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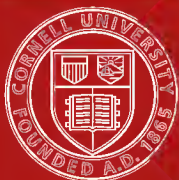


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# ROBERT SOUTHEY

THE STORY OF HIS LIFE WRITTEN  
IN HIS LETTERS

EDITED BY

JOHN DENNIS

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"ENGLISH SONNETS—A SELECTION"



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## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

A SHORT preface will explain the purpose of this volume. It is simply a compilation, but I may be allowed to say that it has not been put together in order to make a book, but to do honour to one of the best men this century has produced.

The present generation does not know Southey as he deserves to be known, and I hope that this story of his life, written in his own words and linked together with a few editorial hooks and eyes, may be the means of reviving the memory of a great name. The narrative, it is needless to say, can be read at length in the Rev. Cuthbert C. Southey's *Life and Correspondence of his father*, in six volumes. The four volumes of letters edited by Southey's son-in-law, the Rev. John Wood Warter, are also of great interest, although Mr. Warter, gleaning after Southey's biographer, was necessarily more limited in his choice. The admirers of Southey, and every one who wishes to know him intimately, should turn to these records for the minute features of character which my outline portrait will not supply.

Professor Dowden's charming monograph in *English Men of Letters* is known to most readers, and so also, it may be hoped, is the significant "Correspondence of Robert Southey and Caroline Bowles," which Mr. Dowden has edited. To that volume I must especially draw attention, not only for the delight it will afford, but also because it supplies, to quote the editor's words, "an interesting chapter in Southey's life—one essential to its completeness—the chapter which tells of the most important friendship of his elder years."

It will be seen that apart from his works there are abundant materials for forming a correct judgment of Southey; indeed, few men of letters can be known so well. In this age, however, literature is too often swamped by books, and readers are apt to treat authors as obsolete whose works are not in circulation at the library. I hope, notwithstanding, that this attempt to present a cabinet portrait of Southey may lead the present generation of readers to give the honour he deserves to an illustrious English worthy.

Southey is one of the most delightful of letter-writers. Rich in matter, wholly without pretension, and the master of a perfect style, his correspondence reveals a character of signal virtue whose very foibles are those of a frank and generous nature. In literary merit, however, Southey's letters differ considerably; and had this volume been compiled simply to show

the poet's epistolary gift, many of the extracts given would not have been inserted. "In every work regard the writer's end." My end has been to enable this great Englishman to write, as it were, his own autobiography, and in this respect I hope the book will be found to achieve its purpose.

It must be understood that such portions only of the letters are given as serve to illustrate the writer's character, and that, while careful not to convey a wrong impression of his meaning, I have not thought it necessary to indicate where omissions occur.

I have to thank the proprietors of the *National Review*, for the permission to reprint the introductory essay, which originally appeared in that periodical.

HAMPSTEAD, *July*, 1894.



# CONTENTS.

---

	PAGE
PREFACE . . . . .	3
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	9

## CHAPTER I.

Early Recollections — Bath — Miss Tyler — First Impressions of the Theatre — Days at Bedminster — Reads Shakespere, and Beaumont and Fletcher — Writes Rhymes — Schools and School-masters . . . . .	33
--	----

## CHAPTER II.

The Autobiography, continued — His Father's Library — Tasso, Ariosto, and Spenser — School-Days in Bristol — Epic Dreams . . . . .	58
--	----

## CHAPTER III.

Autobiography, continued — Miss Tyler's Eccentricities — First Visit to London — Westminster School — Botch Hayes — Story of a Bully . . . . .	71
--	----

## CHAPTER IV.

School Friendships — Four Years at Westminster — Is Privately Expelled — Goes to Oxford — Plans of Life — Friendship with Coleridge — Pantisocracy — Rupture with his Aunt — Marriage — Voyage to Portugal . . . . .	85
--	----

## CHAPTER V.

Resides near Bristol and in Hampshire — Loses Health, and re-visits Portugal — In Bristol again — First Visit to Keswick — Obtains a Secretaryship — Resigns his post, and returns to Bristol — Coleridge — Scott and Modern Ballads . . . . .	114
--	-----

## CHAPTER VI.

Loses his first Child — Keswick — Life among the Mountains — Advice to Coleridge — Visits London — Learns Dutch — <i>Madoc</i> published — Visits Scott and Scotland — Edits Kirke White's <i>Remains</i> . . . . .	146
---	-----

## CHAPTER VII.

Declining to write for the <i>Edinburgh Review</i> — Friendship with Landor — Sale of his Works — Contributes to the <i>Quarterly</i> — Death of a Child . . . . .	199
--	-----

tions of Oxford—His Children . . . . .	227
--	-----

### CHAPTER IX.

Poet-Laureate—Estimate of Wordsworth—Lord Byron— Southey as an Historian—Battle of Waterloo Celebrated upon Skiddaw—Visits Belgium . . . . .	250
--	-----

### CHAPTER X.

Death of Herbert Southey—The Father's Sorrow—Memories of School and College— <i>The Excursion</i> —Condition of the Lower Classes—The Church of England and the Method- ists . . . . .	268
---	-----

### CHAPTER XI.

Southey declines a Position on <i>The Times</i> —Tour in Switzer- land—The <i>Life of Wesley</i> —Declines an Appointment in Edinburgh—Wilberforce at Keswick—Edmund Seward— Walter Scott— <i>History of Brazil</i> —Crabbe's <i>Tales</i> . . . .	287
---	-----

### CHAPTER XII.

Southey at Oxford—Old Friendships—Advice to his Daughters —Visits Holland—Is laid up at Leyden—A Dutch Poet and his Wife—Advice to a Student—Jacob Cats . . . . .	310
---	-----

### CHAPTER XIII.

Holland—Declines a Seat in Parliament—Death of a Daugh- ter—Letter to his Children—Death of his Uncle—Favorite Authors—A Dutch Bookseller—James Barry—The Evan- gelical Party—Literary Style . . . . .	341
---	-----

### CHAPTER XIV.

Visits London—Letter to Lord Brougham—Joanna Bailie— The Howitts—National Education—University Education —White Slavery—The Church of England . . . . .	372
---	-----

### CHAPTER XV.

Publication of <i>The Doctor</i> —Marriage of Edith Southey—Henry Taylor—Mrs. Southey's Loss of Reason—Declines a Baron- etage—Letter to Sir R. Peel—An Additional Pension— The Wordsworth Family—The <i>Life of Cowper</i> . . . . .	394
--	-----

### CHAPTER XVI.

Visits Cottle, Savage Landor, and the Poet Bowles—Old Haunts and Old Friends—The Literary Profession—Charles Lamb —Death of Mrs. Southey—Letter to his Son—Tour in France—Bertha Southey's Marriage—Marries Miss Bowles —Failing Powers and Death . . . . .	417
---	-----

## INTRODUCTION.

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THERE are some names in literature which the lover of books never mentions without affection or reverence. They recall to him gifts of wisdom or of poetic beauty that have permanently enriched his life; they are the names of his best friends, the choice companions of solitary hours, whose presence is alike acceptable in times of joy and sorrow.

No one has described the invigorating and soothing power of books more happily than Southey; and, with two or three exceptions, there is, perhaps, no man of letters of this century whose name is worthier of esteem. Yet the reader who acknowledges this allegiance may confess at the same time that a measured feeling of admiration is the utmost he can give to Southey's poetry. His epics are not among the books he reads upon sleepless nights; neither will he take them with him on a voyage, as Southey took *Gebir*. Open any copy you may find of *Madoc*, *Thalaba*, or *Roderick*, and it will probably be as clean and fresh as the books of Leviticus and Chronicles in an otherwise well thumbed Bible.

The poet writes with the utmost purity of style, with great fertility of invention, with an elevation of tone worthy of a man who respects the art he practises, and with a frequent picturesqueness of detail which wins acknowledgment from the most exacting critic. His vast stores of knowledge are poured forth abundantly; but what he wants, or seems to want, is that incommunicable and divine gift which separates the inspired poet from the consummate artificer in verse.

Poetry made Southey happy, and he thought that it would make him immortal. The happiness was enjoyed to the full, but the ten volumes of his verse have not as yet received the recognition which their author anticipated. We are interested in learning that William Taylor, of Norwich, called *Madoc* the best English poem that had left the press since *Paradise Lost*; that Walter Scott read it through four times; that it kept Fox up until after midnight; that Landor said of *Roderick*, "there is no poem in existence that I shall read so often"; and that even Byron pronounced it "the first poem of the time." And in our day we hear with curiosity how Dean Stanley upheld against all comers the poetical merits of *Thalaba and Kehama*. People read these criticisms and opinions, but they do not read the poems; and, as a poet, Southey is chiefly known to the present generation by his fantastic ballads and by a



few personal lyrics which, like the *Holly Tree* and the stanzas written in his library, touch all hearts.

That Southey fails in our own day to win the public ear may not be wholly due to a deficiency of poetical inspiration. It was not altogether owing to that cause, if we may judge from much of the verse then popular, that he failed during his life-time to gain fame and wealth from his poetry. His sober method in such poems as *Madoc* and *Roderick* was not suited to the taste of an age that craved for rambling stories in verse, and gushed over *Lalla Rookh* and the *Loves of the Angels*. In the first quarter of this century — a period which, if we except the Shakesperian era, is unsurpassed in our literature for wealth of poetical creation — neither Coleridge nor Wordsworth, Shelley nor Keats, gained the popularity that puts money in the purse. Scott — whose success no one grudges, for he was great all round, and as good as he was great — knew perfectly well that the *Lady of the Lake* — his most successful though by no means his finest poem — was immeasurably inferior to the noblest productions of Wordsworth or of Coleridge. True poet though he was in his own vein, he could not, in verse at least, rise to their level. Yet Scott, and even Moore, reaped a golden harvest while Wordsworth was complaining that poetry

did not yield him enough to pay for his shoe-leather, and Southey that it was "the worst article in the market." How popular Byron became is a story too familiar to be repeated; but the student of English poetry has long ago discovered that Byron's fame during his life-time was not chiefly due to the intrinsically poetical qualities of his verse.

In the last year of the last century appeared Campbell's *Pleasures of Hope*. The *Pleasures of Memory*, published about seven years previously, had already passed through ten editions, and from Rogers the young Scottish poet seems to have caught his inspiration. It made him famous at once; yet it is difficult to say what attraction readers found in a poem full of inaccuracies and platitudes, and in which, as Hazlitt wittily says, "the decomposition of prose is substituted for the composition of poetry." Campbell's youthful success, however, affords a striking illustration of the obvious fact that in "the realms of gold" immediate popularity is no proof of sterling worth. That he has secured a permanent place in literature is due to his noble gift as a lyric poet. His inspiring battle-pieces have in them the true ring, and just as Campbell was wont to shout out Scott's fine ballad of Cadyow Castle on the North Bridge at Edinburgh until, as he said, the whole fraternity of coachmen knew him by his voice, so

will many a man recall the youthful enthusiasm and impetuosity with which he recited in his walks such poems as the *Battle of the Baltic* and *Ye Mariners of England*. Yet the fact remains that Campbell's extraordinary reputation at the outset of his career was due to a poem that is comparatively worthless.

Time is the one trustworthy critic whose verdict is unimpeachable, and the way time has treated a number of poets who flourished between the years 1800 and 1825, might almost lead us to accept the judgment of Mr. Bagehot that "the pursuit of fame seems more absurd and trifling than most pursuits." Yet it is not unreasonable that fame should be dear to the poet, although not the main object he pursues. The true poet sings because he must, and is moved less by ambition than by delight. The joy of his art was felt to the full by Southey, who said in his younger days that he would rather leave off eating than poetizing. Even in those days of passionate enthusiasm there was a mechanical regularity in his verse-making which belies the common theory of inspiration. The clerkly virtue of punctuality is not one with which the Muse is credited; and a poet cannot make demands upon her at specified hours as he can upon his cook, with the certainty of a response. In later life, as all the world knows, Southey wrote a good deal of rubbish, for he was

Poet Lanreate at a time when Court poetry was required by the yard. It is a pity that, having done its work, the greater portion of this verse cannot be buried with the royal personages whom it praised.

In middle age Southey came to the conviction that his name was likely to live chiefly as a prose-writer. Unfortunately, his best years and energies were largely consumed upon labor which, however admirable of its kind, must be regarded as ephemeral. As he said himself, he had many mouths to feed, and all from an inkstand. Like Dr. Johnson, therefore, and in a spirit that "makes the action fine," he did a quantity of what is called hack-work. Such work is not more of a disgrace to an author than it is to a physician to prescribe in simple cases that need no skill, or to a celebrated barrister to take briefs which would not test the ability of the youngest member of the Bar. The man who chooses a profession must live by it, and it is surely as pleasant and honorable to live by *Quarterly Review* articles as by the sale of ostrich-feathers or of mineral waters.

He regretted, of course, the want of full leisure to complete the great *History of Portugal* which he fondly hoped would put the coping-stone to his fame, and he anticipated that future ages would honor him as the historian of Brazil. I suspect

he was mistaken in both cases, and it is quite possible that the work which Southey left in MS. and incomplete would share, though the theme is a noble one, the neglect and oblivion of the three quarto volumes that form the *History of Brazil*. Sad to say also, his *History of the Peninsular War* is so completely superseded by Napier's that no publisher ventures to produce a new edition of a work which was the fruit of unwearied research, and for style has won the high applause of critics from Coleridge to Mr. John Morley. With all his literary sagacity, and he had it in large measure, Southey was unfortunate in the choice of popular subjects. He believed that whatever interested him would also interest the public, and his greatest success, the *Life of Nelson*, may be said to have been achieved by accident, as it grew out of an article in the *Quarterly*. Biography is Southey's forte; on this ground he is a master, and there is a virility and charm about such books as the Lives of Nelson, Wesley, and Cowper which, for many a day to come, should keep their reputation fresh. Professor Dowden, whose estimate of the poet is too well appreciated to need my praise, is not, I think, quite happy in the remark that there is no style fitter for continuous narrative than the pedestrian style of Southey. Although the context shows that this is not Mr. Dowden's meaning, a pedestrian style

implies a steady, uniform, and unmodulated style, by the help of which a writer jogs along the foot-path way safely and surely, with no risk of stumbling, but also with no capacity of rising with his theme. This is not the characteristic of Southey's style, which is at once sinewy and flexible, easy and melodious, a style in marked contrast to that in vogue among popular writers of the age—to the alliterative rhetoric of Macaulay and to the richer, but frequently grotesque, composition of Carlyle. Southey, like Dryden, is one of the manliest of writers. He is totally devoid of affectation; he has no mannerism, and expresses himself simply because he thinks clearly. It has been well said that the inner temper of a man is reflected in his written prose. You may see in it whether he loves rhetoric more than truth, whether he cares more for himself than for his subject. The poet Gray observed that good writing not only required great parts, but the very best of those parts; and if, as Carlyle said, and as Mr. Froude maintains, style is not like a coat that can be put off, but like the skin, an essential part of the living organization, then does the harmonious, idiomatic style of Southey indicate a nature unaffected, well balanced, and serene. In his case, Boileau's saying, *Le style c'est l'homme*, may be accepted without reserve.

So thoroughly, indeed, did he understand the

art of good writing, that it would be more accurate to say he did not consider it an art at all. "There may be secrets in painting," he wrote to Allan Cunningham, "but there are none in style. When I have been asked the foolish question what a young man should do who wishes to acquire a good style, my answer has been that he should never think about it, but say what he has to say as perspicuously as he can and as briefly as he can, and then the style will take care of itself." Again, to a friend he said, "People talk of my style! I have only endeavored to write plain English, and to put my thoughts into language which every one can understand."

It is needless, however, to remark that clearness of expression, though invaluable in style, is not the secret of its success. Something depends upon the ear, as Southey elsewhere admits, and more upon the fulness and richness of an author's mind—upon his sincerity of purpose and upon his perception of the niceties of language. Southey wrote from a full mind; it does not follow that "plain English" would be of service to an empty one. His prose-writings, no doubt, exhibit the weakness, as well as strength, of his nature. He acknowledged that he could not stand severe thought. There are subjects about which he knew little and wrote feebly; there are opinions scattered through his volumes at which

we are forced to smile. When he prophesies he fails, just as Cobden fails, and as Mr. Bright fails; and when he touches on spiritual experiences that arouse no corresponding emotion in his own heart, there is an evident want of sympathy and breadth. Few more delightful books exist in the language, and none more honest, than his *Life of Wesley*. This "darling book," the favorite of his library, was more often in his hands, Coleridge wrote, than any other, and he added that it would not be uninteresting to the author to know that to this work, and to the *Life of Baxter*, he was used to resort whenever sickness or languor made him feel the want of an old friend. But Coleridge was keenly alive to the biographer's inability to distinguish, in the great religious movement of the eighteenth century, between what was unquestionable fanaticism, and what, however mysterious, had the warrant of Apostolic teaching. In his admirable narrative, Southey is, therefore, occasionally an uncertain guide, and his judgment fails to lessen — sometimes, indeed, it increases — the difficulties raised by his facts. But the reader, whether dissenting from the writer's opinions or not, feels, and rightly, an unhesitating confidence in the truthfulness of his statements. He is ever the most faithful of biographers.

Probably the book that gave its author the



greatest pleasure was *The Doctor*, that medley of grotesque fancies and out-of-the-way learning, of boyish humor and of the serene wisdom of age. It was the play-book of leisure hours, with which he amused himself more than he amuses his readers. Most of them, I think, find it irritating, and no one, probably, has the courage to read it steadily from end to end. "*The Doctor*," said Caroline Bowles, "makes me laugh and cry, pleased and provoked, and out of all patience, in a breath" — a friendly criticism, and, on the whole, perhaps, a just one, of a book which Henry Nelson Coleridge considered "singularly thoughtful and diverting."

No English man of letters, save Dr. Johnson, has done so much to give dignity to the profession of literature as Southey, and I do not think there is a word in Coleridge's magnificent eulogium of his friend to which exception can be taken. His devotion to literature was the noblest of dedications, adopted without rashness, for he knew his strength, and pursued with unfaltering consistency and courage. And he had his reward. "Excepting that peace," he wrote, "which through God's infinite mercy is derived from a higher source, it is to literature, humanly speaking, that I am beholden, not only for the means of subsistence, but for every blessing which I enjoy; health of mind and activity of mind, contentment, cheerfulness,

continual employment, and, therefore, continual pleasure." And while describing himself as one of the lightest-hearted men on the face of the wide world, he adds that if Gifford (then presiding over the *Quarterly*) could "see him by his fireside, he would see a man working hard and getting little — a bare maintenance, and hardly that — writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressive in learning; not so learned as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy."

After all, the attraction many of us feel for Southey is caused less by his genius as a writer than by his personal character; and his life will be found more worthy of study than the finest of his works. The materials that exist for a thorough acquaintance with him are abundant; but in order to know and estimate Southey, all other sources of information are of small account in comparison with his own letters. I do not know whether to wonder most at their quantity or quality. It was, perhaps, inevitable that whatever he wrote should be well written, but how he found time for such a persistent course of letter-writing is a marvel. "A letter," he said, "is like a fresh billet of wood upon the fire, which, if it be not needed for immediate warmth, is always agreeable for its exhilarating effects. I, who spend so many hours alone, love to pass a por-

tion of them in conversing thus with those whom I love."

It must have been a goodly portion, and in these letters the heart of the man is revealed. We see in them his well nigh unrivalled energy in the pursuit of knowledge; the delight in books which caused him, though a poor man, to accumulate a library of 14,000 volumes; a playful buoyancy of spirit, mingled with a pathetic melancholy, that led him to write of himself as old before he was fifty; a dislike of London as strong as the affection of Johnson and of Lamb for the mighty city; a sombre view of political affairs which, if not always reasonable, was invariably sincere; a generous appreciation of other poets and authors — no one, for instance, has written of Wordsworth with warmer praise — and a noble enthusiasm of friendship for which no sacrifice was too great, and which no absence or change could weaken. And more than this may be read in the copious utterances of Southey's correspondence, for we gain from it a bright picture of the domestic happiness in his mountain home at Keswick which made that home, through many long and toilsome years, a scene of unclouded delight. Writing of the glorious scenery around him, he said he did not talk much about it, but added, "These lakes and mountains give me a deep joy for which I suspect nothing elsewhere can compen-

sate." In the large room on the first floor of Greta Hall, surrounded on all sides by books, "the harvest of many generations," the work of his life was done; and when he went to the window there was "the lake and the circle of the mountains, and the illimitable sky."

No student could be more unlike the popular notion of the mere book-worm and literary drudge than Southey. With a head on his shoulders that was the envy of Byron, and "the most spirited countenance that ever human form was graced with"; tall, firmly knit, and blessed with sound health and great muscular strength, in physique as in character, manliness was his most striking characteristic. But this manliness was combined with a susceptibility and tenderness that tried his strong heart to the uttermost. If he was the happiest of men, he was also the most sensitive, a singularity which struck Carlyle, who, on seeing him in his old age, wondered how, with such a nervous system, he had not been torn to pieces long since. "He must have somewhere," he wrote, "a great deal of methodic virtue in him; I suppose, too, his heart is thoroughly honest, which helps considerably." It was methodic virtue of an uncommon order, it was an honesty of heart rarely to be met with, that bound Southey's days together in natural piety. Although never until old age a year in advance of his liabilities, he contracted no

debt he could not pay, and took voluntary burdens on his shoulders that would have crushed a weaker man. His lavish generosity was not due to impulse; it was a part of his life, and exhibited at every stage of it. To help a relative or friend, or a deserving person who was neither, he would give money with the utmost cheerfulness, and time also, which was more valuable still; and as we read how ready he was at all times to accept fresh burdens of charity, how magnanimous he was, and how affectionate, we are not surprised that Sara Coleridge, who lived all her maiden life under his roof, should have said that, while indebted chiefly to Wordsworth in matters of intellect, "in those which concerned the heart and the moral being" she was more deeply indebted to the character and daily conduct of her uncle Southey. Yet there are moments, and one of them may be after reading his letters to Shelley, when the reader is disposed to think the Laureate too faultless, and that he would have sympathized more with the elder brother in the parable than with the prodigal son.

Very noteworthy, in a retired student like Southey, was his capacity, to which I have alluded already, for making friends and keeping them. The friends of his youth were the friends of his old age, and Wordsworth, Coleridge, Lamb, and Walter Scott not only honored the author but

loved the man. Landor, too, clung to Southey with the passionate ardor of his nature, and, impulsive though he was, never faltered in his affection. "To be deprived of reading your works," he wrote from Como, "and of seeing you for so many years, is infinitely the greatest loss I sustain in losing my country." And in a letter at once nobly frank and sympathetic, written when Southey was in trouble, and had been long silent, he says, in language which from another pen would sound like exaggeration: "Believe me, Southey — and of all men living I will be the very last to deceive and flatter you — I have never one moment ceased to love and revere you as the most amiable and best of mortals, and your fame has always been as precious to me as it could ever be to yourself." What a wealth of fellowship was here! but, strange to say, this affectionate intimacy with the choicest intellects of his age is regarded by a living writer as evidence that Southey, like Davenant, with whom he is compared, sheltered himself "so snugly under the friendship of great men, that to this day criticism shrinks from dragging him forth into the glare of noon." Having the wit, we are told, to see, in 1800, that Wordsworth and Coleridge would reign over English poetry in 1830, "he came over to their camp with equal frankness and adroitness," and "imposed himself upon his own gener-

ation by the force of his character, by the abundance of his writings, and by the tact with which he attached himself to that party which was destined to popularity in the immediate future." \*

The imputation, it will be seen, is a slur upon Southey's character. He was not only "no poet in the true sense," but (an impostor, who traded on the friendship of distinguished authors.) It is difficult to reply to a charge, in my judgment, so utterly without foundation; and had it come from a nameless writer, readers who know Southey would probably laugh for one moment at the perversity of the statement, and forget it the next. But literature is not without a debt to the editor of Gray, and Mr. Gosse is usually so sympathetic a critic, that when he makes an assertion such as this, it cannot be passed over without notice.

The statement that Southey's verse secured to the author, as Davenant's verse had previously secured to him, a large audience "recruited even from the literary class itself," need not be contested, but to Mr. Gosse's assertion that, for the moment, *Thalaba* and the *Curse of Kehama* impressed the majority of readers, I reply that there is no proof of this success in the circulation of those poems. Unfortunately for Southey's pocket, it was quite otherwise, and, while some of his

\* "From Shakespere to Pope," by Edmund Gosse, pp. 155-159.

contemporaries reaped thousands at their poetical harvest, he did not, except in one instance, gain hundreds. This is not all. Southey's literary independence and disregard of contemporary praise or blame is a prominent feature of his character, and the assertion that he contrived to shelter himself snugly under the friendship of others is, I venture to assert, absolutely erroneous. The high estimate of his own powers, to which Mr. Gosse alludes, is a trait inconsistent with such conduct, but the strongest refutation of a charge which, were it true, would make Southey contemptible, will be found in the whole story of his life as unfolded in his letters.

Southey, as every one knows, in his estimate of public affairs belonged to the minority. He had no faith in "self-government by count of heads"; he did not believe that change was necessarily progress, nor that revolution was reform. Like most of us, he had his prejudices, and expressed them sometimes in unguarded language. One of the most brilliant and popular of modern writers has stated his opinion that, as a politician, Southey lacked judgment, and critics have been content to take Macaulay's word for it. They could not choose a worse authority. I do not say that the famous essayist of the *Edinburgh Review* was wilfully unfair, but he was unable to forget that Southey belonged to the opposite camp, and



had been for years the ablest writer for the *Quarterly*. The belief that Southey's poems stand far higher than his prose works is one which Macaulay is probably singular in holding; but his adverse estimate of several of the Laureate's political statements may, perhaps, be justified. At the same time the general impression he tries to convey of Southey is marked by the exaggeration which so often stultifies his criticism. In the anxiety to be brilliant, truth is too frequently sacrificed to antithesis.

It may be admitted that, in some respects, Southey was a Tory of the old school. He objected to Catholic Emancipation, and to Parliamentary Reform, and, according to the principal journal of the period, showed his lack of judgment by saying that Reform would lead to a new disposal of Church property, and to the spoliation of the Irish Church. He thought as, by a curious turn of the tables, Radicals think now, that the diseases of society can to a large extent be remedied by State interference. Like Mr. Ruskin, his views on social questions were not those of the political economist; and it must be admitted that he held objections to some branches of science, as unreasonable as the poet Cowper's contempt for geology. On the other hand, Southey was in many respects a reformer in advance of his age. He favored national education; he wrote, in the

early years of the century, against the absurd injustice of the laws of copyright; he was one of the first advocates for the establishment of Protestant Sisters of Mercy, and for a better order of hospital nurses; he joined Lord Ashley in his efforts to remove the abuses of the factory system, and to protect children; he objected to the needless severity of the criminal laws; he urged in strenuous language the diminution of public houses; he advocated a well organized system of emigration, as well as the most liberal treatment of the Colonies. Other instances of his zeal in the cause of social reform are recorded by Southey's son, who adds, and I think rightly, that his father was one of the chief pioneers of most of the great improvements taking place in our time.

Lord Macaulay— who, by the admission of his nephew, was a "determined and fiery partisan"— writes of Southey's intolerance and bitterness towards opponents; and Hazlitt, of all men! has echoed the same opinion. It is not necessary to defend him in this respect. He had strong feelings, and no doubt expressed them with a vehemence not always justifiable. But it was enough for him to meet an opponent to forget all points of difference, and in his heart of hearts he was among the most charitable of men. "Political questions," he wrote to Sir Henry Taylor, "will

never excite any difference between us in the slightest degree. I have lived all my life in the nearest and dearest intimacy with persons who were most opposed to me in such things"; and to another correspondent he says: "I have an instinctive horror of bigotry. When Dissenters talk of the Establishment, they make me feel like a High Churchman; and when I get among High Churchmen I am ready to take refuge in Dissent."

His happiest hours were spent with the great spirits in his library in a communion free from the discord of controversy. Some of his friends, especially Wordsworth, who had no bookish feeling about him, thought that Southey's love of books made him indifferent to other things. No doubt it was his tendency to live most joyously in his library—just as it was Wordsworth's tendency, although he could read a poem now and then which he had not written, to disregard all books save his own volumes: and it must be admitted that as life advanced, and the evening shadows fell upon him, Southey clung more than ever to his favorite authors. "Books," he wrote to Caroline Bowles, "are all but everything to me. I live with them and by them, and might almost say for them and in them." This was in 1830, when, to use Mr. Dowden's fine expression, he was "stepping downwards from the heights of

life"; but the correspondence with Miss Bowles is itself sufficient to show that a growing passion for books neither lessened the warmth of his friendship nor his readiness to do good to others.

Looking over what I have written, I feel how impossible it is to represent the finest features of Southey's character in a sketch so slight and shadowy. More than forty years have gone by since he was laid to rest in Crosthwaite Churchyard, and, familiar though the name still is, the man is passing from remembrance. One of the poets of a younger generation, who knew him best and loved him most, died recently, ripe in years and fame, and, apart from Southey's son, there are now few men living who can speak of him with the affection of personal friends. Sir Henry Taylor, in a passage that has been often quoted, has expressed his conviction that, while there were greater poets in his generation, and men of a deeper philosophic faculty, yet that for genial piety, moral strength, the magnitude and variety of his powers, the field he covered in literature, and the beauty of his life, it may be said of Southey "justly, and with no straining of the truth, that of all his contemporaries he was the greatest man."

It may be so, but comparisons are rarely satisfactory, and are always likely to provoke opposi-

tion. This, however, can be said, without any feeling of hesitation, that the more intimate we grow with Southey's daily life, the deeper is our admiration of its consistency and heroism. And this life of unflinching fealty to duty was pre-eminently a happy life. All his deepest affections were centred in his home, and, while the home circle remained unbroken, to live laborious days was no pressure on his buoyant spirit. And his mirthfulness was not owing to that want of reflection which leads a man to be satisfied with the sunshine of the hour. He looked Death in the face and did not fear him, believing in the "shall be hereafter." "I do not know," he writes, "that person who is happier than myself and who has more reason to be happy, and never was man more habitually cheerful; but this belief is the root which gives life to all and holds all fast." Life, said Pope, when the first heats are over, is all down hill. It was not altogether so with Southey, but, as the days went on, domestic sorrow tried his affectionate nature to the uttermost, and three years before he died silence and darkness covered that large heart and eager intellect. Could it have been with a poet's prescience of coming evil that Landor sent to his friend the well remembered lines which are among the most touching he ever wrote? —

The dance of youth, O Southey, runs not round,  
But closes at the bottom of the room  
Amid the falling dust and deepening gloom,  
Where the weary sit them down,  
And Beauty too unbraids, and waits a lovelier crown.

We hurry to the river we must cross,  
And swifter downward every footstep wends ;  
Happy, who reach it ere they count the loss  
Of half their faculties and half their friends.

# ROBERT SOUTHEY:

## THE STORY OF HIS LIFE.

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### CHAPTER I.

Early Recollections — Bath — Miss Tyler — First Impressions of the Theatre — Days at Bedminster — Reads Shakespere and Beaumont and Fletcher — Writes Rhymes — Schools and Schoolmasters.

[At the age of 46 Southey wrote a series of letters to his friend John May, recalling his early life. Beyond the days of youth his recollections do not extend. He suggests, indeed, in the first letter that he may not have the leisure or the courage to pursue the story to the end, adding, "Courage, I mean, to live again in remembrance with the dead, so much as I must needs do in retracing the course of my life." It is this feeling which has brought many an autobiography abruptly to the end. Yet he confesses that his life had been one of sunshine and that he was still looking forward with hope. With a few necessary words of introduction, some of these autobiographical letters shall be given in a condensed form. The poet's father, who had more taste for field sports than for trade, was a linen-draper at Bristol. In 1772 he

married Margaret Hill, whose half-sister, Miss Tyler, figures conspicuously in Southey's early years. Robert was born on the 12th of August, 1774, and when he made his appearance, "my mother, asking if it was a boy, was answered by her nurse, in a tone as little favorable to me as the opinion was flattering, 'Ay, a great ugly boy,' and she added when she told me this, 'God forgive me!—when I saw what a great red creature it was, covered with rolls of fat, I thought I should never be able to love him!'" A great part of Robert's earliest childhood was spent at Bath, in the house of his eccentric aunt, Miss Tyler.]

Here my time was chiefly passed from the age of two till six. I had many indulgences, but more privations, and those of an injurious kind; want of playmates, want of exercise, never being allowed to do anything in which by possibility I might dirt myself; late hours in company, that is to say, late hours for a child, which I reckon among the privations (having always had the healthiest propensity for going to bed betimes); late hours of rising, which were less painful perhaps, but in other respects worse. My aunt chose that I should sleep with her, and this subjected me to a double evil. She used to have her bed warmed, and during the months while this practice was in season I was always put into Molly's bed first, for fear of an accident from the



warming-pan, and removed when my aunt went to bed, so that I was regularly wakened out of a sound sleep. This, however, was not half so bad as being obliged to lie till nine, and not unfrequently till ten in the morning, and not daring to make the slightest movement which could disturb her during the hours that I lay awake, and longing to be set free. These were, indeed, early and severe lessons of patience. My poor little wits were upon the alert at those tedious hours of compulsory idleness, fancying figures and combinations of form in the curtains, wondering at the motes in the slant sunbeam, and watching the light from the crevices of the window-shutters, till it served me at last by its progressive motion to measure the lapse of time. Thoroughly injudicious as my education under Miss Tyler was, no part of it was so irksome as this.

Miss Tyler had a numerous acquaintance, such as her person and talents (which were of no ordinary kind) were likely to attract. The circle of her Herefordshire acquaintance, extending as far as the sphere of the three music meetings in the three dioceses of Hereford, Worcester, and Gloucester, she became intimate with the family of Mr. Raikes, printer and proprietor of the *Gloucester Journal*. One of his sons introduced Sunday Schools into this kingdom; others became India Directors, Bank Directors, etc., in the career of

mercantile prosperity. His daughter, who was my aunt's friend, married Francis Newberry of St. Paul's Churchyard, son of that Francis Newberry who published *Goody Two-shoes*, *Giles Gingerbread*, and other such delectable histories in sixpenny books for children, splendidly bound in the flowered and gilt Dutch paper of former days. As soon as I could read, which was very early, Mr. Newberry presented me with a whole set of these books, more than twenty in number: I dare say they were in Miss Tyler's possession at her death, and in perfect preservation, for she taught me (and I thank her for it) never to spoil or injure anything. This was a rich present, and may have been more instrumental than I am aware of in giving me that love of books, and that decided determination to literature, as the one thing desirable, which manifested itself from my childhood, and which no circumstances in after life ever slackened or abated.

Miss Tyler was exceedingly fond of theatrical representations, and there was no subject of which I heard so much from my earliest childhood. It even brought upon me once a most severe reprehension for innocently applying to the church a phrase which, I then learnt to my cost, belonged only to the playhouse, and saying one Sunday, on our return from morning service, that it had been a very *full house*. When I was taken to the the-

atre for the first time, I can perfectly well remember my surprise at not finding the pit literally a deep hole, into which I had often puzzled myself to think how or why any persons could possibly go. You may judge by this how very young I must have been. I recollect nothing more of the first visit, except that the play was *The Fathers*, a comedy of Fielding's, which was acted not more than one season, and the farce was *Coxheath Camp*. This recollection, however, by the help of that useful book the *Biographia Dramatica*, fixes the date to 1778, when I was four years old.

I was introduced to the theatre before it was possible for me to comprehend the nature of the drama, so as to derive any pleasure from it, except as a mere show. What was going on upon the stage, as far as I understood it, appeared real to me; and I have been told that one night, when *The Critic* was represented, and I heard that Sir Walter Raleigh's head was to be cut off, I hid mine in Miss Mary Delamere's lap, and could not be persuaded to look up, till I was assured the dreaded scene was over.

Miss Tyler, whose ascendancy over my mother was always that of an imperious elder sister, would not suffer me to be breeched till I was six years old, though I was tall of my age. I had a fantastic costume of nankeen for highdays and

holydays, trimmed with green fringe; it was called a vest and tunic, or a *jam*. When at last I changed my dress, it was for coat, waistcoat, and breeches of foresters' green; at that time there was no intermediate form of apparel in use. I was then sent as a day scholar to a school on the top of St. Michael's or Mile Hill, which was then esteemed the best in Bristol, kept by Mr. Foot, a dissenting minister of the community called General Baptists, in contradistinction to the Particular or Calvinistic Baptists. He was an old man, and if the school had ever been a good one, it had wofully deteriorated. I was one of the least boys there, I believe the very least, and certainly both as willing and as apt to learn as any teacher could have desired; yet it was the only school where I was ever treated with severity. Lessons in the grammar, which I did not comprehend, and yet could have learnt well enough by rote under gentle discipline and a good-natured teacher, were frightened out of my head, and then I was shut up during playtime in a closet at the top of the stairs, where there was just light enough through some bars to see my lesson by. Once he caned me cruelly, — the only time that any master ever laid his hand upon me, — and I am sure he deserved a beating much more than I did. There was a great deal of tyranny in the school, from the worst of which I was exempted,

because I went home in the evening; but I stood in great fear of the big boys, and saw much more of the evil side of human nature than I should ever have learnt in the course of domestic education.

[When the boy had stayed there twelve months, the master died, and he was removed to a school at Corston, a village nine miles from Bristol.]

Here one year of my life was past with little profit, and with a good deal of suffering. There could not be a worse school in all respects. Thomas Flower, the master, was a remarkable man, worthy of a better station in life, but utterly unfit for that in which he was placed. His whole delight was in mathematics and astronomy, and he had constructed an orrery upon so large a scale that it filled a room. What a misery it must have been for such a man to teach a set of stupid boys, year after year, the rudiments of arithmetic. And a misery he seemed to feel it. When he came into his desk, even there he was thinking of the stars, and looked as if he were out of humor, not from ill-nature, but because his calculations were interrupted. But for the most part he left the school to the care of his son Charley, a person who was always called by that familiar diminutive, and whose consequence you may appreciate accordingly. Writing and arithmetic were all they professed to teach; but twice in the week a

Frenchman came from Bristol to instruct in Latin the small number of boys who learnt it, of whom I was one.

Though I had a full share of discomfort at Cors-ton, I recollect nothing there so painful as that of being kept up every night till a certain hour, when I was dying with sleepiness. Sometimes I stole away to bed; but it was not easy to do this, and I found that it was not desirable, because the other boys played tricks upon me when they came. But I dreaded nothing so much as Sunday evening in winter: we were then assembled in the hall, to hear the master read a sermon, or a portion of Stackhouse's History of the Bible. Here I sat at the end of a long form, in sight but not within feeling of the fire, my feet cold, my eyelids heavy as lead, and yet not daring to close them, kept awake by fear alone, in total inaction, and under the operation of a lecture more soporific than the strongest sleeping dose. Heaven help the wits of those good people who think that children are to be edified by having sermons read to them!

[On the death of the boy's grandmother, Miss Tyler took up her abode at Bedminster, a house near Bristol, and there for a while Robert was sent, the Corston school having broken up, not without good reason.]

I have so many vivid feelings connected with

this house at Bedminster, that if it had not been in a vile neighborhood, I believe my heart would have been set upon purchasing it, and fixing my abode there where the happiest days of my childhood were spent. My grandfather built it (about the year 1740, I suppose), and had made it what was then thought a thoroughly commodious and good house for one in his rank of life. It stood in a lane, some two or three hundred yards from the great western road. You ascended by several semicircular steps into what was called the fore court, but was in fact a flower-garden, with a broad pavement from the gate to the porch. That porch was in great part lined, as well as covered, with white jessamine; and many a time have I sat there with my poor sisters, threading the fallen blossoms upon grass stalks. It opened into a little hall, paved with diamond-shaped flags. On the right hand was the parlor, which had a brown or black boarded floor, covered with a Lisbon mat, and a handsome timepiece over the fireplace; on the left was the best kitchen, in which the family lived. The best kitchen is an apartment that belongs to other days, and is now no longer to be seen, except in houses which, having remained unaltered for the last half century, are inhabited by persons a degree lower in society than their former possessors. The one which I am now calling to mind after an interval of more

than forty years, was a cheerful room, with an air of such country comfort about it, that my little heart was always gladdened when I entered it during my grandmother's life. It had a stone floor, which I believe was the chief distinction between a best kitchen and a parlor. The furniture consisted of a clock, a large oval oak table with two flaps (over which two or three fowling-pieces had their place), a round tea-table of cherry wood, Windsor chairs of the same, and two large armed ones of that easy make (of all makes it is the easiest), in one of which my grandmother always sat. On one side of the fireplace the china was displayed in a buffet—that is, a cupboard with glass doors; on the other were closets for articles less ornamental, but more in use. The room was wainscoted and ornamented with some old maps, and with a long looking-glass over the chimney-piece, and a tall one between the windows, both in white frames. The windows opened into the fore-court, and were as cheerful and fragrant in the season of flowers as roses and jessamine, which grew luxuriantly without, could make them. There was a passage between this apartment and the kitchen, long enough to admit of a large airy pantry, and a larder on the left hand, the windows of both opening into the barton,\* as did those of the kitchen; on the right

\* An enclosed place, or inner yard.



was a door into the back court. There was a rack in the kitchen well furnished with bacon, and a mistletoe bush always suspended from the middle of the ceiling.

It was very seldom, indeed, that my grandmother went to Bristol. I scarcely recollect ever to have seen her there. The extent of her walks was to church, which she never missed, unless the weather absolutely confined her to the house. She was not able to attend the evening service also, on account of the distance; but in the morning she was constant, and always in good time; for if she were not there before the absolution, she used to say that she might as well have remained at home. At other times she rarely went out of her own premises. Neighbors of her own rank there were none within her reach; her husband's acquaintance had mostly died off, and she had made no new ones since his death. Her greatest happiness was to have my mother there with some of the young fry; and we, on our part, had no pleasure so great as that of a visit to Bedminster. It was, indeed, for my mother, as well as for us, an advantage beyond all price to have this quiet country home at so easy a distance, abounding as it did with all country comforts. Bedminster itself was an ugly, dirty, poor, populous village, many of the inhabitants being colliers. But the coal pits were in a different part of the parish,

and the house was at a sufficient distance from all annoyances. If there was no beauty of situation, there was complete retirement, and perfect comfort. The view was merely to a field and cottage on the other side the lane, on a rising ground belonging to the property. But the little world within was our own. And to me it was quite a different world from that in which I lived at other times. My father's house was in one of the busiest and noisiest streets of Bristol, and of course had no outlets. At Bath I was under perpetual restraint. But here I had all wholesome liberty, all wholesome indulgence, all wholesome enjoyments; and the delight which I there learned to take in rural sights and sounds, has grown up with me and continues unabated to this day.

My chief amusement was in the garden, where I found endless entertainment in the flowers and in observing insects. I had little propensity to any boyish sports, and less expertness in them. My uncles Edward and William used to reproach me with this sometimes, saying they never saw such a boy. One school-boy's art, however, they taught me, which I have never read of, nor seen practised elsewhere; it was that of converting a marble into a black witch, and thereby making it lucky. You know that if a marble be put in the fire, it makes a good detonating ball. I have sacrificed many a one so, to frighten the cook. But

if the marble be wrapped up in brown paper (perhaps any paper may answer the purpose as well) with some suet or dripping round about it, it will not explode while the fat is burning, and when you take it out of the grate it is as black as jet.

But if I was unapt at ordinary sports, a botanist or entomologist would have found me a willing pupil in those years; and if I had fallen in with one, I might perhaps, at this very day, have been classifying mosses, and writing upon the natural history of snails or cockchafer, instead of recording the events of the Peninsular War. I knew every variety of grass blossom that the fields produced, and in what situations to look for each. I discovered that snails seal themselves up in their shells during the winter; and that ants make their way into the cockchafer through an aperture in the breast, and eat out its inside while it is yet alive. This gave me a great dislike to the ants, which even the delightful papers about them in *The Guardian* did not overcome. Two curious facts concerning these insects, which fell under my own observation in those days, are worthy of being noted. They spoil the produce of some of our best currant trees one year. The trees were trained against a wall, the ants walked over them continually and in great numbers (I cannot tell why, but probably after the *aphides*, which, as Kirby and Spence tell us, they regularly

*milk*), and thus they imparted so rank a smell to the fruit that it could not be eaten. The ants were very numerous that season, and this occasioned a just and necessary war upon them. They had made a highway through the porch, along the interstices of the flagstones. The right of path, as you may suppose, was not acquiesced in; and when this road was as full as Cheapside at noonday, boiling water was poured upon it. The bodies, however, all disappeared in a few hours, carried away, as we supposed, by their comrades. But we know that some insects are marvellously retentive of life; and this circumstance has sometimes tempted me to suspect that an ant may derive no more injury from being boiled than a fly from being bottled in Madeira, or a snail from having its head cut off, or from lying seven years in a collector's cabinet. Of the latter fact (which was already authenticated) my neighbor, Mr. Fryer of Ormathwaite, had proof the other day.

There are three flowers which, to this day, always remind me of Bedminster. The Syringa or Roman Jessamine, which covered an arbor in the fore-court, and another at the bottom of the kitchen-garden; the everlasting pea, which grew most luxuriantly under the best kitchen windows; and the evening primrose: my grandmother loved to watch the opening of this singularly delicate flower—a flower, indeed, which in purity and

delicacy seems to me to exceed all others. She called it "mortality," because these beauties pass away so soon, and because in the briefness of its continuance (living only for a night) it reminded her of human life.

My grandmother died in 1782, and either in the latter end of that year, or the ensuing January, I was placed at poor old Williams',\* whom, as that expression indicates, I remember with feelings of good will. I had commenced poet before this, at how early an age I cannot call to mind; but I very well recollect that my first composition, both in manner and sentiment, might have been deemed a very hopeful imitation of the Bellman's verses. The discovery, however, that I could write rhymes gave me great pleasure, which was in no slight degree heightened when I perceived that my mother was not only pleased with what I had produced, but proud of it. Miss Tyler had intended, as far as she was concerned, to give me a systematic education, and for this purpose (as she afterwards told me) purchased a translation of Rousseau's *Emilius*. That system being happily even more impracticable than Mr. Edgeworth's, I was lucky enough to escape from any experiment of this kind, and there good fortune provided for me, better than any method could have done.

\* Williams kept a school in Bristol; Southey was a day boarder. — [ED.]

Nothing could be more propitious for me, considering my aptitudes and tendency of mind, than Miss Tyler's predilection, I might almost call it passion, for the theatre. Owing to this, Shakespere was in my hands as soon as I could read; and it was long before I had any other knowledge of the history of England than what I gathered from his plays. Indeed, when first I read the plain matter of fact, the difference which appeared then puzzled and did not please me; and for some time I preferred Shakespere's authority to the historian's.

It is curious that *Titus Andronicus* was at first my favorite play, partly, I suppose, because there was nothing in the characters above my comprehension; but the chief reason must have been that tales of horror make a deep impression upon children, as they do upon the vulgar, for whom, as their ballads prove, no tragedy can be too bloody—they excite astonishment rather than pity. I went through Beaumont and Fletcher also, before I was eight years old; circumstances enable me to recollect the time accurately. Beaumont and Fletcher were great theatrical names, and therefore there was no scruple about letting me peruse their works. What harm, indeed, could they do me at that age? I read them merely for the interest which the stories afforded, and understood the worse parts as little as I did the better.

But I acquired imperceptibly from such reading familiarity with the diction, and ear for the blank verse of our great masters. In general I gave myself no trouble with what I did not understand; the story was intelligible, and that was enough. But the knight of the Burning Pestle perplexed me terribly; burlesque of this kind is the last thing that a child can comprehend. It set me longing, however, for *Palmerin of England*, and that longing was never gratified till I read it in the original Portuguese. My favorite play upon the stage was *Cymbeline*, and next to that, *As You Like It*. They are both romantic dramas; and no one had ever a more decided turn for music or for numbers than I had for romance.

You will wonder that this education should not have made me a dramatic writer. I had seen more plays before I was seven years old than I have ever seen since I was twenty, and heard more conversation about the theatre than any other subject. Miss Tyler had given up her house at Walcot before I went to Corston; and when I visited her from school, she was herself a guest with Miss Palmer and her sister Mrs. Bartlett, whose property was vested in the Bath and Bristol theatres. Their house was in Galloway's Buildings, from whence a covered passage led to the playhouse, and they very rarely missed a night's performance. I was too old to be put to bed

before the performance began, and it was better that I should be taken than left with the servants; therefore I was always of the party; and it is impossible to describe the thorough delight which I received from this habitual indulgence. No after enjoyment could equal or approach it; I was sensible of no defects either in the dramas or in the representation: better acting indeed could nowhere have been found; Mrs. Siddons was the heroine, Dimond and Murray would have done credit to any stage, and among the comic actors were Edwin and Blanchard — and Blisset, who, though never known to a London audience, was, of all comic actors whom I have ever seen, the most perfect. But I was happily insensible to that difference between good and bad acting which, in riper years, takes off so much from the pleasure of dramatic representation; everything answered the height of my expectations and desires. And I saw it in perfect comfort, in a small theatre, from the front row of a box, not too far from the centre. The Bath theatre was said to be the most comfortable in England; and no expense was spared in the scenery and decorations.

My aunt, who hoarded everything, except money, preserved the play-bills, and had a collection of them which Dr. Burney might have envied. As she rarely or never suffered me to be out-of-doors, lest I should dirt my clothes, these play-



bills were one of the substitutes devised for my amusement instead of healthy and natural sports. I was encouraged to prick them with a pin, letter by letter : and for want of anything better, became as fond of this employment as women sometimes are of netting or any ornamental work. I learnt to do it with great precision, pricking the larger types by their outline, so that when they were held up to the window they were bordered with spots of light. The object was to illuminate the whole bill in this manner. I have done it to hundreds ; and yet I can well remember the sort of dissatisfied and damping feeling which the sight of one of these bills would give me, a day or two after it had been finished and laid by. It was like an illumination when half the lamps are gone out. This amusement gave my writing-masters no little trouble ; for, in spite of all their lessons, I held a pen as I had been used to hold the pin.

Miss Tyler was considered as an amateur and patroness of the stage. She was well acquainted with Henderson, but of him I have no recollection. He left Bath, I believe, just as my play-going days began. Edwin, I remember, gave me an ivory windmill, when I was about four years old ; and there was no family with which she was more intimate than Dimond's. She was thrown also into the company of dramatic writers at Mr. Palmer's, who resided then about a mile from Bath,

on the Upper Bristol Road, at a house called West Hall. Here she became acquainted with Coleman and Sheridan, and Cumberland and Holcroft: but I did not see any of them in those years; and the two former, indeed, never. Sophia Lee was Mrs. Palmer's most intimate friend; she was then in high reputation for the first volume of *The Recess*, and for the *Chapter of Accidents*. You will not wonder that hearing, as I continually did, of living authors, and seeing in what estimation they were held, I formed a great notion of the dignity attached to their profession. Perhaps in no other circle could this effect so surely have been produced as in a dramatic one, where ephemeral productions excite an intense interest while they last. Superior as I thought actors to all other men, it was not long before I perceived that authors were still a higher class.

Though I have not become a dramatist, my earliest dreams of authorship were, as might be anticipated, from such circumstances, of a dramatic form, and the notion which I had formed of dramatic composition was not inaccurate. "It is the easiest thing in the world to write a play!" said I to Miss Palmer, as we were in a carriage on Redcliffe Hill one day, returning from Bristol to Bedminster. "Is it, my dear?" was her reply. "Yes," I continued, "for you know you have only to think what you would say if you were in the

place of the characters, and to make them say it." This brings to mind some unlucky illustrations which I made use of about the same time to the same lady, with the view of enforcing what I conceived to be good and considerate advice. Miss Palmer was on a visit to my aunt at Bedminster; they had fallen out, as they sometimes would do; these bickerings produced a fit of sullenness in the former, which was not shaken off for some days; and while it lasted, she usually sat with her apron over her face. I really thought she would injure her eyes by this, and told her so in great kindness; "for you know, Miss Palmer," said I, "that everything gets out of order if it is not used. A book, if it is not opened, will become damp and mouldy; and a key, if it is never turned in the lock, gets rusty." Just then my aunt entered the room. "Lord, Miss Tyler!" said the offended lady, "what do you think this child has been saying? He has been comparing my eyes to a rusty key and a mouldy book." This speech, however, was not without some good effect, for it restored good humor. Miss Palmer was an odd woman with a kind heart; one of those persons who are not respected so much as they deserve, because their dispositions are better than their understanding. She had a most generous and devoted attachment to Miss Tyler, which was not always requited as it ought to have been. The earliest dream which

I can remember, related to her; it was singular enough to impress itself indelibly upon my memory. I thought I was sitting with her in her drawing-room (chairs, carpet, and everything are now visibly present to my mind's eye) when the devil was introduced as a morning visitor. Such an appearance, for he was in his full costume of horns, black bat-wings, tail, and cloven feet, put me in ghostly and bodily fear; but she received him with perfect politeness, called him dear Mr. Devil, desired the servant to put him a chair, and expressed her delight at being favored with a call.

There was much more promise implied in my notion of how a play ought to be written than would have been found in any of my attempts. The first subject which I tried was the continence of Scipio, suggested by a print in a pocket-book. Battles were introduced in abundance; because the battle in *Cymbeline* was one of my favorite scenes; and because Congreve's hero in *The Mourning Bride* finds the writing of his father in prison, I made my prince of Numantia find pen, ink, and paper, that he might write to his mistress. An act and a half of this nonsense exhausted my perseverance. Another story ran for a long time in my head, and I had planned the characters to suit the actors on the Bath stage. The fable was taken from a collection of tales,

every circumstance of which has completely faded from my recollection, except that the scene of the story in question was laid in Italy, and the time, I think, about Justinian's reign. The book must have been at least thirty or forty years old then, and I should recognize it if it ever fell in my way. While this dramatic passion continued, I wished my friends to partake of it; and soon after I went to Williams' school, persuaded one of my school-fellows to write a tragedy. Ballard was his name, the son of a surgeon at Portbury, a good-natured fellow, with a round face which I have not seen for seven or eight-and-thirty years, and yet fancy that I could recognize it now, and should be right glad to see it. He liked the suggestion, and agreed to it very readily, but he could not tell what to write about. I gave him a story. But then another difficulty was discovered; he could not devise names for the personages of the drama. I gave him a most heroic assortment of *propria quæ maribus et fœminis*. He had now got his *Dramatis Personæ*, but he could not tell what to make them say, and then I gave up the business. I made the same attempt with another school-fellow, and with no better success. It seemed to me very odd that they should not be able to write plays as well as to do their lessons.

Of all my schoolmasters Williams is the one

whom I remember with the kindest feelings. His Welsh blood was too easily roused; and his spirit was soured by the great decline of his school. His numbers in its best days had been from seventy to a hundred; now they did not reach forty, when the times were dearer by all the difference which the American War had occasioned, and his terms could not be raised in proportion to the increased price of everything, because schools had multiplied. When his ill circumstances pressed upon him, he gave way, perhaps more readily, to impulses of anger; because anger, like drunkenness, suspends the sense of care, and an irascible emotion is felt as a relief from painful thoughts. His old wig, like a bank of morning clouds in the east, used to indicate a stormy day. At better times both the wig and the countenance would have beseeemed a higher station; and his anger was the more frightful because at those better times there was an expression of good humor and animation in his features which was singularly pleasing, and I believe denoted his genuine character.

And here let me state the deliberate opinion upon the contested subject of public or private education, which I have formed from what I have experienced and heard and observed. A juster estimate of one's self is acquired at school than can be formed in the course of domestic instruc-

tion, and what is of much more consequence, a better intuition into the characters of others than there is any chance of learning in after life. I have said that this is of more consequence than one's self estimate; because the error upon that score which domestic education tends to produce is on the right side — that of diffidence and humility. These advantages a day scholar obtains, and he avoids great part of the evils which are to be set against them. He cannot, indeed, wholly escape pollution; but he is far less exposed to it than if he were a boarder. He suffers nothing from tyranny, which is carried to excess in schools; nor has he much opportunity of acquiring or indulging malicious and tyrannical propensities himself. Above all, his religious habits, which it is almost impossible to retain at school, are safe. I would gladly send a son to a good school by day; but rather than board him at the best, I would, at whatever inconvenience, educate him myself. What I have said applies to public schools as well as private; of the advantages which the former possess I shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

## CHAPTER II.

The Autobiography, continued — His Father's Library — Tasso, Aristotle, and Spenser — School-Days in Bristol — Epic Dreams.

My home, for the first two years while I went to Williams' school, was at my father's, except that during the holydays I was with Miss Tyler, either when she had lodgings at Bath, or was visiting Miss Palmer there. The first summer holydays I passed with her at Weymouth, whither she was invited to join her friend Mrs. Dolignon.

This lady, whom I remember with the utmost reverence and affection, was a widow with two children, Louisa, who was three or four years older than me, and John, who was just my age. Her maiden name was Delamare, she and her husband being both of refugee race, — an extraction of which I should be far more proud than if my family name were to be found in the Roll of Battle Abbey. I have heard that Mr. Dolignon, in some delirium, died by his own hand, and this perhaps may have broken her spirits, and given a subdued and somewhat pensive manner to one who was naturally among the gentlest, meekest, kindest of



human beings. She had known me at Bath in my earliest childhood; I had the good fortune then to obtain a place in her affections, and that place I retained, even when she thought it necessary to estrange me from her family.

Landor, who paints always with the finest touch of truth, whether he is describing external or internal nature, makes his *Charoba* disappointed at the first sight of the sea:—

“She coldly said, her long-lashed eyes abased,  
Is this the mighty ocean?—Is this all?”

and this he designs as characteristic of a “soul discontented with capacity.” When I went on deck in the *Corunna* packet the first morning, and for the first time found myself out of sight of land, the first feeling was certainly one of disappointment as well as surprise, at seeing myself in the centre of so small a circle. But the impression which the sea made upon me when I first saw it at Weymouth was very different; probably because not having, like *Charoba*, thought of its immensity, I was at once made sensible of it. The sea seen from the shore is still to me the most impressive of all objects, except the starry heavens; and if I could live over any hours of my boyhood again, it should be those which I then spent upon the beach at Weymouth.

The first book which I ever possessed beyond

the size of Mr. Newberry's gilt regiment, was given me soon after this visit by Mrs. Dolignon. It was Hoole's translation of the *Gerusalemme Liberata*. She had heard me speak of it with a delight and interest above my years. My curiosity to read the poem had been strongly excited by the stories of *Olindo* and *Sophronia*, and of the *Enchanted Forest* as versified by Mrs. Rowe. I read them in the volume of her *Letters*, and despaired at the time of ever reading more of the poem till I should be a man, from a whimsical notion that as the subject related to Jerusalem, the original must be in Hebrew. No one in my father's house could set me right upon this point; but going one day with my mother into a shop, one side of which was fitted up with a circulating library, containing not more than three or four hundred volumes, almost all novels, I there laid my hand upon Hoole's version, a little before my visit to Weymouth. The copy which Mrs. Dolignon sent me is now in my sight, upon the shelf, and in excellent preservation, considering that when a school-boy I perused it so often that I had no small portion of it by heart. Forty years have tarnished the gilding upon its back; but they have not effaced my remembrance of the joy with which I received it, and the delight which I found in its repeated perusal.

During the years that I resided in Wine Street,

I was upon a short allowance of books. My father read nothing except *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*. A small glass cupboard over the desk in the back parlor held his wine-glasses and all his library. It consisted of the *Spectator*, three or four volumes of the *Oxford Magazine*, one of the *Freeholder*, and one of the *Town and Country*; these he had taken in during the Wilkes and Liberty epidemic. My brother Tom and I spoil them by coloring, that is bedaubing, the prints; but I owe to them some knowledge of the political wit, warfare, and scandal of those days; and from one of them that excellent poem *The Old Batchelor* was cut out, which I reprinted in the *Annual Anthology*. The other books were Pomfret's *Poems*, *The Death of Abel*, Aaron Hill's translation of *Merope*, with *The Jealous Wife*, and *Edgar and Emmeline*, in one volume; *Julius Cæsar*, *The Toy Shop*, *All for Love*, and a Pamphlet upon the Quack Doctors of George II.'s Days, in another; *The Vestal Virgins*, *The Duke of Lerma*, and *The Indian Queen*, in a third. To these my mother had added *The Guardian*, and the happy copy of Mrs. Rowe's *Letters* which introduced me to Torquato Tasso.

The holidays made amends for this penury, and Bull's Circulating Library was then to me what the Bodleian would be now. Hoole, in his notes, frequently referred to the *Orlando Furioso*. I

saw some volumes thus lettered on Bull's counter, and my heart leaped for joy. They proved to be the original; but the shopman, Mr. Cruett (a most obliging man he was), immediately put the translation into my hand, and I do not think any accession of fortune could now give me so much delight as I then derived from that vile version of Hoole's. There, in the notes, I first saw the name of Spenser, and some stanzas of the *Faery Queen*. Accordingly, when I returned the last volume, I asked if that work was in the library. My friend Cruett replied that they had it, but it was written in old English, and I should not be able to understand it. This did not appear to me so much a necessary consequence as he supposed, and I therefore requested he would let me look at it. It was the quarto edition of '17, in three volumes, with large prints folded in the middle, equally worthless (like all the prints of that age) in design and execution. There was nothing in the language to impede, for the ear set me right where the uncouth spelling (orthography it cannot be called) might have puzzled the eye; and the few words which are really obsolete, were sufficiently explained by the context. No young lady of the present generation falls to a new novel of Sir Walter Scott's with keener relish than I did that morning to the *Faery Queen*. If I had then been asked wherefore it gave me so much more

pleasure than ever Ariosto had done, I could not have answered the question. I now know that it was very much owing to the magic of its verse; the contrast between the flat couplets of a rhymester like Hoole, and the fullest and finest of all stanzas written by one who was perfect master of his art. But this was not all. Ariosto too often plays with his subject; Spenser is always in earnest. The delicious landscapes which he luxuriates in describing brought everything before my eyes. I could fancy such scenes as his lakes and forests, gardens and fountains presented; and I felt, though I did not understand, the truth and purity of his feelings, and that love of the beautiful and the good which pervades his poetry.

When Miss Tyler had lived about among her friends as long as it was convenient for them to entertain her, and longer in lodgings than was convenient for herself, she began to think of looking out for a house at Bristol; and, owing to some odd circumstances, I was the means of finding one which precisely suited her. Mrs. Wraxall, the widow of a lawyer, had heard, I know not how, that I was a promising boy, very much addicted to books, and she sent to my mother requesting that I might drink tea with her one evening. The old lady was mad as a March hare after a religious fashion. Her behavior to me was very kind; but as soon as tea was over, she bade

me kneel down, and down she knelt herself, and prayed for me by the hour to my awful astonishment. When this was done she gave me a little book called *Early Piety*, and a coarse edition of the *Paradise Lost*, and said she was going to leave Bristol. It struck me immediately that the house which she was about to quit was such a one as my aunt wanted. I said so; and Mrs. Wraxall immediately answered, "Tell her that if she likes it, she shall have the remainder of my lease." The matter was settled in a few days, for this was an advantageous offer. The house at that time would have been cheap at £20 a year, and there was an unexpired term of five years upon it at only £11. This old lady was mother to Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, who had been bred up, and perhaps born, in that habitation.

The pleasantest of my school years were those which I passed at Williams'. What I learnt there, indeed, was worth little; it was just such a knowledge of Latin as a boy of quick parts and not without diligence will acquire under bad teaching. When I had gone through the *Metamorphoses*, Williams declared his intention of taking me from the usher and instructing me in Virgil himself, no other of his pupils having proceeded so far. But the old man, I suppose, discovered that the little classical knowledge which he ever possessed had passed away as irrevocably

as his youth, and I continued under the usher's care, who kept me in the *Eclogues* so long that I was heartily sick of them, and I believe have never looked in them from that time. Over and over again did that fellow make me read them; probably because he thought the book was to be gone through in order, and was afraid to expose himself in the *Georgics*. No attempt was made to ground me in prosody; and as this defect in my education was never remedied (for when I went to Westminster I was too forward in other things to be placed low enough in the school for regular training in this), I am at this day as liable to make a false quantity as any Scotchman.

Williams, who read well himself and prided himself upon it, was one day very much offended with my reading, and asked me scornfully who taught me to read. I answered, my aunt. "Then," said he, "give my compliments to your aunt; and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead these twenty years, could have taught you as well." I delivered the message faithfully, to her great indignation. It was never forgotten or forgiven, and perhaps it accelerated the very proper resolution of removing me. My uncle made known his intention of placing me at Westminster. His connection with Christ Church naturally led him to prefer that to any other school, in the hope that I should get into college,

and so be elected off to a studentship. But as I was in feeble health, and, moreover, had been hitherto very ill taught, it was deemed advisable that I should be placed for twelve months under a clergyman competent to prepare me for a public school.

[He was sent as a day scholar to Mr. Lewis, a clergyman in Bristol.]

I profited by this year's tuition less than I should have done at a good school. It is not easy to remedy the ill effects of bad teaching; and the farther the pupil has advanced in it, the greater must be the difficulty of bringing him into a better way. Lewis, too, had been accustomed to the mechanical movements of a large school, and was at a loss how to proceed with a boy who stood alone. I began Greek under him, made nonsense-verses, read the *Electa ex Ovidio et Tibullo* and Horace's Odes, advanced a little in writing Latin, and composed English themes.

*C'est le premier pas qui coute.* I was in as great tribulation when I had the first theme to write as when Williams required me to produce a letter. The text of course had been given me; but how to begin, what to say, or how to say it, I knew not. No one who had witnessed my perplexity upon this occasion would have supposed how much was afterwards to be spun from these poor brains. My aunt at last, in compassion,



wrote the theme for me. Lewis questioned me if it was my own, and I told him the truth. He then encouraged me sensibly enough; put me in the way of composing the commonplaces of which themes are manufactured (indeed, he caused me to transcribe some rules for themes, making a regular receipt as for a pudding); and he had no reason afterwards to complain of any want of aptitude in his scholar, for when I had learnt that it was not more difficult to write in prose than in verse, the ink dribbled as daintily from my pen as ever it did from John Bunyan's.

It was still more fortunate that there was none to direct me in my favorite pursuit, certain as it is that any instructor would have interfered with the natural and healthy growth of that poetical spirit which was taking its own course. That spirit was like a plant which required no forcing nor artificial culture; only air and sunshine, and the rains and the dews of heaven. I do not remember in any part of my life to have been so conscious of intellectual improvement as I was during the year and half before I was placed at Westminster: an improvement derived not from books or instruction, but from constantly exercising myself in English verse; and from the development of mind which that exercise produced, I can distinctly trace my progress by help of a list, made thirty years ago, of all my compo-

sitions in verse, which were then in existence, or which I had at that time destroyed.

Early as my hopes had been directed toward the drama, they received a more decided and more fortunate direction from the frequent perusal of Tasso, Ariosto, and Spenser. I had read also Mickle's *Lusiad* and Pope's Homer. If you add to these an extensive acquaintance with the novels of the day, and with the Arabian and mock-Arabian tales, the whole works of Josephus (taken in by me with my pocket-money in three-score sixpenny numbers, which I now possess), such acquaintance with Greek and Roman history as a school-boy picks up from his lessons and from Goldsmith's abridged histories, and such acquaintance with their fables as may be learnt from Ovid, from the old Pantheon, and above all from the end of Littleton's Dictionary, you will have a fair account of the stock upon which I began. But Shakespere and Beaumont and Fletcher must not be forgotten; nor Sidney's *Arcadia*; nor Rowley's *Poems*, for Chatterton's history was fresh in remembrance, and that story, which would have affected one of my disposition any where, acted upon me with all the force of local associations.

The first of my Epic dreams was created by Ariosto. I meant to graft a story upon the *Orlando Furioso*, not knowing how often this had

been done by Italian and Spanish imitators. Arcadia was to have been the title and the scene; thither I meant to carry the Moors under Marsilius after their overthrow in France, and there to have overthrown them again by a hero of my own, named Alphonso, who had caught the Hippogriff. This must have been when I was between nine and ten, for some verses of it were written on the covers of my Phædrus. They were in the heroic couplet. Among my aunt's books was the first volume of Bysshe's *Art of Poetry*, which, worthless as it is, taught me at that age the principle upon which blank verse is constructed, and thereby did me good service at a good time. I soon learnt to prefer that metre, not because it was easier than rhyme (which was easy enough), but because I felt in it a greater freedom and range of language, because I was sensible that in rhyming I sometimes used expressions, for the sake of the rhyme, which were far-fetched, and certainly would not have occurred without that cause.

There was one point in which these premature attempts afforded a hopeful omen, and that was in the diligence and industry with which I endeavored to acquire all the historical information within my reach, relating to the subject in hand. Forty years ago, I could have given a better account of the birth and parentage of Egbert, and

the state of the Heptarchy during his youth, than I could do now without referring to books; and when Cassibelan was my hero, I was as well acquainted with the division of the island among the ancient tribes, as I am now with the relative situation of its counties. It was, perhaps, fortunate that these pursuits were unassisted and solitary. By thus working a way for myself, I acquired a habit and a love for investigation, and nothing appeared uninteresting which gave me any of the information I wanted. The pleasure which I took in such researches, and in composition, rendered me in a great degree independent of other amusements; and no systematic education could have fitted me for my present course of life so well as the circumstances which allowed me thus to feel and follow my own impulses.

### CHAPTER III.

Autobiography, continued — Miss Tyler's Eccentricities — First Visit to London — Westminster School — Botch Hayes — Story of a Bully.

July 17, 1824.

FEW boys were ever less qualified for the discipline of a public school than I was, when it was determined to place me at Westminster; for if my school education had been ill conducted, the life which I led with Miss Tyler tended in every respect still more to unfit me for the new scenes, the new world almost it might be called, on which I was about to enter.

When my aunt settled at Bristol, she brought with her a proud contempt for Bristol society. In fact, she had scarcely any acquaintance there, and seldom saw any company, except when some of her Bath friends came to Clifton for the summer; or when the players took up their abode in the city, for then Mr. Dimond used to visit her. He was a most gentlemanly and respectable man, as well as a good actor. Great is the delight which I have had in seeing him perform, and hardly less was that which I have felt in listening to his conversation. The days when he dined with us were almost our only gala days. At such times, and when she went out, Miss Tyler's

appearance and manners were those of a woman who had been bred in the best society and was equal to it; but if any stranger or visitor had caught her in her ordinary apparel, she would have been as much confused as Diana when Actæon came upon her bathing-place, and almost with as much reason, for she was always in a bed-gown and in rags. Most people, I suspect, have a weakness for old shoes; ease and comfort and one's own fireside are connected with them; in fact, we never feel any regard for shoes till they attain to the privileges of age, and then they become almost as much a part of the wearer as his corns. This sort of feeling my aunt extended to old clothes of every kind; the older and the raggeder they grew, the more unwilling she was to cast them off. But she was scrupulously clean in them; indeed, the principle upon which her whole household economy was directed was that of keeping the house clean, and taking more precautions against dust than would have been needful against the plague in an infected city. She labored under a perpetual *dusto-phobia*, and a comical disease it was; but whether I have been most amused or annoyed by it, it would be difficult to say. I had, however, in its consequences, an early lesson how fearfully the mind may be enslaved by indulging its own peculiarities and whimsies, innocent as they may appear at first.

The discomfort which Miss Tyler's passion for cleanliness produced to herself, as well as to her little household, was truly curious: to herself, indeed, it was a perpetual torment; to the two servants a perpetual vexation, and so it would have been to me if nature had not blest me with an innate hilarity of spirit which nothing but real affliction can overcome. That the better rooms might be kept clean, she took possession of the kitchen, sending the servants to one which was underground; and in this little, dark, confined place, with a rough stone floor, and a skylight (for it must not be supposed that it was a best kitchen, which was always, as it was intended to be, a comfortable sitting-room; this was more like a scullery), we always took our meals, and generally lived. The best room was never opened but for company; except now and then on a fine day to be aired and dusted, if dust could be detected there. In the other parlor, I was allowed sometimes to read, and she wrote her letters, for she had many correspondents; and we sat there sometimes in summer, when a fire was not needed, for fire produced ashes, and ashes occasioned dust, and dust, visible or invisible, was the plague of her life. I have seen her order the teakettle to be emptied and refilled, because some one had passed across the hearth while it was on the fire preparing for her breakfast. She had indulged

these humors till she had formed for herself notions of uncleanness almost as irrational and inconvenient as those of the Hindoos. She had a cup once buried for six weeks, to purify it from the lips of one whom she accounted unclean; all who were not her favorites were included in that class. A chair in which an unclean person had sat was put out in the garden to be aired; and I never saw her more annoyed than on one occasion when a man, who called upon business, seated himself in her own chair: how the cushion was ever again to be rendered fit for her use, she knew not! On such occasions, her fine features assumed a character either fierce or tragic; her expressions were vehement even to irreverence; and her gesticulations those of the deepest and wildest distress, — hands and eyes uplifted, as if she was in hopeless misery, or in a paroxysm of mental anguish.

As there are none who like to be upon ill terms with themselves, most people find out some device whereby they may be reconciled to their own faults; and in this propensity it is that much of the irreligion in the world, and much of its false philosophy, have originated. My aunt used frequently to say that all good-natured people were fools. Hers was a violent temper, rather than an ill one; there was a great deal of kindness in it, though it was under no restraint. She was at



once tyrannical and indulgent to her servants, and they usually remained a long while in her service, partly I believe from fear, and partly from liking: from liking, because she sent them often to the play (which is probably to persons in that condition, as it is to children, the most delightful of all amusements), and because she conversed with them much more than is usual for any one in her rank of life. Her habits were so peculiar, that the servants became in a certain degree her confidants: she therefore was afraid to change them, and they, even when they wished to leave her, were afraid to express the wish, knowing that she would regard it as a grievous offence, and dreading the storm of anger which it would bring down. Two servants in my remembrance left her for the sake of marrying; and, although they had both lived with her many years, she never forgave either, nor ever spoke of them without some expression of bitterness. I believe no daughter was ever more afraid of disclosing a clandestine marriage to a severe parent, than both these women were of making their intention known to their mistress, such was the ascendancy that she possessed over them. She had reconciled herself to the indulgence of her ungoverned anger, by supposing that a bad temper was naturally connected with a good understanding and a commanding mind.

The influence which she possessed over my mother was the ascendancy of a determined and violent spirit over a gentle and yielding one. There was a difference of twelve years between their ages, and the authority, which Miss Tyler had first exerted as an elder sister she never relaxed. My mother was one of those few persons (for a few such there are) who think too humbly of themselves. Her only fault (I verily believe she had no other) was that of yielding submissively to this imperious sister, to the sacrifice of her own inclination and judgment and sense of what was right. She had grown up in awe and admiration of her, as one who moved in a superior rank, and who, with the advantage of a fine form and beautiful person, possessed that also of a superior and cultivated understanding: withal, she loved her with a true sisterly affection which nothing could diminish, clearly as she saw her faults, and severely as at last she suffered by them. But never did I know one person so entirely subjected by another, and never have I regretted anything more deeply than that subjection, which most certainly in its consequences shortened her life.

If my mother had not been disfigured by the smallpox, the two sisters would have strikingly resembled each other, except in complexion, my mother being remarkably fair. The expression,

however, of the two countenances, was as opposite as the features were alike, and the difference in disposition was not less marked. Take her for all in all, I do not believe that any human being ever brought into the world, and carried through it, a larger portion of original goodness than my dear mother. Every one who knew her loved her, for she seemed made to be happy herself, and to make every one happy within her little sphere. Her understanding was as good as her heart: it is from her I have inherited that alertness of mind, and quickness of apprehension, without which it would have been impossible for me to have undertaken half of what I have performed. God never blessed a human creature with a more cheerful disposition, a more generous spirit, a sweeter temper, or a tenderer heart. I remember that when first I understood what death was, and began to think of it, the most fearful thought it induced was that of losing my mother; it seemed to me more than I could bear, and I used to hope that I might die before her. Nature is merciful to us. We learn gradually that we are to die, — a knowledge which, if it came suddenly upon us in riper age, would be more than the mind could endure. We are gradually prepared for our departure by seeing the objects of our earliest and deepest affections go before us; and even if no keener afflictions are dispensed to wean us from this

world, and remove our tenderest thoughts and dearest hopes to another, mere age brings with it a weariness of life, and death becomes to the old as natural and desirable as sleep to a tired child.

My father's house being within ten minutes' walk of Terril Street (or rather run, for I usually galloped along the bye-ways), few days passed on which I did not look in there. Miss Tyler never entered the door, because there was an enmity between her and Thomas Southey. She had given just occasion to it. They hated each other cordially now, and took no pains to conceal it. My visits at home, therefore, were short, and I was seldom allowed to dine or pass the evening there. My brother Tom was at school; the difference of age between us made us at that time not very suitable companions when we were together. There was not a single boy of my own age, or near it, in any of the few families with whom either my mother or aunt was acquainted; and my only friend and companion was my aunt's servant boy, Shadrach Weeks, her maid's brother. Shad, as we called him, was just my own age, and had been taken into her service soon after she settled in Bristol. He was a good-natured, active, handy lad, and became very much attached to me, and I to him. At this hour, if he be living, and were to meet me, I am sure he would greet me with a hearty shake by the hand; and, be it where

it might, I should return the salutation. We used to work together in the garden, play trap in the fields, make kites and fly them, try our hands at carpentry, and, which was the greatest of all indulgences, go into the country to bring home primrose, violet, and cowslip roots; and sometimes to St. Vincent's Rocks, or rather the heights about a mile and a half farther down the river, to search for the bee and fly orchis. Some book had taught me that these rare flowers were to be found there; and I sought for them year after year with such persevering industry, for the unworthy purpose of keeping them in pots at home (where they uniformly pined and died), that I am afraid botanists who came after me may have looked for them there in vain. Perhaps I have never had a keener enjoyment of natural scenery than when roaming about the rocks and woods on the side of the Avon with Shad and our poor spaniel Phillis. Indeed, there are few scenes in the island finer of their kind; and no other where merchant vessels of the largest size may be seen sailing between such rocks and woods — the shores being upon a scale of sufficient magnitude to supply all that the picturesque requires, and not upon so large a one as to make the ships appear comparatively insignificant.

Had it not been for this companion, there would have been nothing to counteract the effemi-

nating and debilitating tendency of the habits to which my aunt's peculiarities subjected me. Pricking play-bills had been the pastime which she encouraged as long as I could be prevailed on to pursue it; and afterwards she encouraged me to cut paper into fantastic patterns. But I learnt a better use of my hands in Shad's company; and we became such proficient in carpentry that, before I went to Westminster, we set about the enterprize of making and fitting up a theatre for puppets.

The business of placing me at Westminster afforded my aunt an excuse for going to London; Miss Palmer was easily persuaded to accompany her and to hire a carriage for the season, and we set off in February, 1788. I had never before been a mile from Bath in that direction, and when my childish thoughts ever wandered into the *terra incognita* which I was one day to explore, this had been the road to it, simply because all the other outlets from that city were familiar to me. We slept at Marlborough the first night; at Reading the second, and on the third day we reached Salt Hill. Tom and Charles Palmer were summoned from Eton to meet their aunt there, and we remained a day for the purpose of seeing Windsor, which I have never seen since. Lodgings had been engaged in a small house in Pall Mall, for no situation that was less fashiona-

ble would content Miss Tyler, and she had a reckless prodigality at fits and starts, the effects of which could not be counteracted by the parsimony and even penuriousness of her usual habits. Mr. Palmer was at that time comptroller of the Post Office, holding the situation which he had so well deserved, and from which he was not long afterwards most injuriously displaced. We visited him, and the Newberrys, and Mrs. Dolignon, and went often to the theatres; and my aunt appeared to be as happy as if she were not incurring expenses which she had no means of discharging. My father had given her thirty pounds for the journey, a sum amply sufficient for taking me to school and leaving me there, and, moreover, as much as he could afford; but she had resolved upon passing the season in town, as careless of all consequences as if she had been blind to them.

About six weeks elapsed before I was deposited at my place of destination. London I very much disliked: I was too young to take any pleasure in the companies to which I was introduced as an inconvenient appendage of my aunt's; nor did I feel half the interest at the theatres, splendid as they were, which I had been wont to take at Bath and Bristol, where every actor's face was familiar to me, and every movement of the countenance could be perceived. I wished

for Shad, and the carpentry, and poor Phillis, and our rambles among the woods and rocks. At length, upon the first of April (of all ominous days that could be chosen), Mr. Palmer took me in his carriage to Dean's Yard, introduced me to Dr. Smith, entered my name with him, and, upon his recommendation, placed me at the boarding-house, then called Otly's, from its late mistress, but kept by Mrs. Farren; and left me there, with Samuel Hayes, the usher of the house, and of the fifth form, for my tutor.

Botch Hayes, as he was denominated, for the manner in which he mended his pupils' verses, was a man who, having some skill and much facility in versifying, walked for many years over the Seatonian race-ground at Cambridge, and enjoyed the produce of Mr. Seaton's Kislingbury estate without a competitor. He was, moreover, what Oldys describes Nahum Tate to have been, — "a free, good-natured, fuddling companion"; to all which qualities his countenance bore witness. Hayes it was who edited the sermons which Dr. Johnson is supposed to have written for his friend Dr. Taylor.

I was quartered in the room with ——, who afterwards married that sweet creature, Lady ——, and never was woman of a dove-like nature more unsuitably mated, for ——, when in anger, was perfectly frantic. His face was as fine as



a countenance could be which expressed so ungovernable and dangerous a temper; the finest red and white, dark eyes and brows, and black curling hair; but the expression was rather that of a savage than of a civilized being, and no savage could be more violent. He had seasons of good-nature, and at the worst was rather to be dreaded than disliked; for he was plainly not master of himself. But I had cause to dread him; for he once attempted to hold me by the leg out of the window; it was the first floor, and over a stone area: had I not struggled in time, and clung to the frame with both hands, my life would probably have been sacrificed to this freak of temporary madness. He used to pour water into my ear when I was abed and asleep, fling the porter-pot or the poker at me, and in many ways exercised such a capricious and dangerous tyranny, merely by right of the strongest (for he was not high enough in the school to fag me), that at last I requested Mr. Hayes to remove me into another chamber. Thither he followed me; and, at a very late hour one night, came in wrapt in a sheet, and thinking to frighten me by personating a ghost, in which character he threw himself upon the bed, and rolled upon me. Not knowing who it was, but certain that it was flesh and blood, I seized him by the throat, and we made noise enough to bring up the usher of the house, and

occasion an inquiry, which ended in requiring ——'s word that he never would again molest me.

He kept his word faithfully, and left school a few months afterwards, when he was about seventeen or eighteen, and apparently full grown, — a singularly fine and striking youth; indeed, one of those figures which you always remember vividly. I heard nothing of him till the Irish rebellion: he served in the army there; and there was a story, which got into the newspapers, of his meeting a man upon the road, and putting him to death without judge or jury, upon suspicion of his being a rebel. It was, no doubt, an act of madness. I know not whether any proceedings took place (indeed, in those dreadful times, anything was passed over); but he died soon afterwards, happily for himself, and all who were connected with him.

## CHAPTER IV.

School Friendships—Four Years at Westminster—Is Privately Expelled—Goes to Oxford—Plans of Life—Friendship with Coleridge—Pantisocracy—Rupture with his Aunt—Marriage—Voyage to Portugal—Returns to England—Legal Studies and literary Pursuits—Edits Chatterton.

[THE autobiography comes abruptly to a close before the end of Southey's school life at Westminster, and he does not mention that he made two friendships there, with C. W. W. Wynn and Grosvenor Bedford, that were destined to be permanent. An article against flogging, written in a school publication, was treated far too seriously by the head master, and Southey, as his son states, was compelled to leave the school. It was in the spring of 1792 that he returned to his aunt's house at Bristol. "I left Westminster," he wrote afterwards, "in a perilous state—a heart full of poetry and feeling, a head full of Rousseau and *Werther*, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon; many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline." With this he soon became acquainted, for his father shortly died with his affairs in utter disorder, but Southey, thanks to his good uncle, the Rev. Herbert Hill, Chaplain to the British Factory at Lisbon, was

enabled, in 1793, to go up to Balliol College, Oxford, where he pursued his own vocation of poet with more ardor than the university curriculum. The youthful letters of the Oxford student are not interesting as letters, but a few passages must be quoted from them in order to maintain the thread of the story. "I have plans," he writes, "lying by me enough for many years or many lives"; yet he aspired to nothing beyond £200 a year and the comforts of domestic life, and observes again and again that he has no ambition. He felt he could not conscientiously take holy orders, as his uncle wished, and already hankered after an ideal home in America.]

*To Horace Bedford.*

BRISTOL, November 13, 1793.

It was the favorite intention of Cowley to retire with books to a cottage in America, and seek that happiness in solitude which he could not find in society. My asylum there would be sought for different reasons (and no prospect in life gives me half the pleasure this visionary one affords); I should be pleased to reside in a country where men's abilities would ensure respect; where society was upon a proper footing, and man was considered as more valuable than money; and where I could till the earth, and provide by honest industry the meat which my wife would dress with

pieasing care — *redeunt spectacula mane* — reason comes with the end of the paper.

*To Grovesnor Bedford.*

BATH, Dec. 14, 1793.

What is to become of me at ordination Heaven only knows! After keeping the straight path so long the Test Act will be a stumbling-block to honesty; so chance and Providence must take care of that, and I will fortify myself against chance. The wants of man are so very few that they must be attainable somewhere, and, whether here or in America, matters little; I have long learned to look upon the world as my country.

Now, if you are in the mood for a reverie, only fancy me in America; imagine my ground uncultivated since the creation, and see me wielding the axe, now to cut down the tree, and now the snakes that nestled in it. Then see me grubbing up the roots, and building a nice snug little dairy with them: three rooms in my cottage, and my only companion some poor negro whom I had bought on purpose to emancipate. After a hard day's toil, see me sleep upon rushes, and, in very bad weather, take out my cassette and write to you, for you shall positively write to me in America. Do not imagine I shall leave rhyming or philosophizing, so thus your friend will realize the romance of Cowley, and even outdo the seclusion of Rous-

seau ; till at last comes an ill-looking Indian with a tomahawk, and scalps me, — a most melancholy proof that society is very bad, and that I shall have done very little to improve it !

[Southey's reveries were never the growth of idleness. While dreaming of America, he was writing *Joan of Arc*, and a great deal besides. In his first year at Oxford he writes : —]

*To Horace Bedford.*

Dec. 22, 1793.

I have accomplished a most arduous task, transcribing all my verses that appear worth the trouble, except letters ; of these I took one list, — another of my pile of stuff and nonsense, — and a third of what I have burnt and lost ; upon an average, 10,000 verses are burnt and lost, the same number preserved, and 15,000 worthless. Consider that all my letters\* are excluded, and you may judge what waste of paper I have occasioned. Three years yet remain before I can become anyways settled in life, and during that interval my object must be to pass each hour in employment. The million would say I must study divinity ; the bishops would give me folios to peruse, little dreaming that to me every blade of grass and every atom of matter is worth all the Fathers. I can bear a retrospect ; but when I

\* Many of these are said to have been in verse.

look forward to taking orders, a thousand dreadful ideas crowd at once upon my mind.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

January, 1794.

I purpose studying physic: innumerable and insuperable objections appeared to divinity: surely the profession I have chosen affords at least as many opportunities of benefiting mankind. In this country a liberal education precludes the man of no fortune from independence in the humbler lines of life; he may either turn soldier or embrace one of three professions, in all of which there is too much quackery. Very soon shall I commence my anatomical and chemical studies. When well grounded in these, I hope to study under Cruikshank to perfect myself in anatomy, attend the clinical lectures, and then commence — Doctor Southey!!!

*To the same.*

May 28, 1794.

You know my objection to orders, and the obstacles to any other profession: it is now my wish to be in the same office with you. Do, my dear Grosvenor, give me some information upon this topic. I speak to you without apologizing; you will serve me if you can, and tell me if you cannot: it would be a great object to be in the same office

with you. In this plan of life the only difficulty is obtaining such a place, and for this my hopes rest on Wynn and you ; in case of success, I shall joyfully bid adieu to Oxford, settle myself in some economical way of life, and, when I know my situation, unite myself to a woman whom I have long esteemed as a sister, and for whom I now indulge a warmer sentiment. Write to me soon. I am sanguine in my expectations if you can procure my admission. Promotion is a secondary concern, though of that I have hopes. My pen will be my chief dependence. In this situation, where a small income relieves from want, interest will urge me to write, but independence secures me from writing so as to injure my reputation. Even the prospect of settling honestly in life has relieved my mind from a load of anxiety.

In this plan of life everything appears within the bounds of probability ; the hours devoted to official attendance, even if entirely taken up by business, would pass with the idea that I was doing my duty, and honestly earning my subsistence. If they should not be fully occupied, I can pursue my own studies ; and should I be fortunate enough to be in the same office with you,\* it would be equally agreeable to both. What situation can be pleasanter than that which places me with all my dearest friends ?

\* Bedford had a post in the Exchequer.



[Once more his purposes were changed. In the summer of 1794 Coleridge visited Oxford, and the two young poets, full of the ardor of youth and the intoxication of genius, found at once many bonds of sympathy. Both of them cherished with fervor the dream of Pantisocracy, and the ties between the two were destined to become still more closely linked. Already Southey was engaged to Edith Fricker; his friend Lovell married another sister, and now Coleridge, on his introduction to the family, became attracted by the eldest. These remarks are necessary to explain the allusions of the following letters.]

Writing to his brother Thomas, a midshipman, in September, 1794, he says: In March we depart for America; Lovell, his wife, brother, and two of his sisters; all the Frickers; my mother, Miss Peggy, and brothers; Heath, apothecary, etc.; G. Burnett, S. T. Coleridge, Robert Allen, and Robert Southey. Of so many we are certain, and expect more. Whatever knowledge of navigation you can obtain will be useful, as we shall be on the bank of a navigable river, and appoint you admiral of a cock-boat. My aunt knows nothing as yet of my intended plan; it will surprise her, but not very agreeably. Everything is in a very fair train, and all parties eager to embark. What do your common blue trowsers cost? Let me know, as I

shall get two or three pairs for my working winter dress, and as many jackets, either blue or gray : so my wardrobe will consist of two good coats, two cloth jackets, four linen ones, six brown Holland pantaloons, and two nankeen ditto for dress. My mother says I am mad ; if so, she is bit by me, for she wishes to go as much as I do. Coleridge was with us nearly five weeks, and made good use of his time. We preached Pantisocracy and Aspheterism everywhere. These, Tom, are two new words, the first signifying the equal government of all, and the other the generalization of individual property ; words well understood in the city of Bristol. We are busy in getting our plan and principles ready to distribute privately. The thoughts of the day, and the visions of the night, all centre in America. Time lags heavily along till March, but we have done wonders since you left me. I hope to see you in January ; it will then be time for you to take leave of the navy, and become acquainted with all our brethren, the pantisocrats. You will have no objection to partake of a wedding dinner in February.

*To the same.*

Bath, October 19, 1794.

Here's a row ! here's a kick up ! here's a pretty commence ! we have have had a revolution in the College Green, and I have been turned out

of doors in a wet night. Lo and behold, even like mine own brother, I was penniless: it was late in the evening; the wind blew and the rain fell, and I had walked from Bath in the morning. Luckily my father's old great coat was at Lovell's. I clapt it on, swallowed a glass of brandy, and set off; I met an old drunken man three miles off, and was obliged to drag him all the way to Bath, nine miles! Oh, Patience, Patience, thou hast often helped poor Robert Southey, but never didst thou stand him in more need than on Friday, the 17th of October, 1794.

Well, Tom, here I am. My aunt has declared she will never see my face again, or open a letter of my writing. — So be it; I do my duty, and will continue to do it, be the consequences what they may. You are unpleasantly situated, so is my mother, so were we all till this grand scheme of Pantisocracy flashed upon our minds, and now all is perfectly delightful. My aunt abuses poor Lovell most unmercifully, and attributes the whole scheme to him; you know it was concerted between Burnett and me. But of all the whole catalogue of enormities, nothing enrages my aunt so much as my intended marriage with Mrs. Lovell's sister Edith; this will hardly take place till we arrive in America; it rouses all the whole army of prejudices in my aunt's breast.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

February, 1795.

My days are disquieted, and the dreams of the night only retrace the past to bewilder me in vague visions of the future. America is still the place to which our ultimate views tend; but it will be years before we can go. As for Wales, it is not practicable. The point is, where can I best subsist? London is certainly the place for all who, like me, are on the world. London must be the place: if I and Coleridge can only get a fixed salary of £100 a year between us, our own industry shall supply the rest. I will write up to *The Telegraph*: they offered me a reporter's place, but nightly employments are out of the question. My troublesome guest, called honesty, prevents my writing in *The True Briton*. God knows I want not to thrust myself forward as a partisan: peace and domestic life are the highest blessings I could implore. Enough! this state of suspense must soon be over: I am worn and wasted with anxiety; and, if not at rest in a short time, shall be disabled from exertion, and sink to a long repose. Poor Edith! Almighty God protect her!

*To Thomas Southey.*

March 21, 1795.

I am giving a course of Historical Lectures, at Bristol, teaching what is right by showing what

is wrong; my company, of course, is sought by all who love good republicans and odd characters. Coleridge and I are daily engaged. John Scott has got me a place of a guinea and a half per week, for writing in some new work called *The Citizen*, of what kind I know not, save that it accords with my principles: of this I daily expect to hear more.

If Coleridge and I can get £150 a year between us, we purpose marrying, and retiring into the country, as our literary business can be carried on there, and practising agriculture till we can raise money for America — still the grand object in view.

So I have cut my cable, and am drifting on the ocean of life — the wind is fair and the port of happiness I hope in view. It is possible that I may be called upon to publish my Historical Lectures; this I shall be unwilling to do, as they are only splendid declamation.

[Meanwhile, much to Coleridge's indignation, the scheme of Pantisocracy was abandoned. Southey's uncle Hill wished him to take orders, but "the gate was perjury," and he told Bedford that he intended to study the law, and reside in the neighborhood of London "as near your road as possible." It will be seen that the wishes of the uncle on whom he was dependent changed his plans.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Oct. 23, 1795.

And where, Grosvenor, do you suppose the fates have condemned me for the next six months? — to Spain and Portugal! Indeed, my heart is very heavy. I would have refused, but I was weary of incessantly refusing all my mother's wishes, and it is only one mode of wearing out a period that must be unpleasant to me anywhere.

I now know neither when I go, nor where, except that we cross to Coruña, and thence by land to Lisbon. Cottle is delighted with the idea of a volume of travels. My Edith persuades me to go, and then weeps that I am going, though she would not permit me to stay. It is well that my mind is never unemployed. I have about 900 lines, and half a preface yet to compose, and this I am resolved to finish by Wednesday night next. It is more than probable that I shall go in a fortnight. When I am returned I shall be glad that I have been. The knowledge of two languages is worth acquiring, and perhaps the climate may agree with me, and counteract a certain habit of skeletonization, that though I do not apprehend it will hasten me to the worms, will, if it continues, certainly cheat them of their supper.

[On the 14th November, 1795, the day fixed for the uncle and nephew to leave England, Southey

was united at Redcliffe church, Bristol, to Edith Fricker. Immediately after the ceremony they parted. "My mother," says the Rev. C. Cuthbert Southey, "wore her wedding-ring hung round her neck, and preserved her maiden name until the report of the marriage had spread abroad."]

*To Joseph Cottle.*

Falmouth, Dec. 8, 1795.

I have learnt from Lovell the news from Bristol, public as well as private, and both of an interesting nature. My marriage is become public. You know my only motive for wishing it otherwise, and must know that its publicity can give me no concern. I have done my duty. Perhaps you may hardly think my motives for marrying sufficiently strong. One, and that to me of great weight, I believe was never mentioned to you. There might have arisen feelings of an unpleasant nature, at the idea of receiving support from one not legally a husband; and (do not show this to Edith) should I perish by shipwreck, or any casualty, I have relations whose prejudices would then yield to the anguish of affection, and who would love and cherish, and yield all possible consolation to my widow. Of such an evil there is but possibility: but against possibility it was my duty to guard.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Falmouth.

Well, Grosvenor, here I am, waiting for a wind. Your letter arrived a few hours before me. Edith you will see and know and love; but her virtues are of the domestic order, and you will love her in proportion as you know her. I hate your daffydown-dilly women, aye, and men too; — the violet is ungaudy in the appearance, though a sweeter flower perfumes not the evening gale. 'Tis equally her wish to see you. Oh! Grosvenor, when I think of our winter evenings that will arrive, and then look at myself arrayed for a voyage in an inn parlor! I scarcely know whether the tear that starts into my eye proceeds from anticipated pleasure or present melancholy. I am never comfortable at an inn; boughten hospitalities are two ill connected ideas. Grosvenor, I half shudder to think that a plank only will divide the husband of Edith from the unfathomed ocean! and did I believe its efficacy, could burn a hecatomb to Neptune with as much devotion as ever burned or smoked in Phæacia.

[It will be seen from the next letter that the lover and husband was absent from England six months.]



*To the same.*

Portsmouth, May 15, 1796.

Thanks be to God, I am in England !

Bedford, you may conceive the luxury of that ejaculation, if you know the miseries of a sea voyage ; even the stoic who loves nothing, and the merchant whose trade-tainted heart loves nothing but wealth, would echo it. Judge you with what delight Robert Southey leapt on *terra firma*. To-night I go to Southampton ; to-morrow will past pains become pleasant. Now, Grosvenor, is happiness a sojourner on earth, or must man be cat-aninetailed by care, until he shields himself in a shroud ? My future destiny will not decide the problem, for I find a thousand pleasures, and a thousand pains, of which nine-tenths of the world know nothing. Come to Bristol, be with me there as long as you can. I almost add, advise me there, but your advice will come too late.

I am sorry you could ask if you did wrong in showing Wynn my letter. I have not a thought secret from him. My passage was very good, and I must be the best-tempered fellow in Great Britain, for the devil a drop of gall is there left in my bile bag. I intend a hymn to the Dii Penates. Write to me directly, and direct to Cottle. I have, as yet, no where to choose my place of rest. I shall soon have enough to place me above want, and till that arrives, shall support myself in ease

and comfort like a silkworm by spinning my own brains.

[For some months, Southey and his wife lived in lodgings at Bristol. During the poet's absence, his brother-in-law Lovell had died. Ultimately the widow found a home with Southey and afterwards with his son.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

May 27, 1796.

Poor Lovell! I am in hopes of raising something for his widow by publishing his best pieces, if only enough to buy her a harpsichord. The poems will make a five-shilling volume, which I preface, and to which I shall prefix an epistle to Mary Lovell. Will you procure me some subscribers? Many a melancholy reflection obtrudes. What I am doing for him you, Bedford, may one day perform for me. How short my part in life may be He only knows who assigned it; I must be only anxious to discharge it well.

How does time mellow down our opinions! Little of that ardent enthusiasm which so lately fevered my whole character remains.

[The enthusiasm, which had died down in May, re-appeared in June.]

Is it not a pity, Grosvenor, that I should not

execute my intention of writing more verses than Lope de Vega, more tragedies than Dryden, and more epic poems than Blackmore? The more I write, the more I have to write. I have a Helicon kind of dropsy upon me, and *crescit indulgens sibi*. The quantity of verses I wrote at Brixton is astonishing; my mind was never more employed: I killed wasps, and was very happy. And so I will again, Grosvenor, though employed on other themes; and if ever man was happy because he resolved to be so, I will.

*To the same.*

June 26, 1796.

My letters occupy more of my time and less of my mind than I could wish. Conceive Gargantua eating wood strawberries one at a time, or green peas, or the old dish — pap with a fork, and you will have some idea how my mind feels in dwelling on desultory topics. *Joan of Arc* was a whole, — it was something to think of every moment of solitude, and to dream of at night; my heart was in the poem; I threw my own feelings into it in my own language, aye, and out of one part of it and another, you may find my own character. Seriously, Grosvenor, to go on with *Madoc* is almost necessary to my happiness; I had rather leave off eating than poetizing; but these things must be; — I will feed upon law and digest it, or it shall choke me.

*To the same.*

July 31, 1796.

Wynn wishes me to live near Lincoln's Inn, because, in a year's time, it will be necessary for me to be with a special pleader; but I wish to live on the other side of Westminster Bridge, because it will be much more necessary to be within an evening's walk of Brixton.\* To all serious studies I bid adieu when I enter upon my London lodgings. The law will neither amuse me, nor ameliorate me, nor instruct me; but the moment it gives me a comfortable independence — and I have but few wants — then farewell to London. I will get me some little house near the sea, and near a country town, for the sake of the post and the bookseller; and you shall pass as much of the summer with me as you can, and I will see you in the winter, — that is, if you do not come and live by me; and then we will keep mastiffs like Carlisle, and make the prettiest theories, and invent the best systems for mankind; aye, and become great philanthropists, when we associate only among ourselves and the fraternity of dogs, cats, and cabbages; for as for poultry, I do not like eating what I have *fed*, and as for pigs, they are too like the multitude. There, in the cultivation of poetry and potatoes, I will be

\* Where Bedford lived. In a summer house in his garden Southey had written a large portion of *Joan of Arc*. — ED.

innocently employed, not but I mean to aspire to higher things; aye, Grosvenor, I will make cider and mead, and try more experiments upon wine than a London vintner; and perhaps, Grosvenor, the first Christmas day you pass with me after I am so settled, we may make a Christmas fire of all my law books. Amen, so be it.

I hope to get out my *Letters* by Michaelmas-day,\* and the *Poems* will be ready in six weeks after that time. That done, farewell to Bristol, my native place, my home for two and twenty years, where from many causes I have endured much misery, but where I have been very happy.

No man ever retained a more perfect knowledge of the history of his own mind than I have done. I can trace the development of my character from infancy,—for developed it has been, not changed. I look forward to the writing of this history as the most pleasing and most useful employment I shall ever undertake.

\* *Letters from Spain and Portugal*, published by Cottle, 1797. "My aunt," Southey writes, "told Peggy [his cousin, Margaret Hill] it was pretty well in me to write a book about Portugal who had not been there six months; for her part, she had been there twelve months, and yet she could not write a book about it—so apt are we to measure knowledge by time. I employed my time there in constant attention, seeing everything and asking questions,—and never went to bed without writing down the information I had acquired during the day." — ED.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

BRISTOL, Oct. 1796.

I know not even the day of the month, but October is somewhat advanced, and this is Friday evening. Why did I not write sooner? Excuses are bad things. I have much to employ me, though I can always make a little leisure. If you were married, Grosvenor, you would know the luxury of sitting indolently by the fireside; at present you only half know it. There is a state of complete mental torpor, very delightful, when the mind admits no sensation but that of mere existence; such a sensation I suppose plants to possess, made more vivid by the dews and gentle rains. To indulge in fanciful systems is a harmless solitary amusement, and I expect many a pleasant hour will be thus worn away, Grosvenor, when we meet. The devil never meddles with me in my unemployed moments; my day-dreams are of a pleasanter nature. I should be the happiest man in the world, if I possessed enough to live with comfort in the country; but in this world we must sacrifice the best part of our lives to acquire that wealth, which generally arrives when the time of enjoying it is past.

I ardently wish for children; yet, if God shall bless me with any, I shall be unhappy to see them poisoned by the air of London.

“Sir, — I do thank God for it, — I do hate  
Most heartily that city.”

So said John Donne;\* 'tis a favorite quotation of mine. My spirits always sink when I approach it. Green fields are my delight. I am not only better in health, but even in heart, in the country. A fine day exhilarates my heart; if it rains, I behold the grass assume a richer verdure as it drinks the moisture: everything that I behold is very good, except man; and in London I see nothing but man and his works. A country clergyman, with a tolerable income, is surely in a very enviable situation.

You love the sea. Whenever I pitch my tent, it shall be by it. When will that be? Is it not a villanous thing that poetry will not support a man, when the jargon of the law enriches so many? I had rather write an epic poem than read a brief.

Have you read St. Pierre? If not, read that most delightful work, and you will love the author as much as I do.

I am as sleepy an animal as ever. The rain beats hard, the fire burns bright, 'tis but eight o'clock, and I have already begun yawning. Good night, Grosvenor, lest I set you to sleep. My father always went to bed at nine o'clock. I have inherited his punctuality and his drowsiness.

\* Donne's words are, "Sir, though I thank God for it, I do hate perfectly all this town." — *Satire* i. — ED.

*To the same.*

Nov. 21, 1796.

When do I come to London? A plain question. I cannot tell, is as plain an answer. My book will be out before Christmas, and I shall then have no further business in Bristol; yet, Bedford, this is not saying when I shall leave it. The best answer is, as soon as I can, and the sooner the better. I want to be there. I want to feel myself settled, and God knows when that will be, for the settlement of a lodging is but a comfortless one. To complete comfort, a house to one's self is necessary. . . . However, I expect to be as comfortable as it is possible to be in that cursed city, "that huge and hateful sepulchre of men." I detest cities, and had rather live in the fens of Lincolnshire or on Salisbury Plain than in the best situation London could furnish. The neighborhood of you and Wynn can alone render it tolerable. I fear the air will wither me up, like one of the miserable myrtles at a town parlor window. It is strange, but I never approach London without feeling my heart sink within me; an unconquerable heaviness oppresses me in its atmosphere, and all its associated ideas are painful. With a little house in the country, and a bare independence, how much more useful should I be, and how much more happy! It is not talking nonsense when I say that the London air is as bad



for the mind as for the body, for the mind is a chameleon that receives its colors from surrounding objects.

My future studies, too. Now, I never read a book without learning something, and never write a line of poetry without cultivating some feeling of benevolence and honesty; but the law is a horrid jargon—a quibbling collection of voluminous nonsense; but this I must wade through,—aye, and I will wade through,—and when I shall have got enough to live in the country, you and I will make my first Christmas fire of all my law books. Oh, Grosvenor, what a blessed bonfire!

[Southey remained in Bristol until the close of 1796 and then went to London resolved to begin in good earnest the study of the law. This, says his son, "he was now enabled to do through the true friendship of Mr. C. W. W. Wynn, from whom he received for some years from this time an annuity of £160, the prompt fulfilment of a promise made during their years of college intimacy." In February he writes to his wife, "Now, my dear Edith, am I of Gray's Inn; where I this day paid twelve pounds fifteen shillings for admission. Edith, you must come to me. I am not merely uncomfortable, I am unhappy without you. I rise in the morning without expecting

pleasure from the day, and I lie down at night without one wish for the morning." The following characteristic letter to Joseph Cottle was written about the same time.]

London, Feb., 1797.

I am now entered on a new way of life, which will lead me to independence. You know that I neither lightly undertake any scheme, nor lightly abandon what I have undertaken. I am happy because I have no wants, and because the independence I labor to obtain, and of attaining which my expectations can hardly be disappointed, will leave me nothing to wish. I am indebted to you, Cottle, for the comforts of my latter time. In my present situation I feel a pleasure in saying thus much.

As to my literary pursuits, after some consideration I have resolved to postpone every other till I have concluded *Madoc*. This must be the greatest of all my works. The structure is complete in my mind; and my mind is likewise stored with appropriate images. Should I delay it these images may become fainter, and perhaps age does not improve the poet.

Thank God! Edith comes on Monday next. I say thank God! for I have never, since my return, been absent from her so long before, and sincerely hope and intend never to be so again.

On Tuesday we shall be settled; and on Wednesday my legal studies begin in the morning, and I shall begin with *Madoc* in the evening. Of this it is needless to caution you to say nothing, as I must have the character of a lawyer; and, though I can and will unite the two pursuits, no one would credit the possibility of the union. In two years the poem shall be finished, and the many years it must lie by will afford ample time for correction. I have declined being a member of a Literary Club which meets weekly, and of which I had been elected a member. Surely a man does not do his duty who leaves his wife to evenings of solitude, and I feel duty and happiness to be inseparable. I am happier at home than any other society can possibly make me.

[In April Southey informs his brother that as he has no business in London till November, except to eat one dinner at Gray's Inn in June, he intends to spend the summer and autumn by the sea. Ultimately the young couple pitched their tent at Burton, in Hampshire, where, it will be seen, Southey made some notable friendships.]

I have two reasons for preferring a residence near the sea. I love to pickle myself in that grand brine-tub; and I wish to catch its morning, evening, and mid-day appearance for poetry, with

the effect of every change of weather. Fancy will do much; but the poet ought to be an accurate observer of nature; and I shall watch the clouds, and the rising and setting sun, and the sea-birds, with no inattentive eye. I have remedied one of my deficiencies, too, since a boy, and learnt to swim enough to like the exercise. This I began at Oxford, and practised a good deal in the summer of 1795. My last dip was in the Atlantic Ocean, at the foot of the Arrabida Mountain—a glorious spot. I have no idea of sublimity exceeding it. . . . Have you ever met with Mary Wollstonecraft's letters from Sweden and Norway? She has made me in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight. Now I am turned lawyer, I shall have no more books to send you, except, indeed, second editions, when they are called for, and then my alterations will be enough, perhaps, to give one interested in the author some pleasure in the comparison. God bless you.\*

[That at 23 he was a boy still may be seen from the wish expressed to Bedford:—]

Would we were settled, aye, and for life, in some little sequestered valley! I would be content

\* As this pious wish is to be found at the close of all or nearly all of Southey's letters, it may for the future be "taken as read." — ED.

never to climb over the hills that sheltered me, and never to hear music or taste beverage but from the stream that ran beside my door. Let me have the sea, too, and now and then some pieces of a wreck to supply me with firewood, and remind me of commerce. This New Forest is very lovely; I should like to have a house in it, and dispeople the rest, like William the Conqueror. Of all land objects a forest is the finest. Gisborne has written a feeble poem on the subject. The feelings that fill me when I lie under one tree and contemplate another in all the majesty of years are neither to be defined nor expressed. They pass over the mind like the clouds of the summer evening — too fine and too fleeting for memory to detain.

*To John May.\**

BURTON, July 11, 1797.

The sister and niece of Chatterton are now wholly destitute; on this occasion I appear as editor of all his works for their relief; this is a heinous sin against the world's opinion, for a young lawyer, but it would have been a real crime to have refused it. We have a black scene to lay before the public: these poor women have been left in want, while a set of scoundrels have been reaping hundreds from the writings of Chat-

\* Southey met May at Lisbon, and a friendship was then formed between them which proved of life-long duration. — ED.

terton. I hope now to make the catastrophe to the history of the poor boy of Bristol; you shall see the proposals as soon as they are printed. Cottle has been with me a few days, and we have arranged everything relative to this business; he is the publisher, and means to get the paper at prime cost, and not receive the usual profit from what he sells. The accounts will be published, and we hope and expect to place Mrs. Newton in comfort during the last years of her life.

Cottle brought with him the new edition of Coleridge's poems: they are dedicated to his brother George in one of the most beautiful poems I ever read. It contains all the poems of Lloyd and Lamb, and I know no volume that can be compared to it. You know not how infinitely my happiness is increased by residing in the country. I have not a wish beyond the quietness I enjoy; everything is tranquil and beautiful; but sometimes I look forward with regret to the time when I must return to a city which I so heartily dislike.

*To the same.*

July 15, 1797.

I sincerely thank you for your letter. I am inclined to think, when my uncle blamed me for not doing my utmost to relieve my family, he must have alluded to my repeated refusal of entering orders; a step which undoubtedly would almost

instantly have relieved them, and which occasioned me great anguish and many conflicts of mind. To this I have been urged by him, and by my mother; but you know what my religious opinions are, and I need not ask whether I did rightly and honestly in refusing. Till Christmas last, I supported myself wholly by the profits of my writings. Thus you may see that the only means I have ever possessed of assisting my mother was by entering the church. God knows I would exchange every intellectual gift which he has blessed me with for implicit faith to have been able to do this. I care not for the opinion of the world, but I would willingly be thought justly of by a few individuals. I labor at a study which I very much dislike, to render myself independent, and I work for the bookseller whenever I can get employment, that I may have to spare for others. I now do all I can, perhaps I may some day be enabled to do all I wish; however, there is One who will accept the will for the deed.

## CHAPTER V.

Resides near Bristol and in Hampshire — Loses Health, and Revisits Portugal — In Bristol again — First Visit to Keswick — Obtains a Secretaryship — Resigns his post, and returns to Bristol — Coleridge — Scott and Modern Ballads.

[SOUTHEY returned to London in the autumn, and escaped from it again in the spring (1798). After a visit to Norwich, and an introduction to William Taylor, the poet took a house at Westbury, two miles from Bristol, and resided there for twelve months, giving far more attention to poetry than to law. To his brother Henry he writes, in July : —]

We are now tolerably settled at Martin Hall. I have labored much in making it comfortable, and comfortable it now is. Our sitting-room is large, with three windows and two recesses — once windows, but now converted into bookcases, with green baize hanging half-way down the books, as in the College Green. The room is papered with cartridge paper, bordered with yellow vandykes edged with black. I have a good many books, but not all I want, as many of my most valuable ones are lying in London. I shall be very glad to get settled in a house at London, where I may collect all my chattels together, and



move on contentedly for some dozen years in my profession. You will find little difficulty either in Anacreon or in Homer; the language will soon become familiar to you, and you will, I hope, apply yourself to it. Gladly I should avail myself of such an opportunity were it in my power. It is of very great advantage to a young man to be a good linguist; he is more respected, and may be more useful; his sources of pleasure are increased; and, what in the present state of the world is to be considered, in case of necessity he has additional means of supporting himself. The languages, Harry — which I learnt almost as an amusement — have considerably contributed and do contribute to my support.

[From Westbury — after eating some dinners in London, for the law was not yet abandoned, — Southey returned to Burton in the summer of 1799. In that summer too he made a tour in Devonshire, and wrote from Exeter to Cottle, of a poet whose name is now inseparably linked to his.]

*Thalaba the Destroyer* is progressive. There is a poem called *Gebir*, of which I know not whether my review be yet printed (in the *Critical*), but in that review you will find some of the most exquisite poetry in the language. I would go a hundred miles to see the anonymous author.

[To Coleridge he writes : —]

A friend of Wordsworth's has been uncommonly kind to me — Basil Montagu. He offered me his assistance as a special pleader, and said if he could save me 100 guineas, it would give him more than 100 guineas' worth of pleasure. I did thank him, which was no easy matter; but I have been told that I never thank anybody for a civility, and there are very few in this world who can understand silence. However, I do not expect to use his offer: his papers which he offered me to copy will be of high service. Tell Wordsworth this.

I commit wilful murder on my own intellect by drudging at law; but trust the guilt is partly expiated by the candle-light hours allotted to *Madoc*. That poem advances very slowly. I am convinced that the best way of writing is to write rapidly and correct at leisure. *Madoc* would be a better poem if written in six months than if six years were devoted to it. However, I am satisfied with what is done, and my outline for the whole is good.

[Scarcely had he settled or seemed to settle at Burton than he was forced to seek for medical advice at Bristol.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Kingsdown, Bristol, Dec. 21, 1799.

Grosvenor, I think seriously of going abroad. My complaint, so I am told by the opinion of many medical men, is wholly a diseased sensibility (mind you, physical sensibility), disordering the functions, now of the heart, now of the intestines, and gradually debilitating me. Climate is the obvious remedy. In my present state, to attempt to undergo the confinement of legal application were actual suicide. I am anxious to be well, and to attempt the profession: *much* in it I shall never do: sometimes my principles stand in my way, sometimes the want of readiness which I felt from the first — a want which I always know in company, and never in solitude and silence. Howbeit, I will make the attempt; but, mark you, if by stage writing, or any other writing, I can acquire independence, I will not make the sacrifice of happiness it will inevitably cost me. I love the country, I love study — devotedly I love it; but in legal studies it is only the subtlety of the mind that is exercised. I am not indolent; I loathe indolence; but, indeed, reading law is laborious indolence — it is thrashing straw. I have read, and read, and read; but the devil a bit can I remember. I have given all possible attention, and attempted to command volition. No! the eye read, the lips pronounced, I understood and

re-read it; it was very clear; I remembered the page, the sentence, — but close the book, and all was gone! Were I an independent man, even on less than I now possess, I should long since have made the blessed bonfire, and rejoiced that I was free and contented.

I suffer a good deal from illness, and in a way hardly understandable by those in health. I start from sleep as if death had seized me. I am sensible of every pulsation, and compelled to attend to the motion of my heart till that attention disturbs it. The pain in my side is, I think, lessened, nor do I at all think it was consumption; organic affection it could not have been, else it had been constant; and a heart disease would not have been perceived *there*. I must go abroad, and recruit under better skies. Not to Lisbon: I will see something new, and something better than the Portuguese.

[To his good uncle and to Lisbon Southey went in spite of his protestation, carrying his wife with him. Thus he writes of the approach to the capital.]

It is not possible to conceive a more magnificent scene than the entrance of the Tagus, and the gradual appearance of the beautiful city upon its banks. It is indeed a sight exceeding all it has

ever been my fortune to behold, in beauty and richness and grandeur. Convents and Quintas, gray olive-yards, green orange-groves, and greener vineyards; the shore more populous every moment as we advanced, and finer buildings opening upon us; the river, bright as the blue sky which illuminated it, swarming with boats of every size and shape, with sails of every imaginable variety; innumerable ships riding at anchor far as eye could reach: and the city extending along the shore, and covering the hills to the farthest point of sight.

*To S. T. Coleridge.*

Lisbon, May day, 1800.

Here, then, we are, thank God! alive, and recovering from dreadful sickness. I never suffered so much at sea, and Edith was worse than I was; we scarcely ate or slept at all: but the passage was very fine and short; five days and a half brought us to our port, with light winds the whole of the way. The way was not, however, without alarm. On Monday morning, between five and six, the captain was awakened with tidings that a cutter was bearing down upon us, with English colors, indeed, but apparently a French vessel; we made a signal, which was not answered; we fired a gun, she did the same, and preparations were made for action. We had another Lisbon packet in company, mounting six guns; our own

force was ten; the cutter was a match, and more, for both, but we did not expect to be taken. You may imagine Edith's terror, awakened on a sick bed — disturbed I should have said — with these tidings! The captain advised me to surround her with mattresses in the cabin, but she would not believe herself in safety there, and I lodged her in the cockpit, and took my station on the quarter-deck with a musket. How I felt I can hardly tell; the hurry of the scene, the sight of grape-shot, bar-shot, and other ingenious implements of this sort, made an undistinguishable mixture of feelings. The cutter bore down between us; I saw the smoke from her matches, we were so near, and not a man on board had the least idea but that an immediate action was to take place. We hailed her; she answered in broken English, and passed on. 'Tis over! cried somebody. Not yet! said the captain; and we expected she was coming round as about to attack our comrade vessel. She was English, however, manned chiefly from Guernsey, and this explained her Frenchified language. You will easily imagine that my sensations, at the ending of the business, were very definable, — one honest simple joy that I was in a whole skin! I laid the musket in the chest with considerably more pleasure than I took it out. I am glad this took place; it has shown me what it is to prepare for action.

Four years' absence from Lisbon have given everything the varnish of novelty, and this, with the revival of old associations, makes me pleased with everything. It even amused me to renew my acquaintance with the fleas, who opened the campaign immediately on the arrival of a foreigner. To-day is a busy day; we are arranging away our things, and seeing visitors: these visits must all be returned; there ends the ceremony, and then I may choose retirement. I hurry over my letters, for the sake of feeling at leisure to begin my employments. The voyage depriving me of all rest, and leaving me too giddy to sleep well, will, with the help of the fleas, break me in well for early rising. The work before me is almost of terrifying labor; folio after folio to be gutted, for the immense mass of collateral knowledge which is indispensable: but I have leisure and inclination.\*

*Thalaba* will soon be finished. Rickman is my plenipotentiary with the booksellers for this. Pray send me your *Plays*. . . . *Thalaba* finished, all my poetry, instead of being wasted in rivulets and ditches, shall flow into the great *Madoc* Mississippi River. I have with me your volume, *Lyrical Ballads*, *Burns*, and *Gebir*. Read *Gebir* again: he grows upon me.

\* He alludes to the *History of Portugal*, the work which employed so much of his time from early manhood to old age, and was never destined to be completed. — ED.

My uncle's library is admirably stocked with foreign books. My plan is this: immediately to go through the chronicles in order, and then make a skeleton of the narrative; the timbers put together, the house may be furnished at leisure. It will be a great work, and worthy of all labor. Write to me, and some long letters; and send me your *Christabel* and your *Three Graves*, and finish them on purpose to send them. Edith's love. I reach a long arm, and shake hands with you across the seas.

*To Lieut. Thomas Southey.*

May 3, 1800.

I am writing at a window that overlooks the river—a magnificent scene: the Tower of Almeida on the opposite isthmus, and its ruined castle; and still further, where the river widens, the shore of Alentejo, the distant height of Cezimbra and its castle, about fifteen miles, the crow's road,—and the boundary formed by the Arrabida mountains;—the Tagus, so superb a river, so busy and alive with its thousand-shaped boats, and yet so broad as never to be crowded, lying smooth under this sunny heaven, like the blue of burnished armor in the sun, seen where it does not dazzle, and now spotted with purple islands by a few thin clouds. Views like this exist only in climates like these; they have a mellow-



ness, a richness, a soft and voluptuous luxuriance of which no English landscape can help you to form an adequate idea; and the strong light and shade varies the scene as the sun moves, now hiding and now bringing forth crags, and vineyards, and churches, and habitations. I am improving my time, and accordingly rise at five. I may say this, for I have done it the only three mornings we have been here, and certainly I shall persevere. Filthy as Lisbon is, no infectious disorders are known here. The streets are narrow, and the houses high, the people dirty, and scantily fed upon poor food, chiefly salt fish, a diet miserably bad and indigestible; yet with all these disadvantages they are as healthy as the inhabitants of any city in the world. An American, in a book upon contagion, attributes the exemption from infectious diseases which Lisbon appears to possess, to the number of lime-kilns in its vicinity. Lime assuredly is very useful in this way; but the cause is utterly inadequate — it might indeed do, were every other house a kiln. The more obvious cause is to be found in the strong winds that regularly blow every evening during the hot weather, sweeping down all the windings of the narrowest streets, and rolling their current down every avenue.

*To the same.*

June 6, 1800.

I go on comfortably. The weather makes me lazy, and yet I have read enormously, and digested much. Laziness is the influenza of the country. The stone-cutter will lay his head upon the stone at which he has worked, and sleep, though it be hot enough to broil a beefsteak. The fellows lie sleeping everywhere in the streets; they seem to possess the power of sleeping when they will. Everlasting noise is another characteristic of Lisbon. Their noonday fireworks, their cannonading on every fool's pretext, their bells to every goat in a flock and every mule in a drove, prove this; above all, their everlasting bell-ding-donging, — for bell-ringing would convey the English idea of music, and here it is only noise.

*To the same.*

June 22.

Fielding died and was buried here. By a singular fatality, four attempts have been made to erect a monument, and all have miscarried. A Frenchman set on foot a subscription for this purpose, and many of the factory engaged for one, two, or three moidores; circumstances took him from Lisbon, and this dropped. Another Frenchman had a monument made at his own expense, and paid for it; there was a fine French inscrip-

tion, that, as his own countrymen had never given the great Fielding a monument, it was reserved for a Frenchman to honor his country by paying that respect to genius: he also went away, and is now following the French Pretender; and his monument lies among masonry and rubbish, where I have sought for it in vain. Then De Visme undertook the affair; and the bust of Fielding, designed for this purpose, is still in the house which belonged to him here. I know not what made this scheme abortive. Last, the Prince of Brazil went to work, and the monument was made. The Lady Abbess of the New Convent wished to see it; it was sent to her; she took a fancy to it, and there it has remained ever since: and Fielding is still without a monument.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

CINTRA, July, 1800.

I have written no line of poetry here, except the four books of *Thalaba*, nor shall I till they are corrected and sent off, and my mind completely delivered of that subject. Some credit may be expected from the poem; and if the booksellers will not give me £100 for a 4to edition of 500 copies, or £140 for a pocket one of 1000, why, they shall not have the poem.

I long to see the face of a friend, and hunger after the bread-and-butter comforts and green

fields of England. Yet do I feel so strongly the good effects of climate, — and I am now perspiring in my shirt while I write, in the coolness of Cintra, a darkened room and a wet floor, — that I certainly wish my lot could be cast somewhere in the south of Europe. The spot I am in is the most beautiful I have ever seen or imagined. I ride a jackass, a fine lazy way of travelling; you have even a boy to beat old Dapple when he is slow. I eat oranges, figs, and delicious pears, — drink Colares wine, a sort of half-way excellence between port and claret, — read all I can lay my hands on, — dream of poem after poem, and play after play, — take a siesta of two hours, and am as happy as if life were but one everlasting to-day, and that to-morrow was not to be provided for.

*To John Rickman.*

Aug. 22, 1800.

I lack society sadly. The people here know much of their own business, very little of the country they live in, and nothing of anything else except cards. My uncle, indeed, is a man of extensive knowledge; and here is one family, of which the master is a man of some science, and where I can open my flood-gates. I want you and Davy, and a newspaper, and bread-and-butter, and a green field for me and the horse: it would do his old English heart as much good as it would

mine. But I have ample and pleasant employment: curiosity forever on the hunt — a situation the most beautiful that I have ever seen, and a climate for which Nature seems to have destined me, only, blessed be God, she dropt me the other side of the bay.

*To Henry Southey.*

Aug. 25, 1800.

For six weeks we have been at Cintra — a spot the most beautiful that I have ever seen, and which is probably unique. Eighteen miles distant, at Lisbon, the sun is insupportable. Here we are cool, with woods and water. The wealthier English are all here; still, however, I lack society, and, were it not for a self-sufficiency (like the bear, who sucks his paws when the snow shuts him up in his den), should be in a state of mental famine. My uncle is little here; people will die, and must be buried. He is a man of extensive information; his library very well furnished, and he very well acquainted with its contents. The English here know very little of the country they live in, and nothing of the literature. Of Camoens they have heard, and only of Camoens. By the help of my uncle I have acquired an extensive knowledge, and am almost as well acquainted with Portuguese literature as with that of my own country. It is not worth much; but it is not

from the rose and the violet only that the bee sucks honey.

You would be amused could you see Edith and myself on ass-back — I sitting sideways, gloriously lazy, with a boy to beat my Bayardo, as well adapted to me as ever that wild courser was to Rinaldo. In this climate there is no walking; a little exercise heats so immoderately: but their cork woods or fir woods, and mountain glens, and rock pyramids, and ever-flowing fountains, and lemon-groves ever in flower and in fruit, want only society to become a Paradise. Could I but colonize Cintra with half a dozen familiars, I should wish never to leave it. As it is, I am comfortable, my health establishing itself, my spirits everlastingly partaking the sunshine of the climate; yet I *do* hunger after the bread-and-butter, and the fireside comforts, and the intellect of England.

[English bread-and-butter was not tasted until the following summer, 1801, when Southey and his wife returned to England, and stayed for a short time at Bristol. "He had now," his son writes, "entirely abandoned all idea of continuing the study of the law, and his thoughts and wishes were strongly turned towards obtaining some appointment which would enable him to reside in a southern climate. He had fixed his mind on a consulship."]

*To S. T. Coleridge.*

BRISTOL, July 11, 1801.

You may have seen a translation of Persius, by Drummond, an M. P. This man is going ambassador, first to Palermo and then to Constantinople: if a married man can go as his secretary, it is probable that I shall accompany him. I daily expect to know. It is a scheme of Wynn's to settle me in the South, and I am returned to look about me. My salary will be small—a very trifle; but after a few years I look on to something better, and have fixed my mind on a consulship. Now, if we go, you must join us as soon as we are housed, and it will be marvellous if we regret England. I shall have so little to do that my time may be considered as wholly my own: our joint amusements will easily supply us with all expenses. So no more of the Azores; for we will see the Great Turk, and visit Greece, and walk up the Pyramids, and ride camels in Arabia. I have dreamt of nothing else these five weeks. As yet everything is so uncertain, for I have received no letter since we landed, that nothing can be said of our intermediate movements. If we are not embarked too soon, we will set off as early as possible for Cumberland, unless you should think, as we do, that Mahomet had better come to the mountain; that change of all externals may benefit you; and that, bad as Bristol weather is, it

is yet infinitely preferable to northern cold and damp. Meet we must, and will.

Time and absence make strange work with our affections; but mine are ever returning to rest upon you. I have other and dear friends, but none with whom the whole of my being is intimate — with whom every thought and feeling can amalgamate. Oh! I have yet such dreams! Is it quite clear that you and I were not meant for some better star, and dropped, by mistake, into this world of pounds, shillings, and pence?

[A few days later he writes again to Coleridge.]

July 25, 1800.

In about ten days we shall be ready to set forward for Keswick; where, if it were not for the rains, and the fogs, and the frosts, I should, probably, be content to winter; but the climate deters me. It is uncertain when I may be sent abroad, or where, except that the south of Europe is my choice — the appointment hardly doubtful, and the probable destination Palermo or Naples. We will talk of the future, and dream of it, on the lake side.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

August 19, 1801.

With Drummond it seems I go not, but he and Wynn design to get for me — or try to get —



a better berth ; that of Secretary to some Italian Legation, which is permanent, and not personally attached to the minister. Amen. I love the South, and the possibility highly pleases me, and the prospect of advancing my fortunes. To England I have no strong tie ; the friends whom I love live so widely apart that I never see two in a place ; and for acquaintance, they are to be found everywhere. Thus much for the future ; for the present I am about to move to Coleridge, who is at the Lakes ; — and I am laboring, somewhat blindly indeed, but all to some purpose, about my ways and means ; for the foreign expedition that has restored my health, has at the same time picked my pocket ; and if I had not good spirits and cheerful industry, I should be somewhat surly and sad. So I am — I hope most truly and ardently for the last time — pen-and-inking for supplies, not from pure inclination. I am rather heaping bricks and mortar than building ; hesitating between this plan and that plan, and preparing for both. I rather think it will end in a romance, in metre Thalabian, — in mythology Hindoo, — by name *The Curse of Kehama*, on which name you may speculate ; and if you have any curiosity to see a crude outline, the undeveloped life-germ of the egg, say so, and you shall see the story as it is, and the poem as it is to be, written piecemeal.

Grosvenor, I perceive no change in myself, nor any symptoms of change; I differ only in years from what I was, and years make less difference in me than in most men. All things considered, I feel myself a fortunate and happy man; the future wears a better face than it has ever done, and I have no reason to regret that indifference to fortune which has marked the past.

[The first letter written from Keswick is dated Sept. 6, 1801, and addressed to the same friend.]

You ask me questions about my future plans which I cannot readily answer, only that if I got a decent salary abroad, even should my health take a fancy to this queer climate, I have no estate to retire to at home, and so shall have a good prudential reason for remaining there. My dreams incline to Lisbon as a resting-place; I am really attached to the country, and, odd as it may seem, to the people. In Lisbon they are, like all metropolitans, roguish enough, but in the country I have found them hospitable, even to kindness, when I was a stranger and in want. The consulship at Lisbon would, of all possible situations, best delight me, — better than a grand consulship, — 'tis a good thousand a year. \* But when one is dreaming, you know, Grosvenor —

These lakes are like rivers; but oh for the

Mondego and the Tagus! And these mountains, beautifully indeed are they shaped and grouped; but oh for the great Monchique! and for Cintra, my paradise! — the heaven on earth of my hopes; and if ever I should have a house at Cintra, as in earnest sincerity I do hope I shall, will not you give me one twelvemonth, and eat grapes, and ride donkeys, and be very happy? In truth, Grosvenor, I have lived abroad too long to be contented in England: I miss southern luxuries, — the fruits, the wines; I miss the sun in heaven, having been upon a short allowance of sunbeams these last ten days.

[And now, through his friend Rickman, who was then residing in Dublin, he obtained the appointment of private secretary to Mr. Corry, Chancellor of the Exchequer for Ireland. A short visit was paid to Dublin, and then, having fetched his wife from Keswick, he removed to London, where Mr. Corry was resident during the winter season.]

*To Mrs. Southey.*

Dublin, Oct., 1801.

It does not appear that my work will be any ways difficult — copying and letter-writing, which any body could do, if anybody could be confidentially trusted. John Rickman is a great man in Dublin and in the eyes of the world, not one jot altered

from the John Rickman of Christchurch, save only that, in compliance with an extorted promise, he has deprived himself of the pleasure of scratching his head, by putting powder in it. He has astonished the people about him. The government stationer hinted to him, when he was giving an order, that if he wanted anything in the pocket-book way, he might as well put it down in the order. Out he pulled his own — "Look, sir, I have bought one for two shillings." His predecessor admonished him not to let himself down by speaking to any of the clerks. "Why, sir," said John Rickman, "I should not let myself down if I spoke to every man between this and the bridge." And so he goes on in his own right way. He has been obliged to mount up to the third story, before he could find a room small enough to sleep in; and there he led me, to show me his government bed, which, because it is a government bed, contains stuff enough to make a dozen; the curtains being completely double, and mattress piled upon mattress, so that tumbling out would be a dangerous fall.\* The filth of the houses is intolerable, —

\* Rickman, according to Talfourd, was the "sturdiest of jovial companions," and Charles Lamb describes him as "fullest of matter with least verbosity." He was also, says Southey's son, "a man of vast and varied practical knowledge upon almost all subjects, of the kindest heart, and unwearied in offices of friendship." Rickman was for many years one of the clerks of the House of Commons. — ED.

floors and furniture offending you with Portuguese nastiness; but it is a very fine city, — a magnificent city, — such public buildings, and the streets so wide! For these advantages Dublin is indebted to the prodigal corruption of its own government. Every member who asked money to make improvements got it; and if he got £20,000, in decency spent five for the public, and pocketed the rest. These gentlemen are now being hauled a little over the coals, and they have grace enough to thank God the Union did not take place sooner.

Did I send, in my last, the noble bull that Rickman heard? He was late in company, when a gentleman looked at his watch, and cried, "*It is to-morrow morning!* — I must wish you good *night.*"

[It was not long before Southey resigned what he called "a foolish office and a good salary," and took up his residence at Bristol.]

"Here," he writes to Coleridge, "I have meantime a comfortable home, and books enough to employ as much time as I can find for them; my table is covered with folios, and my *History* advances steadily, and to my own mind well. No other employment pleases me half so much; nevertheless, to other employment I am compelled by the most cogent of all reasons. I have a job

in hand for Longman and Rees, which will bring me in £60, a possibility of £40, and a chance of a farther £30; this is an abridgment of *Amadis of Gaul* into three duodecimos, with an essay, — anonymously and secretly: if it sell, they will probably proceed through the whole library of romance. In poetry I have, of late, done very little, some fourscore lines the outside; still I feel myself strong enough to open a campaign, and this must probably be done to find beds, chairs, and tables for my house when I get one.”

*To the same.*

Bristol, Aug. 4, 1802.

In reply to your letter there are so many things to be said that I know not where to begin. First and foremost, then, about Keswick, and the pros and cons for domesticating there. To live cheap, — to save the crushing expense of furnishing a house; — sound, good, mercantile motives! Then come the ghosts of old Skiddaw and Great Robinson; — the whole eyewantonness of lakes and mountains, — and a host of other feelings, which eight years have modified and moulded, but which have rooted like oaks, the stronger for their shaking. But then your horrid latitude! and incessant rains! . . .

We shall probably agree altogether some day upon Wordsworth's *Lyrical Poems*. Does he not

associate more feeling with particular phrases, and you also with him, than those phrases can convey to any one else? This I suspect. Who would part with a ring of a dead friend's hair? and yet a jeweller will give for it only the value of the gold: and so must words pass for their current value.

Tell me some more, as Moses\* says, about Keswick, for I am in a humor to be persuaded, — and if I may keep a jackass there for Edith! I have a wolfskin great-coat, so hot that it is impossible to wear it here. Now, is not that a reason for going where it may be useful?

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Nov. 28, 1802.

You have seen my *Cid*, and have not seen what I wrote to Wynn about its manner. Everywhere possible the story is told in the very phrase of the original chronicles, which are almost the oldest works in the Castilian language. The language, in itself poetical, becomes more poetical by necessary compression; if it smack of romance, so does the story: in the notes, the certain will be distinguished from the doubtful passages quoted, and references to author and page uniformly given. Thus much of this, which is no specimen of my historical style: indeed, I do not think uniformity

\* Hartley Coleridge's pet name. — ED.

of style desirable ; it should rise and fall with the subject, and adapt itself to the matter. Moreover, in my own judgment, a little peculiarity of style is desirable, because it nails down the matter to the memory. You remember the facts of Livy ; but you remember the very phrases of Tacitus and Sallust, and the phrase reminds you of the matter when it would else have been forgotten. This may be pushed, like everything, too far, and become ridiculous ; but the principle is true.

*When* I am housed and *homed* (as I shall be, or hope to be, in the next spring ; not that the negotiation is over yet, but I expect it will end well,\* and that I shall have a house in the loveliest part of South Wales, in a vale between high mountains ; and an onymous house too, Grosvenor, and one that is down in the map of Glamorganshire, and its name is Maes Gwyn ; and so much for that, and there's an end of my parenthesis), *then* do I purpose to enter into a grand confederacy with certain of the animal world : every body has a dog, and most people have a cat : but I will have, moreover, an otter, and teach him to fish, for there is salmon in the river Neath (and I should like a hawk, but that is only a vain hope,

\* It is scarcely necessary to say that it did not end well. Some additions to the house were asked for, to which, at the last moment, the landlord objected, and the vale of Neath was exchanged for Cumberland. — ED.



and a gull or an osprey to fish in the sea), and I will have a snake if Edith will let me, and I will have a toad to catch flies, and it shall be made murder to kill a spider in my domains.

*To John Rickman.*

Jan. 30, 1803.

I am rich in books, considered as plain and poor Robert Southey, and in foreign books considered as an Englishman ; but, for my glutton appetite and healthy digestion, my stock is but small, and the historian feels daily and hourly the want of materials. I believe I must visit London for the sake of the Museum, but not till the spring be far advanced, and warm enough to write with tolerable comfort in their reading-room. My *History of Monachism* cannot be complete without the Benedictine *History of Mabillon*. There is another book in the Museum, which must be noticed literally, or put in a note, — the *Book of the Conformities of St. Francis and Jesus Christ!* I have thirteen folios of Franciscan history in the house, and yet want the main one, Wadding's *Seraphic Annual*, which contains the original bulls.

Of the Beguines I have, as yet, found neither traces nor tidings, except that I have seen the name certainly among the heretic list ; but my monastic knowledge is very far from complete. I know only the outline for the two centuries be-

tween Francisco and Luther, and nothing but Jesuit history from that period.

Do not suspect me of querulousness; labor is my amusement, and nothing makes me growl, but that the kind of labor cannot be wholly my own choice; — that I must lay aside old chronicles, and review modern poems; instead of composing from a full head, that I must write like a school-boy upon some idle theme on which nothing can be said or ought to be said. I believe the best thing will be as you hope, for, if I live and do well, my *History* shall be done, and that will be a fortune to a man economical from habit, and moderate in his wants and wishes from feeling and principle.

Coleridge is with me at present; he talks of going abroad, for, poor fellow, he suffers terribly from this climate. You bid me come with the swallows to London! I wish I could go with the swallows in their winterly migration.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 3, 1803.

I love old houses best, for the sake of the odd closets and cupboards and good thick walls that don't let the wind blow in, and little out-of-the-way polyangular rooms with great beams running across the ceiling, — old heart of oak, that has outlasted half a score generations; and chimney-

pieces with the date of the year carved above them, and huge fire-places that warmed the shins of Englishmen before the house of Hanover came over. The most delightful associations that ever made me feel, and think, and fall a-dreaming, are excited by old buildings — not absolute ruins, but in a state of decline. Even the clipt yews interest me; and if I found one in any garden that should become mine, in the shape of a peacock, I should be as proud to keep his tail well spread as the man who first carved him. In truth, I am more disposed to connect myself by sympathy with the ages which are past, and by hope with those that are to come, than to vex and irritate myself by any lively interest about the existing generation.

Your letter was unusually interesting, and dwells upon my mind. What you say of yourself impresses upon me still more deeply the conviction that the want of a favorite pursuit is your greatest source of discomfort and discontent. It is the pleasure of *pursuit* that makes every man happy; whether the merchant, or the sportsman, or the collector, the philobibl, or the *reader-o-bibl*, and *maker-o-bibl*, like me, — pursuit at once supplies employment and hope. This is what I have often preached to you, but perhaps I never told you what benefit I myself have derived from resolute employment. When *Joan of Arc* was in the press, I had as many legitimate causes for unhap-

piness as any man need have, — uncertainty for the future, and immediate want in the literal and plain meaning of the word. I often walked the streets at dinner time for want of a dinner, when I had not eighteen-pence for the ordinary, nor bread and cheese at my lodgings. But do not suppose that I thought of my dinner when I was walking — my head was full of what I was composing: when I lay down at night I was planning my poem; and when I rose up in the morning the poem was the first thought to which I was awake. The scanty profits of that poem I was then anticipating in my lodging-house bills for tea, bread-and-butter, and those little etceteras which amount to a formidable sum when a man has no resources; but that poem, faulty as it is, has given me a Baxter's shove into my right place in the world.

So much for the practical effects of Epictetus, to whom I hold myself indebted for much amendment of character. Now, — when I am not comparatively, but positively, a happy man, wishing little, and wanting nothing, — my delight is the certainty that, while I have health and eyesight, I can never want a pursuit to interest.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

June 9, 1803.

I have just gone through the *Scottish Border Ballads*. Walter Scott himself is a man of great

talent and genius ; but wherever he patches an old poem, it is always with new bricks. Of the modern ballads, his own fragment is the only good one, and that is very good. I am sorry to see Leyden's good for so little. Sir Agrethorn is flat, foolish, Matthewish, Gregoryish, Lewisish. I have been obliged to coin vituperative adjectives on purpose, the language not having terms enough of adequate abuse. I suppose the word Flodden-Field entitles it to a place here, but the scene might as well have been laid in El Dorado, or Tothill Fields, or the country of Prester John, for anything like costume which it possesses. It is odd enough that almost every passage which Scott has quoted from Froissart should be among the extracts which I had made.

In all these modern ballads there is a modernism of thought and language—turns, to me very perceptible and very unpleasant, the more so for its mixture with antique words—polished steel and rusty iron! This is the case in all Scott's ballads. His *Eve of St. John* is a better ballad in story than any of mine, but it has this fault. Matthew G. Lewis, Esq., M. P., sins more grievously in this way ; he is not enough versed in old English to avoid it: Scott and Leyden are, and ought to have written more purely.

Scott, it seems, adopts the same system of metre with me, and varies his tune in the same

stanza from iambic to anapæstic *ad libitum*. In spite of all the trouble that has been taken to torture Chaucer into heroic metre, I have no doubt whatever that he wrote upon this system, common to all the ballad writers. Coleridge agrees with me upon this. The proof is that, read him thus, and he becomes everywhere harmonious; but expletive syllables, en's and y's and e's, only make him halt upon ten lame toes. I am now daily drinking at that pure well of English undefiled, to get historical manners, and to learn English and poetry.

[A proposal was afloat that Southey should edit a *Bibliotheca Britannica*, which led Coleridge to indulge in one of those magnificent projects which were to him so much easier than achievement.]

*To S. T. Coleridge.*

Aug., 1803.

Your plan is too good, too gigantic, quite beyond my powers. If you had my tolerable state of health, and that love of steady and productive employment which is now grown into a necessary habit with me, if you were to execute it, and would execute it, it would be, beyond all doubt, the most valuable work of any age or any country; but I cannot fill up such an outline. No man can better feel where he fails than I do; and to rely

upon you for whole quartos! Dear Coleridge, the smile that comes with that thought is a very melancholy one; and if Edith saw me now, she would think my eyes were weak again, when, in truth, the humor that covers them springs from another cause.

For my own comfort, and credit, and peace of mind, I must have a plan which I know myself strong enough to execute. I can take author by author as they come in their series, and give his life and an account of his works quite as well as ever it has yet been done. I can write connecting paragraphs and chapters shortly and pertinently, in my way; and in this way the labor of all my associates can be more easily arranged. And, after all, this is really nearer the actual design of what I purport by a *Bibliotheca* than yours would be, — a book of reference, a work in which it may be seen what has been written upon every subject in the British language: this has elsewhere been done in the dictionary form; whatever we get better than that form — *ponemus lucro*.

## CHAPTER VI.

Loses his first Child — Keswick — Life among the Mountains — Advice to Coleridge — Visits London — Learns Dutch — *Madoc* published — Visits Scott and Scotland — Edits Kirke White's *Remains*.

[THE plan of the Bibliotheca was delayed, to be finally abandoned, and Southey, having lost a year-old baby, his first child, went for a second visit to Keswick.]

### *To Lieutenant Southey.*

Keswick, Sept. 8, 1803.\*

Edith was very ill at Bristol. On the way we stayed five days with Miss Barker, in Staffordshire — one of the people in the world whom I like. To escape from Bristol was a relief. The place was haunted, and it is my wish never to see it again. Here my spirits suffer from the sight of little Sara,† who is about her size. However, God knows that I do not repine, and that in my very soul I feel that his will is best. These things do one good: they loosen, one by one, the roots that rivet us to earth; they fix and confirm our faith till the thought of death becomes so insepa-

\* It may be understood from this date that all letters are written from Greta Hall unless another address is given. — ED.

† Sara Coleridge.



rably connected with the hope of meeting those whom we have lost, that death itself is no longer considered as an evil.

Did I tell you that, in this universal panic and palsy, Longman has requested me to delay the *Bibliotheca*? This is a relief to me. I feel freer and easier.

Edward has written to me; he was to go on board the following day. I could not at that time see to his fitting out as I should have done; but the boy shall not want as far as my means will go. It is you and I who have fared the worst; the other two will have fewer difficulties to cope with, yet perhaps they will not go on so well. Men are the better for having suffered; — of that, every year's experience more and more convinces me.

Edith suffers deeply and silently. She is kept awake at night by recollections, — and I am harassed by dreams of the poor child's illness and recovery, but this will wear away. Would that you could see these lakes and mountains! how wonderful they are! how awful in their beauty. All the poet-part of me will be fed and fostered here. I feel already in tune, and shall proceed to my work with such a feeling of power as old Samson had when he laid hold of the pillars of the Temple of Dagon.

*To the same.*

Oct. 29, 1803.

This place is better suited for me than you imagine — it tempts me to take far more exercise than I ever took elsewhere, for we have the loveliest scenes possible close at hand; and I have, therefore, seldom or never felt myself in stronger health. And as for good spirits, be sure I have the outward and visible sign, however it may be for the inward and spiritual grace.

My main work has been *Madoc*. I am now arrived at the old fifth book, and at the twelfth of the booklings into which it is now divided. The eleven divisions finished, which bring it down to the end of the old fourth book, contain 2536 lines, — an increase on the whole of 731; but of the whole not one line in five stands as originally written. About 9000 lines will be the extent; but the farther I proceed the less alteration will be needed. When I turn the half-way, I shall then say to my friends, "Now, get me subscribers, and I will publish *Madoc*." In what is done there is some of my best workmanship. I shall get by it less money than fame, and less fame than envy, but the envy will be only life-long; and when that is gone and the money spent — you know the old rhyme.

I must go to work for money; and that also frets me. This hand-to-mouth work is very dis-

heartening, and interferes cruelly with better things, — more important they cannot be called, for the bread-and-cheese is the business of the first necessity. But from my *History* I do expect permanent profit, and such a perpetual interest as shall relieve me. I shall write the volume of letters which you have heard me talk of, — an omnium-gatherum of the odd things I have seen in England.

Whenever you are at a decent distance, and can get leave of absence, do come. Get to Liverpool by water, or, still better, to Whitehaven. You will be thoroughly delighted with the country. The mountains, on Thursday evening, before the sun was quite down, or the moon bright, were all of one dead-blue color; their rifts, and rocks, and swells, and scars had all disappeared — the surface was perfectly uniform, nothing but the outline distinct; and this even surface of dead blue, from its unnatural uniformity, made them, though not transparent, appear transvius, — as though they were of some soft or cloudy texture through which you could have passed. I never saw any appearance so perfectly unreal. Sometimes a blazing sunset seems to steep them through and through with red light; or it is a cloudy morning, and the sunshine slants down through a rift in the clouds, and the pillar of light makes the spot whereon it falls so emerald green that it

looks like a little field of Paradise. At night you lose the mountains, and the wind so stirs up the lake that it looks like the sea by moonlight.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Nov. 10, 1803:

I am preparing *Madoc* for publication, and have so far advanced in the correction as to resolve upon trying my fortune at a subscription. I will print it for a guinea, in one quarto, if possible at that price; if not, in three small volumes. I will not *print* my intention till the success of a subscription has been tried privately; that is, without being published; because if it fails, I can better go to a bookseller. If you can procure me some names, do; but never make yourself uncomfortable by asking. Of course, no money till the delivery of the book.

It is now fifteen years since the subject first came into my occiput, — and I believe Wynn was made acquainted with it almost at the time: it has been so much the subject of my thoughts and dreams that in completing it, in sending off what has been so peculiarly and solely my own, there is a sort of awfulness, and feeling as if one of the purposes of my existence will then be accomplished.

I am growing old, Bedford; not so much by the family Bible, as by all external and outward

symptoms: the gray hairs have made their appearance; my eyes are wearing out; my shoes, the very cut of my father's, at which I used to laugh; my limbs not so supple as they were at Brixton in '93; my tongue not so glib; my heart quieter; my hopes, thoughts, and feelings, all of the complexion of a sunny autumn evening. I have a sort of presage that I shall live to finish *Madoc* and my *History*. God grant it, and that then my work will be done.

*To Richard Duppa.*

Dec. 14, 1803.

Hazlitt, whom you saw at Paris, has been here; a man of real genius. He has made a very fine picture of Coleridge for Sir George Beaumont, which is said to be in Titian's manner; he has also painted Wordsworth, but so dismally, though Wordsworth's face is his idea of physiognomical perfection, that one of his friends, on seeing it, exclaimed, 'At the gallows — deeply affected by his deserved fate — yet determined to die like a man'; and if you saw the picture, you would admire the criticism. We have a neighbor here who also knows you — Wilkinson, a clergyman, who draws, if not with much genius, with great industry and most useful fidelity. I have learnt a good deal by examining his collection of etchings.

Holcroft, I hear, has discovered, to his own

exceeding delight, prophetic portraits of himself and Coleridge among the damned in your *Michael Angelo*. I have found out a more flattering ante-type of Coleridge's face in Duns Scotus. Come you yourself and judge of the resemblances. Coleridge and our lakes and mountains are worth a longer journey. Autumn is the best season to see the country, but spring, and even winter, is better than summer, for in settled fine weather there are none of those goings on in heaven which at other times give these scenes such an endless variety. You will find this house a good station for viewing the lakes; it is, in fact, situated on perhaps the very finest single spot in the whole lake country, and we can show you things which the tourists never hear of.

Edith desires to be remembered to you; she is but in indifferent health. I myself am as well as I ever was. The weather has been, and is, very severe, but it has not as yet hurt me; however, it must be owned the white bears have the advantage of us in England, and still more the dormice. If their torpor could be introduced into the human system, it would be a most rare invention. I should roll myself up at the end of October, and give orders to be waked by the chimney-sweeper on May-day.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

Dec. 17, 1803.

The more I read, the more do I find the necessity of going to old authors for information, and the sad ignorance and dishonesty of our boasted historians. If God do but give me life, and health, and eyesight, I will show how history should be written, and exhibit such a specimen of indefatigable honesty as the world has never yet seen. I could make some historical triads, after the manner of my old Welsh friends, of which the first might run thus: The three requisites for an historian—industry, judgment, genius; the patience to investigate, the discrimination to select, the power to infer and to enliven.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Jan. 9, 1804.

Of the only three visitable families within reach, one is fled for the winter, and the others flying. *N'importe*, our dog Dapper remains, and he is as intimate with me as heart could wish. I want my books, and nothing else; for, blessed be God, I grow day by day more independent of society, and feel neither a want nor a wish for it. Everything at present looks, from the window, like the confectioners' shops at this season in London; and Skiddaw is the hugest of twelfth-cakes: but when I go down by the lake side, it

would puzzle all my comparison-compounding fancy to tell you what it looks like there—the million or trillion forms of beauty soon baffle all description.

Coleridge is gone for Devonshire, and I was going to say I am alone, but that the sight of Shakspeare, and Spenser, and Milton, and the Bible, on my table, and Castanheda, and Barros, and Osorio at my elbow, tell me I am in the best of all possible company.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

Jan. 31, 1804.

They tell me that Walter Scott has reviewed *Amadis* in the *Edinburgh Review*; to what purport I know not, but probably a favorable one, if it be his doing, for he is a man whose tastes accord with mine, and who, though we have never seen each other, knows that I respect him, as he, on his part, respects me. The same friendly office has been performed in the *Critical* at last for *Thalaba* by William Taylor; this, too, I have not seen.


Inquiries are making into the actual state of the poor in England, an office has been established for the purpose, and the superintendence, by Rickman's recommendation, assigned to Poole, Coleridge's friend, of whom you must have heard me speak, — a man of extraordinary powers, more



akin in mind to Rickman than any man I know. This is a very gratifying circumstance to me, to see so many persons, with whom I became acquainted before the world did, rising in the world to their proper stations.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Feb. 16, 1804.

I have seen a sight more dreamy and wonderful than any scenery that fancy ever yet devised for Faëry-land. We had walked down to the lake side; it was a delightful day, the sun shining, and a few white clouds hanging motionless in the sky. The opposite shore of Derwentwater consists of one long mountain, which suddenly terminates in an arch thus , and through that opening you see a long valley between mountains, and bounded by mountain beyond mountain; to the right of the arch the heights are more varied and of greater elevation. Now, as there was not a breath of air stirring, the surface of the lake was so perfectly still that it became one great mirror, and all its waters disappeared; the whole line of shore was represented as vividly and steadily as it existed in its actual being—the arch, the vale within, the single houses far within the vale, the smoke from their chimneys, the farthest hills, and the shadow and substance joined at their bases so indivisibly that you could make no separation even in your

judgment. As I stood on the shore, heaven and the clouds seemed lying under me; I was looking down into the sky, and the whole range of mountains, having one line of summits under my feet and another above me, seemed to be suspended between the firmaments. Shut your eyes and dream of a scene so unnatural and so beautiful. What I have said is most strictly and scrupulously true; but it was one of those happy moments that can seldom occur, for the least breath stirring would have shaken the whole vision and at once unrealized it. I have before seen a partial appearance, but never before did, and perhaps never again may, lose sight of the lake entirely; for it literally seemed like an abyss of sky before me, not fog and clouds from a mountain, but the blue heaven spotted with a few fleecy pillows of cloud, that looked placed there for angels to rest upon them.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

Feb. 17, 1804.

Of my own goings on I know not that there is anything which can be said. Imagine me in this great study of mine from breakfast till dinner, from dinner till tea, and from tea till supper, in my old black coat, my corduroys alternately with the long worsted pantaloons and gaiters in one, and the green shade, and sitting at my desk, and

you have my picture and my history. I play with Dapper, the dog, down-stairs, who loves me as well as ever Cupid did, and the cat up-stairs plays with me; for puss, finding my room the quietest in the house, has thought proper to share it with me. Our weather has been so wet that I have not got out-of-doors for a walk once in a month. Now and then I go down to the river, which runs at the bottom of the orchard, and throw stones till my arms ache, and then saunter back again. James Lawson, the carpenter, has made boards for my papers, and a screen, like those in the frame, with a little shelf to hold my ivory knife, etc., and is now making a little table for Edith, of which I shall probably make the most use. I rouse the house to breakfast every morning, and qualify myself for a boatswain's place by this practice; and thus one day passes like another, and never did the days appear to pass so fast. Summer will make a difference.

*To S. T. Coleridge.*

Feb. 19, 1804.

I know not whether I sent you some curious facts respecting vivaciousness, but I have met with enough to lead to important physiological conclusions, and in particular to explain the sufficiently common fact of sick persons fixing the hour of their death, and living exactly to that time; the

simple solution is, that they would else have died sooner. In proceeding with my history, I continually find something that leads to interesting speculation: it would, perhaps, be better if there were always some one at hand to whom I could communicate these discoveries, and who should help me to hunt down the game when started; not that I feel any wish for such society, but still it would at times be useful. It is a very odd, but a marked, characteristic of my mind — the very nose in the face of my intellect — that it is either utterly idle, or uselessly active, without its tools. I never enter into any regular train of thought unless the pen be in my hand; they then flow as fast as did the water from the rock in Horeb, but without that wand the source is dry. At these times conversation would be useful. However, I am going on well, never better. The old cerebrum was never in higher activity. I find daily more and more reason to wonder at the miserable ignorance of English historians, and to grieve with a sort of despondency at seeing how much that has been laid up among the stores of knowledge has been neglected and utterly forgotten.

*To the same.*

Feb., 1804.

I am not sorry that you gave Godwin a dressing, and should not be sorry if he were occasion-

ally to remember it with the comfortable reflection "*in vino veritas*"; for, in plain truth, it does vex me to see you so lavish of the outward and visible signs of friendship, and to know that a set of fellows whom you do not care for and ought not to care for, boast everywhere of your intimacy, and with good reason, to the best of their understanding. You have accustomed yourself to talk affectionately and write affectionately to your friends, till the expressions of affection flow by habit in your conversation and in your letters, and pass for more than they are worth; the worst of all this is that your letters will one day rise up in judgment against you (for be sure that hundreds which you have forgotten are hoarded up for some Curll or Philips of the next generation), and you will be convicted of a double-dealing, which, though you do not design, you certainly do practise. And now that I *am* writing affectionately *more meo*, I will let out a little more. You say in yours to Sara that you love and honor me; upon my soul I believe you: but if I did not thoroughly believe it before, your saying so is the thing of all things that would make me open my eyes and look about me to see if I were not deceived. Perhaps I am too intolerant to these kind of phrases; but, indeed, when they are true they may be excused, and when they are not there is no excuse for them. There is a something out-

landish in saying them, more akin to a French embrace than an English shake by the hand, and I would have you leave off saying them to those whom you actually do love, that if this should not break off the habit of applying them to indifferent persons, the disuse may at least make a difference. Your feelings go naked, I cover mine with a bear-skin ; I will not say that you harden yours by your mode, but I am sure that mine are the warmer for their clothing. It is possible or probable that I err as much as you in an opposite extreme, and may make enemies where you would make friends ; but there is a danger that you may sometimes excite dislike in persons of whose approbation you would yourself be desirous. You know me well enough to know in what temper this has been written, and to know that it has been some exertion ; for the same habit which makes me prefer sitting silent to offering contradiction, makes me often withhold censure when, perhaps, in strictness of moral duty, it ought to be applied. The medicine might have been sweetened, perhaps ; but, dear Coleridge, take the simple bitters and leave the sweetmeats by themselves.

*To the same.*

March 12, 1804.

Your going abroad appeared to me so doubtful, or, indeed, so improbable an event, that the

certainty comes on me like a surprise, and I feel at once what a separation the sea makes; when we get beyond the reach of mail-coaches, then, indeed, distance becomes a thing perceptible. I shall often think, Coleridge, *Quanto minus est cum reliquis versari quam tui meminisse!* God grant you a speedy passage, a speedy recovery, and a speedy return! I will write regularly and often; but I know by Danvers how irregularly letters arrive, and at how tedious a time after their date. Look in old Knolles before you go, and read the siege of Malta; it will make you feel that you are going to visit sacred ground. I can hardly think of that glorious defence without tears.

You would rejoice with me were you now at Keswick, at the tidings that a box of books is safely harbored in the Mersey. It contains some duplicates of the lost cargo; among them the collection of the oldest Spanish poems, in which is a metrical romance upon the Cid. I shall sometimes want you for a Gothic etymology. Talk of the happiness of getting a great prize in the lottery! What is that to the opening a box of books! That I shall never be paid for my labor according to the current value of time and labor, is tolerably certain; but if any one should offer me £10,000 to forego that labor, I should bid him and his money go to the devil, for twice the sum could not purchase me half the enjoyment. It

will be a great delight to me in the next world to take a fly and visit these old worthies, who are my only society here, and to tell them what excellent company I found them here at the lakes of Cumberland two centuries after they had been dead and turned to dust. In plain truth, I exist more among the dead than the living, and think more about them, and, perhaps, feel more about them.

*To John Rickman.*

March 30, 1804.

I look upon the invention of reviews to be the worst injury which literature has received since its revival. People formerly took up a book to learn from it, and with a feeling of respectful thankfulness to the man who had spent years in acquiring that knowledge which he communicates to them in a few hours; now they only look for faults. Everybody is a critic, that is, every reader imagines himself superior to the author, and reads his book that he may censure it, not that he may improve by it.

You are in great measure right about Coleridge; he is worse in body than you seem to believe, but the main cause lies in his own management of himself, or rather want of management. His mind is in a perpetual St. Vitus's dance — eternal activity without action. At times he feels mortified that he should have done so lit-



tle ; but this feeling never produces any exertion. I will begin to-morrow, he says, and thus he has been all his life long letting to-day slip. He has had no heavy calamities in life, and so contrives to be miserable about trifles. Poor fellow ! there is no one thing which gives me so much pain as the witnessing such a waste of unequalled power. I knew one man resembling him, save that with equal genius he was actually a vicious man. If that man had common prudence, he must have been the first man in this country, from his natural and social advantages, and as such, we who knew him and loved him at school used to anticipate him. I learnt more from his conversation than any other man ever taught me, because the rain fell when the young plant was just germinating and wanted it most ; and I learnt more morality by his example than anything else could have taught me, for I saw him wither away. He is dead and buried at the Cape of Good Hope, and has left behind him nothing to keep his memory alive. This will not be the case with Coleridge ; the *disjecta membra* will be found if he does not die early : but having so much to do, so many errors to weed out of the world which he is capable of eradicating, if he does die without doing his work, it would half break my heart, for no human being has had more talents allotted.

Wordsworth will do better, and leave behind

him a name, unique in his way; he will rank among the very first poets, and probably possess a mass of merits superior to all, except only Shakespeare. This is doing much, yet would he be a happier man if he did more.

[Writing of Coleridge about the same time to Miss Barker, a friend gained in Portugal, Southey says:—]

It is now almost ten years since he and I first met, in my rooms at Oxford, which meeting decided the destiny of both; and now when, after so many ups and downs, I am, for a time, settled under his roof, he is driven abroad in search of health. Ill he is, certainly and sorely ill; yet I believe if his mind was as well regulated as mine, the body would be quite as manageable. I am perpetually pained and mortified by thinking what he ought to be, for mine is an eye of microscopic discernment to the faults of my friends; but the tidings of his death would come upon me more like a stroke of lightning than any evil I have ever yet endured; almost it would make me superstitious, for we were two ships that left port in company.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

March 31, 1804.

I am bound for London, chiefly to complete

these *Specimens*,\* and put them to press. Alas! for your unhappy habit of procrastination! 'Don't delay,' you write in your postscript, and this in answer to a letter which had lain above a fortnight in your desk! Here it happens to be of no moment; but you tell me the habit has produced and is producing worse consequences. I would give you advice if it could be of use; but there is no curing those who choose to be diseased. A good man and a wise man may at times be angry with the world, at times grieved for it; but be sure no man was ever discontented with the world if he did his duty in it. If a man of education who has health, eyes, hands, and leisure, wants an object, it is only because God Almighty has bestowed all those blessings upon a man who does not deserve them. Dear Grosvenor, I wish you may feel half the pain in reading this that I do in writing it.

*To the same.*

April 23, 1804.

'Tis a long way to London! I wish I were on my way, and then shall I wish myself arrived, and then be wishing myself back again; for complete rest, absolute, unprospective, rooted rest, is the great object of my desires. Near London

\* *Specimens of Later English Poets*, 3 vols. Bedford undertook to revise the work for the press, and, as we learn later on, did it very badly. — ED.

must be my final settlement, unless any happy and unforeseen fortune should enable me to move to the south, and thus take a longer lease of life; in fact, if I could afford the money sacrifice, I would willingly make the other, and keep my *History* unpublished all my life, that I might pass it in Portugal. Society, connections, native language, — all these are weighty things; but what are they to the permanent and perpetual exhilaration of a climate that not merely prolongs life, but gives you double the life while it lasts? I have actually felt a positive pleasure in breathing there; and even here, in this magnificent spot, the recollection of the Tagus, and the Serra de Ossa, of Coimbra, and its cypresses, and orange groves, and olives, its hills and mountains, its venerable buildings, and its dear river, of the Vale of Algarve, the little islands of beauty amid the desert of Alentego, and, above all, of Cintrá, the most blessed spot in the habitable globe, will almost bring tears into my eyes.

*To Mrs. Southey.*

London, May, 1804.

The Thames is ebbing fast before the window, and a beautiful sight it is, dear Edith; but I wish I were upon the banks of the Greta! I will not remain an hour longer than can be helped. You have no notion of the intolerable fatigue it is to

walk all day and not get to bed till after midnight. I might live all the year here, by being invited out as a show, but I will not show myself. I write you very unsatisfactory letters, dear Edith, but you know how like a bear with a sore head this place makes me; and never was I more uncomfortable in it, though with a pleasanter house over my head than ever, and better company.

*To S. T. Coleridge.*

June 11, 1804.

I was worn to the very bone by fatigue in London, — more walking in one day than I usually take in a month; more waste of breath in talking than serves for three months' consumption in the country; add to this a most abominable cold, affecting chest, head, eyes, and nose. It was impossible to see half the persons whom I wished to see, and ought to have seen, without prolonging my stay to an inconvenient time, and an unreasonable length of absence from home.

I went into the Exhibition merely to see your picture, which perfectly provoked me. Hazlitt's does look as if you were on your trial, and certainly had stolen the horse; but then you did it cleverly, — it had been a deep, well laid scheme, and it was no fault of yours that you had been detected. But this portrait by Northcote looks

like a grinning idiot; and the worst is, that it is just like enough to pass for a good likeness, with those who only know your features imperfectly. Dance's drawing has that merit at least, that nobody would ever suspect you of having been the original. What news, you will wish to ask, of Keswick? The house remains *in statu quo*, except that the little parlor is painted, and papered with cartridge-paper. Workmen to plaster this room could not be procured when Jackson sent for them, and so unplastered it is likely to remain another winter. A great improvement has been made by thinning the trees before the parlor window, — just enough of the lake can be seen through such a frame-work and such a fretted canopy of foliage as to produce a most delightful scene, and utterly unlike any other view of the same subject.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

July 30, 1804.

I trust you will have learnt before this can reach you that I have two Ediths in the family, — the Edithling (who was born on the last of April) continuing to do well, only that I am myself somewhat alarmed at that premature activity of eye and spirits, and those sudden startings, which were in her poor sister the symptoms of a dreadful and deadly disease. I did not mean to trust

my affections again on so frail a foundation, — and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you perhaps can imagine.

Both Edith and I are well; indeed, I have weathered a rude winter, and a ruder spring, bravely. Harry\* is here, and has been here about three weeks, and will remain till the end of October. He is a very excellent companion, and tempts me out into the air and the water when I should else be sitting at home. We have made our way well in the world, Tom, thus far, and by God's help we shall yet get on better.

You ask of *Amadis*: it has been well reviewed, both in the *Annual* and *Edinburgh*, by Walter Scott, who in both has been very civil to me. Of all my later publications, this has been the most successful, — more than 500 of the 1000 having sold within the year, so that there is a fair chance of the £50 dependent upon the sale of the whole. *Thalaba* has been very admirably reviewed in the *Critical*, by William Taylor; but it does not sell, and will not for some years reach a second edition. Reviewing is coming round again! one parcel arrived! another on the road! a third ready to start! I grudge the time thus to be sold, sorely; but patience! it is, after all, better than pleading in a stinking court of law, — or

\* A younger brother, afterwards Dr. Southey. — ED.

being called up at midnight to a patient; it better than being a soldier or a sailor; better than calculating profits and loss on a counter; better in short, than anything but independence.

July is, indeed, a lovely month at the Lake and so the Lakers seem to think, for they swarm here. We have been much interrupted by visitors, and more are yet to come. These are not the only interruptions; we have been, or rather are, manufacturing black-currant jam for my uncle, and black-currant wine for ourselves, — Harry and I chief workmen, — pounding them in a wooden bowl with a great stone, as the acid acts upon a metal mortar. We have completed a great work in bridging the river Greta at the bottom of the orchard, by piling heaps of stones so as to step from one to another, — many a hard hour sport, half knee-deep in the water. Davy has been here, stark mad for angling.

I am learning Dutch, and wish you were here to profit by the lessons at the breakfast-table, and to mynheerify with me, as you like the language. My reason for attaining the language is that as the Dutch conquered, or rather destroyed, the Portuguese empire in Asia, the history of the downfall of that empire is, of course, more fully related by Dutch than by Portuguese historians.

Will you not laugh to hear that I have actually been employed all the morning in making arrange-



ments for a subscription ball at Keswick?— I! — very I! — your brother, R. S.! To what vile purposes may we come! It was started by Harry and Miss Charter at the theatre (for we have a strolling company at an alehouse here), and he and I and General Peche have settled it; and all Cumberland will now envy the gayeties of Keswick. Mrs. General insisted upon my opening the ball with her. I advised her, as she was for performing impossibilities, to begin with turning the wind, before she could hope to turn me: so I shall sip my tea, and talk with the old folks some hour or so, and then steal home to write *Madoc*, drink my solitary glass of punch, and get to bed at a good Christian-like hour, — as my father, and no doubt his father, did before me. Oh, Tom, that you were but here! for in truth we lead as pleasant a life as heart of man could wish. I have not for years taken such constant exercise as this summer. Some friend or acquaintance or other is perpetually making his appearance, and out then I go to lackey them on the lake or over the mountains. I shall get a character for politeness!

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

Dec. 7, 1804.

No man was ever more contented with his lot than I am, for few have ever had more enjoyments, and none had ever better or worthier hopes. Life,

therefore, is sufficiently dear to me, and long life desirable, that I may accomplish all which I design. But yet I could be well content that the next century were over, and my part fairly at an end, having been gone well through. Just as at school one wished the school-days over, though we were happy enough there, because we expected more happiness and more liberty when we were to be our own masters, might lie as much later in the morning as we pleased, have no bounds, and do no exercise, — just so do I wish that my exercises were over, — that that ugly chrysalis state were passed through to which we must all come, and that I had fairly burst my shell, and got into the new world, with wings upon my shoulders, or some inherent power like the wishing-cap, which should annihilate all the inconveniences of space.

*To C. Danvers.*

Jan. 15, 1805.

Hartley \* is from home, visiting Mr. Wordsworth's sisters near Penrith. It is impossible to give you any adequate idea of his oddities; for he is the oddest of all God's creatures, and becomes quainter and quainter every day. It is not easy to conceive, what is perfectly true, that he is totally destitute of anything like modesty, yet without the slightest tinge of impudence in his

\* Hartley Coleridge.

nature. His religion makes one of the most humorous parts of his character. "I'm a boy of a very religious turn," he says; for he always talks of himself, and examines his own character, just as if he was speaking of another person, and as impartially. Every night he makes an extempore prayer aloud; but it is always in bed, and not till he is comfortable there and got into the mood. When he is ready he touches Mrs. Wilson, who sleeps with him, and says, "Now listen!" and off he sets like a preacher. If he has been behaving amiss, away he goes for the Bible, and looks out for something appropriate to his case in the Psalms or the Book of Job. The other day, after he had been in a violent passion, he chose out a chapter against wrath. "Ah! that suits me!" The Bible is also resorted to whenever he ails anything, or else the Prayer-book. He once made a pun upon occasion of the belly-ache, though I will not say that he designed it. "Oh, Mrs. Wilson, *I'se* got the *colic!* read me the Epistle and Gospel for the day." In one part of his character he seems to me strikingly to resemble his father, — in the affection he has for those who are present with him, and the little he cares about them when he is out of their sight. It is not possible for one human being to love another more dearly than Mrs. Wilson loves him, and he is as fond of her as it is in his nature to be

of anything, and probably loves her better than he does anybody else. Last summer she was dangerously ill, and Hartley in consequence came and lived at home. He never manifested the slightest uneasiness or concern about her, nor ever would go near her. I do not know whether I should wish to have such a child or not. There is not the slightest evil in his disposition, but it wants something to make it steadily good; physically and morally there is a defect of courage. He is afraid of receiving pain to such a degree that, if any person begins to read a newspaper, he will leave the room, lest there should be anything shocking in it. This is the explication of his conduct during Mrs. Wilson's illness. He would not see her because it would give him pain, and when he was out of sight he contrived to forget her. I fear that, if he lives, he will dream away life like his father, too much delighted with his own ideas ever to embody them, or suffer them, if he can help it, to be disturbed.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

April 3, 1805.

I have been grievously shocked this evening by the loss of the *Abergavenny*,\* of which Wordsworth's brother was captain. Of course

\* The ship was wrecked off the Bill of Portland Feb. 5, and it is therefore probable that Southey has misdated his letter. — ED.

the news came flying up to us from all quarters, and it has disordered me from head to foot. At such circumstances I believe we feel as much for others as for ourselves; just as a violent blow occasions the same pain as a wound, and he who breaks his shin feels as acutely at the moment as the man whose leg is shot off. In fact, I am writing to you merely because this dreadful shipwreck has left me utterly unable to do anything else. It is the heaviest calamity Wordsworth has ever experienced, and in all probability I shall have to communicate it to him, as he will very likely be here before the tidings can reach him. What renders any near loss of the kind so peculiarly distressing is that the recollection is perpetually freshened when any like event occurs, by the mere mention of shipwreck, or the sound of the wind. Of all deaths it is the most dreadful, from the circumstances of terror which accompany it.

[On the publication of *Madoc*, which won the warmest praise of Scott, who said that in years to come it would take its place at the feet of Milton, Southey's honest friend Rickman expressed an adverse opinion of the poem.]

*To John Rickman, Esq.*

July, 1805.

I am not surprised at your little liking the poem; on the contrary, I am more surprised at

those who like it, because what merit it has is almost wholly of execution, which is infinitely better than the subject. Now everybody can feel if a story be interesting or flat, whereas there are very few who can judge of the worth of the language and versification. I have said to somebody, perhaps it was to you, that had this been *written* since *Thalaba* (for, as you know, the plan was formed, and the key pitched, before *Thalaba* was begun or dreamt of), I should have thought it ominous of declining powers, it is in so sober a tone, its coloring so autumnal, its light everywhere that of an evening sun; but as only the last finish of language, the polishing part, is of later labor, the fair inference is that instead of the poet's imagination having grown weaker, he has improved in the mechanism of his art. A fair inference it is, for I am no self-flatterer, heaven knows. Having confessed thus much, I ought to add that the poem is better than you think it. . . . Compare it with the *Odyssey*, not the *Iliad*; with *King John* or *Coriolanus*, not *Macbeth* or *The Tempest*. The story wants unity, and has perhaps too Greek, too stoical, a want of passion; but, as far as I can see, with the same eyes where-with I read Homer and Shakspeare and Milton, it is a good poem and must live. You will like it better if ever you read it again.

[Of this poem he writes to his brother a little later : —]

No further news of the sale of *Madoc*. The reviews will probably hurt it for a time ; that is in their power, and that is all they can do. Unquestionably the poem will stand and flourish. I am perfectly satisfied with the execution, — now eight months after its publication, in my cool judgment. Wm. Taylor has said it is the best English poem that has left the press since the *Paradise Lost* ; — indeed this is not exaggerated praise, for unfortunately there is no competition.

[In the autumn of the year Southey visited Scotland and Scotland's greatest son, at Ashestiel. It will be seen from the next letter that he had had some thoughts of revisiting Portugal.]

*To Mrs. Southey.*

Oct. 14, 1805.

I need not tell you, my own dear Edith, not to read my letters aloud till you have first of all seen what is written only for yourself. What I have now to say to you is that having been eight days from home, with as little discomfort, and as little reason for discomfort, as a man can reasonably expect, I have yet felt so little comfortable, so great sense of solitariness, and so many home-

ward yearnings, that certainly I will not go to Lisbon without you ; a resolution which, if your feelings be at all like mine, will not displease you. If, on mature consideration, you think the inconvenience of a voyage more than you ought to submit to, I must be content to stay in England, as on my part it certainly is not worth while to sacrifice a year's happiness ; for, though not unhappy (my mind is too active and too well diciplined to yield to any such criminal weakness), still without you I am not happy. But for your sake as well as my own, and for little Edith's sake, I will not consent to any separation ; the growth of a year's love between her and me, if it please God that she should live, is a thing too delightful in itself, and too valuable in its consequences, both to her and me, to be given up for any light inconveniences either on your part or mine. An absence of a year would make her effectually forget me. But of these things we will talk at leisure ; only, dear, dear Edith, we must not part.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

Nov. 15, 1805.

You will have heard of Nelson's most glorious death. The feeling it occasioned is highly honorable to the country. He leaves a name above all former admirals, with, perhaps, the single exception of Blake, a man who possessed the same



genius upon great occasions. We ought to name the two best ships in the navy from these men.

My trip to Edinburgh was pleasant. I went to accompany Elmsley. We stayed three days with Walter Scott, at Ashestiel, the name of his house on the banks of the Tweed. I saw all the scenery of his *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, a poem which you will read with great pleasure when you come to England. And I went salmon-spearing on the Tweed, in which, though I struck at no fish, I bore my part, and managed one end of the boat with a long spear. Having had neither new coat nor hat since the Edithling was born, you may suppose I was in want of both — so at Edinburgh I was to rig myself, and, moreover, lay in new boots and pantaloons. Howbeit, on considering the really respectable appearance which my old ones made for a traveller, — and considering, moreover, that as learning was better than house or land, it certainly must be much better than fine clothes, — I laid out all my money in books, and came home to wear out my old wardrobe in the winter. My library has had many additions since you left me, and many gentlemen in parchment remain with anonymous backs till you come and bedeck them.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

Oct. 20, 1805.

Of Edinburgh society I think very little. Elmsley very justly observed that, of the three faculties of the mind, judgment is the only one which they cultivate or value. Jeffrey is amusing from his wit; in taste, he is a mere child; and he affects to despise learning, because he has none. Perhaps I am not a fair judge, having been accustomed to live with Coleridge and Wordsworth; but the plain truth is that, compared with such men as these, the Scotch *literatuli* are very low indeed. Brougham was not in good health, and did not open much. I had, however, conversation enough with him to see that he never regarded anything in the broad moral point of view. As for Jeffrey, I really cannot feel angry with anything so diminutive; he is a mere *homunculus*, and would do for a major in Gog and Magog's army, were they twice as little. We were three days at Scott's, a much superior man, whom it is impossible not to like.

[That he did not yet feel himself settled at Keswick, will be seen from the next extract.]

*To the Rev. Nicholas Lightfoot.*

Feb. 8, 1806.

Time, you say, moderates opinions as it mellows wine. My views and hopes are certainly

altered, though the heart and soul of my wishes continues the same. It is the world that has changed, not I. I took the same way in the afternoon that I did in the morning, but sunset and sunrise make a different scene. If I regret anything in my own life, it is that I *could* not take orders, for of all ways of life that would have best accorded with my nature; but I could not get in at the door. In other respects time has not much altered me. I am as thin as ever, and to the full as noisy: making a noise in any way whatever is an animal pleasure with me, and the louder it is the better.

Coleridge is daily expected to return from Malta, where he has been now two years for his health. I inhabit the same house with his wife and children, — perhaps the very finest single spot in England. We overlook Keswick Lake, have the Lake of Bassenthwaite in the distance on the other side, and Skiddaw behind us. But we only sojourn here for a time. I may, perhaps, be destined to pass some years in Portugal, — which, indeed, is my wish, — or, if otherwise, must ultimately remove to the neighborhood of London, for the sake of the public libraries.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

Feb. 28, 1806.

Many things make me feel old: — ten years of

marriage; the sort of fatherly situation in which I have stood to my brother Henry, now a man himself; the premature age at which I commenced author; the death of all who were about me in childhood; a body not made of lasting materials, and some wear and tear of mind. You once remarked to me how time strengthened family affections, and, indeed, all early ones: one's feelings seem to be weary of travelling, and like to rest at home. They who tell me that men grow hard-hearted as they grow older have had a very limited view of this world of ours. It is true with those whose views and hopes are merely and vulgarly worldly; but when human nature is not perverted, time strengthens our kindly feelings, and abates our angry ones.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

July 5, 1806.

And now, Grosvenor, let me tell you what I have to do. I am writing, 1. *The History of Portugal*; 2. *The Chronicle of the Cid*; 3. *The Curse of Kehama*; 4. *Espriella's Letters*. Look you, all these *I am* writing. The second and third of these must get into the press and out of it before this time twelve months, or else I shall be like the Civil List. By way of interlude comes in this Preface. Don't swear, and bid me do one thing at a time. I tell you, I can't afford to do

one thing at a time — no, nor two neither ; and it is only by doing many things that I contrive to do so much ; for I cannot work long together at any thing without hurting myself ; and so I do everything by heats ; then, by the time I am tired of one, my inclination for another is come round.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

July 28, 1806.

For many days I have looked for a letter from you, — the three lines announcing your arrival in England being all which have yet reached me. Yesterday the doctor and I returned home after a five days' absence, and I was disappointed at finding no tidings of you. We were two days at Lloyd's, and have had three days mountaineering, — one on the way there, two on our return, — through the wildest parts of this wild country, many times wishing you had been with us. One day we lost our way upon the mountains, got upon a summit where there were precipices before us, and found a way down through a fissure, like three sides of a chimney, where we could reach from side to side and help ourselves with our hands. This chimney-way was considerably higher than any house, and then we had an hour's descent afterwards over loose stones. Yesterday we mounted Great Gabel, — one of the highest mountains in the country, — and had a magnificent view

of the Isle of Man, rising out of a sea of light, for the water lay like a sheet of silver. This was a digression from our straight road, and exceedingly fatiguing it was ; however, after we got down we drank five quarts of milk between us, and got home as fresh as larks after a walk of eleven hours. You will find it harder service than walking the deck when you come here.

Our landlord, who lives in the house adjoining us, has a boat, which is as much at our service as if it were our own ; of this we have voted you commander-in-chief whenever you shall arrive. The lake is about four miles in length, and something between one and two in breadth. However tired you may be of the salt water, I do not think you will have the same objection to fresh when you see this beautiful basin, clear as crystal, and shut in by mountains on every side except one opening to the N. W. We are very frequently upon it, Harry and I being both tolerably good boatmen ; and sometimes we sit in state and the women row us — a way of manning a boat which will amuse you. The only family with which we are on familiar terms live, during the summer and autumn, on a little island here — one of the loveliest spots in this wide world. They have one long room, looking on the lake from three windows, affording the most beautiful views ; and in that room you may have as much music,

dancing, shuttle-cocking, etc., as your heart can desire.

[In 1803, Southey published an edition of the works of Chatterton for the benefit of the inspired boy's family. To Henry Kirke White he had acted the part of a true friend, and now upon the poor fellow's death undertook a similar act of kindness for his family. They were worthy of it, and with Henry's brothers, especially with Neville, the acquaintance thus begun "ripened into an intimate and life-long friendship."]

*To Neville White.*

Dec. 20, 1806.

What account of your brother shall be given it rests with you, sir, and his other nearest friends, to determine. I advise and *entreat* that it may be as full and as minute as possible. The example of a young man winning his way against great difficulties, of such honorable ambition, such unexampled industry, such a righteous and holy confidence of genius, ought not to be withheld. A full and faithful narrative of his difficulties, his hopes, and his eventual success, till it pleased God to promote him to a higher state of existence, will be a lasting encouragement to others who have the same uphill path to tread; he will be to them what Chatterton was to him, and he will be a

purser and better example. If it would wound the feelings of his family to let all and every particular of his honorable and admirable life be known, those feelings are, of course, paramount to every other consideration. But I sincerely hope this may not be the case. It will, I know, be a painful task to furnish me with materials for this, which is the most useful kind of biography, yet, when the effort of beginning such a task shall have been accomplished, the consciousness that you are doing for him what he would have wished to be done, will bring with it a consolation and a comfort.

*To the same.*

March 3, 1807.

Your parcel reached me on Sunday evening, and I have perused every line of its contents with deep and painful interest. The letters and your account (of which I should say much were I writing to any other person) have made me thoroughly acquainted with one of the most amiable and most admirable human beings that ever was ripened upon earth for heaven. Be assured that I will not insert a sentence which can give pain or offence to any one. There will come a time (and God only knows how soon it may come) when some one will perform that office for me which I am now performing for your incomparable brother; and I shall endeavor to show how that office ought to be



performed. I will be scrupulously careful; and if, when the papers pass through your hands, you should think I have not been sufficiently so, I beg you will, without hesitation, expunge whatever may appear exceptionable. When I obeyed the impulse which led me to undertake this task, it was from a knowledge that Henry White had left behind him an example, which ought not to be lost, of well directed talents, and that, in performing an act of respect to his memory, I should at the same time hold up the example to others who have the up-hill paths of life to tread. No person can be more thoroughly convinced that goodness is a better thing than genius, and that genius is no excuse for those follies and offences which are called its eccentricities.

*To John May.*

March 30, 1807.

I am just now enabled to give you some intelligence concerning myself. In this topsy-turvyng of ministers, Wynn was very anxious, as he says, "to pick something out of the fire for me." The registership of the Vice-Admiralty Court in St. Lucia was offered, worth about £600 a year. He wrote to me, offering this, or, as an alternative, the only one in his power, a pension of £200; but, before my answer could arrive, it was necessary that he should choose for me, and he judged

rightly in taking the latter. Fees and taxes will reduce this to £160,\* the precise sum for which I have hitherto been indebted to him; so that I remain with just the same income as before. The different source from which it is derived is, as you may suppose, sufficiently grateful; for, though Wynn could till now well afford this, and I had no reluctance in accepting it from one who is the oldest friend I have in the world (we have been intimate for nineteen years), he has now nearly doubled his expenditure by marrying. This, I suppose, is asked for and granted to me as a man of letters, in which character I feel myself fully and fairly entitled to receive it; and you know me too well to suppose that it can make me lose one jot of that freedom, both of opinion and speech, without which I should think myself unworthy, not of this poor earthly pittance alone, but of God's air and sunshine, and my inheritance in heaven.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 21, 1807.

I am a little surprised to hear you speak so contemptuously of modern poetry, because it shows how very little you must have read, or how little you can have considered the subject. The improvement during the present reign has been to

\* The deduction, Southey's biographer states, proved to be £56, reducing it to £144. — ED.

the full as great in poetry as it has been in the experimental sciences, or in the art of raising money by taxation. What can you have been thinking of? Had you forgotten Burns a second time? had you forgotten Cowper, Bowles, Montgomery, Joanna Baillie, Walter Scott? to omit a host of names which, though inferior to them, are above those of any former period except the age of Shakspeare, not to mention Wordsworth and another poet, who has written two very pretty poems in my opinion, called *Thalaba* and *Madoc*.

*To the Rev. Nicholas Lightfoot.*

April 24, 1807.

Your last letter is fourteen months old, and they may have brought forth so many changes that I almost fear to ask for my god-child Fanny. During that time I have had a son born into the world, and baptized into the Church by the name of Herbert, who is now six months old, and bids fair to be as noisy a fellow as his father, — which is saying something; for be it known that I am quite as noisy as ever I was, and should take as much delight as ever in showering stones through the hole of the staircase against your room door, and hearing with what hearty good earnest “you fool!” was vociferated in indignation against me in return. Oh, dear Lightfoot, what a blessing it is to have a boy’s heart! it is as great a blessing

in carrying one through this world as to have a child's spirit will be in fitting us for the next.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

May 5, 1807.

When I wished you never to read the Classics again it was because, like many other persons, *you read nothing else*, and were not likely ever to get more knowledge out of them than you had got already, especially as you chiefly (I may say exclusively) read those from whom least is to be got, which is also another sin of the age. Your letter contains the usual blunders which the ignorance of the age is continually making, and upon which, and nothing else, rests the whole point at issue between such critics as Jeffrey and myself: you couple Homer and Virgil under the general term of classics, and suppose that both are to be admired upon the same grounds. A century ago this was better understood; the critics of that age did read what they wrote about, and understood what they read, and they knew that whoever thought the one of these writers a good poet must upon that very principle hold the other to be a bad one. Greek and Latin poets, Grosvenor, are as opposite as French and English (excepting always Lucretius and Catullus), and you may as well suppose it possible for a man equally to admire Shakspeare and Racine as Homer and Virgil; that

is, provided he knows why and wherefore he admires either.

*To Richard Duppa.*

May 23, 1807.

You are mistaken about Henry White; the fact is briefly this:—at the age of seventeen he published a little volume of poems of very great merit, and sent with them to the different Reviews a letter stating that his hope was to raise money by them to pursue his studies and get to college. Hamilton, then of the *Critical*, showed me this letter. I asked him to let me review the book, which he promised; but he sent me no books after the promise. Well, the *Monthly Review* noticed this little volume in the most cruel and insulting manner. I was provoked, and wrote to encourage the boy, offering to aid him in a subscription for a costlier publication. I spoke of him in London, and had assurances of assistance from Sotheby, and, by way of Wynn, from Lord Carysfort. His second letter to me, however, said he was going to Cambridge, under *Simeon's* protection. I plainly saw that the Evangelicals had caught him; and as he did not want what little help I could have procured, and I had no leisure for new correspondences, ceased to write to him, but did him what good I could in the way of reviewing, and getting him friends at Cam-

bridge. He died last autumn; and I received a letter informing me of it. It gave me a sort of shock, because, in spite of his evangelicism, I always expected great things, from the proof he had given of very superior powers; and, in replying to this letter, I asked if there were any intention of publishing anything which he might have left, and offered to give an opinion upon his papers, and look them over. Down came a boxful, the sight of which literally made my heart ache, and my eyes overflow, for never did I behold such proofs of human industry. To make short, I took the matter up with interest, collected his letters, and have, at the expense of more time than such a poor fellow as myself can very well afford, done what his family are very grateful for, and what I think the world will thank me for too. Of course I have done it gratuitously. His life will affect you, for he fairly died of intense application. Cambridge finished him. When his nerves were already so overstrained that his nights were utter misery, they gave him medicines to enable him to hold out during examination for a prize! The horse won, — but he died after the race!

*To John Rickman.*

May 27, 1807.

Nothing can be so little calculated to advance

our stock of knowledge as our inveterate mode of education, whereby we all spend so many years in learning so little. I was from the age of six to that of twenty learning Greek and Latin, or, to speak more truly, learning nothing else. The little Greek I had sleepeth, if it be not dead, and can hardly wake without a miracle, and my Latin, though abundant enough for all useful purposes, would be held in great contempt by those people who regard the classics as the scriptures of taste.

*To Hartley Coleridge.*

June 13, 1807.

Nephew Job,—\*

Bona Marietta hath had kittens; they were remarkably ugly, all taking after their father Thomas, who there is reason to believe was either uncle or grandsire to Bona herself, the prohibited degrees of consanguinity which you will find at the end of the Bible not being regarded by cats. As I have never been able to persuade this family that catlings, fed for the purpose and smothered with onions, would be rabbits to all eatable purposes, Bona Marietta's ugly progeny no sooner came into the world than they were sent out of it; the river nymph Greta conveyed them to the river god Derwent, and if neither the eels nor the ladies

\* Southey used to call this extraordinary boy Moses, and afterwards changed the name to Job, on account of his impatience. — Ed.

of the lake have taken a fancy to them on their way, Derwent hath consigned them to the Nereids.

We have been out one evening in the boat, — Mr. Jackson, Mrs. Wilson,\* and the children, — and kindled our fire upon the same place where you drank tea with us last autumn. The boat has been painted, and there is to be a boat-house built for it. Alterations are going on here upon a great scale. The parlor has been transmogrified. That, Hartley, was one of *my* mother's words; your mother will explain it to you. The masons are at work in my study; the garden is enclosed with a hedge; some trees planted behind it, a few shrubs, and abundance of currant trees. We must, however, wait till the autumn before all can be done that is intended in the garden.

The weather has been very bad; nothing but easterly winds, which have kept everything back. We had one day hotter than had been remembered for fourteen years: the glass was at 85° in the shade, in the sun in Mr. Calvert's garden at 118°. The horses of the mail died at Carlisle. I never remember to have felt such heat in England, except one day fourteen years ago, when I chanced to be in the mail coach, and it was necessary to bleed the horses, or they would have died then. In the course of three days the glass fell

\* Mrs. Wilson, once the belle of Keswick, lived for many years in Southey's house as nurse and friend. — ED.



forty degrees, and the wind was so cold and so violent that persons who attempted to cross the Fells beyond Penrith were forced to turn back.

Your friend Dapper, who is, I believe, your god-dog, is in good health, though he grows every summer graver than the last. This is the natural effect of time, which, as you know, has made me the serious man I am. I hope it will have the same effect upon you and your mother, and that, when she returns, she will have left off that evil habit of quizzing me and calling me names: it is not decorous in a woman of her years.

I am desired to send you as much love as can be enclosed in a letter: I hope it will not be charged double on that account at the post-office: but there is Mrs. Wilson's love, Mr. Jackson's, your Aunt Southey's, your Aunt Lovell's, and Edith's; with a purr from Bona Marietta, an open-mouthed kiss from Herbert, and three wags of the tail from Dapper. I trust they will all arrive safe, and remain,

Dear Nephew Job,

Your dutiful Uncle,

ROBERT SOUTHEY.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Nov. 24, 1807.

Mine is a strong spirit, and I am very desirous that you should not suppose it to be more severely

tried than it is. The temporary inconvenience which I feel is solely produced by unavoidable expenses in settling myself, which will not occur again; and if *Espriella* slides into a good sale, or if one edition of our deplorable *Specimens* should go off, I shall be floated into smooth water. Bear this in mind, also, that I can command an income, fully equivalent to all my wants, whenever I choose to write for money, and for nothing else. Our Fathers in the Row would find me task-work, to any amount which I might wish to undertake, and I could assuredly make £300 a year as easily as I now make half that sum, simply by writing anonymously, and doing what five hundred trading authors could do just as well. This is the worst which can befall me.

Old John Southey dealt unjustly by me, — but it was what I expected, and his brother will, without doubt, do just the same. In case of Lord Somerville's death without a son, a considerable property devolves to me or my representatives — encumbered, however, with a lawsuit to recover it; and, as I should be compelled to enter into this, I have only to hope his Lordship will have the goodness to live as long as I do, and save me from the disquietude which this would occasion. I used to think that the reputation which I should establish would ultimately turn to marketable account, and that my books would sell as well as

if they were seasoned with slander or obscenity. In time they will; it will not be in my time. I have, however, an easy means of securing some part of the advantage to my family, by forbearing to publish any more corrected editions during my lifetime, and leaving such corrections as will avail to give a second lease of copyright, and make any bookseller's editions of no value. As for my family, I have no fears for them; they would find friends enough when I am gone; and having this confidence, you may be sure that there is not a lighter-hearted man in the world than myself.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

Dec. 3, 1807.

On the duty of spreading Christianity you know my opinions, which perfectly coincide with your own. My views of religion approach very nearly to Quakerism, as the *Annual Review* may perhaps have led you to suspect. The Quakers err in prohibiting things which it is sufficient to despise; they err in their principle of preaching; and their conduct about tithes is foolish and troublesome. Their opinions concerning war go against the instinct of self-defence; just now that sort of religion which the Maccabees held upon this subject, is more called for. There can, however, be no question but that the Quaker system, were it general, would produce the greatest possi-

ble good. It never can spread so rapidly as to lay any part of the world at the feet of the conqueror, and if it were not for Bonaparte, I should have little hesitation in declaring my conviction that it is the true system of the Gospel; that is, my reason is convinced, but I want to have the invasion over before I allow it to be so. Their morality is perfect. I should not have agreed with George Fox if he had made his creed, but I entirely agree with him in reverentially abstaining from attempting to define what has been left indefinite, and in rejecting all those disputed terms which are not to be found in the Scriptures; not as false, but as not being there, and as unnecessary provocations to disputes and doubts. Were there a meeting in Keswick, I should silently take a seat in it, but I should not alter my language nor my dress, should pay my Easter dues, and stand in no fear of a pack of cards. Did you ever read Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici*? If ever I can afford to write what I should not think it prudent to publish, it will be the *Religio Poetæ*.

## CHAPTER VII.

Declining to write for the *Edinburgh Review* — Friendship with Landon — Sale of his Works — Contributes to the *Quarterly* — Death of a Child.

[WITH regard to the next letter a word of explanation is necessary. Scott, always a true friend to Southey, had written proposing that he should write for the *Edinburgh Review* in spite of the adverse criticism in that journal of *Thalaba* and *Madoc*, and adding that, notwithstanding the flippancy of those attacks, Jeffrey had the most sincere respect both for his person and talents.]

*To Walter Scott.*

Dec. 8, 1807.

I am very much obliged to you for the offer which you make concerning the *Edinburgh Review*, and fully sensible of your friendliness, and the advantages which it holds out. I bear as little ill-will to Jeffrey as he does to me, and attribute whatever civil things he has said of me to especial civility, whatever pert ones (a truer epithet than severe would be) to the habit which he has acquired of taking it for granted that the critic is, by virtue of his office, superior to every writer whom he chooses to summon before him. The

reviews of *Thalaba* and *Madoc* do in no degree influence me. Setting all personal feelings aside, the objections which weigh with me against bearing any part in this journal are these:—I have scarcely one opinion in common with it upon any subject. Jeffrey is for peace, and is endeavoring to frighten the people into it: I am for war as long as Bonaparte lives. He is for Catholic emancipation: I believe that its immediate consequence would be to introduce an Irish priest into every ship in the navy. My feelings are still less in unison with him than my opinions. On subjects of moral or political importance no man is more apt to speak in the very gall of bitterness than I am, and this habit is likely to go with me to the grave: but that sort of bitterness in which he indulges, which tends directly to wound a man in his feelings, and injure him in his fame and fortune (Montgomery is a case in point), appears to me utterly inexcusable. Now, though there would be no necessity that I should follow this example, yet every separate article in the *Review* derives authority from the merit of all the others; and, in this way, whatever of any merit I might insert there would aid and abet opinions hostile to my own, and thus identify me with a system which I thoroughly disapprove. This is not said hastily. The emolument to be derived from writing at ten guineas a sheet, Scotch measure, instead of seven

pounds, *annual*, would be considerable; the pecuniary advantage resulting from the different manner in which my future works would be handled, probably still more so. But my moral feelings must not be compromised. To Jeffrey as an individual I shall ever be ready to show every kind of individual courtesy; but of Judge Jeffrey of the *Edinburgh Review* I must ever think and speak as of a bad politician, a worse moralist, and a critic, in matters of taste, equally incompetent and unjust.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Jan. 11, 1808.

The thought of the journey to London plagues me, — the older I grow the more do I dislike going from home. Oh dear! oh dear! there is such a comfort in one's old coat and old shoes, one's own chair and own fireside, one's own writing-desk and own library, — with a little girl climbing up to my neck, and saying, "Don't go to London, papa, — you must stay with Edith," — and a little boy, whom I have taught to speak the language of cats, dogs, cuckoos, and jackasses, etc., before he can articulate a word of his own; there is such a comfort in all these things that *transportation* to London for four or five weeks seems a heavier punishment than any sins of mine deserve.

*To Joseph Cottle.*

April 20, 1808.

What you say of my copyrights affected me very much. Dear Cottle, set your heart at rest on that subject. It ought to be at rest. These were yours, fairly bought, and fairly sold. You bought them on the chance of their success, which no London bookseller would have done; and had they not been bought, they could not have been published at all. Nay, if you had not purchased *Joan of Arc*, the poem never would have existed, nor should I, in all probability, ever have obtained that reputation which is the capital on which I subsist, nor that power which enables me to support it.

But this is not all. Do you suppose, Cottle, that I have forgotten those true and most essential acts of friendship which you showed me when I stood most in need of them? Your house was my house when I had no other. The very money with which I bought my wedding-ring and paid my marriage fees was supplied by you. It was with your sisters I left Edith during my six months' absence, and for the six months after my return it was from you that I received, week by week, the little on which we lived, till I was enabled to live by other means. It is not the settling of a cash account that can cancel obligations like these. You are in the habit of preserving your



letters, and if you were not, I would entreat you to preserve *this*, that it might be seen hereafter. Sure I am, there never was a more generous or a kinder heart than yours; and you will believe me when I add that there does not live that man upon earth whom I remember with more gratitude and more affection. My head throbs and my eyes burn with these recollections. Good night! my dear old friend and benefactor.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 26, 1808.

From one scene of confusion to another. You saw me in London everlastingly at work in packing my books: and here they are now lying in all parts about me, up to my knees in one place, up to my eyes in another, and above head and ears in a third. I can scarcely find stepping-places through the labyrinth from one end of the room to the other. Like Pharaoh's frogs, they have found their way everywhere, even into the bed-chambers.

And now, Grosvenor, having been married above twelve years, I have for the first time collected all my books together. What a satisfaction this is you cannot imagine, for you cannot conceive the hundredth part of the inconvenience and vexation I have endured for want of them. But the joy which they give me brings with it a min-

gled feeling — the recollection that there are as many materials heaped up as I shall ever find life to make use of; and the humiliating reflection how little knowledge can be acquired in the most laborious life of man, that knowledge becoming every age less and less in proportion to the accumulation of events.

At Bristol I met with the man of all others whom I was most desirous of meeting, — the only man living of whose praise I was ambitious, or whose censure would have humbled me. You will be curious to know who this could be. Savage Landor, the author of *Gebir*, a poem which, unless you have heard me speak of it, you have probably never heard of at all. I never saw any one more unlike myself in every prominent part of human character, nor any one who so cordially and instinctively agreed with me on so many of the most important subjects. I have often said before we met, that I would walk forty miles to see him, and having seen him, I would gladly walk fourscore to see him again. He talked of *Thalaba*, and I told him of the series of mythological poems which I had planned, — mentioned some of the leading incidents on which they were to have been formed, and also told him for what reason they were laid aside; — in plain English, that I could not afford to write them. Landor's reply was, "Go on with them, and I will pay for printing them, as many

as you will write and as many copies as you please." I had reconciled myself to my abdication (if the phrase may be allowable), and am not sure that this princely offer has not done me mischief; for it has awakened in me old dreams and hopes which had been laid aside, and a stinging desire to go on, for the sake of showing him poem after poem, and saying, "I need not accept your offer, but I have done this because you made it." It is something to be praised by one's peers; ordinary praise I regard as little as ordinary abuse.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

May 2, 1808.

I have sent you all that is written of the *Curse of Kehama*: you offered to print it for me; if ever I finish the poem it will be because of that offer, though without the slightest intention of accepting it. Enough is written to open the story of the poem, and serve as a specimen of its manner, though much of what is to follow would be in a wilder strain.

My history as an author is not very honorable to the age in which we live. By giving up my whole time to worthless work in reviews, magazines, and newspapers, I could thrive, as by giving up half my time to them, I contrive to live. In the time thus employed every year I could certainly produce such a poem as *Thalaba*, and if I

did I should starve. You have awakened in me projects that had been laid asleep, and recalled hopes which I had dismissed contentedly, and, as I thought, for ever. If you think *Kehama* deserves to be finished, I will borrow hours from sleep, and finish it by rising two hours before my customary time; and when it is finished I will try whether subscribers can be procured for five hundred copies, by which means I should receive the whole profit to myself. The bookseller's share is too much like the lion in the fable: 30 or 33 per cent. they first deduct as booksellers, and then half the residue as publishers. I have no reason to complain of mine: they treat me with great respect and great liberality, but I wish to be independent of them; and this, if it could be effected, would make me so.

The will and the power to produce anything great are not often found together. I wish you would write in English, because it is a better language than Latin, and because the disuse of English as a living and literary language would be the greatest evil that could befall mankind.

*To John Rickman.*

May, 1808.

Your good news came much sooner than it was expected. I shall not condole with you on the daughtership, because (though it would be an error

deserving of flogging to deny that the masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine) there are many things in which girls are preferable to boys. They begin to be useful just when boys begin to be troublesome; you have them longer for companions, and, moreover, the cost of a boy's education is a girl's fortune. Mrs. Rickman, I dare say, is well satisfied with the sex, — or, if she is not, she will soon find cause to be so. Boys about a house are like favorite dogs in the country, who come into the parlor with dirty legs, and then lie down on the hearth and lick themselves clean; they are always in the way, and when out of sight, ten to one but they are in mischief. Girls are like cats, clean and fit to be up-stairs.

*To Neville White.*

June 20, 1808.

The box arrived about an hour ago. Sir William Jones's works are placed opposite my usual seat, and on the most conspicuous shelf in the room. I have retired to my library to thank you for the most splendid set of books it contains. I thank you for them, Neville, truly and heartily; but do not let it hurt you if I say, that so costly a present gives me some pain as well as pleasure. Were you a rich man, you could not give me more books than I would joyfully accept, for I delight in accumulating such treasures as much as

a miser does in keeping together gold; but, as things are at present, no proof was needed of your generous spirit, and, from the little you have to spare, I cannot but feel you are giving me too much. You will not be offended at my expressing this feeling, nor will you impute it to any unjust pride, which, blessed be God, I am too poor a man, and too wise a one, to be guilty of in any, even the smallest degree. Be assured that I shall ever value the books far more than if they had come from a wealthier donor, and that I write the donor's name in them with true respect and esteem. You will be pleased to hear they are books of immediate use to me. Seven years ago I began a long poem which Sir William Jones, had he been living, would have liked to see, because it has the system of Hindoo mythology for its basis. I believe you heard me mention it at Mr. Hill's. I have been stimulated by the approbation of one of the few men living whose approbation could stimulate me, to go on with this poem, and am winning time for it by rising earlier than was my custom, because I will not allow any other part of the day to an employment less important than writing history, and far less profitable than that of writing anything else, how humble or how worthless soever. In the hours thus fairly won for the purpose I get on steadily and well. Now, though I had long ago gone through

those works of Sir William, and made from them such extracts as were necessary for my purpose, it was still very desirable that I should have them at hand. *Lord Teignmouth's Life* also is new to me.

*To Richard Duppa.*

July 11, 1808.

The thought of writing to you, — or, rather, the thought that I had not written, — has very often risen in my conscience heavily. Joanna Southcote has been the cause. Her books, with Sharp's dirty treasure, are now on their way to London. It is so much better to say I *have done* a thing than I *will do* it, that I really have deferred writing for the sake of saying these books were actually gone.

For the last three weeks I have suffered from a blinding and excoriating catarrh; always with me a very obstinate disease, and more violent than I have ever seen it in any person except one of my own family. Diseases are the worst things a man can inherit, and I am never likely to inherit anything else. That father's brother of mine in Somersetshire — whom I would so gladly sell at half price — received me as cordially as was in his nature last April, and gave me £25, — an act of great generosity in a man of £1200 a year, and remarkable as being all I ever have had, or ever shall have from him, for he has now turned his

sister out of doors, and desired never to see any of the family again. Duppa, my breeches' pockets will never be so full as to make me stick in Heaven's gate. Three lines of that fellow's pen will cut me off from more than all the pens I shall ever wear to the stump will gain for me, and yet I hope many is the goose-egg yet unlaid which is to produce quills for my service.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

London, July, 1808.

My own affairs are not in the pleasantest way. It cannot quite be said of me *laudatur et alget*; but if I do not wholly give myself up to writing in reviews and magazines, and once more spinning verses for the newspaper, it will very soon come to it. One edition of *Espriella* has sold; it requires the sale of a second to balance my account with Longman, and it is most likely that the second will sell. The small edition of *Madoc* has not yet paid the expenses. The quarto copies are waste paper. *Palmerin* has just paid. I have that, the *Madoc* (which will in time drop off), and the yet unpublished *Cid* to look to for the supplies of the current year. Whatever *Brazil* may produce is anticipated; it will go to discharge a debt contracted for Harry during the last seven years. Do not, however, suppose that I am either out of humor with the world, or out of



heart myself. The 200*l.* a year which is necessary for my expenditure, is within my reach. The *Annual Review* will yield me from 70*l.* to 80*l.*, the *Athenæum* 30*l.*, and I am solicited to become poet to the *Courier* at a guinea per week. This offer I have declined, and choose rather to work by the piece than trust to periodical exertion, which very probably it may not be in my power to command. Verses, however, for that respectable paper I shall assuredly soon begin to write, for this efficient reason, that it is the only way in which they will pay me for the paper on which they are written.

*To Lieutenant Southey.*

Aug. 16, 1808.

We have got the prettiest kitten you ever saw, — a dark tabby, — and we have christened her by the heathenish name of Dido. You would be very much diverted to see her hunt Herbert all round the kitchen, playing with his little bare feet, which she just pricks at every pat, and the faster he moves back the more she paws them, at which he cries "Naughty Dido!" and points to his feet and says, "Hurt, hurt, naughty Dido." Presently he feeds her with comfits, which Dido plays with awhile, but soon returns to her old game. You have lost the amusing part of Herbert's childhood, — just when he is trying to talk, and endeavoring to say everything.

I hope that the opening of *Pelayo* is pretty well arranged, but I will not begin upon it till I come to a stop in *Kehama*. You will not, perhaps, be surprised to hear that two of my old dreams are likely to be introduced, with powerful effect, in this poem, — good proof that it was worth while to keep even the imperfect register that I have. The fear is that what happened to Nebuchadnezzar is perpetually happening to me. I forget my dreams, and have no Daniel to help out my recollection; and if by chance I do remember them, unless they are instantly written down, the impression passes away almost as lightly as the dream itself. Do you remember the story of Mickle the poet, who always regretted that he could not remember the poetry which he composed in his sleep? it was, he said, so infinitely superior to anything which he produced in his waking hours. One morning he awoke and repeated the lamentation over his unhappy fortune, that he should compose such sublime poetry, and yet lose it for ever! "What!" said his wife, who happened to be awake, "were you writing poetry?" "Yes," he replied, "and such poetry that I would give the world to remember it." "Well then," said she, "I did luckily hear the last lines, and I am sure I remember them exactly: they were —

'By Heaven, I'll wreak my woes  
Upon the cowslip and the pale primrose.'

I am not such a dreamer as Mickle, for what I can remember is worth remembering, — and one of the wildest scenes in *Kehama* will prove this.

*To the same.*

Oct. 13, 1808.

An Irishman who was abroad came in one day and said that he had seen that morning what he had never seen before, — a fine crop of anchovies growing in the garden. "Anchovies?" said an Englishman, with a half laugh and a tone of wonder. And from this the other, according to the legitimate rules of Irish logic, deduced a quarrel, a challenge, and a duel, in which the poor Englishman, who did not believe that anchovies grew in the garden, was killed on the spot. The moment he fell, the right word came into the challenger's head. "Och! what a pity!" he cried, "and I meant capers all the while!" Mr. Spence knew the parties, and told this story the other day at Calvert's, from whence it travelled to me.

I wish you had the *Cid* to have shown the Spaniards; they would have been pleased to see that the Campeador was beginning to have his fame here in England, 700 years after his death. Unquestionably that Chronicle is one of the finest things in the world; and so I think it will be admitted to be. Coleridge is perfectly delighted with it.

I am getting on with my *Letters from Portugal*. The evenings close in by tea-time, and fire and candle bring with them close work at the desk, and nothing to take me from it. The Long-man of the Row recommends the small size in preference to quarto, as producing greater profits, in consequence of its readier sale. To this I willingly assent. They will probably extend to three such volumes as *Espriella*. When they are done, the fresh letters of *Espriella* will come in their turn; and so I go on. Huzza! two and twenty volumes already; the *Cid*, when reprinted, will make two more; and, please God, five a year in addition as long as I live.

Edith has just been in with her kiss — as regular as the evening gun. She wants to know when Uncle will come home. Sooner perhaps than he himself thinks, for the glorious revolution in Spain will bring Bonaparte down. It is morally impossible that such a nation can be subdued.

*To Walter Scott.*

Nov. 6, 1808.

Very, very few of the Spanish ballads are good; they are made in general upon one receipt, and that a most inartificial one; they begin by describing the situation of somebody who makes a speech which is the end. Nothing like the wildness or the character of our ballads is to be found among

them. It is curious, and at present inexplicable to me, how their prose should be so exquisitely poetical as it is in the *Cid*, and their poetry so completely prosaical as it is in their narrative poems.

A reviewal of my *Cid* by you will be the best aid that it can possibly receive. Five hundred only were printed, and in spite of the temporary feeling and the wonderful beauty of the book, I dare say they will hang upon hand.

It will rejoice me to see you here, and show you my treasures, and talk of the days of the shield and the lance. We have a bed at your service, and shall expect you to be our guest. Wordsworth, who left me to-day, desires his remembrances. He is about to write a pamphlet upon this precious convention, which he will place in a more philosophical point of view than anybody has yet done. I go to press in a few weeks with my *History of Brazil*, and have *Thalaba* at present in Ballantyne's hands, that poem having just reached the end of its seven years' apprenticeship. And I have got half way through my Hindoo poem, which, it is to be hoped, will please myself, inasmuch as it is not likely to please anybody else. It is too strange, too much beyond all human sympathies; but I shall go on, and as, in such a case, I have usually little but my labor for my pains, the certainty that it never can be popular will not deter me from gratifying my own fancy.

[The *Quarterly Review*, which owed its birth to Sir Walter Scott, was established in 1809. Scott had previously withdrawn from the *Edinburgh*, disapproving of its political tone, and Southey, who agreed with Scott, was asked to write an article for the first number of the new journal. From that time, though never a blind adherent to the principles of the *Quarterly*, he became a regular contributor to that Review, and gained from it the steadiest portion of his income. The first editor, as all the world knows, was Gifford.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Nov. 17, 1808.

Let not Gifford suppose me a troublesome man to deal with, pertinacious about trifles, or standing upon punctilios of authorship. No, Grosvenor, I am a quiet, patient, easy-going hack of the mule breed; regular as clockwork in my pace, sure-footed, bearing the burden which is laid on me, and only obstinate in choosing my own path. If Gifford could see me by this fireside where, like Nicodemus, one candle suffices me in a large room, he would see a man in a coat "still more threadbare than his own" when he wrote his *Imitation*, working hard and getting little, — a bare maintenance, and hardly that; writing poems and history for posterity with his whole heart and soul; one daily progressive in learning, not so learned

as he is poor, not so poor as proud, not so proud as happy. Grosvenor, there is not a lighter-hearted nor a happier man upon the face of this wide world.

Your godson thinks that I have nothing to do but to play with him, and anybody who saw what reason he has for his opinion would be disposed to agree with him. I wish you could see my beautiful boy!

*To W. S. Landcr.*

Nov. 26, 1808.

Find out a woman whom you can esteem, and love will grow more surely out of esteem than esteem will out of love. Your soul would then find anchorage. There are fountain springs of delight in the heart of man, which gush forth at the sight of his children, though it might seem before to be hard as the rock of Horeb, and dry as the desert sands. What I learnt from Rousseau before I laid Epictetus to my heart, was that Julia was happy with a husband whom she had not loved, and that Wolmer was more to be admired than St. Preux. I bid no man beware of being poor as he grows old, but I say to all men beware of solitariness in age. Rest is the object to be sought. There is no other way of attaining it here, where we have no convents, but by putting an end to all those hopes and fears to which the

best hearts are the most subject. *Experto crede Roberto*. This is the holy oil which has stilled in me a nature little less tempestuous than your own.

[The next letter refers to that most hopelessly incompetent of works, Cowper's *Milton*, edited by Hayley.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Jan. 6, 1809.

You make a confession \* respecting Milton which nine hundred and ninety-nine persons out of the thousand would make if they were honest enough; for his main excellences are like M. Angelo's, only to be thoroughly appreciated by an artist. Hayley, as Miss Seward has just remarked to me in a letter, is perfectly insane upon the subject of Cowper's resemblance to Milton; there is no other resemblance between them than that both wrote in blank verse — but blank verse as different as possible. You may compare Cowper's translations (which I suppose are very bad, as many of his lesser pieces are, and as Miss Seward tells me) with Langhorne's; and you may estimate Cowper himself as a poet, as a man of intellect, and as a translator of Homer, showing that he is not over-

\* The confession was that he did not sufficiently understand Milton to be in the same raptures with him "which our countrymen in general think it a natural duty to feel." — ED.



valued, but that his popularity is owing to his piety, not his poetry, and that that piety was craziness. I like his letters, but think their so great popularity one of the very many proofs of the imbecility of the age.

Ah, Grosvenor! the very way in which you admire that passage in *Kehama* \* convinces me, that it ought not to be there. Did I not tell you it was clap-trappish? you are clapping as hard as you can to prove the truth of my opinion. That it grew there naturally is certain, but does it suit with the poem? is it of a piece or color with the whole? Is not the poet speaking in himself, whereas the whole character of the poem requires that he should be out of himself.

*To W. S. Landor.*

Feb. 9, 1809.

You have a bill coming before Parliament. The Speaker's secretary happens to be one of my very intimate friends and one of the men in the world for whom I have the highest respect. It may be some convenience to you on this occasion to know him, because he can give you every necessary information respecting Parliamentary business and thus, perhaps, spare you some needless trouble; and there needs no other introduction than knocking at

\* See *Curse of Kehama*, Canto X., v. 20, beginning, "They sin who tell us love can die." — Ed.

his door and sending up your name, with which he is well acquainted. Rickman is his name; and you will find it over his door, in St. Stephen's Court, New Palace Yard, next door to the Speaker's. I will tell you what kind of man he is. His outside has so little polish about it that once having gone from Christchurch to Poole, in his own boat, he was taken by the press-gang, — his robust figure, hard-working hands, and strong voice all tending to deceive them. A little of this is worn off. He is the strongest and clearest-headed man that I have ever known. "Pondere, numero, et mensurâ," is his motto; but to all things he carries the same reasoning and investigating intellect as to mathematical science, and will find out in Homer and the Bible facts necessarily to be inferred from the text, and which yet have as little been supposed to be there intimated, as the existence of metal was suspected in potash before Davy detected it there. I have often said that I learnt how to see for the purposes of poetry from *Gebir*, how to read for the purposes of history from Rickman. His manners are stoical; they are like the husk of the cocoa-nut, and his inner nature is like the milk within its kernel. When I go to London I am always his guest. He gives me but half his hand when he welcomes me at the door, but I have his whole heart, — and there is not that thing in the world which he thinks would serve or

gratify me that he does not do for me, unless it be something which he thinks I can as well do myself. The subtle subject which he best understands is political economy. Were there but half a dozen such men in the House of Commons, there would be courage, virtue, and wisdom enough there to save this country from that revolution to which it is so certainly approaching.

*To W. Gifford.*

March 6, 1809.

Your letter, and its enclosed draft, reached me this afternoon. I have to acknowledge the one, and thank you for the other. It gratifies me that you approve my defence of the missionaries, because I am desirous of such approbation; and it will gratify me if it should be generally approved, because I wrote from a deep and strong conviction of the importance of the subject. With respect to any alterations in this or any future communication, I am perfectly sensible that absolute authority must always be vested in the editor.

I could have wished that this Review had less resembled the *Edinburgh* in the tone and temper of its criticisms. That book of Miss Owenson's is, I dare say, very bad both in manners and morals; yet, had it fallen into my hands, I think I could have told her so in such a spirit that she herself would have believed me, and might have profited

by the censure. The same quantity of rain which would clear a flower of its blights will, if it falls heavier and harder, wash the roots bare, and beat the blossoms to the ground. I have been in the habit of reviewing more than eleven years, for the lucre of gain, and not, God knows, from any liking to the occupation; and of all my literary misdeeds, the only ones of which I have repented have been those reviews which were written with undue asperity, so as to give unnecessary pain. I propose to continue the subject of the Missions through two other articles, neither of which will probably be half so long as the first; one respecting the South Sea Islands, the other South Africa. Two things I can promise,—perfect sincerity in what I write, without the slightest assumption of knowledge which I do not possess; and a punctuality not to be exceeded by that of Mr. Murray's opposite neighbors at St. Dunstan's.

*To Richard Duppa.*

March 31, 1809.

I am sorry for your loss, — a heavy one under any circumstances, and particularly so to one who, being single at your time of life, will now feel more entirely what it is to have no person who intimately loves him. It is not in the order of nature that there should ever be a void in the heart of man, — the old leaves should not fall

from the tree till the young ones are expanding to supply their place.

I have now three girls living, and as delightful a playfellow in the shape of a boy as ever man was blest with. Very often, when I look at them, I think what a fit thing it would be that Malthus should be hanged.

You may have known that I have some dealings in the way of trade with your bookseller, Murray. One article of mine is in his first *Quarterly*, and he has bespoken more. Whenever I shall have the satisfaction of seeing you once more under this roof it will amuse you to see how dexterously Gifford endeavors to be dull, and aim at nothing higher than Reviews and Magazines.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

April 23, 1809.

I shall send three sections of *Kehama* to meet you in London—three more will complete it—and would have so done before this time had all things been going on well with me. I had a daughter born on the 27th last month; a few days after the birth her mother was taken ill, and for some time there was cause of serious alarm. This, God be thanked, is over. The night before last we had another alarm of the worst kind, though

happily this also is passing away. My little boy went to bed with some slight indications of a trifling cold. His mother went up as usual to look at him before supper ; she thought he coughed in a strange manner, called me, and I instantly recognized the sound of the croup. We have a good apothecary within three minutes' walk, and luckily he was at home. He immediately confirmed our fears. The child was taken out of bed and bled in the jugular vein, a blister placed on the throat next morning, and by these vigorous and timely remedies we hope and trust the disease is subdued. But what a twelve hours did we pass, knowing the nature of the disease, and only hoping the efficacy of the remedy. Even now I am far, very far, from being at ease. There is a love which passeth the love of women, and which is more lightly alarmed than the wakefullest jealousy.

Landor, I am not a stoic at home : I feel as you do about the fall of an old tree ; but, O Christ ! what a pang it is to look upon the young shoot and think it will be cut down. And this is the thought which almost at all times haunts me ; it comes upon me in moments when I know not whether the tears that start are of love or of bitterness. There is an evil, too, in seeing all things like a poet ; circumstances which would glide over a healthier

mind sink into mine; everything comes to me with its whole force, — the full meaning of a look, a gesture, a child's imperfect speech, I can perceive, and cannot help perceiving; and thus am I made to remember what I would give the world to forget.

*To Lieut. Southey.*

May 22, 1809.

My last letter told you of Herbert's danger and his recovery. You will be a little shocked at the intelligence in this. We lost Emma yesterday night. Five days ago she was in finer health than we had ever seen her, and I repeatedly remarked it. For a day or two she had been ailing; on Saturday night breathed shortly and was evidently ill. Edmondson repeatedly saw her, thought her better at ten o'clock, and assured us he saw no danger. In half an hour she literally fell asleep without a struggle. Edith is as well as should be expected, and I, perhaps, better. You know how I take tooth-ache and tooth-drawings, and I have almost learnt to bear moral pain, not, indeed, with the same levity, but with as few outward and visible signs. In fact, God be thanked for it, there never was a man who had more entirely set his heart upon things permanent and eternal than I have done; the transitoriness

of everything here is always present to my feeling as well as my understanding. Were I to speak as sincerely of my family as Wordsworth's little girl, my story [would be] that I have five children; three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven.



## CHAPTER VIII.

Southey's Pecuniary Prospects—The *Annual Register*—*Madoc*—  
Acquaintance with Shelley—*Life of Nelson*—Recollections of  
Oxford—His Children.

[CANNING having expressed a strong desire to serve Southey, Scott wrote to him saying there were professors' chairs vacant, and adding "What would I not give to secure you a chair in our northern metropolis!" Southey replied at length stating his early disappointments with regard to Portugal, and that he was now receiving a pension of £200, "from which the Exchequer deducts above sixty pounds."]

*To Walter Scott.*

June 16, 1809.

This is all I have. Half my time I sell to the booksellers; the other half is reserved for works which will never pay for the paper on which they are written, but on which I rest my future fame. I am, of course, straitened in circumstances; a little more would make me easy. My chance of inheritance is gone by: my father's elder brother was worth 40,000*l.*, but he cut me off without the

slightest cause of offence. You will see by this that I would willingly be served, but it is not easy to serve me. Lisbon is too insecure a place to remove to with a family, and nothing could repay me for going without them. I have neither the habits nor talents for an official situation; nor, if I had, could I live in London, — that is, I should soon die there. I have said to Wynn that one thing would make me at ease for life, — create for me the title of Royal Historiographer for England\* (there is one for Scotland), with a salary of 400*l.*: the reduction would leave a net income of 278*l.*; with that I should be sure of all the decent comforts of life, and, for everything beyond them, it would then be easy to supply myself. Of course, my present pension would cease. Whether Mr. Canning can do this I know not; but, if this could be done, it would be adequate to all I want, and beyond that my wishes have never extended.

*To Lieut. Southey.*

Nov. 25, 1809.

I have this day finished *Kehama*, having written two hundred lines since yesterday morning. Huzza, Aballiboozobanganorribo!† It is not often in his lifetime a man finishes a long poem,

\* Southey soon discovered that he was mistaken in supposing that there was no English Historiographer. — ED.

† See *The Doctor*, &c.

and as I have nobody to give me joy I must give myself joy. 24 sections, 4844 lines; 200 or 300 more will probably be added in course of correction and transcription; all has been done before breakfast (since its resumption) except about 170 lines of the conclusion. Huzza! better than lying abed, Tom; and though I am not quite ready to begin another, I will rise as usual to-morrow and work at the plans of *Pelayo* and *Robin Hood*. And now I am a little impatient that you should see the whole, and shall feel another job off my hands when your copy is completed. By beginning earlier with the next poem I shall be able to keep pace with it, and send it to you as fast as it proceeds. Very very few persons will like *Ke-hama*; everybody will wonder at it; it will increase my reputation without increasing my popularity; a general remark will be, what a pity that I have wasted so much power. I care little about this, having in the main pleased myself, and all along amused myself; every generation will afford me some half dozen admirers of it, and the everlasting column of Dante's fame does not stand upon a wider base.

[And now Southey undertook to write the History of Europe for Ballantyne's *Annual Register*.]

*To John Rickman.*

Jan. 21, 1810.

This is a very profitable engagement. They give me 400*l.* for it; and if it continues two or three years (which I believe rests wholly with myself), it will make me altogether at ease in my circumstances, for by that time my property in Longman's hands will have cleared itself, the constable will come up with me, and we shall travel on, I trust, to the end of our journey cheek by jowl, even if I should not be able to send him forward like a running footman.

The *Quarterly* pays me well — ten guineas per sheet: at the same measure the *Annual* was only four. I have the bulky *Life of Nelson* in hand, and am to be paid double. This must be for the sake of saying they give twenty guineas per sheet, as I should have been well satisfied with ten, and have taken exactly the same pains.

*To Ebenezer Elliott.*

Feb. 9, 1810.

The objections which have been made to the style of *Madoc* are ill-founded. It has no other peculiarity than that of being pure English, which, unhappily, in these times renders it peculiar. My rule of writing, whether for prose or verse, is the same, and may very shortly be stated. It is, to express myself, 1st, as perspicuously as

possible; 2d, as concisely as possible; 3d, as impressively as possible. This is the way to be understood, and felt, and remembered. But there is an obtuseness of heart and understanding which it is impossible to reach; and if you have seen the reviewals of *Madoc*, after having read the poem, you will perceive that almost in every part or passage which they have selected for censure they have missed the meaning.

The metre has been criticised with equal incapacity on the part of the critics. Milton and Shakspeare are the standards of blank verse: in these writers every variety of it is to be found, and by this standard I desire to be measured. The redundant verses (when the redundant syllable is anywhere but at the end of a line) are formed upon the admitted principle, that two short syllables are equal in time to one long one. The truth is, that though the knack of versifying is a gift, the art is an acquirement. I versified more rapidly at the age of sixteen, than now at six-and-thirty. But it requires a knowledge of that art to criticise upon the structure of verse; nor is it sufficient to understand the regular turn of the metre: a parrot might be taught that. In the sweep of blank verse, the whole paragraph must be taken into consideration before the merit or demerit of a single line, or sometimes of a single word, can be understood. Yet these critics

are everlastingly picking out single lines, and condemning their cadence as bad. This might be true if the line could possibly stand alone. But were I to cut off one of the critic's fingers and tell him it was only fit for a tobacco-stopper, that would be true also, because the act of amputation made it so.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

March 26, 1810.

Is it a mark of strength or of weakness, of maturity or of incipient decay, that it is more delightful to me to compose history than poetry? not, perhaps, that I feel more pleasure in the act of composition, but that I go to it with more complacency as to an employment which suits my temperament. I am loth to ascribe this lack of inclination to any deficiency of power, and certainly am not conscious of any; still I have an ominous feeling that there are poets enough in the world without me, and that my best chance of being remembered will be as an historian. A proof-sheet of *Kehama*, or a second-sight scene in *Pelayo*, disperses this cloud; such, however, is my habitual feeling. It did not use to be the case in those days when I thought of nothing but poetry, and lived, as it were, in an atmosphere of nitrous oxide — in a state of perpetual excitement which yet produced no exhaustion.

*To the same.*

Jan. 11, 1811.

Your abhorrence of Spenser is a strange heresy.\* I admit that he is inferior to Chaucer (who for variety of power has no competitor except Shakspeare), but he is the great master of English versification, incomparably the greatest master in our language. Without being insensible to the defects of the Faëry Queen, I am never weary of reading it. Surely Chaucer is as much a poet as it was possible for him to be when the language was in so rude a state. There seems to be this material point of difference between us, — you think we have little poetry which was good for anything before Milton; I, that we have little since, except in our own immediate days. I do not say there was much before, but what there was was sterling verse in sterling English. It had thought and feeling in it. At present, the surest way to become popular is to have as little of either ingredient as possible.

*To the same.*

Feb. 12, 1811.

I am not disappointed in *Count Julian*; it is too Greek for representation in these times, but it

\* See Landor's couplet in the verses addressed to Wordsworth: —

“Thee gentle Spenser fondly led,  
But me he mostly sent to bed.” — ED.

is altogether worthy of you. The thought and feeling which you have frequently condensed in a single line, is unlike anything in modern composition. The conclusion too is Greek. I should have known this play to be yours had it fallen in my way without a name.

Never was a character more finely conceived than Julian. That image of his seizing the horses is in the very first rank of sublimity; it is the grandest image of power that ever poet produced.

You wonder that I can think of two poems at once; it proceeds from weakness, not from strength. I could not stand the continuous excitement which you have gone through in your tragedy: in me it would not work itself off in tears; the tears would flow while in the act of composition, and would leave behind a throbbing head and a whole system in the highest state of nervous excitability, which would soon induce disease in one of its most fearful forms. From such a state I recovered in 1800 by going to Portugal, and suddenly changing climate, occupation, and all internal objects: and I have kept it off since by a good intellectual regimen.

When I have read *Count Julian* again and again I will then make out a list of the passages which appear so difficult that ordinary readers may be supposed incapable of understanding



them. When you perceive that they may be difficult to others, it will be easy, in most instances, to make the meaning more obvious. Then you must print the tragedy. It will not have many more admirers than *Gebir*; but they will be of the same class and cast; and with *Gebir* it will be known hereafter, when all the rubbish of our generation shall have been swept away.

*To the same.*

July 15, 1811.

I am no botanist; but, like you, my earliest and deepest recollections are connected with flowers, and they always carry me back to other days. Perhaps this is because they are the only things which affect our senses precisely in the same manner as they did in childhood. The sweetness of the violet is always the same, and when you rifle a rose, and drink as it were its fragrance, the refreshment is the same to the old man as to the boy. We see with different eyes in proportion as we learn to discriminate, and, therefore, this effect is not so certainly produced by visual objects. Sounds recall the past in the same manner, but do not bring with them individual scenes, like the cowslip-field or the bank of violets, or the corner of the garden to which we have transplanted field-flowers. Oh, what a happy season is childhood, if our modes of life and education will let it be so!

It were enough to make one misanthropical were we consider how great a portion of the evil of this world is man's own making, if the knowledge of this truth did not imply that the evil is removable; and, therefore, the prime duty of a good man is by all means in his power to assist in removing it.

*To James White.*

Oct. 25, 1811.

By this time you are settled at Pembroke, know your way to your rooms, the faces of your fellow collegians, and enough I dare say of a college life, to find its duties less formidable, and its habits less agreeable, than they are supposed to be. Those habits are said to have undergone a great reformation since I was acquainted with them;—in my time they stood grievously in need of it; but even then a man who had any good moral principles might live as he pleased if he dared make the trial; and however much he might be stared at at first for his singularity, was sure ere long to be respected for it.

Some dangers beset every man when he enters upon so new a scene of life; that which I apprehend for you is, low spirits. Walk a stated distance every day; and that you may never want a motive for walking, make yourself acquainted with the elements of botany during the winter, that as soon as the flowers come out in the

spring you may begin to herbalize. A quarter of an hour every day will make you master of the elements in the course of a very few months. I prescribe for you mentally also, and this is one of the prescriptions ; for it is of main importance that you should provide yourself with amusement as well as employment. Pursue no study longer than you can without effort attend to it, and lay it aside whenever it interests you too much : whenever it impresses itself so much upon your mind that you dream of it, or lie awake thinking about it, be sure it is then become injurious. Follow my practice of making your latest employment in the day something unconnected with its other pursuits, and you will be able to lay your head upon the pillow like a child.

One word more and I have done with advice. Do not be solicitous about taking a high degree, or about college honors of any kind. Many a man has killed himself at Cambridge by overworking for mathematical honors ; recollect how few the persons are, who, after they have spent their years in severe study at this branch of science, ever make any use of it afterwards. Your wiser plan should be to look on to that state of life in which you wish and expect to be placed, and to lay in such knowledge as will then turn to account.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Jan. 4, 1812.

Here is a man at Keswick, who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794. His name is Shelley, son to the member for Shoreham; with 6000*l.* a year entailed upon him, and as much more in his father's power to cut off. Beginning with romances of ghosts and murder, and with poetry at Eton, he passed, at Oxford, into metaphysics; printed half-a-dozen pages which he entitled *The Necessity of Atheism*; sent one anonymously to Coplestone, in expectation, I suppose, of converting him; was expelled in consequence; married a girl of seventeen, after being turned out of doors by his father; and here they both are, in lodgings, living upon 200*l.* a year, which her father allows them. He is come to the fittest physician in the world. At present he has got to the Pantheistic stage of philosophy, and, in the course of a week, I expect he will be a Berkeleyan, for I have put him upon a course of Berkeley. It has surprised him a good deal to meet, for the first time in his life, with a man who perfectly understands him, and does him full justice. I tell him that all the difference between us is, that he is nineteen, and I am thirty-seven; and I dare say it will not be very long before I shall succeed in convincing him that he may be a true philosopher, and do a great deal of

good, with 6000*l.* a year; the thought of which troubles him a great deal more at present than ever the want of sixpence (for I have known such a want) did me.

*To James White.*

Feb. 16, 1812.

There is no part of my own life which I remember with so little pleasure as that which was passed at the University; not that it has left behind it any cause of self-reproach, but I had many causes of disquietude and unhappiness, — some imaginary, and some, God knows, real enough. And I cannot think of the place without pain, because of the men with whom I there lived in the closest intimacy of daily and almost hourly intercourse; those whom I loved best are dead, and there are some whom I have never seen since we parted there, and possibly never shall see more. It is with this feeling I believe, more or less, that every man who has any feeling always remembers college. Seven years ago I walked through Oxford on a fine summer morning, just after sunrise, while the stage was changing horses: I went under the windows of what had formerly been my own rooms; the majesty of the place was heightened by the perfect silence of the streets, and it had never before appeared to me half so majestic or half so beautiful. But I would rather go a day's

journey round than pass through that city again, especially in the day-time, when the streets are full. Other places in which I have been an inhabitant would not make the same impression; there is an enduring sameness in a university like that of the sea and mountains. It is the same in our age that it was in our youth; the same figures fill the streets, and the knowledge that they are not the same persons brings home the sense of change which is of all things the most mournful.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

April 15, 1812.

Of all our school companions, how very few of them are there whose lots in life have proved to be what might have been expected for them. You and Bedford have gone on each in your natural courses, and are to be found just where and what I should have looked to find, if I had waked after a Nourjahad sleep of twenty years. The same thing might be said of me, if my local habitation were not here at the end of the map. I am leading the life which is convenient for me, and following the pursuits to which, from my earliest boyhood, I was so strongly predisposed. A less troubled youth would probably have led to a less happy manhood. I should have thought less and studied less, felt less and suffered less. Now, for all that I have felt and suffered, I know that I am

the better ; and God knows that I have yet much to think, and to study, and to do. It is now eighteen years since you and I used to sit till midnight over your claret in Skeleton Corner,\* — half your life and almost half mine. During that time we have both of us rather grown than changed, and accident has had as little to do with our circumstances as with our character.

Hitherto I have been highly favored. A healthy body, an active mind, and a cheerful heart are the three best boons nature can bestow ; and, God be praised, no man ever enjoyed them more perfectly. My skin and bones scarcely know what an ailment is, my mind is ever on the alert, and yet, when its work is done, becomes as tranquil as a baby ; and my spirits invincibly good. Would they have been so, or could I have been what I am, if you had not been for so many years my stay and support ? I believe not ; yet you had been so long my familiar friend, that I felt no more sense of dependence in receiving my main, and at one time sole, subsistence from you, than if you had been my brother : it was being done to as I would have done.

*To John May.*

Jan. 3, 1813.

Many happy new years to you, and may those

\* A part of Christ Church, so called, where Mr. Wynn's rooms were situated.

which are to come prove more favorable to you in worldly concerns than those which are past! I have been somewhat unwell this Christmas; first with a cold, then with a sudden and unaccountable sickness, which, however, has not returned, and I now hope I have been physicked into tolerable order. The young ones are going on well: little Isabel thrives, your god-daughter is old enough to figure at a Christmas dance, and Herbert will very soon be perfect in the regular Greek verb. A Testament is to come for him in my next parcel, and we shall begin upon it as soon as it arrives. No child ever promised better, morally and intellectually. He is very quick of comprehension, retentive, observant, diligent, and as fond of a book and as impatient of idleness as I am. Would that I were as well satisfied with his bodily health; but in spite of activity and bodily hilarity, he is pale and puny: just that kind of child of whom old women would say that he is too clever to live. Old women's notions are not often so well founded as this; and having this apprehension before my eyes, the uncertainty of human happiness never comes home to my heart so deeply as when I look at him. God's will be done! I must sow the seed as carefully as if I were sure that the harvest would ripen. My two others are the most perfect contrast you ever saw. Bertha, whom I call Queen Henry the Eighth, from her



likeness to King Bluebeard, grows like Jonah's gourd, and is the very picture of robust health; and little Kate hardly seems to grow at all, though perfectly well, — she is round as a mushroom-button. Bertha, the bluff queen, is just as grave as Kate is garrulous; they are inseparable play-fellows, and go about the house hand in hand. Shall I never show you this little flock of mine? I have seen almost every one of my friends here except you, than whom none would be more joyfully welcomed.

*To Walter Scott.*

Jan. 13, 1813.

In the course of next month I hope you will receive my *Life of Nelson*, a subject not self-chosen — and out of my way, but executed *con amore*. Some of my periodical employment I must ere long relinquish, or I shall never complete the great historical works upon which so many years have been bestowed, in which so much progress has been made, and for which it is little likely that any other person in the country will ever so qualify himself again. Yonder they are lying unfinished, while I suffer myself to be tempted to other occupations of more immediate emolument indeed, but, in all other respects, of infinitely less importance. Meanwhile time passes on, and I who am of a short-lived race, and have a sense of the uncertainty of life more continually

present in my thoughts and feelings than most men, sometimes reproach myself for not devoting my time to those works upon which my reputation, and perhaps the fortunes of my family, must eventually rest, while the will is strong, the ability yet unimpaired, and the leisure permitted me.

*To Dr. Gooch.*

Jan. 20, 1813.

Wordsworth refers, in more than one of his poems, with a melancholy feeling of regret, to the loss of youthful thoughts and hopes. In the last six weeks he has lost two children — one of them a fine boy of seven years old. I believe he feels, as I have felt before him, that "there is healing in the bitter cup," — that God takes from us those we love as hostages for our faith (if I may so express myself), — and that to those who look to a reunion in a better world, where there shall be no separation, and no mutability except that which results from perpetual progressiveness, the evening becomes more delightful than the morning, and the sunset offers brighter and lovelier visions than those which we build up in the morning clouds, and which disappear before the strength of the day. The older I grow — and I am older in feeling than in years — the more I am sensible of this: there is a precious alchemy in this faith, which transmutes grief into joy, or,

rather, it is the true and heavenly euphrasy which clears away the film from our mortal sight, and makes affliction appear what, in reality, it is to the wise and good, — a dispensation of mercy.

*To Neville White.*

Jan. 25, 1813.

The poem goes on slow and sure. Twenty years ago nothing could equal the ardor with which I pursued such employments. I was then impatient to see myself in print: it was not possible to long more eagerly than I did for the honor of authorship. This feeling is quite extinct; and, allowing as much as may be allowed for experience, wiser thoughts, and, if you please, satiety in effecting such a change, I cannot but believe that much must be attributed to a sort of autumnal or evening tone of mind, coming upon me a little earlier than it does upon most men. I am as cheerful as a boy, and retain many youthful or even boyish habits; but I am older in mind than in years, and in years than in appearance; and, though none of the joyousness of youth is lost, there is none of its ardor left. Composition, where any passion is called forth, excites me more than it is desirable to be excited; and, if it were not for the sake of gratifying two or three persons in the world whom I love, and who love me, it is more than probable that I might never write a verse again.

*To James Dusautoy.\**

Feb. 12, 1813.

Your talents will do everything for you in time, but nothing in the way you wish for some years to come. The best road to the Bar is through the University, where honors of every kind will be within your reach. With proper conduct you would obtain a fellowship by the time you were one or two and twenty, and this would enable you to establish yourself in one profession or another, at your own choice.

This course is as desirable for your intellectual as for your worldly advancement. Your mind would then have time and opportunity to ripen, and bring forth its fruits in due season. God forbid that they should either be forced or blighted! A young man cannot support himself by literary exertions, however great his talents and his industry. Woe be to the youthful poet who sets out upon his pilgrimage to the temple of fame with nothing but hope for his viaticum! There is the Slough of Despond, and the Hill of Difficulty, and the Valley of the Shadow of Death upon the way!

\* Like Kirke White, Dusautoy had applied to Southey for advice, and received the wise counsel contained in this letter. He gave practical help at the same time, and the young man went up to Cambridge. There he showed the highest promise, but was cut off by a malignant fever, and buried in the cloisters of Emanuel College. — ED.

To be called to the Bar you must be five years a member of one of the inns of court; but if you have a University degree, three will suffice. Men who during this course look to their talents for support usually write for newspapers or reviews: the former is destructively laborious, and sends many poor fellows prematurely to the grave; for the latter branch of employment there are always too many applicants. I began it at the age of four and twenty, which was long before I was fit for it.

The stage, indeed, is a lottery where there is more chance of a prize; but there is an evil attending success in that direction which I can distinctly see, though you perhaps may not be persuaded of it. The young man who produces a successful play is usually the dupe of his own success; and being satisfied with producing an immediate and ephemeral effect, looks for nothing beyond it. You must aim at something more. I think your path is plain. Success at the University is not exclusively a thing of chance or favor; you are certain of it if you deserve it.

When you have considered this with your friends, tell me the result, and rest assured that my endeavors to forward your wishes in this, or in any other course which you may think proper to pursue, shall be given with as much sincerity as this advice; meantime read Greek, and write

as many verses as you please. By shooting at a high mark you will gain strength of arm, and precision of aim will come in its proper season.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

March 12, 1813.

Have you heard of the strange circumstance about Coleridge?—a man hanging himself in the Park with one of *his* shirts on, marked at full length! Guess C.'s astonishment at reading this in a newspaper at a coffee-house. The thing is equally ridiculous and provoking. It will alarm many persons who know him, and I dare say many will always believe that the man was C. himself, but that he was cut down in time, and that his friends said it was somebody else in order to conceal the truth. As yet, however, I have laughed about it too much to be vexed.

*To Neville White.*

June 14, 1813.

The prayer in the Litany against *sudden* death I look upon as a relic of Romish error, the only one remaining in that finest of all human compositions, — death without confession and absolution being regarded by the Romanist as the most dreadful of all calamities, naturally is one of the evils from which they pray to be delivered. I substitute the word *violent* in my supplications;

for since that mode of dissolution which, in the Scriptures is termed falling asleep, and which should be the natural termination of life passed in peace and innocence and happiness, has become so rare that it falls scarcely to the lot of one in ten thousand, instantaneous and unforeseen death is the happiest mode of our departure, and it is even more desirable for the sake of our surviving friends than for our own.

## CHAPTER IX.

Poet-Laureate — Estimate of Wordsworth — Lord Byron — Southey as an Historian — Battle of Waterloo Celebrated upon Skiddaw — Visits Belgium.

[WHEN Pye, the poet-laureate, died, "the not very desirable succession" was offered as all readers know, to Scott. His "manner of declining it," writes Southey, "was the handsomest possible; nothing could be more friendly to me or more honorable to himself." Southey was in London at the time, when, thanks to Scott, the laureateship was offered to him, whence he writes to Mrs. Southey: —]

Sept. 28, 1813.

I dined on Sunday at Holland House, with some eighteen or twenty persons. Sharp was there, who introduced me with all due form to Rogers, and to Sir James Mackintosh, who seems to be in a bad state of health. In the evening Lord Byron came in. He had asked Rogers if I was "magnanimous," and requested him to make for him all sorts of amends honorable for having tried his wit upon me at the expense of his discretion; and in full confidence of the success of the apology, had been provided with a letter of



introduction to me in case he had gone to the Lakes, as he intended to have done. As for me, you know how I regard things of this kind; so we met with all becoming courtesy on both sides, and I saw a man whom in voice, manner, and countenance I liked very much more than either his character or his writings had given me reason to expect. Rogers wanted me to dine with him on Tuesday (this day): only Lord Byron and Sharp were to have been of the party, but I had a pending engagement here, and was sorry for it.

*To Walter Scott.*

London, Nov. 5, 1813.

The original salary of the office was 100 marks. It was raised for Ben Jonson to 100*l.* and a tierce of Spanish canary wine, now wickedly commuted for 26*l.*; which said sum, unlike the canary, is subject to income-tax, land-tax, and heaven knows what taxes besides. The whole net income is little more or less than 90*l.* It comes to me as a Godsend, and I have vested it in a life-policy: by making it up 102*l.* it covers an insurance for 3000*l.* upon my own life. I have never felt any painful anxiety as to providing for my family,—my mind is too buoyant, my animal spirits too good, for this care ever to have affected my happiness; and I may add that a not unbecoming trust in Providence has ever sup-

ported my confidence in myself. But it is with the deepest feeling of thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted.

To the manner of your letter I am quite unable to reply. We shall both be remembered hereafter, and ill betide him who shall institute a comparison between us. There has been no race; we have both got to the top of the hill by different paths, and meet there not as rivals but as friends, each rejoicing in the success of the other.

*To James White.*

May 2, 1814.

There are hardly more than half-a-dozen pulpits in the kingdom in which an eloquent preacher would not be out of his place. Everywhere else, what is required of the preacher is to be plain, perspicuous, and in earnest. If he feels himself, he will make his congregation feel. But it is not in the pulpit that the minister may do most good. He will do infinitely more by living with his parishioners like a pastor; by becoming their confidential adviser, their friend, their comforter; directing the education of the poor, and, as far as he can, inspecting that of all, which is not difficult for a man of good sense and gentle disposition to do as an official duty, without giving

it, in the slightest degree, the appearance of officious interference. Teach the young what Christianity is; distinguish by noticing and rewarding those who distinguish themselves by their good conduct; see to the wants of the poor, and call upon the charity of the rich, making yourself the channel through which it flows; look that the schools be in good order, that the workhouse is what it ought to be, that the overseers do their duty; be, in short, the active friend of your parishioners. Sunday will then be the least of your labors, and the least important of your duties; and you will very soon find that the time employed in making a sermon would be better employed in adapting to your congregation a dozen, which your predecessors did not deliver to the press for no other purpose than that they should stand idle upon the shelves of a divinity library. The pulpit is a clergyman's parade, the parish is his field of active service.

*To Neville White.*

Nov. 8, 1814.

Our repast upon Kirkston wore a good face of cheerfulness; but I could not help feeling how soon we were to separate, and how doubtful it was that the whole of the party would ever be assembled together again. After our return Isabel was seized with a severe attack, and was brought

to the very brink of the grave. I so verily expected to lose her that I thought at one moment I had seen her for the last time. There are heavier afflictions than this, but none keener; and the joy and thankfulness which attend on recovery are proportionately intense. She has not yet regained her strength; but every day is restoring her, God be thanked.

O dear Neville! how unendurable would life be if it were not for the belief that we shall meet again in a better state of existence. I do not know that person who is happier than myself, and who has more reason to be happy; and never was man more habitually cheerful: but this belief is the root which gives life to all, and holds all fast.

*To James White.*

Nov. 11, 1814.

I am grieved to learn from Neville that you are distressing yourself about what I could find in my heart to call these cursed examinations. There are few things of which I am more thoroughly convinced, than that the system of feeding-up young men like so many game cocks for a sort of intellectual *long-main* is every way pernicious.

University honors are like provincial tokens, not current beyond the narrow limits of the district in which they are coined; and even where they pass current they are not the only currency,

nor the best. Remember that you only want your degree as a passport: content yourself with simply taking it; and if you are disposed to revenge yourself afterwards by burning your mathematical books and instruments, bring them with you to Keswick when next you make us a visit, and I will assist at the auto-da-fè. We will dine by the side of the Lake, and light our fire with Euclid.

Neville was more fortunate than you in his excursion to this land of loveliness. He had delightful weather, and he made the most of it. Never had we a more indefatigable guest, nor one who enjoyed the country more heartily. Since his return, Neville-like, he has loaded us with presents; and no children were ever happier than these young ones were when the expected box made its appearance. I happened to be passing the evening at the Island with General Peachey, when it arrived, and they one and all laid their injunctions upon their mother not to tell me what each had received, that they might surprise me with the sight in the morning. Accordingly, no sooner was my door opened in the morning than the whole swarm were in an uproar, buzzing about me. In an evil moment I had begun to shave myself; before the operation was half over, Edith with her work-box was on one side, Herbert with his books on the other, — Bertha was displaying one treas-

ure, Kate another, and little Isabel, jiggling for delight in the midst of them, was crying out *mine — mine — Mitter White* — and holding up a box of Tunbridge ware. My poor chin suffered for all this, and the scene would have made no bad subject for Wilkie or Bird.

*To Dr. Gooch.*

Nov. 30, 1814.

I am fully convinced that a gradual improvement is going on in the world, has been going on from its commencement, and will continue till the human race shall attain all the perfection of which it is capable in this mortal state. This belief grows out of knowledge; that is, it is a corollary deduced from the whole history of mankind. It is no little pleasure to believe that in no age has this improvement proceeded so rapidly as in the present, and that there never was so great a disposition to promote it in those who have the power. The disposition, indeed, is alloyed with much weakness and much superstition; and God knows there are many disturbing powers at work. But much has been done, more is doing, and nothing can be of more importance than giving this disposition a good direction.

You have in *Roderick* the best which I have done, and, probably, the best that I shall do, which is rather a melancholy feeling for the

author. My powers, I hope, are not yet verging upon decay, but I have no right to expect any increase or improvement, short as they are of what they might have been, and of what I might have hoped to make them. Perhaps I shall never venture upon another poem of equal extent, and in so deep a strain. It will affect you more than *Madoc*, because it is pitched in a higher key. I am growing old, the gray hairs thicken upon me, my joints are less supple, and, in mind as well as body, I am less enterprising than in former years. When the thought of any new undertaking occurs, the question, shall I live to complete what I have already undertaken? occurs also. My next poem will be, "A Tale of Paraguay," about a thousand lines only in length. Its object will be to plant the grave with flowers, and wreath a chaplet for the angel of death. If you suspect, from all this, that I suffer any diminution of my usual happy spirits, you will be mistaken.

*To Bernard Barton.*

Dec. 19, 1814.

Wordsworth's residence and mine are fifteen miles asunder, a sufficient distance to preclude any frequent interchange of visits. I have known him nearly twenty years, and, for about half that time, intimately. The strength and the character of his mind you see in the *Excursion*, and his

life does not belie his writings, for, in every relation of life, and every point of view, he is a truly exemplary and admirable man. In conversation he is powerful beyond any of his contemporaries: and, as a poet, — I speak not from the partiality of friendship, nor because we have been so absurdly held up as both writing upon one concerted system of poetry, but with the most deliberate exercise of impartial judgment whereof I am capable, when I declare my full conviction that posterity will rank him with Milton.

*To Walter Scott.*

Dec. 24, 1814.

Are you still engaged with the *Lord of the Isles*, or may I give you joy of a happy deliverance? There are few greater pleasures in life than that of getting fairly through a great work of this kind, and seeing it when it first comes before us in portly form. I envy you the advantage which you always derive from a thorough knowledge of your poetical ground; no man can be more sensible of this advantage than myself, though I have in every instance been led to forego it.

Jeffrey I hear has written what his admirers call a *crushing* review of the *Excursion*. He might as well seat himself upon Skiddaw, and fancy that he crushed the mountain. I heartily



wish Wordsworth may one day meet with him, and lay him alongside, yard-arm and yard-arm, in argument.

*To Dr. Southey.*

Feb. 16, 1815.

I have heard from many quarters of Lord Byron's praise, and regard it just as much as I did his censure. Nothing can be more absurd than thinking of comparing any of my poems with the *Paradise Lost*. With Tasso, with Virgil, with Homer, there may be fair grounds of comparison; but my mind is wholly unlike Milton's, and my poetry has nothing of his imagination and distinguishing character; nor is there any poet who has, except Wordsworth: he possesses it in an equal degree. And it is entirely impossible that any man can understand Milton, and fail to perceive that Wordsworth is a poet of the same class and of equal powers. Whatever my powers may be, they are not of that class. From what I have seen of the minor poems, I suspect that Chiabrera is the writer whom, as a poet, I most resemble in the constitution of my mind. His narrative poems I have never seen.

The sale of *Roderick* is what I expected, neither better nor worse. It is also just what I should desire, if profit were a matter of indifference to me; for I am perfectly certain that great immediate popularity can only be obtained by those

faults which fall in with the humor of the times, and which are, of course, ultimately fatal to the poems that contain them.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

March 9, 1815.

Your godson bids fair to walk in the ways of his father. He is now in his ninth year, and knows about as much Greek as a boy in the under-fifth. His Latin consists in a decent knowledge of the grammar, and a tolerable *copia verborum*. His sister teaches him French, and he and I have lately begun to learn German together. Do not fear that we are over-doing him, for he has plenty of play, and, indeed, plays at his lessons. He takes it for granted that he must be a poet in his turn; and in this respect, as far as it is possible to judge, nature seems to agree with him. Be that as it may, there is not a happier creature upon this earth, nor could any father desire a child of fairer promise, as to moral and intellectual qualities.

*To the same.*

May 20, 1815.

I am misemploying much time in reviewing for the lucre of gain, which nothing but filthy lucre should make me do. My *History of Brazil*, however, gets on in the press; and you would be sur-

prised were you to see the materials which I have collected for it. I did not think it right to postpone this second volume till my history of the Spanish war was done; for it had already been postponed too long. But it is a considerable sacrifice which I thus have been making. As soon as this work is off my hands I shall be able to put the *History of Portugal* to press without impeding the more profitable work. It is on this that I should wish to rest my reputation. As a poet I know where I have fallen short; and did I consult only my own feelings, it is probable that I should write poetry no more, — not as being contented with what I have done, but as knowing that I can hope to do nothing better. I might were my whole heart and mind given to it, as they were in youth; but they are no longer at my own disposal. As an historian I shall come nearer my mark. For thorough research, indeed, and range of materials, I do not believe that the *History of Portugal* will ever have been surpassed.

*To Dr. Southey.*

Aug. 23, 1815.

According to all form, I ought to write you a letter of congratulation; \* but some unlucky ingredient in my moral, physical, and intellectual composition has all my life long operated upon

\* On his marriage.

me with respect to forms, like that antipathy which some persons feel towards cats, or other objects equally inoffensive. I get through them so badly at all times, that, whenever I am obliged to the performance, my chief concern is, how to slink out of it as expeditiously as possible. I have, moreover, a propensity which may seem at first not very well to accord with that constitutional hilarity which is my best inheritance. Occasions of joy and festivity seem rather to depress the barometer of my spirits than to raise it; birthdays and wedding-days, therefore, pass uncelebrated by me; and with the strongest conviction of the good effects of national holidays, and with a feeling towards them which men, who are incapable of understanding what is meant by the imaginative faculty, might call superstition, I yet wish, if it were possible, that Christmas and New Year's Day could be blotted from my calendar. It might not be difficult to explain why this is, but it would be somewhat metaphysical, which is bad, and somewhat sentimental, which is worse.

Monday, the 21st of August, was not a more remarkable day in your life than it was in that of my neighbor Skiddaw, who is a much older personage. The weather served for our bonfire,\* and never, I believe, was such an assemblage

\* In honor of the Battle of Waterloo.

upon such a spot. To my utter astonishment, Lord Sunderlin rode up, and Lady S., who had endeavored to dissuade *me* from going as a thing too dangerous, joined the walking party. Wordsworth, with his wife, sister, and eldest boy, came over on purpose. Edith, the Senhora,\* Edith May, and Herbert were my convoy, with our three maid-servants, some of our neighbors, some adventurous Lakers, and Messrs. Rag, Tag, and Bobtail, made up the rest of the assembly. We roasted beef and boiled plum-puddings there; sung "God save the king" round the most furious body of flaming tar-barrels that I ever saw; drank a huge wooden bowl of punch; fired cannon at every health with three times three, and rolled large blazing balls of tow and turpentine down the steep side of the mountain. The effect was grand beyond imagination. We formed a huge circle round the most intense light, and behind us was an immeasurable arch of the most intense darkness, for our bonfire fairly put out the moon.

[After the war Southey, like most Englishmen who could afford it, made the tour of Belgium. He was absent some months.]

\* Miss Barker.

*To John May.*

Dec. 6, 1815.

You will be glad to hear that we arrived safely this day, after a less uncomfortable journey than might have been apprehended from the season of the year. We found all well, God be thanked, and Edith,\* who complained a little the first day, got better daily as we drew nearer home. She complains of a headache now; but that is the natural effect of over-excitement on seeing her brother and sisters and her cousin, and displaying the treasures which we have brought for them. We reached Wordsworth's yesterday, about seven o'clock. Three hours more would have brought us home, but I preferred passing the night at his house, for had we proceeded, we should have found the children in bed; and a return home, under fortunate circumstances, has something the character of a triumph, and requires daylight. Never, I believe, was there seen a happier household than this when the chaise drew up to the door.

*To Walter Scott.*

March 17, 1816.

I have a debt upon my conscience, which has been too long unpaid. You left me a letter of introduction to the Duchess of Richmond, which I

\* This daughter had been seriously ill at Aix. — ED.

was graceless enough to make no use of, and, still more gracelessly, I have never yet thanked you for it. As for the first part of the offence, my stay at Brussels was not very long. I had a great deal to see there; moreover I got among the old books; and having a sort of instinct which makes me as much as possible get out of the way of drawing-rooms, because I have an awkward feeling of being in the way when in them, I was much more at my ease when looking at emperors and princes in the crowd, than I should have been in the room with them.

How I should have rejoiced if we had met at Waterloo! This feeling I had and expressed upon the ground. You have pictured it with your characteristic force and animation. My poem will reach you in a few weeks: it is so different in its kind, that, however kindly malice may be disposed, it will not be possible to institute a comparison with yours. I take a different point of time and a wider range, leaving the battle untouched, and describing the field only such as it was when I surveyed it.

Did I ever thank you for the *Lord of the Isles*? There are pictures in it which are not surpassed in any of your poems, and in the first part especially, a mixture of originality and animation and beauty, which is seldom found. I wished the lord himself had been more worthy of the good

fortune which you bestowed upon him. The laurel which it has pleased you, rather than any other person, to bestow upon me, has taken me in for much dogged work in rhyme; otherwise, I am inclined to think that my service to the Muses has been long enough, and that I should, perhaps, have claimed my discharge. The ardor of youth is gone by: however I may have fallen short of my own aspirations, my best is done, and I ought to prefer those employments which require the matured faculties and collected stores of declining life.

*To Sharon Turner.*

April 2, 1816.

Time, my own heart, and, more than all other causes, the sorrows with which it has been visited (in the course of a life that, on the whole, has been happy in a degree vouchsafed to few, even among the happiest), have made me fully sensible that the highest happiness exists, as the only consolation is to be found, in a deep and habitual feeling of devotion. Long ere this would I have preached what I feel upon this subject, if the door had been open to me; but it is one thing to conform to the Church, preserving that freedom of mind which in religion, more than in all other things, is especially valuable; and another to subscribe solemnly to its articles. Christianity exists nowhere in so pure a form as in our own



Church; but even there it is mingled with much alloy, from which I know not how it will be purified. I have an instinctive abhorrence of bigotry. When Dissenters talk of the Establishment, they make me feel like a high Churchman; and when I get among high Churchmen, I am ready to take shelter in dissent.

You have thrown a new light upon the York and Lancaster age of our history, by showing the connection of those quarrels with the incipient spirit of Reformation. I wish we had reformed the monastic institutions instead of overthrowing them. Mischievous as they are in Catholic countries, they have got this good about them, that they hold up something besides worldly distinction to the respect and admiration of the people, and fix the standard of virtues higher than we do in Protestant countries. Would that we had an order of Beguines in England! There are few subjects which have been so unfairly discussed as monastic institutions; the Protestant condemns them in the lump, and the Romanist crams his legends down your throat. The truth is, that they began in a natural and good feeling, though somewhat exaggerated,—that they produced the greatest public good in their season, that they were abominably perverted, and that the good which they now do, wherever they exist, is much less than the evil.

## CHAPTER X.

Death of Herbert Southey—The Father's Sorrow—Memories of School and College—*The Excursion*—Condition of the Lower Classes—The Church of England and the Methodists.

[THE death of his son Herbert, a boy whose nature seems to have been as sweet and lovable as his intellect was extraordinary, darkened this year with a cloud from which Southey never fully emerged. He bore the loss bravely, but it cut him to the heart. In the first bitterness of grief he wrote to his oldest friend.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 17, 1816.

Here is an end of hope and of fear, but not of suffering. His sufferings, however, are over, and, thank God, his passage was perfectly easy. He fell asleep, and is now in a better state of existence, for which his nature was more fitted than for this. You, more than most men, can tell what I have lost, and yet you are far from knowing how large a portion of my hopes and happiness will be laid in the grave with Herbert. For years it has been my daily prayer that I might be spared this affliction.

I am much reduced in body by this long and sore suffering, but I am perfectly resigned, and do not give way to grief.

I will not venture to relate the boy's conduct during his whole illness. I dare not trust myself to attempt this. But nothing could be more calm, more patient, more collected, more dutiful, more admirable.

Oh! that I may be able to leave this country! The wound will never close while I remain in it. You would wonder to see me, how composed I am. Thank God, I can control myself for the sake of others; but it is a life-long grief, and do what I can to lighten it, the burden will be as heavy as I can bear.

*To the same.*

April 18, 1816.

Wherefore do I write to you? Alas, because I know not what to do. To-morrow, perhaps, may bring with it something like the beginning of relief. To-day I hope I shall support myself, or rather that God will support me, for I am weak as a child, in body even more than in mind. My limbs tremble under me; long anxiety has wasted me to the bone, and I fear it will be long before grief will suffer me to recruit. I am seriously apprehensive for the shock which my health seems to have sustained; yet I am wanting in no effort

to appear calm and to console others; and those who are about me give me credit for a fortitude which I do not possess. Many blessings are left me — abundant blessings, more than I have deserved, more than I had ever reason to expect, or even to hope. I have strong ties to life, and many duties yet to perform. Believe me, I see these things as they ought to be seen. Reason will do something, Time more, Religion most of all. The loss is but for this world; but as long as I remain in this world I shall feel it.

Some way my feelings will vent themselves. I have thought of endeavoring to direct their course, and may, perhaps, set about a monument in verse for him and for myself, which may make our memories inseparable.

There would be no wisdom in going from home. The act of returning to it would undo all the benefit I might receive from change of circumstance for some time yet. Edith feels this; otherwise, perhaps, we might have gone to visit Tom in his new habitation. You, more than most men, are aware of the extent of my loss, and how, as long as I remain here, every object within and without, and every hour of every day, must bring it fresh to recollection. Yet the more I consider the difficulties of removing, the greater they appear; and perhaps by the time it would be possible, I may cease to desire it.

Whenever I have leisure (will that ever be?) I will begin my own memoirs, to serve as a post-obit for those of my family who may survive me. They will be so far provided for as to leave me no uneasiness on that score. My life insurance is 4000*l.*; my books (for there is none to inherit them now) may be worth 1500*l.*; my copyrights, perhaps, not less; and you will be able to put together letters and fragments, which, when I am gone, will be acceptable articles in the market. Probably there would, on the whole, be 10,000*l.* forthcoming. The whole should be Edith's during her life, and afterwards divided equally among the surviving children. I shall name John May and Neville White for executors, — both men of business, and both my dear and zealous friends. But do you take care of my papers, and publish my remains. I have perhaps much underrated the value of what will be left. A selection of my reviews may be reprinted, with credit to my name and with profit. You will not wonder that I have fallen into this strain. One grave is at this moment made ready; and who can tell how soon another may be required? I pray, however, for continued life.

It is some relief to write to you, after the calls which have this day been made upon my fortitude. I have not been found wanting; and Edith, throughout the whole long trial, has displayed the

most exemplary self-control. We never approached him but with composed countenances and words of hope; and for a mother to do this, hour after hour, and night after night, while her heart was breaking, is perhaps the utmost effort of which our nature is capable. Oh! how you would have admired and loved him, had you seen him in these last weeks! But you know something of his character. Never, perhaps, was child of ten years old so much to his father. Without ever ceasing to treat him as a child, I had made him my companion, as well as playmate and pupil, and he had learnt to interest himself in my pursuits, and take part in all my enjoyments.

I have sent Edith May to Wordsworth's. Poor child, she is dreadfully distressed; and it has ever been my desire to save them from all the sorrow that can be avoided, and to mitigate, as far as possible, what is inevitable. Something it is to secure for them a happy childhood. Never was a happier than Herbert's. He knew not what unkindness or evil were, except by name. His whole life was passed in cheerful duty, and love, and enjoyment. If I did not hope that I have been useful in my generation, and may still continue to be so, I could wish that I also had gone to rest as early in the day; but my childhood was not like his.

*To John May.*

April 22, 1816.

Three things I prayed for, — the child's recovery if it might please God ; that if this might not be, his passage might be rendered easy ; and that we might be supported in our affliction. The two latter petitions were granted, and I am truly thankful. But when the event was over, then, like David, I roused myself, and gave no way to unavailing grief, acting in all things as I should wish others to act when my hour also is come. I employ myself incessantly, taking, however, every day as much exercise as I can bear without injurious fatigue, which is not much. My appetite is good, and I have now no want of sleep. Edith is perfectly calm and resigned. Her fortitude is indeed exemplary to the highest degree, but her employments do not withdraw her from herself as mine do, and therefore I fear she has more to struggle with. Perhaps we were too happy before this dispensation struck us. Perhaps it was expedient for us that our hearts should be drawn more strongly towards another world. This is the use of sorrow, and to this use I trust our sorrow will be sanctified.

*To William Wordsworth.*

April 22, 1816.

You were right respecting the nature of my sub-

port under this affliction ; there is but one source of consolation, and of that source I have drunk largely. When you shall see how I had spoken of my happiness but a few weeks ago, you will read with tears of sorrow what I wrote with tears of joy. And little did I think how soon and how literally another part of this mournful poem was to be fulfilled, when I said in it —

“ To earth I should have sunk in my despair,  
Had I not claspt the Cross, and been supported there.”

I thank God for the strength with which we have borne this trial. It is not possible for woman to have acted with more fortitude than Edith has done through the whole sharp suffering ; she has rather set an example than followed it. My bodily frame is much shaken. A little time and care will recruit it, and the mind is sound. I am fully sensible of the blessings which are left me, which far exceed those of most men. I pray for continued life that I may fulfill my duties towards those whom I love. Many will feel for me, but none can tell what I have lost : the head and flower of my earthly happiness is cut off. But I am *not* unhappy.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 30, 1816.

You know how much I used to unbend, and play with the children, in frequent intervals of



study, as though I were an idle man. Of this I am quite incapable, and shall long continue so. No circumstance of my former life ever brought with it so great a change as that which I daily and hourly feel, and perhaps shall never cease to feel. Yet I am thankful for having possessed this child so long; for worlds I would not but have been his father. Of all the blessings which it has pleased God to vouchsafe me, this was and *is* the greatest.

*To the Rev. Nicholas Lightfoot.*

May, 1816.

It is now full two-and-twenty years since you and I shook hands at our last parting. In all likelihood, the separation between my son and me will not be for so long a time; in the common course of nature it cannot possibly be much longer, and I may be summoned to rejoin him before the year, yea, before the passing day or the passing hour be gone. Death has so often entered my doors, that he and I have long been familiar. The loss of five brothers and sisters (four of whom I remember well), of my father and mother, of a female cousin who grew up with me, and lived with me; of two daughters, and of several friends (among them two of the dearest friends that ever man possessed), had very much weaned my heart from this world, or, more properly speaking, had fixed its thoughts and desires upon a better state

wherein there shall be no such separation, before this last and severest affliction. Still it would be senseless and ungrateful to the greatest degree, if I were not to feel and acknowledge the abundant blessings that I still possess, especially believing, trusting, *knowing*, as I do, in the full assurance of satisfied reason and settled faith, that the treasure which has been taken from me now, is laid up in heaven, there to be repossessed with ample increase.

*To the Rev. Herbert Hill.*

May 4, 1816.

My estimate of human life is more favorable than yours. If death were the termination of our existence, then, indeed, I should wish rather to have been born a beast, or never to have been born at all; but considering nothing more certain than that this life is preparatory to a higher state of being, I am thankful for the happiness I have enjoyed, for the blessings which are left me, and for those to which I look with sure and certain hope. With me the enjoyments of life have more than counterbalanced its anxieties and its pains. No man can possibly have been happier; and at this moment, when I am suffering under almost the severest loss which could have befallen me, I am richer both in heart and hope than if God had never given me the child whom it hath pleased him

to take away. My heart has been exercised with better feelings during his life, and is drawn nearer towards Heaven by his removal. I do not recover spirits, but my strength is materially recruited, and I am not unhappy.

*To Chauncey Hare Townshend.*

June 5, 1816.

The history of your school-boy days reminds me of my own childhood and youth. I had a lonely childhood, and suffered much from tyranny at school, till I outgrew it, and came to have authority myself. In one respect, my fortune seems to have been better than yours, or my nature more accommodating. Where intellectual sympathy was not to be found, it was sufficient for me if moral sympathy existed. A kind heart and a gentle disposition won my friendship more readily than brighter talents, where these were wanting.

I left Westminster in a perilous state, — a heart full of feeling and poetry, a head full of Rousseau and Werter, and my religious principles shaken by Gibbon: many circumstances tended to give me a wrong bias, none to lead me right, except adversity, the wholesomest of all discipline. An instinctive modesty, rather than any purer cause, preserved me for a time from all vice. A severe system of stoical morality then came to its aid. I made Epictetus, for many months, literally my

manual. The French revolution was then in its full career. I went to Oxford in January, 1793, a Stoic and a Republican. I had no acquaintance at the college, which was in a flagitious state of morals. I refused to wear powder, when every other man in the University wore it, because I thought the custom foolish and filthy; and I refused even to drink more wine than suited my inclination and my principles. Before I had been a week in the college, a little party had got round me, glad to form a sober society, of which I was the centre. Here I became intimate with Edmund Seward, whose death was the first of those privations which have, in great measure, weaned my heart from the world. He confirmed in me all that was good. Time and reflection, the blessings and the sorrows of life, and I hope I may add, with unfeigned humility, the grace of God, have done the rest. Large draughts have been administered to me from both urns. No man has suffered keener sorrows, no man has been more profusely blest. Four months ago no human being could possibly be happier than I was, or richer in all that a wise heart could desire. The difference now is, that what was then my chief treasure is now laid up in Heaven.

*To John May.*

June 12, 1816.

We read of persons who have suddenly become gray from violent emotions of grief or fear. I feel in some degree as if I had passed at once from boyhood to the decline of life. I had never ceased to be a boy in cheerfulness till now. All those elastic spirits are now gone; nor is it in the nature of things that they should return. I am still capable of enjoyment, and trust that there is much in store for me; but there is an end of that hilarity which I possessed more uninterruptedly, and in a greater degree, than any person with whom I was ever acquainted. You advised me to write down my recollections of Herbert while they were fresh. I dare not undertake the task. Something akin to it, but in a different form, and with a more extensive purpose, I have begun; but my eyes and my head suffer too much in the occupation for me to pursue it as yet; and as these effects cannot be concealed, I must avoid as much as possible all that would produce them. This, believe me, is an effort of forbearance, for my heart is very much set upon completing what I have planned. The effect upon Edith will be as lasting as upon myself; but she had not the same exuberance of spirits to lose, and therefore it will be less perceptible.

*To Chauncey Hare Townshend.*

July 22, 1816.

It will be unfortunate if chance should not one day bring me within reach of you; but I would rather that chance should bring you to Cumberland, when you can spare a few weeks for such a visit. You will find a bed, plain fare, and a glad welcome; books for wet weather, a boat for sunny evenings; the loveliest parts of this lovely county within reach and within sight; and myself one of the best guides to all the recesses of the vales and mountains. As a geologist, you will enjoy one more pleasure than I do, who am ignorant of every branch of science. Mineralogy and botany are the only branches which I wish that I had possessed, not from any predilection for either, but because opportunities have fallen in my way for making observations (had I been master of the requisite knowledge) by which others might have been interested and guided. These two are sciences which add to our out-door enjoyments, and have no injurious effects. Chemical and physical studies seem, on the contrary, to draw on very prejudicial consequences. Their utility is not to be doubted; but it appears as if man could not devote himself to these pursuits without blunting his finer faculties.

This county is very imperfectly visited by many of its numerous guests. They take the regular

route, stop at the regular stations, ascend one of the mountains, and then fancy they have seen the Lakes, in which, after a thirteen years' residence, I am every year discovering new scenes of beauty. Here I shall probably pass the remainder of my days. Our church, as you may perhaps recollect, stands at a distance from the town, unconnected with any other buildings, and so as to form a striking and beautiful feature in the vale. The churchyard is as open to the eye and to the breath of heaven as if it were a Druid's place of meeting. There I shall take up my last abode, and it is some satisfaction to think so — to feel as if I were at anchor, and should shift my berth no more. A man whose habitual frame of mind leads him to look forward, is not the worse for treading the churchyard path, with a belief that along that very path his hearse is one day to convey him.

*To the same.*

August 17, 1816.

There is a paper of mine in the last *Quarterly*, upon the means of bettering the condition of the poor. You will be interested by a story which it contains of an old woman upon Exmoor. In Wordsworth's blank-verse it would go to every heart. Have you read *The Excursion*? and have you read the collection of Wordsworth's other poems, in two octavo volumes? If you have not,

there is a great pleasure in store for you. I am no blind admirer of Wordsworth, and can see where he has chosen subjects which are unworthy in themselves, and where the strength of his imagination and of his feeling is directed upon inadequate objects. Notwithstanding these faults, and their frequent occurrence, it is by the side of Milton that Wordsworth will have his station awarded him by posterity.

*To John Rickman.*

October 2, 1816.

I incline to think there will come a time when public opinion will no more tolerate the extreme of poverty in a large class of the community, than it now tolerates slavery in Europe. Meantime it is perfectly clear that the more we can improve the condition of the lower classes, the greater number of customers we procure for the home market; and that if we can make people pay taxes instead of claiming poor-rates, the wealth as well as security of the State is increased. The poor-rates are a momentous subject, and I have long believed you were the only man who could grapple with it. I see, or think I see, palliatives and alteratives, in providing the laborers with garden and grass land, in establishing saving banks, in national education, and in affording all possible facilities and encouragement for emigration, and in colonizing at home upon our waste lands.



The state of the Church is another important question, assailed as it is on all sides. I think it would be possible to take in the Methodists as a sort of Cossacks, or certainly to employ those persons henceforward in aid of the Establishment, who, if not thus employed, will swell the numbers of the Methodists and act against it.

By nature I am a poet, by deliberate choice an historian, and a political writer I know not how; by accident, or the course of events. Yet I think I can do something towards awakening the country, and that I can obtain the confidence of well-disposed minds by writing honestly and sincerely upon things in which all persons are concerned.

Were I to accept a good berth, which is held out to me, it would very much counteract the impression which I am aiming to produce. Instead of attempting to answer my arguments and assertions, the anarchists would then become the assailants, and attack me as one who had sold himself.

*To John May.*

January 1, 1817.

Your last letter gave me great and most unexpected concern. I had indeed believed that you were sailing on a quiet sea, in no danger of shoals or tempests. By what principle, or what strange want of principle, is it that mercantile men so often, for the sake of the shortest reprieve from bank-

ruptcy, involve their nearest friends and connections with them? Your loss, I would hope, may not prove altogether so great as you apprehend; and I would hope also that some prize in the lottery of life, full of change as it is, may one day or other replace it. Even at the worst it leaves you heart-whole. It will be long before I shall find myself so; and if life had no duties, I should be very far from desiring its continuance for the sake of any enjoyments which it can possibly have in store. I have the same sort of feeling that a man who is fondly attached to his family has when absent from them, — as if I were on a journey. I yearn, perhaps more than I ought to do, to be at home and at rest. Yet what abundant cause have I for thankfulness, possessing as I do so many blessings, that I should think no man could possibly be happier, if I had not been so much happier myself. Do not think that I give way to such feelings; far less that I encourage them, or am weak enough to repine. What is lost in possession is given me in hope. I am now in my forty-third year: both my parents died in their fiftieth. Should my lease be continued to that term, there is a fair prospect of leaving my family well provided for; and let it fall when it may, a decent provision is secured. Before this object was attained, great natural cheerfulness saved me from any anxiety on this score, and there happily exists

no cause for anxiety when I have no longer the same preservative. My house is in order, and whenever the summons may come I am ready to depart. Dearly as I love these children, my presence is by no means so necessary as it was to him who is gone. He drew in his intellectual life from me, and a large portion of mine is departed with him. It is best as it is, for he is gone in the perfection of his nature, and mine will not be the worse for the chastening which it has undergone.

*To Sharon Turner.*

February 24, 1817.

My spirits, rather than my disposition, have undergone a great change. They used to be exuberant beyond those of almost every other person; my heart seemed to possess a perpetual fountain of hilarity; no circumstances of study, or atmosphere, or solitude affected it; and the ordinary vexations and cares of life, even when they showered upon me, fell off like hail from a penthouse. That spring is dried up; I cannot now preserve an appearance of serenity at all times without an effort, and no prospect in this world delights me except that of the next. My heart and my hopes are there.

I have a scheme to throw out somewhere for taking the Methodists into the Church; or, borrowing from Methodism so much of it as is

good, and thereby regenerating the Establishment. There is little hope in such schemes, except that in process of time they may produce some effect. But were it effected now, and would the Church accept the volunteer services of lay coadjutors, I should feel strongly inclined to volunteer mine. This is a dream, and I fear the whole fabric will fall to pieces even in our days. .

## CHAPTER XI.

Southey declines a Position on *The Times*—Tour in Switzerland—  
The *Life of Wesley*—Declines an Appointment in Edinburgh—  
Wilberforce at Keswick—Edmund Seward—Walter Scott—  
*History of Brazil*—Crabbe's *Tales*.

[At this time Southey had an offer of a share in the profits of *The Times* with an income of £2,000 if he were willing to remove to London and to write for that paper; an offer that was at once declined. Then followed a tour in Switzerland, and two such events in the poet's quiet life deserve to be recorded, although the first is barely mentioned in his correspondence, and the second yielded no letters of special interest.]

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

March 10, 1817.

You would be amused to see my table overlaid with Methodism and Moravianism. I am going through the whole set of the *Arminian Magazine*. This *Life of Wesley* is a more *operose* business than one who is not acquainted with my habits would suppose. I am given to works of supererogation, and could do nothing to my own satisfaction if I

did not take twice as much labor as any other person would bestow upon it. In this case it will be well bestowed. I am treating of a curious part of history just at the right time, and in as fair a temper as it could be possible to bring to such a subject. The materials are very copious, and very curious, and the plan so arranged as to relieve that monotony which you might perhaps apprehend.

I see no person during the winter except my own family, and for weeks together do not stir beyond my own garden; the kitchen clock is not more regular in its movements than my life, and scarcely more monotonous, yet time never appeared to glide so swiftly. I have often said that, live as long as we may, the first twenty years of life are the longest half. There are indications enough that I am on the downhill road; an unwillingness to exertion of any kind is one; I fear that a decay of sight is another; as yet, however, it only regards distant objects; what is near I see as distinctly as ever.

*To the same.*

August 23, 1817.

Does this country, you will ask, appear flat and unprofitable after Alpine scenery? Certainly not. It has lost very little by the comparison, and that little will soon be regained. Skiddaw is by much the most imposing mountain, for its height, that I have yet seen. Many mountains, which are

actually as high again from their base, do not appear to more advantage. I find here, as Wordsworth and Sir G. Beaumont had told me I should, the charm of proportion, and would not exchange Derwentwater for the Lake of Geneva, though I would gladly enrich it with the fruit-trees and the luxuriant beauties of a Swiss summer. Their waterfalls, indeed, reduce ours to insignificance. On the other hand, all their streams and rivers are hideously discolored, so that that which should be one of the greatest charms of the landscape, is in reality a disgusting part of it. The best color which you see is that of clean soap-suds ; the more common one that of the same mixture when dirty. But the rivers have a power, might, and majesty which it is scarcely possible to describe.

*To Chauncey Hare Townshend.*

October 31, 1817.

Having nothing to hope in this world, and nothing to desire in it for myself, except as quiet a passage through it as it may please God to grant, my mind, when it takes its course, recurs to the world which is to come, and lays as naturally now the scenes of its day-dreams in Heaven, as it used to do upon earth. I think of the many intimacies I have made among the dead, and with what delight I shall see and converse with those persons whose lives and writings have interested me, to

whom I have endeavored to render justice, or from whom I have derived so much pleasure and benefit of the highest kind. Something perhaps we shall have to communicate, and oh! how much to learn! The Roman Catholics, when they write concerning Heaven, arrange the different classes there with as much precision as a master of the ceremonies could do. Their martyrs, their doctors, their confessors, their monks and their virgins, have each their separate society. As for us poets, they have not condescended to think of us; but we shall find one another out, and a great many questions I shall have to ask of Spenser and of Chaucer. Indeed, I half hope to get the whole story of Cambuscan bold; and to hear the lost books of the Faëry Queen. Lope de Vega and I shall not meet with equal interest, and yet it will be a pleasant meeting.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

January 1, 1818.

The *Life of Wesley* is my favorite employment just now, and a very curious book it will be, looking at Methodism abroad as well as at home, and comprehending our religious history for the last hundred years. I am sure I shall treat this subject with moderation. I hope I come to it with a sober judgment, a mature mind, and perfect freedom from all unjust prepossessions of any kind.



There is no party which I am desirous of pleasing, none which I am fearful of offending; nor am I aware of any possible circumstance which might tend to bias me one way or other from the straight line of impartial truth. For the bigot I shall be far too philosophical: for the libertine, far too pious. The Ultra-churchman will think me little better than a Methodist, and the Methodists will wonder what I am. "*Αγία ἀγίους*" will be my motto.

*To Walter Scott.*

March 10, 1818.

I am glad that the first tidings which informed me of your illness, told of your recovery also. There is an enjoyment of our absent friends, even of those from whom we are far distant, in talking and thinking of them, which makes a large part of the happiness of life. It is a great thing to be in the same place with a friend, it is something to be in the same planet. And whenever you are removed to a better, there are few men whose loss will be more widely felt in this, for I know no one who has administered so much delight to so extensive a part of the public. I hope your illness has left no weakness behind it. We stand in need sometimes of visitations which may lead us to look towards eternity; and in such cases the stroke is merciful when it falls on the body. There is a joyousness, too, in the sense of returning health,

— a freshness of sensation such as one might expect from a draught of the fountain of youth.

[This year Southey had the offer of an appointment, that of Librarian to the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh, which would have relieved him from pecuniary anxiety, and afforded an occupation not out of harmony with his pursuits as a man of letters. He declined it, saying, "I am contented where I am and as I am, wanting nothing and wishing nothing." It would seem, his son writes, "that he had taken root so firmly among the mountains of Cumberland, and was so unwilling to encounter the difficulties of a removal and to take upon him new habits of life, that he exercised unconsciously a kind of self-deception whenever an offer was made to him, and conjured up for the time feelings of security from anxiety which had no solid foundation." That Southey was not without anxiety will be seen presently.]

*To Sharon Turner.*

September 21, 1818.

You have taken, I see, Cornaro for your physician. Had I made the same experiment, I should have been disposed to prefer a diet of roots, fruits, and esculent plants to bread, which is so likely to be adulterated. There is as much difference in the stomachs of men as in their tempers and faces ;

severe abstinence is necessary for some, and others feed high and drink hard, and yet attain to a robust old age; but unquestionably the sparing system has most facts in its favor, and I have often remarked with wonder the great length of life to which some of the hardest students and most inveterate self-tormentors among the monastic orders have attained. Truly glad shall I be if you derive from your system the permanent benefit which there seems such good reason to expect. Both you and I must wish to remain as long as we can in this "tough world" for the sake of others. Thank Heaven it is no rack to us, though we have both reached that stage in our progress in which the highest pleasure that this life can afford is the anticipation of that which is to follow it.

You have made a wise determination for your son William, for I believe that medical studies are of all others the most unfavorable to the moral sense. Anatomical studies are so revolting, that men who carry any feeling to the pursuit are glad to have it seared as soon as possible.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

November 4, 1818.

Wilberforce has been here with all his household, and such a household! The principle of the family seems to be that, provided the servants have faith, good works are not to be expected

from them, and the utter disorder which prevails in consequence is truly farcical. The old coachman would figure upon the stage. Upon making some complaint about the horses, he told his master and mistress that since they had been in this country they had been so lake-and-river-and-mountain-and-valley-mad, that they had thought of nothing which they ought to think of. I have seen nothing in such pell-mell, topsy-turvy, and chaotic confusion as Wilberforce's apartments since I used to see a certain breakfast-table in Skeleton Corner. His wife sits in the midst of it like Patience on a monument, and he frisks about as if every vein in his body were filled with quicksilver; but, withal, there is such a constant hilarity in every look and motion, such a sweetness in all his tones, such a benignity in all his thoughts, words, and actions, that all sense of his grotesque appearance is presently overcome, and you can feel nothing but love and admiration for a creature of so happy and blessed a nature.

A few words now concerning myself. It was my intention to have spent the Christmas in London; a very unexpected cause induced me to delay my journey. More than six years have elapsed since the birth of my youngest child; all thoughts of having another had naturally ceased. In February or March, however, such an event may be looked for. My spirits are more depressed by

this than they ought to be ; but you may well imagine what reflections must arise. I am now in my forty-fifth year, and if my life should be prolonged it is but too certain that I should never have heart again to undertake the duty which I once performed with such diligence and such delightful hope. It is well for us that we are not permitted to choose for ourselves. One happy choice, however, I made when I betook myself to literature as my business in life. When I have a heart at ease, there can be no greater delight than it affords me ; and when I put away sad thoughts and melancholy forebodings, there is no resource so certain.

I begin to be solicitous about making such a provision as should leave me at ease in my ways and means, if loss of health or any other calamity should render me incapable of that constant labor, from which, while health and ability may last, I shall have no desire to shrink. When my next poem is finished, I shall be able to do what has never before been in my power, — to demand a sum for it.

*To John May.*

November 16, 1818.

I have a fellow-feeling for ——, because I was myself expelled from Westminster, not for a rebellion (though in that too I had my share), but for an act of authorship. Wynn, Strachey (who is now chief secretary at Madras), Bedford, and

myself,\* planned a periodical paper in emulation of the *Microcosm*. It was not begun before the two former had left school, and Bedford and I were the only persons actually engaged in it. I well remember my feelings when the first number appeared on Saturday, March 1, 1792. It was Bedford's writing, but that circumstance did not prevent me from feeling that I was that day borne into the world as an author; and if ever my head touched the stars while I walked upon the earth it was then. It seemed as if I had overleaped a barrier, which till then had kept me from the fields of immortality, wherein my career was to be run. In all London there was not so vain, so happy, so elated a creature as I was that day; and, in truth, it was an important day in my life; far more so than I, or than any one else could have anticipated, for I was expelled for the fifth number. The subject of that number was *flogging*, and Heaven knows I thought as little of giving offence by it, as of causing an eclipse or an earthquake. I treated it in a strange, whimsical, and ironical sort of manner, because it had formed a part of the religious ceremonies of the heathens, and the Fathers had held that the gods of the heathen were our devils, and so I proved it to be an invention of the Devil, and therefore unfit to be practised in

\* These names were transposed in the correspondence, but the mistake is so obvious that I have ventured to correct it.  
—ED.

schools; and though this was done with very little respect for the Devil, or the Fathers, or the heathen gods, or the schoolmasters, yet I as little expected to offend one as the other. I was full of Gibbon at the time, and had caught something of Voltaire's manner. And for this I was privately expelled from Westminster, and for this I was refused admission at Christ Church, where Randolph, from the friendship which he professed for my uncle, could not else have decently refused to provide for me by a studentship: and so I went to Balliol instead, in a blessed hour; for there I found a man of sterling virtue (Edmund Seward), who led me right, when it might have been easy to have led me wrong. I used to call him *Talus* for his unbending morals and iron rectitude, and his strength of body also justified the name. His death in the year 1795 was the first severe affliction that I ever experienced; and sometimes even now I dream of him, and wake myself by weeping, because even in my dreams I remember that he is dead. I loved him with my whole heart, and shall remember him with gratitude and affection as one who was my moral father, to the last moment of my life; and to meet him again will at that moment be one of the joys to which I shall look forward in eternity. My dear John May, I have got into a strain which I neither intended nor foresaw. Misfortunes, as the story says, are good

for something. The stream of my life would certainly have taken a different direction, if I had not been expelled, and I am satisfied that it could never have held a better course. . . .

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

December 5, 1818.

It is, between ourselves, a matter of surprise to me that this bodily machine of mine should have continued its operations with so few derangements, knowing, as I well do, its excessive susceptibility to many deranging causes. The nitrous oxide approaches nearer to the notion of a *neurometer* than anything which perhaps could be devised; and I was acted upon by a far smaller dose than any person upon whom it had ever been tried, when I was in the habit of taking it. If I did not vary my pursuits and carry on many works of a totally different kind at once, I should soon be incapable of proceeding with any, so surely does it disturb my sleep and affect my dreams if I dwell upon one with any continuous attention. The truth is, that though some persons, whose knowledge of me is scarcely skin-deep, suppose I have no nerves, because I have great self-control as far as regards the surface—if it were not for great self-management, and what may be called a strict intellectual regimen, I should very soon be in a deplorable state of what is called nervous disease,



and this would have been the case any time during the last twenty years.

Thank God I am well at present, and well employed: *Brazil* and *Wesley* both at the press; a paper for the *Quarterly Review* in hand, and *Oliver Newman* now seriously resumed; while for light reading I am going through *South's Sermons* and the whole British and Irish part of the *Acta Sanctorum*.

In the MSS. of *Wesley*, which passed through Gifford's hands while you were absent, there was a chapter which I wished you to have seen, because both in matter and manner it is among the best things I have written. It contained a view of our religious history down to the accession of the present family; not the facts but the spirit of the history. You will be pleased to see how I have relieved and diversified this book, which will be as elaborate as a Dutchman's work and as entertaining as a Frenchman's.

I want now to provide against that inability which may any day or any moment overtake me. You are not mistaken in thinking that the last three years have considerably changed me; the outside remains pretty much the same, but it is far otherwise within. If hitherto the day has been sufficient for the labor, as well as the labor for the day, I now feel that it cannot always, and possibly may not long, be so. Were I dead there

would be a provision for my family, which, though not such as I yet hope to make it, would yet be a respectable one. But if I were unable to work, half my ways and means would instantly be cut off, and the whole of them are needed. Such thoughts did not use to visit me. My spirits retain their strength, but they have lost their buoyancy, and that forever. I should be the better for traveling, but that is not in my power. At present the press fetters me, and if it did not, I could not afford to be spending money when I ought to be earning it. But I shall work the harder to enable me to do so.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

January 3, 1819.

I was quite certain that you would appreciate Wordsworth justly. Nations, you say, are not proud of living genius. They are proud of it only as far as they understand it; and the majority, being incapable of understanding it, can never admire it, till they take it upon trust: so that two or three generations must pass before the public affect to admire such poets as Milton and Wordsworth. Of such men the world scarcely produces one in a millennium; — has it, indeed, ever produced more than two? for Shakespere is of a different class. But of all inferior degrees of poets no age and no country was ever so prolific as our own: every

season produces some half-dozen poems, not one of which obtains the slightest attention, and any one of which would have [made] the author celebrated above all contemporaries five-and-twenty years ago.

*To Walter Scott.*

March 11, 1819.

Our successors (for you and I are now old enough in authorship to use this term) are falling into the same faults as the Roman poets after the Augustan age, and the Italians after the golden season of their poetry. They are overlaboring their productions, and overloading them with ornament, so that all parts are equally prominent, everywhere glare and glitter, and no keeping and no repose. Henry Milman has spoilt his *Samor* in this way. It is full of power and of beauty, but too full of them. There is another striking example in a little volume called *Night*, where some of the most uncouth stories imaginable are told in a strain of continued tip-toe effort; and you are vexed to see such uncommon talents so oddly applied, and such Herculean strength wasted in preposterous exertions. The author's name is Elliott, a self-taught man, in business (the iron trade I believe) at Rotherham.

It was reported that you were about to bring forth a play, and I was greatly in hopes that it might be true; for I am verily persuaded that in

this course you would run as brilliant a career as you have already done in narrative, both in prose and rhyme, for as for believing that you have a double in the field, — not I! Those same powers would be equally certain of success in the drama; and were you to give them a dramatic direction, and reign for a third seven years upon the stage, you would stand alone in literary history. Indeed, already I believe that no man ever afforded so much delight to so great a number of his contemporaries in this or any other country.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 9, 1819.

I had a beautiful letter yesterday from poor Walter Scott, who has been on the very brink of the grave, and feels how likely it is that any day or hour may send him there. If he is sufficiently recovered I shall meet him in London; but his health is broken beyond all prospect or hope of complete recovery. He entreats me to take warning, and beware of overworking myself. I am afraid no person ever took that advice who stood in need of it; and still more afraid that the surest way of bringing on the anticipated evil would be to apprehend it. But I believe that I manage myself well by frequent change of employment, frequent idling, and keeping my mind as free as I can from any strong excitement.

[A copy of the following letter was found among Southey's papers, with no name attached to it. It belongs, his biographer states, to this year.]

*To a Lady.*

You tell me that the whole of your happiness is dependent upon literary pursuits and recreations. It is well that you have these resources; but were we near each other, and were I to like you half as well upon a nearer acquaintance, as it appears to me at this distance that I should do, I think that when I had won your confidence I should venture to tell you that something better than literature is necessary for happiness.

To confess the truth, one of the causes which have prevented me from writing to you earlier, has been the wish and half intention of touching upon this theme; checked by that sort of hesitation which sometimes (and that too often) prevents us from doing what we ought for fear of singularity. That you are a woman of talents I know; and I think you would not have given me the preference over more fashionable poets, if there had not been something in the general character of my writings which accorded with your feelings, and which you did not find in theirs. But you have lived in high life; you move in circles of gayety and fashion; and though you sympathize with me when I express myself in verse, it is more than probable that the

direct mention of religion may startle you, as something unwarranted as well as unexpected.

I am no Methodist, no sectarian, no bigot, no formalist. My natural spirits are buoyant beyond those of any person, man, woman, or child, whom I ever saw or heard of. They have had enough to try them and to sink them, and it is by religion alone that I shall be enabled to pass the remainder of my days in cheerfulness and in hope. Without hope there can be no happiness; and without religion no hope but such as deceives us. Your heart seems to want an object; and this would satisfy it: and if it has been wounded, this, and this only, is the cure.

Are you displeased with this freedom? Or do you receive it as a proof that I am disposed to become something more than a mere literary acquaintance, and that you have made me feel an interest concerning you which an ordinary person would not have excited?

*To Wade Browne.*

June 15, 1819.

Cuthbert, who is now four months old, is beginning to serve me as well as his sisters for a plaything. The country is in its full beauty at this time; perhaps in greater than I may ever again see it, for it is reported that the woods on Castelet are condemned to come down next year; this, if it be

true, is the greatest loss that Keswick could possibly sustain, and in no place will the loss be more conspicuous than from the room wherein I am now writing. But this neighborhood has suffered much from the axe since you were here. The woods about Lodore are gone; so are those under Castle-Crag; so is the little knot of fir-trees on the way to church, which were so placed as to make one of the features of the vale; and worst of all, so is that beautiful birch grove on the side of the lake between Barrow and Lodore. Not a single sucker is springing up in its place; and, indeed, it would require a full century before another grove could be reared which would equal it in beauty. It is lucky that they cannot level the mountains nor drain the lake; but they are doing what they can to lower it, and have succeeded so far as to render all the old landing-places useless. If the effect of this should be to drain the marshy land at the head and foot of the lake, without leaving as much more swamp uncovered, it will do good rather than harm.

Two cases so extraordinary as to appear almost incredible occurred in the course of last month in this country. A child four years old wandered from its mother, who was cutting peat among the Ennerdale Mountains, and after four days was found alive. A man upon the Eskdale Fells was found after eighteen, still living, and able to wave

his hand as a signal, by which he was discovered. He had fallen in a fit, and was incapable of moving when he recovered his senses; in both cases there was water close by, by which life was preserved. The child is doing well. Of the man I have heard nothing since the day after he was found, when Wordsworth was in Eskdale, and learnt the story; at that time there seemed to be no apprehension that his life was in danger.

I think you will be pleased with Wordsworth's *Wagoner*, if it were only for the line of road \* which it describes. The master of the wagon was my poor landlord, Jackson; and the cause of his exchanging it for the one-horse-cart was just as is represented in the poem; nobody but Benjamin could manage it upon these hills, and Benjamin could not resist the temptations by the way-side.

*To C. H. Townshend.*

July 20, 1819.

The third and last volume of my *Opus Majus* will be published in two or three weeks; they are printing the index. What effect will it produce? It may tend to sober the anticipations of a young author to hear the faithful anticipations of an experienced one. None that will be heard of. It will move quietly from the publishers to a certain number of reading societies, and a certain number

\* The road from Keswick to Ambleside.



of private libraries ; enough between them to pay the expenses of the publication. Some twenty persons in England, and some half-dozen in Portugal and Brazil will peruse it with avidity and delight. Some fifty, perhaps, will buy the book because of the subject, and ask one another if they have had time to look into it. A few of those who know me and love me, will wish that I had employed the time which it has cost in writing poems ; and some of those who do not know me, will marvel that in the ripe season of my mind, and in the summer of reputation, I should have bestowed so large a portion of life upon a work which could not possibly become either popular or profitable. And is this all? No, Chauncey Townshend, it is not all ; and I should deal insincerely with you if I did not add, that ages hence it will be found among those works which are not destined to perish ; and secure for me a remembrance in other countries as well as in my own ; that it will be read in the heart of S. America, and communicate to the Brazilians, when they shall have become a powerful nation, much of their own history which would otherwise have perished ; and be to them what the work of Herodotus is to Europe.

*To C. W. W. Wynn.*

July 22, 1819.

I was not disappointed with Crabbe's *Tales*. He

is a decided mannerist, but so are all original writers in all ages ; nor is it possible for a poet to avoid it if he writes much in the same key and upon the same class of subjects. Crabbe's poems will have a great and lasting value as pictures of domestic life, elucidating the moral history of these times, — times which must hold a most conspicuous place in history. He knows his own powers, and never aims above his reach. In this age, when the public are greedy for novelties, and abundantly supplied with them, an author may easily commit the error of giving them too much of the same kind of thing. But this will not be thought a fault hereafter, when the kind is good and the thing good of its kind.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

February 20, 1820.

A fashion of poetry has been imported which has had a great run, and is in a fair way of being worn out. It is of Italian growth, — an adaptation of the manner of Pulci, Berni, and Ariosto in his sportive mood. Frere began it. What he produced was too good in itself and too inoffensive to become popular ; for it attacked nothing and nobody ; and it had the fault of his Italian models, that the transition from what is serious to what is burlesque was capricious. Lord Byron immediately followed : first with his *Beppo*, which implied

the profligacy of the writer, and, lastly, with his *Don Juan*, which is a foul blot on the literature of his country, an act of high treason on English poetry. The manner has had a host of imitators. The use of Hudibrastic rhymes (the only thing in which it differs from the Italian) makes it very easy.

My poems hang on hand. I want no monitor to tell me it is time to leave off. I shall force myself to finish what I have begun, and then — good night. Had circumstances favored, I might have done more in this way, and better. But I have done enough to be remembered among poets, though my proper place will be among the historians, if I live to complete the works upon yonder shelves.

## CHAPTER XII.

Southey at Oxford—Old Friendships—Advice to his Daughters—  
Visits Holland—Is laid up at Leyden—A Dutch Poet and his  
Wife—Advice to a Student—Jacob Cats.

[DURING the summer of 1820 Southey spent some time in Wales and in London and finally received the honorary degree of D.C.L. at the Oxford Commemoration. A long and full account of the ceremony, written for the amusement of his daughters, ends with the following passage.]

Oh, Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, if you had seen me that day! I was like other issimis, dressed in a great robe of the finest scarlet cloth, with sleeves of rose-colored silk, and I had in my hand a black velvet cap like a beef-eater, for the use of which dress I paid one guinea for that day. Dr. Phillimore, who was an old school-fellow of mine, and a very good man, took me by the hand in my turn, and presented me; upon which there was a great clapping of hands and huzzaing at my name. When that was over, the Vice-Chancellor stood up, and said these words whereby I was ell-ell-deed:—  
*Doctissime et ornatissime vir, ego, pro auctoritate mea et totius universitatis hujus, admitto te ad gradum doctoris in jure civili, honoris causâ.*

These were the words which ell-ell-deed me ; and then the bar was lifted up, and I seated myself among the doctors.

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

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

July 29, 1820.

It is very seldom that a whole month elapses without some interchange of letters between you and me. And, for my part, on the present instance, I cannot plead any unusual press of business, or any remarkable humor of industry. But, then, I can plead a great deal of enjoyment. I have been staying in the house all day, — a great happiness after the hard service upon which my ten trotters were continually kept in London. I have been reading — a great luxury for one who during eleven weeks had not half-an-hour for looking through a book. I have been playing with Cuthbert, giving him the Cries of London to the life, as the accompaniment to a series of prints thereof, and enacting lion, tiger, bull, bear, horse,

ass, elephant, rhinoceros, the laughing hyena, owl, cuckoo, peacock, turkey, rook, raven, magpie, cock, duck, and goose, etc., greatly to his delight and somewhat to his edification, for never was there a more apt or more willing pupil. Whenever he comes near the study door, he sets up a shout, which seldom fails of producing an answer; in he comes, tottering along, with a smile upon his face, and *pica pica* in his mouth; and if the picture-book is not forthwith forthcoming, he knows its place upon the shelf, and uses most ambitious and persevering efforts to drag out a folio. And if this is not a proper excuse for idleness, Grosvenor, what is?

But I have not been absolutely idle, only comparatively so. I have made ready about five sheets of the *Peninsular War* for the press (the main part, indeed, was transcription), and William Nicol will have it as soon as the chapter is finished. I have written an account of Derwent Water for Westall's *Views of the Lakes*. I have begun the *Book of the Church*, written half a dialogue between myself and Sir Thomas More, composed seventy lines for *Oliver Newman*, opened a Book of Collections for the *Moral and Literary History of England*, and sent to Longman for materials for the *Life of George Fox* and the *Origin and Progress of Quakerism*, a work which will be quite as curious as the *Wesley*, and about half the length.

Make allowances for letter writing (which consumes far too great a portion of my time), and for the interruptions of the season, and this account of the month will not be so bad as to subject me to any very severe censure of my stewardship.

[In the first month of this year Southey received from Madame St. Anne Holmes a French translation of *Roderick*.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

January 26, 1821.

There is a part of the business which is so truly booksellerish in general, and French in particular, that it would be a sin to withhold it from you, and you shall have it in the very words of my correspondent, St. Anne.

“There is one part of the business I cannot pass over in silence: it has shocked me much, and calls for an apology; which is, — The life of Robert Southey, Esq., P.L. It never could have entered my mind to be guilty of, or even to sanction, such an impertinence. But the fact is this, the printer and publisher, Mr. Le Bel of the Royal Printing-office Press in Versailles (printers, by-the-bye, are men of much greater importance here than they are in England) insisted upon having the life. He said the French know nothing of M. Southey, and in order to make the work sell, it must be

managed to interest them for the author. To get rid of his importunities we said we were not acquainted with the life of Mr. Southey. Would you believe it? this was verbatim his answer:— ‘N’importe! écrivez toujours, brodez! brodez-la un peu, que ce soit vrai ou non ce ne fait rien; qui prendra la peine de s’informer?’ Terrified lest this ridiculous man should succeed in his point, I at last yielded, and sent to London to procure *all the lives*; and from them, and what I had heard from my dear departed friend Richard Brinsley Sheridan, we drew up the memoir.”

Grosvenor, whoever writes my life when the subject has an end as well as a beginning, and does not insert this biographical anecdote in it, may certainly expect that I will pull his ears in a true dream, and call him a jackass.

*To John May.*

December 10, 1821.

It is not often that I allow myself to wish the accidents of fortune had been more in my favor, and that I were in possession of that property which, in the just ordinary course of things, ought to have devolved upon me; but I cannot help feeling that wish now.

By this post I write to Bedford, desiring that he will transfer to you 625*l.* in the three-per-cents. I wish it was more, and that I had more at com-



mand in any way. I shall in the spring, if I am paid for the first volume of my history as soon as it is finished. One hundred I should, at all events, have sent you then. It shall be as much more as I may receive.

One word more. I entreat you break away from business if it be possible, as early in the spring as you can, and put yourself in the mail for this place. Though you cannot leave your anxieties behind you, yet you may, by means of change of air and scene, be assisted in bearing them, and lay in here a store of pleasant recollections, which in all moods of mind are wholesome.

I cannot write to you about indifferent things, troubled as you needs must be, and sympathizing as I must do with you. Yet I trust that you now know the extent of the evil; and that when this storm is weathered, there may be prosperity and comfort in store for one who so eminently deserves them.

*To* ———.

February 8, 1822.

I heard with sorrow of your ill health. Perhaps you are at this time a happier man than if you were in the enjoyment of vigorous health, and had never known sickness or sorrow. Any price is cheap for religious hope. The evidence for Christianity is as demonstrative as the subject admits: the more it is investigated, the stronger

it appears. But the root of belief is in the heart, rather than in the understanding; and when it is rooted there, it derives from the understanding nutriment and support. Against Atheism, Materialism, and the mortality of the soul, there is the *reductio ab absurdum* in full force; and for revealed religion there is the historical evidence, strong beyond the conception of those who have not examined it; and there is that perfect adaptation to the nature and wants of man, which, if such a revelation had not already been made, would induce a wise and pious man to expect it, as fully as a Jew expects the Messiah. For many years my belief has not been clouded with the shadow of a doubt.

When we observe what things men will believe, who will not believe Christianity, it is impossible not to acknowledge how much belief depends upon the will.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

July 12, 1822.

My old friend Lightfoot is with me, whom you remember at Oxford, and whom I had not seen since we parted upon leaving Oxford eight-and-twenty years ago. The communication between us had never been broken. I had a great regard for him, and talked of him often, and oftener thought of him; and, as you may suppose, the

more I became known and talked of in the world, the larger part I occupied in his thoughts. So at length he mustered up resolution to make a journey hither from Crediton during his midsummer holidays, being master of the grammar school there.

He declares me to be less altered in appearance and manners than any man whom he ever saw. I should not have known him; and yet he has worn better than I have; but he is thinner, and altogether less than when he was a young man, and his face has lengthened, partly because he has lost some of his hair. His life has been laborious, uniform, successful, and singularly happy.

He trembled like an aspen leaf at meeting me. A journey to Cumberland is to him as formidable a thing as it would be for me to set off for Jerusalem, so little has he been used to locomotion. And he has shocked Edith May by wishing that the mountains would descend to fill up the lakes and vales, because then I should return to the South and be within reach of him.

The only thing short of this which would be likely to remove me from this country, would be, if upon Gifford's giving up the management of the *Quarterly Review*, it were to be offered me and made worth my acceptance. In that case I should probably from prudential reasons think it proper to accept the offer, and fix myself within ten or

twelve miles of town. But this is not likely, and I am not sure that it would be desirable.

What a pleasure it is in declining life to see the friends of our youth such as we should wish them to be ; and how infinitely greater will be the pleasure of meeting them in another world, where progression in beatitude will be the only change !

*To John Rickman.*

September 9, 1822.

Such work as that of the population, in addition to your other labors, is enough to break down anybody. The objection to task-work is, that it tempts the industrious to work beyond their strength ; and in intellectual, over-exertion is worse than in bodily, labor.

I have spent a very idle summer, much to the advantage of my health. A fellow collegian, for whom I have a great regard, came to pass his midsummer holidays with me, from Crediton, where he is master of the grammar school. I began a course of exercise with him, and persevered in it, much as it cost me, for some time, till at length the effect which I looked for was produced ; and my constitution recovering its tone, I became once more a sound man. John May came to me just after Lightfoot's departure. I walked about a hundred miles more with him, and am now in as good trim for walking as any man of my years

need be. This I hope will last till I visit London, which I think of doing as soon as the rigor of the winter shall be over.

[A visit of some months to London took place at this time, and Southey was not in harness again until February, 1824.]

*To Edith May Southey.*

London, Dec. 30, 1823.

I have sent you a Bible for a New-Year's gift, in the hope that with the New Year you will begin the custom of reading, morning and night, the Psalms and Lessons for the day. It is far from my wish that this should be imposed as a necessary and burthensome observance, or that you should feel dissatisfied and uneasy at omitting it, when late hours or other accidental circumstances render it inconvenient. Only let it be your ordinary custom. You will one day understand feelingly how beneficially the time has been employed.

The way which I recommend is, I verily believe, the surest way of profiting by the Scriptures. In the course of this easy and regular perusal, the system of religion appears more and more clear and coherent, its truths are felt more intimately, and its precepts and doctrines reach the heart as slow showers penetrate the ground. In passages which have repeatedly been heard and read, some

new force, some peculiar meaning, some home application which had before been overlooked, will frequently come out, and you will find, in thus recurring daily to the Bible, as you have done among the lakes and mountains which you love so well, in the Word of God, as in His works, beauties and effects, and influences as fresh as they are inexhaustible. I say this from experience.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

February 23, 1824.

Here then I am, nothing the worse for having been wheeled over fifteen hundred miles in the course of fifteen weeks. I no longer feel the effect of motion in my head, nor of jolting in my tail. I have taken again to my old coat and old shoes; dine at the reasonable hour of four, enjoy as I used to do the wholesome indulgence of a nap after dinner, drink tea at six, sup at half-past nine, spend an hour over a sober folio and a glass of black-currant rum with warm water and sugar, and then to bed. Days seemed like weeks while I was away, so many and so various were my engagements; and now that I am settling to my wonted round of occupations, the week passes like a day. If my life is not like that of the *prisca gens mortalium*, it is quite as happy; and when you hear *Qui fit Mæcenas* quoted, you may reply that you know one man at least who is perfectly contented with his lot.

*To the same.*

March 27, 1824.

To-day I received the first volume of *Roderick*, in Dutch verse, translated by the wife of Bilderdijk, who is one of the most distinguished men of letters in that country. The translation appears to be very well done, as far as I am able to judge; that is, I can see in the trying passages she has fully understood the original; and her command of her own language is warranted by her husband's approbation, who is a severe critic as well as a skilful poet himself. He must be near eighty years of age, for he tells me he has been now three score years known as an author. His letter to me is in Latin. The book comes in a red morocco livery; it is dedicated to me in an ode, and a very beautiful one, describing the delight she had taken in the poem, and the consolation she had derived from it, when parts of it came home to her own feelings in a time of severe affliction.

*To John Rickman.*

October 10, 1824.

My literary employments have never, in the slightest degree, injured my health. For, in truth, I neither am, nor ever have been, a close student. If I do not take sufficient exercise, it is not from any love of the desk, but for the want of

a companion or an object to draw me out when the season is uninviting; and yet I overcome the dislike of solitary walking, and every day, unless it be a settled rain, walk long enough, and far and fast enough, to require the wholesome process of rubbing down on my return. At no time of my life have I applied half so closely to my employments as you always do to yours. They impose upon me no restrictions. There is nothing irksome in them; no anxiety connected with them; they leave me master of my time and of myself; nor do I doubt but that they would prove conducive to longevity if my constitution were disposed for it.

With regard to the prudence of working up ready materials rather than laying in more, upon whatever I employ myself, I must of necessity be doing both. The work which I am most desirous of completing is the *History of Portugal*, as being that for which most preparation has been made, and most time bestowed on it, and when the *Peninsular War* shall be completed, by God's blessing, a week shall not elapse before it goes to the press; for it has been long in much greater forwardness than any work which I ever before began to print.

*To George Ticknor.*

December 30, 1824.

I have delayed thus long to acknowledge and thank you for your last consignment of books, in



the hope of telling you, what I am now at last enabled to do, that Gifford has finally given up the *Quarterly Review*, and that, after the forthcoming number, it will be under John Coleridge's management. This is a matter which I have had very much at heart, that there might be an end to that mischievous language concerning your country. I opposed it always with all my might, and forced in that paper upon *Dwight's Travels*; yet in the very next number the old system was renewed. So far is it from being the language or the wish of the Government, that one of the Cabinet ministers complained of it to me as most mischievous, and most opposite to the course which they were desirous of pursuing. There is an end of it now, and henceforth that journal will do all in its power towards establishing that feeling which ought to exist between the two nations. Let me be peacemaker; and use what influence you have that the right hand of good-will may be accepted as frankly as it is offered.

My niece desires me to thank you for the sweet story of *Undine*, which is surely the most graceful fiction of modern times. Some other pieces of the same author have been translated here, all bearing marks of the same originality and genius.

I had made a half promise of going to Ireland, to visit one of the best and ablest persons there, the Bishop of Limerick. But it is not likely that

the intention can be fulfilled. An Irishman, well informed of the state of things there, writes to me in these words, "Pray don't think of going to Ireland. I would not insure any man's life for three months in that unhappy country. The populace are ready for a rebellion; and if their leaders should for their own purpose choose to have one, they may have to-morrow a second edition of the Irish massacre."

Wordsworth was with me lately, in good health, and talked of you. His brother, the Master of Trinity, has just published a volume concerning the *Εικων Βασιλικη*, a question of no trifling importance both to our political and literary history. As far as minute and accumulative evidence can amount to proof, he has proved it to be genuine. For myself, I have never, since I read the book, thought that any unprejudiced person could entertain a doubt concerning it. I am the more gratified that this full and satisfactory investigation has been made, because it grew out of a conversation between the two Wordsworths and myself at Rydal, a year or two ago.

*To Mrs. Hughes.*

February 24, 1825.

I have had so many fair words in my time, that if they would butter parsnips (which it is well known they will not) they would have been enough

for the produce of ten good acres ; and I have, on the other hand, had as many foul ones as would certainly manure those acres. There is as much abuse of me in print as would break the back of an elephant, and as many lies as a brewer's team could draw. And for absurdities, what think you of an American critic (a D.D. at Baltimore) seriously asserting and endeavoring to prove that the *Life of Wesley* was written in imitation of — the *Iliad*!

I have retained a good many childish tastes, Heaven be thanked for it. I like gooseberry-pie as well as ever I did, and sweetmeats and fruit ; and can even eat gingerbread, and am very ready to play the fool wherever I feel myself sufficiently at home. And I like praise, too ; but then it must be of the right kind, that is, it must fit. A sentence of Kirke White's concerning *Thalaba* pleased me more than all the criticism I ever saw upon my own writings : it was to the effect that I appeared always to think of what was fitting to be said, and of nothing else. A letter of Mrs. Piozzi was shown me once, in which, speaking of my *Letter to Wm. Smith*, she said, "Oh, how I delight to see him trample on his enemies !" and that was worth all the panegyric in the world.

*To Henry Taylor.\**

March 28, 1825.

Now then for my summer movements. Do not think me actuated by mere fickleness, if I propose crossing the Channel instead of the Severn, and drinking Rhenish wine instead of Welsh ale. I want to see Holland, which is a place of man's making, country as well as towns. I want monastic books, which it is hopeless to look for in England, and which there is every probability of finding at Brussels, Antwerp, or Leyden. In the course of three or four weeks, going sometimes by trekschuits and sometimes upon wheels, we might see the principal places in the Dutch Netherlands, visit the spot where Sir Philip Sidney fell, talk of the Dousas and Scaliger at Leyden, and obtain such a general notion of the land as would enable us better to understand the history of the Low Country wars. Neville White would perhaps join us; and always in travelling three persons are better than two, especially as neither you nor I (I suspect) are such good men of business as not to be glad if a better could be found to officiate as paymaster. Tell me if you like this scheme. If you do I will write to Neville without delay, and be ready to start from London by the 1st of June.

\* Afterwards Sir Henry Taylor, the well known author of *Philip Van Artvelde*. — ED.

*To the same.*

May 2, 1825.

You do not expect enough from Holland. It is a marvellous country in itself, in its history, and in the men and works which it has produced. The very existence of the country is at once a natural and a moral phenomenon. Mountaineer as I am, I expect to *feel* more in Holland than in Switzerland. Instead of climbing mountains, we shall have to ascend church-towers. The panorama from that at Harlaem is said to be one of the most impressive in the world. Evening is the time for seeing it to most advantage.

I have not yet forgotten the interest which Watson's Histories of Philip II. and III. excited in me when a school-boy. They are books which I have never looked into since; but I have read largely concerning the Dutch war gainst the Spaniards, on both sides, and there is no part of Europe which could be so interesting to me as historical ground. Perhaps my pursuits may have made me more alive than most men to associations of this kind; but I would go far to see the scene of any event which has made my heart throb with a generous emotion, or the grave of any one whom I desire to meet in another state of existence.

[To Holland, Southey went accordingly, and at Leyden he was laid up with a bad foot, and for

three weeks was hospitably entertained by the poet Bilderdijk and by his poet wife, who, as we have seen, had translated *Roderick*.]

*To Mrs. Southey.*

Leyden, June 30, 1825.

You will now expect to hear something of the establishment into which I have been thus — unluckily shall I say, or luckily? — introduced. The house is a good one, in a cheerful street, with a row of trees and a canal in front: large, and with every thing good and comfortable about it. The only child, Lodowijk Willem, is at home, Mr. Bilderdijk being as little fond of schools as I am. The boy has a peculiar and to me an interesting countenance. He is evidently of a weak constitution; his dress neat but formal, and his behavior towards me amusing from his extreme politeness, and the evident pleasure with which he receives any attempt on my part to address him, or any notice that I take of him at table. A young vrouw waits at table. I wish you could see her, for she is a much odder figure than Maria Rosa\* appeared on her first introduction, only not so cheerful a one. Her dress is black and white, perfectly neat, and not more graceful than a Beguine's. The cap, which is very little, and has a small front not projecting farther than the green shade which I

\* A Portuguese servant.

wear sometimes for my eyes, comes down to the roots of the hair, which is all combed back on the forehead; and she is as white and wan in complexion as her cap; slender and not ill-made; and were it not for this utter paleness she would be rather handsome. Another vrouw, who appears more rarely, is not in such plain dress, but quite as odd in her way. Nothing can be more amusing than Mr. Bilderdijk's conversation. Dr. Bell is not more full of life, spirits, and enthusiasm; I am reminded of him every minute. He seems delighted to have a guest who can understand, and will listen to him; and he is not a little pleased at discerning how many points of resemblance there are between us. For he is as laborious as I have been; has written upon as many subjects; is just as much abused by the Liberals in his country as I am in mine, and does "contempt" them as heartily and as merrily as I do. I am growing intimate with Mrs. Bilderdijk, about whom her husband in the overflowing of his spirits tells me everything. He is very fond of her, and very proud of her, as well he may be, and on her part she is as proud of him.

*To the same.*

Leyden, July 7, 1825.

This is our manner of life. At eight in the morning Lodowijk knocks at my door. My movements in dressing are as regular as clock-

work, and when I enter the adjoining room breakfast is ready on a sofa-table, which is placed for my convenience close to the sofa. There I take my place, seated on one cushion, and with my leg raised on another. The sofa is covered with black plush. The family take coffee, but I have a jug of boiled milk. Two sorts of cheese are on the table, one of which is very strong, and highly flavored with cummin and cloves; this is called Leyden cheese, and is eaten at breakfast laid in thin slices on bread and butter. The bread is soft, in rolls, which have rather skin than crust; the butter very rich, but so soft that it is brought in a pot to table, like potted meat. Before we begin Mr. B. takes off a little gray cap, and a silent grace is said, not longer than it ought to be; when it is over he generally takes his wife's hand. They sit side by side opposite me; Lodowijk at the end of the table. About ten o'clock Mr. Droesa comes and dresses my foot, which is swathed in one of my silk handkerchiefs. I bind a second round the bottom of the pantaloon, and if the weather be cold I put on a third; so that the leg has not merely a decent, but rather a splendid appearance. After breakfast and tea Mrs. B. washes up the china herself at the table. Part of the morning Mr. B. sits with me. During the rest I read Dutch, or, as at present, retire into my bedroom and write. Henry Taylor calls in the morning, and is always



pressed to dine, which he does twice or thrice in the week. We dine at half-past two or three, and the dinners, to my great pleasure, are altogether Dutch. You know I am a valiant eater, and having retained my appetite as well as my spirits during this confinement, I eat everything which is put before me. The dinner lasts very long. Strawberries and cherries always follow. After coffee, they leave me to an hour's nap. Tea follows. Supper at half-past nine, when Mr. B. takes milk, and I a little cold meat with pickles, or the gravy of the meat preserved in a form like jelly, and at half-past ten I go to bed. My host's conversation is amusing beyond anything I ever heard. I cannot hope to describe it so as to make you conceive it. The matter is always so interesting, that it would alone suffice to keep one's attention on the alert; his manner is beyond expression animated, and his language the most extraordinary that can be imagined. Even my French cannot be half so odd. It is English pronounced like Dutch, and with such a mixture of other languages, that it is an even chance whether the next word that comes be French, Latin, or Dutch, or one of either tongues shaped into an English form. Sometimes the oddest imaginable expressions occur. When he would say "I was pleased," he says "I was very pleasant"; and instead of saying that a poor woman was wounded, with whom he was overturned in a

stage-coach in England, he said she was severely *blessed*. Withal, whatever he says is so full of information, vivacity, and character, and there is such a thorough good nature, kindness, and frankness about him, that I never felt myself more interested in any man's company. The profits of literature here are miserably small. In that respect I am in relation to them what Sir Walter Scott is in relation to me. I can never sufficiently show my sense of the kindness which I am experiencing here. Think what a difference it is to be confined in an hotel, with all the discomforts, or to be in such a family as this, who show by every word and every action that they are truly pleased in having me under their roof.

*To Miss Katherine Southey.*

Amsterdam, July 16, 1825.

Thursday I settled my business as to book-sellers. — Oh, joy! when that chest of glorious folios shall arrive at Keswick — the pleasure of unpacking, of arranging them on the new shelves that must be provided, and the whole year's repast after supper which they will afford!

Yesterday our kind friends accompanied us a little way in the trekschuit on our departure, and we parted with much regret on both sides. If Mr. Bilderdijk can muster spirits for the undertaking, they will come and pass a summer with me, —

which of all things in the world would give me most pleasure, for never did I meet with more true kindness than they have shown me, or with two persons who have in so many essential respects so entirely pleased me. Lodowijk, too, is a very engaging boy, and attached himself greatly to me; he is the only survivor of eight children whom Mr. Bilderdijk has had by his present wife, and of seven by the first! I can truly say, that unpleasant as the circumstance was which brought me under their roof, no part of my life ever seemed to pass away more rapidly or more pleasantly.

*To Caroline Bowles.*

October 14, 1825.

My Works arrived a fortnight ago. A son of my old friend Lightfoot who happened to be here and assisted in unpacking them told his father he had never seen any man look so happy as I did upon that occasion. Now I was as happy as the arrival of eighty-nine folios and about as many smaller fry could make me. The honeymoon is not over yet. O dear Caroline, what a blessing it is to have an insatiable appetite of this kind, which grows by what it feeds on, and for which food can never be wanting! With such pursuits nothing is wanting to my enjoyment, and the only thing I wish for is — now and then — the presence of some one who could fairly enter into my views and

feelings, and partake the interest which I take in such researches.

*To Henry Taylor.*

October 22, 1825.

Canning came here from Lowther, and sat about half an hour with me. My acquaintance with him is of some five years' standing, and of course slight, as it is very rarely that circumstances bring me in his way. Had we been thrown together in early life, — that is, if I had been three years older, and had been sent to Eton instead of Westminster, — we might probably have become friends. "Very ordinary intelligence" has never sufficed for me in the choice of my associates, unless there was extraordinary kindness of disposition, or strength of moral character to compensate for what was wanting. When these are found, I can do very well without great talents; but without them the greatest talents have no attractions for me. If Canning were my neighbor, we might easily become familiar, for we should find topics enough of common interest, and familiarity grows naturally out of an easy intercourse where that is the case. But I am very sure that his good opinion of me would not be increased by anything that he would see of me in general society.

With regard to my writings, I am well aware that some of them are addressed to a comparatively

small part of the public, out of which they will not be read. Probably not half-a-dozen even of those persons who are most attached to me, ever read all that I have published. But if immediate reputation were my object, I know not how it could more surely be attained than by writing to such different classes as those among whom my different books find readers for the sake of the subject matter. The truth, however, is, that this never enters into my consideration. I take up a subject because it interests me. I treat it in the manner which seemeth best in my own eyes, and when it has been sent forth to take its chance, the only care which I have concerning it is to correct and improve it in case it should be reprinted.

The Bishop of Chester has been here, and Mackintosh breakfasted with me and spent an evening also. He has been in Holland, but knows Bilderdijk only by name and by reputation.

My books arrived about a month ago, and I have been in a high state of enjoyment ever since.

*To Henry Taylor.*

December 31, 1825.

I have pursued so little method in my own studies at any time of my life that I am in truth very little qualified to direct others. Having been from youth, and even childhood, an omnivorous reader, I found myself when I commenced man

with a larger stock of general information than young men usually possess, and the desultory reading in which I have always indulged (making it indeed my whole and sole recreation,) has proved of the greatest use when I have been pursuing a particular subject through all its ramifications.

With regard to metaphysics I know nothing, and therefore can say nothing. Coleridge I am sure knows all that can be known concerning them; and if your friend can get at the kernel of his *Friend* and his *Aids to Reflection*, he may crack peach-stones without any fear of breaking his teeth. For logic — that may be considered indispensable, but how far that natural logic which belongs to good sense is assisted or impeded by the technicalities of the schools, others are better able to determine than I am, for I learned very little, and nothing which I ever learnt stuck by me unless I liked it.

The rules for composition appear to me very simple; inasmuch as any style is peculiar, the peculiarity is a fault, and the proof of this is the easiness with which it is imitated, or, in other words, caught. You forgive it in the original for its originality, and because originality is usually connected with power. Sallust and Tacitus are examples among the Latins, Sir T. Browne, Gibbon, and Johnson among our own authors; but look at the imitations of Gibbon and Johnson! My ad-

vice to a young writer is, that he should weigh well what he says, and not be anxious concerning *how* he says it: that his first object should be to express his meaning as perspicuously, his second, as briefly, as he can, and in this everything is included.

One of our exercises at Westminster was to abridge the book which we were reading. I believe that this was singularly useful to me. The difficulties in narration are to select and to arrange. The first must depend upon your judgment. For the second, my way is, when the matter does not dispose itself to my liking, and I cannot readily see how to connect one part with another naturally, or make an easy transition, to lay it aside. What I should bungle at now may be hit off to-morrow; so when I come to a stop in one work I lay it down and take up another.

For a statesman the first thing requisite is to be well-read in history. Our politicians are continually striking upon rocks and shallows, which are all laid down in the chart. As this is the most important and most interesting branch of knowledge, so also is it one to which there is no end. The more you read the more you desire to read, and the more you find there is to be read. And yet I would say this to encourage the student, not to dismay him, for there is no pleasure like this perpetual acquisition and perpetual pursuit. For an

Englishman there is no single historical work with which it can be so necessary for him to be well and thoroughly acquainted as with Clarendon. I feel at this time perfectly assured that if that book had been put into my hands in youth it would have preserved me from all the political errors which I have outgrown.

The advice I would give any one who is disposed really to read for the sake of knowledge, is, that he should have two or three books in course of reading at the same time. He will read a great deal more in that time and with much greater profit. All travels are worth reading, as subsidiary to reading, and in fact essential parts of it: old or new, it matters not — something is to be learned from all. And the custom of making brief notes of reference to everything of interest or importance would be exceeding useful.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

February 18, 1826.

Do you remember my buying a Dutch grammar in the "cool May" of 1799, and how we were amused at Brixton with the Dutch grammarian who pitied himself, and loved his good and rich brother? That grammar is in use now; and Cuthbert and I have begun upon Jacob Cats; who, in spite of his name, and of the ill-looking and not-much-better-sounding language in which he



wrote, I verily believe to have been the most useful poet that any country ever produced. In Bilderdijk's youth, Jacob Cats was to be found in every respectable house throughout Holland, lying beside the hall Bible. One of his longer poems, which describes the course of female life, and female duties, from childhood to the grave, was in such estimation, that an ornamented edition of it was printed solely for bridal presents. He is, in the best sense of the word, a domestic poet; intelligible to the humblest of his readers, while the dexterity and felicity of his diction make him the admiration of those who are best able to appreciate the merits of his style. And for useful practical morals, maxims for every-day life, lessons that find their way through the understanding to the heart, and fix themselves there, I know of no poet who can be compared to him. *Mi Cats* inter omnes. *Cedite Romani Scriptores, cedite Graii!*

*To John Rickman.*

April 26, 1826.

You have had more than your share of this world's business. I doubt whether any other man who has worked so hardly has worked so continuously and so long. Our occupations withdraw us all too much from nearer and more lasting concerns. Time and nature, especially when aided by any sorrows, prepare us for better influences;

and when we feel what is wanting, we seek and find it. The clouds then disperse, and the evening is calm and clear, even till night closes.

Long and intimate conversance with Romish and sectarian history, with all the varieties of hypocritical villany and religious madness, has given me the fullest conviction of the certainty and importance of those truths, from the perversion and distortion of which these evils and abuses have grown. There is not a spark of fanaticism left in my composition: whatever there was of it in youth spent itself harmlessly in political romance. I am more in danger, therefore, of having too little of theopathy than too much, — of having my religious faith more in the understanding than in the heart. In the understanding I am sure it is; I hope it is in both. This good in myself my ecclesiastical pursuits have certainly effected. And if I live to finish the whole of my plans, I shall do better service to the Church of England than I could ever have done as one of its ministers, had I kept to the course which it was intended that I should pursue.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Holland—Declines a Seat in Parliament—Death of a Daughter—  
Letter to his Children—Death of his Uncle—Favorite Authors—  
A Dutch Bookseller—James Barry—The Evangelical Party—  
Literary Style.

[In the summer of this year Southey paid another short visit to Holland, accompanied by his friends Henry Taylor (afterwards Sir Henry) and Mr. Rickman. While absent on this tour an admirer of the *Book of the Church*, who afterwards proved to be Lord Radnor, managed to get him returned for the Borough of Downton. This will explain the next letter written from London where he first received the news:—]

*To Richard White.*

July 1, 1826.

I heard accidentally at Brussels that I had been returned for the Borough of Downton, and on my arrival here, on Wednesday last, I found a letter, announcing, in the most gratifying and honorable manner, that this distinction had been conferred upon me through the influence of the writer, whose name had not been affixed; had that however been doubtful, the writing was recognized by my old and intimate friend Mr. John May.

Our first impulses in matters which involve any question of moral importance, are, I believe, usually right. Three days allowed for mature consideration have confirmed me in mine. A seat in Parliament is neither consistent with my circumstances, inclinations, habits, or pursuits in life. The return is null, because I hold a pension of 200*l.* a year during pleasure. And if there were not this obstacle, there would be the want of a qualification. That pension is my only certain income; and the words of the oath (which I have looked at) are too unequivocal for me to take them upon such grounds as are sometimes supplied for such occasions.

For these reasons, which are and must be conclusive, the course is plain. When Parliament meets a new writ must be moved for, the election as relating to myself being null. I must otherwise have applied for the Chiltern Hundreds.

It is, however, no inconsiderable honor to have been so distinguished. This I shall always feel; and if I do not express immediately to your friend my sense of the obligation he has conferred upon me, it is not from any want of thankfulness, but from a doubt how far it might be proper to reply to an unsigned communication. May I therefore request that you will express this thankfulness for me, and say at the same time, that I trust, in my own station, and in the quiet pursuance of my own

scheme of life, by God's blessing, to render better service to those institutions, the welfare of which I have at my heart, than it would be possible for me to do in a public assembly.

[On arriving at Keswick this most affectionate of fathers found his daughter Isabel dying. She did not live many days : —]

*To Edith May, Bertha, and Katharine Southey.*

July 19, 1826.

I write rather than speak to you on this occasion, because I can better bear to do it, and because what is written will remain, and may serve hereafter for consolation and admonishment, of which the happiest and best of us stand but too often in need.

If anything could at this time increase my sorrow, for the death of one who was the pride of my eyes and the joy of my heart, it would be that there are so many who have their full share in it. When your dear mother and I were last visited with a like affliction, you were too young to comprehend its nature. You feel and understand it now ; but you are also capable of profiting by it ; and laying to your hearts the parental exhortations which I address to you, while they are wounded and open.

This is but the first trial of many such which

are in store for you. Who may be summoned next is known only to the All-wise Disposer of all things. Some of you must have to mourn for others; some one for all the rest. It may be the will of God that I should follow more of my children to the grave; or in the ordinary course of nature and happiest issue, they may see their parents depart. Did we consider these things wisely, we should perceive how little it imports who may go first, who last; of how little consequence sooner or later is, in what must be. We must all depart when our time comes, — all to be re-united in a better state of existence, where we shall part no more.

Our business here is to fit ourselves for that state, — not by depreciating or renouncing those pleasures which may innocently and properly be enjoyed, but by correcting the faults to which we are prone, cultivating our better dispositions, doing the will of God by doing all we can for the good of others, and fixing our dearest hopes on Heaven, which is our resting-place, and our everlasting home.

My children, you have all brought into the world good dispositions: I bless God for it, more than for all the other blessings which he has vouchsafed me. But the best dispositions require self-watchfulness, as there is no garden but what produces weeds. Blessed be God, I have never

seen in either of you any one symptom of an evil nature. Against great sins there is no occasion to warn you ; but it is by guarding against little ones that we acquire a holy habit of mind, which is the sure foundation of happiness here and hereafter.

You know how I loved your dear sister, my sweet Isabel, who is now gathered to that part of my family and household (a large one now!) which is in Heaven. I can truly say that my desire has ever been to make your childhood happy, as I would fain make your youth, and pray that God would make the remainder of your days. And for the dear child who is departed, God knows that I never heard her name mentioned, nor spoke, nor thought of her, without affection and delight. Yet this day, when I am about to see her mortal remains committed earth to earth, it is a grief for me to think that I should ever, by a harsh or hasty word, have given her even a momentary sorrow which might have been spared.

Check in yourselves, then, I beseech you, the first impulses of impatience, peevishness, ill-humor, anger, and resentment. I do not charge you with being prone to these sins, — far from it, — but there is proneness enough to them in human nature. They are easily subdued in their beginnings ; if they are yielded to they gather strength and virulence, and lead to certain unhappiness in all the relations of life. A meek, submissive,

obliging disposition is worth all other qualities. I beseech you, therefore, to bear and forbear; carefully to guard against giving offence, and more carefully (for this is the more needful admonition) to guard against taking it. A soft answer turneth away wrath. There is no shield against wrongs so effectual as an unresisting temper. You will soon find the reward of any conquest which you shall thus obtain over yourselves: the satisfaction is immediate; and the habit of equanimity which is thus easily acquired will heighten all your enjoyments here, as well as enable you the better to support those afflictions which are inseparable from humanity.

Your sister is departed in her innocence: "of such is the kingdom of Heaven." For you, if your lives are prolonged, there will be duties and trials in store, for which you must prepare by self-government, and for which God will prepare you if you steadfastly trust in His promises, and pray for that grace which is never withheld from humble and assiduous prayer.

My children, God alone knows how long I may be spared to you. I am more solicitous to provide for your peace of mind, and for your everlasting interest, than for your worldly fortunes. As I have acted for myself in that respect, so do I feel for you. The longer I may live, the more in all likelihood will be the provision which may be made



for you ; large it can never be, though whenever the hour comes there will be enough, with prudence and good conduct, for respectability and comfort. But were it less, my heart would be at rest concerning you while I felt and believed that you were imbued with those principles, and had carefully cultivated in yourselves those dispositions, which will make you heritors of eternal life.

I copy this letter for each of you with my own hand. It will be read with grief now. But there will come a time when you may think of it with a solemn rather than melancholy pleasure, and feel grateful for this proof of love. Take it, then, with the blessing of

Your afflicted and affectionate Father.

*To Mrs. Hughes.*

August 22, 1826.

Time is passing on ; we are in our usual course of life, and I do what I can to make the younger part of my family resume that healthful cheerfulness which is the portion of youth. They have been much shaken. Their mother seems as if a weight of years had been laid suddenly upon her : and something of this effect I am sensible of in myself. Afflictions of this kind seem to come the heavier when they are repeated, and they leave behind a fearful and ever apprehensive anxiety ; we have now lost four out of eight, and the best

consolation is in the sure prospect of rejoining them.

Do not, however, suppose that I give way to any vain regrets. I know too well that my duties are in this world, while my desires are toward a better; and I know also that in the present state of the world, for those who depart in their innocence, to die is best. All that we have to do here being to make ourselves fit for immortality, they are happiest who are earliest removed from the snares which beset us and the sorrows which are inevitably our portion. The truth of this is felt when sorrow overtakes us. But with all the efforts of reason and all the consolations of religion also, there remains a grief which will be long in healing, and a loss which is daily and hourly felt, and of which everything is continually reminding us. Mine is a sad memory; it treasures up everything which I would wish to forget.

*To C. W. W. Wynn, M. P.*

August 24, 1826.

If you have ever met with the works of Dr. Jackson, who was President of Corpus in Charles the First's reign, they will need no recommendation to you; but if you have not, you may thank me for mentioning a writer who deserves to be ranked in the very first class of our divines, among whom surely are some of the strongest

minds that any country has ever produced. The writings were collected in three folios, 1672. They ought to be reprinted at the Clarendon press.

Of late years I have been very fond of these studies, and wish to have a great library at hand, more for the desire of its old divinity than for anything else. South is, perhaps, the author in whom I have found least that I could wish had not been there, and who has kept my attention the most continuously awake by a continual sense of excitement and pleasure. Jeremy Taylor gives me the greatest occasional delight; but in no other do I find such height and depth of divine philosophy as in Jackson; he had all the stores of learning and all the arms of logic at command. You feel in his writings what is known from his life, that his whole conduct was conformed to the purest principles of Christian faith; nothing can be more intellectual, more elevating, or more devout.

*To Sharon Turner.*

November 12, 1826.

On Wednesday next I shall write to the Speaker, and lay down my M.P.-ship. No temptation that could have been offered would have induced me to sacrifice the leisure and tranquillity of a studious and private life. Free from ambition I cannot pretend to be, but what ambition I have is not of an ordinary kind: rank, and power, and office I

would decline without a moment's hesitation, were they proffered for my acceptance; and for riches, if I ever perceive the shadow of a wish for them, it is not for their own sake, but as they would facilitate my pursuits, and render locomotion less inconvenient. The world, thank God, has little hold on me. I would fain persuade myself that even the desire of posthumous fame is now only the hope of instilling sound opinions into others, and scattering the seeds of good. All else I have out-lived. I have suffered severely since we parted. Little, indeed, when I breakfasted with you last did I apprehend the affliction which was impending over me, and which had even then begun its course. But the will of God be done! My bodily health has not recovered the shock, nor will it speedily, I fear. I am, however, now in full activity of mind, and feel the perfect leisure which winter brings with it in this place as a relief and comfort.

*To Grovesnor Bedford.*

December 8, 1826.

Hear the second part of the history of my parliamentary affairs:—

On Wednesday, I received a note from Harry, saying that a plan had been formed for purchasing a qualification for me; that Sir Robert Inglis had just communicated this to him, and was then gone to Lord R. to ask him to keep the borough

open: that he (Harry) doubted whether a sufficient subscription could be raised, but supposed that under these circumstances I should not refuse the seat; and desired my answer by return of post, that he might be authorized to say I would sit in Parliament if they gave me an estate of 300*l.* a year.

I rubbed my eyes to ascertain that I was awake, and that this was no dream. I heard Cuthbert his Greek lesson, and read his Dutch one with him. I corrected a proof-sheet. And then, the matter having had time to digest, I wrote in reply, as follows: —

MY DEAR H., —

An estate of 300*l.* a year would be a very agreeable thing for me, Robert Lackland, and I would willingly change that name for it: the convenience, however, of having an estate is not the question which I am called upon to determine. It is (supposing the arrangement possible, — which I greatly doubt), whether I will enter into public life at an age when a wise man would begin to think of retiring from it: whether I will place myself in a situation for which neither my habits, nor talents, nor disposition are suited; and in which I feel and know it to be impossible that I should fulfil the expectations of those who would raise the subscription. Others ought to believe me, and you will, when I

declare that in any public assembly I should have no confidence in myself, no promptitude, none of that presence of mind, without which no man can produce any effect there. This ought to be believed, because I have them all when acting in my proper station, and in my own way, and therefore cannot be supposed to speak from timidity, nor with any affectation of humility. Sir Robert Inglis and his friends have the Protestant cause at heart, and imagine that I could serve it in Parliament. I have it at heart also; deeply at heart; and will serve it to the utmost of my power, "so help me God!" But it is not by speaking in public that I can serve it. It is by bringing forth the knowledge which so large a part of my life has been passed in acquiring; by exposing the real character and history of the Romish Church, systematically and irrefragably (which I can and will do) in books which will be read now and hereafter; which must make a part, hereafter, of every historical library; and which will live and act when I am gone. If I felt that I could make an impression in Parliament, even then I would not give up future utility for present effect. I have too little ambition of one kind, and too much of another to make the sacrifice. But I could make no impression there.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

February 21, 1827.

I know not how I have lost sight of you so long, nor whether this may find you at Florence, nor what may have befallen you in the interval since we have communicated. No such affliction, I hope, as has befallen me, in the loss of my youngest daughter. Seven months have elapsed since we suffered this bereavement. She was the flower of my family, — and a lovelier flower this earth never produced. It was long before I could recover heart for anything, and sometimes I fear that my spirits will never again be what they have been. My wife's, I have but too much cause to apprehend, have received a shock from which they will not recover. Yet we have much left for which to be thankful; and, above all, I am thankful for that settled and quiet faith which makes me look on to the end of my journey as a point of hope.

*To the Rev. Neville White.*

May 5, 1827.

The question about National Education you will see discussed in my *Colloquies*, when they are completed. Here is the gist of the question. The human mind is like the earth, which never lies idle. You have a piece of garden ground. Neglect it, and it will be covered with weeds, useless to yourself and noxious to your neighbors.

To lay it out in flowers and shrubbery is what you do not want. Cultivate it then for common fruits and culinary plants. So with poor children. Why should they be made worse servants, worse laborers, worse mechanics, for being taught their Bible, their Christian duties, and the elements of useful knowledge? I am no friend of the London University, nor to Mechanics' Institutes. There is a purpose in all these things of excluding religion, and preparing the way for the overthrow of the Church. But God will confound their devices; and my principle is, that where a religious foundation is laid, the more education the better. Will you have the lower class *Christians* or *brutes*?

*To Henry Taylor.*

September 13, 1827.

I am sorry to hear that cares have been knocking at your door; they must have gone out of their way, methinks, to call there. I thought that you had no thorns either in your sides or your pillow. Tidings after an absence of a few weeks afford indeed at all times matter for uneasy apprehension; and if you and I had this to learn, the two journeys which we have taken together would have taught it us.

I found a great want of you (as they say in this country) during your absence. One likes to have one's friends in a local habitation where at any



time they may be found ; to be out of reach is too like being out of the world. It often came into my thoughts that if H. T. were in London I should have written to him upon such and such occasions, and quite as often that I should have had some brief notices of the strange turns of the wheel.

You distrust opinions, you tell me, when you perceive a strong tenor of feeling in the writer who maintains them. The distrust is reasonable, and is especially to be borne in mind in reading history. My opinions are (thank God!) connected with strong feelings concerning them, but not such as can either disturb my temper or cloud my discernment, much less pervert what I will venture to call the natural equity of my mind. I proceed upon these postulates, — 1. That revealed religion is true ; 2. that the connection between Church and State is necessary ; 3. that the Church of England is the best ecclesiastical establishment which exists at present, or has yet existed ; 4. that both Church and State require great amendments ; 5. that both are in great danger ; and 6. that a revolution would destroy the happiness of one generation, and leave things at last worse than it found them.

If our institutions are worth preserving we cannot be attached to them too strongly, remembering always that the only way to preserve them is by keeping them in good repair. The two duties

upon which I insist are those of conservation and improvement. We must improve our institutions if we would preserve them ; but if any go to work upon the foundations, down must come the building.

*To John May.*

September 15, 1827.

You ought to become acquainted with my old friend Joseph Cottle, the best-hearted of men, with whom my biographical letters will one day have much to do. It would give him great pleasure to see any one with whom he could talk about me. Make an hour's leisure some day and call upon him, and announce yourself to him and his sisters as my friend. You will see a notable portrait of me before my mane was shorn, and become acquainted with one who has a larger portion of original goodness than falls to the lot of most men.

*To Mrs. Hodson.*

August 14, 1828.

I wish there were but one ten thousand of those persons in England who talk about new books and buy them, whether they read, mark, and inwardly digest them or not, that felt half as much interest in any forthcoming or expected work of mine as you are pleased to express, and as I should be unjust, as well as ungrateful, if I did not give you credit for. Alas ! my third volume of the *Penin-*

*sular War* is far from complete, very far. It must be a close and hard winter's work that will make it ready for publication in the spring.

My way to London towards the latter end of May was, I confess, through Ripon, but it was in the mail-coach, for I performed the whole journey without resting on the way. It was anything but a pleasant one. I went to see an uncle (my best friend) for the last time in this world; his continuance, at the age of fourscore, in pain, infirmity, and earthly hopelessness, not being to be desired, even though his deliverance must be, in a mere worldly view, a great misfortune to his family. He married in his sixtieth year, and has six children. I went also in the secret determination of undergoing a surgical operation, if it should be deemed expedient, for an infirmity which had long afflicted me. Thank God! it has succeeded, and I am once more a sound man, which I had not been for some twelve years.

If I am now not quite as able to skip over the mountains as I was when first my tent was pitched here, it will be owing only to the gradual effect of time, not to any disablement from a painful and dangerous cause.

*To John May.*

September 22, 1828.

Before this reaches you, you will have heard

that my dear uncle is relieved from the burden of age and infirmity which pressed upon him so heavily in his latter days. This day brought me the news of his deliverance, and it was the first that I had of his illness; but I was prepared for it, knowing that the first breath of wind must shake the dry leaf from the tree.

It is somewhat remarkable that, either on the night before or after his decease (I am not certain which, but think it was the former), I was very much disturbed throughout the night in dreams concerning him. I seldom remember to have suffered so much in sleep, or to have wept more than I did then, thinking that I saw him, as I had last seen him, bent and suffering, helplessly and hopelessly, and that he reproved or rather reasoned with me for allowing myself to be so affected. This is perfectly explicable; but it impressed me strongly at the time; and if in some of his latter hours his thoughts were directed towards me (as they may have been), I could find a solution which would accord with my philosophy, though it may not be dreamt of in that of other men.

I have long looked for this event, and however important in one point of view the prolongation of his life might appear, I could not, if wishes or prayers could have done it, have stretched him upon the rack of this world longer.

There is some comfort in thinking that he now

knows, if he never knew it before, how truly I loved and honored him. I often indulge the belief that towards our dead friends our hearts are open and our desires known.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

November, 28, 1828.

You may get the whole of Sir Thomas Browne's works more easily perhaps than the *Hydriotaphia* in a single form. The folio is neither scarce nor dear, and you will find it throughout a book to your heart's content. If I were confined to a score of English books, this I think would be one of them; nay, probably, it would be one if the selection were cut down to twelve. My library, if reduced to those bounds, would consist of *Shakespeare*, *Chaucer*, *Spenser*, and *Milton*; *Lord Clarendon*; *Jackson*, *Jeremy Taylor*, and *South*; *Isaac Walton*, *Sidney's Arcadia*, *Fuller's Church History*, and *Sir Thomas Browne*; and what a wealthy and well-stored mind would that man have, what an inexhaustible reservoir, what a Bank of England to draw upon for profitable thoughts and delightful associations, who should have fed upon them!

I am glad you have passed six weeks pleasantly and profitably, though grudging a little that they were not spent at Keswick, where, among other things, I should like you to see the additional

book-room that we have fitted up, and in which I am now writing, dividing my time between the two book-rooms by spells, so that both may be kept well aired. It would please you to see such a display of literary wealth, which is at once the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind; indeed, more than metaphoric-ally, meat, drink, and clothing for me and mine. I verily believe that no one in my station was ever so rich before, and I am very sure that no one in my station had ever a more thorough enjoyment of riches of any kind, or in any way. It is more delightful for me to live with books than with men, even with all the relish that I have for such society as is worth having.

I broke off this morning (not being a post day) for the sake of walking to Lodore, to see the cataract in its glory, after heavy rain in a wet season. A grand sight it was, and a grand sound. The walk, however, has just induced enough of agreeable lassitude to disincline me for my usual evening's penwork.

*To the same.*

December 8, 1828.

I do not wonder that neither you nor your friend are acquainted with the name of Jackson as a divine, and I believe the sight of his works would somewhat appal you, for they are in three thick

folios. He was Master of Corpus (Oxford) and vicar of Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the early part of Charles the First's reign, but his works were not published in a collective form till after the Restoration, when they were edited by Barnabas Oley, who was also the editor of George Herbert's *Remains*. In our Old Divines there is generally something that you might wish were not there: less of this in Jackson, I think, than in any other, except South; and more of what may truly be called divine philosophy than in any or all others. Possibly you might not have the same relish for Jackson that I have, and yet I think you would find three or four pages per day a wholesome and pleasant diet.

If you have not got the sermons of my almost-namesake, Robert South (who was, moreover, of Westminster), buy thou them forthwith, O Grosvenor Charles Bedford! for they will delight the very cockles of thy heart.

*To George Ticknor.*

March 17, 1829.

When your consignment arrived at Keswick last summer, I was in London under Copeland the surgeon's hands. By an operation which some years ago was one of the most serious in surgery, but which he (more than any other person) has rendered as safe as any operation can be, I have

been effectually relieved from an infirmity which had afflicted me about twelve years, and which often rendered me incapable of walking half a mile. Now I am able to climb the mountains; and as then I was never without a sense of infirmity when I moved, I never walk now without a consciousness of the blessing that it is to have been thus rendered sound. This sort of second spring prevents me from feeling the approach of age as I otherwise might do. Indeed Time lays his hand on me gently: I require a glass only for distant objects; for work, my eyes serve me as well as ever they did; and this is no slight blessing when most of my contemporaries have taken to spectacles.

This year, I trust, will see good progress made in *Oliver Newman*, the poem being so far advanced that it becomes an object to take it earnestly in hand and complete it. With us no poetry now obtains circulation except what is in the *Annuals*; these are the only books which are purchased for presents, and the chief sale which poetry used to have was of this kind. Here, however, we are overrun with imitative talent in all the fine arts, especially in fine literature; and if it is not already the case with you, it will very soon be so. I can see some good in this: in one or two generations imitative talent will become so common that it will not be mistaken, when it first manifests itself, for genius; and it will then be cultivated rather as an



embellishment for private life, than with aspiring views of ambition. Much of that levelling is going on with us which no one can more heartily desire to promote than I do, — that which is produced by raising the lower classes. Booksellers and print-sellers find it worth while now to publish for a grade of customers which they deemed ten years ago beneath their consideration. Good must result from this in many ways; and could we but hope or dream of any thing like long peace, we might dream of seeing England in a state of intellectual culture and internal prosperity such as no country has ever before attained. But all the elements of discord are at work; and though I am one of the last men to despair, yet I have no hope of living to see the end of the troubles which must ere long break out, — the fruits of this accursed Catholic question, let it now take what course it may.

*To Henry Taylor.*

April 13, 1829.

I must not let you think ill of Verbeyst. He had sundry books to provide for me, some of which are not easily found; for example, the continuators of *Baronius*, a set of *Surius*, and Colgar's very rare *Lives of the Irish Saints*, without which I could not review O'Connor's collection of the *Res Hibernicarum Script.* Last year, when he had collected these, his wife fell ill and died. *Bien*

*des malheurs*, he says, he has had since he saw me, and that they had left him in a lethargic state, from which he is only beginning to recover.

No, H. T., if you had bought as many books of Verbeyst as I have, and had them in your eye (as they are now in mine), and had talked with him as much as I have done (and in as good French), and had drunk his Rhenish wine and his beer, which is not the best in the world because there is, or was, as good at West Kennet, but than which there is not, never was, and never can be better; — no, H. T., if you remembered the beer, the wine, and the man himself, as I do, you would not and could not entertain even the shadow of an ill or an angry thought towards Verbeyst. Think ill of our fathers which are in the Row, think ill of John Murray, think ill of Colburn, think ill of the whole race of bibliopoles, except Verbeyst, who is always to be thought of with liking and respect.

A joyful day it will be when the books come, and he promises them by the first ship, — perhaps it may be the second. But come they will at last, if wind and waters permit; and, if all be well, when they arrive I shall not envy any man's happiness (were I given to envy) on that day.

I have told you of the Spaniard who always put on his spectacles when he was about to eat cherries, that they might look the bigger and more tempting.

In like manner I make the most of my enjoyments, and, though I do not cast my cares away, I pack them in as little compass as I can, carry them as conveniently as I can for myself, and never let them annoy others. God bless you!

*To Allan Cunningham.*

July 23, 1829.

I have read your first volume, and with very great pleasure. You need not ask any one how biography ought to be written. A man with a clear head, a good heart, and an honest understanding will always write well; it is owing either to a muddy head, an evil heart, or a sophisticated intellect, that men write badly, and sin either against reason, or goodness, or sincerity.

There may be secrets in painting, but there are none in style. When I have been asked the foolish question, what a young man should do who wishes to acquire a good style, my answer has been that he should never think about it; but say what he has to say as perspicuously as he can, and as briefly as he can, and then the style will take care of itself.

Were you to leave nothing but these *Lives*, you need not doubt of obtaining the remembrance which you court and desire.

I wish I could tell you anything which might be found useful in your succeeding volumes. I knew Barry, and have been admitted into his den

in his worst (that is to say, his maddest) days, when he was employed upon his Pandora. He wore at that time an old coat of green baize, but from which time had taken all the green that incrustations of paint and dirt had not covered. His wig was one which you might suppose he had borrowed from a scarecrow; all around it there projected a fringe of his own gray hair. He lived alone, in a house which was never cleaned, and he slept on a bedstead with no other furniture than a blanket nailed on the one side. I wanted him to visit me. "No," he said, "he would not go out by day, because he could not spare time from his great picture; and if he went out in the evening, the Academicians would waylay him and murder him." In this solitary, sullen life he continued till he fell ill, very probably for want of food sufficiently nourishing; and after lying two or three days under his blanket, he had just strength enough left to crawl to his own door, open it, and lay himself down with a paper in his hand, on which he had written his wish to be carried to the house of Mr. Carlisle (Sir Anthony) in Soho Square. There he was taken care of; and the danger from which he had thus escaped seems to have cured his mental hallucinations. He cast his slough afterwards; appeared decently dressed and in his own gray hair, and mixed in such society as he liked.

I should have told you that, a little before his illness, he had with much persuasion been induced to pass a night at some person's house in the country. When he came down to breakfast the next morning, and was asked how he had rested, he said, remarkably well; he had not slept in sheets for many years, and really he thought it was a very comfortable thing.

He interlarded his conversation with oaths as expletives, but it was pleasant to converse with him; there was a frankness and animation about him which won good-will as much as his vigorous intellect commanded respect.

*To Henry Taylor.*

August 6, 1829.

You think me easily pleased with people. Perhaps no one tolerates them more easily; but I am not often contented, in the full sense of that term, any more with men than with books. In both I am thankful for the good that is mixed with ill; but there are few of either which I like well enough to take to my heart and incorporate them, as it were, with it.

*To the same.*

October 8, 1829.

I have been jumping for joy: Verbeyst has kept his word; the bill of lading is in Longman's hands, and by the time this reaches you I hope the vessel, with the books on board, may be in the river, and

by this day month they will probably be here. Then shall I be happier than if his Majesty King George the Fourth were to give orders that I should be clothed in purple, and sleep upon gold, and have a chain about my neck, and sit next him because of my wisdom, and be called his cousin.

Long live Verbeyst! the best, though not the most expeditious of booksellers; and may I, who am the most patient of customers, live long to deal with him. And may you and I live to go to the Low Countries again, that I may make Brussels in the way, and buy more of his books, and drink again of his Rhenish wine and of his strong beer, better than which Jacob von Artevelde never had at his own table, of his own brewing; not even when he entertained King Edward and Queen Philippa at the christening. Would we have had such a son as Philip if he had been a water-drinker, or ever put swipes to his lips?

*To —.*

October, 1829.

I am pleased to find you expressing an opinion respecting Milton and Wordsworth which I have never hesitated to deliver as my own when I was not likely to do harm. A greater poet than Wordsworth there never has been, nor ever will be. I could point out some of his pieces which seem to me good for nothing, and not a few faulty passages, but I know of no poet in

any language who has written so much that is good.

Now, —, I want you and *pray you* to read Berkeley's *Minute Philosopher*; I want you to learn that the religious belief which Wordsworth and I hold, and which — I am sure you know in my case, and will not doubt in his — no earthly considerations would make us profess if we did not hold it, is as reasonable as it is desirable; is in its historical grounds as demonstrable as anything can be which rests upon human evidence; and is, in its life and spirit, the only divine philosophy, the perfection of wisdom; in which, and in which alone, the understanding and the heart can rest.

*To Mrs. Hodson.*

March 16, 1830.

I am inclined to think that the Church is in more danger from the so-called Evangelical party among its own clergy than it would be from lay-assistance. These clergy are now about to form a sort of union, — in other words, a convocation of their own, that they may act as a body. They have had a clerical breakfast in London. The two Noels, Stewart, who is brother-in-law to Owen of Lanark and was here with him some years ago, and Daniel Wilson were the chief

movers. There have been two reports of the speeches in the *Record* newspaper, and a Mr. M'Neil, who very sensibly objected to the whole scheme, had the whole meeting against him.

Like you, I both dislike and distrust those who call themselves professors. They are just what the Pharisees were before them; but I want to embody in the service of the Church some of that honest enthusiasm which will otherwise be employed against it. I want field-preachers, while we have an ignorant and brutal population: there can be no other means of reclaiming them. They will not go to church—the preacher must go to them.

*To Rev. J. W. Warter.*

April 23, 1830.

As for composition, it has no difficulties for one who will “read, learn, mark, and inwardly digest” the materials upon which he is to work. I do not mean to say that it is easy to write well; but of this I am sure, that most men would write much better if they did not take half the pains they do. For myself, I consider it no compliment when any one praises the simplicity of my prose writings; they are written, indeed, without any other immediate object than that of expressing what is to be said in the readiest and most



perspicuous manner. But in the transcript (if I make one), and always in the proof-sheet, every sentence is then weighed upon the ear, euphony becomes a second object, and ambiguities are removed. But of what is called *style*, not a thought enters my head at any time. Look to the matter, and the manner takes care of itself.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Visits London—Letter to Lord Brougham—Joanna Baillie—The Howitts—National Education—University Education—White Slavery—The Church of England.

[In the month of October, 1830, Southey visited London, where he had a taste of high life, dined at the Duchess of Kent's, and received a pleasant compliment from the Princess Victoria, then a child of eleven. In London he remained until the end of the year, when, after a short stay with his friend Rickman, in Sussex, he visited Miss Bowles, in Hampshire. After that visit, he went further west, and from Crediton wrote:—]

*To the Rev. J. W. Warter.*

January 12, 1831.

Here I arrived last night on my way home, and at the farthest point from it to which my circuit has extended; and here, at last, I have some hours upon which no demand will be made. This is the first use of my first interval of leisure. How I have been distracted in London no one can fully understand, unless they have been living with me there; and how I have been busied tooth and nail during eleven days after I left it and got to Miss Bowles's, near Lymington; you may

judge when you know that in that time I wrote the concluding article of the *Quarterly Review*, all but the first seven pages.

I leave this place (whither I came only to spend three days with my old-fellow-collegian Lightfoot) on Saturday morning for Taunton, there to see my Aunt Mary, the last of my father's generation; a dear excellent old lady, in whom I see what I am indebted for to the Southey part of my blood. Monday I go to Bristol, where I have not been for twenty years. I mean once more to look at the scenes of my birth and childhood, and have so much love for the place that I have the serious intention of writing a poem, descriptive, historical, and desultory, in honor of my native city.

You may suppose how impatient I am to reach home, and resume once more the even tenor of my usual life. I bought a good many books in London, three or four consignments of which have arrived, and others are on the way. Some skill in packing will be required for arranging them. Neither my head nor hands were ever so full as at this time, and I hope, with God's blessing, to get through a world of work.

[On the homeward journey, Southey received a letter from Brougham, then Lord Chancellor, to which he replied from his home at Keswick.]

*To the Lord Chancellor Brougham and Vaux.*

February 1, 1831.

The letter which your lordship did me the honor of addressing to me at this place, found me at Crediton, in the middle of last month, on a circuitous course homeward. It was not likely that deliberation would lead me to alter the notions which I have long entertained upon the subject that has, in this most unexpected manner, been brought before me; but I should have deemed it disrespectful to have answered such a communication without allowing some days to intervene. The distance between Devonshire and Cumberland, a visit upon the way to my native city which I had not seen for twenty years, and the engagements arising upon my return home after an absence of unusual length, will explain, and I trust excuse, the subsequent delay.

Your first question is, whether Letters would gain by the more avowed and active encouragement of the Government?

There are literary works of national importance which can only be performed by co-operative labor and will never be undertaken by that spirit of trade which at present preponderates in literature. The formation of an English Etymological Dictionary is one of those works; others might be mentioned; and in this way literature might gain much by receiving national encouragement; but

Government would gain a great deal more by bestowing it. Revolutionary governments understand this; I should be glad if I could believe that our legitimate one would learn it before it is too late. I am addressing one who is a statesman as well as a man of letters, and who is well aware that the time is come in which governments can no more stand without pens to support them than without bayonets. They must soon know, if they do not already know it, that the volunteers as well as the mercenaries of both professions, who are not already enlisted in this service, will enlist themselves against it; and I am afraid they have a better hold upon the soldier than upon the penman; because the former has, in the spirit of his profession and in the sense of military honor, something which not unfrequently supplies the want of any higher principle; and I know not that any substitute is to be found among the gentlemen of the press.

But neediness, my Lord, makes men dangerous members of society, quite as often as affluence makes them worthless ones. I am of opinion that many persons who become bad subjects because they are necessitous, because "the world is not their friend, nor the world's law," might be kept virtuous (or, at least, withheld from mischief) by being made happy, by early encouragement, by holding out to them a reasonable hope of obtain-

ing, in good time, an honorable station and a competent income, as the reward of literary pursuits, when followed with ability and diligence, and recommended by good conduct.

My Lord, you are now on the Conservative side. Minor differences of opinion are infinitely insignificant at this time, when in truth there are but two parties in this kingdom — the Revolutionists and the Loyalists; those who would destroy the constitution and those who would defend it. I can have no predilections for the present administration; they have raised the devil, who is now raging through the land: but, in their present position, it is their business to lay him if they can; and so far as their measures may be directed to that end, I heartily say, God speed them! If schemes like yours, for the encouragement of letters, have never entered into their wishes, there can be no place for them at present in their intentions. Government can have no leisure now for attending to anything but its own and our preservation; and the time seems not far distant when the cares of war and expenditure will come upon it once more with their all-engrossing importance. But when better times shall arrive (whoever may live to see them), it will be worthy the consideration of any government whether the institution of an Academy, with salaries for its members (in the nature of literary or lay benefices), might not be

the means of retaining in *its* interests, as connected with their own, a certain number of influential men of letters, who should hold those benefices, and a much greater number of aspirants who would look to them in their turn. A yearly grant of 10,000*l.* would endow ten such appointments of 500*l.* each for the elder class, and twenty-five of 200*l.* each for younger men; these latter eligible of course, and preferably, but not necessarily, to be elected to the higher benefices, as those fell vacant, and as they should have approved themselves.

The good proposed by this, as a political measure, is not that of retaining such persons to act as pamphleteers and journalists, but that of preventing them from becoming such, in hostility to the established order of things; and of giving men of letters, as a class, something to look for beyond the precarious gains of literature; thereby inducing in them a desire to support the existing institutions of their country, on the stability of which their own welfare would depend.

Your Lordship's second question, — in what way the encouragement of Government could be most safely and beneficially be given, — is, in the main, answered by what has been said upon the first. I do not enter into any details of the proposed institution, for that would be to think of building up a castle in the air. Nor is it worth

while to examine how far such an institution might be perverted. Abuses there would be, as in the disposal of all preferments, civil, military, or ecclesiastical; but there would be a more obvious check upon them; and where they occurred they would be less injurious in their consequences than they are in the State, the army, and navy, or the Church.

With regard to prizes, methinks they are better left to schools and colleges. Honors are worth something to scientific men, because they are conferred upon such men in other countries; at home there are precedents for them in Newton and Davy, and the physicians and surgeons have them. In my judgment, men of letters are better without them, unless they are rich enough to bequeath to their family a good estate with the bloody hand, and sufficiently men of the world to think such distinctions appropriate. For myself, if we had a Guelphic order, I should choose to remain a Ghibelline.

I have written thus fully and frankly, not dreaming that your proposal is likely to be matured and carried into effect, but in the spirit of good-will, and as addressing one by whom there is no danger that I can be misunderstood. One thing alone I ask from the legislature, and in the name of justice, — that the injurious law of copyright should be repealed, and that the family of



an author should not be deprived of their just and natural rights in his works when his permanent reputation is established. This I ask with the earnestness of a man who is conscious that he has labored for posterity.

*To Mrs. Hodson.*

February 7, 1831.

You may infer how incessantly I was engaged during my abode in town from the 1st of November to the 27th of December, when you are told that I could not possibly find time for writing more than the first six pages of that paper in the *Quarterly Review*, though the number was waiting for it. The remainder was written at Caroline Bowles's, where I shut myself up for eleven days, refusing all invitations, seeing no visitors, and never going out, except when she mounted her Shetland pony, and I walked by her side for an hour or two before dinner. That paper, however, is but the first fruits of my journey. I have a great deal more to say, and am busily employed in saying it.

When I met Joanna Baillie at Rogers's, her sister and my daughter Bertha constituted the whole party; for, as to literary parties, they are my abomination. She is a person whom I admired as soon as I read her first volume of Plays, and liked when I saw her as much as I had ad-

mired her before. I never talk much in company, and never carry abroad with me the cheerful spirits which never forsake me at home. But I was not sad that morning, though perhaps my thoughts might sometimes be more engaged than they ought to have been by the engagements of various kinds which were pressing upon me.

*To the Rev. Neville White.*

March 21, 1831.

You know, my dear Neville, that I have endeavored always to impress upon the public the necessity of educating the people. If that education is either so conducted, or left so imperfect as in many cases to do harm rather than good, the fault is not in the principle, but in the mismanagement of it. The great evil which at present it produces is that of making young persons discontented with the stations which they were intended to fill, and thus producing more claimants for the stations one degree higher than can be provided for in that class. Whenever the education which such persons receive shall become universal, the mischief must necessarily cease. It produced nothing but good in Scotland, because it was universal there.

A more difficult question is, how to render the religious instruction which children receive at school of more effect. And where parents neglect,

as they so very generally do in that station of life, this duty, I do not see how this is to be done by schools and teachers. We want a reformation of manners to effect that without which manners, alas! cannot be reformed. This is evident, that boys and girls are taken from school precisely at that age when they become capable of, in some degree, understanding and feeling what till then they have only learnt by rote. Then it is that the aid of catechists is wanting. In a small parish the clergyman can do much; in large ones I do not wonder that they are deterred from attempting what with their utmost exertions they could not possibly accomplish.

I am perfectly satisfied that no children ought to be left without education; so much as to enable them to read, write, cipher, and understand their moral and religious duties. But about infant schools I do not see my way so clearly; and am not sure whether some harm is not done, both to parent and child, by taking so much off the parent's hands. No doubt it is a choice between evils. Of this I am sure, that half the crimes which disgrace this nation are brought on by *street education*, which goes on in villages as well as in towns. So far as infant schools tend to prevent this, they are greatly beneficial.

*To C. Bowles.*

July 11, 1831.

You ask about the Howitts. The Wordsworths left them full of gratitude for their kindness and full of liking for Mary. But her husband, whom they might otherwise have liked much, though never quite so well, had the reform fever upon him so strongly as to put the cloven-foot of Quakerism offensively forward; not when Mr. Wordsworth was there, for all these people would as soon take a bull by the horns as to show theirs either to Mr. Wordsworth or to me; but to poor Dora, who left the room one day when he had been exulting on the near downfall of the Church, and asserting that every person who was a clergyman of the Establishment must be either a fool or a hypocrite; this to her, when her brother and uncle are clergymen. He apologized to her afterwards, and did not repeat the offence, having been well reproved for it by his wife; but the circumstance shows what these sectarians are when the latent spirit is brought out.

Bertha is come home with a sad debility about her; her ankles swell and disable her for the exercise which she requires. If they had not the happy spirits of youth, these daughters of mine would all be miserable invalids; and of course I cannot but think of the time when that season will be over, and they may too probably have less

cheerful circumstances about them. Their mother is better than she has been for many years, and for that I am most truly thankful.

There is a story of a Spaniard who was fond of cherries, and whenever he ate them put on spectacles to make them look larger and finer. I do this with all my enjoyments of every kind; make little pleasures into great ones, and put on diminishing glasses when I look at inconveniences. Our dangers are to be looked at in their own just magnitude; there is no trifling with them; but this way of mine adds largely to the comforts, and diminishes in the same degree the annoyances, of life. This my children seem to have inherited or learned, and with this true worldly wisdom and that better wisdom which, prepared as they are, time will surely bring with it, of looking to the next state of existence with a constant and cheerful hope, they will so far be well fitted for whatever may befall them when I am gone.

*To Henry Taylor.*

July 15, 1831.

Have you seen the strange book which Anastasius Hope left for publication, and which his representatives, in spite of all dissuasion, have published? His notion of immortality and heaven is, that at the consummation of all things he, and you, and I, and John Murray, and Nebu-

chadnezzar, and Lambert the fat man, and the living skeleton, and Queen Elizabeth, and the Hottentot Venus, and Thurtell, and Probert, and the twelve Apostles, and the noble army of martyrs, and Genghis Khan, and all his armies, and Noah with all his ancestors and all his posterity, — yea, all men and all women and all children that have ever been or ever shall be, saints and sinners alike, — are all to be put together, and made into one great celestial eternal human being. He does not seem to have known how nearly this approaches to Swedenborg's fancy. I do not like the scheme. I don't like the notion of being mixed up with Hume, and Hunt, and Whittle Harvey, and Philpotts, and Lord Althorpe, and the Huns, and the Hottentots, and the Jews, and the Philistines, and the Scotch, and the Irish. God forbid! I hope to be I myself; in an English heaven, with you yourself — you, and some others, without whom heaven would be no heaven to me.

*To the same.*

March 7, 1832.

Most men play the fool in some way or other, and no man takes more delight in playing it than I do, in my own way. I do it well with children, and not at all with women, towards whom, like John Bunyan, "I cannot carry myself pleasantly,"

unless I have a great liking for them. Most men, I suspect, have different characters even among their friends, — appearing in different circles in different lights, or rather showing only parts of themselves. One's character being *teres atque rotundus*, is not to be seen all at once. You must know a man *all round* — in all moods and all weathers — to know him well; but in the common intercourse of the world, men see each other in only one mood — see only their manners in society, and hear nothing lying in any deeper part than the larynx. Many people think they are well acquainted with me who know little more of me than the cut of my jib and the sound of my voice.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

April 1, 1832.

As for the likings or dislikings, Grosvenor, which are formed at first sight, or upon casual acquaintance, no one who has lived long in the world will attach more importance to them than they deserve. Complicated as every human character must be, we like or dislike just that part of it which happens to present itself to our observation; and perhaps the same person, in another point of view, makes a very different impression. It is so with countenances; and it is so even with natural scenery. Upon a second journey I have sometimes looked in vain for the

beauties which delighted me on the first ; and, on the other hand, I have discovered pleasing objects where I had formerly failed to perceive them. I know very well in what very different lights I myself must appear to different people, who see me but once, or whose acquaintance with me is very slight : not a few go away with the notion that they have seen a stiff, cold, reserved, disobliging sort of a person ; and they judge rightly as far as they see, except that no one should be deemed disobliging merely for taking no pains to make himself agreeable where he feels no inclination to do so.

This I think is the greatest disadvantage that notorious authorship brings with it. It places one in an unfair position among strangers : they watch for what you say, and set upon you to draw you out, and whenever that is the case, in I go like a tortoise or hodmandod into my shell.

*To Charles Swain.*

May 1, 1832.

Do not look upon my invitation to you as a matter of politeness, a motive from which I never act further than the common law of society requires.

Respect for you and your talents, and the use you have made of them, was my motive. Your poetry is made of the right materials.



If ever man was born to be a poet, you are; and if Manchester is not proud of you yet, the time will certainly come when it will be so.

Come when you will and stay as long as you can, I shall be sincerely happy to receive you here. I wish you were with us now; the sun shines, the birds are busy, the buds beginning to open. There is a vernal spirit abroad which carries joy to young hearts, and brings the best substitute for it to those whose season for joy is past not to return again.

*To the Rev. J. W. Warter.*

June 20, 1832.

Oxford and Cambridge are good places of residence for men who, having stored their minds well, want well stored libraries which may enable them to pursue their researches and bring forth the fruits of them. But the plant which roots itself there will never attain any vigorous growth. The mind must be a very strong and a very active one, which does not stand still while it is engaged in *tutoring*, and both universities now are little more than manufactories in which men are brought up to a certain point in a certain branch of knowledge; and when they have reached that point, they are kept there.

But, after all, knowledge is not the first thing

needful. Provided we can get contentedly through the world, and (be the ways rough or smooth) to heaven at last, the sum of knowledge that we may collect on the way is more infinitely insignificant than I like to acknowledge in my own heart. Indeed, it is not easy for me always to bear sufficiently in mind that the pursuits in which I find constant interest and increasing enjoyment, must appear of no interest whatever to the greater part, not merely of mankind, but of the educated part even of our own countrymen. I forget this sometimes when I am wishing for others opportunities by which perhaps they would not be disposed to profit.

If I could follow my inclinations, a week would not elapse before the *History of Portugal* would be in the press. But this work can only have that time allotted to it which can be won from works of necessity, and that not yet. I hope my affairs are in such a train that next year it will become my chief object in those *subsecive* hours, for which I can find no English word. Once in the press it would go on steadily; for the subject has been two-and-thirty years in my mind. So long is it since I began not merely to collect materials, but to digest them, and, for at least two thirds of the history, I have only to recompose in the process of transcribing what has long been written. I believe no history has ever yet been

composed that presents such a continuous interest of one kind or another as this would do, if I should live to complete it. The chivalrous portion is of the very highest beauty; much of what succeeds has a deep tragic interest; and then comes the gradual destruction of a noble national character brought on by the cancer of Romish superstition.

*To the Rev. Neville White.*

August 19, 1832.

It rarely happens in these times that the post brings me any matter for rejoicing; but it never at any time brought me a communication which gave me more thorough delight than your letter which arrived this morning. You have now the reward of your deserts, and it is no slight comfort to see that desert has been thus rewarded. All circumstances, too, are as you could have wished them to be. For though your lot has not fallen in a beautiful country, it is near Norwich, and therefore a desirable location for you. Walpole is a name which from childhood I have regarded with good-will, and henceforth I shall regard it with still better.

I shall certainly look in upon you on my next journey to London. When that may be, I know not; but certainly not before the spring, and perhaps not so soon. Engagements will keep me to

the desk, and, happily, inclination would never take me from it.

I shall like dearly to see you in your Rectory; to a certain degree you will once more have to form new habits; but in this instance the change is likely to be salutary.

I dare say that the duties of your parish will be much less fatiguing than those in which you engaged as a volunteer in Norwich; and they will be more agreeable, because, in a little while, as soon as your parishioners know you, you will perceive the fruits of them. Any clergyman who does his duty as you will do it, must soon be loved by his flock, and then no other station in life can be so happy.

I wish James were emancipated from his bondage, and settled as his bishop ought to settle him, where he might enjoy the well-deserved reward of his labors, and some rest from them.

Much against my will, I am going to Lowther Castle on Friday next to remain till Monday. Lord Lonsdale asks me in so kind a manner, saying that he is always unwilling to take me from my employments, that I cannot refuse to go; and his object is to introduce me to Lord Mahon, whom I know only by letter, but whose way of thinking and pursuits make him desire to become acquainted with me. It is gratifying to perceive that there are persons growing up whose minds

have been influenced by my writings, and that here and there the seed which during so many years I have been casting on the waters, has taken root, and is beginning to bring forth fruit after its kind.

*To John May.*

March 1, 1833.

I have gone through the whole evidence concerning the treatment of children in the factories, and nothing so bad was ever brought to light before. The slave-trade is mercy to it. We know how the slave-trade began and imperceptibly increased, nothing in the beginning being committed that shocked the feelings and was contrary to the spirit of the age. Having thus grown up, it went on by succession, and of later years has rather been mitigated than made worse. But this white slavery has risen in our own days, and is carried on in the midst of this civilized and Christian nation. Herein it is that our danger consists. The great body of the manufacturing populace, and also of the agricultural, are *miserably* poor; their condition is worse than it *ought* to be. One after another we are destroying all the outworks by which order and with it property and life are defended; and this brutalized populace is ready to break in upon us. The prelude which you witnessed at Bristol was a

manifestation of the spirit that exists among them. But in the manufacturing districts, where the wages of the adults are at a starvation rate, and their children are literally worked to death,—murdered by inches,—the competition of the masters being the radical cause of these evils, there is a dreadful reality of oppression, a dreadful sense of injustice, of intolerable misery, of intolerable wrongs, more formidable than any causes which have ever moved a people to insurrection. Once more I will cry aloud and spare not. These are not times to be silent. Lord Ashley has taken up this Factory Question with all his heart, under a deep religious sense of duty. I hear from him frequently. If we are to be saved, it will be, I will not say *by* such men, but for the sake of such men as he is,—men who have the fear of God before their eyes and the love of their fellow-creatures in their hearts.

*To the Rev. Neville White.*

April 10, 1833.

Now, my dear Neville, to the other part of your letter, the uses and the danger of the Church Establishment. I will touch upon one of its uses which happened to be noticed in conversation yesterday with Wordsworth, by the way-side. He mentioned of what advantage the Church of England had been to that great body

of Dissenters, among whom the Unitarian heresy has spread; and your county was particularly instanced. A great part of the Presbyterian congregations lapsed with their preachers, as sheep follow the bell-wether; but of those who remained orthodox, the majority found their way into the right fold. They held the doctrines of the Church before in the main, differing from them only in points where our Articles most wisely have left room for difference; and they now found by experience the insufficiency of their own discipline; and the want of such a standard as the Establishment preserves.

Public property the Church indeed is; most truly and most sacredly so; and in a manner the very reverse of that in which the despoilers consider it to be so. It is the only property which is public; which is set apart and consecrated as a public inheritance, in which any one may claim his share who is properly qualified. You have your share of it, I might have had mine. There is no respectable family in England, some of whose members have not, in the course of two or three generations, enjoyed their part in it. And many thousands are at this time qualifying themselves to claim their portion. Upon what principle can any government be justified in robbing them of their rights?

## CHAPTER XV.

Publication of *The Doctor*—Marriage of Edith Southey—Henry Taylor—Mrs. Southey's Loss of Reason—Declines a Baronetage—Letter to Sir R. Peel—An Additional Pension—The Wordsworth Family—The *Life of Cowper*.

[At the beginning of 1834, Edith May, Southey's eldest daughter, married the Rev. J. W. Warter, and left for her Sussex home; about the same time the first two volumes of *The Doctor* were published, anonymously.]

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

January 10, 1834.

The books arrived a few days since; this I believe you have already been told. But I have not told you how much amusement Cuthbert afforded us on this occasion. The whole business of transcribing, receiving, correcting, and returning proof sheets (to say nothing of the original composition), has been so well concealed from him, that whenever he knows the truth it will be difficult for him to conceive how he can possibly have been kept in ignorance. From this ignorance we anticipated much entertainment, and have not been disappointed. When I went down to dinner he told me with great glee that the book which



had come that morning was one of the queerest he had ever seen. He had only looked into it, but he had seen that there was one chapter without a beginning, and another about Aballiboozonorribang (for so he had got the word), which, whether it was something to eat, or whether it was the thing in the title-page, he could not tell; for in one place it was called the sign of the book, and in another you were told to eat beans if you liked but to abstain from Aballiboozo.

To-day he says that there is more sense in the second volume, but he does not like it so well as the first. That there is not much in the book about the Doctor; and, indeed, he does not know what it is about, except that it is about everything else; that it was very proper to put &c. in the title-page; that the author, whoever he is, must be a clever man, and he should not wonder if it proved to be Charles Lamb. You may imagine how heartily we have enjoyed all this.

A letter from Wordsworth tells us that the book has just arrived there, and that one of W.'s nephews (a Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, and a very clever and promising person,) had got hold of it, was laughing while he looked over the contents, and had just declared that the man who wrote the book must be mad.

*To Henry Taylor.*

January 16, 1834.

Edith departed yesterday from the house in which she was born. God grant that she may find her new home as happy as this has been to her, — though the cheerfullest days of this have long been past. Her prospects are fair; and, what is of most consequence, she is entrusted to safe hands.

As my household diminishes, there will be room for more books. These I shall probably continue to collect, as long as I can; living in the past, and conversing with the dead, — and the Doctor.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

July 3, 1834.

The day before yesterday I commanded a cart party to Honister Crag, and walked the whole way myself, twenty-one and a half miles by Edward Hill's pedometer, without difficulty or fatigue. So you see that, notwithstanding a touch of the hay-asthma, I am in good condition, and have a pair of serviceable legs.

Henry Taylor's Tragedies are of the very best kind. I am exceedingly glad that you have taken to one another so well. He is the only one now living, of a generation younger than yours and mine, whom I have taken into my heart of hearts.

I certainly hope that you may be set free from

all official business, with such a pension as your long services and your station entitle you to. For I have no fears of your feeling any difficulty in the disposal of your time, or any other regret for the cessation of your long-accustomed business, than what always belongs to the past, and what in this case may arise from the dissolution of an old establishment, which for the very sake of its antiquity ought to have been preserved. You will get more into the country than you otherwise could have done; and you will come here and take a lease of health and good spirits from the mountains. I shall pass through London with Cuthbert, on our way to the west, in the autumn. Our stay will hardly exceed a week.

Just now I am very busy, finishing a third volume of Naval History. This is my sheet anchor. In the way of sale *The Doctor* has clearly failed; yet it may be worth while to send out another volume, and so from time to time, at long intervals, till the design is completed. This may be worth while, because the notice that each will excite will keep the name alive, and act advantageously when it comes to be included in the posthumous edition of my works. Meantime, the pleasure that I and my household, and a very few others who are behind the curtain, will receive, will be so much gain. It will not be amiss to throw out hints that Henry Taylor may be the

author ; having shown in his plays both the serious and comic disposition and power.

My cousin, Georgiana Hill, is here for the first time, and as happy as you may suppose a girl of eighteen is likely to be on such an occasion. Did I tell you that I have a pony, the best of ponies (given me by Sir T. Acland)? and I have bought a light chair, in which Cuthbert or Bertha drive out their mother. If I could give you a good account of her, all would be well. But her spirits are so wretchedly nervous, and I begin to fear so hopelessly so, that I have need of all mine.

*To the same.*

October 2, 1834.

After what Henry Taylor has imparted to you, you will not be surprised at learning that I have been parted from my wife by something worse than death. Forty years has she been the life of my life ; and I have left her this day in a lunatic asylum.

God who has visited me with this affliction, has given me strength to bear it, and will, I know, support me to the end — whatever that may be.

Our faithful Betty is left with her. All that can be done by the kindest treatment, and the greatest skill, we are sure of at the Retreat. I do not expect more than that she may be brought into a state which will render her perfectly man-

ageable at home. More is certainly possible, but not to be expected, and scarcely to be hoped.

To-morrow I return to my poor children. There is this great comfort, — that the disease is not hereditary, her family having within all memory been entirely free from it.

I have much to be thankful for under this visitation. For the first time in my life I am so far beforehand with the world, that my means are provided for the whole of next year; and that I can meet this additional expenditure, considerable in itself, without any difficulty. As I can do this, it is not worth a thought; but it must have cost me much anxiety had my affairs been in their former state.

*To Henry Taylor.*

York, October 2, 1834.

The call upon me for exertion has been such, that, by God's help, I have hitherto felt no weakness.

That this is a far greater calamity than death would have been, I well know. But I perceive that it can be better borne at first, because there is a possibility of restoration, and, however feeble, a hope. Therefore that collapse is not to be apprehended which always ensues when the effort which the circumstances of a mortal sickness, and death, and burial, call forth in the survivor, is at an end.

Mine is a strong heart. I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life ; but I will say, that the heart which could bear it can bear anything.

It is remarkable that the very last thing I wrote before this affliction burst upon me in its full force was upon Resignation, little foreseeing, God knows, how soon and how severely my own principles were to be put to the proof. The occasion was this : — Mrs. Hughes thought it would gratify me to peruse a letter which she had just received from one of her friends, — a clergyman who had recently suffered some severe domestic affliction. He said that his greatest consolation had been derived from a letter of mine which she had allowed him to transcribe some years ago, and which he verily believed had at that time saved his heart from breaking. The letter must have been written upon my dear Isabel's death.\* I have no recollection of it : but that must have been the subject, because Mrs. Hughes and her husband had both been exceedingly struck with her, and declared, — when such a declaration could without unfitness be made, — that she was the most radiant creature they had ever beheld.

\* See page 347.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

December 18, 1834.

I find it a grievous thing that I must now, for the first time, think about *ways* as well as *means*. For the last eight and thirty years I had nothing to do but provide the means in my own quiet way, and deliver them over to one of the best stewards that ever man was blest with. The ways were her concern, and her prudence and foresight exempted me from all trouble as well as from all care. My daughters cannot yet stand here in their poor mother's place, and I must be more accustomed to my new situation before I introduce them to it. Nothing can possibly exceed the good sense and good feeling which they have manifested under our present affliction; but their attentions to me give me a painful sense of how much importance I am to their happiness. Cuthbert, also, is a great comfort to me.

[In the month of January, 1835, Southey received two letters from Sir Robert Peel, as honorable to the statesman as to the poet. He had, he said, advised the king "to adorn the distinction of baronetage with a name the most eminent in literature, and which has claims to respect and honor which literature alone can never confer." And in the second letter, marked private, he wrote: "Will you tell me, without reserve, whether the

possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be serviceable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many heavy sacrifices which office imposes upon me, in the opportunity of marking my gratitude as a public man for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion.”]

*To Sir Robert Peel.*

February 3, 1835.

No communications have ever surprised me so much as those which I have this day the honor of receiving from you. I may truly say, also, that none have ever gratified me more, though they make me feel how difficult it is to serve any one who is out of the way of fortune. An unreserved statement of my condition will be the fittest and most respectful reply.

I have a pension of 200*l.* conferred upon me through the good offices of my old friend and benefactor, Charles W. Wynn, when Lord Grenville went out of office; and I have the Laureate-ship. The salary of the latter was immediately appropriated, as far as it went, to a life insurance for 3000*l.* This, with an earlier insurance for 1000*l.*, is the whole provision that I have made for my family; and what remains of the pension



after the annual payments are made, is the whole of my certain income. All beyond must be derived from my own industry. Writing for a livelihood, a livelihood is all that I have gained; for, having also something better in view, and therefore never having courted popularity, nor written for the mere sake of gain, it has not been possible for me to lay by anything. Last year, for the first time in my life, I was provided with a year's expenditure beforehand. This exposition might suffice to show how utterly unbecoming and unwise it would be to accept the rank which, so greatly to my honor, you have solicited for me, and which his Majesty would so graciously have conferred. But the tone of your letter encourages me to say more.

My life insurances have increased in value. With these, the produce of my library, my papers, and a posthumous edition of my works, there will be probably 12,000*l.* for my family at my decease. Good fortune, with great exertions on the part of my surviving friends, might possibly extend this to 15,000*l.*, beyond which I do not dream of any further possibility. I had bequeathed the whole to my wife, to be divided ultimately between our four children; and having thus provided for them, no man could have been more contented with his lot, nor more thankful to that Providence on whose especial blessing he knew

that he was constantly, and as it were immediately, dependant for his daily bread.

But the confidence which I used to feel in myself is now failing. I was young, in health and heart, on my last birth-day, when I completed my sixtieth year. Since then I have been shaken at the root. It has pleased God to visit me with the severest of all domestic afflictions, those alone excepted into which guilt enters. My wife, a true helpmate as ever man was blessed with, lost her senses a few months ago. She is now in a lunatic asylum; and broken sleep, and anxious thoughts, from which there is no escape in the night season, have made me feel how more than possible it is that a sudden stroke may deprive me of those faculties, by the exercise of which this poor family has hitherto been supported. Even in the event of my death, their condition would, by our recent calamity, be materially altered for the worse; but if I were rendered helpless, all our available means would procure only a respite from actual distress.

Under these circumstances, your letter, Sir, would in other times have encouraged me to ask for such an increase of pension as might relieve me from anxiety on this score. Now that lay sinecures are in fact abolished, there is no other way by which a man can be served, who has no profession wherein to be promoted, and whom any

official situation would take from the only employment for which the studies and the habits of forty years have qualified him. This way, I am aware, is not now to be thought of, unless it were practicable as part of a plan for the encouragement of literature; but to such a plan perhaps these times might not be unfavorable.

The length of this communication would require an apology, if its substance could have been compressed; but on such an occasion it seemed a duty to say what I have said; nor, indeed, should I deserve the kindness which you have expressed, if I did not explicitly declare how thankful I should be to profit by it.

*To Henry Taylor.*

April 7, 1835.

To-day has brought Sir R. Peel's announcement that he has signed the warrant for an additional pension of 300*l.* This is just what I thought likely, what I think reasonable, and what, if I had been desired to name the sum for myself, I should have fixed on, with this difference only, that I would have had the amount of both pensions without deductions.\*

They give me, however, an income of 375*l.* a

\*The Rev. Cuthbert Southey writes: "This proved to be the case with respect to the latter pension, and he received out of a nominal income of 500*l.*, 444*l.*, to which the Laureateship being added, made in all 534*l.*"

year, subject to no other contingencies than those of the State, — and I am contented and thankful.

*To William Wordsworth.*

May 9, 1835.

Thank you for your new volume which it is needless for me to praise. It will do good now and hereafter; more and more as it shall be more and more widely read; and there is no danger of its ever being laid on the shelf. I am glad to see that you have touched upon our white slavery, and glad that you have annexed such a post-script.

My good daughters, who, among their other virtues, have that of being good correspondents, send full accounts to Rydal of our proceedings. We shall lose hope so gradually, that if we lose it we shall be hardly sensible when it is lost. There is, however, so great an improvement in their poor mother's state from what it was at any time during her abode in the Retreat, that we seem to have fair grounds of hope at present. It is quite certain that in bringing her home I have done what was best for her and for ourselves.

I wish the late Administration had continued long enough in power to have provided as well for William \* as it has done for me. It has placed me, as far as relates to the means of subsistence,

\* Wordsworth's son.

at ease for the remainder of my days. Nor ought any man who devotes himself, as I have done, to literary pursuits, to think himself ill-recompensed with such an income as I shall henceforward receive from the Treasury. My new pension is directed to be paid without deductions.

*To John May.*

August 1, 1835.

Since my last letter we have had a severe shock in the death of Miss Hutchinson, Mrs. Wordsworth's sister, who was one of the dearest friends these poor girls had, and who was indeed to me like a sister. She had been with us in all our greatest afflictions. Her strength had been so much exhausted in nursing Miss Wordsworth, the elder, and with anxiety for Dora, that after a rheumatic fever, from which she seemed to be recovered, she sunk at once, owing to mere weakness; an effusion on the brain was the immediate cause. Miss Wordsworth, whose death has been looked upon as likely any day for the last two years, still lives on. Her mind, at times, fails now. Dora, who is in the most precarious state herself, cannot possibly amend while this anxiety continues, so that at this time Wordsworth's is a more afflicted house than my own. They used to be two of the happiest in the country. But there is a time for all things, and we are supported by God's mercy.

If I could leave home with satisfaction, I should go either to Harrogate or Shap (if Shap, which I hope, would do,) for the sake of the waters. But my poor Edith likes none of us to leave her, and requests us not to do so. This, of course, would induce me to bear with any thing that can be borne without danger. Nor, indeed, should I willingly leave my daughters, who stand in need of all that can be done to cheer them in the performance of their duty, and who are the better, because they exert themselves to keep up their own spirits for my sake.

You will see how unprofitable it would be for me, under these circumstances, to look beyond the present anywhere — except to another world. In the common course of nature, it cannot be long before all the events of this life will be of no further importance to me, than as they shall have prepared me for a better. To look back over the nine-and-thirty years which have elapsed since you and I first met at Lisbon, seems but as yesterday. Wednesday, the 12th, completes my sixty-first year; and the likelihood is, that before a fourth part of the like interval has passed, you and I shall meet — where there will be no more sorrow nor parting.

*To Cuthbert C. Southey.*

December 16, 1835.

Twice I wished for you yesterday; first, at breakfast, because it was a beautiful morning, and my feet itched for a ten miles' walk. But you are in Sussex, Davies is in Shropshire, and I have not even a dog for a companion.

Secondly, you were wished for two hours afterwards, when I had settled to my work, for then came the box of books from Ulverston. You would have enjoyed the unpacking. It is the best batch they ever sent home: thirty-six volumes, besides three for Bertha and five of Kate's.\* I should like, if it were possible, always to communicate my pleasures, and keep my troubles to myself. Here was no one to admire the books with us.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

January 7, 1836.

The best thing I can wish for myself, on the commencement of a new year (among those things which "stand to feasible") is, that it may not pass away without your making a visit to Keswick. Other *hope* for the year I have none, and not much (to confess the truth) of this. Time, however, passes rapidly enough; and good part of it, by help of employment, in a sort of world of my own,

\* It is probable that Southey was in the habit of sending portions of his "ragged regiment" of books to a binder at Ulverston. — ED.

wherein I seem abstracted from everything except what occupies my immediate attention. The most painful seasons are, when I lie down at night, and when I awake in the morning. But my health continues good, and my spirits better than I could possibly have expected, had our present circumstances been foreseen.

It is remarkable that, of all employments at this time, the *Life of Cowper* should be that on which I am engaged. Enough of this.

*To John May.*

January 30, 1836.

I am very glad to hear that you are reading Dr. Thomas Jackson, an author with whom, more almost than any other, one might be contented in a prison. There is hardly anything in his works which I wished away, except one shocking passage about the Jews. For knowledge and sagacity and right-mindedness, I think he has never been surpassed. You will be much pleased, also, with Knox's *Remains*, and his correspondence with Bishop Jebb.

There is no change for the better in our domestic circumstances. All hope is extinguished, while anxiety remains unabated, so sudden are the transitions of this awful malady. I can never be sufficiently thankful that my means of support are no longer precarious, as they were twelve months



ago. The fear of being disabled, which I never felt before, might too probably have brought on the evil which it apprehended, when my life seemed to be of more consequence to my family than at any former time, and my exertions more called for. Thank God, Sir Robert Peel set me at ease on that score. Would to God that you were relieved from your cares in like manner! We have both cause to return thanks for the happiness that we have enjoyed, and for the consolations that are left us. If the last stage of our journey should prove the most uneasy, it will be the shortest. It is just forty years since we met in another country; most probably before a fourth part of that time has elapsed, we shall meet in another state of existence.

We have both great comfort in our children. Perhaps one reason why women bear affliction (as I think they generally do) better than men, is, because they make no attempt to fly from the sense of it, but betake themselves patiently to the duties, however painful, which they are called upon to perform. It is the old emblem of the reed and the oak—they bend, and therefore they are not broken; and then comes peace of mind, which is the fruit of resignation.

Secluded as we now are from society, my daughters find sufficient variety of employment. They transcribe a good deal for me: indeed, what-

ever I want extracted of any length from books — most of my notes. One room is almost fitted up with books of their binding : I call it the *Cottonian* library ; no patchwork quilt was ever more diversified. They have just now attired two hundred volumes in this fashion. Their pleasure, indeed, in seeing the books in order, is not less than my own ; and, indeed, the greater part of them are now in such order, that they are the pride of my eye, as well as the joy of my heart. God bless you, my dear old friend ! May I live to write a great many more books ; and may you and your daughters live, and read, and like them all. No small part of the pleasure which I take in writing arises from thinking how often the work in which I am engaged will make me present, in a certain sense, with friends who are far away.

*To Henry Taylor.*

March 12, 1836.

When I went to Lisbon the second time (in 1800), it was for my health. An illness (the only one I ever had) had weakened me, and I was liable to sudden pulsations of the heart, which seemed to indicate some organic derangement. It was inferred, or rather ascertained, that they arose from nervous excitability, because the moment I apprehended them they returned ; and this conclusion was confirmed by a circumstance

which has led me to this relation. Going out of our sitting-room one morning, I happened to hear the maid draw the bed-curtains, preparatory to making the bed in the chamber opposite. From that time, while I remained in those lodgings, I never went out of the room in the early part of the day without hearing the same sound, distinctly, though it came from within instead of without.

Now let me tell you a more curious circumstance, of which I made a memorandum as soon as I returned. About two months ago I was going to the lake, and reading as I went. It was a bright, frosty day, and my Scotch bonnet (in which I appear like a Gaberlunzie man) afforded no shelter to the eyes, but having been used to wear it, I was not inconvenienced by the light. Just on the rising ground, where the view of the lake opens, I suppose the sun came more directly upon my eyelids, but the page which I was reading appeared to be printed in red letters. It happened to be a page in which one book of a Latin poem ended and another began: the heading of this latter was, of course, in considerably larger types; these changed their color first, and became red as blood; the whole page presently became so, and the opposite page presented a confused intermixture of red and black types when I glanced on it, but, fixing my eyes, the whole

became rubic also, though there was nothing then so vivid as the large letters of the heading. The appearance passed away as my position to the sun was altered.

This phenomenon never occurred to me before, but I observed it particularly, because, if my memory does not deceive me, I have more than once read of the same thing, and always as of something supernatural, in the history of a Romish saint, or a fanatic of some other denomination. According to the mood of mind in which it occurred, it would be taken for a manifestation of grace or of wrath.

*To John May.*

June 13, 1836.

Time passes on so rapidly with me in the regular course of constant occupation, that it seems only a few days since that letter arrived which yours of this morning reminds me is two months old.

There is no change in my poor Edith, nor is there likely to be any. Thank God there is no suffering, not even so much as in a dream (of this I am fully convinced), and her bodily health is better than it had been for very many years.

Only one of my daughters is with me at present. Kate has been prevailed on to go to Rydal, and if it be possible to remove poor Dora Words-

worth to the coast (which is her only chance of recovery), she will go with her. The loss of Miss Hutchinson, which was the greatest we could have sustained out of our own nearest kin, has drawn the bonds of affection closer between dear Dora and my daughters, who were almost equally dear to the dead.

You will not wonder that the *Life of Cowper* was a subject better suited to my own state of mind at this time than almost any other could have been. It was something like relief to have thoughts, from which it is not possible that I could escape, diverted as it were from home. There are passages which I dare say you will have perceived would not have been written unless I had had something more than a theoretical knowledge of this most awful of all maladies.

I shall be very glad to see John Coleridge.

The bishop sent me his kind remembrances from Demerara the other day. You ask if there be any likelihood of seeing me in town? Not at present; nor is it possible for me to say when it may be fitting for me to leave home. My presence, though it may be little comfort to my poor wife, is a very great one to my daughters; my spirits help to keep up theirs, and with what they have to do for me in the way of transcribing, and the arrival of letters and packets which would cease during my absence, they would feel a great

blank were they left to themselves. In her quieter moods, too, my poor Edith shows a feeling towards me, the last, perhaps, which will be utterly extirpated. How often am I reminded of my own lines, and made to feel what a woful thing it is : —

“When the poor flesh, surviving, doth entomb  
The reasonable soul.”

## CHAPTER XVI.

Visits Cottle, Savage Landor, and the Poet Bowles — Old Haunts and Old Friends — The Literary Profession — Charles Lamb — Death of Mrs. Southey — Letter to his Son — Tour in France — Bertha Southey's Marriage — Marries Miss Bowles — Failing Powers and Death.

[A short and enforced journey from home at this time, proved that Mrs. Southey was no longer affected by her husband's absence. He needed a change, and with his son Cuthbert as a companion visited the haunts once so familiar to him in the west of England. Savage Landor was then residing at Clifton, and in his society several pleasant days were spent. For the sake of Cowper it will be seen that he also visited the neighborhood of Birmingham.]

*To Charles Swain.*

Gredington, October 27, 1836.

No compliment has ever been addressed to me which gratified me more than your Dedicatory Sonnet, and one only which gratified me so much (that of Henry Taylor's *Philip van Artevelde*); both for the same reason, because both are in themselves singularly beautiful, and I know that both were written with sincerity.

This letter is written from my first halting-place on a very wide circuit. Cuthbert and I left home on Monday, bound for the Land's End, from whence I shall turn back with him to Sussex, and having deposited him there, proceed to London. There my purpose is to remain a fortnight, after which I shall perform my promise of visiting Neville White whenever I went again to town, and then make the best of my way home. It is an unfavorable season for making such a journey, but my brother, Dr. Southey, advised and urged me to break from home, and not rely too confidently upon a stock of health and spirits on which there were large demands.

Being able to do this (which I hardly expected till a fortunate *subpœna* to Lancaster put it to the proof), I had the additional motive of going to examine the only collections of Cowper's letters which have not been entrusted to me, — those of Mr. Bagot, which I am to peruse with his son, near Birmingham, and those of Joseph Hill, which were bequeathed as an heir-loom, with a good estate, to Jekyll. I go to Mr. Bagot's on Monday next, and shall have access to Mr. Jekyll's MSS. in London. There can be little doubt of my finding in these collections (especially in the latter) materials for my supplementary volume.

There was a third inducement for this journey. I wished to show Cuthbert the scenes of my child-



hood and youth, which no one but myself could show him, and to introduce him to a few old friends, all that are left to me in that part of England. Probably it may be my last journey to those parts. We hope to reach Bristol on Thursday, Nov. 3, and intend to remain a week there.

Direct to me at Mr. Cottle's, Bedminster, Bristol. Cottle published my *Joan of Arc* in 1796, and there are very few who entertain a warmer regard for me than he has done from that time.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

Bedminster, November 10, 1836.

Thursday, we came to Bristol, and took up our quarters here at Bedminster with Cottle. Here I have been to the church which I used to attend with my mother and grandmother more than half a hundred years ago; and I have shown Cuthbert my grandmother's house, — what was once my Garden of Eden. At church I was placed in a seat exactly opposite the spot on which our pew had stood; but the whole interior of the church had been altered. A few monuments only remained as they had been. November 8, Tuesday, we walked with Landor about the finest parts of the neighborhood; but the house which I inhabited for one year at Westbury, and in which I wrote more verses than in any other year of my life, has been pulled down. Yesterday I took the

North Pole \* to Corston, and went into the house in which I had been at school fifty-five years ago.

We go on Saturday to visit Bowles at Bremhill, and shall stay there till Wednesday.

To-day I have a letter from home with accounts not on the whole unfavorable;—but upon which I must not allow myself to dwell. Right glad shall I be, or rather right thankful (for gladness and I have little to do with each other now), to find myself at home again. I am well, thank God, and my spirits seldom fail; but I do not sleep better than at home, and lose that after-dinner nap, which has for some time been my soundest and most refreshing sleep. On the whole, however, I expect to find myself the better for this journey, when I return to remain by the wreck. You will not wonder that I am anxious to be there again, and that I have a satisfaction in being there—miserable as it is—which it is impossible to feel any where else.

*To Katharine Southey.*

Wells, November 16, 1836.

Much as I had heard of Bowles' peculiarities, I should very imperfectly have understood his character if I had not passed some little time under his roof. He has indulged his natural timidity to

\* Cuthbert Southey, so called by Mr. Bedford.

a degree little short of insanity, yet he sees how ridiculous it makes him, and laughs himself at follies which nevertheless he is continually repeating. He is literally afraid of everything. His oddity, his untidyness, his simplicity, his benevolence, his fears, and his good-nature, make him one of the most entertaining and extraordinary characters I ever met with. He is in his seventy-third year, and for that age is certainly a fine old man, in full possession of all his faculties, though so afraid of being deaf, when a slight cold affects his hearing, that he puts a watch to his ear twenty times in the course of the day. Our reception was as hospitable as possible, Mrs. Bowles was as kind as himself, and every thing was done to make us comfortable.

Tell your dear mother that I earnestly wish to be at home again, and shall spend no time on the way that can be spared.

Love to all. So good night: and God bless you!

*To the same.*

Stockleigh Pomeroy, January 1, 1837.

Whichever it be to whom this letter is due (for I keep ill account of such things), I begin with such wishes to both, and to all others at home, and all friends round Skiddaw or elsewhere, as the first day of the year calls forth.

It was some comfort to hear that your dearest

mother listened to my letters, and asked some questions. And it is some comfort to know that my presence is not wanted, while it is in vain to wish that it were wished for. I shall be home by the middle of February; glad to be there, and glad that I have taken a journey which has warmed some old attachments, and been in many respects of use. As for Cuthbert, he declares that it would have been worth while to make the whole journey, for the sake of seeing Mary Colling. Verily, I never saw any person in and about whom every thing was more entirely what you could wish, and what it ought to be. She is the pattern of neatness and propriety, simplicity and good sense. Her old master, Mr. Hughes, is as proud of her as if she was his daughter. They live in a small house, the garden of which extends to the river Tavy, a beautiful stream; and her kitchen is such a kitchen for neatness and comfort, that you would say at once no person who could not be happy there deserved to be happy anywhere else. Strangers (and there are many whom Mrs. Bray's book \* draws to Tavistock and Dartmoor) generally inquire for her, and find means to see her, and she has already a little library of books which have been presented to her by such persons.

\* Mrs. Bray edited *Fables and Other Pieces in Verse*, by Mary Maria Colling, and Southey reviewed the volume in the *Quarterly*.

Mr. Bray's is the only house in which I have eaten upon pewter since I was a child; he has a complete service of it, with his crest engraved upon it, and bright as silver. The house (built for him by the Duck, as the Duke of Bedford is called in Tavistock,) is a very good one, the garden large and pleasantly laid out; it includes some of the ruins, and a door from it opens upon a delightful walk on the Tavy. In spite of the weather we had two pleasant walks, one of about ten miles, the other about six; but of Dartmoor we could see nothing. Our time passed pleasantly, Mary paying us a visit every day; some more Fables in her own handwriting will be among the most interesting autographs that I have to dispose of.

*To Henry Taylor.*

Buckland, January 8, 1837.

If I have learnt to look with indifference upon those whom I meet in casual society, it is because in early life circumstances (and disposition also) made me retire into myself, like a snail into his shell; and in later years, because so many new faces have come to me like shadows, and so departed. Yet I was not slow in my likings when young, nor has time rendered me so; it has only withheld me from making any advances towards intimacy with persons, however likeable, whom it is certain that I can have very few opportunities

of seeing again, and no leisure for conversing with by letter.

It is indeed most desirable to knit our friends in a circle; and one of those hopes which, thank God, have in me the strength of certainties, is that this will be done in the next stage of our existence, when all the golden links of the chain will be refined and rendered lasting. I have been travelling for the last ten weeks through places where recollections met me at every stage; and this certainty alone could render such recollections endurable. My faith in that future which cannot be far off never fails.

*To Katharine Southey.*

Tarring, February 8, 1837.

Yesterday I and Karl had a walk of some fourteen or fifteen miles, to the Roman encampments of Sisbury and Chankbury. The latter commands a noble prospect over the Weald. We had also a remarkable view of Worthing, which appeared like a ruined city (Balbec or Palmyra) in the distance, on the edge of what we knew to be the sea, but what might as well have been a desert; for it was so variegated with streaks of sunshine and of shade, that no one ignorant of the place could have determined whether it were sea or sky that lay before us.

I shall come home hungry for work, for sleeping

after dinner, and for walking with a book in my hand. The first thing I have to do is to write a preface for Cowper's *Homer*; little more than an evening's employment. Then I set about reviewing Mrs. Bray's book, and carefully reading through *Joan of Arc*, that it may be sent immediately to the press; for the first volume of my *Poetical Works* is to appear on July 11 (a month after *Cowper* is finished), and we wish to have two or three more through the press, so as to prevent all danger of delay in the publication. Then there are two volumes of *Cowperiana* to prepare (for which I am to have, as is fitting, separate pay), and two volumes more of *Admirals*, besides other things: enough to do, but not too much; for I see my way through all, and was never in better trim for work.

And now, God bless you all! Rejoice, Baron Chinchilla, for I am coming again to ask of you whether you have everything that a cat's heart can desire! Rejoice, Tommy Cockbairn, for I must have a new black coat! and I have chosen that it should be the work of thy hands, not of a London tailor. Rejoice, Echo, for the voice which thou lovest will soon awaken thee again in thy mountains! Rejoice, Ben Wilson, for sample clogs are to be sent into the west country, for the good of the Devonshire men!

[After reaching home, Southey wrote the following characteristic letter : —]

*To a Lady.*

March, 1837.

It is not my advice that you have asked as to the direction of your talents, but my opinion of them; and yet the opinion may be worth little, and the advice much. You evidently possess, and in no inconsiderable degree, what Wordsworth calls "the faculty of verse." I am not depreciating it when I say that in these times it is not rare. Many volumes of poems are now published every year without attracting public attention, any one of which, if it had appeared half a century ago, would have obtained a high reputation for its author. Whoever, therefore, is ambitious of distinction in this way, ought to be prepared for disappointment.

But it is not with a view to distinction that you should cultivate this talent, if you consult your own happiness. I, who have made literature my profession, and devoted my life to it, and have never for a moment repented of the deliberate choice, think myself nevertheless bound in duty to caution every young man who applies as an aspirant to me for encouragement and advice, against taking so perilous a course. You will say that a woman has no need of such a caution :



there can be no peril in it for her. In a certain sense this is true ; but there is a danger of which I would, with all kindness and all earnestness, warn you. The day-dreams in which you habitually indulge are likely to induce a distempered state of mind ; and in proportion as all the ordinary uses of the world seem to you flat and unprofitable, you will be unfitted for them without becoming fitted for anything else. Literature cannot be the business of a woman's life, and it ought not to be. The more she is engaged in her proper duties, the less leisure will she have for it even as an accomplishment and a recreation. To those duties you have not yet been called, and when you are you will be less eager for celebrity. You will not seek in imagination for excitement, of which the vicissitudes of this life, and the anxieties from which you must not hope to be exempted, be your state what it may, will bring with them but too much.

But do not suppose that I disparage the gift which you possess ; nor that I would discourage you from exercising it. I only exhort you so to think of it, and so to use it, as to render it conducive to your own permanent good. Write poetry for its own sake ; not in a spirit of emulation, and not with a view to celebrity : the less you aim at that, the more likely you will be to deserve, and finally to obtain it. So written it

is wholesome both for the heart and soul; it may be made the surest means, next to religion, of soothing the mind, and elevating it. You may embody in it your best thoughts and your wisest feelings, and in so doing discipline and strengthen them.

*To Henry Taylor.*

March 30, 1837.

I too, as you may suppose, speculate (and sometimes more largely than is wise) upon Cuthbert's past, present, and future. The past is past, and could not, I believe, all things considered, have been changed for the better; for the good and evil of public education and of private, as compared with each other, are so nearly balanced, that it would be difficult to say on which side the advantages preponderate. But life is uncertain, and it was a great object with me, feeling that uncertainty, to make his boyhood happy. Moreover, the expense of a public school would have cost me no little anxiety, and must have put me to my shifts.

For the future he knows my predilection, and knows also that he is just as free to choose his own profession as if I had none. I indulge in no dreams respecting my life or his, — or into which their prolongation enters. But if he lives I think he would be happier in a country parsonage than at the bar, or as a physician, or in a public office.

He is free to choose. I may live to see his choice, but not to know the result of it.

*To Edward Moxon.*

July 19, 1837.

I received Lamb's *Letters* yesterday evening, and not very wisely looked through both volumes before I went to bed; for, as you may suppose, they kept possession of me during the night. Of late, I have seen much of myself in a way that thus painfully brings back the past; Sir Walter's *Memoirs* first, then Joseph Cottle's *Recollections* \* of so many things which had better have been forgotten; and now these *Memorials* of poor Charles Lamb. What with these, and the preparation of my own poems for an edition which I have set about in the same mood of mind as if it were designed for posthumous publication, my thoughts and feelings have been drawn to the years that are past far more than is agreeable or wholesome.

I wish that I had looked out for Mr. Talfourd the letter which Gifford wrote in reply to one in which I remonstrated with him upon his designating Lamb as a poor maniac. The words were used in complete ignorance of their peculiar bearings, and I believe nothing in the course of Gifford's life

\* Cottle's volume is entitled *Reminiscences of S. T. Coleridge and Robert Southey.*

ever occasioned him so much self-reproach. He was a man with whom I had no literary sympathies; perhaps there was nothing upon which we agreed, except great political questions; but I liked him the better ever after for his conduct on this occasion. He had a heart full of kindness for all living creatures except authors; them he regarded as a fishmonger regards eels, or as Isaac Walton did slugs, frogs, and worms.

Mr. Talfourd has performed his task, as well as it could be done, under all circumstances. The book must be purely delightful to every one, the very few excepted to whom it must needs recall melancholy recollections.

*To Caroline Bowles.*

July 23, 1837.

That you should like Cottle's book, dear Caroline, is as impossible as it would be for you to dislike Cottle himself, if you knew him as I know him; but unless you knew him thus thoroughly you could not believe that such simple-heartedness and such inordinate vanity were to be found in the same person. One thing he has made me fully sensible of, and that is, how liable the most cautious biographer is to be misled by what should seem to be the most trustworthy documents. Such a confusion of times and circumstances as he has made in his *Recollections*, I never met with in any

other book, and for this reason, no doubt, that my own knowledge could never, in any other instance, enable me to detect it.

Wordsworth and I have always dreaded the indiscretion of Coleridge's admirers, and the exposure of his character which was certain to ensue. Cottle has withheld a great deal, and he has struck out more at my desire; and yet the impression which his book leaves is just what you describe upon all those who feel that intellectual strength affords no excuse for the disregard of moral obligation.

Charles Lamb's letters have just reached me. If the whole story could have been told, this would have been one of the most painfully interesting books that ever came from the press. When I saw Talfourd in January last, he seemed fully aware how much better it would have been to have delayed the publication for some years. But in this age, when a person of any notoriety dies, they lose as little time in making a book of him as they used to do in making a mummy. To be sure, there are some reputations that will not *keep*, and must therefore be brought to market while they are fresh. But poor Lamb's is not of that kind. His memory will retain its fragrance as long as the best spice that ever was expended upon one of the Pharoahs.

*To Joseph Cottle.\**

November 16, 1837.

It pleased God to release my poor dear Edith this morning from a pitiable state of existence, though we have always had the consolation of thinking it was more painful to witness than to endure. She had long been wasting away, and for the last month rapidly. For ten days she was unable to leave her bed. There seemed to be no suffering till excess of weakness became pain, and at no time any distress of mind; for, being sensible where she was and with whom, and of the dutiful affection with which she was attended, she was sensible of nothing more.

My poor daughters have been mercifully supported through their long trial. Now that the necessity for exertion is over, they feel that prostration which in such cases always ensues. But they have discharged their duties to the utmost, and they will have their reward. It is a blessed deliverance!—the change from life to death, and from death to life! inexpressibly so for her.

*To Grosvenor Bedford.*

November 24, 1837.

This event could not have been regarded otherwise than as a deliverance at any time since there

\* This is endorsed, "The last letter which Joseph Cottle received from his old friend Robert Southey."

ceased to be a hope of mental restoration; and for several weeks it was devoutly to be desired. Yet it has left a sense of bereavement which I had not expected to feel, lost as she had been to me for the last three years, and worse than lost. During more than two-thirds of my life she had been the chief object of my thoughts, and I of hers. No man ever had a truer helpmate! no children a more careful mother. No family was ever more wisely ordered, no house-keeping ever conducted with greater prudence, or greater comfort. Every thing was left to her management, and managed so quietly and so well, that except in times of sickness and sorrow, I had literally no cares.

I always looked upon it as conducing much to our happiness, that we were of the same age, for in proportion to any perceptible disparity on that point, the marriage union is less complete. And so completely was she part of myself, that the separation makes me feel like a different creature. While she was herself I had no sense of growing old, or at most only such as the mere lapse of time brought with it; there was no weight of years upon me, my heart continued young, and my spirits retained their youthful buoyancy. Now the difference of five and thirty years between me and Bertha continually makes me conscious of being an old man. There is no one to partake with me the recollections of the best and happiest

portion of my life; and, for that reason, were there no other, such recollections must henceforth be purely painful, except when I connect them with the prospect of futurity.

You will not suppose that I encourage this mood of mind. But it is well sometimes to look sorrow in the face; and always well to understand one's own condition.

*To Henry Taylor.*

December 14, 1837.

It cannot often have happened that any one should have a lost wife brought to his mind in the way that I am continually reminded of my poor Edith. Before any of my children were old enough to make extracts for me, it was one of her pleasures to assist me in that way. Many hundred notes in her writing (after so many have been made use of) are arranged among the materials to which every day of my life I have occasion to refer. And thus she will continue to be my help-mate as long as I live and retain my senses. But all these notes bring with them the vivid recollection of the when and the where and the why they were made; and whether the sight of her handwriting will ever be regarded without emotion, is more than I can promise myself.



*To Cuthbert C. Southey.*

February 7, 1838.

It is right that you should clearly understand what you have to reckon on for your ways and means. Two hundred a year will be a liberal allowance, probably above the average at Queen's, which has not the disadvantage of being an expensive college. Whether I live or die, this is provided for you. If I live and do well, my current occupations will supply it. In any other event, there is Dr. Bell's Legacy in the French Funds, even if the Cowperage should not be forthcoming.

It is an uncomfortable thing to be straitened in your situation; but for most undergraduates it is far more injurious to have too much. If you can save from your income I shall be glad; and I have confidence enough in you to believe that you would have much more satisfaction in saving from it, than you could derive from any needless expenditure. I do not mean that you should receive less from me, if you find that you can do with less; but that you should lay by the surplus for your own use. Next to moral and religious habits, habits of frugality are the most important; they belong, indeed, to our duties. In this virtue your dear mother never was surpassed. Had it not been for her admirable management, this house could not have been kept up, nor this family brought up as they were. God

never blessed any man with a truer helpmate than she was to me in this and in every other respect, till she ceased to be herself.

I dwell upon this, not as supposing you need any exhortation upon the subject, for I have the most perfect confidence in you; no father ever had less apprehension for a son in sending him to the University. But frugality is a virtue which will contribute continually and most essentially to your comfort; without it, it is impossible that you should do well, and you know not how much nor how soon it may be needed. It is far from my intention, if I should live till you take your degree, to hurry you into the world, and bid you shift for yourself as soon as you can. On the contrary, there is nothing on which I could look forward with so much hope as to directing your studies after you have finished your collegiate course, and training you to build upon my foundations. That object is one which it would be worth wishing to live for. But when you take your degree, I, if I should then be living, shall be hard upon three score and ten. My whole income dies with me. In its stead there would be (at this time) about 8000*l.* immediately from the Insurance, and this is all there will be (except 200*l.* or 300*l.* for current expenses) till my papers and copyrights can be made available. At first, therefore, great frugality will be required, though

eventually there may be a fair provision for all. I make no estimate of my library, because if it please God that you should make use of the books in pursuing my course, they would be of more value to you than any sum that could be raised by dispersing them.

It is fitting that you should bear all this in mind; but not for discouragement. Your prospects, God be thanked, are better than if you were heir to a large estate, — far better for your moral and intellectual nature, your real welfare, your happiness here and hereafter.

*To Henry Taylor.*

June 10, 1838.

Whether Hope and I shall ever become intimate again in this world, except on the pilgrimage to the next, is very doubtful; nor ought it to be of much importance to a man in his sixty-fourth year. I have had a large portion of happiness, and of the highest kind: five-and-thirty years of such happiness few men are blest with. I have drunk, too, of the very gall of bitterness; yet not more than was wholesome: the cup has been often administered, no doubt because it was needed. The moral discipline through which I have passed has been more complete than the intellectual. Both began early; and, all things considered, I do not think any circumstances could have been

more beneficial to me than those in which I have been placed. If not hopeful, therefore, I am more than contented, and disposed to welcome and entertain any good that may yet be in store for me, without any danger of being disappointed if there should be none.

[In the course of this summer, Southey endeavored to recruit his health and spirits by a tour in France. A party of six was formed, including the familiar names of Kenyon and Crabb Robinson. Mr. Cuthbert Southey accompanied his father and "observed for the first time an indecision in his manner and an unsteadiness in his step which was wholly unusual with him."]

*To John Rickman.*

Buckland, Lyminster, October, 1838.

I heard good accounts of you on my journey, and having since seen that you were present at the prorogation, venture to infer that you are no longer under the oculist's care.

Nothing could be more fortunate than my expedition was in everything. The weather was as fine as it could be. During six weeks there was not one wet day; what rain fell was generally by night, and never more than sufficed for laying the dust and cooling the air. We got to Carnac. Chantrey had desired me to look for some small

red stones, which Buckland, or some of his disciples, had been much puzzled about, because they are not pebbles of the soil, and have all evidently been rubbed down to different angles. Just such stones so rubbed are used by Chantrey's own people in polishing the finer parts of their statuary: and he fancied this was proof that the people who erected the stones at Carnac must have used them for some similar purpose. I came to the conclusion that the *Celts*, which are so hard and so highly polished, were brought to that high polish by these instruments.

The Bretons are the most miserable people I have ever seen, except those inhabitants of the Alps who suffer with goitres, and among whom the Cretins are found. They look, indeed, as if they lived in an unhealthy country, and as if they were only half fed.

I derived all the benefit that I hoped for from my journey, and am in good condition in all respects.

*To Mrs. Hodson.*

February 18, 1839.

My movements last year did not extend beyond Normandy and Bretagne, and when I turned my face towards England, it was in a steam-packet from Havre to Southampton, by good fortune just before that stormy weather set in, which, with few intervals and those but short, has con-

tinued ever since. Normandy pleased me as much as I had expected, and my expectations were pitched high. We were six in company, and no journey could have been more prosperous in all respects. The weather never prevented us from seeing anything that we wished, and we met with no mishap of any kind.

Cuthbert and I parted when we left the steam-packet. He made the best of his way to Oxford; I remained some weeks in Hampshire, and on returning to Keswick found my youngest daughter suffering under a serious attack of the influenza; an insidious disease, from which, though we were assured that she was well recovered, she has not yet regained strength. You may possibly have heard from the newspapers that I have resolved upon a second marriage. I need not say that such a marriage must be either the wisest or the weakest action of a man's life. But I may say that in the important points of age, long and intimate acquaintance, and conformity of opinions, principles, and likings, no persons could be better suited to each other. The newspapers, indeed, have stated that Miss Bowles is thirty years younger than me, which, if it were true, would prove me to be something worse than an old fool.

*To Walter Savage Landor.*

Buckland, March 31, 1839.

The portrait of Savonarola is safely lodged at Keswick; I should have thanked you for it sooner, I had known whither to direct to you. I have seldom seen a finer picture or a finer face; the countenance seems to bespeak credit for one whose character may perhaps be still considered doubtful.

My daughter Bertha's marriage to her cousin, Herbert Hill, is especially fortunate in this respect, at for a few years it will remove her no farther from Keswick than Rydal. Very different has been her elder sister's lot; for being, to all likelihood, fixed upon the coast of Sussex (and the very worst part of it), she has been lost to us ever since. I have now only one daughter left, and my son divides the year between college and home. Oxford has done him no harm; indeed, I never apprehended any. Reduced in number as my family has been within the last few years, my spirits would hardly recover their habitual and faithful cheerfulness, if I had not prevailed upon Miss Bowles to share my lot for the remainder of our lives. There is just such a disparity of age as fitting; we have been well acquainted with each other more than twenty years, and a more perfect conformity of disposition could not exist; so that, resolving upon what must be either the weakest

or wisest act of a sexagenarian's life, I am well assured that, according to human foresight, I have judged well and acted wisely, both for myself and my remaining daughter.

[The marriage with Miss Bowles took place on the 5th of June, and in August Southey returned with her to Keswick. Knowing what we now know, this may appear to have been a foolish step.\* On the other hand Southey and Caroline Bowles had for years been true friends. She was lonely, and so was he, for only one daughter remained to cheer him in the once happy Keswick home. The sympathy between the two poets was one of heart as well as intellect, and it was surely no forgetfulness of the wife of his youth—as true a wife as ever man was blessed with—that led him in old age to form this new connection. He did not know, neither did she, that the gallant vessel so long battered with the storms of life was about to become a wreck.

The failure in Southey's case was gradual, but his son states that for more than a year before his death he passed his time as in a dream,

\* Professor Dowden has kindly pointed out to me that, since printing the volume of Southey's correspondence with Miss Bowles, he has ascertained from a letter of hers "that she was wholly unaware of Southey's failing power of mind when she married him."—ED.



with little if any knowledge of what went on around him. "One circumstance," he adds, "connected with the latter years of his life, deserves to be noticed as very singular. His hair, which previously was almost snowy white, grew perceptibly darker, and, I think, if anything, increased in thickness and a disposition to curl."

He died on the 21st of March, 1843, and was buried, as every visitor to Keswick knows, in the churchyard of Crossthwaite. It was a stormy morning, but the weather did not prevent Wordsworth from crossing the hills to be present at the funeral of his old friend.]



## INDEX.

- Amadis, 169.  
Ashley, Lord, 392.  
Baillie, Joanna, 379.  
Barry, James, 365, 366, 367.  
Bedford, Grosvenor, 85, 87,  
89.  
Bedminster, 40, 43, 46.  
Berkeley, Bishop, 369.  
Bilderdijk, Mr., 328-333.  
Books, 139, 154, 161, 162,  
179, 203, 359, 360, 396,  
409, 412.  
Bowles, Caroline, 372, 379,  
442.  
Bowles, Rev. W. C., 420, 421.  
"Brazil, History of," 260.  
Bristol, 114, 135.  
Byron, Lord, 259.  
Chatterton, 111, 185.  
Chaucer, 233.  
Church Establishment, 392,  
393.  
Cid, Chronicle of the, 213, 215.  
Coleridge Hartley, 172, 173,  
174.  
Coleridge, S. T., 91, 94, 95,  
112, 130, 140, 144, 152, 157,  
159, 161, 162, 164, 181, 248,  
336.  
Colling, Mary, 422.  
Cottle, Joseph, 112, 356, 419,  
429, 430.  
Cowper, William, 218, 219,  
415.  
Crabbe, George, 307, 308.  
Critics, 162.  
"Doctor, The," 394, 395,  
397.  
Dusautoy, James, 246.  
Edinburgh Review, 199, 200,  
201.  
Education, National, 353,  
380, 381.  
Factories, evils of, 391, 392.  
Fielding, Henry, 124, 125.  
Flower, Thomas, 39.  
Gifford, William, 216, 429.  
Hayley, William, 218.  
Hazlitt, William, 151.  
Hill, Rev. Herbert, 85, 95.  
Hope, Thomas, 383, 384.  
Howitt, William, 382.  
Jackson, Dr. Thomas, 348,  
361, 410.  
Jeffrey, Lord, 180, 200, 201.  
Joan of Arc, 141, 202, 425.

- Kehama, *The Curse of*, 131, 205, 212, 219.  
 Keswick, 136, 228.  
 Lamb, Charles, 429, 431.  
 Landor, 115, 204, 233, 234, 417.  
 Lightfoot, Rev. Nicholas, 189, 275, 316.  
 Lisbon, 96, 118, 123, 132.  
 Lovell, 91, 100.  
 Madoc, 108, 109, 116, 148, 150, 151, 175, 176, 177, 210, 230.  
 May, John, 111.  
 Milman, Dean, 301.  
 Milton, John, 233, 259, 300, 368.  
 Montagu, Basil, 116.  
 Nelson, Lord, 178, 230, 243.  
 Oxford, 86, 88, 90, 91, 239, 278, 310.  
 Pantisocracy, 91, 92, 95.  
 Peel, Sir Robert, 401, 405.  
 "Portugal, History of," 261, 322, 388.  
 Quakerism, 197, 198.  
 Quarterly Review, 216, 221, 223, 230, 317, 323.  
 Rickman, John, 133, 220.  
 "Roderick," 256, 259, 313, 321.  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 143, 154, 179, 250, 265, 302.  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 238.  
 South, Dr. Robert, 349, 361.  
 Southey, Edith May, *Marriage of*, 394.  
 Southey, Herbert, death of, 268, 272, 273, 274, 276.  
 Southey, Isabel, death of, 343, 353.  
 Southey, Mrs., 398, 399, 400, 414, 432, 433, 434.  
 Southey, Robert, *Autobiography*, 33-84; *Westminster School*, 85, 277; *Oxford*, 86; *Pantisocracy*, 91; *marries*, 96; *visits Portugal*, 97; *lives at Bristol*, 100; *law student*, 107; *resides in Hampshire*, 109; *second visit to Portugal*, 118; *England again*, 128; *private secretaryship*, 133; *resigns it*, 135; *loss of a child*, 146; *life in Keswick*, 155, 168, 170; *learns Dutch*, 170; *visits Scott*, 177-179; *Edinburgh society*, 180; *literary projects*, 182; *financial prospects*, 210, 227; *loss of daughters*, 225, 343; *accepts the laureateship*, 250; *tour in Belgium*, 264; *death of his son Herbert*, 268; *offered share in "The Times"*, 287; *declines appointment in Edinburgh*,

- Southey, Robert—*continued*.  
 292; receives degree of D.C.L., 310; visits to Holland, 327, 341; visits Caroline Bowles, 372; Naval History, 397; his wife's illness, 398; offered a baronetage, 401; pension, 405; death of Mrs. Southey, 432; tour in France, 438; second marriage, 442; death, 443.
- Spenser, Edmund, 62, 63, 233.
- Style, 336, 337.
- Taylor, Sir Henry, 341, 396.
- "Thalaba," 115, 121, 125, 169, 325.
- "Times, The," 287.
- Tyler, Miss, 34, 35, 36, 37, 40, 47, 51, 71, 76, 78, 80, 93.
- Wesley, Life of, 287, 290.
- Westminster School, 80-84, 295, 296, 297.
- White, Henry Kirke, 185, 186, 187, 191, 192.
- Wilberforce, William, 293, 294.
- Wollstonecraft, Mary, 110.
- Wordsworth, William, 136, 163, 164, 175, 244, 257, 258, 259, 281, 300, 306, 324, 368, 407, 443.
- Wynn, C. W. W., 85.











