments in his hands, towards a bed-room door. This dream was repeated, I think, twice. Some time after, the lady, accompanied by a grown-up daughter, accomplished her journey. Great was the shock which awaited her on reaching her friend's house: a servant, corresponding in all points to the shadowy outline of her dream, equally bloodless in complexion, and equally gloomy in manner, appeared at her carriage door. The issue of the story was — that upon a particular night, after a stay of some length, the lady grew unaccountably nervous; resisted her feelings for some time; but at length, at the entreaty of her daugh-

ter, who slept in the same room, suffered some communication of the case to be made to a gentleman resident in the house, who had not yet retired to rest. This gentleman, struck by the dream, and still more on recalling to mind some suspicious preparations, as if for a hasty departure, in which he had detected the servant, waited in concealment until three o'clock in the morning — at which time hearing a stealthy step moving up the staircase, he issued with fire-arms, and met the man at the lady's door, so equipped as to leave no doubt of his intentions; which possibly contemplated only robbing the lady's jewels, but possibly also to murder in a case of extremity. There are other stories with some of the same circumstances; and, in particular, I remember one very like it in Dr. Abercrombie's "Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers," [1830,] p. 283. But in this version of Dr. Abercrombie's, (supposing it another version of the same story,) the striking circumstance of anticipating the servant's features is omitted; and in no version, except this of Miss Cullen's, have I heard the names mentioned both of the parties to the affair, and also of the place at which it occurred.

NOTES

¹ The idea of the picturesque is one which did not exist at all until the post-Christian ages; neither amongst the Grecians nor amongst the Romans; and therefore, as respects one reason, it was, that the art of landscape painting did not exist (except in a Chinese infancy, and as a mere trick of inventive ingenuity) amongst the finest artists of Greece. What is picturesque, as placed in relation to the beautiful and the sublime? It is (to define it by the very shortest form of words) the characteristic, pushed into a sensible excess. The prevailing character of any natural object, no matter how little attractive it may be for beauty, is always interesting for itself, as the character and hieroglyphic symbol of the purposes pursued by Nature in the determination of its form, style of motion, texture of superficies, relation of parts, etc.

Thus, for example, an expression of dulness and somnolent torpor does not ally itself with grace or elegance; but, in combination with strength and other qualities, it may compose a character of serviceable and patient endurance, as in the cart-horse, having unity in itself, and tending to one class of uses sufficient to mark it out by circumscription for a distinct and separate contemplation. Now, in combination with certain counteracting circumstances, as with the momentary energy of some great effort, much of this peculiar character might be lost, or defeated, or dissipated. On that account, the skillful observer will seek out circumstances that are in harmony with the principal tendencies and assist them; such, suppose, as a state of lazy relaxation from labour, and the fall of heavy drenching rain causing the head to droop, and the shaggy mane, together with the fetlocks, to weep. These, and other circumstances of attitude, etc., bring out the character or prevailing tendency of the animal in some excess;

and, in such a case, we call the resulting effect to the eye — picturesque: or in fact, characteresque. In extending this speculation to objects of art and human purposes, there is something more required of subtle investigation. Meantime, it is evident that neither the sublime nor the beautiful depends upon any secondary interest of a purpose or of a character expressing that purpose. They (confining the case to visual objects) court the primary interest involved in that (form, colour, texture, attitude, motion), which forces admiration, which fascinates the eye, for itself, and without a question of any distinct purpose: and, instead of character — that is, discriminating and separating expression, tending to the special and the individual — they both agree in pursuing the Catholic — the Normal — the Ideal.

* "Wraie" is the old Danish, or Icelandic word for angle. Hence the many "wrays" in the Lake District.

II

PASSING onwards from Brathay, a ride of about forty minutes carries you to the summit of a wild heathy tract, along which, even at noonday, few sounds are heard that indicate the presence of man, except now and then a woodman's axe, in some of the many coppice-woods scattered about that neighbourhood. In Northern England there are no sheep-bells; which is an unfortunate defect, as regards the full impression of wild solitudes, whether amongst undulating heaths, or towering rocks: at any rate, it is so felt by those who, like myself, have been trained to its soothing effects, upon the hills of Somersetshire — the Cheddar, the Mendip, or the Quantock — or any other of those breezy downs, which once constituted such delightful local distinctions for four or five counties in that south-west angle of England. At all hours of day or night, this silvery tinkle was delightful; but, after sunset, in the solemn hour of gathering twilight, heard (as it always was) intermittingly, and at great varieties of distance, it formed the most impressive incident for the ear, and the most in harmony with the other circumstances of the scenery, that, perhaps, anywhere exists — not excepting even the natural sounds, the swelling and dying intonations of insects wheeling in their vespèr flights. Silence and desolation are never felt so profoundly as when they are interrupted by solemn sounds, recurring by uncertain intervals, and from distant places. But in these Westmoreland heaths, and uninhabited ranges of hilly ground, too often nothing is heard, except, occasionally, the wild cry of a bird — the plover, the snipe, or perhaps the raven's croak. The general impression is, therefore, cheerless; and the more are you rejoiced when, looking down from some one of the eminences which you have been gradually ascending, you descry, at a great depth below,¹ the lovely lake of Coniston. The head of this lake is the part chiefly interesting, both from the sublime character of the mountain barriers, and from the intricacy of the little valleys at their base. On a little verdant knoll, near the north-eastern margin of the lake, stands a small villa, called Tent Lodge, built by Colonel Smith, and for many years occu-

pied by his family. That daughter of Colonel Smith, who drew the public attention so powerfully upon herself by the splendour of her attainments, had died some months before I came into the country. But yet, as I was subsequently acquainted with her family through the Lloyds, (who were within an easy drive of Tent Lodge,) and as, moreover, with regard to Miss Elizabeth Smith herself, I came to know more than the world knew — drawing my knowledge from many of her friends, but especially from Mrs. Hannah More, who had been intimately connected with her; for these reasons, I shall rehearse the leading points of her story; and the rather, because her family, who were equally interested in that story, long continued to form part of the Lake society.

On my first becoming acquainted with Miss Smith's pretensions, it is very true that I regarded them with but little concern; for nothing ever interests me less than great philological attainments, or at least that mode of philological learning which consists in mastery over languages. But one reason for this indifference is, that the apparent splendour is too often a false one. They who know a vast number of languages, rarely know any one with accuracy; and the more they gain in one way, the more they lose in another. With Miss Smith, however, I gradually came to know that this was not the case; or, at any rate, but partially the case; for, of some languages which she possessed, and those the least accessible, it appeared, finally, that she had even a critical knowledge. It created also a secondary interest in these difficult accomplishments of hers, to find that they were so very extensive. Secondly, That they were pretty nearly all of self-acquisition. Thirdly, That they were borne so meekly, and with unaffected absence of all ostentation. As to the first point, it appears (from Mrs. H. Bowdler's letter to Dr. Mummsen, the friend of Klopstock) that she made herself mistress of the French, the Italian, the Spanish, the Latin, the German, the Greek, and the Hebrew languages. She had no inconsiderable knowledge of the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Persic. She was a good geometrician and algebraist. She was a very expert musician. She drew from nature, and had an accurate knowledge of perspective. Finally, she manifested an early talent for poetry; but, from pure modesty, destroyed most of what she had written, as soon as her acquaintance with the Hebrew models had elevated the standard of true poetry in her mind, so as to disgust her with what she now viewed as the tameness and inefficiency of her own performances. As to the second point — that for these attain-

ments she was indebted, almost exclusively, to her own energy; this is placed beyond all doubt, by the fact, that the only governess she ever had (a young lady not much beyond her own age) did not herself possess, and therefore could not have communicated, any knowledge of languages, beyond a little French and Italian. Finally, as to the modesty with which she wore her distinctions, that is sufficiently established by every page of her printed works, and her letters. Greater diffidence, as respected herself, or less willingness to obtrude her knowledge upon strangers, or even upon those correspondents who would have wished her to make a little more display, can not be imagined. And yet I repeat, that her knowledge was as sound and as profound as it was extensive. For, taking only one instance of this, her "Translation of Job" has been pronounced, by Biblical critics of the first rank, a work of real and intrinsic value, without any reference to the disadvantages of the translator, or without needing any allowances whatever. In particular, Dr. Magee, the celebrated writer on the Atonement, and subsequently a dignitary of the Irish Church — certainly one of the best qualified judges at that time — describes it as "conveying more of the character and meaning of the Hebrew, with fewer departures from the idiom of the English, than any other translation whatever that we possess." So much for the scholarship; whilst he rightly notices, in proof of the translator's taste and discretion, that "from the received version she very seldom unnecessarily deviates:" thus refusing to disturb what was, generally speaking, so excellent and time-hallowed for any dazzling effects of novelty; and practising this forbearance as much as possible, notwithstanding novelty was, after all, the main attraction upon which the new translation must rest.

The example of her modesty, however, is not more instructive than that of her continued struggle with difficulties in pursuing knowledge, and with misfortunes in supporting a Christian fortitude. I shall briefly sketch her story: — She was born at Burnhall, in the county of Durham, at the latter end of the year 1776. Early in 1782, when she had just entered her sixth year, her parents removed into Suffolk, in order to be near a blind relation, who looked with anxiety to the conscientious attentions of Mrs. Smith, in superintending his comforts and interests. This occupation absorbed so much of her time, that she found it necessary to obtain the aid of a stranger in directing the studies of her daughter. An opportunity just then offered of attaining this object, concurrently with another not less interesting to herself, viz. that of offering an asylum to

a young lady who had recently been thrown adrift upon the world by the misfortunes of her parents. They had very suddenly fallen from a station of distinguished prosperity; and the young lady herself, then barely sixteen, was treading that path of severe adversity, upon which, by a most singular parallelism of ill fortune, her young pupil was destined to follow her steps at exactly the same age. Being so prematurely called to the office of governess, this young lady was expected rather to act as an elder companion, and as a lightener of the fatigues attached to their common studies, than exactly as their directress. And, at all events, from her who was the only even nominal governess that Miss Smith ever had, it is certain that she could have learned little or nothing. This arrangement subsisted between two and three years, when the death of their blind kinsman allowed Mr. Smith's family to leave Suffolk, and resume their old domicile of Burnhall. But from this, by a sudden gleam of treacherous prosperity, they were summoned, in the following year, (June, 1785,) to the splendid inheritance of Piercefield — a show-place upon the river Wye; and, next after Tintern Abbey and the river itself, an object of attraction to all who then visited the Wye.

A residence on the Wye, besides its own natural attraction, has this collateral advantage, that it brings Bath (not to mention Clifton and the Hot Wells) within a visiting distance for people who happen to have carriages; and Bath, it is hardly necessary to say, besides its stationary body of polished and intellectual residents, has also a floating casual population of eminent or interesting persons, gathered into this focus from every quarter of the empire. Amongst the literary connections which the Piercefield family had formed in Bath, was one with Mrs. Bowdler and her daughter — two ladies not distinguished by any very powerful talents, but sufficiently tinctured with literature and the love of literature to be liberal in their opinions. And, fortunately, (as it turned out for Miss Smith,) they were eminently religious: but not in a bigoted way; for they were conciliating and winning in the outward expression of their religious character; capable of explaining their own creed with intelligent consistency; and, finally, were the women to recommend any creed, by the sanctity and the benignity of their own lives. This strong religious bias of the two Bath ladies, operated in Miss Smith's favour by a triple service. First of all, it was this depth of religious feeling, and, consequently, of interest in the Scriptures, which had originally moved the elder Mrs. Bowdler to study the Hebrew and the Greek, as the two

languages in which they had been originally delivered. And this example it was of female triumph over their difficulties, together with the proof thus given that such attainments were entirely reconcilable with feminine gentleness, which first suggested to Miss Smith the project of her philological studies; and, doubtless, these studies, by the constant and agreeable occupation which they afforded, overspread the whole field of her life with pleasurable activity. "From the above-mentioned visit," says her mother, writing to Dr. Randolph, and referring to the visit which these Bath ladies had made to Piercefield — "from the above-mentioned visit I date the turn of study which Elizabeth ever after pursued, and which I firmly believe the amiable conduct of our guests first led her to delight in." Secondly, to the religious sympathies which connected these two ladies with Miss Smith, was owing the fervour of that friendship, which afterwards, in their adversity, the Piercefield family found more strenuously exerted in their behalf by the Bowdlers than by all the rest of their connections. And, finally, it was this piety and religious resignation, with which she had been herself inoculated by her Bath friends, that, throughout the calamitous era of her life, enabled Miss Elizabeth Smith to maintain her own cheerfulness unbroken, and greatly to support the failing fortitude of her mother.

This visit of her Bath friends to Piercefield — so memorable an event for the whole subsequent life of Miss Smith — occurred in the summer of 1789; consequently, when she was just twelve and a half years old. And the impressions then made upon her childish, but unusually thoughtful, mind, were kept up by continual communications, personal or written, through the years immediately succeeding. Just two and a half years after, in the very month when Miss Smith accomplished her fifteenth year, upon occasion of going through the rite of Confirmation, according to the discipline of the English Church, she received a letter of religious counsel — grave, affectionate, but yet humble — from the elder Mrs. Bowdler, which might also have been thought to have proceeded from a writer who had looked behind the curtain of fate, and had seen the forge at whose fires the shafts of Heaven were even now being forged.

Just twelve months from the date of this letter, in the very month when Miss Elizabeth Smith completed her sixteenth year, the storm descended upon the house of Piercefield. The whole estate, a splendid one, was swept away, by the failure (as I have heard) of one banking-house; nor was there recovered,

until some years after, any slender fragments of that estate. Piercefield was, of course, sold; but that was not the heaviest of her grievances to Miss Smith. She was now far advanced upon her studious career; for it should be mentioned, as a lesson to other young ladies of what may be accomplished by unassisted labour, that, between the ages of thirteen and twenty-one, all her principal acquisitions were made. No treasure, therefore, could, in her eyes, be of such priceless value as the Piercefield library; but this also followed the general wreck: not a volume, not a pamphlet, was reserved; for the family were proud in their integrity, and would receive no favours from the creditors. Under this scorching test, applied to the fidelity of friends, many, whom Mrs. Smith mentions in one of her letters under the name of "summer friends," fled from them by crowds: dinners, balls, soirées — credit, influence, support — these things were no longer to be had from Piercefield. But more annoying even than the fickle levity of such open deserters, was the timid and doubtful countenance, as I have heard Mrs. Smith say, which was still offered to them by some who did not relish, for their own sakes, being classed with those who had paid their homage only to the fine house and fine equipages of Piercefield. These persons continued, therefore, to send invitations to the family; but so frigidly, that every expression manifested but too forcibly how disagreeable was the duty with which they were complying; and how much more they submitted to it for their own reputation's sake, than for any kindness they felt to their old friends. Mrs. Smith was herself a very haughty woman, and it maddened her to be the object of condescensions so insolent and so reluctant.

Meantime, her daughter, young as she was, became the moral support of her whole family, and the fountain from which they all drew consolation and fortitude. She was confirmed in her religious tendencies by two circumstances of her recent experience: one was, that she, the sole person of her family who courted religious consolations, was also the sole person who had been able to maintain cheerfulness and uniform spirits: the other was, that although it could not be truly said of all their worldly friends that they had forsaken them, yet, of their religious friends it could be said, not one had done so; and at last, when for some time they had been so far reduced as not to have a roof over their heads, by one of these religious friends it was that they were furnished with every luxury as well as comfort of life; and, in a spirit of such sisterly

kindness, as made the obligation not painful to the proudest amongst them.

It was in 1792 that the Piercefield family had been ruined; and in 1794, out of the wrecks which had been gathered together, Mr. Smith (the father of the family) bought a commission in the army. For some time the family continued to live in London, Bath, and other parts of England; but, at length, Mr. Smith's regiment was ordered to the west of Ireland; and the ladies of his family resolved to accompany him to head-quarters. In passing through Wales, (May, 1796,) they paid a visit to those sentimental anchorites of the last generation, whom so many of us must still remember — Miss Ponsonby, and Lady Eleanor Butler, (a sister of Lord Ormond,) whose hermitage stood near to Llangollen, and, therefore, close to the usual Irish route, by way of Holyhead. On landing in Ireland, they proceeded to a seat of Lord Kingston — a kind-hearted, hospitable Irishman, who was on the old Piercefield list of friends, and had never wavered in his attachment. Here they stayed three weeks. Miss Smith renewed, on this occasion, her friendship with Lady Isabella King, the daughter of Lord Kingston; and a little incident connected with this visit, gave her an opportunity afterwards of showing her delicate sense of the sacred character which attaches to gifts of friendship, and showing it by an ingenious device, that may be worth the notice of other young ladies in the same case. Lady Isabella had given to Miss Smith a beautiful horse, called Brunette. In process of time, when they had ceased to be in the neighbourhood of any regimental stables, it became matter of necessity that Brunette should be parted with. To have given the animal away, had that been otherwise possible, might only have been delaying the sale for a short time. After some demur, therefore, Miss Smith adopted this plan: she sold Brunette, but applied the whole of the price, 120 guineas, to the purchase of a splendid harp. The harp was christened Brunette, and was religiously preserved to the end of her life. Now Brunette, after all, must have died in a few years; but, by translating her friend's gift into another form, she not only connected the image of her distant friend, and her sense of that friend's kindness, with a pleasure and a useful purpose of her own, but she conferred on that gift a perpetuity of existence.

At length came the day when the Smiths were to quit Kingston Lodge for the quarters of the regiment. And now came the first rude trial of Mrs. Smith's fortitude, as connected with

points of mere decent comfort. Hitherto, floating amongst the luxurious habitations of opulent friends, she might have felt many privations as regarded splendour and direct personal power, but never as regarded the primary elements of comfort, warmth, cleanliness, convenient arrangements. But on this journey, which was performed by all the party on horseback, it rained incessantly. They reached their quarters drenched with wet, weary, hungry, forlorn. The quartermaster had neglected to give any directions for their suitable accommodation — no preparations whatever had been made for receiving them; and, from the luxuries of Lord Kingston's mansion, which habit had made so familiar to them all, the ladies found themselves suddenly transferred to a miserable Irish cabin — dirty, narrow, nearly quite unfurnished, and thoroughly disconsolate. Mrs. Smith's proud spirit fairly gave way, and she burst out into a fit of weeping. Upon this, her daughter Elizabeth, [and Mrs. Smith herself it was that told the anecdote, and often she told it, or told others of the same character, at Lloyd's,] in a gentle, soothing tone, began to suggest the many blessings which lay before them in life, and some even for this evening.

“Blessings, child!”—her mother impatiently interrupted her. “What sort of blessings? . Irish blessings! — county of Sligo blessings, I fancy. Or, perhaps, you call this a blessing?” holding up a miserable fragment of an iron rod, which had been left by way of poker, or rather as a substitute for the whole assortment of fire-irons. The daughter laughed; but she changed her wet dress expeditiously, assumed an apron; and so various were her accomplishments, that, in no long time, she had gathered together a very comfortable dinner for her parents, and, amongst other things, a currant tart, which she had herself made, in a tenement absolutely unfurnished of every kitchen utensil.

In the autumn of this year, (1796,) they returned to England; and, after various migrations through the next four years, amongst which was another and longer visit to Ireland, in 1800, they took up their abode in the sequestered vale of Patterdale. Here they had a cottage upon the banks of Ulleswater; the most gorgeous of the English lakes, from the rich and ancient woods which possess a great part of its western side; the sublimest, as respects its mountain accompaniments, except only, perhaps, Wastdale; and, I believe, the largest; for, though only nine miles in length, and, therefore, shorter by about two miles than Windermere, it averages a greater breadth. Here, at this time, was living Mr. Clarkson — that

son of thunder, that Titan, who was in fact that one great Atlas that bore up the Slave-Trade abolition cause — now resting from his mighty labours and nerve-shattering perils. So much had his nerves been shattered by all that he had gone through in toil, in suffering, and in anxiety, that, for many years I have heard it said, he found himself unable to walk up stairs without tremulous motions of his limbs. He was, perhaps, too iron a man, too much like the Talus of Spenser's "Faerie Queene," to appreciate so gentle a creature as Miss Elizabeth Smith. A more suitable friend, and one who thoroughly comprehended her, and expressed his admiration for her in verse, was Thomas Wilkinson of Yanwath, a Quaker, a man of taste, and of delicate sensibility. He wrote verses occasionally; and though feebly enough as respected poetic power, there were often such delicate touches of feeling, such gleams of real tenderness, in some redeeming part of each poem, that even Wordsworth admired and read them aloud with pleasure. Indeed Wordsworth has addressed to him one copy of verses, or rather to his spade, which was printed in the collection of 1807, and which Lord Jeffrey, after quoting one line, dismissed as too dull for repetition.

During this residence upon Ulleswater (winter of 1800) it was that a very remarkable incident befell Miss Smith. I have heard it often mentioned, and sometimes with a slight variety of circumstances; but I here repeat it from an account drawn up by Miss Smith herself, who was most literally exact and faithful to the truth in all reports of her own personal experience. There is, on the western side of Ulleswater, a fine cataract, (or, in the language of the country, a "force,") known by the name of Airey Force; and it is of importance enough, especially in rainy seasons, to attract numerous visitors from among "the Lakers." Thither, with some purpose of sketching, not the whole scene, but some picturesque features of it, Miss Smith had gone, quite unaccompanied. The road to it lies through Gobarow Park; and it was usual, at that time, to take a guide from the family of the Duke of Norfolk's keeper, who lived in Lyulph's Tower — a solitary hunting lodge, built by his Grace for the purposes of an annual visit which he used to pay to his estates in that part of England. She, however, thinking herself sufficiently familiar with the localities, had declined to encumber her motions with such an attendant; consequently she was alone. For half an hour or more, she continued to ascend: and, being a good "cragswoman," from the experience she had won in Wales as well as in northern England, she had

reached an altitude much beyond what would generally be thought corresponding to the time. The path had vanished altogether; but she continued to pick out one for herself amongst the stones, sometimes receding from the force, sometimes approaching it, according to the openings allowed by the scattered masses of rock. Pressing forward in this hurried way, and never looking back, all at once she found herself in a little stony chamber, from which there was no egress possible in advance. She stopped and looked up. There was a frightful silence in the air. She felt a sudden palpitation at her heart, and a panic from she knew not what. Turning, however, hastily, she soon wound herself out of this aerial dungeon; but by steps so rapid and agitated, that, at length, on looking round, she found herself standing at the brink of a chasm, frightful to look down. That way, it was clear enough, all retreat was impossible; but, on turning round, retreat seemed in every direction alike even more impossible. Down the chasm, at least, she might have leaped, though with little or no chance of escaping with life; but on all other quarters it seemed to her eye that, at no price, could she effect an exit, since the rocks stood around her, in a semi-circus, all lofty, all perpendicular, all glazed with trickling water, or smooth as polished porphyry. Yet how, then, had she reached the point? The same track, if she could hit that track, would surely secure her escape. Round and round she walked; gazed with almost despairing eyes; her breath came thicker and thicker; for path she could not trace by which it was possible for her to have entered. Finding herself grow more and more confused, and every instant nearer to sinking into some fainting fit or convulsion, she resolved to sit down and turn her thoughts quietly into some less exciting channel. This she did; gradually recovered some self-possession; and then suddenly a thought rose up to her, that she was in the hands of God, and that he would not forsake her. But immediately came a second and reproving thought — that this confidence in God's protection might have been justified had she been ascending the rocks upon any mission of duty; but what right could she have to any providential deliverance, who had been led thither in a spirit of levity and carelessness? I am here giving her view of the case; for, as to myself, I fear greatly, that if her steps were erring ones, it is but seldom indeed that nous autres can pretend to be treading upon right paths. Once again she rose! and, supporting herself upon a little sketching-stool that folded up into a stick, she looked upwards, in the hope that

some shepherd might, by chance, be wandering in those aerial regions; but nothing could she see except the tall birches growing at the brink of the highest summits, and the clouds slowly sailing overhead. Suddenly, however, as she swept the whole circuit of her station with her alarmed eye, she saw clearly, about two hundred yards beyond her own position, a lady, in a white muslin morning robe, such as were then universally worn by young ladies until dinner-time. The lady beckoned with a gesture and in a manner that, in a moment, gave her confidence to advance — how she could not guess, but in some way that baffled all power to retrace it, she found instantaneously the outlet which previously had escaped her. She continued to advance towards the lady, whom now, in the same moment, she found to be standing upon the other side of the force, and also to be her own sister. How or why that young lady, whom she had left at home earnestly occupied with her own studies, should have followed and overtaken her, filled her with perplexity. But this was no situation for putting questions; for the guiding sister began to descend, and, by a few simple gestures, just serving to indicate when Miss Elizabeth was to approach and when to leave the brink of the torrent, she gradually led her down to a platform of rock, from which the further descent was safe and conspicuous. There Miss Smith paused, in order to take breath from her panic, as well as to exchange greetings and questions with her sister. But sister there was none. All trace of her had vanished; and when, in two hours after, she reached her home, Miss Smith found her sister in the same situation and employment in which she had left her; and the whole family assured her that she had never stirred from the house.

In 1801, I believe it was that the family removed from Patterdale to Coniston. Certainly they were settled there in the spring of 1802; for, in the May of that spring, Miss Elizabeth Hamilton — a writer now very much forgotten, or remembered only by her “Cottagers of Glenburnie”, but then a person of mark and authority in the literary circles of Edinburgh — paid a visit to the Lakes, and stayed there for many months, together with her married sister, Mrs. Blake; and both ladies cultivated the friendship of the Smiths. Miss Hamilton was captivated with the family; and, of the sisters in particular, she speaks as of persons that, “in the days of paganism, would have been worshipped as beings of a superior order, so elegantly graceful do they appear, when, with easy motion, they guide their light boat over the waves.” And of Miss Elizabeth, separately,

she says, on another occasion,—“I never before saw so much of Miss Smith; and, in the three days she spent with us, the admiration which I had always felt for her extraordinary talents, and as extraordinary virtues, was hourly augmented. She is, indeed, a most charming creature; and, if one could inoculate her with a little of the Scotch frankness, I think she would be one of the most perfect of human beings.”

About four years had been delightfully passed in Coniston. In the summer of 1805, Miss Smith laid the foundation of her fatal illness in the following way, according to her own account of the case, to an old servant, a very short time before she died:—“One very hot evening, in July, I took a book, and walked about two miles from home, when I seated myself on a stone beside the lake. Being much engaged by a poem I was reading, I did not perceive that the sun was gone down, and was succeeded by a very heavy dew, till, in a moment, I felt struck on the chest as if with a sharp knife. I returned home, but said nothing of the pain. The next day, being also very hot, and every one busy in the hay-field, I thought I would take a rake, and work very hard to produce perspiration, in the hope that it might remove the pain; but it did not.” From that time, a bad cough, with occasional loss of voice, gave reason to suspect some organic injury of the lungs. Late in the autumn of this year, (1805,) Miss Smith accompanied her mother and her two younger sisters to Bristol, Bath, and other places in the south, on visits to various friends. Her health went through various fluctuations until May of the following year, when she was advised to try Matlock. Here, after spending three weeks, she grew worse; and, as there was no place which she liked so well as the Lakes, it was resolved to turn homewards. About the beginning of June, she and her mother returned alone to Coniston: one of her sisters was now married; her three brothers were in the army or navy; and her father almost constantly with his regiment. Through the next two months she faded quietly away, sitting always in a tent, that had been pitched upon the lawn, and which remained open continually to receive the fanning of the intermitting airs upon the lake, as well as to admit the bold mountain scenery to the north. She lived nearly through the first week of August, dying on the morning of August 7; and the circumstances of her last night are thus recorded by her mother:—“At nine she went to bed. I resolved to quit her no more, and went to prepare for the night. Turpin [Miss Smith’s maid] came to say that Elizabeth entreated I would not stay in her room. I

replied — ‘On that one subject I am resolved; no power on earth shall keep me from her; so, go to bed yourself.’ Accordingly, I returned to her room; and, at ten, gave her the usual dose of laudanum. After a little time, she fell into a doze, and, I thought slept till one. She was uneasy and restless, but never complained; and, on my wiping the cold sweat off her face, and bathing it with camphorated vinegar, which I did very often in the course of the night, she thanked me, smiled, and said — ‘That is the greatest comfort I have.’ She slept again for a short time; and, at half past four, asked for some chicken broth, which she took perfectly well. On being told the hour, she said, ‘How long this night is!’ She continued very uneasy; and, in half an hour after, and on my inquiring if I could move the pillow, or do anything to relieve her, she replied, ‘There is nothing for it but quiet.’ At six, she said, ‘I must get up and have some mint tea.’ I then called for Turpin, and felt my angel’s pulse: it was fluttering; and by that I knew I should soon lose her. She took the tea well. Turpin began to put on her clothes, and was proceeding to dress her, when she laid her head upon the faithful creature’s shoulder, became convulsed in the face, spoke not, looked not, and in ten minutes expired.”

She was buried in Hawkshead churchyard, where a small tablet of white marble is raised to her memory, on which there is the scantiest record that, for a person so eminently accomplished, I have ever met with. After mentioning her birth and age, (twenty-nine,) it closes thus: — “She possessed great talents, exalted virtues, and humble piety.” Anything so unsatisfactory or so commonplace I have rarely known. As much, or more, is often said of the most insipid people; whereas Miss Smith was really a most extraordinary person. I have conversed with Mrs. Hannah More often about her; and I never failed to draw forth some fresh anecdote illustrating the vast extent of her knowledge, the simplicity of her character, the gentleness of her manners, and her unaffected humility. She passed, it is true, almost inaudibly through life; and the stir which was made after her death soon subsided. But the reason was — that she wrote but little! Had it been possible for the world to measure her by her powers, rather than her performances, she would have been placed, perhaps, in the estimate of posterity, at the head of learned women; whilst her sweet and feminine character would have rescued her from all shadow and suspicion of that reproach which too often settles upon the learned character, when supported by female aspirants.

The family of Tent Lodge continued to reside at Coniston

for many years; and they were connected with the lake literary clan chiefly through the Lloyds and those who visited the Lloyds; for it is another and striking proof of the slight hold which Wordsworth, etc., had upon the public esteem in those days, that even Miss Smith, with all her excessive diffidence in judging of books and authors, never seems, by any one of her letters, to have felt the least interest about Wordsworth or Coleridge; nor did Miss Hamilton, with all her esprit de corps and acquired interest in everything at all bearing upon literature, ever mention them in those of her letters which belong to the period of her Lake visit in 1802; nor, for the six or seven months which she passed in that country, and within a short morning ride of Grasmere, did she ever think it worth her while to seek an introduction to any one of the resident authors.

Yet this could not be altogether from ignorance that such people existed; for Thomas Wilkinson, the intimate and admiring friend of Miss Smith, was also the friend of Wordsworth; and, for some reason that I never could fathom, he was a sort of pet with Wordsworth. Professor Wilson or myself were never honoured with one line, one allusion from his pen; but many a person of particular feebleness has received that honour. Amongst these I may rank Thomas Wilkinson; not that I wish to speak contemptuously of him; he was a Quaker, of elegant habits, rustic simplicity, and with tastes, as Wordsworth affirms, "too pure to be refined." His cottage was seated not far from the great castle of the Lowthers; and, either from mere whim — as sometimes such whims do possess great ladies — whims, I mean, for drawing about them odd-looking, old-world people, as piquant contrasts to the fine gentlemen of their own society, or because they did really feel a homely dignity in the plain speaking "Friend," and liked, for a frolic, to be thou'd and thee'd — or some motive or other, at any rate, they introduced themselves to Mr. Wilkinson's cottage; and I believe that the connection was afterwards improved by the use they found for his services in forming walks through the woods of Lowther, and leading them in such a circuit as to take advantage of all the most picturesque stations. As a poet, I presume that Mr. Wilkinson could hardly have recommended himself to the notice of ladies who would naturally have modelled their tastes upon the favourites of the age. A poet, however, in a gentle, unassuming way, he was; and he, therefore, is to be added to the corps litteraire of the Lakes; and Yanwath to be put down as the advanced post of that corps to the north.

Two families there still remain, which I am tempted to gather

into my group of Lake society — notwithstanding it is true that the two most interesting members of the first had died a little before the period at which my sketch commences; and the second, though highly intellectual in the person of that particular member whom I have chiefly to commemorate, was not, properly speaking, literary; and, moreover, belongs to a later period of my own Westmoreland experience — being, at the time of my settlement in Grasmere, a girl at a boarding-school. The first was the family of the Sympsons, whom Mr. Wordsworth has spoken of, with deep interest, more than once. The eldest son, a clergyman, and, like Wordsworth, an alumnus of Hawkshead school, wrote, amongst other poems, “The Vision of Alfred.” Of these poems, Wordsworth says, that they “are little known; but they contain passages of splendid description; and the versification of his ‘Vision’ is harmonious and animated.” This is much for Wordsworth to say; and he does him even the honour of quoting the following illustrative simile from his description of the sylphs in motion, (which sylphs constitute the machinery of his poem;) and, probably, the reader will be of opinion that this passage justifies the praise of Wordsworth. It is founded, as he will see, on the splendid scenery of the heavens in Polar latitudes, as seen by reflection in polished ice at midnight.

“Less varying hues beneath the Pole adorn
 The streamy glories of the Boreal morn,
 That, waving to and fro, their radiance shed
 On Bothnia’s gulf, with glassy ice o’erspread;
 Where the lone native, as he homeward glides,
 On polished sandals o’er the imprisoned tides,
 Sees, at a glance, above him and below,
 Two rival heavens with equal splendour glow;
 Stars, moons, and meteors, ray oppose to ray;
 And solemn midnight pours the blaze of day.”

“He was a man,” says Wordsworth, in conclusion, “of ardent feeling; and his faculties of mind, particularly his memory, were extraordinary.” Brief notices of his life ought to find a place in the history of Westmoreland.

But it was the father of this Joseph Sympson who gave its chief interest to the family. Him Wordsworth has described, at the same time sketching his history, with a fulness and a circumstantiality beyond what he has conceded to any other of the real personages in “The Excursion.” “A priest he was by function;” but a priest of that class which is now annually growing nearer to extinction among us, not being supported by any sympathies in this age.

“ His course,
 From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon,
 Had been irregular — I might say wild;
 By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care
 Too little check'd. An active, ardent mind;
 A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme
 To cheat the sadness of a rainy day;
 Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games;
 A generous spirit, and a body strong,
 To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl —
 Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights
 Of a priz'd visitant in the jolly hall
 Of country squire, or at the statelier board
 Of Duke or Earl — from scenes of courtly pomp
 Withdrawn, to while away the summer hours
 In condescension amongst rural guests.
 With these high comrades he had revelled long,
 By hopes of coming patronage beguiled,
 Till the heart sicken'd.”

Slowly, however, and indignantly his eyes opened fully to the windy treachery of all the promises held out to him; and, at length, for mere bread, he accepted, from an “unthought-of patron,” a most “secluded chapelry” in Cumberland. This was “the little, lowly house of prayer” of Wythburn, elsewhere celebrated by Wordsworth; and, for its own sake, interesting to all travellers, both for its deep privacy, and for the excessive humility of its external pretensions, whether as to size or ornament. Were it not for its twin sister at Buttermere, it would be the very smallest place of worship in all England; and it looks even smaller than it is, from its position; for it stands at the base of the mighty Helvellyn, close to the high-road between Ambleside and Keswick, and within speaking distance of the upper lake — (for Wythburn Water, though usually passed by the traveller under the impression of absolute unity in its waters, owing to the interposition of a rocky screen, is, in fact, composed of two separate lakes.) To this miniature and most secluded congregation of shepherds, did the once dazzling parson officiate as pastor; and it seems to amplify the impression already given of his versatility, that he became a diligent and most fatherly, though not peculiarly devout, teacher and friend. The temper, however, of the northern Dalesmen, is not constitutionally turned to religion; consequently that part of his defects did him no especial injury, when compensated (as, in the judgment of these Dalesmen, it was compensated) by ready and active kindness, charity the most diffusive, and patriarchal hospitality. The living, as I have said, was in Wythburn; but there was no parsonage, and no house in this

poor dale which was disposable for that purpose. So Mr. Sympson crossed the marches of the sister counties, which to him was about equidistant from his chapel and his house, into Grasmere, on the Westmoreland side. There he occupied a cottage by the roadside; a situation which, doubtless, gratified at once his social and his hospitable propensities; and, at length, from age, as well as from paternal character and station, came to be regarded as the patriarch of the vale. Before I mention the afflictions which fell upon his latter end, and by way of picturesque contrast to his closing scene, let me have permission to cite Wordsworth's sketch (taken from his own boyish remembrance of the case) describing the first gipsy-like entrance of the brilliant parson and his household into Grasmere — so equally out of harmony with the decorums of his sacred character and the splendours of his past life: —

“ Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads
 By which our northern wilds could then be crossed;
 And into most of these secluded vales
 Was no access for wain, heavy or light.
 So at his dwelling-place the priest arriv'd,
 With store of household goods in panniers slung
 On sturdy horses, graced with jingling bells;
 And, on the back of more ignoble beast,
 That, with like burthen of effects most priz'd
 Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.
 Young was I then, a schoolboy of eight years:
 But still methinks I see them as they pass'd
 In order — drawing toward their wish'd-for-home.
 Rock'd by the motion of a trusty ass,
 Two ruddy children hung, a well-pois'd freight —
 Each in his basket nodding drowsily.
 Their bonnets, I remember, wreath'd with flowers,
 Which told it was the pleasant month of June.
 And close behind the comely matron rode —
 A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,
 And with a lady's mien.— From far they came,
 Even from Northumbrian hills: yet theirs had been
 A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheer'd
 By music, pranks, and laughter-stirring jest;
 And freak put on, and arch word dropp'd — to swell
 That cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise
 Which gathered round the slowly moving train.
 ' Whence do they come? and with what errand charged?
 Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe
 Who pitch their tents under the greenwood tree?
 Or strollers are they, fitted to enact
 Fair Rosamond and the Children of the Wood?
 When the next village hears the show announc'd
 By blast of trumpet?' Plenteous was the growth
 Of such conjectures — overheard or seen
 On many a staring countenance portray'd

Of boor or burgher, as they march'd along.
 And more than once their steadiness of face
 Was put to proof, and exercise supplied
 To their inventive humour, by stern looks,
 And questions in authoritative tone,
 By some staid guardian of the public peace,
 Checking the sober horse on which he rode,
 In his suspicious wisdom; oftener still
 By notice indirect or blunt demand
 From traveller halting in his own despite,
 A simple curiosity to ease:—
 Of which adventures, that beguil'd and cheer'd
 Their grave migration, the good pair would tell
 With undiminished glee in hoary age."

Meantime the lady of the house embellished it with feminine skill; and the homely pastor — for such he had now become — not having any great weight of spiritual duties, busied himself in rural labours and rural sports. But was his mind, though bending submissively to his lot, changed in conformity to his task? No:

" For he still
 Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,
 A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights
 Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.
 Few likings had he dropp'd, few pleasures lost;
 Generous and charitable, prompt to serve;
 And still his harsher passions kept their hold —
 Anger and indignation. Still he lov'd
 The sound of titl'd names, and talked in glee
 Of long past banquetings with high-born friends:
 Then from those lulling fits of vain delight
 Uprous'd by recollected injury, rail'd
 At their false ways disdainfully and oft
 In bitterness and with a threatening eye
 Of fire, incens'd beneath its hoary brow.
 Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,
 And with soft smile his consort would reprove.
 She, far behind him in the race of years,
 Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced
 Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,
 To that still region whither all are bound."

Such was the tenor of their lives; such the separate character of their manners and dispositions; and, with unusual quietness of course, both were sailing placidly to their final haven. Death had not visited their happy mansion through a space of forty years—"sparing both old and young in that abode." But calms so deep and ominous — immunities so profound are terrific. Suddenly the signal was given, and all lay desolate.

“ Not twice had fall'n
 On those high peaks the first autumnal snow,
 Before the greedy visiting was closed,
 And the long privileg'd house left empty; swept
 As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague
 Had been among them; all was gentle death,
 One after one, with intervals of peace.”

The aged pastor's wife, his son, one of his daughters, and “ a little smiling grandson,” all had gone within a brief series of days. These composed the entire household in Grasmere, (the others having dispersed, or married away;) and all were gone but himself, by very many years the oldest of the whole: he still survived. And the whole valley, nay, all the valleys round about, speculated with a tender interest upon what course the desolate old man would take for his support.

“ All gone, all vanished! he, deprived and bare,
 How will he face the remnant of his life;
 What will become of him? we said, and mus'd
 In sad conjectures.— Shall we meet him now,
 Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks?
 Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,
 Striving to entertain the lonely hours
 With music? [for he had not ceas'd to touch
 The harp or viol, which himself had fram'd
 For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.]
 What titles will he keep? Will he remain
 Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,
 A planter, and a rearer from the seed?”

Yes; he persevered in all his pursuits; intermitted none of them; weathered a winter in solitude; once more beheld the glories of a spring, and the resurrection of the flowers upon the graves of his beloved; held out even through the depths of summer into the cheerful season of haymaking, (a season much later in Westmoreland than in the south); took his rank, as heretofore, amongst the haymakers; sat down at noon for a little rest to his aged limbs, and found even a deeper rest than he was expecting; for, in a moment of time, without a warning, without a struggle, and without a groan, he did indeed rest from his labours for ever. He,

“ With his cheerful throng
 Of open projects, and his inward hoard
 Of unsunn'd griefs, too many and too keen,
 Was overcome by unexpected sleep
 In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown,
 Softly and lightly; from a passing cloud,
 Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay
 For noontide solace on the summer grass—
 The warm lap of his mother earth; and so,

Their lenient term of separation pass'd,
 That family —
 By yet a higher privilege — once more
 Were gathered to each other."

Two surviving members of the family, a son and a daughter, I knew intimately. Both have been long dead; but the children of the daughter — grandsons, therefore, to the patriarch here recorded—are living prosperously, and do honour to the interesting family they represent.

The other family were, if less generally interesting by their characters or accomplishments, much more so by the circumstances of their position; and that member of the family with whom accident and neighbourhood had brought me especially connected, was, in her intellectual capacity, probably superior to most of those whom I have had occasion to record. Had no misfortunes settled upon her life prematurely, and with the benefit of a little judicious guidance to her studies, I am of opinion that she would have been a most distinguished person. Her situation, when I came to know her, was one of touching interest. I will state the circumstances:— She was the sole illegitimate daughter of a country gentleman; and was a favourite with her father, as she well deserved to be, in a degree so excessive — so nearly idolatrous — that I never heard illustrations of it mentioned but that secretly I trembled for the endurance of so perilous a love under the common accidents of life, and still more under the unusual difficulties and snares of her peculiar situation. Her father was, by birth, breeding, and property, a Leicestershire farmer; not, perhaps, what you would strictly call a gentleman, for he affected no refinements of manner, but rather courted the exterior of a bluff, careless yeoman. Still he was of that class whom all people, even then, on his letters, addressed as esquire: he had an ample income, and was surrounded with all the luxuries of modern life. In early life — and that was the sole palliation of his guilt — (and yet, again, in another view, aggravated it) — he had allowed himself to violate his own conscience in a way which, from the hour of his error, never ceased to pursue him with remorse, and which was, in fact, its own avenger. Mr. K— was a favourite specimen of English yeomanly beauty: a fine athletic figure; and with features handsome, well moulded, frank and generous in their expression, and in a striking degree manly. In fact, he might have sat for Robin Hood. It happened that a young lady of his own neighbourhood, somewhere near Mount Soril I think, fell desperately in love with him. Oh! blindness

of the human heart! how deeply did she come to rue the day when she first turned her thoughts to him! At first, however, her case seemed a hopeless one; for she herself was remarkably plain, and Mr. K—— was profoundly in love with the very handsome daughter of a neighbouring farmer. One advantage, however, there was on the side of this plain girl: she was rich; and part of her wealth, or of her expectations, lay in landed property, that would effect a very tempting arrondissement of an estate belonging to Mr. K——. Through what course the affair travelled, I never heard more particularly, than that Mr. K—— was besieged and worried out of his steady mind by the solicitations of aunts and other relations, who had all adopted the cause of the heiress. But what finally availed to extort a reluctant consent from him was, the representation made by the young lady's family, and backed by medical men, that she was seriously in danger of dying, unless Mr. K—— would make her his wife. He was no coxcomb; but, when he heard all his own female relations calling him a murderer, and taxing him with having, at times, given some encouragement to the unhappy lovesick girl, in an evil hour he agreed to give up his own sweetheart and marry her. He did so. But no sooner was this fatal step taken than it was repented. His love returned in bitter excess for the girl whom he had forsaken, and with frantic remorse. This girl, at length, by the mere force of his grief, he actually persuaded to live with him as his wife; and when, in spite of all concealments, the fact began to transpire, and the angry wife, in order to break off the connection, obtained his consent to their quitting Leicestershire altogether, and transferring their whole establishment to the Lakes, Mr. K—— evaded the whole object of this manœuvre by secretly contriving to bring her rival also into Westmoreland. Her, however, he placed in another vale; and, for some years, it is pretty certain that Mrs. K—— never suspected the fact. Some said that it was her pride which would not allow her to seem conscious of so great an affront to herself; others, better skilled in deciphering the meaning of manners, steadfastly affirmed that she was in happy ignorance of an arrangement known to all the country beside.

Years passed on; and the situation of the poor wife became more and more gloomy. During those years, she brought her husband no children; on the other hand, her hated rival had: Mr. K—— saw growing up about his table two children, a son, and then a daughter, who, in their childhood, must have been beautiful creatures; for the son, when I knew him in after life,

though bloated and disfigured a good deal by intemperance, was still a very fine young man; more athletic even than his father; and presenting his father's handsome English yeoman's face, exalted by a Roman dignity in some of the features. The daughter was of the same cast of person; tall, and Roman also in the style of her face. In fact, the brother and the sister would have offered a fine impersonation of Coriolanus and Valeria. This Roman bias of the features a little affected the feminine loveliness of the daughter's appearance. But still, as the impression was not very decided, she would have been pronounced anywhere a very captivating young woman. These were the two crowns of Mr. K——'s felicity, that for seventeen or eighteen years made the very glory of his life. But Nemesis was on his steps; and one of these very children she framed the scourge which made the day of his death a happy deliverance, for which he had long hungered and thirsted. But I anticipate. About the time when I came to reside in Grasmere, some little affair of local business one night drew Wordsworth up to Mr. K——'s house. It was called, and with great propriety, from the multitude of holly trees that still survived from ancient days, "The Hollens;" which pretty local name Mrs. K——, in her general spirit of vulgar sentimentality, had changed to Holly Grove.

The place, spite of its slipshod novelish name, which might have led one to expect a corresponding style of tinsel finery, and a display of childish purposes, about its furniture or its arrangements, was really simple and unpretending; whilst its situation was in itself, a sufficient ground of interest; for it stood on a little terrace running like an artificial gallery or corridor along the final, and all but perpendicular, descent of the mighty Fairfield.³ It seemed as if it must require iron bolts to pin it to the rock, which rose so high, and, apparently, so close behind. Not until you reached the little esplanade upon which the modest mansion stood, were you aware of a little area interposed between the rear of the house and the rock, just sufficient for ordinary domestic offices. The house was otherwise interesting to myself, from recalling one in which I had passed part of my infancy. As in that, you entered by a rustic hall, fitted up so as to make a beautiful little breakfasting-room: the distribution of the passages was pretty nearly the same; and there were other resemblances. Mr. K—— received us with civility and hospitality — checked, however, and embarrassed, by a very evident reserve. The reason of this was, partly, that he distrusted the feelings, towards him-

self, of two scholars; but more, perhaps, that he had something beyond this general jealousy for distrusting Wordsworth. He had been a very extensive planter of larches, which were then recently introduced into the Lake country; and were, in every direction, displacing the native forest scenery, and dismally disfiguring this most lovely region; and this effect was necessarily in its worst excess during the infancy of the larch plantations; both because they took the formal arrangement of nursery grounds, until extensive thinnings, as well as storms, had begun to break this hideous stiffness in the lines and angles, and also because the larch is a mean tree, both in form and colouring, (having a bright gosling glare in spring, a wet blanket hue in autumn,) as long as it continues a young tree. Not until it has seen forty or fifty winters does it begin to toss its boughs about with a wild Alpine grace. Wordsworth, for many years, had systematically abused the larches and the larch planters; and there went about the country a pleasant anecdote, in connection with this well-known habit of his, which I have often heard repeated by the woodmen — viz. that, one day, when he believed himself to be quite alone — but was, in fact, surveyed coolly, during the whole process of his passions, by a reposing band of labourers in the shade, and at their noon-tide meal — Wordsworth, on finding a whole cluster of birch-trees grubbed up, and preparations making for the installation of larches in their place, was seen advancing to the spot with gathering wrath in his eyes; next he was heard pouring out an interrupted litany of comminations and maledictions; and, finally, as his eye rested upon the four or five larches which were already beginning to “dress the line” of the new battalion he seized his own hat in a transport of fury, and launched it against the odious intruders. Mr. K—— had, doubtless, heard of Wordsworth’s frankness upon this theme, and knew himself to be, as respected Grasmere, the sole offender.

In another way, also he had earned a few random shots from Wordsworth’s wrath — viz. as the erector of a huge unsightly barn, built solely for convenience, and so far violating all the modesty of rustic proportions, that it was really an eyesore in the valley. These considerations, and others beside, made him reserved; but he felt the silent appeal to his lares from the strangers’ presence, and was even kind in his courtesies. Suddenly, Mrs. K—— entered the room — instantly his smile died away: he did not even mention her name. Wordsworth, however, she knew slightly; and to me she introduced herself. Mr. K—— seemed almost impatient when I

rose and presented her with my chair. Anything that detained her in the room for a needless moment seemed to him a nuisance. She, on the other hand — what was her behaviour? I had been told that she worshipped the very ground on which he trod; and so, indeed, it appeared. This adoring love might, under other circumstances, have been beautiful to contemplate; but here it impressed unmixed disgust. Imagine a woman of very homely features, and farther disfigured by a scorbutic eruption, fixing a tender gaze upon a burly man of forty, who showed, by every word, look, gesture, movement, that he disdained her. In fact, nothing could be more injudicious than her deportment towards him. Everybody must feel that a man who hates any person, hates that person the more for troubling him with expressions of love; or, at least, it adds to hatred the sting of disgust. That was the fixed language of Mr. K——'s manner, in relation to his wife. He was not a man to be pleased with foolish fondling endearments, from any woman, before strangers; but from her! "Faugh!" he said internally, at every instant. His very eyes he averted from her: not once did he look at her, though forced into the odious necessity of speaking to her several times; and, at length, when she seemed disposed to construe our presence as a sort of brief privilege to her own, he adopted that same artifice for ridding himself of her detested company, which has sometimes done seasonable service to a fine gentleman when called upon by ladies for the explanation of a Greek word — he hinted to her, pretty broadly, that the subject of our conversation was not altogether proper for female ears; very much to the astonishment of Wordsworth and myself.

NOTES

¹ The approach from Ambleside or Hawkshead, though fine, is far less so than from Grasmere, through the vale of Tilberthwaite, to which, for a coup de theatre, I recollect nothing equal. Taking the left-hand road, so as to make for Monk Coniston, and not for Church Coniston, you ascend a pretty steep hill, from which, at a certain point of the little gorge or "hawse," (that is "hals," neck or throat, viz: the dip in any hill through which the road is led), the whole lake six miles in length, and the beautiful foregrounds, all rush upon the eye with the effect of a pantomimic surprise — not by a graduated revelation, but by an instantaneous flash.

² And, in allusion to this circumstance, the house afterwards raised on a neighbouring spot, at this time suggested by Miss Smith, received the name of Tent Lodge.

³ "And Mighty Fairfield, with her chime
Of echoes, still was keeping time."

WORDSWORTH'S "WAGGONER."

I have retained the English name of Fairfield; but, when I was studying Danish, I stumbled upon the true meaning of the name, unlocked by that language; and reciprocally (as one amongst other instances which I met at the very threshold of my studies) unlocking the fact that Danish (or Icelandic rather) is the master-key to the local names and dialect of Westmoreland. "Faar" is a sheep: "fald" a hill. But are not all the hills sheep hills? No; Fairfield only amongst all its neighbours, has large, smooth, pastoral savannas, to which the sheep resort when all the rocky or barren neighbours are left desolate.

III

I T was at Mr. Wordsworth's house that I first became acquainted with Professor (then Mr.) Wilson, of Ellera. I have elsewhere described the impression which he made upon me at my first acquaintance; and it is sufficiently known, from other accounts of Mr. Wilson, (as, for example, that written by Mr. Lockhart in "Peter's Letters,") that he divided his time and the utmost sincerity of his love between literature and the stormiest pleasures of real life. Cock-fighting, wrestling, pugilistic contests, boat-racing, horse-racing, all enjoyed Mr. Wilson's patronage; all were occasionally honoured by his personal participation. I mention this in no unfriendly spirit toward Professor Wilson; on the contrary, these propensities grew out of his ardent temperament and his constitutional endowments — his strength, speed, and agility: and being confined to the period of youth — for I am speaking of a period removed by five-and-twenty years — can do him no dishonour amongst the candid and the judicious. "Non lusisse pudet, sed non incidere ludum." The truth was, that Professor Wilson had in him, at that period of life, something of the old English chivalric feeling which our old ballad poetry agrees in ascribing to Robin Hood. Several men of genius have expressed to me, at different times, the delight they had in the traditional character of Robin Hood: he has no resemblance to the old heroes of Continental romance in one important feature; they are uniformly victorious: and this gives even a tone of monotony to the Continental poems: for, let them involve their hero in what dangers they may, the reader still feels them to be as illusory as those which menace an enchanter — an Astolpho, for instance, who, by one blast of his horn, can dissipate an army of opponents. But Robin is frequently beaten: he never declines a challenge; sometimes he courts one; and occasionally he learns a lesson from some proud tinker or masterful beggar, the moral of which teaches him that there are better men in the world than himself. What follows? Is the brave man angry with his stout-hearted antagonist, because he is no less brave and a little stronger than himself? Not at all; he insists on making him a present, on giv-

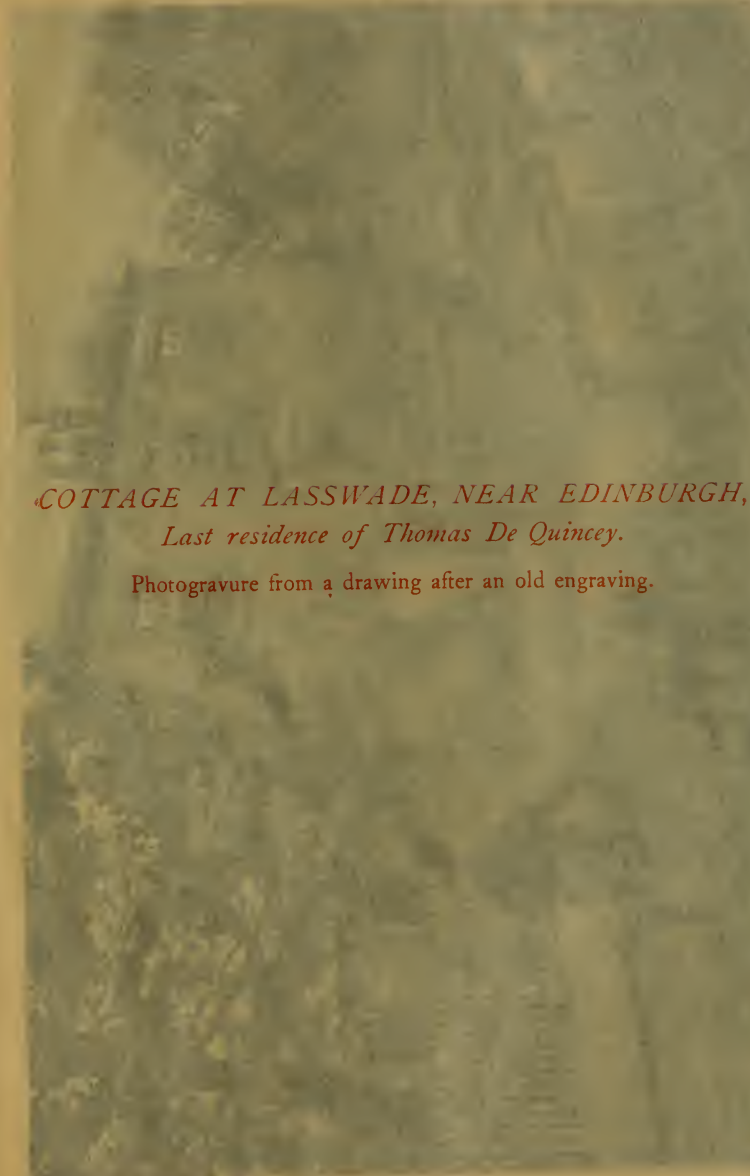
ing him a *dejeuner à la fourchette*, and (in case he is disposed to take service in the forest) finally adopts him into his band of archers. Much the same spirit governed, in his earlier years, Professor Wilson. And, although a man of prudence cannot altogether approve of his throwing himself into the convivial society of gipsies, tinkers, potters,¹ strolling players, etc.; nevertheless, it tells altogether in favour of Professor Wilson's generosity of mind, that he was ever ready to forego his advantages of station and birth, and to throw himself fearlessly upon his own native powers, as man opposed to man. Even at Oxford he fought an aspiring shoemaker repeatedly, which is creditable to both sides; for the very prestige of the gown is already overpowering to the artisan from the beginning, and he is half beaten by terror at his own presumption. Elsewhere he sought out, or, at least did not avoid the most dreaded of the local heroes; and fought his way through his "most verdant years," taking or giving defiances to the right and the left in perfect carelessness, as chance or occasion offered. No man could well show more generosity in these struggles, nor more magnanimity in reporting their issue, which naturally went many times against him. But Mr. Wilson neither sought to disguise the issue nor showed himself at all displeased with it: even brutal ill-usage did not seem to have left any vindictive remembrance of itself. These features of his character, however, and these propensities which naturally belonged merely to the transitional state from boyhood to manhood, would have drawn little attention on their account, had they not been relieved and emphatically contrasted by his passion for literature, and the fluent command which he soon showed over a rich and voluptuous poetic diction. In everything Mr. Wilson showed himself an Athenian. Athenians were all lovers of the cockpit; and, howsoever shocking to the sensibilities of modern refinement, we have no doubt that Plato was a frequent better at cock-fights; and Socrates is known to have bred cocks himself. If there were any Athenian, however, in particular, it was Alcibiades; for he had his marvellous versatility; and to the Windermere neighbourhood in which he had settled, this versatility came recommended by something of the very same position in society — the same wealth, the same social temper, the same jovial hospitality. No person was better fitted to win or to maintain a high place in social esteem; for he could adapt himself to all companies; and the wish to conciliate and to win his way by flattering the self-love of others was so predominant over all personal self-love and vanity

“That he did in the general bosom reign
Of young and old.”

Mr. Wilson and most of his family I had already known for six years. We had projected journeys together through Spain and Greece, all of which had been nipped in the bud by Napoleon's furious and barbarous mode of making war. It was no joke, as it had been in past times, for an Englishman to be found wandering in continental regions; the pretence that he was, or might be, a spy — a charge so easy to make, so impossible to throw off — at once sufficed for the hanging of the unhappy traveller. In one of his Spanish bulletins, Napoleon even boasted² of having hanged sixteen Englishmen, “merchants or others of that nation,” whom he taxed with no suspicion even of being suspected, beyond the simple fact of being detected in the act of breathing Spanish air. These atrocities had interrupted our continental schemes; and we were thus led the more to roam amongst home scenes. How it happened I know not — for we had wandered together often in England — but, by some accident, it was not until 1814 that we visited Edinburgh together. Then it was that I first saw Scotland.

I remember a singular incident which befell us on the road. Breakfasting together, before starting, at Mr. Wilson's place of Elleray, we had roamed, through a long and delightful day, by way of Ulleswater, etc. Reaching Penrith at night, we slept there; and in the morning, as we were sunning ourselves in the street, we saw, seated in an arm-chair, and dedicating himself to the self-same task of apricating his jolly personage, a rosy, jovial, portly man, having something of the air of a Quaker. Good nature was clearly his predominating quality; and, as that happened to be our foible also, we soon fell into talk; and from that into reciprocations of good-will; and from those into a direct proposal, on our new friend's part, that we should set out upon our travels together. How — whither — to what end or object — seemed as little to enter into his speculations at the cost of realizing them. Rare it is, in this business world of ours, to find any man in so absolute a state of indifference and neutrality, that for him all quarters of the globe, and all points of the compass, are self-balanced by philosophic equilibrium of choice. There seemed to us something amusing and yet monstrous in such a man; and, perhaps, had we been in the same condition of exquisite indetermination, to this hour we might all have been staying together at Penrith. We, however, were previously bound to Edinburgh; and, as

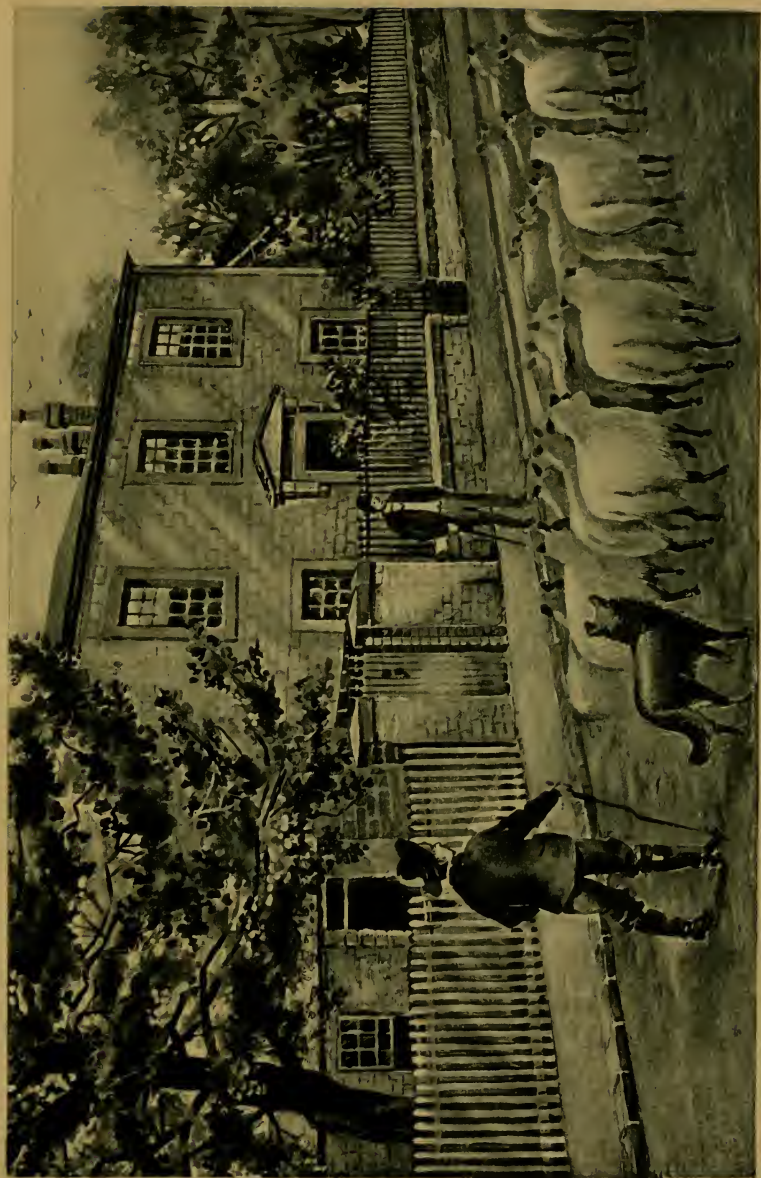
soon as this was explained to him, that way, he proposed to accompany us. We took a chaise, therefore, jointly to Carlisle; and, during the whole eighteen miles, he astonished us by the wildest and most frantic displays of erudition, much of it levelled at Sir Isaac Newton. Much philosophical learning also he exhibited; but the grotesque accompaniment of the whole was, that, after every bravura, he fell back into his corner in fits of laughter at himself. We began to find out the unhappy solution of his indifference and purposeless condition; he was a lunatic; and, afterwards, we had reason to suppose that he was now a fugitive from his keepers. At Carlisle he became restless and suspicious; and, finally, upon some real or imaginary business, he turned aside to Whitehaven. We were not the objects of his jealousy; for he parted with us reluctantly and anxiously. On our part, we felt our pleasure overcast by sadness; for we had been much amused by his conversation, and could not but respect the philological learning which he had displayed. But one thing was whimsical enough; Wilson purposely said some startling things — startling in point of decorum, or gay pleasantries, *contra bonos mores*; at every sally of which, he looked as awfully shocked as though he himself had not been holding the most licentious talk in another key, licentious as respected all truth of history or of science. Another illustration, in fact, he furnished of what I have so often heard Coleridge say — that lunatics, in general, so far from being the brilliant persons they are thought, and having a preternatural brightness of fancy, usually are the very dullest and most uninspired of mortals. The sequel of our poor friend's history — for the apparent goodness of his nature had interested us both in his fortunes, and caused us to inquire after him through all probable channels — was, that he was last seen by a Cambridge man of our acquaintance, but under circumstances which confirmed our worst fears: it was in a stage-coach; and, at first, the Cantab suspected nothing amiss; but some accident of conversation being started, the topic of La Place's "*Mechanique Celeste*," off flew our jolly Penrith friend in a tirade against Sir Isaac Newton; so that at once we recognized him, as the "*Vicar of Wakefield*," his "*cosmogony friend*" in prison; but — and that was melancholy to hear — this tirade was suddenly checked, in the rudest manner, by a brutal fellow in one corner of the carriage, who, as it now appeared, was attending him as a regular keeper; and, according to the custom of such people, always laid an interdict upon every ebullition of fancy or animated thought. He was a



*COTTAGE AT LASSWADE, NEAR EDINBURGH,
Last residence of Thomas De Quincey.*

Photogravure from a drawing after an old engraving.

soon as this was explained to him, that was, he proposed to accompany us. We took a chaise, therefore, directly to Carlisle; and, though we made eighteen miles, he accompanied us by the way, and made frantic displays of erudition, most of it levelled at the Isaac Newton. Much philological learning also he exhibited; but the grotesque accompaniments of the whole were that, after every discourse, he fell back into his corner in fits of laughter at himself. We began to suspect the conscious admission of his indifference and purposeless rambling; he was a lunatic; and, afterwards, we had reason to suspect that he was now a fugitive from his keepers. At Carlisle he became restless and suspicious; and, finally, upon some real or imaginary business, he turned aside to Whitehaven. We were not the objects of his jealousy; for he parted with us reluctantly and anxiously. On our part, we felt our pleasure overcast by sadness; for we had been much amused by his conversation, and could not but respect the philological learning which he had displayed. But, on the other hand, we were shocked when he purposely said some startling things — startling in point of decorum, or of propriety, contra bonos mores; at every rally of which, he looked as usually shocked as though he himself had not been holding the most licentious tale in another key, licentious as respected all truth of history or of science. Another illustration, in fact, he furnished of what I have so often heard Coleridge say — that lunatics, in general, so far from being the brilliant persons they are thought, and having a preternatural brilliancy of fancy, usually are the very dullest and most unimpaired of mortals. The sequel of our journey was singular — by the apparent goodness of the cause had undertaken to have a life forfeited, and would not require any more than a moderate ransom — that he was less than by a Countryman, was a free man, but under circumstances which rendered the same man, it was in a stage-coach, and, as he, was a man connected nothing amiss; but some accident of circumstance being started, the topic of La Place's "Monsieur de Calves" fell upon our jolly Pennish friend in a trade against all our intention, so that at once we recognized him, as the "Tom of Wakefield," his "cosmology friend" in prison; but — the man was melancholy to hear — this trade was suddenly broken, in the nicest manner, by a brutal fellow in one corner of the carriage, who, as it first appeared, was attending him in a regular keeper; and, according to the custom of such people, always laid an interdiction upon every exhibition of fancy or unmanly thought. He was a



man whose mind had got some wheel entangled, or some spring overloaded, but else, was a learned and able person; and he was to be silent at the bidding of a low, brutal fellow, incapable of distinguishing between the gayeties of fancy and the wandering of the intellect. Sad fate! and sad inversion of the natural relations between the accomplished scholar and the rude illiterate boor!

Of Edinburgh I thought to have spoken at length. But I pause, and retreat from the subject, when I remember that so many of those whom I loved and honoured at that time—some, too, among the gayest of the gay—are now lying in their graves. Of Professor Wilson's sisters, the youngest, at that time a child almost, and standing at the very vestibule of womanhood, is alone living; she has had a romantic life; has twice traversed, with no attendance but her servants, the gloomy regions of the Caucasus; and once with a young child by her side. Her husband, Mr. M'Neill, is now the English Envoy at the court of Teheran. On the rest, one of whom I honoured and loved as a sister, the curtain has fallen; and here, in the present mood of my spirits, I also feel disposed to drop a curtain over my subsequent memoirs. Farewell, hallowed recollections!

Thus, I have sketched the condition of the Lake District, as to society of an intellectual order, at the time, (viz. the winter of 1808-9,) when I became a personal resident in that district; and, indeed, from this era, through a period of about twenty years in succession, I may describe my domicile as being amongst the lakes and mountains of Westmoreland. It is true, I often made excursions to London, Bath, and its neighbourhood, or northwards to Edinburgh; and, perhaps, on an average, passed one-fourth part of each year at a distance from this district; but here only it was that henceforwards I had a house and small establishment. The house, for a very long course of years, was that same cottage in Grasmere, embowered in roses and jessamine, which I have already described as a spot hallowed to the admirers of Mr. Wordsworth by his seven years' occupation of its pretty chambers and its rocky orchard: a little domain, which he has himself apostrophized as the "lowest stair in that magnificent temple," forming the north-eastern boundary of Grasmere. The little orchard is rightly called "the lowest stair;" for within itself, all is ascending ground; hardly enough of flat area on which to pitch a pavilion, and even that scanty surface an inclined plane; whilst the rest of the valley, into which you step immediately from the

garden gate, is (according to the characteristic beauty of the northern English valleys, as first noticed by Mr. Wordsworth himself) "flat as the floor of a temple."

In sketching the state of the literary society gathered or gathering about the English Lakes, at the time of my settling amongst them, I have of course authorized the reader to suppose that I personally mixed freely amongst the whole; else I should have had neither the means for describing that society with truth, nor any motive for attempting it. Meantime, the direct object of my own residence at the lakes was the society of Mr. Wordsworth. And it will be a natural inference that, if I mingled on familiar or friendly terms with this society, *à fortiori* would Mr. Wordsworth do so, as belonging to the Lake District by birth, and as having been, in some instances, my own introducer to members of this community. But it was not so; and never was a grosser blunder committed than by Lord Byron, when in a letter to Mr. Hogg, (from which an extract is given in some volume of Mr. Lockhart's "Life of Sir Walter Scott,") he speaks of Wordsworth, Southey, etc., in connection with Sir Walter, as all alike injured by mixing only with little adoring coteries, which each severally was supposed to have gathered about himself as a centre. Now, had this really been the case, I know not how the objects of such a partial or exclusive admiration could have been injured by it in any sense with which the public were concerned. A writer may — and of that there are many instances — write the worse for meeting nobody of sympathy with himself; no admiration sufficient to convince him that he has written powerfully; that misfortune, when it occurs, may injure a writer, or may cause him to cease cultivating his genius. But no man was ever injured by the strong reflection of his own power in love and admiration; not as a writer, I mean: though it is very true, from the great variety of modes in which praise, or the indirect flattery of silent homage, acts upon different minds, that some men may be injured as social companions: vanity, and, still more, egotism — the habit of making self the central point of reference, in every treatment of every subject — may certainly be cherished by the idolatry of a private circle, continually ascending; but arrogance and gloomy anti-social pride are qualities much more likely to be favoured by sympathy withheld, and the unjust denial of a man's pretensions. This, however, need not be discussed with any reference to Mr. Wordsworth; for he had no such admiring circle: no applauding coterie ever gathered about him. Wordsworth was not a

man to be openly flattered; his pride repelled that kind of homage, or any homage that offered itself with the air of conferring honour; and repelled it in a tone of loftiness or arrogance that never failed to kindle the pride of the baffled flatterer. Nothing in the way of applause could give Wordsworth any pleasure, unless it were the spontaneous and half-unconscious utterance of delight in some passage—the implicit applause of love, half afraid to express itself; or else the deliberate praise of rational examination, study, and comparison, applied to his writings: these were the only modes of admiration which could recommend themselves to Wordsworth. But had it been otherwise, there was another mistake in what Lord Byron said:—the neighbouring people in every degree, “gentle and simple,” literary or half-educated, who had heard of Wordsworth, agreed in despising him. Never had poet or prophet less honour in his own country. Of the gentry, very few knew anything about Wordsworth. Grasmere was a vale little visited at that time, except for an hour’s admiration. The case is now altered; and partly by a new road, which, having pierced the valley by a line carried along the water’s edge, at a most preposterous cost, and with a large area of debt for the next generation, saves the labour of surmounting a labourious hill. The case is now altered no less for the intellect of the age; and Rydal Mount is now one of the most honoured abodes in the island. But, at that time, Grasmere did not differ more from the Grasmere of to-day than Wordsworth from the Wordsworth of 1809-20. I repeat that he was little known, even as a resident in the country; and, as a poet, strange it would have been had the little town of Ambleside undertaken to judge for itself, and against a tribunal which had for a time subdued the very temper of the age. Lord Byron might have been sure that nowhere would the contempt for Mr. Wordsworth be rifer than exactly amongst those who had a local reason for curiosity about the man, and who, of course, adopting the tone of the presiding journals, adopted them with a personality of feeling unknown elsewhere.

Except, therefore, with the Lloyds, or occasionally with Thomas Wilkinson the Quaker, or very rarely with Southey, Wordsworth had no intercourse at all beyond the limits of Grasmere: and in that valley I was myself, for some years, his sole visiting friend; as, on the other hand, my sole visitors as regarded that vale, were himself and his family.

Among that family, and standing forth in the series of his children, was a little girl, whose life, short as it was, and whose

death, obscure and little heard of as it was amongst all the rest of the world, connected themselves with the records of my own life by ties of passion so profound, by a grief so frantic, and so memorable through the injurious effects which it produced of a physical kind, that, had I left untouched every other chapter of my own experience, I should certainly have left behind some memorandum of this, as having a permanent interest in the psychological history of human nature. Luckily the facts are not without a parallel, and in well authenticated medical books; else I should have scrupled, (as what man does not scruple who values, above all things, the reputation for veracity?) to throw the whole stress of credibility on my own unattached narration. But all experienced physicians know well that cases similar to mine, though not common, occur at intervals in every large community.

When I first settled in Grasmere, Catherine Wordsworth was in her infancy; but, even at that age, noticed me more than any other person, excepting, of course, her mother. She had for an attendant a young girl, perhaps thirteen years old — Sarah, one of the orphan children left by the unfortunate couple, George and Sarah Green, whose tragical end in a snow-storm I have already narrated. This Sarah Green was as far removed in character as could be imagined from that elder sister who had won so much admiration in her childish days, by her premature display of energy and household virtues. She was lazy, luxurious, and sensual: one, in fact, of those nurses who, in their anxiety to gossip about young men, leave their infant or youthful charges to the protection of chance. It was, however, not in her out-of-door ramblings, but at home, that the accident occurred which determined the fortunes of little Catherine. Mr. Coleridge was, at that time, a visitor to the Wordsworths at Allan Bank, that house in Grasmere to which Wordsworth had removed upon quitting his cottage. One day about noon, when, perhaps, he was coming down to breakfast, Mr. Coleridge passed Sarah Green, playing after her indolent fashion with the child; and between them lay a number of carrots. He warned the girl that raw carrots were an indigestible substance for the stomach of an infant. This warning was neglected: little Catherine ate — it was never known how many; and, in a short time, was seized with strong convulsions. I saw her in this state about two P. M. No medical aid was to be had nearer than Ambleside; about six miles distant. However, all proper measures were taken; and, by sunset, she had so far recovered as to be pronounced out of danger. Her

left side, however, left arm, and left leg, from that time forward, were in a disabled state: not what could be called paralyzed, but suffering a sort of atony or imperfect distribution of vital power. Catherine was not above three years old when she died; so that there could not have been much room for the expansion of her understanding, or the unfolding of her real character. But there was room enough in her short life, and too much, for love the most frantic to settle upon her. The whole vale of Grasmere is not large enough to allow of any great distances between house and house; and as it happened that little Kate Wordsworth returned my love, she in a manner lived with me at my solitary cottage; as often as I could entice her from home, walked with me, slept with me, and was my sole companion. That I was not singular in describing some witchery to the nature and manners of this innocent child, you may gather from the following most beautiful lines extracted from a sketch towards her portraiture, drawn by her father, (with whom, however, she was noways a favourite):

“ And as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,
 Not less if unattended and alone
 Than when both young and old sit gather'd round,
 And take delight in its activity;
 Even so this happy creature of herself
 Was all sufficient: Solitude to her
 Was blithe society, who fill'd the air
 With gladness and involuntary songs.
 Light were her sallies as the tripping fawn's,
 Forth startled from the form where she lay couch'd;
 Unthought of, unexpected, as the stir
 Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow flowers;
 Or from before it chasing wantonly
 The many-colour'd images impress'd
 Upon the bosom of a placid lake.”

It was this radiant spirit of joyousness, making solitude for her blithe society, and filling from morning to night the air “with gladness and involuntary songs,” this it was which so fascinated my heart, that I became blindly, doatingly, in a servile degree, devoted to this one affection.

In the spring of 1812, I went up to London; and, early in June, by a letter from Miss Wordsworth, her aunt, I learned the terrific news, (for such to me it was,) that she had died suddenly. She had gone to bed in good health about sunset on June 4th; was found speechless a little before midnight; and died in the early dawn, just as the first gleams of morning began to appear above Seat Sandel and Fairfield, the mightiest of the Grasmere barriers, about an hour, perhaps, before sun-

rise. Never, perhaps, from the foundations of those mighty hills, was there so fierce a convulsion of grief as mastered my faculties on receiving that heart-shattering news. Over and above my excess of love for her, I had always viewed her as an impersonation of the dawn and the spirit of infancy; and this abstraction seated in her person, together with the visionary sort of connection, which, even in her parting hours, she assumed with the summer sun, by timing her immersion into the cloud of death with the rising and setting of that fountain of life — these combined impressions recoiled so violently into a contrast or polar antithesis to the image of death, that each exalted and brightened the other. I returned hastily to Grassmere; stretched myself every night, for more than two months running, upon her grave; in fact, often passed the night upon her grave; not (as may readily be supposed) in any parade of grief; on the contrary, in that quiet valley of simple shepherds, I was secure enough from observation until morning light began to return; but in mere intensity of sick, frantic yearning after neighbourhood to the darling of my heart.

Many readers will have seen in Sir Walter Scott's "Demonology," and in Dr. Abercrombie's "Inquiries Concerning the Intellectual Powers," some remarkable illustrations of the creative faculties awakened in the eye or other organs by peculiar states of passion; and it is worthy of a place amongst cases of that nature, that, in many solitary fields, at a considerable elevation above the level of the valleys — fields which, in the local dialect, are called "intacks," — my eye was haunted at times, in broad noonday, (oftener, however, in the afternoon,) with a facility, but at times also with a necessity, for weaving, out of a few simple elements, a perfect picture of little Kate in the attitude and onward motion of walking. I resorted constantly to these "intacks," as places where I was little liable to disturbance; and usually I saw her at the opposite side of the field, which might sometimes be at a distance of a quarter of a mile, generally not so much. Always almost she carried a basket on her head; and usually the first hint upon which the figure arose commenced in wild plants, such as tall ferns, or the purple flowers of the foxglove; but, whatever might be the colours or the forms, uniformly the same little full-formed figure arose, uniformly dressed in the little blue bed-gown and black skirt of Westmoreland, and uniformly with the air of advancing motion. Through part of June, July, and part of August, in fact throughout the summer, this frenzy of grief continued. It was reasonably to be expected that nature would avenge

such senseless self-surrender to passion; for, in fact, so far from making an effort to resist it, I clung to it as a luxury, (which, in the midst of suffering, it really was in part.) All at once, on a day at the latter end of August, in one instant of time, I was seized with some nervous sensation that, for a moment, caused sickness. A glass of brandy removed the sickness; but I felt, to my horror, a sting as it were, of some stationary torment left behind — a torment absolutely indescribable, but under which I felt assured that life could not be borne. It is useless and impossible to describe what followed, with no apparent illness discoverable to any medical eye — looking, indeed, better than usual for three months and upwards, I was under the possession of some internal nervous malady, that made each respiration which I drew an act of separate anguish. I travelled southwards immediately to Liverpool, to Birmingham, to Bristol, to Bath, for medical advice; and finally rested — in a gloomy state of despair, rather because I saw no use in further change, than that I looked for any change in this place more than others — at Clifton, near Bristol. Here it was, at length, in the course of November, that, in one hour, my malady began to leave me: it was not quite so abrupt, however, in its departure, as in its first development: a peculiar sensation arose from the knee downwards, about midnight: it went forwards through a space of about five hours, and then stopped, leaving me perfectly free from every trace of the awful malady which had possessed me; but so much debilitated as with difficulty to stand or walk. Going down soon after this, to Ilfracombe, in Devonshire, where there were hot sea baths, I found it easy enough to restore my shattered strength. But the remarkable fact in this catastrophe of my illness is, that all grief for little Kate Wordsworth, nay, all remembrance of her, had, with my malady, vanished from my mind. The traces of her innocent features were utterly washed away from my heart: she might have been dead for a thousand years, so entirely abolished was the last lingering image of her face or figure. The little memorials of her which her mother had given to me, as in particular, a pair of her red morocco shoes, won not a sigh from me as I looked at them: even her little grassy grave, white with snow, when I returned to Grasmere in January, 1813, was looked at almost with indifference; except, indeed, as now become a memorial to me of that dire internal physical convulsion thence arising, by which I had been shaken and wrenched; and, in short, a case more entirely realizing the old Pagan superstition of a nympholepsy in the first place, and, secondly,

of a Lethe or river of oblivion, and the possibility, by one draught from this potent stream, of applying an everlasting ablution to all the soils and stains of human anguish, I do not suppose the psychological history of man affords.

From the Lakes, as I have mentioned before, I went annually southwards—chiefly to Somersetshire or to London, and more rarely to Edinburgh. In my Somersetshire visits, I never failed to see Mrs. Hannah More. My own relative's house, in fact, standing within one mile of Barley Wood, I seldom suffered a week to pass without calling to pay my respects. There was a stronger motive to this than simply what arose from Mrs. H. More's company, or even from that of her sisters, (one or two of whom were more entertaining because more filled with animal spirits and less thoughtful than Mrs. Hannah;) for it rarely happened that one called within the privileged calling hours, which, with these rural ladies, ranged between twelve and four o'clock, but one met some person interesting by rank, station, political or literary eminence.

Here, accordingly, it was, that, during one of my last visits to Somersetshire, either in 1813 or 1814, I met Mrs. Siddons, whom I had often seen upon the stage, but never before in private society. She had come into this part of the country chiefly, I should imagine, with a view to the medical advice at the Bristol Hot Wells and Clifton; for it happened that one of her daughters—a fine interesting young woman—was suffering under pulmonary consumption—that scourge of the British youth; of which malady, I believe, she ultimately died. From the Hot Wells, Mrs. Siddons had been persuaded to honour with her company a certain Dr. Wh—, whose splendid villa of Mendip Lodge stood about two miles from Barley Wood. This villa, by the way, was a show place, in which a vast deal of money had been sunk, upon two follies equally unproductive of pleasure to the beholder and of anything approaching a pecuniary compensation to the owner. The villa, with its embellishments, was supposed to have cost at least sixty thousand pounds; of which one-half had been absorbed, partly by a contest with the natural obstacles of the situation, and partly by the frailest of all ornaments—vast china jars, vases, and other “knicknackery” baubles, which held their very existence by so frail a tenure as the carefulness of a housemaid; and which, at all events, if they should survive the accidents of life, never are known to reproduce to the possessor one-tenth part of what they have cost. Out of doors there were terraces of a mile long, one rising above another,

and carried, by mere artifice of mechanical skill, along the perpendicular face of a lofty rock. Had they, when finished, any particular beauty? Not at all. Considered as a pleasure ground, they formed a far less delightful landscape, and a far less alluring haunt to rambling steps, than most of the uncostly shrubberies which were seen below, in unpretending situations, and upon the ordinary level of the vale. What a record of human imbecility! For all his pains and his expense in forming this costly "folly," his reward was daily anxiety, and one solitary bon mot which he used to record of some man, who, on being asked by the Rev. Doctor what he thought of his place, replied, that "He thought the Devil had tempted him up to an exceedingly high place." No part of the grounds, nor the house itself, was at all the better because, originally, it had been, beyond measure, difficult to form it: so difficult that, according to Dr. Johnson's witty remark, on another occasion, there was good reason for wishing that it had been impossible. The owner, whom I knew, most certainly never enjoyed a happy day in this costly creation; which, after all, displayed but little taste, though a gorgeous array of finery. The show part of the house was itself a monument to the barrenness of invention in him who planned it; consisting, as it did, of one long suite of rooms in a straight line, without variety, without obvious parts, and therefore without symmetry or proportions. This long vista was so managed that, by means of folding-doors, the whole could be seen at a glance, whilst its extent was magnified by a vast mirror at the further end. The Doctor was a querulous old man, enormously tall and enormously bilious; so that he had a spectral appearance when pacing through the false gayeties of his glittering villa. He was a man of letters, and had known Dr. Johnson, whom he admired prodigiously; and had himself been, in earlier days, the author of a poem now forgotten. He belonged, at one period, to the coterie of Miss Seward, Dr. Darwin, Day, Mr. Edgeworth, etc.; consequently he might have been an agreeable companion, having so much anecdote at his command: but his extreme biliousness made him irritable in a painful degree, and impatient of contradiction — impatient even of dissent in the most moderate shape. The latter stage of his life is worth recording, as a melancholy comment upon the blindness of human foresight, and in some degree also as a lesson on the disappointments which follow any departure from high principle, and the deception which seldom fails to lie in ambush for the deceiver. I had one day taken the liberty to ask him why, and with

what ultimate purpose, he who did not like trouble and anxiety, had embarrassed himself with the planning and construction of a villa that manifestly embittered his days? "That is, my young friend," replied the doctor, "speaking plainly, you mean to express your wonder that I, so old a man, (for he was then not far from seventy,) should spend my time in creating a show-box. Well now, I will tell you: precisely because I am old. I am naturally of a gloomy turn; and it has always struck me that we English, who are constitutionally haunted by melancholy, are too apt to encourage it by the gloomy air of the mansions we inhabit. Your fortunate age, my friend, can dispense with such aids: ours require continual influxes of pleasure through the senses, in order to cheat the stealthy advances of old age, and to beguile us of our sadness. Gayety, the riant style in everything, that is what we old men need. And I, who do not love the pains of creating, love the creation; and, in fact, require it as part of my artillery against time."

Such was the amount of his explanation: and now, in a few words, for his subsequent history. Finding himself involved in difficulties by the expenses of this villa going on concurrently with a large London establishment, he looked out for a good marriage, (being a widower,) as the sole means, within his reach, for clearing off his embarrassments, without proportionable curtailment of his expenses. It happened, unhappily for both parties, that he fell in with a widow lady, who was cruising about the world with precisely the same views, and in precisely the same difficulties. Each (or the friends of each) held out a false flag, magnifying their incomes respectively, and sinking the embarrassments. Mutually deceived, they married: and one change immediately introduced at the splendid villa was, the occupation of an entire wing by a lunatic brother of the lady's; the care of whom, with a large allowance, had been committed to her by the Court of Chancery. This of itself, shed a gloom over the place which defeated the primary purpose of the doctor (as explained by himself) in erecting it. Windows barred, maniacal howls, gloomy attendants, from a lunatic hospital, ranging about: these were sad disturbances to the doctor's rose-leaf system of life. This, however, if it were a nuisance, brought along with it some solatium, as the lawyers expressed it, in the shape of the Chancery allowance. But next came the load of debts for which there was no solatium, and which turned out to be the only sort of possession with which the lady was well endowed. The disconsolate doctor — an old man, and a clergyman of the establishment —

could not resort to such redress as a layman might have adopted: he was obliged to give up all his establishments; his gay villa was offered to Queen Caroline, who would, perhaps, have bought it, but that her final troubles in this world were also betsetting her about that very time. For the present, therefore, the villa was shut up, and "left alone with its glory." The reverend and aged proprietor, now ten times more bilious and more querulous than ever, shipped himself off for France; and there, in one of the southern provinces — so far, therefore, as climate was concerned, realizing his vision of gayety, but for all else the most melancholy of exiles — sick of the world and of himself, hating to live, yet more intensely hating to die, in a short time the unhappy old man breathed his last, in a common lodging house, gloomy and vulgar, and in all things the very antithesis to that splendid abode which he had planned for the consolation of his melancholy, and for the gay beguilement of old age.

At this gentleman's villa, Mrs. Siddons had been paying a visit; for the doctor was a worshipper, in a servile degree, of all things which flourished in the sunshine of the world's applause. To have been the idolized favourite of nations, to have been an honoured and even a privileged^s guest at Windsor, that was enough for him; and he did his utmost to do the honours of his neighbourhood, not less to glorify himself in the eye of the country, who was fortunate enough to have such a guest, than to show his respect for the distinguished visitor. Mrs. Siddons felt herself flattered by the worthy doctor's splendid hospitalities; for that they were really splendid, may be judged by this fact, communicated to me by Hannah More, viz. that the Bishop of London, (Porteus,) when on a visit to Barley Wood, being much pressed by the doctor to visit him, had at length accepted a dinner invitation. Mrs. Hannah More was, of course, included in the invitation, but had found it impossible to attend, from ill health; and the next morning, at breakfast, the bishop had assured her, that, in all his London experience, in that city of magnificent dinners beyond all other cities of the earth, and amongst the princes of the land, he had never witnessed an entertainment so perfect in its appointments. Gratified as she was, however, by her host's homage, as expressed in his splendid style of entertaining, Mrs. Siddons was evidently more happy in her residence at Barley Wood. The style of conversation pleased her. It was religious: but Mrs. Siddons was herself religious; and at that moment, when waiting with anxiety upon a daughter whose languor seemed

but too ominous in her maternal eyes, she was more than usually open to religious impressions, and predisposed to religious topics.

Certain I am, however, from what I then observed, that Mrs. Siddons, in common with many women of rank who were on the list of the Barley Wood visitors, did not apprehend, in their full sense and severity, the peculiar principles of Hannah More. This lady, excellent as she was, and incapable of practising any studied deceit, had, however, an instinct of worldly wisdom, which taught her to refrain from shocking ears polite with too harsh or too broad an exposure of all which she believed. This, at least, if it were any duty of hers, she considered, perhaps, as already fulfilled by her writings; and, moreover, the very tone of good breeding, which she had derived from the good company she had kept, made her feel the impropriety of lecturing her visitors even when she must have thought them in error. Mrs. Siddons obviously thought Hannah More a person who differed from the world chiefly by applying a greater energy, and sincerity, and zeal, to a system of religious truth equally known to all. Repentance, for instance — all people hold that to be a duty; and Mrs. Hannah More differed from them only by holding it to be a duty of all hours, a duty for youth not less than for age. But how much would she have been shocked to hear that Mrs. Hannah More held all repentance, however indispensable, yet in itself, and though followed by the sincerest efforts at reformation of life, to be utterly unavailing as any operative part of the means by which man gains acceptance with God. To rely upon repentance, or upon anything that man can do for himself, that Mrs. Hannah More considered as the mortal taint, as the *πρωτον ψευδος* in the worldly theories of the Christian scheme; and I have heard the two ladies — Mrs. More and Mrs. Siddons, I mean — talking by the hour together, as completely at cross purposes as it is possible to imagine. Everything in fact of what was special in the creed adopted by Mrs. Hannah More, by Wilberforce, and many others known as evangelical Christians, is always capable, in lax conversation, of being translated into a vague general sense, which completely obscures the true limitations of the meaning.

Mrs. Hannah More, however, was too polished a woman to allow of any sectarian movement being impressed upon the conversation; consequently, she soon directed it to literature, upon which Mrs. Siddons was very amusing, from her recollections of Dr. Johnson, whose fine-turned compliment to her-

self, (so much in the spirit of those unique compliments addressed to eminent people by Louis XIV) had forever planted the Doctor's memory in her heart. She spoke also of Garrick and of Mrs. Garrick; but not, I think, with so much respect and affection as Mrs. Hannah More, who had, in her youthful days, received the most friendly attentions from both, though coming forward at that time in no higher character than as the author of "Percy," the most insipid of tragedies. Mrs. Siddons was prevailed on to read passages from both Shakespeare and Milton. The dramatic readings were delightful; in fact, they were almost stage rehearsals, accompanied with appropriate gesticulation. One was the great somnambulist scene in "Macbeth," which was the ne plus ultra in the whole range of Mrs. Siddons's scenical exhibitions, and can never be forgotten by any man who once had the happiness to witness that immortal performance of the divine artist. Another, given at the request of a Dutch lady, residing in the neighbourhood of Barley Wood, was the scene from "King John," of the Lady Constance, beginning—"Gone to be married! gone to swear a peace!" etc. The last, and truly superb for the musical intonation of the cadences, was that inimitable apology or pleading of Christian charity for Cardinal Wolsey, addressed to his bitterest enemy, Queen Catherine. All these, in different degrees and different ways, were exquisite. But the readings from Milton were not to my taste. And, some weeks after, when, at Mrs. Hannah More's request, I had read to her some of Lord Byron's most popular works, I got her to acknowledge, in then speaking upon the subject of reading, that perhaps the style of Mrs. Siddons's reading had been too much determined to the dramatic cast of emphasis, and the pointed expression of character and situation which must always belong to a speaker bearing a part in a dialogue, to admit of her assuming the tone of a rapt poetic inspiration.

Meantime, whatever she did — whether it were in display of her own matchless talents, but always at the earnest request of the company or of her hostess — or whether it were in gentle acquiescent attention to the display made by others — or whether it were as one member of a general party, taking her part occasionally, for the amusement of the rest, and contributing to the general fund of social pleasure — nothing could exceed the amiable, kind, and unassuming deportment of Mrs. Siddons. She had retired from the stage,⁴ and no longer regarded herself as a public character. But so much the

stronger did she seem to think the claims of her friends upon anything she could do for their amusement.

Meantime, amongst the many pleasurable impressions which Mrs. Siddons's presence never failed to make, there was one which was positively painful and humiliating: it was the degradation which it inflicted upon other women. One day there was a large dinner party at Barley Wood — Mrs. Siddons was present; and I remarked to a gentleman who sat next to me — a remark which he heartily confirmed — that upon rising to let the ladies leave us, Mrs. Siddons, by the mere necessity of her regal deportment dwarfed the whole party, and made them look ridiculous; though Mrs. H. More, and others of the ladies present, were otherwise really women of very pleasing appearance.

One final remark is forced upon me by my recollections of Mrs. Jordan, and of her most unhappy end; it is this; and strange enough it seems:— That the child of laughter and comic mirth, whose laugh itself thrilled the heart with pleasure, and who created gayety of the noblest order for one entire generation of her countrymen, died prematurely, and in exile, and in affliction, which really killed her by its own stings. If ever woman died of a broken heart, of tenderness bereaved, and of hope deferred, that woman was Mrs. Jordan. On the other hand, this sad votary of Melpomene, the queen of the tragic stage, died, full of years and honours, in the bosom of her admiring country, in the centre of idolizing friends, and happy in all things except this, that some of those whom she most loved on earth had gone before her. Strange contrariety of lots for the two transcendent daughters of the comic and tragic muse. For my own part, I shall always regard my recollections of Mrs. Siddons as those in which chiefly I have an advantage over the coming generation; nay, perhaps over all generations; for many centuries may revolve without producing such another transcendent creature.

NOTES

¹ "Potter" is the local term in northern England for a hawker of earthen-ware, many of which class lead a vagrant life, and encamp during the summer months like gipsies.

² This brutal boast might, after all, be a falsehood; and, with respect to mere numbers, probably was so.

³ Mrs. Siddons used to mention, that when she was invited to Windsor Castle, for the purpose of reading before the Queen and her royal daughters, on her first visit, she was ready to sink from weariness under the effort of standing for so long a time; but on some subsequent visit, I have understood that she was allowed to sit, probably on the suggestion of one of the younger ladies.

‘I saw her myself upon the stage twice after this meeting at Barley Wood; it was at Edinburgh; and the parts were those of Lady Macbeth and Lady Randolph. But she then performed only as an expression of kindness to her grandchildren. Professor Wilson and myself saw her on the occasion from the stage-box, with a delight embittered by the certainty that we saw her for the last time.

THE END

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