CHAPTER XVI.

KEATS, LAMB, AND COLERIDGE.

Charles Cowden Clarke.—Keats and Shelley.—Mr. Monckton Milnes’s Letters and Remains of Keats.—“Other-worldliness.”—Armitage Brown.—Keats and Lamb.—Wordsworth on Shakespeare.—Milton dining.—Keats and Byron.—Keats in Italy.—His death and personal appearance.—“Foliage.”—The Indicator.—Tasso’s Aminta.—Foolish ignorance of business.—Mr. Lockhart.—Personal appearance of Lamb.—Character of his genius.—His bon-mots and imaginary notices of his friends.—Person of Coleridge.—Character of his genius.—Coleridge and Hazlitt.—Coleridge’s conversation and daily habits.

And now to speak of Keats, who was introduced to me by his schoolmaster’s son, Charles Cowden Clarke, a man of a most genial nature, and corresponding poetical taste, admirably well qualified to nourish the genius of his pupil.

I had not known the young poet long, when Shelley and he became acquainted under my roof. Keats did not take to Shelley as kindly as Shelley did to him. Shelley’s only thoughts of his new acquaintance were such as regarded his bad health, with which he sympathized, and his poetry, of
which he has left such a monument of his admiration in *Adonais*. Keats, being a little too sensitive on the score of his origin, felt inclined to see in every man of birth a sort of natural enemy. Their styles in writing also were very different; and Keats, notwithstanding his unbounded sympathies with ordinary flesh and blood, and even the transcendental cosmopolitics of *Hyperion*, was so far inferior in universality to his great acquaintance, that he could not accompany him in his dædal rounds with nature, and his Archimedean endeavours to move the globe with his own hands. I am bound to state thus much; because, hopeless of recovering his health, under circumstances that made the feeling extremely bitter, an irritable morbidity appears even to have driven his suspicions to excess; and this not only with regard to the acquaintance whom he might reasonably suppose to have had some advantages over him, but to myself, who had none; for I learned the other day, with extreme pain, such as I am sure so kind and reflecting a man as Mr. Monckton Milnes would not have inflicted on me could he have foreseen it, that Keats at one period of his intercourse with us suspected both Shelley and myself of a wish to see him undervalued! Such are the tricks which constant infelicity can play with the most noble natures. For Shelley, let *Adonais* answer. For myself, let every word answer which I uttered about
him, living and dead, and such as I now proceed to repeat. I might as well have been told, that I wished to see the flowers or the stars undervalued, or my own heart that loved him.

But it was sickness, and passed away. It appears, by Mr. Milnes's book, that all his friends dissatisfied him in the course of those trials of his temper; and my friend, Mr. Milnes (for that distinguished person honours me with his friendship, and can afford the objection), will allow me to say, that those Letters and Remains of the young poet were not among his happiest effusions, nor wanting to supply a certain force of character to his memory. That memory possessed force enough already for those who were qualified to discern it; and those who were not, hardly deserved to have their own notions of energy flattered at the poet's expense. He was already known to have personally chastised a blackguard, and to have been the author of Hyperion;

"That large utterance of the early gods."

What more could have been necessary to balance the trembling excess of sensibility in his earlier poems? The world has few enough incarnations of poets themselves in Arcadian shapes, to render necessary any deterioration of such as it has the luck to possess.

But perhaps my own personal feelings induce me
to carry this matter too far. In the publication alluded to is a contemptuous reference (not by Mr. Milnes) to a paper in the *Examiner* on the season of Christmas. I turned to it with new feelings of anxiety; and there, besides finding no warrant for such reference (unless a certain tone of self-complacency, so often regretted in this autobiography, can have justified it), I had the good fortune to be compensated with discovering a phrase, which reminded me of one of the most consolatory passages of my life. I hope I am not giving fresh instance of a weakness which I suppose myself to have outgrown; much less appropriating an invention which does not belong to me; but an accomplished authoress one day (Mrs. Jameson), at the table of my friend Barry Cornwall, quoted the term "other-worldliness" from Coleridge. I said Coleridge was rich enough not to need the transference to him of other men's property; and that I felt so much honoured by the supposition in this instance, that I could not help claiming the word as my own. If Coleridge, indeed, used it before me, I can only say that I was not aware of it, and that my own reflections, very much accustomed to that side of speculation, would have suggested an identical thought. And I should be glad if any reader would tell me in what part of his writings it is to be found.

Now, one of my reasons for alluding to this circum-
stance is, that a stranger once came up to me, company, and said he had to thank me for a great benefit done him by a single word in one of my papers. I inquired, with no little interest, what it was; and he said it was the word in question;—probably in the passage just quoted. He told me it had relieved him, by one flash of light, from a long load of mistake and melancholy; for it had shown him the real character of those aspirations after heaven in a certain class of minds (his teachers), which are as grossly self-seeking as the earthliest, and even set it up as a merit and a sanctification.

Keats appears to have been of opinion, that I ought to have taken more notice of what the critics said against him. And perhaps I ought. My notices of them may not have been sufficient. I may have too much contented myself with panegyrizing his genius, and thinking the objections to it of no ultimate importance. Had he given me a hint to another effect, I should have acted upon it. But in truth, as I have before intimated, I did not see a twentieth part of what was said against us; nor had I the slightest notion, at that period, that he took criticism so much to heart. I was in the habit, though a public man, of living in a world of abstractions of my own; and I regarded him as of a nature still more abstracted, and sure of renown. Though
as a politician (so to speak), I had scarcely a political work in my library. Spensers and Arabian Tales filled up the shelves; and Spenser himself was not remoter, in my eyes, from all the commonplaces of life, than my new friend. Our whole talk was made up of idealisms. In the streets we were in the thick of the old woods. I little suspected, as I did afterwards, that the hunters had struck him; and never at any time did I suspect, that he could have imagined it desired by his friends.—Let me quit the subject of so afflicting a delusion.

In everything but this reserve, which was to a certain extent encouraged by my own incuriousness (for I have no reserve myself with those whom I love),—in every other respect but this, Keats and I might have been taken for friends of the old stamp, between whom there was no such thing even as obligation, except the pleasure of it. I could not love him as deeply as I did Shelley. That was impossible. But my affection was only second to the one which I entertained for that heart of hearts. Keats, like Shelley himself, enjoyed the usual privilege of greatness with all whom he knew, rendering it delightful to be obliged by him, and an equal, but not greater, delight to oblige. It was a pleasure to his friends to have him in their houses, and he did not grudge it. When *Endymion* was published, he was living at Hampstead with his friend, 'Charles
Armitage Brown, who attended him most affectionately through a severe illness, and with whom, to their great mutual enjoyment, he had taken a journey into Scotland. The lakes and mountains of the north delighted him exceedingly. He beheld them with an epic eye. Afterwards, he went into the south, and luxuriated in the Isle of Wight. On Brown’s leaving home a second time, to visit the same quarter, Keats, who was too ill to accompany him, came to reside with me, when his last and best volume of poems appeared, containing \textit{Lamia}, \textit{Isabella}, the \textit{Eve of St. Agnes}, and the noble fragment of \textit{Hyperion}. I remember Lamb’s delight and admiration on reading this book; how pleased he was with the designation of Mercury as “the star of Lethe” (rising, as it were, and glittering as he came upon that pale region); and the fine daring anticipation in that passage of the second poem,—

“So the two brothers and their murdered man
Rode past fair Florence.”

So also the description, at once delicate and gorgeous, of Agnes praying beneath the painted window. The public are now well acquainted with those and other passages, for which Persian kings would have filled a poet’s mouth with gold. I remember Keats reading to me with great relish and particularity, conscious of what he had set forth,
the lines describing the supper, and ending with the words,

"Lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon."

Mr. Wordsworth would have said that the vowels were not varied enough; but Keats knew where his vowels were not to be varied. On the occasion above alluded to, Wordsworth found fault with the repetition of the concluding sound of the participles in Shakspeare's line about bees:—

"The singing masons building roofs of gold."

This, he said, was a line which Milton would never have written. Keats thought, on the other hand, that the repetition was in harmony with the continued note of the singers, and that Shakspeare's negligence (if negligence it was) had instinctively felt the thing in the best manner. The assertion about Milton is startling, considering the tendency of that great poet to subject his nature to art; yet I have dipped, while writing this, into *Paradise Lost*, and at the second chance have lit on the following:—

"The gray
Dawn, and the Pleiades before him danced,
Shedding sweet influence. Less bright the moon,
But opposite, in levelled west, was set
His mirrour, with full force borrowing her light.

The repetition of the *e* in the fourth line is an extreme case in point, being monotonous in order to
express oneness and evenness. Milton would have relished the supper, which his young successor, like a page for him, has set forth. It was Keats who observed to me, that Milton, in various parts of his writings, has shown himself a bit of an epicure, and loves to talk of good eating. That he was choice in his food, and set store by a good cook, there is curious evidence to be found in the proving of his Will; by which it appears, that dining one day "in the kitchen," he complimented Mrs. Milton, by the appropriate title of "Betty," on the dish she had set before him; adding, as if he could not pay her too well for it, "Thou knowest I have left thee all." Henceforth let a kitchen be illustrious, should a gentleman choose to take a cutlet in it. But houses and their customs were different in those days.

Keats had felt that his disease was mortal, two or three years before he died. He had a constitutional tendency to consumption; a close attendance on the deathbed of a beloved brother, when he ought to have been nursing himself in bed, gave it a blow which he felt for months. Despairing love (that is to say, despairing of living to enjoy it, for the love was returned) added its hourly torment; and, meanwhile, the hostile critics came up, and roused an indignation in him, both against them and himself, which on so many accounts he could ill afford to endure.
When I was in Italy, Lord Byron shewed me in manuscript the well-known passage in *Don Juan*, in which Keats's death is attributed to the *Quarterly Review*; the couplet about the "fiery particle," that was "snuffed out by an article." I told him the real state of the case, proving to him that the supposition was a mistake, and therefore, if printed, would be a misrepresentation. But a stroke of wit was not to be given up.

Seeing him once change countenance in a manner more alarming than usual, as he stood silently eyeing the country out of window, I pressed him to let me know how he felt, in order that he might enable me to do what I could for him; upon which he said, that his feelings were almost more than he could bear, and that he feared for his senses. I proposed that we should take a coach, and ride about the country together, to vary, if possible, the immediate impression, which was sometimes all that was formidable, and would come to nothing. He acquiesced, and was restored to himself. It was, nevertheless, on the same day, that sitting on the bench in Well Walk, at Hampstead, nearest the Heath,* that he told me, with unaccustomed tears in his eyes, that "his heart was breaking." A doubt, however, was upon him at the time, which he afterwards had reason to know

* The one against the wall.
was groundless; and during his residence at the last house which he occupied before he went abroad, he was at times more than tranquil. At length, he was persuaded by his friends to try the milder climate of Italy. He thought it better for others as well as himself, that he should go. He was accompanied by Mr. Severn, then a young artist of a promise equal to his subsequent repute, and who possessed all that could recommend him for a companion—old acquaintance, great animal spirits, active tenderness, and a mind capable of appreciating that of the poet. They went first to Naples, and afterwards to Rome; where, on the 27th of December 1820, our author died in the arms of his friend, completely worn out, and longing for the release. He suffered so much in his lingering, that he used to watch the countenance of the physician for the favourable and fatal sentence, and express his regret when he found it delayed. Yet no impatience escaped him. He was manly and gentle to the last, and grateful for all services. A little before he died, he said that he "felt the daisies growing over him." But he made a still more touching remark respecting his epitaph. "If any," he said, "were put over him, he wished it to consist of nothing but these words: 'Here lies one whose name was writ in water:'"—so little did he think of the more than promise he had given;—of the fine and lasting things he had added to the stock of
poetry. The physicians expressed their astonishment that he had held out so long, the lungs turning out, on inspection, to have been almost obliterated. They said he must have lived upon the mere strength of the spirit within him. He was interred in the English burying-ground at Rome, near the monument of Caius Cestius, where his great mourner, Shelley, was shortly to join him.

Keats, when he died, had just completed his four-and-twentieth year. He was under the middle height; and his lower limbs were small in comparison with the upper, but neat and well turned. His shoulders were very broad for his size: he had a face in which energy and sensibility were remarkably mixed up; an eager power, checked and made patient by ill health. Every feature was at once strongly cut, and delicately alive. If there was any faulty expression, it was in the mouth, which was not without something of a character of pugnacity. The face was rather long than otherwise; the upper lip projected a little over the under; the chin was bold, the cheeks sunken; the eyes mellow and glowing; large, dark, and sensitive. At the recital of a noble action, or a beautiful thought, they would suffuse with tears, and his mouth trembled. In this, there was ill health as well as imagination, for he did not like these betrayals of emotion; and he had great personal as well as moral courage. He once chas-
tised a butcher, who had been insolent, by a regular stand-up fight. His hair, of a brown colour, was fine, and hung in natural ringlets. The head was a puzzle for the phrenologists, being remarkably small in the skull; a singularity which he had in common with Byron and Shelley, whose hats I could not get on. Keats was sensible of the disproportion, above noticed, between his upper and lower extremities; and he would look at his hand, which was faded, and swollen in the veins, and say it was the hand of a man of fifty. He was a seven months' child. His mother, who was a lively woman, passionately fond of amusement, is supposed to have hastened her death by too great an inattention to hours and seasons. Perhaps she hastened that of her son. His father died of a fall from his horse in the year 1804.

I have endeavoured, in another publication,* to characterize the poetry of Keats, both in its merits and defects. It is not necessary to repeat them here. The public have made up their minds on the subject; and such of his first opponents as were men of genius themselves, but suffered their perceptions to be obscured by political prejudice (as who has not in such times?) have long agreed with, or anticipated the verdict. Sir Walter Scott confessed to Mr. Severn

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* Imagination and Fancy, p. 312.
at Rome, that the truth respecting Keats had prevailed; and it would have been strange, indeed, when the heat of the battle was over, had not Christopher North stretched out his large and warm hand to his memory. Times arrive, under the hallowing influences of thought and trouble, when genius is as sure to acknowledge genius, as it is to feel its own wants, and to be willing to share its glory. A man's eyes, the manlier they are, perceive at last, that there is nothing nobler in them than their tears.

It was during my intimacy with Keats that I published a hasty set of miscellaneous poems, under the title of Foliage, and wrote the set of essays that have since become popular under that of the Indicator. About this time also, I translated the Aminta of Tasso, a poem (be it said with the leave of so great a name) hardly worth the trouble, though the prologue is a charming presentment of love in masquerade, and the Ode on the Golden Age a sigh out of the honestest part of the heart of humanity. But I translated it to enable me to meet some demands, occasioned by the falling off in the receipts of the Examiner, now declining under the twofold vicissitude of triumphant ascendency in the Tories, and the desertion of reform by the Whigs. The Indicator assisted me still more, though it was but published in a corner, owing to my want of funds for advertising it, and my ignorance of the best mode of
circulating such things;—an ignorance so profound, that I was not even aware of its very self; for I had never attended, not only to the business part of the *Examiner*, but to the simplest money-matter that stared at me on the face of it. I could never tell anybody who asked me, what was the price of its stamp!

Do I boast of this ignorance? Alas! I have no such respect for the pedantry of absurdity as that. I blush for it; and I only record it out of a sheer painful movement of conscience, as a warning to those young authors who might be led to look upon such folly as a fine thing; which at all events is what I never thought it myself. I did not think about it at all, except to avoid the thought; and I only wish that the strangest accidents of education, and the most inconsiderate habit of taking books for the only ends of life, had not conspired to make me so ridiculous I am feeling the consequences at this moment, in pangs which I cannot explain, and which I may not live long enough perhaps to escape.

Let me console myself a little by remembering how much Hazlitt and Lamb, and others, were pleased with the *Indicator*. I speak most of them, because they talked most to me about it. Hazlitt's favourite paper (for they liked it enough to have favourite papers) was the one on *Sleep*; perhaps because there is a picture in it of a sleeping despot;
though he repeated, with more enthusiasm than he was accustomed to do, the conclusion about the parent and the bride. Lamb preferred the paper on *Coaches and their Horses*, that on the *Deaths of Little Children*, and (I think) the one entitled *Thoughts and Guesses on Human Nature*. Shelley took to the story of the *Fair Revenge*; and the paper that was most liked by Keats, if I remember, was the one on a hot summer's day, entitled *A New*. He was with me while I was writing and reading it to him, and contributed one or two of the passages. Keats first published in the *Indicator* his beautiful poem *La Belle Dame sans Mercy*, and the *Dream after reading Dante's Episode of Paulo and Francesca*. Lord Holland, I was told, had a regard for the portraits of the *Old Lady* and the *Old Gentleman*, &c., which had appeared in the *Examiner*; and a late gallant captain in the navy was pleased to wonder how I became so well acquainted with seamen (in the article entitled *Seamen on Shore*). They had "sat to me" for their portraits. The common sailor was a son of my nurse at school, and the officer a connection of my own by marriage.

One of my pleasantest recollections of the *Indicator* is associated with one of my *quondam* critical enemies,—one, indeed, who had the greatest right to be such, for he was a connection of Sir Walter Scott. I never inquired what particular part he took in his
hostility. I never, in fact, made the inquiry respecting anybody; and there is an excellent old Scottish saying, “Let bygones be bygones.” I allude to the author of Valerius. Mr. Clowes, jun., told me, that Mr. Lockhart happening to see the Indicator lying one day in his father’s office, stood reading in it a little, and then said (either to his father or himself), “There is good matter in this book, Mr. Clowes.” The young printer, in his right gentleman’s spirit, was good enough to make me acquainted with this circumstance; and I hope it may be as pleasant to Mr. Lockhart to see, as it is to me to record it.

Let me take this opportunity of recording my recollections in general of my friend Lamb; of all the world’s friend, particularly of his oldest friends, Coleridge and Southey; for I think he never modified or withheld any opinion (in private or bookwards) except in consideration of what he thought they might not like.

Charles Lamb had a head worthy of Aristotle, with as fine a heart as ever beat in human bosom, and limbs very fragile to sustain it. There was a caricature of him sold in the shops, which pretended to be a likeness. Procter went into the shop in a passion, and asked the man what he meant by putting forth such a libel. The man apologized, and said that the artist meant no
offence. There never was a true portrait of Lamb. His features were strongly yet delicately cut; he had a fine eye as well as forehead; and no face carried in it greater marks of thought and feeling. It resembled that of Bacon, with less worldly vigour and more sensibility.

As his frame, so was his genius. It was as fit for thought as could be, and equally as unfit for action; and this rendered him melancholy, apprehensive, humorous, and willing to make the best of everything as it was, both from tenderness of heart and abhorrence of alteration. His understanding was too great to admit an absurdity; his frame was not strong enough to deliver it from a fear. His sensibility to strong contrasts was the foundation of his humour, which was that of a wit at once melancholy and willing to be pleased. He would beard a superstition, and shudder at the old phantasm while he did it. One could have imagined him cracking a jest in the teeth of a ghost, and then melting into thin air himself, out of a sympathy with the awful. His humour and his knowledge both, were those of Hamlet, of Molière, of Carlin, who shook a city with laughter, and, in order to divert his melancholy, was recommended to go and hear himself. Yet he extracted a real pleasure out of his jokes, because good-heartedness retains that
privilege when it fails in everything else. I should say he condescended to be a punster, if condescension had been a word befitting wisdom like his. Being told that somebody had lampooned him, he said, "Very well, I'll Lamb-pun him." His puns were admirable, and often contained as deep things as the wisdom of some who have greater names;—such a man, for instance, as Nicole the Frenchman, who was a baby to him. He would have cracked a score of jokes at him, worth his whole book of sentences; pelted his head with pearls. Nicole would not have understood him, but Rochefoucault would, and Pascal too; and some of our old Englishmen would have understood him still better. He would have been worthy of hearing Shakspeare read one of his scenes to him, hot from the brain. Commonplace found a great comforter in him, as long as it was good-natured; it was to the ill-natured or the dictatorial only that he was startling. Willing to see society go on as it did, because he despaired of seeing it otherwise, but not at all agreeing in his interior with the common notions of crime and punishment, he "dumb-founded" a long tirade one evening, by taking the pipe out of his mouth, and asking the speaker, "Whether he meant to say that a thief was not a good man?" To a person abusing Voltaire,
and indiscreetly opposing his character to that of Jesus Christ, he said admirably well (though he by no means overrated Voltaire, nor wanted reverence in the other quarter), that "Voltaire was a very good Jesus Christ for the French." He liked to see the church-goers continue to go to church, and wrote a tale in his sister's admirable little book (Mrs. Leicester's School) to encourage the rising generation to do so; but to a conscientious deist he had nothing to object; and if an atheist had found every other door shut against him, he would assuredly not have found his. I believe he would have had the world remain precisely as it was, provided it innovated no farther; but this spirit in him was anything but a worldly one, or for his own interest. He hardly contemplated with patience the new buildings in the Regent's Park: and, privately speaking, he had a grudge against official heaven-exponents, or clergymen. He would rather, however, have been with a crowd that he disliked, than felt himself alone. He said to me one day, with a face of great solemnity, "What must have been that man's feelings, who thought himself the first deist?" Finding no footing in certainty, he delighted to confound the borders of theoretical truth and falsehood. He was fond of telling wild stories to children, engrafted on things about
them; wrote letters to people abroad, telling them that a friend of theirs had come out in genteel comedy; and persuaded George Dyer that Lord Castlereagh was the author of Waverley! The same excellent person walking one evening out of his friend's house into the New River, Lamb (who was from home at the time) wrote a paper under his signature of Elia, stating, that common friends would have stood dallying on the bank, have sent for neighbours, &c. but that he, in his magnanimity, jumped in, and rescued his friend after the old noble fashion. He wrote in the same magazine two lives of Liston and Munden, which the public took for serious, and which exhibit an extraordinary jumble of imaginary facts and truth of bye-painting. Munden he made born at "Stoke Pogeis:" the very sound of which was like the actor speaking and digging his words. He knew how many false conclusions and pretensions are made by men who profess to be guided by facts only, as if facts could not be misconceived, or figments taken for them; and therefore, one day, when somebody was speaking of a person who valued himself on being a matter-of-fact man, "Now," said he, "I value myself on being a matter-of-lie man." This did not hinder his being a man of the greatest veracity, in the ordinary sense of the
word; but "truth," he said, "was precious, and not to be wasted on everybody." Those who wish to have a genuine taste of him, and an insight into his modes of life, should read his essays on *Hogarth* and *King Lear*, his *Letters*, his article on the *London Streets*, on *Whist-Playing*, which he loves, and on *Saying Grace before Meat*, which he thinks a strange moment to select for being grateful. He said once to a brother whist-player, whose hand was more clever than clean, and who had enough in him to afford the joke, "M., if dirt were trumps, what hands you would hold."

Lamb had seen strange faces of calamity; but they did not make him love those of his fellow-creatures the less. Few persons guessed what he had suffered in the course of his life, till his friend Talfourd wrote an account of it, and shewed the hapless warping that disease had given to the fine brain of his sister.

I will append to this account of Lamb, though I had not the good fortune to know much of him personally, my impression respecting his friend Coleridge.

Coleridge was as little fitted for action as Lamb, but on a different account. His person was of a good height, but as sluggish and solid as the other's was light and fragile. He had, perhaps, suffered
it to look old before its time, for want of exercise. His hair was white at fifty; and as he generally dressed in black, and had a very tranquil demeanour, his appearance was gentlemanly, and for several years before his death was reverend. Nevertheless, there was something invincibly young in the look of his face. It was round and fresh-coloured, with agreeable features, and an open, indolent, good-natured mouth. This boy-like expression was very becoming in one who dreamed and speculated as he did when he was really a boy, and who passed his life apart from the rest of the world, with a book, and his flowers. His forehead was prodigious,—a great piece of placid marble;—and his fine eyes, in which all the activity of his mind seemed to concentrate, moved under it with a sprightly ease, as if it was pastime to them to carry all that thought.

And it was pastime. Hazlitt said, that Coleridge's genius appeared to him like a spirit, all head and wings, eternally floating about in etherealities. He gave me a different impression. I fancied him a good-natured wizard, very fond of earth, and conscious of reposing with weight enough in his easy chair, but able to conjure his etherealities about him in the twinkling of an eye. He could also change them by thousands, and dismiss them as easily when his dinner
came. It was a mighty intellect put upon a sensual body; and the reason why he did little more with it than talk and dream was, that it is agreeable to such a body to do little else. I do not mean that Coleridge was a sensualist in an ill sense. He was capable of too many innocent pleasures, to take any pleasure in the way that a man of the world would take it. The idiest things he did would have had a warrant. But if all the senses, in their time, did not find lodging in that humane plenitude of his, never believe that they did in Thomson or in Boccaccio. Two affirmatives in him made a negative. He was very metaphysical and very corporal; so in mooting everything, he said (so to speak) nothing. His brains pleaded all sorts of questions before him, and he heard them with so much impartiality (his spleen not giving him any trouble) that he thought he might as well sit in his easy chair and hear them for ever, without coming to a conclusion. It has been said (indeed, he said himself) that he took opium to deaden the sharpness of his cogitations. I will venture to affirm, that if he ever took anything to deaden a sensation within him, it was for no greater or more marvellous reason than other people take it; which is, because they do not take enough exercise, and so plague their heads with their livers. Opium,
perhaps, might have settled an uneasiness of this sort in Coleridge, as it did in a much less man with a much greater body—the Shadwell of Dryden. He would then resume his natural ease, and sit, and be happy, till the want of exercise must be again supplied. The vanity of criticism, like all our other vanities, except that of dress (which, so far, has an involuntary philosophy in it), is always forgetting that we are half made up of body. Hazlitt was angry with Coleridge for not being as zealous in behalf of progress as he used to be when young. I was sorry for it, too; and if other men as well as Hazlitt had not kept me in heart, should have feared that the world was destined to be for ever lost, for want either of perseverance or calmness. But Coleridge had less right to begin his zeal in favour of liberty, than he had to leave it off. He should have bethought himself, first, whether he had the courage not to get fat.

As to the charge against him, of eternally probing the depths of his own mind, and trying what he could make of them beyond the ordinary pale of logic and philosophy, surely there was no harm in a man taking this new sort of experiment upon him, whatever little chance there may have been of his doing anything with it. Coleridge, after all, was but one man, though
an extraordinary man: his faculties inclined him to the task; and were suitable to it; and it is impossible to say what new worlds may be laid open, some day or other, by this apparently hopeless process. The fault of Coleridge, like that of all thinkers indisposed to action, was, that he was too content with things as they were,—at least, too fond of thinking that old corruptions were full of good things, if the world did but understand them. Now, here was the dilemma; for it required an understanding like his own to refine upon and turn them to good as he might do; and what the world requires is not metaphysical refinement, but a hearty use of good sense. Coleridge, indeed, could refine his meaning so as to accommodate it with great good-nature to every one that came across him; and, doubtless, he found more agreement of intention among people of different opinions, than they themselves were aware of; which it was good to let them see. But when not enchained by his harmony, they fell asunder again, or went and committed the greatest absurdities for want of the subtle connecting tie; as was seen in the books of Mr. Irving, who, eloquent in one page, and reasoning in a manner that a child ought to be ashamed of in the next, thought to avail himself, in times like these, of the old menacing tones of
damnation, without being thought a quack or an idiot, purely because Coleridge had shewn him, last Friday, that damnation was not what its preachers took it for. With the same subtlety and good-nature of interpretation, Coleridge would persuade a deist that he was a Christian, and an atheist that he believed in God: all which would be very good, if the world could get on by it, and not remain stationary; but, meanwhile, millions are wretched with having too little to eat, and thousands with having too much; and these subtleties are like people talking in their sleep, when they should be up and helping.

However, if the world is to remain always as it is, give me to all eternity new talk of Coleridge, and new essays of Charles Lamb. They will reconcile it beyond all others: and that is much.

Coleridge was fat, and began to lament, in very delightful verses, that he was getting infirm. There was no old age in his verses. I heard him one day, under the Grove at Highgate, repeat one of his melodious lamentations, as he walked up and down, his voice undulating in a stream of music, and his regrets of youth sparkling with visions ever young. At the same time, he did me the honour to show me that he did not think so ill of all modern liberalism as some might suppose, denouncing the pretensions of the money-getting in a style which I
should hardly venture upon, and never could equal; and asking with a triumphant eloquence, what chastity itself were worth, if it were a casket, not to keep love in, but hate, and strife, and worldliness? On the same occasion, he built up a metaphor out of a flower, in a style surpassing the famous passage in Milton; deducing it from its root in religious mystery, and carrying it up into the bright, consummate flower, "the bridal chamber of reproductiveness." Of all "the Muse's mysteries," he was as great a high-priest as Spenser; and Spenser himself might have gone to Highgate to hear him talk, and thank him for his "Ancient Mariner." His voice did not always sound very sincere; but perhaps the humble and deprecating tone of it, on those occasions, was out of consideration for the infirmities of his hearers, rather than produced by his own. He recited his "Kubla Khan," one morning to Lord Byron, in his lordship's house in Piccadilly, when I happened to be in another room. I remember the other's coming away from him, highly struck with his poem, and saying how wonderfully he talked. This was the impression of everybody who heard him.

It is no secret that Coleridge lived in the Grove at Highgate with a friendly family, who had sense and kindness enough to know that they did themselves honour by looking after the comforts of such a man. His room looked upon a delicious prospect of wood
and meadow, with coloured gardens under the window, like an embroidery to the mantle. I thought, when I first saw it, that he had taken up his dwelling-place like an abbot. Here he cultivated his flowers, and had a set of birds for his pensioners, who came to breakfast with him. He might have been seen taking his daily stroll up and down, with his black coat and white locks, and a book in his hand; and was a great acquaintance of the little children. His main occupation, I believe, was reading. He loved to read old folios, and to make old voyages with Purchas and Marco Polo; the seas being in good visionary condition, and the vessel well stocked with botargoes.*

* For a more critical summary of my opinions respecting Coleridge's poetry (which I take upon the whole to have been the finest of its time; that is to say, the most quintessential, the most purely emanating from imaginative feeling, un-adulterated by "thoughts" and manner), the reader may, if he pleases, consult Imagination and Fancy, p. 276.