

# ТОМАС ДЕ КВИНСИ

THE POSTHUMOUS  
WORKS OF THOMAS DE  
QUINCEY, VOL. 2

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## Содержание

INTRODUCTION	5
I. CONVERSATION AND S. T. COLERIDGE	8
EDITOR'S NOTE TO THIS ESSAY	28
II. MR. FINLAY'S HISTORY OF GREECE	30
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	33

# Thomas De Quincey

## The Posthumous Works of Thomas De Quincey, Vol. 2

### INTRODUCTION

All that needs to be said in the way of introduction to this volume will best take the form of notes on the articles which it contains.

I. '*Conversation and S. T. Coleridge.*' This article, which was found in a tolerably complete condition, may be regarded as an attempt to deal with the subject in a more critical and searching, and at the same time more sympathetic and inclusive spirit, than is apparent in any former essay. It keeps clear entirely of the field of personal reminiscence; and if it glances at matters on which dissent must be entered to the views of Coleridge, it is still unvaryingly friendly and reverent towards the subject. It is evidently of a later date than either the 'Reminiscences of Coleridge' in the 'Recollections of the Lakes' series, or the article on 'Coleridge and Opium-Eating,' and may be accepted as De Quincey's supplementary and final deliverance on Coleridge. The beautiful apostrophe to the name of Coleridge, which we have given as a kind of motto to the essay, was found attached to one of the sheets; and, in spite of much mutilation and mixing of the pages with those of other articles, as we originally found them, it was for the most part so clearly written and carefully punctuated, that there can be no doubt, when put together, we had it before us very much as De Quincey meant to publish it had he found a fitting chance to do so. For such an article as this neither *Tait* nor *Hogg's Instructor* afforded exactly the proper medium, but rather some quarterly review, or magazine such as *Blackwood*. We have given, in an appended note to this essay, some corroboration from the poems of Coleridge of the truth of De Quincey's words about the fatal effect on a nature like that of Coleridge of the early and very sudden death of his father, his separation from his mother, and his transference to Christ's Hospital, London.

II. *Mr. Finlay's 'History of Greece.'* This essay is totally different, alike in the advances De Quincey makes to the subject, the points taken up, and the general method of treatment, from the essay on Mr. Finlay's volumes which appears in the Collected Works. It would seem as though De Quincey, in such a topic as this, found it utterly impossible to exhaust the points that had suggested themselves to him on a careful reading of such a work, in the limits of one article; and that, in this case, as in some others, he elaborated a second article, probably with a view to finding a place for it in a different magazine or review. In this, however, he either did not succeed, or, on his own principle of the opium-eater never really finishing anything, retreated from the practical work of pushing his wares with editors even after he had finished them. At all events, we can find no trace of this article, or any part of it, having ever been published. The Eastern Roman Empire was a subject on which he might have written, not merely a couple of review articles, but a volume, as we are sure anyone competent to judge will, on carefully reading these articles, at once admit. This essay, too, was found in a very complete condition, when the various pages had been brought together and arranged. This is true of all save the last few pages, which existed more in the form of notes, yet are perfectly clear and intelligible; the leading thoughts being distinctly put, though not followed out in any detail, or with the illustration which he could so easily have given them.

III. '*The Assassination of Cæsar.*' This was clearly meant to be inserted at the close of the first section of 'The Cæsars,' but was at the last moment overlooked, though without it the text there, as it stands in the Collected Works, is, for De Quincey, perhaps too hurried and business-like.

IV. The little article on '*Cicero*' is evidently meant as a supplementary note to the article on that eminent man, as it appears in the Collected Works. Why De Quincey, when preparing these volumes for the press, did not work it into his text is puzzling, as it develops happily some points which he has there dwelt on, and presents in a very effective and compact style the mingled feelings with which the great Proconsul quitted his office in Cilicia, and his feelings on arriving at Rome.

V. *Memorial Chronology*.—This is a continuation of that already published under the same title in the Collected Works. In a note from the publishers, preceding the portion already given in the sixteenth volume of the original edition, and the fourteenth of Professor Masson's edition, it is said: 'This article was written about twenty years ago [1850], and is printed here for the first time from the author's *MS*. It was his intention to have continued the subject, but this was never done.' From the essay we now present it will be seen that this last statement is only in a modified sense true—the more that the portion published in the Messrs. Black's editions is, on the whole, merely introductory, and De Quincey's peculiar *technica memoria* is not there even indicated, which it is, with some degree of clearness, in the following pages, and these may be regarded as presenting at least the leading outlines of what the whole series would have been.

De Quincey's method, after having fixed a definite accepted point of departure, was to link the memory of events to a period made signal by identity of figures. Thus, he finds the fall of Assyria, the first of the Olympiads, and the building of Rome to date from about the year 777 b.c. That is his starting-point in definite chronology. Then he takes up the period from 777 to 555; from 555 to 333, and so on.

De Quincey was writing professedly for ladies only, and not for scholars; and that his acknowledged leading obstacle was the semi-mythical wilderness of all early oriental history is insisted on with emphasis. The way in which he triumphs over this obstacle is certainly characteristic and ingenious. Though the latter part is fragmentary, it is suggestive; and from the whole a fair conception may be formed of what the finished work would have been had De Quincey been able to complete it, and of the eloquence with which he would have relieved the mere succession of dates and figures.

It is clear that in the original form, though the papers were written for ladies, the phantasy of a definite 'Charlotte' as fair correspondent had not suggested itself to him; and that he had recourse to this only in the final rewriting, and would have applied it to the whole had he been spared to pursue his plan of recast and revision for the Collected Works, as it was his intention to have done. Mrs. Baird Smith remembers very clearly her father's many conversations on this subject and his leading ideas—it was, in fact, a pet scheme of his; and it is therefore the more to be regretted that his final revision only embraced a small portion of the matter which he had already written.

It only needs to be added that, at the time De Quincey wrote, exploration in Assyria and Egypt, not to speak of discovery in Akkad, had made but little way compared with what has now been accomplished, else certain passages in this essay would no doubt have been somewhat modified.

VI. The article entitled '*Chrysomania; or the Gold Frenzy at its Present Stage*', was evidently written after the two articles which appeared in *Hogg's Instructor*. Not improbably it was felt that the readers of *Hogg's Instructor* had already had enough on the Gold Craze, and this it was deemed better not to publish; but it has an interest as supplementing much that De Quincey had said in these papers, and is a happy illustration of his style in dealing with such subjects. Evidently the editor of *Hogg's Instructor* was hardly so attracted by these papers as by others of De Quincey's; for we find that he had excised some of the notes.

VII. '*The Defence of the English Peerage*' is printed because, although it does not pretend to much detail or research, it shows anew De Quincey's keen interest in the events of English history, and his vivid appreciation of the peerage as a means of quickening and reviving in the minds of the people the memorable events with which the earlier bearers of these ancient titles had been connected.

VIII. The '*Anti-Papal Movement*' may be taken to attest once more De Quincey's keen interest in all the topics of the day, political, social, and ecclesiastical.

IX. The section on literature more properly will be interesting to many as exhibiting some new points of contact with Wordsworth and Southey.

X. The articles on the '*Dispersion of the Jews,*' and on '*Christianity as the result of a Pre-established Harmony,*' will, we think, be found interesting by theologians as well as by readers generally, as attesting not only the keen interest of De Quincey in these and allied subjects, but also his penetration and keen grasp, and his faculty of felicitous illustration, by which ever and anon he lights up the driest subjects.

## I. CONVERSATION AND S. T. COLERIDGE

Oh name of Coleridge, that hast mixed so much with the trepidations of our own agitated life, mixed with the beatings of our love, our gratitude, our trembling hope; name destined to move so much of reverential sympathy and so much of ennobling strife in the generations yet to come, of our England at home, of our other Englands on the St. Lawrence, on the Mississippi, on the Indus and Ganges, and on the pastoral solitudes of Austral climes!

What are the great leading vices of conversation as generally managed?—vices that are banished from the best society by the legislation of manners, not by any intellectual legislation, but in other forms of society, and exactly as it approaches to the character of vulgarism, disturbing all approaches to elegance in conversation, and disorganizing it as a thing capable of unity or of progress? These vices are, first, disputation; secondly, garrulity; thirdly, the spirit of interruption.

I. I lay it down as a rule, but still reserving their peculiar rights and exceptions to young Scotchmen for whom daily disputing is a sort of daily bread, that the man who disputes is a monster, and that he ought to be expelled from civilized society. Or could not a compromise be effected for disputatious people, by allowing a private disputing room in all hotels, as they have private rooms for smoking? I have heard of two Englishmen, gentlemanly persons, but having a constitutional *furor* for boxing, who quieted their fighting instincts in this way. It was not glory which they desired, but mutual punishment, given and taken with a hearty goodwill. Yet, as their feelings of refinement revolted from making themselves into a spectacle of partisanship for the public to bet on, they retired into a ball-room, and locked the doors, so that nothing could transpire of the campaigns within except from the desperate rallies and floorings which were heard, or from the bloody faces which were seen on their issuing. A limited admission, it was fancied, might have been allowed to select friends; but the courteous refusal of both parties was always 'No; the pounding was strictly confidential.' Now, pray, gentlemen disputers, could you not make your pounding 'strictly confidential'? My chief reasons for doing so I will mention:

1. That disputing is in bad tone; it is vulgar, and essentially the resource of uncultured people.

2. It argues want of intellectual power, or, in any case, want of intellectual development. It is because men find it easier to talk by disputing than by *not* disputing that so many people resort to this coarse expedient for calling the wind into the sails of conversation. To move along in the key of contradiction is the cheapest of all devices for purchasing a power that is not your own. You are then carried along by a towing-line attached to another vessel. There is no free power. Always your antagonist predetermines the course of your own movement; and you his. What *he* says, you unsay. He affirms, you deny. He knits, you unknit. Always you are servile to *him*; and he to *you*. Yet even that system of motion in reverse of another motion, of mere antistrophe or dancing backward what the strophe had danced forward, is better after all, you say, than standing stock still. For instance, it might have been tedious enough to hear Mr. Cruger disputing every proposition that Burke advanced on the Bristol hustings; yet even *that* some people would prefer to Cruger's single observation, viz., 'I say *ditto* to Mr. Burke.' Every man to his taste: I, for one, should have preferred Mr. Cruger's *ditto*.<sup>1</sup> But why need we have a *ditto*, a simple *affirmo*, because we have *not* an eternal *nego*? The proper spirit of conversation moves in the general key of assent, but still not therefore of mere iteration, but still each bar of the music is different. Nature surely does not repeat herself, yet neither does she

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<sup>1</sup> Really now I can't say that. No; I couldn't have stood Cruger's arguments. 'Ditto to Mr. Burke' is certainly not a very brilliant observation, but still it's supportable, whereas I must have found the pains of contradiction insupportable.

maintain the eternal variety of her laughing beauty by constantly contradicting herself, and quite as little by monotonously repeating herself. Her samenesses are differences.

II. Of the evils of garrulity, which, like the ceaseless droppings of water, will eat into the toughest rock of patience and self-satisfaction, I have spoken at considerable length elsewhere. Its evils are so evident that they hardly call for further illustration. The garrulous man, paradoxical as it may seem to say it, is a kind of pickpocket without intending to steal anything—nay, rather he is fain to please you by placing something in your pocket—though too often it is like the egg of the cuckoo in the nest of another bird.

III. Now, as to *Interruption*, what's to be done? It is a question that I have often considered. For the evil is great, and the remedy occult. I look upon a man that interrupts another in conversation as a monster far less excusable than a cannibal; yet cannibals (though, comparatively with *interrupters*, valuable members of society) are rare, and, even where they are *not* rare, they don't practise as cannibals every day: it is but on sentimental occasions that the exhibition of cannibalism becomes general. But the monsters who interrupt men in the middle of a sentence are to be found everywhere; and they are always practising. Red-letter days or black-letter days, festival or fast, makes no difference to *them*. This enormous nuisance I feel the more, because it is one which I never retaliate. Interrupted in every sentence, I still practise the American Indian's politeness of never interrupting. What, absolutely *never*? Is there *no* case in which I should? If a man's nose, or ear, as sometimes happens in high latitudes, were suddenly and visibly frost-bitten, so as instantly to require being rubbed with snow, I conceive it lawful to interrupt that man in the most pathetic sentence, or even to ruin a whole paragraph of his prose. You can never indeed give him back the rhetoric which you have undermined; *that* is true; but neither could he, in the alternative case, have given back to himself the nose which you have saved.

I contend also, against a great casuist in this matter, that had you been a friend of Æschylus, and distinctly observed that absurd old purblind eagle that mistook (or pretended to mistake) the great poet's bald head—that head which created the Prometheus and the Agamemnon—for a white tablet of rock, and had you interrupted the poet in his talk at the very moment when the bird was dropping a lobster on the sacred cranium, with the view of unshelling the lobster, but unaware that at the same time he was unshelling a great poet's brain, you would have been fully justified. An impertinence it would certainly have been to interrupt a sentence as undeniable in its Greek as any which that gentleman can be supposed to have turned out, but still the eagle's impertinence was greater.<sup>2</sup> That would have been your excuse. Æschylus, or my friend the casuist, is not to be listened to in his very learned arguments *contra*.

Short of these cases, nothing can justify an interruption; and such cases surely cannot be common, since how often can we suppose it to happen that an eagle has a lobster to break just at the moment when a tragic poet is walking abroad without his hat? What the reader's experience may have been, of course, is unknown to me; but, for my own part, I hardly meet with such a case twice in ten years, though I know an extensive circle of tragic poets, and a reasonable number of bald heads; eagles certainly not so many—they are but few on my visiting list; and indeed, if that's their way of going on—cracking literary skulls without leave asked or warning given—the fewer one knows the better. If, then, a long life hardly breeds a case in which it is strictly lawful to interrupt a co-dialogist, what are we to think of those who move in conversation by the very principle of interruption? And a variety of the nuisance there is, which I consider equally bad. Men, that do not absolutely interrupt you, are yet continually *on the fret* to do so, and undisguisedly on the fret all the time you are speaking. To invent a Latin word which ought to have been invented before my time, 'non interrumpunt at *interrupturiunt*.' You can't talk in peace for such people; and as to prosing, which I suppose you've a right to do by

<sup>2</sup> This sublimest of all Greek poets did really die, as some biographers allege, by so extraordinary and, as one may say, so insulting a mistake on the part of an eagle.

*Magna Charta*, it is quite out of the question when a man is looking in your face all the time with a cruel expression in his eye amounting to 'Surely, that's enough!' or a pathetic expression which says, 'Have you done?' throwing a dreadful reproach into the *Have*. In Cumberland, at a farmhouse where I once had lodgings for a week or two, a huge dog as high as the dining-table used to plant himself in a position to watch all my motions at dinner. Being alone, and either reading or thinking, at first I did not observe him; but as soon as I did, and noticed that he pursued each rising and descent of my fork as the poet 'with wistful eyes pursues the setting sun,' that unconsciously he mimicked and rehearsed all the notes and *appoggiaturas* that make up the successive bars in the music of eating one's dinner, I was compelled to rise, and say, 'My good fellow, I can't stand this; will you do me the favour to accept anything on my plate at this moment? And to-morrow I'll endeavour to arrange for your being otherwise employed at this hour than in watching *me*.' It seems a weakness, but I really cannot eat anything under the oppression of an envious *surveillance* like that dog's. A man said to me, 'Oh, what need you care about *him*? He has had *his* dinner long ago.' True, at twelve or one o'clock; but at six he might want another; but, if he thinks so himself, the result is the same. And that result is what the whole South of Frankistan<sup>3</sup> calls the *evil eye*. Wanting dinner, when he sees another person in the very act of dining, the dog (though otherwise an excellent creature) must be filled with envy; and envy is so contagiously allied to malice, that in elder English one word expresses both those dark modifications of hatred. The dog's eye therefore, without any consciousness on his own part, becomes in such a case *an evil eye*: upon me, at least, it fell with as painful an effect as any established eye of that class could do upon the most superstitious Portuguese.

Now, such exactly is the eye of any man that, without actually interrupting one, threatens by his impatient manner as often as one begins to speak. It has a blighting effect upon one's spirits. And the only resource is to say frankly (as I said to the dog), 'Would you oblige me, sir, by taking the whole of the talk into your own hands? Do not for ever threaten to do so, but at once boldly lay an interdict upon any other person's speaking.'

To those who suffer from nervous irritability, the man that suspends over our heads his *threat* of interruption by constant impatience, is even a more awful person to face than the actual interrupter. Either of them is insufferable; and in cases where the tone of prevailing manners is not vigorous enough to put such people down, or where the individual monster, being not *couchant* or *passant*, but (heraldically speaking) *rampant*, utterly disregards all restraints that are not enforced by a constable, the question comes back with greater force than ever, which I stated at the beginning of this article, 'What's to be done?'

I really cannot imagine. Despair seizes me 'with her icy fangs,' unless the reader can suggest something; or unless he can improve on a plan of my own sketching.

As a talker for effect, as a *bravura* artist in conversation, no one has surpassed Coleridge. There is a Spanish proverb, that he who has not seen Seville, has seen nothing. And I grieve to inform the present unfortunate generation, born under an evil star, coming, in fact, into the world a day after the fair, that, not having heard Coleridge, they have *heard*—pretty much what the strangers to Seville have *seen*, which (you hear from the Spaniards) amounts to nothing. *Nothing* is hardly a thing to be proud of, and yet it has its humble advantages. To have heard Coleridge was a thing to remember with pride as a trophy, but with pain as a trophy won by some personal sacrifice. To have heard Coleridge has now indeed become so great a distinction, that if it were transferable, and a man could sell it by auction, the biddings for it would run up as fast as for a genuine autograph of Shakespeare. The story is current under a thousand forms of the man who piqued himself on an interview which he had once enjoyed with royalty; and, being asked what he could repeat to the company of his gracious Majesty's

<sup>3</sup> *Frankistan*.—There is no word, but perhaps Frankistan might come nearest to such a word, for expressing the territory of Christendom taken jointly with that of those Mahometan nations which have for a long period been connected with Christians in their hostilities, whether of arms or of policy. The Arabs and the Moors belong to these nations, for the circle of their political system has always been made up in part by a segment from Christendom, their relations of war being still more involved with such a segment.

remarks, being an honest fellow he confessed candidly that the King, happening to be pressed for time, had confined himself to saying, 'Dog, stand out of my horse's way'; and many persons that might appear as claimants to the honour of having conversed with Coleridge could perhaps report little more of personal communication than a courteous request from the great man not to interrupt him. Inevitably, however, from this character of the Coleridgean conversation arose certain consequences, which are too much overlooked by those who bring it forward as a model or as a splendid variety in the proper art of conversation. And speaking myself as personally a witness to the unfavourable impression left by these consequences, I shall not scruple in this place to report them with frankness.

At the same time, having been heretofore publicly misrepresented and possibly because misunderstood as to the temper in which I spoke of Coleridge, and as though I had violated some duty of friendship in uttering a truth not flattering after his death, I wish so far to explain the terms on which we stood as to prevent any similar misconstruction. It would be impossible in any case for me to attempt a Plinian panegyric, or a French *éloge*. Not that I think such forms of composition false, any more than an advocate's speech, or a political partisan's: it is understood from the beginning that they are one-sided; but still true according to the possibilities of truth when caught from an angular and not a central station. There is even a pleasure as from a gorgeous display, and a use as from a fulness of unity, in reading a grand or even pompous laudatory oration upon a man like Leibnitz, or Newton, which neglects all his errors or blemishes. This abstracting view I could myself adopt as to a man whom I had learned to know from books, but not as to one whom I knew also from personal intercourse. His faults and his greatness are then too much intertwined. There is still something unreal in the knowledge of men through books; with which is compatible a greater flexibility of estimate. But the absolute realities of life acting upon any mind of deep sincerity do not leave the same liberty of suppression or concealment. In that case, the reader may perhaps say, and wherever the relations of the writer to a deceased man prescribe many restraints of tenderness or delicacy, would it not be better to forbear speaking at all? Certainly; and I go on therefore to say that my own relations to Coleridge were not of that nature. I had the greatest admiration for his intellectual powers, which in one direction I thought and think absolutely unrivalled on earth; I had also that sort of love for him which arises naturally as a rebound from intense admiration, even where there is little of social congeniality. But, in any stricter sense of the word, *friends* we were not. For years we met at intervals in society; never once estranged by any the slightest shadow of a quarrel or a coolness. But there were reasons, arising out of original differences in our dispositions and habits, which would probably have forever prevented us, certainly *did* prevent us, from being confidential friends. Yet, if we had been such, even the more for that reason the sincerity of my nature would oblige me to speak freely if I spoke at all of anything which I might regard as amongst his errors. For the perfection of genial homage, one may say, in the expression of Petronius Arbiter, *Præcipitandus est liber spiritus*, the freedom of the human spirit must be thrown headlong through the whole realities of the subject, without picking or choosing, without garbling or disguising. It yet remains as a work of the highest interest, to estimate (but for that to display) Coleridge in his character of great philosophic thinker, in which character he united perfections that never *were* united but in three persons on this earth, in himself, in Plato (as many suppose), and in Schelling, viz., the utmost expansion and in some paths the utmost depths of the searching intellect with the utmost sensibility to the powers and purposes of Art: whilst, as a creator in Art, he had pretensions which neither Plato nor Schelling could make. His powers as a Psychologist (not as a Metaphysician) seem to me absolutely unrivalled on earth. And had his health been better, so as to have sustained the natural cheerfulness towards which his nature tended, had his pecuniary embarrassments been even moderately lightened in their pressure, and had his studies been more systematically directed to one end—my conviction is that he would have left a greater philosophic monument of his magnificent mind than Aristotle, or Lord Bacon, or Leibnitz.

With these feelings as to the pretensions of Coleridge, I am not likely to underrate anything which he did. But a thing may be very difficult to do, very splendid when done, and yet false in its

principles, useless in its results, memorable perhaps by its impression at the time, and yet painful on the whole to a thoughtful retrospect. In dancing it is but too common that an intricate *pas seul*, in funambulism that a dangerous feat of equilibration, in the Grecian art of *desultory* equitation (where a single rider governs a plurality of horses by passing from one to another) that the flying contest with difficulty and peril, may challenge an anxiety of interest, may bid defiance to the possibility of inattention, and yet, after all, leave the jaded spectator under a sense of distressing tension given to his faculties. The sympathy is with the difficulties attached to the effort and the display, rather than with any intellectual sense of power and skill genially unfolded under natural excitements. It would be idle to cite Madame de Staël's remark on one of these meteoric exhibitions, viz., that Mr. Coleridge possessed the art of monologue in perfection, but not that of the dialogue; yet it comes near to hitting the truth from her point of view. The habit of monologue which Coleridge favoured lies open to three fatal objections: 1. It is antisocial in a case expressly meant by its final cause for the triumph of sociality; 2. It refuses all homage to women on an arena expressly dedicated to their predominance; 3. It is essentially fertile in *des longueurs*. Could there be imagined a trinity of treasons against the true tone of social intercourse more appalling to a Parisian taste?

In a case such as this, where Coleridge was the performer, I myself enter less profoundly into the brilliant woman's horror, for the reason that, having originally a necessity almost morbid for the intellectual pleasures that depend on solitude, I am constitutionally more careless about the luxuries of conversation. I see them; like them in the rare cases where they flourish, but do not require them. Not sympathizing, therefore, with the lady's horror in its intensity, I yet find my judgment in harmony with hers. The evils of Coleridgean talk, even managed by a Coleridge, were there, and they fixed themselves continually on my observation:

I. It defeats the very end of social meetings. Without the excitement from a reasonable number of auditors, and some novelty in the composition of his audience, Coleridge was hardly able to talk his best. Now, at the end of some hours, it struck secretly on the good sense of the company. Was it reasonable to have assembled six, ten, or a dozen persons for the purpose of hearing a prelection? Would not the time have been turned to more account, even as regarded the object which they had substituted for *social* pleasure, in studying one of Coleridge's printed works?—since there his words were stationary and not flying, so that notes might be taken down, and questions proposed by way of letter, on any impenetrable difficulties; whereas in a stream of oral teaching, which ran like the stream of destiny, impassive to all attempts at interruption, difficulties for ever arose to irritate your nervous system at the moment, and to vex you permanently by the recollection that they had prompted a dozen questions, every one of which you had forgotten through the necessity of continuing to run alongside with the speaker, and through the impossibility of saying, 'Halt, Mr. Coleridge! Pull up, I beseech you, if it were but for two minutes, that I may try to fathom that last sentence.' This in all conversation is one great evil, viz., the substitution of an alien purpose for the natural and appropriate purpose. Not to be intellectual in a direct shape, but to be intellectual through sociality, is the legitimate object of a social meeting. It may be right, medically speaking, that a man should be shampooed; but it cannot be right that, having asked him to dine, you should decline dinner and substitute a shampooing. This a man would be apt to call by the shorter name of a *sham*.

II. It diminishes the power of the talking performer himself. Seeming to have more, the man has less. For a man is never thrown upon his mettle, nor are his true resources made known even to himself, until to some extent he finds himself resisted (or at least modified) by the reaction of those around him. That day, says Homer, robs a man of half his value which sees him made a slave. But to be an autocrat is as perilous as to be a slave. And supposing Homer to have been introduced to Coleridge (a supposition which a learned man at my elbow pronounces intolerable—'It's an anachronism, sir, a base anachronism!' Well, but one may *suppose* anything, however base), Homer would have observed to me, as we came away from the *soirée*, 'In my opinion, our splendid friend S. T. C. would have been

the better for a few kicks on the shins. That day takes away half of a man's talking value which raises him into an irresponsible dictator to his company.'

III. It diminishes a man's power in another way less obvious, but not less certain. I had often occasion to remark how injurious it was to the impression of Coleridge's finest displays where the minds of the hearers had been long detained in a state of passiveness. To understand fully, to sympathise deeply, it was essential that they should react. Absolute inertia produced inevitable torpor. I am not supposing any indocility, or unwillingness to listen. Generally it might be said that merely to find themselves in that presence argued sufficiently in the hearers a cheerful dedication of themselves to a dutiful patience.

The mistake, in short, is to suppose that the particular power of talk Coleridge had was a *nuance* or modification of what is meant by conversational power; whereas it was the direct antithesis: it differed diametrically. So much as he had of his own peculiar power, so much more alien and remote was he from colloquial power. This remark should be introduced by observing that Madame de Staël's obvious criticism passes too little unvalued or unsearched either by herself or others. She fancied it an accidental inclination or a caprice, or a sort of self-will or discourtesy or inattention. No; it was a faculty in polar opposition to the true faculty of conversation.

Coleridge was copious, and not without great right, upon the subject of Art. It is a subject upon which we personally are very impatient, and (as Mrs. Quickly expresses it) peevish, as peevish as Rugby in his prayers.<sup>4</sup> Is this because we know too much about Art? Oh, Lord bless you, no! We know too little about it by far, and our wish is—to know more. But *that* is difficult; so many are the teachers, who by accident had never any time to learn; so general is the dogmatism; and, worse than all, so inveterate is the hypocrisy, wherever the graces of liberal habits and association are supposed to be dependent upon a particular mode of knowledge. To know nothing of theology or medicine has a sort of credit about it; so far at least it is clear that you are not professional, and to that extent the chances are narrowed that you get your bread out of the public pocket. To be sure, it is still possible that you may be a stay-maker, or a rat-catcher. But these are out-of-the-way vocations, and nobody adverts to such narrow possibilities. Now, on the other hand, to be a connoisseur in painting or in sculpture, supposing always that you are no practising artist, in other words, supposing that you know nothing about the subject, implies that you must live amongst *comme-il-faut* people who possess pictures and casts to look at; else how the deuce could you have got your knowledge—or, by the way, your ignorance, which answers just as well amongst those who are not peevish. We, however, *are* so, as we have said already. And what made us peevish, in spite of strong original *stamina* for illimitable indulgence to all predestined bores and nuisances in the way of conversation, was—not the ignorance, not the nonsense, not the contradictoriness of opinion—no! but the false, hypocritical enthusiasm about objects for which in reality they cared not the fraction of a straw. To hear these bores talk of educating the people to an acquaintance with what they call 'high art'! Ah, heavens, mercifully grant that the earth may gape for us before *our* name is placed on any such committee! 'High art,' indeed! First of all, most excellent bores, would you please to educate the people into the high and mysterious art of boiling potatoes. We, though really owning no particular duty or moral obligation of boiling potatoes, really *can* boil them very decently in any case arising of public necessity for our services; and if the art should perish amongst men, which seems likely enough, so long as *we* live, the public may rely upon it being restored. But as to women, as to the wives of poor hard-working men, not one in fifty can boil a potato into a condition that is not ruinous to the digestion. And we have reason to know that the Chartists, on their great meditated outbreak, having hired a six-pounder from a pawnbroker, meant to give the signal for insurrection at dinner-time, because (as they truly observed)

<sup>4</sup> 'Merry Wives of Windsor,' Act I., Sc. 4. Mrs. Quickly: '... An honest, willing, kind fellow, as ever servant shall come in house withal; and I warrant you no tell-tale, nor no breed-hate; his worst fault is, that he is given to prayer; he is something peevish that way; but nobody but has his fault—but let that pass.'—Ed.

cannon-balls, hard and hot, would then be plentiful on every table. God sends potatoes, we all know; but *who* it is that sends the boilers of potatoes, out of civility to the female sex, we decline to say.

Well, but this (you say) is a digression. Why, true; and a digression is often the cream of an article. However, as you dislike it, let us *regress* as fast as possible, and scuttle back from the occult art of boiling potatoes to the much more familiar one of painting in oil. Did Coleridge really understand this art? Was he a sciolist, was he a pretender, or did he really judge of it from a station of heaven-inspired knowledge? A hypocrite Coleridge never was upon any subject; he never affected to know when secretly he felt himself ignorant. And yet, of the topics on which he was wont eloquently to hold forth, there was none on which he was less satisfactory—none on which he was more acute, yet none on which he was more prone to excite contradiction and irritation, if that had been allowed.

Here, for example, is a passage from one of his lectures on art:

'It is sufficient that philosophically we understand that in all imitations two elements must coexist, and not only coexist, but must be perceived as existing. Those two constituent elements are likeness and unlikeness, or sameness and difference, and in all genuine creations of art there must be a union of these disparates. The artist may take this point of view where he pleases, provided that the desired effect be perceptibly produced, that there be likeness in the difference, difference in the likeness, and a reconciliation of both in one. If there be likeness to nature without any check of difference, the result is disgusting, and the more complete the delusion the more loathsome the effect. Why are such simulations of nature as wax-work figures of men and women so disagreeable? Because, not finding the motion and the life all we expected, we are shocked as by a falsehood, every circumstance of detail, which before induced you to be interested, making the distance from truth more palpable. You set out with a supposed reality, and are disappointed and disgusted with the deception; whilst in respect to a work of genuine imitation you begin with an acknowledged total difference, and then every touch of nature gives you the pleasure of an approximation to truth.'

In this exposition there must be some oversight on the part of Coleridge. He tells us in the beginning that, if there be 'likeness to nature without any check of difference, the result is disgusting.' But the case of the wax-work, which is meant to illustrate this proposition, does not at all conform to the conditions; the result is disgusting certainly, but not from any want of difference to control the sameness, for, on the contrary, the difference is confessedly too revolting; and apparently the distinction between the two cases described is simply this—that in the illegitimate case of the wax-work the likeness comes first and the unlikeness last, whereas in the other case this order is reversed. But that distinction will neither account *in fact* for the difference of effect; nor, if it *did*, would it account upon any reason or ground suggested by Coleridge for such a difference. Let us consider this case of wax-work a little more vigilantly, and then perhaps we may find out both why it is that some men unaffectedly *are* disgusted by wax-work; and secondly, why it is that, if trained on just principles of reflective taste, all men *would* be so affected.

As a matter not altogether without importance, we may note that even the frailty of the material operates to some extent in disgusting us with wax-work. A higher temperature of the atmosphere, it strikes us too forcibly, would dispose the waxen figures to melt; and in colder seasons the horny fist of a jolly boatswain would 'pun<sup>5</sup> them into shivers' like so many ship-biscuits. The grandeur of permanence and durability transfers itself or its expression from the material to the impression of the artifice which moulds it, and crystallizes itself in the effect. We see continually very ingenious imitations of objects cut out in paper filigree; there have been people who showed as much of an artist's eye in this sort of work, and of an artist's hand, as Miss Linwood of the last generation in her

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<sup>5</sup> 'Pun them into shivers': Troilus and Cressida, Act II., Sc. 1. We refer specially to the jolly boatswain, having already noticed the fact, that sailors as a class, from retaining more of the simplicity and quick susceptibility belonging to childhood, are unusually fond of waxen exhibitions. Too much worldly experience indisposes men to the playfulness and to the *toyfulness* (if we may invent that word) of childhood, not less through the ungenial churlishness which it gradually deposits, than through the expansion of understanding which it promotes.

exquisite needlework; in both cases a trick, a *tour-de-main*, was raised into the dignity of a fine art; and yet, because the slightness of the material too emphatically proclaims the essential perishableness of the result, nobody views such modes of art with more even of a momentary interest than the morning wreaths of smoke ascending so beautifully from a cottage chimney, or cares much to preserve them. The traceries of hoar frost upon the windows of inhabited rooms are not only beautiful in the highest degree, but have been shown in several French memoirs to obey laws of transcendental geometry, and also to obey physical laws of startling intricacy. These lovely forms of almighty nature wear the grandeur of mystery, of floral beauty, and of science (immanent science) not always fathomable.<sup>6</sup> They are anything but capricious. Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like *them*; and yet, simply because the sad hand of mortality is upon them, because they are dedicated to death, because on genial days they will have passed into the oblivion of graves before the morning sun has mounted to his meridian, we do not so much as honour them with a transient stare from the breakfast-table. Ah, wretches that we are, the horrid carnalities of tea and toast, or else the horrid bestialities in morning journals of Chartists and Cobdenites at home, of Red Ruffians abroad, draw off our attention from the chonchoids and the cycloids pencilled by the Eternal Geometrician! and these celestial traceries of the dawn, which neither Da Vinci nor Raphaello was able to have followed as a mimic, far less as a rival, we regard as a nuisance claiming the attentions of the window-cleaner; even as the spider's web, that might absorb an angel into reverie, is honoured amongst the things banned by the housemaid. But *the* reason why the wax-work disgusts is that it seeks to reproduce in literal detail the traits that should be softened under a general diffusive impression; the likeness to nature is presented in what is essentially fleeting and subsidiary, and the 'check of difference' is found also in this very literality, and not in any effort of the etherealizing imagination, as it is in all true works of art; so that the case really stands the exact opposite of that which Coleridge had given in his definition.<sup>7</sup>

To pass from art to style. How loose and arbitrary Coleridge not infrequently was in face of the laws on that subject which he had himself repeatedly laid down! Could it be believed of a man so quick to feel, so rapid to arrest all phenomena, that in a matter so important as that of style, he should have nothing loftier to record of his own merits, services, reformations, or cautions, than that he has always conscientiously forborne to use the personal genitive *whose* in speaking of inanimate things? For example, that he did not say, and could not have been tempted or tortured into saying, 'The bridge *whose* piers could not much longer resist the flood.' Well, as they say in Scotland, some people are thankful for small mercies. We—that is, you, the reader, and ourselves—are *persons*; the bridge, you see, is but a *thing*. We pity it, poor thing, and, as far as it is possible to entertain such a sentiment for a bridge, we feel respect for it. Few bridges are thoroughly contemptible; and we make a point, in obedience to an old-world proverb, always to speak well of the bridge that has carried us over in safety, which the worst of bridges never yet has refused to do. But still there *are* such things as social distinctions; and we conceive that a man and a 'contributor' (an *ancient* contributor to *Blackwood*), must in the herald's college be allowed a permanent precedency before all bridges whatsoever, without regard to number of arches, width of span, or any other frivolous pretences. We acknowledge therefore with gratitude Coleridge's loyalty to his own species in not listening to any compromise with mere things, that never were nor will be raised to the peerage of personality, and

<sup>6</sup> 'Science not always fathomable.' Several distinguished Frenchmen have pursued a course of investigations into these fenestral phenomena, which one might call the *Fata Morgana of Frost*; and, amongst these investigators, some—not content with watching, observing, recording—have experimented on these floral prolusions of nature by arranging beforehand the circumstances and conditions into which and under which the Frost Fairy should be allowed to play. But what was the result? Did they catch the Fairy? Did they chase her into her secret cells and workshops? Did they throw over the freedom of her motions a harness of net-work of coercion as the Pagans over their pitiful Proteus? So far from it, that the more they studied the less they understood; and all the traps which they laid for the Fairy, did but multiply her evasions.

<sup>7</sup> The passage occurs at p. 354, vol. ii. of the *Lectures*; and we now find, on looking to the place, that the illustration is drawn from 'a dell of lazy Sicily.' The same remark has virtually been anticipated at p. 181 of the same volume in the rule about 'converting mere abstractions into persons.'

sternly refusing them the verbal honours which are sacred to us humans. But what is the principle of taste upon which Coleridge justifies this rigorous practice? It is—and we think it a very just principle—that this mechanic mode of giving life to things inanimate ranks 'amongst those worst mimicries of poetic diction by which imbecile writers fancy they elevate their prose.' True; but the same spurious artifices for giving a fantastic elevation to prose reappear in a thousand other forms, from some of which neither Coleridge nor his accomplished daughter is absolutely free. For instance, one of the commonest abuses of pure English amongst our Scottish brethren, unless where they have been educated out of Scotland, is to use *ought* for *anything*, *ere* for *before*, *well-nigh* for *almost*, and scores besides. No home-bred, *i.e.* Cockney Scotchman, is aware that these are poetic forms, and are as ludicrously stilted in any ear trained by the daily habits of good society to the appreciation of pure English—as if, in Spenserian phrase, he should say, '*What time* I came home to breakfast,' instead of '*When* I came home.' The '*'tis* and '*'twas*, which have been superannuated for a century in England, except in poetic forms, still linger in Scotland and in Ireland, and these forms also at intervals look out from Coleridge's prose. Coleridge is also guilty at odd times (as is Wordsworth) of that most horrible affectation, the *hath* and *doth* for *has* and *does*. This is really criminal. But amongst all barbarisms known to man, the very worst—and this also, we are sorry to say, flourishes as rankly as weeds in Scotch prose, and is to be found in Coleridge's writings—is the use of the *thereof*, *therein*, *thereby*, *thereunto*. This monstrous expression of imperfect civilization, which for one hundred and fifty years has been cashiered by cultivated Englishmen as *attorneys' English*, and is absolutely frightful unless in a lease or conveyance, ought (we do not scruple to say) to be made indictable at common law, not perhaps as a felony, but certainly as a misdemeanour, punishable by fine and imprisonment.

In nothing is the characteristic mode of Coleridge's mind to be seen more strikingly than in his treatment of some branches of dramatic literature, though to that subject he had devoted the closest study. He was almost as distinguished, indeed, for the points he missed as for those he saw. Look at his position as regards some questions concerning the French drama and its critics, more particularly the views of Voltaire, though some explanation may be found in the fact, which I have noticed elsewhere, that Coleridge's acquaintance with the French language was not such as to enable him to read it with the easy familiarity which ensures complete pleasure. But something may also be due to his deep and absorbed religious feeling, which seemed to incapacitate him from perceiving the points where Voltaire, despite his scepticism, had planted his feet on firm ground. Coleridge was aware that Voltaire, in common with every Frenchman until the present generation, held it as a point of faith that the French drama was inapproachable in excellence. From Lessing, and chiefly, from his *Dramaturgie*, Coleridge was also aware, on the other hand, upon what erroneous grounds that imaginary pre-eminence was built. He knew that it was a total misconception of the Greek unities (excepting only as regards the unity of fable, or, as Coleridge otherwise calls it, the *unity of interest*) which had misled the French. It was a huge blunder. The case was this: Peculiar embarrassments had arisen to the Athenian dramatists as to time and place, from the chorus—out of which chorus had grown the whole drama. The chorus, composed generally of men or women, could not be moved from Susa to Memphis or from one year to another, as might the spectator. This was a fetter, but, with the address of great artists, they had turned their fetters into occasions of ornament. But, in this act of beautifying their narrow field, they had done nothing to enlarge it. They had submitted gracefully to what, for *them*, was a religious necessity. But it was ridiculous that modern dramatists, under no such necessity (because clogged with no inheritance of a personal chorus), should voluntarily assume fetters which, having no ceremonial and hallowed call for a chorus, could have no meaning. So far Coleridge was kept right by his own sagacity and by his German guides; but a very trifle of further communication with Voltaire, and with the writers of whom Voltaire was speaking, would have introduced him to two facts calculated a little to raise Voltaire in his esteem, and very much to lower the only French writer (*viz.*, Racine) whom he ever thought fit to praise. With regard to Voltaire himself he would have found that, so far from exalting the French poetic literature *generally*

in proportion to that monstrous pre-eminence which he had claimed for the French drama, on the contrary, from this very drama, from the very pre-eminence, he drew an argument for the general inferiority of the French poetry. The French drama, he argued, was confessedly exalted amongst the French themselves beyond any other section of their literature. But why? Why was this? If the drama had prospered disproportionately under public favour, what caused that favour? It was, said Voltaire, the social nature of the French, with their consequent interest in whatever assumed the attire of conversation or dialogue; and, secondly, it was the peculiar strength of their language in that one function, which had been nursed and ripened by this preponderance of social habits. Hence it happened that the drama obtained at one and the same time a greater *interest* for the French, and also (by means of this culture given to conversational forms) most unhappily for his lordship's critical discernment of flavours, as well as his Greek literature, happens to be a respectable Joe Miller from the era of Hierocles, and through *him* probably it came down from Pythagoras. Yet still Voltaire was very far indeed from being a 'scribbler.' He had the graceful levity and the graceful gaiety of his nation in an exalted degree. He had a vast compass of miscellaneous knowledge; pity that it was so disjointed, *arena sine calce*; pity that you could never rely on its accuracy; and, as respected his epic poetry, 'tis true 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true, that you are rather disposed to laugh than to cry when Voltaire solemnly proposes to be sublime. His *Henriade* originally appeared in London about 1726, when the poet was visiting this country as a fugitive before the wrath of Louis the Well-beloved; and naturally in the opening passage he determined to astonish the weak minds of us islanders by a flourish on the tight-rope of sublimity. But to his vexation a native Greek (*viz.*, a Smyrniot), then by accident in London, called upon him immediately after the publication, and, laying his finger on a line in the exordium (as it then stood), said, 'Sare, I am one countryman of Homer's. He write de Iliad; you write de Henriade; but Homer vos never able in all de total whole of de Iliad to write de verse like dis.' Upon which the Greek showed him a certain line.

Voltaire admired the line itself, but in deference to this Greek irony, supported by the steady advice of his English friends, he finally altered it. It is possible to fail, however, as an epic poet, and very excusable for a Frenchman to fail, and yet to succeed in many other walks of literature. But to Coleridge's piety, to Coleridge's earnest seeking for light, and to Coleridge's profound sense of the necessity which connects from below all ultimate philosophy with religion, the scoffing scepticism of Voltaire would form even a stronger repulsion than his puerile hostility to Shakespeare. Even here, however, there is something to be pleaded for Voltaire. Much of his irreligion doubtless arose from a defective and unimpassioned nature, but part of it was noble, and rested upon his intolerance of cruelty, of bigotry, and of priestcraft—but still more of these qualities not germinating spontaneously, but assumed fraudulently as masques. But very little Coleridge had troubled himself to investigate Voltaire's views, even where he was supposing himself to be ranged in opposition to them.

A word or two about those accusations of plagiarism of which far too much has been made by more than one critic; we ourselves having, perhaps, been guilty of too wantonly stirring these waters at one time of our lives; and in the attempt to make matters more clear, only, it may be, succeeded in muddying them. Stolberg, Matthison, Schiller, Frederika Brun, Schelling, and others, whom he has been supposed to have robbed of trifles, he could not expect to lurk<sup>8</sup> in darkness, and particularly as he was actively contributing to disperse the darkness that yet hung over their names in England. But really for such bagatelles as were concerned in this poetic part of the allegation—even Bow Street, with the bloodiest Draco of a critical reviewer sitting on the bench, would not have entertained the charge. Most of us, we suppose, would be ready enough to run off with a Titian or a Correggio, provided the coast were clear, and no policemen heaving in sight; but to be suspected

<sup>8</sup> It is true that Mr. De Quincey *did* make the mistake of supposing Coleridge to have 'calculated on' a remark which Mrs. Coleridge justly characterises as a blind one. It *was* blind as compared with the fact resulting from grounds not then known; else it was *not* blind as a reasonable inference under the same circumstances.

of pocketing a silver spoon, which, after all, would probably turn out to be made of German silver—faugh!—we not only defy the fiend and his temptations generally, but we spit in his face for such an insinuation. With respect to the pretty toy model of Hexameter and Pentameter from Schiller, we believe the case to have arisen thus: in talking of metre, and illustrating it (as Coleridge often did at tea-tables) from Homer, and then from the innumerable wooden and cast-iron imitations of it among the Germans—he would be very likely to cite this little ivory bijou from Schiller; upon which the young ladies would say: 'But, Mr. Coleridge, we do not understand German. Could you not give us an idea of it in some English version?' Then would he, with his usual obligingness, write down his mimic English echo of Schiller's German echo. And of course the young ladies, too happy to possess an autograph from the 'Ancient Mariner,' and an autograph besides having a separate interest of its own, would endorse it with the immortal initials 'S. T. C.,' after which an injunction issuing from the Court of Chancery would be quite unavailing to arrest its flight through the journals of the land as the avowed composition of Coleridge. They know little of Coleridge's habits who suppose that his attention was disposable for cases of this kind. Alike, whether he were unconsciously made by the error of a reporter to rob others, or others to rob him, he would be little likely to hear of the mistake—or, hearing of it by some rare accident, to take any pains for its correction. It is probable that such mistakes sometimes arose with others, but sometimes also with himself from imperfect recollection; and *that*, owing chiefly to his carelessness about the property at issue, so that it seemed not worth the requisite effort to vindicate the claim if it happened to be *his*, or formally to renounce it if it were not. But, however this might be, his daughter's remark remains true, and is tolerably significant, that the people whom (through anybody's mistake) he seems to have robbed were all pretty much in the sunshine of the world's regard; there was no attempt to benefit by darkness or twilight, and an intentional robber must have known that the detection was inevitable.

A second thing to be said in palliation of such plagiarisms, real or fancied, intentional or not intentional, is this—that at least Coleridge never insulted or derided those upon whose rights he is supposed to have meditated an aggression.

Coleridge has now been dead for more than fifteen years,<sup>9</sup> and he lived through a painful life of sixty-three years; seventy-eight years it is since he first drew that troubled air of earth, from which with such bitter loathing he rose as a phoenix might be supposed to rise, that, in retribution of some treason to his immortal race, had been compelled for a secular period to banquet on carrion with ghouls, or on the spoils of *vivisection* with vampires. Not with less horror of retrospect than such a phoenix did Coleridge, when ready to wing his flight from earth, survey the chambers of suffering through which he had trod his way from childhood to gray hairs. Perhaps amongst all the populous nations of the grave not one was ever laid there, through whose bones so mighty a thrill of shuddering anguish would creep, if by an audible whisper the sound of earth and the memories of earth could reach his coffin. Yet why? Was he not himself a child of earth? Yes, and by too strong a link: *that* it was which shattered him. For also he was a child of Paradise, and in the struggle between two natures he could not support himself erect. That dreadful conflict it was which supplanted his footing. Had he been gross, fleshly, sensual, being so framed for voluptuous enjoyment, he would have sunk away silently (as millions sink) through carnal wrecks into carnal ruin. He would have been mentioned oftentimes with a sigh of regret as that youthful author who had enriched the literature of his country with two exquisite poems, 'Love' and the 'Ancient Mariner,' but who for some unknown reason had not fulfilled his apparent mission on earth. As it was, being most genial and by his physical impulses most luxurious; yet, on the other hand, by fiery aspirations of intellect and of spiritual heart being coerced as if through torments of magical spells into rising heavenwards for ever, into eternal commerce with the grander regions of his own nature, he found this strife too much for his daily peace, too imperfect

<sup>9</sup> If for the words 'more than fifteen years' we say sixteen or seventeen, as Coleridge died in 1834, this article would be written in 1850 or 1851.—Ed.

was the ally which he found in his will; treachery there was in his own nature, and almost by a necessity he yielded to the dark temptations of opium. That 'graspless hand,' from which, as already in one of his early poems (November, 1794) he had complained—

'Drop friendship's priceless pearls as hour-glass sands,'

was made much *more* graspless, and in this way the very graces of his moral nature ministered eventually the heaviest of his curses. Most unworldly he was, most unmercenary, and (as somebody has remarked) even to a disease, and, in such a degree as if an organ had been forgotten by Nature in his composition, disregarding of self. But even in these qualities lay the baits for his worldly ruin, which subsequently caused or allowed so much of his misery. Partly from the introversion of his mind, and its habitual sleep of reverie in relation to all external interests, partly from his defect in all habits of prudential forecasting, resting his head always on the pillow of the *present*—he had been carried rapidly past all openings that offered towards the creation of a fortune before he even heard of them, and he first awoke to the knowledge that such openings had ever existed when he looked back upon them from a distance, and found them already irrecoverable for ever.

Such a case as this, as soon as it became known that the case stood connected with so much power of intellect and so much of various erudition, was the very ideal case that challenges aid from the public purse. Mrs. Coleridge has feelingly noticed the philosophic fact. It was the case of a man lame in the faculties which apply to the architecture of a fortune, but lame through the very excess in some other faculties that qualified him for a public teacher, or (which is even more requisite) for a public stimulator of powers else dormant.

A perfect romance it is that settles upon three generations of these Coleridges; a romance of beauty, of intellectual power, of misfortune suddenly illuminated from heaven, of prosperity suddenly overcast by the waywardness of the individual. The grandfather of the present generation, who for us stands forward as the founder of the family, viz., the Rev. John Coleridge; even *his* career wins a secret homage of tears and smiles in right of its marvellous transitions from gloom to sudden light, in right of its entire simplicity, and of its eccentric consistency. Already in early youth, swimming against a heady current of hindrances almost overwhelming, he had by solitary efforts qualified himself for any higher situation that might offer. But, just as this training was finished, the chances that it might ever turn to account suddenly fell down to zero; for precisely then did domestic misfortunes oblige his father to dismiss him from his house with one solitary half-crown and his paternal benediction. What became of the half-crown is not recorded, but the benediction speedily blossomed into fruit. The youth had sat down by the roadside under the mere oppression of grief for his blighted prospects. But gradually and by steps the most unexpected and providential, he was led to pedagogy and through this to his true destination—that of a clergyman of the English church—a position which from his learning, his devotion, and even from his very failings—failings in businesslike foresight and calculation—his absence of mind, his charitable feelings, and his true docility of nature, he was fitted to adorn; and, indeed, but for his eccentricities and his complete freedom from worldly self-seeking, and indifference to such considerations as are apt to weigh all too little with his fellows of the cloth, he might have moved as an equal among the most eminent scholars and thinkers. Beautiful are the alternate phases of a good parish priest—now sitting at the bedside of a dying neighbour, and ministering with guidance and consolation to the labouring spirit—now sitting at midnight under the lamp of his own study, and searching the holy oracles of inspiration for light inexhaustible. These pictures were realized in J. Coleridge's life.

Mr. Wordsworth has done much to place on an elevated pedestal a very different type of parish priest—Walker of Seathwaite. The contrast between him and John Coleridge is striking; and not only striking but apt, from some points of view, to move something of laughter as well as tears. The strangest thing is that, if some demon of mischief tempts us, a hurly-burly begins again of laughter

and mockery among that ancient brotherhood of hills, like Handel's chorus in 'l'Allegro' of 'laughter holding both his sides.'

'Old Skiddaw blows  
His speaking-trumpet; back out of the clouds  
On Glaramara, "I say, Walker" rings;  
And Kirkstone "goes it" from his misty head.'

The Rev. Walker, of Seathwaite, it is recorded, spent most of his time in the parish church; but doing what? Why, spinning; *always* spinning wool on the steps of the altar, and only *sometimes* lecturing his younger parishioners in the spelling-book. So passed his life. And, if you feel disposed to say, '*An innocent life!*' you must immediately add from Mr. Wordsworth's 'Ruth,' '*An innocent life, but far astray!*' What time had he for writing sermons? The Rev. John Coleridge wrote an exegetical work on the Book of Judges; we doubt whether Walker could have spelt *exegetical*. And supposing the Bishop of Chester, in whose diocese his parish lay, had suddenly said, 'Walker, *unde derivatur "exege-sis"?*' Walker must have been walked off into the corner, as a punishment for answering absurdly. But luckily the Bishop's palace stood ninety and odd miles south of Walker's two spinning-wheels. For, observe, he had *two* spinning-wheels, but he hadn't a single Iliad. Mr. Wordsworth will say that Walker did something besides spinning and spelling. What was it? Why, he read a little. A *very* little, I can assure you. For *when* did he read? Never but on a Saturday afternoon. And *what* did Walker read? Doubtless now it was Hooker, or was it Jeremy Taylor, or Barrow? No; it was none of these that Walker honoured by his Saturday studies, but a magazine. Now, we all know what awful rubbish the magazines of those days carted upon men's premises. It would have been indictable as a nuisance if a publisher had laid it down *gratis* at your door. Had Walker lived in *our* days, the case would have been very different. A course of *Blackwood* would have braced his constitution; his spinning-wheel would have stopped; his spelling would have improved into moral philosophy and the best of politics. This very month, as the public is by this time aware, Walker would have read something about himself that *must* have done him good. We might very truly have put an advertisement into the *Times* all last month, saying, 'Let Walker look into the next *Blackwood*, and he will hear of something greatly to his advantage.' But alas! Walker descended to Hades, and most ingloriously as *we* contend, before *Blackwood* had dawned upon a benighted earth. We differ therefore by an inexpressible difference from Wordsworth's estimate of this old fellow. And we close our account of him by citing two little sallies from his only known literary productions, viz., two letters, one to a friend, and the other to the Archbishop of York. In the first of these he introduces a child of his own under the following flourish of rhetoric, viz., as 'a pledge of conjugal endearment.' We doubt if his correspondent ever read such a bit of sentiment before. In the other letter, addressed to the Metropolitan of the province, Walker has the assurance to say that he trusts the young man, his son (*not* the aforesaid cub, the pledge of conjugal endearment) will never disgrace the *paternal* example, *i.e.*, Walker's example. Pretty strong *that!* And, if exegetically handled, it must mean that Walker, junr., is to continue spinning and spelling, as also once a week reading the *Town and Country Magazine*, all the days of his life. Oh, Walker, you're a very sad fellow! And the only excuse for you is, that, like most of your brethren in that mountainous nook of England, so beautiful but so poor, you never saw the academic bowers of either Oxford or Cambridge.

Both in prose and verse, much prose and a short allowance of verse, has Wordsworth celebrated this man, and he has held him aloft like the saintly Herbert<sup>10</sup> as a shining model of a rural priest. We are glad, therefore, for Wordsworth's sake, that no judge from the Consistorial Court ever happened

<sup>10</sup> 'The Saintly Herbert,' the brother, oddly enough, of the brilliant but infidel Lord Herbert of Cherbury; which lord was a versatile man of talent, but not a man of genius like the humble rustic—his unpretending brother.

to meet with Walker when trudging over the Furness Fells to Ulverston with a *long* cwt. (120 lb. avoirdupois) of wool on his back, a thing which he did in all weathers. The wool would have been condemned as a good prize, and we much fear that Walker's gown would have been stripped over his head; which is a sad catastrophe for a pattern priest. Mr. John Coleridge came much nearer to Chaucer's model of a *Parish Priest*, whilst at the same time he did honour to the Academic standard of such a priest. He loved his poor parishioners as children confided to his pastoral care, but he also loved his library. But, on the other hand, as to Walker, if ever *he* were seen burning the midnight oil, it was not in a gentleman's study—it was in a horrid garret or cock-loft at the top of his house, disturbing the 'conjugal endearments' of roosting fowl, and on a business the least spiritual that can be imagined. By ancient usage throughout this sequestered region, which is the Savoy of England (*viz.*, Cumberland, Westmoreland, and Furness) all accounts are settled annually at Candlemas, which means the middle of February. From Christmas, therefore, to this period the reverend pastor was employed in making out bills, receipts, leases and releases, charges and discharges, wills and codicils to wills for most of the hardworking householders amongst his flock. This work paid better than spinning. By this night work, by the summer work of cutting peats and mowing grass, by the autumnal work of reaping barley and oats, and the early winter work of taking up potatoes, the reverend gentleman could average seven shillings a day besides beer. But meantime our spiritual friend was poaching on the manors of the following people—of the chamber counsel, of the attorney, of the professional accountant, of the printer and compositor, of the notary public, of the scrivener, and sometimes, we fear, of the sheriff's officer in arranging for special bail. These very uncanonical services one might have fancied sufficient, with spinning and spelling, for filling up the temporal cares of any one man's time. But this restless Proteus masqueraded through a score of other characters—as seedsman, harvester, hedger and ditcher, etc. We have no doubt that he would have taken a job of paving; he would have contracted for darning old Christopher's silk stockings, or for a mile of sewerage; or he would have contracted to dispose by night of the sewage (which the careful reader must not confound with the sewerage, that being the ship and the sewage the freight). But all this coarse labour makes a man's hands horny, and, what is worse, the starvation, or, at least, impoverishment, of his intellect makes his mind horny; and, what is worst of all in a clergyman, who is stationed as a watchman on a church-steeple expressly to warn all others against the all-besetting danger of worldliness, such an incessant preoccupation of the heart by coarse and petty cares makes the spiritual apprehensiveness and every organ of spiritual sensibility more horny than the hoofs of a rhinoceros.

Kindliness of heart, no doubt, remained to the last with Mr. Walker, *that* being secured by the universal spirit of brotherly and social feeling amongst the dalesmen of the lake district. He was even liberal and generous, if we may rely upon the few instances reported by W. W. His life of heroic money-getting had not, it seems, made his heart narrow in that particular direction, though it must not be forgotten that the calls upon him were rare and trivial. But however *that* may have been, the heart of stone had usurped upon the heart of flesh in all that regarded the spiritualities of his office. He was conscientious, we dare say, in what related to the *sacramentum militare* (as construed by himself) of his pastoral soldiery. He would, perhaps, have died for the doctrines of his church, and we do not like him the worse for having been something of a bigot, being ourselves the most malignant of Tories (thank Heaven for all its mercies!). But what tenderness or pathetic breathings of spirituality *could* that man have, who had no time beyond a few stray quarters of an hour for thinking of his own supreme relations to heaven, or to his flock on behalf of heaven? How could that man cherish or deepen the motions of religious truth within himself, whose thoughts were habitually turned to the wool market? Ninety and odd years he lived on earth labouring like a bargeman or a miner. Assuredly he was not one of the *fainéans*. And within a narrow pastoral circle he left behind him a fragrant memory that will, perhaps, wear as long as most reputations in literature. Nay, he even acquired by acclamation a sort of title, *viz.*, the posthumous surname of the *wonderful*; pointing, however, we fear, much less to anything in himself than to the unaccountable amount of money which he left

behind him—unaccountable by comparison with any modes of industry which he practised, all of which were indomitably persevering, but all humble in their results. Finally, he has had the honour (which, much we fear, men far more interesting in the same situation, but in a less homely way, never *would* have had) of a record from the pen of Wordsworth. We and others have always remarked it as one of the austere Roman features in the mind of Wordsworth, that of all poets he has the least sympathy, effeminate or not effeminate, with romantic disinterestedness. He cannot bear to hear of a man working by choice for nothing, which certainly *is* an infirmity, where at all it arises from want of energy or of just self-appreciation, but still an amiable one, and in certain directions a sublime one. Walker had no such infirmity. He laboured in those fields which ensure instant payment. Verily he *had* his reward: ten per cent., at least, beyond all other men, without needing to think of reversions, either above or below. The unearthly was suffocated in *him* by the earthly. Let us leave him, and return to a better man, viz., to the Rev. John Coleridge, author of the *Quale-quare-quidditive* case—a man equal in simplicity of habits and in humility, but better in the sight of God, because he laboured in the culture of his higher and not his lower faculties.

Mr. John Coleridge married a second time; and we are perplexed to say *when*. The difficulty is this: he had by his second wife ten children. Now, as *the* Coleridge, the youngest of the flock, was born in 1772, the space between that year and 1760 seems barely adequate to such a succession of births. Yet, on the other hand, *before* 1760 he could not probably have seen his second wife, unless, indeed, on some casual trip to Devonshire. Her name was Anne Bowden; and she was of a respectable family, that had been long stationary in Devonshire, but of a yeomanly rank; and people of that rank a century back did not often make visits as far as Southampton. The question is not certainly of any great importance; and we notice it only to make a parade of our chronologic acumen. Devilish sly is Josy Bagstock! It is sufficient that her last child was her illustrious child; and, if S. T. C.'s theory has any foundation, we must suppose him illustrious *because* he was the last. For he imagines that in any long series of children the last will, according to all experience, have the leonine share of intellect. But this contradicts our own personal observation; and, besides, it seems to be unsound upon an *à priori* ground, viz., that to be the first child carries a meaning with it: *that* place in the series has a real physiologic value; and we have known families in which, from generation to generation, the first-born child had physical advantages denied to all that followed. But to be the last child must very often be the result of accident, and has in reality no meaning in any sense known to nature. The sixth child, let us suppose, is a blockhead. And soon after the birth of this sixth child, his father, being drunk, breaks his neck. That accident cannot react upon this child to invest him with the privileges of absolute juniority. Being a blockhead, he will remain a blockhead. Yet he is the youngest; but, then, nature is no party to his being such, and probably she is no party (by means of any physical change in the parents) once in a thousand births to a case of absolute and predeterminate juniority.

Whether with or without the intention of nature, S. T. C. was fated to be the last of his family. He was the tenth child of the second flock, and possibly there might have been an eleventh or even a twentieth, but for the following termination of his father's career, which we give in the words of his son. 'Towards the latter end of September, 1781, my father went to Plymouth with my brother Francis, who was to go out as' (a) 'midshipman under Admiral Graves—a friend of my father's. He settled Frank as he wished, and returned on the 4th of October, 1781. He arrived at Exeter about six o'clock, and was pressed to take a bed there by the friendly family of the Harts; but he refused, and, to avoid their entreaties, he told them that he had never been superstitious, but that the night before he had had a dream, which had made a deep impression on him. He dreamed that Death had appeared to him, as he is commonly painted, and had touched him with his dart. Well, he returned home; and all his family, *I* excepted, were up. He told my mother his dream; but he was in good health and high spirits; and there was a bowl of punch made, and my father gave a long and particular account of his travels, and that he had placed Frank under a religious captain, and so forth. At length he went to bed, very well and in high spirits. A short time after he had lain down, he complained of a pain to

which he was subject. My mother got him some peppermint water, which he took; and after a pause he said, "I am much better now, my dear!" and lay down again. In a minute my mother heard a noise in his throat, and spoke to him; but he did not answer, and she spoke repeatedly in vain. Her shriek awakened me, and I said, "Papa is dead!" I did not know of my father's return, but I knew that he was expected. How I came to think of his death, I cannot tell; but so it was. Dead he was. Some said it was gout in the heart; probably it was a fit of apoplexy. He was an Israelite without guile, simple, generous; and, taking some Scripture texts in their literal sense, he was conscientiously indifferent to the good and evil of this world.'

This was the account of his father's sudden death in 1781, written by S. T. Coleridge in 1797. 'Thirty years afterwards' (but after 1781 or after 1797?), says Mr. H. N. Coleridge, 'S. T. C. breathed a wish for such a death, "if," he added, "like him I were an Israelite without guile!" and then added, "The image of my father, my revered, kind, learned, simple-hearted father, is a religion to me."'

In his ninth year, therefore, thus early and thus suddenly, Coleridge lost his father; and in the result, though his mother lived for many a year after, he became essentially an orphan, being thrown upon the struggles of this world, and for ever torn from his family, except as a visitor when equally he and they had changed. Yet such is the world, and so inevitably does it grow thorns amongst its earliest roses, that even that dawn of life when he had basked in the smiles of two living parents, was troubled for *him* by a dark shadow that followed his steps or ran before him, obscuring his light upon every path. This was Francis Coleridge, one year older, that same boy whom his father had in his last journey upon earth accompanied to Plymouth.

We shall misconceive the character of Francis if we suppose him to have been a boy of bad nature. He turned out a gallant young man, and perished at twenty-one from over exertion in Mysore, during the first war with Tippoo Sahib. How he came to be transferred from the naval to the land service, is a romantic story, for which, as it has no relation to *the* Coleridge, we cannot find room.

In that particular relation, viz., to *the* Coleridge, Francis may seem at first to have been unamiable, and especially since the little Samuel was so entirely at the mercy of his superior hardness and strength; but, in fact, his violence arose chiefly from the contempt natural to a bold adventurous nature for a nursery pet, and a contempt irritated by a counter admiration which he could not always refuse. 'Frank,' says S. T. C., looking back to these childish days, 'had a violent love of beating me; but, whenever *that* was superseded by any humour or circumstances, he was always very fond of me, and used to regard me with a strange mixture of admiration and contempt. Strange it was not; for he hated books, and loved climbing, fighting, playing, robbing orchards, to distraction.'

In the latter part of 1778, when S. T. C. was six years old, and recently admitted to King's School at Ottery, he and his brother George (that brother to whom his early poems were afterwards dedicated) caught a putrid fever at the same time. But on this occasion Frank displayed his courageous kindness; for, in contempt of orders to the contrary, and in contempt of the danger, he stole up to the bedside of little Samuel and read Pope's 'Homer' to him. This made it evident that Frank's partiality for thumping S. T. C. did really arise very much out of a lurking love for him; since George, though a most amiable boy, and ill of the same fever in another room, was left to get well in the usual way, by medicine and slops, without any thumping certainly, but also without any extra consolations from either Iliad or Odyssey. But what ministered perpetual fuel to the thumping-mania of Francis Coleridge was a furor of jealousy—strangely enough not felt by him, but felt *for* him by his old privileged nurse. She could not inspire her own passions into Francis, but she could point his scorn to the infirmities of his rival. Francis had once reigned paramount in the vicarage as universal pet. But he had been dethroned by Samuel, who now reigned in his stead. Samuel felt no triumph at that revolution; Francis no anger. But the nurse suffered the pangs of a baffled stepmother, and looked with novercal eyes of hatred and disgust upon little Sam that had stolen away the hearts of men and women from one that in *her* eyes was a thousand times his superior. In that last point nurse was not so entirely wrong, but that nine-tenths of the world (and therefore, we fear, of our dearly-beloved

readers) would have gone along with her, on which account it is that we have forborne to call her 'wicked old nurse.' Francis Coleridge, her own peculiar darling, was memorable for his beauty. All the brothers were handsome—'remarkably handsome,' says S. T. C., 'but *they*,' he adds, 'were as inferior to Francis as *I* am to *them*.'<sup>11</sup>

Reading this and other descriptions of Frank Coleridge's beauty (in our Indian army he was known as the *handsome Coleridge*), we are disposed to cry out with Juliet,

'Beautiful tyrant! fiend angelical!  
Dove-feathered raven!'

when we find how very nearly his thoughtless violence had hurried poor S. T. C. into an early death. The story is told circumstantially by Coleridge himself in one of the letters to Mr. Poole; nor is there any scene more picturesque than this hasty sketch in Brookes's 'Fool of Quality.' We must premise that S. T. C. had asked his mother for a particular indulgence requiring some dexterity to accomplish. The difficulty, however, through *her* cautious manipulations, had just been surmounted, when Samuel left the room for a single instant, and found upon his return that the beautiful Francis had confounded all Mama's labours, and had defeated his own enjoyment. What followed is thus told by Samuel nearly twenty years after: 'I returned, saw the exploit, and flew at Frank. He pretended to have been seriously hurt by my blow, flung himself upon the ground, and there lay with outstretched limbs.' This is good comedy: the pugnacious Frank affecting to be an Abel, killed by a blow from Cain such as doubtless would not have 'made a dint in a pound of butter.' But wait a little. Samuel was a true penitent as ever was turned off for fratricide at Newgate. 'I,' says the unhappy murderer, 'hung over him mourning and in great fright;' but the murdered Frank by accident came to life again. 'He leaped up, and with a hoarse laugh gave me a severe blow in the face.' This was too much. To have your grief flapped back in your face like a wet sheet is bad, but also and at the same time to have your claret uncorked is unendurable. The 'Ancient Mariner,' then about seven years old, could

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<sup>11</sup> In saying this, Coleridge unduly disparaged his own personal advantages. In youth, and before sorrow and the labour of thought had changed him, he must have been of very engaging appearance. The *godlike forehead*, which afterwards was ascribed to him, could not have been wanting at any age. That exquisite passage in Wordsworth's description of him, 'And a pale face, that seem'd undoubtedly as if a blooming face it ought to be,' had its justification in those early days. If to be blooming was the natural tendency and right of his face, blooming it then was, as we have been assured by different women of education and taste, who saw him at twenty-four in Bristol and Clifton. Two of these were friends of Hannah More, and had seen all the world. They could judge: that is, they could judge in conformity to the highest standards of taste; and both said, with some enthusiasm, that he was a most attractive young man; one adding, with a smile at the old pastoral name, 'Oh, yes, he was a perfect Strephon.' Light he was in those days and agile as a feathered Mercury; whereas he afterwards grew heavy and at times bloated; and at that gay period of life his animal spirits ran up *naturally* to the highest point on the scale; whereas in later life, when most tempestuous, they seemed most artificial. That this, which was the ardent testimony of females, was also the true one, might have been gathered from the appearance of his children. Berkeley died an infant, and him only we never saw. The sole daughter of Coleridge, as she inherited so much of her father's intellectual power, inherited also the diviner part of his features. The upper part of her face, at seventeen, when last we saw her, seemed to us angelic, and pathetically angelic; for the whole countenance was suffused by a pensive nun-like beauty too charming and too affecting ever to be forgotten. Derwent, the youngest son, we have not seen since boyhood, but at that period he had a handsome cast of features, and (from all we can gather) the representative cast of the Coleridge family. But Hartley, the eldest son, how shall we describe *him*? He was most intellectual and he was most eccentric, and his features expressed all that in perfection. Southey, in his domestic playfulness, used to call him the *Knave of Spades*; and he certainly *had* a resemblance to that well-known young gentleman. But really we do not know that it would have been at all better to resemble the knave of hearts. And it must be remembered that the knave of spades may have a brother very like himself, and yet a hundred times handsomer. There *are* such things as handsome likenesses of very plain people. Some folks pronounced Hartley Coleridge too Jewish. But to be a Jew is to be an Arab. And our own feeling was, when we met Hartley at times in solitary or desolate places of Westmoreland and Cumberland, that here was a son of Ishmael walking in the wilderness of Edom. The coruscating *nimbus* of his curling and profuse black hair, black as erebus, strengthened the Saracen impression of his features and complexion. He wanted only a turban on his head, and a spear in his right hand, to be perfect as a Bedouin. But it affected us as all things are affecting which record great changes, to hear that for a long time before his death this black hair had become white as the hair of infancy. Much sorrow and much thought had been the worms that gnawed the roots of that raven hair; that, in Wordsworth's fine way of expressing the very same fact as to Mary Queen of Scots: 'Kill'd the bloom before its time, And blanch'd, without the owner's crime, The most resplendent hair.' Ah, wrecks of once blooming nurseries, that from generation to generation, from John Coleridge the apostolic to S. T. C. the sunbright, and from S. T. C. the sunbright to Hartley the starry, lie scattered upon every shore!

not stand this. 'With *his* cross-bow'—no, stop! what are we saying? Nothing better than a kitchen knife was at hand—and 'this,' says Samuel, 'I seized, and was running at him, when my mother came in and took me by the arm. I expected a whipping, and, struggling from her, I ran away to a little hill or slope, at the bottom of which the Otter flows, about a mile from Ottery. There I stayed, my rage died away; but my obstinacy vanquished my fears, and taking out a shilling book, which had at the end morning and evening prayers, I very devoutly repeated them, thinking at the same time with a gloomy inward satisfaction how miserable my mother must be. I distinctly remember my feelings when I saw a Mr. Vaughan pass over the bridge at about a furlong's distance, and how I watched the calves in the fields beyond the river. It grew dark, and I fell asleep. It was towards the end of October, and it proved a stormy night. I felt the cold in my sleep, and dreamed that I was pulling the blanket over me, and actually pulled over me a dry thorn-bush which lay on the ground near me. In my sleep I had rolled from the top of the hill till within three yards of the river, which flowed by the unfenced edge of the bottom. I awoke several times, and, finding myself wet and cold and stiff, closed my eyes again that I might forget it.

'In the meantime my mother waited about half an hour, expecting my return when the *sulks* had evaporated. I not returning, she sent into the churchyard and round the town. Not found! Several men and all the boys were sent out to ramble about and seek me. In vain. My mother was almost distracted, and at ten o'clock at night I was cried by the crier in Ottery and in two villages near it, with a reward offered for me. No one went to bed; indeed, I believe half the town were up all the night. To return to myself. About five in the morning, or a little after, I was broad awake, and attempted to get up and walk, but I could not move. I saw the shepherds and workmen at a distance and cried, but so faintly that it was impossible to hear me thirty yards off. And there I might have lain and died, for I was now almost given over, the ponds, and even the river (near which I was lying), having been dragged. But providentially Sir Stafford Northcote, who had been out all night, resolved to make one other trial, and came so near that he heard me crying. He carried me in his arms for nearly a quarter of a mile, when we met my father and Sir Stafford's servants. I remember, and never shall forget, my father's face as he looked upon me while I lay in the servant's arms—so calm, and the tears stealing down his face, for I was the child of his old age. My mother, as you may suppose, was outrageous with joy. Meantime in rushed a young lady, crying out, "*I hope you'll whip him, Mrs. Coleridge.*" This woman still lives at Ottery, and neither philosophy nor religion has been able to conquer the antipathy which I feel towards her whenever I see her.' So says Samuel. We ourselves have not yet seen this young lady, and now in 1849, considering that it is about eighty years from the date of her wickedness, it seems unlikely that we shall. But *our* antipathy we declare to be also, alas! quite unconquerable by the latest supplements to the Transcendental philosophy that we have yet received from Deutschland. Whip the Ancient Mariner, indeed! A likely thing *that*: and at the very moment when he was coming off such a hard night's duty, and supporting a character which a classical Roman has pronounced to be a spectacle for Olympus—viz., that of '*Puer bonus cum malâ-fortunâ compositus*' (a virtuous boy matched in duel with adversity)! The sequel of the adventure is thus reported: 'I was put to bed, and recovered in a day or so. But I was certainly injured; for I was weakly and subject to ague for many years after.' Yes; and to a worse thing than ague, as not so certainly to be cured, viz., rheumatism. More than twenty years after this cold night's rest, *à la belle étoile*, we can vouch that Coleridge found himself obliged to return suddenly from a tour amongst the Scottish Highlands solely in consequence of that painful rheumatic affection, which was perhaps traceable to this childish misadventure. Alas! Francis the beautiful scamp, that caused the misadventure, and probably the bad young lady that prescribed whipping as the orthodox medicine for curing it, and the poor Ancient Mariner himself—that had to fight his way through such enemies at the price of ague, rheumatism, and tears uncounted—are all asleep at present, but in graves how widely divided! One near London; one near Seringapatam; and the young lady, we suppose, in Ottery churchyard, but her offence, though beyond the power of Philosophy to pardon, is not remembered, we trust, in her epitaph!

We are sorry that S. T. C. having been so much of a darling with his father, and considering that he looked back to the brief connection between them as solemnized by its pathetic termination, had not reported some parts of their graver intercourse. One such fragment he does report; it is an elementary lesson upon astronomy, which his father gave him in the course of a walk upon a starry night. This is in keeping with the grandeur and responsibility of the paternal relation. But really, in the only other example (which immediately occurs) of Papa's attempt to bias the filial intellect, we recognise nothing but what is mystical; and involuntarily we think of him in the modern slang character of 'governor,' rather than as a 'guide, philosopher, and friend.' It seems that one Saturday, about the time when the Rev. Walker in Furness must have been sitting down to his *exegesis* of hard sayings in the *Town and Country Magazine*, the Rev. Coleridge thought fit to reward S. T. C. for the most singular act of virtue that we have ever heard imputed to man or boy—to 'saint, to savage, or to sage'—viz., the act of eating beans and bacon to a large amount. The stress must be laid on the word *large*; because simply to masticate beans and bacon, we do not recollect to have been regarded with special esteem by the learned vicar; it was the liberal consumption of them that entitled Samuel to reward. That reward was one penny, so that in degree of merit, after all, the service may not have ranked high. But what perplexes us is the *kind* of merit. Did it bear some mystical or symbolic sense? Was it held to argue a spirit of general rebellion against Philosophy, that S. T. C. should so early in life, by one and the same act, proclaim mutinous disposition towards two of the most memorable amongst earth's philosophers—Moses and Pythagoras; of whom the latter had set his face against beans, laying it down for his opinion that to eat beans and to cut one's father's throat were acts of about equal atrocity; whilst the other, who tolerated the beans, had expressly forbidden the bacon? We are really embarrassed; finding the mere fact recorded with no further declaration of the rev. governor's reasons, than that such an 'attachment' (an *attachment* to beans and bacon!) 'ought to be encouraged'; but upon what principle we no more understand than we do the principle of the *Quale-quare-quidditive* case.

The letters in which these early memorabilia of Coleridge's life are reported did not proceed beyond the fifth. We regret this greatly, for they would have become instructively interesting as they came more and more upon the higher ground of his London experience in a mighty world of seven hundred boys—insulated in a sort of monastic but troubled seclusion amongst the billowy world of London; a seclusion that in itself was a wilderness to a home-sick child, but yet looking verdant as an oasis amongst that other wilderness of the illimitable metropolis.

It is good to be mamma's darling; but not, reader, if you are to leave mamma's arms for a vast public school in childhood. It is good to be the darling of a kind, pious, and learned father—but not if that father is to be torn away from you for ever by a death without a moment's warning, whilst as yet you yourself are but nine years old, and he has not bestowed a thought on your future establishment in life. Upon poor S. T. C. the Benjamin of his family, descended first a golden dawn within the Paradise of his father's and his mother's smiles—descended secondly and suddenly an overcasting hurricane of separation from both father and mother for ever. How dreadful, if audibly declared, this sentence to a poor nerve-shattered child: Behold! thou art commanded, before thy first decennium is completed, to see father and mother no more, and to throw thyself into the wilderness of London. Yet *that* was the destiny of Coleridge. At nine years old he was precipitated into the stormy arena of Christ's Hospital. Amongst seven hundred boys he was to fight his way to distinction; and with no other advantages of favour or tenderness than would have belonged to the son of a footman. Sublime are these democratic institutions rising upon the bosom of aristocratic England. Great is the people amongst whom the foundations of kings *can* assume this popular character. But yet amidst the grandeur of a national triumph is heard, at intervals, the moaning of individuals; and from many a grave in London rises from time to time, in arches of sorrow audible to God, the lamentation of many a child seeking to throw itself round for comfort into some distant grave of the provinces, where rest the ear and the heart of its mother.

Concerning this chapter of Coleridge's childhood, we have therefore at present no vestige of any record beyond the exquisite sketches of his schoolfellow, Charles Lamb. The five letters, however, though going over so narrow a space, go far enough to throw a pathetic light upon Coleridge's frailties of temperament. They indicate the sort of nervous agitation arising from contradictory impulses, from love too tender, and scorn too fretful, by which already in childish days the inner peace had been broken up, and the nervous system shattered. This revelation, though so unpretending and simple in manner, of the drama substantially so fearful, that was constantly proceeding in a quiet and religious parsonage—the bare possibility that sufferings so durable in their effects should be sweeping with their eternal storms a heart so capacious and so passively unresisting—are calculated to startle and to oppress us with the sense of a fate long prepared, vested in the very seeds of constitution and character; temperament and the effects of early experience combining to thwart all the morning promise of greatness and splendour; the flower unfolding its silken leaves only to suffer canker and blight; and to hang withering on the stalk, with only enough of grace and colour left to tell pathetically to all that looked upon it what it might have been.

## EDITOR'S NOTE TO THIS ESSAY

Certainly this idea of De Quincey about the misfortune to Coleridge of the early loss of his father, separation from his mother, and removal from Devon to London, is fully borne out by the more personal utterances to be found in Coleridge's poems. Looking through them with this idea in view, we are surprised at the deposit left in them by this conscious experience on Coleridge's part. Not to dwell at all on what might be very legitimately regarded as *indirect* expressions of the sentiment, we shall present here, in order to add emphasis to De Quincey's position, some of the extracts which have most impressed us. From the poem in the Early Poems 'To an Infant,' are these lines:

'Man's breathing miniature! thou mak'st me sigh—  
A babe art thou—and such a thing am I,  
To anger rapid and as soon appeased,  
For trifles mourning and by trifles pleased,  
Break friendship's mirror with a tetchy blow,  
Yet snatch what coals of fire on pleasure's altar glow.'

Still more emphatic is this passage from the poem, 'Frost at Midnight':

'My babe so beautiful! it thrills my heart  
With tender gladness thus to look at thee,  
And think that thou shalt learn far other lore,  
And in far other scenes! For I was reared  
In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim,  
And saw nought lovely but the sky and stars.  
But thou, my babe! shalt wander like a breeze  
By lakes and sandy shores beneath the crags  
Of ancient mountain, and beneath the clouds,  
Which image in their bulk both lakes and shores  
And mountain crags; so shalt thou see and hear  
The lovely shapes and sounds intelligible  
Of that eternal language, which thy God  
Utters, who from eternity doth teach  
Himself in all and all things in Himself.  
Great Universal Teacher! he shall mould  
Thy spirit, and by giving make it ask.'

In another place, when speaking of the love of mother for child and that of child for mother, awakened into life by the very impress of that love in voice and touch, he concludes with the line:

'Why was I made for Love and Love denied to me?'

And, most significant of all, is that Dedication in 1803 of his Early Poems to his brother, the Rev. George Coleridge of Ottery St. Mary, when he writes, after having dwelt on the bliss this brother had enjoyed in never having been really removed from the place of his early nurture:

'To me the Eternal Wisdom hath dispensed  
A different fortune, and more different mind—

Me, from the spot where first I sprang to light  
Too soon transplanted, ere my soul had fixed  
Its first domestic loves; and hence, through life  
Chasing chance-started friendships. A brief while  
Some have preserved me from life's pelting ills,  
But like a tree with leaves of feeble stem,  
If the clouds lasted, and a sudden breeze  
Ruffled the boughs, they on my head at once  
Dropped the collected shower: and some most false,  
False and fair-foliaged as the manchineel,  
Have tempted me to slumber in their shade  
E'en 'mid the storm; then breathing subtlest damps  
Mixed their own venom with the rain from Heaven,  
That I woke poisoned! But (all praise to Him  
Who gives us all things) more have yielded me  
Permanent shelter: and beside one friend,  
Beneath the impervious covert of one oak  
I've raised a lowly shed and know the name  
Of husband and of father; not unhearing  
Of that divine and nightly-whispering voice,  
Which from my childhood to maturer years  
Spake to me of predestinated wreaths,  
Bright with no fading colours!  
Yet, at times,  
My soul is sad, that I have roamed through life  
Still most a stranger, most with naked heart,  
At mine own home and birthplace: chiefly then  
When I remember thee, my earliest friend!  
Thee, who didst watch my boyhood and my youth;  
Did'st trace my wanderings with a father's eye;  
And, boding evil yet still hoping good,  
Rebuked each fault and over all my woes  
Sorrowed in silence!"

And certainly all this only gains emphasis from the entry we have in the 'Table Talk' under date August 16, 1832, and under the heading, 'Christ's Hospital, Bowyer':

"The discipline of Christ's Hospital in my time was ultra-Spartan; all domestic ties were to be put aside. "Boy!" I remember Bowyer saying to me once when I was crying the first day of my return after the holidays. "Boy! the school is your father! Boy! the school is your mother! Boy! the school is your brother! the school is your sister! the school is your first cousin, and all the rest of your relations! Let's have no more crying!"

## II. MR. FINLAY'S HISTORY OF GREECE

In attempting to appraise Mr. Finlay's work comprehensively, there is this difficulty. It comes before us in two characters; first, as a philosophic speculation upon history, to be valued against others speculating on other histories; secondly, as a guide, practical altogether and not speculative, to students who are navigating that great trackless ocean the *Eastern Roman* history. Now under either shape, this work traverses so much ground, that by mere multiplicity of details it denies to us the opportunity of reporting on its merits with that simplicity of judgment which would have been available in a case of severer unity. So many separate situations of history, so many critical continuations of political circumstances, sweep across the field of Mr. Finlay's telescope whilst sweeping the heavens of four centuries, that it is naturally impossible to effect any comprehensive abstractions, as to principles, from cases individual by their nature and separated by their period not less than by their relations in respect to things and persons. The mere necessity of the plan in such a work ensures a certain amount of dissent on the part of every reader; he that most frequently goes along with the author in his commentary, will repeatedly find himself diverging from it in one point or demurring to its inferences in another. Such, in fact, is the eternal disadvantage for an author upon a subject which recalls the remark of Juvenal:

'Vester porro labor fecundior, historiarum  
Scriptores: petit hic plus temporis, atque olei plus:  
Sic *ingens rerum numerus* jubet, atque operum lex.'

It is this *ingens rerum numerus* that constitutes at once the attraction of these volumes, and the difficulty of dealing with them in any adequate or satisfactory manner.

Indeed, the vistas opened up by Mr. Finlay are infinite; in *that* sense it is that he ascribes inexhaustibility to the trackless savannahs of history. These vast hunting-grounds for the imaginative understanding are in fact but charts and surveyors' outlines meagre and arid for the timid or uninspired student. To a grander intellect these historical delineations are not maps but pictures: they compose a forest wilderness, veined and threaded by sylvan lawns, 'dark with horrid shades,' like Milton's haunted desert in the 'Paradise Regained,' at many a point looking back to the towers of vanishing Jerusalem, and like Milton's desert, crossed dimly at uncertain intervals by forms doubtful and (considering the character of such awful deserts) suspicious.

Perhaps the reader, being rather 'dense,' does not understand, but we understand ourselves, which is the root of the matter. Let us try again: these historical delineations are not lifeless facts, bearing no sense or moral value, but living realities organized into the unity of some great constructive idea.

Perhaps we are obscure; and possibly (though it is treason in a writer to hint such a thing, as tending to produce hatred or disaffection towards his liege lord who is and must be his reader), yet, perhaps, even the reader—that great character—may be 'dense.' 'Dense' is the word used by young ladies to indicate a slight shade—a *souçon*—of stupidity; and by the way it stands in close relationship of sound to *Duns*, the schoolman, who (it is well known) shared with King Solomon the glory of furnishing a designation for men weak in the upper quarters. But, reader, whether the fault be in you or in ourselves, certain it is that the truth which we wish to communicate is not trivial; it is the noblest and most creative of truths, if only we are not a Duns Scholasticus for explanation, nor you (most excellent reader!) altogether a Solomon for apprehension. Therefore, again lend us your ears.

It is not, it has not been, perhaps it never will be, understood—how vast a thing is combination. We remember that Euler, and some other profound Prussians, such as Lambert, etc., tax this word *combination* with a fault: for, say they, it indicates that composition of things which proceeds two by

two (viz., com-*bina*); whereas three by three, ten by ten, fifty by fifty, is combination. It is so. But, once for all, language is so difficult a structure, being like a mail-coach and four horses required to turn round Lackington's counter<sup>12</sup>—required in one syllable to do what oftentimes would require a sentence—that it must use the artifices of a short-hand. The word *bini-æ-a* is here but an exponential or representative word: it stands for any number, for *number* in short generally as opposed to unity. And the secret truth which some years ago we suggested, but which doubtless perished as pearls to swine, is, that *combination*, or *comternation*, or *comquaternation*, or *comdenation*, possesses a mysterious virtue quite unobserved by men. All knowledge is probably within its keeping. What we mean is, that where A is not capable simply of revealing a truth (*i.e.*, by way of direct inference), very possible it is that A viewed by the light of B (*i.e.*, in some mode of combination with B) shall be capable; but again, if A + B cannot unlock the case, these in combination with C shall do so. And if not A + B + C, then, perhaps, shall A + B + C combined with D; and so on *ad infinitum*; or in other words that pairs, or binaries, ternaries, quaternaries, and in that mode of progression will furnish keys intricate enough to meet and to decipher the wards of any lock in nature.

Now, in studying history, the difficulty is about the delicacy of the lock, and the mode of applying the key. We doubt not that many readers will view all this as false refinement. But hardly, if they had much considered the real experimental cases in history. For instance, suppose the condition of a people known as respects (1) civilization, as respects (2) relation to the sovereign, (3) the prevailing mode of its industry, (4) its special circumstances as to taxation, (5) its physical conformation and temperament, (6) its local circumstances as to neighbours warlike or not warlike, (7) the quality and depth of its religion, (8) the framework of its jurisprudence, (9) the machinery by which these laws are made to act, (10) the proportion of its towns to its rural labour, and the particular action of its police; these and many other items, elements, or secondary features of a people being known, it yet remains unknown which of these leads, which is inert, and of those which are not inert in what order they arrange their action. The *principium movendi*, the central force which organizes and assigns its place in the system to all the other forces, these are quite undetermined by any mere arithmetical recitation of the agencies concerned. Often these primary principles can be deduced only tentatively, or by a regress to the steps, historically speaking, through which they have arisen. Sometimes, for instance, the population, as to its principle of expansion, and as to its rate, together with the particular influence socially of the female sex, exercises the most prodigious influence on the fortunes of a nation, and its movement backwards or forwards. Sometimes again as in Greece (from the oriental seclusion of women) these causes limit their own action, until they become little more than names.

In such a case it is essential that the leading outlines at least should be definite; that the coast line and the capes and bays should be well-marked and clear, whatever may become of the inland waters, and the separate heights in a continuous chain of mountains.

But we are not always sure that we understand Mr. Finlay, even in the particular use which he makes of the words 'Greece' and 'Grecian.' Sometimes he means beyond a doubt the people of Hellas and the Ægean islands, as *opposed* to the mixed population of Constantinople. Sometimes he means the Grecian element as opposed to the Roman element *in* the composition of this mixed Byzantine population. In this case the Greek does not mean (as in the former case) the non-Byzantine, but the Byzantine. Sometimes he means by preference that vast and most diffusive race which throughout

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<sup>12</sup> 'Lackington's counter': Lackington, an extensive seller of old books and a Methodist (see his *Confessions*) in London, viz., at the corner of Finsbury Square, about the time of the French Revolution, feeling painfully that this event drew more attention than himself, resolved to turn the scale in his own favour by a *ruse* somewhat unfair. The French Revolution had no counter; he *had*, it was circular, and corresponded to a lighted dome above. Round the counter on a summer evening, like Phæton round the world, the Edinburgh, the Glasgow, the Holyhead, the Bristol, the Exeter, and the Salisbury Royal Mails, all their passengers on board, and canvas spread, swept in, swept round, and swept out at full gallop; the proximate object being to publish the grandeur of his premises, the ultimate object to publish himself.

Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, the Euxine and the Euphrates, represented the Græco-Macedonian blood from the time of Alexander downwards. But why should we limit the case to an origin from this great Alexandrian æra? Then doubtless (330 b.c.) it received a prodigious expansion. But already, in the time of Herodotus (450 b.c.), this Grecian race had begun to sow itself broadcast over Asia and Africa. The region called *Cyrenaica* (viz., the first region which you would traverse in passing from the banks of the Nile and the Pyramids to Carthage and to Mount Atlas, *i.e.*, Tunis, Algiers, Fez and Morocco, or what we now call the Barbary States) had been occupied by Grecians nearly seven hundred years before Christ. In the time of Cræsus (say 560 b.c.) it is clear that Grecians were swarming over Lydia and the whole accessible part of Asia Minor. In the time of Cyrus the younger (say 404 b.c.) his Grecian allies found their fiercest opponents in Grecian soldiers of Artaxerxes. In the time of Alexander, just a septuagint of years from the epoch of this unfortunate Cyrus, the most considerable troops of Darius were Greeks. The truth is, that, though Greece was at no time very populous, the prosperity of so many little republics led to as ample a redundancy of Grecian population as was compatible with Grecian habits of life; for, deceive not yourself, the *harem*

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