THE CHARLES LAMB BULLETIN

The Journal of the Charles Lamb Society

New Series No.23 *July 1978*

We are happy to be able to celebrate Hazlitt's Bicentenary by publishing Professor W R Niblett's assessment of

WILLIAM HAZLITT AS CRITIC

The years between 1778, when Hazlitt was born, and the end of the century saw a rapid change in the way Englishmen came to look at things. Every man aware of life found the need for re-adaptation to it forced upon his mind. By 1780 the Industrial Revolution and the flow to the towns had begun. Society was growing in large groups instead of small ones and hence was the more easily to be infected by new ideas. The number of readers during the last decade of the eighteenth century increased enormously, for townsmen were beginning to find in books and magazines channels through which ideas of practical importance might come. Timperley notes of 1791 that "in the course of this year were sold 150,000 copies of Paine's *Rights of Man*; and 30,000 of Burke's reply." Old literature began to take on a new interest. During the last twenty years of the century series of pocket classics were published by Bell, Cooke and Harrison, and selections from old authors began to find a market in gradually increasing numbers.

It is not so much, however, the increased amount of printed matter that was read as the increased interest with which it was read that is significant. The evidence of the nation's growing desire for education is to be found in many facts. Between 1785 and 1787 nearly 150 new Sunday Schools were set up, and with the turn of the century day schools - "British" and "National" - began to multiply. In 1795 Thomas Hardy founded his Corresponding Society, which attracted to itself working men eager to discuss matters social and political; and a year later Grey's "Friends of the People" was formed, to be joined by men higher in the social scale with an equal thirst for knowledge. Hazlitt tells us that in the nineties Godwin seemed to be carrying with him "all the most sanguine and fearless understandings of his time." The over-shadowing tree of the French Revolution was dropping many seeds upon English soil.

But if the effects of the new thinking and reading were to have permanent influence on literary development there was an urgent need for a new criticism. Few literary critics of merit were at work in England between 1780 and 1800 in spite of the growing sales of pseudo-critical periodicals. The criticism typical of the eighteenth century, written from a point of view no longer acceptable and directed to a very different audience from that which was now growing up, had for some time been obsolescent.

"Up to the year 1802," writes R P Gillies, "what pitiful abortions were our so-styled reviews! The object of their authors was to give an account of the books, and the notion that upon every occasion there should be a special drift to contend for, an opportunity caught and improved for benefiting the cause of literature, or politics, or morals, or science, by placing the subject in a new light, seems never once to have entered into the calculations of our self-complacent critics." Yet there was danger in such improvement of opportunity. The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*

undoubtedly stimulated interest in literature during the first quarter of the nineteenth century but the defect of these magazines lay in their attempt to do the reader's thinking for him. They wished him not merely to accept the arbitrary selection of books chosen for review but to consent to the authority they imposed upon his convictions. The *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* tried to convert opinion rather than to stimulate free thought. They had comparatively little concern with a book for its own sake; their reviewers had made the tenets of a certain group of opinion into dogmas for whose proclamation books were often but a formal and introductory apology; and as teachers of literary taste they were consequently imperfect.

It thus came about that a large portion of the task of educating literary taste during the years succeeding 1800 was left to free-lance critics - and among these was Hazlitt.

The body of Hazlitt's criticism forms the first important survey of English literature after Johnson's *Lives*. Between 1817 and his death in 1830 Hazlitt critically considered the whole range of English literature, while of foreign authors he knew, among many others, Rabelais, Boccaccio and Cervantes, Dante, Ariosto and Tasso, Molière, Racine and Le Sage, Plato and Cicero, Goethe and Schiller. He found that reading enabled him to express many feelings in addition to those which yielded a precipitate of abstract thought. For in reading books and in writing about them he could be freely himself. Spontaneous, enthusiastic, intuitive, humane, Hazlitt's critical essays are at once a statement of his own opinions and also, because philosophic in many of their interests, a vindication of his attitude to life. One of his many concerns was to rouse an appetite in other people for books and plays which had interested and - particularly - had moved him personally. Only if men and women could bring vitality of mind and spirit to what they read was there any hope that their taste would be educated.

Taste Hazlitt defined as "the power of being properly affected by works of genius. It is the proportioning admiration to power, pleasure to beauty; it is entire sympathy with the finest impulses of the imagination, not antipathy, not indifference to them". And thus the only proof of taste must be enthusiasm: "before a critic can give himself airs of superiority for what he despises, he must first lay himself open to reprisals, by telling us what he admires."

In Hazlitt the revolution in the meaning of the word taste which began during the eighteenth century had fully taken place. What can be seen as appropriate has now become identical with what pleases and there is found no universal standard of taste to which an appeal against a sincere individual judgment can be successfully directed. Though such a judgment be unique it cannot be proved wrong, at least for the individual concerned; for only in his sincerity to his own feelings can a man obtain materials for any judgment whatsoever. Taste is relative to the individual not to society and "good taste" the servant not of conscious but unconscious reason.

The critic therefore need not be concerned whether his verdicts agree with those of the majority, for though frequent examination of the value of our opinions compared with those of others may lessen our prejudices, it will leave nothing for our affections to rest upon - and these affections are the soil from which the verdicts themselves grow. In keeping a mind "awake to the admonitions of his own heart" the critic will also keep an eye

"curiously intent on nature". Every good reader is a critic in embryo but only a few are fitted to adduce with any fullness the reasons for their opinions.

As a disciple of Rousseau Hazlitt was aware that faith precedes reason, for true reason is but faith made conscious; criticism thus becomes a defence of one's faith in literature and one's favourite books. If however we find it impossible to give reasons for the faith that is in us, it does not follow that our faith is hollow. "Whatever interests is interesting... To judge of things by reason or the calculations of positive utility is a slow, cold, uncertain, and barren process - their power of appealing to and affecting the imagination as subjects of thought and feeling is best measured by the habitual impression they leave upon the mind and it is with this only we have to do in expressing our delight or admiration of them, or in setting a just mental value upon them". The critic in fact must judge not first by the heart and then by the head but by both at the same time - being at unity with himself and not deliberately making allowances or deceiving himself into feeling what he does not feel. He must take a very personal interest in the subjects of his criticism for we can only judge for ourselves in what nearly concerns us. That our feeling should be moved by a book is an indispensable precursor to good criticism of it. The ideals peculiar to his own criticism Hazlitt states in several places. "I somehow felt it as a point of honour", he says, "not to make my hearers think less highly of some of these old writers than I myself did of them". He had few illusions about the influence of his own criticism on mankind or indeed of the immortality of any literature. It was in giving way to his natural desire to talk of poems or paintings that Hazlitt believed he could best serve as a guide to the taste of other people.

But if the individual critic, as Hazlitt presumed, ought himself to be an ultimate judge of letters - as original and alone in passing verdicts as the genius in creating works of art - what guarantee have we that one critic's judgment is better than that of any other? Hazlitt, true still to the principles of Rousseau, replies that there is to be found no such guarantee save in the kinship of any particular judgment with that of humanity. A critic's taste is good in so far as he himself is a representative of mankind not merely in mind or opinion but in soul. The reputation gained by works of genius belongs to them because they have merited the approval of generations of good critics. Even to the last, however, no judgment of a work is absolute or unquestionable; nor is the verdict of posterity necessarily the right one. For posterity is "the living public of a future generation", and itself can live only one generation at a time. "The diffusion of taste is not the same thing as the improvement of taste". Hazlitt conceived it to be possible that the Golden Age of Good Judgments was of the past - in a time when, connoisseurship not having become a fashion, a genius could attract to his works only that audience worthy of them. This is a reaction from the eighteenth century faith in the capacity of taste to be improved - a faith still upheld by Jeffrey in his naive belief that "the general taste of every successive generation is better than that of its predecessors".

Hazlitt maintained that even great critics, since they must belong to a particular time, must be partially misled by its prejudices and special sympathies. "Public opinion is always pressing upon the mind, and, like the air we breathe, acts unseen, unfelt. It supplies the living current of our thoughts and infects without our knowledge". Prejudices in judgment are inevitable, for to attempt to refer every question to abstract truth and

precise definition would be impossible. Had we to wait for the criticism of perfect reason before passing our judgments the world would stand still.

Men's opinions and ways of reasoning depend also more than we are apt to perceive on the character and temper of their minds. The light in which they have been accustomed to view things greatly influences all verdicts they pass. Though we can know no more of any given object than we see, we speak as though we had seen the whole of it.

Nevertheless while it is idle to set up a universal standard of taste we may trust that if the representative critics of many ages have rejoiced to read a book it has a true claim to be re-read by ourselves. A commonplace critic will merely re-echo what has already solidified into tradition about a book, but a great critic will proclaim new truths about it - uttering what oft is being thought but never before has been expressed. Originality is truth "before it is acknowledged by others and almost before the mind itself knows what it is". Were there not a subconscious anticipation of an original remark in our minds it would not strike us as a discovery but merely as an oddity or as nonsense. The duty of the critic must therefore all the more lie in keeping faith with his impressions, not in regarding the preconceived ideas of the public. He cannot serve two masters - but in serving his true self he will in the end best serve society. Good critics of literature must always be few - for there are few with sufficiently poetical minds, deep capacity for experience and stern sincerity to their own impressions to be worthy of the name.

In 1800 the taste was still for the older fashioned poetry, though with the increase in number of the circulating libraries and the still growing popularity of the novel, the amount of poetry read was probably less than at any time for seventy years. Cowper's *Task* found a wide public and so did the works of Rogers and Campbell written in the heroic couplet. T J Mathias's *Pursuits of Literature*, which went into thirteen editions between 1794 and 1812, and *The Anti-Jacobin*, issued in 1797-8, made their appeal essentially by satirising new ideas and verse-forms. Thus it came about that the novel was the best medium for the dissemination of revolutionary feelings and new thought. Large numbers read the romances of Mrs Radcliffe (1789-97) and of M G Lewis, Holcroft's philosophical *Anna St Ives* (1792) and *Hugh Trevor* (1794), Mrs Inchbald's *Simple Story* (1791) and *Nature and Art* (1796), the *Hermsprong* of Robert Bage (1796) - revived by the BBC, on Radio 4, in 1978 - and Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794) and *St Leon* (1799).

Yet no one had up to this time written a good criticism of the novel - even of the works of Fielding, Richardson and Smollett. The novel was for the most part neglected by the Reviews, and despised, though read, by men of taste. Opinion concerning what was proper to its form remained vague and uneducated. Hazlitt, in his essays published in the *Edinburgh Review* for 1815 on Dunlop's *History of Fiction* and *Standard Novels and Romances* and in his lecture delivered in 1819 "On the English Novelists", was among the first to attempt to remedy this state of affairs. He was determined, as he said, "to contribute something towards settling the standard of excellence, both as to degree and kind in these several writers" and felt unashamed of his own delight in reading Mrs Inchbald or William Godwin in spite of a just perception of their weaknesses. *Nature and Art* he declares to be one of "the most pathetic and interesting stories in the world", yet "the distress is too naked and the situations hardly to be borne with patience". *Caleb Williams* though "one of the most original as well as powerful productions in the English language" has "little knowledge of the world,

little variety, neither an eye for the picturesque, nor a talent for the humorous". The disappearance of the suspicion in which the reading of novels was held must have been hastened by Hazlitt's discriminating praise. He thought the novel fit to rank beside the drama in its portrayal of the actions and feelings of men and he set a tradition that the novel should be considered as "a close imitation of men and manners", an "evidence on all questions concerning human nature" which was not to be broken in good critical writing about it for a hundred years.

But Hazlitt was also - a fact which has never been sufficiently noticed - a pioneer of the modern form of dramatic criticism. The work he did for the *Morning Chronicle* (1813-1814) set an example without precedent in England of the sincere and acute reviewing of plays actually being performed. Here was a critic free and disinterested even when what he said had to appear in print next morning before a public as excited by dramatic performances as himself. Towards the Elizabethan playwrights he took up the attitude of Coleridge and Lamb - though with a difference - and attempted to lead the people into a new sympathy with their work.

In general Hazlitt's criticism marks a point where men having ceased blindly to reverence eighteenth century standards of what literature should be have ceased also blindly to declaim against them. Dr Johnson had said there were only three works that the reader was sorry to come to the end of - *Don Quixote*, *Robinson Crusoe* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Hazlitt regards two of these as coming "as near to poetry as possible without being so". He considers with justice the works of Dryden and Addison, Pope and Prior, while Congreve and Arbuthnot are among his favourite authors. He teaches that the poets of the eighteenth century "have a clear and independent claim upon our gratitude as having produced a kind and degree of excellence which existed equally nowhere else". The controversy regarding Poetic Diction his criticism looks upon as settled - the common sense of the thing being, as he says, so obvious, and the cadences of poesy ("the extraordinary combination of words sometimes used therein") being so well justified by the poetry of the past. It is indeed remarkable how often and how naturally Hazlitt appeals to the past as judge of what ought to please the present. Though he was no scholarly historian, his respect for the past was deep enough to give ballast to his view of the present. This respect, too, gave his critical methods more basic stability than they would otherwise have had - a stability which their peculiarly personal nature certainly needed.

Hazlitt's vivid sense that the men of the past were once as vital and human as his own contemporaries goes far to atone for his deficiency in historical information. "I conceive," he says, "that the past is as real and substantial a part of our being, that it is as much a bona fide, undeniable consideration in the estimate of human life, as the future can possibly be." His consciousness of time is illustrated in one aspect by his intense realisation of his own development. He comes easily to "discover" a period through study of its literature or painting. Yet he is by temperament compelled to desire the past that is dead to bury its dead. "It is," he says, "by an especial dispensation of Providence that languages wear out; as otherwise we should be buried alive under a load of books and knowledge." The sight of a newspaper thirty years old is enough to give him a fit of the spleen for half an hour - yet Burke's *French Revolution* lives on "glossy as ever" within his mind.

The form of much of Hazlitt's criticism is determined by the fact that he first delivered it orally. The titles of the most important of his lectures

are a guide to the main contributions he made to the literary taste of his time. Men were ready for reconsidering the Elizabethans. Since the decline in popularity of the "German drama" in England, native dramatists had turned to a study of Shakespeare and his contemporaries in order both to gain inspiration and to acquire technical knowledge; Hazlitt, like Coleridge, treats Shakespeare as a skilful dramatist as well as a great dramatic poet. Men were ready also for a re-examination such as Hazlitt's of the works of the eighteenth-century writers; and the interest which more thoughtful readers took in their own contemporaries and in poetic theory is to be deduced from the Table of Contents of almost any issue of the *Edinburgh* or *Blackwood's* as well as from parts of Hazlitt's own criticism. It was the most vital and unsettled problems of the criticism of his day upon which Hazlitt seized for treatment. Both the defects and the virtues of his critical work arise from this fact.

By the time he was forty Hazlitt was becoming recognised by some of the discerning as a critic whose essays mattered. Once having won recognition, he gradually warmed and softened his readers' minds to take the impress of new ideas concerning what criticism might be. He published much good criticism in the Reviews themselves; and the growth of his reputation in the less prejudiced of them is an interesting study. The *Monthly* early showed its appreciation and by 1820 was referring to him as one who had fame - "the confidence of many admirers". The *Edinburgh* published a commentary upon his "Characters of Shakespeare's Plays" in August 1817, and in November 1820 a notable criticism of the "Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth" appeared in its pages, which treated Hazlitt as an author of great merit having an important body of work behind him. A reviewer of his lectures wrote in the *London Magazine* for February 1830 that he never seemed to avail himself of anything conventional in opinion, "the whole force of his intellect seems always fairly put into play to elicit his sentiments, whatever the topic may be..." In the same year the *Retrospective Review* remarked of his work: "Mr Hazlitt - incomparably the most original of the regular critics - has almost raised criticism into an independent art, and, while analysing the merits of others, has disclosed stores of sentiment, thought and fancy which are his own peculiar property".

One great difference between the criticism of Hazlitt and that of most of the Reviews of the time was that Hazlitt had no wish to make his audience feel in danger of being thought without taste. He did not seek to judge a work as included in any school of literature or as according with any previous standard or theory of literary excellence. By 1830 few found his ideals of criticism unacceptable, and by 1840 fewer still.

But his personal fame was less secure. Though the *Revue Brittanique* for May 1829 referred to his work as "remarquable par la sagacité des vues" and to himself as the "celèbre et spirituel Hazlitt", though Heine defended and De Quincey, Macaulay and Bagehot undoubtedly read his work (being influenced by it) it was not until late in the nineteenth century that general respect began to be paid his name. Nothing, however, could destroy the educative effect of his actual criticism upon its own time.

The essential originality of Hazlitt as a critic is to be sought in the loyalty he paid not to society, nor to good sense, nor even to consistency of opinion, but to that microcosm of humanity he saw within himself. "I intend these essays as studies of human nature," he wrote of his own work, "and as in the prosecution of this design I do not spare others, I see no reason why I should spare myself." Hazlitt's literary criticism, so

voluminous and wide of range, gains its essential excellence from the penetration of his own self-knowledge; he is never far from analysing his own consciousness and character. His portraits of other authors are portraits of himself put into their place, and where for any reason he feels that he cannot substitute part of his own wide experience of life for the author's, he fails as an interpreter. It is typical of him thus that the essay "On the Past and Future" deals with his own past and his own future. "All we know, think of, or can admire," he says, "in a manner becomes ourselves - I am as sure of what passed through Raphael's mind as of what passes through my own." If as a young man Hazlitt could express himself with most satisfaction as a philosopher, during his middle years he turned to a less highly imaginative way of criticising, and drew interest from all the capital of his mind in order to write his literary judgments.

Like Johnson, Hazlitt could have declared his writings to be an appeal to experience, and to an experience as individual as any man's. The society to which Johnson belonged was, however, becoming degenerate by 1800. Critics had once more to seek within their own minds for the criteria of their judgments, and in so far as they were men deficient in personal experience or self-scrutiny, their criticism was defective. The attraction of the romantics to the study of history was due in part to the failure of contemporary society to provide standards of any kind to which appeal might be made. By studying history they deepened their understanding of human nature and therefore of themselves. It was his own humanity which Hazlitt transformed into capital for his criticism. He never sought to force judgment upon experience. Acute of mind and sense he saw both in the world around him and in the world which was himself the materials for a power of observation which was both eager and delicate. His prime virtue was a spirit of penetration. He enters, as it were, into the conception of the author he is studying, discerning that author's purpose as well as at the same moment judging his success in the achievement of it. He has a power of taking delight in a thing not as a means to some end, but just because it is what it is, and he is always at his greatest when most excited. He captures in his own mind the subjects of his criticism and trusts to a capturing with them of the atmosphere they breathe in order to live. Because of the wideness of his human interests he can say to an author, "Give me something fine in any form which may suit you best, according to your own temperament," and proceed to judge the result only in relation to the nature of the attempt. In middle age he still has the fine ability for enthusiasm, the creativeness of vision, typical of youth. Yet the possession carries with it its own dangers. Where a particular book does not interest him he is a less reliable critic of it than many of his inferiors in acumen. But it is rare for any good book not to challenge his interest, and as Sainte-Beuve says, "Savoir bien lire un livre en le jugeant chemin faisant et sans cesser de la goûter, c'est presque tout l'art du critique." Hazlitt seldom ceases to relish the book he is criticising.

The freshness and virility of his criticism is in fact largely dependent upon his faith in his own first impressions. "First impressions," he writes, "are often the truest... We are struck at first, and by chance, with what is peculiar and characteristic; also with permanent traits and general effect; this afterwards goes off in a set of unmeaning, commonplace details." He seems, like Dr Johnson, rarely to have forgotten the feelings with which a book affected him on first acquaintance. For if he found it hard to forget his hatreds, he found it hard also to forget his joys. He is usually more concerned with the spirit and the flavour of a book than with

the work as a finite object. On the whole he prefers plays and novels to essays and descriptions; and his chief interest in Shakespeare, unlike that of Coleridge, lies in the actual men and women of the plays. He had succeeded better as a painter of portraits than of landscapes: his "Lamb" in the National Portrait Gallery shows a rare eye for character. His best book *The Spirit of the Age*, is indeed a series of pen portraits - and we may well regret that it does not contain a "Mr Hazlitt".

Any condemnation which Hazlitt metes to an author is rarely due to lack of knowledge, for about those of whom he knows little he is content to write little. Yet if his systematic study of literature was small, the amount of knowledge he picked up "by the way" in his wide reading was astonishingly great. He took no delight in restricting literary refinement to his own age. Most authors he liked simply because he liked himself; even living poets he saw not as confined to and limited by their own time but as freely walking the ages. Detailed historical study is after all not the task of a critic as a critic, though often a necessary preparation to fit him to become one.

Hazlitt's use - and frequent misuse - of quotations may be defended by considering the type of historical imagination to which his mind found itself suited. He never really wished to employ a quotation for its own sake; indeed he summons one to his aid either as a touchstone or as not belonging to another author but already his own. It is as if the river of his thought sometimes flows through a channel cleanly cut by a thing read long ago. He had little rote memory or capacity for carrying about in his mind knowledge which did not belong to him. "I have the love of power," he says, "but not of property." He enforces his arguments with a passion of remembrance of which quotations are merely a symptom.

Hazlitt's criticism is that of a man interpreting to himself - and only in the second place to an audience - his own experiences, but inspired to do so by stimuli found in his reading. What he says of Rousseau is equally true of himself: "He had the most intense consciousness of his own existence. No object that had once made an impression on him was ever after effaced. Every feeling in his mind became a passion... Hence his enthusiasm and his eloquence, bearing down all opposition...his keen penetration and his strange want of comprehension of mind." By writing his criticism Hazlitt kept himself adapted to the world, transforming the simple data of sense into food for mental life.

At his best Hazlitt comes to know a book as a close acquaintance knows a man; and, as every man becomes a little different in the presence of each separate friend, so Hazlitt is individualized afresh in his treatment of particular books. If the greatness of a critic consists in his ability to represent many men and periods, then Hazlitt was a great critic. "It is not books," says Daniel in his *Defence of Ryme*, "but only that great book of the world and the all overspreading grace of heaven that makes men truly judicial." It was Hazlitt's intelligence, his delicacy and liveliness of sense, his reverence for intuition, his power to introspect and ability to express, that made him a judge of literature as well as life, a writer whose works are still able to delight us and to animate our own powers of judgment.

DE QUINCEY AND THE WESTMORLAND GAZETTE

Richard Downing

INTRODUCTION

De Quincey's interest in Westmorland and the Lake District was due entirely to the residence there of his idol - Wordsworth. In his diary for 1803 the seventeen-year-old De Quincey wrote:

> My imagination flies, like Noah's dove, from the ark of my mind...and finds no place on which to rest the sole of her foot except Coleridge, Wordsworth and Southey.(1)

Of these poets it was finally with Wordsworth that De Quincey opened a correspondence in the same year. De Quincey's letter, full of admiration and reverence, was answered by the poet with an invitation to visit him at Grasmere. Between 1803 and 1807 various letters passed between De Quincey and Wordsworth, but their first meeting did not occur until the young enthusiast had made contact with Coleridge in Somerset and later escorted Sara Coleridge and her children to Grasmere in November 1807.

De Quincey, now an undergraduate at Oxford, passed much of his time with Coleridge in London during 1808 where he also met with Wordsworth again. From November 1808 to February 1809 De Quincey was a guest at Allan Bank, the Wordsworths' new home, where the Coleridge family were frequent visitors. Meetings with Southey, at Keswick, took place during this time and it was in the Lake District that De Quincey first encountered John Wilson ('Christopher North' of *Blackwood's Magazine* fame) who was to remain a life-long friend.(2)

In February 1809 De Quincey returned to London where he was to supervise the printing of Wordsworth's pamphlet (which became book-length) *Concerning the Convention of Cintra*. At the same time the Wordsworths were preparing Dove Cottage for De Quincey's tenancy on his return from London. Wordsworth, anxious to see the pamphlet in print, gave De Quincey permission to make whatever amendments were necessary, but he failed to attend properly to De Quincey's alterations and usually cancelled them. De Quincey, always an ambitious perfectionist, took his 'editing' too far for Wordsworth's temperament to endure, while Wordsworth sent copious additions and corrections, as he endeavoured to keep pace with the latest political news, and as he developed fears of possible libel action. The publishers, Longman, apparently not at all interested in the pamphlet, baulked at the continuous changes to the text and, as a consequence, relations between De Quincey and Wordsworth became strained. Wordsworth's final observation was that De Quincey was "not fitted for smooth and speedy progress in business" (3). However, the Wordsworths, especially Dorothy, were grateful to De Quincey for the trouble he had taken and De Quincey settled permanently into Dove Cottage in November 1809 where, as he later wrote, "the direct object of my own residence at the Lakes was the society of Mr. Wordsworth".

The ten years from 1808 to 1818 saw fluctuations in the De Quincey/ Wordsworth relationship: the basically different temperaments of the two men caused some friction, but De Quincey's procrastinations, his regular use of laudanum and his association with the daughter of an insignificant farmer or 'statesman' (which made him a father) all contributed to an estrangement. Although in a difficult financial situation, De Quincey did marry the 'statesman's' daughter in 1817 and drastically reduced his opium consumption. However, he then entered into a period of four years which saw

his heaviest use of laudanum and it was during this period that relations with Wordsworth were re-established over the matter of the Westmorland election campaign of 1818.

THE WESTMORLAND ELECTION CAMPAIGN OF 1818, AND DE QUINCEY'S APPOINTMENT AS EDITOR OF THE *WESTMORLAND GAZETTE*

The Earl of Lonsdale and his family, the Lowthers, had controlled the political power in Westmorland for a considerable time. Lord Lowther and Colonel Henry C Lowther held the two Westmorland seats in Parliament for the Tory interest. Henry Brougham, political and social reformer and later Lord Chancellor, came to Kendal in January 1818 to launch a vehement challenge from the Whig party. This was the first time that the seat had been contested since 1774. Brougham was regarded by his opponents as a dangerous radical and, while many heated public meetings took place, broadsides and handbills were distributed by both parties.

At the opening of the campaign the only reliable Tory newspaper was the *Cumberland Carlisle Patriot*. The *Westmorland Advertiser and Kendal Chronicle* at first claimed neutrality and did publish articles and letters by Lowther supporters, among them two letters from Wordsworth under the name 'A Friend To Truth' and a good part of what finally became his pamphlet *Two Addresses to the Freeholders of Westmorland*. News that the Lowther cause intended to establish a paper which would carry the Tory view exclusively, led the *Kendal Chronicle* to take the side of Brougham. The first issue of the new Tory paper, the *Westmorland Gazette and Kendal Advertiser*, appeared on 23rd May 1818. De Quincey was not its founding editor but later held that office from July 1818 to November 1819.

Such enthusiasm followed the candidates that, on the occasion of the Lowthers' entry into Kendal on 11th February, when James Brougham was campaigning for his brother, the disturbances and injuries caused upon the meeting of the rival groups became known as the 'Kendal Riots'.

A letter from the prominent anti-slavery champion, Thomas Clarkson, in support of Brougham appeared in the *Chronicle* for 28th March, 1818. It was in answer to this letter that the essay signed by 'Philadelphus' appeared in the *Westmorland Gazette* issue of 30th May. This essay has been attributed to Wordsworth, but in the light of more recent examinations it is now considered to have been by De Quincey, even though he was not yet editor of the *Gazette*. Wordsworth's position as Distributor of Stamps made it necessary for him to disguise whatever contributions he made to the campaign, but he was identified and singled out for criticism and attack by both the *Chronicle* and by Brougham in his speeches. (4)

De Quincey wrote to Wordsworth on 25th March to solicit the poet's help in getting two papers he had written presented to the Lowther Committee. The letter is the first from De Quincey to Wordsworth for nearly five years and there is evidence to show that the Wordsworths saw little of him during that time. The letter is more formal than earlier correspondence and De Quincey is careful to remember Wordsworth's position:

> You, I suppose - from your official station - are not on the Committee; and, for the same reason, you may not choose to interfere so far as to give my paper the weight of your recommendation.

Wordsworth responded favourably and De Quincey furnished him with an analysis of a speech made by Brougham in Kendal on 23rd March. Thus appeared, in mid-April, De Quincey's anonymous pamphlet *Close Comments upon a*

Straggling Speech. Wordsworth sent De Quincey a copy of his *Two Addresses* pamphlet but De Quincey still remained unaware that the poet had already published material on the campaign as he refers to "a very excellent letter" by 'A Friend to Truth' in the *Kendal Chronicle*. De Quincey was, however, very much aware of the fact that much of Brougham's speech was in answer to Wordsworth's other contributions to the *Chronicle* (the earlier parts of *Two Addresses*) and he took upon himself a defence of the poet in his own pamphlet.

Several letters now passed from De Quincey to Wordsworth concerning the political campaign and the *Close Comments* pamphlet. In his letter of 14th April De Quincey makes his first reference to the editorship of the *Gazette*: "Do you know of any reasons which should make it imprudent or unbecoming in me to apply for it?", and he goes on to ask Wordsworth to recommend him as editor to the Tory Committee while carefully pointing out that he had "altered" too much in respect to "punctuality and the power of steady perseverence...ever to offend in that way again".

De Quincey did not get the editorship and this must have been a great disappointment as he needed the money and his wife was about to give birth to his second child. However, the first editor "disgusted" the proprietors "in every way" (5) and De Quincey was asked to take over the post. Wordsworth wrote to Lord Lonsdale:

> The Editorship of the new Kendal Paper has passed into the hands of a most able man; one of my particular Friends; but whether he is fit (I mean on the score of punctuality) for such a service, remains to be proved - *His* attainments and abilities are infinitely above such a situation.

The first issue under De Quincey's editorship appeared on July 18th and the paper continued for a while as a normal provincial party organ. But De Quincey soon began to produce articles on his favourite subjects: metaphysics, political economy and assize reports of murder cases (6). Wordsworth acted as a link between De Quincey and the Lowthers and evidently advised and complained to De Quincey very frequently. De Quincey, however, commented "I so managed it as to preserve my independence"(7)and Wordsworth was active at one point in getting an introduction for De Quincey to the *Quarterly Review* enlisting both Southey and Lord Lonsdale for the purpose. There were frustrations: De Quincey was often "not available" when Wordsworth called at Dove Cottage (these were the years of the *Pains of Opium* (8) and many articles were promised in the paper, then were deferred and sometimes never appeared. For his labours De Quincey received one guinea a week, the rest of his salary of £3 a week being paid to a sub-editor who had to be employed to compile the paper at Kendal. It was De Quincey's residence "at so great a distance from the office" that had led to the exclusion of the latest news from London. This, plus some friction with the proprietors, which threatened his "independence", finally led to De Quincey's resignation in November 1819, sixteen months after taking office.

DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS ON THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Apart from juvenilia contributed to school magazines, De Quincey's translation of an Ode by Horace that won third prize in a competition organised by the 'Juvenile Library' in 1800, and his appendix added to Wordsworth's *Convention of Cintra*, the pamphlet *Close Comments upon a Straggling Speech* is De Quincey's first separate publication.

The pamphlet was not only a reply to a speech by Brougham but an answer to attacks made in that speech on Wordsworth for his articles in the *Kendal Chronicle* and *Carlisle Patriot*. Although Wells attributes De Quincey's enthusiasm for Wordsworth's defence as a motive for the pamphlet, the letters reproduced in Jordan's edition of De Quincey's letters (9) show that De Quincey was not initially sure of the identity of 'A Friend To Truth' or the author of *Two Addresses* as it appeared in the *Chronicle* and *Patriot*; he must, however, have had a good suspicion of their origin.

De Quincey's letters to Wordsworth concerning the election campaign are interesting in the way that they formally re-establish communication, earnestly consider the events of the campaign, and end with an application for the post of editor for the *Gazette*. Perhaps De Quincey *was* better suited to "progress in business" than Wordsworth realised.

The pamphlet is presented as a direct reply to Brougham's speech made at Kendal on 23rd March as reported in the *Kendal Chronicle* and the *Carlisle Patriot* of 28th March. De Quincey, who did not hear the speech, used these reports and noted evidence from Dorothy Wordsworth who was present. It is evident from the extracts in the *Chronicle* (which Wells reprints) that Brougham's speech was an open reply to Wordsworth's articles against him, as Wordsworth is the only one of Lowther's supporters to be attacked by Brougham, who makes the poet's identification clear and confines his argument to points made by Wordsworth and quotes or paraphrases Wordsworth's expressions. As Dorothy commented, "Brougham has been galled by nobody's writings but William's, and they have cut him to the quick."

Brougham accused Wordsworth of being a "hired agent" and he calls Lord Lonsdale his "patron". De Quincey counters by accusing Brougham of being the "cat's paw" of the Whig Lord Thanet. While separating Lord Lonsdale from his "agent" (Wordsworth), Brougham affirmed that the Lowthers, Lonsdale's relatives, were maintained by money from the public purse, and this also applied to Wordsworth as stamp-distributor. Wordsworth had suggested in his newspaper letters that Brougham was supported out of Lord Thanet's purse but De Quincey maintains in his pamphlet that Wordsworth is not answerable as he has not acknowledged authorship of the letters and *Addresses*.

The tone of both Brougham's attack on Wordsworth, and of De Quincey's defence, is both parochial and over-indulgent in personalities, but such was the nature of the entire election campaign. De Quincey admits that "In keeping close to a desultory speech, I have been of necessity desultory", but in true De Quinceyan style he arranges his counter-attack on Brougham into seven marked sections, has four sub-sections to one of them and peppers his pamphlet with footnotes, Latin phrases and quotations from Shakespeare, Milton and Wordsworth. To De Quincey, Brougham is a Jacobin, and he makes a careful definition of such a person:

> A jacobin is understood to be one who arms the passions of the mob and their ignorance against the property of the State, and the government of the State: for his own safety he may stop short of treason, as defined by law; and yet, for public mischief and danger, he may go far beyond the evil of any treason that is punishable and formally known as such. By way of disguise a jacobin will generally affect reverence for the personal head of the State; (accordingly, the King's Arms was carried before Mr. Brougham on his entrance into Kendal); whilst the props on which all supremacy must rest, as the affections of the people

> towards their immediate superiors and the just influence of rank and property, he will labour to undermine.

Nevertheless, De Quincey's pamphlet shows early elements of the humour that was to enliven his writings throughout his life:

> We are told that, during the whole of Mr. Brougham's harangue, which the Kendal Chronicle says lasted an hour, the snow fell without intermission upon that "numerous assemblage of men, women, and *children*," which, according to the same paper, listened to Mr. Brougham "with universal satisfaction". We cannot say that Mr. Brougham's eloquence was "as *soft* as feathered snow that melted as it fell," but in some points, nevertheless, it resembled snow: it fell as fast, and was not at all weightier; and we may hope will have as fugitive a power to annoy the good people of Kendal: in another point it did *not* resemble snow; it was warm - it was even inflammatory; if I were to say incendiary, it will appear from what follows that I should not wrong him.

De Quincey made much of this fact that the "mob" which Brougham addressed consisted of "women and children" and very few "gentlemen" or free-holder voters.

De Quincey made a further contribution to the campaign, before taking up the editorship of the *Gazette*, in the form of an essay entitled *Philadelphus, on Mr. Clarkson's Letter* which appeared in the pages of the *Gazette* issue of 30th May, 1818. Brougham thought that this essay required a sustained counter-attack and the rival *Kendal Chronicle* repeatedly referred to it. Brougham even took steps to sue the proprietors and printer of the *Gazette* for slander, and strenuous efforts were made to identify the author (10). The efforts were not strenuous enough as the author's identity was not conclusively established until Dr F S Janzow's thesis of 1968 (11). Charles Pollitt, a later editor of the *Westmorland Gazette*, attributed the essay to Wordsworth (12) but this was challenged by A L Strout (13) and by J E Wells.

The occasion of the *Philadelphus* essay was the publication, in the *Kendal Chronicle* for 28th March, of a letter by Thomas Clarkson in support of the Brougham cause. Clarkson was the leader of the anti-slave-trade movement and was highly respected in the Lake District where he had lived and where he could count on the support of many Quakers. Clarkson, who was a friend of Wordsworth's, supported Brougham because the latter had often expressed strong anti-slavery feelings.

The *Philadelphus* essay treats Clarkson with some respect as:

> this gentleman, who, though he has written on other subjects with great credit, both to his head and heart, may be fairly pronounced, in the present case, a weak and shallow logician, and a most perplexed and vacillating politician.

Clarkson's letter explained that his earlier 'exclamation', as he termed it, "Brougham must be supported - we cannot do without him in the House of Commons", was one which immediatley made him reflect that he had himself "received personal civilities from the Earl of Lonsdale" and that the said Earl had "also laudably supported the same great Cause" of slave-trade abolition. De Quincey is quick to point out that "Reflection, which ought to have been his guide and pioneer, came at last", and that both Lowthers (Lord Lonsdale's sons) had also supported the abolition. De Quincey then

declares, in no uncertain way, his own attitude:

> The character of the British nation and its Legislature stands on a solid foundation, and depends not on the airy vapid speeches of any popular declaimer. It is an ancient tower which has stood the shock of ages, unmoved by the agitations of the fluttering weather-cocks, which in succession have attracted the gazing eye of an idle, or a busy multitude.

The *Philadelphus* essay is written in a better tone than De Quincey's *Close Comments* but the author soon proffers his abuses, accusing Brougham of having entered Parliament "through the *corrupt influence* of Peers", calling him a "tiresome Egotist" and a "Mobocrat". Having identified 'Revolution' and 'Reform' as "twin-sisters" De Quincey continues:

> That engine the mob, with which we begin in England, never fails in such cases to be brought at some period into action, and when the mad driver Democracy sits upon the dickey, an overturn must soon follow.

The slanderous passage occurs when De Quincey writes "It is indeed reported, but on what grounds I know not, that he (Brougham) was employed on the Continent as a spy" - although ignorant of the "grounds" the report appears to be well worth mentioning. De Quincey's concluding remarks "from a true Briton to his dear Countrymen" are as follows:

> Let us then watch with a jealous, vigilant eye the growth of those insurrectionary symptoms which have made their appearance in this Country, and check them to the utmost of our power: else will the order of things be inverted, and an ignorant faction dictate to the Rulers and Counsellors of State.

Whatever the level of this debate, the participants did not pull their punches and there can be little doubt as to De Quincey's opinion of universal suffrage. The *Philadelphus* essay was attacked by various writers in the *Kendal Chronicle* both before and after the election. A correspondent in the *Westmorland Gazette* itself even criticised *Philadelphus* but later a six-instalment defence appeared under the names *Philadelphus Alter* and then *Alter Ac Idem* but these have not been conclusively attributed to De Quincey's pen.

No doubt the *Philadelphus* essay and the *Close Comments* pamphlet were influential in gaining for De Quincey the *Gazette* editorship which he took up on 11th July 1818. This post was for De Quincey his first introduction to regular journalism and to regular employment. Of his contributions to the *Gazette* we will first follow his writings on the election campaign. The day before De Quincey took office the polls for the Westmorland election closed and a victory for the Lowther cause had been achieved.

DE QUINCEY'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE *WESTMORLAND GAZETTE* DURING HIS EDITORSHIP

None of De Quincey's *Gazette* material was included in the later editions of his writings except for revised versions of his papers *On the Danish Origin of the Lake Country Dialect*. He contributed these to the *Gazette* after he resigned as editor and they were included in Masson's Edinburgh collected edition 1853-1860 (14).

It is possible that De Quincey did, for a time, write most of the paper himself, including the small items of local news. "There is something like evidence...that De Quincey took up his quarters for some time at Kendal,

uniting the functions of editor and sub-editor". Some such evidence is given in De Quincey's apologetic letter to Wordsworth dated 27th September, 1818:

> to this infernal torment it was owing that I made no appearance in the Paper of yesterday. I had during the week compelled myself to make up the Paper; nearly the whole was of my selection: I had even written some articles which would, I trust, have bothered the Broughamites beyond their slender powers of patience to endure. But, when it came to correcting and transcribing these articles on Tuesday night, I was so overcome by pain that I could not do it.

So, De Quincey did at times take full charge of the paper and this extract from his letter indicates some of the strains he worked under and no doubt explains the cause of concern on the part of Wordsworth and the Committee.

De Quincey's first editorial in the *Gazette* for 11th July rejoices in the election result, hopes that the "tumults and outrages", caused by Brougham's supporters, will cease and continues to congratulate the supporters of the Tory interest on their success. De Quincey sees great significance in the election result:

> In every view the contest has been of paramount rank, and by no means to be confounded with an ordinary dispute between Whig and Tory. The root and principle of the contest lay far deeper; it touched upon whatever was cardinal and of foremost concern in the frame and constitution of society. In Westmorland, as on a miniature stage, was rehearsed that great drama which, there is reason to fear, from the pestilent activity of the Jacobinical press, and the ferocious energy of the Jacobinican factions, will one day be acted in larger proportions, upon the great theatre of the Empire.

De Quincey discounts various claims, made by the Whig party, that bribery had influenced the electors, that no one could defeat the Lowther cause because of its "property", that the police who attended the polling had misbehaved, and so on. De Quincey's first editorial showed a much increased desire to identify the *Gazette* entirely with the Lowther cause, as earlier editorials had not been so forthright and enthusiastic.

The next editorial, July 18th, returns to the Brougham challenge:

> In our last week's paper we confined ourselves almost exclusively to such terms of joy and exultation as arose naturally from the triumph which has been so recently obtained.

De Quincey then refers to a comment of Brougham's, reported in the *Kendal Chronicle* for 11th July, and made after the election result was declared: "They must meet me here at every election while I live". Brougham had set up a Whig Association to continue the fight against the Lowthers and De Quincey is concerned by this threat:

> the good cause is triumphant; but we must not allow ourselves to forget that it cannot cease in some degree to be militant so long as the lower classes of the electors shall be under those delusions with respect to principles, and facts, and persons, which in part are incident to the actual complexity of the questions moved by the opposite party, and partly to their apparent complexity when addressed to the ignorance of the uneducated poor.

While the issues involved were complex, De Quincey would have them

considered only by such people as could understand them. He writes that Brougham's Whig Association:

> comes nearer to the compacts of Irish insurgents, than any thing which has yet been witnessed among Englishmen and professing friends of the Constitution.

De Quincey then launches his policy for the future purpose of the *Gazette*:

> this Paper will henceforward call the attention of the public, from time to time, to a dispassionate examination of all those questions in politics and legislation to which the errors above-mentioned chiefly point.

The *Kendal Chronicle* did not let De Quincey's first editorial pass without notice and, in commenting on it, they adopt as fighting a manner as De Quincey had begun in his first appearance:

> which contains the exultations, and reiterates the malicious aspersions of those men who adore the idol of property, and who can see integrity and wisdom in no company but the cringing retinue of wealth.

The *Chronicle* writer does not know that De Quincey wrote the editorial in question, but he does allude to William Wordsworth:

> my present opponent, when poor, hawked jacobinical ware about the country, which turning to little or no account, he chose an assortment of aristocratical merchandise, by which he grew rich.

This no doubt refers to Wordsworth's early interest in the French Revolution and his later position as Distributor of Stamps which was awarded to him by Lord Lonsdale. De Quincey, in reply, complains of the "vituperative appellations" used by the *Chronicle* and he points out that the writer has confused the *Gazette* editor with "a writer to whom he has no pretensions to compare himself" (i.e. Wordsworth) and continues that in mistaking the editorial author all accuracy of the *Chronicle* article "falls to the ground". Adopting a policy that he had not adhered to himself in his writings against Brougham, De Quincey rebukes the *Chronicle* for its concentration on personalities and proposes to himself that:

> He designs never to waste one word upon mere personal controversy, unaccompanied by attempts at argument: he designs this chiefly out of respect for the Public, and to the Proprietors of this Paper; and in some degree also out of self-respect.

The whole nature of this editorial is one of self-defence by the Editor. De Quincey is taking his position very seriously and he reacts strongly to the *Chronicle's* attack even though, or perhaps *because*, it was aimed primarily at Wordsworth.

De Quincey's next contribution on matters concerning the election was in the form of a letter to the editor, signed 'Philophilus'. The subject of this letter is mainly the comments made by Brougham on Wordsworth's participation and writings. Brougham had charged Wordsworth with "over zeal in his patron's cause, and perhaps a little ignorance of worldly matters" and De Quincey had already attacked these speeches of Brougham's in his *Close Comments* pamphlet. Here he specifically defends Wordsworth's position and attacks Brougham who had declaimed "in terms of low and virulent abuse, against the influence of noble patronage, exerted in improving the fortunes of authors, even of acknowledged merit."

De Quincey then points out that Brougham's political opinions "have sympathized with all the possible revolutions of the wheel of his fortune" and he refers to the fact that both Brougham and one of his supporters had received patronage from the Duke of Norfolk: "It has happened again and again to this *dux plebeculae* /leader of the rabble/ to accuse his opponents, falsely, of what he has been really guilty himself". Although he calls Wordsworth an author "of acknowledged merit", De Quincey regarded himself as one of the few Westmorland residents who recognised Wordsworth's achievement in poetry (15) and this letter is typical of his constant desire to defend the poet.

After a slight break for two months the *Gazette* renews the attack on Brougham under the heading *Mr. Orator Ego*. Commenting on the previous week's *Chronicle* reports, De Quincey accuses Brougham of having "at length reached the apex and consummation of vanity, and is now enjoying the beatific vision of rapturous egotism". After commenting on Brougham's abilities as an orator, De Quincey turns to a brief account of the Greek school of 'Egotist' philosophers and then applies the term to Brougham, "an arch-egotist". As the *Chronicle* has failed to report a lengthy speech made by Lord Lowther at a dinner in celebration of the Tory election victory, De Quincey is pleased to assume that Brougham is to be considered the *only* orator in the contest or that the said dinner and speech had never, in fact, taken place.

In the same *Gazette* issue De Quincey contributed another article with the title *Bergen-op-Zoom*, a term he defines as a Cambridge expression meaning "a man whose head was uncommonly inaccessible to truth". This term De Quincey then applies to a writer in the *Chronicle* who had taken him to task concerning his use of the word 'State' in an earlier *Gazette* article. De Quincey, whose semantics are seldom, if ever, at fault, points out that the *Chronicle* writer had referred to the 'Crown' as the 'State' whereas he is happy to point out, with some amusing 'asides', that the 'Crown' is *not* synonymous with the 'State'.

The last of De Quincey's contributions to the *Gazette*, concerning the election issue, appeared a further two months later and dealtwith an attack made by Brougham on the 'Croydon Charities':

> "We have been slow", writes De Quincey, "to notice much of what we have deemed open to animadversion in the public contact, speeches and writings of Mr. Brougham. We feared to be betrayed into what was most confined in local, united with what was most misrepresentable in personal, politics."

Brougham was reported to have called for government inspection of certain schools and charities particularly the Whitgift School and hospital in Croydon, Surrey. De Quincey publishes an abridged letter from the solicitor to the Trustees of the school which accuses Brougham of having false evidence and also of having misrepresented the false evidence, if such a thing is possible. After a survey of the true facts, De Quincey concludes:

> with respect to Mr. Brougham himself our inference is that on this case he has betrayed a characteristic precipitancy of judgement and a rash levity of censure which has long ago, in the opinion of the judicious, disqualified him for the duties of a legislator and a practical statesman.

Thus De Quincey *was* drawn from a matter of some national concern, to a

local issue (Brougham's decision to remain a Westmorland candidate) and finally to a personal attack.

These then make up the articles attributed to De Quincey concerning the election campaign and its aftermath, but the editor continued to write other political articles of a national character. These, as they do not relate to Westmorland beyond their appearance in the *Westmorland Gazette*, will be briefly considered.

A group of articles was concerned with the problem of taxation, and De Quincey (author of *The Logic of Political Economy*,1844) was anxious to offer his readers the advantages of his economic wisdom. Initially, De Quincey had presented an alternative account of economic accusations that the *Chronicle* had reprinted from another source. This source, *The Weekly Intelligencer*, had accused the Royal Family of being a burden, in various ways, upon the British taxpayer. Not only was De Quincey ready to point out errors in the "political philosophy" but also pleased to have the opportunity of defending the monarchy. The *Chronicle* then reprinted De Quincey's essay with a commentary upon it, whereupon De Quincey replied in the *Gazette*. The *Chronicle* later renewed the attack on De Quincey and this too was answered.

Following the series on taxation, De Quincey began an appreciation and defence of the monarchy occasioned by the death of the Queen in 1818. De Quincey felt such a defence necessary as "In general the editors of newspapers are low-bred mercenary adventurers - without manners - without previous education - and apparently without conscience or moral principle".

The *Chronicle* of 19th December published a letter of ridicule directed at De Quincey in his position as editor of the *Gazette*. The general purport of the letter is that much that De Quincey includes in his paper is unintelligible to its readers. The next *Gazette* saw De Quincey's defence which was concluded in the following number.

In mid-January, under the heading *Act of Oblivion* De Quincey takes up a suggestion made by the *Chronicle* that an amnesty be called between the two papers. At one point the proprietors of the *Gazette*, via Wordsworth, had requested De Quincey not to pay so much attention to the *Chronicle*. At times it would have been necessary, for anyone following the exchanges between the two papers, to be reading both. But later in January 1819 De Quincey returned to the *Chronicle's* replies to his essay on monarchy. In August De Quincey launched an attack on Robert Owen's political theory with praises to Ricardo, whose ideas De Quincey supported, plus explanations of the system of land-rent and how it relates to the price of corn (16).

January 1819 saw two articles from De Quincey on Napoleon: in one of these De Quincey translates a letter of Napoleon's to show the Emperor's lack of skill with language. The second article, occasioned by a book on 'inland navigation' in which the *true* spelling of 'Buonaparte's' name is announced, De Quincey uses to comment on Napoleon's poor grammar and spelling, both in English and in French. Also in January De Quincey addresses those of his readers who had been sending him letters for publication: "the chances of being read are in the inverse ratio of the length to which the article extends" a maxim that De Quincey himself might have followed, although his writings are seldom without a lively and often humorous interest. In May De Quincey announced his intention to include in the paper: "1. Statistical tables, British and Continental. 2. Original essays. 3. Selections from literature, especially English. 4. Translations from the best of *German*

Literature and Philosophy", but in June he found it necessary to explain why the first part of his "literary journal" had not appeared. However, in August a paper appeared on *Kant and Herder* and as the *Chronicle* had attacked Kant, in response to De Quincey's expressed admiration for the German, the *Gazette* editor was pleased to point out various errors in their account. September saw an article on *Kant and Dr. Herschel* concerning astronomical matters, and this was followed by a continuation on *The Planet Mars*. Thus the *Gazette* readers were treated to the full gamut of De Quinceyan interests and, as Dr Janzow observes:

> De Quincey of course regarded himself best qualified to serve the higher and more learned ranks of society; to represent and serve the lower ranks, he had his assistant at the press.

The *Gazette*, as part of its intention of opposing Brougham, reported many small incidents of news that would relate to, and be understood by, any person who entertained fears of a revolution in England, e.g.: meetings of weavers in Kendal; universal suffrage meetings in London; the arrest of three Kendal men for making pikes, and so on. As a counter to news that related to "reform", the *Gazette* also printed many news items concerning the church, although it disapproved of the 'reforming' tendencies of certain sects.

What part De Quincey played in the selection and presentation of such items is not known for certain but some characteristic pieces have been identified, for example a footnote concerning a pack of hounds that had slept for twenty-one days after having opium administered to them as a cure for suspected "hydrophobia" - something that would appeal to De Quincey on 'psychological' and 'opium' grounds. Dr Janzow identifies other small pieces, amongst which is this anecdote of De Quincey himself:

> On Thursday night...an accident occurred at the house of Mr. De Quincey in Grasmere, which providentially terminated without injury to any of his family. Between one and two o'clock Mr. De Quincey was sitting up and writing: in a single moment a volume of smoke passed between him and his paper so suddenly as to darken it in one instant as much as if the candles had been extinguished. On looking round to the fire, nothing was at first seen; but in half a minute a great fork of flames, extending to a place about four feet distant, sprung out from a crevice in one side of the grate...The family were thankful that one of their number was sitting up, for within half an inch of the place whence the first flames sprang out, and separated only by the side of a bookcase, stood a collection of books, and the room being strewed on that evening with newspapers and the timbers of the house all old, there was little doubt that in ten minutes the fire would have been inextinguishable in a place so remote from fire engines.

From this, Dr Janzow deduces that the "newspapers" in De Quincey's room were part of his job to 'extract' from; in addition, the large extracts that appeared in the *Gazette* relate often to De Quinceyan areas of interest and frequently have commentaries and notes probably supplied by the editor. Dr Janzow lists some thirty smaller items that show, in one way or another, the hand of De Quincey and especially is this true of the reports of trials "where the evidence is intricate, or perplexed with details" that the editor announced his intention to present. However, we get a glimpse of De Quincey at work deep into the night and it is perhaps characteristic that an interruption is turned into copy for the press.

NOTES

1. *A Diary of Thomas De Quincey: 1803.*Ed. H A Eaton. 1928 p.209.
2. Page, H A. *Early Intercourse of the Wordsworths and De Quincey.* The Century Magazine. Vol.41. April 1891.
3. Jordan, J E. *De Quincey to Wordsworth*: a biography of a relationship: with the letters of Thomas De Quincey to the Wordsworth family. 1963. p.81.
4. Wells, J E. *Wordsworth and De Quincey in Westmorland Politics, 1818.* P.M.L.A. Vol.55. 1940.
5. Japp, A H. *Thomas De Quincey: his life and writings.* 1890. p.153.
6. On all these subjects De Quincey was later to write many essays for the magazines - especially, 'On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts', 1827.
7. Hogg, J. *De Quincey and his Friends.* 1895.
8. 'Pains of Opium', a section in the *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, describing De Quincey's experiences at this time.
9. The various letters relating to this issue are published in Jordan, pp. 304-323.
10. *Philadelphus: a New Essay by De Quincey* by F S Janzow. Costerus. Vol. 9. 1973. p.29.
11. Janzow, F S. *De Quincey enters Journalism*: his contributions to the Westmorland Gazette, 1818-1819. Ph.D thesis, University of Chicago, 1968. I must acknowledge a dependence upon this thesis, as it pioneers the accurate study of De Quincey's 'Gazette' writings and, in addition to a careful identification of De Quincey as author of many articles, it also transcribes them.
12. Pollitt, C. *De Quincey's Editorship of the Westmorland Gazette.* 1890. p.6 and p.33.
13. Strout, A L. *Thomas Clarkson as champion of Brougham in 1818.* Notes and Queries. No.174. p.400.
14. *The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey.* Ed. D Masson. 14 vols. 1896-7.
15. For example, from De Quincey's autobiographical essay 'Oxford' (1835): "Mr Wordsworth's neighbours in Westmorland, who had (generally speaking) a profound contempt for him, used to rebut the testimony of 'Blackwood' by one constant reply - 'Ay, Blackwood praises Wordsworth, but who else praises him?'" Masson. Vol.2. p.60.
16. Subjects which De Quincey wrote upon frequently: 'The Services of Mr. Ricardo', 1824; 'Ricardo Made Easy', 1824; and on the corn-laws: 'The Corn Bill', 1828; 'The Game up with Repeal Action', 1843; 'Dilemmas on the Corn-Law Question', 1839; 'Anti-Corn Law Deputation', 1842; 'Repeal Action', 1843, etc.

BOOK REVIEWS

Kenneth Curry: *Robert Southey: A Reference Guide* (Reference Guides in Literature, ed. Marilyn Gaull) Boston: G K Hall & Co., 1977. xx and 95 pp. including author-subject index and list of 29 Ph.D dissertations on Southey. $12.00

This very useful volume has been needed by students of Southey for some time, and it should prove valuable to many working in the English Romantic Period. Professor Curry's succinct introduction reflects his lifetime knowledge of the criticism of Southey, explains his selectivity in this volume, and suggests books that may be used to advantage with the Reference Guide to writings about Southey.

Arranged chronologically from 1796 through 1975, the Curry list and annotations lead the reader through the interesting history of the review article as well as the critical stances of the writers. Several patterns of judgment can be seen in the criticism of Southey from his own day to the present time. His prose is valued far above his verse, the histories have errors of fact but contain vivid narrative, the biographies are generally given good marks, and the letters are approved almost universally. *The Doctor*, an attempt at fiction published anonymously, has mixed reviews. "The Three Bears" from *The Doctor* became a children's classic, and only in the 20th century have critics suggested sources in folklore.

The beginning student of Southey can go to such guides as Geoffrey Carnall's list in the *New Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* to Ernest Bernbaum's *Guide through the Romantic Movement* (1949), and to Curry's earlier works: the essay on Southey in *English Romantic Poets and Essayists: A Review of Research* (1957, rev. 1966), and to the notes and short biographies of Southey's correspondents in *New Letters*, 2 vols, edited by Curry in 1965, and his checklist of published letters in the *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (1967).This new Reference Guide lists all publication of letters since 1967. The more advanced student will find that this Guide lists everything of importance, but he may supplement it with Lionel Madden's *The Critical Heritage* (1972), John O Hayden's *The Romantic Reviewers 1802-1824* (1969) and W S Ward, *Literary Reviews in British Periodicals 1798-1820* (1974).

Of course, the Guide does not include every assessment of Southey published in almost 180 years. Curry has selected all notices that appeared in the influential *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly Review*, and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* as well as dipping into the less influential periodicals of the 19th century. The emphasis, however, is upon what Curry calls "the posthumous critical and scholarly attention accorded Southey and his works because this area is the one in which the student needs information and guidance." He has listed all full-length articles and books that make "even a modest contribution to Southey scholarship or criticism." Book reviews, except for some review articles, have been omitted.

Professor Curry quotes or paraphrases enough from the articles and books in a few sentences to give the flavor of the criticism. The most laudatory of all reviewers of Southey is his friend Landor who writes in *Fraser's Magazine*, 1850, "Southey could grasp great subjects, and completely master them; Coleridge never attempted it; Wordsworth attempted it, and failed." At the other extreme, Arthur Symons in *The Romantic Movement in English Poetry*, 1909, finds little to praise, for Southey "had no vision of the

world; he came with no new music." He is not a good critic of literature because he confuses virtue with genius. As a man he is irritating because of his "conscious rectitude." Symons does admire the short poems about the grotesque, written with ironical humor, of which the best is "The Battle of Blenheim." Symons concludes that Southey's "talent was pedestrian, and it was his misfortune that he tried to fly." Between the very sympathetic and the highly negative responses to Southey lie many balanced, objective estimates of his work.

One of the most valuable contributions of the Reference Guide is the listing of substantial book-length biographies, editions of Southey's travel journals, annotated editions of works, as well as the new letters of the last 50 years. Not least is the convenience of having all this in one handy volume.

Mary Ellen Priestley

H W Howe: *Greta Hall: Home of Coleridge and Southey*. Edited with revisions by Robert Woof. King's Lynn, Norfolk: Daedalus Press of Stoke Ferry. Illus. 117 pp. British readers: £2.00 plus 30p postage to Mrs R M Abbot, 41 St James Road, Sevenoaks, Kent. American readers: $5.95 incl. postage to Mrs Ursula Baier, RFD 2, Cumberland Center, Maine 04021.

This is the second edition of Harold Howe's little book written in 1943 for the Southey centenary on the house that was home to the Coleridges, the Southeys, and later to the Howes. From 1922 to 1946, the author was headmaster of the Keswick Grammar School, for which Greta Hall serves as a boarding house. Robert Woof, reader in English literature at the University of Newcastle, has edited the text left by Mr Howe at his death in 1975, has made valuable additions in notes, and has, in places, corrected the original.

The result is a delightful portrait of the Keswick house, painted in the words of the two poets, the members of their families, and their visitors. And such visitors they were! William and Dorothy Wordsworth, Charles and Mary Lamb, Walter Scott, P B Shelley, Walter Landor, and William Wilberforce, to start the list. Ten children enlivened Greta Hall; nine of them were born there, and three died there.

The sequence of the chapters follows the protagonists: (1) the Coleridges, (2) the Coleridge Children, (3) STC as Visitor and in Absence. Sara Hutchinson, (4) The Southeys, (5) The Visitors, and an (6) Epilogue - The Curtain Falls, (7) Appendix - The Story of the House: a chronology with illustrations of the floor plan from the younger Sara Coleridge's description.

Intimate, at times gossipy, personal, and packed with the interactions and the day-to-day life of the extended family of Southeys and Coleridges, this account is framed by the house, but it is about the people who lived in it, 1800 to 1843. The reader relives the joys of Coleridge upon finding the house with "What a scene -! Right before me is a great *Camp* of single mountains...and to the left...is the lake of Keswick, with it's Islands & white sails, & glossy Lights of Evening - crowned with green meadows, but the three remaining sides are encircled by the most fantastic mountains..." In 1800 Coleridge, with his wife and three children, had moved in. In 1803 Southey and Edith, having recently lost their first child, came to visit and stayed. And they had seven children there. Mrs Lovell (Mary, sister to Edith and Sara Fricker) was a permanent resident. The maiden Fricker sisters came to visit as did George, their brother. Even a house the size

of Greta Hall could become overcrowded. It was, in fact, called "the Aunt Hill" (pronounced "aunt" as in Devonshire). Southey, later master of the house, eventually gloried in its position, once he became used to the rainfall of the Lake District. He took great pride in his large family, in domesticity, and in his books and study.

The reader will notice the author's bias toward Southey when there are questions of behavior on the part of Coleridge and Southey. The steady worker and provider, the family man, wins out, although in all fairness, weaknesses of Southey are not omitted.

This reader wished for correction of some typographical errors and for fewer shifts in verb tense by the author and fewer misplaced modifiers.

This book is small but big in interest and variety. It should be of particular interest to all visitors to the Lake District in addition to the general reader of the English Romantics as well as the seasoned scholar. This edition is very limited; orders should be sent in now.

Mary Ellen Priestley

THE CHARLES LAMB BIRTHDAY LUNCHEON

At the Birthday Luncheon, held at Simpsons' in the Strand on February 11, 1978, we had the great pleasure this year of hearing our President, Professor Ian Jack, propose the toast to the Immortal Memory of Charles Lamb.

Of some great masterpieces of literature, Professor Jack said, new aspects are revealed each time one reads them, one's own mental development leading to growing understanding: "indeed the hope that one may be coming to understand a little more of the mind of Shakespeare is perhaps not the least of the consolations of growing older". But with Lamb it is another kind of rediscovery. One does not expect to find a different and surprising Elia. It is rather that one looks for something that may sharpen the sense one already has of his quality and his quiddity. On this occasion Professor Jack found it in re-reading one of the less good essays "Modern Gallantry". The tone of the earlier part of this essay disappointed him by its fellowship with that of earlier essayists who, by their preaching, earned such comments as Tonson's on Addison, "I ever thought him a priest in his heart": disappointed because this is just what one does *not* expect of Lamb. "He is on our level, he addresses us as an equal - and *that* (by the way) is one of the greatest compliments we are ever likely to be paid". By contrast, the latter part of the essay is more characteristically Elian, both in its turning towards the past and in its holding up to our admiration a man of no particular note, by worldly standards.

Of the remarkable turning towards the past for inspiration by writers in the early nineteenth century - the past sometimes of the human race, sometimes of a particular nation, sometimes of the individual - we may study varying manifestations in Scott, De Quincey, Wordsworth and Lamb himself. In Lamb it is retroversion to his own childhood and its people and scenes, not only as a reaction to the "day of horrors" in his life, but also because his early experiences in themselves "might have been designed to nurture a mind that would turn as naturally towards the past as a flower turns towards the sun". Lamb's remark in "The Old Benchers of the Inner Temple", "A man would give something to have been born in such

places" is characteristic of his lack of bitterness or self-love, his capacity for generous loyalty and gratitude, well illustrated in that essay. (He has to take on the *persona* of Coleridge before he can bring himself to be critical of Christ's Hospital.) In the old Benchers, as in the clerks of "The South-Sea House", Lamb celebrates people of no worldly importance.

Above all, Lamb valued the underlying humanity in people, whether gifted or not, particularly if spiced with eccentricity. His attitude, like that of Sterne to My Uncle Toby, is the *reverse* of the satirist's. The father of the poet Yeats called Lamb "Shelley's antidote": Lamb would never have fallen into the trap of thinking the world could be set right by changing "systems", he had too much insight into the human heart. In essays "*not* (to tell the truth) altogether innocent of teaching", Lamb was "(with all his faults and weaknesses) a *wise* man", who did not subject his readers to a lecturing he would not have appreciated himself. Instead, he wrote the *Essays of Elia*, which Professor Jack summed up as "not to be placed beside the greatest work of Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, yet a book that is lasting well, and which will continue to find readers so long as the world is populated by human beings who care for their common humanity".

Thanks for the address were given by the Chairman, Dr D G Wilson, who also thanked the chef for the meal and particularly the delicious Trinity College Pudding. The toast to Provincial and Overseas Members was proposed by Mrs Huxtep and the response was given by this year's Crowsley Memorial Lecturer, Dr J E Stevens, Reader in English and Musical History at Magdalene College, Cambridge. Stephen Harrison and Andrew Bing, Grecians of Christ's Hospital, said Grace "before and after meat".

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting was held on 6 May, 1978, at the Mary Ward Centre. The Chairman paid tribute to Miss Park and her great contribution to the Society over the years.

In addition to the usual business, the question of finance was discussed. It was agreed to continue with four Bulletins a year but, in view of inflation, some subscription rates would have to go up next year.

It was decided that the Society's Library should be moved to the Guildhall Library, where it would be in central London and so more accessible to scholars wishing to make use of it. The Librarian had kindly agreed to house it on indefinite loan.

Plans for next year's meetings and for the Birthday Luncheon were discussed and the new programme will be included with the Bulletin as soon as it is finalized.

NEW MEMBERS

Baylor University Library, Serials Dept, Box 6307, Waco, Texas 76706, USA

Mr and Mrs C R Watters, Christ's Hospital, Horsham, Sussex

Periodicals Dept, Carl B Ylvisaker Library, Concordia College, Moorhead MN 56560, USA