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## ART. II.—SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

IT was a saying of Wordsworth that “many men in this age had done wonderful *things*, as Davy, Scott, Cuvier, etc., but that Coleridge was the only wonderful *man* he knew.” This seems to have been the judgment of all who had the privilege of knowing the poet, the moralist, the psychologist, and the philosopher. The man was more than his works, the author greater than his books. Great as his reputation was while he lived, it has increased since his death; and he exercises still a powerful influence over the thinkers of this generation. Those who knew him in his more vigorous days, bore witness to the power of his regal mind, and to the brilliancy of his conversational eloquence, which was peculiar and unique of its kind. De Quincey,<sup>1</sup> speaking of a visit that he made to the poet, refers to his conversation on that occasion in the following words:

That point being settled, Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellana, or the St. Lawrence, that, having been checked and fretted by rocks, or thwarting islands, suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music, swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious fields of thought, by transitions the most just and logical that it was possible to conceive.

A Quarterly Reviewer in an article on “Coleridge’s Poetical Works,” written in the year 1834, thus sums up the difference between the conversation of Coleridge and Sir James Mackintosh, also a brilliant and elegant talker:

To listen to Mackintosh was to inhale perfume; it pleased but it did not satisfy. The effects of an hour with Coleridge is to set you thinking; his words haunt you for a week afterwards; they are spells, brightenings, revelations. In short it is, if we may venture to draw so bold a line, the whole difference between talent and genius.

It were impossible, in the space allowed us in these pages, to enter upon the labours of Coleridge as a moralist, or as a metaphysical philosopher, or to speak of such literary works as the “Friend,” the “Lay Sermons,” the “Aids to Reflection,” and “The Church and State.” His “Table Talk” is a delightful volume, full of beauties; and his “Notes” on English Divines present many examples of acute theological criticism. To attempt anything like a review of these volumes would be beyond our limits; but we may say in passing that there is

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<sup>1</sup> De Quincey’s “Recollections of the Lake Poets;” Gillman’s “Life of Coleridge;” “The English Poets,” edited by T. H. Ward.

not one of them which does not supply to the patient reader topics suggestive of the deepest thought and the greatest interest.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was the youngest son of a Devonshire clergyman, vicar of Ottery St. Mary, and master of its Grammar School. He was born in the year 1772. His father was a man of guileless simplicity, described by his son as a sort of Parson Adams, distinguished alike by his learning and his inexperience of the world. It is strange to say that he was an object of dislike and persecution to his mother, and being a child of delicate condition, he was excluded from the sports of his brothers, and was left to find his amusement in books. He was early attracted to works of imagination, and before he was six years old he had thrice read through the stories of the "Arabian Nights;" and when alone he pursued his dreams of fancy, and realized them in his solitary games. When the death of his father broke up his quiet home, the delicate and sensitive boy was removed to the heart of London, and placed on the foundation of Christ's Hospital. He went there in the summer of 1782, and carried to the din and dust of London images of the country, its green lanes and grassy meadows, its old church with its grey tower; and these refreshed the heart of the dreaming boy, as he roamed fancy free through the crowded streets of the great city. Here he found himself associated with several boys who won distinction in after-life; and he formed a lasting friendship with the brilliant Leigh Hunt, and the inimitable Charles Lamb. Coleridge early displayed his genius, outstripped all competition, and rose to be the captain of the school. Before completing his fifteenth year he had translated the Greek Hymns of Synesius into English Anacreontic verse. This was no school-task undertaken by compulsion, but was a work of choice and a labour of love. An interesting anecdote is told of him at this time. Strolling one day down the Strand, absorbed in a reverie, and fancying himself Leander swimming across the Hellespont, he thrust out his hands before him like a swimmer; and as one of his hands touched a gentleman's pocket, the stranger laid hold of him as a pickpocket. The frightened boy explained the circumstance, and the gentleman was so much touched that he procured him admission to a Library in King Street, where he devoured catalogues, folios, and books of all kinds, borrowing daily the two volumes allowed him, and then curling himself up in some sunny corner where he read unconscious of everything but the pages, and the fancies which they conjured up.

All were attracted to the dreamy Bluecoat Boy. His masters looked upon him as a genius, and his schoolfellows regarded

him with admiration. He had made friends, and all were astonished as he poured forth in conversation, inconceivable in a lad of his years, stores of philosophy, metaphysical speculations, and quotations from the classics. In the spring of 1791 he went to Jesus College, Cambridge, at the age of nineteen, where he won some distinction as a scholar, having obtained the prize for a Greek Ode in Sapphic metre, of which the sentiments (as he observes himself) were better than the Greek. He soon began to betray that infirmity of purpose and that want of perseverance which proved to be his bane. Instead of following out the studies of the University, his reading was desultory. He read whatever pleased his fancy, or was agreeable to his tastes—it might be philosophy, or poetry, or politics; and his rooms became a rendezvous for all who loved conversation better than work, and who preferred debates on the pamphlets of Burke and the speculations of Voltaire, to the dramas of Æschylus or the dialogues of Plato.

It was an age of excitement both in religion and politics. Unitarianism was the popular creed. The French Revolution in its early stages had a fascination for minds enthusiastic in what was hoped to be the cause of liberty, and many ardent youths of the University allowed themselves to be borne away on the strong current of popular thought. Coleridge embraced Unitarian opinions, and ranged himself on what he believed to be the side of freedom.

All this interrupted his quiet habits of study, and weary of restraint, in a frenzy of unhappy feeling at the rejection he met with from a lady whom he loved, he left Cambridge, and enlisted as a private in a Dragoon regiment. He fell off his horse on several occasions, and being ill framed for a good rider, and finding a peculiar difficulty in grooming his steed, he only spent a few months in the army.<sup>1</sup>

He returned to Cambridge, unsettled and dejected, and despairing of success, gave up the hope of attaining a fellowship. Forming an acquaintance at this critical time with the two Wedgwoods, the celebrated manufacturers of Etruria, they became his friends, and admiring his genius, they subscribed to send him to Germany, where, at the University of Göttingen,

<sup>1</sup> De Quincey—who, however, will vouch for no part of the story—mentions a romantic incident which, it is said, led to his discharge from a profession which under no circumstances would have been congenial to his tastes. “Coleridge, as a private; was on one occasion mounted on guard at the door of a room in which his officers were giving a ball. Two of them had a dispute upon some Greek word or passage when close to Coleridge’s station. He interposed his authentic decision of the case. The officers stared as though one of their horses had sung ‘Rule Britannia,’ questioned him, heard his story, pitied his misfortunes, and finally subscribed to purchase his discharge.”

he completed his education according to his own scheme. On his return to England he attended Mr. Thomas Wedgwood throughout the long anomalous illness which brought him to the grave. By the death of Mr. Wedgwood, Coleridge succeeded to an annuity of £75, which that gentleman bequeathed to him. Mr. Wedgwood's brother granted him a similar allowance, and from this time he could reckon on a small but certain income.

Still in profound sympathy with the French Revolution, he, with two or three friends, who were worshippers of liberty, and had theories of superhuman virtue, resolved to seek in America happier fortunes than the Old World contained; and at the close of 1794, these enthusiastic students from Oxford and Cambridge met in Bristol, and resolved to emigrate to the banks of the Susquehanna. Now came plans for raising the wind, and struggles to escape the pangs of hunger; and lectures were announced in Bristol—six shillings for the course—on subjects wide in their range, and magnificent in their scope. Southey proposed to deal with history, and his syllabus embraced a period extending from the first origin of society to the legislation of Solon, and thence on to the American war. Coleridge took as his themes Milton and Sidney, Mirabeau and Tom Paine, Oliver Cromwell and Robespierre, Mazarin and Pitt; and into his plan entered the extent and origin of evil, the evidences and corruptions of Christianity; and he hoped to evolve a grand social scheme which would convert all men to Unitarianism, and make them wise, and pure, and perfect.

As might be expected, nothing came of so grandiloquent a prospectus. Already absence of mind, and disregard of order, began to be marked features in Coleridge's daily life; no appointments were kept; the lecture-room was often crowded, but the lecturer was not to be found; and as to letters, he opened none and answered none. Amidst daylight realities, he spent his time in a deep reverie or waking dream. It is not surprising under the circumstances that he often found himself in want of money, and that he formed various plans for raising what is as needful in this practical world for the philosopher and the poet as for the dullest and most prosaic of men. To his kind bookseller—the most liberal of friends—he offered to write poems, songs, and epics in blank verse, all of which prospects were pleasantly conceived, faithfully promised, and never carried into execution. Upon the faith of these "airy nothings," Coleridge married. His wife was a Miss Fricker, one of four or five sisters in humble circumstances, who lived at Bristol, and who maintained an irreproachable character, though exposed by their personal attractions to some peril, and to the detractions of envy.

Another of the sisters became the wife of Southey. Unfortunately Mrs. Coleridge was not a woman who could comprehend her husband's intellectual powers, or had any sympathy with his ruling pursuits; and though she was in all circumstances of her married life a virtuous wife and conscientious mother, yet their home was not a happy one, and its domestic peace was often disturbed. To embarrassments of a pecuniary nature was added an incompatibility of temper and disposition which in a great measure robbed life of its sunshine and added to its gloom. Another circumstance which marred the harmony of the young married couple was the friendship which Coleridge formed with a young lady who became their neighbour, who was intellectually very superior to Mrs. Coleridge, and had a true sympathy with the husband's pursuits. Although no shadow of suspicion rested upon the moral conduct of either party, yet Mrs. Coleridge felt that she held but a divided sway over her husband's heart, which could not but be deeply mortifying to a young wife; and the arrow was even more sharply barbed when others—her own female servant amongst the number—began to drop expressions which alternately implied pity for her as an injured woman, or contempt for her as a tame one.

Their first home was in a cottage near the Severn, very picturesque in its external aspect, with roses clambering over the wall and round the windows, but very comfortless in its internal arrangements, with no paper on the walls, and no supplies in the kitchen. In order to meet his daily wants he writes to his friend the bookseller, now offering him a sonnet, and now a ballad; now proposing to print a pamphlet for the instruction of the public; and now to publish eighteen different works in quarto; and as a *per contra* he begs his friend to send him "a tea-kettle, a tin dust-pan, teaspoons, a cheese-toaster, a keg of porter, allspice, ginger, and rice." Thus passed two years away in futile plans and projects never to be fulfilled.

In 1796 he attempts to raise money in another way, and he resolves to publish a periodical, *The Watchman*, every eighth day, for the small sum of fourpence, which is to treat of all kinds of subjects, to teach all truth, that all may know the truth and that the truth may make them free. He hurries to the manufacturing districts to find subscribers; teaches philosophy with more or less success to tallow-chandlers and cotton-spinners; argues with infidels; reasons with Dr. Darwin; preaches Socinianism at Birmingham and Sheffield; wears a blue coat in the pulpit, and is greatly disturbed when forced in the former town to present himself to his audience in a gown. Nor is he altogether regardless of enjoyment on his

tour. He often finds himself in pleasant company; sees interesting sights; eats good dinners at a late hour, and is solaced and entertained by the music of the concert-room. He also starts a grand scheme of education, and proposes to set up a school at Derby. He thinks of becoming a regular Unitarian preacher; tries his hand at two sermons at Bath, and gives instead two lectures on the Corn Laws and the Hair Powder Tax, which were unfortunately considered to be dull. Are not these, and other incidents of a similar nature, told us in his letters? *The Watchman* lived through nine numbers, and then died suddenly of inanition.

But though *The Watchman* died, Coleridge lived, and his genius attracted to him many friends. At one time a young man, the son of a banker, Mr. Lloyd, enters his family as a boarder, in order to enjoy his society; at another, an acquaintance who admires his powers of conversation, settles in his neighbourhood.

It was now that he formed with Southey a scheme for emigrating to America under the learned name of "Pantisocracy." "It differed little," as De Quincey says, "except in its Grecian name, from any other scheme for mitigating the privations of a wilderness, by settling in a cluster of families bound together by congenial tastes and uniform principles, rather than in self-depending, insulated households." The plan was never carried out. A fierce quarrel parted the friends, and England, not America, was to be the home of Coleridge.

About this time he wrote a tragedy, which Sheridan accepted, and brought out on the stage of Drury Lane.<sup>1</sup>

In 1798 was published Wordsworth's famous volume of "Lyrical Ballads," to which Coleridge contributed "The Ancient Mariner," together with some other pieces. In the autumn of this year he visited North Germany in company with Mr. and Miss Wordsworth. Their tour was chiefly confined to the Hartz Mountains and the neighbourhood; and after fourteen

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<sup>1</sup> The success of the play was marred by Sheridan's inability to sacrifice what he thought a good jest. One scene presented a cave with streams of water creeping down the sides, and the first words were in a sort of mimicry of the sound: "Drip, drip, drip!" upon which Sheridan repeated aloud to the assembled green-room, especially convoked for the purpose of hearing the play read: "'Drip, drip, drip!' in short, it is all dripping." The theatre falling afterwards into the hands of Lord Byron and Mr. Whitbread, his lordship sent for Coleridge, was very kind to his brother poet, and requested that the play might be represented; this desire was complied with, and it received his support. Although Mr. Whitbread did not give it the advantage of a single new scene, yet the popularity of the play was such that the principal actor who had performed in it with great success, made choice of it for his benefit night, and it brought an overflowing house.

months the little party returned to England. He now became the editor of the literary department of the *Morning Post*, and on its staff were also Wordsworth and Southey. In 1801 he settled at Keswick, no doubt attracted to the Lake country by Wordsworth. Here his health began to be affected, and he suffered from severe attacks of rheumatism, accompanied by difficulty in breathing, which, with a constant sensation of weight, made him think that his heart was affected. In the spring of 1804 he was induced to seek change of air, and to try the climate of Malta; and here his powers of conversation had such an effect on the Governor, Sir Alexander Ball, that he appointed him to the office of Secretary then vacant. Unhappily in Malta he formed, if he did not confirm and cherish, the habit of taking opium in large quantities. He began the habit as a relief from bodily pain and nervous irritation, and he continued it as a source of luxurious sensations. When he had once tasted the enchanted cup he returned to its charms again and again in order to excite his animal spirits by artificial stimulants; and the habit became the curse of his later life. For years he struggled against it, and struggled in vain. Under these circumstances it was not likely that he could discharge efficiently the post of Secretary, or bear with patience the restraints of duty; and so he left Malta in the autumn of 1805, and on his return homewards he visited Rome and Naples.

In 1806 he returned to England, and passed his time between his own house at Keswick, and Wordsworth's house at Grasmere. His eccentric habits were now rapidly gaining ground, and making a fixed impression on his character. His life, under these conditions, was far from being a happy or satisfactory one, and his conscience was but ill at ease. It is thus he writes to the friend who had more than once come to his help in his early struggles. "Alas! you will find me the wretched wreck of what you knew me, rolling rudderless! My health is exceedingly bad; pain I have enough of; but that is indeed to me a mere trifle; but the almost unceasing, overpowering sensations of wretchedness, achings in my limbs, with an indescribable restlessness that makes action to any available purpose almost impossible; and, worst of all, the sense of blighted utility, regrets not remorseless." This was written in the year 1807. We have an account of him in the same year from the pen of De Quincey. He says: "In the summer season of 1807 I first saw this illustrious man, the largest and most spacious intellect, in my judgment, that has ever yet existed amongst men. My knowledge of his works as a most original genius began about the year 1799." Coleridge was at this time staying at Nether Stowey with Mr. Poole; and thither

De Quincey, who had conceived a profound admiration for the poet and philosopher, bent his steps.

I had received direction for finding out the house where Coleridge was visiting, and in riding down a main street of Bridgwater I noticed a gateway corresponding to the description given me. Under this was standing, and gazing about him, a man whom I will describe. In height he might seem to be about five feet eight (he was, in reality, about an inch and a half taller, but his figure was of an order which drowns the height); his person was broad and full, and tended even to corpulence; his complexion was fair, though not what painters technically style fair, because it was associated with black hair; his eyes were large, and soft in their expression, and it was from the peculiar appearance of haze or dreaminess which mixed with their light that I recognised my object. This was Coleridge. I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more, and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie, for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him before he seemed apparently conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him; he started for a moment, seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation, for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us. There was no *mauvaise honte* in his manner, but simply perplexity, and an apparent difficulty in recovering his position among daylight realities. This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. The hospitable family with whom he was domesticated were distinguished for their amiable manners and enlightened understandings; they were descendants from Chubb, the philosophic writer, and bore the same name. For Coleridge they all testified deep affection and esteem—sentiments in which the whole town of Bridgwater seemed to share; for in the evening, when the heat of the day had declined, I walked out with him, and rarely, perhaps never, have I seen a person so much interrupted in one hour's space as Coleridge on this occasion by the courteous attentions of young and old.

The extreme courtesy of Coleridge, his devotion to those he loved, or who might require his sympathy, won the regard of all whom he met; and Lord Egmont and others, who felt for him an excessive admiration, were anxious that he should undertake some great work that might furnish a sufficient arena for the display of his various and rare accomplishments. "At any rate, let him do something," said Lord Egmont, "for at present he talks very much like an angel, and does nothing at all. And what a pity," he added, "if this man were after all to vanish like an apparition, and you and I, and a few others who have witnessed his grand *bravuras* of display were to have the usual fortune of ghost-seers, in meeting no credit for any statements that we might vouch on his behalf." In speaking of his conversation, Professor Wilson said he talks with a melodious richness of words, which he heaps around his

images—images that are not glaring, but which are always affecting to the very verge of tears.

The restless activity of Coleridge's mind, his intellectual efforts in the paths of speculation, and the chase after abstract truths, seemed to his friends to be attempts to escape out of his own personal wretchedness. The consciousness of marvellous gifts weakened or wasted by the direful effects of opium, and his slavery to the habit, stimulated his mind to a restless activity, which found a vent in conversation. It is pitiable to read in "The History of my own Mind for my own Improvement," of his self-reproaches; of his struggles to get rid of this thorn in the flesh; of his endeavours to free himself from the "Mælstrom, the fatal whirlpool, to which I am drawing," he says, "just when the current was already beyond my strength to stem." Wordsworth refers to the change wrought in his friend by "the flattering poison" in those beautiful "Lines written in my Pocket Copy of the 'Castle of Indolence.'" After the description of Coleridge's countenance, there follow the lines:

Ah! piteous sight it was to see this man  
 When he came back to us, a wither'd flow'r,  
 Or, like a sinful creature, pale and wan!  
 Down would he sit, and without strength or power  
 Look at the common grass from hour to hour.  
 And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,  
 Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,  
 Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay.  
 And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

It was during his residence at the Lakes, and in the year 1809, that Coleridge published some essays, composed in 1807, in a periodical called the *Friend*, which he continued for some time. The *Friend*, dealing too exclusively with metaphysics, in which Coleridge delighted, came to a sudden and abrupt end through the bankruptcy of the printer. Coleridge was living as a visitor at this time at Allan Bank, Grasmere, the residence of Wordsworth. Here, surrounded by the most exquisite scenery, and turn where he would seeing nothing but beauty—beauty of hill, and stream, and lake, and dale—and living in a family endeared to him by long friendship, and by the closest sympathy with all his predilections and tastes, Coleridge might surely have been happy. What more could he want? The outward world was "as a field which the Lord hath blessed"—a well-watered garden of the Lord; the world within was made pleasant by congenial companionships—the voices of friends, the graciousness of woman, the innocent laughter of children. But he was far from knowing what happiness was; all natural pleasure was poisoned at its

source; and the gloom which marked his countenance was but the shadow projected there from a conscience ill at ease. His habits were peculiar. He lived chiefly by candle-light, and sat up a great part of the night reading German books. At two or four o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance downstairs. When all other lights had been put out in the quiet village of Grasmere, his lamp burnt on still; and when man was going forth to his labour in the morning, he was about to retire to bed.

In the autumn of 1810 Coleridge left the Lakes, and never returned to them again as a resident. The causes which led him to leave these scenes of natural beauty in which he had found strength and restoration are matters of conjecture. The reason is unknown. It may be that, suffering as he was in mind and body, the sad passion exercised over him a mastery so terrible that Nature, however beautiful, had not the charm for him that she once possessed. He has himself insisted on the truth that all which we find in nature must be created by ourselves; and this power may have now become extinct in him; he can give nothing to nature, and therefore he can receive nothing in return. Everyone is familiar with the beautiful lines in his "Ode to Dejection:"

Oh Lady! we receive but what we give,  
 And in our life alone does nature live.  
 Ours is her wedding-garment, ours her shroud!  
 And would we aught behold of higher worth,  
 Than that inanimate cold world allowed  
 To the poor loveless ever anxious crowd,  
 Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth  
 A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud  
     Enveloping the earth—  
 And from the soul itself must there be sent  
 A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth,  
 Of all sweet sounds the life and element!

As a personal comment on this thought we may give the lines of the preceding stanza:

My genial spirits fail;  
 And what can these avail  
 To lift the smothering weight from off my breast?  
 It were a vain endeavour,  
 Though I should gaze for ever  
 On that green light that lingers in the west.  
 I may not hope from outward forms to win  
 The passion and the life, whose fountains are within!

Coleridge left the Lakes in company with Mr. Basil Montagu, who with Mrs. Montagu was returning to London from a visit

to Wordsworth, and who offered his friend a seat in his travelling-carriage. For some time he remained as a guest under Mr. Montagu's friendly roof. He afterwards resided at Hammersmith with a common friend of his and Southey's, a Mr. Morgan, with whom they had formed an intimacy in Bristol. He was suffering at this time from pecuniary difficulties, which affected his health and spirits; and such reliance had he on the kindness of friends that he threw out the suggestion that they might purchase an annuity for him to set him free from anxiety, and enable him to pursue his literary labours. Though this was not done, efforts for his relief were not wanting; and De Quincey made him a gift of £300. It was arranged that he should deliver a course of lectures at the Royal Institution on Poetry and the Fine Arts during the ensuing winter, and for this he received a sum of one hundred guineas. The course was to extend to fifteen lectures, which were to be given on Monday and Thursday evenings successively during the winter. He was at this time living uncomfortably at the *Courier* office, in the Strand, and was a constant contributor to that journal. In such a situation, disturbed by the noise of feet passing his chamber-door continually to the printing-room of this great establishment, and with no soothing ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness (for his wife and he had separated, and she with her children resided with Southey), naturally enough his spirits flagged, and he sank more than ever under the dominion of opium. So that it often happened, when at two o'clock he should have been in the Lecture Hall of the Royal Institution, he was unable to rise from his bed. Audience after audience were dismissed with pleas of illness; and on many of the days when Albemarle Street was blocked up with carriages, intelligence was brought by the attendants to the carriage-doors that Mr. Coleridge had been suddenly taken ill. This plea repeated too often, and at first received with expressions of concern, began to awaken feelings of annoyance and disgust, so that many, from the uncertainty of the lecturer's appearance, ceased to attend. "Even when he did appear, his looks betrayed his condition. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in colour; and in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labour under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower." Yet such was his rare intellectual power, and marvellous brilliancy of expression, that when he was himself he held his audience spell-bound by the eloquent periods that flowed in melodious cadence from his tongue. Dr. Dibdin, in his "Reminiscences of a Literary Life," says that it might be said of Coleridge, as Cowper has so happily said of Sir Philip Sidney,

that he was "the warbler of poetic prose." "There was always *this* characteristic in his multifarious conversation—it was delicate, reverend, and courteous. The chastest ear could drink in no startling sound; the most serious believer never had his bosom ruffled by one sceptical or reckless assertion. Coleridge was eminently simple in his manner. Thinking and speaking were his delight; and he would sometimes seem, during the more fervid movements of discourse, to be abstracted from all and everything around and about him, and to be basking in the sunny warmth of his own radiant imagination." "In his lectures Coleridge was brilliant, fluent, and rapid; his words seemed to flow as from a person repeating with grace and energy some delightful poem;" and though he lectured from notes carefully prepared, yet his audience was more delighted when, putting his notes aside, he spoke extempore, for words never failed him; he always found the most appropriate, and they followed one another in the most logical arrangement. The attempt to take down his lectures in shorthand was a failure.<sup>1</sup>

It was during this sad period of suffering, energies depressed, and a mind ill at ease, because of his bondage to a terrible drug—his regular allowance of opium being a pint a day, though on one occasion he actually swallowed a quart—that he threw aside the cheerless doctrines of Socinianism for a truer and Scriptural creed. He had once endeavoured to reconcile the Socinian theory with an orthodox belief, but he now regarded Socinianism as a heresy subversive of Christianity; and receiving the Bible as the Word of God, and accepting the fall and corruption of man as doctrines of revelation, he looked at Christ's atonement as the only hope of the sinner, and proclaimed without hesitation that Christ was God as well as man. He acknowledged in all humility, and with the frankness of true wisdom, that "there are truths revealed to us, of which the Trinity was one, lost in darkness to us, because our eyes cannot penetrate the depths of the skies; we receive them, not because they can be made clear to our apprehension, but because the Scriptures expressly state them. It is impos-

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<sup>1</sup> The manuscript was almost entirely unintelligible. An accomplished and experienced shorthand-writer thus accounts for the difficulty: "With regard to every other speaker whom he had ever heard, however rapid or involved, he could always, by long experience in his art, guess the form of the latter part, or apodosis of the sentence, by the form of the beginning; but that the conclusion of every one of Coleridge's sentences was a surprise upon him. He was obliged to listen to the last word. Yet this unexpectedness was not the effect of quaintness or confusion of construction: it was the uncommonness of the thoughts, or the image, which prevented you from anticipating the end."

sible for any man to read the New Testament with the uncommon exercise of an unbiassed understanding, without being convinced of the divinity of Christ from the testimony of almost every page." "Socinianism," he says, "is not a religion, but a theory: pernicious, because it excludes all our deep and awful ideas of the perfect holiness of God, His justice and His mercy, etc.; unsatisfactory, for it promises forgiveness, without any solution of the difficulty of the compatibility of this with the justice of God."<sup>1</sup>

We find Coleridge in the midst of all his literary and social successes struggling still against his besetting sin; now entreating his friends to place him in the asylum of Dr. Fox, that, treated as a madman, he might be cured; and now resolving to place himself where he could "remain a month or two, wholly in the power of others;" "for my case is a species of

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<sup>1</sup> When referring to the religious opinions of Coleridge, we must not omit to say that he was one of the first in this country to put forth a theory of inspiration as unsatisfactory as it was bold. In his "Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit," published after his death, he spoke of the Bible as a library of infinite value, as that which must have a Divine Spirit in it, from its appeal to all the hidden springs of feeling in our hearts. But then he protests against what he calls "Bibliolatry," "the doctrine which requires me to believe that not only what finds me, but all that exists in the same volume, and which I am bound to find therein, was not only inspired by, that is, composed by men under the actuating influence of the Holy Spirit, but likewise dictated by an Infallible Intelligence; that the writers, each and all, were divinely informed, as well as inspired." Such a doctrine, he conceives, must imply infallibility in physical science and in everything else as much as in faith, in things natural no less than in spiritual. He expresses a full belief "that the word of the Lord came to Samuel, to Isaiah, to others, and that the words which gave utterance to the same are faithfully recorded." But for the recording he does not think there was need of any supernatural working, except in such cases as those in which God not only utters certain express words to a prophet, but also enjoins him to record them. In the latter case he accepts them "as supernaturally communicated, and their recording as executed under special guidance." We need not say that the views of Coleridge are far from satisfactory to those who believe, as we do, that the Scriptures are the revelations through human media of the infinite mind of God to the finite mind of man, and who recognising, as we do, both a human and a Divine element in the written Word, are convinced that the Holy Ghost was so breathed into the mind of the writer, so illumined his spirit, and pervaded his thoughts, that while nothing that individualized him as a man was taken away, everything that was necessary to enable him to declare Divine Truth in all its fulness was bestowed and superadded. Not only did the writers, under the influence of the Spirit, reveal the rule and counsel of God, declare facts, and make statements, but they also made choice of such expressions, and words of speech, as were most calculated to convey and commend the Truth. This, it will be seen, is very different from the theory of Coleridge, who apparently draws no distinction between the inspiration of holy men of old, and the inspiration of the poet and the teacher in every age and nation.

madness, only that it is a derangement, an utter impotence of the volition, and not of the intellectual faculties." "I have prayed," he says in a letter to a friend, alluding to the fierceness of his conflict with his sin—"I have prayed with drops of agony on my brow." He draws the following picture of himself: "Conceive a poor, miserable wretch, who for many years has been attempting to beat off pain by a constant recurrence to a vice which reproduces it; conceive a spirit in hell, employed in tracing out for others the road to that heaven from which his crimes exclude him; in short, conceive whatever is most wretched, helpless, and hopeless, and you will form as tolerable a notion of my state as it is possible for a good man to have."

In the spring of 1816, he placed himself in the home of Mr. Gillman, a physician, and here he passed the last eighteen years of his life, during which years he wrote but little. Though he was gradually set free from the bondage of an ensnaring vice, and his conscience, no longer clouded by vicious indulgence, was at rest through the faith which he had sought with many tears; yet his health was permanently injured by the tremendous effects of taking opium. Though his intellect was clear, his mind never recovered its vigour or energy; and while pursuing his philosophical and literary labours, yet he never regained the capacity or strength necessary to undertake a continuous work. "Christabel," after lying long in manuscript, was printed in 1816, three editions of it appearing in one year; and in the next year, Coleridge published a collection of his chief poems, under the title of "Sibylline Leaves;" in allusion, as he says, "to the fragmentary and wildly-scattered state in which they had been long suffered to remain." His "Lay-Sermons" were written in 1816-17; and in 1818 he delivered the Lectures on Poetry which have been already referred to; but the first really collective edition of his "Poetical and Dramatic Works" was published in the year 1828, in three volumes arranged by himself. A third and more complete issue of his works, arranged by another hand, appeared in 1834, the year of his death. He to the last retained his marvellous powers of conversation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> It is thus that a Quarterly Reviewer speaks of him in the later period of his life: "Mr. Coleridge's conversation, it is true, has not now all the brilliant versatility of his former years; yet we know not whether the contrast between his bodily weakness and his mental power does not leave a deeper and a more solemnly affecting impression than his most triumphant displays in youth could ever have done. To see the pain-stricken countenance relax, and the contracted frame dilate under the kindling of intellectual fire alone; to watch the infirmities of the flesh shrinking out of sight, or glorified and transfigured in the brightness of the awakening spirit, is an awful object of contemplation; and in no

In July, 1834, in his sixty-second year, Coleridge entered into rest. He had been long separated by distance from the companions of his early days. The friends with whom he had at one time been closely connected and who had many things in common, who were bound together, in the bonds of a common sympathy with nature as well as literature, continued to cherish for him an affectionate regard. This was shown by the manner in which Wordsworth received, in the Westmoreland which they both loved, the news that Coleridge had fallen asleep in peace at Highgate. The Rev. Robert Perceval Graves, in writing to a friend, says :

The death of Coleridge was announced to us by his friend Wordsworth. He then continued to speak of him ; called him the most *wonderful* man that he had ever known, wonderful for the originality of his mind, and the power he possessed of throwing out in profusion grand central truths from which might be evolved the most comprehensive systems. Wordsworth, as a poet, regretted that German metaphysics had so much captivated the taste of Coleridge, for he was frequently not intelligible on this subject ; whereas, if his energy and his originality had been more exerted in the channel of poetry—an instrument of which he had so perfect a mastery—Wordsworth thought he might have done more permanently to enrich the literature, and to influence the thought of the nation, than any man of the age.

The letter of Henry Nelson Coleridge, which conveyed the tidings of his great relation's death, and the manner of it, adds Mr. Graves, was read to us :

It appeared that his death was a relief from intense pain, which, however, subsided at the interval of a few days before the event ; and that shortly after this cessation of agony, he fell into a comatose state. The most interesting part of the letter was the statement that the last use he made of his faculties was to call his children, and other relatives and friends, around him to give them his blessing, and to express his hope to them that the manner of his end might manifest the depth of his trust in his Saviour, Christ. As I heard this, I was at once deeply glad at the substance, and deeply affected by Wordsworth's emotion in reading it. When he came to this part his voice at first faltered, and then broke ; but soon divine faith that the change was a blest one overcame aught of human grief, and he concluded in an equable though subdued tone.

So Coleridge, Poet, Psychologist, Moralist, Philosopher, and Christian, passed to his rest, thankful for the deep, calm peace

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other person did we ever witness such a distinction—nay, aberration of mind from body—such a mastery of the purely intellectual over the purely corporeal, as in the instance of this remarkable man. Even now his conversation is characterized by all the essentials of its former excellence, there is the same individuality, the same *unexpectedness*, the same universal grasp ; nothing is too high, nothing too low for it ; it glances from earth to heaven, from heaven to earth, with a speed and a splendour, an ease and a power, which almost seems inspired.”—*Quarterly Review*, vol. lii. p. 3.

of mind which he enjoyed ; a peace such as he had never before experienced, or scarcely hoped for ; this, he said, seemed now settled upon him ; and all things were thus looked at by him through an atmosphere by which all were reconciled and harmonized. We may appropriately conclude this sketch of his life with the lines called my "Baptismal Birthday:"

God's child in Christ adopted,—Christ my all,—  
 What that earth boasts were not lost cheaply, rather  
 Than forfeit that blest name, by which I call  
 The Holy One, the Almighty God, my Father ?—  
 Father ! in Christ we live, and Christ in Thee—  
 Eternal Thou, and everlasting we.

The heir of heaven, henceforth I fear not death :  
 In Christ I live ! in Christ I draw the breath  
 Of the true life !—Let then earth, sea, and sky  
 Make war against me ! On my front I show  
 Their mighty master's seal In vain they try  
 To end my life, that can but end its woe.—  
 Is that a death-bed where a Christian lies ?—  
 Yes ! but not his—'tis Death itself there dies.

In turning to speak of his poems in what space is yet allowed to us, we may notice the sweetness of his versification, and the natural melody of the words he employs to express his thoughts. Mrs. Barrett Browning in her "Vision of Poets" thus speaks of him :

And visionary Coleridge, who  
 Did sweep his thoughts as angels do  
 Their wings, with cadence up the blue.

He seems to have had an inborn sense of music which never can be acquired by any effort of art, and which made him by natural right a singer, so that he attempted every kind of lyric measure, whether rhymed or not, with the most perfect success. He has also written poems in the heroic couplet, and in blank verse which satisfies the ear of all who delight in harmony which is the result of rhythmical construction. The best poems of Coleridge are distinguished in a remarkable degree by that consummate harmony which is a natural gift, as well as by that metrical arrangement which is the fruit of uncommon labour and skill. It is evident that he must have studied the laws and properties of metre with the utmost attention and care. His poetry is what Milton said poetry ought to be, "simple, sensuous, impassioned ;" and his imagery, ever distinct and clear, is fitted to carry out the poet's intention of awaking in the reader's mind the same mood which coloured the spirit of his own thoughts. In the wild and romantic poem of "Christabel"—that magnificent fragment—with what

singular skill the reader is made to see and to hear the various sights and sounds which the poet narrates with such power and distinction! The reader is under a spell as he hears at midnight the striking of the castle clock, and the "Tu-whit! Tu-who!" of the owl, and the short, low howl of the sleeping mastiff; and as he sees the dim forest in the chilly night, and the lonely Lady Christabel, as she steals through the wood to pray "for the weal of her lover so far away," and suddenly, at the other side of the oak, observes a lady richly clad, and "beautiful exceedingly." What pictures pass before the eye—the sudden flash of the dying brands, as Christabel and Geraldine pass through the echoing hall, the carved chamber:

Carved with figures strange and sweet,  
All made out of the carver's brain  
For a lady's chamber meet:  
The lamp with twofold silver chain  
Is fastened to an angel's feet.

And then the struggle between Geraldine and the spirit of Christabel's sainted mother; the weaving of the spell, and the discovery of her hideous form as Geraldine drops her silken robe and inner vest:

A sight to dream of, not to tell,  
O shield her, shield sweet Christabel!  
Yet Geraldine nor speaks, nor stirs:  
Ah! what a stricken look was hers!

And what a relief at the ceasing of the spell, and as the joyousness of the birds is described, and the awaking of Christabel as from a trance—all this and more powerfully affects the imagination, and if he had written nothing else would have placed him in the ranks of our greatest poets.

The description of the change which takes place in Geraldine from her assumed to her natural form, when read in a party at Lord Byron's, is said to have caused Shelley to faint.

A snake's small eye blinks dull and shy,  
And the lady's eyes they shrunk in her head,  
Each shrunk up to a serpent's eye,  
And with somewhat of malice and more of dread  
At Christabel she look'd askance!  
One moment—and the sight was fled!  
But Christabel, in dizzy trance  
Stumbling on the unsteady ground,  
Shuddered aloud with a hissing sound;  
And Geraldine again turn'd round,  
And like a thing that sought relief,  
Full of wonder, and full of grief,

She rolled her large bright eyes divine  
 Wildly on Sir Leoline.  
 The maid, alas ! her thoughts are gone,  
 She nothing sees—no sight but one !

With regard to the sweetness of the versification of the poem there can be but one opinion. The first part was composed in 1797—the *annus mirabilis* of this great man—when he was in his best and strongest health, and when the works on which his poetic fame will rest were composed or planned.

The weird poem of "The Ancient Mariner" also displays the poet's mastery of the wild and preternatural, and is one of the most perfect pieces of imaginative poetry in our own or any other language. It is a poem in which sublimity is allied to terror. And how full of the sweetest music are many of its stanzas ! For example :

Sometimes a-dropping from the sky  
 I heard the skylark sing,  
 Sometimes all little birds that are  
 How they seemed to fill the sea and air  
 With their sweet jargonings !

And now 'twas like all instruments,  
 Now like a lonely flute,  
 And now it is an angel's song,  
 That makes the heavens be mute.

It ceased ; yet still the sails made on  
 A pleasant noise till noon,  
 A noise like of a hidden brook  
 In the leafy month of June,  
 That to the sleeping woods all night  
 Singeth a quiet tune.

It is by these two poems, "The Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel," that Coleridge is most widely known ; and many of his most exquisite pieces are but little read. They who confine themselves to these two poems of pure imagination are great losers, for there are other poems of his distinguished, some by philosophical reflection, some by deep pathos, and others, like the grand "Hymn in the Vale of Chamouni," inspired not only by the glory of external nature, but by the hidden fire of strong devotional feelings which lifted the soul to God. This poem, which has excited much discussion, is an expansion of a poem of twenty lines by Frederica Brun. It is to all intents and purposes a new poem ; a new creation ; a glorification of the original. It has been said that it was a sentiment of propriety and not of inspiration that led Coleridge to give a religious turn to his lines, and that propriety is a bad guide in poetry ; but with this criticism we cannot agree.

There is no feigned enthusiasm in this magnificent hymn; its inspiration is not simply derived from the beauty of flowers and waters, stars and sunsets, the mountain and the glacier; not simply from the majesty of Nature, but from the majesty of Nature's God. No! He describes the glories of external nature, "the silent sea of pines;" the bald and awful head of *Sovran Blanc*, "visited all night by troops of stars;" the "wild torrents fiercely glad;" the dark and icy caverns; the ice-falls; the enormous ravines; the sky-pointing peaks—for the sake of lifting up the soul to God. The invocation summoning all creation to praise its Author is the crown and climax of the poem.

Into the depth of clouds, that veil thy breast,  
Thou too again, stupendous Mountain! thou  
That as I raise my head, awhile bowed low  
In adoration, upward from thy base  
Slow travelling with dim eyes suffused with tears,  
Solemnly seemest, like a vapoury cloud,  
To rise before me—Rise, O ever rise,  
Rise like a cloud of incense, from the Earth:  
Thou kingly Spirit throned among the hills,  
Thou dread ambassador from Earth to Heaven  
Great hierarch! tell thou the silent sky,  
And tell the stars, and tell yon rising sun,  
Earth, with her thousand voices, praises God.

"Genevieve" is one of Coleridge's best-known and most beautiful pieces. It is a song of triumphant "Love"—love as pure as it is ardent, as gentle as it is impassioned, and full of a chivalrous tenderness and courtesy. It is musical throughout.

All thoughts, all passions, all delights,  
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,  
All are but ministers of love,  
And feed his sacred flame.

Some of its stanzas linger almost unconsciously on the memory.

Many of Coleridge's poems are marked by a strain of impassioned contemplation, combined with philosophical expression, such as we find in the "Ode to Dejection," from which some lines have been quoted in an earlier part of this paper. It is a poem less known than it ought to be; and in it we find not only philosophical reflection, but also a deep and tender pathos. "France: an Ode," a political poem, inspired by an indignant reaction against his own earlier sympathies with the French Republic, and full of strong national feeling, has some fine stanzas. The first is especially worthy of remembrance.

Ye clouds! that far above me float and pause,  
 Whose pathless march no mortal may control!  
 Ye ocean-waves! that wheresoe'er ye roll,  
 Yield homage only to eternal laws!  
 Ye woods, that listen to the night-birds singing  
 Midway the smooth and perilous slope reclined  
 Save when your own imperious branches swinging  
 Have made a solemn music of the wind!  
 Where like a man beloved of God,  
 Through glooms which never woodman trod,  
 How oft pursuing fancies holy,  
 My moonlight way o'er flowering weeds I wound,  
 Inspired beyond the guess of folly  
 By each rude shape and wild unconquerable sound!  
 O ye loud waves, and O ye forests high!  
 And O ye clouds that far above me soared!  
 Thou rising sun! thou blue rejoicing sky!  
 Yea, everything that is and will be free!  
 Bear witness for me, wheresoe'er ye be,  
 With what deep worship I have still adored  
 The spirit of divinest liberty.

Another political poem in which his love for England is eloquently expressed, and in which we have some beautiful and living descriptions of natural objects, is one called "Fears in Solitude." It was "written in 1798, during the alarm of an invasion." We have as a background to the poet's fears:

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,  
 A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place  
 No singing skylark ever poised himself.

He contrasts the national agitation and alarm with the quiet and peace of nature.

The dell,  
 Bathed by the mist, is fresh and delicate  
 As vernal cornfield, or the unripe flax  
 When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,  
 The level sunshine glimmers with green light,  
 Oh! 'tis a quiet, spirit-healing nook!

Coleridge was associated with what has been called "The Lake School," not only in political sentiment, but in its reaction from the formal and mechanical poetry of Pope, and the old French School of Poetry; in its love of Nature, in its discernment of the spiritual in the material, and in its sympathy with the animal world.

But we must not linger on a poet who has been called "the most imaginative poet since Milton;" a poet distinguished by sympathetic vision, and whose verses overflow with harmony. We cannot speak of his tragedies, "Remorse" and "Zapolya,"

the latter not found in every edition of the poet's works, but each embracing the pastoral and romantic, and containing situations of grand dramatic interest.

His translation of Schiller's magnificent drama of "Wallenstein," which has always been considered as one of the most remarkable productions of Coleridge's pen, is an unique performance, and has all the charm of an original work. It is as closely connected with the translator's poetic fame as the "Iliad" with Pope, and the "Æneid" with Dryden, and is superior to both in its faithfulness to the original. Indeed, many parts of the translation are exclusively the property of the English poet, who used a manuscript copy of the German text before its publication by the author; and it is a curious anecdote in literature, that Schiller in more instances than one afterwards adopted the hints, and translated in turn the interpolations of his own translator.<sup>1</sup>

But we must send the reader to the works of Coleridge for poems which cannot but charm the fancy, please the ear, and delight the taste; such as "An Ode to the Departing Year;" "This Lime-tree Bower my Prison;" "To William Wordsworth;" "Time: Real and Imaginary;" and "The Nightingale: a Conversation Poem." In this latter poem he contests the idea that the nightingale is a bird

Most musical, most melancholy,

and saying that "in nature there is nothing melancholy" (a sentiment which, however, we dispute), has the following beautiful lines:

'Tis the merry nightingale  
That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates  
With fast thick warble his delicious notes,  
As he were fearful that an April night  
Would be too short for him to utter forth  
His love-chant, and disburthen his full soul  
Of all its music!

This paper may be fittingly brought to a close by some lines from "A Tombless Epitaph," which form a portrait of the poet himself:

Sickness, 'tis true,  
Whole years of weary days besieged him close,  
Even to the gates and inlets of his life!  
But it is true, no less, that strenuous, firm,  
And with a natural gladness, he maintained  
The citadel unconquered, and in joy  
Was strong to follow the delightful muse.

<sup>1</sup> *Quarterly Review*, vol. lii, p. 18.

For not a hidden path, that to the shades  
 Of the Parnassian forest leads,  
 Lurked undiscovered by him ; not a rill  
 There issues from the fount of Hippocrene,  
 But he traced it upwards to its source.  
 Through open glade, dark glen, and secret dell,  
 Knew the gay wild flowers on its banks, and cul'd  
 Its med'cinable herbs. Yea, oft alone,  
 Piercing the long-neglected holy cave,  
 The haunt obscure of old Philosophy.  
 He bade with lifted torch its starry walls  
 Sparkle, as erst they sparkled to the flame  
 Of odorous lamps tended by Saint and Sage.  
 O framed for calmer times and nobler hearts !  
 O studious Poet, eloquent for truth !  
 Philosopher ! contemning wealth and death,  
 Yet docile, childlike, full of Life and Love !

CHARLES D. BELL, D.D.



### ART. III.—MR. RICHARD, M.P., AND THE NATIONAL CHURCH.

**M**R. RICHARD, M.P. for Merthyr, has given the following notice of motion for the next session :

That the establishment of the Church of England by law

- (1) Imposes upon Parliament duties which it cannot effectually discharge ;
  - (2) Deprives the Church of the power of managing her own affairs ;
  - (3) Inflicts injustice on a large number of the community, and
  - (4) Is injurious to the political and religious interest of the nation ;
- and that

Therefore it ought no longer to be maintained.

In the second charge of this indictment Mr. Richard admits that there are affairs which belong to the Church. This is satisfactory, because Mr. Richard is, we believe, a prominent member of the Liberation Society, and that Society has put forth a scheme which, if carried out, would leave the Church no affairs at all. The scheme observes that Mr. Gladstone's method of dealing with the Irish Church left the Church many affairs. To guard against so calamitous a result in England, precautions are taken, in the Society's scheme, for leaving the Church in this country neither minister, endowment, nor fabric. The cathedrals and other "monumental buildings" are to be seized by the State, and maintained for such pur-