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THOMAS DE QUINCEY

DE Q UINCEY

Selections

With Essays by

LESLIE STEPHEN

and

FRANCIS THOMPSON

With an Introduction and Notes by

M. R. RIDLEY

O X F O R D
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS
1927

Oxford University Press
London Edinburgh Glasgow Copenhagen
New York Toronto Melbourne Capetown
Bombay Calcutta Madras Shanghai
Humphrey Milford Publisher to the UNIVERSITY

Printed in Great Britain

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The portrait of De Quincey is from the chalk drawing of the De Qumcey Family Group made by James Archer, R.S.A., in 1855 (reproduced from a photograph at Worcester College, Oxford.)

INTRODUCTION

A SCHOLARLY Puck with a taste for the macabre; a walking encyclopaedia; a critic with the intellectual keenness of a razor and yet the very type of 'the absent-minded man' for a modern Theophrastus; a connoisseur in crime who would not willingly have hurt a fly; the most retiring of men and a brilliant conversationalist; as gentle as a child with his friends and as pugnacious as a terrier in the printed page; soaring to the heights of imagination and descending to the puerile in controversy; opium-drinker, dreamer of dreams, historian and political economist; vendor of cheap paste and of flawless gems; this bundle of contradictions is De Quincey, one of the most provoking, stimulating, and fascinating figures in the long gallery of English letters.

I

Of De Quincey the man we can form a moderately complete composite picture, both from what he tells us of himself and from what his friends remembered of him. We are told that some lines in *The Castle of Indolence* have an oddly prophetic accuracy,—

> He came, the bard, a little Druid wight
> Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,
> With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,
> As is his sister of the copses green,
> He crept along, unpromising of mien.
> Gross he who judges so! His soul was fair.

And we have Mr. J. R. Findlay's account of him :

' He was a very little man (about 5 feet 3 or 4 inches), his countenance the most remarkable for intellectual attractiveness that I have ever seen. His features, though not regular, were aristocratically fine, and an air of delicate breeding pervaded the face. . . •. His dress was at all times peculiar. His clothes had generally a look of extreme age, and also of having been made for a person somewhat larger than himself. . . . I have sometimes seen appearances about him of a shirt and shirt-collar, but usually there were no indications of these articles of dress. He walked with considerable rapidity (he said walking was the only athletic exercise in which he had ever excelled), and with an odd one-sided and yet straightforward motion, moving his legs only, and neither his arms, head, nor any other part of his body, like Wordsworth's cloud

Moving all together if he moved at all.

His hat, which had the antediluvian aspect characteristic of the rest of his clothes, was generally stuck on the back of his head ; and no one who ever met that antiquated figure, with that strangely dreamy and intellectual face, making its way rapidly, and with an oddly deferential air, through any of the streets of Edinburgh—a sight certainly by no means common, for he was very seldom to be seen in town—could ever forget it.'

His habits and his character were not less singular than his appearance. There was a strange vagrancy in his blood that forbade settlement. In youth he wandered, first happily in North Wales, and then for miserable months in the streets of London. Later he might rent Wordsworth's cottage in the Lakes, but he spent probably more time in London and Edinburgh than at Grasmere. Later still, when his wanderings were more circumscribed, and the cottage at Lasswade was their centre, and the nearest approach to a home that he ever knew, he was perpetually disappearing into one or other obscure lodging in Edinburgh. There he sat, surrounded by a welter of papers, working at his article for *Tait* or *Blackwood,* or rose to dig frenziedly amidst the

chaos for some earlier and forgotten article, which was more probably than not in another chaos in another lodging. In practical affairs he had an incompetence amounting to perverse genius. Who but De Quincey would have solemnly tendered a £50 note as security for the 7s. 6d. which he was borrowing from a friend ? His shyness was almost morbid, and his absent-mindedness beyond belief. To secure his attendance at a dinner party was an exploit attempted by many and achieved by few : personal escort was the only method. He would arrive in the most outrageous miscellany of apparel and irradiate the company with his conversation. For he was a true conversationalist, not a brilliant monologist like Coleridge ; too much the aristocrat to give less than his best, or to be content unless he kindled others to give theirs. But it was perhaps at home with his daughters that the truest and most delightful De Quincey emerged. One of his daughters has left a description of her father on such an occasion which gives us a vivid glimpse of this strange, absent-minded, kindly scholar of genius:

' The newspaper was brought out, and he, telling in his own delightful way, rather than reading, the news, would, on questions from this one or that one of the party, often including young friends of his children, neighbours, or visitors from distant places, illuminate the subject with such a wealth of memories, of old stories, of past or present experiences, of humour, of suggestion, even of prophecy, as by its very wealth makes it impossible to give any taste of it. . . . He was not a reassuring man for nervous people to live with, as those nights were exceptions on which he did not set something on tire, the commonest incident being for some one to look up from book or work to say casually, *Papa, your hair is on fire* ; of which a calm *Is it, my love* ? and a hand rubbing out the blaze was all the notice taken.'

*

II

Of De Quincey the writer an estimate is harder to form. Of all the masters of English prose he is the only one whose work consists solely of contributions to periodical magazines; and such work is commonly done under conditions, of which De Quincey himself bitterly complains, which impose a severe handicap on the writer, almost certainly exaggerate his defects, and probably obscure his merits. If a man is writing with the printer's devil metaphorically, or as with De Quincey often actually, at his elbow, it is inevitable that he will include many blemishes which leisurely revision would excise, and forgo many graces which leisurely composition would include. The wonder with De Quincey is not that he wrote some pages which are bad, but that he wrote so much which is good in so many diverse fields, and that in one particular style of writing he is supreme.

Leslie Stephen, in the able, but prejudiced, and somewhat patronizing essay here printed, writes two sentences of which one is untrue and the other at least misleading. The first is 'The rest of his life' (after Oxford) 'was spent in consuming opium or in breaking off the habit at intervals, and in planning more or less ambitious works.' It would be hard to find a more partial piece of criticism than this picture of the drug-sodden idler. In actual fact the rest of De Quincey's long life, with the exception of three or four years, was spent in making a living for himself and his family by the exercise of his talents. Periodical journalism may not be the most exalted form of literary craftsmanship, but it is at least an honest and exacting trade.

The second sentence is hardly better: 'And so in a life

of seventy-three years De Quincey read extensively and thought acutely by fits, ate an enormous quantity of opium, wrote a few pages which revealed new capacities in the language, and provided a good deal of respectable padding for magazines.' Work which the editor of any periodical in the country would have been glad to secure is not ordinarily described as padding; and the repeated sneer at the opium-taking may be germane to a study of De Quincey's morals, but is out of place in an estimate of his literary calibre.

We should not spend time on such isolated extracts from an essay which, for all its bias, is full of acute criticism, were it not that they are representative of a view very widely held about De Quincey. He is known to many readers as the writer of the *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* and a good deal of ' impassioned prose', and as nothing more. And he is imagined by them as a man who spent the greater part of his life in a series of opium dreams. Whereas in fact De Quincey ranges at ease over a peculiarly wide field of subjects and is a complete master of several quite different but inevitably appropriate styles. He can write on political economy, or on the knocking on the gate in *Macbeth.* He can narrate the romantic adventures of the Spanish Military Nun, or the formal history of the Revolt of the Kalmuck Tartars. He can support with a wealth of knowledge the most paradoxical view of the Essenes, or write *Suspiria.* He is by turns historian, literary critic, economist, theologian, romance-writer, prose-poet. Much of his work is more remarkable for sheer intellectual power and close reasoning than for imagination, and his range of actual information is startlingly wide. If a little more

attention were paid to the full title of his most famous work a juster estimate of him would perhaps be formed. The title of the paper which appeared in the *London Magazine* for September 1821 was *Confessions of an Opium-Eater, being an extract from the Life of a Scholar*; and for any just estimate of De Quincey the scholarship is of vastly more importance than the opium-taking. The one was a failing, grave enough, and at times pitifully disastrous in its consequences, but the other was a part and a large part of the essential man. De Quincey's faults are varied and serious ; his bad taste is often conspicuous and his humour almost uniformly deplorable; he is often inaccurate through haste and not infrequently for the same reason inconsistent; he is often ill-considered in his judgements, sometimes from haste, sometimes from personal prejudice, and sometimes from an ignorantly narrow patriotism; and occasionally he seems to be wilfully sinning against the light. But he has always the scholar's belief in the pursuit of truth by the alliance of the intellect and the imagination, the scholar's keenness of perception and delicacy of touch, the scholar's innate hatred of the slipshod and impatience of the phrase which only approximates to the intended meaning. Even his apparent long-windedness springs from the instinct for scrupulous completeness, the dislike of the unbalanced and unfinished.

De Quincey's merits are such that we do his reputation poor service by attempting to minimize his faults or conceal them under silence, particularly since they are so glaring that the attempt is bound to fail.

He has, to begin with, a capacity, remarkable in one of such real intellectual keenness, for the merely stupid. In

discussing, for example, the average age of the Oxford undergraduate he commits himself to the statement that ' there must always be more men of three years standing than of two or one '. We rub our eyes, hardly believing that we have read aright. Or he solemnly says that' Demosthenes or Plato is not read to the extent of twenty pages annually by ten people in Europe '. Or he says that two Miltonic lines are of ' the same identical structure ' when one begins with trochee and iamb and the other with two trochees.

He is sometimes, though rarely and in the heat of a piece of special pleading, far from honest; as in the paper on *Milton* v. *Southey and Landor* where he misrepresents not only what Landor said but also what Wordsworth manifestly meant, because he cannot bear to admit that Wordsworth meant it. Or again, wishing to arraign Milton for an ' unaccountable blunder ' he does not take the trouble to read what Milton wrote, though he has just been pluming himself on his ' habit of systematically accurate reading '. Or, perhaps the worst case of all, since he knew that many of his readers could not challenge him, he quietly ' sets Sappho aside ' because a consideration of her transcendent lyric genius would have been destructive of his case, even on the false grounds on which he is arguing it. De Quincey, that is, will from time to time permit himself the methods of the clever barrister seeking a verdict, instead of those of the honest critic seeking the truth.

But his most serious faults are faults of taste. He had a misguided opinion of himself as a humorist, and it is singular to find a man of such keen sensibility and penetrating perception of beauty, a real aristocrat of letters,

descending so low. There have been other great writers deficient in humour. Milton's attempts at the light vein are about as graceful as the laborious mirth-making of his own elephant in Eden. But De Quincey's humour is too often that of the street gamin. His chief method is a chaffing familiarity which is never funny and usually offensive. To call Dr. Johnson ' Sam ', or Augustus Caesar 'my little man', or to say of the birth of Shakespeare's daughter ' Oh fie ! Miss Susanna, you came rather before you were wanted' can hardly amuse any one but De Quincey himself, and one could wish that he had not been so cheaply amused. Occasionally there is not even the excuse of attempted humour. Because a Liverpool literary coterie had irritated him by a depreciation of Burns he writes of certain members of it, after their deaths, as follows : ' Mr. Roscoe is dead and has found time since then to be half forgotten ; Dr. Currie the physician has been found unable to heal himself ; Mr. Shepherd of Gatacre is a name and a shadow ; Mr. Clarke is a shadow without a name.' This indecent gibing harms no one but the giber.

These faults are serious, and we cannot but regret them, but they are not De Quincey. They are motes in the sunlight of his true genius. If he is capable of prejudice he is capable also of the most generous enthusiasm and the subtlest insight. His estimate of Lamb, for example, is something more than a sympathetic eulogy of a lovable contemporary ; it has that inner truth of the great portrait which reveals the soul behind the lineaments. And as with men so with literature. He lays his finger with unerring precision upon the essentials. He often takes long to arrive at his point, and he may labour the point too much

when he has arrived at it; but even if he hits the nail too often there is no question that he hits it on the head, and the point is frequently an illuminatingly novel one. Again and again in De Quincey's critical writing we are conscious of the sudden lightning flash which cuts through the darkness and makes the salient object stand out in the vividest relief.

Yet for all his versatility, his wide range of scholarship, and his critical acumen, De Quincey's fame rests ultimately, and rightly rests, upon his unrivalled mastery of a particular type of English prose. We need not waste time in disputing over labels nor in the vain detection of ' influences ' and ' affinities ' ' Impassioned prose' may or may not be a happy description of De Quincey's most characteristic work, and in it the curious ear may catch echoes of Sir Thomas Browne and others. But what is important is the work itself. The English language is an instrument of many stops and pipes, before which the inferior artist stands as impotently as the two courtiers before Hamlet, but from which the great literary composers can draw music of unending richness and delicacy. From this great instrument De Quincey's genius elicited harmonies hitherto unheard, and, once heard, never to be mistaken. They are marked in turn by a grave and melancholy sonority, a slowly swelling majesty, the ' *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric ', a vivid fire, or the most exquisitely lingering delicacy of touch. The reader may be roused by the staccato attack of ' God smote Savannah-la-Mar '; he may be spell-bound by the few notes of a sudden melody, such as the 'wind that had swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries'; he may surrender himself to the controlled symphonic

splendours that in *Our Ladies of Sorrow* bear him away to the far countries of the imagination : but however various the music, he knows that one musician only holds its secret, ' a little Druid wight', De Quincey.

Sir Leslie Stephen's essay is reprinted from *Hours in a Library* by permission of Messrs. John Murray; Francis Thompson's by permission of Messrs. Burns, Oates, and Washbourne, Ltd.

*

DE QUINCEY'S LIFE

1785. August 15. De Quincey born, in Fountain Street, Manchester.

1785-91. Childhood at ' The Farm' near Manchester. Deaths of Jane (1787) and Elizabeth (1791), De Quincey's sisters.

1792. Family moved to ' Greenhay ', Manchester. Return from abroad of De Quincey's father, and his death.

1792-6. De Quincey and his brother William under tutorship of ' the Rev S. H '

1796. Move to Bath. De Quincey at the Grammar School, with his brother Richard (' Pink ').

1799. De Quincey, after an illness resulting from a blow on the head, transferred to private school at Winkfield, Wiltshire.

1800. Acquaintance with Lord Westport. De Quincey visits him at Eton (meeting with George III) and travels with him to Ireland. On returning to England, visit to Lady Carbery at Laxton.

1800-2. At Manchester Grammar School

1802. Runs away from school. Wanderings in North Wales.

1803. In poverty in London. In the autumn goes up to Worcester College, Oxford. Study of German philosophy.

1804. First introduction to opium.

1807. Leaves Oxford without taking degree. Meeting with Coleridge. Escorts Mrs Coleridge and her children to the Lakes and meets Wordsworth and Sou they.

1808. In London.

1809. Residence in the Lakes. Friendship with John Wilson (' Christopher North ').

1813. Greatly increased consumption of opium.

1814. Visit to Edinburgh.

1816. Marriage to Margaret Simpson.

1819-20. Editorship of *Westmoreland Gazette,*

1821 (September). Appearance in the *London Magazine* of the first paper of *Confessions of an Opium-Eater, being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar.*

1821-5. Contributions to *London Magazine.* Residence chiefly in London.

1826. Beginning of connexion with *Blackwood's Magazine.*

1827. *On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts* (in *Blackwood).*

1830. Removal to Edinburgh.

1832. *Klosterheim, or the Masque.*

1833. Death of De Quincey's youngest son.

1834. Beginning of connexion with *Tait's Magazine.*

1835. Death of De Quincey's eldest son.

1837. Death of his wife.

1840. Tenancy of the cottage at Lasswade near Edinburgh. De Quincey lives there with his daughters, but spends much time in lodgings in Edinburgh.

1844. *The Logic of Political Economy.*

1845. *Suspiria de Profundis* (in *Blackwood).*

1846. *The Spanish Military Nun* (in *Tait's Magazine).*

1848. Contributions to *The North British Review.*

1849. *The English Mail-Coach* (in *Blackwood).*

1850. Collective Edition of De Quincey's work under his own editorship decided on.

1853. Appearance of the first volume. De Quincey at work on the further volumes till his death.

1859. December8. De Quincey died, in Lothian Street, Edinburgh.

EDITIONS

Collective Edition, vols, i-xiv, Edinburgh, 1853-1860 ; vol, xv, 1863 ; vol. xvi, 1871.

Collected Writings, New and Enlarged Edition. Ed. David Masson, 14 vols., Edinburgh, 1889, 1890.

Select Essays, Narrative and Imaginative. Ed. David Masson, 2 vols., Edinburgh, 1888.

Select Essays. With Introduction by Charles Whibley. Blackie.

Literary Criticism. Ed. H. Darbishire. Oxford, 1909.

LESLIE STEPHEN ON DE QUINCEY

LITTLE more than fourteen years ago there passed from among us a man who held a high and very peculiar position in English literature. For seventy-three years De Quincey had been carrying on an operation, which, for want of a better term, we must describe as living, but which would be more fitly described by some mode of speech indicating an existence on the confines of dreamland and reality. In 1821 he first published the work with which his name is most commonly associated, and at uncertain intervals he gave tokens to mankind of his continued presence on earth, 1o What his life may have been in the intervals seems to have been at times unknown even to his friends. He began by disappearing from school and from his family, and seems to have fallen into the habit of temporary eclipses. At one moment he dropped upon his acquaintance from the clouds ; at another he would vanish into utter darkness for weeks or months together. One day he came to dine with Christopher North—so we are told in the professor's life—was detained for the night by a heavy storm of rain, and prolonged his impromptu visit for a year. During 20 that period his habits must have been rather amazing to a well-regulated household. His wants, indeed, were simple, and, in one sense, regular ; a particular joint of mutton, cut according to a certain mathematical formula, and an ounce of laudanum, made him happy for a day. But in the hours when ordinary beings are awake he was generally to be found stretched in profound opium-slumbers upon a rug before the fire, and it was only about two or three in the morning that he gave unequivocal symptoms of vitality, and suddenly gushed forth in streams of wondrous 30 eloquence to the supper parties detained for the purpose

of witnessing the display. That is the most distinct glimpse I have caught of the living De Quincey. Between these irregular apparitions we are lastly given to understand that his life was so strange that its details would be incredible. What these incredible details may have been, I have no means of knowing. It is enough that he was a strange unsubstantial being, flitting uncertainly about in the twilight regions of society, emerging by fits and starts into visibility, afflicted with a general vagueness as to the ordinary duties of mankind, and always and everywhere taking much more opium than was good for him. He tells us, indeed, that he broke off his overmastering habit by vigorous efforts ; as he also tells us that opium is a cure for most grievous evils, and especially saved him from an early death by consumption. It is plain enough, however, that he never really refrained for any length of time ; and perhaps we should congratulate ourselves on a propensity, unfortunate, it may be, for its victim, but leading to the Confessions as one collateral result.

The only part of De Quincey's career, in which we may conceive ourselves to be treading the firm ground of fact, is the early period described in his various autobiographical writings. If we could evaporate the gorgeous rhetoric and the diffuse discussions of irrelevant topics, of which they are chiefly composed, we might perhaps come upon a residuum of solid dates and facts. Setting aside, however, the difficulty of discriminating the facts from fancies, we should not learn much that is of importance. That he was the son of a rich merchant, who left him an orphan at an early age ; that he lived in a suburb now swallowed up by the advance of Manchester ; that he was sent to school, and proved so bright that he became a prodigy of Greek scholarship; that he quarrelled with his guardians, ran away to Wales, and afterwards led for a time a strange, incognito existence amongst outcasts and thievish attorneys

in London, is pretty well all that we are told. From other sources, it seems that he ought to have taken a brilliant degree at Oxford in the same year with Sir Robert Peel, but that he decamped in a sudden panic before the end of the examination. It is plain enough that before his opium excesses he was the victim of a morbid temperament, and little calculated to struggle with the prosaic hardships of life. He gives thanks himself for four circumstances. He rejoices that his lot was cast in a rustic solitude; that that solitude was in England; that his 'infant feelings TO were moulded by the gentlest of sisters', instead of 'horrid pugilistic brothers'; and that he and his were members of 'a pure, holy, and' (the last epithet should be emphasized) 'magnificent Church'. The thanksgiving is characteristic, for it indicates his naive conviction that his admiration was due to the intrinsic merits of the place and circumstances of his birth, and not to the accident that they were his own. It would be useless to inquire whether a more bracing atmosphere and a less retired spot might have been more favourable to his talents; but we 20 may trace the influence of these conditions of his early life upon his subsequent career.

De Quincey implicitly puts forward a claim which has been accepted by many competent critics. They declare, and he tacitly assumes, that he is a master of the English language. He claims a sort of infallibility in deciding upon the precise use of words and the merits of various styles. But he explicitly claims something more. He declares that he has used language for purposes to which it has hardly been applied by any prose writers. The *Confessions of an* 30 *Opium-eater* and the *Suspiria de Profundis* are, he tells us, 'modes of impassioned prose, ranging under no precedents that I am aware of in any literature'. The only confessions that have previously made any great impression

upon the world are those of St. Augustine and of Rousseau; but, with one short exception in St. Augustine, neither of those compositions contains any passion, and, therefore, De Quincey stands absolutely alone as the inventor and sole performer on a new musical instrument—for such an instrument is the English language in his hands. He belongs to a genus in which he is the only individual. The novelty and the difficulty of the task must be his apology if he fails, and causes of additional glory if he succeeds. He alone of all human beings who have stained paper since the world began, has entered a path, which the absence of rivals proves to be encumbered with some unusual obstacles. The accuracy and value of so bold a claim require a short examination. After all, every writer, however obscure, may contrive by a judicious definition to put himself into a solitary class. He has some peculiarities which distinguish him from all other mortals. He is the only journalist who writes at a given epoch from a particular garret in Grub Street, or the only poet who is exactly six feet high and measures precisely forty-two inches round the chest. Any difference whatever may be applied to purposes of classification, and the question is whether the difference is, or is not, of much importance. By examining, therefore, the propriety of De Quincey's view of his own place in literature, we shall be naturally led to some valuation of his distinctive merits. In deciding whether a bat should be classed with birds or beasts, we have to determine the nature of the beast and the true theory of his wings. And De Quincey, if the comparison be not too quaint, is like the bat, an ambiguous character, rising on the wings of prose to the borders of the true poetical region.

De Quincey, then, announces himself as an impassioned writer, as a writer in impassioned prose, and, finally, as applying impassioned prose to confessions. The first

question suggested by this assertion concerns the sense of the word ' impassioned ' There is very little of what one ordinarily means by passion in the Confessions or elsewhere. There are no explosions of political wrath, such as animate the *Letters on a Regicide Peace,* or of a deep religious emotion, which breathes through many of our greatest prose writers. The language is undoubtedly a vehicle for sentiments of a certain kind, but hardly of that burning and impetuous order which we generally indicate by impassioned. It is deep, melancholy reverie, not concentrated essence of emotion ; and the epithet fails to indicate any specific difference between himself and many other writers. The real peculiarity is not in the passion expressed, but in the mode of expressing it. De Ouincey resembles the story-tellers mentioned by some Eastern travellers. So extraordinary is their power of face, and so skilfully modulated are the inflexions of their voices, that even a European, ignorant of the language, can follow the narrative with absorbing interest. One may fancy that if De Quincey's language were emptied of all meaning whatever, the mere sound of the words would move us, as the lovely word Mesopotamia moved Whitefield's hearer. The sentences are so delicately balanced, and so skilfully constructed, that his finer passages fix themselves in the memory without the aid of metre. Humbler writers are content if they can get through a single phrase without producing a decided jar. They aim at keeping up a steady jog-trot, which shall not give actual pain to the jaws of the reader. They no more think of weaving whole paragraphs or chapters into complex harmonies, than an ordinary pedestrian of ' going to church in a galliard and coming home in a coranto '. Even our great writers generally settle down to a stately but monotonous gait, after the fashion of Johnson or Gibbon, or are content with adopting a style as transparent and inconspicuous as possible.

Language, according to the common phrase, is the dress of thought; and that dress is the best, according to modern canons of taste, which attracts least attention from its wearer. De Quincey scorns this sneaking maxim of prudence, and boldly challenges our admiration by appearing in the richest colouring that can be got out of the dictionary. His language deserves a commendation sometimes bestowed by ladies upon rich garments, that it is capable of standing up by itself. The form is so admirable that, for purposes of criticism, we must consider it as something apart from the substance. The most exquisite passages in De Quincey's writings are all more or less attempts to carry out the idea expressed in the title of the dream fugue. They are intended to be musical compositions, in which words have to play the part of notes. They are impassioned, not in the sense of expressing any definite sentiment, but because, from the structure and combination of the sentences, they harmonize with certain phases of emotion.

Now in all this it is plain that the peculiar characteristic of De Quincey is merely that he is attempting to do in prose what every great poet does in verse. The specific mark thus indicated is still insufficient to give him a solitary position among writers. All great rhetoricians, as De Quincey defines and explains the term, rise to the borders of poetry, and the art which has recently been cultivated among us under the name of word-painting may be more fitly described as an attempt to produce poetical effects without the aid of metre. From most of the writers described under this rather unpleasant phrase he differs by the circumstance, that his art is more nearly allied to music than to painting. Or, if compared to any painters, it must be to those who care comparatively little for distinct portraiture or dramatic interest. He resembles rather the school which is satisfied in contemplating gorgeous draperies, and graceful limbs and long processions

of imposing figures, without caring to interpret the meaning of their works, or to seek for more than the harmonious arrangement of form and colour. In other words, his prose-poems should be compared to the paintings which aim at an effect analogous to that of stately pieces of music. Milton is the poet whom he seems to regard with the sincerest admiration ; and he apparently wishes to emulate the majestic rhythm of the ' God-gifted organ-voice of England'. Or we may, perhaps, admit some analogy between his prose and the poetry of Keats, though it is remarkable that he speaks with very scant appreciation of his contemporary. The Ode to a Nightingale, with its marvellous beauty of versification and the dim associations half-consciously suggested by its language, surpasses, though it resembles, some of De Ouincey's finest passages ; and the *Hyperion* might have been translated into prose as a fitting companion for some of the opium dreams. It is in the success with which he produces such effects as these that De Quincey may fairly claim to be almost, if not quite, unrivalled in our language. Pompous (if that word may be used in a good sense) declamation in prose, where the beauty of the thought is lost in the splendour of the style, is certainly a rare literary product. Of the great rhetoricians whom De Quincey quotes in the Essay on Rhetoric just noticed, such men as Burke and Jeremy Taylor lead us to forget the means in the end. They sound the trumpet as a warning, not for the mere delight in its volume of sound. Perhaps his affinity to Sir Thomas Browne is more obvious ; and one can understand the admiration which he bestows upon the opening bar of a passage in the Urn-burial:—' Now since these bones have rested quietly in the grave under the drums and tramplings of three conquests,' &c. ' What a melodious ascent,' he exclaims, ' as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the pomps of earth and from the sanctities

of the grave ! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric ! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by vast periods of conquests and dynasties ; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies, Antiochi and Arsacides ! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations ; by the drums and tramplings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead—the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave ! '

The commentator is seeking to eclipse the text, and his words are at once a description and an example of his own most characteristic rhetoric. Wordsworth once uttered an aphorism which De Quincey repeats with great admiration : that language is not, as I have just said, the dress, but ' the incarnation of thought ' But though accepting and enforcing the doctrine by showing that the ' mixture is too subtle, the intertexture too ineffable ' to admit of expression, he condemns the style which is the best illustration of its truth. He is very angry with the admirers of Swift; De Foe and ' many hundreds ' of others wrote something quite as good ; it only wanted ' plain good sense, natural feeling, unpretendingness, some little scholarly practice in putting together the clockwork of sentences, and, above all, the advantage of' an appropriate subject. Could Swift, he asks, have written a pendant to passages in Sir W. Raleigh, or Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor ? He would have cut the same figure as ' a forlorn scullion from a greasy eating-house at Rotterdam, if suddenly called away in vision to act as seneschal to the festival of Belshazzar the King, before a thousand of his lords '. And what, we may retort, would Taylor, or Browne, or De Quincey himself, have done, had they been wanted to write down the project of Wood's halfpence in Ireland ? They would have resembled a king in his coronation robes

compelled to lead a forlorn hope up the scaling ladders. The fact is, that Swift required for his style not only the plain good sense, and other rare qualities enumerated, but pungent humour, quick insight, deep passion, and general power of mind, such as is given to few men in a century. But, as in his case, the thought is really incarnated in the language, we cannot criticize the style separately from the thoughts, or we can only assign, as its highest merit, its admirable fitness for producing the desired effect. It would be wrong to invert De Quincey's censure, and blame him because his gorgeous robes are not fitted for more practical purposes. To everything there is a time ; for plain English, and for elaborate ' bravura ', as De Quincey delights to call his highly-wrought passages. It would be difficult or impossible, and certainly it would be superfluous, to define with any precision the peculiar flavour of De Quincey's style. The chemistry of critics has not yet succeeded in resolving any such product into its constituent elements ; nor, if it could, should we be much nearer to understanding their effect in combination.

A few specimens would do more than any description ; and De Quincey is too well known to justify quotation. It may be enough to notice that most of his brilliant performances are variations on the same theme. He appeals to our terror of the infinite, to the shrinking of the human mind before astronomical distances and geological periods of time. He paints vast perspectives, opening in long succession, till we grow dizzy in the contemplation. The cadence of his style suggests sounds echoing each other, and growing gradually fainter, till they die away into infinite distance. Two great characteristics, he tells us, of his opium dreams were a deep-seated melancholy and an exaggeration of the things of space and time. Nightly he descended ' into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that he could

ever reascend '. He saw buildings and landscapes ' in proportion so vast as the human eye is not fitted to receive '. He seemed to live ninety or a hundred years in a night, and even to pass through periods far beyond the limits of human existence. Melancholy and an awe-stricken sense of the vast and vague are the emotions which he communicates with the greatest power ; though the melancholy is too dreamy to deserve the name of passion, and the terror of the infinite is not explicitly connected with any religious emotion. It is a proof of the fineness of his taste, that he scarcely ever falls into bombast; we tremble at his audacity in accumulating gorgeous phrases ; but we confess that he is justified by the result. The only exception that I can remember is the passage in *The English Mail-coach,* where his exaggerated patriotism—to which I must presently refer again—leads him into what strikes me at least as a rather vulgar bit of claptrap. If any reader will take the trouble to compare De Quincey's account of a kind of anticipation of the Balaklava charge at the battle of Talavera, with Napier's description of the same facts, he will be amused at the distortion of history ; but whatever the accuracy of the statements, one is a little shocked at finding ' the inspiration of God' attributed to the gallant dragoons who were cut to pieces, on that occasion, as other gallant men have been before and since. The phrase is overcharged, and inevitably suggests a cynical reaction of mind. The ideas of dragoons and inspiration do not coalesce so easily as might be wished; but, with this exception, I think that his purple patches are almost irreproachable, and may be read and re-read with increasing delight. I know of no other modern writer who has soared into the same regions with so uniform and easy a flight.

The question is often raised how far the attempt to produce by one art effects specially characteristic of another, can be considered as legitimate ; whether, for example,

a sculptor, when encroaching upon the province of the painter, or a prose writer attempting to rival poets, may not be summarily condemned. The answer probably would be that a critic who lays down such rules is erecting himself into a legislator, when he should be a simple observer. Success justifies itself; and if De Quincey obtains, without the aid of metre, graces which few other writers have won by the same means, it is all the more creditable to De Quincey. A certain presumption, however, remains in such cases, that the failure to adopt the ordinary methods implies a certain deficiency of power. If we ask why De Quincey, who trenched so boldly upon the peculiar province of the poet, yet failed to use the poetical form, there is one very obvious answer. He has one intolerable fault, a fault which has probably done more than any other to diminish his popularity, and which is, of all faults, most diametrically opposed to poetical excellence. He is utterly incapable of concentration. He is, from the very principles on which his style is constructed, the most diffuse of writers. Other men will pack half a dozen distinct propositions into a sentence, and care little if they are somewhat crushed and distorted in the process. De Quincey insists upon putting each of them separately, smoothing them out elaborately, till not a wrinkle disturbs their uniform surface, and then presenting each of them for our acceptance with a placid smile. His very creditable desire for lucidity of expression makes him nervously anxious to avoid any complexity of thought. Each step of his argument, each shade of meaning, and each fact in his narrative, must have its own separate embodiment; and every joint and connecting link must be carefully and accurately defined. The clearness is won at a heavy price. There is some advantage in this elaborate method of dissecting out every distinct fibre and ramification of an argument. But, on the whole, one is apt to remember that life is limited, and that there are some

things in this world which must be taken for granted. If a man's boyhood fill two volumes, and if one of these (though under unfavourable circumstances) took six months to revise, it seems probable that in later years he would have taken longer to record events than to live them. No autobiography written on such principles could ever reach even the middle life of the author. Take up, for example, the first volume of his collected works. Why, on the very first page, having occasion to mention Christendom in the fifteenth century, should he provide against some eccentric misconception by telling us that it did not, at that time, include any part of America? Why should it take considerably more than a page to explain that when a schoolmaster begins lessons punctually, and leaves off too late, there will be an encroachment on the hours of play? Or two pages to describe how a porter dropped a portmanteau on a flight of stairs, and didn't waken a schoolmaster? Or two more to account for the fact that he asked a woman the meaning of the noise produced by the 'bore' in the Dee, instead of waiting till she spoke to him? Impassioned prose may be a very good thing; but when its current is arrested by such incessant stoppages, and the beauty of the English language displayed by showing how many faultless sentences may be expended on an exhaustive description of irrelevant trifles, the human mind becomes recalcitrant. A man may become prolix from the fullness or fervency of his mind; but prolixity produced by this finical minuteness of language, ends by distressing one's nerves. It is the same sense of irritation as is produced by waiting for the tedious completion of an elaborate toilette, and one is rather tempted to remember Artemus Ward's description of the Fourth of July oration, which took four hours 'to pass a given point'.

This peculiarity of his style is connected with other qualities upon which a great deal of eulogy has been

expended. There are two faculties in which, so far as my experience goes, no man, woman, or child ever admits his or her own deficiency. The driest of human beings will boast of their sense of humour; and the most perplexed, of their logical acuteness. De Quincey has been highly praised, both as a humorist and as a logician. He believed in his own powers, and exhibits them rather ostentatiously. He says, pleasantly enough, but not without a substratum of real conviction, that he is ' a *doctor seraphicus,* and also *inexpugnabilis* upon quillets of logic '. I confess that I am generally sceptical as to the merits of infallible dialecticians, because I have observed that a man's reputation for inexorable logic is generally in proportion to the error of his conclusions. A logician, in popular estimation, seems to be one who never shrinks from a *reductio ad absurdnm.* His merits are measured, not by the accuracy of his conclusions, but by the distance which separates them from his premisses. The explanation doubtless lies in the general impression that logic is concerned with words and not with things. There is a vague belief that by skilfully linking syllogisms you can form a chain sufficiently strong to cross the profoundest abyss, and which will need no test of observation and verification. A dexterous performer, it is supposed, might pass from one extremity of the universe to the other without ever touching ground ; and people do not observe that the refusal to draw an inference may be just as great a proof of logical skill as ingenuity in drawing it. Now, De Quincey's claim to infallibility would be plausible, if we still believed that to define words accurately is the same thing as to discover facts, and that binding them skilfully together is equivalent to reasoning securely. He is a kind of rhetorical Euclid. He makes such a flourish with his apparatus of axioms and definitions that you do not suspect any lurking fallacy. He is careful to show you the minutest details of his argumentative

mechanism. Each step in the process is elaborately and separately set forth; you are not assumed to know anything, or to be capable of supplying any links for yourself; it shall not even be taken for granted without due notice that things which are equal to a third thing are equal to each other; and the consequence is, that few people venture to question processes which seem to be so plainly set forth, and to advance by such a careful development.

When, indeed, De Quincey has a safe guide, he can put an argument with admirable clearness. The expositions of political economy, for example, are clear and ingenious, though even here I may quote Mr. Mill's remark, that he should have imagined a certain principle—obvious enough when once stated—to have been familiar to all economists, ' if the instance of Mr. De Quincey did not prove that the complete non-recognition and implied denial of it are compatible with great intellectual ingenuity and close intimacy with the subject-matter '. Admirable skill of expression is, indeed, no real safeguard against logical blunders; and I will venture to say that De Quincey rarely indulges in this ostentatious logical precision without plunging into downright fallacies. I will take two instances. The first is trifling, but characteristic. Poor Dr. Johnson used to reproach himself, as De Quincey puts it, ' with lying too long in bed '. How absurd ! is the comment. The doctor got up at eleven because he went to bed at three. If he had gone to bed at twelve, could he not easily have got up at eight ? The remark would have been sound in form, though a quibble in substance, if Johnson had complained of lying in bed ' too late '; but as De Quincey himself speaks of ' too long ' instead of ' too late ', it is an obvious reply that eight hours are of the same length at every period of the day. The great logician falls into another characteristic error in the same paragraph. Dr. Johnson, he says, was not ' indolent'; but he adds that Johnson

' had a morbid predisposition to decline labour from his scrofulous habit of body ', which was increased by over-eating and want of exercise. It is a cruel mode of vindication to say that you are not indolent, but only predisposed by a bad constitution and bad habits to decline labour ; but the advantage of accurate definition is, that you can knock a man down with one hand, and pick him up with the other.

To take a more serious case. De Quincey undertakes to refute Hume's memorable argument against miracles. There are few better arenas for intellectual combats, and De Quincey has in it an unusual opportunity for display. He is obviously on his mettle. He comes forward with a whole battery of propositions, carefully marshalled in strategical order, and supported by appropriate ' lemmas '. One of his arguments, whether cogent or not, is that Hume's objection will not apply to the evidence of a multitude of witnesses. Now, a conspicuous miracle, he says, can be produced resting on such evidence, to wit, that of the thousands fed by a few loaves and fishes. The simplest infidel will, of course, reply that as these thousands of witnesses cannot be produced, the evidence open to us reduces itself to that of the Evangelists. De Quincey recollects this, and replies to it in a note. ' Yes,' he says, ' the Evangelists certainly ; and, let us add, all those contemporaries to whom the Evangelists silently appealed. These make up the " multitude " contemplated in the case ' under consideration. That is, to make up the multitude, you have to reckon as witnesses all those persons who did not contradict the ' silent appeal', or whose contradiction has not reached us. With such canons of criticism it is hard to say what might not be proved. When a man with a great reputation for learning and logical ability tries to put us off with these wretched quibbles, one is fairly bewildered. He shows an ignorance of the real strength

and weakness of the position, which, but for his reputation, one would summarily explain by incapacity for reasoning. As it is, we must suppose, that living apart from the daily battle of life, he had lost that quick instinct possessed by all genuine logicians for recognizing the vital points of an argument. A day in a court of justice would have taught him more about evidence than a month spent over Aristotle. He had become fitter for the parade of the fencing-room than for the real thrust and parry of a duel in earnest. The mere rhetorical flourish pleases him as much as a blow at his antagonist's heart. Another glaring instance in the same paper is his apparent failure to perceive that there is a difference between proving that such a prophecy as that announcing the fall of Babylon was fulfilled, and proving that it was supernaturally inspired. Hume, without a tenth part of the logical apparatus, would have made mincemeat of such an opponent in a couple of clear paragraphs. Paley, whom he never tires of treating to contemptuous abuse, was incapable of such feeble sophistry. De Quincey, in short, was an able expositor ; but he was not, though under better discipline he might probably have become, a sound original thinker. He is an interpreter, not an originator of thought. His skill in setting forth an argument blinds him to its most palpable defects. If language is a powerful weapon in his hands, it is only when the direction of the blow is dictated by some more manly, if less ingenious, understanding.

Let us inquire, and it is a more delicate question, whether he is better qualified to use it as a plaything. He has a certain reputation as a humorist. The Essay on Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts is probably the most popular of his writings. The conception is undoubtedly meritorious, and De Quincey returns to it more than once in his other works. The description of the Williams murders is inimitable, and the execution even in the humorous

passages is frequently good. We may praise particular sentences : such as the well-known remark that ' if a man once indulges himself in murder, he comes to think little of robbing ; and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking ; and from that to incivility and procrastination '. One laughs at this whimsical inversion ; but I don't think one laughs very heartily ; and certainly one does not find, as in really deep humour, that the paradox is pregnant with further meaning, and the laugh a prelude to a more melancholy smile. Many of the best things ever said are couched in a similar form : the old remark that the use of language is the concealment of thought ; the saying that the half is greater than the whole, and that two and two don't always make four, are familiar instances ; but each of them really contains a profound truth expressed in a paradoxical form, which is a sufficient justification of their extraordinary popularity. But if every inversion of a commonplace were humorous, we should be able to make jokes by machinery. There is no humour that I can see in the statement that honesty is the worst policy, or that procrastination saves time ; and De Quincey's phrase, though I admit that it is amusing as a kind of summary of his essay, seems to me to rank little higher than an ingenious pun. It is a clever trick of language, but does not lead any further.

Here, too, and elsewhere, the humour gives us a certain impression of thinness. It is pressed too far, and spun out too long. Compare De Quincey's mode of beating out his one joke through pages of laboured facetiousness, with Swift's concentrated and pungent irony, as in the proposal for eating babies, or the argument to prove that the abolition of Christianity may be attended with some inconveniences. It is the difference between the stiffest of nautical grogs, and the negus provided by thoughtful parents for a child's evening party. In some parts of the

essay De Quincey sinks far lower. I do not believe that in any English author of reputation there is a more feeble piece of forced fun, than in the description of the fight of the amateur in murder with the baker at Munich. One knows by a process of reasoning that the man is joking; but one feels inclined to blush, through sympathy with a very clear man so exposing himself. A blemish of the same kind makes itself unpleasantly obvious at many points of his writings. He seems to fear that we shall find his stately and elaborate style rather too much for our nerves. He is conscious that, as a great master of language, he can play what tricks he pleases, without danger of remonstrance. And, therefore, he every now and then plunges into slang, not irreverently, as a vulgar writer might do, but of malice prepense. The shock is almost as great as if an organist performing a solemn tune should suddenly introduce an imitation of the mewing of a cat. Now, he seems to say, you can't accuse me of being dull and pompous. Let me quote an instance or two from his graver writings. He wishes to argue, in defence of Christianity, that the ancients were insensible to ordinary duties of humanity. ' Our wicked friend Kikero, for instance, who *was* so bad, but *wrote* so well, who *did* such naughty things, but *said* such pretty things, has himself noticed in one of his letters, with petrifying coolness, that he knew of destitute old women in Rome who went without tasting food for one, two, or even three days. After making such a statement, did Kikero not tumble downstairs, and break at least three of his legs in his hurry to call a public meeting ', &c, &c. What delicate humour ! The grave apologist of Christianity actually calls Cicero, Kikero, and talks about ' three of his legs 'I Do we not all explode with laughter ? A parallel case occurs in his argument about the Essenes ; where he grows so irrepressibly funny as to call Josephus ' Mr. Joe ', and addresses him as

follows :—' Wicked Joseph, listen to me : you've been telling us a fairy tale ; and for my part, I've no objection to a fairy tale in any situation, because if one can make no use of it one's self, always one knows that a child will be thankful for it. But this tale, Mr. Joseph, happens also to be a lie ; secondly, a fraudulent lie ; thirdly, a malicious lie.' I have seen this stuff described as ' scholar-like badinage ' ; but the only effect of such exquisite foolery, within my mind, is to persuade one that a writer assailed by such weapons, and those weapons used by a man who has the whole resources of the English language at his command, must probably have been speaking an inconvenient truth. I will simply refer to the story of Sir Isaac Newton sitting all day with one stocking on and one off, in the Casuistry of Roman Meals, as an illustration of the way in which a story ought not to be told. Its most conspicuous though not its worst fault, its extreme length, protects it from quotation.

It is strange to find that a writer, pre-eminently endowed with delicacy of ear, and boasting of the complex harmonies of his style, should condescend to such an irritating defect. De Quincey says of one of the greatest masters of the humorous :—' The gyration within which his (Lamb's) sentiment wheels, no matter of what kind it may be, is always the shortest possible. It does not prolong itself, it does not repeat itself, it does not propagate itself.' And he goes on to connect the failing with Lamb's utter insensibility to music, and indifference to ' the rhythmical in prose composition '. The criticism is a fine one in its way, but it may perhaps explain some of De Quincey's shortcomings in Lamb's peculiar sphere. De Quincey's jokes are apt to repeat and prolong and propagate themselves, till they become tiresome ; and the delicate touch of the true humorist, just indicating a half-comic, half-pathetic thought, is alien to De Quincey's more elaborate style.

Yet I do not deny that he has a sense of humour. That faculty may be predominant or latent; it may form the substance of a whole book, as in the case of Sterne : or it may permeate every sentence, as in Mr. Carlyle's writings ; or it may simply give a faint tinge, rather perceived by subsequent analysis than consciously felt at the time ; and in this lowest degree it occasionally gives a certain charm to De Quincey's writing. When he tries overt acts of wit, he becomes simply vulgar; when he directly aims at the humorous, we feel his hand to be rather heavy; but he is occasionally very happy in that ironical method, of which the Essay on Murder is the most notorious specimen. The best example, in my opinion, is the description of his elder brother in the *Autobiographical Sketches.* The account of the rival kingdoms of Gombroon and Tigrasylvania; of poor De Quincey's troubles in getting rid of his subjects' tails ; of his despair at the suggestion that by making them sit down for six hours a day they might rub them off in the course of several centuries ; of his ingenious plan of placing his unlucky island at a distance of 75 degrees of latitude from his brother's capital; and of his dismay at hearing of the ' vast horns and promontories ' which run down from all parts of the hostile dominions towards his unoffending little territory, are touched with admirable skill. The grave, elaborate detail of the perplexities of his childish imagination is pleasant, and almost pathetic. When, in short, by simply applying his usual stateliness of manner to a subject a little beneath it in dignity, he can produce the desired effect, he is eminently successful. The same rhetoric which would be appropriate (to use his favourite illustration) in treating the theme of ' Belshazzar the King giving a great feast to a thousand of his lords ', has a certain piquancy, when for Belshazzar we substitute a schoolboy playing at monarchy. He is indulging in a whimsical masquerade, and the pomp is assumed in sport

instead of in earnest. Nobody can do a little mock majesty so well as he who on occasion can be seriously majestic. Yet when he altogether abandons his strong ground, and chooses to tumble and make grimaces before us, like an ordinary clown, he becomes simply offensive. The great tragedian is capable on due occasion of pleasant burlesque ; but sheer unadulterated comedy is beyond his powers. De Quincey, in short, can parody his own serious writing better than anybody, and the capacity is a proof that the faculty of humour was not entirely absent from his intellect; but for a genuine substantive joke—a joke which, resting on its own merits, instead of being the shadow of his serious writing, is to be independently humorous—he seems, to me at least, to be generally insufferable.

De Quincey's final claim to a unique position rests on the fact that his ' impassioned prose ' was applied to confessions. He compares himself, as I have said, to Rousseau and Augustine. The analogy with the last of these two writers would, I should imagine, be rather difficult to carry beyond the first part of resemblance ; but it is possible to make out a somewhat closer affinity to Rousseau. In both cases, at least, we have to deal with men of morbid temperament, ruined or seriously injured by their utter incapacity for self-restraint. So far, however, as their confessions derive an interest from the revelation of character, Rousseau is more exciting almost in the same proportion as he confesses greater weaknesses. The record of such errors by their chief actor, and that actor a man of such singular ability, presents us with a strangely attractive problem. De Quincey has less to confess, and is less anxious to lay bare his own morbid propensities. His story excites compassion ; but in its essential features it is commonplace enough. Nearly all that he has to tell us is that he ran away from school, spent some time in London, **for no** very assignable reason, in a semi-starving

condition, and then, equally without reason, surrendered at discretion to the respectabilities and went to Oxford like an ordinary human being. We may fancy that even these meagre facts are more or less distorted by the fumes of opium; but at best they serve as little more than a text for eloquent meditation. The rest of his life was spent in consuming opium or in breaking off the habit at intervals, and in planning more or less ambitious works. Vague thoughts passed through his mind of composing a great work on Political Economy, or of writing a still more wonderful treatise on the Emendation of the Human Intellect. But he never seems to have made any decided steps towards the fulfilment of such dreams ; and remained to the end of his days a melancholy specimen of wasted force. There is nothing, unfortunately, very uncommon in the story, except so far as its hero was a man of unusual talents. The history of Coleridge exemplifies a still higher ambition, resulting, it is true, in a much greater influence upon the thought of the age, but almost equally sad. Their lives might be put into tracts for the use of opium-eaters ; and whilst there was still hope of redeeming them, it might have been worth while to condemn them with severity. Indignation is now out of place, and we can only grieve and pass by. When thousands of men are drinking themselves to death every year, there is nothing very strange or dramatic in the history of one ruined by opium instead of by gin.

From De Quincey's writings we get the notion of a man amiable, but with an uncertain temper ; with fine emotions, but an utter want of moral strength ; and, in short, of a nature of much delicacy and tenderness retreating into opium and the Lake district, from a world which was too rough for him. He does not seem to have been liable to any worse imputations than that of excessive inability for anything beyond spinning gorgeous phraseology; but, in

a literary sense, we may accept his humorous scale of morality, and say that he had sunk from lying and law-breaking to utter procrastination. The goodness of his character diminishes the interest of his story. But if in this sense his story falls short of Rousseau's confessions, because he had no baseness to relate, it falls short in another way which is less to his credit. Rousseau has the supreme merit of having felt more deeply, and expressed more eloquently than any one else, what all his contemporaries were thinking; he fulfilled in the highest degree the conditions which enable a man of genius to be at once the spokesman and the impelling force of his time. De Quincey not only had not strength to stand alone, but he belonged to a peculiar side-current of English thought. He was the adjective of which Coleridge was the substantive; and if Coleridge himself was an unsatisfactory and imperfect thinker, his imperfections all greatly increased in his friend and disciple. He shared that belief which some people have not yet abandoned, that the answer to all our perplexities is to be found in some of the mysteries of German metaphysics. If we could only be taught to distinguish between the reason and the understanding, the scales would fall from our eyes, and we should see that the Thirty-nine Articles contained the plan on which the universe was framed. He had an acquaintance, which, if his own opinion was correct, was accurate and profound, with Kant's writings, and had studied Schelling, Fichte, and Hegel. He could talk about concepts and categories and schematisms without losing his head amongst those metaphysical heights. He knew how by the theoretic reason to destroy all proofs of the existence of God, and then, by introducing the practical reason, to set the existence of God beyond a doubt. He fancied that he was able to translate the technicalities of Kant into plain English; and he believed that when so translated, they

would prove to have a real and all-important meaning. But as nothing ever came of all this, it would be idle to deduce from his scattered hints any estimate of his powers. If German metaphysics be a science, and not a mere edifice of moonshine ; and if De Quincey had really penetrated the secrets of that science, we have missed a chance of enlightenment. As it is, we have little left except a collection of contemptuous prejudices. De Quincey thought himself entitled to treat Locke as a shallow pretender. The whole eighteenth century was, with one or two exceptions, a barren wilderness to him. He aspersed its reasoners, from Locke to Paley ; he scorned its poets with all the bitterness of the school which first broke loose from the rule of Pope ; and its prose-writers, with the exception of Burke, were miserable beings in his eyes. He would have seen with little regret a holocaust of all the literature produced in England between the death of Milton and the rise of Wordsworth. Naturally, he hated an infidel with that kind of petulant bitterness which possesses an old lady in a country village, who has just heard that some wicked people dispute the story of Balaam's ass. And, as a corollary, he combined the whole French people in one sweeping censure, and utterly despised their morals, manners, literature, and political principles. He was a John Bull, as far as a man can be, who is of weakly, nervous temperament, and believes in Kant.

One or two illustrations may be given of the force of these effeminate prejudices ; and it is to be remarked with regret, that they are specially injurious in a department where he otherwise had eminent merits, that, namely, of literary criticism. Any man who lived in the eighteenth century was prima facie a fool; if a freethinker, his case was all but hopeless ; but if a French freethinker, it was desperate indeed. He lets us into the secret of his prejudices, which, indeed, is tolerably transparent in his state-

ment that he found it hard to reverence Coleridge when he supposed him to be a Socinian. Now, though a ' liberal man ', he could not hold a Socinian to be a Christian ; nor could he ' think that any man, though he make himself a marvellously clever disputant, ever could tower upwards into a very great philosopher, unless he should begin or end with Christianity '. The canon may be sound, but it at once destroys the pretensions of such men as Hobbes, Spinoza, Hume, and even, though De Quincey considers him ' a dubious exception ', Kant. Even heterodoxy is enough to alienate his sympathies. ' Think of a man ', he exclaims about poor Whiston, ' who had brilliant preferment within his reach, dragging his poor wife and daughter for half a century through the very mire of despondency and destitution, because he disapproved of Athanasius, or because the " Shepherd of Hermas " was not sufficiently esteemed by the Church of England.' To do him justice, De Quincey admits, in another passage, that this ridicule of a poor man for sacrificing his interests to his principles was not quite fair ; but then Whiston was only an Arian. When Priestley, who was a far worse heretic, had his house sacked by a mob and his life endangered, De Quincey can scarcely restrain his exultation. He admits in terms that Priestley ought to be pitied, but adds that the fanaticism of the mob was ' much more reasonable ' than the fanaticism of Priestley ; and that those who play at bowls, must look out for rubbers. Porson is to be detested for his letters to Travis, though De Quincey does not dare to defend the disputed text. He has, however, a pleasant insinuation at command. Porson, he says, stung like a hornet; ' it may chance that on this subject Master Porson will get stung through his coffin, before he is many years deader.' What scholar-like badinage ! Political heretics fare little better. Fox's eloquence was ' ditchwater ', with a shrill effervescence of ' imaginary gas '. Burnet was

a ' gossiper, slanderer, and notorious falsifier of facts '. That one of his sermons was burnt is ' the most consolatory fact in his whole worldly career '; and he asks, ' would there have been much harm in tying his lordship to the sermon ? ' Junius was not only a knave who ought to have been transported, but his literary success rested upon an utter delusion. He had neither ' sentiment, imagination, nor generalization '. Johnson, though the best of Tories, lived in the wrong century, and unluckily criticized Milton with foolish harshness. Therefore ' Johnson, viewed in relation to Milton, was a malicious, mendacious, and dishonest man '.

Let us turn to greater names. Goethe's best work was *Werther,* and De Quincey is convinced that his reputation ' must decline for the next generation or two, until it reaches its just level'. His merits have been exaggerated for three reasons—first, his great age ; secondly, ' the splendour of his official rank at the court of Weimar ' ; thirdly, ' his enigmatical and unintelligible writing '. But ' in Germany his works are little read, and in this country not at all '. *Wilhelm Meister* is morally detestable, and, artistically speaking, rubbish. Of the author of the *Philosophical Dictionary,* of the *Essai sur les Mœurs,* of *Candide,* and certain other trifles, his judgement is that Horace Walpole's reputation is the same in kind, as the *genuine* reputation of Voltaire : ' Both are very splendid memoir writers, and of the two, Lord Orford is the more brilliant.' In the same tone he compares Gibbon to Southey, giving the advantage to the latter on the score of his poetical ability; and his view of another great infidel may be inferred from the following phrase. One of Rousseau's opinions is only known to us through Cowper, ' for in the unventilated pages of its originator it would have lurked undisturbed down to this hour of June, 1819 '.

Voltaire and Rousseau have the double title to hatred

of being Frenchmen and freethinkers. But even orthodox Frenchmen fare little better. ' The French Bossuets, Bourdaloues, Fenelons, &c, whatever may be thought of their meagre and attenuated rhetoric, are one and all the most commonplace of thinkers.' In fact, the mere mention of France acts upon him like a red rag on a bull. The French, ' in whom the lower forms of passions are constantly bubbling up, from the shallow and superficial character of their feelings', are incapable of English earnestness. Their taste is ' anything but good in all that department of wit and humour '—the department, apparently, of anecdotes—' and the ground lies in their natural want of veracity ' ; whereas England bases upon its truthfulness a well-founded claim to ' a moral pre-eminence among the nations '. Belgians, French, and Italians attract the inconsiderate by ' facile obsequiousness ', which, however, is a pendent of ' impudence and insincerity. Want of principle and want of moral sensibility compose the original *fundus* of southern manners.' Our faults of style, such as they are, proceed from our manliness. In France there are no unmarried women at the age which amongst us gives the insulting name of old maid. ' What striking sacrifices of sexual honour does this one fact argue ! ' The French style is remarkable for simplicity—' a strange pretension for anything French ' ; but on the whole the intellectual merits of their style are small,' chiefly negative ', and ' founded on the accident of their colloquial necessities .' They are amply compensated, too, by ' the prodigious defects of the French in all the higher qualities of prose composition'. Even their handwriting is the ' very vilest form of scribbling which exists in Europe ', and they and the Germans are ' the two most gormandizing races in Europe '. They display a brutal selfishness in satisfying their appetites, whereas Englishmen at all public meals are remarkably conspicuous for ' a spirit of mutual

attention and self-sacrifice '. It is enough to show the real degradation of their habits, that they use the ' odious gesture ' of shrugging their shoulders, and are fond of the ' vile ejaculation " bah ! " ' which is as bad as to puff the smoke of a tobacco-pipe in your companion's face. They have neither self-respect nor respect for others. French masters are never dignified, though sometimes tyrannical; French servants are always, even without meaning it, disrespectfully familiar. Many of their manners and usages are ' essentially vulgar, and their apparent affability depends, not on kindness of heart, but love of talking '.

All this stuff, from which I have only taken a few random specimens, was written by a man who, so far as appears, never visited the Continent, and knew nothing, except from books, of the great people whom he systematically vilifies. The impudence of the assertions is really amusing, though one cannot but regret that the vulgar prejudice of the old-fashioned John Bull should have been embodied in the pages of a master of our language. The explanation, however, is easy. De Quincey's prejudices are chiefly the reflection of those of the Coleridge school in general, though he added to them a few pet aversions of his own. At times his genuine acuteness of mind raises him above the teaching of his masters, or at least enables him to detect their weaknesses. He discovers Coleridge's plagiarisms, though he believes and, indeed, speaks in the most exaggerated terms of his philosophical pretensions ; whilst, in treating of Wordsworth, he points out with great skill the fallacy of some of his theories and the inconsistency of his practice. But whilst keenly observant of some of the failings of his friends, he reproduces others in even an exaggerated type. He shows to the full their narrow-minded hatred of the preceding century, of all forms of excellence which did not correspond to their favourite types, and of all speculation which did not lead to, or

start from, their characteristic doctrines. The error is fully pardonable. We must not look to men who are leading a revolt against established modes of thought for a fair appreciation of the doctrines of their antagonists ; and if De Quincey could recognize no merit in Voltaire or Rousseau, in Locke, Paley, or Jeremy Bentham, their followers were quite prepared to retaliate in kind. One feels, however, that such prejudices are more respectable when they are the foibles of a strong mind engaged in active warfare. We can pardon the old campaigner, who has become bitter in an internecine contest. It is not quite so pleasant to discover the same bitterness in a gentleman who has looked on from a distance, and never quite made up his mind to buckle on his armour. De Quincey had not earned the right of speaking evil of his enemies. If a man chances to be a Hedonist, he should show the good temper which is the best virtue of the indolent. To lie on a bed of roses, and snarl at everybody who contradicts your theories, seems to imply rather testiness of temper than strength of conviction. De Quincey is a Christian on Epicurean principles. He dislikes an infidel because his repose is disturbed by the arguments of freethinkers. He fears that he will be forced to think conscientiously, and to polish his logical weapons afresh. He mutters that the man is a fool, and could be easily thrashed if it were worth while, and then turns back to his opium and his rhetoric and his beloved Church of England. There is no pleasanter institution for a gentleman who likes magnificent historical associations, and heartily hates the rude revolutionists who would turn the world upside down, and thereby disturb the rest of dreamy metaphysicians.

He is quite pathetic, too, about the British Constitution. ' Destroy the House of Lords,' he exclaims, ' and henceforward, for people like you and me, England will be no habitable land.' Here, he seems to say, is one charming

elysium, where no rude hand has swept away the cobwebs or replaced the good old-fashioned machinery; here we may find rest in the ' pure, holy, and magnificent Church ', whose Articles, interpreted by Coleridge, may guide us through the most wondrous of metaphysical labyrinths, dwell in a grand constitutional edifice, rich in picturesque memories, and blending into one complex harmony elements contributed by a long series of centuries. And you, wretched French revolutionists, with your love of petty precision, and irreverent radicals and utilitarians, with your grovelling material notions, propose to level, and destroy, and break in upon my delicious reveries. No old Hebrew prophet could be more indignant with the enemy who threatened to break down the carved work of his temple with axes and hammers. But his complaint is, after all, the voice of the sluggard. Let me dream a little longer ; for much as I love my country and its institutions, I cannot rouse myself to fight for them. It is enough if I call their assailants an ugly name or so, and at times begin to write what might be the opening pages of the preface to some very great work of the future. Alas ! the first digression diverts the thread of the discourse ; the task becomes troublesome, and the labour is abruptly broken off. And so in a life of seventy-three years De Quincey read extensively and thought acutely by fits, ate an enormous quantity of opium, wrote a few pages which revealed new capacities in the language, and provided a good deal of respectable padding for magazines.

FRANCIS THOMPSON ON DE QUINCEY

(From *The Works of Francis Thompson)*

THE life of Thomas De Quincey is too well known to need much recounting. It is, indeed, the one thing that most people do know of him, even when they have not read his works. Born at Greenhays, in the Manchester neighbourhood ; brought up by a widowed mother with little in her of motherhood ; shy, small, sensitive, dwelling in corners, with a passion for shunning notice, for books and the reveries stimulated by books ; without the boy's love of games and external activities; the only break in his dreamy existence was the sometime companionship of a schoolboy elder brother. That episode in his childhood he has told a little long-windedly, as is the De Quincey fashion ; and with curious out-of-the-way humour, as is also the De Quincey fashion. He has told of the imaginary kingdoms ruled by his brother and himself ; and how the brother, assuming suzerainty over De Quincey's realm, was continually issuing proclamations which burdened the younger child's heart. Once, for example, the elder brother, having become a convert to the Monboddo doctrine in regard to Primitive Man, announced that the inhabitants of De Quincey's kingdom were still in a state of tail; and ordained that they should sit down, by edict, a certain number of hours *per diem,* to work off their ancestral appendages. Also has Thomas told of the mill-youths with whom his brother waged constant battle, impressing the little boy as an auxiliary; and how De Quincey, being captured by the adversary, was saved by the womankind of the hostile race, who did, furthermore, kiss him all round ; and how, thereupon, his brother issued a bulletin,

or order of the day, censuring him in terrible language for submitting to the kisses of the enemy.

The *Confessions* contain the story of De Quincey's youth : his precocity as a Greek scholar, which led one master to remark of him : ' There is a boy who could harangue an Athenian mob better than you or I an English one ' ; his misery at and flight from school, his subsequent drifting to London, his privations in ' stony-hearted ' Oxford Street, which he paced at night with the outcast Ann ; and there laid the seeds of the digestive disorder which afterwards drove him to opium. His experiences as an opium-eater have become, through his *Confessions,* one of the best-known chapters in English literary history. The habit, shaken off once, returned on him, never again entirely to be mastered. But he did, after severest struggle, ultimately reduce it within a limited compass, which left free his power of work ; and, unlike Coleridge, passed the closing years of his life in reasonable comfort and freedom from anxiety. The contrast was deserved. For the shy little creature displayed in his contest with the obsessing demon of his life a patient tenacity and purpose to which justice has hardly been done. With half as much ' grit', Coleridge might have left us a less piteously wasted record. In the midst of this life-and-death struggle, De Quincey worked for his journalistic bread with an industry the results of which are represented in sixteen volumes of prose, while further gleanings have, in these late years, intermittently made their appearance. It is not a record which supports the charge of sluggishness or wasted life. Never, at any period, has it been easy for a man to support his family solely by articles for reviews and magazines. Yet De Quincey did it honourably ; and if he was often in straits, it is doubtful whether this should not be set to the account of his financial incompetence.

His life brought him into contact with most of the great

litterateurs of his time. 'Christopher North' was his only bosom friend; but in his youth he was an intimate of all the 'Lake' circle; and, finally, he who had known Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, Landor, Hazlitt, and at least had glimpse of Shelley, lived to be acquainted with later men like Prof. Masson and others. Not all thought well of him: his talk, like his books, could fret as well as charm; and probably the charge of a certain spitefulness was earned. But, like feminine spite, it could be, and was, coexistent with a kind heart, a gentle and even childlike nature. His children loved him; and though he was a genius, an opium-eater, and married beneath him, he defied all rules by being happy in his marriage.

As a writer, De Quincey has been viewed with the complete partiality dear to the English mind, and hateful to his own. He was nothing if not distinguishing; the Englishman hates distinctions and qualifications. He loved to

> divide
> A hair 'twixt south and south-west side;

the Englishman yearns for his hair one and indivisible. The Englishman says, 'Black's black—*furieusement* black; and white's white—*furieusement* white.' De Quincey saw many blacks, many whites, multitudinous greys. Consequently to one he is a master of prose; to another—and that other Carlyle—'wiredrawn'. To one he ranks with the Raleighs, the Brownes, the Jeremy Taylors; to another—and that other Mr. Henley—he is 'Thomas de Sawdust'. And, as usual, both have a measure of Tightness. Too often is De Quincey wiredrawn, diffuse, ostentatious in many words of distinctions which might more summarily be put; tantalizing, exasperating. Also, if you will suffer him with patience, he is never obvious; a challenger of routine views, a perspicuous, if minute and wordy, logician, subtle in balanced appraisal. He was the first to practise that mode of criticism we call 'appreciation'—be it a merit

or not. Often his rhetorical *bravuras* (as he himself called them) are of too insistent, too clamorously artificial, a virtuosity. Also, in a valuable remainder, they are wonderful in vaporous and cloud-lifted imagination, magnificently orchestrated in structure of sentence, superb in range and quality of diction. In a more classified review, he never criticizes without casting some novel light, and often sums up the characteristics of his subject in memorably fresh and inclusive sentences. His sketch biographies, marred by characteristic discursiveness, at their best (as in the Bentley or the Shakespeare) are difficult to supersede, eating to the vitals of what they touch. His historical papers are unsystematic, skimming the subject like a sea-mew, and dipping every now and again to bring to the surface some fresh view on this or that point.

To re-tell the old has no interest for him ; it is the point of controversy, the angle at which he catches a new light, that interests him. But his noble views on insulated aspects of history have sometimes been quietly adopted by succeeding writers. Thus his view of the relations between Caesar and Pompey, and the attitude of Cicero towards both, is substantially that taken in Dean Merivale's *History of the Romans.* On his prose fantasies we have already touched. In a certain shadowy vastness of vision we say deliberately that they have more of the spirit of Milton than anything else in the language—though, of course, they have no intention of competing with Milton. They are by themselves. The best of the *Confessions* ; that vision of the starry universe which he greatly improved from Richter ; parts (only parts) of *The Mail-Coach* (which is strained as a-whole) ; portions of the *Suspiria* ; above all, *The Three Ladies of Sorrow*—these are marvellous examples of a thing which no other writer, unless *it* be Ruskin, has succeeded in persuading us to be legitimate. Its admirers will always be few ; we have no doubt they will always be enthusiastic.

His humour should have a word to itself. The famous *Murder as One of the Fine Arts* is the only specimen which we need pause upon. Much of that paper is humour out of date ; a little childish and obvious. But of the residue let it be said that it was the first example of the topsy-turvydom which we associate with the name of Gilbert. The passage which describes how murder leads at last to procrastination and incivility—' Many a man has dated his ruin from some murder which he thought little of at the time '—might have come out at a Savoy opera. In this, as in other things, De Quincey was an innovator, and, like other innovators, has been eclipsed by his successors. Yet, with all shortcomings, the paper is likely to leave a more durable residuum than much humour which is now of the highest fashion. It is not certain that the slang on which a vast deal of new humour is pivoted will any more amuse posterity than the slang on which De Quincey too often and unluckily relied.

A little, wrinkly, high-foreheaded, dress-as-you-please man ; a' meandering, inhumanly intellectual man, shy as a hermit-crab, and as given to shifting his lodgings ; much-enduring, inconceivable of way, sweet-hearted, fine-natured, small-spited, uncanny as a sprite begotten of libraries ; something of a bore to many, by reason of talking like a book in coat and breeches—undeniably clever and wonderful talk none the less ; master of a great, unequal, seductive, and irritating style ; author of sixteen delightful and intolerable volumes, part of which can never die, and much of which can never live : that is De Quincey.

Selections from

THOMAS DE QUINCEY

The Infernal Mixture

(Confessions of English Opium-Eater : Being an Extract from the Life of a Scholar, appeared in two parts in the *London Magazine* for September and October 1821 ; these, with an ' Appendix ', were published in book form in 1822 The whole was revised and considerably enlarged by De Quincey for inclusion in vol. v of the Collective Edition in 1856. The following extracts are from the latter)

UNHAPPILY my professional adviser was a comatose old gentleman, rich beyond all his needs, careless of his own practice, and standing under that painful necessity (according to the custom then regulating medical practice, which prohibited fees to apothecaries) of seeking his remuneration in excessive deluges of medicine. Me, however, out of pure idleness, he forbore to plague with any *variety* of medicines. With sublime simplicity he confined himself to one horrid mixture, that must have suggested itself to him when prescribing for a tiger. In ordinary circumstances, and with plenty of exercise, no creature could be healthier than myself. But my organization was perilously frail. And to fight simultaneously with such a malady and such a medicine seemed really too much. The proverb tells us that three ' flittings ' are as bad as a fire. Very possibly. And I should think that, in the same spirit of reasonable equation, three such tiger-drenches must be equal to one apoplectic fit, or even to the tiger himself. Having taken two of them, which struck me as quite enough for one life, I declined to comply with the injunction of the label pasted upon each several phial—viz. *Repetatur haustus;* and, instead of doing any such dangerous thing, called upon Mr.——(the apothecary), begging to know if his art had not amongst its reputed infinity of resources any less abominable, and less shattering to a delicate system than

this. ' None whatever,' he replied. Exceedingly kind he was ; insisted on my drinking tea with his really amiable daughters ; but continued at intervals to repeat ' None whatever—none whatever ' ; then, as if rousing himself to an effort, he sang out loudly ' None whatever ', which in this final utterance he toned down syllabically into ' *whatever—ever—ver—er* '. The whole wit of man, it seems, had exhausted itself upon the preparation of that one infernal mixture.

The Bore on the Dee

(From the same)

IN the infancy of its course amongst the Denbighshire mountains, this river (famous in our pre-Norman history for the earliest parade of English monarchy) is wild and picturesque ; and even below my mother's Priory it wears a character of interest. But, a mile or so nearer to its mouth, when leaving Chester for Parkgate, it becomes miserably tame ; and the several reaches of the river take the appearance of formal canals. On the right bank of the river runs an artificial mound, called the Cop.

On the present occasion there were many cows grazing in the fields below the Cop : but all along the Cop itself I could descry no person whatever answering to the idea of a Philistine : in fact, there was nobody at all, except one woman, apparently middle-aged (meaning by *that* from thirty-five to forty-five), neatly dressed, though perhaps in rustic fashion, and by no possibility belonging to any class of my enemies ; for already I was near enough to see so much. This woman might be a quarter-of-a-mile distant, and was steadily advancing towards me—face to face. Soon, therefore, I was beginning to read the character of her features pretty distinctly; and her countenance naturally served as a mirror to echo and reverberate my

own feelings, consequently my own horror (horror without exaggeration it was), at a sudden uproar of tumultuous sounds rising clamorously ahead. *Ahead* I mean in relation to myself, but to *her* the sound was from the rear. Our situation was briefly this. Nearly half-a-mile behind the station of the woman, that reach of the river along which we two were moving came to an abrupt close ; so that the next reach, making nearly a right-angled turn, lay entirely out of view. From this unseen reach it was that the angry clamour, so passionate and so mysterious, arose : and I, for *my* part, having never heard such a fierce battling outcry, nor even heard of such a cry, either in books or on the stage, in prose or verse, could not so much as whisper a guess to myself upon its probable cause. Only this I felt, that blind, unorganized nature it must be—and nothing in human or in brutal wrath—that could utter itself by such an anarchy of sea-like uproars. What was it ? Where was it ? Whence was it ? Earthquake was it ? convulsion of the steadfast earth ? or was it the breaking loose from ancient chains of some deep morass like that of Solway ? More probable it seemed that the ἄνω ποταμῶν of Euripides (the flowing backwards of rivers to their fountains) now, at last, after ages of expectation, had been suddenly realized. Not long I needed to speculate ; for within half-a-minute, perhaps, from the first arrest of our attention, the proximate cause of this mystery declared itself to our eyes, although the remote cause (the hidden cause of that visible cause) was still as dark as before. Round that right-angled turn which I have mentioned as wheeling into the next succeeding reach of the river, suddenly as with the trampling of cavalry—but all dressing accurately—and the water at the outer angle sweeping so much faster than that at the inner angle as to keep the front of advance rigorously in line, violently careered round into our own placid watery vista a huge charging block of waters, filling the whole channel

of the river, and coming down upon us at the rate of forty miles an hour. Well was it for us, myself and that respectable rustic woman, us the Deucalion and Pyrrha of this perilous moment, sole survivors apparently of the deluge (since by accident there was at that particular moment on that particular Cop nothing else to survive), that by means of this Cop, and of ancient Danish hands (possibly not yet paid for their work), we *could* survive. In fact, this watery breastwork, a perpendicular wall of water carrying itself as true as if controlled by a mason's plumb-line, rode forward at such a pace that obviously the fleetest horse or dromedary would have had no chance of escape. Many a decent railway even, among railways since born its rivals, would not have had above the third of a chance. Naturally, I had too short a time for observing much or accurately; and universally I am a poor hand at observing ; else I should say that this riding block of crystal waters did not gallop, but went at a long trot; yes, long trot—that most frightful of paces in a tiger, in a buffalo, or in a rebellion of waters. Even a ghost, I feel convinced, would appal me more if coming up at a long diabolical trot than at a canter or gallop. The first impulse to both of us was derived from cowardice ; cowardice the most abject and selfish. Such is man, though a Deucalion elect; such is woman, though a decent Pyrrha. Both of us ran like hares ; neither did I, Deucalion, think of poor Pyrrha at all for the first sixty seconds. Yet, on the other hand, why *should* I ? It struck me seriously that St. George's Channel (and, if so, beyond a doubt, the Atlantic Ocean) had broke loose, and was, doubtless, playing the same insufferable" gambols upon all rivers along a seaboard of six to seven thousand miles ; in which case, as all the race of woman must be doomed, how romantic a speculation it was for me, sole relic of literature, to think specially of one poor Pyrrha, probably very illiterate, whom I had never yet spoken to ! That idea

pulled me up. *Not spoken to her ?* Then I *would* speak to her; and the more so because the sound of the pursuing river told me that flight was useless. And, besides, if any reporter or sub-editor of some Chester chronicle should, at this moment, with his glass be sweeping the Cop, and discover me flying under these unchivalrous circumstances, he might gibbet me to all eternity. Halting, therefore (and really I had not run above eighty or a hundred steps), I waited for my solitary co-tenant of the Cop. She was a little blown by running, and could not easily speak ; besides which, at the very moment of her coming up, the preternatural column of waters, running in the very opposite direction to the natural current of the river, came up with us, ran by with the ferocious uproar of a hurricane, sent up the sides of the Cop a salute of waters, as if hypocritically pretending to kiss our feet, but secretly understood by all parties as a vain treachery for pulling us down into the flying deluge ; whilst all along both banks the mighty refluent wash was heard as it rode along, leaving memorials, by sight and by sound, of its victorious power.

Pleasures and Pains of Opium

(From the same)

O JUST, subtle, and all-conquering opium ! that, to the hearts of rich and poor alike, for the wounds that will never heal, and for the pangs of grief that ' tempt the spirit to rebel', bringest an assuaging balm ; eloquent opium ! that with thy potent rhetoric stealest away the purposes of wrath, pleadest effectually for relenting pity, and through one night's heavenly sleep callest back to the guilty man the visions of his infancy, and hands washed pure from blood ; O just and righteous opium ! that to the chancery of dreams summonest, for the triumphs of despairing innocence, false witnesses, and confoundest perjury, and dost

reverse the sentences of unrighteous judges ; thou buildest upon the bosom of darkness, out of the fantastic imagery of the brain, cities and temples, beyond the art of Phidias and Praxiteles, beyond the splendours of Babylon and Hekatompylos; and, 'from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,' callest into sunny light the faces of long-buried beauties, and the blessed household countenances, cleansed from the 'dishonours of the grave'. Thou only givest these gifts to man ; and thou hast the keys of Paradise, O just, subtle, and mighty opium ! . . .

This pageant would suddenly dissolve ; and, at a clapping of hands, would be heard the heart-shaking sound of *Consul Romanus* ; and immediately came 'sweeping by', in gorgeous paludaments, Paullus or Marius, girt around by a company of centurions, with the crimson tunic hoisted on a spear, and followed by the *alalagmos* of the Roman legions. . . .

And now came a tremendous change, which, unfolding itself slowly like a scroll, through many months, promised an abiding torment; and, in fact, it never left me, though recurring more or less intermittingly. Hitherto the human face had often mixed in my dreams, but not despotically, nor with any special power of tormenting. But now that affection which I have called the tyranny of the human face began to unfold itself. Perhaps some part of my London life (the searching for Ann amongst fluctuating crowds) might be answerable for this. Be that as it may, now it was that upon the rocking waters of the ocean the human face began to reveal itself ; the sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens ; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing ; faces that surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations : infinite was my agitation ; my mind tossed, as it seemed, upon the billowy ocean, and weltered upon the weltering waves. . . .

Under the connecting feeling of tropical heat and vertical

sunlights, I brought together all creatures, birds, beasts, reptiles, all trees and plants, usages and appearances, that are found in all tropical regions, and assembled them together in China or Hiridostan. From kindred feelings, I soon brought Egypt and her gods under the same law. I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms ; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia ; Vishnu hated me ; Seeva lay in wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris : I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. Thousands of years I lived and was buried in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud.

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

of the tables, sofas, &c, soon became instinct with life : the abominable head of the crocodile, and his leering eyes, looked out at me, multiplied into ten thousand repetitions ; and I stood loathing and fascinated. So often did this hideous reptile haunt my dreams that many times the very same dream was broken up in the very same way : I heard gentle voices speaking to me (I hear everything when I am sleeping), and instantly I awoke ; it was broad noon, and my children were standing, hand in hand, at my bedside, come to show me their coloured shoes, or new frocks, or to TO let me see them dressed for going out. No experience was so awful to me, and at the same time so pathetic, as this abrupt translation from the darkness of the infinite to the gaudy summer air of highest noon, and from the unutterable abortions of miscreated gigantic vermin to the sight of infancy and innocent *human* natures. . . .

Now, at last, I had become awestruck at the approach of sleep, under the condition of visions so afflicting, and so intensely lifelike as those which persecuted my phantom-haunted brain. More and more also I felt violent palpita- 20 tions in some internal region, such as are commonly, but erroneously, called palpitations of the heart—being, as I suppose, referable exclusively to derangements in the stomach. These were evidently increasing rapidly in frequency and in strength. Naturally, therefore, on considering how important my life had become to others besides myself, I became alarmed ; and I paused seasonably ; but with a difficulty that is past all description. Either way it seemed as though death had, in military language, ' thrown himself astride of my path.' Nothing short of mortal 30 anguish, in a physical sense, it seemed, to wean myself from opium ; yet, on the other hand, death through overwhelming nervous terrors—death by brain-fever or by lunacy—seemed too certainly to besiege the alternative course. Fortunately I had still so much of firmness left

as to face that choice, which, with most of instant suffering, showed in the far distance a possibility of final escape.

I triumphed. But infer not, reader, from this word *'triumph* ', a condition of joy or exultation. Think of me as of one, even when four months had passed, still agitated, writhing, throbbing, palpitating, shattered ; and much, perhaps, in the situation of him who has been racked, as I collect the torments of that state from the affecting account of them left by a most innocent sufferer in the time of James I. . . .

Lord Bacon conjectures that it may be as painful to be born as to die. That seems probable ; and, during the whole period of diminishing the opium, I had the torments of a man passing out of one mode of existence into another, and liable to the mixed or the alternate pains of birth and death. The issue was not death, but a sort of physical regeneration ; and I may add that ever since, at intervals, I have had a restoration of more than youthful spirits.

Inadequacy of Pure Literature

(From *Letters to a Young Man whose Education has been Neglected* ; Letter I, *London Magazine,* January 1823)

IF there has ever lived a man who might claim the privilege of speaking with emphasis and authority on this great question—By what means shall a man best support the activity of his own mind in solitude ? I probably am that man ; and upon this ground, that I have passed more of my life in absolute and unmitigated solitude, voluntarily, and for intellectual purposes, than any person of my age whom I have ever either met with, heard of, or read of. With such pretensions, what is it that I offer as the result of my experience, and how far does it coincide with the doctrine of Mr. Coleridge ? Briefly this : I wholly agree with him that Literature, in the proper acceptation of the

term, as denoting what is otherwise called *Belles Lettres,* &c.—that is, the most eminent of the fine arts, and so understand, therefore, as to exclude all *science* whatsoever—is not, to use a Greek word, αὐτάρκης—is not self-sufficing; no, not even when the mind is so far advanced that it can bring what have hitherto passed for merely literary or *aesthetic* questions under the light of philosophic principles; when problems of 'taste' have expanded to problems of human nature. And why? Simply for this reason—that our power to exercise the faculties on such subjects is not, to as it is on others, in defiance of our own spirits; the difficulties and resistances to our progress in these investigations are not susceptible of minute and equable partition (as in mathematics); and, therefore, the movements of the mind cannot be continuous, but are either of necessity tumultuary and *per saltum,* or none at all. When, on the contrary, the difficulty is pretty equally dispersed and broken up into a series of steps, no one of which demands any exertion sensibly more intense than the rest, nothing is required of the student beyond that sort of application and 20 coherent attention which, in a sincere student of any standing, may be presumed as a habit already and inveterately established. The dilemma, therefore, to which a student of pure literature is continually reduced—such a student, suppose, as the Schlegels, or any other man who has cultivated no acquaintance with the severer sciences—is this: either he studies literature as a mere man of taste, and perhaps also as a philologer—and in that case his understanding must find a daily want of some masculine exercise to call it out and give it play; or (which is the rarest thing in the 30 world), having begun to study literature as a philosopher, he seeks to renew that elevated walk of study at all opportunities—but this is often as hopeless an effort as to a great poet it would be to sit down upon any predetermination to compose in his character of poet. Hence, therefore, if (as

too often it happens) he has not cultivated those studies (mathematics, e. g.) which present such difficulties as will bend to a resolute effort of the mind, and which have the additional recommendation that they are apt to stimulate and irritate the mind to make that effort, he is often thrown by the very cravings of an unsatisfied intellect, and not by passion or inclination, upon some vulgar excitement of business or pleasure, which becomes constantly more necessary to him.

Roman Sublimity

(From Letter IV *(On Languages (continued))* of *Letters to a Young Alan* ; *London Magazine,* May 1823 ; reprinted with certain errors in 1860, in vol. xiv of the Collective Edition)

IN my last letter I declined to speak of the antique literature, as a subject too unwieldy and unmanageable for my limits. I now recur to it for the sake of guarding and restraining that particular sentence in which I have spoken of the Roman literature as inferior to the Greek. In common with all the world, I must, of necessity, think it so in the drama, and generally in poetry κατ' ἐξοχήν. Indeed, for some forms of poetry, even of the lower order, it was the misfortune of the Roman literature that they were not cultivated until the era of fastidious taste, which in every nation takes place at a certain stage of society. They were harshly transplanted as exotics, and never passed through the just degrees of a natural growth on Roman soil. Notwithstanding this, the most exquisite specimens of the lighter lyric which the world has yet seen must be sought for in Horace ; and very few writers of any country have approached to Virgil in the art of *composition,* however low we may be disposed at this day to rank him as a poet, when tried in the unequal contest with the sublimities of the Christian literature. The truth is (and this is worth

being attended to), that the peculiar sublimity of the Roman mind does not express itself, nor is it at all to be sought, in their poetry. Poetry, according to the Roman ideal of it, was not an adequate organ for the grander movements of the national mind. Roman sublimity must be looked for in Roman acts and in Roman sayings.

The English Character

(From *Notes from the Pocket-Book of a late Opium-Eater, No. I, ' Walking Stewart,' London Magazine,* September 1823 ; somewhat revised for publication in vol. viii of the Collective Edition in 1858)

I HAD been greatly impressed by the sound and original views which, in the first volume, he had taken of the national characters throughout Europe. In particular, he was the first, and, so far as I know, the only, writer who had noticed the profound error of ascribing a phlegmatic character to the English nation. ' English phlegm ' is the constant expression of authors, when contrasting the English with the French. Now, the truth is that, beyond that of all other nations, it has a substratum of profound passion : and, if we are to recur to the old doctrine of temperaments, the English character must be classed, not under the *phlegmatic,* but under the *melancholic,* temperament, and the French under the *sanguine.* The character of a nation may be judged of, in this particular, by examining its idiomatic language. The French, in whom the lower forms of passion arc constantly bubbling up from the shallow and superficial character of their feelings, have appropriated all the phrases of passion to the service of trivial and ordinary life : and hence they have no language of passion for the service of poetry, or of occasions really demanding it: for it has been already enfeebled by continual association with cases of an unimpassioned order. But a character of deeper passion has a perpetual standard

in itself, by which, as by an instinct, it tries all cases, and rejects the language of passion as disproportionate and ludicrous where it is not fully justified. ' Ah Heavens ! ' or ' Oh my God ! ' are exclamations, with us, so exclusively reserved for cases of profound interest, that, on hearing a woman even (i. e. a person of the sex most easily excited) utter such words, we look round, expecting to see her child in some situation of danger. But in France, ' *Ah Ciel!* ' and ' *Oh mon Dieu!'* are uttered by every woman if a mouse does but run across the floor. The ignorant and the thoughtless, however, will continue to class the English character under the phlegmatic temperament, whilst the philosopher will perceive that it is the exact polar antithesis to a phlegmatic character.

Dream-vision of the Infinite

(From *Dream upon the Universe,* a translation from Richter; *London Magazine,* March 1824 ; reduced and appended as a conclusion to an article on *System of the Heavens (Tait's Magazine,* September 1846) when the latter was revised in 1854 for vol. in of the Collective Edition)

Dream-vision of the Infinite as it reveals itself in the Chambers of Space

' God called up from dreams a man into the vestibule of heaven, saying " Come thou hither and see the glory of my house ". And to the servants that stood around his throne he said " Take him, and undress him from his robes of flesh : cleanse his vision, and put a new breath into his nostrils arm him with sail-broad wings for flight. Only touch not with any change his human heart—the heart that weeps and trembles ". It was done ; and, with a mighty angel for his guide, the man stood ready for his infinite voyage ; and from the terraces of heaven, without sound or farewell, at once they wheeled away into endless space. Sometimes

with the solemn flight of angel wing they fled through Zaarahs of darkness, through wildernesses of death that divided the worlds of life : sometimes they swept over frontiers that were quickening under prophetic motions towards a life not yet realized. Then, from a distance that is counted only in heaven, light dawned for a time through a sleepy film : by unutterable pace the light swept to *them,* they by unutterable pace to the light : in a moment the rushing of planets was upon them : in a moment the blazing of suns was around them. Then came eternities of twilight, that revealed, but were not revealed. To the right hand and to the left towered mighty constellations, that by self-repetitions and by answers from afar, that by counter-positions, that by mysterious combinations, built up triumphal gates, whose architraves, whose archways—horizontal, upright—rested, rose—at altitudes, by spans, that seemed ghostly from infinitude. Without measure were the architraves, past number were the archways, beyond memory the gates. Within were stairs that scaled the eternities above, that descended to the eternities below : above was below, below was above, to the man stripped of gravitating body: depth was swallowed up in height insurmountable, height was swallowed up in depth unfathomable. Suddenly as thus they rode from infinite to infinite, suddenly as thus they tilted over abysmal worlds, a mighty cry arose—that systems more mysterious, worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths, were dawning, were nearing, were at hand. Then the man sighed, stopped, shuddered, and wept. His overladen heart uttered itself in tears ; and he said " Angel, I will go no further. For the spirit of man aches under this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God's house. Let me lie down in the grave, that I may find rest from the persecutions of the Infinite ; for end, I see, there is none ". And from all the listening stars that shone around issued one choral chant—" Even so it is :

Angel, thou knowest that it is : end there is none that ever yet we heard of ". " End is there none ? " the Angel solemnly demanded. " And is this the sorrow that kills you ? " But no voice answered, that he might answer himself. Then the Angel threw up his glorious hands to the heaven of heavens, saying, "End is there none to the Universe of God ? Lo ! also THERE IS NO BEGINNING." '

On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts

(From *On Murder Considered as one of the Fine Arts,* a reprint in vol. iv of the Collective Edition, 1854, with modifications and the addition of a ' Postscript', of two papers, the first in *Blackwood's Magazine* for February 1827, the second in the same magazine of November 1839)

[Only considerations of space could induce one to mutilate this, by far the most brilliant and typical example of De Quincey's lighter vein : but perhaps even a quarter of a loaf is better than no bread, when the bread is of such quality.]

I. *Advertisement of a Man morbidly Virtuous*

MOST of us who read books, have probably heard of a Society for the Promotion of Vice, of the Hell-Fire Club founded in the last century by Sir Francis Dashwood, &c. At Brighton I think it was that a Society was formed for the Suppression of Virtue. That society was itself suppressed ; but I am sorry to say that another exists in London, of a character still more atrocious. In tendency, it may be denominated a Society for the Encouragement of Murder ; but, according to their own delicate εὐφημισμός, it is styled, the Society of Connoisseurs in Murder. They profess to be curious in homicide, amateurs and dilettanti in the various modes of carnage, and, in short, Murder-Fanciers. Every fresh atrocity of that class which the police annals of Europe bring up, they meet and criticize as they would a picture, statue, or other work of art. But

I need not trouble myself with any attempt to describe the spirit of their proceedings, as the reader will collect *that* much better from one of the Monthly Lectures read before the society last year. This has fallen into my hands accidentally, in spite of all the vigilance exercised to keep their transactions from the public eye. The publication of it will alarm them ; and my purpose is that it should. For I would much rather put them down quietly, by an appeal to public opinion, than by such an exposure of names as would follow an appeal to Bow Street ; which last appeal, however, if this should fail, I must really resort to.

II. *The Lecture*

GENTLEMEN :—I have had the honour to be appointed by your committee to the trying task of reading the Williams Lecture on Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts—a task which might be easy enough three or four centuries ago, when the art was little understood, and few great models had been exhibited ; but in this age, when masterpieces of excellence have been executed by professional men, it must be evident that in the style of criticism applied to them the public will look for something of a corresponding improvement. Practice and theory must advance *pari passu.* People begin to see that something more goes to the composition of a fine murder than two blockheads to kill and be killed, a knife, a purse, and a dark lane. Design, gentlemen, grouping, light and shade, poetry, sentiment, are now deemed indispensable to attempts of this nature. Mr. Williams has exalted the ideal of murder to all of us, and to me, therefore, in particular, has deepened the arduousness of my task. Like Aeschylus or Milton in poetry, like Michael Angelo in painting, he has carried his art to a point of colossal sublimity, and, as Mr. Wordsworth observes, has in a manner ' created the taste by which he

is to be enjoyed '. To sketch the history of the art, and to examine its principles critically, now remains as a duty for the connoisseur, and for judges of quite another stamp from his Majesty's Judges of Assize.

Before I begin, let me say a word or two to certain prigs, who affect to speak of our society as if it were in some degree immoral in its tendency. Immoral! God bless my soul, gentlemen ! what is it that people mean ? I am for morality, and always shall be, and for virtue, and all that; and I do affirm, and always shall (let what will come of it), that murder is an improper line of conduct, highly improper ; and I do not stick to assert that any man who deals in murder must have very incorrect ways of thinking, and truly inaccurate principles ; and, so far from aiding and abetting him by pointing out his victim's.hiding-place, as a great moralist of Germany declared it to be every good man's duty to do, I would subscribe one shilling and sixpence to have him apprehended—which is more by eighteenpence than the most eminent moralists have hitherto subscribed for that purpose. But what then ? Everything in this world has two handles. Murder, for instance, may be laid hold of by its moral handle (as it generally is in the pulpit and at the Old Bailey), and *that,* I confess, is its weak side ; or it may also be treated *aesthetically,* as the Germans call it—that is, in relation to good taste.

Really, gentlemen, I beg pardon for so much philosophy at one time ; and now let me apply it. When a murder is in the paulo-post-futurum tense—not done, not even (according to modern purism) *being* done, but only going to be done—and a rumour of it comes to our ears, by all means let us treat it morally. But suppose it over and done, and that you can say of it, Τετέλεσται, It is finished, or (in that adamantine molossus of *Medea)* Εἴργασται, Done

it is, it is a *fait accompli*; suppose the poor murdered man to be out of his pain, and the rascal that did it off like a shot nobody knows whither; suppose, lastly, that we have done our best, by putting out our legs, to trip up the fellow in his flight, but all to no purpose—' abiit, evasit, excessit, erupit', &c.—why, then, I say, what's the use of any more virtue? Enough has been given to morality; now comes the turn of Taste and the Fine Arts. A sad thing it was, no doubt, very sad; but *we* can't mend it. Therefore let us make the best of a bad matter; and, as it is impossible to hammer anything out of it for moral purposes, let us treat it aesthetically, and see if it will turn to account in that way. Such is the logic of a sensible man; and what follows? We dry up our tears, and have the satisfaction, perhaps, to discover that a transaction which, morally considered, was shocking, and without a leg to stand upon, when tried by principles of Taste, turns out to be a very meritorious performance. Thus all the world is pleased; the old proverb is justified, that it is an ill wind which blows nobody good; the amateur, from looking bilious and sulky by too close an attention to virtue, begins to pick up his crumbs; and general hilarity prevails. Virtue has had her day; and henceforward, *Virtu*, so nearly the same thing as to differ only by a single letter (which surely is not worth haggling or higgling about)—*Virtu*, I repeat, and Connoisseurship, have leave to provide for themselves. Upon this principle, gentlemen, I propose to guide your studies from Cain to Mr. Thurtell. Through this great gallery of murder, therefore, together let us wander hand in hand, in delighted admiration; while I endeavour to point your attention to the objects of profitable criticism.

The first murder is familiar to you all. As the inventor of murder, and the father of the art, Cain must have been

All the Cains were men of

genius. Tubal Cain invented tubes, I think, or some such thing. But, whatever might be the originality and genius of the artist, every art was then in its infancy; and the works turned out from each several *studio* must be criticized with a recollection of that fact. Even Tubal's work would probably be little approved at this day in Sheffield; and therefore of Cain (Cain senior, I mean) it is no disparagement to say that his performance was but so-so. Milton, however, is supposed to have thought differently. By his way of relating the case, it should seem to have been rather a pet murder with him, for he retouches it with an apparent anxiety for its picturesque effect :

> Whereat he inly raged, and, as they talked,
> Smote him into the midriff with a stone
> That beat out life : he fell, and, deadly pale,
> Groaned out his soul, *with gashing blood effused.*
> *Par. Lost,* Bk. XL

Upon this Richardson the painter, who had an eye for effect, remarks as follows in his ' Notes on Paradise Lost', p. 497 : ' It has been thought ', says he, ' that Cain beat (as the common saying is) the breath out of his brother's body with a great stone : Milton gives in to this, with the addition, however, of a large wound.' In this place it Was a judicious addition ; for the rudeness of the weapon, unless raised and enriched by a warm, sanguinary colouring, has too much of the naked air of the savage school; as if the deed were perpetrated by a Polypheme, without science, premeditation, or anything but a mutton-bone. However, I am chiefly pleased with the improvement, as it implies that Milton was an amateur. As to Shakespeare, there never was a better ; witness his description of the murdered Duncan, Banquo, &c. ; and above all witness his incomparable miniature, in *Henry VI,* of the murdered Gloucester.

The foundation of the art having been once laid, it is pitiable to see how it slumbered without improvement for

ages. In fact, I shall now be obliged to leap over all murders, sacred and profane, as utterly unworthy of notice until long after the Christian era. Greece, even in the age of Pericles, produced no murder, or at least none is recorded, of the slightest merit; and Rome had too little originality of genius in any of the arts to succeed where her model failed her. In fact, the Latin language sinks under the very idea of murder. 'The man was murdered;'—how will this sound in Latin? *Interfectus est, interemptus est*—which simply expresses a homicide; and hence the Christian Latinity of the Middle Ages was obliged to introduce a new word, such as the feebleness of classic conceptions never ascended to. *Murdratus est*, says the sublimer dialect of Gothic ages. Meantime, the Jewish school of murder kept alive whatever was yet known in the art, and gradually transferred it to the Western World. Indeed, the Jewish school was always respectable, even in its medieval stages, as the case of Hugh of Lincoln shows, which was honoured with the approbation of Chaucer, on occasion of another performance from the same school, which, in his *Canterbury Tales*, he puts into the mouth of the Lady Abbess.

Recurring, however, for one moment, to classical antiquity, I cannot but think that Catiline, Clodius, and some of that coterie, would have made first-rate artists; and it is on all accounts to be regretted that the priggism of Cicero robbed his country of the only chance she had for distinction in this line. As the *subject* of a murder, no person could have answered better than himself. Oh Gemini! how he would have howled with panic, if he had heard Cethegus under his bed. It would have been truly diverting to have listened to him; and satisfied I am, gentlemen, that he would have preferred the *utile* of creeping into a closet, or even into a *cloaca*, to the *honestum of* facing the bold artist.

To come now to the Dark Ages—(by which we that speak

with precision mean, *par excellence,* the tenth century as a meridian line, and the two centuries immediately before and after, full midnight being from A. D. 888 to A. D. IIII)— those ages ought naturally to be favourable to the art of murder, as they were to church architecture, to stained glass, &c. ; and, accordingly, about the latter end of this period, there arose a great character in our art—I mean the Old Man of the Mountains. He was a shining light indeed, and I need not tell you that the very word ' assassin ' is deduced from him. So keen an amateur was he that on one occasion, when his own life was attempted by a favourite assassin, he was so much pleased with the talent shown that, notwithstanding the failure of the artist, he created him a duke upon the spot, with remainder to the female line, and settled a pension on him for three lives. Assassination is a branch of the art which demands a separate notice ; and it is possible that I may devote an entire lecture to it. Meantime, I shall only observe how odd it is that this branch of the art has flourished by intermitting fits. It never rains but it pours. Our own age can boast of some fine specimens, such, for instance, as Bellingham's affair with the prime minister Perceval, the Due de Berri's case at the Parisian Opera House, the Marechal Bessieres's case at Avignon ; and about two and a half centuries ago, there was a most brilliant constellation of murders in this class. I need hardly say that I allude especially to those seven splendid works : the assassinations of William I of Orange ; of the three French Henries, viz. of Henri, Duke of Guise, that had a fancy for the throne of France, of Henri III, last prince of the line of Valois, who then occupied that throne, and finally of Henri IV, his brother-in-law, who succeeded to that throne as first prince in the line of Bourbon : not eighteen years later came the 5th on the roll, viz. that of our Duke of Buckingham (which you will find excellently described in the letters published by

Sir Henry Ellis, of the British Museum), 6thly of Gustavus Adolphus, and 7thly of Wallenstein. What a glorious Pleiad of Murders ! And it increases one's admiration that this bright constellation of artistic displays, comprehending 3 Majesties, 3 Serene Highnesses, and I Excellency, all lay within so narrow a field of time as between A. D. 1588 and 1635. The King of Sweden's assassination, by the by, is doubted by many writers, Harte amongst others ; but they are wrong. He *was* murdered ; and I consider his murder unique in its excellence ; for he was murdered at noon-day, and on the field of battle—a feature of original conception which occurs in no other work of art that I remember. To conceive the idea of a secret murder on private account as enclosed within a little parenthesis on a vast stage of public battle-carnage is like Hamlet's subtle device of a tragedy within a tragedy. Indeed, all of these assassinations may be studied with profit by the advanced connoisseur. They are all of them *exemplaria,* model murders, pattern murders, of which one may say

Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna—

especially *nocturna.*

With respect to the Williams murders, the sublimest and most entire in their excellence that ever were committed, I shall not allow myself to speak incidentally. Nothing less than an entire lecture, or even an entire course of lectures, would suffice to expound their merits. But one curious fact connected with his case I shall mention, because it seems to imply that the blaze of his genius absolutely dazzled the eye of criminal justice. You all remember, I doubt not, that the instruments with which he executed his first great work (the murder of the Marrs) were a ship-carpenter's mallet and a knife. Now, the mallet belonged to an old Swede, one John Peterson, and bore his initials. This instrument Williams left behind him in Marr's house, and

it fell into the hands of the magistrates. But, gentlemen, it is a fact that the publication of this circumstance of the initials led immediately to the apprehension of Williams, and, if made earlier, would have prevented his second great work (the murder of the Williamsons), which took place precisely twelve days after. Yet the magistrates kept back this fact from the public for the entire twelve days, and until that second work was accomplished. That finished, they published it, apparently feeling that Williams had now done enough for his fame, and that his glory was at length placed beyond the reach of accident.

As to Mr. Thurtell's case, I know not what to say. Naturally, I have every disposition to think highly of my predecessor in the chair of this society ; and I acknowledge that his lectures were unexceptionable. But, speaking ingenuously, I do really think that his principal performance as an artist has been much overrated. I admit that at first I was myself carried away by the general enthusiasm. On the morning when the murder was made known in London there was the fullest meeting of amateurs that I have ever known since the days of Williams ; old bedridden connoisseurs, who had got into a peevish way of sneering and complaining ' that there was nothing doing ', now hobbled down to our club-room : such hilarity, such benign expression of general satisfaction, I have rarely witnessed. On every side you saw people shaking hands, congratulating each other, and forming dinner parties for the evening ; and nothing was to be heard but triumphant challenges of—' Well! will *this* do ? ' 'Is *this* the right thing ? ' ' Are you satisfied at last ? ' But, in the middle of the row, I remember, we all grew silent, on hearing the old cynical amateur L. S———stumping along with his wooden leg. He entered the room with his usual scowl; and, as he advanced, he continued to growl and stutter the whole way—' Mere plagiarism—base plagiarism from

hints that I threw out ! Besides, his style is as harsh as Albert Durer, and as coarse as Fuseli.' Many thought that this was mere jealousy and general waspishness ; but I confess that, when the first glow of enthusiasm had subsided, I have found most judicious critics to agree that there was something *falsetto* in the style of Thurtell. The fact is, he was a member of our society, which naturally gave a friendly bias to our judgements ; and his person was universally familiar to the ' fancy '—which gave him, with the whole London public, a temporary popularity that his pretensions are not capable of supporting ; for *opinionum commenta delet dies, naturae judicia confirmat.* There was, however, an unfinished design of Thurtell's for the murder of a man with a pair of dumb-bells, which I admired greatly ; it was a mere outline that he never filled in ; but to my mind it seemed every way superior to his chief work. I remember that there was great regret expressed by some amateurs that this sketch should have been left in an unfinished state ; but there I cannot agree with them ; for the fragments and first bold outlines of original artists have often a felicity about them which is apt to vanish in the management of the details.

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And now, gentlemen, in conclusion, let me again solemnly disclaim all pretensions on my own part to the character of a professional man. I never attempted any murder in my life, except in the year 1801—upon the body of a tom-cat; and *that* turned out differently from my intention. My purpose, I own, was downright murder. ' Semper ego auditor tanturn ? ' said I, ' nunquamne reponam ? ' And I went downstairs in search of Tom at one o'clock on a dark night, with the ' animus ', and no doubt with the fiendish looks, of a murderer. But, when I found him, he was in the act of plundering the pantry of bread and other things. Now this gave a new turn to the affair; for, the time

being one of general scarcity, when even Christians were reduced to the use of potato-bread, rice-bread, and all sorts of things, it was downright treason in a tom-cat to be wasting good wheaten-bread in the way he was doing. It instantly became a patriotic duty to put him to death ; and, as I raised aloft and shook the glittering steel, I fancied myself rising, like Brutus, effulgent from a crowd of patriots, and, as I stabbed him, I

Called aloud on Tully's name,
And bade the father of his country hail!

Since then, what wandering thoughts I may have had of attempting the life of an ancient ewe, of a superannuated hen, and such ' small deer ', are locked up in the secrets of my own breast; but for the higher departments of the art I confess myself to be utterly unfit. My ambition does not rise so high. No, gentlemen : in the words of Horace,

Fungar vice cotis, acutum
Reddere quae ferrum valet, exsors ipsa secandi.

Second Paper

A GOOD many years ago, the reader may remember that I came forward *in* the character of a *dilettante* in murder. Perhaps *dilettante* is too strong a word. *Connoisseur* is better suited to the scruples and infirmity of public taste. I suppose there is no harm in *that,* at least. A man is not bound to put his eyes, ears, and understanding into his breeches-pocket when he meets with a murder. If he is not in a downright comatose state, I suppose he must see that one murder is better or worse than another, in point of good taste. Murders have their little differences and shades of merit, as well as statues, pictures, oratorios, cameos, intaglios, or what not. You may be angry with the man for talking too much, or too publicly (as to the too much, that I deny—a man can never cultivate his taste too highly) ; but you must allow him to think, at

any rate. Well, would you believe it ? all my neighbours came to hear of that little aesthetic essay which I had published ; and, unfortunately, hearing at the very same time of a club that I was connected with, and a dinner at which I presided—both tending to the same little object as the essay, viz. the diffusion of a just taste among Her Majesty's subjects—they got up the most barbarous calumnies against me. In particular, they said that I, or that the club (which comes to the same thing), had offered bounties on well-conducted homicides—with a scale of drawbacks, in case of any one defect or flaw, according to a table issued to private friends. Now, let me tell the whole truth about the dinner and the club, and it will be seen how malicious the world is. But, first, confidentially, allow me to say what my real principles are upon the matter in question.

As to murder, I never committed one in my life. It 's a well-known thing amongst all my friends. I can get a paper to certify as much, signed by lots of people. Indeed, if you come to that, I doubt whether many people could produce as strong a certificate. Mine would be as big as a breakfast tablecloth.

' But,' say you, ' if no murderer, you may have encouraged, or even have bespoken, a murder.' No, upon my honour—no. And that was the very point I wished to argue for your satisfaction. The truth is, I am a very particular man in everything relating to murder ; and perhaps I carry my delicacy too far.

A man came to me as a candidate for the place of my servant, just then vacant. He had the reputation of having dabbled a little in our art; some said, not without merit. What startled me, however, was, that he supposed this art to be part of his regular duties in my service, and talked

of having it considered in his wages. Now, that was a thing I would not allow ; so I said at once, ' Richard (or James, as the case might be), you misunderstand my character. If a man will and must practise this difficult (and, allow me to add, dangerous) branch of art—if he has an overruling genius for it—why, in that case, all I say is that he might as well pursue his studies whilst living in my service as in another's. And also I may observe that it can do no harm either to himself or to the subject on whom he operates that he should be guided by men of more taste than himself. Genius may do much, but long study of the art must always entitle a man to offer advice. So far I will go—general principles I will suggest. But, as to any particular case, once for all I will have nothing to do with it. Never tell me of any special work of art you are meditating—I set my face against it *in toto.* For, if once a man indulges himself in murder, very soon he comes to think little of robbing, and from robbing he comes next to drinking and Sabbath-breaking, and from that to incivility and procrastination. Once begin upon this downward path, you never know where you are to stop. Many a man dated his ruin from some murder or other that perhaps he thought little of at the time. *Principiis obsta*—that's my rule.' Such was my speech, and I have always acted up to it; so, if that is not being virtuous, I should be glad to know what is.

But now about the dinner and the club. The club was not particularly of my creation ; it arose—pretty much as other similar associations for the propagation of truth and the communication of new ideas—rather from the necessities of things than upon any one man's suggestion. As to the dinner, if any man more than another could be held responsible for that, it was a member known amongst us by the name of *Toad-in-the-hole.* He was so called from his gloomy misanthropical disposition, which led him into

constant disparagements of all modern murders as vicious abortions, belonging to no authentic school of art. The finest performances of our own age he snarled at cynically ; and at length this querulous humour grew upon him so much, and he became so notorious as a *laudator temporis acti,* that few people cared to seek his society. This made him still more fierce and truculent. He went about muttering and growling ; wherever you met him, he was soliloquizing, and saying ' Despicable pretender—without grouping—without two ideas upon handling—without——'; and there you lost him. At length existence seemed to be painful to him ; he rarely spoke ; he seemed conversing with phantoms in the air ; his housekeeper informed us that his reading was nearly confined to ' God's Revenge upon Murder ' by Reynolds, and a more ancient book of the same title, noticed by Sir Walter Scott in his *Fortunes of Nigel.* Sometimes, perhaps, he might read in the *Newgate Calendar* down to the year 1788 ; but he never looked into a book more recent. In fact, he had a theory with regard to the French Revolution, as having been the great cause of degeneration in murder. ' Very soon, sir,' he used to say, ' men will have lost the art of killing poultry : the very rudiments of the art will have perished ! ' In the year 1811 he retired from general society. Toad-in-the-hole was no more seen in any public resort. We missed him from his wonted haunts : ' Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he.' By the side of the main conduit his listless length at noontide he would stretch, and pore upon the filth that muddled by. ' Even dogs ', this pensive moralist would say, ' are not what they were, sir—not what they should be. I remember in my grandfather's time that some dogs had an idea of murder. I have known a mastiff, sir, that lay in ambush for a rival—yes, sir, and finally murdered him, with pleasing circumstances of good taste. I also was on intimate terms of acquaintance with a tom-

cat that was an assassin. But now——' ; and then, the subject growing too painful, he dashed his hand to his forehead, and went off abruptly in a homeward direction towards his favourite conduit; where he was seen by an amateur in such a state that he thought it dangerous to address him. Soon after Toad shut himself entirely up ; it was understood that he had resigned himself to melancholy ; and at length the prevailing notion was that Toad-in-the-hole had hanged himself.

The world was wrong *there,* as it had been on some other questions. Toad-in-the-hole might be sleeping, but dead he was not; and of that we soon had ocular proof. One morning in 1812, an amateur surprised us with the news that he had seen Toad-in-the-hole brushing with hasty steps the dews away, to meet the postman by the conduit side. Even that was something : how much more, to hear that he had shaved his beard—had laid aside his sad-coloured clothes, and was adorned like a bridegroom of ancient days. What could be the meaning of all this ? Was Toad-in-the-hole mad ? or how ? Soon after the secret was explained : in more than a figurative sense ' the murder was out '. For in came the London morning papers, by which it appeared that, but three days before, a murder the most superb of the century by many degrees had occurred in the heart of London. I need hardly say that this was the great exterminating *chef-d'œuvre* of Williams at Mr. Marr's, No. 29 Ratcliffe Highway. That was the debut of the artist; at least for anything the public knew. What occurred at Mr. Williamson's twelve nights afterwards—the second work turned out from the same chisel—some people pronounced even superior. But Toad-in-the-hole always ' reclaimed ', he was even angry, at such comparisons. ' This vulgar *gout de comparaison,* as La Bruyere calls it,' he would often remark, ' will be our ruin ; each work has its own separate characteristics—each in and for itself is incomparable. One, perhaps, might suggest the

Iliad—the other the *Odyssey* : but what do you get by such comparisons ? Neither ever was or will be surpassed ; and, when you've talked for hours, you must still come back to that.' Vain, however, as all criticism might be, he often said that volumes might be written on each case for itself ; and he even proposed to publish a quarto on the subject.

Meantime, how had Toad-in-the-hole happened to hear of this great work of art so early in the morning ? He had received an account by express, dispatched by a correspondent in London who watched the progress of art on *Toad's* behalf, with a general commission to send off a special express, at whatever cost, in the event of any estimable works appearing. The express arrived in the night-time ; Toad-in-the-hole was then gone to bed ; he had been muttering and grumbling for hours ; but of course he was called up. On reading the account, he threw his arms round the express, declared him his brother and his preserver, and expressed his regret at not having it in his power to knight him. We, amateurs, having heard that he was abroad, and therefore had *not* hanged himself, made sure of soon seeing him amongst us. Accordingly he soon arrived ; seized every man's hand as he passed him—wrung it almost frantically, and kept ejaculating, ' Why, now, here 's something like a murder !—this is the real thing—this is genuine—this is what you can approve, can recommend to a friend : this—says every man, on reflection—this is the thing that ought to be ! Such works are enough to make us all young.' And in fact the general opinion is that Toad-in-the-hole would have died but for this regeneration of art, which he called a second age of Leo the Tenth ; and it was our duty, he said, solemnly to commemorate it. At present, and *en attendant,* he proposed that the club should meet and dine together. A dinner, therefore, was given by the club ; to which all amateurs were invited from a distance of one hundred miles.

Of this dinner there are ample shorthand notes amongst the archives of the club. But they are not ' extended ', to speak diplomatically ; and the reporter who only could give the whole report *in extenso* is missing—I believe, murdered. Meantime, in years long after that day, and on an occasion perhaps equally interesting, viz. the turning up of Thugs and Thuggism, another dinner was given. Of this I myself kept notes, for fear of another accident to the shorthand reporter. And I here subjoin them.

Toad-in-the-hole, I must mention, was present at this dinner. In fact, it was one of its sentimental incidents. Being as old as the valleys at the dinner of 1812, naturally he was as old as the hills at the Thug dinner of 1838. He had taken to wearing his beard again ; why, or with what view, it passes my persimmon to tell you. But so it was. And his appearance was most benign and venerable. Nothing could equal the angelic radiance of his smile as he inquired after the unfortunate reporter (whom, as a piece of private scandal, I should tell you that he was himself supposed to have murdered in a rapture of creative art). The answer was, with roars of laughter, from the under-sheriff of our county—' Non est inventus '. Toad-in-the-hole laughed outrageously at this : in fact, we all thought he was choking; and, at the earnest request of the company, a musical composer furnished a most beautiful glee upon the occasion, which was sung five times after dinner, with universal applause and inextinguishable laughter, the words being these (and the chorus so contrived, as most beautifully to mimic the peculiar laughter of Toad-in-the-hole) :—

Et interrogatum est a Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille reporter ?
Et responsum est cum cachinno—*Non est inventus.*

Chorus.

Deinde iteratum est ab omnibus, cum cachinnatione undulante, trepidante—*Non est inventus,*

——Toad-in-the-hole, I ought to mention, about nine years

before, when an express from Edinburgh brought him the earliest intelligence of the Burke-and-Hare revolution in the art, went mad upon the spot, and, instead of a pension to the express for even one life, or a knighthood, endeavoured to Burke *him* ; in consequence of which he was put into a strait-waistcoat. And that was the reason we had no dinner then. But now all of us were alive and kicking, strait-waistcoaters and others ; in fact, not one absentee was reported upon the entire roll. There were also many foreign amateurs present.——Dinner being over, and the cloth drawn, there was a general call made for the new glee of *Non est inventus* ; but, as this would have interfered with the requisite gravity of the company during the earlier toasts, I overruled the call. After the national toasts had been given, the- first official toast of the day was *The Old Man of the Mountains*—drunk in solemn silence.

Toad-in-the-hole returned thanks in a neat speech. He likened himself to the Old Man of the Mountains in a few brief allusions that made the company yell with laughter ; and he concluded with giving the health of

Mr. von Hammer, with many thanks to hirn for his learned History of the Old Man and his subjects the Assassins.

Upon this I rose and said that doubtless most of the company were aware of the distinguished place assigned by Orientalists to the very learned Turkish scholar, Von Hammer the Austrian ; that he had made the profoundest researches into our art, as connected with those early and eminent artists, the Syrian assassins in the period of the Crusaders; that his work had been for several years deposited, as a rare treasure of art, in the library of the club. Even the author's name, gentlemen, pointed him out as the historian of our art—Von Hammer——

' Yes, yes,' interrupted Toad-in-the-hole, ' Von Hammer —he 's the man for a *malleus haereticorum.* You all know what consideration Williams bestowed on the hammer, or the

ship-carpenter's mallet, which is the same thing. Gentlemen, I give you another great hammer—Charles the Hammer, the Marteau, or, in old French, the Martel: he hammered the Saracens till they were all as dead as door-nails.'

' *Charles the Hammer,* with all the honours.'

But the explosion of Toad-in-the-hole, together with the uproarious cheers for the grandpapa of Charlemagne, had now made the company unmanageable. The orchestra was again challenged with shouts the stormiest for the new glee. I foresaw a tempestuous evening ; and I ordered myself to be strengthened with three waiters on each side—the vice-president with as many. Symptoms of unruly enthusiasm were beginning to show out; and I own that I myself was considerably excited as the orchestra opened with its storm of music and the impassioned glee began—' Et interrogatum est a Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille Reporter ? ' And the frenzy of the passion became absolutely convulsing as the full chorus fell in—' Et iteratum est ab omnibus—*Non est inventus.'*

The next toast was—*The Jewish Sicarii.*

Upon which I made the following explanation to the company :—' Gentlemen, I am sure it will interest you all to hear that the Assassins, ancient as they were, had a race of predecessors in the very same country. All over Syria, but particularly in Palestine, during the early years of the Emperor Nero, there was a band of murderers, who prosecuted their studies in a very novel manner. They did not practise in the night-time, or in lonely places ; but, justly considering that great crowds are in themselves a sort of darkness by means of the dense pressure, and the impossibility of finding out who it was that gave the blow, they mingled with mobs everywhere ; particularly at the great paschal feast in Jerusalem ; where they actually had the audacity, as Josephus assures us, to press into the temple—and whom should they choose for operating upon

but Jonathan himself, the Pontifex Maximus? They murdered him, gentlemen, as beautifully as if they had had him alone on a moonless night in a dark lane. And, when it was asked who was the murderer, and where he was——'

'Why, then, it was answered,' interrupted Toad-in-the-hole, '"*Non est inventus*".' And then, in spite of all I could do or say, the orchestra opened, and the whole company began—' Et interrogatum est a Toad-in-the-hole—Ubi est ille Sicarius? Et responsum est ab omnibus—*Non est inventus.*'

At length came the toast of the day—*Thugdom in all its branches.*

The speeches *attempted* at this crisis of the dinner were past all counting. But the applause was so furious, the music so stormy, and the crashing of glasses so incessant, from the general resolution never again to drink an inferior toast from the same glass, that I am unequal to the task of reporting. Besides which, Toad-in-the-hole now became ungovernable. He kept firing pistols in every direction; sent his servant for a blunderbuss, and talked of loading with ball-cartridge. We conceived that his former madness had returned at the mention of Burke and Hare; or that, being again weary of life, he had resolved to go off in a general massacre. This we could not think of allowing; it became indispensable, therefore, to kick him out; which we did with universal consent, the whole company lending their toes *uno pede*, as I may say, though pitying his grey hairs and his angelic smile. During the operation the orchestra poured in their old chorus. The universal company sang, and (what surprised us most of all) Toad-in-the-hole joined us furiously in singing—

Et interrogatum est ab omnibus—Ubi est ille Toad-in-the-Hole?
Et responsum est ab omnibus—*Non est inventus.*

English ' Rhetoricians'

(From *Elements of Rhetoric* ; *Blackwood's Magazine,* December 1828)

OMITTING Sir Philip Sidney, and omitting his friend, Fulke Greville, Lord Brooke (in whose prose there are some bursts of pathetic eloquence, as there is of rhetoric in his verse, though too often harsh and cloudy), the first very eminent rhetorician in the English Literature is Donne. Dr. Johnson inconsiderately classes him in company with Cowley, &c, under the title of *Metaphysical* Poets : metaphysical they were not; *Rhetorical* would have been a more accurate designation. In saying *that,* however, we must remind our readers that we revert to the original use of the word *Rhetoric,* as laying the principal stress upon the management of the thoughts, and only a secondary one upon the ornaments of style. Few writers have shown a more extraordinary compass of powers than Donne ; for he combined—what no other man has ever done—the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty. Massy diamonds compose the very substance of his poem on the Metempsychosis, thoughts and descriptions which have the fervent and gloomy sublimity of Ezekiel or Aeschylus, whilst a diamond dust of rhetorical brilliancies is strewed over the whole of his occasional verses and his prose. No criticism was ever more unhappy than that of Dr. Johnson's which denounces all this artificial display as so much perversion of taste. There cannot be a falser thought than this ; for upon that principle a whole class of compositions might be vicious by conforming to its own ideal. The artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degree as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other; that the pleasure is of an inferior order, can no more attaint the idea or model of the com-

position than it can impeach the excellence of an epigram that it is not a tragedy.

The next writers of distinction who came forward as rhetoricians were Burton in his *Anatomy of Melancholy* and Milton in many of his prose works. They labour under opposite defects. Burton is too quaint, fantastic, and disjointed ; Milton too slow, solemn, and continuous. In the one we see the flutter of a parachute ; in the other the stately and voluminous gyrations of an ascending balloon. Agile movement, and a certain degree of fancifulness, are indispensable to rhetoric. But Burton is not so much fanciful as capricious ; his motion is not the motion of freedom, but of lawlessness ; he does not dance, but caper. Milton, on the other hand, *polonaises* with a grand Castilian air, in paces too sequacious and processional; even in his passages of merriment, and when stung into a quicker motion by personal disdain for an unworthy antagonist, his thoughts and his imagery still appear to move to the music of the organ.

In some measure it is a consequence of these peculiarities, and so far it is the more a duty to allow for them, that the rhetoric of Milton, though wanting in animation, is unusually superb in its colouring ; its very monotony is derived from the sublime unity of the presiding impulse ; and hence it sometimes ascends into eloquence of the highest kind, and sometimes even into the raptures of lyric poetry. The main thing, indeed, wanting to Milton was to have fallen upon happier subjects : for, with the exception of the ' Areopagitica ', there is not one of his prose works upon a theme of universal interest, or perhaps fitted to be the ground-work of a rhetorical display.

Milton, however, was not destined to gather the *spolia opima* of English rhetoric. Two contemporaries of his own,

and whose literary course pretty nearly coincided with his own in point of time, surmounted all competition, and in that amphitheatre became the Protagonistae. These were Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne; who, if not absolutely the foremost in the accomplishments of art, were undoubtedly the richest, the most dazzling, and, with reference to their matter, the most captivating, of all rhetoricians. In them first, and perhaps (if we except occasional passages in the German John Paul Richter) in them only, are the two opposite forces of eloquent passion and rhetorical fancy brought into an exquisite equilibrium —approaching, receding—attracting, repelling—blending, separating—chasing and chased, as in a fugue—and again lost in a delightful interfusion, so as to create a middle species of composition, more various and stimulating to the understanding than pure eloquence, more gratifying to the affections than naked rhetoric. Under this one circumstance of coincidence, in other respects their minds were of the most opposite temperament: Sir Thomas Browne, deep, tranquil, and majestic as Milton, silently premeditating and ' disclosing his golden couplets ', as under some genial instinct of incubation ; Jeremy Taylor, restless, fervid, aspiring, scattering abroad a prodigality of life, not unfolding but creating, with the energy and the ' myriad-mindedness ' of Shakespeare. Where but in Sir T. B. shall one hope to find music so Miltonic, an intonation of such solemn chords as are struck in the following opening bar of a passage in the *Urn-Burial*—' Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave under the drums and tramplings of three conquests ', &c. What a melodious ascent as of a prelude to some impassioned requiem breathing from the pomps of earth, and from the sanctities of the grave ! What a *fluctus decumanus* of rhetoric ! Time expounded, not by generations or centuries, but by the vast periods of conquests and dynasties ; by cycles of Pharaohs and Ptolemies,

Antiochi, and Arsacides ! And these vast successions of time distinguished and figured by the uproars which revolve at their inaugurations ; by the drums and tramplings rolling overhead upon the chambers of forgotten dead—the trepidations of time and mortality vexing, at secular intervals, the everlasting sabbaths of the grave !

Caesar and the Rubicon

(From *The Caesars* ; *Blackwood's Magazine*, October 1832 ; revised for vol. x of the Collective Edition in 1859)

ON the ever memorable night when he had resolved to take the first step (and in such a case the first step, as regarded the power of retreating, was also the final step) which placed him in arms against the state, it happened that his head-quarters were at some distance from the little river Rubicon, which formed the boundary of his province. With his usual caution, that no news of his motions might run before himself, on this night Caesar gave an entertainment to his friends, in the midst of which he slipped away unobserved, and with a small retinue proceeded through the woods to the point of the river at which he designed to cross. The night was stormy, and by the violence of the wind all the torches of his escort were blown out, so that the whole party lost their road, having probably at first intentionally deviated from the main route, and wandered about through the whole night, until the early dawn enabled them to recover their true course. The light was still grey and uncertain as Caesar and his retinue rode down upon the banks of the fatal river—to cross which with arms in his hands, since the further bank lay within the territory of the Republic, *ipso facto* proclaimed any Roman a rebel and a traitor. No man, the firmest or the most obtuse, could be otherwise than deeply agitated when looking down upon this little brook—so insignificant in

itself, but invested by law with a sanctity so awful, and so dire a consecration. The whole course of future history, and the fate of every nation, would necessarily be determined by the irretrievable act of the next half-hour.

In these moments, and with this spectacle before him, and contemplating these immeasurable consequences consciously for the last time that could allow him a retreat—impressed also by the solemnity and deep tranquillity of the silent dawn, whilst the exhaustion of his night wanderings predisposed him to nervous irritation—Caesar, we may be sure, was profoundly agitated. The whole elements of the scene were almost scenically disposed; the law of antagonism having perhaps never been employed with so much effect: the little quiet brook presenting a direct antithesis to its grand political character; and the innocent dawn, with its pure, untroubled repose, contrasting potently, to a man of any intellectual sensibility, with the long chaos of bloodshed, darkness, and anarchy, which was to take its rise from the apparently trifling acts of this one morning. So prepared, we need not much wonder at what followed. Caesar was yet lingering on the hither bank, when suddenly, at a point not far distant from himself, an apparition was descried in a sitting posture, and holding in its hand what seemed a flute. This phantom was of unusual size, and of beauty more than human, so far as its lineaments could be traced in the early dawn. What is singular, however, in the story, on any hypothesis which would explain it out of Caesar's individual condition, is that others saw it as well as he; both pastoral labourers (who were present, probably, in the character of guides) and some of the sentinels stationed at the passage of the river. These men fancied even that a strain of music issued from this aerial flute. And some, both of the shepherds and the Roman soldiers, who were bolder than the rest, advanced towards the figure. Amongst this party, it hap-

pened that there were a few Roman trumpeters. From one of these, the phantom, rising as they advanced nearer, suddenly caught a trumpet, and, blowing through it a blast of superhuman strength, plunged into the Rubicon, passed to the other bank, and disappeared in the dusky twilight of the dawn. Upon which Caesar exclaimed :—' It is finished—the die is cast—let us follow whither the guiding portents from Heaven, and the malice of our enemy, alike summon us to go.' So saying, he crossed the river with impetuosity ; and, in a sudden rapture of passionate and vindictive ambition, placed himself and his retinue upon the Italian soil ; and, as if by inspiration from Heaven, in one moment involved himself and his followers in treason, raised the standard of revolt, put his foot upon the neck of the invincible republic which had humbled all the kings of the earth, and founded an empire which was to last for a thousand and half a thousand years.

The German Language

(From a paper entitled *Autobiography of an English Opunn-Eater* continued in *Tait's Magazine* for June 1836)

As respects the German language in particular, I shall give one caution from my own experience to the self-instructor : it is a caution which applies to the German language exclusively, or to that more than to any other, because the embarrassment which it is meant to meet grows out of a defect of taste characteristic of the German mind. It is this: elsewhere, you would naturally, as a beginner, resort to *prose* authors, since the license and audacity of poetic thinking, and the large freedom of a poetic treatment, cannot fail to superadd difficulties of individual creation to the general difficulties of a strange dialect. But this rule, good for every other case, is *not* good for the literature of Germany. Difficulties there

certainly are, and perhaps in more than the usual proportion, from the German peculiarities of poetic treatment; but even these are overbalanced in the result by the single advantage of being limited in the extent by the metre, or (as it may happen) by the particular stanza. To German poetry there is a known, fixed, calculable limit. Infinity, absolute infinity, is impracticable in any German metre. Not so with German prose. Style, in any sense, is an inconceivable idea to a German intellect. Take the word in the limited sense of what the Greeks called **Σύνθεσις ὀνομάτων**— i . e. the construction of sentences—I affirm that a German (unless it was here and there a Lessing) cannot admit such an idea. Books there are in German, and, in other respects, very good books too, which consist of one or two enormous sentences. A German sentence describes an arch between the rising and the setting sun. Take Kant for illustration : he has actually been complimented by the cloud-spinner, Frederick Schlegel, who is now in Hades, as a most original artist in the matter of style. 'Original' Heaven knows he was ! His idea of a sentence was as follows :—We have all seen, or read of, an old family coach, and the process of packing it for a journey to London some seventy or eighty years ago. Night and day, for a week at least, sate the housekeeper, the lady's maid, the butler, the gentleman's gentlemen, &c, packing the huge ark in all its recesses, its 'imperials', its 'wells', its 'Salisbury boots', its 'sword-cases', its front pockets, side pockets, rear pockets, its 'hammer-cloth cellars' (which a lady explains to me as a corruption from *hamper-cloth,* as originally a cloth for hiding a hamper, stored with *viaticum),* until all the uses and needs of man, and of human life, savage or civilized, were met with separate provision by the infinite chaos. Pretty nearly upon the model of such an old family coach packing did Kant institute and pursue the packing and stuffing of one of his regular sentences.

Everything that could ever be needed in the way of explanation, illustration, restraint, inference, by-clause, or indirect comment, was to be crammed, according to this German philosopher's taste, into the front pockets, side pockets, or rear pockets, of the one original sentence. Hence it is that a sentence will last in reading whilst a man

Might reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.

Nor is this any peculiarity of Kant's. It is common to the whole family of prose-writers of Germany, unless when they happen to have studied French models, who cultivate the 10 opposite extreme.

The English Party System

(From an article written in 1837 but declined by Tait on political grounds and not published till 1863, in Messrs. Black's reissue of the Collective Edition, with the title *Political Parties of Modern England)*

MEANTIME, you understand that I deny broadly and universally, and place amongst the vast catalogue of vulgar errors, that notion which attributes any logical opposition to the relations between Whigs and Tories—any such opposition as would make it necessary, if one were pronounced right, that the other should be pronounced wrong. Both are right; and not only so—not only can these party differences coexist without violence to truth—but, as in the mechanical law, formerly referred to, of action and reaction, 20 they are *able to exist only by means of their coexistence.* The true view of their relations is this, that each party forms one hemisphere ; jointly they make up the total sphere. They divide, it is true, the functions of the constitution—one party administering the popular or democratic, the other administering the anti-popular or timocratic functions. But, in dividing the functions, they still distribute their care over the whole. In so exquisite a system of

balances as is at work in the British constitution, there is a constant reason for fear that in one function or other the equilibrium should be disturbed. Consequently, it is fit that to every organ through which the constitution acts or is acted upon a vigilant jealousy should be directed. This jealousy cannot, by any possibility, be rendered so keen and effective if lodged comprehensively and indiscriminately, for all parts of the constitution, in the same general hands, charged alternately with the duty of repressing the Crown and the People, as it would be if assigned dramatically, by separate parts or castings, to separate agents. Human nature itself would make it a self-defeating jealousy if it were necessary for the same man to vary his own passions to suit the varying circumstances ; and the task of training his feelings this day in one direction, and to-morrow in another, would be a mere impossibility for any man of steady feelings—such feelings as it could be otherwise right to rely on. Habits are the great pledge for the due performance of duties ; and habits, *to be* habits, cannot be supposed applying themselves to variable or contradictory impulses. Hence it is that the Whigs have charged themselves with one class of duties to the British Constitution, and the Tories with another. Not that I would wish to represent this wise division of labour as having been originally prescribed by human foresight, but that, under the wise leading of human nature, and under the natural tendencies of human passions or interests, things having once settled into this arrangement or into this tendency, the result was seen and approved by the deliberate judgement of parties. An advocate would not feel himself entitled (or, if entitled, not reconciled) to the practice of urging the presumptions strongly against an accused person simply by the balancing *right* of that person to take off the effect of evidence, and in the utmost degree that he could to throw dust in the eyes of the court; but perhaps he

may feel reconciled to this by the consciousness that the very extremity of this rigour on his own part, and the anticipation of it, like the intensity of a mechanic force, will be the very best pledge in the long run for a corresponding extremity of effort in the reaction. And thus the guardians of the Crown prerogative are warranted in pressing this prerogative to the very uttermost tension by the certainty that thus, more effectually than by all the bribes in this world, they will ensure the permanent reaction of the Democratic party in defence of popular privilege. But that, in the very midst of this bisection of the public spirit into two polar forces of reciprocal antagonism for the sake of a steadier, stronger, and more continuous action, there does, in fact, preside latently and in the rear a transcendent regard to the total interest in the most comprehensive sense ; that neither party wishes the weight of the other party to be diminished, much less annihilated, as is often imagined, by an excess of blundering in respect of principles (for as to personal influence, and the question of Ministerial power, *that* is quite another thing) ;—all these truths flow like so many corollaries from that great consummating act by which, at the same moment, our constitution was finally established, and our two great constitutional parties originally inaugurated. You understand, of course, that I mean the Revolution of 1688-9. For let me ask any man who clings to the old notion that the Whigs and Tories are hostile parties (hostile, I mean, as depositaries of principle, not in the very different sense of parties seeking against parties possessing power), and that they wish (or have reason to wish) each other's destruction—such a man let me ask how he will reconcile this notion of essential hostility with the unanimity and absolute harmony which they manifested in the most critical and important measure, the measure most fitted to divide men otherwise hostile of all which ever have agitated this nation. Did the Whigs

and the Tories adjust the measure of the Revolution in the way of a capitulation—that is, by mutual concessions, by reciprocal sacrifices of interests which had confessedly held a high party value? Was the Revolution, in the sense of Roman law, a *transactio*—that is, was it a compromise in which both parties, under a sense of their situation and doubtful power, yielded up some capital principles? Nothing of the sort. Never was there a measure to which both parties more cordially or unreservedly concurred in all that touched upon principles: for the articles on which they much differed were articles of a personal pressure: as, for instance, should the nephew of the exiled king stand first and single in the substitution; or, *2ndly,* be associated with that king's eldest daughter (in which case, undoubtedly, there was a personal wrong to the younger daughter and to her children); or, 3r*dly,* be coldly remanded to his original place in the line of succession? These questions were certainly personal questions, and merely personal; for the least unscrupulous of the deliberators never meant to raise a precedent, in the case of calling William to the throne, that should be construed in favour of nephews generally by preference to daughters. On every question of principle, all questions which concerned the rights of kings, of people, of the church, the mode of administration, the exercise of the prerogative, and the tenure of property, both parties coalesced, and both were equally forward. No capital opposition was raised but from a third party, connected by no ties of principle whatever, but purely by private considerations, either of fidelity, gratitude, or disinterested attachment to the king's person—viz. Jacobites. And it must also be remembered that in other instances of opposition, *not* capital, the parties were often neither Whigs, Tories, nor Jacobites; for there were many in both Houses who professed neither the great principles of the two former parties nor the personal bias of the latter.

Life

(From *The Household Wreck* ; *Blackwood's Magazine,* January 1838)

WHAT is life ? Darkness and formless vacancy for a beginning, or something beyond all beginning ; then next a dim lotos of human consciousness, finding itself afloat upon the bosom of waters without a shore ; then a few sunny smiles and many tears ; a little love and infinite strife ; whisperings from paradise and fierce mockeries from the anarchy of chaos ; dust and ashes, and once more darkness circling round, as if from the beginning, and in this way rounding or making an island of our fantastic existence : *that* is human life, *that* the inevitable amount of man's laughter and his tears—of what he suffers and he does—of his motions this way and that way, to the right or to the left, backwards or forwards—of all his seeming realities and all his absolute negations—his shadowy pomps and his pompous shadows—of whatsoever he thinks, finds, makes or mars, creates or animates, loves, hates, or in dread hope anticipates. So it is, so it has been, so it will be for ever and ever.

Lamb

(From *Recollections of Charles Lamb*; *Tait's Magazine,* April 1838)

I KNEW Lamb ; and I know certain cases in which he was concerned—cases which it is difficult to publish with any regard to the feelings of persons now living, but which (if published in all their circumstances) would show him to be the very noblest of human beings. He was a man, in a sense more eminent than would be conceivable by many people, *princely*—nothing short of that—in his beneficence. Many

liberal people I have known in this world—many who were charitable in the widest sense—many munificent people ; but never any one upon whom, for bounty, for indulgence and forgiveness, for charitable construction of doubtful or mixed actions, and for regal munificence, you might have thrown yourself with so absolute a reliance as upon this comparatively poor Charles Lamb. Considered as a man of genius, he was not in the very first rank, simply because his range was a contracted one : within that range, he was perfect; of the peculiar powers which he possessed he has left to the world as exquisite a specimen as this planet is likely to exhibit. But, as a *moral* being, in the total compass of his relations to this world's duties, in the largeness and diffusiveness of his charity, in the graciousness of his condescension to inferior intellects, I am disposed, after a deliberate review of my own entire experience, to pronounce him the best man, the nearest in his approaches to an ideal standard of excellence, that I have known or read of. In the mingled purity—a childlike purity—and the benignity of his nature, I again express my own deep feeling of the truth, when I say that he recalled to my mind the image and character of St. John the Evangelist—of him who was at once the beloved apostle, and also, more peculiarly, the apostle of love. Well and truly, therefore, did the poet say, in his beautiful lines upon this man's grave and memory—

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

Shakespeare

(From the article on *Shakespeare* contributed in 1838 to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica,* 7th edition)

AFTER this review of Shakespeare's life, it becomes our duty to take a summary survey of his works, of his intellectual powers, and of his station in literature—a station which is now irrevocably settled, not so much (which happens in other cases) by a vast overbalance of favourable suffrages, as by acclamation ; not so much by the *voices* of those who admire him up to the verge of idolatry, as by the *acts* of those who everywhere seek for his works among the primal necessities of life, demand them, and crave them as they do their daily bread ; not so much by eulogy openly proclaiming itself, as by the silent homage recorded in the endless multiplication of what he has bequeathed us ; not so much by his own compatriots, who, with regard to almost every other author, compose the total amount of his *effective* audience, as by the unanimous ' All hail ! ' of intellectual Christendom ; finally, not by the hasty partisanship of his own generation, nor by the biassed judgement of an age trained in the same modes of feeling and of thinking with himself, but by the solemn award of generation succeeding to generation, of one age correcting the obliquities or peculiarities of another ; by the verdict of two hundred and thirty years, which have now elapsed since the very *latest* of his creations, or of two hundred and forty-seven years if we date from the earliest; a verdict which has been continually revived and re-opened, probed, searched, vexed, by criticism in every spirit, from the most genial and intelligent, down to the most malignant and scurrilously hostile which feeble heads and great ignorance could suggest when co-operating with impure hearts and narrow sensibilities ; a verdict, in short, sustained and countersigned by

a longer series of writers, many of them eminent for wit or learning, than were ever before congregated upon any inquest relating to any author, be he who he might, ancient or modern, Pagan or Christian. It was a most witty saying with respect to a piratical and knavish publisher, who made a trade of insulting the memories of deceased authors by forged writings, that he was 'among the new terrors of death'. But in the gravest sense it may be affirmed of Shakespeare that he is among the modern luxuries of life; that life, in fact, is a new thing, and one more to be coveted, since Shakespeare has extended the domains of human consciousness, and pushed its dark frontiers into regions not so much as dimly descried or even suspected before his time, far less illuminated (as now they are) by beauty and tropical luxuriance of life. For instance—a single instance, indeed one which in itself is a world of new revelation—the possible beauty of the female character had not been seen as in a dream before Shakespeare called into perfect life the radiant shapes of Desdemona, of Imogen, of Hermione, of Perdita, of Ophelia, of Miranda, and many others. The Una of Spenser, earlier by ten or fifteen years than most of these, was an idealized portrait of female innocence and virgin purity, but too shadowy and unreal for a dramatic reality. And, as to the Grecian classics, let not the reader imagine for an instant that any prototype in this field of Shakespearian power can be looked for there. The *Antigone* and the *Electra* of the tragic poets are the two leading female characters that classical antiquity offers to our respect, but assuredly not to our impassioned love, as disciplined and exalted in the school of Shakespeare. They challenge our admiration, severe, and even stern, as impersonations of filial duty, cleaving to the steps of a desolate and afflicted old man, or of sisterly affection, maintaining the rights of a brother under circumstances of peril, of desertion, and consequently of perfect self-reliance. Iphigenia, again,

though not dramatically coming before us in her own person, but according to the beautiful report of a spectator, presents us with a fine statuesque model of heroic fortitude, and of one whose young heart, even in the very agonies of her cruel immolation, refused to forget, by a single indecorous gesture, or so much as a moment's neglect of her own princely descent, that she herself was ' a lady in the land '. These are fine marble groups, but they are not the warm breathing realities of Shakespeare ; there is ' no speculation ' in their cold marble eyes ; the breath of life is not in their nostrils; the fine pulses of womanly sensibilities are not throbbing in their bosoms. And, besides this immeasurable difference between the cold moony reflexes of life as exhibited by the power of Grecian art and the true sunny life of Shakespeare, it must be observed that the Antigones, &c, of the antique put forward but one single trait of character, like the aloe with its single blossom : this solitary feature is presented to us as an abstraction, and as an insulated quality ; whereas in Shakespeare all is presented in the *concrete*—that is to say, not brought forward in relief, as by some effort of an anatomical artist, but embodied and imbedded, so to speak, as by the force of a creative nature, in the complex system of a human life : a life in which all the elements move and play simultaneously, and, with something more than mere simultaneity or co-existence, acting and re-acting each upon the other—nay, even acting by each other and through each other. In Shakespeare's characters is felt for ever a real *organic* life, where each is for the whole and in the whole, and where the whole is for each and in each. They only are real incarnations.

In the great world, therefore, of woman, as the interpreter of the shifting phases and the lunar varieties of that mighty changeable planet, that lovely satellite of man, Shakespeare stands not the first only, not the original only, but is yet the

sole authentic oracle of truth. Woman, therefore, the beauty of the female mind, *this* is one great field of his power. The supernatural world, the world of apparitions, *that* is another : for reasons which it would be easy to give, reasons emanating from the gross mythology of the ancients, no Grecian, no Roman, could have conceived a ghost. That shadowy conception, the protesting apparition, the awful projection of the human conscience, belongs to the Christian mind : and in all Christendom, who, let us ask, who, but Shakespeare, has found the power for effectually working this mysterious mode of being ? In summoning back to earth ' the majesty of buried Denmark ', how like an awful necromancer does Shakespeare appear ! All the pomps and grandeurs which religion, which the grave, which the popular superstition had gathered about the subject of apparitions, are here converted to his purpose, and bend to one awful effect. The wormy grave brought into antagonism with the scenting of the early dawn ; the trumpet of resurrection suggested, and again as an antagonist idea to the crowing of the cock (a bird ennobled in the Christian mythus by the part he is made to play at the Crucifixion) ; its starting ' as a guilty thing ' placed in opposition to its majestic expression of offended dignity when struck at by the partisans of the sentinels ; its awful allusions to the secrets of its prison-house ; its ubiquity, contrasted with its local presence ; its aerial substance, yet clothed in palpable armour ; the heart-shaking solemnity of its language, and the appropriate scenery of its haunt, viz. the ramparts of a capital fortress, with no witnesses but a few gentlemen mounting guard at the dead of night—what a mist, what a *mirage* of vapour, is here accumulated, through which the dreadful being in the centre looms upon us in far larger proportions than could have happened had it been insulated and left naked of this circumstantial pomp ! In the *Tempest,* again, what new modes of life, preternatural,

yet far as the poles from the spiritualities of religion. Ariel in antithesis to Caliban ! What is most ethereal to what is most animal ! A phantom of air, an abstraction of the dawn and of vesper sunlights, a bodiless sylph on the one hand ; on the other a gross carnal monster, like the Miltonic Asmodai, ' the fleshliest incubus ' among the fiends, and yet so far ennobled into interest by his intellectual power, and by the grandeur of misanthropy ! In the *Midsummer-Nighit's Dream,* again, we have the old traditional fairy, a lovely mode of preternatural life, remodified by Shake- 10 speare's eternal talisman. Oberon and Titania remind us at first glance of Ariel ; they approach, but how far they recede : they are like—' like, but oh, how different ! ' And in no other exhibition of this dreamy population of the moonlight forests and forest-lawns are the circumstantial proprieties of fairy life so exquisitely imagined, sustained, or expressed. The dialogue between Oberon and Titania is, of itself, and taken separately from its connexion, one of the most delightful poetic scenes that literature affords. The witches in Macbeth are another variety of supernatural life 2O in which Shakepeare's power to enchant and to disenchant are alike portentous. The circumstances of the blasted heath, the army at a distance, the withered attire of the mysterious hags, and the choral litanies of their fiendish Sabbath, are. as finely imagined in their kind as those which herald and which surround the ghost in *Hamlet.* There we see the *positive* of Shakespeare's superior power. But now turn and look to the *negative.* At a time when the trials of witches, the royal book on demonology, and popular superstition (all so far useful, as they prepared a basis of 50 undoubting faith for the poet's serious use of such agencies) had degraded and polluted the ideas of these mysterious beings by many mean associations, Shakespeare does not fear to employ them in high tragedy (a tragedy moreover which, though not the very greatest of his efforts as an

intellectual whole, nor as a struggle of passion, is *among* the greatest in any view, and positively *the* greatest for scenical grandeur, and in that respect makes the nearest approach of all English tragedies to the Grecian model) ; he does not fear to introduce, for the same appalling effect as that for which Aeschylus introduced the Eumenides, a triad of old women, concerning whom an English wit has remarked this grotesque peculiarity in the popular creed of that day—that, although potent over winds and storms, in league with powers of darkness, they yet stood in awe of the constable ; yet, relying on his own supreme power to disenchant as well as to enchant, to create and to uncreate, he mixes these women and their dark machineries with the power of armies, with the agencies of kings, and the fortunes of martial kingdoms. Such was the sovereignty of this poet, so mighty its compass !

Forensic and Parliamentary Oratory

(From *Lake Reminiscences ! No. IV, William Wordsworth and Robert Southey ; Tait's Magazine,* July 1839)

AND the reason why any meal favours and encourages conversation is pretty much the same as that which accounts for the breaking down of so many lawyers, and generally their ill-success in the House of Commons. In the courts of law, when a man is haranguing upon general and abstract topics, if at any moment he feels getting beyond his depth, if he finds his anchor driving, he can always bring up, and drop his anchor anew upon the *terra firma* of his case: the facts of this, as furnished by his brief, always assure him of a retreat as soon as he finds his more general thoughts failing him ; and the consciousness of this retreat, by inspiring confidence, makes it much less probable that they *should* fail. But, in Parliament, where the advantage of a case with given facts and circumstances,

or the details of a statistical report, does not offer itself once in a dozen times that a member has occasion to speak—where he has to seek unpremeditated arguments and reasonings of a general nature, from the impossibility of wholly evading the previous speeches that may have made an impression upon the House;—this necessity, at any rate a trying one to most people, is doubly so to one who has always walked in the leading-strings of a *case*—always swum with the help of bladders, in the conscious resource of his *facts*. The reason, therefore, why a lawyer succeeds ill as a senator is to be found in the sudden removal of an artificial aid. Now, just such an artificial aid is furnished to timid or to unready men by a dinner-table, and the miscellaneous attentions, courtesies, or occupations which it enjoins or permits, as by the fixed memoranda of a brief. If a man finds the ground slipping from beneath him in a discussion—if, in a tide of illustration, he suddenly comes to a pause for want of matter—he can make a graceful close, a self-interruption, that shall wear the interpretation of forbearance, or even win the rhetorical credit of an *aposiopesis* (according to circumstances), by stopping to perform a duty of the occasion : pressed into a dilemma by some political partisan, one may evade it by pressing him to take a little of the dish before one ; or, plagued for a reason which is not forthcoming, one may deprecate this logical rigour by inviting one's tormentor to wine. In short, what I mean to say is, that a dinner party, or any meal which is made the meal for intellectual relaxation, must for ever offer the advantages of a *palaestra* in which the weapons are foils and the wounds not mortal: in which, whilst the interest is that of a real, the danger is that of a sham fight: in which whilst there is always an opportunity for swimming into deep waters, there is always a retreat into shallow ones.

Roman Civilization

(From *Philosophy of Roman History* ; *Blackwood's Magazine,* November 1839)

CIVILIZATION, to the extent of security for life and the primal rights of man, necessarily grows out of every strong government. And it follows also that, as this government widens its sphere, as it pushes back its frontiers *ultra et Garamantas et Indos,* in that proportion will the danger diminish (for in fact the possibility diminishes) of foreign incursions. The sense of permanent security from conquest, or from the inroad of marauders, must of course have been prodigiously increased when the nearest standing army of Rome was beyond the Tigris and the Inn, as compared with those times when Carthage, Spain, Gaul, Macedon, presented a ring-fence of venomous rivals, and when every little nook in the Eastern Mediterranean swarmed with pirates. Thus far, inevitably, the Roman police, planting one foot of his golden compasses in the same eternal centre, and with the other describing an arch continually wider, must have banished all idea of public enemies, and have deepened the sense of security beyond calculation. Thus far we have the benefits of police ; and those are amongst the earliest blessings of civilization ; and they are one indispensable condition—what in logic is called the *conditio sine qua non*—for all the other blessings. But that, in other words, is a *negative* cause—a cause which being absent, the effect is absent; but not the *positive* cause, or *causa sufficiens,* which being present, the effect will be present. The security of the Roman Empire was the indispensable condition, but not in itself a sufficient

cause, of those other elements which compose a true civilization. Rome was the centre of a high police, which radiated to Parthia eastwards, to Britain westwards, but not of a high civilization.

On the contrary, what we maintain is that the Roman Civilization was imperfect *ab intra*—imperfect in its central principle ; was a piece of watchwork that began to go down —to lose its spring—and was slowly retrograding to a dead stop from the very moment that it had completed its task of foreign conquest: that it was kept going from the very first by strong reaction and antagonism ; that it fell into torpor from the moment when this antagonism ceased to operate ; that thenceforwards it oscillated backwards violently to barbarism : that, left to its own principles of civilization, the Roman Empire was barbarizing rapidly from the time of Trajan : that, abstracting from all alien agencies whatever, whether accelerating or retarding, and supposing Western Rome to have been thrown exclusively upon the resources and elasticity of her own proper civilization, she was crazy and superannuated by the time of Commodus—must soon have gone to pieces—must have foundered ; and, under any possible benefit from favourable accidents co-operating with alien forces, could not, by any great term, have retarded that doom which was written on her drooping energies, prescribed by internal decay, and not at all (as is universally imagined) by external assault.

The Western Caesars

(From the same)

GIBBON has left us a description, not very powerful, of a case which is all-powerful of itself, and needs no expansion : the case of a state criminal vainly attempting to escape or hide himself from Caesar—from the arm wrapped in clouds, and stretching over kingdoms alike, or oceans, that arrested and drew back the wretch to judgement—from the inevitable eye that slept not nor slumbered, and from which, neither Alps interposing, nor immeasurable deserts, nor trackless seas, nor a four-months' flight, nor perfect innocence, could screen him. The world, the world of civilization, was Caesar's ; and he who fled from the wrath of Caesar said to himself, of necessity—' If I go down to the sea, there is Caesar on the shore; if I go into the sands of Bilidulgerid, there is Caesar waiting for me in the desert; if I take the wings of the morning, and go to the utmost recesses of wild beasts, there is Caesar before me.' All this makes the condition of a criminal under the Western Empire terrific, and the condition even of a subject perilous. But how strange it is—or would be so, had Gibbon been a man of more sensibility—that he should have overlooked the converse of the case : viz. the terrific condition of Caesar amidst the terror which he caused to others. In fact, both conditions were full of despair. But Caesar's was the worst, by a great pre-eminence ; for the state criminal could not be made such without his own concurrence : for one moment, at least, it had been within his choice to be no criminal at all; and then for him the thunderbolts of Caesar slept. But Caesar had rarely any choice as to his own election ; and for him, therefore, the dagger of the assassin never *could* sleep. Other men's

houses, other men's bedchambers, were generally asylums ; but for Caesar his own palace had not the privileges of a home. His own armies were no guards ; his own pavilion, rising in the very centre of his armies sleeping around him, was no sanctuary. In all these places had Caesar many times been murdered. All these pledges and sanctities—his household gods, the majesty of the empire, the ' sacramentum militare '—all had given way, all had yawned beneath his feet.

The imagination of man can frame nothing so awful— the experience of man has witnessed nothing so awful—as the situation and tenure of the Western Caesar. The danger which threatened him was like the pestilence which walketh in darkness, but which also walketh in noon-day. Morning and evening, summer and winter, brought no change or shadow of turning to this particular evil. In that respect it enjoyed the immunities of God : it was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. After three centuries it had lost nothing of its virulence ; it was growing worse continually : the heart of man ached under the evil, and the necessity of the evil. Can any man measure the sickening fear which must have possessed the hearts of the ladies and the children composing the imperial family ? To them the mere terror, entailed like an inheritance of leprosy upon their family above all others, must have made it a woe like one of the evils in the Revelation—such in its infliction, such in its inevitability. It was what Pagan language denominated ' a *sacred* danger ', a danger charmed and consecrated against human alleviation.

The Roman Breakfast

(From *Dinner : Real and Reputed*; *Blackwood's Magazine*, December 1839; reprinted in *The Casuistry of Roman Meals* in vol 111 of the Collective Edition, 1854)

No such genius had yet arisen in Rome. Breakfast was not suspected. No prophecy, no type of breakfast, had been published. In fact, it took as much time and research to arrive at that great discovery as at the Copernican system. True it is, reader, that you have heard of such a word as *jentaculum* ; and your dictionary translates that old heathen word by the Christian word *breakfast.* But dictionaries are dull deceivers. Between *jentacuilum* and *breakfast* the differences are as wide as between a horse-chestnut and a chestnut horse—differences in the *time when,* in the *place where,* in the *manner how,* but pre-eminently in the *thing which.*

Speaking of his uncle, Pliny the Younger says, ' Post solem plerumque lavabatur : deinde gustabat ; dormiebat minimum ; mox, quasi alio die, studebat in coenae tern-pus ' : ' After taking the air, generally speaking, he bathed ; after that he broke his fast on a morsel of biscuit, and took a very slight *siesta* : which done, as if awaking to a new day, he set in regularly to his studies, and pursued them to dinner-time.' *Gtistabat* here meant that nondescript meal which arose at Rome when *jentaculum* and *prandium* were fused into one, and that only a *taste* or mouthful of biscuit, as we shall show farther on.

Possibly, however, most excellent reader, like some epi-curean traveller, who, in crossing the Alps, finds himself weather-bound at St. Bernard's on Ash-Wednesday, you surmise a remedy : you descry some opening from ' the loopholes of a retreat' through which a few delicacies might

be insinuated to spread verdure on this arid wilderness of biscuit. Casuistry can do much. A dead hand at casuistry has often proved more than a match for Lent with all his quarantines. But sorry I am to say that, in this case, no relief is hinted at in any ancient author. A grape or two (not a bunch of grapes), a raisin or two, a date, an olive—these are the whole amount of relief which the chancery of the Roman kitchen granted in such cases. All things here hang together, and prove each other—the time, the place, the mode, the thing. Well might man eat standing, or eat in public, such a trifle as this. Go home, indeed, to such a breakfast ! You would as soon think of ordering a cloth to be laid in order to eat a peach, or of asking a friend to join you in an orange. No man in his senses makes ' two bites of a cherry '. So let us pass on to the other stages of the day. Only, in taking leave of this morning's stage, throw your eyes back with me, Christian reader, upon this truly heathen meal, fit for idolatrous dogs like your Greeks and your Romans ; survey, through the vista of ages, that thrice-accursed biscuit, with half a fig, perhaps, by way of garnish, and a huge hammer by its side, to secure the certainty of mastication by previous comminution. Then turn your eyes to a Christian breakfast—hot rolls, eggs, coffee, beef ; but down, down, rebellious visions : we need say no more ! You, reader, like myself, will breathe a malediction on the Classical era, and thank your stars for making you a Romanticist. Every morning I thank mine for keeping me back from the Augustan age, and reserving me to a period in which breakfast had been already invented. In the words of Ovid, I say :

> Prisca juvent alios : ego me nunc denique natum
> Gratulor. Haec aetas moribus apta meis.

De Quincey's Relations with Wordsworth

(From an article on '*Walking Stewart*'; *Tait's Magazine*, October 1840)

LONDON, however, great as were its attractions, did but rarely draw me away from Westmoreland. There I found more and more a shelter and an anchor for my own wishes. Originally, as I have mentioned, the motive which drew me to this county, in combination with its own exceeding beauty, had been the society of Wordsworth. But in this I committed a great oversight. Men of extraordinary genius and force of mind are far better as objects for distant admiration than as daily companions; not that I would insinuate anything to the disadvantage of Mr. Wordsworth. What I have to say in the way of complaint shall be said openly and frankly: this is but fair; for insinuations or covert accusations always leave room for misconstruction and for large exaggeration. Mr. Wordsworth is not only a man of principle and integrity, according to the severest standard of such a character, but he is even a man, in many respects, of amiable manners. Still there are traits of character about him, and modes of expressing them in his manners, which make a familiar or neighbourly intercourse with him painful and mortifying. Pride, in its most exalted form, he was entitled to feel; but something there was, in the occasional expression of this pride, which was difficult to bear. Upon ground where he was really strong, Wordsworth was not arrogant. In a question of criticism, he was open to any man's suggestions. But there *were* fields of thought or of observation which he seemed to think locked up and sacred to himself; and any alien entrance upon those fields he treated almost as intrusions and usurpations. One of these, and which naturally occurred the most frequently, was the whole theory of picturesque

beauty, as presented to our notice at every minute by the bold mountainous scenery amongst which we lived, and as it happened to be modified by the seasons of the year, by the time of day, or by the accidents of light and shade. Now, Wordsworth and his sister really had, as I have before acknowledged, a peculiar depth of organic sensibility to the effects of form and colour ; and to *them* I was willing to concede a vote, such as in ancient Rome was called ' a prerogative vote ', upon such questions. But, not content with this, Wordsworth virtually claimed the same precedency for all who were connected with himself, though merely by affinity, and therefore standing under no colourable presumption (as blood relations might have done) of inheriting the same constitutional gifts of organization. To everybody standing out of this sacred and privileged pale Wordsworth behaved with absolute insult in cases of this nature : he did not even appear to listen ; but, as if what they said on such a theme must be childish prattle, turned away with an air of perfect indifference; began talking, perhaps, with another person on another subject; or, at all events, never noticed what we said by an apology for an answer. I, very early in our connexion, having observed this inhuman arrogance, took care never afterwards to lay myself under the possibility of such an insult. Systematically I avoided saying anything, however suddenly tempted into any expression of my feelings, upon the natural appearances whether in the sky or on the earth. Thus I evaded one cause of quarrel; and so far Wordsworth was not aware of the irritation and disgust which he had founded in the minds of his friends. But there were other manifestations of the same ungenial and exclusive pride, even still more offensive and of wider application.

With other men, upon finding or thinking one's self ill-used, all one had to do was to make an explanation ; and, with any reasonable grounds of complaint, or any reasonable

temper to manage, one was tolerably sure of redress. Not so with Wordsworth. He had learned from Mrs. C——a vulgar phrase for all attempts at reciprocal explanations—he called them contemptuously '*fending and proving*.' And you might lay your account with being met *in limine*, and further progress barred, by a declaration to this effect—'Mr. X. Y. Z., I will have nothing to do with fending and proving'. This amounted, in other words, to saying that he conceived himself to be liberated from those obligations of justice and courtesy by which other men are bound. Now, I knew myself well enough to be assured that, under such treatment, J should feel too much indignation and disgust to persevere in courting the acquaintance of a man who thus avowed his contempt for the laws of equal dealing. Redress I knew that I should never get; and, accordingly, I reasoned thus: 'I have been ill-used to a certain extent; but do I think *that* a sufficient reason for giving up all my intimacy with a man like Wordsworth? If I do *not*, let me make no complaint; for, inevitably, if I *do* make complaint, that will be the result. For, though I am able to bear the particular wrong I now complain of, yet I feel that even from Wordsworth I could not tolerate an open and contemptuous refusal of justice. The result, then, if I pursue this matter, will be to rob me of Wordsworth's acquaintance. Reparation, already necessary to my feelings, will then become necessary to my honour: I shall fail to obtain it; and then it will become my *duty* to renounce his acquaintance. I will, therefore, rest contentedly where I am.'

Hence began the waning of my friendship with the Wordsworths. But, in reality, never after the first year or so from my first introduction had I felt much possibility of drawing the bonds of friendship tight with a man of Wordsworth's nature. He seemed to me too much like his own Pedlar in the 'Excursion', a man so diffused amongst

innumerable objects of equal attraction that he had no cells left in his heart for strong individual attachments.

I have mentioned the kind of wrongs which first caused my personal feelings to grow colder towards the Wordsworths ; and there were, afterwards, others added to these, of a nature still more irritating, because they related to more delicate topics. And, again and again, I was provoked to wonder that persons, of whom some commanded respect and attention simply as the near connexions of a great man, should so far forget the tenure on which their influence rested as to arrogate a tone of authority upon their own merits. Meantime, however much my personal feelings had altered gradually towards Wordsworth, and more, I think, in connexion with his pride than through any or all other causes acting jointly (insomuch that I used to say, Never describe Wordsworth as equal in pride to Lucifer : no ; but, if you have occasion to write a life of Lucifer, set down that by possibility, in respect to pride, he might be some type of Wordsworth), still, I say, my intellectual homage to Wordsworth had not been shaken. Even this, however, in a course of years, had gradually been modified. It is impossible to imagine the perplexity of mind which possessed me when I heard Wordsworth ridicule many books which I had been accustomed to admire profoundly. For some years, so equally ineradicable was either influence —my recollection, on the one hand, of the books despised, and of their power over my feelings ; on the other, my blind and unquestioning veneration for Wordsworth—that I was placed in a strange sort of contradictory life ; feeling that things were and were not at the same instant; believing and not believing in the same breath. And not until I had read much in German critics of what they were the first to notice, viz. the accident of *einseitigkeit,* or *one-sidedness,* as a peculiarity not unfrequently besetting the strongest minds, did I slowly come to the discovery that

Wordsworth, beyond all men, perhaps, that have ever lived (and very likely as one condition towards the possibility of his own exceeding originality), was *einseitig* in extremity. This one-sidedness shows itself most conspicuously in his dislikings ; but occasionally even in his likings. Cotton, for instance, whom, in one of his critical disquisitions, he praises so extravagantly for his fancy, has never found an admirer except in himself. And this mistake to be made in a field of such enormous opulence as is that of fancy !

Schiller's *Wallenstcin,* again, was equally unpleasing to him and unintelligible. Most people have been enraptured with the beautiful group of Max. Piccolomini and the Princess Thekla ; both because they furnish a sweet relief to the general harsh impression from so many worldly-minded, scheming, treacherous, malignant ruffians, meeting together in one camp as friends, or rivals, or betrayers ; and also on their own separate account, even apart from the relation which they bear to the whole—for both are noble, both innocent, both young, and both unfortunate : a combination of advantages towards winning our pity which has rarely been excelled. Yet Wordsworth's sole remark to me, upon *Wallcnstein,* was this—that he could not comprehend Schiller's meaning or object in entailing so much unhappiness upon these young people : a remark that, to me, was incomprehensible ; for why, then, did Shakespeare make Ophelia, Desdemona, Cordelia, unhappy ? Or why, to put the question more generally, did any man ever write a tragedy ?

Perhaps, to the public, it may illustrate Wordsworth's one-sidedness more strikingly, if I should mention my firm persuasion that he has never read one page of Sir Walter Scott's novels. Of this I am satisfied ; though it is true that, latterly, feeling more indulgently to the public favourites as the public has come to appreciate himself more justly, he has spoken of these tales in a tone of assumed

enthusiasm. One of Mrs. Radcliffe's romances, viz. *The Italian*, he had, by some strange accident, read—read, but only to laugh at it; whilst, on the other hand, the novels of Smollett, Fielding, and Le Sage—so disgusting by their moral scenery and the whole state of vicious society in which they keep the reader moving: these, and merely for the ability of the execution, he read and remembered with extreme delight.

Without going over any other examples, it may well be understood that, by these striking instances of defective sympathy in Wordsworth with the universal feelings of his age, my intellectual, as well as my personal, regard for him, would be likely to suffer. In fact, I learned gradually that he was not only liable to human error, but that, in some points, and those of large extent, he was frailer and more infirm than most of his fellow-men. I viewed this defect, it is very true, as being the condition and the price, as it were, or ransom, of his own extraordinary power and originality; but still it raised a curtain which had hitherto sustained my idolatry. I viewed him now as a *mixed* creature, made up of special infirmity and special strength. And, finally, I now viewed him as no longer capable of an equal friendship.

Junius

(From a paper on miscellaneous subjects, including *Mr. Tavler and his book on Junms*; *Tait's Magazine*, December 1840)

SIR PHILIP suffered under a most cruel disease, which soon put an end to his troubled life; and my own belief is that there ended as agitated an existence as can have been supported by frail humanity. He was naturally a man of bad and harsh disposition; insolent, arrogant, and ill-tempered. Constitutionally, he was irritable; bodily sufferings had exasperated the infirmities of his temper; and the mixed agony of body and mind in which he passed

his latter years must have been fearful even to contemplate. The Letters of Junius certainly show very little variety or extent of thought ; no comprehensive grasp ; no principles of any kind, false or sound ; no powers, in fact, beyond the powers of sarcasm ; but they have that sort of modulated rhythm, and that air of classical chastity (perhaps arising more from the penury of ornament, and the absence of any impassioned eloquence, than from any positive causes), which, co-operating with the shortness of the periods, and the unparalleled felicity of their sarcasms, would, at any rate, have conciliated the public notice. They have exactly that sort of talent which the owner is sure to overrate. But the intensity, the sudden growth, and the durability of their fame, were due (as I must ever contend), not to any qualities of style or composition—though, doubtless, these it is which co-operated with the thick cloak of mystery to sustain a reputation once gained—but to the knowledge dispersed through London society that the Government had been appalled by Junius, as one who, in some way or other, had possessed himself of their secrets.

The Night before the Duel

(From an untitled article in *Tait's Magazine* for February 1841, the last of a series under the general title *Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater)*

MEANTIME, my friend—what was *his* condition; and how did *he* pass the interval ? I have heard him feelingly describe the misery, the blank anguish, of this memorable night. Sometimes it happens that a man's conscience is wounded ; but this very wound is the means, perhaps, by which his feelings are spared for the present : sometimes his feelings are lacerated ; but this very laceration makes the ransom for his conscience. Here, on the contrary, his feelings and his happiness were dimmed by the very same cause

which offered pain and outrage to his conscience. He was, upon principle, a hater of duelling. Under any circumstances, he would have condemned the man who could, for a light cause, or almost for the weightiest, have so much as *accepted* a challenge. Yet, here he was positively *offering* a challenge ; and to whom ? To a man whom he scarcely knew by sight; whom he had never spoken to until this unfortunate afternoon ; and towards whom (now that the momentary excitement of anger had passed away) he felt no atom of passion or resentment whatsoever. As a free ' unhoused ' young man, therefore, had he been such, without ties or obligations in life, he would have felt the profoundest compunction at the anticipation of any serious injury inflicted upon another man's hopes or happiness, or upon his own. But what was his real situation ? He was a married man, married to the woman of his choice within a very few years : he was also a father, having one most promising son, somewhere about three years old. His young wife and his son composed his family ; and both were dependent, in the most absolute sense, for all they possessed or they expected—for all they had or ever could have—upon his own exertions. Abandoned by him, losing him, they forfeited, in one hour, every chance of comfort, respectability, or security from scorn and humiliation. The mother, a woman of strong understanding and most excellent judgement—good and upright herself—liable, therefore, to no habit of suspicion, and constitutionally cheerful, went to bed with her young son, thinking no evil. Midnight came, one, two o'clock ; mother and child had long been asleep ; nor did either of them dream of that danger which even now was yawning under their feet. The barrister had spent the hours from ten to two in drawing up his will, and in writing such letters as might have the best chance, in case of fatal issue to himself, for obtaining some aid to the desolate condition of those two beings whom he would leave behind

unprotected and without provision. Oftentimes he stole into the bedroom, and gazed with anguish upon the innocent objects of his love, and, as his conscience now told him, of his bitterest perfidy. 'Will you then leave us? Are you really going to betray us? Will you deliberately consign us to life-long poverty, and scorn, and grief?' These affecting apostrophes he seemed, in the silence of the night, to hear almost with bodily ears. Silent reproaches seemed written upon their sleeping features; and once, when his wife suddenly awakened under the glare of the lamp which he carried, he felt the strongest impulse to fly from the room; but he faltered, and stood rooted to the spot. She looked at him smilingly, and asked why he was so long in coming to bed. He pleaded an excuse, which she easily admitted, of some law case to study against the morning, or some law paper to draw. She was satisfied, and fell asleep again. He, however, fearing, above all things, that he might miss the time of his appointment, resolutely abided by his plan of not going to bed; for the meeting was to take place at Chalk Farm, and by half-past five in the morning: that is, about one hour after sunrise. One hour and a half before this time, in the grey dawn, just when the silence of Nature and of mighty London was most absolute, he crept stealthily, and like a guilty thing, to the bedside of his sleeping wife and child; took what he believed might be his final look of them; kissed them softly; and, according to his own quotation from Coleridge's 'Remorse',

in agony that could not be remembered,

and a conflict with himself that defied all rehearsal, he quitted his peaceful cottage at Chelsea in order to seek for the friend who had undertaken to act as his second. He had good reason, from what he had heard on the night before, to believe his antagonist an excellent shot; and, having no sort of expectation that any interruption could

offer to the regular progress of the duel, he, as the challenger, would have to stand the first fire ; at any rate, conceiving this to be the fair privilege of the party challenged, he did not mean to avail himself of any proposal for drawing lots upon the occasion, even if such a proposal should happen to be made.

Homer and the Nile

(From *Homer and the Homeridae* (Part I) ; in *Blackwood!s Magazine* for October 1841 ; reprinted in vol vi of Collective Edition, 1857)

HOMER, the general patriarch of Occidental Literature, reminds us oftentimes, and powerfully, of the river Nile. If you, reader, should (as easily you may) be seated on the banks of that river in the months of February or March 1858, you may count on two luxuries for a poetic eye : first, on a lovely cloudless morning ; secondly, on a gorgeous Flora. For it has been remarked that nowhere out of tropical regions is the vernal equipage of nature so rich, so pompously variegated, in buds, and bells, and blossoms, as precisely in this unhappy Egypt—' a house of bondage ', undeniably, in all ages; to its own working population ; and yet, as if to mock the misery it witnesses, the gayest of all lands in its spontaneous Flora. Now, supposing yourself to be seated, together with a child or two, on some flowery carpet of the Delta ; and supposing the Nile—′ that ancient river '—within sight; happy infancy on the one side, the everlasting pomp of waters on the other, and the thought still intruding that on some quarter of your position, perhaps fifty miles out of sight, stand pointing to the heavens the mysterious pyramids: these circumstances presupposed, it is inevitable that your thoughts should wander upwards to the dark fountains of origination. The pyramids, why and when did they arise ? This infancy, so lovely and

innocent, whence does it come, whither does it go? This creative river, what are its ultimate well-heads? That last question was viewed by antiquity as charmed against solution. It was not permitted, they fancied, to dishonour the river Nile by stealing upon his solitude in a state of weakness and childhood—

Nee licuit populis parvum te, Nile, videre.

No license there was to the nations of earth for seeing thee, O Nile! in a condition of infant imbecility.

So said Lucan. And in those days no image that the earth suggested could so powerfully express a mysterious secrecy as the coy fountains of the Nile. At length came Abyssinian Bruce; and that superstition seemed to vanish. Yet no: for now again the mystery has revolved upon us. You have drunk, you say, from the fountains of the Nile. Good; but, my friend, from which fountains? 'Which king, Bezonian?' Understand that there is another branch of the Nile—another mighty arm, whose fountains lie in far other regions. The great letter Y, that Pythagorean marvel, is still covered with shades in one-half of its bifurcation. And the darkness which, from the eldest of days, has invested Father Nile with fabulous awe still broods over the most ancient of his fountains, defies our curious impertinence, and will not suffer us to behold the survivor of Memphis in his cradle, and of Thebes the hundred-gated other than in his grandeur as the benefactor of nations.

Such thoughts, a world of meditations pointing in the same direction, settle also upon Homer. Eight-and-twenty hundred years, according to the improved views of chronology, have men drunk from the waters of this earliest among known poets. Himself, under one of his denominations, the son of a river (Melesigenes), or the grandson of a river (Maeonides), he has been the parent of fertilizing streams carried off derivatively into every land. Not the fountains

of the Nile have been so diffusive, or so creative, as those of Homer—

A quo, ceu fonte perenni,
Vatum Pieriis ora rigantur aquis.

From whom, as from a perennial fountain, the months of poets are refreshed with Pierian streams.

There is the same gaiety of atmosphere, the same ' blue rejoicing sky ', the same absence of the austere and the gloomy sublime, investing the Grecian Homer as invests the Nile of the Delta. And, again, if you would go upwards to the fountains of this ancient Nile, or of this ancient Homer, you would find the same mysterious repulsion. In both cases you find their fountains shyly retreating before you, and, like the sacred peaks of Ararat, where the framework of Noah's ark reposes, never less surmounted than when a man fancies himself within arm's reach' of their central recesses.

Achilles

(From *Homer and the Homeridae* (Part III) ; first printed in *Blackwood's Magazine* for December 1841)

THE first class of arguments, therefore, for the sanity of the existing Homer is derived from language. A second argument I derive from THE IDEALITY OF ACHILLES. This I owe to a suggestion of Wordsworth's. Once, when I observed to him that of imagination, in his own sense, I saw no instance in the *Iliad,* he replied, ' Yes ; there is the character of Achilles ; this is imaginative, in the same sense as Ariosto's Angelica.' *Character* is not properly the word, nor was it what Wordsworth meant. It is an idealized conception. The excessive beauty of Angelica, for instance, in the *Orlando Furioso,* robs the paladins of their wits ; draws anchorites into guilt ; tempts the baptized into mortal feud ; summons the unbaptized to war ;

brings nations together from the ends of the earth. And so, with different but analogous effects, the very perfection of courage, beauty, strength, speed, skill of eye, of voice, and all personal accomplishments, are embodied in the son of Peleus. He has the same supremacy in modes of courtesy, and doubtless, according to the poet's conception, in virtue. In fact, the astonishing blunder which Horace made in deciphering this Homeric portrait gives the best memorandum for recalling the real points of his most self-commanding character :

> Impiger, iracundus, inexonibths, aeer,
> Jura negat sibi nata, nihil non arrogat arnms.

Was that man ' iracundus ' who, in the very opening of the *Iliad,* makes his anger, under the most brutal insult, bend to the public welfare ? When two people quarrel, it is too commonly the unfair award of careless bystanders that ' one is as bad as the other ' ; whilst generally it happens that one of the parties is but the respondent in a quarrel originated by the other. I never witnessed a quarrel in my life where the fault was equally divided between the parties. Homer says of the two chiefs, διαστήτην ἐρίσαντε, they stood aloof in feud ; but what was the nature of the feud ? Agamemnon had inflicted upon Achilles, himself a king, and the most brilliant chieftain of the confederate army, the very foulest outrage (matter and manner) that can be imagined. Because his own brutality to a priest of Apollo had caused a pestilence, and he finds that he must resign this priest's daughter, he declares that he will indemnify himself by seizing a female captive from the tents of Achilles. Why of Achilles more than of any other man ? Colour of right, or any relation between his loss and his redress, this brutal Agamemnon does not offer by pretence. But he actually executes his threat. Nor does he *ever* atone for it ; since his returning Briseis, without disavowing his right to have seized her, is

wide of the whole point at issue. Now, under what show of common sense can that man be called *iracundus* who calmly submits to such an indignity as this ? Or is that man *inexorabilis* who sacrifices to the tears and grey hairs of Priam his own meditated revenge, giving back the body of the enemy who had robbed him of his dearest friend ? Or is there any gleam of truth in saying that *jura ncgat sibi nala* when, of all the heroes in the *Iliad,* he is the most punctiliously courteous, the most ceremonious in his religious observances, and the one who most cultivated the arts of peace ? Or is that man the violent defter of all law and religion who submits with so pathetic a resignation to the doom of early death ?

> Enough, I know my fate—to die ; to see no more
> My much-loved parents, or my native shore.

Charles X I I of Sweden threatened to tickle that man who had libelled his hero Alexander. But Alexander himself would have tickled Master Horace for this infernal libel on Achilles, if they had happened to be contemporaries. I have a love for Horace;; but my wrath has always burned-2o furiously against him for his horrible perversion of the truth in this well-known tissue of calumnies.

The character, in short, of the matchless Pelides has an ideal finish and a divinity about it which argue that it never could have been a fiction or a gradual accumulation from successive touches. It was raised by a single flash of creative imagination; it was a reality seen through the harmonizing abstractions of two centuries ; and it is in itself a great unity, which penetrates every section where it comes forward with an identification of these several 30 parts as the work of one man.

Defoe

(From *Homer and the Homeridae* (Part III) ; *Blackwood[1] s Magazine,* December 1841)

THE invention of little personal circumstances and details is now a well-known artifice of novelists. We see, even in our oldest metrical romances, a tendency to this mode of giving a lively expression to the characters, as well as of giving a colourable reality to the tale. Yet, even with us, it is an art that has never but once been successfully applied to regular history. De Foe is the only author known who has so plausibly circumstantiated his false historical records as to make them pass for genuine, even with literary men and critics. In his ' Memoirs of a Cavalier ', one of his poorest forgeries, he assumes the character of a soldier who had fought under Gustavus Adolphus (1628-31), and afterwards (1642-5) in our own Parliamentary War ; in fact, he corresponds chronologically to Captain Dalgetty. In other works he personates a sea-captain, a hosier, a runaway apprentice, an officer under Lord Peterborough in his Catalonian expedition. In this last character he imposed upon Dr. Johnson ; and, by men better read in History than Dr. Johnson, he has actually been quoted as a regular historical authority. How did he accomplish so difficult an end ? Simply by inventing such little circumstantiations of any character or incident as seem, by their apparent inertness of effect, to verify themselves ; for, where the reader is told that such a person was the posthumous son of a tanner, that his mother married afterwards a Presbyterian schoolmaster, who gave him a smattering of Latin, but, the schoolmaster dying of the plague, that he was compelled at sixteen to enlist for bread—in all this, as there is nothing at all amusing, we conclude that the author could have no reason to detain us with such particulars but simply

because they were true. To invent, when nothing at all is gained by inventing, there seems no imaginable temptation. It never occurs to us that this very construction of the case, this very inference from such neutral details, was precisely the object which De Foe had in view—was the very thing which he counted on, and by which he meant to profit. He thus gains the opportunity of impressing upon his tales a double character : he makes them so amusing that girls read them for novels ; and he gives them such an air of verisimilitude that men read them for histories.

Coleridge and Bowyer

(Coleridge and Opium-Eating, published in *Blackwood's Magazine,* January 1845, as review of Gillman's *Life of Coleridge* ; revised in 1859 for publication in vol xn of the Collective Edition)

THE third person raised to divine honours by Coleridge was Bowyer, the master of Christ's Hospital, London—a man whose name rises into the nostrils of all who knew him with the gracious odour of a tallow chandler's melting house upon melting day, and whose memory is embalmed in the hearty detestation of all his pupils. Coleridge describes this man as a profound critic. Our idea of him is different. We are of opinion that Bowyer was the greatest villain of the eighteenth century. We may be wrong ; but we cannot be *far* wrong. Talk of knouting indeed ! which we did at the beginning of this paper in the mere playfulness of our hearts —and which the great master of the knout, Christopher, who visited men's trespasses like the Eumenides, never resorted to but in love for some great idea which had been outraged—why, this man knouted his way through life, from bloody youth up to truculent old age. Grim idol ! whose altars reeked with children's blood, and whose dreadful eyes never smiled except as the stern goddess of the Thugs smiles when the sound of human lamentations

inhabits her ears. So much had the monster fed upon his great idea of 'flogging', and transmuted it into the very nutriment of his heart, that he seems to have conceived the gigantic project of flogging all mankind; nay, worse; for Mr. Gillman, on Coleridge's authority, tells us the following anecdote: "'*Sirrah, I'll flog you*", were words so familiar to him, that on one occasion, some *female* friend of one of the boys' [who had come on an errand of intercession] 'still lingering at the door, after having been abruptly told to go, Bowyer exclaimed, "Bring that woman here, and I'll flog her."'

To this horrid incarnation of whips and scourges Coleridge, in his *Biographia Literaria*, ascribes ideas upon criticism and taste which every man will recognize at once as the intense peculiarities of Coleridge. Could these notions really have belonged to Bowyer, then how do we know but he wrote the *Ancient Mariner*? Yet, on consideration, no; for even Coleridge admitted that, spite of his fine theorizing upon composition, Mr. Bowyer did not prosper in the practice—of which he gave us this illustration; and, as it is supposed to be the one only specimen of the Bowyeriana which now survives in this sublunary world, we are glad to extend its glory. It is the most curious example extant of the melodious in sound:

'Twas thou that smooth'd'st the rough-rugg'd bed of pain.

'Smooth'd'st!' Would the teeth of a crocodile not splinter under that word? It seems to us as if Mr. Bowyer's verses ought to be boiled before they can be read. And, when he says, *'Twas thou*, who or what is the wretch talking to? Can he be apostrophizing the knout? We very much fear it. If so, then you see (reader) that, even when incapacitated by illness from operating, he still adores the image of his holy scourge, and invokes it as alone able to smooth 'his rough-rugg'd bed'. O thou infernal Bowyer! upon whom even Trollope *[History of Christ's Hospital)* charges 'a discipline

tinctured with more than due severity ', can there be any partners found for thee in a quadrille except Draco the bloody lawgiver, Bishop Bonner, and Mrs. Brownrigg ?

Coleridge's Conversation

(From the same)

THERE is another accomplishment of Coleridge's, less broadly open to the judgement of this generation, and not at all of the next—viz. his splendid art of conversation—on which it will be interesting to say a word. Ten years ago, when the music of this rare performance had not yet ceased to vibrate in men's ears, what a sensation was gathering amongst the educated classes on this particular subject ! What a tumult of anxiety prevailed to ' hear Mr. Coleridge ', or even to talk with a man who *had* heard him. Had he lived till this day, not Paganini would have been so much sought after. That sensation is now decaying, because a new generation has emerged during the ten years since his death. But many still remain whose sympathy (whether of curiosity in those who did *not* know him or of admiration in those who *did)* still reflects as in a mirror the great stir upon this subject which then was moving in the world. To these, if they should inquire for the great distinguishing principle of Coleridge's conversation, we might say that it was the power of vast combination. He gathered into focal concentration the largest body of objects, *apparently* disconnected, that any man ever yet, by any magic, could assemble, or, *having* assembled, could manage. His great fault was that, by not opening sufficient spaces for reply, or suggestion, or collateral notice, he not only narrowed his own field, but he grievously injured the final impression. For, when men's minds are purely passive, when they are not allowed to react, then it is that they collapse most, and that their sense of what is said must ever be feeblest.

Doubtless there must have been great conversational masters elsewhere, and at many periods ; but in this lay Coleridge's characteristic advantage, that he was a great natural power, and also a great artist. He was a power in the art; and he carried a new art into the power.

His sister's death and the ' dreatn-echo' of it

(From *Autobiographic Sketches* in vol i of the Collective Edition, 1853 ; a recast of earlier articles, mainly the *Suspiria de Profundis* articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* for 1845)

OUT of this digression, for the purpose of showing how inextricably my feelings and images of death were entangled with those of summer, as connected with Palestine and Jerusalem, let me come back to the bedchamber of my sister. From the gorgeous sunlight I turned round to the corpse. There lay the sweet childish figure ; there the angel face ; and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that no features had suffered any change. Had they not ? The forehead, indeed—the serene and noble forehead—*thai* might be the same ; but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish—could these be mistaken for life ? Had it been so, wherefore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses ? But so it was *not.* I stood checked for a moment; awe, not fear, fell upon me ; and, whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow —the saddest that ear ever heard. It was a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries. Many times since, upon summer days, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow, solemn, Memnonian, but saintly swell: it is in this world the one great audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life have I happened to

hear the same sound in the same circumstances—viz. when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day.

Instantly, when my ear caught this vast Aeolian intonation, when my eye filled with the golden fullness of life, the pomps of the heavens above, or the glory of the flowers below, and turning when it settled upon the frost which overspread my sister's face, instantly a trance fell upon me. A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up for ever. I, in spirit, rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft for ever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but *that* also ran before us and fled away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on for ever and ever. Frost gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadful antagonism between them; shadowy meanings even yet continue to exercise and torment, in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me. I slept—for how long I cannot say; slowly I recovered my self-possession; and, when I woke, found myself standing, as before, close to my sister's bed.

[The reader must suppose me at Oxford; more than twelve years are gone by; I am in the glory of youth: but I have now first tampered with opium; and now first the agitations of my childhood reopened in strength; now first they swept in upon the brain with power and the grandeur of recovered life.)

Once again, after twelve years' interval, the nursery of my childhood expanded before me: my sister was moaning in bed; and I was beginning to be restless with fears not intelligible to myself. Once again the elder nurse, but now dilated to colossal proportions, stood as upon some Grecian stage with her uplifted hand, and, like the superb Medea towering amongst her children in the nursery at Corinth,

smote me senseless to the ground. Again I am in the chamber with my sister's corpse, again the pomps of life rise up in silence, the glory of summer, the Syrian sunlights, the frost of death. Dream forms itself mysteriously within dream ; within these Oxford dreams remoulds itself continually the trance in my sister's chamber—the blue heavens, the everlasting vault, the soaring billows, the throne steeped in the thought (but not the sight) of ' *Who* might sit thereon '; the flight, the pursuit, the irrecoverable steps of my return to earth. Once more the funeral procession gathers ; the priest in his white surplice stands waiting with a book by the side of an open grave ; the sacristan is waiting with his shovel; the coffin has sunk ; the *dust to dust* has descended. Again I was in the church on a heavenly Sunday morning. The golden sunlight of God slept amongst the heads of his apostles, his martyrs, his saints ; the fragment from the litany, the fragment from the clouds, awoke again the lawny beds that went up to scale the heavens—awoke again the shadowy arms that moved downward to meet them. Once again arose the swell of the anthem, the burst of the Hallelujah chorus, the storm, the trampling movement of the choral passion, the agitation of my own trembling sympathy, the tumult of the choir, the wrath of the organ. Once more I, that wallowed in the dust, became he that rose up to the clouds. And now all was bound up into unity ; the first state and the last were melted into each other as in some sunny, glorifying haze. For high in heaven hovered a gleaming host of faces, veiled with wings, around the pillows of the dying children. And such beings sympathize equally with sorrow that grovels, and with sorrow that soars. Such beings pity alike the children that are languishing in death, and the children that live only to languish in tears.

Savannah-la-Mar

(From the conclusion of Part I of *Suspiria de Profundis* ; *Blackwood's Magazine*, June 1845 ; revised and corrected by De Quincey, but not published till 1871 in the second supplementary volume of Messrs. Black's edition)

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

Thither, lured by the loveliness of cerulean depths, by the peace of human dwellings privileged from molestation, by the gleam of marble altars sleeping in everlasting sanctity, oftentimes in dreams did I and the Dark Interpreter cleave the watery veil that divided us from her streets. We looked into the belfries, where the pendulous bells were

waiting in vain for the summons which should awaken their marriage peals; together we touched the mighty organ-keys, that sang no *jubilates* for the ear of heaven, that sang no requiems for the ear of human sorrow; together we searched the silent nurseries, where the children were all asleep, and *had* been asleep through five generations. 'They are waiting for the heavenly dawn,' whispered the Interpreter to himself: 'and, when *that* comes, the bells and the organs will utter a *jubilate* repeated by the echoes of Paradise.'

Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow

(From the same)

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

by delegation, had her name from the Latin verb (as still it is the Italian verb) *levare,* to raise aloft.

This is the explanation of Levana. And hence it has arisen that some people have understood by Levana the tutelary power that controls the education of the nursery. She, that would not suffer at his birth even a prefigurative or mimic degradation for her awful ward, far less could be supposed to suffer the real degradation attaching to the non-development of his powers. She therefore watches over human education. Now, the word *educo,* with the penulti- 10 mate short, was derived (by a process often exemplified in the crystallization of languages) from the word *educo,* with the penultimate long. Whatsoever *educes,* or develops, *educates.* By the education of Levana, therefore, is meant—not the poor machinery that moves by spelling-books and grammars, but by that mighty system of central forces hidden in the deep bosom of human life, which by passion, by strife, by temptation, by the energies of resistance, works for ever upon children—resting not day or night, any more than the mighty wheel of day and night themselves, whose 20 moments, like restless spokes, are glimmering for ever as they revolve.

If, then, *these* are the ministries by which Levana works, how profoundly must she reverence the agencies of grief ! But you, reader, think that children generally are not liable to grief such as mine. There are two senses in the word *generally*—the sense of Euclid, where it means *universally* (or in the whole extent of the *genus),* and a foolish sense of this world, where it means *usually.* Now, I am far from saying that children universally are capable of grief like mine. But 30 there are more than you ever heard of who died of grief in this island of ours. I will tell you a common case. The rules of Eton require that a boy on *the foundation* should be there twelve years : he is superannuated at eighteen; consequently he must come at six. Children torn away from

mothers and sisters at that age not unfrequently die. I speak of what I know. The complaint is not entered by the registrar as grief ; but *that* it is. Grief of that sort, and at that age, has killed more than ever have been counted amongst its martyrs.

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

These Sisters—by what name shall we call them ? If I say simply ' The Sorrows ', there will be a chance of mistaking the term ; it might be understood of individual sorrow—separate cases of sorrow—whereas I want a term expressing the mighty abstractions that incarnate themselves in all individual sufferings of man's heart, and I wish to have these abstractions presented as impersonations—that is, as clothed with human attributes of life, and with functions pointing to flesh. Let us call them, therefore, *Our Ladies of Sorrow.*

I know them thoroughly, and have walked in all their

kingdoms. Three sisters they are, of one mysterious household ; and their paths are wide apart; but of their dominion there is no end. Them I saw often conversing with Levana, and sometimes about myself. Do they talk, then ? O no ! Mighty phantoms like these disdain the infirmities of language. They may utter voices through the organs of man when they dwell in human hearts, but amongst themselves is no voice nor sound; eternal silence reigns in *their* kingdoms. They spoke not as they talked with Levana ; they whispered not ; they sang not ; though oftentimes methought they *might* have sung : for I upon earth had heard their mysteries oftentimes deciphered by harp and timbrel, by dulcimer and organ. Like God, whose servants they are, they utter their pleasure not by sounds that perish, or by words that go astray, but by signs in heaven, by changes on earth, by pulses in secret rivers, heraldries painted on darkness, and hieroglyphics written on the tablets of the brain. *They* wheeled in mazes ; I spelled the steps. *They* telegraphed from afar; I read the signals. *They* conspired together ; and on the mirrors of darkness *my* eye traced the plots. *Theirs* were the symbols ; *mine* are the words.

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

The eldest of the three is named *Mater Lachrymarum*, Our Lady of Tears. She it is that night and day raves and moans, calling for vanished faces. She stood in Rama, where a voice was heard of lamentation—Rachel weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted. She it was that stood in Bethlehem on the night when Herod's sword swept its nurseries of Innocents, and the little feet were stiffened for ever which, heard at times as they trotted along

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

The second Sister is called *Mater Suspiriorum* Our Lady of Sighs. She never scales the clouds, nor walks abroad **upon the winds.** She wears no diadem. And her eyes, if they were ever seen, would be neither sweet nor subtle ; no

man could read their story ; they would be found filled with perishing dreams, and with wrecks of forgotten delirium. But she raises not her eyes ; her head, on which sits a dilapidated turban, droops for ever, for ever fastens on the dust. She weeps not. She groans not. But she sighs inaudibly at intervals. Her sister, Madonna, is oftentimes stormy and frantic, raging in the highest against heaven, and demanding back her darlings. But Our Lady of Sighs never clamours, never defies, dreams not of rebellious aspirations. She is humble to abjectness. Hers is the meekness that belongs to the hopeless. Murmur she may, but it is in her sleep. Whisper she may, but it is to herself in the twilight. Mutter she does at times, but it is in solitary places that are desolate as she is desolate, in ruined cities, and when the sun has gone down to his rest. This Sister is the visitor of the Pariah, of the Jew, of the bondsman to the oar in the Mediterranean galleys ; of the English criminal in Norfolk Island, blotted out from the books of remembrance in sweet far-off England ; of the baffled penitent reverting his eyes for ever upon a solitary grave, which to him seems the altar overthrown of some past and bloody sacrifice, on which altar no oblations can now be availing, whether towards pardon that he might implore, or towards reparation that he might attempt. Every slave that at noonday looks up to the tropical sun with timid reproach, as he points with one hand to the earth, our general mother, but for *him* a stepmother, as he points with the other hand to the Bible, our general teacher, but against *him* sealed and sequestered ; every woman sitting in darkness, without love to shelter her head, or hope to illumine her solitude, because the heaven-born instincts kindling in her nature germs of holy affections, which God implanted in her womanly bosom, having been stifled by social necessities, now burn sullenly to waste, like sepulchral lamps amongst the ancients ; every nun defrauded of her unreturning May-

time by wicked kinsman, whom God will judge; every captive in every dungeon; all that are betrayed, and all that are rejected; outcasts by traditionary law, and children of *hereditary* disgrace: all these walk with Our Lady of Sighs. She also carries a key; but she needs it little. For her kingdom is chiefly amongst the tents of Shem, and the houseless vagrant of every clime. Yet in the very highest ranks of man she finds chapels of her own; and even in glorious England there are some that, to the world, carry their heads as proudly as the reindeer, who yet secretly have received her mark upon their foreheads.

But the third Sister, who is also the youngest——! Hush! whisper whilst we talk of *her!* Her kingdom is not large, or else no flesh should live; but within that kingdom all power is hers. Her head, turreted like that of Cybele, rises almost beyond the reach of sight. She droops not; and her eyes, rising so high, *might* be hidden by distance. But, being what they are, they cannot be hidden: through the treble veil of crape which she wears the fierce light of a blazing misery, that rests not for matins or for vespers, for noon of day or noon of night, for ebbing or for flowing tide, may be read from the very ground. She is the defter of God. She also is the mother of lunacies, and the suggestress of suicides. Deep lie the roots of her power; but narrow is the nation that she rules. For she can approach only those in whom a profound nature has been upheaved by central convulsions; in whom the heart trembles and the brain rocks under conspiracies of tempest from without and tempest from within. Madonna moves with uncertain steps, fast or slow, but still with tragic grace. Our Lady of Sighs creeps timidly and stealthily. But this youngest Sister moves with incalculable motions, bounding, and with tiger's leaps. She carries no key; for, though coming rarely amongst men, she storms all doors at which she is permitted to enter at all. And *her* name is *Mater Tenebrarum*—our Lady of Darkness.

Wordsworth

(From *On Wordsworth's Poetry* ; *Tent's Magazine,* September 1845)

NOT, therefore, in the 'Excursion' must we look for that reversionary influence which awaits Wordsworth with posterity. It is the vulgar superstition in behalf of big books and sounding pretensions that must have prevailed upon Coleridge and others to undervalue, by comparison with the direct philosophic poetry of Wordsworth, those earlier poems which are all short, but generally scintillating with gems of far profounder truth. I speak of that truth which strengthens into solemnity an impression very feebly acknowledged previously, or truth which suddenly unveils a connexion between objects hitherto regarded as irrelate and independent. In astronomy, to gain the rank of discoverer, it is not required that you should reveal a star absolutely new : find out with respect to an old star some new affection—as, for instance, that it has an ascertainable parallax—and immediately you bring it within the verge of a human interest; or, with respect to some old familiar planet, that its satellites suffer periodical eclipse, and immediately you bring it within the verge of terrestrial uses. Gleams of steadier vision that brighten into certainty appearances else doubtful, or that unfold relations else unsuspected, are not less discoveries of truth than the downright revelations of the telescope, or the absolute conquests of the diving-bell. It is astonishing how large a harvest of new truths would be reaped simply through the accident of a man's feeling, or being made to feel, more *deeply* than other men. He sees the same objects, neither more nor fewer, but he sees them engraved in lines far stronger and more determinate ; and the difference in the strength makes the whole difference between consciousness and sub-

consciousness. And in questions of the mere understanding we see the same fact illustrated. The author who wins notice the most is not he that perplexes men by truths drawn from fountains of absolute novelty—truths as yet unsunned, and from that cause obscure—but he that awakens into illuminated consciousness ancient lineaments of truth long slumbering in the mind, although too faint to have extorted attention. Wordsworth has brought many a truth into life, both for the eye and for the understanding, which previously had slumbered indistinctly for all men.

For instance, as respects the eye, who does not acknowledge instantaneously the magical strength of truth in his saying of a cataract seen from a station two miles off that it was ' frozen by distance ' ? In all nature there is not an object so essentially at war with the stiffening of frost as the headlong and desperate life of a cataract ; and yet notoriously the effect of distance is to lock up this frenzy of motion into the most petrific column of stillness. This effect is perceived at once when pointed out; but how few are the eyes that ever *would* have perceived it for themselves ! Twilight, again—who before Wordsworth ever distinctly noticed its *abstracting* power ?—that power of removing, softening, harmonizing, by which a mode of obscurity executes for the eye the same mysterious office which the mind so often, within its own shadowy realms, executes for itself. In the dim interspace between day and night all disappears from our earthly scenery, as if touched by an enchanter's rod, which is either mean or inharmonious, or unquiet, or expressive of temporary things. Leaning against a column of rock, looking down upon a lake or river, and at intervals carrying your eyes forward through a vista of mountains, you become aware that your sight rests upon the very same spectacle, unaltered in a single feature, which once at the same hour was beheld by the legionary Roman from his embattled camp, or by

the roving Briton in his ' wolf-skin vest', lying down to sleep, and looking

> Through some leafy bower,
> Before his eyes were closed.

How magnificent is the summary or abstraction of the elementary features in such a scene, as executed by the poet himself, in illustration of this abstraction daily executed by Nature through her handmaid Twilight 1 Listen, reader, to the closing strain, solemn as twilight is solemn, and grand as the spectacle which it describes :

> By him [i.e. the roving Briton J was seen
> The self-same vision which *we* now behold,
> At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power, brought forth;
> These mighty barriers and the gulf between;
> The flood, the stars—a spectacle as old
> As the beginning of the heavens and earth.

Cooking

(From *National Temperance Movements* ; *Tait's Magazine,* October 1845)

THE natives of the Society and the Friendly Isles, or of New Zealand, and other favoured spots, had, and still have, an *art* of cookery, though very limited in its range ; the French have an art, and a real art, and very much more extensive ; but we English are about upon a level (as regards this science) with the ape, to whom an instinct whispers that chestnuts may be roasted, or with the aboriginal Chinese of Charles Lamb's story, to whom the experience of many centuries had revealed thus much—viz. that a dish very much beyond the raw flesh of their ancestors might be had by burning down the family mansion and thus roasting the pigsty. Rudest of barbarous devices is English cookery, and not much in advance of this primitive Chinese step—a fact which it would not be worth while, to lament were it not for the sake of the poor

trembling deserter from the banners of intoxication, who is thus, and by no other cause, so often thrown back beneath the yoke which he had abjured. Past counting are the victims of alcohol that, having by vast efforts emancipated themselves for a season, are violently forced into relapsing by the nervous irritations of demoniac cookery. Unhappily for *them*, the horrors of indigestion are relieved for the moment, however ultimately strengthened, by strong liquors : the relief is immediate, and cannot fail to be perceived ; but the aggravation, being removed to a distance, is not always referred to its proper cause. This is the capital rock and stumbling-block in the path of him who is hurrying back to the camps of temperance ; and many a reader is likely to misapprehend the case through the habit he has acquired of supposing indigestion to lurk chiefly amongst *luxurious* dishes ; but, on the contrary, it is amongst the plainest, simplest, and commonest dishes that such misery lurks in England. Let us glance at three articles of diet, beyond all comparison of most ordinary occurrence—viz. potatoes, bread, and butchers' meat. The art of preparing potatoes for *human* use is utterly unknown, except in certain provinces of our empire and amongst certain sections of the labouring class. In our great cities—London, Edinburgh, &c.—the sort of things which you see offered at table under the name and reputation of potatoes are such that, if you could suppose the company to be composed of Centaurs and Lapithae, or any other quarrelsome people, it would become necessary for the police to interfere. The potato of cities is a very dangerous missile, and, if thrown with an accurate aim by an angry hand, will fracture any known skull. In volume and consistency it is very like a paving stone ; only that, I should say, the paving stone had the advantage in point of tenderness; and upon this horrid basis, which youthful ostriches would repent of swallowing, the trembling, palpitating invalid,

fresh from the scourging of alcohol, is requested to build the superstructure of his dinner. The proverb says that three flittings are as bad as a fire; and on that model I conceive that three potatoes, as they are found at the majority of British dinner tables, would be equal, in principle of ruin, to two glasses of vitriol. The same savage ignorance appears, and only not so often, in the bread of this island. Myriads of families eat it in that early state of sponge which bread assumes during the process of baking; but less than sixty hours will not fit this dangerous article of human diet to be eaten; and those who are acquainted with the works of Parmentier, of Count Rumford, or other learned investigators of bread and of the baker's art, must be aware that this quality of sponginess (though quite equal to the ruin of the digestive organs) is but one in a legion of vices to which the article is liable. A German of much research wrote a book on the conceivable faults in a pair of shoes, which he found to be about six hundred and sixty-six—many of them, as he observed, requiring a very delicate process of study to find out; whereas the possible faults in bread, which are not less in number, being also, I conceive, about equal to the number of the beast, require no study at all for the detection—they publish themselves through all varieties of misery. But the perfection of barbarism, as regards our island cookery, is reserved for animal food; and the two poles of Oromasdes and Ahrimanes are nowhere so conspicuously exhibited. Our insular sheep, for instance, are so far superior to any which the Continent produces that the present Prussian minister at our court is in the habit of questioning a man's right to talk of mutton as anything beyond a great idea, unless he can prove a residence in Great Britain. One sole case he cites of a dinner on the Elbe where a particular leg of mutton really struck him as rivalling any which he had known in England. The

mystery seemed inexplicable ; but, upon inquiry, it turned out to be an importation from Leith. Yet this incomparable article, to produce which the skill of the feeder must co-operate with the peculiar bounty of Nature, calls forth the most dangerous refinements of barbarism in its cookery. A Frenchman requires, as the primary qualification of flesh meat, that it should be tender. We English universally, but especially the Scots, treat that quality with indifference or with bare toleration. What *we,* what *nous autres les barbares,* require is that it should be fresh—that is, recently killed (in which state it cannot be digestible except by a crocodile, or perhaps here and there a leopard) ; and we present it at table in a transition state of leather, demanding the teeth of a tiger to rend it in pieces, and the stomach of a tiger to digest it.

Religion

(From *On Christianity as an Organ of Political Movement*; *Tait's Magazine,* April 1846)

I BEGIN with this question : What do people mean in a Christian land by the word ' *religion* ' ? My purpose is not to propound any metaphysical problem ; I wish only, in the plainest possible sense, to ask, and to have an answer, upon this one point—how much is understood by that obscure term ' religion ', when used by a Christian ? Only I am punctilious upon one demand—viz. that the answer shall be comprehensive. We are apt in such cases to answer elliptically, omitting, because silently presuming as understood between us, whatever *seems* obvious. To prevent *that,* we will suppose the question to be proposed by an emissary from some remote planet—who, knowing as yet absolutely nothing of us and our intellectual differences, must insist (as I insist) upon absolute precision,

so that nothing essential shall be wanting, and nothing shall be redundant.

What, then, is religion ? Decomposed into its elements, as they are found in Christianity, how many *powers* for acting on the heart of man does, by possibility, this great agency include ? According to my own view, four. I will state them, and number them.

ist, A form of worship, a *cultus.*

2dly, An idea of God; and (pointing the analysis to Christianity in particular) an idea not purified merely from 10 ancient pollutions, but recast and absolutely born again.

3dly, An idea of the relation which man occupies to God: and of this idea also, when Christianity is the religion concerned, it must be said that it is so entirely remodelled as in no respect to resemble any element in any other religion. Thus far we are reminded of the poet's expression, ' Pure religion *breathing* household laws' ; that is, not *teaching* such laws, not formally *prescribing* a new economy of life, so much as *inspiring* it indirectly through a new atmosphere surrounding all objects with new attributes. But there is 20 also in Christianity.

4thly, A *doctrinal* part, a part directly and explicitly occupied with *teaching;* and this divides into two great sections : a, A system of ethics so absolutely new as to be untranslateable into either of the classical languages ; and,

, A system of mysteries—as, for instance, the mystery of the Trinity, of the Divine Incarnation, of the Atonement, of the Resurrection, and others.

Keats

(From *Notes on Gilfillan's Literary Portraits* ; *Tait's Magazine,* April 1846)

As a man, and viewed in relation to social objects, Keats was nothing. It was as mere an affectation when he talked with apparent zeal of liberty, or human rights, or human prospects, as is the hollow enthusiasm which innumerable people profess for music, or most poets for external nature. For these things Keats fancied that he cared, but in reality, from all I can learn, he cared next to nothing. Upon them, or any of their aspects, he had thought too little, and too indeterminately, to feel for them as personal concerns. Whereas Shelley, from his earliest days, was mastered and shaken by the great moving realities of life, as a prophet is by the burden of wrath or of promise which he has been commissioned to reveal. Had there been no such thing as literature, Keats would have dwindled into a cipher. Shelley, in the same event, would hardly have lost one plume from his crest. It is in relation to literature, and to the boundless questions as to the true and the false arising out of literature and poetry, that Keats challenges a fluctuating interest—sometimes an interest of strong disgust, sometimes of deep admiration. There is not, I believe, a case on record throughout European Literature where feelings so repulsive of each other have centred in the same individual. The very midsummer madness of affectation, of false vapoury sentiment, and of fantastic effeminacy, seemed to me combined in Keats's *Endytnion,* when I first saw it, near the close of 1821. The Italian poet Marino had been reputed the greatest master of gossamery affectation in Europe. But *his* conceits showed the palest of rosy blushes by the side of Keats's bloody crimson. Naturally I was discouraged at

the moment from looking further. But about a week later, by pure accident, my eye fell upon his *Hyperion.* The first feeling was that of incredulity that the two poems could, under change of circumstances or lapse of time, have emanated from the same mind. The *Endymion* trespasses so strongly against good sense and just feeling that, in order to secure its pardon, we need the whole weight of the imperishable *Hyperion* ; which, as Mr. Gilfillan truly says, ' is the greatest of poetical torsos '. The first belongs essentially to the vilest collections of waxwork filigree or gilt gingerbread. The other presents the majesty, the austere beauty, and the simplicity of a Grecian temple enriched with Grecian sculpture.

The modes of existence in the two parties to the love-fable of the *Endymion,* their relations to each other and to us, their prospects finally, and the obstacles to the *instant* realization of these prospects—all these things are more vague and incomprehensible than the reveries of an oyster. Still, the unhappy subject, and its unhappy expansion, must be laid to the account of childish years and childish inexperience. But there is another fault in Keats, of the first magnitude, which youth does not palliate, which youth even aggravates. This lies in the most shocking abuse of his mother-tongue. If there is one thing in this world which, next after the flag of his country and its spotless honour, should be holy in the eyes of a young poet, it is the *language* of his country. He should spend the third part of his life in studying this language and cultivating its total resources. He should be willing to pluck out his right eye, or to circumnavigate the globe, if by such a sacrifice, if by such an exertion, he could attain to greater purity, precision, compass, or idiomatic energy of diction. This if he were even a Kalmuck Tartar—who, by the way, *has* the good feeling and patriotism to pride

himself upon his beastly language. But Keats was an Englishman, Keats had the honour to speak the language of Chaucer, Shakespeare, Bacon, Milton, Newton. The more awful was the obligation of his allegiance. And yet upon this mother-tongue, upon this English language, has Keats trampled as with the hoofs of a buffalo. With its syntax, with its prosody, with its idiom, he has played such fantastic tricks as could enter only into the heart of a barbarian, and for which only the anarchy of Chaos could furnish a forgiving audience. Verily it required the *Hyperion* to weigh against the deep treason of these unparalleled offences.

Landor's ' Count Julian'

(From *Notes on Savage Landor* ; *Tint's Magazine,* February 1847)

LET me now draw the reader's attention to *Count Julian,* a great conception of Mr. Landor's.

The fable of Count Julian (that is, when comprehending all the parties to that web of which *he* is the centre) may be pronounced the grandest which modern history unfolds. It is, and it is *not,* scenical. In some portions (as the fate so mysterious of Roderick, and in a higher sense of Julian) it rises as much above what the stage could illustrate as does Thermopylae above the petty details of narration. The man was mad that, instead of breathing from a hurricane of harps some mighty ode over Thermopylae, fancied the little conceit of weaving it into a metrical novel or succession of incidents. Yet, on the other hand, though rising higher, Count Julian sinks lower : though the passions rise far above Troy, above Marathon, above Thermopylae, and are such passions as could not have existed under Paganism, in some respects they condescend and pre-conform to the stage. The characters are all different,

all marked, all in *position ;* by which, never assuming fixed attitudes as to purpose and interest, the passions are deliriously complex, and the situations are of corresponding grandeur. Metius Fuffetius, Alban traitor ! that wert torn limb from limb by antagonist yet confederate chariots, thy tortures, seen by shuddering armies, were not comparable to the unseen tortures in Count Julian's mind; who—whether his treason prospered or not, whether his dear outraged daughter lived or died, whether his king were trampled in the dust by the horses of infidels or escaped as a wreck from the fiery struggle, whether his dear native Spain fell for ages under misbelieving hounds, or, combining her strength, tossed off *them,* but then also *himself,* with equal loathing from her shores—saw, as he looked out into the mighty darkness, and stretched out his penitential hands vainly for pity or for pardon, nothing but the blackness of ruin, and ruin that was too probably to career through centuries. ' To this pass,' as Caesar said to his soldiers at Pharsalia, ' had his enemies reduced him ' ; and Count Julian might truly say, as he stretched himself a rueful suppliant before the Cross, listening to the havoc that was driving onwards before the dogs of the Crescent, ' *My* enemies, because they would not remember that I was a man, forced *me* to forget that I was a Spaniard—to forget thee, O native Spain ! and, alas ! thee, 0 faith of Christ ! '

The story is wrapt in gigantic mists, and looms upon one like the Grecian fable of Oedipus ; and there will be great reason for disgust if the deep Arabic researches now going on in the Escurial, or at Vienna, should succeed in stripping it of its grandeurs. For, as it stands at present, it is the most fearful lesson extant of the great moral that crime propagates crime, and violence inherits violence—nay, a lesson on the awful *necessity* which exists at times that one tremendous wrong should blindly reproduce itself in endless

retaliatory wrongs. To have resisted the dread temptation would have needed an angel's nature : to have yielded is but human ; should it, then, plead in vain for pardon ?—and yet, by some mystery of evil, to have perfected this human vengeance is, finally, to land all parties alike, oppressor and oppressed, in the passions of hell.

Mr. Landor, who always rises with his subject, and dilates like Satan into Teneriffe or Atlas when he sees before him an antagonist worthy of his powers, is probably the one man in Europe that has adequately conceived the situation, the stern self-dependency, and the monumental misery of Count Julian. That sublimity of penitential grief, which cannot accept consolation from man, cannot hear external reproach, cannot condescend to notice insult, cannot so much as *see* the curiosity of bystanders—that awful carelessness of all but the troubled deeps within his own heart, and of God's spirit brooding upon their surface, and searching their abysses—never was so majestically described as in the following lines. It is the noble Spaniard Hernando, comprehending and loving Count Julian in the midst of his treasons, who speaks. Tarik, the gallant Moor, having said that at last the Count must be happy, for that

> Delicious calm
> Follows the fierce enjoyment of revenge,

Hernando replies thus :

> That calm was never his : no other *will* be,—
> Not victory, that o'ershadows him, sees he ;
> No airy and light passion stirs abroad
> To ruffle or to soothe him ; all are quell'd
> Beneath a mightier, sterner, stress of mind.
> Wakeful he sits, and lonely, and unmoved,
> Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men ;
> As oftentimes an eagle, ere the sun
> Throws o'er the varying earth his early ray,
> Stands solitary, stands immovable
> Upon some highest cliff, and rolls his eye,
> Clear, constant, unobservant, unabased,
> In the cold light above the dews of morn.

One change suggests itself to me as possibly for the better : viz. if the magnificent line—

> Beyond the arrows, shouts, and views of men

were transferred to the secondary object, the eagle, and placed after what is *now* the last line, it would give a fuller rhythmus to the close of the entire passage. It would be more *literally* applicable to the majestic and solitary bird than to the majestic and solitary man ; whilst a figurative expression even more impassioned might be found for the utter self-absorption of Count Julian's spirit—too grandly sorrowful to be capable of disdain.

It completes the picture of this ruined prince that Hernando, the sole friend (except his daughter) still cleaving to him, dwells with yearning desire upon his death, knowing the necessity of this consummation to his own secret desires, knowing the forgiveness which would settle upon his memory after that last penalty should have been paid for his errors, comprehending the peace that would then swallow up the storm :

> For his own sake I could endure his loss,
> Pray for it, and thank God : yet mourn I must
> Him above all, so great, so bountiful,
> So blessed once !

It is no satisfaction to Hernando that Julian should ' yearn for death with speechless love ' ; but Julian *does* so, and it is in vain now, amongst these irreparable ruins, to wish it otherwise.

> Tis not my solace that 'tis *his* desire :
> Of all who pass us in life's drear descent
> We grieve the most for those who *wish'd* to die.

How much, then, is in this brief drama of Count Julian—chiselled, as one might think, by the hands of that sculptor who fancied the great idea of chiselling Mount Athos into a demigod—which almost insists on being quoted, which seems to rebuke and frown on one for *not* quoting it:

passages to which, for their solemn grandeur, one raises one's hat as at night in walking under the Coliseum ; passages which, for their luxury of loveliness, should be inscribed on the phylacteries of brides, or upon the frescoes of Ionia, illustrated by the gorgeous allegories of Rubens.

> Sed fugit interea, fugit irreparabile tempus,
> Singula dum capti circumvectamur amore.

Yet, reader, in spite of time, one word more on the subject we are quitting. Father Time is certainly become very importunate and clamorously shrill since he has been fitted up with that horrid railway-whistle ; and even old Mother Space is growing rather impertinent, when she speaks out of monthly journals licensed to carry but small quantities of bulky goods ; yet one thing I must say in spite of them both. It is that, although we have had from men of memorable genius, Shelley in particular, both direct and indirect attempts (some of them powerful attempts) to realize the great idea of Prometheus—which idea is *so* great that (like the primeval majesties of Human Innocence, of Avenging Deluges that are past, of Fiery Visitations yet to come) it has had strength to pass through many climates and through many religions without essential loss, but surviving without tarnish every furnace of chance and change—so it is that, after all has been done which intellectual power *could* do since Aeschylus (and since Milton in his Satan), no embodiment of the Promethean situation, none of the Promethean character, fixes the attentive eye upon itself with the same secret feeling of fidelity to the vast archetype as Mr. Landor's ' Count Julian '. There is in this modern aerolith the same jewelly lustre which cannot be mistaken, the same ' *non itnitabile fulgur ',* and the same character of ' fracture ' or *cleavage,* as mineralogists speak, for its beaming iridescent grandeur, redoubling under the crush of misery. The colour and the coruscation are the same when splintered by violence; the tones of the

rocky harp are the same when swept by sorrow. There is the same spirit of heavenly persecution against his enemy —persecution that would have hung upon his rear, and 'burnt after him to the bottomless pit' though it had yawned for both; there is the same gulf fixed between the possibilities of their reconciliation, the same immortality of resistance, the same eternity of abysmal sorrow. Did Mr. Landor *consciously* cherish this Aeschylean ideal in composing 'Count Julian'? I know not: there it is!

Joan of Arc

(From *Joan of Arc*; *Tait's Magazine*, March and August 1847)

WHAT is to be thought of *her*? What is to be thought of the poor shepherd girl from the hills and forests of Lorraine, that—like the Hebrew shepherd boy from the hills and forests of Judea—rose suddenly out of the quiet, out of the safety, out of the religious inspiration, rooted in deep pastoral solitudes, to a station in the van of armies, and to the more perilous station at the right hand of kings? The Hebrew boy inaugurated his patriotic mission by an *act*, by a victorious *act*, such as no man could deny. But so did the girl of Lorraine, if we read her story as it was read by those who saw her nearest. Adverse armies bore witness to the boy as no pretender; but so they did to the gentle girl. Judged by the voices of all who saw them *from a station of good-will*, both were found true and loyal to any promises involved in their first acts. Enemies it was that made the difference between their subsequent fortunes. The boy rose to a splendour and a noonday prosperity, both personal and public, that rang through the records of his people, and became a byword amongst his posterity for a thousand years, until the sceptre was departing from Judah. The poor, forsaken girl, on the contrary, drank not herself from

that cup of rest which she had secured for France. She never sang together with the songs that rose in her native Domremy as echoes to the departing steps of invaders. She mingled not in the festal dances at Vaucouleurs which celebrated in rapture the redemption of France. No ! for her voice was then silent; no ! for her feet were dust. Pure, innocent, noble-hearted girl! whom, from earliest youth, ever I believed in as full of truth and self-sacrifice, this was amongst the strongest pledges for *thy* truth, that never once —no, not for a moment of weakness—didst thou revel in the vision of coronets and honour from man. Coronets for thee ! Oh no ! Honours, if they come when all is over, are for those that share thy blood. Daughter of Domremy, when the gratitude of thy king shall awaken, thou wilt be sleeping the sleep of the dead. Call her, King of France, but she will not hear thee. Cite her by the apparitors to come and receive a robe of honour, but she will be found *en contumace.* When the thunders of universal France, as even yet may happen, shall proclaim the grandeur of the poor shepherd girl that gave up all for her country, thy ear, young shepherd girl, will have been deaf for five centuries. To suffer and to do, that was thy portion in this life ; that was thy destiny ; and not for a moment was it hidden from thyself. Life, thou saidst, is short; and the sleep which is in the grave is long; let me use that life, so transitory, for the glory of those heavenly dreams destined to comfort the sleep which is so long ! This pure creature—pure from every suspicion of even a visionary self-interest, even as she was pure in senses more obvious—never once did this holy child, as regarded herself, relax from her belief in the darkness that was travelling to meet her. She might not prefigure the very manner of her death ; she saw not in vision, perhaps, the aerial altitude of the scaffold, the spectators without end on every road pouring into Rouen as to a coronation, the surging smoke, the volleying flames, the hostile faces all

around, the pitying eye that lurked but here and there, until nature and imperishable truth broke loose from artificial restraints ; these might not be apparent through the mists of the hurrying future. But the voice that called her to death, *that* she heard for ever.

Bishop of Beauvais ! thy victim died in fire upon a scaffold—thou upon a down bed. But, for the departing minutes of life, both are oftentimes alike. At the farewell crisis, when the gates of death are opening, and flesh is resting from its struggles, oftentimes the tortured and the torturer have the same truce from carnal torment; both sink together into sleep ; together both sometimes kindle into dreams. When the mortal mists were gathering fast upon you two, bishop and shepherd girl—when the pavilions of life were closing up their shadowy curtains about you—let us try, through the gigantic glooms, to decipher the flying features of your separate visions.

The shepherd girl that had delivered France—she, from her dungeon, she, from her baiting at the stake, she, from her duel with fire, as she entered her last dream—saw Domremy, saw the fountain of Domremy, saw the pomp of forests in which her childhood had wandered. That Easter festival which man had denied to her languishing heart—that resurrection of springtime, which the darkness of dungeons had intercepted from *her,* hungering after the glorious liberty of forests—were by God given back into her hands, as jewels that had been stolen from her by robbers. With those, perhaps (for the minutes of dreams can stretch into ages), was given back to her by God the bliss of childhood. By special privilege for *her* might be created, in this farewell dream, a second childhood, innocent as the first; but not, like *that,* sad with the gloom of a fearful mission in the rear. This mission had now been fulfilled. The storm was weathered; the skirts even of that mighty storm

were drawing off. The blood that she was to reckon for had been exacted; the tears that she was to shed in secret had been paid to the last. The hatred to herself in all eyes had been faced steadily, had been suffered, had been survived. And in her last fight upon the scaffold she had triumphed gloriously; victoriously she had tasted the stings of death. For all, except this comfort from her farewell dream, she had died—died, amidst the tears of ten thousand enemies—died, amidst the drums and trumpets of armies—died, amidst peals redoubling upon peals, volleys upon volleys, from the saluting clarions of martyrs.

Bishop of Beauvais ! because the guilt-burdened man is in dreams haunted and waylaid by the most frightful of his crimes, and because upon that fluctuating mirror—rising (like the mocking mirrors of *mirage* in Arabian deserts) from the fens of death—most of all are reflected the sweet countenances which the man has laid in ruins ; therefore I know, bishop, that you also, entering your final dream, saw Domremy. That fountain, of which the witnesses spoke so much, showed itself to your eyes in pure morning dews ; but neither dews, nor the holy dawn, could cleanse away the bright spots of innocent blood upon its surface. By the fountain, bishop, you saw a woman seated, that hid her face. But, *as you* draw near, the woman raises her wasted features. Would Domremy know them again for the features of her child ? Ah, *but you* know them, bishop, well! Oh, mercy ! what a groan was *that* which the servants, waiting outside the bishop's dream at his bedside, heard from his labouring heart, as at this moment he turned away from the fountain and the woman, seeking rest in the forests afar off. Yet not so to escape the woman, whom once again he must behold before he dies. In the forests to which he prays for pity, will he find a respite ? What a tumult, what a gathering of feet is there ! In glades where only wild deer should run armies and nations are assembling; towering in the

fluctuating crowd are phantoms that belong to departed hours. There is the great English Prince, Regent of France. There is my Lord of Winchester, the princely cardinal, that died and made no sign. There is the Bishop of Beauvais, clinging to the shelter of thickets. What building is that which hands so rapid are raising ? Is it a martyr's scaffold ? Will they burn the child of Domremy a second time ? No : it is a tribunal that rises to the clouds; and two nations stand around it, waiting for a trial. Shall my Lord of Beauvais sit again upon the judgement-seat, and again number the hours for the innocent ? Ah no ! he is the prisoner at the bar. Already all is waiting : the mighty audience is gathered, the Court is hurrying to their seats, the witnesses are arrayed, the trumpets are sounding, the judge is taking his place. Oh ! but this is sudden. My lord, have you no counsel ? ' Counsel I have none : in heaven above, or on earth beneath, counsellor there is none now that would take a brief from *me* : all are silent.' Is it, indeed, come to this ? Alas ! the time is short, the tumult is wondrous, the crowd stretches away into infinity ; but yet I will search in it for somebody to take your brief : I know of somebody that will be your counsel. Who is this that cometh from Domremy ? Who is she in bloody coronation robes from Rheims ? Who is she that cometh with blackened flesh from walking the furnaces of Rouen ? This is she, the shepherd girl, counsellor that had none for herself, whom I choose, bishop, for yours. She it is, I engage, that shall take my lord's brief. She it is, bishop, that would plead for you : yes, bishop, SHE—when heaven and earth are silent.

Reformed Spelling

(From *Orthographic Mutineers* ; *Tait's Magazine,* March 1847)

A N D yet all these fellows were nothing in comparison of Mr. Pinkerton. The most of these men did but ruin the national *spelling* ; but Pinkerton—the monster Pinkerton—proposed a revolution which would have left us nothing to spell. It is almost incredible—if a book regularly printed and published, bought and sold, did not remain to attest the fact—that this horrid barbarian seriously proposed, as a glorious discovery for refining our language, the following plan :—All people were content with the compass of the English language : its range of expression was equal to anything ; but, unfortunately, as compared with the sweet orchestral languages of the south—Spanish the stately, and Italian the lovely—it wanted rhythmus and melody. Clearly, then, the one supplementary grace which it remained for modern art to give is that every one should add at discretion *0* and *a, ino* and *ano,* to the end of English words. The language, in its old days, should be taught *struttare struttissimamente.* As a specimen, Mr. Pinkerton favoured us with his own version of a famous passage in Addison, viz. ' The Vision of Mirza '—the passage which begins thus, ' As I sat on the top of a rock', being translated into ' As I sat to on the toppino of a rocko', &c. But *luckilissime* this *proposalio* of the *absurdissimo Pinkertonio* was not *adoptado* by *anybodyini whateverano.*

The long and the short of it is that the whole world lies in heresy or schism on the subject of orthography. All climates alike groan under heterography. It is absolutely of no use to begin with one's own grandmother in such labours of reformation. It is toil thrown away, and as nearly a hopeless task as the proverb insinuates that it is

to attempt a reformation in that old lady's mode of eating eggs. She laughs at one. She has a vain conceit that she is able, out of her own proper resources to do both, viz. the spelling and the eating of the eggs. And all that remains for philosophers, like Mr. Landor and myself, is to turn away in sorrow rather than in anger, dropping a silent tear for the poor old lady's infatuation.

Conversation

(From the enlargement, published in vol xiv of the Collective Edition, 1860, of *Conversation* ; *Tait's Magazine,* October 1847)

LORD BACON had been led to remark the capacities of conversation as an organ for sharpening one particular mode of intellectual power. Circumstances, on the other hand, led me into remarking the special capacities of conversation as an organ for absolutely creating another mode of power. Let a man have read, thought, studied, as much as he may, rarely will he reach his possible advantages as a *ready* man, unless he has exercised his powers much in conversation : that, I think, was Lord Bacon's idea. Now, this wise and useful remark points in a direction not objective, but subjective ; that is, it does not promise any absolute extension to truth itself, but only some greater facilities to the man who expounds or diffuses the truth. Nothing will be done for truth objectively that would not at any rate be done ; but subjectively it will be done with more fluency, and at less cost of exertion to the doer. On the contrary, my own growing reveries on the latent powers of conversation (which, though a thing that then I hated, yet challenged at times unavoidably my attention) pointed to an absolute birth of new insight into the truth itself as inseparable from the finer and more scientific exercise of the talking art. It would not be the brilliancy, the ease, or the adroitness of the expounder that would benefit, but the absolute interests

of the thing expounded. A feeling dawned on me of a secret magic lurking in the peculiar life, velocities, and contagious ardour of conversation, quite separate from any which belonged to books—arming a man with new forces, and not merely with a new dexterity in wielding the old ones. I felt (and in this I could not be mistaken, as too certainly it was a fact of my own experience) that in the electric kindling of life between two minds—and far less from the kindling natural to conflict (though *that* also is something) than from the kindling through sympathy with the object discussed in its momentary coruscation of shifting phases—there sometimes arise glimpses and shy revelations of affinity, suggestion, relation, analogy, that could not have been approached through any avenues of methodical study. Great organists find the same effect of inspiration, the same result of power creative and revealing, in the mere movement and velocity of their own voluntaries. Like the heavenly wheels of Milton, throwing off fiery flakes and bickering flames, these *impromptu* torrents of music create rapturous *fioriture*, beyond all capacity in the artist to register, or afterwards to imitate.

Literature of Power and that of Knowledge

(From a review of Roscoe's edition of Pope ; *North British Review*, August 1848)

BOOKS, therefore, do not suggest an idea coextensive and interchangeable with the idea of Literature ; since much literature, scenic, forensic, or didactic (as from lecturers and public orators), may never come into books, and much that *does* come into books may connect itself with no literary interest. But a far more important correction, applicable to the common vague idea of literature, is to be sought not so much in a better definition of literature as in a sharper distinction of the two functions which it fulfils. In that great

social organ which, collectively, we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend and often *do* so, but capable, severally, of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*; and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is—to *teach* ; the function of the second is—to *move* : the first is a rudder; the second, an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding ; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always *through* affections of pleasure and sympathy. Remotely, it may travel towards an object seated in what Lord Bacon calls *dry* light ; but, proximately, it does and must operate —else it ceases to be a literature of *power*—on and through that *humid* light which clothes itself in the mists and glittering *iris* of human passions, desires, and genial emotions. Men have so little reflected on the higher functions of literature as to find it a paradox if one should describe it as a mean or subordinate purpose of books to give information. But this is a paradox only in the sense which makes it honourable to be paradoxical. Whenever we talk in ordinary language of seeking information or gaining knowledge, we understand the words as connected with something of absolute novelty. But it is the grandeur of all truth which *can* occupy a very high place in human interests that it is never absolutely novel to the meanest of minds : it exists eternally by way of germ or latent principle in the lowest as in the highest, needing to be developed, but never to be planted. To be capable of transplantation is the immediate criterion of a truth that ranges on a lower scale. Besides which, there is a rarer thing than truth—namely, *power*, or deep sympathy with truth. What is the effect, for instance, upon society, of children ? By the pity, by the tenderness, and by the peculiar modes of admiration, which connect themselves with the helplessness, with

the innocence, and with the simplicity of children, not only are the primal affections strengthened and continually renewed, but the qualities which are dearest in the sight of heaven—the frailty, for instance, which appeals to forbearance, the innocence which symbolizes the heavenly, and the simplicity which is most alien from the worldly—are kept up in perpetual remembrance, and their ideals are continually refreshed. A purpose of the same nature is answered by the higher literature, viz. the literature of power. What do you learn from *Paradise Lost*? Nothing at all. What do you learn from a cookery-book? Something new, something that you did not know before, in every paragraph. But would you therefore put the wretched cookery-book on a higher level of estimation than the divine poem? What you owe to Milton is not any knowledge, of which a million separate items are still but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level; what you owe is *power*—that is, exercise and expansion to your own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending as upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth. *All* the steps of knowledge, from first to last, carry you further on the same plane, but could never raise you one foot above your ancient level of earth: whereas the very *first* step in power is a flight—is an ascending movement into another element where earth is forgotten.

Were it not that human sensibilities are ventilated and continually called out into exercise by the great phenomena of infancy, or of real life as it moves through chance and change, or of literature as it recombines these elements in the mimicries of poetry, romance, &c, it is certain that, like any animal power or muscular energy falling into disuse, all such sensibilities would gradually droop and dwindle. It is in relation to these great *moral* capacities of man that the

literature of power, as contradistinguished from that of knowledge, lives and has its field of action. It is concerned with what is highest in man ; for the Scriptures themselves never condescended to deal by suggestion or co-operation with the mere discursive understanding : when speaking of man in his intellectual capacity, the Scriptures speak not of the understanding, but of '*the understanding heart*'—making the heart, i. e. the great *intuitive* (or non-discursive) organ, to be the interchangeable formula for man in his highest state of capacity for the infinite. Tragedy, romance, fairy tale, or epopee, all alike restore to man's mind the ideals of justice, of hope, of truth, of mercy, of retribution, which else (left to the support of daily life in its realities) would languish for want of sufficient illustration. What is meant, for instance, by *poetic justice* ?—It does not mean a justice that differs by its object from the ordinary justice of human jurisprudence ; for then it must be confessedly a very bad kind of justice ; but it means a justice that differs from common forensic justice by the degree in which it *attains* its object, a justice that is more omnipotent over its own ends, as dealing—not with the refractory elements of earthly life, but with the elements of its own creation, and with materials flexible to its own purest preconceptions. It is certain that, were it not for the Literature of Power, these ideals would often remain amongst us as mere arid notional forms ; whereas, by the creative forces of man put forth in literature, they gain a vernal life of restoration, and germinate into vital activities. The commonest novel, by moving in alliance with human fears and hopes, with human instincts of wrong and right, sustains and quickens those affections. Calling them into action, it rescues them from torpor. And hence the pre-eminency over all authors that merely *teach* of the meanest that *moves,* or that teaches, if at all, indirectly *by* moving. The very highest work that has ever existed in the Literature of Knowledge is but a *provisional*

work : a book upon trial and sufferance, and *quamdiu bene se gesserit.* Let its teaching be even partially revised, let it be but expanded—nay, even let its teaching be but placed in a better order—and instantly it is superseded. Whereas the feeblest works in the Literature of Power, surviving at all, survive as finished and unalterable amongst men. For instance, the *Principia* of Sir Isaac Newton was a book *militant* on earth from the first. In all stages of its progress it would have to fight for its existence : Ist, as regards absolute truth ; 2ndly, when that combat was over, as regards its form or mode of presenting the truth. And as soon as a La Place, or anybody else, builds higher upon the foundations laid by this book, effectually he throws it out of the sunshine into decay and darkness ; by weapons won from this book he superannuates and destroys this book, so that soon the name of Newton remains as a mere *nominis umbra,* but his book, as a living power, has transmigrated into other forms. Now, on the contrary, the *Iliad,* the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, the *Othello* or *King Lear,* the *Hamlet* or *Macbeth,* and the *Paradise Lost,* are not militant, but triumphant for ever as long as the languages exist in which they speak or can be taught to speak. They never *can* transmigrate into new incarnations. To reproduce *these* in new forms, or variations, even if in some things they should be improved, would be to plagiarize. A good steam-engine is properly superseded by a better. But one lovely pastoral valley is not superseded by another, nor a statue of Praxiteles by a statue of Michael Angelo. These things are separated not by imparity, but by disparity. They are not thought of as unequal under the same standard, but as different in *kind,* and, if otherwise equal, as equal under a different standard. Human works of immortal beauty and works of nature in one respect stand on the same footing : they never absolutely repeat each other, never approach so near as not to differ; and they differ not as better and

worse, or simply by more and less : they differ by undecipherable and incommunicable differences, that cannot be caught by mimicries, that cannot be reflected in the mirror of copies, that cannot become ponderable in the scales of vulgar comparison.

Lamb

(From *Charles Lamb* ; *North British Review,* November 1848)

IT sounds paradoxical, but is not so in a bad sense, to say that in every literature of large compass some authors will be found to rest much of the interest which surrounds them on their essential non-popularity. They are good for the very reason that they are not in conformity to the current taste.

Charles Lamb, if any ever *was,* is amongst the class here contemplated; he, if any ever *has,* ranks amongst writers whose works are destined to be for ever unpopular, and yet for ever interesting ; interesting, moreover, by means of those very qualities which guarantee their non-popularity. The same qualities which will be found forbidding to the world and the thoughtless, which will be found insipid to many even amongst robust and powerful minds, are exactly those which will continue to command a select audience in every generation. The prose essays, under the signature of *Elia,* form the most delightful section amongst Lamb's works. They traverse a peculiar field of observation, sequestered from general interest; and they are composed in a spirit too delicate and unobtrusive to catch the ear of the noisy crowd, clamouring for strong sensations. But this retiring delicacy itself, the pensiveness chequered by gleams of the fanciful, and the humour that is touched with cross lights of pathos, together with the picturesque quaintness of the objects casually described, whether men, or things, or usages, and, in the rear of all this, the constant recurrence

to ancient recollections and to decaying forms of household life, as things retiring before the tumult of new and revolutionary generations—these traits in combination communicate to the papers a grace and strength of originality which nothing in any literature approaches, whether for degree or kind of excellence, except the most felicitous papers of Addison, such as those on Sir Roger de Coverley, and some others in the same vein of composition. They resemble Addison's papers also in the diction ; which is natural and idiomatic, even to carelessness. They are equally faithful to the truth of nature ; and in this only they differ remarkably—that the sketches of Elia reflect the stamp and impress of the writer's own character, whereas in all those of Addison the personal peculiarities of the delineator (though known to the reader from the beginning through the account of the club) are nearly quiescent. Now and then they are recalled into a momentary notice, but they do not act, or at all modify his pictures of Sir Roger or Will Wimble. *They* are slightly and amiably eccentric ; but the Spectator himself, in describing them, takes the station of an ordinary observer.

Hazlitt

(From the same)

HAZLITT was not eloquent, because he was discontinuous. No man can be eloquent whose thoughts are abrupt, insulated, capricious, and (to borrow an impressive word from Coleridge) non-sequacious. Eloquence resides not in separate or fractional ideas, but in the relations of manifold ideas, and in the mode of their evolution from each other. It is not indeed enough that the ideas should be many, and their relations coherent; the main condition lies in the *key* of the evolution, in the *law* of the succession. The

elements are nothing without the atmosphere that moulds, and the dynamic forces that combine. Now Hazlitt's brilliancy is seen chiefly in separate splinterings of phrase or image which throw upon the eye a vitreous scintillation for a moment, but spread no deep suffusions of colour, and distribute no masses of mighty shadow. A flash, a solitary flash, and all is gone. Rhetoric, according to its quality, stands in many degrees of relation to the permanencies of truth; and all rhetoric, like all flesh, is partly unreal, and the glory of both is fleeting. Even the mighty rhetoric of Sir Thomas Browne, or Jeremy Taylor, to whom only it has been granted to open the trumpet-stop on that great organ of passion, oftentimes leaves behind it the sense of sadness which belongs to beautiful apparitions starting out of darkness upon the morbid eye, only to be reclaimed by darkness in the instant of their birth, or which belongs to pageantries in the clouds. But, if all rhetoric is a mode of pyrotechny, and all pyrotechnics are by necessity fugitive, yet even in these frail pomps there are many degrees of frailty. Some fireworks require an hour's duration for the expansion of their glory; others, as if formed from fulminating powder, expire in the very act of birth. Precisely on that scale of duration and of power stand the glitterings of rhetoric that are not worked into the texture, but washed on from the outside. Hazlitt's thoughts were of the same fractured and discontinuous order as his illustrative images —seldom or never self-diffusive; and *that* is a sufficient argument that he had never cultivated philosophic thinking.

The English Mail-Coach

(From *The English Mail Coach,* a revision for vol. iv of the Collective Edition in 1854 of his articles in *Blackwood's Magazine* for October and December 1849)

Section I. *The Glory of Motion*

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

—kindling in the rapture of the fiery strife, and then propagating its own tumults by contagious shouts and gestures to the heart of his servant the horse. But now, on the new system of travelling, iron tubes and boilers have disconnected man's heart from the ministers of his locomotion. Nile nor Trafalgar has power to raise an extra bubble in a steam-kettle. The galvanic cycle is broken up for ever; man's imperial nature no longer sends itself forward through the electric sensibility of the horse; the inter-agencies are gone in the mode of communication between the horse and his master out of which grew so many aspects of sublimity under accidents of mists that hid, or sudden blazes that revealed, of mobs that agitated, or midnight solitudes that awed. Tidings fitted to convulse all nations must henceforwards travel by culinary process; and the trumpet that once announced from afar the laurelled mail, heart-shaking when heard screaming on the wind and proclaiming itself through the darkness to every village or solitary house on its route, has now given way for ever to the pot-wallopings of the boiler. Thus have perished multiform openings for public expressions of interest, scenical yet natural, in great national tidings—for revelations of faces and groups that could not offer themselves amongst the fluctuating mobs of a railway station. The gatherings of gazers about a laurelled mail had one centre, and acknowledged one sole interest. But the crowds attending at a railway station have as little unity as running water, and own as many centres as there are separate carriages in the train.

GOING DOWN WITH VICTORY

But the grandest chapter of our experience within the whole mail-coach service was on those occasions when we went down from London with the news of victory. A

period of about ten years stretched from Trafalgar to Waterloo ; the second and third years of which period (1806 and 1807) were comparatively sterile ; but the other nine (from 1805 to 1815 inclusively) furnished a long succession of victories, the least of which, in such a contest of Titans, had an inappreciable value of position : partly for its absolute interference with the plans of our enemy, but still more from its keeping alive through central Europe the sense of a deep-seated vulnerability in France. Even to tease the coasts of our enemy, to mortify them by continual blockades, to insult them by capturing if it were but a baubling schooner under the eyes of their arrogant armies, repeated from time to time a sullen proclamation of power lodged in one quarter to which the hopes of Christendom turned in secret. How much more loudly must this proclamation have spoken in the audacity of having bearded the *elite* of their troops, and having beaten them in pitched battles ! Five years of life it was worth paying down for the privilege of an outside place on a mail-coach, when carrying down the first tidings of any such event. And it is to be noted that, from our insular situation, and the multitude of our frigates disposable for the rapid transmission of intelligence, rarely did any unauthorized rumour steal away a prelibation from the first aroma of the regular dispatches. The government news was generally the earliest news.

From eight p.m. to fifteen or twenty minutes later imagine the mails assembled on parade in Lombard Street ; where, at that time, and not in St. Martin's-le-Grand, was seated the General Post-Office. In what exact strength we mustered I do not remember ; but, from the length of each separate *attelage,* we filled the street, though a long one, and though we were drawn up in double file. On *any* night the spectacle was beautiful. The absolute perfection of all the appointments about the carriages and the harness, their

strength, their brilliant cleanliness, their beautiful simplicity —but, more than all, the royal magnificence of the horses— were what might first have fixed the attention. Every carriage on every morning in the year was taken down to an official inspector for examination : wheels, axles, linchpins, pole, glasses, lamps, were all critically probed and tested. Every part of every carriage had been cleaned, every horse had been groomed, with as much rigour as if they belonged to a private gentleman ; and that part of the spectacle offered itself always. But the night before us is a night of victory ; and, behold ! to the ordinary display what a heart-shaking addition ! horses, men, carriages, all are dressed in laurels and flowers, oak-leaves and ribbons. The guards, as being officially his Majesty's servants, and of the coachmen such as are within the privilege of the post-office, wear the royal liveries of course ; and, as it is summer (for all the *land* victories were naturally won in summer), they wear, on this fine evening, these liveries exposed to view, without any covering of upper coats. Such a costume, and the elaborate arrangement of the laurels in their hats, dilate their hearts, by giving to them openly a personal connexion with the great news in which already they have the general interest of patriotism. That great national sentiment surmounts and quells all sense of ordinary distinctions. Those passengers who happen to be gentlemen are now hardly to be distinguished as such except by dress ; for the usual reserve of their manner in speaking to the attendants has on this night melted away. One heart, one pride, one glory, connects every man by the transcendent bond of his national blood. The spectators, who are numerous beyond precedent, express their sympathy with these fervent feelings by continual hurrahs. Every moment are shouted aloud by the post office servants, and summoned to draw up, the great ancestral names of cities known to history through a thousand years—Lincoln, Winchester, Portsmouth,

Gloucester, Oxford, Bristol, Manchester, York, Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Perth, Stirling, Aberdeen—expressing the grandeur of the empire by the antiquity of its towns, and the grandeur of the mail establishment by the diffusive radiation of its separate missions. Every moment you hear the thunder of lids locked down upon the mail-bags. That sound to each individual mail is the signal for drawing off; which process is the finest part of the entire spectacle. Then come the horses into play. Horses! can these be horses that bound off with the action and gestures of leopards? What stir! what sea-like ferment! what a thundering of wheels! what a trampling of hoofs! what a sounding of trumpets! what farewell cheers—what redoubling peals of brotherly congratulation, connecting the name of the particular mail—'Liverpool for ever!' with the name of the particular victory—'Badajoz for ever!' or 'Salamanca for ever!' The half-slumbering consciousness that all night long, and all the next day—perhaps for even a longer period—many of these mails, like fire racing along a train of gunpowder, will be kindling at every instant new successions of burning joy, has an obscure effect of multiplying the victory itself, by multiplying to the imagination into infinity the stages of its progressive diffusion. A fiery arrow seems to be let loose, which from that moment is destined to travel, without intermission, westwards for three hundred miles—northwards for six hundred; and the sympathy of our Lombard Street friends at parting is exalted a hundredfold by a sort of visionary sympathy with the yet slumbering sympathies which in so vast a succession we are going to awake.

Liberated from the embarrassments of the city, and issuing into the broad uncrowded avenues of the northern suburbs, we soon begin to enter upon our natural pace of ten miles an hour. In the broad light of the summer evening, the sun, perhaps, only just at the point of setting,

we are seen from every storey of every house. Heads of every age crowd to the windows ; young and old understand the language of our victorious symbols ; and rolling volleys of sympathizing cheers run along us, behind us, and before us. The beggar, rearing himself against the wall, forgets his lameness—real or assumed—thinks not of his whining trade, but stands erect, with bold exulting smiles, as we pass him. The victory has healed him, and says, Be thou whole ! Women and children, from garrets alike and cellars, through infinite London, look down or look up with loving eyes upon our gay ribbons and our martial laurels ; sometimes kiss their hands ; sometimes hang out, as signals of affection, pocket-handkerchiefs, aprons, dusters, anything that, by catching the summer breezes, will express an aerial jubilation.

Section II. *The Vision of Sudden Death*

The incident, so memorable in itself by its features of horror, and so scenical by its grouping for the eye, which furnished the text for this reverie upon *Sudden Death,* occurred to myself in the dead of night, as a solitary spectator, when seated on the box of the Manchester and Glasgow mail, in the second or third summer after Waterloo. I find it necessary to relate the circumstances, because they are such as could not have occurred unless under a singular combination of accidents.

[De Quincey was sitting on the box beside the driver. The latter had been without sleep for three days and nights, since during the days he had been waiting as a witness in an important trial then being held at the Lancaster assizes, and during the nights had been driving his coach. During the third stage out from Manchester he fell asleep. Thus about ten miles from Preston De Quincey found himself ' left in charge of his Majesty's London and Glasgow mail, then running at the least twelve miles an hour'.]

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

and dreamy, that covered the woods and fields, but with a veil of equable transparency. Except the feet of our own horses—which, running on a sandy margin of the road, made but little disturbance—there was no sound abroad. In the clouds and on the earth prevailed the same majestic peace ; and, in spite of all that the villain of a schoolmaster has done for the ruin of our sublimer thoughts, which are the thoughts of our infancy, we still believe in no such nonsense as a limited atmosphere. Whatever we may swear with our false feigning lips, in our faithful hearts we still believe, and must for ever believe, in fields of air traversing the total gulf between earth and the central heavens. Still, in the confidence of children that tread without fear *every* chamber in their father's house, and to whom no door is closed, we, in that Sabbatic vision which sometimes is revealed for an hour upon nights like this, ascend with easy steps from the sorrow-stricken fields of earth upwards to the sandals of God.

Suddenly, from thoughts like these I was awakened to a sullen sound, as of some motion on the distant road. It stole upon the air for a moment ; I listened in awe ; but then it died away. Once roused, however, I could not but observe with alarm the quickened motion of our horses. Ten years' experience had made my eye learned in the valuing of motion ; and I saw that we were now running thirteen miles an hour. I pretend to no presence of mind. On the contrary, my fear is that I am miserably and shamefully deficient in that quality as regards action. The palsy of doubt and distraction hangs like some guilty weight of dark unfathomed remembrances upon my energies when the signal is flying for *action.* But, on the other hand, this accursed gift I have, as regards *thought,* that in the first step towards the possibility of a misfortune I see its total evolution ; in the radix of the series I see too certainly and too instantly its entire expansion ; in the first syllable of the

dreadful sentence I read already the last. It was not that I feared for ourselves. *Us* our bulk and impetus charmed against peril in any collision. And I had ridden through too many hundreds of perils that were frightful to approach, that were matter of laughter to look back upon, the first face of which was horror, the parting face a jest—for any anxiety to rest upon *our* interests. The mail was not built, I felt assured, nor bespoke, that could betray *me* who trusted to its protection. But any carriage that we could TO meet would be frail and light in comparison of ourselves. And I remarked this ominous accident of our situation—we were on the wrong side of the road. But then, it may be said, the other party, if other there was, might also be on the wrong side ; and two wrongs might make a right. *That* was not likely. The same motive which had drawn *us* to the right-hand side of the road—viz. the luxury of the soft beaten sand as contrasted with the paved centre—would prove attractive to others. The two adverse carriages would therefore, to a certainty, be travelling on the same side ; 20 and from this side, as not being ours in law, the crossing over to the other would, of course, be looked for from *us.* Our lamps, still lighted, would give the impression of vigilance on our part. And every creature that met us would rely upon *us* for quartering. All this, and if the separate links of the anticipation had been a thousand times more, I saw, not discursively, or by effort, or by succession, but by one flash of horrid simultaneous intuition.

Under this steady though rapid anticipation of the evil which *might* be gathering ahead, ah ! what a sullen mystery 30 of fear, what a sigh of woe, was that which stole upon the air, as again the far-off sound of a wheel was heard ! A whisper it was—a whisper from, perhaps, four miles off—secretly announcing a ruin that, being foreseen, was not the less inevitable; that, being known, was not therefore healed. What could be done—who was it that could do it—

to check the storm-flight of these maniacal horses ? Could I not seize the reins from the grasp of the slumbering coachman ? You, reader, think that it would have been in *your* power to do so. And I quarrel not with your estimate of yourself. But, from the way in which the coachman's hand was viced between his upper and lower thigh, this was impossible. Easy was it ? See, then, that bronze equestrian statue. The cruel rider has kept the bit in his horse's mouth for two centuries. Unbridle him for a minute, if you please, and wash his mouth with water. Easy was it ? Unhorse me, then, that imperial rider; knock me those marble feet from those marble stirrups of Charlemagne.

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

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

Here, then, all had been done that, by me, *could* be done ; more on *my* part was not possible. Mine had been the first step ; the second was for the young man ; the third was for God. If, said I, this stranger is a brave man, and if indeed he loves the young girl at his side—or, loving her not, if he feels the obligation, pressing upon every man worthy to be

called a man, of doing his utmost for a woman confided to his protection—he will at least make some effort to save her. If *that* fails, he will not perish the more, or by a death more cruel, for having made it ; and he will die as a brave man should, with his face to the danger, and with his arm about the woman that he sought in vain to save. But, if he makes no effort—shrinking without a struggle from his duty—he himself will not the less certainly perish for this baseness of poltroonery. He will die no less : and why not ? Wherefore should we grieve that there is one craven less in the world ? No ; *let* him perish, without a pitying thought of ours wasted upon him ; and, in that case, all our grief will be reserved for the fate of the helpless girl who now, upon the least shadow of failure in *him,* must by the fiercest of translations—must without time for a prayer—must within seventy seconds—stand before the judgement-seat of God.

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

For seven seconds, it might be, of his seventy, the stranger settled his countenance stedfastly upon us, as if to search

and value every element in the conflict before him. For five seconds more of his seventy he sat immovably, like one that mused on some great purpose. For five more, perhaps, he sat with eyes upraised, like one that prayed in sorrow, under some extremity of doubt, for light that should guide him to the better choice. Then suddenly he rose ; stood upright; and, by a powerful strain upon the reins, raising his horse's fore-feet from the ground, he slewed him round on the pivot of his hind-legs, so as to plant the little equipage in a position nearly at right angles to ours. Thus far his condition was not improved; except as a first step had been taken towards the possibility of a second. If no more were done, nothing was done ; for the little carriage still occupied the very centre of our path, though in an altered direction. Yet even now it may not be too late : fifteen of the seventy seconds may still be unexhausted ; and one almighty bound may avail to clear the ground. Hurry, then, hurry ! for the flying moments—*they* hurry. Oh, hurry, hurry, my brave young man ! for the cruel hoofs of our horses—*they* also hurry ! Fast are the flying moments, faster are the hoofs of our horses. But fear not for *him,* if human energy can suffice ; faithful was he that drove to his terrific duty ; faithful was the horse to *his* command. One blow, one impulse given with voice and hand, by the stranger, one rush from the horse, one bound as if in the act of rising to a fence, landed the docile creature's fore-feet upon the crown or arching centre of the road. The larger half of the little equipage had then cleared our over-towering shadow : *that* was evident even to my own agitated sight. But it mattered little that one wreck should float off in safety if upon the wreck that perished were embarked the human freightage. The rear part of the carriage—was *that* certainly beyond the line of absolute ruin ? What power could answer the question ? Glance of eye, thought of man, wing of angel, which of these had speed enough to sweep between the

question and the answer, and divide the one from the other ? Light does not tread upon the steps of light more indivisibly than did our all-conquering arrival upon the escaping efforts of the gig. *That* must the young man have felt too plainly. His back was now turned to us ; not by sight could he any longer communicate with the peril; but, by the dreadful rattle of our harness, too truly had his ear been instructed that all was finished as regarded any effort of *his.* Already in resignation he had rested from his struggle ; and perhaps in his heart he was whispering, ' Father, which art in heaven, do Thou finish above what I on earth have attempted.' Faster than ever mill-race we ran past them in our inexorable flight. Oh, raving of hurricanes that must have sounded in their young ears at the moment of our transit ! Even in that moment the thunder of collision spoke aloud. Either with the swingle-bar, or with the haunch of our near leader, we had struck the off-wheel of the little gig ; which stood rather obliquely, and not quite so far advanced as to be accurately parallel with the near-wheel. The blow, from the fury of our passage, resounded terrifically. I rose in horror, to gaze upon the ruins we might have caused. From my elevated station I looked down, and looked back upon the scene ; which in a moment told its own tale, and wrote all its records on my heart for ever.

Here was the map of the passion that now had finished. The horse was planted immovably, with his fore-feet upon the paved crest of the central road. He of the whole party might be supposed untouched by the passion of death. The little cany carriage—partly, perhaps, from the violent torsion of the wheels in its recent movement, partly from the thundering blow we had given to it—as if it sympathized with human horror, was all alive with tremblings and shiverings. The young man trembled not, nor shivered. He sat like a rock. But *his* was the steadiness of agitation

frozen into rest by horror. As yet he dared not to look round; for he knew that, if anything remained to do, by him it could no longer be done. And as yet he knew not for certain if their safety were accomplished. But the lady——

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

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

SECTION III. DREAM-FUGUE

FOUNDED ON THE PRECEDING THEME OF SUDDEN DEATH

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

Tumulttuosissimamente

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

1

Lo, it is summer—almighty summer ! The everlasting gates of life and summer are thrown open wide ; and on the ocean, tranquil and verdant as a savannah, the unknown

lady from the dreadful vision and I myself are floating—she upon a fairy pinnace, and I upon an English three-decker. Both of us are wooing gales of festal happiness within the domain of our common country, within that ancient watery park, within the pathless chase of ocean, where England takes her pleasure as a huntress through winter and summer, from the rising to the setting sun. Ah, what a wilderness of floral beauty was hidden, or was suddenly revealed, upon the tropic islands through which the pinnace to moved ! And upon her deck what a bevy of human flowers : young women how lovely, young men how noble, that were dancing together, and slowly drifting towards *us* amidst music and incense, amidst blossoms from forests and gorgeous corymbi from vintages, amidst natural carolling, and the echoes of sweet girlish laughter. Slowly the pinnace nears us, gaily she hails us, and silently she disappears beneath the shadow of our mighty bows. But then, as at some signal from heaven, the music, and the carols, and the sweet echoing of girlish laughter—all are hushed. What 20 evil has smitten the pinnace, meeting or overtaking her ? Did ruin to our friends couch within our own dreadful shadow ? Was our shadow the shadow of death ? I looked over the bow for an answer, and, behold ! the pinnace was dismantled; the revel and the revellers were found no more ; the glory of the vintage was dust; and the forests with their beauty were left without a witness upon the seas. ' But where,' and I turned to our crew—' where are the lovely women that danced beneath the awning of flowers and clustering corymbi ? Whither have fled the noble 30 young men that danced with *them* ? ' Answer there was none. But suddenly the man at the mast-head, whose countenance darkened with alarm, cried out, ' Sail on the weather beam ! Down she comes upon us : in seventy seconds she also will founder.'

II

I looked to the weather side, and the summer had departed. The sea was rocking, and shaken with gathering wrath. Upon its surface sat mighty mists, which grouped themselves into arches and long cathedral aisles. Down one of these, with the fiery pace of a quarrel from a cross-bow, ran a frigate right athwart our course. 'Are they mad?' some voice exclaimed from our deck. 'Do they woo their ruin?' But in a moment, as she was close upon us, some impulse of a heady current or local vortex gave a wheeling bias to her course, and off she forged without a shock. As she ran past us, high aloft amongst the shrouds stood the lady of the pinnace. The deeps opened ahead in malice to receive her, towering surges of foam ran after her, the billows were fierce to catch her. But far away she was borne into desert spaces of the sea: whilst still by sight I followed her, as she ran before the howling gale, chased by angry sea-birds and by maddening billows; still I saw her, as at the moment when she ran past us, standing amongst the shrouds, with her white draperies streaming before the wind. There she stood, with hair dishevelled, one hand clutched amongst the tackling—rising, sinking, fluttering, trembling, praying; there for leagues I saw her as she stood, raising at intervals one hand to heaven, amidst the fiery crests of the pursuing waves and the raving of the storm; until at last, upon a sound from afar of malicious laughter and mockery, all was hidden for ever in driving showers; and afterwards, but when I know not, nor how,

III

Sweet funeral bells from some incalculable distance, wailing over the dead that die before the dawn, awakened me as I slept in a boat moored to some familiar shore. **The** morning twilight even then was breaking; and, by the

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

I sat, and wept in secret the tears that men have ever given to the memory of those that died before the dawn, and by the treachery of earth, our mother. But suddenly the tears and funeral bells were hushed by a shout as of many nations, and by a roar as from some great king's artillery, advancing rapidly along the valleys, and heard afar by echoes from the mountains. ' Hush ! ' I said, as I bent my ear earthwards to listen—' hush !—this either is the very

anarchy of strife, or else '—and then I listened more profoundly, and whispered as I raised my head—' or else, oh heavens ! it is *victory* that is final, victory that swallows up all strife.'

IV

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

Two hours after midnight we approached a mighty Minster. Its gates, which rose to the clouds, were closed.

But, when the dreadful word that rode before us reached them with its golden light, silently they moved back upon their hinges ; and at a flying gallop our equipage entered the grand aisle of the cathedral. Headlong was our pace ; and at every altar, in the little chapels and oratories to the right hand and left of our course, the lamps, dying or sickening, kindled anew in sympathy with the secret word that was flying past. Forty leagues we might have run in the cathedral, and as yet no strength of morning light had reached us, when before us we saw the aerial galleries of organ and choir. Every pinnacle of the fretwork, every station of advantage amongst the traceries, was crested by white-robed choristers that sang deliverance ; that wept no more tears, as once their fathers had wept ; but at intervals that sang together to the generations, saying,

Chant the deliverer's praise in every tongue,

and receiving answers from afar,

Such as once in heaven and earth were sung.

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

Thus as we ran like torrents—thus as we swept with bridal rapture over the Campo Santo of the cathedral graves—suddenly we became aware of a vast necropolis rising upon the far-off horizon—a city of sepulchres, built within the saintly cathedral for the warrior dead that rested from their feuds on earth. Of purple granite was the necropolis ; yet, in the first minute, it lay like a purple stain upon the horizon, so mighty was the distance. In the second minute it trembled through many changes, growing into terraces and towers of wondrous altitude, so mighty was the pace. In the third minute already, with our dreadful gallop, we were entering its suburbs. Vast sarcophagi rose on every side, having towers and turrets that, upon the limits of the central aisle, strode forward with haughty intrusion,

that ran back with mighty shadows into answering recesses. Every sarcophagus showed many bas-reliefs—bas-reliefs of battles and of battle-fields; battles from forgotten ages, battles from yesterday ; battle-fields that, long since, nature had healed and reconciled to herself with the sweet oblivion of flowers; battle-fields that were yet angry and crimson with carnage. Where the terraces ran, there did *we* run ; where the towers curved, there did *we* curve. With the flight of swallows our horses swept round every angle. Like rivers in flood wheeling round headlands, like hurricanes that ride into the secrets of forests, faster than ever light unwove the mazes of darkness, our flying equipage carried earthly passions, kindled warrior instincts, amongst the dust that lay around us—dust oftentimes of our noble fathers that had slept in God from Creci to Trafalgar. And now had we reached the last sarcophagus, now were we abreast of the last bas-relief, already had we recovered the arrow-like flight of the illimitable central aisle, when coming up this aisle to meet us we beheld afar off a female child, that rode in a carriage as frail as flowers. The mists which went before her hid the fawns that drew her, but could not hide the shells and tropic flowers with which she played—but could not hide the lovely smiles by which she uttered her trust in the mighty cathedral, and in the cherubim that looked down upon her from the mighty shafts of its pillars. Face to face she was meeting us ; face to face she rode, as if danger there were none. ' Oh, baby ! ' I exclaimed, ' shalt thou be the ransom for Waterloo ? Must we, that carry tidings of great joy to every people, be messengers of ruin to thee !' In horror I rose at the thought; but then also, in horror at the thought, rose one that was sculptured on a bas-relief—a Dying Trumpeter. Solemnly from the field of battle he rose to his feet; and, unslinging his stony trumpet, carried it, in his dying anguish, to his stony lips—sounding once, and yet once again ; proclamation that, in *thy* ears, oh

baby 1 spoke from the battlements of death. Immediately deep shadows fell between us, and aboriginal silence. The choir had ceased to sing. The hoofs of our horses, the dreadful rattle of our harness, the groaning of our wheels, alarmed the graves no more. By horror the bas-relief had been unlocked unto life. By horror we, that were so full of life, we men and our horses, with their fiery fore-legs rising in mid air to their everlasting gallop, were frozen to a bas-relief. Then a third time the trumpet sounded; the seals were taken off all pulses; life, and the frenzy of life, tore into their channels again; again the choir burst forth in sunny grandeur, as from the muffling of storms and darkness; again the thunderings of our horses carried temptation into the graves. One cry burst from our lips, as the clouds, drawing off from the aisle, showed it empty before us.—'Whither has the infant fled?—is the young child caught up to God?' Lo! afar off, in a vast recess, rose three mighty windows to the clouds; and on a level with their summits, at height insuperable to man, rose an altar of purest alabaster. On its eastern face was trembling a crimson glory. A glory was it from the reddening dawn that now streamed *through* the windows? Was it from the crimson robes of the martyrs painted *on* the windows? Was it from the bloody bas-reliefs of earth? There, suddenly, within that crimson radiance, rose the apparition of a woman's head, and then of a woman's figure. The child it was—grown up to woman's height. Clinging to the horns of the altar, voiceless she stood—sinking, rising, raving, despairing; and behind the volume of incense, that, night and day, streamed upwards from the altar, dimly was seen the fiery font, and the shadow of that dreadful being who should have baptized her with the baptism of death. But by her side was kneeling her better angel, that hid his face with wings; that wept and pleaded for *her*; that prayed when *she* could *not*; that fought with Heaven by tears for

her deliverance; which also, as he raised his immortal countenance from his wings, I saw, by the glory in his eye, that from Heaven he had won at last.

V

Then was completed the passion of the mighty fugue. The golden tubes of the organ, which as yet had but muttered at intervals—gleaming amongst clouds and surges of incense—threw up, as from fountains unfathomable, columns of heart-shattering music. Choir and anti-choir were filling fast with unknown voices. Thou also, Dying Trumpeter, with thy love that was victorious, and thy anguish that was finishing, didst enter the tumult; trumpet and echo—farewell love, and farewell anguish—rang through the dreadful *sanctus.* Oh, darkness of the grave! that from the crimson altar and from the fiery font wert visited and searched by the effulgence in the angel's eye—were these indeed thy children? Pomps of life, that, from the burials of centuries, rose again to the voice of perfect joy, did ye indeed mingle with the festivals of Death? Lo! as I looked back for seventy leagues through the mighty cathedral, I saw the quick and the dead that sang together to God, together that sang to the generations of man. All the hosts of jubilation, like armies that ride in pursuit, moved with one step. Us, that, with laurelled heads, were passing from the cathedral, they overtook, and, as with a garment, they wrapped us round with thunders greater than our own. As brothers we moved together; to the dawn that advanced, to the stars that fled; rendering thanks to God in the highest—that, having hid His face through one generation behind thick clouds of War, once again was ascending, from the Campo Santo of Waterloo was ascending, in the visions of Peace; rendering thanks for thee, young girl! whom having overshadowed with His ineffable passion of death, suddenly did God relent, suffered

thy angel to turn aside His arm, and even in thee, sister unknown ! shown to me for a moment only to be hidden for ever, found an occasion to glorify His goodness. A thousand times, amongst the phantoms of sleep, have I seen thee entering the gates of the golden dawn, with the secret word riding before thee, with the armies of the grave behind thee—seen thee sinking, rising, raving, despairing; a thousand times in the worlds of sleep have seen thee followed by God's angel through storms, through desert seas, through the darkness of quicksands, through dreams and the dreadful revelations that are in dreams ; only that at the last, with one sling of His victorious arm, He might snatch thee back from ruin, and might emblazon in thy deliverance the endless resurrections of His love 1

NOTES

PAGE 5, 1. 5 *Letters on a Regicide Peace,* written by Edmund Burke in the years 1795-7 as comments on the understanding with France.

I.22. *Mesopotamia.* Garrick is credited with giving currency to the report that the famous preacher Whitefield could draw tears to the eyes of his hearers by the mere pronunciation of the word Mesopotamia.

PAGE 17, 1. 30. *the proposal for eating babies,—A Modest Proposal for preventing the Children of Poor People from being a Burthen to their Parents, or the Country, and for making them beneficial to the Publick.* (Dublin 1729.)

1. 32. *abolition of Christianity,—An Argument to prove that the Abolishing of Christianity in England may, as things now stand, be attended with some Inconveniences,* published in Swift's *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse,* 1711.

PAGE 25, 1. 2. *Socinian.* Socinianism was a school of theological thought, mainly anti-Trinitarian, founded by Sozini, or (latinized) Socinus (1525-62).

1. 21. *Priestley,*—Joseph Priestley (1733-1804), theologian and scientist. ' The fearlessness and frankness of his propaganda were entirely new : for Whiston, whom he resembled in temperament, wrote only for the learned' *(Dictionary of National Biography).* The radicalism of his view, both political and religious, brought him into great popular disfavour.

1. 27. *Porson,*—Richard Porson (1759-1808), Greek scholar, and Regius Professor of Greek at Cambridge from 1792.

PAGE 27, 1. 2. *Bossuet* (1627-1704), *Boitrdaloue* (1632-1704), *Fenelon* (1651-1715). The first two were famous preachers, and Bourdaloue, at any rate, whom Voltaire rated above Bossuet, was one of the greatest of French orators. Fenelon was Archbishop of Cambrai, and a distinguished writer. His famous *Maxims of the Saints* (1697) involved him in a bitter controversy with Bossuet, and two years later the book was condemned by Innocent X I I and he himself exiled from the French Court.

PAGE 31, 1. 19. *Monboddo doctrine.* James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714-99), Scottish judge and anthropologist, was one of the forerunners of Darwinism, and regarded as an eccentric paradox-monger by an age of which he was far in advance.

PAGE 38. *The Infernal Mixture.* De Quincey is describing his medical treatment during an illness at school.

PAGE 39, 1. 12. *earliest parade of English monarchy.* 'It was a very scenical parade, for somewhere along this reach of the Dee—viz. immediately below St. John's Priory—Edgar, the first sovereign of all England, was rowed by nine vassal *reguli.*' (D. Q.)

PAGE 43, 1. 3. *Phidias, Praxiteles.* Greek sculptors.

1. 5. *Hekatompylos.* 'i. e. the hundred-gated (from ἑκατόν, *hekaton,* a hundred, and πύλη, *pyle,* a gate). This epithet of hundred-gated was applied to the Egyptian Thebes in contradistinction to the ἑπτάπυλος *(Heptapylos,* or *seven-gated)* which designated the Grecian Thebes, within one day's journey of Athens.' (D. Q.)

1. 16. *alalagmos.* 'A word expressing collectively the gathering of the Roman war-cries—alala, alala.' (D. Q.)

PAGE 44, 1 10. *Brama, Vishnu, Seeva,* are in Hindu belief respectively the 'creative', 'preservative', and 'destructive' aspects of divinity.

I.12. I *sis, Osiris,* the Egyptian cow-goddess and her husband, the king of the dead.

PAGE 46, 1. 9. *innocent sufferer* 'William Lithgow. His book (*Travels, &c.)* is tedious and not well written; but the account of his own suffering on the rack at Malaga, and subsequently, is overpoweringly affecting. Less circumstantial, but the same in tendency, is the report of the results from torture published in 1830 by Juan Van Halen.' (D. Q.)

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

PAGE 49, 1. 6. *Roman acts and Roman sayings.* De Quincey quoted Hadrian's saying, 'Minime licere Principi Romano ut quae privatus agitasset odia ista Imperator exequi'; and 'the saying of Trajan—"imperatorem oportere stantem mori"—that Caesar ought to die standing, a speech of imperatorial grandeur; implying that he, who was "the foremost man of all this world", and, in regard to all other nations, the representative of his own, should express its characteristic virtues in his farewell act—should die *in procinctu*—and should meet the last enemy, as the first, with a Roman countenance, and in a soldier's attitude.' And he recalls in a note another famous episode: 'When the Roman Senate kept their seats immovably upon the entrance of the Gauls, reeking from the storm of Rome, they did it not as supposing that this spectacle of senatorial dignity could disarm the wrath of their savage

enemy ; if they had, their act would have lost all its splendour. The language of their conduct was this : So far as the grandeur of the will is concerned, we have carried our resistance to the last extremity, and have expressed it in the way suitable to our rank. For all beyond we were not answerable; having recorded our " protest" in such an emphatic language, death becomes no dishonour. The *stantem mori* expresses the same principle, but in a symbolic act.' De Quincey then sums up thus : ' In such anecdotes as these it is—in the actions of trying emergencies and their appropriate circumstances—that I find the revelation of the Roman mind under its highest aspect. The Roman mind was great in the presence of man, mean in the presence of nature ; impotent to comprehend or to delineate the internal strife of *passion,* but powerful beyond any other national mind to display the energy of the *will,* victorious over all passion.'

PAGE 52, 1. 9. *Hell-Fire Club,* called originally the ' Franciscans' Its motto was *Fay ce que voudras,* borrowed from Rabelais's description of the Abbey of Thelema, and inscribed over a doorway at Medmenham Abbey, the meeting-place of the club. John Wilkes and Bubb Dodington were members.

PAGE 53,1.27. Mr. *Williams.* De Quincey in a long postscript gives with great gusto and circumstantiality of detail the full story of the ' Williams Murders', of which the summary is as follows : On the night of 7 December 1811, at a few minutes past midnight, John Williams, a seaman, entered the house of an acquaintance, by name Marr, locked the door behind him, and murdered Marr himself, his wife, an apprentice, and the Marrs' baby, by first stunning them with a ship-carpenter's mallet and then cutting their throats. Twelve days later, about half past eleven at night, Williams, by the same method, but substituting a crowbar for the mallet, murdered an innkeeper, by name Williamson, his wife, and a maid ; a journeyman living in the house contrived to escape from an upper window and raised the alarm in time to save the Williamsons' child. The murderer escaped in the fog, but was arrested on the next day, and killed himself in gaol.

1. 31. *as Mr. Wordsworth observes,*—'every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great or original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished ' (Letter to Lady Beaumont, May 21, 1807). Wordsworth attributes the observation to Coleridge.

PAGE 54, 1. 16. *great moralist of Germany,* the distinguished German philosopher, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804).

1. 35. Euripides' *Medea,* 1. 293 (a molossus is a ' foot' of three long syllables).

PAGE 55, 1. 28. *Mr. Thurtell.* John Thurtell, owner of a gambling house, after first shooting with a pistol, smashed the skull, and cut the throat of a gambler, Mr. W. Weare, put

the body in a sack, weighted it with stones, and deposited it in a marshy pond. One of his accomplices turned King's evidence, and Thurtell was arrested and hanged. For some reason he became a popular hero. Ballads were written about him, and he left the world in something like the odour of sanctity. See Sir Walter Scott's Journal for 16 July 1826. ' It (the murder) led John Bull into one of his most uncommon fits of gambols, until at last he became so maudlin as to weep for the pitiless assassin, Thurtell, and treasure up the leaves and the twigs of the hedge and shrubs in the fatal garden as valuable relics—nay thronged the minor theatres to see the roan horse and yellow gig in which the body was transported from one place to another.' This gig gave rise to Carlyle's word ' gigmanity ', one of the witnesses at the trial having given the possession of a gig as a definition of ' respectability '

PAGE 56, 1. 26. *Polypheme,* the cyclops Polyphemus, who killed two of Odysseus' companions for each meal, until blinded by Odysseus.

1. 32. *Henry VI,* Second Part, in. ii. 160 onwards.

PAGE 57, 1. 5 *Rome had too little originality. '* At the time of writing this I held the common opinion upon that subject. Mere inconsideration it was that led to so erroneous a judgement. Since then, on closer reflection, I have seen ample reason to retract it : satisfied I now am that the Romans, in every art which allowed to them any parity of advantages, had merits as racy, native, and characteristic, as the best of the Greeks.' (D. Q. in 1854.)

1. 18. The Prioress in the Canterbury Tales tells the story of a boy in a town of Asia, who used to sing *A Ima redemptoris mater* on his way to school through the Jewish quarter, and had his throat ' kut unto the nekke boon' by the Jews. At the end of the story the Prioress recalls the similar and recent (1255) case of Hugh of Lincoln, crucified by the Jews for the same offence.

1. 23. *Catiline,* leader of the conspiracy at Rome in 63 B C, which was defeated by Cicero, then Consul. Cethegus was one of the most violent of Catiline's supporters. Clodius, as Tribune in 58, procured Cicero's banishment, and enjoyed a brief period of power in Rome depending on terrorization by armed gangs.

1. 29. *how he would have howled.* In actual fact Cicero, after an opposition to Antony of which he fully realized the danger, met his inevitable death with quiet heroism.

PAGE 58, 1. 8. *the Old Man of the Mountains,* Sheik-al-Jabal; the title of the chief of a sect founded in the eleventh century, and for two centuries strong in Syria and Persia. Apart from credal tenets the distinguishing mark of the sect's policy was its practice of secret assassination of all enemies. (For an interesting sketch see Maurice Hewlett's *Richard Yea and Nay.)*

1. 20 and following. *Spencer Perceval* (Prime **Minister** 1809-12) was shot in the Lobby of the House of Commons **in** May 1812 by a bankrupt named Bellingham, who had vainly appealed to him for redress of a grievance.

Charles Ferdinand, *Duc de Berri,* was fatally wounded by a saddler named Louvel when leaving the Opera House in Paris with his wife, February 1820.

Marechal Bessieres. De Quincey has confused two men. Bessieres, one of the most famous of Napoleon's cavalry leaders, was not assassinated, but killed in a reconnaissance at the opening of the 1813 campaign. A much less distinguished Marshal, Brune, was killed by the Royalists at Avignon during the White Terror in August 1815.

William I of Orange, William the Silent, founder of the independence of the Dutch Republic, was shot by Balthazar Gerard in July 1584 as he was leaving his dining-hall.

Henri III, having in December 1588 secured the assassination of *Henri de Guise* in the Chateau of Blois, was himself fatally stabbed by a Dominican friar, Jacques Clement, while investing Paris in August 1589

Henry of Navarre, *Henri IV,* who succeeded him, was himself assassinated by Ravaillac in May 1610.

The first *Duke of Buckingham,* having gone down to Portsmouth to command an expedition for the relief of La Rochelle in August 1628, was stabbed by John Felton as he left his room one morning after breakfast

Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden was killed—there is no proof that he was assassinated—in November 1632 at the battle of Lutzen at which he defeated Wallenstem.

Wallenstein, Duke of Friedland, at first in the thirty years' war an imperialist, later prepared to ' force a just peace upon the emperor in the interests of a united Germany '. A patent was in February 1634 issued charging him with High Treason. Realizing his danger he attempted to reach the Swedes who were marching to jom him, but at Eger he was assassinated by a Captain Devereux backed by Colonels Gordon and Leslie.

PAGE 59, 1. 8. *Harte,*—Walter Harte (1709-1774), whose *Life of Gustavus Adolphus* appeared in 1759. It seems to have been, at any rate in point of style, one of the worst works of history ever written. Chesterfield abused it, Carlyle called it a ' wilderness ', and Johnson explained that its defects ' proceeded not from imbecility but from foppery '.

PAGE 61, 1. 2. *Albert Durer* (1471-1528), German painter, draughtsman, and engraver

Fuseli (1741-1825), English painter of German-Swiss extraction. His style is exaggerated and often violent.

1. 28. *Semper ego,*—the **first line of Juvenal's first satire: 'Am I always** to **listen only and never retaliate ? '**

PAGE 62, 1. 17. Horace, *ARS Poetica*, 304 : ' I shall perform the function of a whetstone, which can put an edge on a blade, but cannot cut itself.'

PAGE 65, 1. 14. *God's Revenge upon Murder. ' The triumphs of God's revenge against the crying and execrable shine of murther*', London 1621. This with five subsequent parts was printed in folio in 1635 and reprinted with additions in 1679. It was written by John Reynolds, a merchant of Exeter.

1. 15. *a more ancient book.* Scott's description of it is ' the book was entitled God's Revenge against Murder ; not, as the bibliomaniacal reader may easily conjecture, the work which Reynolds published under that imposing name, but one of a much earlier date, printed and sold by old Wolfe '. [Reginald Wolfe, and after him his son John, were printers in London, 1537 (circa)-1601.]

1. 26. *Nor up the lawn* : Gray's *Elegy*, 1. 112. In the following sentence and on the next page, 11. 14, 15, De Quincey parodies two earlier stanzas :

> Haply some hoary-headed Swain may say,
> ' Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
> Brushing with hasty steps the dews away
> To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.
>
> ' There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
> That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
> His listless length at noontide would he stretch,
> And pore upon the brook that babbles by '

PAGE 66, 1. 34. *La Brityere* (1645-96), French essayist. His famous work is *Les Caracteres de T heophraste tradunts du Grec avec les Caracteres ou les Mœurs de ce siecle* (1688)

PAGE 67, 1. 31. *Leo the Tenth,* Giovanni de' Medici (1475-1521), Pope 1513-21 : a period reputed, not without reason, to be the ' floruerunt' of the Italian poisoners.

PAGE 68, 1. 7. *Thugs,* a confederacy of Indian professional assassins, operating usually by strangulation, whence their other name Phansigars (noose-operators).

1. 15. *persimmon.* It looks from the other instances cited in the *New English Dictionary* as though De Quincey has simply misused an American slang phrase.

PAGE 69, 1. 2. *Burke-and-Hare,* two Edinburgh murderers who sold the bodies of their victims for anatomical purposes. They usually made their victims drunk and then strangled them. Hare turned King's evidence and Burke was hanged in 1829.

1. 21. *von Hammer* wrote *Geschichte der assassinen* (1818).

1. 34. *malleus haereticorum,* a title bestowed on both Saint Augustine and Johann Faber (an attacker of Luther).

PAGE 70, 1. 2. *Charles Martel,* i. e. Charles the Hammer, so called for his victories over the Saracens, 732 onwards.

1. 20. *Sicarii,* a violent Jewish sect, supported by the Roman Procurator of Judea, Felix (A. D. 52-60), and used by him to oppose the zealots and in particular to secure the murder of the High Priest Jonathan.

PAGE 72, 1. 2. *Fulke Greville* (1554-1628), author of *The Life of Sir Philip Sidney,* various verse treatises, two tragedies, and a sequence of sonnets.

1. 5. *John Donne* (1573-1631), the greatest of the so-called metaphysical poets, and perhaps even greater as a preacher.

1. 6. *Dr. Johnson,* in the life of Cowley in *Lives of the Poets.*

PAGE 73, 1. 4. *Robert Burton* (1577-1640). His *Anatomy of Melancholy* was published in 1621

1. 28. *with the exception . . . universal interest.* One might have thought that education, if not divorce, was a theme of as universal interest as freedom of printing.

PAGE 74, 1. 4. *Jeremy Taylor* (1613-67), Bishop of Down and Connor and of Dromore. ' Most eloquent of divines ', Coleridge calls him; and he was no less admirable for his character than for his eloquence.

Sir Thomas Browne (1605-82), a doctor of medicine at Norwich, and an antiquary. His principal writings are *Religio Medici, Hydriotaphia, The Garden of Cyrus,* and *Pseudodoxia Epidemica.*

1. 28. *Now, since these bones.* What Sir Thomas Browne actually says is, ' Now since these dead bones have already outlasted the living ones of *Methuselah,* and in a yard under ground, and thin walls of clay, out-worn all the strong and specious buildings above it; and quietly rested under the drums and tramplings of three conquests' (*Hydriotaphia,* chap. v).

1. 33. *fluctus decumanus,* the tenth wave, supposedly the largest.

PAGE 75, 1. I. *Antiochi,* the Seleucid dynasty in Asia Minor and the Kings of Commagene

Arsacides, the Kings of Parthia.

1. 7. *Caesar and the Rubicon.* ' According to Suetonius, the circumstances of this memorable night were as follows : As soon as the decisive intelligence was received that the intrigues of his enemies had prevailed at Rome, and that the interposition of the popular magistrates (the tribunes) was set aside, Caesar sent forward the troops, who were then at his head-quarters, but in as private a manner as possible. He himself, by way of masque *(per dissimulationem),* attended a public spectacle, gave an audience to an architect who wished to lay before him a plan for a school of gladiators which Caesar designed to build, and finally presented himself at a banquet, which was very numerously attended. From this, about sunset, he set forward in a carriage, drawn by mules, and with a small escort *(modico comitatu).* Losing his road, which was the most private he could find *(occultissimum),* he

quitted his carriage and proceeded on foot. At dawn he met with a guide ; after which followed the above incidents.' (D.Q)

PAGE 78, 1. 12. *Lessing* (1729-81), author of *Laocoon.*

1. 16. *Kant.* See note on p. 54,1. 16.

1. 18. *Frederick Schlegel* (1772-1829), brother of Augustus Schlegel, German critics and scholars.

PAGE 84, 1. 27. *Oh, he was good,*—from Wordsworth's poem, *Written after the Death of Charles Lamb,* 1835.

PAGE 85, 11. 13,14. *almost every other author.* 'An exception ought perhaps to be made for Sir Walter Scott and for Cervantes; but with regard to all other writers,—Dante, suppose, or Ariosto amongst Italians, Camoens amongst those of Portugal, Schiller amongst Germans,—however ably they may have been naturalized in foreign languages, as all of those here mentioned (excepting only Ariosto) have in one part of their works been most powerfully naturalized in English, it still remains true (and the very sale of the books is proof sufficient) than an alien author never does take root in the general sympathies out of his own country. He takes his station in libraries, he is read by the man of learned leisure, he is known and valued by the refined and the elegant; but he is not (what Shakespeare is for Germany and America) in any proper sense a *popular* favourite.' (D. Q.)

PAGE 88, 1. 6. *a ghost.* 'It may be thought, however, by some readers, that Aeschylus, in his fine phantom of Darius, has approached the English ghost. As a foreign ghost, we would wish (and we are sure that our excellent readers would wish) to show every courtesy and attention to this apparition of Darius. It has the advantage of being royal, an advantage which it shares with the ghost of the royal Dane. Yet how different, how removed by a total world, from that or any of Shakespeare's ghosts ! Take that of Banquo, for instance : how shadowy, how unreal, yet how real ! Darius is a mere ghost—a diplomatic ghost. But Banquo—he exists only for Macbeth : the guests do not see him ; yet how solemn, how real, how heart-searching he is.' (D. Q.)

PAGE 89,1 2. *Caliban.* 'Caliban has not yet been thoroughly fathomed. . . . Caliban is evidently not meant for scorn, but for abomination mixed with fear and partial respect. He is purposely brought into contrast with the drunken Trinculo and Stephano, with an advantageous result. He is much more intellectual than either,—uses a more elevated language, not disfigured by vulgarisms, and is not liable to the low passion for plunder, as they are. He is mortal, doubtless, as his "dam" (for Shakespeare will not call her mother) Sycorax. But he inherits from her such qualities of power as a witch could be supposed to bequeath. He trembles indeed before Prospero ; but that is, as we are to understand, through the moral

superiority of Prospero in Christian wisdom ; for, when he finds himself in the presence of dissolute and unprincipled men, he rises at once into the dignity of intellectual power.' (D- Q.)

PAGE 91, 1. 21 *aposiopesis,* the technical name for the oratorical trick of suddenly breaking off without completing the sentence.

1. 30. ' *palaestra,* the open-air Greek gymnasium in which all forms of athletics were practised.

PAGE 92, 1. 5. *Garamantas,* a people in the interior of North Africa: Virgil, *Aen.* vi. 795.

PAGE 93, 1. 16. *Trajan,* Emperor (98-117).

1. 21. *Commodus,* Emperor (180-92).

PAGE 94, 1. 1. *Gibbon.* ' The Empire of the Romans filled the world, and, when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the Senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive. " Wherever you are," said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, " remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror." '

1. 14. *Bihdulgerid* (properly Belad-el-Jend), a strip of country (much talked of by the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century geographers) lying on the edge of the desert in the South of the Roman provinces of Byzacium and Numidia Mihtana.

PAGE 97, 1. 31. *Prisca juvent, etc.* Ovid, *Ars Amatoria,* iii. 121. 2 : ' Old times may please others ; I congratulate myself that I haven't been born till now; this age suits my temperament.'

PAGE 99, 1. 8. *prerogative vote.* The ' century ' at Rome which voted first was determined by lot, since a superstitious value was attached to the first vote and the remaining centuries were apt to follow the lead.

PAGE **102,** 1. 5. *Cotton,*—Charles Cotton (1630-87). His *Ode upon Winter* is praised and quoted by Wordsworth in the Preface to *Poems,* 1815.

1. 10. *Schiller* (1759-1805), German poet ; his famous tragedies are *Wallenstem* and *Wilhelm Tell.*

PAGE **103,** 1. 1. *Mrs. Radcliffe,*—Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823),

the most famous of the ' mystery and terror' school of novelists which was prominent at the end of the eighteenth century. Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764) gave the lead which was followed by Mrs. Radcliffe *(The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), *The Italian* (1797), &*c*), 'Monk' Lewis, and others.

1. 4. *Le Sage* (1668-1747), French dramatist and novelist, author of *Gil Blas,* which was translated by, and largely influenced, Smollett.

1. 23. *Junius.* In January 1769 there appeared in the *Public Advertiser* the first of the famous series of seventy letters signed ' Junius '. They were brilliant and bold attacks on the government, and a model of English invective. The authorship has never been settled. The writer himself said, ' I am the sole depository of my secret, and it shall dre with me.' In 1812 the letters with numerous additions were published in book form, and in 1813 and 1816 appeared two books by John Taylor arguing that the author was Sir Philip Francis. Taylor's theory was accepted by De Quincey and Macaulay, and one can at least say that Francis satisfies more of the necessary conditions than any other author who has been suggested.

PAGE **104,** 1 21 *The Night before the Duel.* De Quincey's friend was a barnster of repute, who had, during the conduct of a case, been insulted by, and therefore challenged, the Judge, who misapprehended both the case and the status of the barrister, and later, both realizing and regretting his misapprehension, terminated the affair upon the duelling ground by offering an apology which was readily accepted.

PAGE **108,**1. 12. *Abyssinian Bruce,*—James Bruce (1730-94), who in 1770-2 explored Abyssinia and discovered the sources of the Abawi, then considered the mam stream of the Nile

I. 19. *that Pythagorean marvel.* Servius *(Aen.* vi. 136) says that Pythagoras regarded the letter Y as a symbol of human life, since the child does not choose its course, but later the man has to choose one branch or the other, virtue or vice.

PAGE 1**10,**1. **I I** and following. An examination of De Quincey's ' refutation ' of Horace throws a good deal of light on the methods which he sometimes employed in controversy when his prejudices were roused. Achilles, De Quincey tells us, ' makes his anger bend to the public welfare ', and ' calmly submits to an indignity '. Homer, on the other hand, who ought to know, opens the *Iliad* by telling us that the subject **of** his epic is the ' ruinous wrath of Achilles, which brought countless woes upon the Achaeans ', and goes on to show us **how** little Achilles cared for the public **welfare** by his refusal **to** fight in aid of the hard-pressed Greeks. De Quincey would **have** quarrelled less with ' **iracundus** ' if he **had counted the number of times that Homer describes Achilles as** χολωθείς.

Against the final yielding of Hector's body one may set other occasions when his ears were shut to pleadings, whether of Phoenix or the dying Hector. As to *jura negat sibi nata*, what proof is there that Achilles surpassed the other heroes in courtesy, religious observance, or cultivation of the arts of peace (for which last the Greek camp before Troy would seem to have offered few facilities) ? And in any case what relevance have cultivation of the arts of peace, or resignation to an early death, to denial of *jura* ? De Quincey has in any event given his case away by the admission of the ' meditated revenge ', a revenge which violated all *jura.* And he concludes his tirade by a cheap attempt to belittle Horace in the intended sneer of ' Master Horace '

PAGE 112, 1. 14. *Captain Dalgetty,* in Scott's *A Legend of Montrose.*

An officer under Lord Peterborough, in *The Military Memoirs of Captain George Carleton.*

PAGE 113, 1. II. *Bowyer.* De Quincey copies an error from Coleridge. The head-master of Christ's Hospital at the time was the Rev. James Boyer.

PAGE 115, 11. 2 and 3. 'Draco and the Bishop belong to History—the first as bloody law-giver in the days of the elder Athens, the Bishop as fiery disciplinarian to weak, relapsing *perverts* (such is the modern slang) : sneaking perverts like myself and my ever-honoured reader, who would be very willing to give the Bishop a kick in the dark, but would find ourselves too much of cowards to stand to it when the candies were brought. These men are well known ; but who is Mrs. Brownrigg ? The reader would not have asked had he lived in the days of the Anti-Jacobin, who describes Mrs. Brownrigg as the woman

who whipped two female 'prentices to death,
And hid them in the coal-hoal.' (D. Q.)

1. 13. *Paganim* (1784-1840), the famous violinist.

PAGE 116, 1. 27. *Memnonian.* ' For the sake of many readers, whose hearts may go along earnestly with a record of infant sorrow, but whose course of life has not allowed them much leisure for study, I pause to explain—that the head of Memnon, in the British Museum, that sublime head which wears upon its lips a smile co-extensive with all time and all space, an Aeonian smile of gracious love and Panlike mystery, the most diffusive and pathetically divine that the hand of man has created, is represented on the authority of ancient traditions to have uttered at sunrise, or soon after, as the sun's rays had accumulated heat enough to rarify the air within certain cavities in the bust, a solemn and dirge-like series of intonations ; the simple explanation being, in its general outline, this—that sonorous currents of air were produced by causing chambers of cold and heavy air to press upon other collections

of air, warmed, and therefore rarified, and therefore yielding readily to the pressure of heavier air. Currents being thus established, by artificial arrangements of tubes, a certain succession of notes could be concerted and sustained,' . . . and so ' the cavities within this ancient Memnonian bust reported this mighty event of sunrise to the rejoicing world of light and life—or, again, under the sad passion of the dying day, uttering the sweet requiem that belonged to its departure.' (D. Q.)

PAGE **119,** 1. 2*o. Fata-Morgana,* a fairy, pupil of Merlin and sister of Arthur.

PAGE **121,** 1. 21. *restless spokes.* ' As I have never allowed myself to covet any man's ox nor his ass, nor anything that is his, still less would it become a philosopher to covet other people's images or metaphors. Here, therefore, I restore to Mr. Wordsworth this fine image of the revolving wheel and the glimmering spokes, as applied by him to the flying successions of day and night. I borrowed it for one moment in order to point my own sentence ; which being done, the reader is witness that I now pay it back instantly by a note made for that sole purpose. On the same principle I often borrow their seals from young ladies, when closing my letters, because there is sure to be some tender sentiment upon them about'' memory'', or " hope ", or " roses ", or " reunion ", and my correspondent must be a sad brute who is not touched by the eloquence of the seal, even if his taste is so bad that he remains deaf to mine.' (D. Q.)

PAGE **124,**1. 23. *this winter.* The Grand Duchess Alexandra, daughter of Nicholas I of Russia, died in 1844.

PAGE **125,** 1 18. *Norfolk Island,* an island in the Pacific 800 miles east of New South Wales, was a penal settlement from 1826-56.

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

PAGE **128,** 1. 14. *frozen by distance,* in *Address to Kilchurn Castle,* 1. 38.

1. **21.** *Twilight,* in the **poem** *Hail, Twilight, Sovereign of one peaceful hour;* and **cf. the poem, ' Soft** as a **cloud** is **yon blue ridge.'**

PAGE **129,** 1. 24. *aboriginal Chinese,*—Lamb's Essay on Roast Pig.

PAGE **130,**1. 27. *Centaurs and Lapithae.* The **Centaurs were invited by the Lapithae to the bridal feast of Peirithous. A drunken quarrel followed and many of the Centaurs were killed.**

PAGE **131, 1. 12.** ***Parmentier.*** **A pamphlet appeared in 1783 entitled ' Observations on such nutritive vegetables as may be**

substituted in the place of ordinary food in times of scarcity, extracted from the French of M. Parmentier.' This writer, says his translator, ' is advantageously known by several works, in which the skill of the Philosopher is united with the benevolence of the Citizen of the World : his Treatise on the Chestnut, his Perfect Baker, his Oeconomical Essay on Potatoes, are so many instances of the ardour and success with which he has laboured in the service of the most numerous and therefore the most valuable class of Society.'

Count Rumford. Benjamin Thompson, Count Rumford, wrote a number of essays on methods of cooking and improved types of ovens and boilers, and in particular an essay (1795) ' On food and particularly on feeding the Poor', which contains instructions for the preparation of rye bread, and of substitutes for bread.

1. 27. *Oromasdes and Ahrimanes,* the good and evil powers in the later Persian dualistic religion.

PAGE **134,** 1. 27. *Marino* (1569-1625), author of *A done,* a romantic and highly ornate epic.

PAGE **136,** 1. 12. *unparalleled offences.* One may remark that De Quincey, who elsewhere complains of Wordsworth for adducing too few instances in support of an argument, himself produces no instance at all in support of this extravagant denunciation. In a preface written in 1857, when this paper with others was included in the complete edition, he makes the following inadequate ' amende '. ' In the case of Keats there is something which (after a lapse of several years) I could wish unsaid, or said more gently. It is the denunciation, much too harsh, and disproportioned to the offence, of Keats's licentiousness in the treatment of his mother-tongue : to which venerable mother-tongue Keats certainly *did* approach with too little reverence, and with a false notion of his rights over it as a material servile to his caprices. But the tone of complaint on my part was too vehement and unmeasured,—though still (as I request the reader to observe) not uttered until Keats had been dead for many years, and had notoriously left no representatives interested in his literary pretensions,—which, besides, are able to protect themselves.' (D. Q.) -

1. 13. *Count Julian.* Landor's tragedy was published in **1811.**

PAGE **137,** 1. 4. *Metius Fuffetius,* an Alban dictator who after the combat of the Horatii and Curiatii promised loyalty to the Romans, but in a later battle deserted them. He was tied to two chariots which were then driven in opposite directions, cf. Virgil, *Aen.* viii. 642, and Livy i. 23-8.

1. 30. *the Escurial,* a magnificent building of granite, 30 miles north-west of Madrid, built by Philip II of Spain as a Palace, Mausoleum, and Monastery, and repository for a large library of Arabic literature.

PAGE **138,** 1. 8. *Satan into Teneriffe. Paradise Lost,* iv. 985-7 :

Satan, alarmed,
Collecting all his might, dilated stood,
Like Teneriff or Atlas, unremoved.

PAGE **141,** 1. I. *rocky harp. '* There are now known other cases, besides the ancient one of Memnon's statue, in which the ' deep grooved' granites, or even the shifting sands of the wildernesses, utter mysterious music to ears that watch and want for the proper combination of circumstances.—See some Travels, I forget whose, in the neighbourhood of Mount Sinai and its circumjacencies.' (D. Q)

PAGE **146,** 1. 2. *Pinkerton.* John Pinkerton (1758-1826), apart from the vagaries which De Quincey attacks, made a number of valuable contributions to the study of Scottish antiquities.

PAGE **147,** 1. 8. *Lord Bacon had been led to remark,*—' whosoever hath his Minde fraught, with many Thoughts, his Wits and Understanding doe clarifie and breake up, in the Communicating and discoursing with Another : He tosseth his Thoughts, more easily ; He marshalleth them more orderly ; He seeth how they looke when they are turned into Words ; Finally, He waxeth wiser then Himselfe ; And that more by an Houres discourse, then by a Dayes Meditation.' (Of Friendship)

PAGE **149,** 1. 13. *dry light. ' Heraclitus* saith well, in one of his Ænigmaes ; *Dry Light is ever the best.* And certaine it is, that the Light, that a man receiveth, by Counsell from Another, is Drier, and purer, then that which commeth from his owne Understanding, and Iudgement; which is ever infused and drenched in his Affections and Customes.' (Of Friendship.)

PAGE **152,** 1. 12. *La Place* (1749-1817), mathematician and astronomer. His great work was the *Mecanique Celeste.*

PAGE **158,** 1. 4. *long succession of victories.* 1805, Trafalgar; 1808, Baylen and Vimiera (but also the Retreat to Corunna) ; 1809, Talavera; 1810, Busaco; 1811, Fuentes d'Onoro ; 1812, Badajoz and Salamanca; 1813, Vittoria, Bidassoa, Orthez ; 1815, Waterloo.

PAGE **162,** 1. 10. *sigh-born. '* I owe the suggestion of this word to an obscure remembrance of a beautiful phrase in ' Giraldus Cambrensis '—viz. *suspiriosae cogitationes.'* (D. Q.)

PAGE **164,** 1. 24. *quartering.* ' It is true that, according to the law of the case as established by legal precedents, all carriages were required to give way before royal equipages, and therefore before the mail as one of them. But this only increased the danger, as being a regulation very imperfectly made known, very unequally enforced, and therefore often embarrassing the movements on both sides.

'Quartering':—This is the technical word, and, I presume, derived from the French *cartayer,* to evade a rut or any obstacle.' (D. Q.)

PAGE **166,** 1. 22. *the shout of Achilles and its effect.*

' And when the brazen cry of Aeakides
Was heard among the Trojans, all their hearts
Were troubled, and the full-maned horses whirled
The chariots backward, knowing grief at hand ;

Thnce from the dyke he sent his mighty shout,
Thrice backward reeled the Trojans and allies.'

(Tennyson's translation of *Iliad* xviii. 221, and following).

PAGE **169,** 1. 16. *swingle-bar,* the crossbar pivotted at its centre to which the traces are attached.

PAGE **171,** 1. 2. *averted signs* :—' I read the course and changes of the lady's agony in the succession of her involuntary gestures ; but it must be remembered that I read all this from the rear, never once catching the lady's full face, and even her profile imperfectly.' (D. Q.)

PAGE **176,** 1. 22. *Campo Santo.* ' It is probable that most of my readers will be acquainted with the history of the Campo Santo (or cemetery) at Pisa, composed of earth brought from Jerusalem from a bed of sanctity, as the highest prize which the noble piety of crusaders could ask or imagine. To readers who are unacquainted with England, or who (being English) are yet unacquainted with the cathedral cities of England, it may be right to mention that the graves within-side the cathedrals often form a flat pavement over which carriages and horses *might* run ; and perhaps a boyish remembrance of one particular cathedral, across which I had seen passengers walk and burdens carried, as about two centuries back they were through the middle of St. Paul's in London, may have assisted my dream.' (D. Q.)

Printed in England
At the OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
By John Johnson
Printer to the University

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