

## CHAPTER XII.

## LITERARY AND DOMESTIC LIFE.

1827-'29.

ONE who knew my father well, said, "That in the multiform nature of the man, his mastery over the hearts of ingenuous youth was one of his finest characteristics. An essay or poem is submitted to him by some worthy young man, he does not like it, and says so in general terms. The youth is not satisfied, and, in the tone of one rather injured, begs to know specific faults. The generous aristarch, never dealing haughtily with young worth, instantly sits down, and begins by conveying, in the most fearless terms of praise, his sense of that worth; but, this done, woe be to the luckless piece of prose or numerous verse! Down goes the scalpel with the most minute savagery of dissection, and the whole tissues and ramifications of fault are laid naked and bare. The young man is astonished, but his nature is of the right sort; he never forgets the lesson, and, with bands of filial affection stronger than hooks of steel, he is knit for life to the man who has dealt with him thus. Many a young heart will recognize the peculiar style of the great nature I speak of. This service was once done to Delta; he was the young man to profit by it, and the friendship was all the firmer."\* Mr. Aird probably alludes to the following letter, written by Professor Wilson in January, 1827, to his friend Dr. Moir:—

"MY DEAR SIR:—Allow me to write you a kind letter, suggested by the non-insertion of your Christmas verses in the last number of 'Maga'—a letter occasioned rather than caused by that circumstance—for I have often wished to tell you my mind about yourself and your poetry.

"I think you—and I have no doubt about the soundness of my opinion—one of the most delightful poets of this age. You have not, it is true, written any one great work, and, perhaps, like myself, never will; but you have written very many exquisitely beautiful poems which, as time rolls on, will be finding their way into

\* Thomas Aird's *Memoir of D. M. Moir*.

the mindful hearts of thousands, and becoming embodied with the *corpus* of true English poetry. The character and the fame of many of our finest writers are of this kind. For myself, I should desire no other—in some manner I hope they are mine; yours they certainly are, and will be more and more as the days and years proceed.

“Hitherto, I have not said as much as this of you publicly, and for several good reasons. *First.* It is best and kindest to confer praise after it is unquestionably due. *Secondly.* You, like myself, are too much connected with the Magazine to be praised in it, except when the occasion *either* demands it or entirely justifies it. *Thirdly.* Genevieve is not my favorite poem, because the subject is essentially *non-tragic to my imagination*, finely as it is written. *Fourthly.* I shall, and that, too, right early, speak of you as you ought to be spoken of, because the time has come when that can be done rightfully and gracefully. *Fifthly.* I will do so when I feel the proper time has come; and, *lastly,* As often as I feel inclined, which may be not unfrequent. I love to see genius getting its due; and, although your volume has not sold extensively, you are notwithstanding a popular and an admired writer.

“Having said this much conscientiously, and from the heart, I now beg leave to revert to a matter of little importance, surely, in itself, but of some importance to me and my feelings, since, unluckily, it has rather hurt yours, and that too, not unnaturally or unreasonably, for I, too, have been a *rejected contributor*. In one respect you have altogether misconceived Mr. Blackwood’s letter, or he has altogether misconceived the very few words I said about the article. I made no comparison whatever between it and any other article of the kind in ‘Maga,’ either written by you or by any one else. But I said that the Beppo or Whistlecraft measure had become so common, that its sound was to me intolerable, unless it was executed in a transcendent style, like many of Mr. Lockhart’s stanzas in the Mad Banker of Amsterdam, which, in my opinion, are equal to any thing in Byron himself. Your composition, I frankly and freely say now, will not, in my opinion, bear comparison, for strength and variety, with that alluded to. I said further, that there had been poems, and good ones too, without end, and also in magazines, in that measure; that it had, for a year or so, been allowed to cease, and that I wished not to see its revival, except in some most potent form indeed. That is all I said to Mr. Black-

wood. I will now say, further, in defence or explanation of the advice I gave him, that the composition is not, in my opinion, peculiarly and characteristically *Christopherish*, and therefore, with all its merit, would not have greatly delighted the readers of 'Maga' at the beginning of a new year. *Secondly*. The topics are not such as Christopher, on looking back for two or three years, could have selected, and many important ones are not alluded to at all. That to me is a fatal objection. *Thirdly*. There are occasional allusions that are rather out of time and place, and seem to have been—as I believe they were—written, not lately, but a good while ago. So that I do not now, as I did not then, think it a composition that would have graced and dignified a new year's number, preceding all other articles, as a sort of manifesto from the pen of C. N., and this, partly from its not being very like him in style, but chiefly from its being very unlike him in topics.

“Having said so much, I will venture to say a little more, well knowing that my criticism will not offend, even although it may not convince.\* Of the first four stanzas, the first is to me beautiful, the second moderately good, the third, absolutely bad, and the fourth, not very happy, Irving and Rowland Hill being better out of North's mind altogether on a Christmas occasion. The nineteenth stanza is, I think, very bad indeed, no meaning being intended, and the expression being cumbrous and far from ingenious. Twentieth stanza I see no merit in at all, nor do I understand it, I hope, for I trust there is more meaning in it than meets my ear. Jeffrey's age was a bad joke at the first, worse when repeated in a Christmas Carol for 1827–28. The whole stanza displeases me much. Twenty-four is pretty well, but by no means equal to what would have been the view-holloa of old C. N. on first tally-hoing a Whig. The last line of it does not tell, or point to any one person; if so, not distinctly. Twenty-fifth contains a repetition of what has been many thousand times repeated in 'Maga,' *usque ad nauseam*, by that eternal Londoner from Yorkshire, and wants the free freshness with which C. N. would have breathed out himself on such a topic, if at all. Perhaps I dislike twenty-eighth stanza, because I am by no means sure of its political economy, and never can join in the cry

\* Then follows a minute criticism of the poem, stanza by stanza, too detailed to be given entire. A few touches may suffice, indicating that in politics the extreme opinions of Christopher North, as expressed in *Blackwood*, were not always those of John Wilson.

in the Magazine against free trade. Twenty-ninth stanza is neither good nor bad perhaps, but it leans towards the latter. Thirty-third is written, I fear, in the same vein with much of our enemies' abuse against us. Thirty-fourth opens inefficiently with Eldon. He is a fine old fellow, but in some things a bigot, and getting very old; yet I love and respect him, as you do. Still this, and stanzas thirty-fifth, thirty-sixth, and thirty-seventh are not glorious, and free, and exulting, but the contrary, and the list of our friends is too scanty. Thirty-sixth is unworthy of Sir Walter, and Δ, and C. N., and J. W. Pardon me for saying so. In stanza fortieth I did not expect any thing more about Time, and be damned to him! All the stanzas that follow to forty-sixth, inclusive, are excellent, and in themselves worthy of Δ. But what if there be no snow and no skating at Christmas? No appearance of it at present. Besides, in such an address, they are too numerous. Forty-seventh, forty-eighth, and forty-ninth are feeble in the extreme; and the recipe for hot-pint, although correct, especially so.

"Finally, the composition, as a whole, is of a very mediocere character, in the opinion of your kind friend and most sincere admirer, Professor Wilson.

"I have never, in the whole course of my life, given an opinion in writing more than three lines long, of any composition of any man, whom I did not know to be a man of genius and talents. I have given you this long, scrawling, imperfectly expressed opinion of your verses, because I had already let you know that it was unfavorable, and therefore there is no impertinence in giving some of the reasons of my belief.

"That you should agree with me wholly is not to be expected; but that you will agree with me partly, I have no doubt, by and by. I say so from experience, for I have often and often seen, all at once, compositions of my own to be good for little or nothing, which I had at the time of writing them thought well of, and even admired.

"One thing I *know* you are wrong in, and that is in your preferring this composition to all you ever wrote for 'Maga.' You have written for 'Maga' many of the most delightful verses that are in the English language, and as for 'Mansie Waugh,'\* it is inimitable,

\* *The Life of Mansie Waugh, Tailor in Dalkeith.* 12mo. Edinburgh, 1828. A work full of humor, and abounding in faithful sketches of Scottish life and manners.

and better than Galt's very best. That it should have stopped—if the fault of Mr. Blackwood—is to me inexplicable and very displeasing, and I have more than once said so to him, for nothing better ever was in 'Maga' since she was born. Mr. Blackwood certainly thought the rejected composition a good one, and it was owing to me that it was rejected. I take that on my own head. But that 'Mansie Waugh' should be stopped, is to me disgusting, because it was stopped in my teeth, and in yours who have the glory of it.

"Let me conclude with the assurance of my esteem for you, my dear sir, no less as a man than an author. I am happy to know that you are universally esteemed where you would wish to be, in your profession, and in your private character, and that your poetical faculty has done you no harm, but on the contrary great good.

"I wish you would dine with us on Saturday *at six o'clock*. I expect De Quincey, and one or two other friends, and there is a *bed* for *you*, otherwise I would not ask you at so late an hour.

"I am yours affectionately,

JOHN WILSON."

With the above exception, the memorials of this year are confined to the pages of *Blackwood*, to which he contributed in one month (June), when a double number was published, six of the principal articles. How little he thought of knocking off a *Noctes* when in the humor, may be judged from a note to Mr. Ballantyne, the printer, in which he says:—"I think of trying to-day and to-morrow to write a 'Noctes.' Would you have any objection to be introduced as a member? Would your brother? Of course I need not say, that, with a little fun, I shall represent you both in the kindest feeling. Pray let me know.

"Yours very truly,

JOHN WILSON.

"*Subject*:—A party are to assemble in the *New Shop* to dinner."

The following note to the same gentleman may come in as a minor illustration of the "calamities of authors:"—

"Last night *about eleven o'clock*, I got two proofs to correct, which took me nearly *three hours*. I ordered the boy, therefore, to go away, and come early in the morning. It is exactly half-past eight, and I have had the luxury of three hours' work after supper for no end whatever, instead of indulging in it before breakfast.

Yet to get on is, I understand, of great importance. Here, then, are hours on hours lost, not by me assuredly; then by whom?

“Why the devil does not the devil hasten himself of an August morning? What right can any devil, red-hot from Tartarus, have to disturb me, who never injured him, for three long hours including midnight, *all for no purpose but to make me miserable?*”

“I am, my dear sir, very wroth; therefore, see henceforth, that delays of this kind do not occur, for though I am willing to work when necessary, I am not willing to sacrifice sleep, and sometimes suffer, which is worse, from want of arrangement or idleness in the infernal regions.

Yours sincerely,

“JOHN WILSON.

“*Thursday morning.*—With two corrected proofs lying before me for several hours needlessly at a time when they are most wanted in the Shades.”

In the month of July of this year, my mother writes to her sister:—

“We are all quite well, and looking forward to a few weeks’ stay on the banks of the Tweed with great pleasure. I forget whether I mentioned when I last wrote to you that Mr. Wilson had taken lodgings at Innerleithen (about six miles from Peebles). We go on the 2d of August, the day after the boys’ vacation commences.

“Mr. and Mrs. Lockhart and their two children are come here this summer, I am sorry to say the latter in search of health. Mr. L. is looking well, and not a bit changed in any respect.

“Ebony has presented me with the *Life of Napoleon*, 9 vols.; everybody is now devouring it, but what is thought of it I have not heard; it will last me some years to get through it if I live; at least, if I read at my customary pace.”

The three autumnal months were spent at Innerleithen, the Professor visiting Edinburgh from time to time, to attend to his literary affairs, finding on his return relaxation in his favorite amusement of fishing, or rambling over the hills to St. Mary’s Loch, and not unfrequently spending a day at Altrive with the Ettrick Shepherd. He had intended, in the following year, to let Elleray; but not having found a suitable tenant, he spent the autumn there himself with his family.

From a letter to his friend, the Rev. Mr. Fleming of Rayrig,

written in the spring of 1828, it will be seen how fondly he clung to the place, after having made up his mind as a matter of duty to sacrifice the pleasure of spending his summers there. Referring in this letter to the Magazine, he says:—

“Of *Blackwood's Magazine* I am not the editor, although, I believe, I very generally get both the credit and discredit of being Christopher North. I am one of the chief writers, perhaps the chief, and have all along been so, but never received one shilling from the proprietor, except for my own compositions. Being generally on the spot, I am always willing to give him my advice, and to supply such articles as may be most wanted when I have leisure to do so. But I hold myself answerable to the public only for my own articles, although I have never chosen to say, nor shall I ever, that I am not editor, as that might appear to be shying responsibility, or disclaiming my real share in the work. To you, however, I make the avowal, which is to the letter correct, of Christopher North's ideal character. I am in a great measure the parent nevertheless, nor am I ashamed of the old gentleman, who is, though rather perverse, a thriving bairn.

“I shall be at Elleray, with my daughters Margaret and Mary, about the 18th or 20th of April, and hope to stay a month. I intend to let Elleray, if I can get a suitable tenant, for *three years*. My children are all just growing up, and I cannot remove them from Edinburgh, nor can I leave them, even if the expense of having two houses were such as I could prudently encounter. I have therefore brought my mind to make the sacrifice of my summers, nowhere else so happy as on the banks of beautiful and beloved Windermere. My visit is chiefly to make arrangements for letting Elleray during the period now mentioned.

“I feel great delicacy in asking any questions of a friend relative to concerns of his friends. But I hope you will not think me guilty of indelicacy in writing to know on what terms Bellfield was let to Mr. Thomson. I am wholly at a loss to know what to ask for Elleray, and Bellfield would be a rule to go by in fixing the rent. I am anxious you will do me the justice to think that I am one of the last men in the world to seek to know any thing of the kind, except in the case like the present, where it would be of advantage to my interests and that of my family; or if there be any

objection to your informing me of the point, perhaps you would have the goodness to give me your opinion of what might be the annual rent of the house, garden, and outhouses of Elleray. Whoever takes it must keep the place in order, and therefore must keep on my gardener on his present wages. The land I could either keep myself, or let it along with the house, the whole or in part.

“Mr. ——— would act for me, I know, but ———, like other idle people, is too free of his tongue about my intentions, of which he knows nothing, and has been busy telling all people that I am never again to return to Elleray, and that Elleray is to be sold. This rather displeases me. Mr. ——— would oblige me in any thing, but is not very skilled in character, and might, I fear, be imposed upon if he met with people wishing to impose. The idea of making Mr. Fleming useful to me has something in it abhorrent to my nature. Do, however, my dear sir, forgive my natural anxiety on this point, for if I should let Elleray to a family that would injure it, it would make me truly unhappy. I love it as I love life itself; and, in case I leave Elleray unlet, in your hands I would feel that it was as safe as in my own. I am, however, I repeat it, duly sensible of the delicacy of making such a request to such a friend; and one word will be sufficient. My intention is to keep the cottage in my own hands, with the privilege to inhabit it *myself* if I choose for a month or two, which will be the utmost in my power; although that privilege I will give up if necessary.

“Mrs. Wilson is much better in her general health than she has been since her first unhappy illness; but is still far from being well, and my anxieties are still great. I am, however, relieved from the most dreadful of all fears, and I trust in God that the fits will not again return. Her constitution would seem to have outlived them, but they have been of a most heart-breaking kind, and I look on all life as under the darkness of a shadow. John, my eldest boy, is five feet ten inches tall, and goes to College next winter. My daughters you will, I hope, see soon, and yours must come up to Elleray and stay a day or two with them, while they will be but too happy to be again at sweet Rayrig. I hear of a house having been built below Elleray by Mr. Gardiner. I hope it is not an eyesore. If it be, my eyes, I am sorry to state, will not be often offended by it for some years to come. A curious enough book on transplanting trees has been published here lately, which I will



bring you a copy of. Sir Henry Stewart, the author, has made a place well wooded and thriving out of a desert, and has removed hundreds of trees of all kinds, from twenty to fifty years old, with underwood, all of which have for years been in a most flourishing condition.

“I think you will get this letter on Sunday morning. I shall think of you all in church. Your affectionate friend,

“JOHN WILSON.”

As soon as his college duties were over, he set out for Ellerray. He writes from Bowness to my mother, May 16, 1828:—

“MY DEAR TURKISS:—I have this morning received your long and kind letter; and though I wrote to you yesterday, I do so again. First, then, I enclose a twelve-pound note, which, I hope, will settle the accounts, though you don’t mention the amount of the rendering one. I will thank you to write to Robert as follows:—‘Dear Robert, be so good as send to me the ten-pound receipt to sign, if convenient, and I will return it by post. Jane is to tell you to do so, to save you a postage. If you can give her the money *first* it will be convenient; if not, she will wait till I return the paper. Yours, J. W.’ Your taste in furniture is excellent, being the same as my own; so choose a paper of a bluish sort, and don’t doubt that I will like the room the better for its being entirely your taste, carpet and all. Johnny may go to the fishing whenever you think it safe; but remember wet feet are dangerous to him at present. If he goes, tell him to go and come by the coach, and give him stockings to put on dry. To fish there with dry feet is not possible; and he is not strong yet. Send him to school, with a note saying it was but an eruption, for I cannot think it was the small-pox. If it was, he is cured now. I hope they are good boys. God bless them both, Umbs, and their good mother!

“Yesterday, we rode to Ambleside—Mary on Blair’s pony, which is in high health and very quiet, and spirited too, Maggie on the nondescript. We called on the Lutwidges, whom we saw. They are all well—she looking very beautiful, and in the family-way of course. On the Edmunds, too. We called on the Norths, and were most kindly received. I left the girls there, and proceeded to Grasmere, along the new road by the lake-side, which is beautiful. Found Hartley Coleridge, a little tipsy, I fear, but not very

much; went with him to Sammy Barber's. Sammy was delighted to see me. He has unroofed his house, and is raising it several feet. He has built a bed-room for himself, thirty feet long, by twenty wide, with two fireplaces, and one enormous window commanding a view of the whole lake. It is the most beautiful room I ever saw. All the rest of the house is equally good, and still the external look improved.

"Wordsworth is in London. I called for the nymphs at eight o'clock, and we reached Elleray about ten o'clock—all well. Both nymphs are recovered, though Mary has still a little sore-throat left. To-day, we have walked to Bowness, and made some calls. We visited the Island, and Miss Curwen comes to Elleray next Wednesday to stay all night. She is a sweet girl, modest, sensible, amiable, and English. They are a worthy family. The girls are just now gone on to Rayrig with Miss Taylor, and I shall join them there. I wait behind to write to the Turkess. The country now is in perfect beauty; and I think of one who has been a kind, and affectionate, and good wife to me at all hours. If I do not, may the beauty of nature pass away from my eyes! To-morrow we dine at Calgarth. On Tuesday next, Sammy Barber and H. Coleridge dine with us. Neither Wellock nor M'Neil has appeared, and I shall wait for them no more. Captain Hope and his lady and a piccaninny have just driven up to the door of the inn; he is a son of the Lord President's, and brother of the Solicitor-General, and a friend of mine. They are just off again. Write as soon as you can or choose, and tell Johnny or Blair to write too—a conjoint letter. Once more, love to you all. Your affectionate husband,

"JOHN WILSON."

The following letters show how well he knew to adapt his communications to the taste of his correspondents:—

TO HIS SON BLAIR.

"ELLERAY, *Friday Afternoon, May 23, 1828.*

"MY DEAREST BLAIR:—Your very entertaining and witty letter came in due course at the breakfast hour, and made us all laugh till we were like to burst our sides; and Mary had very nearly broken a tea-cup. It was, however, rather impertinent. Your pony is in capital health and spirits, and Mary rides him very gently and not

too fast. Maggy rides a chestnut cow, which George declares is a horse, and it certainly is rather like one sometimes. There are two cats, both very tame—a black, and a white one with a red tail. I fear the latter kills small birds. The young thrushes have flown, and so have a nest of linnets in the front of the house. The thrush is building again in another place. We had a gooseberry-tart yesterday, which you would have liked very much. On Saturday, we dined at Calgarth, and found all the people there exceedingly well and happy. On Sunday we went to church, and dined at home. On Monday we also dined at home; and on Tuesday, Hartley Coleridge came to dine with us, without Mrs. Barlow, who was ill. On Wednesday we all dined at home; and yesterday Fletcher Fleming and Mr. Harrison from Ambleside dined with us. To-day we are all going to drink tea with Miss Taylor at Bowness, and to go to a children's ball in the evening. Hartley Coleridge is still with us, and sends his love to your mamma and all yourselves. To-morrow we are going down to Penny Bridge, and will return on Monday or Tuesday. On Wednesday, which is Ambleside Fair, I am going there. On Thursday, there is to be wrestling there. On Friday, Mr. Garnet gives us a dinner; and after that we shall be thinking of coming home again pretty soon. I am happy to hear you and Johnny are good boys. Tell Johnny I am very angry with him for not writing. Tell mamma that I like the paper; and got her last letter this morning. God bless her, and you, and Johnny, and Umbs, and keep you all well and happy till we return. Love, too, to Miss Penny, that is, Aunt Mary; and kind compliments to Mrs. Alison. I will write to mamma from Penny Bridge. I am, my dear little boy, your most loving and affectionate father,

"THE OLD MAN."

TO HIS SON JOHN.

"ELLERAY, *Monday Afternoon, June 2, 1828.*

"MY DEAR JOHNNY:—I received your letter this morning, from which I find you are well, and in good spirits. I am satisfied with your place in the Academy, which I hope you will keep till the end, or rather steal up a little. I presume Mr. Gunn intends going on the stage. We left Penny Bridge on Tuesday, and dined at the Island with a large party. On Wednesday, I went to Ambleside fair, and settled a few bills. Richard Sowden dined with me at

Elleray on that day, and kept furnishing me with his talk till one o'clock in the morning—the girls being at the Miss Bartons'. On Thursday, I went again to Ambleside, with William and George Fleming, to see the wrestling. It was very good. A man from Cumberland, with a white hat and brown shirt, threatened to fling everybody, and 'foight' them afterwards. The 'foighting' I put a stop to. He stood till the last, but was thrown by a schoolmaster of the name of Robinson, cousin to the imp who used to be at Elleray, who won the belt with a handsome inscription—'From Professor Wilson.' We had then a number of single matches, the best of three throws; and Collinson of Bowness threw Robinson easily, he himself having been previously thrown by the Cumbrian for the belt. One Drunky, who had also been thrown for the belt, then threw Collinson, and a tailor called Holmes threw Cumberland. A little fellow about the size of Blair, or less, threw a man about six feet high, and fell upon him with all his weight. Holmes, the tailor, threw Rowland Long. The wrestling, on the whole, 'gave the family great delight.' On Friday, we all sailed with Captain Stamp in the 'Emma,' and ran aground at the water-head, but got off in about an hour without damage. The 'Emma' is an excellent, safe, roomy boat, and draws more water than the 'Endeavor.' On the same Friday, we dined with William Garnet, and at tea met some young ladies, the Miss Winyards, and Lady Pasley. We rode home in the dark and the wet. On Saturday we gave a party in the evening to the Flemings, Bellasses, and Miss A. Taylor from Ambleside. We had the band, and danced, and the party was pleasant. On Sunday we stayed at home, the day being blowy; and Miss A. Taylor is still with us. To-day some gentlemen dined at Elleray; so you see we are very gay. To-morrow we are all going a pic-nicking on the Lake. God bless you, my dear Johnny! Mind all your dear mother says, and be kind in all things, and attentive to her till we return. Love to Blair and Umbs. Your affectionate father,

JOHN WILSON.

"The cross lines are for your mamma."

"MY DEAREST JANE:—I intend riding into Kendal on Wednesday, to meet our Edinburgh friends, as it will be satisfactory to hear how you all are. I shall be kept here a few days longer than I intended, because of the want of the needful, which I want to

sponge out of Ebony. I shall also send to Robert for the £10, in case you have not got it. I will write to you on Thursday, fixing the day for our return, The girls are both well, and everybody is kind to them. They are just gone to call at Calgarth, with Alicia Taylor on horseback, with John Alexander with them on foot. Owen Loyd, and Joseph Harding, and some others, are to dine with us to-day. Summer is come, and really the most beautiful time of the year is past. Write to me on *Sunday evening*, for we shall not leave this till Tuesday, at the earliest. If you write the day you get this, too, or bid Blair do so, so much the better, for that day is always a happy one on which I hear from you. You are a most unaccountable niggard. Direct Mr. Hood's letter to me here, and send it to me by post. Tell Johnny to call and inquire for Captain Watson, or do so yourself, my dear Jane, first good day. I am glad to hear such good accounts of him. Keep sending me the *Observer* and *Evening Post*. My expectations of my room are very high. I intend to get John Watson to give me a head of you, to hang up over the chimney-piece. What think you of that? The little man does not sleep well here by himself. I do not fear that I shall find you well and happy. Yours till death.

“JOHN WILSON.”

The allusions to Hartley Coleridge awaken mingled feelings of pain and pleasure in remembrance of his frequent visits to Elleray, where he was ever a welcome guest. The gentle, humble-hearted, highly gifted man, “Dear Hartley,” as my father called him, dreamed through a life of error, loving the good and hating the evil, yet unable to resist it. His companionship was always delightful to the Professor, and many hours of converse they held; his best and happiest moments were those spent at Elleray. My father had a great power over him, and exerted it with kind but firm determination. On one occasion he was kept imprisoned for some weeks under his surveillance, in order that he might finish some literary work he had promised to have ready by a certain time. He completed his task, and when the day of release came, it was not intended that he should leave Elleray. But Hartley's evil demon was at hand; without one word of adieu to the friends in whose presence he stood, off he ran at full speed down the avenue, lost to sight amid the trees, seen again in the open highway still running,

until the sound of his far-off footsteps gradually died away in the distance, and he himself was hidden, not in the groves of the valley, but in some obscure den, where, drinking among low companions, his mind was soon brought to a level with theirs. Then these clouds would after a time pass away, and he again returned to the society of those who could appreciate him, and who never ceased to love him.

Every one loved Hartley Coleridge; there was something in his appearance that evoked kindness. Extremely boyish in aspect, his juvenile air was aided not a little by his general mode of dress—a dark blue cloth round jacket, white trousers, black silk handkerchief tied loosely round his throat; sometimes a straw hat covered his head, but more frequently it was bare, showing his black, thick, short, curling hair. His eyes were large, dark, and expressive, and a countenance almost sad in expression, was relieved by the beautiful smile which lighted it up from time to time. The tone of his voice was musically soft. He excelled in reading, and very often read aloud to my mother. The contrast between him and the Professor, as they walked up and down the drawing rooms at Elleray, was very striking. Both were earnest in manner and peculiar in expression. My father's rapid sweeping steps would soon have distanced poor Hartley, if he had not kept up to him by a sort of short trot; then, standing still for a moment, excited by some question of philosophical interest—perhaps the madness of Hamlet, or whether or not he was a perfect gentleman—they would pour forth such torrents of eloquence that those present would have wished them to speak forever. After a pause, off again through the rooms, backwards and forwards, for an hour at a time would they walk; the Professor's athletic form, stately and free in action, and his clear blue eyes and flowing hair, contrasting singularly with Hartley's diminutive stature and dark complexion, as he followed like some familiar spirit, one moment looking vengeance, the next humble, obeisant. Is it not true that the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children? Certain it is that the light of genius he inherited was dimmed from its original source. He found no repose upon earth, but wandered like a breeze, until he was laid down in the quiet churchyard of Grasmere, close beside the resting-place of William Wordsworth.\*

\* Hartley Coleridge, son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, born 1796, died 1851.

My father's contributions to the Magazine this year were very extensive, and several of them of enduring interest. They include "Christopher in his Sporting Jacket," "Old North and Young North," "Christmas Dreams," "Health and Longevity," "Salmonia," and "Sacred Poetry." My mother, writing to her sister in September, asks her:—"Have you read Blackwood's last number? I mean any of it. 'Christopher in his Sporting Jacket' is thought very good; and Mr. W. expressed a sort of wish our nephew John might like it. The Dean of Chester thinks it about one of the best things the author has produced."

Another of her letters about this time contains some pleasant home gossip. A baby niece is of course a principal topic:—"Mr. Wilson feels a great interest in her, poor little thing, and is never annoyed by any of her infantine screams or noises, which is more than I can say of him towards his own when of that age. This is a comfort to me, because I shall have true delight in having the little darling here as often as she is allowed to come; and you may well suppose that I am always anxious, when the pen is, as it *must* be, in Mr. Wilson's hand often, that he has nothing to disturb him." The mother's heart is shown in the following lines:—"Johnny is preparing for the University. As Mr. Wilson only expects and *expects* common diligence from him, I do not fear he will do well." After mentioning the classes, she says:—"The three last-mentioned accomplishments (drawing, fencing, and dancing) are only recreations, but there is no harm in them; and I believe a greater blessing cannot befall a young man than to have every hour harmlessly if not usefully employed. You cannot think how much pleased I was with a letter Mr. W. received from Miss Watson the other day, speaking of the boys. I dare say it was flattering, but she has a way of saying things that appears as if they were not flattering. I would copy it now for you, but that I think you must be tired of the old mother's egotism. I have not mentioned the girls, but they are well. M. has two pupils, Jane and M. De Quincey, to whom she gives daily lessons in reading, writing, geography, grammar, and spelling; this occupies good part of the forenoon, and practising, mending old stockings, millinery, and such like, fill up some of the remaining hours of the day."

The four following letters from Allan Cunningham tell their own story:—

" 27 LOWER BELGRAVE PLACE,  
11th September, 1828.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:—I have cut and cleared away right and left, and opened a space for your very beautiful poem, and now it will appear at full length, as it rightly deserves. Will you have the goodness to say your will to the proof as quickly as possible, and let me have it again, for the printer pushes me sorely.

"You have indeed done me a great and lasting kindness; you have aided me, I trust effectually, in establishing my Annual Book,\* and enabled me to create a little income for my family. My life has been one continued struggle to maintain my independence and support wife and children, and I have, when the labor of the day closed, endeavored to use the little talent which my country allows me to possess as easily and as profitably as I can. The pen thus adds a little to the profit of the chisel, and I keep head above water, and on occasion take the middle of the causeway with an independent step.

"There is another matter about which I know not how to speak; and now I think on't, I had better speak out bluntly at once. My means are but moderate; and having engaged to produce the literature of the volume for a certain sum, the variety of the articles has caused no small expenditure. I cannot, therefore, say that I can pay you for Edderline's Dream; but I beg you will allow me to lay twenty pounds aside by way of token or remembrance, to be paid in any way you may desire, into some friend's hand here, or remitted by post to Edinburgh. I am ashamed to offer so small a sum for a work which I admire so much; but what Burns said to the Muse, I may with equal propriety say to you:—

" 'Ye ken—ye ken  
That strong necessity supreme is  
'Mang sons of men.'

"Now, may I venture to look to you for eight or ten pages for my next volume on the same kind of terms? I shall, with half-a-dozen assurances of the aid of the leading men of genius, be able to negotiate more effectually with the proprietor; for, when he sees that Sir Walter Scott, Professor Wilson, Mr. Southey, Mr. Lockhart, and one or two more, are resolved to support me, he will comprehend that the speculation will be profitable, and close with me

\* *The Anniversary.*



accordingly. Do, I beg and entreat of you, agree to this, and say so when you write.

“Forgive all this forwardness and earnestness, and believe me to be your faithful servant and admirer,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.”

“27 LOWER BELGRAVE PLACE,

November 7, 1828.

“MY DEAR FRIEND :—My little Annual—thanks to your exquisite Edderline, and your kind and seasonable words—has been very successful. It is not yet published, and cannot appear these eight days, yet we have sold 6,000 copies. The booksellers all look kindly upon it; the proprietor is very much pleased with his success; and it is generally looked upon here as a work fairly rooted in public favor. The *first* large paper proof-copy ready shall be on its way to Gloucester Place before it is an hour finished. It is indeed outwardly a most splendid book.

“I must now speak of the future. The *Keepsake* people last season bought up some of my friends, and imagined, because they had succeeded with one or two eminent ones, that my book was crushed, and would not be any thing like a rival. They were too wily for me; and though I shall never be able to meet them in their own way, still I must endeavor to gather all the friends round me that I can. I have been with our mutual friend Lockhart this morning, and we have made the following arrangement, which he permits me to mention to you, in the hope you will aid me on the same conditions. He has promised me a poem, and a piece of prose to the extent of from twenty to thirty pages, for £50, and engaged to write for no other annual. Now if you would help me on the same terms, and to the same extent, I shall consider myself fortunate. It is true you kindly promised to aid me with whatever I liked for next year, and desired me not to talk of money. My dear friend, we make money of you, and why not make some return? I beg you will, therefore, letting bygones be bygones in money matters, join with Mr. Lockhart in this. I could give you many reasons for doing it, all of which would influence you. It is enough to say, that my rivals will come next year into the field, in all the strength of talent, and rank, and fashion, and strive to bear me down. The author of ‘Edderline,’ and many other things equally delightful, can prevent this, and to him I look for help.

"I shall try Wordsworth in the same way. I am sure of Southey and of Ed. Irving. I shall limit my list of contributors, and make a better book generally than I have done. I am to have a painting from Wilkie, and one from Newton, and they will be more carefully engraved too.

"I am glad that your poem has met with such applause here. I have now seen all the other Annuals, and I assure you that in the best of them there is nothing that approaches in beauty to 'Edderline.' This seems to be the general opinion, and proud I am of it. I remain, my dear friend, yours ever faithfully,

"ALLAN CUNNINGHAM."

"27 BELGRAVE PLACE LOWER,  
November 19, 1828.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:—I send for your acceptance a large-paper copy of my Annual, with proofs of the plates, and I send it by the mail that you may have it on your table a few days before publication. You will be glad to hear that the book has been favorably received, and the general impression seems to be, that while the *Keepsake* is a little below expectation, the *Anniversary* is a little above it. I am told by one in whose judgment I can fully confide, that *our* poetry is superior, and 'Edderline's Dream' the noblest poem in *any* of the annuals. This makes me happy; it puts us at the head of these publications.

"I took the liberty of writing a letter to you lately, and ventured to make you an offer, which I wish, in justice to my admiration of your talents, had been worthier of your merits. I hope and entreat you will think favorably of my request, and give me your aid, as powerfully as you can. If you but knew the opposition which I have to encounter, and could hear the high words of those who, with their exclusive poets, and their bands of bards, seek to bear me down, your own proud spirit and chivalrous feelings would send you [quickly] to my aid, and secure me from being put to shame by the highest of the island. One great poet, not a Scotch one, kindly advised me last season, to think no more of literary competition with the *Keepsake*, inasmuch as *he* dipt *his* pen exclusively for that publication. I know his poetic contributions, and fear them not when I think on 'Edderline.'

"I hope you will not think me vain, or a dreamer of unattainable things, when I express my hope of being able, through the aid of

my friends, to maintain the reputation of my book against the fame of others, though they be aided by some who might have aided me. Should you decline—which I hope in God you will not—the offer which I lately made, I shall still depend upon your assistance, which you had the goodness to promise. Another such poem as ‘Edderline’ would make my fortune, and if I could obtain it by May or June it would be in excellent time.

“If you would wish a copy or two of the book to give away, I shall be happy to place them at your disposal. I remain, my dear friend, your faithful servant,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.”

“27 LOWER BELGRAVE PLACE,  
12th December, 1828.

“MY DEAR FRIEND:—I enclose you some lines for your friend’s paper, and am truly glad of any opportunity of obliging you. I like Mr. Bell’s *Journal*\* much. He understands, I see, what poetry is; a thing not common among critics. If there is any thing else you wish me to do, say so. I have not the heart to refuse you any thing.

“I was much pleased with your kind assurances respecting my next year’s volume. Mr. Lockhart said he would write to you, and I hope you will unite with him and Irving in contributing for me alone. As I have been disappointed in Wordsworth, I hope you will allow me to add £25 of his £50 to the £50 I already promised. The other I intend for Mr. Lockhart. This, after all, looks like picking your pocket, for such is the rage for Annuals at present, that a poet so eminent as you are may command terms. I ought, perhaps, to be satisfied with the kind assurances you have given, and not be over greedy.

“One word about Wordsworth. In his last letter to me, he said that Alaric Watts had a prior claim, ‘Only,’ quoth he, ‘Watts says I go about depreciating other Annuals out of regard for the *Keepsake*. This is untrue. I only said, as the *Keepsake* paid poets best, it would be the best work.’ This is not depreciating! He advised me, before he knew who were to be my contributors, not to think of rivalry in literature with the *Keepsake*. Enough of a little man and a great poet. His poetic sympathies are warm, but his heart, for any manly purpose, as cold as a December snail. I had to-day

\* *The Edinburgh Literary Gazette.*

a very pleasant, witty contribution, from Theodore Hook. I remain, my dear friend, yours faithfully,

“ALLAN CUNNINGHAM.

“*P. S.*—I have got Mr. Bell’s letter and Journals, and shall thank him for his good opinion by sending *him* a trifle some time soon for the paper. If you think my name will do the least good to the good cause, pray insert it at either end of the poem you like. A. C.”

The *Anniversary*, of which the editor wrote so anxiously, was not the only literary work this year that had requested the Professor’s powerful aid. “Edderline’s Dream,” unfortunately, a fragment, some cantos having been lost in MS., was followed in the month of December by two beautiful little poems, one called “The Vale of Peace,” the other “The Hare-Bells,” written for *The Edinburgh Literary Gazette*, then edited by Mr. Henry Glassford Bell, whose abilities as a student in the Moral Philosophy class had attracted Professor Wilson’s notice. He frequently visited at his house in Gloucester Place, and very soon evinced qualities more worthy of regard than a cultivated mind and a refined poetical taste. This acquaintanceship ripened into a friendship warm and sincere. Support in affairs of literature was not long a binding link; letters were forsaken for law, and, after a few years’ practice in Edinburgh, Mr. Bell removed to Glasgow, having obtained a Sheriffship in that important city, where he has long enjoyed the respect due to an admirable judge, and an accomplished man of letters.

It has already been mentioned that my father had prepared sketches for the composition of various poems; why he did not follow further his original impulses in this direction has been matter of surprise. So strong a genius as his can hardly be supposed to have quite missed its proper direction. Yet from the date of the publication of the “City of the Plague,” up to 1829, there is no indication of his having seriously bent his mind to poetical composition. In the autumn of that year, at Elleray, he was again visited by the muse, and my mother thus mentions the fact to her sister:—

“Mr. W. has been in rather a poetical vein of late, and I rather think there will be a pretty long poem of his in the next number of *Blackwood*, entitled, ‘An Evening in Furness Abbey,’ or something of that kind. It will be too long for *you* to read, but perhaps Ann will do so, and tell you what it is about.” From the publica-

tion of this beautiful poem, the tender domestic allusions in which would alone make it of peculiar interest and value in the eyes of the present writer,\* down to 1837, when he composed his last poem, "Unimore," he did not again exercise his poetic faculty in the form of verse. Late in life, he thought much of a subject which he wished to shape into verse, "The Covenanters," but he said that he found in it insuperable difficulties.† "The Manse" was another subject he used to speak of, adding jocularly, "he was obliged to leave that, owing to the *Disruption*."‡

How far we have got beyond the days when criticism of the Ettrick Shepherd required remonstrance to subdue it, may be gathered from the next letter, received during this holiday time at Ellera:—

"MOUNT BENDER, *August 11, 1829.*

"MY DEAR AND HONORED JOHN:—I never thought you had been so unconscionable as to desire a sportsman on the 11th or even the 13th of August to leave Ettrick Forest for the bare scraggy hills of Westmoreland!—Ettrick Forest, where the black cocks and white cocks, brown cocks and gray cocks, ducks, plovers, and peaseweeps and whilly-whaups are as thick as the flocks that cover her mountains, and come to the hills of Westmoreland that can nourish nothing better than a castril or stonechat! To leave the great yellow-fin of Yarrow, or the still larger gray-locher for the degenerate fry of Troutbeck, Esthwaite, or even Wastwater! No, no, the request will not do; it is an unreasonable one, and therefore not unlike yourself; for besides, what would become of Old North and Blackwood, and all our friends for game, were I to come to Ellera just now? I know of no home of man where I could be so happy within doors, with so many lovely and joyous faces around me; but this is not the season for in-door enjoyments; they must be reaped on the

\* Contrasting his present experience with his early poetic dreams, he says:

"Those days are gone,  
And it has pleased high Heaven to crown my life  
With such a load of happiness, that at times  
My very soul is faint with bearing up the blessed burden." . . .

† He corresponded with Mr. Aird a good deal on this subject. His letters are too lengthy for insertion, but it is refreshing to find in them an occasional hearty outburst of indignation at the persecuting government of Charles and James. "Ought there not to be some savage splendid Covenanters introduced somewhere or other? Pray, consider with yourself how far they ever carried retaliation or retribution. I believe not far. Besides, under such accursed tyranny, bold risings up of men's fiercest and fellest passions were not wrong."

‡ The split in the Church of Scotland in 1843.

wastes among the blooming heath, by the silver spring, or swathed in the delicious breeze of the wilderness. Elleray, with all its sweets, could never have been my choice for a habitation, and perhaps you are the only Scottish gentleman who ever made such a choice, and still persists in maintaining it, in spite of every disadvantage. Happy days to you, and a safe return! Yours most respectfully,

“JAMES HOGG.”

The following letter, written about the same time, from my father to his friend Mr. Fleming, is unfortunately torn at the conclusion, but what remains of it is sufficiently interesting to be given:—

“MY DEAR FLEMING:—I much fear that it will not be possible for me to join your party on Tuesday, which I should regret under any circumstances, and more especially under the present, when you are kind enough to wish my presence more than usual. I have tried to arrange my proceedings, in twenty different ways, with the view of returning on Tuesday, but see not how I can effect my object. Mr. Benjamin Penny and his wife come to us to-morrow, and leave us on Friday. I cannot therefore go to Keswick till Saturday, and from Keswick I have to go to Buttermere and Cromack, and, if possible, Ennerdale and Wastwater. The artist who accompanies me, or rather whom I accompany, is unfortunately the most helpless of human beings, and incapable of finding his way alone among mountains for one single hour. I am, therefore, under the absolute necessity of guiding him every mile of the way, and were I to leave him he might as well be lying in his bed. His stay here is limited by his engagements in Edinburgh, and we shall have to return to Elleray on Thursday, without having an opportunity of going again into Cumberland. Were I therefore to leave him on Tuesday, great part of my object in bringing him here would be defeated, and, indeed, even as it is, I have little hope of his achieving my purpose. He can neither walk nor ride, nor remember the name of the lake, village, vale, or house, and yet he is an excellent artist, though a most incapable man. I returned from a three days' tour with him on Saturday night, and would have immediately written to you, but expected to have called on you on Sunday evening, to tell you how matters stood. Mrs. Wilson, John, and one of the girls, or indeed any part of the family you choose, will be with you on Tuesday; and

if Tuesday be a bad day, so that Mr. Gibb cannot draw, and the distance be such as I can accomplish, I will exert some of my activity, a little impaired now, though not to any melancholy extent, and appear at Rayrig at five o'clock.

"It would have been pleasant had the three friends met, in a quiet way, at Rayrig; and I do not doubt that, in spite of all, we might have been even happy. But our meeting was prevented. Watson, I am sure, regretted it; and as for myself, I trust you will believe in the warmth and sincerity of my affection.

"With regard to the conversation of Calgarth about the Edinburgh murderers,\* I had quite forgotten it, till the allusion to it in your kind letter recalled it to my memory. I do not believe that there is any difference of opinion in our minds respecting those hideous transactions, that might not be reconciled in three minutes' uninterrupted conversation. But I never yet recollect a single conversation in a mixed company, on any subject on which some difference of opinion between two parties had been expressed or intimated, where it was not rendered impossible to reconcile it by the interposition of a third or fourth party taking up some point connected with, perhaps, but not essentially belonging to the point at issue. The argument, if there has been one, is thus broken in upon, new topics introduced, and, without tedious explanations, it is scarcely possible to get back to the real question. Something of this kind occurred, I remember, at Calgarth. Watson and Lord De Tabley joined in with certain remarks—right enough, perhaps, in their way—but such as involved and entangled the thread of our discourse. And thus you and I appeared, I am disposed to think, to have adopted different views of the matter; whereas, had we been left to ourselves, we should either have agreed, or at least had an opportunity of letting each other clearly understand what the point was on which we disagreed, and the grounds of that disagreement. In early life I fear that my studies were not such as habituated my mind to the very strictest and closest reasonings; nor perhaps is it the natural bent . . . ."

The artist, Mr. Gibb, whose incapacity in travelling is thus hu-

\* Burke and Hare, who were tried in Edinburgh, in 1829, for a series of murders perpetrated for the purpose of supplying the medical school with anatomical subjects.—See *Noctes Ambrosianæ*. 190.

morously described, was taken to Westmoreland by Professor Wilson, in order to make drawings for an intended work descriptive of lake scenery; a design, however, that came to an end, owing to an untimely disaster that overtook the numerous illustrations that had been made.

A letter from so celebrated a man as Thomas Carlyle naturally awakens interest, to know how he and Professor Wilson regarded each other. The terms of affection expressed in this epistle would lead to a supposition that there had been an intimate intercourse between them. But either want of opportunity or other circumstances prevented the continuance of personal friendship. It seems that these two gifted men never met, at least not more than once again after their first introduction, which took place in the house of Mr. John Gordon, at one time a favorite pupil, and ever after a dearly-loved friend of my father.

"CRAIGENPUTTOCK, DUMFRIES,  
19th December, 1829.

"MY DEAR SIR:—Your kind promise of a Christmas visit has not been forgotten here; and though we are not without misgivings as to its fulfilment, some hope also still lingers; at all events, if we must go unserved, it shall not be for want of wishing and audible asking. Come, then, if you would do us a high *favor*, that warm hearts may welcome in the cold New-Year, and the voice of poetry and philosophy, *numeris lege solutis*, may for once be heard in these deserts, where, since Noah's deluge, little but the whirring of heath-cocks and the lowing of oxen has broken the stillness. You shall have a warm fire, and a warm welcome; and we will talk in all dialects, concerning all things, climb to hill-tops, and see certain of the kingdoms of this world, and at night gather round a clear hearth, and forget that winter and the devil are so busy in our planet. There are seasons when one seems as if emancipated from the 'prison called life,' as if its bolts were broken, and the Russian ice-palace were changed into an open sunny *Tempe*, and man might love his brother without fraud or fear! A few such hours are scattered over our existence, otherwise it were too hard, and would make us too hard.

"But now descending to prose arrangements, or capabilities of arrangement, let me remind you how easy it is to be conveyed hither. There is a mail-coach nightly to Dumfries, and two stage-



coaches every alternate day to Thornhill; from each of which places we are but fifteen miles distant, with a fair road, and plenty of vehicles from both. Could we have warning, we would send you down two horses; of wheel carriages (except carts and barrows) we are still unhappily destitute. Nay, in any case, the distance, for a stout Scottish man, is but a morning walk, and this is the loveliest December weather I can recollect of seeing. But we are at the Dumfries post-office every Wednesday and Saturday, and should rejoice to have the quadrupeds waiting for you either there or at Thornhill, on any specified day. To Gordon, I purpose writing on Wednesday; but any way I know he will follow you, as Hesperus does the sun.

"I have not seen one *Blackwood*, or even an Edinburgh newspaper since I returned hither; so what you are doing in that unparalleled city is altogether a mystery to me. Scarcely have tidings of the *Scotsman-Mercury* duel reached me, and how the worthies failed to shoot each other, and the one has lost his editorship, and the other still continues to edit.\* Sir William Hamilton's paper on Cousin's Metaphysics I read last night; but, like Hogg's Fife warlock, 'my head whirled roun', and aye thing I couldna mind.' *O curas hominum!* I have some thoughts of beginning to *prophesy* next year, if I prosper; that seems the best style, could one strike into it rightly.

"Now, tell me if you will come, or if you absolutely refuse. At all events, remember me as long as you can in good-will and affection, as I will ever remember you. My wife sends you her kindest regards, and still hopes against hope that she shall wear her Goethe brooch this Christmas, a thing only done when there is a man of genius in the company.

"I must break off, for there is an Oxonian gigman coming to visit me in an hour, and I have many things to do. I heard him say the other night that in literary Scotland there was not one such other man as ——!—a thing in which, if —— would do himself any justice, I cordially agree. Believe me always, my dear sir, yours with affectionate esteem,

THOMAS CARLYLE."

\* One of the pleasant little incidents of those agreeable times, when it was considered necessary that the editors of the *Scotsman* and the *Caledonian Mercury* should exchange shots to vindicate a fine-art criticism. The principals were Mr. Charles Maclaren and Dr. James Browne. The "hostile meeting" took place at seven o'clock in the morning, on the 12th of November, 1820.

About this time I find another letter from Mr. Lockhart, referring to the contest for the University of Oxford in 1829, when Sir Robert Peel was unseated :—

“LONDON, 24 SUSSEX PLACE, REGENT'S PARK,  
*Sunday.*”

“MY DEAR WILSON :—I am exceedingly anxious to hear from you, firstly about Landor, what you have done, or what I really may expect to count on, and *when?* You will see Blanco White's review ere this reaches you. I think it won't do, being full of coxcombry, and barren of information, and in all the lighter parts *mauvais genre*. It's, however, supported by all the Coplestons, Malthuses, etc. ; and to satisfy —, I must make an exertion, in which, as you love me, give me your effectual aid—for you can. I know you will.

“I take it for granted you have been applied to both for Peel and Inglis. What do you say on that score? I am as well pleased I don't happen to have a vote. To have one, would cost me near £100 ; more than I care for Peel, Inglis, and the Catholic Question, *tria juncta in uno*. The Duke now counts on forty majority in the Lords, but his cronies hint he begins to be sorry the opposition out of doors is so *weak*, as he had calculated on forcing, through the No Popery row, the Catholics to swallow a bill seasoned originally for the *gusto* of the Defender of the Faith.

“How are you all at home? Ever yours,

“J. G. LOCKHART.

“*P. S.*—If you go to Oxon, come hither *imprimis*, and I will go with you.”

The next letter is addressed to Mr. De Quincey, dated June, 1829, and alludes to the “sketch of the Professor,” of which I have made partial use in a previous chapter :—

“*Sunday Evening, June, 1829.*”

“MY DEAR DE QUINCEY :—I had intended calling at the Nab tomorrow, to know whether or not you had left Edinburgh ; but from the *Literary Gazette*, received this morning, I perceive you are still in the Modern Athens. I wish, when you have determined on coming hitherwards, that you would let me have intimation thereof, as an excursion or two among the mountains, ere summer fades, would be pleasant, if practicable.

“Your sketch of the Professor has given us pleasure at Ellery. It has occurred to me that you may possibly allude, in the part which is to follow, to the circumstance of my having lost a great part of my original patrimony, as an antithesis to the word ‘rich.’ Were you to do so, I know it would be with your natural delicacy, and in a way flattering to my character. But the man to whom I owed that favor *died* about a fortnight ago, ——, and any allusion to it might seem to have been prompted by myself, and would excite angry and painful feelings. On that account I trouble you with this perhaps needless hint, that it would be better to pass it over *sub silentio*. Otherwise, I should have liked some allusion to it, as the loss, grievous to many minds, never hurt essentially the peace of mine, nor embittered my happiness.

“If you think the *Isle of Palms* and the *City of the Plague* original poems (in design), and unborrowed and unsuggested, I hope you will say so. The *Plague* has been often touched on and alluded to, but never, that I know of, was made the subject of a poem, old Withers (the *City Remembrancer*) excepted, and some drivelling of Taylor the Water-Poet. Defoe’s fictitious prose narrative I had never read, except an extract or two in Britton’s *Beauties of England*. If you think me a good private character, do say so; and if in my house there be one who sheds a quiet light, perhaps a beautiful niche may be given to that clear luminary. Base brutes have libelled my personal character. Coming from you, the truth told, without reference to their malignity, will make me and others more happy than any kind expression you may use regarding my genius or talents. In the *Lights and Shadows*, *Margaret Lyndsay*, *The Foresters*, and many articles in *Blackwood* (such as Selby’s ‘Ornithology’\*), I have wished to speak of humble life, and the elementary feelings of the human soul in isolation, under the light of a veil of poetry. Have I done so? Pathos, a sense of the beautiful, and humor, I think I possess. Do I? In the *City of the Plague* there ought to be something of the sublime. Is there? That you think too well of me, is most probably the case. So do not fear to speak whatever you think less flattering, for the opinion of such a man, being formed in kindness and affection, will gratify me far beyond the most boundless panegyric from anybody else. I feel that I am totally free from all jealousy, spite, envy, and un-

\* November, 1826.

charitableness. I am not so passionate in temper as you think. In comparison with yourself, I am the Prince of Peacefulness, for you are a nature of dreadful passions subdued by reason. I wish you would praise me as a lecturer on Moral Philosophy. That would do me good; and say that I am thoroughly logical and argumentative—for it is true; not a rhetorician, as fools aver. I think, with practice and opportunities, I would have been an orator. Am I a good critic? We are all well. I have been very ill with rheumatism. God bless you, my dear friend, and believe me ever yours affectionately,  
J. W.”

The friendship subsisting between Mr. De Quincey and my father has already been mentioned. From 1809, when he was his companion in pedestrian rambles and the sharer of his purse, till the hour of his death, that friendship remained unbroken, though sometimes, in his strange career, months or years would elapse without my father either seeing or hearing of him. If this singular man's life were written truthfully, no one would believe it, so strange the tale would seem. It may well be cause of regret that, by his own fatal indulgence, he had warped the original beauty of his nature. For fine sentiment and much tender kindliness of disposition gleamed through the dark mists which had gathered around him, and imperfectly permitted him to feel the virtue he so eloquently described. For the most part his habit of sympathy was such that it elevated the dark passions of life, investing them with an awful grandeur, destructive to the moral sense. Those beautiful writings of his captivate the mind, and would fain invite the reader to believe that the man they represent is De Quincey himself. But not even in the “Autobiography” is his *personnel* to be found. He indeed knew how to analyze the human heart, through all its deep windings, but in return he offered no key of access to his own. In manner no man was more courteous and naturally dignified; the strange vicissitudes of his life had given him a presence of mind which never deserted him, even in positions the most trying. It was this quality that gave him, in combination with his remarkable powers of persuasion, command over all minds; the ignorant were silenced by awe, and the refined fascinated as by the spell of a serpent. The same faults in common men would have excited contempt; the same irregularities of life in ordinary mortals would

have destroyed interest and affection; but with him patience was willing to be torn to tatters, and respect driven to the last verge. Still Thomas De Quincey held the place his intellectual greatness had at first taken possession of. Wilson loved him to the last, and better than any man he understood him. In the expansiveness of his own heart, he made allowances for faults which experience taught him were the growth of circumstance. It may seem strange that men so opposite in character were allied to each other by the bonds of friendship; but I think that all experience shows that sympathy, not similarity, draws men to one another in that sacred relation.

I remember his coming to Gloucester Place one stormy night. He remained hour after hour, in vain expectation that the waters would assuage and the hurly-burly cease. There was nothing for it but that our visitor should remain all night. The Professor ordered a room to be prepared for him, and they found each other such good company that this accidental detention was prolonged, without further difficulty, for the greater part of a *year*. During this visit some of his eccentricities did not escape observation. For example, he rarely appeared at the family meals, preferring to dine in his own room at his own hour, not unfrequently turning night into day. His tastes were very simple, though a little troublesome, at least to the servant who prepared his repast. Coffee, boiled rice and milk, and a piece of mutton from the loin, were the materials that invariably formed his diet. The cook, who had an audience with him daily, received her instructions in silent awe, quite overpowered by his manner; for, had he been addressing a duchess, he could scarcely have spoken with more deference. He would couch his request in such terms as these:—"Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional disarrangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise, so much so indeed as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than in a longitudinal form." The cook—a Scotchwoman—had great reverence for Mr. De Quincey as a man of genius; but, after one of these interviews, her patience was pretty well exhausted, and she would say, "Weel, I never heard the like o' that in a' my days; the bodie has an awfu' sicht o' words. If it had been my ain mais-

ter that was wanting his dinner, he would ha' ordered a hale table-fu' wi' little mair than a waff o' his haun, and here's a' this claver about a bit mutton nae bigger than a prin. Mr. De Quinshey would mak' a gran' preacher, though I'm thinking a hantle o' the folk wouldna ken what he was driving at." Betty's observations were made with considerable self-satisfaction, as she considered her insight of Mr. De Quincey's character by no means slight, and many was the quaint remark she made, sometimes hitting upon a truth that entitled her to that shrewd sort of discrimination by no means uncommon in the humble ranks of Scottish life. But these little meals were not the only indulgences that, when not properly attended to, brought trouble to Mr. De Quincey. Regularity in doses of opium was even of greater consequence. An ounce of laudanum per diem prostrated animal life in the early part of the day. It was no unfrequent sight to find him in his room lying upon the rug in front of the fire, his head resting upon a book, with his arms crossed over his breast, plunged in profound slumber. For several hours he would lie in this state, until the effects of the torpor had passed away. The time when he was most brilliant was generally towards the early morning hours; and then, more than once, in order to show him off, my father arranged his supper parties so that, sitting till three or four in the morning, he brought Mr. De Quincey to that point at which in charm and power of conversation he was so truly wonderful.\*

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### CHAPTER XIII.

#### LITERARY AND DOMESTIC LIFE.—A CRUISE WITH THE EXPERIMENTAL SQUADRON.

1830-'37.

IN 1830, we get some glimpses of home life in Gloucester Place, from my mother's letters to Miss Penny. She says, in reply to an invitation for her sons to Penny Bridge:—"The boys are transported with the idea of so much enjoyment, and I hope they will

\* Mr. De Quincey died at Edinburgh, December 8, 1859.