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De Quincey and the Lake poets

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DE QUINCEY AND THE LAKE POETS

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PREFACE

I feel that an investigation into the friendships between each of the Lake Poets and DeQuincey is worthwhile. The intercourse of these great personalities and the effects they produced on one another are sources of valuable information. It will be the object of this study to present the personal and social lives of the Lake Poets and their devotee, with a view of finding contributions and detractions made to each other by this association.

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-----S. A. C.

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CHAPTER I

The Life of De Quincey

At the time of Thomas' birth, on August 15, 1785, the Quinceys (in which form the father preferred the family name) were living at the Farm, or Greenhay, about a mile away from Manchester. But De Quincey himself informs us distinctly[1] that he was born in Manchester, and later authorities have rectified this blunder made by memoirs.

De Quincey emphasized that his family was not a recent French importation into England, but had come in with the Conquest. De Quincey, while dwelling with fondness on his genealogy, admits that most of the English De Quinceys for many generations before his time had been quite insignificant people. With other English families of like origin, they had dropped the aristocratic prefix De;

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1. De Quincey, Autobiographic Sketches, p. 34.

in addition to this they had consented, in the days of optional spelling, to be Quincys, Quincies, or Quinceys. De Quincey himself probably revived the prefix De (which he always wrote with the small d) in his particular branch of the family.

His father held a partnership in the firm of Quincey and Duck, linen drapers in Manchester. After a time he sold out this partnership and became a merchant on a larger scale, and on his own account. On account of this he went to Portugal, America, to the West Indies, and he did not see much of Manchester. He married, however in 1781, and his wife gave birth to eight children, of whom the fifth was Thomas. Soon after the latter's birth he developed consumption and was obliged to spend still more of his time abroad. In 1793, at the age of forty, he came home for the last time, to die.

Obviously, his father was very modest; "a plain and unpretending man," says De Quincey, at the beginning of his Autobiographic Sketches. He was fond of books, which he read mainly for amusement; having been denied the advantages of a college education, he had an exaggerated respect for those who had enjoyed them. De Quincey admitted that his father had always been a rather shadowy figure to him, come one day and

gone the next, almost indifferent to the personal affairs of his family.

His wife, née Elizabeth Penson, "was a very different type of person."(2) She was the daughter of an officer and came, like her husband, from solid middle-class stock, though De Quincey indicates that this stock was socially superior to her husband's. If his father had but little influence on the development of De Quincey's character, "his mother had what is perhaps better described as an enormous involuntary effect upon it."(3) De Quincey's references to his mother are uniformly respectful and reverent, with just a shade of critical remark on that side of her character which ruled her relations to himself. He hints in his Autobiographic Sketches that there was a touch too much of Roman firmness or hardness in her. Masson describes her as, "a stately woman, every inch a lady, moving in the best country circles, and with her feet on the Rock of Ages--such was, and always had been, De Quincey's mother."(4)

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2. Sackville-West, Thomas De Quincey, p. 3.

3. Ibid.

4. Masson, Thomas De Quincey, p.7.

She was a deeply religious woman, whose love for family and friends was deprived of warmth by being so obviously dictated by a severe sense of duty. She was, too, a woman of vigorous intellect; but her main fault was that she as a person of unquestionable integrity had a driving desire to influence others for their own good. I might mention a curious idiosyncrasy of Mrs. De Quincey, because it had to do with the muddled financial state of De Quincey's affairs.

There is no question about Mrs. De Quincey's narrow religious notions. She took De Quincey out of Bath School because he was too much praised, and in his earlier days, at least, she seems to have been by no means free from the abominable notion that human affections deeply enjoyed must lead astray from the path of duty. A love of formality seems to have been another weakness of this good lady. De Quincey tells us with some humor of the daily regulation according to which brothers and sisters were carried before their mother for morning-parade in her dressing room.

> When we were pronounced to be in proper trim, we were dismissed, but with two ceremonies that were to us mysterious and allegorical,--first, that our hair and faces were sprinkled with lavender--water and milk of roses; secondly, that we received a kiss on the forehead. (5)

The estate at Mr. Quincey's death amounted to 1600 l a year, out of which each of the sons was to be allowed 150 l, and the daughters 100 l. This arrangement, in the hands of competent trustees in 1793, should not have meant penury; the mismanagement of Quincey's fortune, and the miserable pittance on which his son Thomas was obliged to live during his minority, must be ascribed to Mrs. De Quincey's architectural extravagences.

For four years after the death of De Quincey's father, or from 1792 to 1796, the widow continued to live at Greenhay, trying her best to have her children educated. Soon, when home-reading and miscellaneous voluntary reading no longer served their needs, a tutor was chosen, known as the Rev. S. E., one of the guardians by the father's will.

When Thomas was seven his eldest brother William was twelve years old; this senior brother, totally unmanageable, boisterous, prank-loving, collared his smaller

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5. Japp, De Quincey Memorials, vol. I, p. 70.

brother at once for his fag and spaniel. It is not for nothing that De Quincey heads the long chapter of more than eighty pages in which he treats of the time of his subjection to his stormy elder brother with the words Introduction to the World of Strife. It is easy to see that during the three and a half years of which so much fun is made in the retrospect, Thomas was generally miserable.

The lessons given the nervous little creature by the Rev. S. H. served to quiet his fears and trepidations. "A conscientious man, though decidedly dull, he had grounded De Quincey well in Latin, and entered him in Greek,"(6) and he trained Thomas well in his own field too. For three years and a half Thomas was required to memorize a sermon each week, and De Quincey the writer recalls certain passages that impressed him. One passage, for instance, that sank into him with a mystic sense of power was the phrase in the book of Daniel, "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords." The word Pariah, meaning "social outcast," also sank into his consciousness, and

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6. Masson, Thomas De Quincey, p. 12.

he uses it a great deal in his writings.

When it was arranged by the guardians that his brother William, sixteen, should utilize his flair for drawing by studying under a London landscape-painter, De Loutherbourg, it marked a new point in Thomas' life.

Some time in 1796, De Quincey's mother having made up her mind to live at Bath, the establishment of Greenhay was broken up, and the house and grounds were sold. After being boarded for a while in Manchester, for continuation of the lessons under Rev. S. H., De Quincey followed his mother to Bath, and he was entered at the Bath Grammar School, presided over by Mr. Morgan, a classical scholar. He remained there for about two years. From the first he had a reputation of being something of a prodigy, especially for his Latin verse-making. Thomas was to have his brother Richard, four years younger and known as "Pink," as a school-fellow; he was the very opposite of William, of whom Thomas had seen the last. He died of typhus-fever soon after he had become an art pupil.

As the result of an accidental blow to Thomas' head dealt by a master, Mrs. Quincey sent him and his brother

to a private school at Winkfield, in Wiltshire, "of which the chief recommendation lay in the religious character of the master."[7] Hardly more than a year had been spent at Winkfield when the connection with that school was brought to an end by an invitation to De Quincey of a kind which his mother did not see fit to refuse. During the time of his convalescence at Bath, in the spring of 1799, he became acquainted with the young Lord Westport. The latter invited De Quincey to join him at Eton and accompany him in a long holiday on his father's estates in county Mayo, in the West of Ireland. Arrangements having been duly made, De Quincey did set out for Eton in the summer of 1800, to begin a ramble and round of visits in England and Ireland, which extended over four or five months. In the company of Lord Westport, De Quincey had the honor of speaking to King George III.

> What happened was pretty nearly as follows: the king, having first spoken with great kindness to my companion . . . then turned his eyes upon me. My name, it seems, had been communicated to him; he did not therefore, inquire about that. Was I of Eton? That was his first question. I replied that I was not, but hoped I should be. Had I a father living? I had not: my father had been dead about eight years. But

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7. Ibid, p. 18.

> you have a mother? I had. 'and she thinks of sending you to Eton? I answered, that she had expressed such an intention in my hearing . . . O, but all people think highly of Eton; everybody praises Eton. Your mother does right to inquire; there can be no harm in that; but the more she inquires, the more she will be satisfied--that I can answer for. (8)

He was impressed by the friendliness of George III.

> His majesty smiled in a very gracious manner, waved his hand towards us, and said something (I do not know what) in a peculiarly kind accent; he then turned around, and the whole party along with him. (9)

From Eton the two lads and a tutor went on a journey to Ireland on the 18th of July. Returning from Ireland to England in October, 1800, the two friends parted at Birmingham; and it is rather curious that Lord Westport is hardly heard of again in De Quincey's history. From Birmingham, as instructed by a letter from his mother, he went to Laxton, in Northamptonshire, where his elder sister already was.

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8. De Quincey, Autobiographic Sketches, pp. 190-191.

9. Ibid., p. 191.

Mainly because of financial limitations De Quincey had to go to Manchester Grammar School some time late in 1800, for his three years of drudgery. His account of the school, and of the head-master, Mr. Lawson, in whose house he was boarded, is on the whole not unfriendly. But the monotony of the school life itself put him out of spirits; above all, the total deprivation of physical exercise inflicted on Mr. Lawson's boarders by his absurd system of regulating their hours from morning to evening had a ruinous effect on De Quincey's health. After a year and a half at the school, the prospect of another year and a half became intolerable. In a letter to his mother, still extant, he pleads most pitifully for his immediate removal. When this pleading was of no avail, De Quincey decided to run away. After receiving 10 £ from Lady Carbery, of Laxton, who did not know his purpose, he slipped out of Mr. Lawson's house early one morning in July, 1802. He was then almost seventeen years old.

De Quincey's first idea, when he had made up his mind to run away from Manchester School, was to roam around the region of the English Lakes. He had a burning desire to see Wordsworth, but he realized the awkwardness of his position and also the necessity of communicating

with his mother. As his mother had moved from Bath to Chester, to a house called the Priory, the communication was not difficult. His mother took a stern view of the affair, but his uncle, Colonel Thomas Penson, home from India on a three years' furlough, sympathized with him, and made the generous offer of a guinea a week so that the young man could wander around for a while.

From July to November, 1802, then, we see him wandering about North Wales. But, even if this nomadic existence was most pleasant, there was, as Masson says, "the sting of some unsatisfied craving, the fatal longing in his nature to break away from the customary and respectable, and to dare the forbidden and indefinite" which "carried him suddenly out of those Welsh solitudes." (10) He decided to give up his guinea a week, cut that remaining bond between him and his mother and guardians, and bury himself in the world of London. There he sought out a "Jew" money-lender named Dell and negotiated a loan with an obscure attorney named Brunell. After Dell had sucked out charges for papers, stamps, and other little things, and pursued a policy of delay, De Quincey

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10. Masson, op. cit., p. 94.

was soon brought to his last guinea, but Brunell, not an unkind man, let him sleep in his house. During the day he was a tramp, treated with repugnance by watchmen. He describes his relations, intimate but innocent, with prostitutes. One he could never forget--Ann of Oxford Street, whom he describes as a poor girl of sixteen who was good at heart even in her degradation. She once saved his life when he fainted from exhaustion; she ran for wine and stimulants, buying them with her own money. But during his absence from Oxford Street for a day or two, London Ann had left, and he was chagrined. Throughout his later days her memory haunted him, for he never saw her again.

To answer some of the critics of De Quincey, who say that some of his episodes of London vagrancy are just fiction, Masson asserts that, first of all according to De Quincey's statement, he had not told the whole truth because it was impossible, but he had told nothing but the truth; second, in early private letters published by Japp, the check on these facts shows everything but date to be correct. (11) Furthermore, all of De Quincey's

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11. Ibid, p. 33.

biographers and many contemporary writers are agreed that De Quincey had such experiences. This writer had the opportunity of looking over De Quincey's early private letters and was reassured of the check on facts given in the Autobiographic Sketches. His negotiations with money-lender Dell turned out to be on the wrong side and produced a crisis in the opium-eater's life. Then: "Suddenly, at this crisis an opening was made, almost by accident, for reconciliation with my guardians." This is very vague and suggests that De Quincey was anxious not to go into precise facts. Japp, in his article in James Hogg's book of recollections, stated that "a gentleman--a friend of the family--whom he had met in London"(13) effected the reconciliation, in which case it was probably the same friend who had given him the 10 l. with which to make the journey to Eton. The most likely explanation seems to be that Thomas, discovering through the medium of this gentleman that he was free of troubles at home, decided to

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12. Japp, De Quincey Memorials, p. 374.

13. Hogg, De Quincey and his Friends, p. 37.

return once more to Chester.

Thomas' second visit to the Priory, Chester, was chiefly distinguished by his relations with his uncle, Colonel Penson--relations which were rendered comic by the conflict between the older man's sympathy for his nephew and his feeling that he ought to treat him severely. He obeyed the former alternative, showing in a letter written to him from India in 1808, that he could "rest assured I shall not invade the independence you desire to maintain."(14) After a discussion with his guardians, it was agreed that he might go to Oxford, but he should not get more than 100 l. a year. So in the autumn of 1803, at the age of eighteen, he went to Worcester College, Oxford.

De Quincey arrived at Oxford in December 1803, and he remained there, off and on, for the next three and a half years, though his name was kept on the books of his college until 1810. He treated his college as a more or less inconvenient hotel, where the tuition was a hindrance rather than a help, and he left the university

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14. Japp, Thomas De Quincey, vol. I, p. 101.

without receiving anything from it. The undergraduates were divided sharply into two classes: the sons of the rich aristocracy who lived for sport and fun, and the poor scholars who did nothing else but work. He did not like the habits of the rich undergraduates, and he found that even the scholars were not well-read in English literature. He must have been a queer figure, if only to judge from his own statement that for the first two years of his stay at Oxford he did not utter one hundred words. But his insociability probably made him work harder, for during his first two years he gained a large supply of knowledge. For his pleasure he turned to his correspondence with Wordsworth; he also made inquiries about Coleridge.

One other phase of his Oxford days is important. It was then that he first began to take opium. His first experience of the drug was on a dull, rainy Sunday in the spring or autumn of 1804, when, being on one of his visits to London, and having suffered for a week or two from neuralgia, he took the advice of a friend and bought a phial of the tincture of opium at a druggist's shop in Oxford Street. The effect when he took his first dose was divine, and from then on he was an experimenter with opium.

He was an apologist for opium; he suggests that in continuing the use of the drug he had hit on the specific for the pulmonary consumption to which he was liable by inheritance, from his father. The reports of medical authorities, however, are to the effect that he had ulceration of the stomach, brought on probably by bad and insufficient food during his vagrancy in Wales and London. Nevertheless, De Quincey avers that, although he took opium at Oxford from 1804 on, it was still in such moderation that he could have broken off the habit.

His name remained on the books of Worcester till 1810, but his time of residence was from 1803 to 1808, and it is supposed that there was only a year of connection with the University after 1807, and that was broken by absences.

The improvement of De Quincey's pecuniary circumstances in and from the year 1807 connects itself more particularly with one interesting absence of his from Oxford in the latter half of that year. Having gone into Somersetshire in the course of the summer, and having heard that Coleridge had returned from abroad, and was then quartered among friends at Nether Stowey, in that county, he went in search of the great man. He did not

find him at Nether Stowey, but came upon him in the town of Bridgewater, where he was staying with his wife and his three young children, Hartley, Derwent, and Sara, in the house of a certain family of Chubbs. A few weeks after Coleridge went with his family to Bristol, it was with delight that De Quincey found he could do the sage some service. De Quincey offered to escort his wife and children to Southey, at Greta Hall, Keswick. They reached the Lake country by a route which required them to take Wordsworth's cottage at Grasmere as their resting-place before going on to Southey's. Twice De Quincey had been on the verge of this poetic paradise before, but both times he had retreated with nervous shrinking at the last moment from the idea of presenting himself to Wordsworth. Now, at last, in the character of convoy to Mrs. Coleridge, he received a grasp of welcome from the poet's hand at his door, and became his temporary guest. Soon the party went on to Keswick, where De Quincey met Southey. All this was in November, 1807, when De Quincey was twenty-two years old.

Though De Quincey includes the year 1808 in the time of his Oxford residence, the records show him

to have been much in London through parts of that year. Coleridge was undoubtedly one of his attractions; other attractions were seeing Lamb and Hazlitt and going to the opera. In November of the same year he paid a second visit to Wordsworth at the Lakes, and he remained there till February, 1809, when he returned to London. De Quincey, after his return to London, saw through the press a pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, written by Wordsworth.

In a letter Dorothy Wordsworth points to an arrangement of some importance that had been made between De Quincey and the Wordsworths. This was that De Quincey should leave London, Oxford, and his other entanglements, and should come to reside permanently at the Lakes and as a tenant of Dove Cottage.

It had originally been De Quincey's intention, on leaving Oxford, to travel in Germany.[15] Nevertheless, like all his other projects for travel this came to nothing because of lack of funds. His pecuniary affairs had been going from bad to worse.

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15. Woodhouse, in Hogg, De Quincey and his Friends, p. 99.

In November, 1809, De Quincey, at the age of twenty-four, took over his cottage at Townend, Grasmere. Besides Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey, there were three other literary notables in the Lake district at the time of De Quincey's advent there. They were Dr. Richard Watson, Bishop of Llandoff; Charles Lloyd, a fine philosopher and poet who was later to become insane; John Wilson, afterwards known as Professor Wilson or "Christopher North," who had made a rather enviable reputation for himself at Oxford.

But after 1810, for reasons which will be pointed out later, there was a gradual waning of the friendship between De Quincey and Wordsworth, although Dorothy Wordsworth was not to become cold towards him for sometime, and he was still well-liked by the children.

He had brought the habit of opium-taking to the Lakes with him; and an indispensable article on his table, on one night of the week at least, when he was seated by himself, and the shutters were shut, the candles lit, was the opium-decanter. De Quincey's intimations on the subject are perfectly plain. Through the eight years preceding 1812 he had, he says, persisted without interruption in the use of opium, with a gradual increase both in the

frequency of his doses and of the quantity of each, but still with no signs of harm. The year 1813, nevertheless, was a fateful one in his history. What it was he does not say, but it seems to have been some serious calamity of a private kind, causing him distress. It may be suggested that he had two main troubles: serious losses and sad state of pecuniary affairs, and the death of Tonny Wordsworth, who followed Catherine Wordsworth to the grave. It was in the year 1813 that he became a confirmed opium-eater. This also marks the beginning of gloom and intellectual torpor rising from his opium debauches.

During the years 1813-1816, he went for several rambles and trips away from the Lakes. Several times he was in London; every year he was for some time in Somersetshire or elsewhere in the West of England, visiting his mother and her friends.

There are not many striking incidents in De Quincey's bachelor life at the Lakes if we except his well-known, but undated, adventure with the Malay. As he sat reading in his upper room his servant girl, Barbara, came up in agitation to say that a sort of demon was waiting below to see him. Descending, De Quincey found

a Malay, dressed in native clothes, with a turban on his head, standing in the dim light in the hall. Knowing no Malay, De Quincey tried him with the Arabic word for barley and the Turkish word for opium without result. He had some food and rest, but before he started on his way De Quincey gave him various presents, among them a piece of opium, which the Malay, to his surprise and alarm, proceeded to swallow at a mouthful. He fully expected to see the man drop down dead on the spot; on the contrary, the drug did not seem to have any effect upon him, and he departed.

This incident seems to have been the only break in the studious monotony of his days at this time. His evenings, though, were soon to be spent in a different manner. He visited the Simpsons frequently at their farm, called the Nab, between Grasmere and Ambleside. Before the year 1816, certainly, he was in constant search there for Margaret Simpson, the daughter. Whatever may have been his feelings at the beginning of their friendship, a strong attachment soon grew up between the two of them.

By September, 1816, his mother knew of his intention to marry, and she "instantly took up her pen and wrote to him, asking incredulously if the news was true and managing to imply that, if it were, it ought not to be."(16) The Wordsworths and Coleridges were strongly opposed to the match, mainly because of the premature birth of a child; but De Quincey and Margaret had married in the end of 1816. At the date of the marriage the bride was eighteen years, De Quincey being thirty-one.

It is somewhat peculiar that De Quincey never pictured for his readers the avowedly attractive figure of Margaret De Quincey. We get, though, a good idea of her character and of her help to the opium-eater. We gather that the extreme pliability and sweetness that informed Margaret's manner was evidently set off by a character of solid common sense and very touching fidelity. As he himself testified: "Without the aid of M., all records of bills paid, or to be paid, must have perished: and my whole domestic economy, whatever became of Political Economy, must have gone into irretrievable confusion."(17)

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16. Sackville-West, op.cit., p.119.

17. De Quincey, Confessions, (1823), p. 155.

For a while before the event, and in anticipation of it, De Quincey had, as he tells us "suddenly and without any considerable effort," reduced his daily allowance of opium from 320 grains, or 8000 drops, to 40 grains, or 1000 drops. For a while, then, his mind was healthy and healed, and for a year he had peace and happiness. But his self-control was unfortunately but temporary; and for some time in 1817, on through 1818, and even into 1819, he was again under the full dominion of the drug, rising once more to his 8000 drops per diem, or even sometimes to 12,000 drops. This, accordingly, was the time of that most intimate and tremendous experience of the opium-horrors in his own case which he has described in part of his Confessions. He had visions of "vast processions," "friezes of never-ending stories ";recollections of the Malay, jumbled confusions of Egypt, China, and Hindostan; mazes and labyrinths of streets in lamp-lit London and an endless groping for Ann of Oxford Street.

In 1819 he made a determined effect to indulge moderately, and he was successful. In that same year he was offered by the Tories the editorship of the Westmoreland Gazette, which he accepted and which had a

steadying effect on him. De Quincey entered into an arrangement whereby he was to pay a sub-editor to carry on the routine at Kendal, the home of the periodical, keeping the surplus for himself for his leading articles and supervising editorship from Grasmere. He had, furthermore, engagements at this time with Blackwood's Magazine and the Quarterly Review. But, as Japp says, he "was not born for a successful newspaper editor." On the other hand, it could not be said that he was wholly unsuccessful, even by the standard of the Tory gentlemen at Westmoreland.

But his editorship of the Westmoreland Gazette came to an end in 1820, and from then on he was merely a contributor. Not unnaturally his thought turned to Edinburgh, where his friend Wilson, now Professor of Moral Philosophy, had since 1817 been the lord of Blackwood's Magazine. So at the end of 1820 he is found in Edinburgh, and in a letter to his wife thence, dated December 9, 1820, he speaks of the cordial reception he has had among his old Edinburgh friends. Nothing definite, however, seem to have come of the visit. Wilson, no doubt, did his best, but there may have been difficulties. Therefore, De Quincey was back at his home in the Lakes

early in 1821.

De Quincey, having tried and failed to borrow more money from Wilson in Edinburgh, decided to cast his fortune in the metropolis of London. But he could not make up his mind to live permanently in London, for it was painful for him to be parted from his wife and family. So for the next four years (1821-1824) he continued to return for short visits to Grasmere. It was not to Dove Cottage that he returned, though, because his family had taken a slightly larger house at Rydal, called Fox Ghyll, the property of John Simpson of the Nab, to accommodate the children, William, Margaret, and Horace, and his wife.

When he lived in London, where he found lodgings at York Street, Covent Garden, he wrote feverishly. At last he had settled down to the business of journalism, which was to be inexorably his for the rest of his life. His opportunity came when De Quincey, soon after arriving in London, met Sir Thomas Noon Talfourd, who introduced him to Messrs. Taylor and Hessey, the publishers of the London Magazine. The result was a contract which set the seal of De Quincey's career. His

first contribution to the magazine was the Confessions of an English Opium-Eater. He wrote speedily, but this speed was achieved at the price of large doses of laudanum, which De Quincey found necessary to produce sleep, while working at such high pressure.

The serial publications of the Confessions aroused so much interest that Taylor and Hessey brought out the whole in book form in 1822. This edition was soon reprinted, and in the same year a second appeared with an appendix giving the author's account of the disintoxication which he had undergone in the summer of that year. Though the little book caused considerable excitement by its novelty and frankness, and Sir James Mackintosh wrote a letter praising it, doubts were cast on its genuineness by the poet James Montgomery, and by the North American Review. But if the Confessions brought him notoriety, he was still acutely miserable. He seems to have disliked the life of hard literary toil; and his separation from his family was almost unbearable. He was unable to tolerate or take pleasure in any sort of society. He was disembarrassed and comforted, nevertheless, by occasional visits to the Lambs; there was a deepening in his friendship with Charles Lamb.

In the summer of 1822, De Quincey found that in order to work properly, he had to subject himself to a rigorous system of disintoxication, of which he gives the details in the Appendix to the third edition of the Confessions. His body, unfortunately, disturbed by this sudden change of regimen, took its toll in distressing symptoms of cramp in the stomach, restlessness, lack of sleep, ulcerated mouth, and violent and continuous sneezing. In the end, however, this effort brought its reward in a greatly increased ability to concentrate on work and to get new ideas.

De Quincey's affairs, at the beginning of 1825, were reaching a complex crisis. His debts had become so pressing that he found it necessary almost to go into hiding, changing his lodgings frequently to evade his creditors. His mother wrote to him in January and said that she was then prepared to give him an allowance of 100 l a year; it is not known, but probable, that De Quincey accepted this offer. "A friend indeed" turned up in the person of Charles Knight, an editor and publisher, who was then founding Knight's Quarterly Magazine, to which he invited De Quincey to contribute. The connection of De Quincey with the London Magazine seems to have ceased after 1824,

as a result of Taylor's and Hessey's arrangements at the time for quitting the propietorship. But the opium-eater contributed only two important pieces, meanwhile living some months in Knight's house and astonishing the master and his servants with his eccentricities. A good deal of De Quincey's time in the year 1825 was taken up with a translation of a German novel, Walladmor, for Taylor and Hessey.

And so, from 1821 to 1825, or between De Quincey's thirty-seventh and his forty-first year, we have the first burst of his magazine articles and cognate publications.

In November, 1825, Wilson wrote to the opium-eater soliciting his collaboration on the Quarterly Review which was about to change hands from John Coleridge to Lockhart. His contributions were in the form of assisting Wilson to write a review of Brown and Welsh's lectures on psychology. Wilson ends the letter in an apologetic and friendly tone, realizing that an offer of this kind might seem impertinent.

The letter was followed, however, a year later, by an offer of a more substantial kind, namely, what De Quincey seems to have hankered after: a return to the

staff of Blackwood's. De Quincy went to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1826, to make a fresh start in the pages of Maga.

Through the years 1827-1829 we find him quite as much in Edinburgh as at Grasmere. He was, of course, no stranger there. And Carlyle and De Quincy met at the house of one of Wilson's friends; Carlyle shows his interest in De Quincy by his long letter of December 11, 1828, inviting De Quincy and his wife to visit him and his wife at Craigenputtock.

Carlyle sheds considerable light on the change of De Quincy's person. In the former's Reminiscences he gives an impression of him which, fundmamentally contemtuous though it is, lays just emphasis on the man prematurely aged by pain, by prolonged anxiety and sorrow, and by the deceptions of a gentle romanticism.

> He was a pretty little creature, full of wire-drawn enthusiasms, bankrupt pride; with the finest silver-toned low voice, and most elaborate gently-winding courtesies and ingenuities in conversation: "What wouldn't one give to have him in a Box, and take him out to walk! A bright ready and melodious talker; but in the end an inconclusive and long-winded. One of the smallest man figures I ever saw; shaped like a pair of tongs; and

> hardly above five feet in all: when he sat, you would have taken him, by candle light, for the beautifullest little child; blue-eyed, blond-haired, sparkling face,-- . . . . His fate,-- owing to opium, etc.--was hard and sore; poor fine-strong, weak creature, launched so into the "literary career of ambition, and mother of dead-dogs." (18)

This would not have been an accurate picture of De Quincey in 1816.

De Quincey's troubles were still clinging to him. Although he was making a hardy income, it was not enough to support a man of letters in Edinburgh and his wife and young ones in the vale of Grasmere. Both De Quincey and his wife were averse to the idea of leaving Grasmere; but at length, in 1830, apparently on the spur of some new offer of literary engagement in Edinburgh, the resolution was taken. It was precipitated by the advice of the sympathetic and sensible Dorothy Wordsworth.

The literary industry of De Quincey in the period 1830-1840 is represented mainly by the list of his continued contributions to Blackwood's and by a

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18. Sackville-West, op. cit., pp. 152-153.

series of contributions to another Edinburgh monthly, called Tait's Magazine. In Blackwood's for 1831 appeared Dr. Parr and his Contemporaries, or Whiggism in its Relations to Literature; in the same magazine, under the title of The Caesars, there was begun, in October, 1832, a series of articles on Roman history. There was then an interruption of four years; but in July 1837, appeared the long narrative, Revolt of the Tartars, which was followed in 1838 by The Household Wreck and Modern Greece, and in 1839 by Casuistry and Dinner, Real and Reputed. The year 1840 was marked by the production of the series of papers entitled The Essenes, the articles entitled Alleged Plagiarisms of Coleridge and Modern Superstition, and the series on Style and Rhetoric. Meanwhile De Quincey had been contributing also to Tait's.

It was in February, 1834, just at the time of the break with Blackwood's, that Tait's began to astonish its readers by Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-eater. The series ran on, sometimes with explanatory sub-titles, through the rest of 1834 and through 1835, and 1836, and, even after the connection with Blackwood's was resumed in

1837, Tait was able to entertain its readers for three more years with new instalments of the same. The Sketches, indeed, extending over about thirty articles in all, contain that Autobiography of De Quincey, the republished portions of which in the English edition of his collected works form, together with the Confessions, the most frequently read volumes of the collection. No portions of the series attracted greater attraction at the time, or excited more wrath in certain quarters, than the digressions upon the recently dead Coleridge and the still living Wordsworth and Southey.

The average amount of De Quincey's contributions to the two magazines jointly through the ten years was about six articles every year. In 1835 and 1836 he wrote the articles Goethe, Pope, Shakespeare, and Schiller, for the seventh edition of the Encyclopedia Britannica. During the same period he produced one of the only two specimens of his powers given to the world originally in book form. This was his Klosterheim, or the Masque, a romance, published by Blackwood's.

De Quincey's domestic life in Edinburgh through a period of such marked activity is striking in its

considerable obscurity. We learn incidentally that he was a guest in Wilson's home in Gloucester Place for some time continuously in 1830-31; we hear of a large furnished house or set of apartments in Great King Street taken for himself and his family in 1831; we know of removals to Forrest Street and to the village of Duddington.

But if he did not devote so much time to his family, his affection was not wanting, and three family bereavements fell with heavy effect upon him. The first was the death by fever, in 1833, of De Quincey's youngest son, Julius, in the fifth year of age. The next was the death, in 1835, at the age of not quite eighteen, of the eldest son, William. Then, in 1837, came the death of Mrs. De Quincey herself. "One can suppose," says Masson, "that hers had not been the easiest or the happiest of lives."(19)

De Quincey, left in his fifty-second year with six children, must have had a difficult time. The eldest girl, Margaret, and the child next to her in age,

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19. Masson, op. cit., p. 94.

Horace, purposed to take a cottage called Mavis Bush, near Lasswade, about seven miles out of Edinburgh, where they and the four younger ones could live more economically than in town. This was in 1840. From that time on the cottage at Lasswade was his chief abode.

He was located at Lasswade, but he was there only when he chose. There was an attraction to Edinburgh and also to Glasgow. For perhaps the greater part of the two years from March, 1841, to June, 1843, De Quincey was in Glasgow as the guest of one or the other of two friends--J. P. Nichol, Professor of Astronomy, and E. L. Lushington, Professor of Greek. From his return to Glasgow in June, 1843, he seems, with the exception of a plunge now and then in some lodging in Edinburgh, to have resided steadily at Lasswade. The three sons, of whom Horace had died, had departed, and De Quincey had to be with his three daughters as much as possible. On the whole De Quincey's life on the decline seemed more pleasant and more peaceful than in former times. His son Francis returned soon from Manchester, and De Quincey enjoyed his companion-

ship. Then there were pleasant acquaintanceships with some of the Lasswade neighbors and also with friends and admirers who journeyed to his home to see him.

Through 1848 and 1849 all the family were together, although in 1847 De Quincey went to Glasgow for some time.

As for his opium problem those days, there had been ups and downs according to the varying degrees of his suffering from his gastric ailment. The chief crisis had been in the year 1844 . In some new excess of accumulated wretchedness, mental and physical, when a horror of the most hideous blackness seemed once more to engulf him, he had rioted again with the fiend and exulted in 5000 daily drops. But again he mastered a heroic effort, and, with the allowance ranging from 100 drops a day onwards, he had recovered in 1844 the faculty of living on.

During the years 1854 and 1855 De Quincey had re-awakenings of old friendships. When Wilson died in the former year, it was a considerable blow to De Quincey. At his friend's death there came back

vision of a vibrant personality who had inspired him again and again with the sheer lust of living and who had revealed to him the joys of intimate friendship in those far off days at Grasmere.

A last echo of his friendships with the Wordsworths came to De Quincey in the news of Dorothy's death, on January 25, 1855. Seven years previously, he had written a letter of introduction to Wordsworth for a young Greek called, Neocles Jaspis Mousabines.[20] It is a stiff letter, though it ends "your faithful friend and servant"; it expresses what was necessary to the occasion, and no more. The chapter was closed forever. And so, when Dorothy Wordsworth died, De Quincey, if he felt any emotion, at all events did not reveal it. After all, while Wilson had been his constant friend throughout the years, Dorothy's influence at the time of his youth now had grown dim in his mind.

Japp's assertion that "the last ten years embrace a period of quiet and steady activity"[21] has to be

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20. Japp, Thomas De Quincey, p. 268.

21. Ibid., p. 277.

qualified. DeQuincey's activity during this period was as steady as his health and habits would allow it to be, but it was certainly not quiet, if by "quiet" is meant freedom from nervous exhaustion, an amount of work suited to his capacity, and the sort of tranquillity conferred by the easy sense of a well-spent life. In this sense, DeQuincey's activity was never quiet. For one thing, his health, though free from the taut agonies of the opium crises, continued to give him every kind of trouble. In 1852 he complained of suffering continually from a stagnation of blood in the legs, resulting in a torpor so great that he was unable to hold a pen, while the sensation was accompanied by a "frightful recurrence of long-ago imagery and veriest trifles of the past." (22)

Among his works of these later years were Coleridge and Opium-eating, The English Mail-coach, and The Vision of Sudden Death, published in Blackwood's; and in Tait's magazine appeared Wordsworth's Poetry, On the Temperance Movement, and Milton versus Southey and Landor.

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22. Ibid.

When the autumn of 1859 had come, and the thirteenth volume of the Collected Works had been issued, it became evident that De Quincey's work in the world was over. On Sunday, December 4, 1859, the approach of death was so imminent that it was thought right to telegraph for Mrs. Craig, who, with his youngest daughter, already summoned from Ireland, were the only children within reach. Mrs. Craig arrived in time to be recognized and welcomed; and on the morning of Thursday, December 8, the two daughters standing by the bedside, and the physician with them, De Quincey passed away. De Quincey, at the time of his death, was seventy-four years and four months old.

Unlike many other chiefs of literature, the opium-eater's best works consist almost entirely of papers contributed to periodicals. Another characteristic of his writings is their extreme multifariousness. The large extent of ground covered and the most diverse of subjects in a single work is enormous, and one gets the impression of reading pleasant miscellanea of conversable subjects. But his writings, so miscellaneous in their collective range, are all, or almost all, of high quality; this is noteworthy especially when one considers the quantity of bad magazine-writing in De Quincey's time.

De Quincey had a passion for scientific exactness, and his numerical divisions and subdivisions, so unusual in literary papers, are signs of the practiced thinker. Masson tells us, too, that, "he had a teeming memory" and quotes De Quincey's words to the effect that he had "a logical instinct for feeling in a moment the secret analogies or parallelisms that connect things else apparently remote." And so, Masson continues, there is that quality of his thought called "richness or inventiveness." "In the act of thinking anything, metonymies, metaphors, anecdotes, illustrations, historical or fantastic, start up in his mind, become incorporate with his primary thought, and are, in fact, its language."(43)

The style of De Quincey, as might be expected, is prevailingly intellectual. There is nothing fiery about it, and we are not hurried along, but become conscious instead of a beautiful style, unique in intellectual nimbleness, light precision, and lyrical music.

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43. Masson, op. cit., p. 143.

A good deal has been said about DeQuincey's stately and elaborate phrasing, but it has generally been agreed that, except for a few cases, this characteristic does not impair the quality of his writings, but makes it more splendid. Thus, he could express his feeling for the mysterious and the sublime, an analyst, along with Burton and others, of the sense of sorrow and melancholy. This he relieves by his considerable vein of humor, sometimes rollicking, sometimes ironical, and sometimes mischievous and spiteful. But he needed humor to alleviate his essentially pathetic and poetical mind; humor and pathos, we are told, sometimes are one.

So it is with such a man who became a master of prose, smooth, elegant, and lyrical, that we are to associate the figures of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. Of the affinity between DeQuincey and the last two mentioned there is an intellectual rendez-vous, whatever their personal natures had as points of difference; Southey he did not find a person especially receptive to his literary tastes, and vice versa.

It will be very interesting to note in this paper the dominance of the personal equation; although DeQuincey, Wordsworth, and Coleridge were drawn to each other by common impulses, there were sharp points of difference in temperament and character which prohibited a lasting communion of minds. For the time that they influenced one another, they provided mutual comradeship and mutual encouragement.

CHAPTER II

De Quincey and Coleridge

De Quincey had got as far as Liverpool on what was his first definite attempt to reach the poet's home at Grasmere. Twice also, he had advanced as far as the Lake of Coniston, but his courage had failed him. It was not until August, 1807, while visiting an acquaintance at Bristol, that he called on Thomas Poole, a friend of Coleridge's, in the hope that Coleridge might be in the vicinity. He surmised that if he could see Coleridge, an introduction to Wordsworth might not be so difficult. Poole received him genially and took him to Alfoxden, where Coleridge had lived with William and Dorothy Wordsworth in 1797-98; but Coleridge was away

at Bristol. He took leave of Mr. Poole after receiving instructions for finding the house where Coleridge was visiting, and noticed in riding through the main street of Bridgewater a gateway which matched the description given him. Under this was standing a man whose figure was "broad and full" whose complexion was fair, and whose "eyes were large and soft in their expression." He recognized him to be Coleridge.

> I examined him steadfastly for a minute or more; and it struck me that he saw neither myself nor any other object in the street. He was in a deep reverie; for I had dismounted, made two or three trifling arrangements at an inn door, and advanced close to him, before he had apparently become conscious of my presence. The sound of my voice, announcing my own name, first awoke him: he started, and for a moment seemed at a loss to understand my purpose or his own situation; for he repeated rapidly a number of words which had no relation to either of us.....This little scene over, he received me with a kindness of manner so marked that it might be called gracious. (1)

It seems singular that Thomas De Quincy should in one breathless moment meet a man who, by his quaint perplexity and then by his innate fineness of spirit,

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1. De Quincy, Literary Reminiscences, Vol.1, p. 167.

introduced him at once to spiritual ideals and to the imminent power of opium. In this first meeting, then, are to be found two forces combining to ingrain themselves in this young man's life: the great inspiration of a poet-philosopher; the drug, showing that it tainted even the cleanest of spirits, and warning him of its dread influence in his later life.

For about three hours he and De Quincy were seated comfortably and talking,

> And in the course of this performance he had delivered many most striking aphorisms, embalming more weight of truth, and separately more deserving to be themselves embalmed than any that are on record. (2)

In the midst of this talk, in which De Quincy seldom tried to interrupt and which did not leave any openings for contribution, the door opened, and Sara Coleridge entered.

> She was in person full and rather below the common height: whilst her face showed, to my eye, some prettiness of rather a commonplace order. Coleridge turned, upon her entrance: his features, however, announced no particular complacency, and

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2. Ibid, p. 175.

> did not relax into a smile. In a frigid tone he said, whilst turning to me, "Mrs. Coleridge:" in some slight way he presented me to her: I bowed; and the lady almost immediately retired. From this short, but ungenial scene, I gathered, what I afterward learned redundantly, that Coleridge's marriage had not been a happy one. (3)

After relating occasions during which Mrs. Coleridge's ill temper displayed itself, he explains Coleridge's marriage to this woman.

> Coleridge...assured me that his marriage was not his own deliberate act; but was in a manner forced upon his sense of honor, by the scrupulous Southey, who insisted that he had gone too far in his attentions to Miss F____, for any honorable retreat. On the other hand, a neutral spectator of the parties protested to me, that if ever in his life he had seen a man under deep fascination, and what he would have called desperately in love, Coleridge, in relation to Miss F____, was that man. (4)

It must have been this passage that particularly hurt Southey, who prescribed a cudgel for the remarks upon Mrs. Coleridge, Bath milliners, and marital unhappiness.(5)

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3. Ibid. p. 176.

4. Ibid. p. 179.

5. Carlyle, Reminiscences, p. 518.

Fortunately, he had a pleasant time in spite of the awkward circumstances of their meeting, and Coleridge treated him with perfect courtesy. De Quincy on being invited by Coleridge to a large dinner party the next day, accepted eagerly, anxious to see him under any conditions. After this dinner party at the house of one Mr. Chubb, "De Quincy felt so wrought up by the excitements of the day that he decided to walk to Bristol through the night." (6) This started the series of nocturnal walks which so invigorated his body and mind. With his imagination drawn sharp by this stimulus, he left to us vivid memoirs of commonplace events changed by his agile turns of mind into adventures.

In December, 1807, they met again at the Bristol Hot Wells, and a rather "happy circumstances made way for an opportunity to meet Wordsworth, this time with company, so it would be much easier." (7)

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6. Sackville-West, Thomas De Quincy, p. 68.

7. Ibid., p, 68.

After leaving Oxford, De Quincey spent the rest of the summer of 1808 mostly in London, where he was "making some attempt to study law, and keep his terms with a view of being called to the bar; but his real reason was in such associations as those he now formed with Charles Lamb and Coleridge."(8) He describes visits to both of these distinguished writers; with Lamb at the India House and at his home, and with Coleridge at the Courier office in the Strand.

> Coleridge was at that time living uncomfortably enough at the Courier office, in the Strand. In such a situation, annoyed by the sound of feet passing his chamber door continually to the printing rooms of this great establishment, and with no gentle ministrations of female hands to sustain his cheerfulness, naturally enough his spirits flagged; and he took more than ordinary doses of opium. I called upon him daily, and pitied his forlorn condition. (9)

Thus remarks De Quincey of the poet's life in the Strand commenting further on his friend's sad degradation at that period of his life. Here we find:

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8. Japp, Thomas De Quincey, His Friends and Associates, p. 45.

9. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, Vol. 1, pp. 213-214.

> Thus unhappily situated, he sank more than ever under the dominion of opium; so that at two o'clock, when he should have been in attendance at the Royal Institution, he was often unable to rise from bed. (10)

And then again:

> His appearance was generally that of a person struggling with pain and overmastering illness. His lips were baked with feverish heat, and often black in color; and in spite of the water which he continued drinking through the whole course of his lecture, he often seemed to labor under an almost paralytic inability to raise the upper jaw from the lower. In such a state it is clear that nothing could save the lecture itself from reflecting his own feebleness and exhaustion, except the advantage of having been precomposed in some happier mood. But that never happened.... (11)

The next chance he had of seeing Coleridge was at the Lakes in the winter of 1809, and up to the autumn of the following year.(12) At this time Coleridge was editor of The Friend, carrying out his duties in his home. He saw him daily the greater part of the time. Coleridge was living with the Wordsworths in Grasmere, and De Quincey

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10. Ibid., p. 214.

11. Ibid., p. 215.

12. Ibid., p. 216.

now resided also in Grasmere, about a mile away, where the latter had a cottage and a "considerable library." Coleridge borrowed heavily from this library, so that sometimes there were as many as five hundred books absent at one time.

De Quincy comments significantly on Coleridge's way of living at this stage of their friendship.

> He was not now reduced to depend on "Mrs. Bainbridge," but looked out from his study windows upon the sublime hills of Seat Sandal and Arthur's Chair, and upon pastoral cottages at their feet; and all around him he hears hourly the murmuring of happy life, the sound of female voices, and the innocent laughter of children. But, apparently, he was not happy himself: the accursed drug poisoned all natural pleasure at its sources; he burrowed continually deeper into scholastic subtleties and metaphysical abstraction, and, like that class described by Seneca, in the luxurious Rome of his days, he lived chiefly by candle-light. At two or three o'clock in the afternoon he would make his first appearance: through the silence of the night, when all other lights had long disappeared, in the quiet cottage of Grasmere his lamp might be seen invariably by the belated traveler. (13)

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13. Ibid., p. 220.

The year 1810 was the year of the estrangement between Wordsworth and Coleridge. This estrangement had been maturing for some time, "unknown to the latter."(14) Wordsworth had by now become convinced of Coleridge's incurable feebleness of will, his inability to finish what he had begun, and his shilly-shallying method of conducting his life. (15)

"In the autumn of 1810, Coleridge left the Lakes; and--so far as I am aware--for ever."(16) De Quincey ventures in a somewhat inconclusive manner the cause and immediate occasion for his departure: In the first place, "flashes of personal recollections, suddenly restored and illuminated."(17) These recollections had, in Coleridge's extremely sensitive state of mind, brought "into collision the present with some long-forgotten past, in a form too trying and too painful for endurance."(18)

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14. Sackville-West, Thomas De Quincy, p. 99.
15. Ibid., p. 99.
16. Ibid., p. 232.
17. Ibid., p. 232.
18. Ibid., p. 232.

> In the second place, sometimes the same decay came back upon his heart in the more poigant shape of intimation, and vanishing glimpses, recovered for one moment from the paradise of youth, and from the fields of joy and power, over which for him, too certainly, he felt that the cloud of night had settled for ever. (19)

The immediate occasion for his departure was the opportunity offered him to change his residence in an unpainful way. Mr. Basil Montague, a lawyer friend, happened to be returning to London with Mrs. Montague. Mr. Montague asked him to London as their guest, and Coleridge consented to go.

From Montague's Coleridge passed into another family, which De Quincy does not mention otherwise than "Mr. and Mrs. M_____. Mr. M____ died shortly, and he obtained lodgings elsewhere.

In March, 1812, De Quincy left Grasmere for London and stayed there till summer, making some pretence of taking up legal studies. He saw Coleridge regularly,

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19. Ibid., p. 235.

almost every day; "and sometimes we were jointly engaged in dinner parties."[20] In particular De Quincy remembers one party in which they met Lady Hamilton, "the beautiful, the accomplished, the enchantress!"[21]

Between the years 1813 and 1815 De Quincy walked on even ground. He lived with the tranquillity of William and Dorothy Wordsworth and of Dove Cottage, although he absented himself frequently and went to London and Wrington. His indulgence in opium had not yet reached "the stage where pleasure passes over into pain."[22] But Coleridge's nerves were getting worse.

> In August De Quincy wrote that the poet was refusing to be seen, flinging a note down the stairs to Mrs. Morgan, his landlady, to the effect that the gout had mounted to his stomach and that if he were disturbed or agitated it would speedily attack his brain. (23)

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20. Ibid., p. 235.

21. Ibid.

22. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 105.

23. Ibid.

A night or two later, though, Mrs. Morgan and her sister, looking out of the window and seeing smoke rolling round the corner of the street, vertured to call Coleridge, who immediately "tripped downstairs with her as lightly as ever."(25)

There is a considerable decline in the friendship and companionship of these two literary figures after the death of Mrs. M_____ and the dissolution of the household.

> I know not whither Coleridge went immediately: for I did not visit London until some years had elapsed. In 1823-1824, I first understood that he had taken up his residence as a guest with Mr. Gillman, a surgeon, in Highgate. He had then probably resided for some time at that gentleman's; there he continued to reside on the same terms, I believe, of affectionate friendship with the members of Mr. Gillman's family as he had made life endurable to him in the time of the M_____'s; and there died on July 25, 1834 at Highgate, at the age of sixty-one.(26)

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25. Japp, Thomas De Quincey, p. 133.

26. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. 1, p.241.

And so we come to the end of the chronological events relating to the friendship between De Quincey and Coleridge. It remains now to contract the friendship between the two men and the alienation between De Quincey and the Coleridge family.

When the two kindred spirits met, friendship was spontaneous. De Quincey was then twenty-two, the poet thirty-seven. Coleridge had the knack of making friends by his graciousness, his modesty, and his ease of conversation. After formal introductions were over and small matters arranged,

> Coleridge, like some great river, the Orellans or the St. Lawrance, that has been checked and fretted by rocks or thwarting islands, and suddenly recovers its volume of waters, and its mighty music--swept at once, as if returning to his natural business, into a continuous strain of eloquent dissertation, certainly the most novel, the most finely illustrated, and traversing the most spacious, fields of thought, by transitious the most just and logical, that it was possible to conceive.(27)

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27. Ibid., p. 169.

There can be no doubt that at the initial phase of their companionship De Quincy admired Coleridge for his intellectual attainments, goodness of manners, and advanced knowledge of human nature. Coleridge, on the other hand, was attracted to De Quincy the lad because the latter had a certain fervor, an undiminished sincerity, and eagerness of purpose and fulfillment which Coleridge felt somewhat lacking in himself.

After this first meeting and its charms, a second instance of De Quincy's show of friendship for Coleridge was evident in his gift of 300 l. In the autumn of 1807 he had returned to Bristol, found Coleridge in financial straits, and conceived a plan in essence good but in later considerations faulty. At that time he approached Joseph Cottle, Bristol publisher and personal friend of the poet, and asked him whether Coleridge would accept 100 l or 200 l as a gift by an anonymous donor. Coleridge at first was offended, but he became more receptive in his letter to Cottle the following day.

Coleridge finally decided to take the sum offered, which at De Quincey's insistence had risen to 500 l, but only as a loan. "Cottle, knowing how wasteful and improvident the poet was, seemed to have had some twinges of conscience over his responsibility in the affair."(28) Cottle therewith intimated that a sum smaller than 500 l would be sufficient; De Quincey settled on 300 l. This debt was never repaid him. De Quincey must have afterwards recognized the uselessness of this action, for he wrote: "in strict morality...it was wrong: it was an act not for my fortune nor for my situation....(29)

Nevertheless, whether this measure was right or not, the downright sincerity and affection of the donor for the receiver, seems unquestionable.

Another evidence of friendship between the two men, this time of mutual attachment, is seen in their meetings in London at the office of the Courier, in the Strand.

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28. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 76.

29. Coleridge, Unpublished Letters, vol. 1, p. 113.

Coleridge at this time really valued De Quincey as a friend who could bolster his failing spirits. He was ill and overworked, and his over-use of opium accompanied by his inability to produce interesting lectures in that nervous condition in which he was, rendered him in need for encouragement. When he wrote to De Quincey he felt freer to express his deeper emotions than when he wrote to his older friends. "It would have been indeed far, far better for me," he writes, "in some little degree perhaps for society--if I could have attached more importance, greater warmth of feeling to my own writings. But I have not been happy enough for that."(30)

During the year 1810 Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and De Quincey were having social intercourse with one another. Coleridge spent the greater part of 1810 at Allan Bank, where he edited "with sighs and groans and a complete lack of method,"(31) The Friend. He saw De Quincey every day, finding the latter's library a great convenience.

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30. Coleridge, Unpublished Letters, vol. 1, p. 423.

31. De Quincey, op. cit. p. 232.

This was also the year in which the estrangement between Wordsworth and Coleridge took place, and Coleridge spent more of his time with De Quincey as a result of this parting of ways.

One cannot help feeling, somehow, that it was fortunate that the estrangement between De Quincey and the Coleridges did not take place during the poet's lifetime. The issues in this quarrel are rather drawn out and complicated, dragging into the light various details which are magnified and made bad, as well as others which are rightly argued over.

However, it is very curious that De Quincey, as a result of vindictive feelings aroused by his quarrel with critics of his Literary, Lake, and London Reminiscences, 1853, denies any real friendship with Coleridge. In the former's note, placed at the end of volume two of this work, he defends his stand on the matter of Coleridge's plagiarism. One cannot help feeling that his statements denying this friendship are extreme, to say the least, and contradictory to the relations between the

two people through the year 1813. He writes:

> I must inform the reader that I was not, nor ever had been, the friend of Coleridge in any sense which could have a right to restrain my frankest opinions upon his merit. I never had lived in such intercourse with Coleridge as to give me an opportunity of becoming his friend. To him I owed nothing at all: but to the public, to the body of his own readers, every writer owes the truth, and especially on a subject so important as that which was then before me. (32)

Another clue to De Quincey's vindictive feelings is found in the following passage, in which, as is paralleled in the case of Wordsworth, he indicates that Coleridge had many friends, but few intimate ones:

> If, generally speaking, poor Coleridge had but a small share of earthly prosperity, in one respect at least, he was eminently favored by Providence, beyond all men who ever perhaps have lived. He found means to engage a constant succession of sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, from the hands of strangers attracted to him by no possible impulses but those of reverence for his intellect, and love for his gracious nature. How, says Wordsworth --

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32. De Quincey, *op.cit.*, pp. 241-242.

> "How can he expect others should
> Sow for him, reap for him, and at his call,
> Love him, who for himself will take no
> thought at all?"
>
> How can he indeed? It is most unreasonable to do so: Yet this expectation, if Coleridge ought not to have entertained, at all events he realized. Fast as one friend dropped off, another, and another succeeded; perpetual relays were laid along his path in life, of judicious and zealous supporters; who comforted his days, and smoothed the pillow for his declining age....(33)

Sackville-West mentions five features of the articles on Coleridge in De Quincey's Literary, Lake, and London Reminiscences that were responsible for the bad feelings aroused;[34] references to Coleridge's marriage and Mrs. Coleridge's ungainliness,[35] to the Wordsworth-Montague imbroglio;[36] the charges of literary plagiarism;[37] the accusation of taking opium to produce luxurious sensations;[38] and the revelation of the gift of 300 l.[39]

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33. Ibid.

34. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 195.

35. De Quincey, Literary Reminscences, pp. 176 ff.

36. Ibid., pp. 236 ff.

37. Ibid., p. 158.

38. Ibid., p. 242.

39. Ibid., pp. 183-184.

The same authority says that the main charge against De Quincey is not the conclusion he draws, but his "blurting."(40) Although the main substances of what he says in the articles are true and well-expressed, and although inaccuracies of detail impair the validity of the sketches, the work is, however, true in its main scope and judgements. The above five features are the salient ones, I believe, in this problem, but a few minor ones could be added--which I shall merely mention: the shy caricatures on Coleridge's person; the lack of respect undercurrent in the Reminiscences, the more because Colridge had just recently died.

Considering De Quincey's reference to Coleridge's marital relations, there are arguments both for and against De Quincey. The author starts out by stating that it appeared to him Coleridge's marriage had not been a happy one. But he begs the readers not to misunderstand, denouncing Lord Byron's lie about the Bath milliners which appeared in a lampoon directed against Southey.

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40. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 195.

Byron had described both the latter and Coleridge as having married "two milliners from Bath." De Quincey attested (41) that Bristol, not Bath was their native city, and that contrary to Byron's implications by using the term "milliner," "Mrs. Coleridge was, in all circumstances of her married life, a virtuous wife, and a conscientious mother." (42)

In contrast to this he mentioned Mrs. Coleridge's discourtesy and bad temper, (43) her inability to understand and appreciate her husband's genius, (44) and her jealousy of and hostility to Dorothy Wordsworth. But in so far as De Quincey makes a fairly objective analysis of her virtues as well as her shortcomings, he is on solid ground. In stressing more her shortcomings than virtues, and in blurting, though, De Quincey deserves some censure.

His references to the Wordsworth-Montague inbroglio were not in themselves unfair to Coleridge except in bringing this very personal incident before the reading public.

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41. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. I, pp. 176-177.

42. Ibid., p. 177.

43. Ibid.

44. Ibid.

The occasion of the quarrel between Wordsworth and Coleridge was the fatal remark made by Wordsworth to Basil Montague, who had invited Coleridge to stay with him in London, that the latter was a "perfect nuisance" in the house, coupled with no less disturbing opinion that he had "rotted out his entrails with drugs."(45) The presentation of this circumstances by De Quincey reflected badly on Coleridge.

As evidence of De Quincey's "impertinent indiscretion,"(46) it can be shown how he made matters even worse by adding to the Montague story that the barrister was entertaining one Captain Palsey to dinner and wine, which beverage Montague forbade in his house. The contention of the Coleridge family was that episodes like this were none of his business, and they were probably right from their side of the matter; but for the purpose of entertainment and impish humor to be left for the reading audience, material such as this is choice. On these grounds alone, however, can De Quincey receive any vindication from this charge.

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45. Ibid., pp. 179-180.

46. Sackville-West, Thomas De Quincey, p. 196.

As for De Quincey's accusation of literary plagiarism by Coleridge, not made in a hostile spirit particularly, it is defective. Admitting that borrowing from other writers is all right, so long as it is acknowledged, De Quincey points out a "few of Coleridge's unacknowledged obligations."(47) He accused Coleridge of taking from Frederica Brun the essence of his "Hymn to Chamouni," declaring that the English poet merely expanded a short poem from the German woman poet; he claims to have discovered in Coleridge's writings traces of Milton, Schelling, and Shelvocke--this all in The Ancient Mariner. Although De Quincey explains that Coleridge really had no need to borrow,(48) he contends that Coleridge did injustice to writers from whom he borrowed. However, apart from one instance, in an essay in Biographia Literaria, a dissertation on the reciprocal relation of the Esse and the Cogitare is a translation, unacknowledged, from Schelling.(49)

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47. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. I, pp. 158 ff.

48. Ibid. p. 162.

49. Ibid. pp. 161-162.

Coleridge added so much of his own that the charge of plagiarism has not much ground.

De Quincey's references to Coleridge and opium were obviously a means of retaliation for De Quincey. The Lake poet had charged De Quincey with spreading opium-eating by his works. When Gillman's Life revised the controversy between the De Quincey and Coleridge factions, the former brought out a work called Coleridge and Opium-Eating, (1845). In this he points out that "there was a good deal more glass in Coleridge's house than in De Quincey's."(50) He thinks that opium killed Coleridge the poet but made Coleridge the Philosopher; and he expresses resentment against the latter's boast of being able to arouse himself easily and rapidly from intoxication. A propos of this article, he wrote angrily to Hogg in 1859: "This is a description of S. T. C.'s person, not only accurate, but the sole accurate among many that are libellously false--drawn from my own knowledge, guaranteed defyingly by myself and

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50. Sackville-West, op. cit. p. 196.

sure to give pleasure in many quarters."(51)

That Coleridge was a more ravenous opium-eater than De Quincey we have reported us by Richard Woodhouse. "The Opium-Eater was speaking to a surgeon in the north, a neighbor of Coleridge's, who supplied Coleridge with laudanum, and who, upon a calculation made as to quantity consumed by Coleridge, found it to amount to 80,000 drops per day."

"The Opium-Eater said that he himself once, at the time when he was taking 8,000 drops per day, but when he was not in the habit of measuring what he took, was in some danger from the quantity he had taken."(52)

In looking at the controversy from the side of De Quincey, he may be defended because he was aiming at retaliation to Coleridge's accusation.

The objection of the Coleridges to De Quincey's 300 l, which loan was revealed in his Literary, Lakes and London Remininscences,(53) is referred to in such a sketchy manner in this book that anyone not familiar with the details of the story would not have much of an inea of the source and consequences of the loan. So De Quincey might

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51. Japp, Thomas De Quincey, p. 356.

52. Woodhouse, Notes of Conversation With Thomas De Quincey, p. 83.

53. De Quincey, literary Reminiscences, vol. I, pp. 183-184.

stand acquitted on this charge.

De Quincey must have forseen that some parts of his essays on Coleridge would not be taken in good faith, and therefore he writes an explanation concerning the rather frank tone of his sketches on Coleridge.

On the whole, I can sympathize with both parties in this controversy, for the Coleridge family and friends justly decried asperions on their beloved one; as for De Quincey, he with his journalistic manner, bespeaking sensationalism and pokes of humor, did not wish to show disrespect. Rather, we get a better understanding of Coleridge, the man, as he really was.

CHAPTER III

De Quincey and Wordsworth

-A Diary of Thomas De Quincey, edited by Horace A. Eaton, 1927, is valuable mainly for two reasons: it shows his newly acquired objective view of looking at others, and it deals with his literary preoccupations. Among the revelations in this Diary is that of two separate drafts of his first letter to Wordsworth. It is significant to note that De Quincey had been screwing up his courage for some time, for the draft is dated May 13 and the letter itself May 31.

This letter is of extreme interest because it displays De Quincey's adolescent mind in the year 1803, when he was but seventeen. Involved and repetitious in its urgent desire to drive home its burden, it must have moved Wordsworth. The last paragraph of this letter summarizes his essential ideas.(1)

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1. Sackville - West Thomas De Quincey, p. 53, quoting from the Wordsworth Collection. This is the letter which Japp thought had been lost. The dots herein are De Quincey's own.

> I cannot say anything more than that though you may find many minds more congenial with your own...and therefore proportionately more worthy of your regard, you will never find any one more zealously attached to you--more full of admiration for your mental excellence and of reverential love for your moral character--more ready (I speak from my heart!) to sacrifice even his life...whenever it could have a chance of promoting your interest and happiness--than he who now bends the knee before you. And I will add that, to no man on earth except yourself and one other (a friend of your's) (2) would I thus lowly and suppliantly prostrate myself.
>
> Dear Sir!
>
> Your's for ever,
>
> Thomas De Quincey.

Wordsworth, conceited but kindly and prudent, must have been alarmed at the spectacle of a boy willing "to sacrifice even his life." He assures his admirer in his reply:

> My friendship in not in my power to give, this is a gift which no man can make; it is not in our own power. A sound and healthy friendship is the result of time and circumstance; it will spring up and thrive like a wild-flower when these flourish, and when they do not it is in vain to look for it. (3)

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2. Coleridge.

3. Japp, Thomas De Quincey: His Friends and Associates, p. 42.

Wordsworth then proceeds to caution the youth against neglecting the older writers for himself, and adds that he is about ready to depart on a Scotch tour with Dorothy and Coleridge. He closes with a warm invitation to visit him at Grasmere.

This letter of reply should have imparted to Thomas that Wordsworth was not a man who gave freely his human affections; he should have gathered that nothing good would come out of too great an admiration for the nature-poet. But in a few days we find him (4) writing another letter to him, a much longer one, in which he expresses pleasant surprise at having received an answer. He apopogizes for his indiscreet impetuosity of his remarks on friendship, explains that he loves the works of the older writers as well as those of Wordsworth, regrets that he cannot visit the latter because he is about to move into Oxford, and he concludes by entreating Wordsworth not to write to him solely out of consideration for himself (De Quincey), but whenever he felt

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4. Japp, Thomas De Quincey: His Friends and Associates, p. 42.

disposed. This made it easier for Wordsworth, who waited eight months before writing again to the young man.

Life at Oxford proved quite solitary for him, and "one of the chief pleasures in his life was the receipt of letters from Wordsworth. The next is dated Grasmere, March 6, 1804." In it Wordsworth writes:

> I am anxious to hear how far you are satisfied, and, above all, that you have not been seduced into unworthy pleasures and pursuits,--and further, I have much anxiety on this head, for a sincere concern for your welfare and the melancholy retrospect which forces itself upon one, of the number of men of genius who have followed beneath the evils that lurk there....(5)

It would not be surprising if Wordsworth were darkly hinting at Coleridge and his degrading malady. At any rate, he seems perfectly sincere, and it appears that Wordsworth was not ungenerous in writing letters to an obscure youth to whom hardly anyone gave much heed; for a well-known person to write voluntarily to one of much lesser note is not in itself very unusual, but still Wordsworth is to be commended for it.

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5. Ibid., pp. 42-43, quoting Wordsworth Collection.

But De Quincey "from mere excess of nervous distrust in my own powers for sustaining a conversation with Wordsworth . . . for nearly five years shrank from a meeting for which, beyond all things under heaven"[6] he longed. Twice he had advanced as far as the Lake of Coniston, about eight miles from the church of Grasmere, and once he had gone within view of the vale of Grasmere, but, "catching one hasty glimpse of this loveliest of landscapes, I retreated like a guilty thing, for fear I might be surprised by Wordsworth, and then returned faint-heartedly to Conniston, and so to Oxford, re infecta."[7]

In 1807, within a short time, De Quincey realized his hopes of seeing both Coleridge and Wordsworth. In December, when De Quincey met Coleridge for the second time at the Bristol Hot Wells, a bit of chance gave De Quincey another opportunity to raid Wordsworth's retreat, this time in company which would make it much

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6. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. I, p. 365.
7. Ibid.

easier for him. Mrs. Coleridge was on her way north, about to travel with her three children, Dorothy, Derwent, and Sara Coleridge to visit Wordsworth and stay for a time at the home of Southey, at Keswick. Coleridge, however, had his lectures to make at the Royal Institution, in London, and he was unable to take them. De Quincey offered himself as escort and was gratefully accepted.

De Quincey's reactions to his first meeting with Wordsworth are rather touching. "I heard a step, a voice, and, like a flash of lightening, I saw the figure emerge of a tallish man, who held out his hand, and saluted me with the most cordial manner, and the warmest expression of friendly welcome, that it is possible to imagine."(8) Stunned by the culmination of an event so long planned for and feared, De Quincey in mechanical movements went into the house. But he was immediately put at ease by Mrs. Wordsworth, benign, frank, and natural

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8. Ibid., p. 272.

in manner. Notwithstanding this, it was Dorothy Wordsworth who made the profoundest impression upon him, and his classic description of the poet's sister is one of the high points of his prose.

> Her eyes were not soft, as Mrs. Wordsworth's nor were they fierce or bald; but they were wild and startling, and hurried in their motion. Her manner was warm and even ardent; her sensibility seemed constitutionally deep; and some subtle fire of impassioned intellect apparently burned within her, which, being alternately pushed forward into a conspicuous expression... gave to her whole demeanor and to her conversation, an air of embarrassment and even of self-conflict, that was sometimes distressing to witness.(9)

Coming to Wordsworth himself, we find De Quincey's impression confused by the fact that he compares his impressions of the Lake poet as he first saw him and as he appeared to him at the time of writing, which was 1839. There emerges, however, the long crude, indigenous face of the Border country, together with a " a fine, sombre complexion...resembling that of a Venetian senator of a Spanish Monk."(10)

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9. Ibid., p. 276.

10. Ibid., p. 280.

He judges Wordsworth, "on the whole, not a well-made man." "His legs, he thinks, are bad-looking; but the worst part of Wordsworth's figure was his bust, for there was a narrowness and a droop about the shoulder which became striking."(12) He asserts, though, that his face was one "which would have made amends for greater defects of figure; it was certainly the noblest for intellectual effect that, in actual life, I have seen, or at least have consciously been led to notice."(13)

As for the Wordsworths, the impression De Quincey made upon them is indicated by Dorothy in a letter to Lady Beaumont.

> He is a remarkable and very interesting young man, very diminutive in person, which, to strangers, makes him appear insignificant; and so modest, and so very shy, that even now I wonder how he ever had the courage to address my brother by letter. (14)

The Coleridges left after dinner the next day, but De Quincey was prevailed upon to stay longer. It is plain that in spite of his painful self-consciousness De Quincey enjoyed the company of the Wordsworths and landscape, life, and people of the Lake region. Leaving Mrs. Coleridge and

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12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., p. 283.

14. Ibid., quoting from De Selincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 316

her children, De Quincey and Wordsworth walked to Penrith, and that evening the poet read "The White Doe of Rylstone" aloud. The next day, Wordsworth, who had some business to attend to left De Quincey to proceed alone to Southey's, at Greta Hall, Keswick. He returned to Grasmere two days later, along with Mr. Wordsworth, who had followed him to Kendal. The night-ride, coming as an end to such a memorable visit, stirred him strangely.

> He knew that the visit to Grasmere was for him the beginning of a new life. He had entered a new world, into which for years and beauty as yet unsuspected by other men ...(16)

Toward the end of the year 1808 the friendship between De Quincey and the Wordsworths entered upon a new phase. Dorothy and her brother had now found Dove Cottage too small for a growing family and moved into Allan Bank. It was at allan Bank that De Quincey came to stay. "His correspondence with Dorothy has created a sense of ease and trust between them; William was still his idol; Mrs. Wordsworth and her sister, Sara Hutchinson, who followed the lead of William and Dorothy, continued to regard him

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16. Maclean, Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 265.

with placid approval."[17] He was becoming increasingly fond of the children of the household, making his favorites Johnny, five years, and Catherine, one month old. He seemes to have a special talent for getting along well with children.

So delighted was De Quincey with the scenery of Grasmere and by the company of the Wordsworths that he decided to take a lease of Dove Cottage, which had stood empty since the Wordsworths vacated it. It was still their porperty, and he returned to London in February, 1809, while Dorothy managed necessary interior repairs and made the cottage ready for his return.

Those portions of the spring, summer, and autumn of 1809 which De Quincey spent away from Grasmeme are laced together by a busy correspondence with Dorothy, and a still busier and more voluminous one with Wordsworth himself. But his chief concern in this time was Wordsworth's pamphlet on The Convention of Cintra, which De Quincey

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17. Sackville-West, Thomas De Quincey, p. 84.

had undertaken to revise, punctuate, and see through the press while he was in London. It is rather complimentary to De Quincey that Wordsworth should have turned to him to edit one of his works; in 1814 Wordsworth was again to turn to De Quincey for advise about the poem "Laodamia," and sought out his detailed criticism.(18) Although Wordsworth was truly satisfied by the production of their joint labor on this pamphlet, he had no cause to be pleased with its reception.

In November, 1809, he at leat entered into possession of Dove Cottage, and he was filled with happiness. He had sufficient money for his needs, he was living close to the Wordsworths and the friends he had made in the Lake district, and his health, though it required the support and stimulus of opium, (19) was improving greatly. He had as friends the Wordsworths, Coleridge, Charles Lloyd, John Wilson, and Robert Southey, besides a number of acquaintances of whom he gives an entertaining account in the series of articles entitled The Society of the Lakes.(20) The mile of road

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18. Japp, De Quincey, p. 135.

19. Sackville-West, op. cit. p. 95.

20. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. II, pp. 115-256.

from his own cottage to Wordsworth's house of Allan Bank was his familiar walk morning and evening from the first, for the sake of Wordsworth's society, and also of Coleridge's, so long as Coleridge, busy in bringing out his Friend, remained Wordsworth's guest.[21]

But 1810 was the year of the Wordsworth-Coleridge estrangement; even though they were reconciler a few years later by Crabb Robinson, the reconcilation was little more than a formal one. More and more, it seems, after 1810, when Coleridge took final departure from the Lakes, there was a gradual waning of friendship between De Quincey and Wordsworth. They were still much together, Wordsworth still consulting De Quincey about his poems. But " whether because Wordsworth in his self-absoption found De Quincey's companionship unnecessary, or because De Quincey felt his nerves jarred by Wordsworth's habitual austerity and masculine hardness, there came at length to be some degree of mutual alienation."[22] This was recompensed somewhat by Dorothy

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21. Masson, Thomas De Quincey, p. 94.

22. Ibid.

Wordsworth's liking for De Quincey and by the growing attachment to him of Wordsworth's children, by whom he was called "Kinsey." He was soon to have deep grief over Catherine Wordsworth's death, which occurred on June 4, 1812. In fact, one would suspect him of exaggerating his concern for the child if he did not take into consideration the fact that he loved children intensely and that he had no children of his own. The letters which he wrote to Dorothy on this occasion are proof enough of the violence of his grief. Crabb Robinson was with him when he met Wordsworth in London, just after the tragedy, and records that De Quincey, overcome by the pathos of the circumstances, burst into tears at the sight of the poet. But, as usual, it was Dorothy to whom he turned in order to confide his grief.

His mind, thus endued with an excessive sensibility, sought an escape into symbolism and art by means of which he was to effect a catharsis on the spirit. Thus the real Catherine, as De Quincey had known her and had clasped in his arms, melted gradually into a beautiful image. "I suffered an unaccountable attack of nervous horror

lasting for five months, and went off in one night as unaccountably as it had first come as in one second of time."[23] This he wrote to Miss Mitford, describing a similar attack in 1846. The symptoms were the same and left him in the same abrupt way, "suddenly with a nervous sensation of sickness," says Japp.[24]

But then the agony, once purged cleanly, was not renewed. When later in the same year Thomas Wordsworth died of the measles, De Quincey did not show much emotion.

However, the effect of these deaths upon his life are not to be regarded as light. "The mental strain imposed by the shock and the subsequent grief was responsible for a sudden increase in the nervous dyspepsia which, though by now chronic, had remained in a state of stability since 1809."[25] Consequently, there followed an increase in the dose of laudanum which caused the extreme of stress and pain in 1817 and 1818.

The year 1818 also brought unfortunate tidings. He had stomach trouble; he had been left all but penniless by

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23. Sackville-West, op. cit., quoted therein on p. 105.

24. Japp, De Quincey Memorials, Vol. I, p. 129.

25. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 105.

the failure of a small business in which his capital had been invested; he soon reached 8,000 drops of laudanum per day (320 grains of solid opium). Three thousand drops would fill about seven ordinary wine glasses. For a year or two after 1813 he tried to quiet his restless soul by rambles. He was several times in London and Somersetshire, seeing less and less of Wordsworth; it seemed that their friendship was on the decline, although this was not noticeable in the relations between the opium-eater and Dorothy. He was in Edinburgh with Wilson in the winter of 1814-1815.

At the end of the year De Quincey returned to Dove Cottage, where he married Margaret Simpson in 1816. This marriage was to prove its unfortunate stain on the relation between the Wordsworths and his mother, the latter thinking his wife to be "a stupid heavy girl," as Dorothy writes.(26) The year 1816, although De Quincey called it paradoxically, the best year of his life, was a year of increased isolation from his general society. He admits, though, that at the same time it was but a parenthesis between years of

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26. Letter to Mrs. Clarkson of February 15, 1817. Quoted by De Selincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 304.

unparalleled gloom.(27)

With this disruption of friendship between De Quincey and William Wordsworth, we come to an end of the associations between the two parties. Next under comment will come a study of this friendship, to be followed by that of their estrangement, and by that of De Quincey and Dorothy Wordsworth.

From the very beginning De Quincey was cautioned against holding too high the value of Wordsworth's friendship, the latter having hinted by the tone of his first letter of reply that his capacity for human affection was a limited one. But, naturally, the youngster of eighteen could not detect this veiled hint; his judgment was not very mature.

Wordsworth was a constant influence upon him. Not long after his arrival at Oxford, Wordsworth answered his second letter, and in this proceeded to give more explicit advice than he allowed himself on the first occasion. He writes:

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27. Japp, De Quincey Memorials, vol. III, p. 408.

> I need not say to you that there is no time dignity but in virtue and temperance, and, let me add, chastity; and that the best safeguard of all these is the cultivation of pure pleasures, namely, those of the intellect and affections...I do not mean to preach; I speak in simplicity and tender apprehension as one lover of nature and virtue speaking to another.(28)

De Quincey answered this letter at once, assuring Wordsworth of his natural disposition toward this type of life, and his disgust at the practice of "unworthy pleasures" prohibits him from indulging in them. At this time he "could not even bring himself to mention his (Wordsworth's) name in Oxford, for fear of having to encounter ridiculous observations or jeering abuse of his favourite, who was laughed at by most of the Oxonians." (29)

An instance which depicts the reverence which De Quincey had in his earlier years for the poet is told by Woodhouse.(30) Meeting one time in London with Charles Lamb, another admirer of Wordsworth, De Quincey heaped praise upon the name of the poet. Lamb was also inclined to praise Wordsworth, but in more qualified terms. The opium-eater complained to Lamb that he did not do Wordsworth justice. Lamb, then, "in his dry, facetious way, observed, if we are to talk of him in this strain, we ought to have said grace before

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28. Ibid., vol. I, p. 124.

29. Woodhouse, Notes of Conversations with Thomas De Quincey, Sept. 28, 1821, p. 71.

30. Ibid., pp. 71-72.

we began our conversation." De Quincey, not having the sharpness of mind in 1804 to appreciate irony or wit, left the room instantly and broke off associations with Lamb for some time.

Nevertheless, when De Quincey made his memorable visit to Wordsworth and first met him, this meeting carried a slight disappointment to him; this is shown by his tending to make Dorothy, not her brother, the chief confidant of his hopes. So his relations with Wordsworth were to mature up to a certain point of friendship and mutual esteem, from which they rapidly declined; but they were never really intimate. Part of this may be explained by the fact that Wordsworth had already reached that age in which his desire for intimacy was not great, and had become satisfied by his wife and family. As Keats once reported Wordsworth's saying of himself, he was "not one of those who much delight to season their friends with personal talk."(31)

> The human nature unto which I felt
> That I belonged, and which I loved and reverenced,
> Was not a punctual Presence, but a Spirit
> Living in time and space, and far diffus'd.(32)

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31. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 72, quoting letter to John Hamilton Reynolds, September 21, 1817.

32. The Prelude (1805), Book VIII, lines 760-764.

Now it is necessary to treat in some details the painful subject of their estrangement, Before De Quincey's marriage with Margaret Simpson--the event which completed the estrangement, there were many evidences of a falling out. Sara Hutchinson wrote in November, 1815, that Wilson was sober, "though De Quincey was often tipsy... He doses himself with opium and drinks like a fish and tries in all other ways to be as great a gun as Mr. Wilson."(33) Although this bit is probably untrue, dictated out of spite and vindictive feelings, it serves to show that a coldness that had developed.

When De Quincey's visits to the Nab, where he courted Margaret Sampson, began to cause gossip in the neighborhood, the Wordsworth ladies accepted readily the stories.

Crabb Robinson, writing to Wordsworth in October 1816, after a visit to the Lakes, says that he found De Quincey "in a sore state," talking of the estrangement between himself and the Wordsworths, and "imagining comments" on himself.(34) This imagination, however, was not to be

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33. De Selincourt, Dorothy Wordsworth, p. 303.

34. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 120.

untrue; and some months later, when De Quincey was married, his own dearest friend, Dorothy, could write of him in perfect misunderstanding and unkindness:

> Mr. De Quincey is married; and I fear I may add he is ruined. By degrees he withdrew himself from all society except that of the Sympsons (35) of the Nab... At the up-rouzing of the Bats and the Owls he regularly went thither, and the consequence was that Peggy Sympson, the eldest daughter of the house presented him with a son ten weeks ago, and they...are now spending their honeymoon in our cottage at Grasmere. This is in truth a melancholy story!... As for him I am very sorry for him--he is utterly changed in appearance and takes largely of opium.(36)

But it was not the case that Margaret Simpson was ill-fitted to be his mate, that she made him unhappy, or that their romance was an unnatural one. To these remarks can be assigned the explanation either that Dorothy felt a wounding disillusionment about a young man to whom she had granted such affection, or that she felt a jealousy of his companionship with another woman. Most likely, the second factor was almost negligible, and Dorothy Wordsworth suffered only from a misunderstanding of De Quincey's motives. However, this is merely a guess.

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35. This name is spelled in different ways; there is no general agreement about its form.

36. Letter to Mrs. Clarkson of February 15, 1817. Quoted by De Selincourt, op. cit., p. 304.

Wordsworth, on the other hand, heard the accusations against De Quincey with cool and untroubled, but with clear, disapproval. He was not to become hurt to the core by an offensive action of De Quincey's, for the poium-eater did not take much of a place in his heart. As an admirer and pleasant acquaintance Wordsworth had presumably enjoyed De Quincey's companionship. But his feelings were not those of real friendship--in the ordinary sense of the term. In judging Wordsworth's part in the estrangement, it must be remembered above all that the poet was a man whose ordinary affections had been sublimated into his poetry and journalism. Coleridge's friendship he did not pine much over losing, but contented himself with lofty indifference and self-centered occupations. He did, howeve, feel more deeply about Coleridge than De Quincey. In a man of Wordsworth's temperament and greatness it ought not to be hard to excuse his attitudes. He was an isolated figure of greatness, content to make artistry his life work, and unmindful of the judgment of other human beings. In this he is very similiar of Walter Savage Landor, who "strove with none for none was worth my strife." Coleridge, De Quincey, and Hazlitt, all hurt by Wordsworth's lack of sympathy for them, tried in turn to injure the poet by

their abuses --without a bit of success.

His withdrawal from intimate friendship with De Quincey had made itself felt early in the year; and in September, 1816, Crabb Robinson in his Diary reports a walk which he took with the poet up Nab Scar, at the end of which Wordsworth left him at the door of Dove Cottage, where De Quincey was living, but did not go in, thus indicating the state of his feelings. But it was no doubt the birth of Margaret's child that finally determined him to drop the friendship. (37)

Though it was almost the custom in country districts to have marriage conditional upon conception, and Wordsworth had followed this course twenty-five years ago in his liaison with Annette Vallon, yet Wordsworth did not feel himself obliged to tolerance, his circumstances and age being changed. Also, he had an unmarried sister and sister-in-law living in his house, and children who were growing up: these facts, it appeared to him, made it impossible that he and his family should continue on intimate terms with a man who was said to have had an illicit romance with a peasant girl in

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37. Sackville - West, op. cit., p. 121.

the neighborhood. Wordsworth now took a line, in the words of Coleridge, who describes his and Wordsworth's separation from Hazlitt,--of a "quiet withdrawing from any further connection with him." Although Wordsworth had further connections with De Quincey, it was more in the way of literary business than of friendly intercourse.

We tend to sympathize with De Quincey, but to argue that Wordsworth, with the distinctive temperament, should have been more considerate, is beside the point.

Another question of the estrangement, and one which De Quincey avoids as much as possible because of his feeling of guilt, is that of opium. De Quincey's increased indulgence in opium, which began in the last months of 1815, the date of the beginning of the estrangement, was regarded with disgust by the Wordsworth. The letter of Sara Hutchinson, mentioned before, shows that the Wordsworths were by now fully aware of this feature of their friend's life, and their dismal experience with Coleridge precluded another such embroilment in the future. They were entirely justified in their refusal to sacrifice themselves a second time

by letting a drug addict vex the household. De Quincy must have known about all this, because he aviods the opium subject in his writings about this period of his life; and it probably prevented him from voicing grievances against Wordsworth at this time.

The shock of receiving the cold shoulder from his dearest friends was a terrible one and was certainly responsible for the heavy gloom of the next two years of his life. After the first months of marriage everything went well, and he was not tempted into "unworthy pleasures," but there was soon the grimmest of tortures to eclipse sadly the promise and hope of these few months. No doubt greatly sensitive to the loss of his society, he lapses into a frightful experience, for the same opium which had previously brought him pleasures now brought him down to the lowest depths of despair and hopelessness.

To Dorothy Wordsworth, who for such a long time supplied fresh interests for De Quincey until the year 1815-1816, should go the credit for brightening his life and inspiring him in his creations.

The inspiration which she gave to her brother was of the same kind which De Quincey received, and he writes that

> Whereas the intellect of Wordsworth was, by its original tendencies, too stern--too austere--too much enamored of an ascetic, harsh sublimity, she it was--the lady who paced by his side continually through sylvan and mountain tracks, in Highland glens, that first couched his eye to the sense of beauty--humanized him by the gentler charities, (38)

and instilled into him "those graces upon the ruder growths of his nature."

That De Quincey looked towards Dorothy to express more personal feelings is shown by their correspondence soon after their first meeting. In the spring of 1808 he writes two letters (39) to Dorothy, the first written in answer to one from Dorothy, which he had found waiting for him on his return to college. He confides herein his dislikes of Oxford study--the learning by heart "collections of unassorted details," his sleeplessness, and the strain of the work. In the second letter, May 8, he makes the confession that he stays awake eighteen hours a day and goes to sleep on a sofa when he can no longer keep awake. All such little details he would not have confided to Wordsworth.

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38. De Quincey, op. cit., vol. I, p. 277.

39. Sackville-West, op. cit., p. 73, quoting from the Wordsworth Collection.

During those parts of the year 1809 which De Quincey spent away from Grasmere, he busied himself by correspondence with Dorothy. In her letters the domestic affairs of the Wordsworths alternate with gossip about the district and news of the progress of repairs at Dove Cottage. De Quincey replies with humorous description of his mother's household at Wrington and the self-importance of Hannah More. Throughout Dorothy's letters the theme of the children is constant: the progress of Johnny and Catherine, De Quincey's lavish spending on toys for the children. In fact, by the spring of 1809, "she looked on him now very affectionately as almost a member of the family."(40) This state of affection was to remain unbroken until the series of events which led to the estrangement. Dorothy, then, besides acting as a source of enlightenment and faith to William Wordsworth, filled that same capacity, to a lesser degree, in encouraging Thomas De Quincey. Another function of hers was in smoothing the asperities found in the poet's letters to the opium-eater, and in bridging the gulf between Wordsworth's staid, sober mind and De Quincey's more impulsive, flighty dispositions.

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40. Maclean, Dorothy Wordsworth, The Early Years, p. 302.

CHAPTER IV

"The Society of the Lakes"

If De Quincey did not write as much as Wordsworth and Coleridge about the scenery of the Lakes, there was certainly no lack of that sort of material in the works of the poets.[1] Certainly the landscapes about the Lakes played an important part in the lives of all three of the great literary figures.

In the spring of 1799, after their return from Germany, Wordsworth and his sister visited their friends, the Hutchinsons, at Sockburn-on-Tees, and they remained there till almost the close of the year. On September 2nd, Wordsworth wrote from Sockburn to his friend Cottle, to whom he proposed that he meet the publisher at Greta Bridge and that Wordsworth should

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1. He does treat the subject in his "Society of the Lakes" in his Literary Reminiscences, vol. II, p. 115.

accompany him in a tour through Cumberland and Westmoreland counties.

Coleridge and Wordsworth's sailor brother, John, joined in this excursion, but Cottle was not able to proceed farther than Greta Bridge. It was Coleridge's first visit to the Lake country. He describes his impressions in a letter from Keswick to Dorothy Wordsworth.

> You can feel, what I cannot express for myself, how deeply I have been impressed by a world of scenery absolutely new to me. At Rydal and Grasmere I received, I think, the deepest delight; yet Hawes-Water, through many a varying view, kept my eyes dim with tears; and, the evening approaching, Derwent-Water, in diversity of harmonious features, in the majesty of its beauties, and in the beauty of its majesty . . . and the black crags close under the snowy mountains, whose snows were pinkish with the setting sun, and the reflections from the rich clouds that floated over some and rested upon others! (2)

It was reserved to Wordsworth, however, to set the example of treating the Lake scenery in a manner not unworthy of its beauty and magnificence, and for this he was well qualified, not only by his poetic

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2. Wordsworth, Christopher, Memoirs of William Wordsworth, p. 149.

powers, but also by familiarity with the scenes.

This work was the Guide to the Lakes, a pleasing book of topographical and social observation, which he published in 1809. He begins his Guide with directions to the tourist, and informs him how he may approach the Lake district with best advantage. He then proceeds to present a panoramic view of the Lake district. He invites the reader to accompany him to some central point and asks him to imagine himself placed on "a cloud hanging midway between Gable and Scawfell."(3) He points out to him the valleys which diverge from this center as spokes from the nave of a wheel, and helps him to trace in the mind the course of these radiating valleys and of the brooks which flow along them to their termination: "Langdale, to the south-east; the vale of Coniston, on the south; the vale of Duddon, with its copious stream, on the south-west. Eskdale, watered by the Esk, adorned with the woody steep of Muncaster, the deep valley of Wastdale, and its stern and desolate lake on the west, and beyond it the Irish sea; Ennerdale, with

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3. Ibid., p. 447.

its wild lake, and its stream flowing through fertile meadows by Egremont Castle, the vale and village of Buttermere, and Crummock Water, then present themselves. Beyond is the beautiful vale of Lorton, along which the river Cocker flows, till it falls into the Derwent, below the ruins of the castle and the town of Cockermouth, the author's native place. Lastly, Borrowdale, of which the vale of Keswick is only a continuation, stretches due north. Thus half of the circle has been completed. The rest is traced in a similar manner."(4)

After commenting on the various kinds of beauty produced by light and shadow in this mountainous region, Wordsworth describes the different constituents of beauty: first, the mountains, on which the irons with which they are impregnated, the herbage, mosses, lichens, fens, and woods, all contribute to give variety and brilliance to their hues. A special characteristic of the vales of the Lake region is noticed. The bed of these valleys is often level, giving room for meadows

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4. Ibid.

in which picturesque rocks emerge like islands from the plain. The form of a lake is then most perfect when it least resembles a river, and when, consequently, it inspires a placid feeling of repose.

In the next section Wordsworth directs an inquiry as to how far the beauties of this country are ascribable to the hand of man.

> When the Border country was pacified by the union of the two crowns, property became more secure, dwellings were multiplied, and agriculture improved. The native forests were thinned for firewood and for the supply of fuel to furnaces, and to give place to corn and carrle. The native rock affords excellent materials for building cottages, which, from their rudeness and simplicity, appear to have risen by a spontaneous growth from the soil. Herein consists their beauty. Their projecting masses of stone produce beautiful effects of light and shade. Their solid porches, built to weather-fend the strangers, and to guard the cottage hall from wind and rain, add much to their picturesque appearance . . .(5)

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5. Ibid., pp. 449-450.

The author then passes to a controversial part of his subject. Certain settlers had expended large sums of money in banishing Nature, in indulging grotesque and fantastic extravagances, which marred her beauty and repose. He suggests that the houses in a mountainous region should not be obtrusive, but retired. He concludes with an appeal against the encroachment of civilizing elements and for simplicity and beauty.

De Quincey seems to concur with Wordsworth about the ravages of "intruders" in the Lake country. He praises Westmoreland dwellings, but only those of the native dalesmen are considered, for those of the "lakers", such as he and Wordsworth, are not real rustic abodes, for their offence lies "in the hard undisguised pursuit of more coarse uses and needs of life."(6) He insists that the rustic dwelling should bespeak poverty and seclusion. Another difference in habitat between the dalesmen and the "intrusive gentry" is that

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6. De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol. II, p. 118.

dalesmen select a sheltered spot which protects them from the wind altogether and takes care, at the same time, to be within a few feet of the mountain beck; the stranger, on the other hand, chooses his site on points better fitted for a temple than a dwelling place, and he belts his house with balconies and verandas that are easy prey for a mountain gale.

In November, 1809, it will be recalled, De Quincey arrived at Dove Cottage, where he was admired by the common folk for his learning. He observes, in his search for a servant girl, that the dalesmen of Westmoreland, however wealthy some of them might be, do not think it degrading to permit even the eldest daughter to go out a few years to service; the object is to gain a favorable sort of household experience.

After some comment on servant girls, De Quincey introduces us into Clappersgate, a few miles from Grasmere, the former being a hamlet where lived Dr. Cullen, a physician, and his two daughters. The Scottish ladies were liked for their kind dispositions. They had been reduced from great wealth to a condition of poverty, due

to the indulgent lavishness indulged on them by their father. At the doctor's death, the family was poor. One daughter, a Mrs. Millar, had become a childless widow; the other one was still unmarried. These ladies, though fairly well educated, could not be classed with the lake community of literati and did not take any interest in the Lake poets. In fact, "these amiable women persisted in one uniform tone of cautious forbearance, as often as any question arose to implicate the names of either Wordsworth or Coleridge."(7) They thought it strange indeed that men who had graduated from great universities, men such as Wilson or De Quincey, should worship these writers. It was a craze, they thought, originating in personal connections, and this craze should be treated with tenderness. For their sakes, then, "they took a religious care to suppress all allusion to those disreputable names."(8)

Another cross-section of life in the Lake district is contained in De Quincey's description of the valley of Easedale and George and Sarah Green. He declares this valley "one of the most impressing solitudes amongst

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7. Ibid., p. 128.

8. Ibid.

the mountains of the lake district."[9] De Quincey says that he must pause to describe it, calling attention to two phases of its beauty: first, it is impressive as a solitude; second, it is impressive from the loveliness which adorns its little area. Easdale is "a dependency of Grasmere,"[10] lying within the same general basin of mountains. In this solitude it was that George and Sarah Green, two poor and hard-working peasants, dwelt with a numerous family of small children. They were poor but well-respected and well-groomed. Sarah, though a good woman in mature days, had an elder daughter who was illegimate and whose father was dead; she took utmost care of the child, wishing to see her placed in a respectable house with a good and virtuous mistress. On one occasion, therefore, she went with her husband to a sale of domestic furniture, where she challenged notice by the emphasis of her solicitations for her daughter. But no one gave them much consideration. They left the scene, but when they were unobserved, they began to ascend the hills. "After this they were seen no more. They had disappeared into the cloud of death."[11]

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9. Ibid., p. 62.

10. Ibid., pp. 62-63.

11. Ibid., p. 73.

That night and the following morning there was a very heavy fall of snow, and Sarah Green's poor children were imprisoned. Three days later the eldest daughter, Agnes, pursued her solitary mission to the nearest house in Grasmere. She came to Dorothy Wordsworth and told her and De Quincey her sad news. And, "no tongue can express the fervid sympathy which travelled through the vale, like the fire in an American forest, when it was learned that neither George nor Sarah Green had been seen by their children since the day of the Longdale sale. Days later George Green was found lying at the bottom of a precipice, from which he had fallen; Sarah Green was found on the summit of the precipice.

By this affair Wordsworth was able to write a poem, of which I quote two stanzas:

Who weeps for strangers? Many wept
For George and Sarah Green;
Wept for that pair's unhappy fate,
Whose graves may here be seen.

By night, upon these stormy fells,
Did wife and husband roam;
Six little ones at home had left,
And could not find that home.

Wordsworth goes on, in the rest of the poem, with the narrative of George and Sarah Green's disappearance.

There are other very interesting accounts of acquaintances of the Lakes in the second volume of Literary Reminiscences of persons such as Miss Elizabeth Smith, "Walking" Steward, Mrs. Siddons, Mrs. Hannah More--but it is necessary to leave them and deal with two literary notables, Charles LLoyd and John Wilson, charter members of the "Lake Community of literati."

Immediately below the hamlet of Clappersgate, in which the Scottish ladies, Mrs. Millar and Mrs. Cullen, resided, runs the mountain river Brathay; close to this river, on the farthest side, stands Low Brathay, a modest family mansion belonging to a one Charles Lloyd; De Quincey refers to the latter as "amongst the most interesting men I have known."

On his first hasty visit to Grasmere in 1807 he found Lloyd settled with his family at Brathay, and a resident of good standing. It was on a wet gloomy evening when he and Dorothy were caught in the rain, and she suggested that they call on the Lloyds on passing. They did not stay there long, but he was impressed by the warm cordiality and cheerfulness of the couple who had "six or seven children then living,"(13) he being not more, certainly,

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13. Ibid., p. 143.

than thirty-seven, and his wife, Sophia, perhaps not yet twenty-five. He was interested in them, and two years later when he became a resident of Grasmere, he maintained close connection with the Lloyds.

Charles Lloyd seems to have been quite a literary personality of that time, although his poems were not of the best order, being loosely conceived and not finished in technique. But his poetry did not belong to the imitative poetry so widely cultivated; "they were true and solitary sighs, wrung from his own meditative heart by excess of suffering, and by the yearning after old scenes and household forces of an impassioned memory, brooding over vanished happiness."(14)

His person De Quincey describes as(15) "tall and somewhat clumsy--not intellectual so much as benign and conciliatory in his expression of force. His features were not striking, but they expressed great goodness of heart; and latterly wore a deprecatory expression that was

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14. Ibid., p. 144.

15. Ibid., pp. 151-152.

peculiarly touching to those who knew its cause." This "cause" was a hereditary disease said to appear in the second or third generation and also to be found exclusively among the young men and women of the Quaker society, of which he was a member.

De Quincey rather liked Charles Lloyd and was somewhat resentful that Wordsworth and Coleridge did not take to him or appreciate his powers. He was thought by the opium-eater to have had the flair for analyzing a certain character or characters with a keeness of distinction and a felicity of phrase, which were perfectly admirable.(16) He had a truly remarkable insight into human nature, but was very modest about this talent. De Quincey observes that because Lloyd was not sure of the sympathy of either Wordsworth or Coleridge, his powers forsook him in their presence; both Charles Lloyd and his wife believed that the two Lake poets despised him.

Lloyd was attacked by disease for about six or seven years in a violent manner; he tried all sort of remedies, including walks of twenty miles and large quantities of opium, to no avail. Lloyd's mind began suffering derangement, and he sought children's company because they would not scoff at

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16. Ibid., p. 153.

his peculiar ways. But his madness increased, and he was taken away to a lunatic asylum, ran away a fugitive to De Quincey's house at Grasmere, was recaptured, then let loose to go with his wife to France, where he died.

It was at one of the dances at Low Brathay, Lloyd's house, that De Quincy first met John Wilson, of Elleray, "in circumstances of animation, and buoyant with youthful spirits, under the excitement of lights, wine, and, above all, of female company."(17)

Wilson, referred to as "Professor Wilson" by De Quincey, had been a married man since 1811, when Miss Jane Penny, the belle of the Lake district, became his bride. He was at intervals coming and going between Edinburgh and Elleray.

"The Admiral of the Lakes," as he called himself, was to outward appearances anyway, the complete opposite to Charles Lloyd. In a few intellectual traits, though, he came close to the sensitive person, Lloyd. He was tall, quite handsome, "Nordic" in typical style, with fair hair and blue eyes; bursting with vitality and a schoolboy sense of fun; rowing, sailing, striding over the mountains; yet also reading voluminously and at random. He was a man peculiarly fitted to appeal to De Quincey's sense of romance

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17. Ibid., p. 155.

and his need of hero worship. Wilson was a sort of pleasant substitute for Wordsworth as a hero; for Wilson, instead of belittling De Quincey, admired him openly for qualities which he himself lacked, while at the same time providing his friend with an endless fund of vicarious energy.

Wilson was the eldest son of a rich gauze manufacturer of Paisley; he was left fatherless and well-off at the age of eighteen, in the same year as De Quincey matriculated at Worcester. But the two never met during their varsity careers. After leaving Oxford, Wilson had bought the estate of Elleray on Windermere, and settled down there.

When the two met in Coleridge's room at Allan Bank for the first real meeting, it was Wilson's conversation rather than his appearance which impressed De Quincey. It bore no trace, even in such a person of fine endowments, of arrogance in his character. But Carlyle detested some of Wilson's weaknesses, and so, later, did De Quincey, as evidenced in the latter's somewhat chiding passages in his sketch of the critics. In later years Wilson showed off a certain dilettantism and indulged himself in sentimental poses; there was also a certain self-distrust, moral cowardice, and immaturity of social life of behavior that had gone far to change him from an eager-eyed Elizabethan of twenty-four into the raucous, practical joker of the Blackwood's period.

But at the moment when the friendship between himself and De Quincey broke into triumphant flower, this deterioration had not yet set in. Throughout the first years at Grasmere Wilson kept De Quincey in a state of delight and liveliness, and each one's mutual admiration did wonders on the other's temperament. In their years of Edinburgh, their friendship was not so enthusiastic as had been earlier, but its lamp was still shining.

We shall now discuss the third of the Lake poets, Robert Southey, and his position in the little clique of literary persons.

It has already been related how De Quincey had offered to take Mrs. Coleridge and her children to Southey's home and how the party stopped at Wordsworth's house on the way. On the third day after his arrival at Grasmere, Wordsworth and his youthful visitor walked and rode for about twenty-two miles and passed the night in a house called Ewsmere. The next day they left the rest of their party there, roamed through the woods of Lowther, dined together at Emont Bridge, and walked into Penrith. There Wordsworth left De Quincey in the house of Captain Wordsworth, his brother, the latter and his family being absent from the quarters. Then Wordsworth went on his way, and De Quincey walked along the road, about seventeen miles, to Keswick.

It was about seven o'clock when he reached Southey' door. His arrival caused a stir in the house; "and, by the time the front door could be opened, I saw Mrs. Coleridge, and a gentleman whom I could not doubt to be Southey, standing very hospitably to greet my entrance. Southey was, in person, somewhat taller than Wordsworth, being about five feet eleven in height, or a trifle more whilst Wordsworth was about five feet ten."(18) He had fine, pronounced features, appeared dressed in Tyrolese costume and struck De Quincey by "a remarkable habit of looking up into the air, as if looking at abstractions."(19) But "the expression of his face was that of a very acute and an inspiring man"; and, "so far, it was even noble as it conveyed a feeling of a serene and gentle pride, habitually familiar with elevation subjects of contemplation."(20) Southey was sincere and hospitable, eager to serve his friends, but De Quincy's acumen judges that "there was an air of reserve and distance about him--the reserve of a lofty, self-respecting mind, but, perhaps, a little too freezing--in his treatment of all persons who were not among the corps of his ancient fireside friends."(21)

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18. Ibid., p. 19.

19. Ibid.,p. 27.

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid.

De Quincey hardly ever sought out his society and never was really very intimate with him. If one word could be used to fit the opium-eater's attitude toward Southey, it would be "respect." His statement--"I was yet on such terms for the next ten or eleven years, (i.e., from 1809-22) that I might in a qualified sense, call myself his friend--" is not by any means enthusiastic. But he immediately affirms that "there were long years through which Southey might respect me, I him."(23)

The atmosphere of conscious rectitude dispensed by Southey must have been galling to almost anybody, let alone those who, like Coleridge and De Quincy, were conscious of considerable weakness of temperament which, they may have been sure, would receive short shrift from Southey. De Quincy at once noticed the lack of any real feeling of friendship between Wordsworth and Southey, and afterwards took a kind of malicious pleasure in recording it.(24) Although he admits that in later relationships, about fifteen years from the time of De Quincey's meeting with Southey, many circumstances made the two Lake poets more intimate: "agreement in politics, sorrow which had happened to both alike in their

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22. Ibid., pp. 50-51.

23. Ibid., p. 51.

24. Ibid., p. 20.

domestic relations, and the sort of tolerance for different opinions of literature, or, indeed, in anything else, which advancing years and experience are sure to bring with them."[25] This being dispensed with, De Quincey rather in a simpering manner talks of their disharmonies during the earlier Grasmere period. Southey's feminine fussiness irritated Wordsworth, who called it finical. The difference between the two men is illustrated by the different attitudes with regard to books: Southey loved them as objects, whereas Wordsworth had no feeling for them apart from their contents. De Quincey reports his own and Southey's horror at the sight of Wordsworth cutting the leaves of De Quincey's own copy of Burke with a knife that had just been used to butter bread. To Wordsworth such an action seemed quite natural, because he "lived in the open air" and was without the instincts of the scholar or bibliophile; but Southey "lived in his library, which Coleridge used to call his wife," and Southey's fastidious tastes can best be seen in his manuscripts, exquisitely written, with hardly an erasure, on tiny pages.

Very interesting are some other points of contrasts between Wordsworth and Southey.[26] Beginning with an accentuated tone of respect, De Quincey observes that Southey had

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25. Ibid., p. 20.

26. Ibid., pp. 396ff.

no superior for sense of honor, firmness of integrity, "and for generosity within the limits of prudence;" and certainly in habits and daily manners he is a more "amiable" man than Wordsworth. "He is less capable, for instance, of usurping an undue share of the conversation; he is more uniformly disposed to be charitable in his transient coloquial judgments upon doubtful actions of his neighbors"; more willing to make allowances for inferior powers of persons; more willing to admit that he may have been wrong; more tolerant of indifference towards his writings; and, finally, as an "anti-climax," much more ready to volunteer his assistance in carrying a lady's reticule or parasol." All of which is not quite complimentary to Wordsworth, although he avers that he will have something to say later to justify Wordsworth's hostility towards his critics. Furthermore, in this contrast can be seen instantly the petty grievances that the opium-eater entertains concerning Wordsworth.

With De Quincey's arguments against the inclusion of Southey with the "Lake Poets", this writer agrees, although the criticism of the man's prose, which De Quincey admits at

first is good, seems to be beside the point. The only possible reason for Southey's inclusion in the group termed the "Lake School," of the Lake poets", is that he lived among then and maintained close personal connections with them. But whether he can be rightly given the place because of his work in poetry--as exemplifying the credo and style of Wordsworth and Coleridge--is debatable. In fact, this writer sees that the names of the three were grouped together by a few critics, then taken in by the audience of readers, and finally popularized because of its convenient and easy means of identification in a geographical sense.

CHAPTER V

APPRAISAL OF DE QUINCEY'S ATTITUDES

The partisans of De Quincey in the struggle between the opium-eater and members of the Wordsworth and Coleridge families would probably admit that he had certain prejudices. That these prejudices crept into his work to no little extent, and that De Quincey was guilty of distortions of fact as well as of one-sidedness in approach, is evidenced in much of his work. Although he seems to assure us in his brilliant prose that he means well, it is not infrequent that his tone is insincere. But, on the other hand, it must be said that he had certain rights to his criticism. What these rights were and in what bounds he belonged will be the purpose of the following discussion.

Perhaps a large measure of misunderstanding is due to the fact that the offensive articles were thought of as other than autobiographical, which they were not. Thus, the contemporary opinion, which was on the whole against De Quincey, did not distinguish the difference between the series of autobiographical sketches, which it was, and the life of Coleridge, which it did not claim to be. Edward Fitzgerald was one of those who termed his article on the author of The Ancient Mariner "The Life of Coleridge."

Granted this distinction, we must look for violations within the realm of autobiographical writing. One accusation that has been directed against De Quincey is "cattiness." Certainly a sense of spitefulness, if not treated objectively, does not belong in a work like Literary Reminiscences. In some passages the thoughts, while intensely personal, are presented in this objective manner.

De Quincey accuses Wordsworth of being arrogant to the point that makes "a familiar or neighborly intercourse with him painful and mortifying." (1) The words "painful" and"mortifying" here show that De Quincey's own pride had been wounded by Wordsworth. He states that there were certain provinces of thought which he kept exclusively for himself, and any attachments therein he treated contemptuously, as if they were intrusions. One of these "things apart," and which occurred most frequently, was the theory of"picturesque beauty;" specifically, it had to do with comments on mountain scenery as affected by seasons, time of day, or light and shade. He admits that both William and his sister had a sharp "organic sensibility to the effects of form and color," and naturally should be given attention. But Wordsworth claimed absolute precedency in this matter. "To everybody, standing out of this sacred and privileged pale, Wordsworth behaved

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(1) De Quincey, Literary Reminiscences, vol.II, pp. 241ff.

insult in cases of this nature: he did not even appear to listen; but, as if what they said on such a theme be childish prattle, turned away with an air of perfect indifference," (2) either began talking with somebody else, or did not even notice what was being said, making an apology for an answer.

This passage obviously reflects that Wordsworth was purposely, and arrogantly, full of pride. The overcharged spirit, however, points to a deep hurt of De Quincey's____ a mortification at not having been properly appreciated by the poet. Wordsworth's alleged pride can be defended on several grounds, and on one chiefly; namely, that Wordsworth preferred to have private thoughts on the subject. Intrusion by other people spoiled the poetic love and veneration he had for the scenery. De Quincey, on the other hand, stung to the quick by an admiration that had not been returned, imagined that Wordsworth's reticence on the subject was arrogance. This viewpoint does not take into account Wordsworth's essential temperament and enlarges upon what the nature-poet would probably consider a slight matter, possibly being even as much as unaware of any offence on his part.

An instance, again, of exaggeration is that passage in which De Quincey deplores Wordsworth's stubbornness. (3)

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(2) Ibid., p. 242.
(3) Ibid., p. 243.

Wordsworth had applied the"vulgar" term "fending and proving" to those who differed with him and attempted, according to the quoted term, to make explanations for their differences. He would declare something like this: " 'Mr. XYZ, I will have nothing to do with fending and proving,' " which amounted to saying that "he conceived himself to be liberated from those obligations of justice by which other men are bound." (4) He knew that he could not get redress from Wordsworth,and reasoned: "I have been ill used to a certain extent; but do I think that a sufficient reason for giving up all my intimacy with a man like Wordsworth?...Although I am able to bear the particular wrong I now complain of, yet I feel that even from Wordsworth I could not tolerate and contemptuous refusal of justice. The result, then, if I pursue this matter, will be to rob me of Wordsworth's acquaintance." (5)

Undertones to be detected here are those essentially of the previously considered portion: a sense of hurt pride; an expounding on the subject of Wordsworth's dogmatism, harping on the phrase "fending and proving" as a contemptuous expression of Wordsworth's for people who disagreed with him. The biographers of Wordsworth do not create for one the impression that the poet was scornful of other people and their ideas. Furthermore, what might under different circumstances have been regarded as a natural and excusable trait of Wordsworth's, had been regarded

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(4) Ibid.
(5) Ibid., pp. 243-244.

as offensive and provocative. De Quincey is obviously hunting up ways and means of alleviating his hurt, for he wants to impress upon the reader that he, De Quincey, had seen fit to leave Wordsworth; the fact was, however, that Wordsworth was the one who stopped their friendship.

But these undertones, taken in themselves, do not constitute judgment against De Quincey; guilty of prejudice though he was,he might in some ways have been justified in calling Wordsworth arrogant and narrow-minded.But Wordsworth was not an ordinary man. When he spoke about Wordsworth, he looked upon him as a man of normal interests and passions; such was not the case, for Wordsworth had but a little capacity for human friendship outside his family interests. His realm was the greatness of the nature world,and of universal love. Wordsworth, no doubt, realized this limitation of his human side, and warned De Quincey accordingly. The opium-eater, then, not unwelcome, but on his own initiative, sought out the poet's companionship.

The same sense of injury which produced these impertinences against a man who was still alive deprived De Quincey's account of the estrangement of the force and cogency it might have had. He fails to take advantage of his good points but divert's the reader's sympathy by loudness of protest. He makes it plain that he understands Wordsworth's incapacity for dispersed affection, outside his family circle, but wastes the rest of his article with petty fault-finding; for example, Wordsworth does not admire Harriet Lee's The German Tale; therefore his mind is one-sided.

(6) Ibid., pp.241 ff.

Sackville-West avers that De Quincey's ideas on Wordsworth also suffered from his envy of the latter's success. He quotes to this effect from De Quincey:

> And it must rejoice every man who joins in the public homage now rendered to his powers (and what man is to be found who, more or less, does not?) to hear, which goes with respect for one so lavishly endowed by nature, that he had not been neglected by fortune; that he has never had the finer sensibilities of his powers dulled by the sad anxieties, the degrading fears, the miserable dependencies of debt; that he has been blessed with competency even when poorest. (7)

De Quincey continues in this strain, creating a complete elegy on his own dreams, "which he had been obliged to abandon in the bitterest detail." (8)

And so we conclude that if Wordsworth's character is to be judged, it should be on the basis of his peculiar, almost impersonal temperament; for De Quincey to suppose otherwise lays him open to reproof. But De Quincey fails to appreciate this temperament in Wordsworth, and consequently his writings are open to censure where he expects of Wordsworth something foreign to his nature.

The opium-eater's quarrel with Coleridge was quite different from the one with Wordsworth. De Quincey had not the "breathless adoration" for Coleridge that he had for Wordsworth; his and Coleridge's were kindred spirits, and the two men met more or less on a ground of parity. De Quincey was seldom ill at ease under the gaze of Coleridge, because

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(7) Sackville-West, De Quincey, quoting from Japp, De Quincey Memorials, vol. II, p. 292.
(8) Ibid., p. 199.

the latter was always affable and personable, and made everyone he met feel at home with him. Coleridge had undergone the same sort of of mental, physical, and moral degradation as he had undergone, so that De Quincey could actually look with pity upon the older opium-eater.

Five features of the articles on Coleridge which caused ill feeling I have already mentioned: The reference to Coleridge's marriage, to the Wordsworth-Montagu imbroglio, the charges of literary plagiarism, the accusation of taking opium to produce "luxurious sensations," and the revelation of the gift of 300 l.

De Quincey can more easily be defended in these controversies, because he committed no perversions of fact and made no unjust attacks as had been the case in his articles on Wordsworth, ___more notably the last, on the Gradual Estrangement from Wordsworth, published in 1840. His references to Coleridge's marriage and to the Wordsworth-Montagu imbroglio, and the revelation of the gift of 300 l. _____all were truthful, shrewd, and well-expressed, although they may be arraigned on the charge of "blurting." However, there was not much excuse for charging Coleridge with literary plagiarism. His accusation of Coleridge's taking opium for pleasure is understandable, but the element of bias necessarily creeps in and hinders truth of statement.

In giving his reasons for pointing out some of

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(9) Ibid.

Coleridge's "unacknowledged obligations," (9) De Quincey explains clearly that he does this "to forestall...other discoverers who would make a more unfriendly use of the discovery, and also, as matters of literary curiosity."(10) The general line of argument is against De Quincey on these two bases, however, because hardly any other scholars might accuse Coleridge of plagiarism if only for the fact that this type of plagiarism was permissable; as "matters of literary curiosity" they naturally lead to considerations of plagiarism.

From De Quincey's point of view, he could be acquitted of dishonorable intention on the ground that he gave due credit to Coleridge from time to time. He treats first Coleridge's debt to Frederica Brun, a female poet of Germany, for the framework to the "Hymn to Chamouni." To be sure, "the mere framework of the poem is exactly the same,___an appeal to the most impressive features of the regal mountain, (Mount Blanc,) citing them to proclaim their author." He cites for an illustration that "the torrent," to proclaim its author, "is required to say by whom it had been arrested in its headlong raving, and stiffened, as by the petrific mace of Death, into everlasting pillars of ice; and the answer to these impassioned apostrophes is made by the same soul burst of rapture." Then it by all means it is in mere logic, an even in form,

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(10) De Quincey, op. cit., vol.I, pp. 156 ff.
(11) Ibid.,p. 157.

a translation. He admits, however, that Coleridge by succesful amplification and deeper lyrical meaning, had created "the dry bones of the German outline...into the fulness of life. It is not, therefore, a paraphrase, but a recast of the original." (12)

Although I have not had the opportunity to see the original, it seems to me that an accusation of plagiarism is not very strong if it relies upon the factors mentioned above. Most of the observations made are beside the point; an aouthor can borrow "the mere framework of the poem," for it is mostly the means of expression that makes the poem. Since De Quincey admits that Coleridge put life into it, his case is quite weak.

His second point against Coleridge was that "in a very noble passage of 'France' a fine expression or two occur from'Samson Agonistes.' " (13) He defends Coleridge: "Now to take a phrase or an inspiring line from the great fathers of poetry, even though no marks of quotation be used, carries with it no charge of plagiarism." Then he immediately contradicts this statement by condemning Coleridge for using phrases and lines that were very very typically Milton's.

His third point was that Coleridge got the germ of the Ancient Mariner from Shelvocke; that he would not admit his obligation to the latter.This is true, but poets are not required to announce their various sources.

One exception, though, to Coleridge's innocence lay in an essay in Biographia Literaria on the reciprocal relations

(12) Ibid.
(13) Ibid.

of the Esse and the Cogitare. Coleridge's preface to his essay acknowledges his indebtedness to Schelling for the ideas contained therein; "but in this particular case, insisting on the impossibility that he could have borrowed arguments which he had first seen after he had thought out the whole hypothesis propri marte." (14) But "after this, what was my astonishment to find that the entire essay from the first word to the last, is a verbatim translation from Schelling, with no attempt in a single instance to appropriate the paper, by developing the arguments or by diversifying the illustrations!" (15) In spite of the firm tone used by De Quincey, he was right, as a lawyer would be to prosecute a guilty person, to bring into attention this wrong-doing.

Approaching the opium controversy, we find that De - Quincey had considerable prejudice in this matter, as naturally would be the case. De Quincey had a right to retaliate, because Coleridge's letters accuse him of spreading opium-eating by his works; furthermore, Coleridge was the greater opium addict. So, as far as the motives for broaching this subject reach, De Quincey was justified in the writing; but it would not be accurate to say in the same breath that his writing is free from exaggeration and misinterpretation at this issue.

He states that Coleridge, chagrined by his army life at Malta, took to the consumption of opium. But he becomes offensive in making the insinuation found in the following passage. (16)

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(14) Ibid., p. 160.
(15) Ibid.
(16) Ibid., p. 206.

I am the last person in the world to press conclusions harshly or uncandidly against Coleridge; but I believe it to be notorious that he first began the use of opium, not only as a relief from any bodily pains or nervous irritations ___for his constitution was strong and excellent___but as a source of luxurious sensations. It is a great misfortune, at least it is a great peril, to have tasted the enchanted cup of youthful rapture incident to a poetic temperament. The standard of high-wrought sentimentality once made known experimentally, it is rare to see a submission afterwards to the sobrieties of life.Coleridge, to speak in the words of Cervantes, wanted better bread than was made of wheat; and when youthful blood no longer sustained the riot of his animal spirits, he endeavored to excite them by artificial stimulants.

This accusation is peculiarly comparable to the one made by Japp against De Quincey himself,explaining the latter's opium habit: "This excessive sensibility, accompanied as it was with sensuous perceptions unduly exacting, rendered him dependent on the periodical gratification of certain senses or appetites." (17)

This comparison might go to prove that De Quincey, angered at Coleridge's accusing him of spreading opium-eating by his works, sought to hurl upon Coleridge the charge that he, himself, had been taking opium for his personal enjoyment. De Quincey, probably desiring to alleviate his inferiority feelings, seized upon Coleridge for this purpose.De Quincey had no proof whatsoever that Coleridge first took opium to produce "luxurious sensations," but he merely guessed at that conclusion at finding out that Coleridge had been under stress during his brief army career at Malta.

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(17) Japp, Thomas De Quincey, p. 3.

Turning aside from De Quincey's violations of the principle of scientific accuracy in prose literature, we come now to a consideration of his objectives and intentions in his writings about the Lake poets.

Comparatively, it appears, the opium-eater wrote a larger portion of eulogy, and, what is of greater importance, of acute and impartial criticism of Wordsworth; the same might also apply to Coleridge,and, to a lesser degree, to Southey. Looking first toward Wordsworth, we find invaluable contributions concerning the poet's dramatic experiences in France during the pre-revolutionary days; Wordsworth's poetry criticized in an unbiased manner; the accounts of the Wordsworths,minus the elements of envy and detraction. Several minor contributions could be added.

Of the poet's early days in France we read: (18) "Wordsworth,it is well known to all who know anything of his history, felt himself by the gorgeous festival era of the Revolution____that era when the sleeping snakes which afterwards stung the national felicity, were yet covered with flowers___that he went over to Paris, and spent about one entire year between that city, Orleans, and Blois." (19) Wordsworth we see strongly attached to Beaupuis, who is described by De Quincey in glowing terms,(20) and who, says De Quincey, quoting,

> 'perished, fighting in supreme command,
> upon the banks of the unhappy Loire.'

(18) Ibid.,pp. 327 ff.
(19) Ibid.
(20) Ibid., pp. 333-335.

The accounts of the Wordsworths which have not been afflicted with De Quincey's spite are charming and delightful in the expression therein of Mary and Dorothy and William Wordsworth, the children, social customs of the Lake districts and the Wordsworths' part in them, and good-fellowship in the Lakes.

His contributions to the understanding of Coleridge include: an appreciation of his intellectual powers; the revelations of interesting relations between Coleridge and William and Dorothy Wordsworth; sympathy, on occasions, with Coleridge's opium habit; interesting facts about Coleridge's life.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

When we contrast the favorable and vindictive intents of De Quincey, we find that without a doubt the constructive, unbiased, and truthful accounts predominate over the destructive, biased, and untruthful ones. We cannot overlook the fact, nevertheless, that De Quincey's writings were offensive to the Wordsworths, the surviving Coleridges,and Southey. To these people, living at the time which his Literary Reminiscences was published, the articles seemed totally inconsiderate and brazen. In our day, however, it is possible to read the delicious-witted quips and stories about the Lake poets without a feeling of outrage. What was once intensely personal to parties concerned is now the source of delight for readers. About De Quincey the man in relationship with the Lake poets as men, it can be discovered that he never in everyday life tried to outdo them or to betray them; De Quincey the man must have been far more harmless and affable then De Quincey the journalist.

The world is truly grateful to De Quincey for his vivid descriptions of meeting Wordsworth,Coleridge,and Southey; for his beautifully cadenced prose conceptions of the Lake country, with the Lake poets as the proud traversers of its

wonderful stretches; his analysis of opium and its effects upon genious struggling in its whirlpool; for entertainment, humor, pathos, tragedy, sweetness and light, all encompassed in a lyrical flow of powerful words.

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