

nable to certain laws which I do not acknowledge.

"If I were at Malta, the siege of that illustrious island should have a poem, and a good one too; and you ought to think about it, for of all sieges that ever have been or ever will be, it was the most glorious, and called forth the noblest heroism. Look after some modern Greek books; in particular, the poem from which the Teseide of Boccaccio and the Knight's Tale are derived; if, indeed, it be not a translation from the Italian. Could you lay hand on some of these old books, and on *old* Italian poetry, by selling them at Leigh and Sotheby's you might almost pay your travels.

"More manuscripts of Davis come down to-day. I have run through his *Life of Chatterton*, which is flimsy and worthless. I shall not advise Longman to print it, and shall *warn* the writer to expunge an insult to you and to myself, which is not to be paid for by his praise. We formed a just estimate of the man's moral stamina, most certainly, and as for man-mending, I have no hopes of it. The proverb of the silk purse and the sow's ear comprises my philosophy upon that subject.

"I write rapidly and unthinkingly, to be in time for the post. Why have you not made Lamb declare war upon Mrs. Bare-bald? He should singe her flaxen wig with squibs, and tie crackers to her petticoats till she leaped about like a parched pea for very torture. There is not a man in the world who could so well revenge himself. The *Annual Review* (that is, the first vol.) came down in my parcel to-day. My articles are wickedly misprinted, and, in many instances, made completely nonsensical. If I could write Latin even as I could once, perhaps I should talk to Longman of publishing a collection of the best modern Latin poets: they were *dulli canes* many of them, but a poor fellow who has spent years and years in doing his best to be remembered, does deserve well enough of posterity to be reprinted once in every millenium, and, in fact, there are enough good ones to form a collection of some extent.

"God bless you! prays your old friend and brother,
R. SOUTHEY."

To John Rickman, Esq.

"Keswick, March 30, 1804.

"MY DEAR RICKMAN,

"Turner wrote to me and complained heavily of Scotch criticism, which he seems to feel too much. Such things only provoke me to interject Fool! and Booby! seasoned with the participle damnatory; but as for being vexed at a review—I should as soon be festered by a flea-bite! I sent him back a letter of encouragement and stimulant praise, for these rascals had so affected him as to slacken his industry. I look upon the invention of reviews to be the worst injury which literature has received since its revival. People formerly took up a book to learn from it, and with a feeling of respectful thankfulness to the man who had spent years in

acquiring that knowledge, which he communicates to them in a few hours; now they only look for faults. Every body is a critic; that is, every reader imagines himself superior to the author, and reads his book that he may censure it, not that he may improve by it. * * *

"You are in great measure right about Coleridge; he is worse in body than you seem to believe; but the main cause lies in his own management of himself, or, rather, want of management. His mind is in a perfect St. Vitus's dance—eternal activity without action. At times he feels mortified that he should have done so little; but this feeling never produces any exertion. I will begin to-morrow, he says, and thus he has been all his life-long letting to-day slip. He has had no heavy calamities in life, and so contrives to be miserable about trifles. Poor fellow! there is no one thing which gives me so much pain as the witnessing such a waste of unequalled power. I knew one man resembling him, save that with equal genius he was actually a vicious man.

"If that man had common prudence, he must have been the first man in this country, from his natural and social advantages, and as such, we who knew him and loved him at school used to anticipate him. I learned more from his conversation than any other man ever taught me, because the rain fell when the young plant was just germinating and wanted it most; and I learned more morality by his example than any thing else could have taught me, for I saw him wither away. He is dead and buried at the Cape of Good Hope, and has left behind him nothing to keep his memory alive. A few individuals only remember him with a sort of horror and affection, which just serves to make them melancholy whenever they think of him or mention his name. This will not be the case with Coleridge; the *disjecta membra* will be found if he does not die early; but, having so much to do, so many errors to weed out of the world which he is capable of eradicating, if he does not die without doing his work, it would half break my heart, for no human being has had more talents allotted.

"Wordsworth will do better, and leave behind him a name unique in his way. He will rank among the very first poets, and probably possesses a mass of merits superior to all, except only Shakspeare. This is doing much, yet would he be a happier man if he did more.

"I am made very happy by a re-enforcement of folios from Lisbon, and I shall feel some reluctance in leaving them, and breaking off work to go for London to a more trifling employment; however, my History is to be considered as the capital laid by—the savings of industry; and you would think me entitled to all the praise industry can merit, were you to see the pile of papers. * * * * *

"Vale! R. S."

To Grosvenor C. Bedford, Esq.

"Greta Hall, March 31, 1804.

"DEAR GROSVENOR,

* * * I am bound for London,