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ROBERT SOUTHEY

A Critical Biography

by

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MAIN REFERENCES.

The main references in footnotes are to the works named below. References to other works are made in full.

1. C.C.S. = Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey, edited by his son the Revd. Charles Cuthbert Southey. London 1849.

2. J.W.W. = Selections from the Letters of Robert Southey, edited by his son-in-law, John Wood Warter, B.D. London 1856.

3. S.T.C. = Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, edited by Hartley Coleridge. London 1895.

4. Letters of S.T.C = Unpublished Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, including certain letters reprinted from original sources, edited by Earl Leslie Griggs, London, 1932.

5. C.B.-R.S. = Correspondence of Caroline Bowles and Robert Southey, Edited by Edward Dowden, Dublin, 1801.

6. C.R.-W.= Correspondence of Crabb Robinson with the Wordsworth Circle; Edited by Edith Morley, London, 1927.

7. Letters H.C. = Letters of Hartley Coleridge; Ed. G.E. and E.L. Briggs, Oxford, 1936.

8. Mem. S.C. = Memoir and Letters of Sara Coleridge, edited by her daughter, London, 1873.

9. Mem. W.T.,N. = A Memoir of the Life and Writings of the late William Taylor of Norwich, by J.W. Robberds, F.G.S., London, 1843.

Besides these and a great many other printed books, some of which are referred to in the text, I have examined the collections of Southey's manuscript letters in the British Museum, and in the Scottish National Library. Another large collection of MSS which belonged to Miss Warter, Southey's grand-daughter, is now in the possession of her niece, Mrs. Boult, of Biddenden, Kent. Through her kindness I have been able to examine these. The bulk of the letters in these three collections have already been printed, though in some cases with omissions or mutilations. While I have discovered nothing in them of the first importance, they do explain or amplify a number of interesting points. I have also to acknowledge the kindness of Canon M.H. FitzGerald of Bristol Cathedral, editor of Southey's poems and letters for the Oxford University Press, who saw the Warter collection of manuscripts before Miss Warter's death. Canon FitzGerald has explained to me that he recommended the destruction of certain letters which seemed to him to refer to purely family matters, including all Southey's letters to Caroline Bowles before their marriage; but he showed me some extracts and notes which he had made, and kindly granted me permission to use them for this thesis. I learned that Southey's first wife was never a good correspondent, and that her letters contained nothing of interest; and I was given some interesting information about his second wife and about his brother Edward, which I have incorporated. Canon FitzGerald's statements are confirmed by certain printed letters to and from Crabb Robinson, as the text shows. No doubt MS letters exist which I have not seen, but I question whether anything remains to be discovered which could materially affect my narrative.

D.R.
Edinburgh, 1940.

CHAPTER I.

EARLY LIFE.

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Born on 12th August 1774, the second but eldest surviving son of the family, Robert Southey was shortly given over to a foster-mother, as if to initiate that succession of separations from his parents which made up his childhood.[1]

His parents were tradespeople of Bristol. Robert Southey the elder was a city linendraper with a passionate love of the country, who disliked and mismanaged his business in such fashion as to die in debt. He had been born near Taunton, and placed first with a grocer kinsman in London, where he sighed sorely for his native hills, so that when a London porter chanced to carry past a hare, his mind went back to the country sports with such a sense of contrast that he cried at the sight. His city exile was for one short year; he went then to Bristol and served twelve or fourteen years with a linendraper, leaving his employment only to open a shop for himself and his brother. The capitalistic venture was made possible by small legacies paid to them by their great-uncle, a lawyer of means who adopted the eldest Southey and left him his property in trust - a bequest which was later to interest, without profiting, Robert Southey junior. Besides this and the savings of a dozen years, there was a contribution to the linendraper's capital from his

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1 Information regarding R. S's childhood is given in his autobiographical letters to John May, C.C.S. vol. I. pp. 1-157.

fiancée. Margaret Hill was the youngest child of a middle-aged union between a widow and a widower, both gentle-folk with growing families, people of culture and some knowledge of the world. Her own schooling was limited to some attendances at a dancing school. Margaret's brother Herbert was all his life a good friend to her son, and her half sister Elizabeth Tyler was certainly the strongest influence in the poet's early life. Mrs Southey's husband's shortcomings as a bread-winner employed Margaret's capacity and motherly sweetness to the utmost; and fearfully disfigured by small-pox, she could claim no feminine advantage when her half-sister Elizabeth descended on her, supported by pretensions to gentility, imperious beauty, and all that force of character which develops in maiden ladies with the means and the will to make a figure. Mrs Southey suffered herself to be domineered over by her half-sister: awe and admiration together led her into subjection. When Miss Tyler declared her intention to take charge of the baby's upbringing, the matter was settled.

Looking back from maturity, Robert Southey could remember being carried by his foster-mother, at the age of three, to a local dame-school in Bristol, where he was driven to control his lusty howls for 'Pat' and take his seat on the form with as good grace as he could muster; while she, a 'great soft-hearted simple country lass', ran howling home to his mother with the whole story. This school attendance, however, was intended rather to keep him out of the way than to advance his education. He/

He made some friends, with whom he learned to play soldiers, and planned the foundation of an island colony, with a mountain of gingerbread and another of candy. He may even have learned to read here, for he learned early; but his attendance was broken by long and frequent absences during which he lived with his Aunt Tyler at Bath.

Miss Tyler was thirteen years older than her half-sister. She spent her girlhood with an uncle, a curate with private means, who was a welcome guest at the tables of the county society. Under his tutelage she acquired a taste for high life. After her aunt's death, she managed the curate's domestic affairs, and some of his parish affairs too, with strong-minded efficiency, and at the age of thirty-three, she inherited his fortune. She now began to live at large, and presently sailed off to Lisbon, carrying her half-brother Herbert Hill and two lady friends with her. They stayed a year abroad, and through this escapade her brother, newly in orders, became chaplain to a British factory in Lisbon. Miss Tyler returned to take a house in Bath, determining to enjoy as much of society life as she could contrive after this expenditure. Her house was large, though on the outskirts of the city, and was fitted up with rash extravagance. She cultivated in public the appearance and manners of a woman of the best society, and indulged in private eccentricities which extreme poverty would not condone. She went about the house in a bed-gown, and that in rags, and could never be persuaded to throw out anything that might/

might be termed property. Cleanliness with her was less a virtue than a mania: her kitchen became her livingroom that the public rooms might be kept clean; she would not light fires because of the dust and ashes; and she built up a constitution of taboos which would hardly be suffered by a savage. Those not her favourites were her enemies and their touch was contaminating: a cup which one drank out of had to be buried six weeks in the garden to purify it. Her temper was violent, but this she thought with some pride was evidence of her intellectual capacity; her expressions were violent enough to be called swearing; her gesticulations extravagantly theatrical; and her personal habits so peculiar she durst not let her servants leave her, while they were terrified to suggest such a thing.

This extraordinary woman quarrelled so violently with her brother-in-law, the Bristol linendraper, that she would never enter his house; and it is little wonder that she held the ascendancy over her half-sister. She returned from Lisbon the year after Robert was born, and for the next twenty years he was more faithful to her wanderings than to the family at Bristol.

A child who can adapt himself to the abnormal life of an eccentric adult, is likely to be indulged, and both the subjection and the indulgence will do him harm. Robert spent the better part of his childhood listening to the gossip of a parcel of middle aged women and missing the company of his kind. That the self complacency and dogmatism and puritanism of the mature man had their prototype and origin in Miss Tyler and her training/

training, cannot be doubted. The training itself was severe. Miss Tyler must sleep with her charge, but at the hour when her warming-pan was carried up to her bed, he was packed into the maid's, and he was jerked out of his beauty-sleep each night to take the place of the warming-pan, when his aunt thought fit to retire. He lay awake for hours in the morning, afraid to move lest he disturb his aunt, diverting himself with the pattern of the curtains or the light filtering through chinks of the shuttered windows. Miss Tyler dressed him in a nankeen vest and tunic with a green fringe, and positively prevented him from dirtying himself. Having learned early to read, a small library of children's stories bound in the flowered and gilt Dutch paper of these days was given to him by the publisher, who was of Miss Tyler's circle, and over these he pored while the ragamuffins of Walcot parish played their games in the dust. Shakespeare too was in his hands almost as soon as he could read. At the age of four he paid his first visit to the theatre in Bath, which his aunt patronised regularly on free passes supplied by another useful friend; while for diversion he pricked out the letters in his aunt's hoarded play bills, one by one, with a pin clutched in his childish fist. So little exercise was allowed him that a walk in the fields became a delirious excitement, and his imagination planned adventurous trips to viewpoints barely two miles away and visible from the garden. Visits to his mother were relished for the liberty they allowed him, and to visit his maternal grandmother at Bed-

minster/

Bedminster, near Bristol, was heaven, for there he had the freedom of the country.

In his grandmother's house the happiest of Southey's childhood memories were centred. As a man, he thought of buying it again, but found the neighbourhood changed too much for the worse. Mrs Southey used frequently to make the short trip across the fields to her mother's house, and when he was home from Bath, Southey accompanied her with his brother Thomas, and the sisters who died in childhood. The home in Bristol, situated in one of the busiest streets of a growing city, offered no scope for childish adventure, and at Bath he was under Miss Tyler's iron rule; but Bedminster provided liberty with indulgence. Southey had no interest in organised games or competitive sports. His pleasure was in the flowers and grasses of the fields and garden, and in the ways of those insects whose habits could conveniently be studied by a patient, insatiably curious little boy, bending over them in a loose cotton tunic.

His uncles - brothers of Miss Tyler - lived here, and reproached the boy for his unsportsmanlike habits without changing them. William Tyler, commonly called 'The Squire', was an odd fellow; an irresponsible mental defective who 'made no contract with society' for his conduct, but had wit enough to be good company. He had an inexhaustible stock of proverbs, anecdotes and gossip that made him a favourite in the kitchen, where he spent much of his time avoiding his step-father. He used/

used to play marbles with the little boy, and taught him some natural history. One of Uncle William's sayings became the motto of the 'The Curse of Kehama', when put into Greek by Coleridge; and Southey drew his portrait in full length for 'The Doctor', besides writing, when he was a man of fifty,

> "Strange creature as he was, I think of him very often, often speak of him, quote some of his odd apt sayings, and have that sort of feeling for his memory, that he is one of the persons whom I should wish to meet in the world to come."[1]

This quaint character lived with Mrs Hill till her death, and after a short interval in lodgings stayed with his sister till a stroke carried him beyond the reach of charity. Uncle Edward, the other brother, was a characterless man who drifted around his mother's house till her death, then became a clerk in Bristol, and died without attracting notice.

These visits were not so frequent as to counterbalance the influence of Southey's Aunt Tyler, whose system, though she consulted Rousseau, was founded on an old maid's whims. The boy was growing up studious, precocious, and priggish; imaginative/

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1 C.C.S. I. 12.

imaginative through much mental solitude; sensitive to that sort of criticism which is bandied by playmates but not by adults, yet proud and full of justification for himself because admitted to level terms with such adults as his aunt and her coterie. In a worse nature this might have bred hypocrisy or cunning. The example of his father's country bluntness, as honesty is sometimes called, and his love for his mother, whom he could not bear to hurt, fortunately outweighed the temptations suggested by the monstrous regimen of Miss Tyler. Margaret Southey used to say that when trouble rose among her children, she could always depend on hearing the truth of it from Robert. I have wondered whether this is not an unusual tribute to a romantic, imaginative child; but perhaps even at this time, the vein of romance in Robert Southey was thinner than he believed.

At the age of six, Robert was promoted to coat and breeches, taken from Bath, and sent as day-boy to a Baptist minister's[1] school then thought the best in Bristol. This was his first taste of discipline other than his aunt's unreliable temper: only his return home in the evening saved him from extreme misery. Severity and bullying by staff and boys, probably common enough at this time, became familiar to him, and certain advantages which communal life offers were lost to the day scholar. The educational system failed to drive the logic of grammar into his imaginative head, though he read Erasmus in a parallel/

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1 Mr Foot. C.C.S. says he published some letters to Bishop Hoadley. (C.C.S. I. 45.)

parallel translation text before leaving, on the death of the master, a year later.

His next move was a year later, in 1781, to a school at Corston, nine miles from Bristol, where he became a boarder. The parting from his mother affected him so deeply that long afterwards he declared

> Years intervening have not worn away
> The deep remembrance of that wretched day,
> Nor taught me to forget my earliest fears,
> A mother's fondness, and a mother's tears;
> When close she prest me to her sorrowing heart,
> As loth as even I myself to part;
> And I, as I beheld her sorrow flow,
> With painful effort hid my inward woe.[1]

The precocious and half-effeminate child might well feel terror at the prospect of Corston after his experience at Bristol, and weep when his father left him with the master and mistress of the place, who, though

> civilly they soothed my parting pain
> ... Never did they speak so civilly again.[2]

The year at Corston Southey described later as one of little profit and no little suffering. The master, one Thomas Flower, was no Squeers, for his delight was in mathematics and astronomy and he had constructed an orrery which filled a room; nor was corporal punishment his recreation; but the school was one of those child-farms of which Dotheboys Hall represents a more extreme example. The boys were an unkept horde of little savages, foully dirty. When Southey went home for the holidays, his scabbed head and his mop of hair, shaggy and populous as the Emperor/

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1 Hymn to the Penates.

2. The Retrospect. Published in Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey, 1795. In its present form (1909 edition) the poem has been completely rewritten.

Emperor Julian's beard, brought his mother to tears. Washing, such as it was without soap, was done in a brook that ran through the yard, no oftener than was necessary. The food was coarse and dirty - broth of leeks swimming in a sea of oily tepid water, bread and cheese, sometimes a hot cake with a scraping of butter. In summer the children grew salads in the neglected flower borders, sold them to the school, and got them back for supper. In autumn, apples and walnuts were plentiful from the master's orchard. The mistress was seldom sober, her husband seldom present, and teaching devolved upon a son Charlie, thus familiarly called by the whole school, where such discipline ruled as may be guessed from this circumstance. Here, Robert read Phaedrus with a marginal vocabulary text, learned some spelling for the termly Spelling Bee - in which he scored success with "crystallized" and "coterie" - and much improved his Latin by being set to teach boys older than himself and assist them in their lessons. He was compelled however to keep late hours, and spent frozen hours in a stupor of cold and terror while the master read sermons from forgotten divines. For relaxation he played a version of 'conkers' with snail-shells occupied by live snails - perhaps a unique variant. A rumour that the itch had broken out brought Glower and Charlie to blows over the question of who was to blame for the neglect; the rumour spread; and Southey was recalled to Bristol for a spell of home life.

Southey cannot have been continuously unhappy at Corston in/

in spite of what he says. The deserted gardens were his playground; he had companionship; if there was little discipline there could be little severity. His tender heart drove him to protest with a playmate, whom he found running up a colossal total of 'Conquests' for his 'Conqueror', by pressing the petrified point against the soft shells of a number of newly hatched snails, and counting the victories with much satisfaction; but on the whole it was a hardening period. He was too little to share in the more active pursuits, such as throwing sticks to bring down walnuts, or damming the brook; his exploits with kite or bow and arrow are not recorded; he probably spent much time by himself, playing such solitary games as a vivid imagination would suggest to him.

During this period his Aunt Tyler had left Bath, and taken herself to live with friends - two sisters named Palmer whose income was from the Bath and Bristol Theatre company. Southey joined this trio for the holidays. Their house was situated behind the theatre, and was connected with it by a covered passage. The ladies were regular patrons of the drama, and the child, who was too old to be sent to bed before it began, as regularly went with them. Miss Tyler was acquainted with Sheridan, Colman and Cumberland; they saw Mrs Siddons in a variety of plays: it is little wonder if the gossip of the house ran on playwrights and actors. Southey thought actors a superior race of men, and soon learned that authors ranked even/

even higher.

From watching plays he graduated to reading them. Shakespeare was his first history book, and he claims himself to have 'gone through' Beaumont and Fletcher before he was eight.[1] Cymbeline and As You Like It were his favourites, but the Knight of the Burning Pestle inspired a longing, one day to be gratified, to read Palmerin of England. His school education taught him the Three R's and some Latin: he educated himself into an omnivorous if uncritical reader. At first all was grist that came to his mill, though he showed a child's readiness to ignore the windings of the Elizabethan plots and the delineation of complex characters, gravitating towards the sprawling romances with all their irrelevancies, for which he developed a taste which was to dominate his literary judgment in later years. His first attempts to write belong to this time: they were dramatic fragments which exhibited his precocity and perseverance.

In 1782, on his mother's death, Miss Tyler sold the house in Bedminster, and Robert, now eight years old, paid his last visit, returned to his father's house, and was enrolled at a day school in Bristol kept by an old Welshman called Williams, who made him something of a favourite. For the next two years he lived with the family at Bristol, but spent his holidays with his aunt, whose peripatetic life at this time seems to have carried her to all the popular resorts of the day.

Williams/

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[1] C.C.S. I. 70.

Williams carried Southey's education little further than the stage he had reached. To be sure he now had a daily, instead of a weekly Latin lesson, but when he had exhausted some mediaeval Latinists, Ovid's Metamorphoses, and Virgil's eclogues, he had also exhausted the master's knowledge, and came perforce to a halt. He learned to write a fine hand, but attempts to teach him dancing failed. He remembered Williams afterwards with affection; but also remembered shrinking from the communal wash tub, and how he made a little hollow beneath the spigot of the rain-water barrel and washed in the drippings. Such fastidiousness in a boy of eight at such a school is worth noting. Very remarkable was his course of private reading. His father, who read only the Bristol Journal, opened the parlour cupboard for Robert to read the Spectator, the Guardian, some eighteenth century plays, and lesser works of the same period. At Bath in the vacations his resources were greater: he devoured Hoole's Tasso and Ariosto, and fell hopelessly in love with The Faerie Queene.[1]

When in 1784 his Aunt took a house in Bristol, he made his home with her again, and was able to run home for dinner, which gratified him much, since, he says "I found much more satisfaction there in my own pursuits from twelve o'clock till two than in the contracted playground." His home pursuits may be imagined, and none will suppose they tended towards a widening of his human sympathies. The boy who could make such a statement/

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1 C.C.S. I. 85.

statement had little chance of becoming a man of broad views. His father's house was within ten minutes of his aunt's; he often looked in, but his brothers were too young to be his companions. Yet there was a servant boy in his aunt's employ whom he dragged round the country to gather flowers, and with whom he sometimes made kites and flew them. The pair also learned enough carpentry to build jointly a puppet theatre, in the course of several years' vacation. The leadership was with the young master however, and Shedrech's part was merely that of a devoted servant: not from him could Robert learn compromise and forbearance.

His reading had now reached out to include the novels of the day, mock Arabian romances, translations of the Lusiad and Homer, Sidney's Arcadia, the Rowley poems, Goldsmith's hack histories, and Josephus - the latter bought in sixpenny numbers with his own pocket money. Such a vast deal of epic and romance to scarce a penn'orth of human intercourse is truly awful to comtemplate; and it led - with such a boy who could doubt it? - to attempts at epic verse. A work entitled Arcadia intended as a sequence to Orlando Furioso reached the stage of some couplets written in the cover of his Latin reader. Bysshe's Art of Poetry then turned him to blank verse - not, however, because it was easier than rhyme, but because he 'felt in it a greater freedom and range of language' and was sensible that in rhyming he 'sometimes used expressions for the sake of the rhyme, which were far-fetched, and certainly would not have occurred without that cause.' Little progress was made with attempts on the/

the lives of Brutus and Richard III, but an Egbert got far enough to be discovered in embryo by a friend of Miss Tyler. Heroic epistles in rhyme; translations of Ovid, Virgil and Horace; satire, drama, and description were all composed by this facile prodigy before he was fourteen years old. Fortunately a halt was called by his entracee to Westminster School.

The removal from Williams's school was expedited through an unlucky sarcasm of the master, who asked Robert where his reading aloud had been learned, and on hearing, retorted, "Then give my compliments to your aunt; and tell her that my old horse, that has been dead this twenty years, could have taught you as well." Southey thought fit to report this verbatim.

His uncle Herbert Hill[1] came forward in 1767 with a proposal to send Robert to Westminster, with an eye to a studentship at his own college of Christ Church, Oxford, which was on the same foundation, and in the expectation that Southey would eventually take orders in the Church of England.[2] In preparation for this, as he had been ill-taught and was physically a weakling, Robert first spent a year under a tutor. Mr Lewis, a Bristol clergyman, had three other pupils, mentally retarded boys, Robert's senior by three or four years, and none of them blessed with angel faces. "Among them," says Southey, "It was not possible that I could find a/

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1 Vide supra, p.3. Chaplain to the British Factories at Porto and Lisbon. He paid Southey's expenses at Westminster and Oxford.

2 "Although it had been both wished and hoped that my father would take holy orders, his uncle had never even hinted to him that he was educating him with that in view. Other friends, however, had not shown the same judgment and he considered himself as destined for the Church, a prospect to which he had never reconciled himself." C.C.S. I. 200.

a friend." He discovered however to his surprise that to write prose was not necessarily more difficult than to write verse, and his lessons thus disposed of, found time for the dusty research which he carried on in solitary corners to ensure the historical accuracy of his poetic output.

In February 1788 Miss Tyler set off for London with her friend Miss Palmer and her nephew, to enter him at Westminster. She had been given £30 by Mr Southey to pay the expenses of the trip, but, her social ambitions enjoing a renascence in the city, she resolved to spend the season there, regardless of the expenses she incurred. It was six weeks before Robert reached his destination, the interval being spent in visits to friends and the theatre. Robert felt himself superfluous and was unhappy. On April 1st Mr Palmer took him to Dean's Yard, introduced him to Dr Smith, and left him at his boarding house. He was placed in the lower fourth form, and introduced to the sufferings of a new boy at a public school.

The levelling system of the Public School seems to have dealt rather ineffectively with young Southey. He entered Westminster a badly spoiled, priggish and precocious boy of fourteen, and looking round his fellows, decided without waste of time that "there were very few upon whose countenance Nature had set her best testimonials."[1] He was surprised to find that with the seniors who had acted in the Westminster Play the previous year, whose names he had read in the newspapers, there could be no/

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1 C.C.S. I. 149.

no friendship or even acquaintance. At first he was terrified by a strong-handed bullying fellow in his boarding house, who poured water in his ears while he slept, flung the poker or a porter pot at him as fancy directed, and even attempted to hold him by the leg from a window on the first floor over a stone area. After this episode, Southey pled for transfer to another room. Next week his enemy tried to scare him by appearing as a ghost, robed in a white sheet. "Not knowing who it was," says Southey, "but certain that it was flesh and blood, I seized him by the throat and we made noise enough to bring up the usher of the house, and occasion an inquiry, which ended in requiring ------'s word that he never would again molest me."[1]

These incidents are recorded on Southey's own authority. What are we to think of the boy? Mr Haller[2] believes that he was sensitive, imaginative, emotional, and his picture reminds one of Little Lord Fauntleroy. But Robert was a tall boy for his age, with an unruly mop of curly brown hair, and I imagine his aunt and Miss Palmer had not neglected either to let the boy know that he was handsome, or to teach him in their woman's way, to criticise the looks of those about him. I fancy it was not long before the natural shyness of the new boy gave way to an assertion of his arrogance. There is nothing to suggest the Arthur of Eric either in the ghost story, or in this anecdote:

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1 C.C.S. I. 138.

2 The Early Life of Robert Southey 1774-1803. By William Haller, Ph.D. New York, 1917.

"Some of the day boys in my remove took it into their heads, in the pride of Westminster, to annoy a little schoolmaster, close to St. Margaret's Churchyard, by beating up his quarters, and one day I joined in the party. The sport was to see him sally with a cane in his hand, and to witness the admiration of his own subjects at our audacity. He complained at last, as he had good cause, to Vincent; but no suspicion fell or could fall on the real parties; for ... the ringleaders in these regular rows were ... the very last to whom such pranks would have been imputed. The only indication he could give, was that one of the culprits was a curly headed fellow. One evening, a little to my amusement, and not a little to my consternation, I heard old Burrell say that Vincent had just sent for him, and taxed him with making a row at a schoolmaster's in St. Margaret's Churchyard; and would hardly believe the protestations of innocence, which he reiterated with an oath when he told the story, and which I very well knew to be sincere. It was his curly head, he said, that brought him into suspicion. I kept my own counsel, and did not go near the academy again."[1]

When Southey went to Oxford, a senior of his day at Westminster greeted him with "I hear you became a devilish fine fellow after I left, and used to row Dodd (the usher) famously!" This/

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1 C.C.S. I. 147-8.

This boy was no namby pamby: his training had made him not soft but conceited: different from others, but taking a pride in his difference.

Southey was four years at Westminster, but his autobiographical letters do not carry us beyond 1788. We do not know how he graduated from a new boy to a 'devilish fine fellow', nor the origins of the friendships he formed with Charles Watkin Williams Wynn[1] and Grosvenor Charles Bedford[2] which were to be the most important and lasting of his life. These friends were later/

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1 C.W.W. Wynne (1775-1800) Schoolboy at Westminster from 1784. Matriculated at Christ Church Oxford 1791, entered Lincoln's Inn 1795, called to Bar 1798. Entered Parliament 1797, sat for Montgomeryshire from 1799 to his death when he was Father of the House of Commons. Was President of the Board of Control, 1822-28, Privy Councillor, 1822, Secretary at War, 1830-31, and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1834-35. Southey wrote to his brother Dr. H.H. Southey, Feb. 3rd, 1813, "Wynn is in Wales, and where he is, he is always, as Elmsley most happily said of him in Oxford, - doing something else. He is always in that state of bother and confusion which you would expect in a man who, before he was married, used to begin doing half a hundred things before he put his breeches on, and who used to have books, pen, ink and paper, breeches, gallowses, neck-cloth, and rolls and butter, all upon the breakfast table at the same time." J.W.W. IV. 530.

2 G.C. Bedford (- . 1839) Schoolboy at Westminster with Southey. Lived at Brixton and held a post in the Exchequer, obtaining the highest post in his department in 1822. He was Southey's principal non-political correspondent, to whom many of his best letters were addressed. "My letters to you are such pure Meipseads that I have seldom room or leisure for any but personal concerns." (Letter to C.G.B. dated 29.1.1817. J.W.W. III. 57.) "If I were to look round the world and ask you what man there is in it whom I should miss the most if he were removed, you would be the man. Excepting Wynn, you are the oldest friend I have, and with no one has my communication been so uninterruptedly frequent." (To G.C.B. 22.6.14. J.W.W. II. 355.)

later the recipients of much of his correspondence. Thomas Philip Lamb was another Westminster friend to whom many early letters were addressed. James Boswell, son of the biographer, was his room mate for a time; and the autobiography mentions a George Strachey in his form, as one whom Southey's 'physiognomical eyes' approved, and who was his friend from first sight. Strachey was also a 'diligent and capable boy'. It may be supposed that as these friends moved up the school they were bound into a coterie, like-minded, careless of games, but keenly interested in subjects outside the school curriculum.

When Southey reappears four years later in the pages of the Correspondence, his dominant characteristics of quick kindling enthusiasm, an enormous capacity for reading and noting, but not for inwardly digesting, and an equally enormous facility for expressing himself on paper, were well developed. During the years of which we have no record, these were growing. A boy in the upper forms of a public school is bound to acquire a fame of some sort: either he is a sportsman, or a student, or at worst he is notoriously neither. Into this third division, willy-nilly, through an effeminate upbringing and an incompetent schooling in Latin, Robert Southey found himself thrust. Yet he must have been conscious of possessing talents, he knew he had acquired prodigious stores of book knowledge, and he knew himself to be better read in English literature than his teachers. Spoiled and therefore arrogant, it would be easy for him to believe that his separation from the herd was due to his own superior merit; and it would be the more natural for/

for him to make a virtue of his eccentricity, if his companions made an eccentricity of his virtue. For women's chastity was to Southey something so sacred that the slightest suggestion of lasciviousness excited him almost to hysteria. Since the morals of this period were loose, since its public conscience felt nothing of later Victorian horror of seduction and unchastity, Southey's aggressive priggishness is not sufficiently explained by his personal uprightness. The influence of his aunt during his most impressionable years is however a simple and obvious first cause. The conceited old woman who trained Southey was herself an old maid. Is it too much to suggest that with all her love of the theatre, her ambition to shine in high society, and her apparent freedom from convention, she had the fanatical horror of unchastity that spinsters sometimes feel? Further, as the niece and half sister of men in orders, she had a horror of impiety which also her nephew inherited, and cultivated to an intense degree. A talented and well-informed boy, strict in his moral and religious views, and to some extent an eccentric among his fellows, it is not surprising that Southey grew up with a temper all too ready to attribute immorality and irreligion to his opponents in any field.

Perhaps he found compensation for a comparative failure at Westminster in becoming a leader in his own small circle, and in trying to win notoriety by the extravagance of his opinions. He read in his later years at school the works of Rousseau, Voltaire, and Gibbon; and though the ordinary schoolboy is a conservative creature and the public schoolboy not less so, Southey/

Southey persuaded himself into sympathy with the revolutionaries who destroyed the Bastille in 1789. How far his feeling was logical, how far even sincere, it is not necessary to enquire. Southey was precocious and impulsive, steeped in a literature whizh confirmed his own experience - that the wise and good are tyrannised over by the base. Something of the generous spirit that moved Wordsworth and unified the Whig minority under Fox was shared or adopted by the boy of fifteen, (who must have seemed an extravagant figure to his contemporaries!) And, having accepted the principles of the French Revolutionaries, he defended them with all the tenacity of moral fervour: it became a matter of conscience to defy authority and cling to his views with the tenacity of a martyr.

Southey's juvenile views on affairs in France are revealed in the letters he wrote on leaving Westminster, but the cause of his departure was more trivial: - an article in a school magazine. The first literary work he offered for print was a verse elegy on the death of his little sister, which he sent by post to 'The Trifler', a Westminster magazine run by senior boys: the suggestion of capitalised sentiment in this incident is perhaps worth note. This was rejected, but his second venture was more successful, attracting the Headmaster's attention. The Flagellant was initiated by Southey in company with his own particular friends. Wynn and Strachey had actually left before the magazine appeared, but Bedford and Southey pressed on and on March 1st 1792 the first number, written by Bedford, appeared. The paper proposed to satirise society/

society in a series of essay papers like the Spectator; the framework was a 'club' or retired scholars who wrote in turn. Bedford, as Peter the Hermit, dealt four mild lashes against vice, and in the fifth number Gaulbertus, or Robert Southey, attacked flogging. Doubtless the public schools of the day deserved calling to account in this matter, but it was most impolitic for a schoolboy to protest; and the emphatic rhodomontade of Southey's assertions that flogging was an invention of the devil and the floggers priests of Lucifer, was unlikely to conciliate the headmaster of Westminster. Dr Vincent indeed took it very ill. Southey thought he had caught 'something of Voltaire's manner.' Whether Dr. Vincent disliked most the suggestions of the boy's unorthodox background or the plain innuendo is debatable, but that he had other evidences of Southey's rebellious temper is certain. Mr Haller calls attention to a letter from Charles Lamb to Southey,[1] to prove that Lamb at least thought Southey was the Westminster boy who damaged the nose of a statue of Major Andre in Westminster Abbey; an essay had been returned to the young radical because it too roundly abused Burke; Southey himself in a letter of 1818 says 'I know something of rebellions and generally suspect that there has been some fault in the masters as well as the boys,'[2] which/

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1 C.B.-R.S.40. Caroline Bowles wrote to Southey 27.10.23; "From a certain hint at the end of Lamb's letter, I half suspect that, in your schoolboy days, you were a party concerned in some outrage on Sir Cloudesly Shovel's nose in Westminster Abbey", to which R.S. replies 2.11.23 'I once declared in a poem that I never put out the eye of a Cyclops; and I now declare with equal sincerity that I never offered any outrage to the nose of Sir Cloudesly Shovel." The relevant part of Lamb's letter appears in Last Essays of Elia 'The Tombs in the Abbey'.

2 C.C.S. IV. 318.

which may mean he had already asserted himself against authority. In any case the upshot was that Dr. Vincent sued the publisher for libel, and Southey at once acknowledging himself the author, was made to write an apology and then formally expelled. The background of the case suggests that Southey was no sensitive shrinker who found publicity where he least sought it.

We went to his aunt's house at Bristol and bombarded his friends with letters in which he harped on the Flagellant and proposed further publications to attack 'Envy, Hatred and Malice'. Other troubles however arose to distract him. His father fell into financial difficulties and became ill. Southey paid a visit to the elder brother and made a vain appeal for help, returning embittered. Miss Tyler came to the rescue financially, but the linendraper's health was more fragile than his fortunes and he died in six months.

Meanwhile Herbert Hill had to receive a parcel of Flagellants and made a decision on his nephew's case. He made no reproaches, and Southey's programme still held, but Dr. Vincent's power reached beyond Westminster, and Southey was refused admittance to Christ Church. He blamed Vincent for this with undisguised bitterness, writing to Philip Lamb;[1]

> " ... Dr Vincent has behaved to me with his accustomed generosity and liberality, virtues which he praises so much and practices so little. I am rejected at Christ Church. When I say so without feeling very warm, allow me to possess more patience than either you or I imagined. Let/

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[1] Thomas Philip Lamb, of Mountsfield Lodge, Rye. J.W.W. I. 5-6.

Let me not, however, attribute the calm state of my mind to so good a motive. I cannot help hoping one day to tell him he has behaved to me in a manner equally ungenerous and unjust. Before I wrote that letter (for which I must reproach myself, as expressing contrition I did not feel, and apologising for an action which I thought needed no apology), before I was persuaded to write, he had engaged his honour never to mention the circumstance. As Queen Bess once said 'God forgive him, but I never can'."

Dr Vincent's judgment in expelling Southey and procuring his rejection at Christ Church for this offence does seem to have been at fault; and it may well have strengthened Southey's conviction that his views on most matters were more valuable than vested pedantry would admit. He certainly grew up so stiff in opinion and so often in the wrong that it is difficult sometimes to reconcile his stubborn adherence to folly with what we know of his commonsense.

In October 1792 he was admitted to Balliol College, but he did not go into residence until the following January. The long interval between his expulsion and his entrance was spent in writing letters and poetry, tramping, reading some Euclid, much more Spenser, and the dispatches from France. But these last began now to trouble him, for before the end of the year he wrote to Philip Lamb, "The people have changed tyrants, and, for the mild irresolute Louis, bow to the savage, the unrelenting Petition. After so open a declaration of abhorrence, you may perhaps expect that all the sanguine dreams of liberty are gone forever. It is true, I have seen the difficulty of saying to the mob, 'thus far, no farther'. I have seen a/

a structure raised by the hand of wisdom, and defended with the sword of liberty, undermined by innovation, hurled from its basis by faction, and insulted by the proud abuse of despotism. Is it less respectable for its misfortunes? These horrid barbarities, however, have rendered me totally indifferent to the fate of France, and I have only to hope that (La) Fayette will be safe."[1] The reference is to the attack on the Tuileries (August 10th, 1792) and to the proclamation of the Republic by the National Convention on September 21st.

His poetic output included some imitations of Horace and Juvenal whose satirical mood suited him, and one surviving letter to Lamb is in Prior's anapaests. The eighteenth century poets indeed must have been his favourite reading during his last years at school, for he later declared that Gray, Mason, Warton, Akenside, Cowper and Bowles inspired the first verses he printed, and he paid a special tribute to Dr Sayers, whose Dramatic Sketches of Northern Mythology, now forgotten, convinced him that success with unrhymed verse forms was not limited to Collins. This was the first book Southey ever found the money to order from a bookseller.

With his head thus full of contemporary politics, Gothicism, Deism, the commercially inspired patriotism of the eighteenth century poets, and a weak leaven of academic learning, Southey bade farewell to his aunt again, and proceeded to Oxford.

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1 J.W.W. I. 4. (dated '1792' but probably September or October).

CHAPTER II.

OXFORD AND PANTISOCRACY.

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Southey entered Balliol in a mood of arrogant superiority, not expecting to find profit in the experience of residence, and certainly admitting none. Oxford at this time deserved his strictures, and his capacity and personal achievement entitled him to make them. "I expect to find pedantry, prejudice, and aristocracy"[1] he wrote, before going up; and a month later, "I learn to pay respect to men remarkable only for great wigs and little wisdom."[1] The aristocracy was there too, and Southey had to learn that the aristocracy of brawn which ruled Westminster had its new parallel in the aristocracy of blood which ruled Oxford. As at Westminster he found there could be no place for him in the leading class, and set about achieving fame in unorthodox ways. The state of things could not be altered, but he could and did protest against it by defying the laws of etiquette "Would you think it possible that the wise founders of an English University should forbid us to wear boots?"[1] he asked Bedford; and though he toed the line here, he committed the impropriety of entering the dining-hall with his fair flowing in curls down to his shoulders - 'a token of disaffection to Church and State' as Mr. Haller points out. He was disgusted by the heavy drinking habits of the undergraduates, and lamented the absence, in 1793, of any memorial to the Oxford Martyrs. His fastidiousness drove him/

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1 C.C.S. I, 169.

him, as at Westminster, to seek friends in a more intellectual circle, and besides Wynn, who had gone up before him to Christ Church, and whose rooms in 'Skeleton Corner' Southey must have frequented, he now had for friend a Balliol youth named Edmund Seward, who sounds too good to be true. His appearance was to Southey odd and uncommon; he denied himself butter and sugar and drank no wine; tea and dry bread made his breakfast; and to a suggestion of Southey's, made with reference to Hutchinson's Moral Philosophy in Latin, that studies would be pursued with more pleasure if made more interesting, he replied "Certainly they should, but I feel a pleasure in studying them because I know it is my duty.' Southey gave this prodigy the respect that was his due. Academic studies were pursued in the Greek and Latin poets, but his tutor told Robert frankly that if he had anything better to do, lectures should be avoided. He was boy enough to be tempted by the Oxford rivers into swimming and rowing with all the enthusiasm of the degenerate 'bloods' of the colleges.

Certain of his characteristics developed during the Oxford years, and require to be examined. With all his talent, and in spite of his strong, unregulated passion for sheer information, Southey was an illogical and shallow thinker. From his mother's side he inherited that impatient temper so fully developed in his aunt: like Miss Tyler he enjoyed activity for its own sake, regardless of direction; with him it took the form of an insatiable hunger for all sorts of unrelated scraps of knowledge. He had nothing at all of the philosophic temper/

temper, and what he says of the influence of philosophical books on him, is largely self-deception. The best he could do was accept such opinions of the philosophers as, read without understanding or appreciation of their logical tendencies, harmonised with those inhibitions and conscious restrictions by which he let himself be bound. Thus he read Epictetus. In 1806 he said, "I carried him in my pocket till my very heart was ingrained with it, as a pig's bones become red by feeding him upon madder. And the longer I live and the more I learn, the more I am convinced that Stoicism, properly understood, is the best and noblest of systems."[1] Stoicism, properly understood, is a religion of atheistical despair; and what Southey shows here is simply shallowness of spiritual apprehension. He mistook for moral principles the standards of conduct imposed by his upbringing. Southey's very originality in the matter of revolution was the sort of originality permitted to the pseudo-intellectual caste among which he was brought up; the sole difference being that fashion had dictated a new direction for proper enthusiasms since Miss Tyler taught her nephew the rules of the game. The real thinkers of his age took very different roads from Robert Southey. Wordsworth became a mystic, and Coleridge lost himself in a maze of thought: Southey's mental activity was all on the surface; he had no head for the subtleties of philosophy, and such attitudes were incomprehensible to/

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[1] To his brother Thomas Southey. J.W.W. I. 400.

to him. After the first enthusiasm passed, he admitted he had nothing in common with Coleridge; and though he was Wordsworth's neighbour, he was not really in sympathy with his views. Stoicism was merely a name he gave to his acceptance of facts which it baffled his reason to explain, and which remained persistently unpleasant. Soon he called himself a Unitarian; later he called himself a Christian, but his attitude was the same, except that material disappointments made him add the amendment that all would be made up to him in a better world to come.

Such views on morality and religion as Southey did hold were accepted at second hand with little understanding. He was a child of the eighteenth century; and the eighteenth century was predominantly rational. The leading theologians preached Deism, according to which a man's own reason is his supreme guide. Extremists even declared that Divine Revelation was irrational and therefore to be rejected, that the Scriptures were corrupt, and that the only guide to the truth of the Biblical revelation of God was the nature of things as it could be deduced by observation. The Deists did not deny God, but opposed superstition and illiberalism, and hence, in extreme cases, the orthodoxy of the established Church. From this, or as a parallel discovery, arose the conception of Nature as a force acting for the maintenance of a permanent order in the Universe. The ordinances of the Church, founded on tradition or revelation instead of reason, became suspect as valueless for the promotion of the true virtue. In place of Divine ordinances, there came to be set up the natural ordinances of the physical world, and Nature/

Nature was discovered to be a strong controlling force. Soon, the orthodox doctrines of the Church came to be regarded as positively harmful; as debasing superstitions which perverted the moral nature of men.

When the romantic school of poets, headed by Thomson early in the eighteenth century, but followed at last by Dyer, Blair, and Akenside, men whose upbringing was not within the sound of Bow Bells but among the hills of the north, tried to paint the beauties of nature, they did so in accordance with the Deistic philosophy. Akenside at least was as much a philosopher as a poet. The rediscovery of the loveliness of wild nature synchronised very happily with the conception of the Noble Savage. Those who loved nature and found fault with the social order, found the fruits of Deism very palatable; the poets of the late century were popular, and poetically minded young men like Robert Southey found the old philosophical conclusions as to the weakness of orthodoxy set forth by poets who had rediscovered Nature's loveliness, and swallowed the one with the other as a solution of their difficulties. God was still Nature, but Nature methodised not by Pope, but by Rousseau. The poets who were Southey's immediate predecessors, and thus his first poetical influences, belonged to the fraternity of noble savages, and Southey, willing enough to believe that the beaux, sportsmen and illiterate drunkards of his University were degenerates from the high stock of humanity, attached himself to the poetic philosophers, ignoring their reasoning but accepting with his usual easy enthusiasm the/

the view that nature was the true guide to moral conduct, and that to know this was to know God. The consequence of this acceptance is found in his earliest poetical works and the prefaces, for the history of which the narrative must be resumed.

Southey spent his first Easter vacation walking with Seward, and on his return wrote a long letter to Bedford to explain that "far from adopting the tenets of any self sufficient cynic or puzzling sophist, (my) sentiments will be found more enlivened by the brilliant colours of fancy, nature, and Rousseau." He mingled expressions of a romantic temper with the technical language of philosophy and imagined himself unique. He had by now extended and improved his acquaintances, for he speaks of Robert Lovell, Charles Collins, Nicholas Lightfoot, and Robert Burnett. During this vacation he first walked with Seward, then visited Bedford at his home near London, and with his encouragement, wrote, in six weeks, his first epic poem, Joan of Arc.

The preface to the first edition tells us that

> "Early in July 1793, the character of Joan of Arc was the subject of conversation between myself and an intimate friend: the adventures of this extraordinary woman appeared to me well adapted for an Epic Poem; in the course of a few days I formed the rude outlines of a plan, and wrote the first three hundred lines; the remainder of the month was employed travelling, and I made/

made no progress even in idea. The subject was resumed on the 13th. of August, and the original poem in TWELVE books, finished in six weeks, from that time."

He was now 19 years of age, and though the poem was not printed for three years, and then much altered, the throwing off of this version must be considered a remarkable feat. The altered version included nearly 400 lines by Coleridge, but the changes must have been mainly technical; the plan and the spirit of the first edition illustrate the opinions of Southey in 1793.

As we have it, Joan of Arc is in ten books. In the first, Dunois meets the Maid, who tells how her childhood was spent with a hermit living close to Nature. At 14, she says, she heard a soldier, named Conrade, argue that God intends men to war when tyranny is abroad. She and Dunois set out together, and in the second book, she has a vision in which she is called to Orleans and warned of her ultimate fate. The siege of Rouen and King Henry's behaviour to the inhabitants is also described in no measured terms. The third book tells how she recognised the King and argued with the Doctors of Theology, to their complete discomfiture. In the fourth, after haranguing King Charles at length on the licentiousness of his court, she sets off to answer an appeal for help from Orleans, guided by Conrade who carried the message. On the march, an outcast describes some of the horrors of despotic war; making the fifth book. The sixth is concerned with the defeat of the English outside the town, and the entry of Joan into Orleans; books seven and eight continue the fighting. A vision comes to Joan in the ninth book, of the Dungeons of Despair/

Despair, where she argues with Despair, and is again shown her fate. Undaunted, she persists in her mission, and an angel comforts her by showing the fates awarded to tyrants, hypocrites, lewd writers, and Murderers of Mankind. These include Nimrod, Alexander, Caesar, Octavious, Titus the Conqueror of the Jews, and Henry V. of England, now in repentant mood. The poem closes with the battle of Patay, and the coronation of Charles at Rheims.

The story was of course selected as illustrating a struggle for liberty, having its parallels in the period in which Southey wrote and in his personal quarrel with the social order: it praises Liberty throughout, and is dedicated to Liberty in a Greek motto on the title page. But it also became a vehicle for tirades against some other of Southey's moral aversions.

> "There are few readers (he says in the Preface) who do not prefer Turnus to Aeneas; an emigrant, suspected of treason, who negligently left his wife, seduced Dido, deserted her, and then took Lavinia forcibly from her betrothed husband! What avails a man's piety to the Gods, if in all his dealings with men he prove himself a villain? If we represent Deity as commanding a bad action, we make a Moloch God, and furnish arguments for the Aetheist. The ill-chosen subjects of Lucan and Statius have prevented them from acquiring the popularity they would otherwise have merited, yet in detached parts, the former of these is perhaps unequalled, certainly unexcelled."

And in the ninth book of the poems we read of a group so horrible

That/

That the Maid gazed with half-averted eye,
And shudder'd: each one was a loathing corpse!
The worm did banquet on his putrid prey,
Yet had they life and feeling exquisite,
Tho' motionless and mute.
"Most wretched men
Are these," the Angel cried. "These, JOAN, are Bards
Whose loose lascivious lays perpetuate
Their own corruption. Soul-polluted slaves,
Who sat them down, deliberately lewd,
So to awake and pamper lust in minds
Unborn; and therefore foul of body now
As then they were of soul, here they abide
Long as the evil works they left on earth
Shall live to taint mankind."

The author of this was the fastidious boy who washed in the drippings from the spiggot of a rain-water barrel, and later uncompromisingly identified literary and moral standards. Sheer bawdry is to be reprobated, but the man who today publishes a preference for Turnus over AEneas and Statius over Virgil exhibits an unusual taste.

Rousseau's doctrine of the Noble Savage is argued by the Maid at considerable length against the Doctors of Divinity. "'Twas Nature taught my early youth" she declares, and the Doctors stand appalled till a priest warns her that this is heretical.

Masses and absolution and the use
Of mystic wafer are to thee unknown.
How then could nature teach thee true religion,
Depriv'd of these? Nature can teach to sin,
But 'tis the priest alone can teach remorse,
Can bid St. Peter ope the gates of Heaven,
And from the penal fires of purgatory
Absolve the soul.

Joan, no whit abashed, retorts with energy,

'Tis/

'Tis true my youth
Conceal'd in forest gloom, knew not the sound
Of mass high-chaunted, nor with trembling lips
I touch'd the mystic wafer: yet the Bird
That to the matin ray prelusive poured
His joyous song, methought did warble forth
Sweeter thanksgiving to Religion's ear ...
Than ever rung along the high-arch'd roofs
Of man. Yet never from the bending vine
Pluck'd I its ripen'd clusters thanklessly,
Of that good God unmindful, who bestow'd
The bloodless banquet. Ye have told me, Sires,
That Nature only teaches man to sin!
If it be sin to seek the wounded lamb,
To bind its wounds, and bathe them with my tears,
This is what Nature taught! No, REVERENDS! no,
It is not Nature that can teach to sin:
Nature is all Benevolence, all Love,
All Beauty! ....

and the argument is clinched when

Even as she spoke
A pale blue flame rose from the trophied tomb
Beside her ....
Recovering from his amaze, the Priest replied:
"Thou are indeed the delegate of Heaven!
What thou hast said surely thou shalt perform!
We ratify thy mission. Go in peace."

Other elaborations of the theme abound throughout the text.

These matters are however subsidiary to the great theme of Liberty, more especially illustrated by the horror of war waged by tyrants. The Maid's first vision shows her a wide, desolate landscape ruled by a Dynast and his courtiers Mitred Hypocrisy and proud Oppression, who are all routed by the arrival of Freedom. The last lines of the poem solemnly warn the King of France

that hireling guards,
Tho' flesh'd in slaughter, would be weak to save
A tyrant on the blood-cemented throne
That totters underneath him.

Many lines more plainly allusive to the situation in 1793 ring out their blatant warning:

I/

> I tell thee Chief, that there the English wolves
> Shall never pour their yells of victory.
> The will of God defends these fated walls.
>
> Herald! To all thy vaunts
> Of English sovereignty let this suffice
> For answer: France will only own as king
> Him whom the people chuse.

It was the undisguised Jacobinism of such passages that won Southey notoriety on the publication of the epic.

As poetry, it is very thin stuff. Epithets jostle each other along the crowded lines, and his Latinisms are seldom either lovely or useful. 'Biform hag! 'cuetaneous oak', and 'morning ray prelusive' display an affectation of hard words. When Conrade, accusing King Charles of seduction, cries

> My poor polluted Agnes! Thou bad man!
> Thou hast almost shaken my faith in heaven,

it is impossible not to laugh. It is no epic, for the propaganda outweighs the narrative which at the end is incomplete; and Joan as a Dedicated Maid is utterly without character. Her principal duty is to speak for Robert Southey, who, it will be noticed, has drifted rather out of the course set for him by his uncle Herbert Hill, and directed towards the Church.

Later editions showed some changes. In 1798 the vision of the second book was replaced by an account of a storm in which Joan, overcome by the splendour of power displayed, becomes entranced, and in this state, filled with a conviction of her mission. A still later edition expunged Coleridge's lines and rejected the vision of the ninth book, which was added to the volume as a separate poem. The rewritten book tells how Joan by an inspired intervention saves the life of the Duke/

Duke of Burgundy, and makes a public oration against oppression. Evidently Southey thought the visions of the first edition were too Gothic.

In the preface, and by two lines in the second book, Southey acknowledges a debt to Glover; an Epic poet whose Leonidas (1737) and Atheneid (1787) were thoroughly familiar to him. Another influence he admits was Dr. Sayers, whose Dramatic Sketches tried to illustrate Scandinavian mythology. Southey admired his unrhymed odes. Sayers was a writer of the Gothic school, by Mason out of Gray, now little read; but when Southey was devouring epics as fast as he could read his contemporaries were not likely to escape attention. Behind their influences there stood the vast bulk of native and translated epic poetry which filled Southey's head, and from which he extracted the essence of poetic Nationalism. He knew a feeble French tragedy based on the life of his heroine; otherwise the work was original. He had "never been guilty of looking into Voltaire's Pucelle."

In 1794, actually before Joan of Arc was printed, a volume, Poems by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey was published at Bath. Southey's poems were the strainings of all he had ever written. In 1793 he told Grosvenor Bedford he had burnt or lost 10,000 lines, kept an equal amount, and kept but thought worthless 15,000 lines. Such amazing facility carried with it the penalty of feebleness, and the volume is only of interest to us as showing the range of Southey's interests. In a late preface he acknowledged that his schoolboy verses were reminiscent of Gray, Mason/

Mason, Warton, and Akenside, and he also confessed the influence of Cowper, Bowles and Sayers. I have quoted The Retrospect: the other pieces show a wide diversity both of form and subject, and echo almost every poet of the eighteenth century without ever reaching a standard that made them worth preserving. The volume was brought out by Bowles's publisher, on whom Southey and Lovell called personally. Their admiration for Bowles may have persuaded the printer that he had captured an equally profitable protege.

Robert Lovell appears in the Correspondence in 1793, as an eccentric but lovable fellow, "who has been his own master since 15 and owes all his knowledge to himself." Southey made his acquaintance through a Miss Mary Fricker, Lovell's fiancée, of whom we hear now for the first time. Her sister Edith Fricker however had won Southey's admiration some time earlier; and they were probably by now engaged. The Fricker family comprised a widow and six children. Mary, Edith and Sarah were the elder daughters, and during their father's lifetime they received the usual female education given to their class. Mr Fricker however died bankrupt about 1783, and during the eight years that followed the family fell into serious difficulties. Mrs. Fricker kept some sort of school, and the elder girls earned something by needlework or perhaps by millinery, as Byron suggested.[1] Sarah had been sixteen when her father died, and perhaps worked for Mrs. Southey among others, for the families were old friends at Bristol.

Perhaps Southey spent some of his time with Edith Fricker during/

1. Byron's works, edited H.C. Coleridge, Vol.VI, (Letters) p.113 and Don Juan Canto 3, Stanza 93.

during the autumn of 1793, when he was worrying about his future; knowing well that the tone of Joan of Arc, together with his intention to marry, must debar him from a fellowship at Balliol. The idea of taking orders was by now utterly repugnant to him from the vigour of his social opinions, contrasted with the apathy of the Established Church. He was not in residence this term, but at Bristol with Miss Tyler. He went up again after the new year, proposing with his usual enthusiasm a medical career, but this was soon abandoned. He attempted to raise money by selling the very doubtful reversion to his uncle's property at Taunton, without success, and he even attempted to find a post under the Tory government, though his Oxford reputation made this obviously impossible. Now he began to talk, half seriously, of going to America[1] to lead the natural life he had so much praised, with intervals of course for philosophy and poetry; and in the middle of the depression caused by all this uncertainty about his marriage and his future career, he found time to study the course of events in France, which could not, from his point of view, make cheerful reading. This letter to Bedford shows that his friends expected his views to be altered.

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[1] Note that this precedes his meeting with Coleridge. R.S. writes H.W. Bedford, 13th Nov. 1793, "It was the favourite intention of Cowley to retire with books to a cottage in America, and seek that happiness in solitude which he could not find in society. My asylum there would be sought for different reasons, (and no prospect in life gives me half the pleasure this visionary one affords); I should be pleased to reside in a country where men's abilities would ensure respect; where society was upon a proper footing, and man was considered as more than money; and where I could till the earth, and provide by honest industry the meat which my wife would dress with pleasing care - redeunt spectacula mane - reason comes with the end of the paper."

> For once in my life I rejoiced that Grosvenor Bedford's paper was short, and his letter at the end. To suppose that I felt otherwise than grieved and indignant at the fate of the unfortunate Queen of France was supposing me a brute, and to request an avowal of what I felt, implied a suspicion that I did not feel. You seemed glad, when arguments against the system of republicanism had failed, to grasp at the crimes of wretches who call themselves republicans, and stir up my feelings against my judgment.[1]

His views were altering in this way, that as the actualities of the Revolution which he had praised became more unpleasant, he retreated from them to take his stand on a higher level, at which he could glorify democracy while deploring the uglier consequences of its attempts at expression. The rise of Robespierre and the fall of Brissot's Girondins impressed him very deeply; and one aspect of the circumstances attending this change seeming to confirm a personal opinion he had always cherished, he became from this time a Tory to the extent that he distrusted the lower classes as liable to acts of extremism dictated chiefly by a thirst for revenge. That such men given a free rein would become tyrants, worse, because worse educated, than noble tyrants, evolved slowly as one of his political beliefs. When this belief, at first vague, crystallised, Southey's conversion was complete, and I consider his later emphatic denials of a change of front justifiable in part, because, being/

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[1] C.C.S. I. 188. Autumn 1793 (undated.) Marie Antionette was executed in October 1793.

being fundamentally incapable of facing facts and drawing logical conclusions, he never realised that in opposing the illiterate-oppressed who were the class most exploited, he opposed the class on behalf of which it was most important that public sympathy should be roused if any substantial reforms were to be achieved. He had a reformer's spirit, but he refused to support the spokesmen of the oppressed classes, and succeeded perfectly in pleasing nobody.

His depression at this time was real, but I question how far political events were responsible for it. The letters he wrote despairing of democracy, reflect more the feelings of a man who, conscious of unusual ability and proud of his ascetic virtue, finds himself in a state of unwilling dependence, and sees his visions of a glorious future recede rapidly into a very insubstantial background. This attitude can easily enough be traced in two other letters of 1793.

> I am sick of this world, and discontented with everyone in it. The murder of Brissot has completely harrowed up my feelings, and I begin to believe that virtue can only aspire to content in obscurity; for happiness is out of the question. I look round the world, and everywhere the same mounrful spectacle - the strong tyrannising over the weak, man and beast; oppression is triumphant everywhere, and the only difference is, that it acts in Turkey through the anger of a grand seignior, in France of a revolutionary tribunal, and in England of a prime minister. There is no place for virtue.[1]

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[1] To Grosvenor Bedford. 11.11.93. C.C.S. I. 190.

> Nineteen years have elapsed since I set sail upon the ocean of life, in an ill-provided boat; the vessel weathered many a storm, and I took every distant cloud for land; still pushing for the Fortunate Islands, I discovered that they existed not for me, and that, like others wiser and better than myself, I must be content to wander about and never gain the port. ... Yesterday is just one year since I entered my name in the Vice Chancellor's book. It is a year of which I would wish to forget the transactions, could I remember only their effects; my mind has been very much expanded; my hopes, I trust extinguished: so adieu to hope and fear, but not to folly.[1]

In such unhappy mood, he came into touch with Coleridge and was almost at once swept on a wave of new enthusiasm into plans for new schemes that would solve his problems for ever.

Two years older than Southey, Coleridge has graduated through Christ's Hospital to Jesus College, Cambridge University, where he had made himself unpopular by his opinions on Deism, Unitarianism, and Foxism. In December 1793, he tried to evade his financial difficulties and stifle his love for Mary Evans by enlisting in a regiment of dragoons; but from the army he was haled back by his brothers to Cambridge, where he was reprimanded, gated for a month, and set to translate a Greek quarto of some ninety pages. He had made this atonement by June 1794, and was on a walking tour to Wales when he called at Oxford on Robert Allen, an undergraduate of Southey's circle. Southey and Coleridge met, and an immediate intimacy blazed up. They shared the same views of Republicanism and Religion, they were both enthusiastically interested in poetry, and they may have confided to each other their depressions and their doubtful prospects; certainly this friendship was a beanstalk growth only possible to two young men/

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1 C.C.S. I. 190.

men with an unusual quantity of common interests and striking lack of personal reserve. Southey wrote at once to Bedford;

> Allan is with us daily, and his friend from Cambridge, Coleridge, whose poems you will oblige me by subscribing to, either at Hookham's or Edwards's. He is of the uncommon merit, - of the strongest genius, the clearest judgment, the best heart. My friend he already is, and must hereafter be yours.[1]

while Coleridge was equally carried away by the violence of this new friendship, and was soon after writing to Southey as "Sturdy Republican" and complaining of the evils of society as constituted.

> It is wrong, Southey! for a little girl with a half famished sickly baby in her arms to put her head in at the window of an inn - 'Pray give me a bit of bread and meat!' from a party dining on lamb, green peas, and salad. Why? Because it is impertinent and obtrusive! 'I am a gentleman! and wherefore the clamorous voice of woe intrude upon mine ear?' My companion is a man of cultivated, though not vigorous understanding; his feelings are all on the side of humanity;yet such are the unfeeling remarks, which the lingering remains of aristocracy occasionally prompt.[2]

During the fortnight at Oxford, Southey must have unburdened himself of a great deal of republicanism, and from this the talk turned to the ideal state, in which the young men's theories were imagined in practice. If we suppose these talks to have taken place in Allan's rooms in Corpus Christi, among those present there would be Allan himself, perhaps Burnet, Seward, and others of the select circle, and Coleridge's friend Hucks. The discussion, though centred on an ideal state, continued as though that state were now actually about to be founded, "Pantisocracy" a name descriptive of the method of government, and other philosophical technical terms of its constitution were coined by Coleridge, and details of the communal life were flung/

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1 To Grosvenor Bedford. 12.6.94. C.C.S. I. 210.
2 S.T.C. I. 73.

flung in by Southey as he tossed back his curls and pointed on the scent with his long nose. Such talks continued for two weeks, then Coleridge left to continue on his way to Wales, while Southey and Robert Burnet turned south to Bath, and 'talked the idea into shape'.

We owe something of our knowledge of Pantisocracy to the industry of Joseph Cottle, a Bristol bookseller who became acquainted with the projectors in this year. Cottle was a Methodist and an honest industrious man with a rather odd fancy for lionising young authors and a supreme egotism. He is perhaps most notorious now for having thought fit to publish all he knew about Coleridge's opium habits in his Reminiscences,[1] and as the publisher of Lyrical Ballads, but he was also a poet of sorts. Southey refers to 'the unhappy Alfred of Cottle, which I laboured hard to suppress at birth. I am thrown into a cold sweat by recollecting it'; and other efforts followed. Cottle gives a letter from Southey in the Reminiscences, which tells of the formation of the scheme.

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[1] Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and Robert Southey. By Joseph Cottle, London, 1847.

"You mention Cottle's "Recollections". Nothing ever makes me so fully aware how incorrect the most careful biography must inevitably be, than what I saw in this book ... The confusion in Cottle's "Recollections" is greater than anyone would think possible. He has only his memory to trust to, never having made any noted with a view to be-Boswelling his friends. Coleridge's letters to him were not fully dated; and in consequence he has confounded times, places, and circumstances in a way which must utterly mislead the unlucky biographer who goes to his book for materials. ... I was in time to make him strike out a good deal; but as to rectifying his mistakes, that was impossible."

R.S. to Mrs Hughes. Dec.7, 1837. (J.W.W. IV. 538)

> In the summer of 1794, S.T. Coleridge and Hucks came to Oxford on their way into Wales on a pedestrian tour. Allen introduced them to me, and the scheme of Pantisocracy was introduced by them; talked of, by no means determined on. It was subsequently talked into shape by Burnet and myself, at the commencement of the long vacation. We separated from Coleridge and Hucks: they making for Gloucester; Burnet and I proceeding on foot to Bath.

Unfortunately the italised by them is Cottle's own interpolation, and Charles Southey followed Cottle in his Correspondence, so that the real initiator of the scheme has been in some doubt. Yet it is easier to believe that Southey, whose genius was for imagining impossibilities as realities, created the plan, than to think that Coleridge, whose main contribution was talk on the theoretical side, and whose letters at this time are a mere gush of wild words, could have concentrated long enough on practical economics to have evolved it. Southey's letters nowhere suggest that he regarded Coleridge as the founder.

The system of government in the new colony was from the first intended to be democratic, and Pantisocracy signified the equal government of all. Coleridge also coined the word aspheterism, to indicate the system of common ownership of property which would obtain. As many as could be found were to be enlisted; land was to be purchased with their common contributions, and cultivated by their common labour. It may be that on his way to Bath, Southey found time to remember Edith Fricker, for the next amendment proposed that all should be married, and that the women should arrange the domestic duties on a communal basis. Poetry and philosophy were not to be forgotten, but would be the recreation of the party.

In/

In July, Southey wrote to Bedford from Bath that he proposed joining Coleridge in Wales, and thereafter trying to enlist Seward in the plan; and also that he had taken proposals for publishing his Joan of Arc to the printer. 'Should the publication be any ways suggessful, it will carry me over, and get me some few acres, a spade, and a plough.' With this in view, he proposed leaving Oxford, so that he might have time to prepare his epic for the press.

Southey was now living with his mother at Bath, but frequently visiting his aunt's house in Bristol, and probably also Lovell's house, and Edith Fricker's. After some weeks Coleridge reached Bristol, and the project came to be discussed anew. Coleridge was introduced to Lovell and the Fricker sisters; and presently he and Southey dashed down to Somersetshire to see Burnet again, calling on a friend of Coleridge's called Poole, and returning to stay with Mrs. Southey at Bath. Southey was engaged privately to Edith Fricker. Coleridge now suddenly proposed to her sister Sarah and was accepted. His daughter tells us that Burnet offered himself to the third sister, but was rejected with some scorn as having proposed more from devotion to Pantisocracy than to the lady.[1] Coleridge's feeling is also suspect, as he had a bare month earlier 'nearly fainted' on a chance meeting with his first passion, Mary Evans. However, he evidently felt the truth of his own maxim - 'Love is a local anguish': at/

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1 Memoir of Sara Coleridge.

at a distance he was not half so miserable.

Meanwhile the question of funds became more prominent and urgent. Coleridge had printed proposals and obtained a list of subscribers for a projected Specimens of Modern Latin Poets, and Southey had his Joan of Arc and many lyrical pieces, but all these were unpublished. Now, in a jesting moment, Lovell suggested a communal literary project: each of the three friends was to produce one act of a play by the following evening.[1] The subject was chosen, and Lovell and Southey produced their copy; but Coleridge was late, and Lovell's act was not up to the desired standard. Southey undertook to write another, and by the time this was done, Coleridge had completed his share. The play was refused by a local publisher, but Coleridge carried it with him to London and Cambridge after the vacation, and it was published at Cambridge as an octavo pamphlet in September, with Coleridge's name on it to stimulate the local sale.

The Fall of Robespierre, as this drama was called, has the value of illustrating Southey's change to anti-Jacobinism. Robespierre is denounced as a tyrant because he muzzled the National Convention, but the republican principle is still upheld, and the last lines declare that

> Though myriads round assail,
> And with worse fury urge this new crusade
> Than savages have known; though the leagued despots
> Depopulate all Europe, so to pour
> The accumulated mass upon our coasts,
> Sublime amid the storm shall France arise,
> And like the rock amid surrounding waves
> Repel the rushing ocean. - She shall wield
> The thunder-bolt of vengeance - she shall blast
> The despot's pride, and liberate the world!

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1 S.T.C. the first, R.S. the second and Lovell the third.

The poetry is turgid, repeating some of the more resounding phrases from Joan of Arc such as 'blood-cemented thrones', and Southey has taken such pains to achieve enjambed paragraph construction, that the regularity with which the sentences end in mid-line, becomes an irritation. The style strongly resembles the cumulative staccato style of his prose.

About this same time, Southey wrote in one week, for profit and for pleasure, a dramatic poem called Wat Tyler. It was the fate of this poem to find no publisher when it truly represented its author's feelings and opinions, and to be widely read and advertised when these had changed, as will be told; but it has a present interest beyond that. Coleridge complained that its sentiment opposed that of Robespierre, and if this is exaggeration, yet it is a different aspect of Southey's republicanism that is emphasised. Whereas Robespierre repudiated the Jacobins, but supported liberty, equality, and fraternity at the cost of bloodshed, Wat Tyler includes speeches by John Ball which argue that the purpose of revolution is reform not revenge.

Ball — Is not punishment revenge?
The momentary violence of anger
May be excused: the indignant heart will throb
Against oppression, and the outstretched arm
Resent its injured feelings: the Collector
Insulted Alice, and roused the keen emotions
Of a fond father. Tyler murder'd him.

Piers. — Murder'd! - a most harsh word.

Ball — Yes, murder'd him:
His mangled feelings prompted the bad act,
And Nature will almost commend the deed
That Justice blames: but will the awakened feelings
Plead with their heart-emoving eloquence
For the cool deliberate murder of Revenge?
....
But we must pity them that they are vicious,
Not imitate their vice.

and/

and again;

> my frail and fallible judgment
> Knows hardly to decide if it be right
> Peaceably to return, content with little,
> With this half restitution of our rights,
> Or boldly to proceed thro' blood and slaughter
> Till we shall all be equal and all happy.
> I chose the milder way:- perhaps I erred.

Ball decides in the end that he has erred:

> I should have urged it
> Thro' every opposition: now, perhaps,
> The seemly voice of pity has deceived me,
> And all this mighty movement ends in ruin!
> I fear me I have been like the weak leech,
> Who, sparing to cut deep, with cruel mercy
> Mangles his patient without curing him.

and whether we regard this as an argument for the horrors of the French Revolution, or as evidence of a real fear in Southey's mind that there was too much bloodshed, it cannot be disregarded: plainly the doubt was in Southey's mind, whether he is thought to have resolved it or no.

For the rest, Wat Tyler expresses views which could not fail to be regarded as offensive to the government of his day, though to the modern reader they smack more of the soap-box orator trying to create disaffection.

> Tell me, Sir Judge,
> What does the government avail the peasant?
> Would he not plow his field and sow the corn,
> Aye, and in peace enjoy the harvest too:
> Would not the sunshine and the dews descend
> Tho' neither King nor Parliament existed?
> Do your Court Politics ought matter him?
> Would he be warring even unto the death
> With his French neighbours? - Charles and Richard contend;
> The people fight and suffer:- think ye, Sirs,
> If neither country had been cursed with a chief,
> The peasants would have quarrell'd?

Of such passages Southey was to be reminded when he opposed the peacemongers and reformers of the Napoleonic period.

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The various characters in the poem are disembodied voices speaking with Southey's accents: the title character is even less alive than the Dedicated Maid.

Towards the end of this summer vacation of 1794 Coleridge went to London, whence he wrote enthusiastic letters, speaking of friends he had made who approved of Pantisocracy, and had even recommended the Susquhanna valley for 'its excessive beauty, and its security from hostile Indians.' By September 18th he was back in Cambridge, writing:

> My God! how tumultous are the movements of my heart. Since I quitted this room what and how important events have been evolved! America! Southey! Miss Fricker! Yes, Southey, you are right. Even Love is the creature of strong motive. I certainly love her. I <u>think</u> of her incessantly and with unspeakable tenderness, - with that inward melting away of the soul that symptomises it.
>
> Pantisocracy! Oh, I shall have such a scheme of it! My head, my heart are all alive. I have drawn up my arguments in battle array; they shall have the <u>tactician</u> excellence of the mathematician with the <u>enthusiasm</u> of the poet. The head shall be the mass; the heart the fiery spirit that fills, informs, and agitates the whole.[1]

This was all very well, but Pantisocracy had not blinded Southey to more domestic matters. Love was so much a local anguish with Coleridge, that he had omitted to write from London to his fiancée, and Southey felt compelled to remind Coleridge of this in a tone of offended severity, and had even written to a friend of Coleridge's to enquire his whereabouts. The poetic tactician replied in a letter of excuses, plus a dash of reproach, plainly thinking that Southey was altogether too ready to mount the moral high-horse, and regard as sins what a friend would rather seek to condone. For the day, reproach was veiled in compliment; but other difficulties arose.

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1 S.T.C. I. 81.

First, Miss Tyler, from whom the whole American scheme had been kept secret, now got wind of it and its subsidiary entanglements, and lost her temper completely. Southey was 'turned out of doors on a wet night' and obliged to walk nine miles to Bath on 17th October, 1794. The younger Southeys, at this time staying with their aunt, were dispatched back to their mother, who of course took her son's side, and was indeed an enlisted Pantisocrat. Miss Tyler declared she would never see her nephew again, nor open a letter of his writing; and extraordinary as it may seem, she never did. She most abused Lovell, whom, perhaps from his lower social origins, she took to be the author of the scheme, and Edith Fricker whom she would not think of as a fit match for her nephew. Southey's letter on this occasion to his brother Thomas, now a midshipman, is a classic of the Correspondence,[1] but is too long for quotation. At the same time, Coleridge too was plagued with advices to withdraw, from his brother George and even from his first love Mary Evans.

Then, while Coleridge was happily preaching the theories of Pantisocracy and aspheterism to all whom he could buttonhole, Southey was finding recruits; and perhaps with something of the air of a patron, he had enlisted his aunt's servant and his own playmate, Shadrech Weeks, now a married man; and a Mr. and Mrs. Roberts, also servants. Coleridge's response to this suggestion, in his letter quoted above, was in capitals:

SHAD GOES WITH US. HE IS MY BROTHER![2]

but Southey's plans for Shad savoured less of brotherhood than of/

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1 C.C.S. 19.10.94. I. 222. 2. S.T.C. I. 82.

of servitude. Coleridge asked very pertinently if every family was to possess one of these unequal-equals, these 'helot-egalites', or if they were to do for all 'that part of labour which their education has fitted them for?' Indeed, this with the proposed inclusion of Mrs. Southey and Mrs. Fricker and a litter of children, seemed to Coleridge to spell ruin to the scheme as he had theorised it. He asserted that he would not withdraw his support, but criticism of Southey's poetry, now to be published in Bristol, monopolised his next few letters to the exclusion of Pantisocracy; and when he returns to that subject, it is to complain that Southey treats him as one alienated from the system. In the same letter he characterises Southey with delightful acuteness. 'Your sentiments look like the sickly offspring of disgusted pride.' He has also to protest against Southey's new proposal to try Pantisocracy in Wales; but still asserts his willingness to support the scheme however modified; and it appears that a trial in modified form, in Wales, was seriously considered. Wynn, who lived in Wales, was the author of this suggestion. It is plain that relations between the two protagonists were becoming rather strained.

In December 1794, Coleridge wrote bombastic letters of farewell to Mary Evans, on her becoming engaged; and in the same week he wrote to Southey to say that 'to love her, habit has made unalterable', but probably all is for the best. Still; "To marry another! O Southey! bear with my weakness.

> Love makes all things pure and heavenly like itself,- but to marry a woman whom I do not love, to degrade her whom I call my wife by making her the instrument of low desire, and on the removal of a desultory appetite/

> appetite to be perhaps not displeased with her absence!
> Enough! These refinements are wildering fires that
> lead me into vice. Mark you, Southey!, I will do my duty.[1]

Irritated by Southey's pressure on him to remember his engagement to Miss Sarah Fricker, Coleridge reminded his friend that Indignation is the brother of Anger and Hatred. This letter included a promise to be at Bath that week-end, but that no dependence could be placed on Coleridge was proved by his non-appearance. Nor would he have come back at all if Southey had not gone to London to look for him. An undated and hitherto unprinted letter[2] to Edith Fricker continues the story.

"My journey was cold - never had I so fit an opportunity cooly to consider the theory of freezing. We arrived not till 11 next morning. I went to the Salutation and Cat - a most foul stye - no Coleridge. I went to Christ's Hospital, Favell was at church and could not be spoken with till a quarter past 12. I returned, drest and breakfasted very heavy at heart, went again to Christ's and watching all the boys come out of church physiognomised one for Favell.[3] I was right. Where is Coleridge? At the Angel Inn - Angel Street, - Butcher hall Lane, Newgate Street. We went there. Coleridge had given me up from the lateness/

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1 S.T.C. I. 126.

2 In the possession of Southey's great-grand-daughter.

3 Samuel Favell, a schoolboy at Christ's Hospital, converted to Pantisocracy.

lateness of the hour and was gone with Lamb[1] to the Unitarian chapel. I sat down at one to the Ordinary dinner and in the middle in came Coleridge. Lamb came in to us in the evening. My heart was very heavy. Coleridge objected to Wales and thought it best to find some situation in London till we could prosecute our original plan - he talked of a tutorage - a public office - a newspaper for me. I went to bed in dirty sheets - and tost and turned - cold weary and heartsick till seven in the morning - then fell asleep and woke before ten more refreshed by mental exertion than bodily repose.

"Today I went to Bedford. Coleridge was to wait half an hour in the Park in case I staid not with him. I left Bedford (with whom I spend tomorrow) but found not Coleridge, called on Wynn - not in town; on Scott, went to Ridgeway concerning Wat Tyler. I am to send them more sedition to make a 2 shilling pamphlet. They will print it immediately, give me 12 copies and allow me a sum proportionate to the sale if it sells well. All the rest is their own.

"I am at a coffee house with Scott, my pen execrable and my hand too cold either to guide it well or mend it.

"Love/

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1 Although Dowden implies that Southey and Lamb did not meet until 1797 at Burton, Hampshire, this letter makes it clear that they met through Coleridge in December 1794, if not earlier. In the middle of December Coleridge certainly saw a great deal of Lamb in London. Hence Lamb wrote, June 10th 1796, referring to this period, "I imagine to myself the little smoky room at the 'Salutation and Cat', where we have sat together through the winter nights, beguiling the cares of life with Poesy." Southey's reference to the same inn at the same date and his mention of Lamb in the same letter must be conclusive.

"Love me my dear Edith or there will be no comfort for me. I lean strongly to Wales in spite of his strong arguments - but if it be not practicable will get a place in some public office of 80 or 100 per year in which with some 50 more for writing reviews &c. we can live with frugality and happiness.

"Do not forget me, do not believe that any circumstances can ever make me unhappy while secure of your affection. I think of you always - always with emotion - 'tis a thought that would comfort me in every calamity and I will cherish it even as my Life, for indeed I could not love the one without the other. God bless you and make you most happy,

yours affectionately,

Robert Southey.

At the Cat and Salutation in Newgate Street, it is said, Coleridge's conversation brought so much custom to the house that the landlord offered him free quarters to stay and talk; but Southey dragged him back to Bath, and shortly after to Bristol, in January 1795.

On these dissentions, new hopes of financial profit descended like a benediction. Having broken with Miss Tyler, and having cut himself off from Herbert Hill's allowance when he left Oxford and refused to take orders, Southey was forced to fend for himself. The publication of his poems had not been profitable to him. He now took rooms with Coleridge in Bristol, and hoped to turn author. There was much talk of a new provincial magazine, and a post on the Telegraph, but these hopes failed. But about this time Southey and Coleridge were introduced by Lovell to Joseph Cottle, who, while maintaining a discreet/

discreet position on the fence between England and America, was willing enough to enjoy the company of these clever and enthusiastic young men, to introduce them to his freinds, and do everything he could to make Bristol pleasant. Cottle's only fear was that they might disappear overnight, and this was dissipated by a sudden appeal from Coleridge:

Spring, 1795.

> My dear Sir, Can you conveniently lend me five pounds, as we want a little more than four pounds to make up our lodging bill, which is indeed much higher than we expected; seven weeks and Burnett's loding for twelve weeks, amounting to eleven pounds?
>
> Yours affectionately,
> S.T. Coleridge.

Finding there was no danger of an immediate migration, Cottle became magnanimous, and offered Coleridge thirty guineas for his poems which several publishers had refused. Coleridge was delighted, and so too was Southey when Cottle offered him an equal sum for a similar volume and fifty guineas for Joan of Arc - an offer which was at once accepted.[1]

Southey now found himself busied up to the ears with his different literary works. Practically the whole poem of Joan was recast to the form in which we now have it, because he was anxious/

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1 Southey wrote to G.C. Bedford, April 3rd 1803, "When Joan of Arc was in the press, I had as legitimate causes for unhappiness as any man need have - uncertainty for the future, and immediate want, in the literal and plain meaning of the word. I often walked the streets at dinner-time for want of a dinner, when I had not eighteen-pence for the ordinary, nor bread and cheese at my lodgings."

anxious to do justice to the new fount of type which was to produce the handsomest book that Bristol had ever made. Not only this, but before he resumed Joan, he was at work on a new epic, Madoc; and several short pieces in republican vein were written; of which the only one now known attained its notoriety through the Anti-Jacobin parody: probably many today know the Needy Knife Grinder who have not read its prototype, The Widow. And at the same time he was writing for another profitable plan now hit upon; the delivery of courses of lectures to the citizens of Bristol, so far as Cottle could command them. Tickets were sold at the price of 10/6 for the series. Coleridge's lectures were officially on Moral and Political subjects. They they dealt freely with the topics of the day in 1795 may be judged from the syllabus; according to which he compared the French and English revolutions, discussed the liberty of the press, the French revolutionary writers, and the characters of Louis I and XVI, Cromwell, Robespierre, Mazarin, and Pitt. "All the lectures" says Cottle " were anti-Pitt-ite" and some of them attracted unwelcome attention to the lecturer. Southey's lectures were historical, and no doubt extremely dogmatic and Southey-esque, since he told his brother he was 'teaching what is right by showing what is wrong'. His syllabus ranged from Solon and Lycurgus to the American War in twelve lectures, and he admitted himself they were only 'splendid declamation'. In addition to the series, some odd lectures were given, and though Coleridge's were the more successful, both lecturers enjoyed good audiences, were listened to with approval, and probably made some profit.

While/

While the course of lectures was in progress, temperamental differences were driving the lecturers further apart. Southey would be running back and forth betwixt their lodgings and the printing house, or composing new cantos for his epic; while Coleridge was calmly smoking his pipe or attending the social functions which eminent Bristolians prepared for him, as the price of his conversation. Southey did not shine socially beside his friend, and admitted that such parties did not amuse him; his pleasure was in intense activity over his own concerns: he was never content either to sit and think, or just to sit. His friend's idleness - for Coleridge was worrying even Cottle by his dilatoriness with his poems - must have been to Southey an ever present source of annoyance, especially when we remember that, on his own assertion, his contribution to their earnings was four times as great as his friend's. He may well have wondered how communal labour and communal ownership of property would work, practiced in such company; and it seems that he went the length of telling Coleridge that when the scheme was tried in Wales, he would consider his private resources his individual property, and would expect everything to be separate except a farm of five or six acres. "This was the mouse of which the mountain Pantisocracy was at last safely delivered."[1] The question of Coleridge's behaviour to Miss Fricker was still burning, too; and Lovell had ventured to show his future brother-in-law that he doubted the wisdom of the match, and been called a villain for his pains. Finally, the very course of lectures which/

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1 S.T.C. I. 140.

which had solved some of their difficulties, created a new cause of complaint. Coleridge believed himself specially fitted to speak on the subject chosen by Southey for his fourth lecture; namely the Rise, Progress, and decline of the Roman Empire; and asked his friend's permission to deliver it. Southey gracefully made way, and the change was advertised; but when on the appointed night the large audience had to wait half-an-hour for an intimation that Mr. Coleridge was prevented from being there - the truth being that he had forgotten;- Southey was furious. Cottle had arranged a picnic party for the following day, but dinner was hardly over when he found Southey quarrelling violently with Coleridge; angered first by the neglect shown to his own audience, and more by Coleridge's cool surprise that he should think the neglect a matter of any consequence. The ladies taking sides with their respective husbands-to-be, the altercation grew still louder; and it took a deal of Cottle's courage to interrupt, win the ladies to the side of peace, and so compel the angry communists to shake hands.

This continuous irritation with Coleridge, and a growing doubt as to the possibility of carrying out the plans so hopefully prepared - both on account of Coleridge, and the now apparent impossibility of raising sufficient funds - flung Southey back again into the mood of despondency from which Coleridge's first arrival had lifted him; and his melancholy was deepened by the news in June 1795 of the death of Edmund Seward.[1] Because his was not really a deep nature, Southey was always easily moved to grief/

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1 See Chap. II. p.2.

grief or enthusiasm: his depression now was of some duration, so that he gloomed long and bitterly. He enshrined Seward's memory in a verse in his Hymn to the Penates[1], and actually four years later, when his own health was a matter for concern, composed an elegy entitled The dead friend. Southey was not unused to thoughts of death: four of his young brothers and sisters died while he was a child, and he lost his father and grandmother while a school-boy; but this loss of a friend of his own age, with whom he had shared an unbroken and perhaps unusual intimacy, seems to have affected him more deeply. Yet, as I cannot believe that the verses he offered to the Westminster Magazine on the death of his baby sister were the outcome of a very intense feeling, so perhaps the loss of Seward, which brought death so close to him as a possibility to be faced at any time, made Death rather than Seward the subject of his gloomy thoughts; associated so closely in a memorable impression that he recalled Seward vividly when in fearful mood he contemplated his own end.

In the summer of 1795, circumstances occurred to distract his attention. His uncle Herbert Hill returned to England, and urged him again very strongly to return to Oxford and prepare to take orders. Southey's natural aversion to this course was reinforced by the knowledge that as soon as he came of age, his friend Wynn intended to implement a College promise to pay him an annuity of £160 a year. Resolved to cut himself clear of Coleridge and Pantisocratic entanglements, but unwilling to be dependent on his uncle, Southey reported his uncle's suggestion to/

1 Poems, 1797.

to Wynn; who at once advised against the Church and in favour of the Law, to be studied as soon as the annuity could be paid. Southey also showed his uncle's letter to Coleridge, saying he did not know what to do. Coleridge felt that every act and word of Southey's now showed more clearly his intention to withdraw from the scheme, but troubled himself to urge the impossibility of a Church career after Joan of Arc should be published. Southey seems to have quibbled, saying a sufficient interval would elapse for Joan to be forgotten. Judging that Southey was now definitely a seceder, Coleridge began to act towards him with a coldness which was soon reciprocated. Southey at last decided to accept Wynn's suggestion, and left Bristol for his mother's house in Bath, paying his debts with money advanced by Cottle on his unpublished poems, and settling down to correct Joan. This was almost completed when his uncle invited him to travel with him to Lisbon, probably in the hope that he would alter his republican opinions and forget his indiscretion in loving Edith Fricker. The offer was accepted. Meanwhile, Coleridge, believing that Southey was going to enter the Church, wrote letters to suggest he would be guilty of perjury; and Southey retorted with the accusation that Coleridge had trumpeted his uncle's letter abroad, and misrepresented his character publicly with a host of falsehoods. He also referred to the Pantisocratic scheme, now stone dead, and asserted that the prospects it offered did not justify him in deserting his family. Coleridge did not at once reply. The breach was now complete.

In October 1795, Coleridge married Sarah Fricker, encour-

aged/

encouraged no doubt to risk this step by a promise from Cottle to pay him a guinea and a half for every hundred lines of verse he should write. Immediately after we find him telling Poole that he was abandoning a proposed magazine, because he would not be associated in anything with Southey. A few days later the two men who for almost a year had schemed and worked together, passed each other without sign of recognition, in the main street of Redcliffe.[1]

Southey was not happy. His plans for the future were precisely what they had been a year before, nothing; and in spite of his spirited replies and counter accusations, he cannot have felt that he had escaped from the ruins of Pantisocracy with either his dignity or his integrity undamaged. Delayed by lack of funds, the plan really died of inanition; for six months the protagonists had been deceiving themselves and each other by talk; but this plain fact was the last that either would admit. Coleridge declared himself a Pantisocrat to the end; Southey alleged that his withdrawal was on the moral ground that he must support his family. Coleridge may never have faced the practical impossibility of carrying through even a modified version of the plan without more money than they were likely to have within years; Southey, who must have realised it, gave other reasons. However, he was now out of it. His departure for Lisbon was dated for 14th November, and he arranged privately/

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1 S.T.C. I. 144.

privately that this should also be his wedding day. The morning brought him a very long epistle from Coleridge; recapitulating the entire course of their acquaintanceship; vigorously defending the writer's conduct at every turn; and accusing Southey in violent terms of base desertion. This brought about a complete rupture lasting a year, and Southey and Coleridge were never really intimate again.[1] With this in his pocket, Southey proceeded to the Radclift Church, Bristol, and was wed on 14th November, 1795. Edith's wedding ring was paid for by Cottle, and during her husband's absence she was to wear it round her neck and live with Cottle's sisters, keeping her maiden name till the marriage became public. The motives given for this hurried wedding illustrate Southey's strict morality and his despondent frame of mind. "There might have arisen feelings of an unpleasant nature at the idea of receiving support from one not legally a husband, and should I perish by shipwreck ... I have relations whose prejudices would then yield to the anguish of affection, and who would love, cherish, and yield all possible consolation to my widow.[2]

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1 S.T.C. I. 210. 31.12.96. Coleridge writes "Between ourselves, the *enthusiasm* of friendship is not with S. and me. We *quarrelled and* the quarrel lasted for a twelvemonth. We are now reconciled; but the cause of the difference was solemn, and 'the blasted oak puts not forth its buds anew! We are *acquaintances*, and feel *kindliness* towards each other, but *I do not esteem* Southey as I must esteem and love the man whom I *dared call* by the holy name of *friend*: and vice versa Southey of me."

2 To Cottle. C.C.S. I. 258.

He travelled to Falmouth en route for Lisbon, leaving behind him the wreck of Pantisocracy, the proofs of his first epic, and his new wed but unacknowledged wife.

CHAPTER III.

WANDERINGS.

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Southey, his uncle, and a friend, sailed from Falmouth early in December 1795, and he did not return till the following May. They sailed on a Spanish ship, and Southey had an early introduction to the dirt and religious superstition which painfully impressed themselves on him in the succeeding months.[1] When he went on board the mate was carving a cross on the side of his bunk, and the sailors were pawing a mess of biscuit, liver, onions and beans from a bucket. The sight more than the crossing affected his appetite. After five days semi-starvation he arrived in Corunna, where he stayed five days, learning about Spain from the British consul, with whom he immediately struck up a friendship, and making more direct contact with the populous Spanish bedding. Mr. Hill's itinerary led the travellers to Madrid, by a three weeks journey in a coach and six, <u>via</u> a chain of verminous Spanish <u>posadas</u> which it strained the poet's imagination to describe, though he ransacked the martyrology in search of similes. The dirt, poverty, and backwardness of the people made an immediate unfavourable impression, but as the coach and six mules, each hung round with bells, sped musically across the country, the novel and picturesque landscape affected him, and the civil yet familiar ways of the people quite won him. The coach broke down from time to time, and the Virgin Mary would be invoked to help the driver and the three hundred devils to carry off the coach/

1 For the matter of this account of Southey's visit, see J.W.W.I. 21-24 and "Letters from Spain and Portugal".

coach, but time meant little to the travellers. Southey would scribble poetry or stretch his long legs or fraternise with the pigs and goats in these intervals. As they travelled on to the capital he practised his Spanish on all who would talk to him, stored his mind with recollections of waterfalls, precipices, gorges, and of the ruins and churches perched here, or hidden there, among the Spanish hills. In Madrid he was disillusioned by the narrowness of the streets; their dirt and darkness; and by the sadly tarnished dignity of Romantic Spain. He found the grandees depraved and arrogant; adultery was condoned in a manner that shocked him. The local tradition in miracles excited him to some rather stinging mockery. From Madrid their direction was west to Lisbon, in a buggy drawn by two mules; but though their means of transport was now speedier, they were compelled to travel slowly behind the courtly train of his Most Catholic Majesty, the King of Spain, travelling to the Portuguese border. The royal retinue stripped the country like an invading army, paid for nothing, and asserted its benevolence by inscribing <u>Reinando Carlos IV</u> on every bridge which the royal progress had caused to be built. The English party ran some risk of having its mules embargoed to assist the King's progress, but after eight hundred miles of travel, hindered only by two breakdowns on the way, reached Lisbon in eighteen days, in time to be shaken by an earthquake. Here Southey remained till the beginning of May, except for brief visits to Setuval and Cintra. Lisbon he found shared a custom with seventeenth century Edinburgh, where the cry of 'Gardyloo' had a significance which Southey would have appreciated/

appreciated when he wrote, 'You are in great danger of meeting with pot-luck if you walk these streets by night. Danae was less alarmed than I am at the golden showers, when I

> Hear nightly dashed into the perilous street,
> The frequent urn.'

He was sickened, too, by the multitudes of wretched beggars who exposed their hideous deformities to the charity of passers by. But his time and labour were devoted in Lisbon to the acquisition of the Spanish and Portuguese languages. His uncle's library was Southey's workshop, where he strove with hosts of authorities on history and politics, and read poetry for relaxation. He had neither the wish nor the ability to shine in society, and rather prided himself on his abstention from the pleasures it offered. His studies, wide and probably superficial, enabled him to comment very learnedly in his letters home on many historical and literary subjects. When he moved on to Cintra, he thought he had 'never beheld a view that so effectually checked the wish of wandering', and it is clear that this was a happy holiday for him; but in the end, he wrote that he had the <u>maladie du pays</u>, and would gladly exchange the olive and orange groves of Portugal for the mud-encumbered tide of Avon and a glimpse of Bristol smoke.

As a declared rationalist, and a faithful Protestant, Southey had no patience with the great mass of miracle tradition cherished among the ignorant superstitious people with whom these months were spent. He quickly connected the many memorials to murdered travellers, met with on every road, with the prevalent system by which/

which the depraved 'confess their crimes, wipe off the old score by absolution, and set off with light hearts and clear consciences, to begin a new one,' and the 'serious folly' of all this made him grave, though he stored up the miraculous chronicles mainly for the amusement they provided. He asserted that they were preserved for their propaganda value; and felt that the efforts of the Catholic priests to maintain and strengthen their hold upon the Peninsular peoples, supported by these and even more detestable methods, made the Roman Church a danger to liberty and morality, his twin pillars of faith. For the stories themselves he had only an amused contempt, but of the priests he said with horrified seriousness, 'They tempt in the day of poverty, they terrify on the bed of sickness, they persecute in the hour of death.' A hatred of Rome germinated spontaneously on this journey, and soon infected his whole outlook.

good

The immediate results of the trip were only partly gratifying to Mr. Hill. To be sure Southey wrote from Lisbon that he had learned to thank God he was an Englishman, for if that country was no Eldorado it was still better than anywhere else;[1] but Mr. Hill must have heard this declaration with the modified gratitude of a gambler whose stake is returned to him. He had not converted Robert to the Church and he had not prevented his marriage: that he had cured him of extreme radicalism could hardly be taken for granted at the very time when the extremely radical, not to say revolutionary Joan of Arc was enjoying no small notoriety in England. Cottle had got it out at last; the sales were gratifying; the Monthly and Critical reviews praised it highly/

1 To C.W.W. Wynne 26.1.96. J.W.W. I. 23.

highly; and Southey was already full of schemes for a second edition purged of Coleridge's lines. Mr. Hill parted from his nephew with some misgivings: Southey turned an eager face to England.

His return was not too happy. Robert Lovell, his brother-in-law, had died while Southey's ship waited for a wind at Lisbon: he was in debt to Cottle for Edith's keep during his absence; and he was, when he thought of it, uneasy at the prospects involved in his choice of the legal profession. He had however some £18 in his pocket, and he set up house with Edith in Bristol quite gaily, on the strength of this money and Cottle's goodwill, intending to repay the small sums he borrowed from time to time with an edition of his letters from Spain and Portugal which Cottle would publish. These he hoped to have ready by Christmas, when by the terms of his agreement with Wynn, he would draw the first instalment of his annuity and turn law-student. Under such circumstances, and with such prospects, his housekeeping seems a very gallant venture; but his now robust physical health, and the courage he won from his wife's presence, produced in him an astonishing energy and a renascence of poetic fire. Though grateful for Cottle's help, and though - accepting Wynn's annuity with a strange lack of self-consciousness or feelings of wounded pride - he now proposed to educate himself at his friend's expense, Southey reserved the right to cherish hopes of complete independence. To achieve this, one small sacrifice was required: he abandoned politics for poetry. 'I have tamed Bucephalus', he told Bedford. He was not the first or the last to find altruistic republicanism/

republicanism and private capitalism incompatible. As at earlier crises, the nearer consideration - in this case the necessity of earning ready money - foreshortened Southey's views: he forgot his former interest in republican principles and thought more in terms of principal and interest. He began to unload his old stocks of poetry and some of his newer Spanish materials on the Monthly Magazine. At the same time, the calm beauties of his native land in the glory of late summer and autumn, though differing from the wild and elemental vividness of the scenes he had left, proved by their very difference an inspiration to poetry. A list of proposed works made out at this time included poetical lives of Spanish banditti, a novel to be called Edmund Oliver, a history of Alcar, and three epics - one Norwegian, one on the destruction of the Dom Daniel, and Madoc, on which work was already begun. The Hymn to the Penates, inspired by his possession of a home, appeared now: a poem in which the genuine need of Southey's impulsive, adventurous, and yet rather petted and childish nature for a hearth and heart-centre, found expression in quietly sweet and sometimes sentimental verse. When the edition of his letters is added to this list, it is clear that Southey was not idle.

During these busy months only the thought of London troubled him. This prospect indeed filled him with nothing but gloom. To be sure his apprenticeship to the law was but to be for two years, and was regarded not as the prologue to some swelling theme of legal preeminence, but as a step towards independence. But this attitude made the legal studies the more unattractive. He saw/

saw himself laying down the pen just when he knew what and how to write, in order to earn freedom to do this very writing. The two years could only be thought of as a bleak interlude in a poetical career. Over and over Southey reminded his friends that the law meant nothing to him but a means of achieving independence; over and over he repeated anathemas on London. The fatal day however, could not be postponed. In January 1797 he received the first instalment of Wynn's very handsome annuity of £160 p.a., and on February 7th he paid his fees to be registered at Gray's Inn.

The date also coincided approximately with the publication of his Letters from Spain and Portugal. These were a slightly polished and edited version of the letters written while he was abroad with his Uncle. The book has humour in it; the piety is not obtrusive; and though there is much mockery of Roman Catholic ritual and miracle-legends, this does not predominate over the accounts of manners and customs. At the same time, it can be seen that Southey's later denunciations of Rome must have owed much to the disgust he conceived for the Spanish clergy. "They are the sworn enemies," he said, "of all innovation; they among them who believe what they profess must be narrow-minded bigots, and they who profess what they do not believe must be bad men; the one cannot instruct, and the other will not." Here too was born that love of Spanish history which was to dominate his later writings. Though he disapproved of the paroque in religion, he welcomed it in history. There are lively descriptions here of the travellers' difficulties - their encounters with the dirt and laziness and poverty of the Peninsula/

Peninsula - and there are also wearisome and pedantic summaries of local traditions, and lengthy passages of original but mediocre verse. It is not a book which many will trouble to remember today, though it ran through three editions. Similar conditions can probably be found still, and its value even as a social record is doubtful. Shortly after its publication he observed with some complacency that 'My aunt" (Miss Tyler) "told Peggy it was pretty well in me to write a book about Portugal who had not been there six months: for her part she had been there twelve months, and yet she could not write a book about it - so apt are we to measure knowledge by time. I employed my time there in constant attention, seeking everything and asking questions, - and never went to bed without writing down the information I had acquired during the day.[1]" This is a very revealing confession.

Having drawn his annuity, Southey went alone to London in February 1797. His first term was a busy if not a happy time, and a large circle of acquaintances, including the Godwin household, did not keep him from Blackstone and work of other kinds: he undertook a translation from the French of a volume on the Revolution, and Madoc was being pushed forward. But he felt himself cramped in the city: although he had located himself on the South and undeveloped side of Thames, he pined for green fields, and suffered from lack of exercise and overwork. Edith joined him in March, and her health too was affected. His letters for weeks were filled with the imagined delights of the seaside; swimming, or idling on the sands with an observant eye on seabirds and colour changes, that the effects might be described in verse; and/

1 C.C.S. I. 309. "Peggy refers to his cousin, Margaret Hill.

and as soon as he was at liberty, he went off with Edith for a week at Southampton. Unfortunately, a week there was made miserable by Edith's ill-health; and rooms for the vacation were finally chosen at Burton near Christchurch, in Hampshire. Southey's mother joined them here, his sailor brother Tom paid them a visit, Cottle too, and among newer friends, John Rickman[1] and Charles Lloyd, who was welcomed on the recommendation of Coleridge, with whom Southey became partly reconciled, on his return from Lisbon. Accompanying Lloyd was Charles Lamb, whom Southey had met before but with whom he presently began to exchange letters and poems - a sign of intimacy. With Cottle, Southey discussed the publication of Chatterton's works, for the relief of the poet's surviving sister and niece, at this time wholly destitute. Southey expected no profit from this whatever: it was a scheme of his own; strikingly generous and typical of his anxiety at all times to right such wrongs as he could, whenever he knew of them. The plan was actually carried into effect by the publication of Chatterton's poems, with a preface by Southey, in 1803. Cottle probably edited/

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1 John Rickman (1771-1840) Clerk-Assistant to the House of Commons for many years. A close friend of Lamb as well as of Southey. Southey described him in a letter to W.S. Landor, Feb. 9th 1809: "his outside has so little polish about it that once having gone from Christ Church to Poole in his own boat, he was taken by the pressgang: his robust figure, hard working hands, and hoarse voice all tending to deceive them. A little of this is worn off. He is the strongest and clearest headed man that I have ever known .... the subject which he best understands is political economy." C.C.S. III. 216.

edited and saw them through the press. The holiday was thus not all poetry and conversation, for Southey was never weary in well doing.

Independence must have seemed very distant at this time. How Southey lived it is difficult to tell. The elder Mrs. Southey was in some financial difficulty, with Robert's two younger brothers, Henry and Edward, now fifteen and thirteen years, to educate and support; yet she was resolved to keep her house in Bath; and his mother-in-law was equally indigent. Thus we find that when Herbert Hill sent Robert ten pounds it was immediately posted forward to his mother, and when he had money to spare, Mrs Fricker benefited.[1] It must have been a very convenient arrangement all round, that brought Lloyd with Southey to Bath at the end of the Summer holiday, to be Mrs. Southey's lodger for a little.

The friendship with Lloyd had other than financial implications. Lloyd had been very intimate with Coleridge, but left him in the Spring of 1797,[2] and brought his troubles instead to Southey; with whom of course Coleridge was not now on intimate terms. That Autumn, Coleridge published under the pen name of Nehemiah Higginbottom, some Sonnets in the manner of Contemporary Writers, in which the poems of Southey, Lloyd and Charles Lamb, besides his own, were parodied. The victims regarded the book as an attack upon themselves. Coleridge heard of this through

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1 Mrs. Fricker was also in receipt of a small allowance from Coleridge. See Letters of S.T.C.

2 See Letters of Charles Lamb. Ed. E.V. Lucas. Dent & Methuen 1935.

the Wordsworths and wrote to both Lamb and Southey denying that the sonnets were spiteful in intention. To Southey he said[1] "I am sorry, Southey! very sorry that I wrote or published those sonnets - but 'sorry' would be a tame word to express my feelings, if I had written them with the motives which you have attributed to me." Lloyd seems however to have persuaded Southey that he was not mistaken about Coleridge's intentions, and the two became united in resentment. The publication of "Lyrical Ballads" gave Southey an opportunity, of which he took advantage, of saying some damning things about both Coleridge and Wordsworth,[2] and Lloyd retaliated on Coleridge by publishing a novel Edmund Oliver, dedicated to Lamb, in which Coleridge's army experiences and his addiction to drugs were freely exploited. Besides all this, Lloyd said things to Southey and Lamb regarding Coleridge which were fatal to their friendship. The consequence was that Lloyd and Southey were drawn closer, and Coleridge estranged. Lamb too became Southey's principal correspondent for some months. As for Coleridge, he was meanwhile becoming deeply intimate with Wordsworth, and had gone off to Germany leaving things as described.

The expenses of keeping term in London were not inconsiderable, and with two families to think off, Southey looked round for new sources of income. He was successful in obtaining review work/

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1 S.T.C. I. 251.

2 It has been suggested that Southey's review of Lyrical Ballads was intended as a kindness to Cottle who had repented his purchase and sold all rights.

work with the Critical, and the Morning Post commissioned verses at the rate of a guinea a week: to this work he added the revision of Joan of Arc for the long projected second edition. Under the circumstances it is not surprising that he found the unproductive law work wearisome, and it was plainly dangerous to his health. He was back to London before Christmas, and again after the new year, but a two months residence was ended when Edith's health failed again, and they returned to Bristol for the Spring. Familiarity with London did nothing to assuage Southey's hatred of it: he cursed the town, the swarms of acquaintances that buzzed around him, and the work that carried him there. His only pleasure was in haunting the bookstalls.

In the Spring of 1798 Southey paid a first visit to Norwich, for the purpose of putting his brother Henry under a tutor there. He was welcomed by the Norwich literary coterie, and stayed with its revered chief, Mr. William Taylor, who introduced him to Dr. Sayers, whose poetry had inspired Southey long before. Taylor was an odd fellow, something of a pedant, something of an atheist, and something of a poet. Southey took to him at once, and started to learn Dutch and German under his guidance, and entered, as usual, on a long-continued correspondence, in which criticism of his poems by his Norwich friend occupied no small part.

The next year was perhaps the happiest of these troubled times, as it was also the most productive of poetry. Southey established himself in a house of his own at Westbury, near Bristol, where the temple-haunting martins provided the pretty name of Martin/

Martin Hall; and a large sitting-room, papered in cartridge paper, bordered with yellow and black dados, provided accommodation for his growing collection of books. Three recesses that had been windows were curtained in green baize, coming half way down the books, to protect them. One regret was that many of his most valuable acquisitions lay in London. Here Southey made some shape at establishing a home, and though friends were not excluded, he largely kept house and toiled at his reviews, poems for the Morning Post, ever progressing epics and at a new venture, the 'Annual Anthology' suggested by Taylor. The reviews were heavy labour. Writing to his brother Tom[1] he says, "Ever since you left us I have been hurried from one job to another. You know I expected a parcel of books when you went away. They came, and I had immediately to kill off one detachment; that was but just done, when down came a bundle of French books, to be returned with all possible speed. This was not only unexpected work, but double work, because all extracts were to be translated. Well; that I did, and by that time the end of the month came round, and I am now busy upon English books again. What with this and my weekly communications with Stuart,[2] and my plaguy regimen of exercise, I have actually no time for voluntary employment. In a few days I hope to breathe a little in leisure." Still much was written here: the eclogues and the ballads, now out of fashion, but/

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[1] 5.1.99. C.C.S. II. 2.

[2] Editor of the Morning Post.

but once in every school reader, were Westbury products; and if we smile at the indignation with which Southey repudiated the term 'mock-ballads' as applied to them, we surely owe him some gratitude for our childish pleasure in The Well of St. Keyne, Bishop Hatto, and The Inchcape Rock. These were first contributed to the Morning Post: Southey's own favourites were reserved for publication in his Poems, some years later, which first printed The Old Woman of Berkeley and Rudiger. The Battle of Blenheim, which thanks to Palgrave maintains his name today, was worth a guinea to the Morning Post. The eclogues, Southey did not claim as entirely original, for he had been told of German Idylls by Taylor of Norwich, but they were certainly most unusual pastorals for English readers. With no special beauty in subject or versification, they are perhaps interesting as preceding Browning's dramatic monologues: though not alike in form, the Alderman's Funeral in particular recalls Browning by the tone of disinterested third-party criticism. Madoc too made progress here, and perhaps the poet's inspiration was kindled by the newly discovered nitrous oxide, displayed to him by the proud inventor, Humphrey Davy. Davy, not yet twenty-one, was in charge of Dr. Beddoes' Pneumatic Institution at Bristol, which encouraged experiments for the cure of hitherto incurable diseases. In him Southey found a 'first-rate man, conversable on all subjects' and more - the inventor 'of a new pleasure for which language has no name.' A whiff of the gas made Southey 'laugh and tingle in every toe and finger tip', and he believed it helped the affections of heart and digestion which were falling on him, probably/

probably through overwork. When Madoc was roughed out, Southey turned to Thalaba; and he read a newly published poem, Gebir, marvelled at it, and declared he would travel a hundred miles to meet the anonymous author. In May, 1799, he paid a duty call to London and returned gladly as soon as he had eaten three dinners, laden with more odd treasures in folio and foreign languages, ransacked from the bookstalls. But a permanent home was still to be denied Southey: he was compelled to leave Westbury on the expiry of his lease, and though he found another house at his old haunt of Burton, immediate occupation was not possible. Again Southey had to uproot himself and become a wanderer.

Until occupation was granted at Burton, Southey went walking, as he had often done before; and a pleasant send-off was provided in a second, more complete reconciliation with Coleridge.

In July 1799, after his return from Germany, an effort was made by Coleridge to patch up a peace, when he wrote an appealing letter to Southey.[1]

"I pray and entreat you', he said "if we should meet at any time, let us not withhold from each other the outward expressions of daily kindness; and if it be no longer in your power to soften your opinions, make your feelings at least more tolerant towards me."

Southey's reply has not been kept, but "its tenor was that Coleridge had slandered him to others."[2] Coleridge in answer[3] said/

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1 S.T.C. I. 303-4.

2 Same Editor's note.

3 Letters of S.T.C. I. 123.

said, "If Wordsworth and Poole will not affirm to you solemnly that I have ever thought and spoken of you with affection and respect, never charging you with aught else than your restless enmity to me and attributing even that to Delusion, I abandon myself for ever to the disesteem of every man whose esteem is worth having. .... I pray you let us be at least in the possibility of understanding each other's moral being; and with regard to what you have heard, to think a little on the state of mind in which those were from whom you heard it. More I will not say; but end by thanking you for your letter, which under your convictions was a wise and temperate one." Thomas Poole[1] supported Coleridge in a letter to Southey, and thanks to his intervention, the friends were sufficiently reunited for the Southeys to visit the Coleridges at Nether Stowey in 1799 and travel with them to Devonshire.

As Lloyd had by this time taken himself off to Birmingham and married, reunion was a simpler matter than before, but it is certain that Southey never fully recaptured the first fine rapture of his early admiration. He went off with Coleridge, to Ilfracombe and Exeter by Teignmouth, 'the finest spot, except Cintra and the Arrabida' that he had ever seen; but his thoughts kept wandering to the catalogue of works he hoped to write. Now was born an urge/

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[1] Thomas Poole. A tanner at Nether Stowey and life long friend of Coleridge's.

urge to create a great history of Portugal: a scheme conceived on his travels, now brought to light, but though pursued with infinite labour, never completed. He knew that through his uncle he had access to the necessary books of reference, and he knew his own ability and energy: what he could not foresee was that this ambitious project must be continually delayed, and pushed into the background to make way for lighter but more immediately profitable tasks. Even now, his energies were being misdirected into the production of some heavy hexameters on Mahommed, and to the stimulation of Coleridge to produce an equal quota that they might publish jointly. This plan equally with the History died stillborn.

In October 1799 Southey established himself at Burton, in a reconditioned double cottage, roomy enough to accommodate all his books now painfully gathered together; but fate, with that perversity which had dogged all his attempts to settle, baffled him once more. The lime and shavings were scarcely out of sight when Southey was attacked by a feverish illness, partly no doubt a digestive complaint brought upon him by his irregular habits. He suspected heart trouble, and his nerves got so much the better of him that he could neither read nor write. In this plight, and with Edith also unwell, he retreated hastily to Bristol and cast about for some corner of a foreign land that might be warm enough to pamper him back to health. As Mr. Hill readily offered to find accommodation for them in Portugal, half made plans for visiting Italy were abandoned, and with £100 offered him by an old schoolfellow friend,[1] he prepared to travel. As he had done/

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1 Rev. Peter Elmsley. One of Southey's Westminster friends. He became Principal of St. Alban's Hall, Oxford, and Camden Professor of Ancient History 1823-25. J.W.W. 1. 102.

done no writing for weeks, this financial help was very necessary: and Southey had no scruples over its acceptance. These arrangements took time: during the months of February and March he lived in lodgings in Bristol, where he summoned up energy enough to work on Thalaba and do some preliminary reading for the giant History; besides, with typically eccentric generosity, discussing with Rickman the publication of an essay to draw attention to the dependent state of unmarried women; and planning to 'provide for the numerous class of women who want employment, the means of respectable independence, by restoring to them those branches of business, which the men have mischievously usurped, or monopolised, when they ought only to have shared.' Southey's experience of women of this class was of course almost the sum of his experience with the sex, and the duty that lay nearest him was sure to have his warmest support. Nor did these employments quite fill the interval: he had six days to wait at Falmouth for a fair sailing wind, and in his seaside lodgings he added another half book to his epic, and re-read Gebir.

The way to Portugal is the wind's way, and for the next week Southey was vilely sick, and Edith worse. However, such sorrows have their termination in harbour, and before the ship berthed Southey was exclaiming with renewed enthusiasm over the magnificent entrance to the blue Tagus, white-splashed with the sails of countless craft, with the city creeping into view along either banks, extending along the shore and covering the hills as far as he could see. It was four years since he had been in Lisbon; years more full of business than of beauty; and he took an almost extravagant/

extravagant pleasure in the spectacle provided by the lovely river, especially by moonlight, when it 'lay like a plain of light under the heaven, the trees and houses now forming a dark and distinct foreground, and now undistinguishable in shade as the moon moved on her way; Almada stretching its black isthmus into the waters that shone like midnight snow.' He had not forgotten the lawlessness, vermin, and dirt of Lisbon, but in the house they rented, English cleanliness was the rule upstairs whatever Portuguese Manuel and Rosa might make of the lower half. Edith was soon convinced of the impossibility of reforming her servants, and satisfied herself with upstairs dominion.

Their early days were spent in receiving and returning visits, while Southey hankered after his folios; and then the great festivals of the season had to be witnessed: three illuminations for the Pope, one for the christening of a princess, the Festival of the "Emperor of the Holy Ghost,"[1] a 'raree-show' for St. Antony, and the great Procession of the Body of God - 'I like to translate' says Southey 'that I may not throw a Portuguese cloak over the nakedness of the nonsensical blasphemy'. For this, in which the sacred wafer was carried in state, the tall houses of Lisbon were draped with red damask and all the native finery of dress was on show. The banners of the city and corporate trades led the procession; then a champion in armour; closely followed by a wooden St. George, mounted, and held on his horse by men marching alongside; and behind him a splendid array of led horses. The brethren of the religious establishments followed, some 'more /

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1 Southey's own phrase. (C.C.S. II. 71.)

'more fat than friar beseemed'[1], some grey, aged, and ascetic. The knights and nobles followed the Wafer. The crowded streets, blatant with colour, and the raw music contributed to make the scene memorable. A bull fight was on the list of entertainments, but the spectacle of tame bulls, their horns muffled, being teased by picadors who could make an easy escape over the barrier, and then set against trained men and horses, to say nothing of the cruel bull-baiting with dogs, pained Southey so much that he regretted his curiosity.

He arrived in Lisbon in April: from early in July till October he lived in Cintra, to escape the torrid heat of summer; and there he settled down to work. He had two main tasks in hand: the first, to collect such material for the History of Portugal as could be worked up at home - piling marble, Southey called it. This work he designed to write in three parts: a history of Portuguese literature, a political history, and a history of the Portuguese colonial dependencies. He read Portuguese well, spoke it fluently if not grammatically, and had the advantage of his uncle's interest, his library, and his help in securing books. Furthermore he was indomitably industrious, even rising at five to work; but his appetite was too omnivorous. He would willingly have read every printed Portuguese book had they all been procurable: the more he read, the wider scope he wished his work to have: and though he persevered with it throughout his life, it failed at last through the sheer unwieldiness of his quarried slabs. His ambitions for this <u>magnum opus</u> were however of the highest: it was to rank him with Gibbon among historians, besides making his fortune. A by-product of the literary history /

[1] Southey's own quotation v.s.

history was his translations of Portuguese romances: he began Palmerin of England in Cintra, and Amadis of Gaul and the Cid soon followed. His other task was Thalaba. This he finished, and polished inexorably, once putting his pen through six hundred lines at a time; but he satisfied himself at last and it was despatched to Rickman, who arranged for its publication by Longman, and secured £115 for the author. But Thalaba was so sooner off the stocks than the skeleton of a Hindoo romance began to rise in its place - the Curse of Keradon it was provisionally entitled, and his schoolboy dream of a series of epics to illustrate every faith that still finds followers, was revived. While all these plans and works were in progress, the illness that had brought Southey out had yielded to the beneficent climate; part of the cure being perhaps the frequent excursions on burros or small donkeys, which Edith enjoyed as much as her husband. One trip of some duration took Southey and a party of friends three hundred and fifty miles around the countty; and though the mules amused almost everyone except Edith by lying down under her and rolling in the dry sand, they both reported improved health and coppery complexions on their return. The winter months were spent in Lisbon again: when summer threatened, they returned to England, after an absence of more than a year, in June 1801.

Southey's letters over this period concern themselves with three main topics: his work, his travels, and the evidences of Catholic domination and corruption he met with everywhere. Of his work he wrote optimistically; of his travels, with a fine descriptive quality and a pretty strain of whimsical humour; of/

of the third, with a blend of resignation, indignation, and hearty derision. On his tour, he visited a monestary at Mafra of which he wrote: 'Such is Mafra: a library, whose books are never used; a palace, with a mud-wall front; and a royal convent, inhabited by monks who loathe their situation. The monks often desert; in that case they are hunted like deserters, and punished, if caught, with confinement and flogging. They take the vows young - at fourteen: those who are most stupidly devout may be satisfied with their life; those who are most abandoned in vice may do well also; but a man with any feeling, any conscience, any brains, must be miserable.' Of the ubiquitous crucifixes and madonnas, he said, 'Religion is kept alive by these images, &c., like a fire perpetually supplied with fuel. They have a saint for everything. . . . . One saint preserves from lightning, another from fire, and third clears the clouds, and so on - a salve for every sore. It is a fine religion for the enthusiast - for one who can let his feelings remain awake, and opiate his reason.' What we may take as his conclusions, drawn from his observations, are stated with reference to the state of affairs at home. 'Decidedly as my own principles lead to toleration, I yet think in the sufferance of converts and proselytism it has been carried too far. You might as well let a fire burn or a pestilence spread, as suffer the propagation of popery. I hate and abhor it from the bottom of my soul, and the only antidote is poison.'

Southey combined a love of the country with a hatred of its religion. 'I have formed attachments' he wrote, 'and not personal ones: this/

this glorious river, with its mountain boundaries, this blessed winter sun, and the summer paradise of Cintra. I would gladly live and die here.' - and this feeling too, was to influence him later. And though he here denies personal attachments, he none the less formed a friendship with an English lady at Cintra; a Miss Barker, who figured later as the Bhow Begum in The Doctor.

Southey's return was partly expedited by political events. Napoleon, having made himself the master of central Europe, was threatening to add the Peninsula to his empire, and the English colony in Lisbon prepared to leave. Southey, who had admired Napoleon at the outset of his career and was even tempted to write a poem on his defeat at Acre, looked with dismay on this newer turn of events. "A military despotism!" he exclaimed. "Popery re-established! The negroes to be enslaved! Why had not the man perished before the walls of Acre in his greatness and his glory?" and he coined the famous metaphor which, with a significant twist, was to be employed again against his political enemies: 'It is not I who have turned round. I stand where I stood, looking at the rising run - and now the sun has set behind me!' 'Now that war was anticipated, he was inclined to 'see it out and witness the whole boderation', but he returned on his wife's account, and was sick during the fortnight's crossing. On arrival in England, they took up residence again at Bristol.

Southey/

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1 Vide History of Peninsular War by R.S. quoted in last chapter of this thesis.

Southey had now completely abandoned his law studies, and he wrote whimsically of throwing the one book which constituted his legal library down the crater of Etna to the devil. 'Huzza, Grosvenor' he wrote soon after to his friend Bedford, 'I was once afraid that I should have a deadly deal of law to forget whenever I had done with it, but my brains, God bless them, never received any, and I am as ignorant as heart could wish. The tares would not grow.'[1] Wynn continued his allowance, and Southey regarded his literary commitments with a calm conscience. He had not however abandoned hope of finding a situation in which the remuneration would supply his basic needs, while leaving him time to write his poetry and history, and he had hardly returned before his industrious well-wisher Wynn brought news to him of a secretaryship to the British ambassador first at Palermo, then at Constantinople. Southey was enthusiastic and dared to think of a future consulship and a thousand a year, but this fell through, as did another of Wynn's plans to place him with the Italian Legation. Still, Southey went off happily enough to visit Coleridge, (who had gone to Keswick to be near Wordsworth) intending to call on Wynn in Wales on his way, and find local colour for Madoc. His Portuguese holiday had picked his pocket, but he refused an offer for Madoc, which was to be his monument, and must not go too quickly and uncorrected. At the same time, Kehama, as the Curse of Keradon was renamed, was hanging fire while the author debated with himself the question of rhyme or no rhyme. In short, money was becoming distinctly scarce and urgently needed; and when on arrival in Wales, he found a letter from/

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1 Sept. 6th 1801. C.C.S. II. 161.

from Rickman now a secretary in Dublin offering a similar post to his friend, he closed immediately, and with omly a flying visit to Coleridge, set off almost at once to take up his new duties, in October 1801.

The crossing to Ireland began in wind and ended in fog, so that Southey landed not at Dublin, but at the fishing port of Balbriggan, fifteen miles further south, and he had experience enough of the island on his first day to prejudice him against it. The fifteen miles that he crossed were destitute of trees; the women he met went barefoot and bareheaded - plainly the Irish were savages. His chief, Mr Corry, Chancellor of the Irish Exchequer, being absent from Dublin when Southey arrived, the secretary worked on *Madoc*, visited his friend Rickman, and continued to study the barbarians at closer quarters, without finding cause to change his tone of superior pseudo-witty derision. To be sure there were wonderful public buildings in Dublin and the streets were wide but this was accounted for by government corruption: the houses and furniture rivalled Portuguese filthiness: further afield, the people were uncivilised and idle, lived on buttermilk and potatoes, and were translated to the third heaven by a drop of whisky. The generosity and wit of the Irish pleased him; their impudence and thriftless, begging ways, disgusted. This criticism of course simply echoes his observations on the Portuguese, but applied to the people of one of the British Isles, the tone is less agreeable, and indeed suggests a narrowness of outlook which might have led him into error with regard to the Peninsula. Southey was a quick and intelligent but very superficial observer, grossly affected by personal/

personal bias. Place seekers are a common consequence of a system of government which keeps the real control in foreign hands and thereby encourages local officials, who have little interest in the carrying out of measures arbitrarily imposed on their country, to make sure that their personal circumstances shall be as comfortable as possible. The countryman, on the other hand, courageous, independent and witty, is the produce of an age-long association with the land, which will maintain him in sufficient plenty. To accuse him of failing to develop his resources, when there can be neither pleasure nor profit in creating an unsaleable surplus, is foolish. Finally, the high standard of living with which Southey was acquainted in England, a wealthy exporting country, was not altogether dissociated from the existence of colliers and industrial labourers whose conditions were no whit better than those of the Irish savages, and much less secure. Southey's criticism was unjust, but how little he was prepared to take Irish problems seriously may be gathered from the rather pedantic joke he perpetrated at the expense of an island characteristic: 'my own idea is that the Irish are of Cretan race - the descendants of Pasiphae.' By way of redress, he praised the scenery, which is after all an international possession.

His actual stay in Ireland was very short, and he was established with Edith in London by November 1801. The chancellor had some difficulty in finding work for his secretary, who made out a catalogue of all books published within the past five years upon finance and famine, and was then dismissed to read up the corn laws and tithes. The rather equivocal position of the author of

Joan/

Joan of Arc in the role of secretary inspired the independent papers to some satire, but Southey observed that such flea-bites itched only if they were scratched, and went steadily ahead with his employments. He had leisure to visit Norwich and Bristol again early in 1802, and if not so comfortable as he cared, in a post which involved so much travelling, he nevertheless passed the winter with little complaint. About March however, Corry suggested that Southey might undertake the education of his son, and the secretary promptly resigned, losing thereby a 'foolish office and a good salary'. Charles Cuthbert Southey thinks that Corry's hint only hastened this resignation, and that really 'all play and no work' did not suit Southey's taste and conscience'[1]; but this is hardly reconcilable with the assertion, 'my objects in life are, leisure to do nothing but write, and competence to write at leisure; and my notions of competence do not exceed £300 a year'. This demand Corry's employment exactly fitted, and the probability is that Southey's honour could not brook the indignity of turning tutor. Dowden's suggestion that a prospect of parenthood hastened the split, since 'a library and a nursery ought to be stationary', is unconvincing, both from the tone of this quotation and the date - July. The separation, on whatever grounds, took place in April.

In the preceding January, Southey's mother had died: a more painful rupture. 'I have not been yielding to, or rather indulging grief' wrote Southey, but he was an impulsive man and his emotions could be roused upon lighter occasions than this. In his childhood he/

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1 C.C.S. II. 184.

he had seen little of his mother, but he had supported her courageously now for some years, and cemented a late intimacy. His letters describing his mother's death have lines of true pathos: 'I calmed and curbed myself, but at night there was no sound of feet in her bedroom, to which I had been wont to listen, and in the morning, it was not my first business to see her".[1] That with his mother's death he had lost all the friends of his infancy and childhood was however no very unique state of affairs: his mention of it recalls that morbid tendency to dwell upon death which was noted in the case of Seward. To distract him from his brooding he had friends enough in London: Lamb and his sister, Miss Barker, Campbell, and sometimes Coleridge, and he also made a trip to see Taylor again at Norwich; but after midsummer he transferred himself to Bristol, and buried himself in work, as his secretarial defection left him freer to do so. Amadis of Gaul was commissioned by Longmans, the edition of Chatterton was under way, the history made progress, and he was again reviewing, versifying, and drudging for necessity's sake. The birth of his first child, Margaret, in September 1802, made another move necessary however. He thought of Richmond, then Keswick, then bargained for a house in Wales, - the loveliest spot in Britain he thought, - but stayed perversely on in Bristol for another year. He here busied himself with plans for a huge encyclopaedia, which Coleridge would have designed anew on even grander lines, when suddenly, after a brief illness/

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1 C.C.S. II. 180.

illness, his child died in August 1803. Every plan was wrecked. Southey bore the loss with resignation, but Edith was broken; and to distract her and to comfort her with her sister's company, a visit to Keswick was decided on. "Coleridge likes to have Greta Hall attached to the address", said Southey, thus writing perhaps for the first time the name of the house that was to know so intimately the ups and downs of his life from now till the end. He set off with no knowledge that he was going to the long sought home, and that the curtain was being rung down at last on the drama of his wanderings.

CHAPTER IV.

KESWICK TO 1820.

Greta Hall, which still stands, is built on a hill, well back from the road ro Crossthwaite. The house overlooks the end of Keswick. The River Greta runs through a steep little valley immediately behind the house, curves widely round beside it, and reappears a hundred yards in front, running almost straight into Derwentwater. A path to the house leaves the road a few steps from a bridge over the Greta. Directly before Greta Hall lie the steep flanks of the Cumberland hills, with a stretch of Derwentwater visible from the windows, looking south. Borrowdale lies south-west, and Skiddaw peak can be seen from the side windows. The house itself, originally two houses under one roof, is from the front a plain faced three storey building: the rear part has curved gables projecting beyond those of the front house. The main part of the double building was occupied by the joint families of Southey and Coleridge till, after the death of the landlord Mr Jackson, the whole fell into Southey's hands. It was an amply commodious dwelling. To the left of the front door lay the parlour, which was the dining room and general sitting room, lit by a large window to the front and a smaller to the side. Behind this was a great cheerful stone flagged kitchen, looking into a back yard and to a laburnum tree at the end of the kitchen garden. The right wing accommodated Mrs Lovell in a small room with the curved wall, and beyond, a room for the lanterns, clogs and pattens for outdoor work, and the family mangle. A staircase led up from the central passage, to the right of which were Harley Coleridge's room, and the housekeeper, Mrs Wilson's bedroom, kitchen,/

kitchen, and back kitchen. Half way up the stair, on a landing, were some of Southey's bookcases; at the top were the bedrooms of Mrs Coleridge and her daughter, Southey and his wife, and Mrs Lovell; beyond were Mr Jackson's rooms. Most important of all, here was Southey's study, "so large that, God help me, I look in it like a cock robin in a church .... the view from the window as heavenly as those on earth can be."[1] Here all the tea-visiting guests were received. "The room had three windows, a large one looking down upon the green with the wide flower border, and over to Keswick Lake and the mountains beyond. There were two smaller windows looking towards the lower part of the town seen beyond the nursery garden. The room was lined with books in fine bindings; there were also books on brackets, elegantly lettered vellum-covered volumes lying on their sides in a heap. The walls were hung with pictures, mostly portraits; miniatures of the family and some friends; of Southey and Edith; soon after of little Edith, born 1st May 1804, and little Sara Coleridge; and later of the three younger Southey children, Bertha, Kate and Isabel. At the back of the room was a comfortable sofa, and there were sundry tables beside Southey's library table, his screen, desk, &c". "In the highest story of the house were six rooms; a nursery, nursery bedroom, maid's bedroom, another occupied by Kate and Isabel at one time, and a dark appleroom, which used to be supposed to be the abode of a bogle. Then there was a way out upon/

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J.W.W. I.253.

upon the roof and a way out upon the leads over one wing of the house, whence we could look far out to the Penrith Road, Brow Top, and the Saddleback side of the region". Outside, in front lay the lawn in the form of a long horse-shoe, with a wide flower border and a hedge all round. To one side of this lay the kitchen garden, fenced off by a paling and high shrubs and hedges; and a yard skirted by poultry and out-houses was cut off by a gooseberry hedge and some trees, immediately behind the house, from a leafy but unproductive orchard which sloped down to the river. To the fourth side of the house lay nursery-gardens and shrubberies. Part of this description belongs to a line later than Southey's arrival, but the main features always existed.

Sara Coleridge, from whose memoir[1] this account is taken was seven months old in September 1803 when the Southeys came to Greta Hall. Her voice and childish playfulness made Edith Southey sleepless, and Robert's distress brought bad dreams. But the poet set himself resolutely to find a panacea in work. He had indeed employments sufficient to fill his time. Madoc was undergoing severe correction for publication, and money-bringing poems for the Morning Post kept him busy. He had also begun a book of letters from England, that purported to be by one Don Manuel Alvarez Espriella, "characterised is an able man bigoted by Catholicism, seeking signs of English decay to gratify his sense of national inferiotity"; in effect, a gentle satire on Great Britain. The authorship of this was to be a secret, but most of Southey's friends were in it. Amadis was published this year, soon/

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1 Mem. S.C.

soon after his arrival at Keswick; later Palmerin and the Cid made up Southey's triad of Spanish romances.

A letter to Wynn suggests that he was even trying to write a drama, and the History was growing not only in bulk but in plan, so that a twelvemonth after Southey's settlement, its extent threatened formidably; a History of Portugal, a history of the Portuguese empire in Asia, a history of Brazil, a history of the Jesuits in Japan, a literary history of Spain and Portugal, and a history of Monachism - in all, some ten or twelve quarto volumes. "You cannot easily imagine with what pleasure I look at all the labour before me", was Southey's own comment.

Coleridge was Southey's companion at Greta Hall for about six months, but in April 1804 he set off for Devonshire, and so for Malta where he spent three years, and so ultimately to London, whence his visits to Keswick were rare and brief. From this year forward Southey acted foster-father to the Coleridge children, besides bringing up a family of his own. Edith May Southey was born at Keswick in May 1804.

By the end of the first year, though by no means reconciled to the idea of a lifetime in Keswick, believing rather that his final settlement must be near London if not Portugal, Southey had settled into that routine that later made it impossible for him to move. His habits of work were methodically fixed. He was an early riser, and breakfasted early, wrote three folio sheets of history in his narrow clear handwriting after the meal, and was occupied till lunch to making fair copies for the press. The newspaper,/

newspaper, reading, and his immense correspondence were usually enough to fill the afternoons; if not, he allowed himself a nap; and correcting, rewriting and copying occupied him after tea till he was tired or till the claims of his family forced him to put books and papers away. In spring and summer he allowed the mountains to seduce him from this rigid discipline, and in summer the 'lakers' as he called the trippers of that day swarmed for his guidance to the hills or his company on picnics to Walla Craig or the lake. At other times, "imagine me", he said, "in this great study of mine from breakfast till dinner, from dinner till tea, and from tea till supper, in my old black coat, my corduroys alternately with the long worsted pantaloons and gaiters in one, and the green shade, and sitting at my desk, and you have my picture and my history. I play with Dapper, the dog, downstairs, who loves me as well as ever Cupid did, and the cat, upstairs, plays with me; for puss, finding my room the quietest in the house, has thought proper to share it with me". "It is a very odd, but marked, characteristic of my mind, that it is either utterly idle, or uselessly active, without its tools. I never enter into any regular train of thought unless the pen be in my hand; then they flow as fast as did the water from the rock in Horeb, but without that wand the source is dry".

In January 1804, Southey proposed to his publishers a volume of/

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1 C.C.S. II. 262.

2 C.C.S. II. 264.

of specimens of contemporary poetry; and some selection by himself, and some biographical prefaces by Bedford produced a saleable book.[1] Its preparation, and the imminent publication of Metrical Tales and Ballads (reprinted from the Annual Anthology) necessitated a trip to London. When he arrived, Southey found himself so ashamed of his provincial clothes that he hurried to a tailor to be fitted with the puff-sleeved and huge-cuffed coat of the prevailing fashion. This amused him; otherwise he did not pretend to enjoy the trip. Walking the streets of London wearied him more than ascents of Skiddaw, and in spite of his discovery of half a dozen Spanish folios, the pleasure of meeting friends, and the satisfaction gained from his publishers, he returned to Keswick gladly, and sat down to his treasured books.

In the autumn of 1805 Southey met Walter Scott. He had been interested in Scott ever since the publication of the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border, on which he made the characteristic observation that the prefaces and notes were more interesting than the poetry. Of Scott's Lay of the Last Minstrel, he seems to have said nothing further than a bidding to a friend to "look in Scott's title-page, at the cruelty with which he has actually split Paternoster Row". Scott, on his side, had reviewed Amadis in the Annual and Edinburgh Reviews, and had had the temerity to question, rightly, Southey's ascription of authorship. The two poets/

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Specimens of the later English Poets, with preliminary notices, by R.S. 3 vols. Longmans, 1807.

poets shared a romantic appreciation of the past and a modified admiration for each others works: there is another link in the closing chapters of both their lives, pathetically alike. Their meeting came during a visit by Southey to Scotland with his friend Elmsley, when he called at Ashestiel. Southey found his host "a most superior man, whom it is impossible not to like", and, being taken round the borders by the Sheriff, expressed himself well pleased with Teviotdale and astonished by Melrose. Presbyterianism sickened him, however, making him "glad he was an Englishman"; while for the Edinburgh reviewers he had little but contempt. "Judgment is the only faculty of the mind which they cultivate or value", he observed. Doubtless the talk of the Scottish lawyers wearied him immensely; widely read as he was, he could never control and concentrate the powers of his active mind on the hair-splittings of formal logic. That compared with Coleridge and Wordsworth he found the Scots men of letters very low indeed, may also be attributed to the superior attraction of poetry for him over other studies, and to the rigidity of his moral plus the comparative narrowness at this time, of his political views for Jeffrey and Brougham were men as outstanding for their liberal views in morals and politics as for their conservatism in the arts. Southey made fun of Jeffrey's small stature to his correspondents. They met in Edinburgh, and when the great critic foundered in a book of unspoken apologies for harsh reviews, talking round the subject he would not approach, Southey, looking down from the height of six feet, quoted the review without naming/

naming it, discussed the principles of criticism, and thus satisfied himself he had made it abundantly clear that a difference as wide as the physical separated their respective places in the hierarchy of letters. After which he went out and showed his mental superiority by spending the money he had set apart for new clothes, on books to be sent to Keswick.

From Edinburgh, Southey wrote to his wife, describing his uneasiness whilst from home. "Eight days, with as little discomfort or cause for discomfort as a man could expect, "yet discomforted him so much and strengthened his yearning for home and family to that degree that, he declared, without Edith he would go nowhere. Edith's thoughts were so Keswick-centred that this confession was tantamount to a declaration never to leave it. But at this time Southey imagined he had prospects of an appointment as Consul in Lisbon, through his uncle; and when this hope faded he still spoke of a two years' holiday in Lisbon. His letters also mention hopes of a residence near London, preferably in Richmond, to be near to the libraries.

The New Year of 1806 found him still dreaming of Portugal - "almost certain of a secretaryship there" - yet he remained at Keswick. The likelihood of his leaving the country was indefinitely postponed by the birth of a son, named after Southey's uncle Herbert Hill, on October 11th, 1806. He feared each year that the state of his lungs would drive him abroad, as the winter compelled his return to dangerously sedentary habits, but such fears were dissipated as regularly with the summer, when he found himself with

Lloyd/

Lloyd and Harry climbing Great Gable and descending to share five quarts of milk, or sailing picnic fashion, on the waters of the lake. That a visit to Taylor in Norwich this year was extended to London and a tour of Hampshire indicates however some assurance on the score of health, and any thoughts of early travel were certainly abandoned when "some arrangements of Coleridge's" in the spring of 1807 made it necessary to choose between leaving speedily or taking over the house. The former being impossible, the latter alternative was not unwillingly adopted. "And here I am now", he wrote, "planting garden-enclosures, rose-bushes, currants, gooseberries, and resolute to become a mountaineer - perhaps for ever.... We are going to have laburnums and lilacs, seringas, barberry bushes, and a pear tree..... And then the outside of the house is to be rough-cast, as soon as the season will permit, and there is a border made under the windows, and there is to be a gravel walk there, and turf under the trees beyond that, and beyond that such peas and beans!"[1]

It will be remembered that from 1797 Southey had received a pension of £160 from his friend C.W.W. Wynn, under an arrangement already explained. In 1807 he resigned this, because Wynn obtained for him a pension from the government of almost equal value. The Grenwille ministry, with which Wynn was connected, fell in 1807, but Wynn, with his usual solicitude, was able to pick something out of the fire for his friend. A pension of £200 p.a./

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1 C.C.S. III. 68.

p.a. was secured: fees and taxes reduced this to £144, leaving Southey, when he had resigned Wynn's annuity, precisely £16 a year poorer than he was before. Some sense of grievance here was permissible, yet we find Southey writing humorously, "I am less disposed to be very much obliged to the Treasury for giving me £200 a year, than I am to swear at the Taxes for taking £56 of it back again. And if it were a pull Devil pull Baker between that loyalty which, as you know, has always been so predominant in my heart, and that jacobinism of which, you know how vilely, I have been suspected, I am afraid the 56 would give a stronger pull on the Baker's side than the 144 on the Devil's. Look you, Mr Bedford of the Exchequer, it is out of all conscience."[1] The securing of this government pension, to be paid by a Whig ministry, was to him cause for an innocent merriment that almost offset regret at the loss: there is indeed a traceable resemblance between the circumstances and those under which Dr Johnson was relieved by Lord Bute, to the indignation of some who called the bounty a political bribe.

The personal friendship with Sir Walter Scott which Southey's northern tour in 1805 had established, led to a correspondence, and in November 1807 Scott wrote to suggest that Southey might become a contributor to the Edinburgh Review to the benefit of his income. Southey rejected this suggestion on the ground of his political difference/

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1 C.C.S. III. 80.

difference with Jeffrey. "My moral feelings" he wrote, "must not be compromised..... of Judge Jeffrey .... I must ever think and speak as of a bad politician, a worse moralist, and a critic, in matters of taste, equally incompetent and unjust."[1] He recognised Scott's good intentions, but the decision was irrevocable. Reviewing, however, was soon to be Southey's main source of income. The Quarterly Review began in 1809, published by Murray and edited by Gifford. Scott was one of its supporters, and he and Gifford both urged Southey to write for the new journal. Southey readily agreed to this proposal, writing an article on the Baptist Mission in India for the first number, published in February 1809, and a total of ninety-four articles between 1808 and 1838.

At the close of the year 1808 too, he received from Ballantyne the prospectus of the Edinburgh Annual Register with a request for contributions. Some verses were sent then, and in 1809 Southey undertook to prepare the historical part of the work at an annual salary of £400. The engagement lasted three years, and was obviously profitable.

The Keswick years show Southey as a man of unusually charitable temper. If he received much from his friends, he gave as freely to others, and his acts were often worth more than his gifts. His son-in-law records that he once rose at a moment's notice at midnight, and walked over the field to see Wordsworth's dying child and comfort the distressed mother. He carried on long correspondence/

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1. C.C.S. III. 125.

correspondences with poetasters who wished advice and thrust their manuscripts on him: the names of Shaaron Turner, one of his close friends in later years, and of Ebenezer Elliot arise in this connection. His efforts on behalf of Chatterton's mother and sister have been referred to. Very similar, though less financially necessary, was the service he did the remains of one William Roberts, and more important, the service done to the papers of Henry Kirke White, a consumptive young poet who died of overwork at Cambridge in 1806.

Two years earlier, Southey had read with some interest a very thin volume of very thin poetry. The author, Henry Kirke White, in a letter to the reviewers, unfortunately explained his work as the product, in part, of a desire to earn money, and the Monthly Review with perfect justice regrettably untempered with mercy, laughed this hope to scorn. Southey, whose critical judgment was always influenced by moral bias, characteristically denied the verdict of Monthly on the score of the letter, and hastened to offer White assistance in publishing a larger volume by subscription. Nothing came of this, as White soon after matriculated at Cambridge, where, as related, he wore himself out; but news of his death coming to Southey, he asked what papers White had left behind him for publication, and offered to edit them. This was done, and the book appeared in 1807. It is worth remarking that White was a non-conformist, while Southey was stiffening into a bulwark of the Establishment.

Southey required to have at hand an enormous stock of reference books for his literary work. Books he had in plenty, but/

but his peripatetic life had contrived to separate him from them for long periods. Now, however, installed in his own house, he resolved to have his books about him. The first months of 1808 saw this ambition achieved, after an upheaval in Greta Hall that left him hardly stepping places through the labyrinth of books piled high in all parts about him. "Like Pharaoh's frogs, they found their way everywhere, even into the bedchambers". The passage connecting the two houses was lined with shelves to hold about 1350 volumes and was denominated Duck Row. His study was filled with shelves even to the spaces above the doors, and the total at this time amounted to four thousand volumes. Later, it reached fourteen thousand. Some of the ragged veterans were later hand-covered by the ladies of the house in chintzes and muslins, a pleasing fancy leading them to try to suit the cover to the contents - a sub-fusc hue for sermons and a gayer colour for poetry, and when they filled a room the collection was named the Cottonian Library. When the whole army was gathered together and Southey had approved their disposal, he forgot the vexation their absence had caused and regretted only the short span of life he had in view to make use of them. Book collecting was a passion with Southey, and well his friends knew it. When Neville White wished to show his gratitude for the work done on his brother's papers, he sent Southey thirteen volumes of the works of Sir William Jones in the handsomest binding ever seen. His uncle sent him books, Bedford and other friends did likewise, and while it was possible not a few books found their way from Portugal to Greta Hall without

paying/

paying the revenue tax. An amusing letter to his friend Danvers a Bristol wine merchant, in 1807 expresses fear lest Coleridge in Bristol should get at his books. "In the first place he spoils every decent book on which he lays his hands, and in the next place the minute it is in his hands he considers it to all intents and purposes his own, and makes no scruple of bescrawling it, of giving it away, - in short of doing anything with it, - except taking care of it and returning it to its owner.... in plain English his borrowing is something worse than begging."[1]

Such a collecting brought together in the one place might well of itself bring inspiration down from her heights. There was another reason however, for resuming the epic pen. Early in 1808 Southey met at Bristol Walter Savage Landor, known to him as the author of Gebir, of whose talent he had a high, even an exaggerated opinion, holding him "the only man living of those praise I was ambitious or whose censure would have humbled me". Landor talked of Thalaba, and Southey was led to speak of the series of mytho= logical poems he had projected, and confessed frankly that they were laid aside because he could not afford to write them. "Go on with them", said Landor, "and I will pay for printing them, as many as you will write and as many copies as you please". The offer reawakened dreams and ambitions, and "a stinging desire to go on, for the sake of showing him poem after poem, and saying, "I need not accept your offer, but I have done this because you made it".[2]

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1 Unpublished letter in B.M.

2 J.W.W. II. 69.

So Kehama began to take shape again, and because Southey never worked at one task, but liked to have several pieces of work on hand so that he could refresh himself by a change of subject if not of occupation, Pelayo - later Roderick - was planned.

Landor and Wynn were not the only friends who exerted themselves at different times to help Southey. Scott, visiting London in 1809, had used his influence with friends connected with the government to see if a professorial chair could not be offered to the poet, and there were diplomatic and other situations that might be canvassed for. Southey told Scott that he could not go abroad with his family, and would not live in London under any circumstances, but if a post as Royal Historiographer for England could be created at an actual salary of £300 a year, he would resign his pension to have it. This post, however, existed and was filled. Professorships in England were unattainable, and none offered in Scotland. On the top of this, however, Southey discovered that a Stewardship to Greenwick Hospital for Derwentwater estates was soon to be vacant, and exercised himself to win the £600 a year attaching to this post. When he found it took the Steward and a clerk eighteen hours out of the twenty-four to attend to the combined duties of agriculturist, surveyor, minerologist and lawyer, he lost interest at once, asserting that he "would rather live in a hollow tree all the summer and die when the cold weather set in, than undertake such employment". Another attempt to gain the post of Historiographer was made in 1822, when the office-holder died. Southey approached Canning via Gifford, and Scott approached/

approached Lord Melville, but the official reply stated that a previous arrangement had been made for the post. Southey had had real hopes of securing this post, believing himself better fitted than most to fill it; and was ambitious if appointed to raise the status of the office by his labours. These ambitions, however, were given no scope.

One notable achievement of Sir Walter Scott's on Southey's behalf falls to be recorded in this chapter, but as it properly rounds off a period, brief reference must first be made to Southey's other affairs prior to 1813. In the summer of 1812 he made a fortnight's excursion to Durham, where his brothers Tom and Harry were now resident, and through Yorkshire - where in one day he was fifteen hours on foot, with only half an hour's rest and no dinner: a strong effort for a literary gentleman of thirty eight years - and where also he visited the Rokeby estate, soon made famous by Scott. His domestic affairs once again gave rise to concern as he withdrew from the *Edinburgh Annual Register*, whose payments had for some time been irregular, causing him inconvenience. He blamed the non-success on the London booksellers, commenting that for ten copies sold in Scotland, only one was sold in England; but he frequently postulated the *oldest* reasons for the plainest facts, and nothing could be plainer than the fact that this periodical was not saleable. Other writings, apart from the poetry mentioned, include the most violently political part of his work. The *Book of the Church* was planned and begun, and in the *Quarterly* he was making himself known to the great body of/

of conservative and patriotic Englishmen by his aggressive articles on the State of the Poor, besides urging very strongly the establishment of a system of universal state education with a school in every parish, in an article on Bell's and Lancaster's tuition system. His famous Life of Nelson, expanded from a review article, was completed in February 1813. Dr Bell he had met previously, and the visit was returned this year; and other noteworthy meetings were with Shelley, and with Lord Byron at Holland House, London.

This last meeting took place when Southey travelled south to be invested Poet Laureate, under circumstances not a little odd and deserving of notice. There is no mystery attached, and the story is well known, but most fully told in the correspondence itself, as follows. The previous Laureate, Pye, died in September 1813, and Southey, already committed to a journey south, thought his succession so probable that he cracked a joke or two and thought seriously of what it would entail. Wynn as would be expected wrote to him, and Bedford met him in London with the news that Croker of the Quarterly had already spoken about the appointment to him and Gifford. Southey hastened to the Admiralty and saw Croker; who had already interviewed the Prince Regent, and extracted the observation that Southey "had written some good things about the Spaniards" and should have the office. However, Croker had also seen Lord Liverpool, and in passing on the Prince's verdict, was met with the news that Lord Liverpool had already offered the laurel to Scott, as the greatest poet of the day! However, embarassing this/

this was to Croker, it did not depress Southey, who foresaw Scott's generous line of action, and had his expectation confirmed almost immediately. Sir Walter writing to Southey said he had declined the offer of the Laureateship as "incompetent to the task of annual commemmoration" but chiefly as being provided for in his professional capacity, and "unwilling to take money better given to one with no income except from literature". He may have over-estimated the value of the honour, which turned out to be worth £90, but the generosity of his action is not thereby impugned. Southey now wrote to Croker that "the time was passed when he could write verses upon demand, but that if it were understood that, instead of the old formalities, I might be at liberty to write upon great public events or to be silent, as the spirit moved, - in that case the office would become a mark of honourable distinction, and I should be proud of accepting it". After a foolish delay, caused by the wish of Lord Hertford that Lord Liverpool should formally request the office for Southey, an order was written for making out the appointment. "A letter soon followed to say that the order was given and I might be sworn in whenever I pleased. My pleasure, however, was the last thing to be consulted. After due inquiry on my part, and some additional delays, I received a note to say that if I would attend at the Chamberlain's office at one o'clock on Thursday, November 4 .. a gentleman usher would be there to administer the oath.... Down I went to the office and solicited a change in the day; but this was in vain, the gentleman-usher had been spoken to, and a Poet-

Laureate/

Laureate is a creature of a lower description. I obtained, however, two hours' grace; and yesterday, by rising by candle-light and hurrying the postboys, reached the office to the minute. I swore to be a faithful servant to the King, to reveal all treasons which might come to my knowledge, to discharge the duties of my office, and to obey the Lord Chamberlain in all matters of the King's service, and in his stead the Vice-Chamberlain. Having taken this upon my soul, I was thereby inducted into all the rights, privileges, and benefits which Henry James Pye, Esq., did enjoy, or ought to have enjoyed".[1]

Poor Southey, the rights, privileges, and benefits of an annual £90, plus a little of his own money, were sufficient to cover an insurance policy of £3000 upon his own life as a legacy to his wife and children, while the penalties attached were not mitigated. Southey soon learned to refer to the task of turning out birthday verses as his 'odious duty'; and found that even the patriotism with which he burned must be expressed with discretion. "It appeared" said his son, "that he might rejoice for England, and Spain, and Wellington, but he must not pour out the vials of his wrath upon France and Bonaparte".

"To the manner of your letter I am quite unable to reply" Southey wrote to Scott: at once a tribute and a gracious response, but more substantial are these words: "It is with the greatest thanksgiving that I have secured this legacy for my wife and children/

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1 C.C.S. IV. 48,49.

children, and it is to you that I am primarily and chiefly indebted".[1] Underneath his honours, and despite his eccentricities and failings, the best and most lovable in Southey was dedicated to his home, his friends, and his family.

In 1813 when Southey became Poet Laureate he was forty years old. The date falls later than the central year of his life, but is central in his life story, marking approximately the abdication of the poet and the accession of the prose writer. For the poet singing hymns unbidden had to give place to the composer of New Year and Birthday odes to order, and to the historian, biographer, and author of The Doctor, begun this year.

At twenty-two Cottle described Southey as "tall, dignified, possessing great suavity of manners, with an eye piercing, a countenance full of genius, kindliness and intelligence". At forty, Byron said his appearance was 'epic'; "the best looking bard I have seen for some time", and he added impishly, "to have that poet's head and shoulders I would almost have written his Sapphics. He is certainly a prepossessing person to look on". Nearly six feet tall but slight in build, with an oval face, wide-set eyes and a long straight nose, Southey had the traditional air of a poet through almost continuous neglect to have his hair cut, and he looked younger than his age, perhaps because he habitually neglected his clothes and wore a countryman's cap when he went out.

Ten years at Keswick did not alter the routine of his life. He/

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1 C.C.S. IV. 48,49.

He still read before breakfast and wrote after, slept and wrote in the afternoon, and conversed with the family or read aloud after supper, "sitting with the fire on his left hand and a small table on his right, looking on at his family circle in front of him". His walks were still on the grand scale. (Even after sixty he could walk twenty-five miles as a matter of course, despising the mountain pony). He often climbed Skiddaw, and Saddleback and Causey Pike were favourite summits. Joint gatherings with Wordsworth's household and other friends, (special meetings, when sometimes fifty people assembled), were held at Thirlmere. Descriptions of these and other favourite excursions form interchapters to his Colloquies.

Wordsworth settled in Dove Cottage, Grasmere, in 1799. After intervals at Coleorton and Allan Bank, he settled at Rydal Mount in 1813. Little of his correspondence with Southey seems to have been preserved: Charles Cuthbert Southey says the families visited each other too frequently to need to correspond and admittedly references to his friendship with Wordsworth occur frequently in Southey's letters. When Coleridge returned to England from Malta, he lived for some months between 1809 and 1810 with Wordsworth at Allan Bank, until their estrangement. He next spent four or five months at Greta Hall between visits to London, and paid his last visit to Greta Hall between February and March in 1812, never returning to the Lake District. Southey wrote often to him and received no reply, and so we find him writing Cottle in October 1814: "Can you tell me anything of Coleridge? A few lines of introduction for a son of Mr Biddulph of St. James's, [Bristol] are all that we have received since/

since I saw him last September twelvemonth in town. The children being thus left entirely to chance, I have applied to his brothers at Otley concerning them, and am in hopes through their means and the aid of other friends, of sending Hartley to College. Lady Beaumont has promised £30 a year for this purpose, Poole £10. I wrote to Coleridge three or four months ago, telling him that unless he took some steps in providing for this object I must make the application, and required his answer within a given term of three weeks. He received the letter, and in his note to W. promised to answer it, but he has never taken any further notice of it. I have acted with the advice of Wordsworth. The brothers, as I expected, promised their concurrence, and I daily expect a letter stating what amount they will contribute".[1]

Hartley was duly entered at Oxford, but Southey was wearied by any mention of Coleridge by this time, and the few later references in his correspondence[2] have a sour flavour for which he can hardly be blamed.

International events almost coincident with this can be seen through Southey's eyes in the correspondence.

"Thank God we have seen the end of this long tragedy of five and twenty years! The curtain is fallen; and though there is the after-piece of the Devil to Pay to be performed, we have nothing to do with that: it concerns the performers alone".

With these words Southey joined in the universal rejoicings, when in/

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[1] C.C.S. IV. 82,83.

[2] Including some unprinted letters.

in April 1814 the exhausted armies laid down their weapons and Napoleon abdicated. "If the King of France has any stray cordon bleu to dispose of here, Herbert has a fair claim to one, having been the first person in Great Britain who mounted the white cockade. He appeared with one immediately upon the news from Bordeaux, and wore it till the news from Paris[1]. My young ones were then all as happy as paper cockades could make them; and, to our great amusement, all the white ribband in Keswick was brought up to follow their example"[2].

He was able to recall his feelings at the outbreak of the French Revolution with a rather ingenous satisfaction that the European upheaval had, as a sort of corollary, served to correct his own earlier misconceptions. "I could not but remember how materially the course of my own life had been influenced by that tremendous earthquake, which seemed to break up the great deeps of society, like a moral and political deluge. I have detived nothing but good from it in everything, except the mere consideration of immediate worldly fortune, which is to me be as dust in the balance. Sure I am that under any other course of discipline I should not have possessed half the intellectual powers which I now enjoy, and perhaps not the moral strength. The hopes and the ardour, and the errors and the struggles and the difficulties of my early life crowded upon my mind; and, above all, there was a deep and grateful sense of that/

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1 Of the occupation of Paris and the restoration of the Bourbons.

2 C.C.S. IV. 65.

that superintending goodness which had made all things work together for good in my fortune, and will, I firmly believe, in like manner uniformly educe good from evil upon the great scale of human events".[1]

Southey had never had any sympathy for the arch-tyrant: in the end he was contemptuous. "I thought he would set his life upon the last throw, and die game; or that he would kill himself, or that some of his own men would kill him; and though it has long been my conviction that he was a mean minded villain, still it surprised me that he should live after such a degradation, - after the loss, not merely of empire, but even of his military character. But let him love".[2] However, he indicted the army and the marshalls, who owed all their necks, were they hydra-headed, to the gallows. "You know how earnestly I used to urge that, while we were at war, we should distinguish between Bonaparte and the French people. The fitness if that distinction is proved by the act of deposing him, and making peace with the world, being one and the same. But we must not let this rob the French army of the whole meritn of their conduct in his services. Certes it was Bonaparte who sent them into Spain; but who did the work there? - who were they who robbed, ravished, burnt, tortured, and murdered wherever they went? They were the soldiers, the officers, and the generals of the most amiable of nations. It was not Bonaparte who /

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1 C.C.S. IV. 66 ff.

2 C.C.S. IV. 69.

who did all this".[1] Probably Southey could never have conceived how war affects the best of natures, especially such as war as the French fought, in continuous defence of extended communications, against the Spanish guerillas who could not be brought to a regular action. There is nothing to show what Southey thought of the amnesty to the French generals, or Ney's execution, but the proposals for peace did not please him. "In war John Bull's bottom makes amend for the defects of his head; he is a dreadful fellow to take by the horns, but no calf can be more easily led by the nose. Europe was in such a state when Paris was taken that a commanding intellect, had there been such among the allies, might have cast it into whatever form he pleased. The first business should have been to have reduced France to what she was before Louis XIV's time; the second to have created a great power in the north of Germany with Prussia at its head; the third to have consolidated Italy into one kingdom or commonwealth".[2] It was long before any of these dreams came true.

When war was renewed, he commented, "Two things were wanting last year, - the British army did not get to Paris, and the French were neither punished as they deserved, nor humbled as the interests of the rest of the world required. It will, I trust now be put beyond doubt that they have been conquered, and that their metropolis has been taken".[3] Then came Waterloo, and criticism/

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1 J.W.W. II. 352.

2 C.C.S. IV. 96.

3 C.C.S. IV. 110.

criticism was forgotten. "Our bells are ringing as they ought to do; and I, after a burst of thankfulness at the day's news, am in a state of serious and thoughtful thankfulness for what, perhaps, ought to be considered as the greatest deliverance that civilised society has experienced since the defeat of the Moors by Charles Martel".[1]

Waterloo celebrations at Keswick were on the grand scale. A bonfire was lit on Skiddaw, and great crowds gathered at the summit, among whom the Southey family and Wordsworth with his wife, sister and son, were prominent. "We roasted beef and boiled plum-puddings there; sun 'God save the King' round the most furious body of flaming tar-barrels that I ever saw; drank a huge wooden bowl of punch; fired cannon at every health with three times three, and rolled large blazing balls of tow and turpentine down the steep side of the mountain. The effect was grand beyond imagination. We formed a huge circle round the most intense light, and behind us was an immeasurable arch of the most intense darkness, for our bonfire fairly put out the moon". One mishap threatened the success of the party. When all were clamouring for punch, the the kettle of boiling water was found to have been overturned by Wordsworth, who stood conspicuous in a red cloak like a Spanish Don. "As soon as, in my enquiries concerning the punch, I learned his guilt, I went round to all our party, and communicated the discovery, and getting them about him, I punished him by singing a parody/

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1 C.C.S. IV.117.

parody, which they all joined in: "'Twas you that kicked the kettle down! 'twas you, Sir, you!" The consequences were, that we took all the cold water upon the summit to supply our loss. Our myrmidons and Messrs Rag & Co. had, therefore, none for their grog; they necessarily drank the rum pure; and you are doubtless acquainted with the manner in which alcohol acts upon the nervous system. All our torches were lit at once by this mad company, and our way down the hill was marked by a track of fire, from flambeaux dropping the pitch, tarred ropes, &c. One fellow was so drunk that his companions placed him upon a horse, with his face to the tail, to bring him down, themselves being just sober enough to guide and hold him on. Down, however, we all got safely by midnight; and nobody, from the old Lord of seventy-seven to my son Herbert, is the worse for the toil of the day, though we were eight hours from the time we set out till we reached home".[1]

As soon as peace was declared, all who could hastened to the battlefield of Waterloo. Southey crossed the Channel late in 1815, with his wife, his daughter Edith, and Nash the artist, and visiting Bruges, Ghent, Brussels and Waterloo, Louvaine, Aix, and Namur, returned before Christmas to compose The Poets Pilgrimage". "We have seen the whole field of battle, or rather all the fields, and vestiges enough of the contest, though it is almost wonderful to observe how soon nature recovers from all her injuries. The fields are cultivated again, and wild flowers are in blossom upon some of the graves. The result of what I have collected is an opinion that the present settlement of these countries/

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1 C.C.S. IV. 122-123.

countries is not likely to be durable. The people feel at present pretty much as a bird who is rescued from the claw of one eagle by the beak of another. The Rhine is regarded as a proper boundary for Prussia; and it is as little desired that she should *pass* that river as that France should reach it. There is a spirit of independence here, which has been outraged, but from which much good might arise if it were conciliated. This, I am inclined to think, would be best done by forming a wide confederacy, leaving to each of the confederates its own territory, laws, &c. and this might be extended from the frontiers of France to the Hanseatic cities. One thing I am certain, that such arrangements would satisfy everybody, except those sovereigns who would lose by it".[1]

The *Poet's Pilgrimage* was published in 1816. Extending to 23,000 lines, this tedious poem is only in part a description of the tour. It is more a justification of his own opinions on the Napoleonic wars. A ghostly protagonist of Whiggery tried to argue with the poet:

> Where now the hopes with which thine ardent youth
>   Rejoicingly to run its race began?
> Where now the reign of Liberty and Truth,
>   The Rights Omnipotent of Equal Man,
> The Principles should make all discord cease,
> And bid poor humankind repose at length in peace?
>
> Behold the Bourbon to that throne by force
>   Restored, from whence by fury he was cast;
> Thus to the point where it began its course
>   The melancholy cycle comes at last:
> And what are all the intermediate years? ....
> What, but a bootless waste of blood and tears?

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1 C.C.S. IV. 131-2.

Another goddess, however, supplies an elaborate answer. The courses of history shows a progress towards that perfection which is won best by service to Established Religion and the moral law. The aim of Napoleon was to overthrow this system; he represented the forces of evil as fully as any ancient tyrant:

> If among hateful Tyrants of all times
> For endless execration handed down
> One may be found surpassing all in crimes,
> One that for infamy should bear the crown,
> Napoleon is that man, in guilt the first,
> Pre-eminently bad among the worst.

Waterloo is therefore another and nearly final victory of Good over Evil:

> That danger is gone by. On Waterloo
> The Tyrant's fortune on the scale was weigh'd....
> His fortune and the World's .... and England threw
> Her sword into the balance .... down it sway'd;
> And, when in battle first he met that foe,
> There he received his mortal overthrow.
>
> Peace she hath won.... with her victorious hand
> Hath won through rightful war auspicious peace;
> Nor this alone, but that in every land
> The withering rule of violence may cease.
> Was ever War with such blest victory crown'd!
> Did ever Victory with such fruits abound!

Of the poetic merit of The Poet's Pilgrimage, these stanzas are sufficient example. There are, however, some sweetly sentimental verses in the Poem, describing his own family, which have a biographical interest. The verses here quoted describe the scene at Greta Hall on his return from the continent:

Bring/

Bring forth the treasures now, ... a proud display,...
For rich as Eastern merchants we return!
Behold the black Beguine, the Sister grey,
The Friars whose heads with sober motion turn,
The Ark well-fill'd with all its numerous hives,
Noah and Shem and Ham and Japhet, and their wives.

It was a group which Richter, had he view'd,
Might have deem'd worthy of his perfect skill;
The keen impatience of the younger brood,
Their eager eyes and fingers never still;
The hope, the wonder, and the restless joy
Of those glad girls, and that vociferous boy!

The aged friend serene with quiet smile,
Who in their pleasure finds her own delight;
The mother's heart-felt happiness the while;
The aunts, rejoicing in the joyful sight;
And he who, in his gaiety of heart,
With glib and noisy tongue performed the showman's part.

Scoff ye who will! but let me, gracious Heaven,
Preserve this boyish heart till life's last day!
For so that inward light by Nature given
Shall still direct, and cheer me on my way,
And, brightening as the shades of age descend,
Shine forth with heavenly radiance at the end.

This was the morning light vouchsafed, which led
My favour'd footsteps to the Muses' hill,
Whose arduous paths I have not ceased to tread,
From good to better persevering still;
And, if but self-approved, to praise or blame
Indifferent, while I toil for lasting fame.

In 1816 Southey's articles attracted government attention, and it was suggested that he should edit a government journal. He rejected this suggestion, partly because it seemed likely to make him purely a government mouthpiece, unable to express his true opinions, and partly because he thought his influence would be diminished if he wrote as a salaried official. The following year he turned down even without examination a hint that he might be made leader writer for <u>The Times</u>, with some share in the management of/

of the paper and a remuneration probably of £2,000 plus some share in the profits. He declared then that he could not consider living in London, and that his mind was set on future fame rather than present profit. His pride may have resented the honours paid to the journalist, which had evaded the poet, but evidently there can have been no serious financial problem. He contemplated a book on political and social questions, but meanwhile continued to write for the Quarterly. His own opinion of his influence there was considerable, and his self-approval earned some justification when he was made a member of the Royal Spanish Academy and of the Royal Spanish Academy of History in 1815 (with the privileges of a member of the Royal household, "which I should be very glad to profit by, if I could afford a journey to Spain, for I should have better access to archives and manuscripts than any foreigner has ever enjoyed"), and a member of the Royal Institute of the Netherlands in 1817; but some of his own countrymen had devised a different style of honour. In February 1817, Southey was astonished to find Wat Tyler advertised as newly published.[1]

The play had not of course been published before, and its appearance now was deliberately intended to nullify the force of Southey's Quarterly articles. In 1817 he clamoured for a censorship, suppression of opposition, and rejection of all schemes for widening the franchise. In 1794 he had tried to publish a play which,/

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1 C.C.S. IV. 237 ff.

which, under a censorship, could never have been published, and which urged an oppressed peasantry to rebel against their insufferable wrongs.

The sales of Wat Tyler increased - without profit to the author. It is supposed that six thousand copies were sold at this time. How had it got into print? Southey told Bedford; "Three and twenty years ago the MS. was put into Ridgeway's hands, who promised to publish it then (anonymously, unless I am very much mistaken,) and from that time to this I never heard of it. There was no other copy in existence except the original scrawl, which is now lying upstairs in an old trunk full of papers". There must obviously be some omission here, though Southey need not be blamed for failure to remember what had happened. Meanwhile of course the author wanted to have the book withdrawn, and he applied to the courts for an injunction to restrain the publication. This was refused on grounds which constitute perhaps the oddest part of the whole affair. Lord Eldon, after due reference to case-law and precedent decided that "a person cannot recover damages for a book which is in its nature calculated to do an injury to the public". The injunction could not be granted till Mr Southey established his right to the property by action. Mr Southey, however, admitted that in the political circumstances he could not deny Wat Tyler's injurious tendencies. He had therefore no claim on the book, and had to watch the sales rise without interference.

"I wonder", wrote a friend to Cottle[1], "if Mr Southey ever did/

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[1] C.C.S. IV. 255.

did get at the secret history of that affair. The story, as I heard it, was that Southey visited Winterbottom in prison, and, just as a token of kindness, gave him the MS, of <u>Wat Tyler</u>. On a visit to Worcester he had the piece with him, meaning, I suppose to afford them a little amusement at Southey's expense, he being held in great reproach and contempt as a turn-coat. At the house where Winterbottom was visiting, two persons, keeping the piece in their reach at bed-time, sat up all night transcribing it, of course giving him no hint of the manoeuvre. This information I had from one of the two operators". But Southey denied this in a letter to the <u>Courier</u>,[1] after the court case.

"In the year 1794, this manuscript was placed by a friend of mine (long since deceased) in Mr Ridgeway's hands. Being shortly afterwards in London myself for a few days, I called on Mr Ridgeway, in Newgate, and he and Mr Symonds agreed to publish it. I understood that they had changed their intentions, because no proof sheet was sent me, and acquiescing readily in their cooler opinion, made no enquiry concerning it. More than two years elapsed before I revisited London; and then, if I had thought of the manuscript, it would have appeared a thing of too little consequence to take the trouble of claiming it for the mere purpose of throwing it behind the fire. That it might be published surreptitiously at any future time, was a wickedness of which I never dreamt.

"To/

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1 C.C.S. V. Appendix.

"To these facts I have made oath. Mr Winterbottom, a dissenting minister, has sworn, on the contrary, that Messrs Ridgeway and Symonds having declined the publication, it was undertaken by himself and Daniel Isaac Eaton; that I gave them a copy as their own property, and gave them, moreover, a fraternal embrace for their gracious acceptance of it; and that he the said Winterbottom verily believed he had a right now, after an interval of three-and-twenty years, to publish it as his own.

"My recollection is perfectly distinct, notwithstanding the lapse of time; and it was likely to be so, as I was never, on any other occasion, within the walls of Newgate. The work had been delivered to Mr Ridgeway; it was for him that I inquired, and into his apartments I was shown. There I saw Mr Symonds, and there I saw Mr Winterbottom also, whom I knew to be a dissenting minister. I never saw Daniel Isaac Eaton in my life; and as for the story of the embrace, every person who knows my disposition and manners, will at once perceive it to be an impudent falsehood... There is no earthly balance in which oaths can be weighed against each other; but character is something in the scale; and it is perfectly in character that the man who has published Wat Tyler under the present circumstances, should swear - as Mr Winterbottom has sworn.

"Thus much concerning the facts. As to the work itself, I am desirous that my feelings should neither be misrepresented nor misunderstood. It contains the statement of opinions which I have long outgrown, and which are stated more broadly because of/

of this dramatic form. Were there an expression which bordered upon irreligion or impurity, I should look upon it with shame and contrition; but I can feel neither for opinions of universal equality, taken up as they were conscientiously in youth, acted upon in disregard of all worldly considerations, and left behind me in the same straightforward course of advancing years. The piece was written when such opinions, or rather such hopes and fears, were confined to a very small number of the educated classes; when those who were deemed Republicans were exposed to personal danger from the populace; and when a spirit of anti-Jacobinism prevailed.. The times have changed....."

What was morally wrong, in short, was not the revolutionary sentiments nor the character of the writer who expressed them in 1793, but the character of those who expressed the same sentiments in 1817. Times had changed: and revolutionary sentiments in 1817, expressed by a large number of the uneducated class, were now immoral. Southey was certainly expert in resolving moral issues; but it is not surprising that his opponents thought him a hypocrite.

The next turn in this surprising history was staged in the House of Commons. Mr Brougham raised the matter first: then William Smith, M.P. for Norwich, came forward with Wat Tyler in one hand and the Quarterly Review in the other, to attack the author. "He was far from supposing that a man who set out in life with the profession of certain sentiments, was bound to conclude life with them. He thought there might be many occasions in which a change of opinion, when that change was unattended by any personal advantages/

advantages, when it appeared entirely disinterested, might be the result of sincere conviction. But what he most detested, what most filled him with disgust, was the settled, determined malignity of a renegade".[1]

"He had read in a publication, certainly entitled to much respect from its general literary excellencies, though he differed from its principles, a passage alluding to the recent disturbances, which passage was as follows:- 'When the man of free opinions commences professor of moral and political philosophy for the benefit of the public, the fables of old credulity are then verified: his very breath becomes venomous, and every page which he sends abroad carries with it poison to the unsuspicious reader. We have shown, on a former occasion, how men of this description are acting upon the public, and have explained in what manner a large part of the people have been prepared for the virus with which they innoculate them. The dangers arising from such a state of things are now fully apparent, and the designs of the incendiaries, which have for some years been proclaimed so plainly that they ought, long ere this, to have been prevented, are now manifested by overt acts'.

"With the permission of the House, he would read an extract from a poem recently published, to which, he supposed, the above writer alluded (or, at least, to productions of a similar kind,) as/

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1 Hansard's Parl Debates, vol. xxxvii. Reprinted by C.C. Southey in the 'Life and Correspondence of R.S.' vol. v. appendix.

as constituting a part of the virus with which the public mind had become infected:-

'My brethren, these are truths, and weighty ones:
Ye are all equal; Nature made ye so.
Equality is your birthright; when I gaze
On the proud palace, and behond one man,
In the blood-purpled robes of royalty,
Feasting at ease, and lording over millions;
Then turn me to the hut of poverty,
And see the wretched labourer, worn with toil,
Divide his scanty morsel with his infants,
I sicken, and, indignant at the sight,
Blush for the patience of humanity'.

"This Wat Tyler seemed to him the most seditious book that was ever written; its author did not stop short of exhorting to general anarchy; he vilified kings, priests, and nobles, and was for universal suffrage, and perfect equality.... Why, then, had not those who thought it necessary to suspend the Habeas Corpus act taken notice of this poem? Why had they not discovered the author of that seditious publication, and visited him with the penalties of the law? .... It must remain with the Government, and their legal advisers, to take what step they might deem most advisable to repress this seditious work. In bringing it under the notice of the House, he had merely spoken in defence of his constituents, who had been most grossly calumniated, and he thought that what he had said would go very far to exculpate them".

The speech was exceedingly witty, and well calculated to discomfort both the Government and the poet, who could not of course see the joke as well as his opponents. Wynn defended Southey in the House, and Coleridge in 'The Courier', but he was not/

not content and retorted with violence in a long letter, running to six thousand words, in the next Courier. This was too long to be really effective, and is much too long to quote, but it can be summarised.

Southey began by accusing Smith of introducing his remarks deliberately and not in the course of debate. He briefly acknowledged Wynn's defence, but explained he thought it proper to speak for himself. In regard to the article quoted, without denying authorship, he pointed out that it was anonymous, denied Smith's right to ascribe authorship, and asserted that the only question that could arise was the truth of the statements made. As to Wat Tyler, Smith knew that it was published against the author's will, and the author denied that it was seditious. That it was mischievous, he admitted, and he had tried to withdraw it,- not as repudiating the feelings of his youth, but from a sense of duty having regard to the times. When Smith accused him of attacking men merely for holding these opinions, he lied. Further, when the Edinburgh Review charged Southey with vindictive and jealous writings in support of his own works, it lied. He had never troubled to reply to critics of such moral calibre before; his writing on this occasion could not then be put down to desire for notoreity. On the contrary, the other side had opened the debate. But as his views were the subject of so much discussion, he supposed he had a right to state them himself.

As a young man he had been impressed by the evils of inequality of property, and the evils of class distinction arising from 'want of/

of moral and intellectual culture'. He wrote Wat Tyler in impatience of oppression: the subject was injudicious and the treatment biased; but it was an accurate representation of what historical characters had thought and said. Were he to write the play again, he should still demonstrate the oppressions of the feudal system, and the excesses of the insurgents, and the treachery of the government, holding up these crimes and errors as a moral warning. Other of Southey's early poems showed only a hatred of tyranny and wickedness, plus a visionary optimism: if Wat Tyler did more, it was only because it was a drama. In any case, he felt no shame for the opinions held as a young man. He was no renegade, but had simply 'ceased to think that he understood the principles of government, and the nature of man and society, before he was one-and-twenty years of age. He had ceased to suppose that men who neither cultivate their intellectual nor their moral faculties could understand them at any age'. He had not ceased to hate tyranny and wickedness. In opposing Napoleon he had not been guilty of change, for he had never held such opinions as Bonapartists and revolutionaries now held. All his life he had wished for the improvement of mankind, and all his life he had been to this aim, consistent.

In proof of this, he outlined his opinions on current affairs. Extremes of inequality must be avoided, because they are dangerous, but improvement must be slow. In order slowly to work improvement, the Government must be strengthened against seditious writers. Without measures to this end, all else would be useless. But this granted/

granted, Southey supported poor relief, colonisation, and a system of moral and religious education. There should be expenditure on public works, because the war, a time of unexampled expenditure, had shown that prosperity accompanied expenditure. Taxes should be graded, prisons reformed, and legal remedies made quicker and cheaper. These views, expressed in all Southey's writings, might have been known to Smith, whose attack, in such a place and manner as he had chosen, had compelled this reply.

There is nothing new in all this to have required such extensive elaboration, but Southey in a passion became exceedingly verbose, and, having descended to personalities, he attacked Smith with a ponderous sarcasm that filled his pages. Southey was a violent writer: in a time of strong feelings he must have known he stood small chance of personal immunity. His attack on Smith is weakened, not strengthened, by the mixture of arrogance and vindictiveness. All through the paper he is on the defensive, and the closing paragraph, a final attempt to recover his dignity, seems rather pathetic now:

How far the writings of Mr Southey may be found to deserve a favourable acceptance from after ages, time will decide: but a name which, worthily or not, has been conspicuous in the literary history of its age, will certainly not perish. Some account of his life will always be prefixed to his works, and transferred to literary histories and to the biographical dictionaries, not only of this, but of other countries. Then it will be related, that he lived in the bosom of his family, in absolute retirement; that in/

in all his writings there breathed the same abhorrence of oppression and immorality, the same spirit of devotion, and the same ardent wishes for the amelioration of mankind; and that the only charge which malice could bring against him was, that as he grew older his opinions altered concerning the means by which that amelioration was to be effected; and that as he learnt to understand the institutions of his country, he learnt to appreciate them rightly, to love, and to revere, and to defend them. It will be said of him that in an age of personality he abstained from satire, and that during the course of his literary life, often as he was assailed, the only occasion on which he ever condescended to reply, was when a certain Mr William Smith insulted him in Parliament. On that occasion it will be said, that he vindicated himself as it became him to do, and treated his calumniator with memorable severity. Whether it shall be added, that Mr William Smith redeemed his own character by coming forward with honest manliness and acknowledging that he had spoken rashly and unjustly concerns himself, but is not of the slightest importance to me".

There is something of sophistry and intellectual dishonesty in Southey's whole defence. It is all very well to say he had been faithful to the high ideal of wishing to ameliorate the condition of mankind. No man has ever crossed the floor of the House of Commons without saying something of the sort; any upright man would willingly say the same at any time. But when particular issues are at stake, faithfulness to this ideal may be claimed by the advocates/

advocates of totally different courses. While Southey might honestly believe that all who inconvenienced the government in its wars against Napoleon and emancipators were supporting a cause morally wrong, he had no claim to keep the conscience of the whole country. Very considerable numbers of patriots thought it morally wrong that the poorer classes should pay so large a proportion of taxes to prosecute a war they had not provoked, that government policy should be directed by those gaining most by exploitation of the poor, and that Irish affairs should be regulated by a non-representative minority. And though the moral issue is indefinite as between war and peace, or Protestantism and Catholicism; most people would regard it as definable between freedom and censorship of the political press, or autocracy and democracy. To the question whether Southey had or had not turned his coat there may be two answers. If he chose, on moral grounds, to jettison some early beliefs which he found conflicting with his choice of action on a higher moral issue, he had not. But in so far as he jettisoned these beliefs from an intellectual conviction that they were unsound, he had turned his coat, and nearly turned his skin, however strong moral reasons he might afterwards put forward. It shows singular self assurance in Southey that he should so emphatically have asserted that his course of action was chosen upon purely moral grounds. And certainly, disregarding Smith who was out only to score debating points, Southey had no right to question the moral probity of his opponents.

The William Smith controversy disposed of, Southey turned back/

back to his books. In 1811 he had begun another long poem, to be called Oliver Newman, dealing with New England: this was never finished. Laureate New Year odes continued to harass him, and in prose, he was busy on Morte D'Arthur, the Life of Wesley, the History of Brazil, and the Book of the Church.

In 1817 he made a Continental tour of Switzerland, Italy, Germany and Brussels, in the course of which he visited Pestalozzi at Yverdun. Southey's interest in education was real, but his views were rather coloured by his friendship for Dr Bell, whose System of Education he greatly admired. Of Pestalozzi he said, "I have seen many strange figures in my time, but never a stranger than was now presented to our view: a man whose face and stray tusk-like teeth would mark him for fourscore, if his hair, more black than gray, did not belie the wrinkles of his countenance: this hair a perfect glib in full undress, no hat or covering for the head, no neckcloth, the shirt collar open, a pair of coarse dark trousers, and a coat, if coat it may be called, of the same material. He speaks French as ill as I do, and much less intelligibly, because his speech is rapid and impassioned, and moreover much affected by the loss of his teeth..... About six, P. called upon us to show us the practice of his system: it was exhibited by two very intelligent teachers as applied to drawing and arithmetic. In drawing, they were made to draw the simplest forms, and were not instructed in the laws of perspective till the eye and hand had acquired correctness; just as we learn to speak by habit before we know the rules of grammar. In arithmetic, it appeared/

appeared to me that the questions served only to quicken the intellect, but were of no utility in themselves, and acted upon boys just as the disputes of the schoolmen formerly acted upon men".[1] On the same trip, he visited Fellenberg's institution at Hofwyl, near Berne, a school for young men of high birth who would hold high offices. "A young man carried us over the institution, to the Smiths, the blacksmiths, &c. &c.; we also visited the dairy, which was a really fine one; the granaries, &c., and the place of gymnastics, where the boys are taught to climb ropes, and walk round upon poles. About an hour had passed in this manner when Fellenberg returned. His countenance is highly intelligent; his light eyes uncommonly clear and keen; his manners those of a man of the world, not of an enthusiast".[2] Southey had no great fondness for 'enthusiasts'.

His friend Rickman, now secretary to a committee for Highland Roads and Bridges, persuaded Southey to join him and Telford, the committee's engineer, on a tour of the Highlands in the autumn of 1819. The party went north through Edinburgh and the Trossachs to Dunkeld, up the coast to Aberdeen, and so to Inverness and Caithness. Southward, they followed the line of the Caledonian Canal, across the ferry to Ballachulish, and by Inverary and Loch Lomond to Glasgow. Southey was thus one of the first of those who have flocked to make the Scots Tour, popularised by the Scott romances. His/

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1 C.C.S. IV. pp. 267.

2 Do. 273.

His account of this journey was published after his death.

Between these two journeys, in 1818, Southey refused an appointment as Librarian to the Advocates' Library in Edinburgh, apparently because of a feeling that his constitution could not now bear the strain of regularly appointed duties. "If I did vary my pursuits", he told Bedford, "and carry on many works of a totally different kind at once, I should soon by incapable of Proceeding with any, so surely does it disturb my sleep and affect my dreams if I dwell upon one with any continuous attention". There was also the fact that he had made himself comfortably independent by his writings, and had neither the need nor the wish to leave Greta Hall.

CHAPTER V.

CHARACTER AND FINANCES.

The passion of Burns's love songs and the agony of Milton's allusions to his blindness express an intensity of emotion never found in Southey's poetry. The absence is conspicuous: and in one so conscious of poetic gifts and so fluent in composition, is interesting. But the virtuous serenity which represented Southey's keenest happiness was probably the limit of his emotional excitability. Though his life was vivid with eccentric and almost exciting incident, he never himself initiated any action that would alienate common sympathy. The most extravagant action of Southey's life brought about his expulsion from school, but it is clear that this consequence was the last thing Southey expected, and he resented it the more for that reason. His married life ran smoothly; there is nothing to show that Edith Fricker was a disappointment to her husband. He loved Edith without passion, was satisfied in his marriage, and could neither understand nor sympathise with the extravagances of less well balanced temperaments. If he handles the love romances of his epics with a rather too cool efficiency, the fault must be attributed to lack of passion in the man.

While I feel it necessary to insist that Southey never knew the intensities of emotion which make our great poets our teachers and interpreters, I do not pretend that he was at all an insensitive or unfeeling man. On the contrary, he responded with unusual quickness to emotional stimuli. The range of his susceptibilities was wide; the depth on the other hand, small. The orthodoxy of his religion reinforces this charge. Though a fanatical supporter of the Church of England. Southey had little/

little or no spiritual apprehension. It is impossible to think otherwise in the light of his comment on Mrs Wesley's conversion.[1] He relates that as she received the cup at one Communion, with the words 'the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ which was given for thee', "she then knew that for Christ's sake God had forgiven her all her sins. Wesley asked whether his father had not the same faith, and whether he had not preached it to others. She replied, he had it himself, and declared, a little before his death, he had no darkness, no fear, no doubt of his salvation: but that she did not remember to have heard him preach upon it explicitly; and therefore supposed that he regarded it as the peculiar blessing of a few, not as promised to all the people of God. Mrs Wesley was then seventy years of age; and this account may induce a reasonable supposition that her powers of mind must have been impaired; she would not else have supposed that any other faith or degree of faith was necessary, than that in which her husband had lived and died".[1] If Southey had been such a Christian as Wesley's newest convert, he could not possibly have suggested that Mrs Wesley's spiritual apathy was preferable to the state of personal conviction of God which she attained. In the same work, he repeatedly accuses Wesley of making religion "a thing of sensation and passion", instead of something bringing "peace and contentment"; an accusation which ignores the evangelical view that passionate conviction is the essential prelude/

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[1] Life of Wesley. Vol.I. p.291-2.

prelude to peace and contentment in faith. Without questioning how commonly such conviction is achieved, it may surely be presumed that when Southey denies its value, he himself had not experienced spiritual emotion to anything like the same degree, and had no conception of that dynamic happiness through the knowledge of Christ which is the possession of the true mystic and spiritually apprehensive man.

Even his attitude to his work shows method and self control. His regular habits have been described. Southey was certainly never wholly a bread-and-butter writer; but his table was well supplied, he was continually making expensive additions to his library, and these extras were paid for by his reviewing. How he might have lived without this added income is a hopeless speculation, but that he lived rather well by it is a fact. Again, it would be ridiculous to pretend, as his contemporaries believed, that Southey made a fortune by his writing: he was perfectly serious when he wrote to Rickman, in 1804, "It is clear enough that if I regarded pen-and-inkmanship solely as a trade, I might soon give in an income of double the amount, but I am looking forward to something better, and will not be tempted from the pursuit in which I have so long and so steadily persevered".[1] Equally we may trust the burst of confidence in which he told Miss Barker that he had a feeling of certainty he should have a monument in St.Pauls - though he follows this with a comic description/

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1 C.C.S. II.250.

description of his dress as he wrote, declaring he would prefer it on his monument to any fancy dress in which the authorities might wish to wrap him up!

Strangers described Southey as at once abrupt and laconic in speech and mild and scholarly in bearing. An Oxford acquaintance said he had more imagination than judgment, which is apparent from the construction of his narrative poems. The same critic said, "far removed from a phlegmatic, he approaches to a choleric disposition.... His mind is capable of being filled in an instant with the most extensive subject. which he is more adapted to embrace and improve than to analyse or divide his ideas". A more elaborate picture by a friend repudiates Southey's choler. "Excitable as he was in conversation he was never angry or irritable nor can there be any greater mistake concerning him, than that into which some persons have fallen when they have inferred, from the fiery vehemence with which he could give utterance to moral anger in verse or prose, that he was personally ill-tempered or irascible. He was in truth a man whom it was hardly possible to quarrel with or offend personally and face to face.... He said of himself that he was tolerant of persons, though intolerant of opinions. But in oral intercourse the toleration of persons was so much the stronger, that the intolerance of opinions was not to be perceived; and indeed it was only in regard to opinions of a pernicious moral tendency that it was ever felt. He was averse from argumentation, and would commonly quite a subject when it was passing into that shape, with a quiet and good humoured/

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humoured indication of the view in which he rested.[1] Against this, again may be set Sarah Coleridge's remark: "Southey is much annoyed by the Catholic emancipators. I have the greatest dread of the subject - especially as Sara, the only one in the house, is rather upon the other side of the question. She in general sits silent when the matter is discussed, but at Rydal Mount where we were staying for a month in May, she talked much with Wordsworth who is equally strong against the measure with Southey - but he will listen to another side with more tolerance".[2] It was often said of Southey that in society he was more interested in the subject than in the speakers. When he was not among strangers and subdued by shyness, he probably pursued a subject with what strangers would call choler.

He was confessedly uneasy in company with strangers. From shyness, or a habit of absent-mindedness, he never noticed people whom he met on the roads, and had often to blame himself for neglecting to acknowledge their greetings and salutes. Apart from this forgivable failing, he was certainly a courteous man, willing to be sociable when he could give pleasure to others. He made many friends in the Lake country, and his letters often give the impression that life at Greta Hall must have resembled life in a Lake Hotel, the names of visitors, known and unknown, pile up so formidably. His acquaintances at Keswick included General Peachy, a retired East India soldier who kept open house for his friends, and/

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[1] C.C.S. VI. 4-5.

[2] Unpub. Letter of Sarah Coleridge, dated July 1829, in Brit. Mus.

not unpublished

and among these Southey was numbered to the extent of being induced to manage a subscription ball. But though he shared social amenities, Southey was no lover of them, and while the ball went forward, he supped his tea and talked with the old folk an hour or two, then stole home for a spell at Madoc, before taking his single glass of punch and retiring at a 'Christian-like hour'. Another friend was Sir Wilfrid Lawson, eighteen miles off, who gave Southey the freedom of his library. Tom Southey spent rare leaves with his brother; and Henry Southey, first a medical student at Edinburgh, but later an established doctor with a wife, a practice, and a place on the Annual Review's list of contributors, had also to be introduced to Skiddaw, Grisedale Pike, and Walla Craig. In summer, visitors to the Lakes, to Coleridge, Southey, and Wordsworth - fifteen miles off at Grasmere - streamed through Keswick. One whom Southey met early, was Hazlitt; who stayed at Keswick at the end of 1803, and made portraits of Wordsworth and Coleridge with such lack of success, says Southey, that though "Wordsworth's face is his idea of physiognomical perfection, one of his friends, on seeing it, exclaimed, 'At the gallows - deeply affected by his deserved fate - yet determined to die like a man". Of Coleridge's picture he observed that it looked "as if you were on trial, and certainly had stolen the horse; but then you did it cleverly - it had been a deep, well laid scheme, and it was no fault of yours that you had been detected".[1]

Southey/

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[1] C.C.S. II. 238.

Southey was an indefatiguable walker. He who had rambled South England, Wales, and half the Peninsula was fully a match for the rounded slopes of the Cumberland hills. He loved them from the first, and described them in many letters, urging his friends to join his expeditions. Lake prospects might not equal Portuguese scenery in grandeur, but they had their features of unique interest. He dragged Coleridge up and down Skiddaw in four and a half hours, and went solitary twelve mile walks; these chiefly for love of the country and for exercise, but also in part because such tramps were necessary to offset the effects on his eyes and stomach of his fixed hours of work. During the latter half of his life he was troubled by asthma and hay fever, and he developed a regular habit of taking summer holidays away from Keswick. He particularly enjoyed foreign travel, and in this way he visited the battlefield of Waterloo in 1816, Switzerland, Italy and the Black Forest in the following year, Belgium and Holland in 1825 and 1826, and Normandy and Brittany in 1838. In the intermediate years he visited Wales, the West of England, Harrogate, Buckland and London, and he toured Scotland in 1819 with Telford the Scots engineer. Of all these excursions he kept a full diary account, from which he wrote the Poet's Pilgrimage to Waterloo, (noticed elsewhere), and Journal of a tour to Scotland[1], published posthumously.

One of the odd passions which gathered force as Southey aged centred on cats. It is impossible to reckon the number of cats Greta Hall sheltered. Grosvenor Bedford was another fancier, and in/

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[1] Journal of a Tour in Scotland in 1819 by R.S. Murray, 1929. (Published by the Institution of Civil Engineers).

in letters to him, Southey gives his cats their titles, the noblest of which was surely, His Serene Highness the Archduke, Rumpel-stilzchen, Marquis Macbum, Earl Tomlemagne, Baron Raticide, Waouhler, and Skratch.[1] He writes, "I believe you remember Lord Nelson. He became so wretched that it was an act of mercy to put him in the river. Bona Fidelia reached a good old age, and was found dead in the wood-house. There then remained Madame Bianchi, who was Bona's daughter, and Pulcheria, who was Madame's daughter .... A visitor from town, by name Virgil, who haunted these premises, being possibly driven from his own, died here also. And thus the old generation to which Bona Marietta, Sir Thomas Dido, and Madame Catalini, had belonged, was extinct. We have now only a young Othello, from Newlands: Sir, I shall be very happy to introduce you to Othello. It is a good name, not merely as expressing his complexion, but because he will undoubtedly be as jealous as beseems his Tomship. I trust he will be the founder of a new dynasty, and that in a few generations black will be the prevailing livery of the cats in Keswick.[2] A long letter to Bedford tells of Zombi, a cat that would not become reconciled to Greta Hall, and lived hermit like in the cellar. "But between four and five on the Sunday morning, all who had ears to hear were wakened by such screams as if the Zombi had been caught in a rat trap, or had met with some other excruciating accident. You, Mr Bedford, understand cats, and know very well that a cat-<u>solo</u> is a very/

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[1] J.W.W. III. 470.

[2] J.W.W. III. 217.

very different thing from a duet; and that no person versed in their tongue can mistake their expression of pain for anything else. The creature seemed to be in agonies. A light was procured, that it might be relieved if that were possible. Upon searching the house, the Zombi was seen at the top of Wilsey's stairs, from whence he disappeared, retreating to his stronghold in the cellar; nor could any traces be discovered of the hurt which had befallen him, nor has it since appeared that he had received any, so that the cause of this nocturnal disturbance remains an impenetrable mystery".[1] Zombie had vanished and never returned, but he was soon replaced by Prester John and so the line continued. An indignant letter[2] was addressed to a party of undergraduates reading at Keswick, who had been found cat-worrying:

"Young Gentlemen,

It has come to the knowledge of the writer that one of your amusements here is to worry cats, - that you buy them from those owners who can be tempted to the sin of selling them for such a purpose, and that you employ boys to steal them for you.

A woman who was asked by her neighbour how she could do so wicked a thing as sell her cat to you, made answer that she never would have done it, if she could have saved the poor creature; but that if she had not sold it, it would have been stolen by your agents, and therefore she might as well have the half-crown herself".

Neither her poverty nor her will consented; yet she was made to partake in your wickness because she could not prevent it. She gave/

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[1] J.W.W. III. 242. [2] C.C.S. VI. 237

gave up to your barbarity a domestic animal - a fireside companion, with which her children had played, and which she herself had fondled on her lap. You tempted her, and she took the price of its blood.

Are you incapable, young gentlemen, of understanding the injury you have done to this woman in her own conscience, and in the estimation of her neighbours?

Be this as it may, you cannot have been so ill-taught as not to know that you are setting an evil example in a place to which you have come for the ostensible reason of pursuing your studies in a beautiful country; that your sport is as blackguard as it is brutal; that cruelty is a crime by the laws of God, and theft by the laws also of man; that in employing boys to steal for you, and thus training them up in the way they should not go, you are doing the devil's work; that they commit a punishable offence when serving you in this way, and that you commit one in so employing them.

You are hereby warned to give up these practices. If you persist in them, this letter will be sent to all the provincial newspapers".

The effects of this letter are not recorded. It is possible however to think of stronger threats, and interesting that Southey thought public notoriety would frighten these tormentors.

He used to say two things made for him the feeling of home: a little girl of six years of age and a young kitten of six months. There was much of the child in this spare, oddly dressed, giant of a man, so exuberant in physical exertion, so ingenuously happy in exposition, so irresponsible and uncritical in his sense of humour.

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To a more than Shakespearian relish for puns he added an extravagant and unfortunately sometimes tedious affection for slender witticisms and sheer nonsense writing. The Doctor is a storehouse of odd stories, varying from the farcical to the insignificantly anecdotal; and he seems to have sat down in his huge room to write with equal gusto a folio sheet on the iniquities of the government, or an appeal such as this to Grosvenor Bedford: "Will you Butlerise, Mr Bedford? By the core of William's heart, which I take to be the hardest of all oaths, and therefore the most impossible to break, I will never cease persecuting you with that question". The Butler and William were creatures of Southey's fertile imagination, intended as the basis of an omniana of Rabelaisian and Munchausian anecdotes; the excreta of his overworked mind and overflowing notebooks to be written on such lines as these: "William's iron-grey had his advantages and his disadvantages. He never required shoeing, for as the hoof is harder than the flesh, so in just proportion to his metallic muscles he had hoofs of adamant: but then, he was hard-mouthed. There was no expense in feeding him: but he required scouring, lest he should grow rusty. Instead of spurs, William had a contrivance for touching him with aqua-fortis. He was a fine thing to hear the rain hiss upon him as he galloped..... The Butler wears a chest of drawers - sometimes a bureau".[1] The iron-grey might be/

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[1] C.C.S. II.335.

be conceived as a prophetic vision of the automobile. A similar extravaganza was the monster word he coined for a triumphal paen: "Aballiboozobanganorribo! I have finished Kehama!" - and the names he invented for his publishers, Longmans; 'The King of Persia', from Artaxerxes surnamed Longimanus, or 'Longi Homines', or The Long Men of the Row, come into the same class of humour. The Lingo-Grande, discussed in letters to Bedford, is still, I think, spoken by schoolboys. Its principles can be gathered from Southey's subscription, at the end of a letter, "And so-o-o,

> Dear Mistercumter Bedfordiddlededford,
> I subcumscribe myself
> Your sincumsere friendiddledend and serdiddle dervant,
> Robcumbert Southeydiddledouthey,
> Student in the Lingo-Grande, Graduate in Butlerology,
> Professor of the science of Noncumsensediddledense, of
> sneezing and of vocal music, P.L. and LL.D. &c., &c."

He was so irresistably fascinating to children with his ever ready stories and his ability to share childish happiness in small things, that Coleridge was stirred to something like jealousy when he found how effectively his brother-in-law had stolen hearts in the Greta Hall nursery. Yet even among his beloved children, Southey showed something of that dogmatic temper and inability to imagine feelings which he could not share, that warped his writings. Little Sara Coleridge, whose small face and features made her eyes appear strangely large, used to lie awake in the dark early hours of evening, terrorised by her uncle's ballad horrors; yet if she crept downstairs to the parlour after an hour's torture, Uncle Southey laughed heartily at the cause of her agonies and did not share/

share her feelings in the slightest. In this her father understood her better, and when he knew Sara's fears, a nightlight was kept burning by her bed till her mother joined her.

The most intimate glimpses we have of Southey show him watching over his double family. There were Hartley, Derwent, and Sara Coleridge; his own Edithling, Herbert, whose death at ten years was a terrible affliction; Emma, born in 1808 but who died in infancy; Bertha, born the next year; Isabel, four years younger; and Cuthbert, the child of his age, born when Southey was forty-five. These children, their nurse Miss Wilson, (who was really the landlord's housekeeper), and the small menagerie of cats and dogs, filled Southey's winter evenings and summer days with the relaxation he loved best. The Coleridge children, all older than his own, were his from the first by avuncular adoption. Hartley the eldest, called Moses or Job by his uncle, at eight years acquired a perfect knowledge of the counties of England through fitting together a jig-saw puzzle map, and showed a passion for drawing which Southey encouraged.[1] The correspondence records his oddities at length. "If he has been behaving amiss, away he goes for the Bible, and looks out for something appropriate to his case in the Psalms or the Book of Job. The other day, after/

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1 C.C.S. II. 272.

after he had been in a violent passion, he chose out a chapter against wrath. 'Ah! that suits me!' The Bible is also resorted to whenever he ails anything, or else the Prayer-book. He once made a pun upon the occasion of the bellyache, though I will not say that he designed it. 'Oh, Mrs Wilson, I'se got the colic! read me the Epistle and Gospel for the day'. In one part of his character he seems to me strikingly to resemble his father, - in the affection he has for those who are present with him, and the little he cares about them when he is out of their sight."[1] Derwent was almost, if not quite, an equal favourite. His sister's Memoir describes how he used to colour prints in old volumes and how, "upon one of these pictorial occasions, after diligently plying his brush for some time, he exclaimed, with a slow, solemn, half-pitying, half-complacent air, 'Thethe little minute thingth are very difficult; but they mutht be done!"' Sara herself, said Southey, was "fond of me as Dapper (the dog) is, which is saying a good deal".[2] On his own children, Southey lavished an affection that he sometimes feared was too great: "Little Edith grows and does well; she attempts to say everything, and is thought wondrous wise sometimes. I wish her less forward - in fear; but God be thanked, she is well".[3] He knew by experience how he could be wounded, feared for them with a jealous passion/

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[1] J.W.W. I. 311.

[2] C.C.S. II. 273. March 1804.

[3] J.W.W. I. 338.

passion, and suffered vicariously in their childish ailments. Herbert was seized with croup at three years, and his father wrote, "The poor child has been so used to having me for his play-fellow, that he will have me for his nurse, and you may imagine with what feelings I endeavour to amuse him. But, thank God! he is living, and likely to live".[1] The Edithling's age was still measured in months when he thought he recognised the symptoms of her sister's disease and confessed "I did not mean to trust my affections again on so frail a foundation, - and yet the young one takes me from my desk and makes me talk nonsense as fluently as you can perhaps imagine".[2] When Emma died in 1809 he said, "I have learnt to bear moral pain, not indeed with levity, but with few outward and visible signs .... Were I to speak as sincerely of my family as Wordsworth's little girl, my story - that I have five children; three of them at home, and two under my mother's care in heaven. - No more of this ....."[3] But when they were well, he saw the beauty of the most trivial domestic scenes: "Herbert went on the water yesterday for the first time, and was not a little delighted with the stroke of the oars, but he found out another amusement which was not quite so well, that of throwing things overboard. One of his stockings went, and it required good watching to save his leathern cap from/

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[1] C.C.S. III. 231,2. April 1809.

[2] C.C.S. II. 300. July 1804.

[3] C.C.S. III. 233-4. May 1809.

from following it".[1] Often when he watched them at play he "thought what a fit thing it would be that Malthus should be hanged"![2] When Herbert was scarcely two and learning to talk, Southey thought it the most amusing age of childhood, and wrote lively descriptions. When he wrote to children, his letters were perfect in this kind. He delighted too in extravagant expression of this affection before the children: kisses were lavished on them, and excuses for kisses sought with much ingenuity. Kisses sent by correspondence were unfailingly delivered by proxy. It was for Herbert he wrote the poem Lodore, which has this amusing genesis: "Tell the people how the water comes down at Lodore? Why it comes thundering, and floundering, and thumping, and flumping, and bumping, and jumping, and hissing, and whizzing, and dripping, and skipping, and grumbling, and rumbling, and tumbling, and falling, and brawling, and dashing, and clashing, and splashing, and pouring, and roaring, and whirling, and curling, and leaping, and creeping, and sounding, and bounding, and clattering, and chattering, with a dreadful uproar, - and that way the water comes down at Lodore".[3] And the most charming tributes a great writer could pay to childhood lie in the booklets he penned in his own careful handwriting for his eldest daughter: A Memoir of the Cats of Greta Hall for Edith May Southey, and Edith May Southey's Album.[4]

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1 J.W.W. II. 64.
2 C.C.S. III. 226.
3 J.W.W. II. 168.
4 Both of these are in the British Museum.

When he was away from home, Southey wrote the most beautiful letters to his children. The following delightful description is quoted in full:[1]

"Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, you have been very good girls, and have written me very nice letters, with which I was much pleased. This is the last letter which I can write in return; and as I happen to have a quiet hour to myself, here at Streatham, on Monday noon, I will employ that hour in relating to you the whole history and manner of my being ell-ell-deed at Oxford by the Vice-Chancellor.

"You must know, then, that because I had written a great many good books, and more especially the Life of Wesley, it was made known to me by the Vice-Chancellor, through Mr Heber, that the University of Oxford were desirous of showing me the only mark of honour in their power to bestow, which was that of making me an LL.D., that is to say, a doctor of laws.

"Now, you are to know that some persons are ell-ell-deed every year at Oxford, at the great annual meeting which is called the Commemoration. There are two reasons for this: first, that the university may do itself honour, by bringing persons of distinction to receive the degree publicly as a mark of honour; and,/

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[1] C.C.S. V. 38 ff.

and, secondly, that certain persons in inferior offices may share in the fees paid by those upon whom the ceremony of ell-ell-deeing is performed. For the first of these reasons the Emperor Alexander was made a Doctor of Laws at Oxford, the King of Prussia, and old Blucher, and Platoff. And for the second, the same degree is conferred upon noblemen, and persons of fortune and consideration who are in any ways connected with the university, or city, or county of Oxford.

"The ceremony of ell-ell-deeing is performed in a large circular building called the theatre, of which I will show you a print when I return, and this theatre is filled with people. The undergraduates (that is the young men who are called Cathedrals at Keswick) entirely fill the gallery. Under the gallery there are seats, which are filled with ladies in full dress, separated from the gentlemen. Between these two divisions of the ladies are seats for the heads of houses, and the doctors of laws, physic and divinity. In the middle of these seats is the Vice-Chancellor, opposite the entrance which is under the orchestra. On the right and left are two kinds of pulpits, from which the prize essays and poems are recited. The area, or middle of the theatre, is filled with bachelors and masters of arts, and with as many strangers as can obtain admission. Before the steps which lead up to the seats of the doctors, and directly in front of the Vice-Chancellor, a wooden bar is let down, covered with red cloth, and on each side of this the beadles stand in their robes.

"When/

"When the theatre is full, the Vice-Chancellor, and the heads of houses, and the doctors enter: those persons who are to be ell-ell-deed remain without in the divinity schools, in their robes, till the convocation have signified their assent to the ell-ell-deeing, and then they are led into the theatre, one after another in a line, into the middle of the area, the people just making a lane for them. The professor of civil law, Dr Phillimore, went before, and made a long speech in Latin, telling the Vice-Chancellor and the dignissimi doctores what excellent persons we were who were now to be ell-ell-deed. Then he took us one by one by the hand, and presented each in his turn, pronouncing his name aloud, saying who and what he was, and calling him many laudatory names ending in issimus. The audience then cheered loudly to show their approbation of the person; the Vice-Chancellor stood up, and repeating the first words in issime, ell-ell-deed him; the beadles lifted up the bar of separation, and the new made cotor went up the steps and took his seat among the dignissimi doctores.

"Oh Bertha, Kate, and Isabel, if you had seen me that day! I was like other issimis, dressed in a great robe of the finest scarlet cloth, with sleeves of rose-coloured silk, and I had in my hand a black velvet cap like a beef-eater, for the use of which dress I paid one guinea for that day. Dr Phillimore, who was an old school-fellow of mine, and a very good man, took me by the hand in my turn, and presented me; upon which there was a great clapping of hands and huzzaing at my name. When that was over, the/

the Vice-Chancellor stood up, and said these two words whereby I was ell-ell-deed:- Doctissime et ornatissime vir, ego, pro auctoritate mea et totius universitatis hujus, admitto te ad graduam doctoris in jure civili, honoris causa. These were the words which ell-ell-deed me; and then the bar was lifted up, and I seated myself among the doctors.

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

God bless you all!

Your affectionate father,

R. Southey".

The happiness of Southey's family life was very seriously affected indeed by the deaths of four of his children. The intensity of his feeling for Herbert at least cannot be over estimated: he had educated the child and been his constant play-mate; he had frequently reproached himself for setting his hopes too highly upon the boy; and all his friends knew what a super-stitious fear he had that so exceptional a love might be punished by loss. Herbert died in 1816 at the age of ten, and the shock was one from which Southey never really recovered. "My limbs tremble/

tremble under me", he wrote to Bedford, "long anxiety has wasted me to the bone, and I fear it will be long before grief will suffer me to recruit.... You, more than most men, are aware of the extent of my loss, and how, as long as I remain here, every object within and without, and every hour of every day, must bring it fresh to recollection.[1] Ten years later, in 1826, Isabel died at fourteen, while her father was in Holland. Charles Cuthbert Southey says, "Well do I, though but a child, remember that return, as we hastened to meet him, and changed, by our sorrowful tidings, his cheerful smile and glad welcome to tears and sadness. It was the first time I had seen sorrow enter that happy home; and those days of alternate hope and fear, and how he paced the garden in uncontrollable anguish, and gathered us around him to prayer when all was over, are vividly impressed on my mind. This, too, was the beginning of troubles; and from this shock my mother's spirits, weakened by former trials, and always harassed by the necessary anxieties of an uncertain income, never wholly recovered. Thus of Southey's eight children,[2] only Edith May, Bertha, Kate and Cuthbert survived him. It is not surprising that each of these unhappy events should find him looking forward to his own death,/

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1 C.C.S. IV. 160-161.

2 Margaret, born Sept. 1802, died at 1 year: Emma, Feb.1808, died 1 year: Herbert, born Oct. 1806, died 10 years; Isabel, Nov. 1812, died 14 years. Edith May, born 1804, married in 1834, the editor of 'Selections from letters of R.S.', J. Wood Warter. Bertha, born 1809, married her cousin Herbert Hill in 1839; Katherine, born 1810, did not marry.

death, speculating on the financial position of these he would leave, and making tentative provision for the arrangement of his books and papers after his passing.

This reference leads directly to the chaos of Southey's finances. They are no easy matter to follow in detail, but an examination may most usefully begin from his fixed income in annuities. The Grenville pension, paid to him from 1807, amounted to £144 per annum; and the Laureate pension, paid from 1813, amounted to £90. After 1804, Southey had the expenses of the Coleridge family to consider, but it is certain that while Coleridge received the annuity of £150 paid to him between 1798 and 1812 by Josiah Wedgewood, Sarah Coleridge was regularly remitted £75 a year. Southey by some odd error states the sum as £67, and Campbell in his Biographical Introduction to Coleridge's poems says "the whole was for many years at her disposal". After 1812, Wedgewood's annuity was reduced by half: if Mrs Coleridge received all that it would explain the figure of £75. There are also documents in the British Museum to show that Mrs Coleridge drew on Stewart of the Morning Post for sums of varying amounts, debited to her husband. It is likely that in the early years at least Southey bore quite a heavy burden for Coleridge: with what willingness we may judge from the fact that he would not allow Mrs Coleridge to leave him. Mrs Lovell's maintenance seems to have been a sheer labour of love.

This pension money apart, Southey's main income in the years before 1813 was from the Annual Review, where his articles at

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four guineas a sheet earned him some £90 a year; the Athenaeum, which till it expired was worth £30 a year, and the Critical, for which he wrote a little, but which ultimately failed owing him ten pounds. His published books sold badly and brought him small earnings, since he published on condition of halving the eventual profits, which means that costs of production had first to be deducted: in the case of his heavier works the deduction swallowed the receipts entire. His Morning Post poems, spread over many years, brought in £150; published in book form they fetched £22. Thalaba took seven years to sell the first edition and earn him £115. The profits in the second were all his own, and he recorded a hope that if sales did not slacken, he might in another seven years "look for another £115". Madoc, a year after publication, had been worth less than £4 to him: he said then that the unsold quarto copies were so much waste paper; later he says it brought him in £25. Palmerin (1807) just paid the expenses of the publishers; the first edition of Espriella sold out, but it took the second to balance Longman's account. It was, however, a comparatively brilliant success, and in all brought its author £100. The Specimens (1807) do not seem to have been profitable, and indeed of this volume he said Bedford's mismanagement was likely to lose him both credit and cash. His annual income at Keswick, up to 1808, would be something above £250 a year, but he continually borrowed in advance, chiefly from Longmans, but also from his friends, and through an optimistic habit of overestimating the possible returns from his books, was continually in debt - for as/

as high a sum sometimes as £200 - and never knew how he would stand in the ensuing twelve months. From 1808 till 1813, he was better off, as his mainstay became the Quarterly Review, which paid ten guineas a sheet, and for three years he contributed the historical part of the Edinburgh Annual Register at the princely salary of £400 per annum; but his work was enormously increased by these commitments, and his books continued to pay little or nothing.

Hopes of a settled income through inheritance, thought possible for years, were extinguished in 1806. Southey's great-uncle was a Taunton lawyer who married an heiress called Cannon, by whom he had a son John Cannon Southey, and also a daughter. This woman's daughter married into the family of James Lord Somerville, and died bearing a son, John Southey Somerville. The property of John Cannon Southey was left in trust for his great-nephew John Southey Somerville: the Cannon estates were willed in the same way to Somerville or, after him, - should he die without issue - to the poet Robert Southey's nearest relatives, - his uncle John, his father, and his uncle Thomas in that order, and to the sons of each in succession. The properties in due course reached Southey's uncle John, but on his death in 1806, part of the moneys were willed away and the remainder went to Southey's other uncle Thomas. With Thomas, an old curmudgeon, Southey was on good enough terms to receive a gift of £25, but he neither admired this act of generosity - not so remarkable in a man worth £1200 a year - nor regretted his uncle's decision

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a year later to see none of the family again. When Thomas Southey died in 1811, he left half his money to the son of a friend, and the rest to his servants, leaving his sister nothing at all! The sale of part of the estates by the then Lord Somerville in 1806 excited Southey into some enquiries addressed to Wynn, as he believed himself John Cannon Southey's heir at law. He even sought counsel's advice, and was advised he could claim nothing at that time, but had good ground for a chancery suit in the event of Lord Somerville's death. With this inconvenient inheritance Southey had to be content; and whatever claim he or his family ever had was completely lost sight of in 1820, when Lord Somerville did die, and legal enquiries elicited that, owing to the manner in which the will was drawn up, John Cannon Southey's estates were judged to be purely the property of Somerville, who had now sold or bequeathed them into different families.[1]

To return to 1813. About this period he estimated his expenditure at £600 per annum. This excluded premiums on the considerable assurance of £4,000 paid for by Wynn's pension and the Laureate salary of £90. In one letter he says these annuities paid his insurance, and also his rent and taxes. Towards the £600 he required for household expenses, he reckoned on/

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1 C.C.S.V.8.

on an average of £200 per annum from the publication of his works, which still came out on the principle of the publishers taking the risk and halving the profits. But Roderick, for example, reached four editions totalling 6,000 copies, and in 1818, four years after publication, Southey calculated to have earned £700 from this work alone. Kehama, still selling, surely accounts for another £100 in the same period, so that an average of £200 annually may be conservative. His prose works probably paid worse, but information is contradictory. It is said that in one year he only received £26 for his share of the profit on twenty one books published by Longman, and that the Book of the Church and its Vindication brought him nothing. But Southey is the authority for these statements: he was notoriously useless at estimating his own position, and there is an actual letter of 1840[1] in which his second wife acknowledges Murray's draft for £259, the balance for his Book of the Church. Of course his fondness for leather - bound quartos and the care with which type was chosen and set, put ransom prices on these formidable tomes. They commonly sold at a guinea.

If the profits from his books are uncertain, there is at least no doubt that he wrote between 1813 and 1831 for every issue of the Quarterly Review receiving usually £100 for each article and sometimes £150. Between 1808 and 1834 he certainly wrote 94 articles for the Quarterly; within these dates he can have missed few numbers. By 1830 however, there was a falling off in the/

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1 In the Scottish National Library.

the sales of the Quarterly, which caused an attempt to reduce Southey's payments.[1] This he resisted, but he wrote less for the Quarterly thereafter. His income was made up by the good price Longman gave him for his volumes on the British Admirals in the Cabinet Encyclopaedia, and similar work in Murray's Family Library series at £600 per volume.

In 1832 he was left £1,000 by Dr Bell the educationist, with the task of writing Bell's life, which he never completed. A windfall without conditions came to him in 1834 in a legacy from Telford, the Scots engineer, of £200. "After the surprise and the first emotion", Southey wrote, "it was some time before I smiled at recollecting the whimsical manner in which I was designated, thus:-

To Thomas Campbell, poet, 200 l.

To Robert Southey, do. 200 l.[2]

He went on, "Independent of this, I am, for the first time in my life, so far beforehand with the world, that I have means at command for a whole year's expenditure, were my hand to be idle or palsied during that time". Finally, as will be told in its place, a second pension of £300 per annum was granted him by Peel in 1835, and his last years were quite untroubled.

Southey's expenditure, apart from the obvious household expenses/

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1. Vide next chapter.

2. C.C.S. VI 250.

expenses of which only his wife could give any account, was heavy on books,[1] high, too, on carriage of manuscripts and proof sheets, and he spent an amount not calculable, but certainly not small, on charity. In 1821 he transferred to John May, whom he had met in Portugal, the sum of £625 in government stock because May had lost heavily through the failure of business investments in Brazil. Southey contracted a debt very early on behalf of his brother Henry to have him qualified as a doctor. There were also obscure payments to a younger brother, Edward. "Poor Edward", said his brother Thomas, "It was impossible to keep his head above water". Yet much seems to have been attempted for him during his life.

Not much is known about Edward Southey. He seems to have been brought up by Miss Tyler, and in 1796 Southey wrote to his brother Thomas[2] that Edward was destined for St.Paul's School, and expected from there to get on to the foundation at Cambridge University. The University plan, however, must have failed. He appears again in 1803, when Rickman was involved in an attempt to place him in the Navy.[3] "I have given him your great coat to be midshipmannified, your white worsted breeches - and your chest" Southey wrote Thomas. "Do you know his Aunt means to go with him to the port - and actually talks of setting off for Portsmouth/

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[1] In July 1805 Southey writes to Wynn, "(The books) my uncle has sent over, (from Lisbon)..... has cost about a hundred pounds freight and duty - the freight for the smaller part". C.C.S. II. 332.

[2] Unprinted letter to Thos. Southey, dated 1.6.1796 in Brit. Mus.

[3] Unprinted letters to Thos. Southey dated 2.8.03 and 2.12.03 in Brit. Mus.

Portsmouth before he has an appointment. I have talked of the madness of this to him that she may be prevented if possible".[1] The next year however, found Edward "on board the Salvador del Mundo.... there to remain till Admiral Colpoys shipped him off to some foreign station ..... Dr Thomas has given him money to fit himself out with so little discretion that he makes that and his expenses for 8 months amount to £140!"[2] In 1806 Edward was still in the Navy, but in 1813 Rickman was trying again to get him an appointment, and Southey wrote, "I shall heartily rejoice when he is off, for everything I see or hear of him only serves to provoke me."[3] He seems to have been twice in the Navy, and in the Army, but latterly became a strolling actor with friends who picked his pockets for him very freely. His brothers doled out money, and bundles of old clothes were sent to him, but more than this was quite useless. When he called on his brother Thomas he was announced by courtesy and known to the servants as Mr Edwards. He was always accompanied by a woman, who was always his wife but never the same woman; and the almost last thing known of him is that Mrs Southey was called on twice in the same week, once by Edward appealing for money/

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1 Unprinted letters to Thos. Southey, dated 2.8.03 and 2.12.03 in Brit. Mus.

2 Unprinted letters to Thos. Southey, dated 12.9.1804 in Brit. Mus.

3 Unprinted letters to Thos. Southey, dated 13.7.1813, in Brit. Mus.

money to bury his dead wife, and once by his wife appealing for money to bury her dead Edward.[1] His death in 1845 is vouched for by C.C. Southey.

Granting that we do not know how far he bore the costs of the Coleridge family up to 1829, when Sara left Greta Hall to marry her cousin, and took her mother with her, there is still very little reason to suppose that Southey ever lived in any degree of real poverty. Financial affairs really troubled him hardly at all. He pulled long faces in a mock-serious vein over the difference between his literary earnings and those of Sir Walter Scott, and he grumbled when review payments were unpunctual, and when he found his calculations had overestimated the selling value of certain works, and when he was offered honours that in fact had to be paid for; but such complaints usually arose from an actual shortage of ready cash to pay current expenses; and in the main he spoke the truth when he said "I have no worldly ambition: a man who lives so much in the past and the future can have none".

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1 This information about Edward Southey is derived from unprinted letters in the possession of Robert Southey's descendents, and in the British Museum.

CHAPTER VI.

POLITICAL VIEWS.

CHAPTER VI.

POLITICAL VIEWS.

British statesmen at the close of the Napoleonic wars were faced with problems of a novel and complex character. On the one hand, there was widespread unemployment caused by the return of the Peninsular army and the extension of the enclosure system; on the other, overcrowding and underfeeding due to the growth of towns in the new industrial areas, and the separation of these from the rich agricultural areas. Legislation lay in the hands of the country gentlemen of England, aided by some of the landholding manufacturers The former were ignorant or incredulous of industrial conditions and were profiting by the enclosures; the latter did not want any interference with their exploitation of the workers. Both classes were thus united to maintain the status quo. Many well intentioned people sought to alleviate the condition of the poor by charity, and the complicated English educational system dates from this period. Others recognised the antagonism of the governing class to the best interests of the poor, and sought the enlargement of the franchise as the necessary preliminary to new legislation. Others were frankly opposed to reform of any kind.

In addition to these economic problems, successive governments had to grapple with the problem of Catholic Ireland. The Republicans of France had offered their help to Irish Catholics: Pitt's counter-stroke was the Act of Union. Catholic emancipation was used as a bribe, but anti-Jacobin and evangelical forces withheld the gift. From that date emancipation meant to Churchmen the triumph of papal authority and of the Irish Catholic republicans.

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During the middle period of his life, Southey discussed these economic and political questions with enormous energy and at excessive length not only in his private correspondence, but in a mass of contributions to periodicals and in several books. His attitude was peculiarly personal: no party won his unqualified support, and on questions of actual administrative practice he found points of agreement with people of widely separated views, and points of difference with his most intimate friends. He never wrote any clear exposition of his political creed, and seems in his miscellaneous papers to be now a Tory of the most extreme school, now a man of amazingly liberal and enlightened opinion. But there was, behind the apparently irresponsible and eccentric dogmatism of his political writings, a guiding faith, a belief rather than a principle, which deserves respectful consideration.

Colloquies with Sir Thomas More[1] is not a simple statement of this faith. It is a lengthy, tedious, discursive, disordered book, written in imaginary dialogue, which is perhaps the most unsuitable medium possible for expression of a creed. In the following argument, extracted from Southey's two volumes, I have quoted freely, in the hope of getting as near to Southey's mind as possible.

Looking at the poorer classes in Britain in the early nineteenth century, Southey said, "They remain liable to the same indigenous diseases as their forefathers, and are exposed to all which have been imported ... they are worse fed than when they were hunters, fishers, and herdsmen; their clothing and habitations are little better, and, in comparison with those of the higher classes, immeasurably/

1 Published by Murray, 1829.

immeasurably worse ... they suffer more cold ... are less religious ... the independence which has been gained since the total decay of the feudal system has been dearly purchased by the loss of kindly feelings and ennobling sentiments. They are less contented and in no respect more happy"[1].

Contrasting this with the social conditions in the last decades of the fifteenth century, he said: "The feudal system had well nigh lost all its inhuman parts, and the worse inhumanity of the commercial system had not yet shown itself".[2] At this period, feudal slaves neither enjoyed the feeling, nor suffered the insecurity of independence. The master who killed a slave was liable to punishment, he had no motive for cruelty, scarcely any for oppression.

With the rise of the trading system, "in came calculation, and out went feeling".[3] Whereas the monasteries had "delayed the growth of pauperism" by their care for the old and the poor, the newer system created professional beggars, the direct ancestors of those of the nineteenth century, by "unwisely and inhumanly" turning men adrift on society, to extend the enclosures.

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, government policy was misdirected. "Of the two ends of government, which are the security of the subject, and the improvement of the nation, the latter has never been seriously attempted, and the former imperfectly attained."[4] Whereas the feudal order gave "omnipresence to law, and omnipotence to order," the new order gave neither: where the Church had worked for improvement, its decay brought "ignorance, vice, and/

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1 Colloquies I. pp.59-60 [2] do. p.62. [3] do. p.79.

[4] do. p.100.

and wretchedness." The golden age was thus irretrievably lost, and forgotten.

Of this, the chief consequence for Southey's own age was the serious danger of revolution. This was an immediate danger. "There is no provocation for an insurrection",[1] he said, but the want of order had created misery and ignorance and desperate wickedness for interested parties to work upon. These parties would naturally direct an insurrection against the bulwarks of security and improvement, the Government and the Church.

"There is certainly", he said, "at this time, a more formidable combination acting against the church than has ever in any former age assailed it."[2] "It is composed of parties and sects who have no other bond of union than the common desire of overthrowing what they all hate worse than they hate each other."[3] These parties and sects he named: the Roman Catholics, the Dissenters, and Unbelievers. "The Roman Catholics aim at supplanting the establishment. The Dissenters desire to pull it down for the sake of gratifying an inherited hatred, and getting each what it can in the scramble. The Infidels look for nothing less than the extirpation of Christianity."

Although the Reformation had undoubtedly "lowered the standard of devotion, lessened the influence of religion not among the poor and ignorant alone but among all classes; and prepared the way for the uncontrolled dominion of that worldly spirit which it is the tendency of the commercial system to produce and foster,"[4] and "the dissolution of the religious houses the greatest evil that accompanied the/

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1 Do. I.p.114. [2] Do. I.p.250. [3] Do.p.154

[4] Do. p.154

the Reformation,"[1] Southey did not regret the Reformation. He maintained that the principle of intolerance was essentially connected with Catholicism, and "the whole system of Romish hagiology inseparably connected with fraud and falsehood."[2] The utmost intolerance must therefore be shown to the Catholic Church, as a first precaution against the threatening danger.

The Dissenters were hardly less dangerous.

"The principle of nonconformity of religion is very generally connected with political discontent . . . . at contested elections their weight is uniformly thrown into the opposition scale. . . . . their exertions are on the factious side ... . . . The truth is, as Burleigh said of the English Papists, they are but half Englishmen at heart; for they acknowledge only one part of the two-fold Constitution under which they live, and, consequently, sit loose in their attachment to the other."[3] Even of an earlier period he said: "So far as the dissenting ministers supplied the want of other religious instructors, and, so supplying it, delayed the only regular and convenient remedy, evil was done by the very prevention of good, and there was this further evil, that the teachers, who thus found room and opportunity to interlope, inculcated a feeling of enmity to one branch of the constitution. Now nothing is more certain than that religion is the basis upon which civil government rests, and it is necessary that this religion be established for the security of the state and for the welfare of the people who would otherwise be moved to and fro by every wind of doctrine."[4]

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1 Do. II.p.36. 2 Do. II.34. 3 Do. II.44.

4 Do. II.47.

Of the third sect, he said briefly that "infidelity implies the hatred of religion, and acts in alliance with popery against the ecclesiastical establishment.[1]

These enemies of the established Church were regarded by Southey as enemies of the government, but the government was threatened more directly by another class of enemies. Britain had "a great increasing population, exposed at all times by the fluctuations of trade to suffer the severest privations in the midst of a rich and luxurious society, under little or no restraint from religious principle and if not absolutely disaffected to the institutions of the country, certainly not attached to them; a class of men aware of their numbers and their strength, ... directing against the Government and the laws of the country their resentment and indignation for the evils brought upon them by competition and the spirit of trade."[2] But commerce and manufactures, however closely related, seemed to Southey to differ widely in their effects upon society. The factories he abhorred. "The moral atmosphere wherein (the employees) live and move and have their being, is as noxious to the soul, as the foul and tainted air which they inhale is to their bodily constitution.[3] On the other hand, "the mercantile profession is that which, when properly and wisely exercised, requires the most general knowledge, and affords the fairest opportunities for acquiring and enlarging it. There is nothing in its practice which tends to contract the mind, to sophisticate the understanding, or to corrupt the feelings."[4] Whereas the immediate and home effect of the manufacturing system, carried on as

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[1] Do. II.p90. [2] Do.II.p.416. [3] Do.I.166.

[4] Do. I.p.196.

it is now upon the great scale, is to produce physical and moral evil, in proportion to the wealth which it creates."[1]

Under these circumstances, Southey anticipated "a contest between impiety and Religion, a struggle between Popery and Protestantism. Co-existent with this is the struggle between the feudal system of society as modified, and the levelling principle of democracy. That principle is actively and indefatigably at work in these kingdoms, allying itself as occasion may serve with Popery or Dissent, with Atheism or with Fanaticism, with Profligacy or Hypocrisy."[2]

Finally, "the root of all our evils is in the sinfulness of the nation. The principle of duty is weakened ... ; that of moral obligation is loosened; that of religious obedience is destroyed."[3] "There can be no health, no soundness in the state, till the Government shall regard the moral improvement of the people as its first great duty. The same remedy is required for the rich and for the poor ... We are, in a great degree, what our institutions make us. Gracious God! were these institutions adapted to Thy will and word, were we but broken in from childhood to Thy easy yoke, were we but carefully instructed to believe and obey, in that obedience and belief we should surely find our temporal welfare and our eternal happiness."[4]

Southey's examination of the social and economic conditions brought him to a conception of a Christian Commonwealth: a State founded on the twin pillars of an Aristocratic Government and the Church, with a semi-feudal arrangement of classes, each having responsibilities and duties to those above and below. He looked back to/

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1 Do. I.p.197. 2 Do.II.p.414. 3 Do.II.p417.
4 Do.II.425.

to the fifteenth century as a period when this admirable arrangement obtained; and saw in that period only one weakness, which however, had been fatal to the ideal system, namely, the weakness of the Church. The position of the Church in his own day, he thought, was strong. "The bulk of the English gentry hold fast to their Church with a sober and sedate but sincere and strong attachment. The same hereditary and rooted feeling prevails among the yeomanry of the land. But our strongest ground of hope and confidence is in the Church itself, and the character of its ministry. An unbelieving clergyman would be regarded as a monster." It was essential however, that the Church should ensure its own maintenance by the provision of a nation-wide system of education, by resistance to Catholics and disestablishmentarians, and by provision of religious houses to replace the poor-houses and to provide employment for the poor and infirm throughout the land. These Reforms Southey sincerely and earnestly advocated, not only in the Colloquies but in all his writings.

Unfortunately, Southey's hatred of Catholicism and his firm conviction that Government must remain a prerogative of the landed classes led him to make hysterically splenetic attacks on his enemies, which materially affect the literary and scholarly qualities of his work.

An interpolated life of St. Kentigern is related to annoy Catholics in a very offensive strain of burlesque, and this fault against good taste is often repeated. Elsewhere the style is clear and forcible, in Southey's characteristic manner, but it is disfigured by the absurd form of the book, by prejudice, bad taste, and rhodomontade. If something must be praised, then the irrelevant links, which describe Derwentwater/

Derwentwater, the river Greta and other beauties of Cumberland, in excellent prose, should be noticed.

The most unpleasant features of Southey's style on these topics find full expression in another of his works: The Book of the Church, published in 1824.

We must go to the successor to this work to find its genesis, which is explained in the preface to Southey's Vindication of the Book of the Church.

"Upon the first institution of the National Society for promoting the Education of the Poor in the Principles of the Established Church . . . . my excellent friend Dr Bell . . . . asked me to compose a summary view of our Church History for the elder pupils. I easily promised what for the moment I thought might presently be done. But upon considering the matter, I soon perceived that it would be both easier and of more utility to extend the design, and compose such a compendium as might be a fit manual for our English youth: that is, for those (still happily in the great majority) whose good fortune it is to be bred up in the principles of our two-fold constitution. Supposing that this might be accomplished in the compass of one little volume, I began: I lingered and brooded over it as I advanced, and as my collections increased, but regarding it always as an outline -" added no display of references."

Writing to his uncle, he explains the plan of the book in more detail:

"It begins with an account of the various false religions of our different ancestors . . . . with mischievous temporal consequences of/

of these superstitions, being the evils from which the country was delivered by its conversion to Christianity. Secondly, a picture of popery and the evils from which the Reformation delivered us. Lastly, Methodism, from which the establishment preserves us. These parts to be connected by an historical thread, containing whatever is most impressive in the acts and monuments of the English Church. How beautiful a work may be composed upon such a plan (which from its very nature excludes whatever is uninviting or tedious) and will at once perceive."[1]

It does not appear that English youth found the two octavo volumes so inviting as Southey anticipated; nor will the modern reader. Southey was accustomed in his works to claim impartiality "without compromising principles of eternal importance" - a delusion as complete as it was mistaken. The Book of the Church is long to tediousness, and attacks Catholicism, Puritanism, and Noncomformity with a blend of savagery and ponderous jocosity which is pitiful. It is difficult to quarrel with the facts of history as stated, but there are significant omissions and deliberate distortions. For shallowness and bigotry the book is hard to equal.

"Mythology was invented in mere sport of fancy;" but lives of the saints "have for the most part . . . . been promulgated not as fiction, but as falsehood, with a fraudulent mind." Examine the life of St. Francis of Assisi: "the web of his history is interwoven with such inextricable falsehoods, that it is not possible to decide whether, in riper years, he became madman or impostor; nor whether at last he was/

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1 C.C.S. III. 320, 321.

was the accomplice of his associates or the victim."[1] The scholiasts of the middle ages are reproved for "studying the most inscrutable points of theology . . . . which foster the presumption of the human mind, instead of convincing it of its weakness." Lollards were levellers, and therefore scoundrels. Puritans and nonconformists under the persecution, "entered the Church with the desire, if not the design, of betraying it."[2] The Scottish National Covenant was "a popular commotion, easily roused, and then craftily directed."[3] The cumulative effect of two volumes of these half truths so set out, is nauseating.

Archbishop Laud, the 'ill-starred pedant' of Carlyle, is Southey's hero, and it is not difficult to find points of contact between them. Just as in the 17th century the Laudian system of clerical authority was linked with royal absolutism, and nonconformity with parliamentarianism, so in the 19th century the high churchmen and tories joined against emancipationists and reformers. The result is a noble panegyric on Laud, and a spirited defence of the royal 'martyr'. This is perhaps the best part of the book, but there are excellent stories of the Reformation martyrs, and a fine narrative covering the Reformation period up to the Hampton Court Conference. Narrative was Southey's strongest line and when he felt no urge to cumber his style with clumsy satiric periphrases or to break into rhetorical denunciations he was unequalled. The Book of the Church is neither a great book nor a good book, but there are many pages of literature entombed in it. The fault, and a sufficiently serious one, is that Southey's passionate hatred of Catholicism keeps his style at a high, almost hysterical/

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[1] Book of the Church vol.1.p.323. [2] Do.II.343. [3] Do. II.373

hysterical, pitch, from which he descends to coarse satire, only rarely diverging into the pleasanter path of simple narrative. Add to this the fact that to most readers the subject is supremely uninteresting, and its failure now and for ever is explained.

It was followed after a brief interval by Vindiciae Ecclesiae Anglicanae. This series of letter-chapters to a Romanist critic of the major work, exhibits Southey in his worst light. Where it is not an elaborate repetition of the Book of the Church, it is a hysterical attack on monkish tales, saints' lives, papal decrees, and all the other paraphernalia of the Catholic system.

Southey's conception of a Christian Commonwealth did not deter him from commenting freely on the practical measures to be enacted by the government. As a humane man and a man utterly unaffected by questions of profit or loss, he was as we have seen, profoundly shocked by the conditions of the poor. He sincerely advocated alterations in the laws which bore most hardly on them: the game laws, the death penalty, the laws governing employment of child labour. He proposed the abolition of flogging, the giving allotments to labourers, the establishment of savings banks, the commutation of tithes, and the encouragement of emigration. He even, with unusual depth of vision, thought that National works should be undertaken in times of distress, and recommended a system of education aided by government grants.[1]

But for reasons very easy to understand, he was irrevocably opposed to any tampering with the franchise. As Professor Trevelyan explains/

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1 Essays Moral & Political (London, 1832) Essay 'On the state of the poor'.

explains, during the Napoleonic campaign in Europe "the mildest proclivities to reform, and sympathy with the victims either of economic oppression or of government persecution, usually went with a want of zeal for the war, and a slowness to acknowledge the intractable character . . . . . of the new France." To Southey it seemed the sheerest folly to put the reins of government into the hands of traitors, or by extending the franchise to strengthen the hands of those who had spoken like traitors throughout the war.

The first opportunity for releasing in public the emotions with which he burned in private came with the establishment of the Quarterly Review in 1809.

Southey was first invited as an authority upon Spanish subjects. He declined this post, but expressed his willingness to contribute reviews, and after further reassurance as to the political integrity of the new review, became a zealous supporter of it, and a writer of many political articles for it besides. His first contribution was an article on the Baptist Mission in India, published in the first number in February 1809, in which he showed a characteristic width of knowledge. He found, however, as he went on, that his papers were too often subject to mutilation by the editor, and many and clamorous were the outcries he made on this score. The reasons for this cutting of his scripts were first, mere editorial economy - Southey was frequently a verbose writer - but also of course, editorial policy. "How much better I could do if nobody but Robert Southey were responsible for the opinions expressed," he said.[1]

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[1] C.C.S. IV.362.

"What I have at different times written in the Quarterly has sometimes been mutilated, and was always written under a certain degree of restraint to prevent mutilation."[1]

He knew that his papers were toned down to match the political views of the Quarterly, and cried out upon the editor for timidity; demanding that full copies of his script should be returned to him for separate publication when he should choose. He always asserted that his opinions had never changed, but that circumstances had made changes desirable in the methods by which his ideals were to be made practicable. This is literally true. The beliefs to which he held always as principles were but two: that government must at all times be moral, and that what is morally right must never be impeded. The difficulty in estimating the value of Southey's political writings arises from the fact that these philosophical ideals are not political principles. Political principles Southey had none, and in questions of political practice he contradicted himself a hundred times. Pitt may have been oftener wrong, but he was at least politically consistent. Southey praised the French Revolution because it was morally right that the French should resist the Bourbon tyranny, and he attacked Napoleon when he too became a tyrant, committing supremely immoral atrocities; but he demanded that the British government should tyrannise over the Irish because they were Catholics, and ipso facto sworn to uphold an immoral system, and he/

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1 C.C.S.IV.229.

he demanded a tyrannical interference with the liberty of the press because pacifism was immoral. "What must be done if they would escape an attempt, at least, of a Jacobinical revolution, is to curb the licentiousness of the Press. My remedy is to make transportation the punishment for sedition, and thus to rid the country of those who would set it on fire."[1] "I have stated the danger broadly, and as broadly affirmed, that unless the licentiousness of the press be checked, nothing (as far as my judgment can foresee) can preserve us from revolution, and that in its most fearful shape."[2] Every writer and politician was judged by Southey's subjective moral code as well as by his view of practical politics, and this sometimes confused his political allegiance. For example, he always spoke admiringly of Washington in his Review articles, and always found these references struck out. He was, however, able to pride himself that he was no government hireling, earning his bread at the cost of his moral and political integrity, and as with all his prejudice and illogicality he remained a sincere and upright man, his writings on less controversial topics display a liberality and humanity that must sometimes have sorely distressed his less intimate acquaintances. It is also to his credit that he deprecated strongly the Quarterly attacks on unfledged poets, and spoke with indignation of that attack on Keats which also roused Shelley's anger.

He took the losing side in the question of parliamentary reform, which he resisted on the ground mentioned earlier: he felt that the first effect of an extended franchise would be a House/

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1 J.W.W.III.43. 2 J.W.W.III.44.

House packed with the have-nots whom he expected to legislate for their own behoof in defiance of morality and justice. 'Mobocracy' he feared as much as tyranny. To these opinions he gave free expression when Mr Percival was murdered in the House of Commons in 1812. "I fear the happiest days of England are over. The abuse of liberty has uniformly been punished with the loss of liberty.... We are on the brink of the most dreadful of all imaginable evils, - a war of the poor against the rich, of brute ignorance against everything against its own degraded level. ... This I feel assured of, that unless the licentiousness of the press is stopped there will soon be an end of its liberty. Were I in the House of Commons I would clear the gallery whenever Burdett rose; if his speeches were published I would punish the publication as a breach of privilege, and if he spoke elsewhere I would teach him that this privilege of exciting rebellion was confined to the walls of St. Stephens."[1] The vehemence of his expression and the violence of the measures he recommended were astounding, and still more surprising is the amount Southey wrote on political questions. Volumes could be filled with his fulminations against reformers and Catholics.

Here he speaks of the proposals for changing the qualifications of voters:

"The principle that the representative must obey the instructions of his constituents, which many of the reformers process, would follow as a necessary consequence; (from popular elections) and the moment that principle is established, 'chaos is come again;' anarchy begins, or more truly an ochlocracy, a mob government, which is/

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1 J.W.W.II.272-273.

is as much worse than anarchy, as the vilest ruffians of a civilised country are more wicked than rude savages."[1]

Other essays argue that as the war was not sought by the government, its consequences were not the fault of the government; that since the constitution of parliament did not cause distress, reform of parliament would not cure it. Southey seems to reject legislation as a means of amelioration: "It appears that more may be done by well disposed individuals, than could be effected by legislative interference."[2] "So far as the further increase of pauperism can be prevented, ... more may be done by benevolent individuals . . . . . than by any parliamentary interference."[3] "Thanks to the gradual improvements which have been made, there are but few political evils left for government to amend in this fortunate country."[4] Only on education does he admit more expansive views: "A business of such momentous interest should not depend upon casual means alone; nor ought government to rely upon private benevolence for one of the most imperative and important of all public duties." - and here one feels that his attitude is that of those friends of humanity who trusted in the efficacy of Bible instruction to keep the poor happy in their station.

Three long essays are directed against Catholic emancipation. The misery of Ireland was due to Southey's opinion to the extortions of landlords and to the fact that Irish "aptitude for becoming the instruments of mischief and murder, is, as it were, the original sin of the race."[5] Of this he gives historical proof. Diatribes against/

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1 Essays Moral & Political (Reprinted from the Quarterly Review) London, 1832 Vol.I.p.388. 2 Do. p.192. 3 Do. p.212.
4 Do. p.218. 5 Do. Vol.II. p.283.

against papistry and the Catholic Church fill up much of his space, and the conclusion is: "Introduce the poor laws . . . educate the people, execute justice, and maintain peace; - and Catholic emancipation will then become as vain and feeble a cry in Ireland as Parliamentary reform has become in England."[1]

The violence of Southey's language in these papers contrasts strangely with the confidence he expresses from time to time that 'Verily there is a God that judgeth the earth.' In the Colloquies he says "There is no opinion from which I should so hardly be driven, and so reluctantly part, as the belief that the world will continue to improve, even as it has hitherto continually been improving; and that the progress of knowledge and the diffusion of Christianity will bring about at last, when men become Christians in reality, as well as in name, something like that Utopian state of which philosophers have loved to dream, like that millennium in which Saints as well as enthusiasts have trusted."[2] "I know that the world has improved; and I believe that it will continue to improve in natural and certain progress. Good and evil principles are widely at work: a crisis is evidently approaching; it may be dreadful, but I can have no doubts concerning the result. Black and ominous as the aspects may appear, I regard them without dismay. The common exclamation of the poor and helpless, when they feel themselves oppressed, conveys to my mind the sum of the surest and safest philosophy. I say with them, 'God is above', and trust Him for the event."[3]

Even if there is no logical contradiction between this belief and/

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[1] Essays Moral & Political II.p.443. [2] Colloquies I.27.

[3] Do. I.37.

and the practical measures Southey advocated, there is an apparent inconsistency of character in the writer. The cry of the present day for 'moral rearmament' is an echo of Southey's appeal; but he was in no sense a pacifist. His emotional temperament made that impossible. He clung to the authority of the Church and State because an emotional mind always looks for an anchor in an authoritarian system. But any threat to the Church and State roused his emotionalism, and he wrote his political articles in an almost hysterical condition of alarm and terror. The inconsistency is more apparent than real: the same nervous excitability and the same desperate clutching at religious faith are shown in his thoughts on poverty, on chastity, and on death.

CHAPTER VII.

POETRY - CRITICAL.

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When Southey achieved the Laurel, the bulk of his poetry had been written. Roderick alone of the epics was unpublished in 1813 and many of his later works were duty poems; the main exception being the Pilgrimage to Waterloo of which more in its place.

Southey wrote much before he became reconciled to the British government's policy in regard to France, and hence to the parliamentary system as it then existed: accordingly some of his early poems echo the class-conscious cry of revolutionary writers against riches. Such writings were not unopposed. The Anti-Jacobin ran for about nine months between 1797 and 1798 to support Pitt's government, and attack the pro-revolutionaries. Its editor was Gifford, later editor of the Quarterly; ably supported by John Hookham Frere, later envoy at Lisbon and to the Spanish Junta, the translator of Ariosto; and George Canning, later Foreign Secretary. The former two were later friends of Southey and closely associated with him. The paper was founded amid such crises as Napoleon's peace treaties with Austria and with Portugal, the Navy mutiny at Spithead, the formation of the French Directory's design for an invasion of Britain, and the Irish rebellion of 1798. Although mainly a political paper, devoted to attacks on Fox and the Whigs, its serious articles were interleaved with verses which have kept its name alive; and, which is more to the present/

present purpose, have kept Southey's name alive. To Southey belongs the questionable honour of having written the prototypes of the three best known parodies in our language; Lewis Carrol's *You are old, Father William*, Byron's *Vision of Judgment*, and Canning's *Needy Knife Grinder*.

Southey's poem, *The Widow*, was ostensibly an exercise in Sapphics. He had returned from Lisbon in 1796; and we know that even earlier, his faith in revolution had been shaken by events in France. But he was still suffering from the notoriety of *Joan* and *Wat Tyler*, and this poem, as the *Anti-Jacobin* pointed out, preached "the natural and eternal warfare of the POOR and the RICH"; perhaps, as it went on to say, "not to excite compassion ... but for the purpose of aggravating discontent in the inferior orders" - a purpose intolerable to the government when threatened by storms on every side, at home and abroad. The Sapphics became subject for joke, the moral of the poem for attack; and the lesson of *The Widow* was neatly inverted in the parody, as a few stanzas may show

THE WIDOW

Cold was the night wind, drifting fast the snow fell,
Wide were the downs and shelterless and naked,
When a poor Wanderer struggled on her journey,
Weary and way-sore.

....

Fast o'er the heath a chariot rattled by her,
'Pity me!' feebly cried the lonely wanderer;
'Pity me, strangers! lest with cold and hunger
Here I should perish.'

....

'I/

'I had a home once - I had once a husband -
I am a widow, poor and broken hearted!'
Loud blew the wind, unheard was her complaining,
On drove the chariot.

....

Worn out with anguish, toil and cold and hunger,
Down sunk the Wanderer, sleep had seized her senses;
There did the traveller find her in the morning;
GOD had released her.

THE FRIEND OF HUMANITY AND THE KNIFE-GRINDER.

"Needy Knife-grinder! whither are you going?
Rough is the road, your wheel is out of order -
Bleak blows the blast; - your hat has got a hole in't,
So have your breeches!

"Weary Knife-grinder! little think the proud ones,
Who in their coaches roll along the turnpike -
-road, what hard work 'tis crying all day, "Knives and
Scissors to grind O!"

"Tell me Knife-grinder, how came you to grind knives?
Did some rich man tyrannically use you?
Was it the squire? or parson of the parish?
Or the attorney?

"Story! God bless you! I have none to tell, sir,
Only last night a-drinking at the Chequers,
This poor old hat and breeches, as you see, were
Torn in a scuffle.

"I should be glad to drink your Honour's health in
A pot of beer, if you will give me sixpence;
But for my part, I never love to meddle
With politics, sir."

"I give thee sixpence! I will see thee damn'd first -
Wretch! whom no sense of wrongs can rouse to vengeance -
Sordid, unfeeling, reprobate, degraded,
Spiritless outcast!"

The Complaints of the Poor (1798) is another poem which teaches the rich that the poor have claims to their sympathy: its main interest is the obvious reminiscence of Wordsworth, whom Southey never met till he went to Keswick. This poem begins:

> And wherefore do the Poor complain?
> The Rich Man ask'd of me; ..
> Come walk abroad with me, I said,
> And I will answer thee.

The Rich Man and the Poet meet successively 'an old bare-headed man', and 'a young bare-footed child', and finally,

> We saw a woman sitting down
> Upon a stone to rest,
> She had a baby at her back
> And another at her breast;
>
> I ask'd her why she loiter'd there
> When the night-wind was so chill;
> She turn'd her head and bade the child
> That scream'd behind, be still;

In conclusion,

> I turn'd me to the Rich Man then,
> For silently stood he, ..
> You ask'd me why the Poor complain,
> And these have answer'd thee!

Wordsworth's mannerisms, without his philosophy, can be traced also in The Old Man's Comforts. Lewis Carrol's verses will be readily remembered.

> You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
> The few locks which are left you are grey;
> You are hale, Father William, a hearty old man,
> Now tell me the reason, I pray.
>
> In the days of my youth, Father William replied,
> I remembered that youth would fly fast,
> And abused not my health and my vigour at first,
> That I never might need them at last.
>
> ....

You/

You are old, Father William, the young man cried,
And life must be hastening away;
You are cheerful, and love to converse upon death,
Now tell me the reason, I pray.

I am cheerful, young man, Father William replied,
Let the cause thy attention engage;
In the days of my youth I remember'd my God!
And he has not forgotten my age.

Besides these more notorious pieces, there are many among the early Westbury poems which breathe a rather plaintive sentimental melancholy; further illustrative of the easy fluctuation of Southey's spirits, for none of these attains any deep emotional intensity. Careful observation lifts many an odd line from the prevailing low level - this is indeed his best contribution to the Romantic revival - but the technique, varying between the personified and adjective-laden style of the eighteenth century and the bare style of Wordsworth in Lyrical Ballads, never reaches any very high level. The Hymn to the Penates and the Retrospect have not quite flung off earlier influences.

Even the English Eclogues echo something of an earlier fashion in such lines as:

Was his wealth
Stored fraudfully, .. the spoil of orphans wrong'd
And widows who had none to plead their right?

and The Old Mansion House is not improved by an artificial happy ending, in which the ancient retainer finds he has been talking to the Squire, but this conclusion was the invention of William Taylor of Norwich, who thought it "would give catastrophe to the piece".[1]

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1 Mem. W.T., N. Vol.1. p.215.

Taylor was godfather to the Eclogues, as he was, more indirectly, of Sir Walter Scott's ballad imitations. Southey met him, as has been related, on a visit to his friend Burnett in 1797. On his return to Westbury, Southey sent Taylor a first draft of the Old Mansion House, adding, "What you told me of the German eclogues, revived some almost forgotten plans, and enabled me to correct them. I purpose writing some, which may be called English, as sketching features peculiar to England; not like the one which you read to me of Goethe, which would suit any country with Roman ruins. I would aim at something of domestic interest."[1] The Wedding and The Sailor's Mother followed, and Taylor was moved to protest: "Must each include a scene of distress - a pathetic tale?.... Have we no May days, no harvest-homes, no Christmas-times? ... A few rawhead and bloody-bone stories, so told, might have this effect, and would suit that species of tragic eclogue to which you seem to tend."[2] This advice was disregarded, and The Funeral and The Ruined Cottage continue Southey's sentimental strain. The Old Mansion House and The Alderman's Funeral however are more vigorous. Southey could not say today, as he did in the preface to his Poems,[3] "The following Eclogues, I believe, bear no resemblance to any poems in our language" for there is more than a hint of Browning's choice of language to express character/

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1. Op. Cit. 1. 213.
2. Op. Cit. 1. 241.
3. Edition of 1799.

character and of the style of his dramatic monologues in this passage among others:

> It don't look well, ..
> These alterations, Sir! I'm an old man,
> And love the good old fashions; we don't find
> Old bounty in new houses. They've destroyed
> All that my Lady loved; her favourite walk
> Grubb'd up, .. and they do say that the great row
> Of elms behind the house, which meet a-top,
> They must fall too. Well! well! I did not think
> To live to see all this, and 'tis perhaps
> A comfort I shan't live to see it long.

It is probably going too far however to suggest that Southey influenced later writers. In these poems he is no innovator, but a disciple of Wordsworth, using the language of low life to describe aspects of that life with which he was familiar, but without claiming to prove any philosophic theory.

The Inscriptions read heavily: lacking any epigrammatic quality they sprawl into narrative, and are eked out with bombast. The Ballads are justly regarded as children's pieces. Their aim is not high, the narrative style is often diffuse, and the humour is frequently too weak to attract the modern taste; but generations of high spirited schoolboys have enjoyed them. They display some vigour, and a control of rhyme and metre that stamps them as competent versification too; but contrasted with such classics as Campbell's Maid of Neidpath, or Scott's Lochinvar and Rosabelle they must be admitted to lack the highest dramatic as well as the highest poetic values. Of course Southey wrote much to fulfil his newspaper contract, and himself admitted that his volumes of shorter pieces contained much dross. The verdict that sets him down as a sweet rather/

rather than a deeply emotional lyrical poet, and a mildly humorous rather than a dramatic ballad writer will hardly be disputed. His minor works will be read with much enjoyment and sympathy by those who have been at some pains to appreciate the character of the writer, which they reflect in every mood with precision and felicity; but the world is likely to go its way neglecting Southey's minor works completely.

The major pieces deserve more serious consideration. Southey called them 'metrical romances' and never attempted to write in the classical epic tradition. "In romance, epic laws may be dispensed with"[1] he said: the poets he claimed nearest kinship with were Ariosto and Spenser, his boyhood favourites. The aim of the romances was to illustrate not 'historical chronology' but the manners and mind of a period; and "as to looking for a popular subject, this I shall never do; for, in the first place, I believe it to be quite impossible to say what would be popular, and secondly, I should not willingly acknowledge to myself that I was influenced by any other motive than the fitness of my story to my powers of execution".[2]

Much of Southey's self-criticism is to be found in his letters to William Taylor,[3] who put the poet on the defensive by acute observations on the works he saw. "If there be a poetical sin in which you are apt to indulge," he told Southey, "it/

1. C.C.S. II. 134.
2. C.C.S. IV. 72.
3. Mem. W.T., N.

"it is expatiation, an Odyssey garrulity, as if you were ambitious of exhausting a topic, instead of selecting its more impressive outlines only."[1] This is perfectly true, and when Southey was called to defend Thalaba, he admitted "There is a fault of story - a want of concatenation of events - perhaps inevitable from the subject. Yet I have found no lack of interest in the readers, who have followed the story breathlessly."[1]

Thalaba appeared in 1801, and before considering it critically, it will probably be advisable to let the reader follow the story briefly if not breathlessly, through its twelve books.

Book I. Describes how Thalaba, an infant, wandering with his widowed mother in the desert, arrives at an amazing palace of incomparable richness and beauty, whose history is related. Its completion was delayed by a three years' drought which decimated the population. Despite the warnings of a prophet, the work was continued; but to avert catastrophe, a mission was sent to Mecca to pray to the true God for rain. The completion of the palace coincided with the return of the mission. The messengers explained that being offered three clouds, a white, a red, and a black, they chose the black as being heavy with rain. The people of Ad acclaimed this choice, and the black cloud approached and broke, but not in rain. It released the wind of Death, which slew the population of Ad. The Angel of Death/

1. Op. cit. 1. 296
1. Op. cit. 1. 371.

Death now appears and carries off Thalaba's mother, informing the boy that his task is to live and avenge the slayers of his father. The palace then disappears.

Book II. Describes the caverns of Domdaniel, where the evil magicians watch the flames which represent the lives of Thalaba's family. Eight are extinguished, and the murderer is understood to have succeeded in eight attempts. But the preservation of Thalaba and his mother offends the magicians, who demand explanation of the murderer. He explains that a cloud enwrapped the two and turned his dagger's point. Just then the ninth flame is extinguished, but the tenth and last burns higher and brighter than the rest formerly. The magicians send Abdaldar in search of Thalaba. After wide travel he finds the boy dwelling in tents with an old man Moath, and his daughter Oneiza. Abdaldar tried to stab Thalaba, but is himself slain by the simoon at that moment.

Book III. Thalaba puts on the dead magician's ring. In the night he feels it move, and calling the Demon of the ring, is informed of the murder of his family, and the duty expected of him. A flight of locusts passes over the camp, and one falls in Oneiza's lap. On its wings is written a message to Thalaba to depart when the sun is darkened at noon. Oneiza, loving him, would have him stay, but when the eclipse comes, Thalaba sets out.

Book IV. His mother appears to Thalaba in a vision, and tells him to go to Babylon and learn from the angels what talisman his task requires. Thalaba sets off over the desert, and at first stop/

stop meets a traveller also bound for Babylon. They agree to travel together. The stranger is Lobaba, one of the magicians of the Domdaniel, sent to slay Thalaba. While the boy sleeps, Lobaba tries to kill him, but the magic ring protects him. Next day Lobaba invites Thalaba to show him the ring; but, on the point of drawing it off, Thalaba is stung by a wasp in the finger, so that the ring cannot be removed. A sandstorm approaches, and Lobaba appeals to Thalaba to employ the power of the ring to save them. Thalaba indignantly refuses to league himself with the powers of darkness, and Lobaba is carried off in a magic chariot, but the sandstorm engulfs him and he died.

Book V. Thalaba continues his way to the ruins of Babylon. There, he is accosted by a young man, Mohareb, who undertakes to guide Thalaba to the cave of the angels. To charm the guardians of the cave, Mohareb carries a taper, clutched in the dead hand of a murderer, taken from the corpse while it yet hung warm on the gibbet, and also two human hands, yet warm, to propitiate the guardian serpents. These perils passed, the pair enter the cave and stand on the brink of a rushing subterranean torrent. Thalaba calls on the angels to give him the talisman. Mohareb, recognising him for one pure in spirit, accuses Thalaba of hypocrisy in claiming faith to Allah while wearing the ring. Thalaba retorts by throwing the ring into the torrent; and then, closing with Mohareb, succeeds in throwing him after it. The angels become visible to him beyond the abyss, and Thalaba is informed that the talisman is Faith.

Book VI. Emerging from the cave, Thalaba finds an Arab steed/

steed awaiting him. He mounts, and is borne to the mountains. There he is welcomed by an old man who leads him through a seductive valley to a banqueting hall. Here Thalaba refuses wine, forbidden by the Prophet; and when a troop of dancing girls appears, he rushes out of the hall. Thalaba throws himself on the turf, calls up a memory of Oneiza, but is roused by the shrieks of a maiden fleeing from her seducer. Thalaba draws his bow, slays the ravisher, and discovers the maiden to be Oneiza. Oneiza explains how she was torn from her father, who now roams the desert in search of her.

Book VII. Other escape from the mountains being impossible, Thalaba resolves to fight his way out. He seeks out the sorcerer and fells him, when the whole magic frame of the valley is rent, and the two find themselves on the bare hillside. They reach the Sultan, and Thalaba is honoured for his act of destruction. He is now second only to the Sultan, and appeals to Oneiza to marry him. Oneiza reminds him that he has not yet found her father for her. Thalaba overcomes this objection, and they are married; but on the bridal night, Oneiza dies.

Book VIII. At midnight Oneiza rises from her tomb and repeats her nightly charge to Thalaba to consider himself outcast by God. Thalaba is in despair, but Moath recognises the deception, and slays the vampire. The true Oneiza then appears and urges Thalaba to seek the all-knowing Bird of Ages. Thalaba climbs to the hill home of the Bird, and is met by an old woman who persuades him to help her wind silk. He is then bound by her silk, and she calls her sister sorceress. The fettered Thalaba is/

is carried to an island where he finds Mohareb, wearing the robes of royalty.

Book IX. Mohareb consults an oracle and learns that he must die when Thalaba dies. He returns to Thalaba the magic ring, and tries to pervert him with sophistry, in vain. The sorceress Maimuna undoes the charm which led to his capture; and commanding the spirits in the name of God, they escape together.

Book X. The charms that have kept her alive fail, and Maimuna dies. Thalaba journeys to a snowy waste where he meets a daughter of a sorcerer. She is an innocent maiden, guarded by a brazen image. The sorcerer appears, and Thalaba finds himself powerless to kill. He tells him that the book of Fate ordains that either he or the maiden must die. Thalaba refuses to kill the maiden; and the sorcerer, arguing that he thus defies Allah and becomes vulnerable, makes to stab Thalaba; but the maiden rushing between, receives the blow and dies at her father's hand.

Book XI. Thalaba is guided to the Ancient Bird. The Simong directs him where to wash his sins away; and Thalaba is borne on a dog-sledge a great distance. He is carried on the last stage of his journey in a ship guided by a maiden, who instructs him where to perform the ritual ablutions.

Book XII. Having performed his ablutions, Thalaba is taken by his guide to the Domdaniel cave. He releases there the maiden's lover, who had failed in this quest before, and he goes on into the cave. Attacked by all the fiends, he is nevertheless able to seize his father's sword where it hangs circled in flame. He destroys the magician, dies, and is received by Oneiza into eternal bliss.

Taylor/

Taylor wrote to Southey

"'Everywhere magic! The Arabian's heart
Yearn'd after human intercourse."

"Such an exclamation may escape the reader of Thalaba"...[1]
"I do not object to a theo-drama or to an epic poem, where all the actors are gods; but I contend that the marvellous must be confined to physical properties, and that the unmotivated in action, the marvellous in conduct, the extravagant in behaviour, - in a word, the insane, - ceases to be an object of artistic imitation, and always displeases."[2] ..... "The story of Thalaba ... is not very clear to anybody."[2]

Southey replied, "Thalaba shall be severely corrected. Yet am I a dull dog if the story be obscure, and can only say with Coleridge, 'intelligibilia, non intellectum affero'"[3] Elsewhere he wrote, "It must be remembered that the most absolute fatalism is the mainspring of Mohammed's religion, and therefore the principle is always referred to in the poem. ..... Now I will avow myself confident enough to ask you if you know any other poems of equal originality except the Faerie Queene, which I regard almost with a religious love and veneration?"[4]

This self-chosen comparison with the Faerie Queene is interesting. It emphasises an important point; that Southey was not attempting the classical epic form; and it points to Thalaba's weakness/

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1. Mem. W.T., N. I. 372.
2. Op. cit. 1. 389, 443.
3. Op. cit. 1. 446.
4. J.W.W. 1. 215-216.

weakness, which lies in the fact that the principle of absolute fatalism, explaining the hero's calm amid an amorphous conglomeration of magical sand-storms and divine interpolations, is as inadequate in providing a unity for the whole long poem as Spenser's principle of Magnificence. Spencer saw the danger of reproducing his allegory twelve times: Southey with a simpler conception of structure, simply accumulated incidents: the dominance of the supernatural powers deprives these incidents of almost all dramatic value, and the reader begins to suspect that Thalaba's fatalism is chiefly useful to delay the climax, of which the nature is apparent from the start.

The superficial formlessness of both poems provides a comparison which Southey would probably have welcomed. He knew his weakness as a constructor of taut, dramatic narratives, but flattered himself that he could handle isolated incidents with true poetic power. It is quite certain, however, that there is nothing in Thalaba to stand beside the highest imaginative passages of the Faerie Queene. The fault which Taylor refers to, added to this formlessness, amply accounts for the poem's rapid descent into limbo. The personages of the piece want character. The magicians of the Domdaniel are no doubt sufficiently wicked in intention, but their lamentable incapacity to work concrete evil shakes faith in their power, and an ineffective magician is valueless for drama. Southey was so far from endowing his demons with any individuality that they became mere men of straw. Thalaba himself is an even worse offender. The one incident in which he displays any humanity is/

is that in which he persuades Oneiza to marry him; and this is followed so swiftly by the fatal consequence that the dramatic value is seriously impaired. Throughout the rest of the poem, Thalaba is a personification of that rather dull virtue, Justifiable Indignation. All the poet's art is insufficient to raise the struggle to a conflict between the major powers of heaven and hell; and to follow this vaguely righteous and rather priggish young man with pleasure through twelve books of adventures contrived with patent artificiality requires more patience than many possess.

The metre of Thalaba is hardly an encouragement to the reader. Southey deliberately chose an unrhyming irregular stanza, as capable of more variation than any other; and claimed to have imposed upon this form all the subtleties of onomatopoeic suggestion which it would carry. At its best, the Thalaba stanza is melodic and effective: indeed any stanza taken almost at random shows that Southey's claim was not foundationless:-

Over the plain
Away went the steed;
With the dew of the morning his fetlocks were wet,
The foam frothed his limbs in the journey of noon,
Nor stayed he till over the westerly heaven
The shadows of evening had spread.
Then on a sheltered bank
The appointed youth reposed,
And by him laid the gentle courser down.
Again in the grey of morning
Thalaba bounded up;
Over hill, over dale,
Away goes the steed.
Again at eve he stops,
Again the youth alights;
His load discharg'd, his errand done,
The courser then bounded away.

The/

The technical skill of this is remarkable; though the description itself is ordinary. But such metre is unsuited for long narrative. First the triple measures become jarring rather than refreshing; then the ear becomes dulled by too much variation, and all effects are lost. In the quieter passages which necessarily intervene between the incidents, the irregular stanza shows it cannot stay the course: it weakens into mere jerkiness or falls exceedingly flat.

After such denunciation, to point out any beauties in the poem may seem rediculous; but it is certainly not devoid of all good qualities. Without approaching greatness, it has merit. Many of the descriptive passages show keen power of observation, and others a fertile imagination. On its publication, the critics classes Southey with Coleridge and Wordsworth in the new 'school' of poets; and Southey thought there were no poets among whom less resemblance could be found; but this is certainly not the case. Of that type of Romantic writing which found its genesis in Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' and its apotheosis in Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, Thalaba is an example. Southey, too, was a poet who sought an escape from the workaday world, and the marvels of Thalaba have a genuine romantic appeal. The qualities of original accurate and imaginative description and of freedom from poetic diction and the poetic inversions of the earlier age, caught the attention of the reviewers too, and these rank him with his great contemporaries. The language is not uniformly simple; indeed at times it is foolishly pretentious, but it is mainly of the new fashion. Thalaba and its successors indeed paved the way/

way, with their wildly fantastic scenery and colourful imagery for such works as Alastor and Idylls of the King.

The picture is similar and no fuller in Madoc. To summarise its 45 cantos separately, short as they are, would occupy more space than the poem deserves, especially as Thalaba has shewn how lavish Southey could be with extraneous incident. To this synopsis imagination may add freely, for Madoc too was full of undigested detail. The poem is divided into two parts: Madoc in Wales, and Madoc in Aztlan. In the first, Madoc returning from the New World relates his adventures to an audience of relatives and retainers. Having left his kingdom in Wales to be the object of strife and bloodshed among his brothers, Madoc sailed westwards, anticipating Columbus in many of his adventures, and so landed in America. He was invited to aid Queen Erillyab in throwing off the yolk of a conqueror, and in a fierce battle defeated the armies of Yuhidthiton, made peace, and compelled the defeated Indians to accept Christianity. This occupies eight cantos. Another eight describe Madoc's efforts to recruit from among the less fortunate of his tyrant-ridden relatives in Wales, men and women to join him in the establishment of his new kingdom; filled out with a recruiting lay sung at an Eistedfod, and an account of the hero's interference first in a ceremony of excommunication, and then in a midnight disinterment of his father's corpse, which he recovers and resolves to bury in the New World. The second part is much livelier. Madoc's return to Aztlan is triumphant, but his lieutenant Cadwallon soon comes to tell him that the altars of Aztlan are still smoking with human sacrifice; and/

and that a rescued victim, Luncoya, has revealed a plot between the chief priest Helhua and Yudhidthiton to overthrow the invaders. Lincoya is in love with an Aztec maiden who later in the poem is slain for helping Madoc, and when the news reaches him, Lincoya commits suicide. The plot is soon laid bare, and Neolin, a subject of Queen Erullyab but a strong supporter of the old religion, claims that the Snake God requires his wonted sacrifices. The converted priests are vastly impressed. Meantime, the queen's son, Amalhata, has conceived a lustful desire to wed Goervyl, sister of Madoc, and presses his suit although rebuked by his mother. Shortly after Amalhata is made drunk with Welsh mead, and publicly declares himself as against Madoc and the invaders. Ambassadors from Aztlan come to tell Madoc of their intention to return to the heathen ways of their fathers, and war is formally declared. Sacrifices to the Snake God are described. Madoc, breaking in on this ceremony, slays Neolin, the Priest. The serpent's scales repel Madoc's sword; but the monster is killed by penning him with fire in the innermost cave of his dwelling and loosening the crags above, which fall in and crush it. A second deity Tezcalipoca, is invoked with sacred rites to help Aztlan against the invader. An expedition from Aztlan immediately after succeeds in capturing Madoc and his small nephew Hoel. The latter is imprisoned in a cave, but liberated by an Aztec maiden. Meanwhile Madoc fights for life by the stone of Sacrifice, in single combat with the Aztec champions. This is interrupted by the arrival of Cadwallon with a rescue party, so Madoc is bound/

bound and imprisoned. A fierce conflict takes place in the city, during which the women in Madoc's camp beat off an attack by raiders, in which Amalhata is killed. Madoc is secretly liberated by Lincoya's lover, returns to his camp, raises a reserve force, and so in able to relieve Cadwallon. The defeated Aztecs hold a ceremony for their dead, punish the traitor maiden, and hold funeral games. In an interlude certain love passages between the Welsh people of Madoc's camp reach a happy consummation; then after a final battle has been fought and won, the rebellious and defeated men of Aztlan migrate, leaving Madoc in victorious occupation of the land.

This poem, published in 1805 was to keep Southey's fame alive for ever.

He wrote to Taylor, "I build the hope, the confidence, of my own immortality upon Madoc, because, in a story as diversified as that of Thalaba, human characters are well developed, human incidents well arranged; because it will be as new in the epic as this is in the romance, and assert a bolder claim to originality than has been asserted since the voice of Homer awoke its thousand echoes. I expect with some wistfulness your remarks on the second volume: I wish your judgment of the metre, for which thank Dr. Sayers in my name."[1]

Taylor's/

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1. Mem. W.T., N. I, 371, 372.

Taylor's first reception of the poem was enthusiastic. "It approaches closely in rank and character and quality to the Odyssey, and is to sit in the peers with the Aeneid, the Paradise Lost and the Messiah";[1] but the same letter remarks shrewdly, "The manners are hardly mixed enough: almost everybody is a real hero, with very fine feelings, notions and sentiments; and this, whether he is a white or red man, an educated bard or a runaway savage.... Is there not in your ethic drawing... a perpetual tendency to copy a favourite ideal of perfection, of which the absence of selfishness and warm sensibility constitute the contour and colouring?"[2] Southey confessed his 'moral mannerism' - "Thalaba is a male Joan of Arc" he said[3] - but maintained that the characters of Madoc were "those which the circumstances would form." In fact, the personages of the poem are as colourless as in Thalaba, but Madoc the Conqueror is an easier figurehead to recognise than Thalaba the Destroyer, and Madoc moving from victory on to victory is more interesting than Thalaba winging his way hither and thither on the command of disembodied powers. The minor characters, though more or less, equally divided into men and maidens pure confronted with monsters of iniquity include at least a few warrior champions for whom Southey contrived to feel some sympathy in their final defeat and banishment.

Structurally/

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1. Mem. W.T., N. I, 371, 372.
2. Op. cit. II. 81.
3. Op. cit. II. 82.

Structurally, the poem is little better than Thalaba, as even this brief analysis shows. The love entanglements have rather a Hollywood flavour, and Madoc's exploits against the Aztlan champions are more god-like than human, but the choice of a tale of conquest for the main theme involved ipso facto a restriction to more reasonable bounds and set limits to the extravagances of repetition perpetrated in Thalaba. Southey thought it would bear comparison with a Shakespearian Historical play.

But if Madoc is a failure, the reasons are not all so obvious as in the case of Thalaba, and lie partly in the choice of the subject and not wholly in the handling of it. It is not easy to arouse interest in a subject too far divorced from common experience. Southey had the support of historical tradition for his choice of hero, but who beyond himself and Wynn had ever heard of Madoc? Nor does there appear in the poem any other character of whom any one has ever heard to link it with the common cultural background of poetry readers. When to this is added his inability to give any flexibility or humanity to his hero, public neglect of Madoc becomes forgivable. A hero who is always right is always dull.

"Thalaba relates to fancy, Madoc to human character", said Southey, and again, "Madoc himself is of too philosophic a character to be quite fit for poetry; he may be admired and loved, but cannot be sympathised with, because he is never in that state of feeling and passion which excites sympathy. There is/

is this advantage which Thalaba possesses; amid all that bustle of incident, that pantomimic change of scenery, that world of wonders, Thalaba is for ever present, the single figure to whom everything relates; at first, the object of curiosity, then of hope, lastly of pity. The two poems are not subjects of comparison, but it is possible to give these advantages to the hero of a poem as dramatically true in its structure as Madoc, and this I have not done."[1] The battles upon which Southey spent so much labour contain too many descriptions of hand-to-hand conflicts, and fail to give the reader any picture of the tactical disposition of the forces. Never did Southey write anything that presents half so vivid a picture as Scott's description in Marmion of the last stand of the Scottish knights around their king on Flodden field. There are too many superlatives and too much hysteria even in this remarkable passage:

> Merciful God! how horrible is night
> Upon the plain of Aztlan! there the shout
> Of battle, the barbarian yell, the bray
> Of dissonant instruments, the clang of arms,
> The shriek of agony, the groan of death,
> In one wild uproar and continuous din,
> Shake the still air; while, overhead, the Moon,
> Regardless of the stir of this low world,
> Holds on her heavenly way. Still unallay'd
> By slaughter raged the battle, unrelax'd
> By lengthened toil; anger supplying still
> Strength undiminished for the desperate strife.
> And lo! where yonder, on the temple top,
> Blazing aloft, the sacrificial fire
> Scene more accurst and hideous than the war
> Displays to all the vale:

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1. J.W.W. 1. 332.

The strength of <u>Madoc</u> is in the vivid portrayal of Aztec manners and customs, and the vigorous handling of some scenes. Southey anticipated Prescott's <u>Conquest of Mexico</u>, and worked up a mass of highly picturesque material which sheer familiarity if nothing else makes much more interesting today than the supernatural occurrences of <u>Thalaba</u>. Of the vigorous style, this extract describing the death of the Snake God will serve as sample.

From side to side
The monster turns!... where'er he turns, the flame
Flares in his nostrils and his blinking eyes;
Nor aught against the dreaded element
Did that brute force avail, which could have crush'd
Milo's young limbs, or Theban Hercules,
Or old Manoah's mightier son, ere yet
Shorn of his strength. They press him now, and now
Give back, here urging, and here yielding way,
Till right beneath the chasm they centre him.
At once the crags are loosed, and down they fall
Thundering. They fell like thunder, but the crash
Of scale and bone was heard......
But not the rage which now
Clangs all his scales, can from his seat dislodge
The barbed shaft: nor those contortions wild
Nor those convulsive shudderings, nor the throes
Which shake his inmost entrails, as with the air
In suffocating gulps the monster now
Inhales his own life-blood. ....
Madoc seized
That moment, planted in his eye the spear,
Then setting foot upon his neck, drove down
Through bone and brain and throat, and to the earth
Infixed the mortal weapon. Yet once more
The Snake essay'd arise; his dying strength
Fail'd him, nor longer did these mighty folds
Obey the moving impulse, crush'd and scorch'd;
In every ring, through all his mangled length,
The shrinking muscles quivered and collapsed
In death.

Southey's blank verse shows mastery over the technical tricks of varied caesura, enjambement, and inverted stresses. It is rather ponderous/

ponderous; he loads it with archaic terms, and with reminiscences of Shakespeare and the Authorised Version; but for his purpose in Madoc to recreate the atmosphere of a ruined and forgotten civilisation, it is a fit medium.

The Curse of Kehama (1810) was Southey's third exercise in the exhibition of ancient mythologies in English verse, and on his own confession owed something to the Mohammedan legends in poetry of Sir William Jones. The poem was begun in 1801 but laid aside after that until 1806 when the generous offer of Landor already referred to induced Southey - though with no intention of accepting that offer - to resume his composition. He finally completed it in 1809. As the story is no better known than Thalaba or Madoc, the usual summary is here supplied.

PARTS I - IV describe a funeral pyre, and the burning of the living wives with the dead body of Arvalan, the son of Kehama. The spirit of Arvalan demands vengeance through the hands of his father upon Ladurlad, a peasant who slew Arvalan for an assault upon his daughter, Kailyal. Kahama, to satisfy the spirit of his murdered son, drags Ladurlad and Kailyal forward before the pyre. Kailyal clings to the image of a goddess with such tenacity that the tugging of the crowd precipitates both maiden and goddess into the river. Ladurlad however is haled before Kehama, whose vengeance takes the form of a curse:

I charm thy life
From the weapons of strife,
From stone and from wood,
From fire and from flood,
From the serpent's tooth,
And the beasts of blood:
From/

From Sickness I charm thee,
And Time shall not harm thee;
But Earth which is mine,
Its fruits shall deny thee;
And Water shall hear me,
And know thee and fly thee;
And the Winds shall not touch thee
When they pass by thee,
And the dews shall not wet thee,
When they fall nigh thee:
And thou shalt seek Death
To release thee in vain;
Thou shalt live in thy pain
While Kehama shall reign,
With a fire in thy heart,
And a fire in thy brain;
And Sleep shall obey me
And visit thee never,
And the Curse shall be on thee
For ever and ever.

Ladurlad feels the power of this curse when, seeing his daughter floating in the river and rushing to save her, he finds that the waters retreat before him. Though he rescues Kailyal, the burning tortures of the Curse from now afflict him.

PARTS V-VII. tell of Ladurlad's resolve to leave his daughter, that she, apart from him and believed to be dead, may suffer no harm. The spirit of Arvalan takes his chance to adopt bodily form and attempt again to win Kailyal, but he is driven off by Ereenia, one of the Glendoveers or Good Spirits of Indian mythology, who bears Kailyal off to Mount Meru by the course of the Ganges. Here she will be safe till the outcome of Kehama's attempt to gain by magic the powers of the gods of heaven and hell shall be known..

The next parts show Kehama about to fulfil the rites by which he will attain supreme power. He is about to sacrifice a stallion untouched by man, when Ladurlad bursts through the guards/

guards and lays profane hands on the sacrifice. By the terms of Kehama's own curse no one can harm Ladurlad, yet the guards are massacred for not preventing his act of defilement. Ladurlad escaping, is tortured by a sandstorm brought on him by Arvalan, but Ereenia again interferes and carries him off to join Kailyal. The spirit of Kailyal's mother joins them on Mount Meru, where they wait in peace till Kehama shall conquer the Immortals.

In PART XI Arvalan seeks help from Lorrinite, an enchantress of hell who reveals Kailyal's hiding place, and gives Arvalan a dragon car to reach her; but as he drives to Mount Meru, the powers of good overturn the car and Arvalan falls among the frozen regions around the Pole.

PARTS XII-XIV relate how Kehama completes the rites and becomes Lord of Hell, while Ladurlad and Kailyal become wanderers again. Kailyal is seized by a band of Yogees and carried off to become the bride of Jaga-Naut. She is set upon the chariot in the road of which frantic votaries fling their bodies to be crushed, and is then led to the priests chamber when Arvalan reappears. Ereenia also arrives but Lorrinite and Arvalan overpower the Glendoveer. Ereenia is borne away by Lorrinite: Kailyal to escape Arvalan sets fire to the pagoda. Arvalan's bodily form cannot bear fire, but Ladurlad now appearing is able through the curse to rescue his daughter once more.

In PARTS XV-XVI he also rescues Ereenia by walking through the sea and slaying a sea monster set on guard.

The last seven parts tell how Kehama finds his fate is linked with Kailyal's, and on her refusal to join him, he strikes her with/

with leprosy. Ereenia is told by Siva to appeal to Yamen (Judge of the Dead) and he with Ladurlad and Kailyal sail in an enchanted ship across the sea that divides the land of the living from the abode of the dead. Kehama reaches hell at the same time. He has only to drink from a magic cup to win all power. Drinking, he finds that 'as the lips which touch it, even such its quality'. Seeva awards him an immortality of torture in hell. Kailyal drinks to inherit immortality in heaven, united to Ereenia, to dwell there for ever with her mother and Ladurlad.

In the preface to the collected edition of his works (1837-38) Southey said of Kehama, "I soon perceived that the best mode of treating it would be to construct a story altogether mythological," and he continued "It appeared to me, that here neither the tone of morals, nor the strain of poetry, could be pitched too high; that nothing but moral sublimity could compensate for the extravagance of the fictions, and that all the skill I might possess in the art of poetry was required to counterbalance the disadvantage of a mythology with which few readers were likely to be well acquainted, and which would appear monstrous if its deformities were not kept out of sight. I endeavoured, therefore, to combine the utmost richness of versification with the utmost freedom."

It was typical of Southey's illogicality and his Puritanism that he could not conceive of Indian mythology in itself providing the stuff of poetry, but must interweave with the stern impersonality of Brahminism the morality and sentimentality of English romanticism. The blend has produced a string of absurdities with which/

which the only parallel is <u>Thalaba</u>. The motto of the poem, 'Curses are like chickens, they come home to roost', is responsible for the worst contradictions of common-sense; others are simply the result of his effort to spin out the love romance and to introduce as many as possible of the lower deities of the East. There is still no structure, no characterisation, nothing of the real philosophy of Brahma. William Taylor, critical as ever, said "The plan has the very fault of <u>Thalaba</u>, and busies men about what men take no interest in, - the fulfilment of destinies beyond their foresight or control... Mythology should allegorise a moral or a physical cause, and however boldly employed, should never supersede the human effort or natural contingency requisite to produce the same effect."[1] "The plot has not that humanity of interest which the ordinary pursuits and enterprises of men can alone secure."[2] Southey's replies, if any, to these criticisms, have not survived.

On the technical side, the poem is almost equally unsuccessful. To obtain 'richness and freedom' he wrote in a series of loosely strung stanzas of unequal length and irregular rhyming/

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1. Mem. W.T., N. II. 142.
2. Op. cit. II, 351.

rhyming scheme.[1] As in Thalaba, the effect in bulk is tedious, and the formlessness of the narrative is emphasised by the formlessness of the verse. Here and there, however, there are striking descriptions. In the main, Southey neglected to count the streaks of the tulip: he preferred to elaborate fantastic images - with no essential contact with foreign or English mythology - rather as a child delights in colour rather than unattainable form in his first 'pictures'. Southey's poems are splashed with striking descriptions, often chaotic and incredible in detail, seldom integral with the mood of the poem at any given time, but so vivid in their colour that they astonish the reader into emotional receptivity. These passages are really flashing excrescences of rhetoric: they are not lyrical in their inspiration and they do not carry forward the epic: none the less they are the best of Southey. The story in all its convolutions is ground out with mechanical competence/

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1. "In one of the first books which I published a crazy compositor took it into his head to correct the proofs after me; and this he did so assiduously, that it cost me no fewer than sixteen cancels to get rid of the most intolerable of his blunders. One of his principles was, that in printing verse, wherever the lines were so indented that two in succession did not begin in the same perpendicular, there was to be a full stop at the end of the former; and on this principle he punctuated my verses. I discovered it at last in the printing office, upon inquiring how the very faults for which a leaf was cancelled appeared most perseveringly in the reprint. The man then came forward, quite in a fit of madness, told me I should have made a pretty book of it if he had not corrected it for me, and it was as much as the master of the office could do to pacity him."
C.C.S. IV. 100.

competence, great stretches of it being poetically sterile, for Southey has imagination but no power to give definition to his conceptions. Thus Kehama and Thalama sprawl. And while the purple passages of Shakespeare and Milton at once recall their context to the reader, Southey's best excerpts could be interchanged from one book to another without doing very much harm. This passage is from Kehama, introducing the fifth book.

> Evening comes on: arising from the stream,
> Homeward the tall flamingo wings his flight;
> And where he sails athwart the setting beam,
> His scarlet plumage glows with deeper light.
> The watchman, at the wish'd approach of night,
> Gladly forsakes the field, where he all day,
> To scare the winged plunderers from their prey,
> With shout and spling on yonder clay built height,
> Hath borne the sultry ray.
> Hark! at the Go-den Palaces
> The Bramin strikes the hour.
> For leagues and leagues around, the brazen sound
> Rolls through the stillness of departing day,
> Like thunder far away.

The last of Southey's long verse romances was Roderick, the Last of the Goths. Begun in 1809 and finished in 1814, it was later twice honoured by translation into French prose, and once by translation into Dutch verse; the Dutch version brought Southey into touch with Bilderdijk, a Dutch bookseller whose wife had made the translation; both remained afterwards his very good friends. It seems advisable to deal with Roderick here rather than to interrupt the narrative later, when it becomes chronologically proper to refer to it.

Roderick carries on the action of a story whose prelude should tell how the hero recovered the throne of his father Theodoric, King of the Goths, after Theodoric and his brother had been/

been respectively blinded and murdered by the intruder, Witiza. Roderick in revenge blinded Witiza but spared the tyrant's brother. His restoration of the true royal line makes Roderick a national hero, but before the poem opens, he has forfeited this honour by ruling with severity, and apparently so little regard for morality that he violated Florinda, daughter of Count Julian. Julian has therefore turned traitor to the Goths, and introduced the Moors, by whom Roderick is defeated. The poem shows how Roderick repented of his sin, and for the second time became the instrument by whom national honour is restored; the splendour of his actions showing the honesty of his repentance, and the success of his efforts showing that his penance is accepted by heaven.

Defeated in battle, and so changed by his troubles as to be unrecognisable by former friends, Roderick sees a vision of his mother and is inspired to win heaven's forgiveness. Setting out as a hermit, he meets the daughter of a former governor of Auria, whose account of her sufferings at the hands of the Moors make Roderick vow himself to the redemption of Spain. Travelling on to a monastery, he conceals his identity but re- veals his intention, and is advised to seek out Pelayo, his own cousin, now supposed to be first in the true line of Gothic descent. On the way to Pelayo, Roderick meets one of his own former servants, Siverian. The two find Pelayo, and Roderick is able to inspire the prince with something of his own fervour to save Spain. When his offer of service has been accepted by Pelayo/

Pelayo, Roderick feels he has won the peace of repentance.

Florinda now visits Pelayo to tell him that her renegade father Count Julian wishes to bind himself to the rebel side by marrying her against her will to Orpas, brother of the tyrant Witiza. Florinda also meets Roderick in his hermit guise, and confesses herself more guilty than her seducer, thus further lightening the hero's burden of sin.

Roderick, Pelayo and Siverian visit Count Pedro and enlist him against the Moors, largely by the vigour of Roderick's speeches. Pelayo is then declared King. As further proof of atonement, Roderick now meets his mother, is recognised, and receives her blessing.

The renegades assemble in the Moorish camp. Roderick tries to win Count Julian from the Moors, unsuccessfully. The Count however becomes suspect by the Moors, and his life is plotted against. The two forces meet in the vale of Covadonga: Julian is murdered, and in death sends his men over to Roderick's side, the two protagonists mutually forgiving each other. Florinda also recognises Roderick and dies. The defection of Julian's troops turns the tide of battle. Pelayo and Siverian at last recognise Roderick, and accepting the fact, the hero leads the Spanish forces in his own name to a final victory over the Moors. He himself hopes to find death and final reconciliation on the battle field, but in accordance with the tradition, Southey leaves his fate uncertain; death in battle evades Roderick, who finds the 'Shield of Heaven extended over him', and,

Days/

> Days, months, and years, and generations pass'd
> And centuries held their course, before, far off
> Within a hermitage near Viseu's walls
> A humble tomb was found, which bore inscribed
> In ancient characters King Roderick's name.

This is of course a much abridged version of a poem half as long again as Thalaba or Kehama, extending actually to 7,000 lines of blank verse. It is a point in favour of Roderick that it can be so compressed: here there is a straightforward story to tell. It is lengthened however by the recapitulation of historical events prior to Roderick's appearance, elaborated by the introduction of unnecessary characters, spun out by the pseudo-analysis of character in speeches of platitudinous morality, and thickened again by the addition of much irrelevant incident. Still, the main course of the narrative is throughout kept in the reader's remembrance.

Roderick has affinities with Madoc rather than with Thalaba and Kehama. Both are national epics in which the forces of Christianity are pitted against pagans; it is not pretended that either protagonist is representative of a strange religious faith. In Roderick Southey's moral superstructure is more plainly riveted to the face of the narrative, but Roderick is the finer poem because the theme, of a hero who redeems himself and is enabled finally to claim the mercy of heaven, has more of moral struggle and is essentially more dramatic than the theme of Madoc. To be sure, as the story goes on Roderick appears in even higher degree as a man more sinned against than sinning, which/

which is a pity but inevitable with a Southey hero. The author's conviction that the slaughter of pagans is a meritorious Christian action is of course quite in character. Perhaps some of the vigour of the poem may be put down to Southey's identifying Roderick in his struggle against the Moors with the Spanish patriots who as he wrote were struggling to liberate their country from Napoleon.

good

The versification is competent, as in Madoc, with a rhetorical flavour and a striking number of poetical reminiscences, as, 'that lacks discourse of reason', 'more sinned against than sinning', 'Havoc and the Dogs of War and Death', 'Sacaru, Theudemir, Athanagild', 'loosen'd and disjointed the whole frame', 'thou too wert a stricken deer', and others. Some of Southey's pedestrian passages show how thin his poetical vein was, running as they do into iambic prose, employing the vocabulary of the prose writer with no measurable effect of sublimation into intense feeling. Such lines as these are poetaster's work:

> Oblivious there he sate, sentient alone
> Of outward nature. XVII.45

> Those fears
> Diffused their chilling influence. XIV.91

> No guilt he purported but rather meant
> An amplest recompense of life-long love
> For transitory wrong, which fate perverse,
> Thus madly he deceived himself, compelled
> And therefore stern necessity excused. X.348-352.

Even at its best Southey's blank verse shows too plainly the influence of Milton in the repeated use of technical devices, and an effort after Shakespearian fertility of allusion and/

and epithet - Biblical allusion being substituted for Classical; - while there is a distinct dearth of happy simile and metaphor. As elsewhere, it is in the portrayal of scenes that never were on land or sea, in the sheer exuberance of uncontrolled imagination, that Southey's best lines are found; and in less degree, in the description of Spanish scenery actually familiar to him that his quality is raised. For example;

Before them Betis roll'd his glittering stream,
In many a silvery winding traced afar
Amid the ample plain. Behind the walls
And stately piles which crown'd its margin, rich
With olives, and with sunny slope of vines,
And many a lovely hamlet interspersed,
Whose citron bowers were once the abode of peace,
Height above height, receding hills were seen
Imbued with evening hues; and over all
The summits of the dark sierra rose,
Lifting their heads amid the silent sky. V.311-321.

Roderick is a very long poem; the narrative is spread rather thinly over its length to sustain the dramatic interest, and the number of characters and incidents introduced weakens it further. It takes very high quality in the verse to counterbalance such faults. But though Southey's poetry is not great, he has achieved in Roderick something nearer to the epic than either Scott or Byron ever attempted. He aimed higher than either of these, and in failing, doomed himself to neglect; yet perhaps with all his diffuseness and dramatic powerlessness, Southey had a better conception of the potentialities of poetry than his better known contemporaries. He has doomed himself to neglect by falling between epic and romance: no one now will/

will prefer Roderick to Marmion; but by those who take account of aim as well as of achievement, Roderick will always be considered a poem of worth.

Dowden has said, "Southey's larger poetical works are fashioned of two materials, which do not always entirely harmonise. First, material brought from his own moral nature; his admiration of something elevated in the character of man or woman - generosity, gentleness, loyalty, fortitude, faith. And secondly material gathered from abroad; mediaeval pomps of religion and circumstance of war; Arabial marvels, the work of the enchantress and the genii; the wild beauties of adventure of life amid New-world tribes; the monstrous mythology of the Brahman."[1] But this is an over simplification. Southey began in the first place with a mass of antiquarian material 'gathered from abroad'. To make the material plastic, he then introduced a fable. But the fable was not inherent in the materials; and so much out of the way information about odd beliefs, manners, customs, had to be introduced that the fable inevitably, in addition to being extrinsic, became involved and discursive. The opposition of these two elements ruined the structure of the works. A second opposition ruined the artistic unity. The philosophy of the alien religions which he exploited was repugnant to Southey. In fact his interest was really concentrated on the eccentricities of tradition and behaviour resultant upon the holding of certain beliefs, and never in the philosophic attitude behind these modes of expression. Accordingly, his works/

1. Southey by Edward Dowden, E.M.L. Series, 1909.

works ignore the fundamentals of alien religion, and his puppets dance in response not to the stimuli of their supposed beliefs; but, as they are good or evil characters, in accordance with his own conceptions of good and evil. In consequence, there is a fatal inconsistency between the beliefs which characters as Arabs, Mexicans or Brahmins ought to hold, and the beliefs which they are shown by their actions actually to hold. Where there should be fatalism and submission, there is rebellion and free-thinking. Where the eternal warfare of strange gods should affect passive mankind, Southey shows us men at war with their gods, and sustained in this warfare by a faith in the ultimate power of Good as they choose to conceive it, and not as the warfare of their gods reveals it. Behaviour is illogical and anachronistic, and totally opposed to the doctrines of the faiths Southey is trying to exhibit. The doctrinal background is indeed merely a vague and unconvincing restatement of Southey's fixed belief that Good, as he conceived it, is Good, all else Evil, and that in the long run Evil is always vanquished. Finally, on top of this mixture of archaic customs, formless fable, alien faith, and Southeyesque morality, the poet imposes a love story of purely Western sentimentality. The result should be chaos, if there did not somehow emerge another unity from the expression of those beliefs that Southey held sacred: the nobility of struggle against what instinct says is evil, the beauty of love between man and wife and parent and child, and

the/

the certainty that Heaven will recompense us for suffering on this earth.

Thus stated, these ideals suggest a rather pedestrian philosophy of life, yet Southey held them sacrosanct. He never at any time showed any ability to understand complexity of character or any ability to imagine the reactions of men to new experiences. His own life was lived in an atmosphere rather of resignation tinged with optimism for the distant future, than of deeply religious faith, or of spiritual enquiry or rebellion. The strange certainty of what is right and what is wrong, the calm obliviousness to any possible choice of action, the earnest tilting against what turn out to be windmills, and the complete subordination of all their faculties to the task set them which characterise the 'good' people in Southey's works, characterise also the poet. They are the characteristics of abnormal purity or abnormal insensitivity; and perhaps Southey was infected with something of both.

Forgotten now, these poems were never brilliantly successful. Even Roderick is hardly an exception. They crept imperceptibly into successive small editions, but were not popularly acclaimed. Southey's own friends praised them, Jeffrey damned them, literary men read them with some bewilderment. Dowden tells us that "Fox was in the habit of reading aloud after supper to eleven o'clock; but while Madoc was in his/

his hands he read until after midnight." James Hogg wrote to Southey, "I have read Roderick over and over again, and am the more and more convinced that it is the noblest epic of the age. I have had some correspondence and a good deal of conversation with Mr. Jeffrey about it, though he does not agree with me in every particular. He says it is too long, and wants elasticity..... I assured him he had the marrow of the thing to come at as yet, and in that I was joined by Mr. Alison. There was at the same time a Lady M--- joined us at the instant; short as her remark was, it seemed to make more impression on Jeffrey than all our arguments:- "Oh, I do love Southey!" that was all." Younger men such as Macaulay, and Byron liked the works, and Newman and Carlyle praised the high moral tone. It is easy to find fault with them: yet, if they do not set Southey among the great, they win for him a place among the more competent of smaller poets in the great style.

CHAPTER VIII.

EARLY PROSE.

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So far, Robert Southey has been spoken of and criticised chiefly as a writer of poetry, the only exception being the Letters from Spain and Portugal. As a young man, as we have seen, he devoted himself rather to poetry, but after he became Laureate, rather oddly, he became more and more a prose writer. In 1815 he wrote to a friend, "did I consult only my own feelings, it is probable that I should write poetry no more, - not as being contented with what I have done, but as knowing that I can hope to do nothing better . . . . As a historian I shall come nearer my mark." - And from this time his work was predominantly in prose.

When a selection from Southey's commonplace book was printed posthumously, it filled some 3,000 double column pages. This gives some idea of the extraordinary preparations he made for works in progress; and the masses of translation and transcription and paraphrase involved must have given him an early training in economical writing. Thus from 1815 on, it is not easy to trace any development in Southey's style, beyond an increasing difficulty in controlling the masses of material which it had become a habit to collect. They constituted an embarrassment of riches to a man who lacked the power to discriminate between the valuable and the worthless, interesting and uninteresting. Southey had not a logical mind/

mind, and if he was methodical in the arrangement of his working day, he was much the opposite in the arrangement of his materials, as the odd juxtapositions of his narratives and the cumbrous irrelevancies of his longer works will be found to prove.

Before resuming the narrative, it will be well to consider those early prose works of which mention has been made, in a more critical way than was convenient earlier.

The Letters from Spain and Portugal have already been discussed. Letters from England, published as by Don Alvarez Espriella, followed ten years later. The wit of this pen name was a simple inversion, typical of Southey's ever juvenile sense of humour. Having written as an Englishman in Spain, he now proposed to write as a Spaniard in England. "The book will be very amusing," he told his brother confidently, "and promises more profit than any of my former works." In respect of the humour, this anticipation was somewhat sanguine, but the profits carefully elevated by puffs in The Courtier justified his other hope.

Espriella contains accounts of the Quakers, Swedenborgianism, and Joanna Southcott and other omniana, and also a sufficient quantity of diluted guide book . English politics and social conditions are examined, and as Southey at this age could still write on such subjects without losing his temper, which meant noise and verbosity, he is interesting. He expresses much the same point of view as was elaborated in the essays, some of which were written not long after, and given long disquisitions on contested elections, rotten boroughs, and the dreadful conditions of the manufacturing poor. Religion figures prominently: there are lives of Wesley and Whitfield and a history of Methodism which

attacks/

attacks the "predestinarian heresy, at once the most absurd and most blasphemous that ever human presumption has devised." Here the voice of the maturer Southey is heard; but elsewhere the letters are lightened by deliberate exploitation of the Spanish disguise. The ruse is a little childish, and the sophisticated will not be greatly entertained by Southey's little editorial notes, that remind readers of the supposed author's Spanish origins, nor by the rather palpable hints scored by the editor at the Catholic Churchman's expense. Still, the book is readable, and it justified Southey's hopes of profit. It is very pleasant to see ourselves as others see us, when they are seeing with our eyes.

The translations from the Spanish are undoubtedly good work, but they are very little known. The truth is that whereas Malory and Spenser have sent their romances into every literate household, the tales of Amadis and Palmerin are too far divorced from the common background of English literature to be read on their own merits. These works therefore are dead. The *Cid*, on the other hand, is a straightforward military chronicle or romance of the same sort as *Chanson de Roland*; the tale marches, the characters are definite and distinguishable, and it is a matter for real regret that it has shared the fate of its companions. Readers of Corneille will find in Southey's translation a proportioned narrative that can with advantage be compared with the stage hero's day of glory; and admirers of the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* will recognise the genuine oriental atmosphere. *The Cid* owes something to the *chansons de geste* carried into Spain by the troubadours/

troubadours, and that the marvellous tales are grouped around one heroic personage gives the work a unity and coherence lacking in _Palmerin_ and _Amadis_. On its own merits, as well as for its historical importance, Southey's _Cid_ deserves to be better known.

The style of the three translations shows development. In all three Southey deliberately cultivated an artificial style, but _Palmerin_ in particular is greatly overburdened with archaisms badly grafted on to his own packed but flowing paragraphs. Eg.:-

> "This careful prince, having obtained such quietness as the extremity of his pain would permit him, calleth again into question the reckless regard he had of himself, so lightly to leave his lady, and so urgently to forsake his company, which although it happened against his will, he judged they would not accept it so in worth."

In the _Cid_ he strikes a better compromise, and the style is comparable with that of Lang's _Iliad_, except that the Spanish work is unadorned by the epic devices and is, as literature, primitive.

Southey here took his editorial duties seriously, but he made no contributions of any value to the study of the romances. He regarded himself as an unchallenged expert in this field, and wrote in a strain of heavy self-assertion, in spite of which it has since been proved that he was quite wrong about the authorship of _Palmerin_. His prefaces give occasion for more questions than they answer, his discussion of textual transmission problems is muddled, and his comments are mere expressions of personal taste. In a typical note he reproves a French translator of the middle ages for introducing immoral and obscene passages. He/

He regarded the Chronicle of the Cid as history, not romance, and some of his notes parallel the wildest excesses of textual pedantry.

For example, the text tells us:

> "Nine months did the Cid hold Valencia besieged, and at the end of that time it fell into his power. . . . on Thursday the last day of June, in the year of the aera one thousand one hundred and thirty and one."

Southey's footnote reads:

> "Both the Chronicles say aera 1125, i.e. A.D. 1087; but by specifying Thursday, the last day of June, they supply a date for correcting this error. Berganza, 5.24. sec. 299, calculates that the last day of June would fall on a Thursday, in the years 1082, 1093, and 1099: the last is the year of the Cid's death, and Valencia was certainly not taken in the former. If the day be assumed as datum, the result should be adhered to."[1]

Fortunately, most of the end notes are interesting explanations of Spanish customs referred to in the text, which Southey was well qualified to supply; some are more critical, and some few reflect quaintly on the situation in foreign affairs at the time at which he wrote.

Southey wrote to Scott in 1807: "There are passages of a poet's feeling in the Cid, and some of the finest circumstances of chivalry. I expect much credit from this work." It is a pity that he has won so little. Amadis and Palerin are tangled tales, but the Cid is well written and at all times a good story. The value of the original Spanish work in the history of litera- ture/

1. Chronicle of the Cid. 1846 edition. p.241.

literature is high, and this translation deserves a niche.

It is safe to say that if Southey had written none other than these early prose works, he would not be remembered to-day primarily as a prose writer. The travel books were pot-boilers, and served their purpose in adding to his prosperity rather than his reputation; the translations cannot be regarded as original work and two of them are extremely heavy reading. The comparative excellence of Espriella and the Cid does not make them great books.

Critics are fallible. Poetic philosophies and theories of versification rise and wane, and those who best understand the poetry of their day and generation are often least able to appreciate the virtues of a different fashion. Thus we have Dr Johnson's magnificent denigrations of Milton and Gray, and Jeffrey's attacks on the Lakists. As a modern writer[1] has said, "It may be well to enquire, not with Pilate 'What is truth?' but what was felt to be 'truth' and 'explanation' under other conditions" Dr Johnson was a great critic, yet Jeffrey was not; and that he guessed wrongly more often than Johnson was not the cause of his weakness, but the effect. Dr Johnson may be wrong by almost every standard except his own, but that he had his own 'explanation' of 'true' poetry is none the less certain. Jeffrey, on the other hand, judged by political rather than poetical standards; he had a fine nose for smelling out recusancy, but not for scenting poetry.

Robert/

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1. "The Seventeenth Century Background", by Basil Willey, London, 1934.

Robert Southey as a critic showed himself very fallible, and he must be ranked with those critics whose standards were unpoetic. His own vein of poetry was thin; if he ever really appreciated the theories which premised the work of the early Romantics, then he neglected them to experiment with metrical forms of unamenable complexity, and produce cloud-capped epics with the ecclesiastical moral, 'whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' In criticism, he was austerely pietistic: his criterion was morality, and whoever failed to emphasise that with God in his heaven, all's right with the world, was sure of a stern reprimand. At the same time, for Southey liked to have his cake and eat it, any expression of pious resignation or unreasoning faith would be highly commended, for he considered the work of God, and who can make that straight which He hath made crooked?

It is difficult to believe that he ever understood Wordsworth, though he wrote "with the most deliberate exercise of impartial judgment whereof I am capable, I declare my full conviction that posterity will rank him with Milton." He praised the power of the Excursion and described the Immortality Ode as "a dark subject darkly handled." There is scarcely any more direct criticism, and perhaps his verdict was not, in spite of his denial, disconnected with the fact that he lived fifteen miles from Wordsworth and thought him "in every relation of life, and every point of view . . . . a truly exemplary and admirable man."

He/

He did not tire of praising Wordsworth, but of Coleridge's work he said extremely little. Christabel was too good for The Friend, of which the prose was "rambling and inconclusive." The Ancient Mariner, Southey thought "the clumsiest attempt at German Sublimity he had ever seen". Such snippets are all: family relations with Coleridge perhaps soured the critic's temper. Most of his letters to Sir Walter Scott are full of praise for the verse romances, but in an early letter to a friend he complains of mixed language and a want of perspicuousness in the Lay of the Last Minstrel. "I suspect that Scott did not write poetry enough when he was a boy, for he has little command of language ... but I like his poem for it is poetry."

Southey's professional criticism is in two divisions: his contributions to the periodical literature of the day, and his critical introductions to various editions. All his life, the book reviews were Southey's financial mainstay: hackwork of the most exhausting nature. Yet he could write of it, "Not but of all trades it is the least irksome, and most like my favourite pursuits, which it certainly must, in a certain degree at least, assist, as well as, in point of time, retard." When asked to contribute to the new Quarterly Review he gave an outline of his method of working, which accounts to a large extent for the ephemeral fame of these notices:

"I/

"I believe myself to be a good reviewer in my own way, which is that of giving a succinct account of the contents of the book before me, extracting its essence, bringing my own knowledge to bear upon the subject, and, where occasion serves, seasoning it with those opinions which in some degree leaven all my thoughts, words, and actions."[1]

Elsewhere he describes his gentle dealing with the worthless books which continually littered his desk:

"I get the worthless poems of some good natured person whom I know; I am aware of what review phrases go for, and contrive to give that person no pain, and deal out such milk and water praise as will do no harm: to speak of smooth versification and moral tendency etc. etc. will take in some to buy the book, while it serves as an emollient mixture for the patient. I have rarely scratched without giving a plaister for it."

It is not surprising that his reviews should be mainly precis with enormous quotations: his collected criticisms indeed made a reservoir of odd facts and anecdotes to be drawn on in the compilation of his other works. Many of <u>The Doctor's</u> jocosities exist word for word in the <u>Annual Review</u>. "How came they to be in love at last?", asks the author, concerning Dr Dove and his lady; - "the question may be answered by an incident which Mr John Davies relates in his Travels of Four Years and a Half in the United States of America." The diligent seeker will find it reviewed in Vol. I, No. 9, of the <u>Annual</u>.

Southey very rarely ventured a personal criticism, and when he did, it was rarely of any value. More frequently he criticised from a moral standpoint, as witness these vigorous attacks:

"We/

1. C.C.S. II. 250.

"We speak thus of Mr Ritson with more pity than indignation; lamenting that a man of such patient research and scrupulous fidelity should thus disgrace and injure himself; and lamenting also that the heart of any human being should be so inveterately and hopelessly diseased."[1]

"The morals of Massinger are better than those of his contemporaries, though nothing can be more beastly than his language . . . . he felt no predilection for vice; no vicious character is ever his favourite . . . this must be attributed to the excellence of his nature, not to his religion: whoever is acquainted with catholicism and with the catholic poets must be convinced of this."

As often as outraged piety dictated vituperation, Southey's patriarchal benevolence dictated ultra generous praise. Later, he edited Kirke White's Remains, in 1802 he reviewed Clifton Grove. Kirke White was a feeble poetaster, yet Southey wrote "this is a most interesting poem. We know of no production of so young a poet that can be compared with it, and when we say this, we remember Cowley and Pope and Chatterton." This is absurd, but his tongue was in his cheek, and his head above his heart when he wrote of Falconer's Shipwreck (new edition): "his poetical merit also is considerable, but the editor's admiration goes too far when he calls Falconer a second Homer."

There is enough here to show that Southey had no standards of criticism, no critical aloofness, nor any insight to appreciate the philosophic content or individuality of a work of art. His books lack these qualities equally.

He was still 'birdlimed with this vile reviewing' when he edited/

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1. Annual Review. Southey's article on Ritson's Ancient English Romances. 1802.

edited Specimens of the later English poets. The 'preliminary notices' are only this and nothing more, and quite negligible. A similar volume appeared in 1831. The British Poets surveys our poetry from Chaucer to Lovelace, generously including the entire Faerie Queene and Polyolbion. It is one of these double columned omnibus volumes which the nineteenth century loved to produce. With what hope of reaching the end our grandfathers embarked on such a course of reading, one would be glad to know. Southey however was only in a minor degree responsible for the publication of this tome: his publishers were the only editors, and his contribution is limited to some two columns on each of the score of poets represented in its thousand pages. In these forty columns he expresses such characteristic opinions as that "it should be remembered that Chaucer expresses contrition for such of his works as 'sounen unto sin,' and prays Christ of his mercy to forgive him for the guilt he had incurred thereby:" that Donne's son "would have shown himself a more worthy son of such a father, if he had destroyed a considerable part of these poems;" and that "than Daniel there is no poet in any language of whom it may be inferred with more certainty, from his writings, that he was an amiable and wise and good man."

Omniana is a commonplace book. How Southey and Coleridge persuaded their publisher to print this collection of odds and ends is a mystery, yet as Southey says of another work, "it contained so many odd things that an idle after-dinner hour was not ill bestowed upon its perusal." Among some 250 paragraphs varying in/

in length from 15 words to 2,000, many of them translations and quotations, quite the oddest shows us Southey in the impossible role of textual critic.

Kirke White's <u>Remains</u> is a book with a history. White published <u>Clifton Grove</u> in the hope of paying his expenses at Cambridge. In spite of a piteous covering letter, the <u>Monthly Review</u> found it possible to praise only the author's "exertions and laudable efforts to excel" - a just, if discouraging verdict. Southey learned the circumstances, waxed violently indignant against the 'cruelty' of the reviewer, and exercised himself to help White. After his death through overwork at Cambridge, Southey volunteered to examine White's papers and publish the best: a selection duly appeared, and watered by Southey's tears in a preface of incredible sentimentality, flourished abundantly. "Even though the poems had been bad," says the preface, "a good man would not have said so; he would have avoided censure if he had found it impossible to bestow praise. But that the reader may perceive the wicked injustice, as well as the cruelty, of his reviewal, a few specimens . . . shall be inserted in this place:"

<u>TO THE HERB ROSEMARY.</u>

Come, funeral flow'r! who lov'st to dwell
With the pale corpse in lonely tomb
And throw across the desert gloom
A sweet decaying smell.

The edition was fathered in a spirit of benevolence tinged with/

with indignation that makes Southey look very foolish. White was of course one of the worst of the 'grave' school of poetasters.

Attempts in Verse by John Jones, with lives of the uneducated poets by Southey appended, appeared under very similar circumstances. John Jones wanted money, and came to Southey, poems in hand. The Laureate saw them through the press and fairly established the old coachman in comfort; an act of generosity very typical of Southey the man, but reflecting little credit on his critical genius. The book was designed and must have been recognised as a decent method of levying contributions on behalf of Jones; it was unnecessary for Southey to exert himself to defend the verses. Probably he added the lives to give the reader better value for his contribution.

In these brief biographies, Southey went sadly astray. Determined to praise the worthy men who raised themselves from poverty, he quite lost sight of the ludicrous side - the laughable rhymes and the extraordinary careers of the rhymesters. He waxed indignant at Swift, who mocked Stephen Duck in a flimsy couplet:

> "Thrice happy Duck, employed in threshing stubble!
> Thy toil is lessen'd, and thy profits double.

Southey would have encouraged every penny poet with the honour of print and binding, if his orals were but above reproach. He quotes with discreet lack of comment this fragment of a good hearty piece of song writing by John Frederick Bryant:

Our/

Our lips the circling tankard greeting
Our pipes with fragrance charge the air;
Success we drink, and every draught repeating
Or damn the churl or toast the fair.

- and goes on to say "the last specimen which I shall produce is a prayer; it is the best of his productions," - and to quote fifty lines of Bryant's best and dullest copy-book couplets.

Quite the most fascinating of Southey's uneducated poets was Taylor the Water Poet. Mr Eric Linklater has recently brought him to our notice again[1] in a strain of mock heroic which is apt and entertaining, but Southey traces Taylor's ragged road to Scotland with the unsmiling care of a Baedecker, and concludes with the precise judgment that 'there is nothing of John Taylor's which deserves preservation for its intrinsic merit alone, but in the collection of his pieces which I have perused, there is a great deal to illustrate the manners of his age.[2]

Taylor's wagering adventures, largely described in his own prose and verse, occupy a creditable amount of space in Southey's book, and perhaps his eccentricities delighted the editor more than the pedantic style of the book invites us to believe.

Stephen Duck, worst of the didactic poets, is quited at pernicious length by his biographer, who does not fail to remind us of the author's own testimony, that "they have nothing in them to give modesty a blush."[3] Southey's criticisms in such cases were/

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1. "Ben Johnson and King James", by Eric Linklater, London, 1928.
2. Attempts in Verse by John Jones; 1831 edition, p.86.
3. Do. p.107.

were made with the heart rather than the head, but it is regrettable that the cheerful plaudits deserved by Bryant and Taylor should be withheld in order to favour with maudlin tributes some writers whose highest achievement was the expression in stilted English of a genteel melancholy or an orthodox piety, neither likely to be sincere. It is more to his credit that he noticed the process of degeneration which took place in the poetry of these men, when material prosperity robbed their verses of their early freshness, and made the poets mere copyists of the prevailing style of fashionable verse. It is perhaps curious that when Stephen Duck complains of his 'want of Education,' Southey fails to notice that this need not affect the quality of his poetry. He seems rather to regard a fondness for verse composition as evidence of a moral and intellectual stature that deserves its reward in this world in the shape of publishers' royalties.

Some of the by-products of the book are interesting:

> "He is not one of those writers for whom a palingenesia can be expected from their dust. Yet we have lately seen the whole of Herrick's poems republished, a coarse-minded and beastly writer, whose dunghill, when the few flowers that grew therein, had been transplanted, ought never to have been disturbed."1

Heads will be shaken over this verdict, and also over the next:

> "The distinction between the language of high and low life could not be broadly marked, till our language was fully formed, in the Elizabethan age; then the mother tongue of the lower classes ceased to be the language of composition; that of the peasantry was antiquated, that of the inferior citizens had become vulgar. It was not necessary that a poet should be learned in Greek and Latin, but it was that he should speak the language of polished society." 2

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1. Do. p.85. 2. Do. p.13.

The little volume is genuinely interesting and often amusing, but it is so in spite of Southey and not because of him. He never appreciated the magnificent comedy of Taylor's vagabond strolling; and that sense of superiority which causes laughter seems never to have been excited in Southey even by reading the most uncouth rhymes of his pious proteges. It is far from being the book it might be, but deserves attention from those who know only the highways of literature.

Southey also shepherded an edition of Malory's Morte d'Arthur through the press. There was "nothing to be done in it but to introduce it with a preface, and accompany it with notes. No time needed to be lost." The edition is, he claims, a scrupulously exact reprint of Caxton's edition. The preface named and epitomised Malory's probable sources for his compilation, and Southey cannot be blamed for his ignorance of the full story of the Arthurian legend from Geoffrey of Monmouth through Wace and Layamon to Malory. The notes are few and uninformative.

Southey was one of those critics who know what they like, and what he liked was religious orthodoxy. This given, he was a kindly critic, and not like those who forget the steps by which they have climbed when they reach the summit. He had a fair judgment of good passages and was not unsound on the technical minutiae of versification, but he had no depth of feeling and no appreciation of the intellectual content of poetry. In fact, he suspected the philosophers and deep thinkers/

thinkers among poets, perhaps not unjustly, of attempting to subvert orthodox and established religion, so damned them out of hand. Such an attitude is common enough and easy enough to understand, but in a professional critic, is quite unforgivable. Southey would have tied poetry to the apron strings of bourgeois morality. By nature and training he was unfitted for criticism, and unless with Rymer, he has no title to be ranked among English critics.

CHAPTER IX.

LITERARY ASSOCIATIONS.

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The eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries bring to many readers a muddled picture of progress, symbolised in steam-engines, spinning machinery, mills, potteries, and blast furnaces. Or it suggests the press-gang and the crimp, pestilence-stricken jails, child labour and pauper revolts. But it was in the heart of Cumberland, and untroubled except by second-hand accounts of these events and changes, that Robert Southey spent most of his life. The friends to whom he wrote and who sought his companionship lived almost as remote as himself from the industrial hurly-burly. One result is that his letters tell us much more about Robert Southey than about anything else: worse letters by lesser men may have more historical interest and importance. In the same way his relations with contemporary writers seem to have most importance for the student of Southey's life: an incident in Byron's career is a major event in Southey's, a simple kindness by Scott has surprising consequences in Cumberland. And these relationships reflect very faithfully the self portrait given in Southey's writings. We have seen how Coleridge fell out of favour with Southey as his behaviour degenerated: the same self-righteousness and respect for orthodox behaviour made Southey respect Scott, and made him quarrel with Byron and Shelley.

The/

The most interesting of the incidents in which Scott and Southey figure together have already been detailed; the laureate election and the foundation of the Quarterly Review: but there is a third chapter, arising from the appointment of Scott's son-in-law Lockhart to the editorship of the Quarterly, which is told exclusively in unpublished letters between Southey and Scott and Lockhart, now in the Scottish National Library, from which I quote extensively.

These letters may be best introduced by some further remarks on Southey's Quarterly connection. We have seen that as time went on he wrote more and more on political subjects, and that his views swung from extreme Toryism to extreme liberalism, so that he could be almost as much a nuisance to the Quarterly as to its opponents. Not only because he repeatedly introduced praise of Washington into his articles (and as often had it struck out) but because of eccentricities such as his insistance on the advantage of undertaking public works to relieve the poor, and his constant advocacy of universal state-aided education. Such passages were not often printed; but though Southey complained of the mutilation of his articles, the editor was generous to him, and often wrote to John Murray about the excellence of his writings. Gifford resigned in 1824 however, and Robert Southey's welcome to John Taylor Coleridge was probably the warmer because of a hope that the new editor would be more amenable to control. This is suggested in the very interesting letter/

letter to Sir Walter Scott dated from Keswick on 7th October 1824, from which the following extract is taken.

> You mention Gifford. I left him in February last With the mournful impression that I had seen him for the last time. He will, I suspect, hold the reins of the Quarterly till they drop from his hands. As long ago as when he first communicated to me his inability to continue the management, and his difficulty in finding a successor, I named both to him and Murray a person whom they both knew and who had every qualification for the office - John Coleridge - a nephew of S.T.C's. Were they to search these kingdoms, they could not find a man better qualified: he is an excellent scholar, thoroughly bred at Eton and Oxford; his talents they have tried and known; a man of sound judgment, great discretion, excellent opinion, and high principles; and what is of some importance, a lawyer by profession. The matter has been repeatedly all but settled with him, and yet it is not settled, nor likely to be so. The reasons I take to be these:- a natural unwillingness in Gifford formally to resign even a part in a management which he can no longer direct;- a notion as natural in Murray that he may get the business done at a cheaper rate, and be in great measure his own manager:- an apprehension on the part of both that the/

the journal in John Coleridge's hands would take its bias in some degree from me, for I am considered by Murray as too bigoted, and by Gifford as too liberal;- the certainty, alike unwelcome to both, that no articles would be admitted which could have no other effect than to wound the feelings and injure the fortunes of an obnoxious author;- that there would be none of that injustice and cruelty (for example) which was shown towards Keats;- and lastly an overruling influence at the Admiralty.[1]

John Coleridge however had ambitions which reached beyond Albemarle Street. He ultimately became the Rt. Hon. J.T. Coleridge, a judge of the King's Bench; and even while he was Murray's editor, he found increasing practice as a lawyer on the Western Circuit, so that a successor had to be found. Southey seems to have thought Coleridge was ill-treated, but this view cannot be substantiated. The successor chosen was Sir Walter Scott's son-in-law, J.G. Lockhart, who took over the Quarterly in 1826.

Sir Walter Scott had no hand in directing this choice, but when it was made, he set about strengthening his son-in-law's position by letters to his friends. Lockhart was far from persona grata among the supporters of the 'Q.R.', both on account/

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1. i.e. Croker.

account of the heavy satire of his early articles in Blackwood, and the stigma that rested on him after his unfortunate challenge to a duel with John Scott and Christie the author of Hypocrisy Unveiled, who did not come forward, though he had attacked Lockhart in print. Southey as an old friend of Sir Walter's was approached, and replied with this letter.

Keswick. 25th Nov. 1825.

Dear Scott,

I have not heard anything yet from Murray concerning the change in the Q. Review. This does not surprise me, for he must needs wish that I should rather hear it from any person than himself. It was not till Friday the 18th. of this month (this day week) that any intimation of his intentions was made to John Coleridge. Then it was done in such a manner, and followed by such apologies, that they have parted friends, in the common meaning of the phrase. On the score of delicacy indeed Murray's conduct seems to have been of a piece to all parties, throughout the transaction. - Dismissing this part of the subject (upon which I feel much more than John Coleridge as having been the means of bringing him into a situation which has exposed him to most unhandsome treatment) I will speak of the Review itself and of its new Editor, with relation to the change.

Even if I were not the last man in the world to visit upon/

upon any one the errors of his youth, the relationship in which Mr Lockhart stands to you would not only induce me to wish him well, but would be to me a sufficient recommendation. For it was not with mere talents, however great, that you could have been satisfied, when you entrusted your daughter's happiness to his keeping. Sins of the pen bring with them their own punishment. I have committed enough of them myself to know this. And a man is the better for his sins, when they teach him to judge charitably and think kindly of others. The new Editor however will have all his own enemies, and all those of the Journal upon him. But there are persons who are neither enemies to him nor to the Journal, who feel that it risks something in passing into his hands. One of these persons expresses himself thus in a letter which I have this day received. "I have learnt with real concern that the Q. is to be no longer under the direction of Mr. J.C. Of the abilities of the new editor everyone is aware. But there are circumstances in the history of his life, and there is a tone and character in his writings, which in my judgment must greatly diminish the weight of a publication which has been hitherto considered as the standard of good feeling in the nation. Some ten or fifteen years since Mr L. might well appear at the helm where so many tried men are embarked. But will these men continue under him? For myself, I should most/

most certainly consider the engagements I had made with Mr C. as completely at an end, if I knew that you intended to withdraw."

Now my dear Scott, I can answer this by saying (what I have always said) that in the unhappy affair alluded to, the man who fell was the aggressor, and deserved his fate - as far as one whom no provocation could induce to give or accept a challenge may venture to express himself. I can remove other objections also by stating as far as may be repeated what you have said to me. But this is not all. The friend who says this has written without knowing (what, I believe, has been made no secret of) that the new Editor is also to edit a Newspaper for Murray. Will there not arise a doubt whether this other employment (of all employments the most harassing) will leave him time and spirits for the business of the Review? Is it not placing him upon lower ground than the Editor of the Review ought to occupy? With all the advantages attached to such a situation - with all the influences which (for the curse of these kingdoms) the newspaper possesses - with all the necessity that public men feel, or think they feel, for courting popularity, there is a feeling among them that any one so connected with a daily paper is an unsafe person. I have had opportunities of knowing that this feeling exists. Regard for you may counteract it in some quarters/

quarters. But there are men of high character and station connected with the Review who will be alive to this consideration.

The letter from which I have given you an extract was written also without any knowledge of the manner in which John Coleridge had been put out. He does not resent it himself, because in the first place no man living has a better regulated mind, and secondly because he feels it a deliverance. The rapid progress which he is making in his profession made the additional employment too laborious for him, and his prospects are such that he could hardly have carried it on more than another year. How easily then had there been any management (to say nothing of delicacy) on Murray's part, might the matter have been so brought about as that Mr Lockhart should have appeared to succeed and not to oust him. What J. Coleridge does not resent for himself, it is very probable that his friends may resent for him. And they are such persons that were they to pass over to the British Critic, the Review would have a very different kind of rivalry to encounter than that of the Edinburgh or the Westminster. Your son-in-law will carry with him abundant talents, enough I dare say to make a display at the outset; but a weight of character like that which may be withdrawn, he cannot impart.

I put myself out of the question in all this. Murray probably/

probably thinks that I am bound by necessity to his review, and may be transferred with it like a serf who is attached to the soil. Therein he is mistaken. It is true that reputation has not brought wealth with it in my case, and that I am, without any prospect of ever ceasing to be while I live, the slave of the desk. But I am not his slave, and could snap his bonds like green withes, for I am not yet short of my strength. I am only an author in his way of thinking, and he is only a bookseller in mine, and we deal with each other accordingly. This matter however does not rest merely between him and me.

I do not overvalue my services in the Q.R. On the other hand I am perfectly aware they might be dispensed with at any time, - except on such an occasion as this. Up the hill it would never have got if I had not been in the shafts, - of this I have a full acknowledgment under the hand of Johannes de Moravia himself, who has been carried up the hill with it. The same strength and the same hearty good will are not required for it when it is upon smooth ground. But were I to withdraw from it just at this time, the very persons who are always endeavouring to depreciate me in public opinion would magnify my importance for the purpose of injuring the Journal and its new Editor. Hurt I am, and I have reason to be so, at the manner in which the change has been effected. The fault/

fault however is not yours; and I should not easily forgive myself if this feeling were to make me act an unfriendly part in a case where you are so nearly concerned, - and not you alone, but your daughter whom I remember at Ashestiel, when she was called Madam French, a little creature, just on foot, - who when I saw her again was in the first bloom of her youth - and who, I hope, will live to remember me as one of her father's friends, long after we shall be where the course of years is carrying us.

God bless you my dear Sir Walter,

Yrs.very truly,

Robert Southey.

This long letter, with all its professions of friendship, shows rather an uncordial attitude to Lockhart, which is echoed in the printed letters of the time, and is scarcely improved on in Southey's first letter to the new editor.

Keswick, 11th December, 1825.

Dear Sir,

It is fitting that I should reply to your letter from Penrith, were it only to repeat to yourself, what was said thro' Sir Walter Scott, that you will find me a willing and ready assistant in your new undertaking. In its progress, I trust, we shall become better acquainted.

I have taken the Life and Revelations of Sieur Nativite in/

in hand, and you shall have the first portion of it by the end of this month. It is so compleat an example of Romish priestcraft, and proves so entirely that that villainous craft is now what it always has been, that I hope and trust the exposure may produce a wholesome impression at this time.

The task which you have undertaken is not always an agreeable one. All persons are not aware how much must necessarily be allowed to the judgment and conveniences of an Editor. On this score you will have no difficulties with me. I only request that when you find it necessary to curtail a paper of mine, you will do me the favour of sending me the proofs in their original state. . . . .

It is one of the sins of the Q.R. not to have spoken out upon the Catholic question. Gifford was too much connected with the Amancipators, and Coleridge had done little more than make up his mind that this was not the time for Emancipation.

Farewell Sir,

and believe me yrs. very truly,

Robert Southey.

Two points in this letter are of interest. The first relates to the curtailments which Southey admitted might sometimes be required. It is pleasant to note that Lockhart appears scrupulously to have attended to Southey's request, for though it is repeated at intervals, the fourth letter in this series begins on a note of thanks - I thank you for attending to my request concerning a set of the proofs - a similar observation appears in a letter of/

of April 1828 - I thank you for the Bill, and for the proofs, - and have certainly neither cause, nor disposition, to complain of the trifling curtailments. - and almost another year later he writes:

> You shall have my next paper as soon as possible. Pray send me the proofs of the last: the historical matter which you have struck out may be made use of elsewhere, and I should be sorry to lose it. Strike out always what you will, - so you send me a set of the proofs.

Southey does not seem to have felt Lockhart's hand so heavy as Gifford's.

The other interesting reference in the first letter, concerns the Review attitude to the proposed Catholic emancipation. On this point Southey was rabid. Scott had warned Lockhart that in his political judgment Southey was 'nothing better than a wild bull', and in no political matter is the description so well merited as in regard to emancipation. Southey made it the text of his first review for Lockhart, possibly as a test piece, accompanying the manuscript with this note:

> Keswick, 28th. December, 1825.
>
> Dear Sir,
>
> You have herewith the first part of an exposure which will not be unseasonable at this time. The remainder will follow in ten days.

and writing again, a month later, he says:

I/

I am glad you think this exposure may be of some use. Well timed it is likely to be, if some of those persons who take most part in the discussion, on the right side, are not deceived in their expectation that the question is to be brought forward.

Finding that Lockhart did not criticise him for being 'too bigoted', Southey spilt a good deal of his anti-Catholicism into his letters to the editor. On 16th April 1826 he wrote:

The R. Catholics are at present the advanced guard of the Church's enemies; the Puritans are the main body: and the great mischief which the former may do, is that of opening a way for the latter: just as the Puritans of the Rebellion opened a way for them.

A letter of July 1827 relates more properly to Southey's financial problems:

You will not think it strange that having been left without the slightest communication concerning the Q.R. for nearly six months, I began to apprehend there was an intention of making me feel that my services were no longer required.

It was in the middle of January that you sent me half the proofs of my last paper. The paper was written under a belief that the Quarterly had decidedly taken its ground upon the Catholic question: indeed it is professedly in part a reply to a pamphlet which had attacked the Review upon that question. Had it appeared in the Spring number, you/

you would have received the paper on Emigration for the next; but after three months, hearing nothing from you or Mr Murray, and thinking it not impossible because of the political changes which were then taking place, that it might be adjourned <u>sine die</u> as well as <u>sans ceremonie</u>, I employed the time which would otherwise have been allotted to the emigration subject upon an article for the Foreign Quarterly. Writing for the Q.R. to help out the means of a modest expenditure, it is not a matter of indifference to me whether the article which I provide be made use of at the expected time, or laid aside till another quarter; and if it be laid aside for an indefinite time, the only motive which induces me to write for a journal, ceases to exist. Emolument enters not into my thoughts when I am employed upon works upon which my reputation will hereafter rest; but in the exercise of my pen for temporary purposes, I can neither afford to waste my labour, nor to wait for its wages. It is your <u>wish</u>, you say, to retain my last paper, and make use of it afterwards. Let me be assured that it will be used in the number after your next, and that in future my communications shall not be deferred: after the frank statement which has just been made you will perceive the fitness and the necessity of my saying that this is the <u>condition</u> upon which they are to be continued.

I quote here two letters which are almost entirely political, and may be parallelled in the printed correspondence, but are interesting/

interesting as showing how his letters to Lockhart stretched out to resemble those to more intimate friends.

Keswick, 24th August, 1830.

My dear Sir,

I send you the first part of Dymond, and a few pages upon the Talkee-talkee N. Testament; the latter are in a spirit which can offend nobody.

If the third and fourth volumes of Robespierre's Memoirs are published (as I conclude they are by this time) I shall be glad to have them; because with the aid of Bronarroti's book they would form a seasonable subject just now. I am not one of these persons who think this new French Revolution will stop at its present stage. The Orleans faction of this generation may have as little reason to rejoice as that of the last: in itself it must be weaker than the Royalist and republican parties, - perhaps than the Napoleonists; and certainly it stands upon worse ground than either.

If the republicans succeed we shall have a war, and very probably the new King may think that the best way of preventing this success and securing himself upon that throne which was the object, and is now the reward of his father's crimes, is to engage the nation in a scheme of conquest, for which Italy, Bavaria, and the Prussian dominion on this side of the Rhine, offer sufficient/

sufficient temptation. But France will not find more partizans in those countries now than it did formerly, and the continental powers understand their own strength. England was never so well prepared for a contest, as to the condition of her armies, - and war, by putting the stagnant wealth of the country in motion, would remove most of the present distresses, whatever the after consequences might be.

Charles X having been wholly in the right, managed to put himself wholly in the wrong. He knew his danger, but miscalculated his strength, and therefore struck the blow instead of waiting for it. We have only to keep in the right, and let the aggression come manifestly from France: the national spirit will then take a right direction, and we shall beat them again.

Yrs. very truly,

Robert Southey.

Keswick, 13th September, 1830.

My dear Sir,

The Talkee-talkee proofs came today: the remainder of Oberlin I suppose will soon follow, and I shall have finished Dymond by the time the first part reaches me.

I have a good many notes about the Netherlands, and shall be in no danger of compromising you in any way either upon Foreign or Domestic politics.

Perhaps/

Perhaps there never was a time in which it was so impossible to forsee what changes would take place in administration, or what hybrid mixtures would be produced by the dissolution of parties. A very short time must throw light upon this, for the Regency question will form men into parties which if they have no common principle, will at least have some common object. For my own part, tho' heartily disapproving of what the Duke and Peel have done in betraying us, and breaking the staff of their own strength, I do not wish to see them displaced; and would rather the Tories should rally round them, than see these ministers driven into an alliance with the Whigs, or than that the Tories should form an unnatural coalition. As long as it can be done without the sacrifice of principle, my maxim is the old English one that the government, as being the government, ought to be supported.

By 1834, Southey knew his books had made him independent of the Quarterly, but in 1831 and 1832, the Review sales had fallen off and Southey was asked to accept lower rates of payment. This he refused to do, nevertheless during these years payments "became so uncertain as to inconvenience him considerably." He had always lived currently on future payments and never knew how he stood, boasting that money meant nothing to him beyond supplying his needs in the state in which he lived. But he came to earth in a panic over the Quarterly's threat to that state. The irritation in the following letter may charitably be attributed to alarm.

Keswick, 14th November, 1831.

My dear Sir,

You may suppose that the contents of your letter have in no small degree surprised me. A diminution of this kind ought to have been announced as soon as its necessity was apprehended; not delayed till it was to act retrospectively for <u>three</u> numbers: for I must observe that no payment has been yet made for the article upon Buonarroti. Perhaps indeed there may be a mistake upon your part, supposing that it had been settled for, one of the checks may be for that, and that for Lord Edward postponed.

Be assured that I always give Murray credit for the generosity which there is in his nature, and I complain only because a timely communication on his part might have spared me difficulties which it will require much exertion to meet.

This complaint is followed immediately by a discussion of the <u>Quarterly's</u> prospects; and then finishes in a familiar vein:

The general business will recover whenever things resume a settled course. That the Quarterly will is not so certain. No doubt the diminution of its sale may be in part accounted for by the change of opinion that so many of the former supporters have found it convenient to profess. It would seem like an evil conscience to the whole race of Rats, and they of course will have discontinued it. But the weekly and monthly journals will always continue to interfere with its/

its sale, by forestalling it in the market. Whether you have short articles or long ones can have no possible effect in this competition - the Quarterly must keep its character for ability and for learning; and if it does this, tho' it may never attain to its former sale, Murray's ship will always be safe while he has that sheet anchor by which to ride.

That the 'diminution' in the Quarterly articles referred to, directed Southey's energy into other channels, is shown by these extracts.

Keswick, 10th December, 1831.

In my last note to you I promised a short paper upon Mary Colling's fables, for the next number. Hitherto, I have let the Q.R. take place of all other engagements, considering that from long connection it had the first claim. But having other engagements at an equal rate of payment to those, a reduction in its payments must of necessity make me appropriate the time which is devoted to the business of my ways and means. Only that I might not seem to have withdrawn from the Journal, I should occasionally send a short paper. This I stated to Murray,- and he (with something not worth explaining in the account) made up in reply, the usual sum. From this it might be inferred that that rate is to be continued, but this must be clearly understood.

Keswick, 25th February, 1832.

I had nearly finished this note without adverting to the beginning of yours. Murray did write to me when he promised/

promised you that he would, and that matter is settled, - but the unsettlement made it necessary for me to enter into engagements which will often employ me when I should otherwise have been working for the Q.R. I am sorry for this, but it is neither my fault nor yours, and I am sure it would not have been Murray's if he had not been straitened at the time.

Closely related to these extracts, is a letter which shows that even accountants sometimes nod. Knowing what we do of Southey's finances, there is something of minor tragedy in this story of a cheque which was overpaid in error! It will be noted that Southey is hoping in this letter to become independent of Murray through Longmans.

Keswick, 16th September, 1832.

My dear Sir,

I am sorry you should have been troubled about a misunderstanding which ought not to have arisen. ....

Had 50£ been sent to me for the paper on Mary Colling, I should have been (and with good reason) perfectly satisfied. But when 100£ came specially for that paper, I of course concluded that Murray - tho' most handsomely because unexpectedly - had taken that occasion of showing that he was as little sparing of money as I have ever shown myself of length and labour. But such a mistake having been made once before, a circumstance of the same sort/

sort ought not to have occurred a second time. I care for money only as I want it; otherwise no man can possibly care less for it. But as four fifths of my expenditure must be derived from the inkstand, defalcations and delays can bring with them so much inconvenience that it will be a relief to me when my arrangements with the Row make my concerns in Albemarle Street (as they will do easily in the ensuing spring) a secondary consideration.

Finally, on this subject, it is interesting to note that the release which he anticipated from review work was in some degree achieved, for he says to Lockhart in December 1833, in sending his MS., It is long since you have seen my handwriting in the shape of an article for the Q.R.

As the series proceeds, Southey's letters to Lockhart become longer, and faintly more personal. His references to Sir Walter Scott are curiously few, and by their absence perhaps hint at the absence of a real intimacy between Southey and Lockhart. Among those that exist, here is an odd letter of condolence dated 4th May, 1831.

Your account of Sir Walter distresses me more than these dark times and the storm which is raging round me at this time, tho' just at safe distance. God's mercy will bring us thro' this as it has thro' other dangers, if those who know their duty continue to do it manfully, and in that trust. Anything that depresses Sir/

> Sir Walter's spirits must be injurious to him, anything that agitates him, more so. But we may hope that there is yet a long and pleasant evening to come for him. I have known two cases of severe apoplexy: the first was so severe that not the slightest expectation of recovery was entertained, yet the subject, who could not have been under 50 at that time, recovered perfectly, and is after an interval of more than ten years, a hale man still. The Bishop of Limerick's is the other case: a person more disposed to apoplexy I never saw, and his first stroke was a dreadful one; but he has recovered from a second to such a degree that he is capable of intellectual exertion, and likely to continue a most useful, tho' no longer an active member of society.

The letter goes on to discuss literature and politics. It is hard to believe that Southey was so deeply affected after all. Another reference to Scott's danger is in this postscript to a letter of February 1832:

> Remember me most tenderly to Sir Walter, when you write, and tell him if he goes to Florence to look for Landor there: there is nothing in Italy, or elsewhere, more worth seeing.

The last reference of all comes at the end of a long discussion of projected _Quarterly_ articles

> My heart has often ached at thinking of you and Mrs Lockhart. The tragedy I hope has now closed. You have/

have indeed been tried in the burning fiery furnace. God grant you present support and relief and peace and happiness hereafter.

16th September, 1832.

The relationship with Lord Byron, which was far less intimate but far more amusing, became important when in 1820 King George III died; and Southey commemorated the event with his Vision of Judgment, published the following year. The long suppressed animosity between him and Byron then burst into a flame.

The first shot in this ten years' guerilla war was fired by Lord Byron. Brougham, in the Edinburgh Review had severely punished Byron's Hours of Idleness[1], and Byron, fortified by three bottles of claret, immediately set about making his own review, carrying the war into enemy country, and attacking the vested interest of established poetical reputation without distinguishing between Whig and Tory. In this outburst, Southey was not worse treated than Scott or Wordsworth, or many of the 'smaller fry who swarm in shoals', but he took his poetry so seriously, and had such a vast opinion of his own talent, that he must have resented Byron's gibes.

> With eagle pinion soaring to the skies,
> Behold the ballad-monger Southey rise!
> To him let Camoens, Milton, Tasso yield,
> Whose annual strains, like armies, take the field.
> First in the ranks see Joan of Arc advance,
> The/

1. Among other witticisms, it may be worth while to recall, "There is a good deal also about his maternal ancestors, in a poem on Lachin y Gair, a mountain where he spent part of his youth, and might have learnt that pibroch is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle."

The scourge of England and the boast of France!
Though burnt by wicked Bedford for a witch,
Behold her statue placed in glory's niche;
Her fetters burst, and just released from prison,
A virgin phoenix from her ashes arisen.
Next see tremendous Thalaba come on,
Arabia's monstrous, wild and wondrous son;
Domdaniel's dread destroyer, who o'erthrew
More mad magicians than the world e'er knew.
Immortal hero! all thy foes o'ercome,
For ever reign - the rival of Tom Thumb!
Since startled metre fled before thy face,
Well wert thou deem'd the last of all thy race!
Well might triumphant genii bear thee hence,
Illustrious conqueror of common sense!
Now, last and greatest, Madoc spreads his sails,
Cacique in Mexico, and prince in Wales;
Tells us strange tales, as other travellers do,
More old than Mandeville's, and not so true.
Oh, Southey! Southey! cease thy varied song!
A bard may chant too often and too long:
As thou art strong in verse, in mercy, spare!
A fourth, alas, were more than we could bear.
But if in spite of all the world can say,
Thou still wilt versewards plod thy weary way;
If still in Berkely ballads most uncivil,
Thou wilt devote old women to the devil,[1]
The babe unborn thy dread intent may rue:
"God help thee," Southey, and thy readers too.

Apart however from careless remarks to his friends about "Lord Byron's lampoon" Southey made no move.

It was not until 1813 that the two poets actually met, at the house of Lord Holland in London, when Southey was in the Capital capturing the laurel. There were several meetings here, and Byron's praise of Southey's appearance, already quoted, was written after the first. The comment continued, "he certainly is a prepossessing person to look on, and a man of talent, and all that, and - there is his eulogy!"[2] The epics that 'crammed the creaking shelves' still weighed heavily against Southey in Byron's estimation, and only a month after this meeting he wrote, "The north south and west/

1. Referring to 'The Old Woman of Berkley' an early ballad of R.S.
2. Moore's Byron. Letter of 27.9.1813.

west have all been exhausted; but from the east we have nothing but Southey's unsaleables, - and these he has contrived to spoil by adopting only their most outrageous fictions.[1] There was something for the other side of the scale however, as Byron admitted before the year was out. "Southey I have not seen much of. His appearance is Epic; and he is the only existing entire man of letters. All the others have some private pursuit annexed to their authorship. His manners are mild, but not those of a man of the world, and his talents of the first order. His prose is perfect. Of his poetry there are various opinions: there is, perhaps, too much of it for the present generation; - posterity will probably select. He has passages equal to anything. At present he has a party, but no public - except for his prose writings. The Life of Nelson is beautiful."[2] And in 1815 he said, with Roderick in mind, "Nobody but Southey has done anything worth a slice of bookseller's pudding, and he has not luck enough to be found out in doing a good thing." He called Roderick "the first poem of its time."[3]

Southey was equally willing to give Byron his due, and wrote in 1814, "Thank you for Lord Byron's Ode:[4] there is in it, as in all his poems, great life, spirit, and originality, though the meaning is not always brought out with sufficient perspicuity. The last time I saw him he asked me if I did not think Bonaparte/

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1. Moore. Letter of 28.7.1813.
2. Moore. Letter of 22.11.1813.
3. Moore. Letter of 10.1.1815.
4. Ode to Napoleon Bonaparte.

Bonaparte a great man in his villany. I told him, no, - that he was a mean-minded villain. And Lord Byron has now been brought to the same opinion."[1]

Whatever good opinions Byron may have had of Southey's work, and whatever willingness he may have had to keep up the appearances of friendship, gossip made him forget. During Southey's continental tour in 1817, he and his friends[2] paid a visit to Chamonix. In the visitors' book at Montanvert they found a Greek verse in Shelley's writing, in which he declared himself an atheist with the added comment, 'Fool!' also in Greek. Southey's horror may be imagined. He copied the verse and commented on it; he may be supposed to have spoken of it to his friends, and the story may have gathered circumstance. By 1818, Byron had heard that an elaborate scandal, to the effect that he and Shelley "had formed a league of incest with two sisters", was current in England, and that Southey and Coleridge were its originators. Byron preferred to manufacture his own scandals, and had not Southey's gift for enjoying a contemptuous superiority to abuse, and, as the matter would not bear direct reference, chose a different ground of attack. Without further enquiry into the origin of the rumour, he took up the <u>Wat Tyler</u> episode, and wrote a mock dedication of the first cantos of <u>Don Juan</u>, addressed to Southey. There was a reference to Wordsworth, and there were five stanzas attacking Castlereagh, who had "spread his infamy like a plague from Ireland to Italy, and made his name an execration in all languages"[3], but the point of the insult was in the dedication of

1. C.C.S. IV. 72-73.
2. Mr Senhouse and Mr Nash, the artist.
3. Letter to Murray, 8.5.20 quoted by E.H. Coleridge in his edition of Byron's Works.

of an openly gross and sensual work to the man who above all others had advertised the purity of his verse and his private life. <u>Don Juan</u> actually appeared in 1819 without the dedication, but these verses had been publicly read, passed round and copied, and were widely known. "Wynn has told me of Lord Byron's dedication to me." said Southey, "I have no intention at present of noticing it, if it sees the light; but if it should sufficiently provoke me, you may be assured that I will treat him with due severity, as he deserves to be treated, and lay him open, in a live dissection." Suppressed in 1819 with Lord Byron's reluctant consent, the verses appeared in all posthumous editions.

Bob Southey! You're a poet - Poet-laureate,
  And representative of all the race;
Although 'tis true that you turned out a Tory at
  Last, - yours has lately been a common case;
And now, my Epic Renegade! what are ye at?
  With all the Lakers, in and out of place?
A nest of tuneful blackbirds, to my eye
Like "four and twenty Blackbirds in a pye;

"Which pye being opened they began to sing,"
  (This old song and new simile holds good),
"A dainty dish to set before the King,"
  Or Regent, who admires such kind of food;-
And Coleridge, too, has lately taken wing,
  But like a hawk encumbered with his hood,-
Explaining Metaphysics to the nation -
I wish he would explain his explanation.

You, Bob! are rather insolent, you know,
  At being disappointed in your wish
To supersede all warblers here below,
  And be the only Blackbird in the dish;
And then you overstrain yourself, or so,
  And tumble downward like the flying fish
Gasping on deck, because you soar too high, Bob,
And fall for lack of moisture, quite a-dry, Bob!

Meantime/

Meantime, Sir Laureate, I proceed to dedicate,
In honest simple verse, this song to you.
And, if in flattering strains I do not predicate,
'T is that I still retain my "buff and blue;"
My politics as yet are all to educate:
Apostasy's so fashionable, too,
To keep one creed's a task grown quite Herculean;
Is it not so, my Tory, ultra-Julian? [1]

When Don Juan itself appeared, it was not sufficient to provoke Southey. "I have not seen more of Don Juan than some extracts in a country paper, where my own name is coupled with a rhyme which I thought would never be used by any person but myself when kissing one of my own children in infancy, and talking nonsence to it.[2] Lord Byron attacked me when he ran amuck as a satirist; he found it convenient to express himself sorry for that satire, and to have such of the persons told to whom he had assailed in it as he was likely to fall in with in society; myself among the number. I met him three or four times on courteous terms, and saw enough of him to feel that he was rather to be shunned than sought. Attack me as he will, I shall not go out of my course to break a spear with him; but if it comes in my way to give him a passing touch, it will be one that will leave a scar." But he had not forgiven Byron either his loose morality or his published and unpublished attacks/

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1. I allude not to our friend Landor's hero, the traitor Count Julian, but to Gibbon's hero, vulgarly yclept "the Apostate." (Byron's note.)

2. C.C.S. IV. 352. The stanza referred to runs:-
Thou shalt believe in Milton, Dryden, Pope;
Thou shalt not set up Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey;
Because the first is crazed beyond all hope,
The second drunk, the third so quaint and mouthy:
With Crabbe it may be difficult to cope,
And Campbell's Hippocrene is somewhat droughty:
Thou shalt not steal from Samuel Rodgers, nor
Commit - flirtation with the muse of Moore.
(Don Juan, Canto I, Stanza ccv.)

attacks.

The opportunity of a 'passing touch' came with the publication in 1821, of his Vision of Judgment; and here a digression must be made to describe the poem.

It was dedicated in foolishly extravagant terms to King George IV. "To whom," says Southey, "could an experiment, which, perhaps, may be considered hereafter as of some importance in English Poetry, be so fitly inscribed, as to the Royal and munificent Patron of science, art, and literature?" and he goes on, "We owe much to the House of Brunswick; but to none of that illustrious House more than to Your Majesty, under whose government the military renown of Great Britain has been carried to the highest point of glory. ... The same perfect integrity has been manifested in the whole administration of public affairs. More has been done than was ever before attempted, for mitigating the evils incident to our stage of society; for imbuing the rising race with those sound principles of religion on which the welfare of states has its only secure foundation; and for opening new regions to the redundant enterprize and industry of the people." The experiment referred to was in writing English hexameters. The verses are thoroughly competent workmanship, though rather burdened with heavy polysyllables; and when the Scriptures provide the language, achieve a grave nobility.

They are met where Change is not known, nor Sorrow, nor Parting,
Death is subdued, and the Grave, which conquers all, hath been conquered.

Then was the region clear; the arrowy flashes which redden'd
Through the foul thick throng, like sheeted argentry floating
Now o'er the blue serene, diffused an innocuous splendour,
In the infinite dying away.

Above competence, the poem never rises; and even good lines do not make a good poem, when, as in this case, the narrative is essentially ludicrous.

The Vision of Judgment is divided into twelve parts, each of approximately fifty lines. It describes the poet's falling into a trance while he gazes over Derwentwater on the day of the King's death, and his awakening in a low subterranean chamber ranged round with coffins and lit by an unearthly radiance. Celestial music is heard, and the poet translated to the Heavens. Here the late King appears, bows in adoration, and is welcomed by his late minister Percival[1], who gives news of the Peace of Paris and Napoleon's exile. He suggests it is a pity that King George did not see all this, but the King says, No, the joy of this news is as an earnest of the joys of Heaven. He then enquires about the state of England, and is told that unhappily a fierce and restless spirit of revolt is widespread. At this point the scene dilates and the Celestial City appears on a hilltop. An angel at the gates calls the souls of the dead to come and hear judgment on the soul of King George. The Almighty descends, hidden in a cloud; and the nine orders of angels range themselves opposite the cohorts of the damned. A trumpet signals the approach of Satan with his advocates. John Wilkes and Junius; but before the innocent king, both stand speechless, and Satan hurls them back into Hell. The damned spirits are driven after them by thunders and lightnings. Advocates on the other side are then heard: Washington testifies to the king's uprightness/

1. Shot in the House of Commons, 1813. Southey was a friend of his and regarded his death as a martyrdom.

uprightness: and the King replies suitably, to the effect that they two were peace loving, and the war was forced on them by others for their own ends. The King then enters the City, and, drinking from the Well of Life, puts on incorruptibility. Successive groups of saints now welcome him to Everlasting Bliss. First come the martyr kings: William III, Charles I, Elizabeth, the Black Prince, Edward I, Richard I, and King Alfred. Then the Elder Worthies: Bede, Roger Bacon, Wucliff, Chaucer, Cranmer, Cecil[1], Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton ('of passion now as of blindness, Healed, and no longer here to Kings and to Hierarchs hostile'!) Marlborough, Newton, and Berkely - 'enjoying where all things are what they seem'! The third group is of Worthies of the Georgian Age: Wolfe, the seaman who fell on the shores of Owhyhee[2], Handel and Reynolds, Hogarth, Wesley, Judge Lord Mansfield, Burke, Warren Hastings, Cowper and Nelson. They are followed by soldiers and sailors who fought under Wellington and Nelson, by Davy, Haydon, Allston, Chatterton, Russel, Bampfylde, and Kirke White.

> Was I deceived by desire, or, Henry indeed did thy spirit
> Know me, and meet my look, and smile like a friend at the meeting?

Finally the King's family welcome the husband and father. In the excitement of the moment, the poet stoops to the fountain that he too may enter into eternal life; and the vision fades.

The poem had a poor, and even then a mixed reception. Some were shocked by the apotheosis, some doubtful of the hexameters. Southey's/

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1. Southey's favourite historian.
2. For whom R.S. raised a subscription.

Southey's own friends approved, and King George IV sent word to him "that he had read the Vision of Judgment twice and was well pleased with it;" and told his brother Dr Henry Southey[1] "at the drawing room, that (the author) had sent him a very beautiful poem, which he had read with great pleasure;" but it won little other praise. It might have fared no worse than other works if Southey had not seen fit to use his introduction, ostensibly a history and defence of hexameters, for an attack on Byron. No names were mentioned, and he told Wynn, "What I have written proceeded from a sense of duty, not from any personal resentment: if any personal feeling existed it was a latent apprehension that some undeserved censure might attach to me for the scandalous silence of the Quarterly Review concerning Don Juan." Earlier, he had said "Lord Byron's Beppo implied the profligacy of the writer, and lastly, his Don Juan is a foul blot on the literature of his country, an act of high treason on English poetry." There is no need to dispute Southey's conviction that he wrote on the impulse of pure morality; but he was not human if behind that conviction there lay no rationalised feelings of indignation at Byron's dedication and other small jibes.

The preface in which the attack appeared opened with an elementary lesson in prosody, in the course of which Southey explained that his hexameters were built up on six main stresses with a variable number of unaccented syllables. He "presented the English hexameter, not as anything better than our established metres, but/

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1. Dr H.H. Southey (1783-1865) M.D. Edinburgh, Appntd. Physician in Ordinary to George IV in 1823. Gresham Professor of Medicine, 1834, D.C.L. Oxford, 1847.

but as something different," admitting that blank verse was in many respects the best. Then he digressed.

"I am well aware that the public are peculiarly intolerant of such innovations, not less so than the populace are of any foreign fashion, whether of foppery or convenience. Would that this literary intolerance were under the influence of a saner judgment, and regarded the morals more than the manner of a composition - the spirit rather than the form! Would that it were directed against those monstrous combinations of horrors and mockery, lewdness and impiety, with which English poetry has, in our days, first been polluted!" For fifty years the purity of English poetry was its distinguishing feature. "It is now no longer so; and woe to those by whom the offence cometh! The greater the talents of the offender, the greater is his guilt, and the more enduring will be his shame." Those who encouraged such writings, shared the guilt. "The publication of a lascivious book is one of the worst offences which can be committed against the well-being of society. It is a sin, to the consequences of which no limits can be assigned, and those consequences no after repentance in the writer can counteract. Whatever remorse of conscience he may feel when his hour comes (and come it must!) will be of no avail. The poignancy of a death-bed repentance cannot cancel one copy of the thousands which are sent abroad; and as long as it continues to be read, so long is he the pander of posterity; and so long is he heaping up guilt upon his soul in perpetual accumulation." Those remarks applied even to writers who thought only to introduce a little harmless sensuality, and infinitely/

infinitely more to those who published bawdry with deliberate purpose. "Men of diseased hearts and depraved imaginations, who, forming a system of opinions to suit their own unhappy course of conduct, have rebelled against the holiest ordinances of human society, and hating that revealed religion which, with all their efforts and bravadoes, they are unable entirely to disbelieve, labour to make others as miserable as themselves, by infecting them with a moral virus that eats into the soul! The school which they have set up may properly be called the Satanic School, for though their productions breathe the spirit of Belial in their lascivious parts, and the spirit of Moloch in those loathsome images of atrocities and horrors which they delight to represent, they are more especially characterised by a Satanic spirit of pride and audacious impiety, which still betrays the wretched feeling of hopelessness wherewith it is allied." The evil too, was political as well as moral; for immorality of a people brings ruin on a government. "Let the rulers of the State look to this in time!"

The preface then concluded with short paragraphs on Sidney's and Stanihurst's and Southey's friend Taylor's attempts to write hexameters.

The name of Byron was not mentioned, and for once Southey had not said much too much. Too elaborately he had written, for there are bombastic extravagances even in the excerpts quoted; but for Southey the paragraphs were exceptionally succinct and pointed; and the "Satanic School' was a really brilliant coinage. He expressed with real pith and pungency what very many readers of the time felt needed saying. Even Lord Jeffrey, while maliciously/

maliciously and quite wrongly imputing envy to Southey, rebuking the "base and bigoted, venting their petty malice in silly nicknames", did not hesitate to say that Byron "under some strange misapprehension of the truth and the duty of proclaiming it," had "exerted all the powers of his powerful mind to convince his readers, directly and indirectly, that all ennobling pursuits and disinterested virtues are mere deceits and illusions, hollow and despicable mockeries for the most part, and at best but laborious follies" and that his writings had "a tendency to destroy all belief in the reality of virtue, and to make all enthusiasm and constancy of affection ridiculous."[1] The right thing had been said at the right time.

Byron was furious. He replied to Southey in an appendix to the Two Foscari in December 1821, but evaded the main issue. Taking over the easy and offensive term of renegade, and with reference to Wat Tyler, he challenged Southey's accuracy in the last and least important paragraph on the danger of immoral writings to the State. One point he made, which Southey should have thought more upon: "It is the fashion to attribute everything to the French Revolution, and the French Revolution to everything but its real cause. That cause is obvious. The Government exacted too much, and the people could neither give nor bear more. Without this, the encyclopaedists might have written their fingers off without the occurrence of a single alteration." After this, Byron scored a hit against Southey's 'death-bed repentance/

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1. Quoted by C.C.S. in the Life and Correspondence.

repentance' and continued; "I am not ignorant of Mr Southey's calumnies on a different occasion, knowing them to be such, which he scattered abroad on his return from Switzerland, against me and others. They have done him no good in this world; and if his creed be the right one, they will do him less in the next. What his 'death-bed' may be, it is not my province to predicate; let him settle it with his Maker, as I must do with mine."

Southey wasted no time in returning to the attack. A long letter was published in the Courier in January 1822. He disposed of the charge of spreading calumnies against Byron with a direct denial, expressed with a very caustic humour. "If I had been told in that country that Lord Byron had turned Turk, or monk of La Trappe, - that he had furnished a harem, or endowed a hospital, I might have thought the report, whichever it had been, possible, and repeated it accordingly, passing it, as it had been taken, in the small change of conversation, for no more than it was worth. In this manner I might have spoken of him as of Baron Gerambe, the Green Man, the Indian Jugglers, or any other figurante of the time being. There was no reason for any particular delicacy on my part in speaking of his lordship; and, indeed, I should have thought anything which might be reported of him would have injured his character as little as the story which so greatly annoyed Lord Keeper Guilford, - that he had ridden a rhinocerous. He may ride a rhinocerous, and though every one would stare, no one would wonder. But making no inquiry concerning him when I was abroad, because I felt no curiosity, I heard/

I heard nothing, and had nothing to repeat. When I spoke of wonders to my friends and acquaintances on my return, it was of the flying-tree at Alpnach, and the eleven thousand virgins at Cologne, - not of Lord Byron. I sought for no staler subject than St. Ursula." And the wider charge was as easily met:- "With regard to the others, whom his lordship accuses me of calumniating, I suppose he alludes to a party of his friends, whose names I found written in the album at Mont Anvert, with an avowal of atheism annexed, in Greek, and an indignant comment, in the same language, underneath it. Those names, with that avowal and the comment, I transcribed in my note-book, and spoke of the circumstance on my return. If I had published it, the gentleman in question would not have thought himself slandered by having that recorded of him which he has so often recorded of himself." Then Southey pointed out that the charges that he had brought against 'blasphemous and lascivious books' and 'public pandars' had not been met at all. Finally, and in a tone of heightened indignation, he dealt with Byron's jibe, 'scribbler of all work'. "I will tell Lord Byron what I have <u>not</u> scribbled, what kind of work I have <u>not</u> done:- I have never published libels on my friends and acquaintances, expressed my sorrow for these libels, and celled them in during a mood of better mind, and then reissued them when the evil spirit, which for a time had been cast out, had returned and taken possession, with seven others more wicked than himself. I have never abused the power, of which every author is in some degree possessed, to wound the character of a man or the heart of a woman. I have never sent into the world/

world a book to which I did not dare affix my name, or which I feared to claim in a court of justice, if it were pirated by a knavish bookseller. I have never manufactured furniture for the brothel. None of these things have I done; none of the foul work by which literature is perverted to the injury of mankind. My hands are clean! There is no damned spot upon them! - no taint, which all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten!"

This was carrying the war into the enemy's country with a vengeance, and even in this paragraph Southey kept his temper and escaped that hysteria which ruined his purpler passages. At this point the honours rested with Southey.

That Byron could find no good answer was shown by his next step; itself a confession of weakness. "I have got Southey's pretended reply . . What remains to be done is to call him out."[1] A challenge to a duel was accordingly sent, with a short note, by Douglas Kinnaird, who had the sense not to deliver it. What Southey might have replied is indicated in an undated paper printed among his letters[2], which may properly refer to another matter.

Sir, - I have the honour of acknowledging the receipt of your letter, and do myself the pleasure of replying to it without delay.

In affairs of this kind the partners ought to meet upon equal terms. But to establish the equality between you and me, there are three things which must be previously done, and then a fourth also becomes necessary, before I can meet you in the field/

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1. Moore's Byron. Letter dated 6.2.1822.
2. J.W.W. Printed as for 1837, but belongs to before birth of C.C.S. in 1819.

field.

First, - you must marry and have four children; please to be particular in having them all girls.

Secondly, - you must prove that the greater part of the provision which you make for them, depends upon your life, and you must be under a bond of £4000, not to be hanged, not to commit suicide, and not to be killed in a duel, - which are the conditions upon which I have effected an insurance of my own life, for the benefit of my wife and daughters.

Thirdly, - I must tell three direct falsehoods, concerning you, upon the hustings, or in some other not less public assembly; and I shall neither be able to do this, nor to meet you afterwards in the manner you propose, unless you can perform the fourth thing, - which is -

That you must convert me from the Christian religion.

Till all this be accomplished, our dispute must be carried on without the use of any more iron than is necessary for blackening our ink and mending our pens; or of any more lead than enters into the composition of the Edinburgh Review. I have the honour to transcribe myself,

Sir,

Yours with all proper consideration,

Robert Southey.

The dispute was carried on in print and paper. Southey's letter to the Courier had finished with a 'word of advice' to Byron: "When he attacks me again, let it be in rhyme. For one who has so little command of himself, it will be a great advantage that his temper should be obliged to keep tune." And to this Byron's reply/

reply was his Vision of Judgment.

No summary of this great parody is offered, but the reader should recall that Southey himself is brought before the seat of judgment, that he expresses himself as very willing to read his works to the assembly of angels - being the better pleased because none will listen to him below - and that his readings disperse the whole company, saved and damned; while in the last confusion,

> King George slipped into heaven for one;
> And when the tumult dwindled to a calm,
> I left him practising the hundredth psalm.

Some of the best verses include:

> The varlet was not an ill-favoured knave;
> A good deal like a vulture in the face,
> With a hook nose and a hawk's eye, - which gave
> A smart and sharper looking sort of grace
> To his whole aspect, which, though rather grave,
> Was by no means as ugly as his case;
> But that indeed was hopeless as can be,
> Quite a poetic felony "de se."
>
> He had written praises of a regicide;
> He had written praises of all kings whatever;
> He had written for republics far and wide,
> And then against them bitterer than ever;
> For pantisocracy he once had cried
> Aloud, a scheme less moral than 'twas clever;
> Then grew a hearty anti-jacobin -
> Had turned his coat - and would have turned his skin.
>
> He had sung against all battles, and again
> In their high praise and glory; he had call'd
> Reviewing 'the ungentle craft', and then
> Become as base a critic as e'er crawled -
> Fed, paid, and pamper'd by the very men
> By whom his muse and morals had been maul'd:
> He had written much blank verse, and blanker prose,
> And more of both than anybody knows.

He/

He ceased, and drew forth an MS.; and no
   Persuasion on the part of devils, or saints,
Or angels, now could stop the torrent; so
   He read the first three lines of the contents;
And at the fourth, the whole spiritual show
   Had vanished, with variety of scents,
Ambrosial and sulphureous, as they sprang,
Like lightning, off from his "melodious twang."

Those grand heroics acted as a spell;
   The angels stopp'd their ears and plied their pinions;
The devils ran howling, deafen'd, down to hell;
   The ghosts fled, gibbering, for their own dominions -
(For 'tis not yet decided where they dwell,
   And I leave every man to his opinions);
Michael took refuge in his trump - but lo!
His teeth were set on edge, he could not blow!

With this magnificent comic poem, Byron won the match, and whatever serious thoughts the onlookers may have pondered were dissolved in laughter. The Vision was however heralded by a preface, in which it appears clearly that Byron had taken the quarrel to heart in a very much more personal way than Southey, and no serious critic will contend that on the real point at issue, Byron presented the better case. He took up a hint in the Courier letter, that the motive for his own anger was hurt pride rather than hurt reputation, and, harking back again to Wat Tyler asked with what conscience Southey dared call the attention of the laws to the publications of others. "I say nothing of the cowardice of such a proceeding; its meanness speaks for itself; but I wish to touch upon the motive, which is neither more nor less than that Mr S. has been laughed at a little in some recent publications, as he was of yore in the Anti-Jacobin, by his present patrons. Hence all this "skimble scamble stuff' about Satanic, and so forth. However, it is worthy of him - "qualis ab incepto".

This/

This was at best a tu quoque, and only a half truth.

Southey never replied to Byron again, but there is a footnote to the affair. On Byron's death in 1824, Southey wrote, "I am sorry Lord Byron is dead, because some harm will arise from his death, and none was to be apprehended while he was living; for all the mischief which he was capable of doing he had done. ... We shall now hear his praises from all quarters. I dare say he will be held up as a martyr to the cause of liberty, as having sacrificed his life by his exertions on behalf of the Greeks. Upon this score the liberals will beatify him; and even the better part of the public will for some time think it becoming in them to write those evil deeds of his in water, which he himself has written in something more durable than brass. I am sorry for his death therefore, because it comes in aid of a pernicious reputation which was stinking in the snuff. With regard to the thought that he has been cut off in his sins, mine is a charitable creed, and the more charitable it is the likelier it is to be true. God is merciful."[1] And then in 1824 Medwin's edition of Byron's correspondence appeared, and the old scandals were raked up again. Byron was reported to have said of a review in the Quarterly, dealing with Leigh Hunt's poems, that it was typical of Southey in that it vilified and scattered insinuations against Byron and Shelley. Southey wrote a last letter to the Courier, saying that he agreed with the article, but had not written it. "The charge of scattering dark and devilish insinuations is one which, if Lord Byron were living, I would throw back/

1. C.C.S. V. 179.

back in his teeth. Me he had assailed without the slightest provocation, and with that unmanliness, too, which was peculiar to him; and in this course he might have gone on without giving me the slightest uneasiness, or calling forth one animadversion in reply. When I came forward to attack his lordship, it was upon public, not upon private grounds. ... It was because Lord Byron had brought a stigma upon English literature that I accused him; because he had perverted great talents to the worst purposes; because he had set up for pandar-general to the youth of Great Britain as long as his writings should endure; because he had committed a high crime and misdemeanour against society, by sending forth a work in which mockery was mingled with horrors, filth with impiety, profligacy with sedition and slander. For these offences I came forward to arraign him. The accusation was not made darkly, it was not insinuated, nor was it advanced under cover of a review. I attacked him openly in my own name, and only not by his, because he had not then publicly avowed the flagitious production by which he will be remembered for lasting infamy. He replied in a manner altogether worthy of himself and his cause."[1]

This is the same story, with something less of dignity and more of spleen, and a false prophecy for good measure. It comes as an anti-climax to the brilliant interchange which gave us a memorable epithet and an enduring poem.

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1. C.C.S. V. 359, 360.

Southey's quarrel with Shelley belongs to the year 1820. He had been away from home, and had hardly got back to his children when he found himself called upon to reply to a charge from Pisa of attacking Shelley in a Quarterly criticism which he had never written. His actual acquaintance with Shelley dated back to 1812, when the younger poet had called at Greta Hall on his way south from Edinburgh and talked with a great deal of zeal of his plans for the reformation of the world. Southey wrote then, "Here is a man in Keswick, who acts upon me as my own ghost would do. He is just what I was in 1794 ... I tell him that all the difference between us is that he is nineteen and I am thirty-seven."[1] Shelley may have appreciated Southey's sympathy, for he remembered him four years later, sending Southey a copy of Alastor, with a note that recalled their meeting and continued, "regarding you with admiration as a poet, and with respect as a man, I send you, as an intimation of these sentiments, my first serious attempt to interest the best feelings of the human heart, believing that you have so much general charity as to forget, like me, how widely in moral and political opinions we disagree, and to attribute that difference to better motives than the multitude are disposed to allege as the cause of dissent from their institutions."[2] But in 1820, though still professing to recall their meeting with pleasure, Shelley wrote with more punctilious courtesy to enquire whether, as some of his friends persisted in affirming, Southey was/

1. C.C.S. III. 326.

2. C.B.-R.S. Appendix.

was the author of a review in the Quarterly dealing with the Revolt of Islam. The article, "except in reference to the possibility of its having been written by Southey" was "not worth a moment's attention," but a lengthy comment was provided. "That an unprincipled hireling, in default of what to answer in a published composition, should, without provocation, insult over the domestic calamities of a writer of the adverse party - to which perhaps their victim dares scarcely advert in thought - that he should make those calamities the theme of the foulest and falsest slander - that all this should be done by a calumniator without a name - with the cowardice, no less than the malignity, of an assassin - is too common a piece of charity among Christians (Christ would have taught them better), too common a violation of what is due from man to man among the pretended friends of social order, to have drawn one remark from me, but I would have you observe the arts practised by that party for which you have ababdoned the cause to which your early writings were devoted. ... I regret to say that I shall consider your neglecting to answer this letter a substantiation of the fact which it is intended to settle - and therefore I shall assuredly hear from you."[1]

To this Southey replied in a tone of didactic patronage. Too sure of his ground to write such a hysterical defence as had vanquished William Smith, he implied a moral superiority by the use of the arrogant rhetoric that most irritated his opponents. He had not written the review; had never mentioned Shelley in any/

1. C.B.-R.S. p. 358.

any of his writings; had seen nothing of Shelley's work except <u>Alastor</u> and review quotations, which "confirmed his opinion of Shelley's powers." "But the manner in which these powers have been used is such as to prevent me from feeling any desire to see more of productions so monstrous in their kind, and so pernicious in their tendency. ... You wrote to me when you sent me your <u>Alastor</u>, that as you tolerated my opinions, you supposed I should tolerate yours. Few persons are less intolerant than myself, by disposition as well as by principle, but I cannot admit that any such reciprocity is justly to be claimed. Opinions are to be judged by their effects - and what has been the fruit of yours? ... Do not let any feeling of pride withhold you from acknowledging to yourself how greviously and fatally you have erred. ... God in his mercy bring you to this better mind!" [1]

Shelley in reply maintained with an effort the studious politeness that characterised his first letter. After the opening acknowledgments, he 'confessed' that Southey's recommendations of Christianity had 'little weight' with him, "To judge of the doctrines by their effects, one would think that this religion were called the religion of Christ and Charity <u>ut lucus a non lucendo</u>. ... Instead therefore, of refraining from 'judging that you be not judged,' you not only judge but condemn. ... You select a single passage out of a life otherwise not only spotless, but spent in an impassioned pursuit of virtue, which looks like a blot, merely because I regulated my domestic arrangements without referring to the notions of the vulgar, although I might have done/

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1. Do. p. 360.

done so quite as conveniently had I descended to their base thoughts - this you call guilt. I might answer you in another manner, but I take God to witness, if such a Being is now regarding both you and me, and I pledge myself if we meet, as perhaps you expect, before Him after death, to repeat the same in His presence - that you accuse me wrongfully. I am innocent of ill, either done or intended; the consequences you allude to flowed in no respect from me."[1] Shelley also referred to Southey's judgment of his works from reviews, and asked Southey to accept The Cenci and Prometheus. He closed with a hope that they might meet, and an expression of good wishes. Here the matter might have closed, but Southey's letter in reply to Shelley's is a brutal piece of writing. "You forsook your wife because you were tired of her and had found another woman more suited to your taste. ... It is a matter of public notoriety that your wife destroyed herself. Knowing in what manner she bore your desertion, I never attributed this to her sensibility on that score. I have heard it otherwise explained: I have heard that she followed your example as faithfully as your lessons, and that the catastrophe was produced by shame. Be this as it may, ask your own heart, whether you have not been the whole, sole, and direct cause of her destruction. You corrupted her opinions; you robbed her of her moral and religious principles; you debauched her mind. ... That sophistry which endeavours to confound the plain broad distinction between right and wrong can/

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1. Do. p. 361.

can never be employed innocently or with impunity. Some men are wicked by disposition, others become so in their weakness, yielding to temptation; but you have corrupted in yourself an excellent nature. You have sought for temptation and courted it; and have reasoned yourself into a state of mind so pernicious that your character, with your domestic arrangements, as you term it, might furnish a subject for the drama more instructive, and scarcely less painful, than the detestable story of the Cenci, and this has proceeded directly from your principles. It is the Atheist's Tragedy."[1] Yet there is sorrow in the letter too, and Southey concludes by describing himself as an 'earnest monitor'.

Shelley was in a far higher degree than Southey an excitable and emotional man, but temperamentally they were at least akin. Both too were idealists, but more incompatible views could not be found. Southey wished to prop human fallibility with rules for right conduct; Shelley, to sweep away human conventions and seek an abstract 'goodness'. Neither was capable of compromise. Living in a world whose social institutions are almost universally accepted, Shelley's views were liable to injure some with whom he came into touch if they lacked his courage and strength of mind; and this could never be said of Southey; but to attempt an assessment of Shelley's morality would be fantastic. Southey at least took up a typical position in the correspondence: if he was/

1. Do. pp. 363-5.

was uncharitable, it was because he was convinced of his unassailable rectitude and infallible moral judgment. He was like that.

Southey was involved in another 'incident', this time with Charles Lamb, in 1823. He had become intimate with Lamb through Coleridge nearly thirty years earlier, but had largely lost touch since his removal to Keswick. It seems that in a Quarterly article Southey remarked that the Essays of Elia only wanted a "sounder religious feeling to be as delightful as it was original." No proof sheet of this article was sent, otherwise, Southey asserts, the expression might have been modified. As it was, Lamb, who in common with Byron, Shelley, and all the Quarterly subscribers, was willing to attribute anything in that journal to Southey, had already suffered too much from incidental references of this sort. It had been stated that the Confessions of a Drunkard was pure autobiography, and there had been an exceedingly unfortunate observation by Gifford, who, in complete ignorance of Lamb's circumstances, called him a maniac. Lamb now wrote a public letter of resentful remonstrance in the London Magazine,[1] reminding Southey that he might himself be accused of writing on religious topics with a want of reticence - a plain hit at the Vision of Judgment. Southey read this article when on a visit to London, and was in his turn surprised and grieved, but, he says, "On my part there was not even a momentary feeling of anger" - perhaps because the letter was not very successful in expressing resentment, perhaps because he did not regard Lamb as/

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1. Part of this letter appears in Lamb's Essays as The Tombs in the Abbey.

as a foe of the same character as Byron or Shelley. He wrote at once to Lamb that if the complaint had been made to him privately he would, in the next <u>Quarterly</u>, have "explained or qualified" his expressions, entirely to Lamb's satisfaction, and though this was not now possible, he did not wish to join in a public controversy. The rest of the letter "was an expression of unchanged affection and a proposal to call upon him" Lamb's answer was typical: he confessed he had been "fighting against a shadow" and would be ashamed to see Southey, yet, "I will make up my courage to see you, any day next week (Wednesday excepted). We shall hope that you will bring Edith with you. That will be a second mortification; she will hate to see us; but come and heap embers; we deserve it, I for what I have done, and she (Mary Lamb) for being my sister. Do come early in the day, by sunlight, that you may see my Milton." This at least was a happy outcome, and the interrupted intimacy was renewed for life.

The following anecdote belongs to this chapter of eccentric acquaintanceships. A Frenchman who had translated <u>Roderick</u> dedicated his work to a Mme. St. Anne Holmes, a correspondent of Southey's. The lady sent him the translation together with an account of how it came to contain a <u>Notice sur M. Southey</u>. This had been demanded by the publisher, who thought it necessary to tell buyers something of the author; and when Mme. Holmes and the translator protested they knew nothing of Southey, he retorted, "N'importe! ecrivez toujours, brodez! brodez la un peu; que ce soit vrai ou non ce ne fait rien; qui prendra la peine de a'informer?". "Grosvenor" said Southey to his friend, "whoever writes/

writes my life and does not insert this biographical anecdote in it, may certainly expect that I will pull his ears in a true dream, and call him a jackass."[1] The episode is otherwise hardly worth reporting.

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1. C.C.S. V. 60.

CHAPTER X.

LAST YEARS.

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The Book of the Church, published in 1824 sold 5,000 copies and was loudly acclaimed by established churchmen, so that Southey's annual pilgrimage in search of health should have taken him, the following summer, to Ireland, as the guest of the Bishop of Limerick; but Ireland was judged an unhealthy country for one who had written so violently against Emancipation. Of this truth he had had proof - in a violent Irish Roman Catholic counter-attack in the Morning Chronicle, which accused him of publishing obscene impieties in Omniana, where he had quoted a Roman Catholic book of devotions to the Virgin. Southey was tempted to prosecute the proprietors for libel, but the procedure was too involved. There was also a letter from his opponent, "couched" says Charles Cuthbert Southey, "in terms of the most horrible and disgusting kind." Accordingly, it was decided to spend the holiday in Holland; and there Southey went in May 1825 with William Taylor of Norwich, Neville White, and a young officer called Mallet.[1] The Correspondence describes very amusingly how Southey was delayed in Antwerp by a bug-bite on his big toe, already inflamed by an ill-fitting shoe/

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1. Senhouse, with whom the trip to Switzerland was made in 1817 was not free to travel in 1825, and Nash, also of the 1817 party, died in 1821. Southey wrote, 'I fear it will be some time before my spirits recover from the shock which they have sustained. It is little more than 5 years since I became acquainted with him, and we had spent more than 12 months of that time together, at home and abroad.'

shoe; and how he travelled in some discomfort by Breda and Rotterdam to Leyden, "where the first thing I had to do was to write to Mr Bilderdijk[1], and request him to recommend me a surgeon. He came immediately with one, by whose account, and by my own feelings, I am now already thirty per cent better; though it will be three or four days before I shall be able to move, as there is a great sore."[2] White and Mallet went on from this point together, but Taylor stayed in a Leyden hotel, and Southey was accommodated by the Bilderdijk family for three weeks. Mrs Bilderdijk had sent Southey a copy of her translation of Roderick into Dutch, a year before, and was delighted to have this opportunity of showing honour to the poet. To judge by his letters, Southey's chief interest in Leyden was the novelty of the Dutch food, but he also gives a lively description of Bilderdijk, talking with the animation of a Dr Johnson and the animation and gestures of a Garrick in a lingua franca mixture of English, French, Latin and Dutch. Some small excursions were made, and Southey returned to England via Amsterdam and Utrecht, nearly cured and laden with books, at the end of July. A year later he was back in Holland with Taylor and Rickman; but this time his return was shadowed by the death of his daughter Isabel on July 16th 1826. Cuthbert Southey says, "Well do I, though but a child, remember that return, as we hastened to meet him, and changed, by our sorrowful tidings, his cheerful smile and glad welcome to tears and sadness. ... Those days of alternate hope and fear, and how he paced the garden in uncontrollable anguish, and gathered us around him to prayer when all was over, was vividly impressed on my mind."[3]

1. See Chap.VII.p.225 2. J.W.W. III. 490. 3. C.C.S. V. 252.

Comedy was coupled with tragedy on this return. His zeal for the Church was such that even on his vacations he hunted out materials to make a scourge for the Catholics. "They are at their old tricks everywhere," he said, "and would go to work again with fire and faggot if they could." An amusing consequence of this was that when he returned in 1826 he found himself elected member of parliament for the borough of Downton in Wiltshire. The following letter,[1] in which May recognised the writing of Lord Radnor, a complete stranger, announced the fact of his election.

July 10. 1826.

> A zealous admirer of the British Constitution in Church and State, being generally pleased with Mr Southey's 'Book of the Church', and professing himself quite delighted with the summary on the last page of that work, and entertaining no doubt that the writer of that page really felt what he wrote, and, consequently, would be ready, if he had an opportunity, to support the sentiments there set forth, has therefore been anxious that Mr Southey should have a seat in the ensuing Parliament; and having a little interest, has so managed that he is at this moment in possession of that seat under this single injunction:-
>
> Ut sustineat firmitur, strenue et continuo, quae ipse bene docuit esse sustinenda.

The depression following Isobel's death of course diminished the pride and pleasure which the Southeys would normally have felt/

1. C.C.S. V. 261.

felt at this honour: there is no comic commentary in the Correspondence. Southey was urged to 'frank' at least one letter as an acknowledgment, but he refused to do this since he knew that his pension nullified the election, and he could not afford to give it up. There was also his lack of a land-holding qualification, and though Sir Robert Inglis offered to help him out of his difficulty, Southey rejected this solution. He had already declined the office in a dignified letter to a third party, pointing out the legal difficulties, saying that a seat in parliament was not consistent with his circumstances, inclinations, habits, or pursuits in life, and concluding, "It is, however, no inconsiderable honour to have been so distinguished. This I shall always feel; and if I do not express immediately to your friend my sense of the obligation he has conferred upon me, it is not from any want of thankfulness, but from a doubt how far it might be proper to reply to an unsigned communication. May I therefore request that you will express this thankfulness for me, and say at the same time, that I trust, in my own station, and in the quiet pursuance of my own scheme of life, by God's blessing, to render better service to those institutions, the welfare of which I have at my heart, than it would be possible for me to do in a public assembly."[1] To his brother, who had conveyed the plan to purchase his qualification, he declared, "in any public assembly I should have no confidence in myself, no promptitude, none of that presence of mind, without which no man can produce any effect there...I can serve it (the Protestant cause) by bringing/

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1. C.C.S. V. 263.

bringing forth the knowledge which so large a part of my life has been passed in acquiring; by exposing the real character and history of the Romish Church, systematically and irrefragably (which I can and will do) in books which will be read now and hereafter; which must make a part, hereafter, of every historical library; and which will live and act when I am gone."[1] To Sir Robert Inglis he wrote in strictly formal style, acknowledging the generous intention, and adding to the reasons already given for declining the offer, that he could not think of spending five months of the year in London, under the necessity of suffering irregular hours and late sittings, and away from his favourite pursuits and his family. In the whole matter, Southey showed very good sense.

The fears for his health, here hinted at, were so well justified that in 1828 he had to undergo an operation in London. He was so unwilling to distress his family that he said nothing of the matter till it was all over.

While in London, Southey paid what he knew must be his last visit to his uncle Herbert Hill, who died a few months later. The loss of this most faithful helper, who had been his protector and friend since Westminster days, turned Southey's thoughts again to the gaps torn among the ranks of his friends by death. On Grosvenor Bedford he could still lean - though when they met, Southey's part in the conversation had to be bellowed down an ear-trumpet - but Elmsley had died, Edward Williams for whom some lines were added to Madoc, his brother's wife/

1. C.C.S. V. 274.

wife, Nash, and other intimate friends whose names have not been introduced into this narrative. These losses were perhaps partly offset by a growing intimacy between Southey and Caroline Bowles.[1]

He had been asked as long ago as 1818 to criticise a poem by Miss Bowles - at this time a woman of thirty, alone in the world, and in need of money - and had replied that it was 'womanly', and that he would ask Murray to consider its publication. Soon after he had undertaken to go through the poem and point out the parts needing alteration:- so fortunate was Miss Bowles, by contrast with Charlotte Bronte, of whom he wrote in 1837, "I sent a dose of cooling admonition to the poor girl whose flighty letter reached me at Buckland. ... I think well of her from her second letter, and probably she will think kindly of me as long as she lives."[2] Although Caroline's poem was refused by Murray, it was published by Longmans in 1820 under the title Ellen Fitzarthur, and in the same year Southey and the poetess met in London. The Widow's Tale appearing in 1822 brought an interchange of letters, and by 1823 Southey and Caroline were writing so frequently that it was natural for her to visit him in Keswick that autumn. A twelvemonth later he wrote, "I have put up among my papers the memoranda which were made many years ago for a poem upon Robin Hood. They are easily shaped into a regular plan, and, in my judgment, a promising one. Will you form an intellectual union with me that it may be executed? We will keep our own secret as well as Sir Walter Scott has done. Murray shall publish it, and/

1. C.B.-R.S.
2. C.B.-R.S. 348. Charlotte Bronte said later "Mr Southey's letter was kind and admirable, a little stringent, but it did me good."

and not know the whole mystery that he may make the more of it, and the result will be means in abundance for a summer's abode at Keswick, and an additional motive for it that we may form other schemes of the same nature. Am I dreaming when I think that we may derive from this much high enjoyment, and that you may see in the prospect something which is worth living for? The secret itself would be delightful while we thought proper to keep it; still more so the spiritual union which death would not part."[1] The persuasion he employed, "You can write as easily and as well as I can plan", was better intended than said; but though <u>Robin Hood</u> was never finished, Southey went to Buckland to discuss the poem, returned to work and plan in other years, and so deepened that intimacy which was ultimately consummated in marriage.

Caroline Bowles was the daughter of a retired East India Company captain, who claimed Norman ancestry. His wife was the daughter of a French-speaking Jersey woman with aristocratic connections. In his house at Lymington, where Caroline was born, there lived his wife, daughter and himself, his wife's mother and grandmother, and a faithful servant. Caroline is reported to have broken off an engagement to an officer at Lymington, at her family's desire. Presently the family removed to Buckland, where Captain Bowles and the old ladies died. The death of her mother in 1816, and the loss of her fortune through the defalcations of a guardian, was the cause of Caroline's introducing herself to Southey. Almost immediately after, however, she was given/

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1. Op. cit. p.42.

given an annuity of £150 by her father's adopted son, another wealthy East Indian, which provided for her in reasonable comfort. She was a delicate woman, and suffered from painful headaches in consequence of some constitutional weakness. As she had spent most of her life alone with her mother and their servant, she worried over her solitude, and was deeply grateful to Southey for the new interest his letters provided, and for the entry he gave her into a more active life. Her letters are light and personal, showing clearly the influence of Southey's style as the correspondence continues, and suggest to me a distinct conscious taking of pains to meet Southey's views and prejudices. Southey of course helped her to win some fame as a writer of sentimental verses by supplying her with stories that could be worked up, and his eminent position invited flattery from one who was conscious of receiving benefit. We are told[1] that she had a strong sense of the ridiculous and no sentimentality: these qualities alone would account for the acquaintance deepening into the major friendship of Southey's later life: and in addition she would display, as in the correspondence, all the conventional 'womanly' virtues of the period, with the further recommendation that she really was sick and friendless. Her works were certainly sentimental; the expression of a second rate intelligence with a tendency to melancholy and too much leisure to indulge it; such narratives worked out in an atmosphere of domestic piety and virtue, were precisely what Southey might be expected to admire. In appearance Caroline was attractive: slight/

1. Robert Southey's Second Wife. Cornhill Magazine. Quoted by Dowden in C.B.-R.S.

slight of build; her face oval, eyes large with arched brows; her nose long like Southey's; her hair dark and curled, parted in the centre and piled low at the back. How intense Southey's feeling for her was, and how far Caroline had already taken the place of Edith in his inmost thought before becoming his wife, is needless to enquire. "As for my letters" he told her in 1829,"... there is nothing in them which might not be seen by men and angels," and it was his own wish that they should be published.

Between the present period and Southey's last bereavement, however, was a space of seven years' violent activity. Though the Vindication of the Book of the Church brought him less money than he used to get for a Quarterly article, he was busy now on Colloquies with Sir Thomas More, in which much the same things were to be said again. An angry correspondence with Dr Shannon of Edinburgh arose from an article on Irish Roman Catholics. Much time and money were being lost, and only the departure of Mrs Coleridge and Sara from Greta Hall, on the occasion of Sara's marriage, induced him to take his annual holiday in 1829. On his return he found himself invited to think about co-operative community societies; but economic questions did not interest Southey: he had nothing to say for or against the repeal of the corn laws, free trade was only a phrase to him, and the co-operators forfeited his interest by being reported as little better than levellers. Finally, when the emancipation bill was passed, Southey called it a 'base measure'; and on the accession of/

of William IV he commented gloomily, "William IV it is believed, will continue the present Ministers, but act towards them in such a way that they will soon find it necessary to resign. Then in come Lord Holland and the Whigs, in alliance with the flying squadron of political economists under Huskisson. Beyond this nothing can be foreseen, except change after change; every successive change weakening the government, and, consequently, strengthening that power of public opinion which will lay all our institutions in the dust. Yet I neither despair nor despond, and you may be sure I will not be idle."[1] In 1830, when reform of the franchise seemed imminent, he went to London, partly indeed to consult his publishers, but partly to be "upon the scene of action", and he wrote, "Parliamentary reform is no longer a doubtful matter; in some shape or other it must come; and, in fact, the present state of things gives us some of its worst effects, as seen in Yorkshire and Middlesex. The old ground of defence, therefore, that the system works well, is no longer tenable; indeed I have long seen that what wise men ought to look to is, to devise in what manner they may best construct a raft from the wreck of the old ship. I would have fought her to the water's edge rather than have run among the breakers in the vain hope of escaping the enemy's fire."[2] But again, he said, "While the Government remains what it is, we must support it in whatever hands it may be" - a logical consequence of his views, and a sound dictum for a moralist, if odd for a politician.

This London trip occupied nearly two months in November

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1. C.C.S. VI. 102-103. 2. C.C.S. VI. 117-118.

and December 1830, and delayed Southey's article for the current Quarterly so that he had to shut himself up for eleven days at Buckland on the way home, going out only when Caroline Bowles, on her Shetland pony, required him company afoot for an hour or two before dinner. He came home to Keswick by a circuitous route in February, and from his study poured out a flood of re-crimination upon the ministers of state. He anticipated a war with France, a revolution or insurrections and burnings in the country, and a general pulling down of the rich when the grand reform should come about. Against these thoughts however, he set an 'invincible and instinctive hope' in God's mercy.

Southey attended Dr Andrew Bell in his last illness in 1831, and was consulted about the will by which Scottish education came to benefit after Bell's death in January 1832. Its first draft bequeathed £1,000 to Southey, yet, he wrote, "if he weighs me in the balance against a Madras school in any part of Scotland, my scale will kick the beam."[1] Actually, he received the thousand pounds as executor, under the condition of writing Bell's life. This was undertaken on the top of the labours that already employed him: the Peninsular War, in its last volume, the Colloquies, The Doctor &c., and an edition of his moral and political papers; and he used to work with Bell's amanuensis in Keswick from seven till nine in the morning on the mass of letters and papers which Bell had collected in forty years. None of the books here mentioned were financial successes, and, in fact, Southey/

1. C.C.S. VI. 153.

Southey at this time actually had difficulty in balancing his budget. The Naval Biographies, on which he was soon embarked, fairly set him afloat again; before they were commissioned he wrote regretting that a suggestion that he should offer himself for a Professorship of Humanity in Glasgow had come too late - "otherwise prudence might have overcome inclination." He would also have accepted a professorship in History at Durham, had the salary been more nearly appropriate to his needs. Fortunately, the situation soon improved, and he could boast himself "so beforehand with the world, that he had means at command for a whole year's expenditure." This was the more fortunate, in that severer trials lay ahead.

In January 1834, Miss Edith Southey left Greta Hall with her husband the Rev. J. Wood Warter[1]. At the close of that year, in October, Edith Southey, his wife, was removed to a lunatic asylum. The causes of this failure are quite clear. Mrs Southey had been a girl of a shy and nervous temper. Her early married life had been spent in anxiety, if not in actual poverty. Though Southey's income grew to very comfortable proportions, ready money was usually hard to find, and housekeeping under these conditions must have been a strain. The house at Keswick was large, and for most of the time, fully occupied and understaffed. The fame of the laureate brought not only friends but daily shoals of visitors, to many of whom hospitality had to be shown. The deaths/

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1. Editor of "Selections from the correspondence of Robert Southey" and of the "Commonplace Books".

deaths of the children may have weighed even more heavily on the mother's mind, with no distracting interests, than on the father's, and the successive departures of the Coleridges and her own eldest daughter would obviously deprive Mrs Southey not only of domestic assistance, but of valuable friends to whom she might unburden herself of melancholy and anxious thoughts. For some time before her removal the family had noticed Mrs Southey's weakness, nervousness, and sleeplessness, but apparently it had not occurred to anyone that immediate change and complete relief from domestic duties would be essential if she was to be saved from a breakdown. Edith was evidently not a woman who complained much. The breakdown came, and the removal to the Asylum gave her the rest she needed, but when she seemed to be physically strong enough to move, Southey, disliking the thought that he was avoiding a painful duty by sending his wife out of the way, brought Edith home again, perhaps unwisely, early in 1835.

His wife's illness was of course a tremendous shock to Southey himself. Anxiety for her condition and loss of her company were seriously injurious to him; besides, he had thrust upon him the various questions of ways and means from which his wife had shielded him. He was sleepless and brooded a great deal, yet at a real risk of harm to himself, he turned to work for relief. The Naval Biographies and Cowper belong to this time. His letters reveal very little: they are taciturn by contrast with those he wrote on the death of Herbert, but some quotations/

quotations may help to show his state of mind[1]. - "God, who has visited me with this affliction, has given me strength to bear it, and will, I know, support me to the end - whatever that may be."[2] - "That this is a far greater calamity than death would have been, I well know. But I perceive that it can be better born at first, because there is a possibility of restoration, and, however feeble, a hope. Therefore that collapse is not to be apprehended which always ensues when the effort which the circumstances of a mortal sickness, a death, and burial, call forth in the survivor, is at an end. Mind is a strong heart. I will not say that the last week has been the most trying of my life; but I will say, that the heart which can bear it can bear anything."[3] - "I am severely shaken; but when a word of hope comes it counteracts the mischief of a night's unrest; - sleeplessness I do not call it, the old word better describes that uneasy state in which the wakeful hours are succeeded by broken slumbers and dreams with which realities are blended."[4]

An odd distraction interrupted the distress of these days, with/

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1. The printed correspondence is very deficient at this point. Parts of letters are omitted. Although I have had access to a great number of MS. letters, I have not found the originals of these and suppose that like some others they may have been purposely destroyed.
2. C.C.S. VI. 244.
3. C.C.S. VI. 246.
4. J.W.W. IV. 391.

with consequences which ensured material comfort for the remainder of Southey's life. His son tells how "one morning, shortly after the letter had arrived, he called me into his study. 'You will be surprised,' he said, 'to hear that Sir Robert Peel has recommended me to the King for the distinction of a baronetcy, and you will probably feel some disappointment when I tell you that I shall not accept it, and this more on your account than on my own. I think, however, that you will be satisfied I do so for good and wise reasons;' and he then read to me the following letters."[1]

Whitehall Gardens, Feb. 1. 1835.

My dear Sir,

I have offered a recommendation to the King (the first of the kind which I have offered), which, although it concerns you personally, concerns also high public interests, so important as to dispense with the necessity on my part of that previous reference to individual feelings and wishes, which, in an ordinary case, I should have been bound to make. I have advised the King to adorn the distinction of a baronetage with a name the most eminent in literature, and which has claims to respect and honour which literature alone can never confer.

The King has most cordially approved of my proposal to his Majesty; and I do hope that, however indifferent you may be personally to a compliment of this kind, however trifling it/

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1. C.C.S. VI. 253 ff.

it is when compared with the real titles to fame which you have established;- I do hope that you will permit a mark of royal favour to be conferred in your person upon the illustrious community of which you are the head.

Believe me, my dear Sir, with the sincerest esteem,
Most faithfully yours,

ROBERT PEEL.

This was accompanied with another letter marked private.

Whitehall, Feb. 1. 1835.

My dear Sir,

I am sure, when there can be no doubt as to the purity of the motive and the intention, there can be no reason for seeking indirect channels of communication in preference to direct ones. Will you tell me, without reserve, whether the possession of power puts within my reach the means of doing anything which can be servicable or acceptable to you; and whether you will allow me to find some compensation for the many heavy sacrifices which office imposes upon me in the opportunity of marking my gratitude as a public man, for the eminent services you have rendered, not only to literature, but to the higher interests of virtue and religion?

I write hastily, and perhaps abruptly, but I write to one to whom I feel it would be almost unbecoming to address elaborate and ceremonious expressions, and who will prefer to receive the declaration of friendly intentions in the simplest language.

Believe me, my dear Sir, with true respect,
Most faithfully yours,

Robert Peel.

P.S./

P.S.- I believe your daughter is married to a clergyman of great worth, and, perhaps, I cannot more effectually promote the object of this letter than by attempting to improve his professional situation. You cannot gratify me more than by writing to me with the same unreserve with which I have written to you.

In reply to these letters, Southey gave a fairly close account of his financial position as a reason for not accepting the baronetcy; but added a more personal paragraph, explaining how much he dreaded that a sudden stroke might at any time make it impossible for him to earn enough for current expenditure, and admitting that he would welcome an increase of pension were it practicable. To his friend Wynn he wrote, "I had said in my letter that I could afford to die, but not to be disabled; the words came naturally to my pen, but I struck them out, lest they should look as if I were endeavouring to trick out a plain statement."[1] That his suggestion was practicable was proved by a letter of April 4th., followed by an official confirmation, of which Southey at once wrote, "Today has brought Sir R. Peel's announcement that he has signed the warrant for an additional pension of 300£. This is just what I thought likely, that I think reasonable, and what, if I had been desired to name the sum for myself, I should have fixed on, with this difference only, that I would have had the amount of both pensions without deductions/

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1. J.W.W. IV. 398.

deductions. They give me, however, an income of 375£ a year[1], subject to no other contingencies than those of the state, - and I am contented and thankful."[2]

Two other diversions were provided: one by the letters Southey received in connection with The Doctor &c., the other by a tour of south England with his son.

Of the Doctor, Southey wrote to Caroline Bowles,[3] "The book brings to me as many recollections ... as the sight of wild flowers in spring, and the singing of birds - sights and sounds that always carry us back to the past. Miss Barker[4], who then lived in the next house, was the Bhow Begum: that whole chapter is from the life[5], and the book grew out of that night's conversation, exactly as is there related. But to go further back with its history, there is a story of Dr D. of D. and his horse Nobs, which have, I believe been made into a hawker's book. Coleridge used to tell it, and the humour lay in making it as long-winded as possible; it suited, however, my long-windedness better than his, and I was frequently called upon for it by those/

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1. The second pension was paid without deductions, and he received out of a nominal income of £500, £440, to which the Laureatship being added, made in all £534. (C.C.S's note in the Life & Corr.)

2. C.C.S. VI. 265. 3. C.B.-R.S. 325-326.

4. Southey met her in Portugal See chap. 3.

5. The opening chapter of The Doctor &c. Southey forgets the plan of the Butler discussed with Grosvenor Bedford.

those who enjoyed it, and sometimes I volunteered it when Mrs Coleridge protested against its being told. As you may suppose, it was never told twice alike, except as to names and the leading features. ... Intending little more at first than to play the fool in a way that might amuse the wise, and becoming 'a sadder and a wiser man' as I proceeded, I perceived that there was no way in which I could so conveniently dispose of some of my multifarious collections, nor so well send into the world some wholesome but unpalatable truths, nor advance speculations upon dark subjects, without giving offence or exciting animadversion. With something therefore of Tristram Shandy in its character, something of Rabelais, more of Montaigne, and a little of old Burton, the predominant character is still my own. It was not till the book went to press that I thought of putting headings to the chapters, and finding mottoes for each."

The first two volumes appeared in 1834, the third in 1835, and later volumes in 1837 and 1838. Two volumes edited by Warter came out after Southey's death. Those in his lifetime appeared anonymously, and though Grosvenor Bedford, Mrs Wordsworth's sister (who copies it for the press), and a selected few were in the secret, it was closely kept. Hence Southey was able to amuse himself by sending copies to friends and acquaintances, and by suggesting a variety of possible writers as the real author. During the years when he watched by his wife, the simple amusement of diverting suspicion and starting fresh hares may well have been of value to Southey.

Since/

Since Edith's return to Keswick, her husband had almost ceased to see visitors, and though his son Cuthbert left in October 1835 to receive tuition from Warter in preparation for Oxford, Southey himself never left home. It may be imagined how bad it was for him to live in the emptying house, seldom out of sight or hearing of his wife. It was impressed upon him that he must take a holiday, and in 1836 he agreed to make a tour with his son through Bristol to Cornwall, Buckland, and Sussex. Charles Cuthbert Southey tells how "we visited together all his old haunts, - his grandmother's house at Bedminster, so vividly described in his Autobiography, the College Green where Miss Tyler had lived, - the house where he was born, - the schools he had been sent to. He had forgotten nothing, - no short cut, - no by-way; and he would surprise me often by darting down some alley, or threading some narrow lane, - the same which in his school-boy days he had traversed".[1] Many old friends were visited, and the tour ended by way of Caroline Bowles's home, and that of his son-in-law, Warter.

Meanwhile Edith was growing gradually weaker. Just before her death Southey wrote, "The end cannot be far off, and all is going on most mercifully. For several days when I have supported her down stairs, I have thought it was for the last time; and every night when she has been borne up, it has seemed to me that she would never be borne down alive. Thank God there is no pain, no suffering of any kind; and only such consciousness as is consolation."[2] For three years she had held on to life,

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1. C.C.S. VI. 310. 2. C.C.S. VI. 346.

but on November 16th 1837 she died.

For another year, Southey was busy writing and planning, but for three years he had mislaid his capacity for high spirits, and he never recovered it. The pressure of hard and continuous work on a failing constitution now threatened to wear out his mind. The loss of his children, Herber and Isabel, followed at no great length of time by the insanity and death of his wife, gave shocks to his mental stability which at sixty-four he had not the resilience to overcome. He hastened his own breakdown by driving himself to hard work to escape the torture of reflection. In 1838 he was included in a party with his son, Senhouse, Crabb Robinson, and others, to tour Normandy, Brittany, and Touraine: the trip interested and amused him, but the decay of his mind became unmistakably evident.[1] The journal, in which he was accustomed to keep copious notes of all he saw, broke off unfinished when only two thirds of the tour was completed; he became subject to fits of absence of mind; the active step and quick decisive manner gave way to langour and indecision. "The point in which he seemed to me to fail most," says his son, "was that he continually lost his way, even in the hotels we stopped at; and perceiving this, I watched him constantly, as, although he himself affected to make light of it, and laughed at his own mistakes, he was evidently sometimes painfully conscious of his failing memory in this respect."[2] The trip finished in mid/

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1. Crabb Robinson's Diary, December 1838, says: During our stay in Paris I believe S. did not once go to the Louvre; he cared for nothing but the old book-shops. This is a singular feature of his character, but with this indifference to the living things around him is closely connected his poetic faculty of beholding the absent as if present, and creating a world for himself.
2. C.C.S. VI. 373-374.

mid October, and he went to Buckland again before returning home, at the end of the year.

At the beginning of 1839, Bertha Southey married her cousin Herbert Hill. Charles Cuthbert was at Oxford, and only Kate and Southey and Mrs Lovell were left in Greta Hall. Immediately after the wedding, Southey went back to Buckland; on June 5th. he married Caroline Bowles in Boldre Church, and they returned together to Keswick at the end of August.

The fact is thus briefly stated by C.C. Southey in his Life, and the relevant correspondence has been destroyed. But Canon FitzGerald has supplied me with the following information.[1] From about April 1838 Southey, though protesting that he was willing to abide by her decision, repeatedly urged Caroline Bowles to marry him. Apparently he disregarded her refusals, which she based on her own state of health as the main objection. About mid-summer, however, she gave way to his importunity, and they were married within a year. The situation was then seriously complicated, and indeed made impossible for the second Mrs Southey, by the complete mental breakdown of her husband. It is easy to sympathise with her. Instead of being, as the wife of the Poet Laureate, a personage of some consequence, she found herself wedded to a dotard, and a man of less wealth than she had/

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1. Canon FitzGerald of Bristol Cathedral, editor of the Oxford edition of the poems of Southey, the World's Classics edition of his letters, and an abridged edition of The Doctor &c. He saw Miss Warter, Southey's grand-daughter, before her death, and saw the correspondence before it was destroyed. I am obliged to him for the facts given above.

had anticipated[1]. The household at Greta Hall moreover was disturbed by small bitternesses. Mrs Southey developed a strong jealousy of her step-daughter, and would hardly allow Kate to be alone with her father. Mrs Warter, Southey's eldest daughter, sympathised with Caroline and took her side in the disputes which arose, but Kate was supported by the Wordsworths. It seems that Kate did not treat Caroline well either; and the presence of Mrs Lovell, sister of Southey's first wife, was no ease to matters. The Warters eventually found themselves half cut off from the family.

Canon FitzGerald's statement is confirmed by letters to Crabb Robinson[2], especially one from Wordsworth dated January 1841. Wordsworth explains that his first connection with the family difference at Greta Hall, was when Southey's daughters Kate and Bertha, having heard while on a visit to Ambleside of their Father's intention to marry again, approached Wordsworth. He attempted to reconcile them to this step, appreciating that it would be a difficult position for the girls at Greta Hall. "In/

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1. C.R.-W. I. 497-498.
   (Quillinan to H. Crabb Robinson, May 1843)
   "Mr W. thinks it right that you should be able to contradict the silly statement that has got into the papers ... that Mrs S. - that is to say Miss Catherine Bowles - has been injured in her pecuniary circumstances by her marriage... with Mr Southey. On the contrary she is £2000 (That is the interest of that sum) the gainer by this connection, that being the amount of the sum settled on her by Mr Southey. An annuity which she received ... has lately ceased to be paid her in consequence of the failure of the House that paid it."

   Caroline Bowles's annuity was paid by her adopted brother Colonel Bruce.

2. C.R.-W.

"In justice to Kate" he says, "I must here add that she frequently said that if her Father was to marry again, Miss Bowles was of all persons, from what she had heard, and seen of her in her writings, the one whom she would prefer."[1]

But not long after the second Mrs Southey's arrival at Keswick it became clear to Wordsworth that there was little harmony in the old home. He saw Kate fairly frequently, and continuously urged her to bear the change "and all things consequent on it, that troubled her, with patience and resignation; and never did I shrink from endeavouring to rectify whatever appeared to me to be amiss in her own views, purposes, and conduct: in this also I know I was in no small degree successful.[2]

Mrs Southey herself was distressed by her differences with Kate, and opened the subject to Mrs Wordsworth. Wordsworth went over to Keswick to see her. "For truth's sake, and in order to prove that I was under no degree of partiality which would preclude a fair consideration of all she could urge on her own behalf, I did not conceal from Mrs S. what as I thought had been erroneous in Kate's judgment, and unwarrantable in her feelings; but, I added, that before Mrs S's arrival at Keswick she had corrected and subdued all this - and to you I cannot but say my belief is, that had Mrs S then taken a just view of Kate's feelings and claims as daughter; and of her own position in the family, and/

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1. C.R.-W. I. 423.

2. C.R.-W. I. 424.

and been as candidly and kindly disposed towards Kate as Kate was towards her, all things might have gone on as well as could be, under circumstances so otherwise afflicting."[1] ... "Though Mrs S. was extremely agitated, she took in good part every question I thought it necessary or expedient to put to her, and more than this - she entreated me to cross-question her, that was her very expression. In several points with which I had been dis-satisfied ... she gave explanations to me that were most acceptable ... But upon the whole the interview was sadly unpromising. The views she had taken of Kate's behaviour, the interpretationsshe had put upon her words and actions, and the notions so different from my own, which she obviously entertained of her general character, extinguished, when I bore in mind Kate's sentiments, whether right or wrong, towards Mrs. S. the faint hope I had carried with me of being serviceable.- I left the house with a strong sympathy in Mrs S's sufferings and with an unqualified pity for her, as being exposed to trials which her constitution of body and mind, conjoined with her previous position, for so long a time, as a single Lady and sole Mistress of her house, had made her unequal to."[2]

In consequence of the dismissal of an old and cherished servant of Southey's household, Cuthbert Southey left the house to live in lodgings. Kate spent much of her time with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount. The brother and sister agreed to try/

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1. C.R.-W. I. 424.

2. C.R.-W. I. 425. M. Wordsworth to H.C.R. Oct. 14th 1841.

try to ensure that Kate should be able to live in her father's house apart from Mrs Southey, and that she should be able to see her father once a day, alone, at any convenient time. Something of the sort seems to have been arranged, for a little later M. Wordsworth is found writing to Crabb Robinson: "We hear little from Greta Hall - no change in dear S. except that we understand he is occasionally very much more irritable, sometimes violent. Poor Kate's visits are, as stipulated, merely for a few minutes once a week. Bertha who was at Keswick with her Sister for a few weeks a short time since, occasionally, poor thing! went to look at her father, who alas! was scarcely ever conscious of her presence. She never saw Mrs Southey.[1]

Mr and Mrs Warter heard Caroline Southey's version of the state of affairs at Greta Hall, sympathised with her, and chose to hear nothing of the other side of the question. When they travelled to Keswick, Dora Wordsworth invited them to call at Rydal Mount, intending to supply what might be lacking from their complete acquaintance with the state of affairs, but "the proposal was rejected, and drew from Mrs W. those unworthy reflections upon my conduct, so prominent in her and her husband's letters."[2]

Soon after his second marriage, the decay of Southey's mind reached a stage at which his powers were completely lost. He forgot things, lost his way in well known places, became oddly irritated over trifles; and his once fine clear handwriting degenerated/

1. C.R.-W. I. 444.

2. C.R.-W. W.W. to H.C. Robinson.

degenerated. On the way from Buckland to Keswick he visited London, and one of his friends described him as sunk into langour, having lost all animation, 'the tone of strength and elasticity quite wanting', while his appearance was shrunk and thin. He quite stopped work. For some time he would talk of them - "the History of Portugal - the History of the Monastic Orders - the Doctor;- all were soon to be taken in hand in earnest - all completed, and new works added to these;"[1] but he drifted into a state where he could no longer even read. His son says, "In the earlier stages of his disorder he could still converse at times with much of his old liveliness and energy. When the mind was, as it were, set going upon some familiar subject, for a little time you could not perceive much failure; but if the thread was broken, if it was a conversation in which new topics were started, or if any argument was commenced, his powers failed him at once, and a painful sense of this seemed to come over him for the moment,... But this failure was so gradual, and at the same time so complete, that I am inclined to hope and believe that there was not on the whole much painful consciousness of it; and certainly for more than a year preceding his death, he passed his time in a dream, with little, if any, knowledge of what went on around him."[2] Physically, he recovered strength, and his hair, which had been white, grew perceptibly darker. At one stage he could walk among his books, taking them down mechanically, and replacing them unread.

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1. C.C.S. VI. 389.

2. C.C.S. VI. 389-390.

In February 1843, Quillinan wrote to Crabb Robinson,[1] "Poor Mr Southey has had an apoplectic seizure, which it was thought must be fatal, but it yielded to violent bleeding. It has however left him in a condition which makes the Medical man think that it may shortly be succeeded by another from which he is not likely to rally. ... Kate says there is something now in her dear father's face which was not there before, very deathlike. ... Mr Southey has now a convulsive twitching too and shaking back of the head as if there was something oppressive there, painful to observe. Poor man, we can but join in his good and deeply injured daughter's pious hope that the scene will soon close." At last the body wore out, and Robert Southey died on 21st March 1843.

He was buried at Crossthwaite Churchyard, near Keswick, one dark and stormy morning, beside his wife and three children. Wordsworth was not invited to the funeral by Mrs Southey, but he attended with Quillinan, who drove him over, and with John Wordsworth and his son - three generations of Wordsworths, as Quillinan observed[2]. Henry Southey was too late for the funeral, to his regret, and Hartley Coleridge was also unable to attend. He wrote[3] "I was too late for the funeral. I know not whether to regret this or not. It would have been painful to see persons by/

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1. C.R.-W. I. 477.

2. C.R.-W. I. 485.

3. Letters H.C.

by the graveside, equally related and equally dear to the departed, who would not so much as speak to each other."

Inside the church, a memorial has been erected; in form, a recumbent figure of Southey on a high base. On one end a sonnet by Wordsworth is engraved:

Ye vales and hills, whose beauty hither drew
The poet's steps, and fix'd him here; on you
His eyes have closed; and ye loved books, no more
Shall Southey feed upon your precious lore,
To works that ne'er shall forfeit their renown
Adding immortal labours of his own, -
Whether he traced historic truth with zeal
For the state's guidance or the Church's weal,
Or fancy disciplined by curious art
Informed his pen, or wisdom of the heart,
Or judgments sanctioned in the patriot's mind
By reverence for the rights of all mankind.
Wide were his aims, yet in no human breast
Could private feelings meet in holier rest.
His joys - his griefs - have vanished like a cloud
From Skiddaw's top; but he to Heaven was vowed
Through a long life and pure, and steadfast faith
Calm'd in his soul the fear of change and death.

CHAPTER XI.

CRITICAL - PROSE WORKS.

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When Robert Southey lapsed into that senile unconsciousness which preceded his death in 1843, he had been for almost ten years undisputed ruler over the whole field of contemporary letters. Wordsworth it is true survived him, but Wordsworth had been all but silent since 1815; Byron and Coleridge, Shelley and Keats, died before him, and the younger generation of romantics were still only names. In poetry, the Laureateship commanded respect; and in prose literature, apart from the magazines, he was admittedly the greatest figure after Scott: Scott's death in 1832 left Southey supreme.

Southey grew up with Wordsworth, Coleridge, Scott and Byron. With them, he shared the Jacobin enthusuasms of '89, and the spiritual depression of The Terror. He was a jingo patriot through the Napoleonic wars; and at their close he was an Established Churchman and a Tory, in opposition to Cobbett and Leigh Hunt. He dreaded disestablishment, and bemoaned the Reform Bill. Towards the end of his life, he met Princess Victoria, who told him prettily that she had enjoyed his Life of Nelson; and he rode in one of the first railway trains, to the danger, he thought, of his constitution. He lived through the most extraordinary seventy years of political, social and economic change that our history records, commented freely upon everything he saw or heard of, and left the largest, and, apart from his letters, perhaps the least valuable mass of written matter of any literary man of his reputation; for amid all this joy and uproar, he remained the most distant of spectators. Robert Southey/

Southey was practically a recluse. When he travelled, it was to browse in libraries, or, tourist like, to survey the scenes of battles. With all his knowledge of history and literature - English, Spanish, and Portuguese - he had singularly little knowledge of Englishmen, Spaniards, and Portuguese. When he wrote ecclesiastical history, or touched on economics, politics, or criticism, he stepped out of his depth. His contributions on these subjects are inaccurate and illogical: they never had any value in their content, and neither then nor now could the style save them from condemnation. They represent merely the personal opinion of a kind hearted but uninformed student, working in strange fields.

The smell of the lamp is unpleasantly pervasive in Southey's writings. His most ambitious works were histories and biographies: the history, belonging to a day that knew not Bishop Stubbs, is narrative, unscientific and often biassed; the biography is largely an accumulation of documents without selection or evaluation. His singularly perspicuous narrative style gives distinction to works that are equally distant from contemporary biography on the one hand, and interpretative biography on the other, and that are quite dead so far as this generation is concerned. There is one exception to this: the classic *Nelson*, which is a triumph, for reasons to be explained in their place. The translations of Spanish romances are successful. It is in this field, perhaps, that Southey's so extensive and peculiar knowledge of an antiquarian flavour and absence of the human touch/

touch can do least harm. They are hardly original, however; and Southey's secluded life and incredible range of reading find their best vindication in The Doctor.

In the pages that follow, those of Southey's prose works not noticed previously are considered individually. The order in which they are discussed is not chronological, but that in which, for various reasons, it has seemed best to take them, and I begin with his biographies.

"Nobody", said Dr Johnson, "can write the life of a man but those who have eat and drank and lived in social intercourse with him".

Southey quoted this dictum in order to disagree. "In letters, feelings and view and motives are related as they existed at the time; in retrospect they are overlooked and lost".

In writing the life of Cowper, Southey had access to the greatest mass of letters he had ever seen; and he thought to read Cowper's views and feelings and motives as easily as he read them. Perhaps where an extensive correspondence is available, modern biography can equal the work of one contemporary with the subject; but what Dr Johnson wished to emphasise was that the biographer must know his subject. A man may not know his bedfellow, and social intercourse may exist between antagonists; how then can we assert that a mere heap of correspondence will explain all the eccentricities of conduct manifested by complex human characters? Unbiassed biography may be possible, just as the easiest way to attain judicial calm is by knowing nothing,

nothing, but the greatest biographies have been written by contemporaries whose love for their subjects brought them understanding. A friend is better able than a judge to say when emphasis is due to a public eccentricity, and when rather to a private inclination; and the secret of great biography is the proper distribution of emphasis. Even letters are semi-public writings, and do not display private lives as fully as Southey thought. A sense of propoertion, won not by study alone, but by affection, is the one thing needful; and with complex characters this is extremely difficult. Dr Johnson appears differently in the pages of Boswell's Life and Macaulay's essay. Boswell was but his friend; Macaulay his brilliant expositor; but criticism has declared for the sympathetic portrait.

It may be said at once that Southey the student-recluse was incompetent to deal justly with such men as Wesley, Cowper, and Cromwell. The complexities of religious experience were mysteries too deep for his sturdy Anglicanism. But with Nelson the case was different. This was his first venture in biography; in some ways it was his best: it was easily his most successful.

Southey was passionately patriotic. His temper was pious, upright, impulsive and illogical: he had the heart of a schoolboy to his dying day. With Nelson he struck an easy sympathy: and if he made some mistakes about the deeper complexities which characterised the great admiral, they were too slight to disfigure the portrait. Southey on Nelson was the right man on the right subject; and the length of the work, which prohibited display of/

of documentary evidence, saved him from running too far down side tracks. None the less, it is longer than many biographies of today. It reached three editions in Southey's lifetime; and later editions have multiplied beyond count.

Evidence of Southey's fundamental sympathy for his hero starts from every page. He seems to have adopted the maxim laid down by Nelson for his midshipmen - "You must hate a Frenchman as you hate the devel". Had Nelson intercepted Napoleon before Egypt, the soldier "would have escaped the perpetration of those crimes which have incarnadined his soul with a deeper dye than that of the purple for which he committed them: those acts of perfidy, midnight murder, usurpation, and remorseless tyranny, which have consigned his name to universal execration, now and for ever".[1] He writes of the French "upon that element, on which, when the hour of trial comes, a Frenchman has no hope". There is a strain of hero worship which Southey never repeated, even in his Peninsular War; as when he says of Howe that "a higher compliment could not have been paid to any commander-in-chief, than to say of him, that he understood the merits of Nelson".

There are two points on which Southey can be accused of inaccuracy: they both illuminate his own ideals of honour and purity. One is the matter of Nelson's supposed perfidy at Naples; the other, of his relations with Lady Hamilton.

At/

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1 Life of Nelson. 'Everyman' edition, p.108.

At Naples, Nelson's authority was made to overrule a treaty with Neapolitan revolutionaries who occupied the commanding forts, by which they marched out with the honours of war. Nelson insisted on annulling the treaty: the garrisons were handed over as rebels to the vengeance of the Sicilian court, and Prince Francisco Caraccioli was hanged at the yard arm. Southey's comment is in these words:

> "A deplorable transaction! A stain upon the memory of Nelson, and the honour of England! To palliate it would be vain; to justify it would be wicked: there is no alternative, for one who will not make himself a participator in guilt, but to record the disgraceful story with sorrow and shame".[1]

With whatever diligence Southey sifted evidence, his mind was invariably made up beforehand. In these cases of the treaty and Caraccioli, he expounds the views commonly held in his own circle; this apparent judicial severity exemplifies a priori judgment. The truth lies between extremes. Nelson's conduct in the Caraccioli affair is in no legal sense irregular but in his secondary character as delegate from the King of Naples, he acted with an extravagant violence which Britain resented in the primary character of a British officer. That Nelson acted against his own convictions, under the influence of Lady Hamilton, is denied by later biographers,[2] but the examples of Neopolitan savagery are allowed to have influenced his conduct, which, however defensible, was extremely injudicious. In the matter of the treaty/

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1 Do. p.151.

2 "Life of Nelson" by Captain A.T. Mahan, U.S. Navy, London, 1899. and "Nelson", by Clennel Wilkinson; London, 1931.

treaty Southey was adopted what was clearly a mistaken view, and must be discredited.

He takes a lenient view of the relations between Nelson and Lady Hamilton. "He formed an infatuated attachment which totally weaned his affections from his wife. Further than this, there is no reason to believe that this unfortunate attachment was criminal".[1] That the child was "believed to be his daughter" is admitted but not stressed. Later biographers agree that the child was Nelson's; and that such mystery as existed was deliberately paraded, in order that Sir William Hamilton, who raised Emma from the gutter and was for years the friend of Nelson, might wear his horns with a difference.

The success of this biography is well merited. It has all the vitality of a life written by a sympathetic admirer; and all the popularity of a story about a likeable personality. It is a tale of action recounted in clear English prose. Southey complained of difficulty with the nautical terms, but the reader will find none. Neither in this work nor in any other does Southey show any capacity for heightening his narrative style when the excitement rises, but this baldness is effective. The staccato sentences of which Southry compounds his nattative paragraphs admirably suggest tension; and it is sustained by shifting the limelight to the different ships engaged in Nelson's actions.

Southey sometimes showed a curious blindness to the elementary rules/

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1 Do. p.149.

rules of paragraph construction. His style deserves highest praise, yet the oddest juxtapositions are to be found from time to time; as when he writes: "He wore a miniature of her also next his heart. Blackwood went on board the Victory about six".[1]

It is true that Southey's epic is mainly a schoolboy's classic. There is little room in the life of a man of action for close analysis of motive, or the study of psychological sub-conscious tendencies. There are no conversations to report, no views on the arts to examine. The Life of Nelson, in fact, belongs to the literature of escape, and to the landsman is as strange as Robinson Crusoe. It may seem odd to say that a biography is detached from reality, but Southey's Nelson gives that impression; and with all its merits, is, by the nature of the subject, excluded from the highest rank.

For this work, the author received £200. It has since proved the best seller of all his works, and one of the best in English literature. Such used to be the reward of success.

Seven years after the publication of Nelson, Southey re-entered the field of biography, and gave us Wesley. "I hope I come to it", he wrote, "with a sober judgment, a mature mind, and perfect freedom from all unjust prepossessions of any kind ..... I am not away of any possible circumstances which might tend to biad me one way or the other from the straight line of impartial truth./

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1 Do. P.253.

truth. For the bigot I shall be far too philosophical; for the libertine too pious. The Ultra-churchman will think me little better than a Methodist, and the Methodists will wonder what I am. Hagia hagiois will be my motto."[1] Again, he wrote: "I am no Methodist, no sectarian, no bigot, no formalist".[2] Accordingly, he paid no attention whatever to the protesting pamphlets[3] which followed the publication of his book.

There is one good reason, already stated, why the Life of Wesley should not suit the taste of the present generation: the fact that it is too largely a chronicle. Extended by copious extracts from Wesley's Journals, by a life of Whitfield, and by an elaborate survey of Methodism up to his own time, it made two octavo volumes without half the superficial attraction of the Nelson. On the other hand, it is "relieved and diversified", as the author said, by many personal opinions, expressed with vigorous clarity. But in these days of a religious tolerance that borders on apathy, Southey's unfashionable regard for Church establishment has no admirers. It affected the book too from a purely factual standpoint, for his view of Calvinism and non-conformity is unhistorical: though what is worse is his failure to understand the character of Wesley.

Southey's/

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[1] C.C.S. IV. 293-294.

[2] C.C.S. IV. 345.

[3] A letter to Robert Southey, Esq., Poet Laureate, etc. on his Life of the late Mr John Wesley (etc.) by William Okely, M.D. Bristol, 1820.
Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley (etc.) by Richard Watson, London, 1820.

Southey's bibliography refers to some thirty odd works representing 75 volumes; including the lives and writing of obscure divines, Methodist magazines, and Moravian Histories. As Johnson said of Grainger, "What industry could do has been provided, but natural deficiency cannot be supplied".

The book claims on the title-page to show the rise of Methodism: that is, to be a piece of ecclesiastical history; and one is entitled to expect a historian's attitude towards religious beliefs. It claims to tell the life of one of the most remarkable evangelistic preachers the world has known: Southey is not content always to be a mere chronicler, and every comment testifies to the shallowness of his own spiritual apprehension. Justifiable expectations are in both cases inevitably disappointed.

What was the keynote of Wesley's character?

"The love of power", says Southey, "was the ruling passion in his mind".[1] "No conqueror or poet was ever more ambitious than John Wesley".[2] "By becoming an itinerant, he acquired notoriety, which gratified his ambition".[3] The obstacles to union with the Moravians "would not have been insuperable, if there had not existed others ..... John Wesley could never have been more than a member of the Moravian Church: The first place was occupied and he was not born to hold a secondary one".[4]

Sometimes Southey qualifies this insistence on Wesley's ambition by suggesting that it was unconscious. It is difficult to know what he meant by this: ambition in any understood sense can/

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1 Life of Wesley, 1820 edition, vol.II, p.197.
2 Do. II. 304.
3 Do. I. 398.
4 Do. I. 351.

can only mean a conscious striving. It is certain that Wesley was gifted with genius, to organise the structure we know as the Methodist Church, but to suggest that consciously or otherwise he manipulated the crises which led to ultimate separation from the established Church is infamous.

Wesley's latest biographer,[1] without reference to Southey, writes: "The idea of a merely personal success was never present in the mind of Wesley at all". "Wesley was .... personally unknown to people of high rank .... Up to the very last year of his life he remained, in this sense, an obscure man .... In most of the fashionable memoirs of the period, there is no mention of Wesley at all". Ambition should be made of sterner stuff.

It requires no deep study to notice the incompatibility of ambitious aims with Wesley's quite illogical position as an opponent of the Church of England who refused to consider himself such, and could not see that he was virtually expelled from that Church. Southey's verdict cannot be substantiated.

Perhaps it was because Southey had no interest in music, that he overlooked Wesley's great gift to the nonconformists. That this austere, Pauline, evangelist should have encouraged the new practice of congregational singing by writing hymns and exhorting Charles and others to write and compose, casts such a highlight on his character that it is specially deserving of notice. Southey ignored it, as he ignored the literary aspect of Wesley's journals, which he read only to quote.

Southey/

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1 "John Wesley", by C.E. Vulliamy, London, 1931.

Southey cannot mention the phenomena of religious conversion without losing his temper. He brings abuse, clumsy satire, and a kind of holy indignation to bear against the extravagances which accompanied Wesley's earliest appearances as a field preacher. Of New Testament conversions, he says: "They were necessarily instantaneous, because they were produced by plain miracles", but that evangelists might make the same claim for all cases of instantaneous conversion, he denied. Faith healing in any form, he denounced as fraud. "The ecclesiastical authorities ought to have a power of sending such people to Bedlam, for the sake of religion and decency, and for the general good; but such madmen in England are suffered to go abroad, and bite whom they please with impunity".[1] This hardly exemplifies the freedom from all prepossession which Southey boasted.

In the historical part of his survey, Southey is guilty of similar bias. Of the irreverence, apathy, simony, and faction which permeated the established church in the early decades of the eighteenth century, he says nothing. We hear nothing of the neglected duty of the church to provide buildings and pastors for the colliers of Bristol and South Wales. Yet, however far Wesley provoked the establishment, it remains true that had the Established Church made any effort to cover the uncharted areas, he would have found his occupation gone. Southey minimises the importance of Wesley"s work in this respect, and by way of amends, attaches/

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Do. II.339.

attaches a ridiculous importance to his supposed opposition to absolute predestination.

Southey wrote:

"In the words of Wesley, who has stated the case with equal force and truth, 'the sum of all is this: one in twenty (suppose) of mankind, are elected; nineteen is twenty are reprobated! The elect shall be saved, do what they will; the reprobate shall be damned, do what they can! This is the doctrine of Calvinism, for which Diabolism would be a better name; and in the worst and bloodiest idolatry that ever defiled the earth, there is nothing so horrid, so monstrous, so impious as this".[1]

He might have quoted Burns:

O Thou wha in the Heavens dost dwell,
Wha, as it pleases best thysel',
Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,
A' for thy glory,
And no for ony guid or ill
They've done afore thee!

Now, although this was a doctrine preached in the mid and late 18th century, monstrously and impiously, it was emphatically not the doctrine of Calvinism, as Southey ought to have known and explained.

John Calvin's great gift to the Reformed Churches was an anchor of assurance in the fact of God's election. In the Catholic Church, salvation depended upon sacraments: Calvin transferred salvation from an act of repentance to an act of God. If it was a dead doctrine in the 18th century, it was none the less a vital discovery in the sixteenth; and there is nothing at all in Calvin's writings to suggest that he denied salvation to the majority./

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1 Do. I. 370-1.

majority. What a religious historian should have pointed out, is that where Methodism emphasises experimental, Calvinism emphasises theocentric Christianity. In glorifying Wesley as the opponent of 18th century Diabolism, Southey passed over Wesley's letter of 1768, in which he wrote:

> "I did attack predestination twenty years ago; and I do not believe now any predestination which implies irrespective reprobation. But I do not believe it is necessarily subversive of all religion. I think hot disputes are much more so; therefore I never willingly dispute with anyone about it".

It is important to notice Southey's errors in the treatment of Methodism, for they exhibit his fundamental incapacity to treat doctrinal questions, which take up so large a part of his later writings. His mind was neither logical nor deeply imaginative: lacking both these qualities he could never reach the front rank.

The merits of the Wesley are easily assessed. The clear style, which makes the narrative continuously agreeable reading, even when the view is biassed, deserves high praise. When further allowance is made for bias, the extracts from Wesley's journals seem well chosen and suitably distributed. The very fact of the author's attempting to explain Wesley, puts the work on a high contemporary level; and the common-sense attitude inspiring the vigorous attacks which punctuate it, is remarkably refreshing, if modern biography of the school of Strachey has not satiated the palate. Finally, the reader is always conscious of the author's resources: he speaks as one having authority, and there is no suggestion of a hack work botched up for the booksellers.

Apart/

Apart from the major issues already discussed, there is room for complaint. Southey's attempts at humour or satire could well be spared us, for periphrasis is seldom funny, and it is dangerous to joke about religion. There is sometimes a display of erudition where it is pointless, and often an aggressiveness beyond the need.

The book is on a larger scale than the Nelson, and falls far short of perfection; but as the product of an age when biography was unfashionable, it is more important. Coleridge said it was his favourite biography, and though it will never again have such admirers, it constitutes a notable milestone between Boswell and Lockhart.

Wesley was an opus majus; and when he came to edit Cowper, nearly fifteen years later, Southey regarded himself as a biographer. "I am fond of biography", he had written, "and shall probably one day publish a series of English lives". The life of Cowper was prefaced to the only complete edition of the poet's works: Southey was to have had 1000 guineas for it, but the publishers failed, and he only received £800.

This book shows the usual traces of Southey's illimitable view when he started on a piece of writing. In fact all sense of proportion is lost. He offers us lives, none too brief, of Thornton, Colman, Lloyd, and Churchill, although "no intimacy appears to have subsisted between Cowper and Churchill", and very little relevance is proved for the others. We have also in full, Cowper's life of his brother, and an interpolated chapter, "Sketches of the Progress of English Poetry from Chaucer to Cowper";/

Cowper"; which is more interesting to the student of Southey than of Cowper, containing as it does such characteristic assertions as "The age from Dryden to Pope is the worst age of English Poetry"[1] and, "Dryden was not well read in his own art."[2] Then there are intolerable digressions; as that naively introduced by a mention of East Dereham:

> "In the seventh century, Withburga, daughter of the East Anglian King Anna, (who was famous for the number of his canonised children) removed from Holkham to an oratory which she had built for herself and her maidens at this place, then only a village, and called Derrega. Here she gave herself entirely to contemplation . . ."[3]

And so it goes on for two octavo pages.

On Cowper himself, there is a vast accumulation, wrought into a tortuous documented narrative, as remarkable for its inclusions as its omissions. There is little or no criticism, the relations with Mrs Unwin and Lady Austen are barely sketched, and the pet hares are dismissed in a sentence. The character of Cowper was too complex to be understood by Southey. He wrote down the stricken deer as a valetudinarian. The key of the book is in these sentences:

> "The same degree of mental suffering is not produced by imaginary causes of distress as by real ones . . . The distress, even when the patient retains, like Cowper, the full use of his reason upon other points, is in this respect like that of a dream, - a dream indeed, from which the sufferer can neither wake nor be awakened; but it pierces no deeper, and there seems to be the same dim consciousness of its unreality."[4]

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1. Life of Cowper; 1835 edition, vol. II p. 138.

2. Do. II. 131. 3. Do. III. 202.

4. Do. II. 70.

"He alludes . . . to a notion which possessed him now, that he should never die, but was speedily to be carried away in the body to some place of torment. I have already observed that such notions as the latter, affect the insane person who expresses them no more than if he were in a dream, probably not so much."1

Mental suffering is always produced by the imagination, and is intense in the same proportion. The distinction Southey draws between real and imaginary causes of distress, cannot affect the degree of suffering. "In the year when I wrote the Task", said Cowper, "I was very often most supremely unhappy; and am, under God, indebted in a good part to that work for not having been much worse."

In extenuation, it has to be remembered that Southey's wife at this time had to be removed to an asylum, and it must certainly have been easier for him to take this view of insanity. There are passages in Cowper which, he says, "would not have been written unless I had something more than a theoretical knowledge of this most awful of all maladies."2 Southey spent his own later days in a dream from which there was no awakening; but madness has many forms, and Southey's affliction was at the remotest pole from Cowper's mania. "Within the centre of Cowper's consciousness remained unaltered the conviction that he was damned, that every day that passed brought him a day nearer to an eternity of torment; . . . . . . he laboriously devised the whole elaborate scheme . . . . which was his mode of life, in order to distract himself/

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1. Do. III. 196.

2. C.C.S. VI. 295.

himself from the frightful fate that awaited him. But the certainty of that fate remained." So writes Cowper's latest biographer.[1]

Again to mitigate the tragic horror of Cowper's breakdown in 1760, further intensified by Mrs Unwin's stroke and her altered personality after 1791, the highlights are dimmed in Southey's narrative. He makes the end easy, denying almost that every hour of Cowper's last six years held the prospect of a living damnation in a material hell from which there could be no escape.

Southey denies positively that the final separation between Cowper and Lady Austen was in any way due to jealousy on the part of Mrs Unwin; or that marriage was ever contemplated between Cowper and Mrs Unwin: both assertions are considered wrong by later writers.

The most direct criticism offered is an explanation of the popularity of the Task. The hymns and satires are barely mentioned; the Homer is ignored. So to divorce a man of letters from his writings/ is surely to burke a biographer's duty.

This farrago of documents and digressions, misconstructions and misunderstandings, fails to make a great book. As Southey at this time was 61 years old, and three years later showed evident signs of failing powers, it may perhaps not unfairly be suggested that the failure had already set in.

The lack of control evident in his treatment of sources is reflected even in the style. Punctuation and paragraphing, ever Southey's weakness, are more than usually eccentric; and he reaches incredible/

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1. "The Stricken Deer, or the Life of Cowper", by David Cecil, London, 1929.

incredible depth of complexity in such a sentence as this:

> "The last of that school of dramatists, to whom, far inferior as all, and especially the later ones, were to their mighty master, no other language has produced any that are either like, or comparable, lived to see a French school introduced in the country of Shakespeare."[1]

These are heavy indictments, which, if the book is to be judged from a standpoint more nearly contemporary, demand qualification.

Southey was writing in a garrulous age and old age. The 19th century writers with some notable exceptions had jettisoned the ideals of precision and economy set up by the age of Swift. Digression was welcomed for its own sake, and display of learning was commendable. The Life of Cowper must have seemed a feast of literary entertainment; and had the advantage of being compiled by the most industrious, conscientious, and yet typical man of the age, whose authority on matters of fact was indisputable and whose opinion on matters of literary controversy was unfailingly palatable. The style, as apart from the method of the book, and with the exceptions referred to, was characteristically clear and pungent. If Southey avoided the higher flights of rhetoric, it was the better for the narrative. By refusing to make a tragedy of Cowper, he won the approval of unemotional Englishmen; and a side thrust or so at Calvinism or Nonconformity could do no harm. It was gratifying to learn that, sad as Cowper's story was, "he had never to complain of injustice, nor of injuries, nor/

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1. Do. II. 111.

nor even of neglect," and the great and compensatory goodness of God was surely shown in that "to the very calamity which made him 'leave the herd' it was owing that the genius which has made him the most popular poet of his age, and secures that popularity from fading away, was developed." So sane and uncontrovertible is this summary that almost one accepts it: but Cowper was not sane, and what consolation is undying fame to a man in the torment of undying fire?

Southey's Cowper is a pedestrian book for undiscriminating minds; but then the poets' Cowper was a man to whom Southey was totally unqualified to do justice.

This criticism of Southey's biographies may fittingly conclude with an examination of his Lives of the British Admirals, as "the most gainful work upon which he was ever employed." "For the first time in my life," he wrote, "I am provided with means for twelve months expenditure beforehand." The sum gained was £1,000; but as the volumes appeared over six years, the annual rate was not high.

The title page threatens an 'introductory view of the naval history of England' - a threat which was amply fulfilled. There is something ludicrous about an attempt to write the history of our earliest British ancestors, of the Angles, Saxons and Jutes, of Alfred and the Danes, from a naval point of view. Every schoolboy knows the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle reference to Alfred's long ships, but while the sea has profoundly influenced our history, to talk of our 'navy' is misleading.

Half/

Half way through, Southey wrote: "I shall be glad when this work is completed, because, though of all my books I have been best paid for it, it is that which I have taken the least interest in composing, and which anyone who would have bestowed equal diligence upon it, might have executed equally well."[1] This is fair criticism upon the first two volumes, unless we care to add that a little less diligence might have allowed the reader to see the wood behind the trees. Again, we find him writing: "Just now I am very busy, finishing a third volume of Naval History. This is my sheet anchor."[2] The anchor has begun to drag. Fortunately, in this third and in the fourth volumes, Southey turned to biography, and forthwith produced some classic fragments.

Like Nelson, the Admirals have been hacked and reprinted to make school readers for boys. Only in this form could they survive, for Murray's ugly volumes lie rotting on library shelves: the inconsistent brilliance of the book checked any call for a second edition. In parts, it is disappointingly dull. Sometimes where the facts are thrilling, imagination can amend them, but Southey did nothing to brighten his narrative style. The staccato sentences which admirably create the atmosphere of tension before a battle, become too metallic to suggest the roll and thunder of broadsides; and having only one hero at a time, Southey cannot here diversify the scene as he did elsewhere, by showing in quick succession/

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1. C.C.S. VI. 285.

2. C.C.S. VI. 235.

succession many of these individual encounters which make up the inferno of a great action. Grenville's struggle, the 'one against fifty-three,' reads like an Admiralty report. It is disappointing too to find Raleigh's dreams of El Dorado dismissed contemptuously, when we have thought of them as golden romance; and the theories of trade with which Southey punctuates his story, often illogical or ridiculous, must either weary or disgust. Too often he repeats those errors of juxtaposition mentioned before. An excellent example concludes a dignified account of Raleigh's execution, when without lifting the pen, Southey goes on: "The great efflux of blood astonished the spectators, and they inferred that with so vigorous a constitution as this was supposed to imply, he might have attained to a good old age."[1] All his life, Southey lacked the power to discriminate.

That 'your easy writing's cursed hard reading' cannot be the moral of the Admirals, for the best parts are those fragments of stirring narrative which consist in essence of older authorities paraphrased into Southey's English. It is to be hoped that the modern schoolboy is not denied easy access to such fine examples of English prose. The book as a whole is dead, but these extracts deserve more than museum fame.

To quarrel upon matters of fact with writings a century old is perhaps to exceed the scope of literary criticism. In this discussion, effort has been made to keep criticism of facts within limits that are fair to the author. On a purely factual assessment, all Southey's works are damned; but some have/

1. Lives of the Admirals, IV. p. 438.

have other claims to salvation.

The Life of Wesley, as combining a high aim with a good measure of achievement, ranks first of these biographies. Southey's views may be opposed, but his control of his materials in the expression of these views was never better. Never stylistic, his prose is always characteristically perspicuous, and the rounded fullness of his paragraphs is saved from rhetoric by the pungency of their component sentences. Alike in outspoken comment, and in the absence of uncritical adulation, he is almost unique among contemporary biographers. If Wesley can never be a standard classic, it certainly deserves more notice than it receives.

The ever popular Life of Nelson ranks second. The economy of the narrative was in a measure forced on the author: it accounts for its continuous success. To be a schoolboys' favourite is not the highest praise; and the work cannot have the importance of the more ambitious Wesley, but in other respects it is superior. The verdict of posterity has been no more than just. In a modified degree this is also applicable to the fragmentary Lives of the Admirals.

The Life of Cowper is ambitious and bad. The Cromwell and Bunyan are not ambitious, neither are they good. Southey's sources contributed half these works; the rest stands as an interesting example of an admirable prose style.

Other biographies may be classified with Pope's Shakespeare as "editions of no account."

Reference has been made to Southey's belief that he would be remembered as a historian. He was widely read in mediaeval chronicles, European history, and foreign travel books, which assured a solid foundation for historical works of importance, and no one had yet exploded the myth that an accretion of well or ill substantiated rumours and beliefs constitutes a valuable contribution to historical studies. Accordingly, with an unequalled stock of such data beside him, Southey in his thirties embarked upon the works which were to ensure the gratitude of posterity.

His lifelong ambition was to write an all embracing History of Portugal - "a subject," as Johnson said of cider, "of which it is difficult to say what could recommend it" - and to this unwritten masterpiece his History of Brazil bears something of the relation of the Excursion to Wordsworth's unfinished trilogy. The obvious irrelevance of the subject to English interests was alone sufficient to justify that neglect of Southey's Brazil which he anticipated and felt, and for which he tried to find compensation in this letter of 1819:

> "The third and last volume of my Opus Majus will be published in two or three weeks; . . . . What effect will it produce? . . . . None that will be heard of. . . . a work which could not possibly become either popular or profitable. And is this all? No, ... I should deal insincerely with you if I did not add, that ages hence it will be found among those works which are not destined to perish; and secure for me a remembrance in other countries as well as my own; that it will be read in the heart of S. America . . . . . and be to the Brazilians what the work of Herodotus is to Europe."[1]

The/

1. C.C.S. IV. 354.

The History of Brazil is the most considerable and flagrant example of Southey's utter lack of any standard of values. His own interests were paramount, and his critical and selective faculties lay dormant under the superincumbent mass of documents and notes from recondite authorities which it had long been his passion to collect. His interest in Spanish and Portuguese history was accidental in origin and eccentric in character, and he was as incompetent to write a proportioned historical narrative as to write a logical statement of contemporary politics. The one anecdote that relates these quarto volumes to the world of affairs is so humerous that it agrees aptly with the fantastic yet colossal monument of misdirected energy that constitutes the whole.

> "Did I tell you that my History of Brazil has led the English merchants who trade with Monte Video to claim an exemption upon certain duties; the Attorney General pronounces that they have established a prima facie claim to that exemption; the officers of the customs are instructed to act upon that opinion; and one house alone saves £1200 by this, by their own statement to me."1

The book appeared in three volumes. The first deals mainly with the semi-piratical expeditions of the early Portuguese navigators, the second with the Dutch and Portuguese conflicts in Brazil, and the third with the adventures of Portuguese Jesuits and politicians in the New World. There is of necessity some overlapping, there is also garrulity and redundance. "If the value of an historical work be in proportion to the store of facts which/

1. C.C.S. VI. 211-212.

which it has first embodied, to the fidelity with which they are recorded, and to the addition which thereby is made to the stores of human knowledge, then may I affirm of the present History, imperfect as it is, that in these respects has not often been equalled, and will not easily be surpassed." [1] So says Southey in his valediction. He forgets the relative value of facts, and the necessity of historical interpretation. His volumes exhibit the credulity of a child with the prejudice and bigotry most typical of Robert Southey himself.

What has really captured his imagination and brought him to this sacrificial task of writing was a vision of the past, when a nation small in numbers set her flags at the outposts of the earth and men with the blood of the first knights in Europe running in their veins looked out over the naked Atlantic for help that came late or not at all and died with the sonnets of Camoens on their lips. The Portuguese tenure of Brazil against enemies within and without over a remarkable period of years set a seal upon her fame, yet of this glorious history Southey manages to convey pitifully little. Facts, half truths and myths are here heaped up, pressed down and shaken together to a heavy and unpalatable consistency, leavened with bitter attacks on Catholicism, the Dutch, and British ministries of the 18th century.

Southey turned his batteries of heavy satire on the accounts of/

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1. History of Brazil, 1st Edition, vol. III. p. 879.

of miracles worked by the Jesuits and their converts: he seldom admitted any compromise between miracle and falsehood and damned the Catholics with an ultra Protestant fervour. His moral suspicions were awakened by the criticisms of one Robeiro on the fable of the American Amazons. Although the stories that compose Southey's pseudo-history show the primitive instincts of lust and cruelty in violent activity, yet he observes primly that Robeiro's arguments are not nice:

> "He maintains that in such a climate, no community of women could possibly be induced to live apart from the other sex. But he must have perused history to little purpost, who has not learnt, that political institutions, whatever may be their power of exalting human nature, are capable of moulding, perverting, and even extinguishing its instincts. The argument is also disgraceful to its author and inapplicable to its subject."[1]

This is nonsense.

Southey had no gift whatever for the interpretation of character or motive; and he could not take men as he found them, but judged their conduct by standards compounded from his own interests. Thus he accuses Raleigh, here as in the Admirals, of baiting the popular cupidity with tales of El Dorado and exploiting it to finance enterprises for his own personal glorification. "It is not possible that Raleigh could have delieved the existence of such a kingdom"[2] he says, while himself credulously repeating such extravagances as the fisherman's tale of the talishas:

"In/

1. Do. I. 608
2. Do. I. 373.

> "In the river Camuta the talinhas were remarkably abundant; they were caught there simply by shewing a light in the canoe after sunset, when they jumped in in such numbers, that it is said if the light were not extinguished in time they would sink the boat."

It was inevitable that the Jesuits should suffer; and he accuses the Dutch of dishonourable dealing with regard for the times or the character either of the Dutch, against whom he was briefed, or of the Portuguese, whom he favoured unduly.

If to bring together in one place the raw materials from which history is written were a great feat in itself, Southey would deserve well of us; but as it stands the History of Brazil is too amorphous and indigestible.

Intended to form a chapter in Brazil, for which it was deemed too long and irrelevant, the Expedition of Orsua and the Crimes of Aguirre appeared first in the Edinburgh Annual Register. Irrelevance is the last impediment which one would expect Southey to appreciate, and the History was not so short that a score of pages would unbalance it; yet withheld it was, to be reprinted with additions as a small 16mo in 1821. It relates a frightful history of ambition attaining supreme power in a tiny community by remorseless cruelty; a truly remarkable tale of rebellion and bloodshed; but the death of a bad man cannot be tragic, and besides, the final collapse of Aguirre's rebellion is a pure anti-climax. The earlier events of themselves sustain a high degree of dramatic intensity, and Southey's plain style suits well with the theme. Rarely does he weaken the narrative by phrases such as "Lope de Aguirre, who had now removed the last impediment to his wicked and insane desires."

Such/

Such commentary on such a tale is needless. Perhaps the only parallel to this horror is among the tales of the buccaneers of the eighteenth century, and taken as a complete story it is eminently readable. But the three quarto volumes of Brazil provide a surfeit: Aguirre was lucky to be withheld.

Southey's other history was his Peninsular War, and this we are able to compare with a rival: Napier's War in the Peninsula.[1]

In equity it must be admitted that both books are biassed, though Napier's bias is certainly the least harmful. Writing as a regular soldier of Wellington's army, he took little pains to disguise his contempt for the regular Spanish and Portuguese forces, rather reluctantly admitted the value of the Spanish guerilla tactics, and criticised in no measured terms the British statesmen and ambassadors whose ignorance and parsimony considerably harassed the general. Southey on the other hand regarded the campaign as a Spanish War of Independence: the fact that his narrative was necessarily more concerned with the movements of British troops did not deter him from emphasising this aspect of the war. Further his intense hatred of Napoleon led him into childishnesses which would have been better avoided; and finally he devoted an illegitimate amount of space to attacks on the/

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1. History of the War in the Peninsula and in the South of France, from the year 1807 to the year 1814, by Major-General Sir W.F.P. Napier, K.C.B., Colonel 27th Regiment (etc.) London, 1828.

the British pacifists, whose influence was almost negligible.

It was perhaps Napier's professional interest as much as a genuine will to deal fairly that made him almost an apologist for Napoleon. He is ever careful to point out that departures by the French marshals from the instructions of their general gave Wellington the opportunities of which he took victorious advantage. This by itself is enough to ensure an unbiassed view of the purely military operations, utterly at variance with Southey's spiteful spelling of Buonaparte and his refusal to refer to Joseph except as 'the Interloper." Southey's history devotes a grossly disproportionate space to such features of the campaign as can be made to show the French in a bad light, and in consequence the military operations and manoeuvres of troops are often treated too scantily. In describing battles, the same importance attaches to individuals as in the *Iliad* or *Maldon*: his passion for finding a place for any oddment of information he had to bestow was not restrained; and we are treated to brief histories of such towns as he has occasion to mention. The general effect is as of a prose epic, full of panegyric for the victors, satire for the losers, and epitaphs for the dead. Too often, moreover, he neglects the capaign to discuss internal Spanish politics: he has thirty quarto pages on the reformation of the Spanish Constitution in 1811, when Napier says: "With the excellencies and defects of that instrument the present History has indeed little concern, but the results were not in accord with the spirit of the contrivance."

On/

On certain important matters of fact, notably Moore's famous retreat from Corunna, the actions of Mr Frere,[1] our Minister in Spain, and the battles fought by Soult at Toulouse and Thouvenot at Bayonne after Napoleon's abdication, there seems little doubt that Southey is seriously wrong; and although the fault is self evident, he denies favouring the Spaniards in a letter dated 1827:

> "Surely I have never dissembled nor extenuated the cruelties of the Spaniards; and it is upon the leaders of the French army that my reproach falls, who had their full share in Bonaparte's guilt. I have not relied rashly upon Spanish and Portuguese authorities, but the scale on which I have related events in which the British army had no share is not what —— likes. . . . . I take my side, and that warmly, but my desire is to be just and so far strictly impartial. . . . . . In my third volume I shall bear your observations in mind . . . . you will not do me the injustice to suppose that they needed an apology.[2]

The only consequence of the 'observations' seems to have been a crowding of the later events from Badajos to the end. Southey takes but half as much space as Napier in the conclusion, yet he finds time to devote three pages to the shooting of Mr Percival in the House of Commons of which Napier disposes in one line.

An actual comparison of the two Histories provides remarkably good entertainment. An edition with parallel columns would be amusing: there is room here for some examples.

In/

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1. J. Hookham Frere, translator; and parodist of Southey in the "Anti-Jacobin"

2. C.C.S. V. 320.

In May 1808, during a tumult in Madrid, two Spanish officers named Daoiz and Velarde fired a volley of grape-shot on a column of French infantry crossing the Maravelles. Southey wrote:

> "Little could they gave foreseen, when they went that morning to their posts, the fate which awaited them and the renown which was to be its reward . . . . . never did any men act with more perfect self-devotion."[1]

Napier calls them "two Spanish officers in a state of great excitement from drink."

In the same year, a series of notes passed between Britain and France. "Mr Canning's replies," says Southey, "were equally decided and dignified." "The insulting tone of Mr Canning's communication," observes Napier, "was retaliated by the French minister."

At Talavera, three battalions of Spanish troops, comprising ten thousand infantry and all the artillery, broke and fled before a small French cavalry demonstration. Southey tells us, that "the vacancy was promptly filled up; and these very men the next day bore their full share of the battle, and behaved as steadily as the best troops could have done." Napier bitterly remarks that "in the next day's fight, the Spanish army was less by six thousand men than it should have been, and the redoubt tin the centre was silent for want of guns."

In an action at Rolica, Southey tells us, "the superiority of the British troops was finely shown." "This fight," says Napier/

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1. History of the Peninsular War. 1st edition. Vol.I. p.247.

Napier, "was very honourable to both sides."

Finally, of Sir John Moore, whom he could never forgive for retreating, Southey wrote:-

> "Had he been less circumspect, had he looked more ardently forward, and less anxiously around him, and on all sides, and behind; - had he been more confident in himself and in his army, and impressed with less respect for the French generals, he would have been more equal to the difficulties of the situation. Despondency was the radical weakness of his mind."[1]

Napier defends Moore's conduct to the last detail, and concludes by quoting Wellington:

> "In Sir John Moore's campaign I can see but one error; when he advanced to Sahagun he should have considered it as a movement of retreat, and sent officers to the rear to mark and prepare the halting places for every brigade. But this opinion . . . . is formed after the event."

If the professional soldier's six volumes did nothing more than record the events of the war for posterity, Southey's quartos might have ranked the higher; but Napier was master of an English style as pure as Southey, unencumbered by mannerisms of uncontrolled prejudice, and infinitely clearer when employed on the complications of a military action. Southey returned to his practised habit of describing actions in terms of individual encounters: the large scale operations of the troops are lost sight of behind a screen of personalities. It may be objected/

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1. Do. I. 805

objected too, that he saw less of the horror of war than Napier knew and remembered, but this is a present day criticism. Southey's capacity to handle the full rounded period and to sustain a fine metaphor, however, ensures that parts at least of this work will be remembered. No better piece of writing can be quoted than his famous denunciation of the pacifists of 1807. He describes first the religious pacifists, and continues:

> "This was a pitiable delusion: but more extraordinary was the weakness of those, who having been the friends of France at the commencement of the revolution, when they believed that the cause of liberty was implicated in her success, looked with complacency now upon the progress which oppression was making in the world, because France was the oppressor. They had turned their faces towards the east, in the morning, to worship the rising sun, and now when it was evening they were looking eastward still, obstinately affirming that still the sun was there. Time had passed on; circumstances were changed; nothing remained stationary except their understandings; and because they had been incapable of deriving wisdom from experience, they called themselves consistent; and because they were opposed in every thing to the views of their government, the hopes of their countrymen, and the honour and interest of their country, they arrogated to themselves the exclusive praise of patriotism."[1]

This is supremely fine prose of its kind: it is perhaps ungrateful to record that the author knew its value so well as to quote or repeat it twice in other works.

The writing of history involves a selection, which is in turn determined by personal factors. Southey had studied the/

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1. Do. I. 57.

the progress of events from his eyrie in Cumberland, and was entirely dependent on documents for his information; he was the author of a Portuguese history, and self styled champion of the Peninsulars: it was to be expected therefore that his narrative would cover a wider field than Napier's. The political manoeuvres in Spain and in England came more naturally under his survey, and received deserved attention. But unfortunately he could not select. His judgment on matters political was notoriously untrustworthy, and there can be no assurance that the Spanish documents he followed were in this respect more reliable. The modern reader feels rightly that the proportion of the History is impaired by the detailed exposition of Spanish constitutional systems never effective and utterly divorced from the fighting, and that reports of House of Commons debates, however damaging to the reputation of forgotten personalities, have no place in this work. He feels that the emphasis which Southey uses is probably misplaced, because too hysterical, and that a man who describes a battle like a tournament must fail to achieve a well proportioned history of a campaign. A contemporary critic[1], writing before the publication of the third volume, observed that "Mr Southey's History of the Peninsular War is already dead: indeed the second volume was dead-born."

There/

1. Macaulay, Review of Sir Thomas More in the Edinburgh Review, January, 1830.

There can be no doubt that Napier's work deserved to become standard; and Southey's history falls to historical insignificance. Some passages will be remembered by students of literature, and the rest forgotten.

His colossal labours in history have added nothing to Southey's reputation either in this country, or so far as is known, abroad. Brazil and the Peninsular War are both well below the front rank, from any standpoint, and can only hope to be known as 'among his prose works.' There is nothing inexplicable in his failure to understand his own best bent or to judge the value of his contributions to literature, but it is a little pathetic that these six unwieldy quartos should have failed financially even to assist a man whose deserts were considerably higher than his receipts. For the later work he got £1,000, and it took ten years to write; the copyright remained with the publisher.

It has been an ungrateful task to expose the weaknesses of these works, but if the conclusion is reserved for praise of his anonymous masterpiece, this is not undertaken in any spirit of concession to reputation. Nor is it done with much hope of convincing the reader. Most of us are more easily convinced that the books we have not read are worthless than that they are masterpieces; and though Southey's name is familiar to-day to every moderately well read person, not one in fifty has read a line of his prose or connects him with The Doctor &c. - the best book he ever wrote. If Southey deserves greatness

to-day/

to-day it is primarily on account of this work, and perhaps despite appearances, Bell's abridged reprint of 1930 has done something to refurbish his dilapidated laurels.

The Doctor &c. was published anonymously, its seven volumes appearing at intervals between 1834 and 1847. "It is the writer's determination to remain unknown," Southey wrote, "any they who may suppose that 'By certain signs set here in sundry place' they have discovered him, will deceive themselves. He must be a desperate mannerist who can be detected by his style, and a poor proficient in his art if he cannot at any time so vary it, as to put the critic upon a false scent." Poe was indeed deceived by the excellence of the book into saying that it could not be Southey's; others have read the 'Postscript' with indulgence. The author, however, was at some pains to preserve his incognito. Charles Southey wrote:

> "When the first two volumes were published, and arrived, bearing 'from the Author', written in a disguised hand, I well remember my father putting them aside with a kind of disdain, with the expression 'some novel, I suppose,' although to seize upon them, and cut them open would have been a great delight to him."[1]

There are many references in Southey's correspondence to the authorship, which became more obvious as volume followed volume. Charles tells us:

> "When he first determined upon anonymous publication, it is certain he did not expect that the authorship would be so uninformly and confidently ascribed to him as proved to be the case, otherwise he might have hesitated at a/

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1. C.C.S. VI. 227.

> a step which ultimately involved him in so many statements, which, if not amounting to an absolute denial of the fact, yet sounded like it . . . . He was himself from the first determined that this should not be like the authorship of the Waverley Novels - a secret and no secret."1

Secrecy was impossible, for style and matter alike proclaimed Southey's responsibility.

If the Bhow Begum inspired The Doctor as described in chapter 7.A.1., it was Southey's life of tireless industry and the unparallelled stores of knowledge thus won that continued it to seven volumes. Seldom can there have been such a knowledgeable man as Southey, and The Doctor best justifies what sometimes seems a life of misdirected effort.

In its beginnings the work owed something to Tristram Shandy. The opening chapters, preceded by a postscript, are numbered in reverse order from 7 to 1; chapter 1 follows, then an ante-preface and preface before chapter 2. A description of Nobs and the baby precedes a description of Dove's marriage; even at chapter 77 there is a Leonard and Margaret interlude that recalls Sterne by its sentimentality. Frequently the author practised the apostrophe to his readers, in the second person singular. But odd as the work continued to be, Southey gradually shed these more obviously borrowed eccentricities, and relied rather on the recondite nature of the information he gave, and on his humorous circumlocutions. There is some attempt at characterisation at the start, but it is soon forgotten, and Dr Dove is never remotely so/

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1. C.C.S. VI. 338.

so clear and lovable a personality as Uncle Toby or Corporal Trim: rather he is a reflection of Southey himself.

Nothing would be easier than to give a wrong impression of The Doctor. It is far from being a weak imitation of Tristram Shandy. In spite of the re-employment of old material, it is not a glorified commonplace book. This warning is necessary before it is noted that here we meet again the Water Poet, Andrew Bell, Wesley, Toplady and others; the semi-satiric references to 'Political Economists, Utilitarians, Futilitarians;' and some rougher references to Byron, Malthus, Lancaster's Schools, and persons of the wrong political coliur. These with the typical pages of Doncastriana and the cross references to works on which Southey was variously engaged, are enough to make the authorship plainly evident, but the old materials are transmuted into something rich and strange by a different handling. There is no attempt at argument or polemic; the continuity is through a seemingly endless chain of associations, winding in and about through topical, literary, historical and philosophical allusion with a fluency at once bewildering and delightful, and in the mass, deeply impressive. Sometimes Southey's periphrasis and his passion for puns will bring a sicklier smile and a doubt of his genius. Our earlier estimate of his humour is not amended by such specimens as this:- a horse chesnut tree being planted on the grave of Nobs:

> "Hadst thou been a bay horse, Nobs, it would have been a bay tree instead. But though the tree which was thy monument was deciduous and has perhaps been doomed to fall by some irreverent or ignorant hand, thy honours are perennial."

Compare/

Compare this with a letter written on the death of Southey's cat:

> "As we have no catacombs here, he will be decently interred in the orchard, and cat-mint planted on his grave."[1]

Southey was seldom really witty, but his rather child-like sense of fun is reflected in a style at once clear and quaintly flippant, easily read, and only at long last dull by the cumulative effect of so much diffuseness. Some of his anecdotes are matchless; not so much striking in their climax as flavoured in their narration. Southey rather avoided stories with a point, but humour is a quality as well as a technique. We can all offer thanks for The Three Bears - a chapter in The Doctor. In Southey's original version, there is no Goldilocks, but an Old Woman whose final Antigonus-like exit, pursued by three bears, leaves our sympathy exactly where it should be - with the householders. After all, Southey had a better sense of drama than those who introduced the little girl to distract us.

Quotation cannot do justice to a book which aims at being garrulous and diffuse, but two extracts are here appended; one to show the fertility of allusion, the other as exemplifying the rhythmic smoothness of Southey's style.

> "Well, our Little Woman was sleeping on a bank beside the way, when a Pedlar happened to come by. Not such a Pedlar as the one in Mr Wordsworth's Excursion, who was what Randolph's Pedlar describes himself to be, 'a noble, generous, understanding, royal, magnificent, religious, heroical and thrice illustrious Pedlar;' if Randolph had been a Highlander this description might have been adduced as a proof of the prophetic/

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1. C.C.S. VI. 211.

prophetic faculty, - a second sight of that glorious poem, the well established fame of which and the effect which it has produced and is producing upon the present generation both of authors and readers must be so peculiarly gratifying to Lord Jeffrey. No; he was such a Pedlar as Autolycus, and if the Little Woman lived in the days of King Leontes, it may possibly have been Autolycus himself; for he had 'a quick eye and a nimble hand,' and was one who 'held Honesty for a fool and Trust, his brother, for a very simple gentleman.' The distance between Bohemia and England makes no difficulty in this supposition. Gypsies used to be called Bohemians; and more over as Uncle Toby would have told Trim, Bohemia might have been a maritime country in those days; and when he found it convenient to return thither, the readiest way was to get on board ship."

"Perhaps of all the works of man sun-dials and church-clocks are those which have conveyed most feeling to the human heart; the clock more than the sun-dial because it speaks to the ear as well as to the ey, and by night as well as by day. Our forefathers understood this, and therefore they not only gave a Tongue to Time, but provided that he should speak often to us and remind us that the hours are passing. Their quarter boys and their chimes were designed for this moral purpose as much as the memento which is so commonly seen upon an old clock-face, - and so seldom upon a new one. I never hear chimes that they do not remind me of those which were formerly the first sounds I heard in the morning, which used to quicken my step on my way to school, and which announced my release from it, when the same tune methought had always a merrier import. When I remember their tones, life seems to me like a dream, and a train of re-collections arises, which if it were allowed to have its course would end in tears."

What cannot be shown is the versatility of the author. It is always Southey, but he is charming in cap and bells, and as charming when he justifies his Doctorate by discussing ancient herbal remedies or the Columbian Theory of Progressive Existence, culled from some forgotten authority and given again in simple conversational/

conversational prose with an air half serious and half mocking. Quotation and translation abound, and even the thin thread of narrative contributes its share to making this one of the most delightful bedside books in the world. The allusiveness ensures that every palate may find a flavour to taste.

The authorship, to return to the first question, is self-evident. Every one of Southey's own characteristics is reflected; piety, sympathy, childishness, dogmatism, - the whole gamut. Southey never wrote an interpretive biography but The Doctor does for its author what the most conscientious diarist might easily fail to do for himself.

It is not a book for the youthful, the impatient, or the salacious mind; and it is too reminiscent of Rabelais and Sterne to be quite sui generis, but no one with any appreciation of good literature having read this book will hesitate to put it on his bookshelf as one of the great books of the 19th century. 'For a thing unknown there is no desire;' I shall have made some amends for adverse criticisms if I bring one more reader to admire this masterpiece.

Robert Southey ranks among the great English writers, secure of the fame he so eagerly anticipated. Yet, who now reads Southey? Nelson is not so significant a work that the author's name should rank high on its account alone; the Doctor has few readers. Most people indeed know Southey's works only from the Golden Treasury - After Blenheim, and My Days among the Dead are Past: most of the works here examined have, as individual/

individual contributions to literature, no real importance. Of the students who so glibly refer to Southey's prose in examination papers, hardly one in a score could explain his reputation, for that reputation is unheld not by a handful of titles, but by a lifetime's writing.

Southey's letters introduce us to one of the most remarkable personalities who have ever borne part in the sustentation of English literature. Student and recluse as he was, things happened to Southey. Offered the editorship of a government journal, central figure of a scene in the House of Commons, elected member of parliament for a rotten borough, poet-laureate, and had he chosen, baronet of the realm - these were contemporary tributes which, accorded to a man of letters with no other public contacts whatsoever, mark him as of no small importance. He was almost incredibly industrious, and though in many ways a stupid man, was enormously informed. Within the limits set by his religious and political opinions he was prepared to write - and did write - on everything. The respect in which he was held and the mass of his writings make it impossible for any student of the 19th century to overlook Southey. Read or unread, he will always be remembered as one of the really conspicuous figures of his age. That he is known now despite the paucity of biographical study, is one more tribute to him.

The importance of his writings is mainly in the importance of the writer. Wrong in nearly every judgment he formed and lacking/

lacking originality or cogency in argument, he will certainly not be read for guidance. His essays illustrate the state of society and may have a value to the historian, but that equally is not our concern. Yet he will be read with interest for the excellence of his prose style. This is not confined to any one book, nor is any book devoid of blemish: if this belated survey of his prose works has any value it may be in emphasing that however prejudiced, illogical, or ill-informed Southey may have been, he never forgot altogether how to write fine English. Life is too short that readers to-day should waste time on the Colloquies, but even in this masterpiece of folly there is good writing: that is why the 19th century read it.

Southey's prose writing had three moodes. In narrative he wrote short sentences, built into closely worked paragraphs with no heightening or colouring whatever. His aim was to pack in as much detail as possible without spoiling the porportion of the story, and sometimes these long close paragraphs contain odd juxtapositions, as has been shown. He was seldom much excited by mere events, so that for adventures and scenes of battle he had no graphic style, and the most stirring encounters are badly enough related; but by shifting the focus, as described elsewhere, he maintained an atmosphere of tension. In the Peninsular War, his battles lose by comparison with Napier, who was undoubtedly a very gifted writer. Southey's style was well calculated to provide clarity with economy; and was used to good effect in Nelson, the Admirals, and narrative parts of other works. The following passage from the battle of Trafalgar is typical:

"The/

"The _Victory_ had not yet returned a single gun: fifty of her men had by this time been killed or wounded, and her main-topmast, with all her studding sails and their booms, shot away. Nelson declared that, in all his battles, he had seen nothing which surpassed the cool courage of his crew on this occasion. At four minutes after twelve she opened her fire from both sides of her deck. It was not possible to break the enemy's line without running on board one of their ships: Hardy informed him of this, and asked which he would prefer. Nelson replied: 'Take your choice, Hardy, it does not signify much.' The master was then ordered to put the helm to port, and the _Victory_ ran on board the _Redoubtable_, just as her tiller ropes were shot away."

Southey's passion was best kindled by more abstract forces. Throughout and after the Napoleonic wars he was very deeply moved by emotional patriotism; hypocrisy and scatology always roused his fighting temper; and he could be very violent in defence of his own opinions. In this mood he wrote a more highly coloured style. He favoured long paragraphs built up of compound sentences, in which the main thought was repeated, and elaborated by illustration, and its application extended sometimes by reference or allusion. He was apt to overpunctuate, and favoured too frequently the "pompous triads" of which Macaulay complained in Johnson, but his sentences were well balanced and seldom laboured. At its best, this style has a resonance and rhythmic flow not often equalled, and it is unfailingly perspicuous. "All who read shall understand me," said Southey. At his worst, he became hysterical and resonance was lost in high pitched abuse, very unlovely. Sufficient examples of this style are given in the text.

In meditative mood, the style retained its rhythmic quality, but//

but lost its violence. There are pages in The Doctor permeated with homely sentiment, but sustained by the dignity of these rhythmic flowing paragraphs which stamp the author as a master of English prose. Much of Cowper and many letters illustrate this style; a late development from the aggressiveness of his most active period.

As a satirist Southey was impossible, and his ponderous jocosity gives little pleasure. He tells many good tales in The Doctor, and tells them well, so he was not utterly without a sense of humour, but his own witticisms are pitiful. The worst faults of his style are due to too much aggressiveness and too little genuine humour. He was obviously deficient in imagination and drove his way through difficulties by sheer self assertion; a method which makes no converts. If Burke defended his side like a philosopher, Southey did so like a soldier. His style lacks the figurative colourfulness of Burke's, and though more continuously clear and hard hitting, was apt to get out of control. Deficient in logic and humour, he was no match for Macaulay in mordant criticism, and his narrative is certainly less colourful. Though in prejudice and self confidence they were equal, Macaulay must be admitted the more entertaining, if more mannered in style. Absolute equality with Sterne is probably to be denied Southey on the score of originality and absence of characterisation, though he writes better. With the 19th century essayists he did not compete.

Southey's/

Southey's position seems to be a little lower than any of these writers; but it must be remembered always that though his separate works are poor supporters of his fame, the aggregate bulk of his good writing is very considerable. It is unjust to rank him by the success or failure of his books - he was not a writer of books, but of prose: passage for passage, he will stand comparison with the best in our literature.

To examine his books is at best a poor way of estimating the status of a man whose life and character contribute so largely to his greatness. So far Southey has been unfortunate in his biographers: the time is ripe for a new estimate.