

# Letters<sup>1</sup> from Joseph Cottle to William Wordsworth: 1828–1850

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FOR ANY reader or scholar interested in the dawn of English Romantic poetry it will be unnecessary to point out the part played by Joseph Cottle, the Bristol bookseller, whose shop stood first at the corner of High Street and Corn Street, and later in Wine Street. A contemporary of Wordsworth (he too was born in 1770) he not only befriended the group of young poets, but proved far more generous than his London colleagues, offering money to Coleridge and Southey for poetry not yet written. All this is well known.

Apparently, after Wordsworth had settled in the North country, all intercourse between Cottle (who retired from business in 1798 after the transfer to Longman's of his interests in the *Lyrical Ballads*) and the poet of *The Borderers* came to an end for a very long time: thirty years. Wordsworth, of the three lake poets, was the least closely connected with Bristol and Somerset, except for his love for Alfoxden and the country around. The only actual native Bristolian of the group was Southey; Coleridge, a West-countryman, could be considered at one time a Bristolian by adoption; while in Wordsworth's long life, the residence at Racedown and later at Alfoxden was but an episode, even if, at the time, a most important one.

It is well known too that Wordsworth was a slow-working man, not only in poetry, but also in correspondence. As far as it has been possible to ascertain, the following letters have not yet been published and they may illuminate some of Wordsworth's

<sup>1</sup> For permission to print these letters, kept in the archives department of the University Library, Bristol, our thanks are due to the University Library of Bristol and the Librarian, and for help and information, to the Bristol Central Library and the Librarian, to the City Archives of Bristol, to the Bank of England, Bristol Branch, and Threadneedle Street Head Office, and to Mr Bertram R. Davis, of Bristol.

own letters. But very few letters to Cottle, when compared to the dates of those mentioned, appear in E. de Sélincourt's edition of William and Dorothy Wordsworth's letters (1939).

Of Cottle's personality, these letters show little more than is already known. Though severely criticized for his moralizing tone when writing of Coleridge's defects in *Early Recollections* . . . (1837) and the later version, *Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey* (1847), and in spite of the scathing article under his name in the *Dictionary of National Biography*, he has a right to our gratitude; his generous attitude to the memory of the 'Marvellous Boy', Chatterton, and to the poet's sister in distress, brought about the edition, with the joint editorship of Southey, of the first collected works of Chatterton, in 3 volumes in 1803. Later on, after Southey's death, his attachment to the late Laureate's memory should make us overlook his moralizing tone, and think only of his sincere Christian faith.

Letter 1: Bristol July 25th 1828

This letter was answered 27 January 1829. On 25 July 1828 Wordsworth was travelling on the Continent: cf. E. de Sélincourt *Middle Years*, I, 302, n° 822.

Dear Wordsworth

After a mutual epistolary interruption of thirty years (in which our faces would be almost unknown, and our very hand-writing, unrecognized) you may perhaps wonder at receiving a letter from me.<sup>1</sup> I cannot but regret this total silence, and cessation of intercourse, originating, no doubt, in a great measure, from the distant parts of the kingdom where our lots have been cast. However it may be with you, I retain many pleasant associations with your name, and this interruption, is mourned on my part, especially as a subsequent acquaintance would have occurred under more auspicious circumstances, as to pecuniary affairs, (owing to the great goodness of the Almighty!) than those, to which we both of us must, occasionally, direct our retrospective thoughts. No individual has watched the progress of your reputation with more interest than I have done, or rejoiced more sincerely, than myself in beholding its extension and confirmation; and which, it is impossible to doubt, will progressively increase.

<sup>1</sup> It seems the latest previous letter between the two correspondents was that written by Wordsworth to Cottle, 9 May 1798: E. de Sélincourt, VI, 1339, n° 78, acknowledging receipt of books and particularly Charles Lloyd's works, but also mentioning a project: that of the *Lyrical Ballads*.

My object in writing to you, at present, is to state that the third edition of my 'Malvern Hills, and other Poems', has long been out of print, and that I have been laboriously preparing for a new edition.<sup>1</sup> You may suppose that my alterations have been above the ordinary proportion, when I name that I have excluded 3 or 4 hundred lines of Malvern Hills, and added about 700, so that it is nearly equivalent to a new poem. I mean also to include, in this edition, numerous small poems which, at least, will not be inferior to their associates. The thought this moment occurs to me that I will transcribe, in this place, the lines referring to Chatterton, by which you will know my sentiments, and judge the metre.

x x x Such was Brystowa's Bard, that wonderous Boy,  
 First in the rank of Genius, who illumed,  
 With coruscation of mysterious light,  
 Our dark terrene, then, comet-like pass'd on!  
 Oh! had this spirit of ethereal mould  
 Into his heart received the Book of Life!  
 Soften'd, and mellow'd, by the Christian's faith,  
 He had not look'd on all created things —  
 As Fatherless, ocean, and starry heaven;  
 In evil hour, he had not sipp'd the bowl,  
 Which sent him, unprepared, in audit dread,  
 To meet his Judge!

O ye in after times,  
 Who feel, like Chatterton, (over whose grave  
 We bend, in solemn silence) Power of Song —  
 The lofty consciousness, seize not your Lyre,  
 And dash it down, if man withhold, awhile,  
 The tardy recognitions. What is Fame,  
 For which you pant, as the ascendant good?  
 One smile from Heaven, one whisper sweet within,  
 In Wisdom's chasten'd estimate, exceeds —  
 The proudest plaudits Earth ere scatter'd round.  
 Crowd not your views, your aspirations high,  
 Into this point of being! — like a cloud, —  
 A tale — a flower — a vision of the night,  
 So frail and fleeting! Grasp at mightier joys!  
 Stretch your impassioned and inspiring views  
 Beyond the passing finite! Realize —  
 Man, as Immortal. From the Word Divine,  
 Drive your maxims, regulate your aims; —  
 The once enclosure where true peace is found.

<sup>1</sup> Cottle was himself a rather prolific writer; he was preparing the 4th edition in two volumes of 1829, of *Malvern Hills, and other Poems*, the first edition having appeared in 1798, the third in 1802.

But now to the point. It has appeared to me as a suitable proceeding, and indicative of my high value; to prefix to this projected 4th edition the Poems which Coleridge and Southey, unsolicited, respectively addressed to me. It was a combination of very remarkable events which threw you, and other Men of Genius in my way, in the early years of my life, and I derive pleasure from the recollection that I never, I trust, omitted any opportunity of showing them every act of kindness in my power, as they well know, and their letters sufficiently testify. My only concern then arose (as it does at present), from the recollection that imperative and uncontrollable circumstances restrained me from doing one half of that which was in my heart.

It was indeed a very remarkable coincidence that in the few years in which I was a bookseller in Bristol, (for I quitted the profession at the age of twenty eight,)<sup>1</sup> I should have been the means of introducing to the world, by publishing their First Volume of Poems, three such men as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Southey, and that with a liberality towards them which almost exceeded my ability. On this head I can have no self-accusation.<sup>2</sup> My object in troubling you, at that time is, (and I am almost ashamed to name it,) to express the high gratification which I should experience, if you would address to me a few lines, (a sonnet, or any thing else, by Oct<sup>r</sup> next) to be appended to the Volume, with those of Coleridge and Southey (which you doubtless recollect). However brief, it would be equally acceptable, and if your mind should retain, after so long an interruption, any remembrances of friendly acts, on my part, your compliance with this request, will be making me an ample return, and will leave on my mind a permanent sense of obligation. If you however, should feel the least disinclination to comply with this request, be assured I shall not take it amiss, but shall retain through the now contracted residue of my days, a pleasing recollection of W<sup>m</sup> Wordsworth as he was, and which, I have every reason to believe, would be increased if I enjoyed the privilege of knowing him as he is.

I beg to be remembered very kindly to your amiable Lady, and Miss Wordsworth, whose recent visit has very favourable impressed all our minds. Ladies, however intellectual, like a little gossip; at your next Tea-table, therefore, you may name to M<sup>rs</sup> and Miss W, that since they left Bristol, my dear sister Anne has married a valuable man. John Hare Esq<sup>r</sup> of Firfield-House, near Bristol, unconnected with business; a Gentleman (who was a widower), who keeps his Carriage; possesses several thousand a year, and with a residence of his own building,

<sup>1</sup> At least, not before the first edition of the *Lyrical Ballads* had been published in July 1798.

<sup>2</sup> It would not do to charge Cottle with self-importance. In spite of a patronizing attitude, his help proved capital for the publication of Southey's *Joan of Arc*, and Coleridge's poems.

which may be termed a little Paradise.<sup>1</sup> My eldest Sister I am not likely so soon to lose, as some years ago she refused a Gentleman worth an hundred thousand pounds; but this latter swain has been more fortunate, and so the world goes round. I must, however, say, in justice to my incomparable sister Anne, that she is a lovely character, who will adorn any station, and her husband appears to be quite as sensible of this secret as I am. Poets may talk of these mundane affairs, without elation, for the objects which occupy their attention are somewhat [of a] higher order. A good dinner, notwithstanding, is no bad thing, but th (The letter is torn here, and a patch of paper is stuck.) this, and all other temporal blessings, I trust we both know, is [ -ed] ten fold when we behold them in the Hand of the Almighty.

Give my love to your Sister Dorothy, who was always a great favourite of mine; I hope she is well, and believe me to be still,

Dear Wordsworth

Your Old and Sincere Friend

Joseph Cottle

P.S. If my Sisters and Nieces knew of my writing, they would be earnest in sending their kind remembrances to Mrs and Miss Wordsworth.

<sup>1</sup> John Hare: b. 1753? in Taunton; cf. Latimer: *Annals of Bristol in the 19th century*, Bristol, 1897, p. 136. He was an eminent floor-cloth manufacturer, but the Hare family also had an oil and colour factory. He is chiefly remembered as a pillar of Non-Conformity in Bristol. At his own expense, and at a cost of £4,000 he built Zion Chapel in Bedminster, today a district of Bristol, for the use of the Independents or Congregationalists. The foundation stone was laid on 12 May 1829 by Mrs Anne Hare, and the chapel was opened on 15 June 1830. J. Hare was an active member of the congregation, and so was Cottle.

The Rev. M. Casten gives Hare's address as Firfield-House, on the Wells Road (*Independency in Bristol*, Bristol, 1860, pp. 161-71). Firfield House, Upper Knowle was demolished some years ago. But there still is Firfield Street, running from 136 Wells Road to 35 Stanley Hill. Belluton Road, Knowle, stands where Cottle's house and grounds were. Knowle is a residential area on high ground south of the central area of the city.

Cottle's mentioning 'a residence of his own making' seems to contradict the statement of two careful historians of Bristol, J. F. Nicholls and John Taylor (*Bristol past and present*, Bristol, 1882, 3 vols; II, 296 and III, 281) according to whom, 'J. Cottle resided at 1 Carlton Place, Bedminster, until he built Firfield House, Knowle, where he died, June 7th, 1853, aged 84'.

From this letter there is no doubt that Firfield was J. Hare's house, built and owned by him, and all other allusions to Cottle having built the house are incorrect. Cottle must have moved into Firfield in Hare's extreme old age, or after his decease. If the figure quoted by Latimer is accurate, Hare would have married Anne at the age of 75.

Letter 2: Bedminster near Bristol Ap<sup>l</sup> 29. 1837<sup>1</sup>  
 [This letter was endorsed (by Wordsworth?) 'answered Aug<sup>st</sup>. 19th  
 37']

My dear Sir

As a small testimony of respect, will you do me the favour to accept a Copy of my "Early Recollections of Coleridge". In a work of this nature, I could not well help introducing your name, occasionally, but it has ever been with respect, and such as I hope will meet your cordial approbation. Had I possessed the privilege of living in your vicinity, you might, in a personal conference, have favoured me with some useful suggestions, both as to additions and omissions. It may not still be wholly unavailing to receive from you any remarks which might be suggested to your mind, in the perusal. One cannot venture to calculate on a Second Edition, but the demand for such is possible, in which case any observations of yours would be received and remembered with great respect, and attention. I was rather doubtful of the propriety of saying what I did of my dear Brother Amos,<sup>2</sup> (whom I believe you recollect,) & particularly of commenting on Lord Byron. How have these two points operated on your mind? And may I be permitted to ask, also, whether you think I have been too full of my disclosures respecting our friend Coleridge? (Much I have withheld, in deference to his Family.)

I have understood from one source and another, that, in the latter periods of Coleridge's life, he occasionally spoke and wrote of you, in a way, not exactly conformable with what might have been expected from his previous declarations. This information gave me great pain, and marked the want of stability in C's mind, which was, in him, I am afraid, rather a prominent peculiarity; so often is interwoven, the good, and the defective, in the human mind! This circumstance occasioned me to be the more particular in transferring into my pages every reference in Coleridge's letters of an opposite tendency.

<sup>1</sup> There are two letters from Wordsworth to Cottle, written August 1829: 1<sup>o</sup>) from Patterdale: E. de Sélincourt: *Middle Years*, I, 386, n<sup>o</sup> 874, dated 2 August; Wordsworth thanked Cottle for a present of his miscellaneous works, *Malvern Hills*, 4th ed. 1829. - 2<sup>o</sup>) from Lowther Castle, 7 August, given in: Cornell Studies in English, vol. xxxii, *Some Letters of the Wordsworth Family*, edited by L. N. Broughton, Ithaca, New York, Cornell University Press, 1942, pp. 66-7. The postmark shows: Penrith, Aug. 7th, 1829, directed: Jos. Cottle Esq. Bristol Marshall.

<sup>2</sup> Amos Simon Cottle (1768-1800), whose only work was a long poem: *Icelandic Poetry, or the Edda of Saemund translated into English Verse*, by A.S.C. of Magdalen College, Cambridge. The copy in Bristol Library is dated 1 Nov. 1797. To this 'translation' Southey wrote a prefatory poem. He reviewed it in the *Critical Review*, 2nd ser. Jan. 1798, xxii, 24-8. Compare the satirical verse on the two brothers by Byron in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, 385-410. Compare too E. de Sélincourt, op. cit., I, 174, n<sup>o</sup> 70, 13 Dec. 1797: '... I received from the hands of Coleridge sometimes a volume of Icelandic poetry translated by your brother ...', Wordsworth to Cottle.

Perhaps it is not unreasonable to suppose, that, in the perusal of the enclosed volumes, some little interest may be excited in your mind, by the notice of scenes, and a recurrence to events, so distant, if not half forgotten by you. This effect must still more vividly be produced in my own mind. Life sometimes appears to me a tumultuous dream, in which few of us are broad awake. I think if we were, our thoughts would be more steadfastly directed to the abiding state that awaits us, and, in the same proportion, be diverted from that which every thing in and around, reminds us of shortness, and instability. You and I are rapidly advancing in life. It becomes us to look well at our foundations, so that the hopes and expectations we fondly cherish, may all be realized. There is no happiness in the state about to be unfolded, which I seek for myself; a participation in which, I do not equally desire for my friends. In a very little time, Wealth, and Fame, however great, will vanish before the only grand question, whether or not we are Christians! A hint of this kind, from a friend, is sometimes salutary, & will I hope be pardoned.

I hope your Lady is well, and that your amiable Daughter is now restored to health. Should they or you again visit these parts, our house, (now in the neighbourhood of Bristol) will offer a hospitable reception; and it is no vain compliment when I say, my own heart would bound at the sight of you once more. With every kind wish,

I am

My dear Sir

Your old and affectionate Friend

Joseph Cottle.

P.S. I have been deeply affected to hear of your dear Sister Dorothy. If she still should remember me; give my kind love to her. In the years that are passed, she was a great favourite of mine. May God bless her!  
Bedminster April 29th 1837.<sup>1</sup>

My Sister begs her kind remembrance to Mrs and Miss Wordsworth.

Letter 3:

Firfield House, March 1844<sup>2</sup>

My dear Sir

I have, for some time past, wished to let you know a little of our doing at Bristol. It had long appeared to me a debt due from Bristol

<sup>1</sup> This indication shows that Cottle was living at Firfield House, but compare letter 3, page 92, note 1 below.

<sup>2</sup> It seems there was no answer from Wordsworth's part to letter 2. But he wrote to Cottle on 26 April 1839; he was in Bristol, but could not meet Cottle: E. de Selincourt, *op. cit.*, II, 973, n<sup>o</sup> 1293, and 24 November 1839, after the publication of Cottle's treatise against Soccanism: II, 1186, n<sup>o</sup> 1506.

to her illustrious Citizen our late friend Southey,<sup>1</sup> to distinguish his memory by some permanent testimony of respect. I anxiously waited for some leading man to take a prominent interest in promoting such an object, in which I should have become a hearty auxiliary.

I waited but in vain. All was praise, but nothing doing. At length it appeared to me, an incumbent duty, as the oldest of Southey's Friends, to emerge from the privacy in which I delighted; and to make an effort, I may say, to rescue Bristol from the disgrace in neglecting to honour the greatest Genius she had produced, with the one exception of Chatterton. It appeared to me that the most lasting memorial would be, a handsome Monument in our Cathedral.

My resolution was at once fixed, with a determination that if I might not follow, I would lead. But now the grand consideration was, to proceed in the best way. — Many years ago I remembered to have projected a Subscription for placing a Monument to Chatterton in the Bristol Cathedral; and as a preliminary step, I wrote to the then Dean for his permission. He replied by saying, The circumstance of C's death would be considered as an insuperable objection "I now wrote to the present Dean (Dr Lamb) asking his concurrence in the measure, accompanied with a solicitation for his Subscription; for a Dean, at the head of the List, would carry weight. The subscription he politely declined, but (what was of more consequence) he suggested that the Dean and Chapter might remit the Cathedral Fees, and at the next convocation he would propose it. This was the first step in the ladder. — I then thought according to the rule of proportion, if a Dean at the head of the List was a good thing, a Bishop would still be better.

(I should mention, that wherever I applied, I sent a Copy of my 'Early Recollections': generally in some such form as the following.)

'Sir

Some Friends of the late Laureat, Dr Robert Southey, are desirous of marking the sense they entertain of his worth and genius, by having erected to his memory, in the Cathedral Church of Bristol (his native City) a Monument, ornamental to that Edifice, and worthy of the Poet's name. I take the liberty of conveying to you this information, and beg to express a hope that you will allow your name to appear in the List of Noblemen and Gentlemen who patronize the undertaking.—(other things added according to circumstances).

From &c &c . . . J.C.'

The Books accounted for my interference, and generally secured, a compliance and a polite reply. The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, wished success to the undertaking, and sent 5 £.<sup>2</sup> This I immediately

<sup>1</sup> Southey died 21 March 1843.

<sup>2</sup> The Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol was the Rt Rev. James Henry Monk (1836-56).



sent to the Bristol Branch Bank of England, requesting that an Account might be opened in the name of the 'Committee for Southey's Monument'. I had not yet nominated the Committee, but this could be done when the business was a little more advanced.<sup>1</sup>

I now began to look up, and remembered that the Arch Bishop (*sic*) of Canter<sup>y</sup> was a friend of Southey. I wrote to him.<sup>2</sup> He politely declined, but having made a commencement, I was determined to proceed thro' thick and thin, for I should have despised myself if I could not have made some sacrifices to do honour to the memory of a friend of more than forty years' standing, who was always singularly kind to me, and considering his rank in the Literary World, it evidenced the goodness of his heart; which none who really knew Southey, like you and me, could ever doubt.

I now wrote to Sir Robert Peel. — He considered the affair as 'local', but he might subscribe 'hereafter'. I may as well tell you to whom else I wrote. To my Brother Robert 5 £. To Lord Brougham. A civil letter returned, concluding thus, 'I will subscribe to the Monument of my old Friend Southey'. (No sum named) — Wrote to Longmans<sup>3</sup> — Nil (They had subscribed 5 £ for a Tablet in the North, and to which I should have sent 5 £, but for my own affair) — Wrote to Lord Jeffrey — £ 10, thus speaking of Southey — 'He was one of the best Writers, and most excellent and amiable men of our generation'.<sup>4</sup> Wrote to J. S. Harford of Blaze Castle 5 £ — Wrote to Sir T. D. Ackland (no notice) — Wrote to the Duke of Wellington (no notice) — Wrote to the Queen (had too many applications) — Wrote to the Hon. C. W. W. Wynn.<sup>5</sup> (He and some friends were going to place a Bust of S. in Westminster Abbey (Good!) if possible. If they did not succeed 'all their weight should be transferred to the Bristol object'.) — Wrote to

<sup>1</sup> From the records of the Bank of England, Bristol Branch, Cottle opened an account with this branch on 16 January 1833. It was last worked on 3 June 1853, four days before his death. There is no evidence to suggest that it had any connection with the Southey Monument. The records kept at the Head Office, London, unfortunately have a gap in the series of the Bristol branch ledgers for the period in which the account was opened to 1 July 1844, and it is therefore impossible to check what moneys collected from individuals and paid in by Cottle would be credited. The address given by Cottle when opening the account was 7 Dighton Street, Bristol.

<sup>2</sup> The Archbishop of Canterbury was William Howley (1828-48).

<sup>3</sup> The famous publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Lord Jeffrey: as Francis Jeffrey (1773-1850) is best remembered as the founder, with Sydney Smith, of the *Edinburgh Review*, as its editor until 1829. This gift was an outstanding instance of generosity, seeing that Jeffrey was always inimical to Southey's politics, and never kind to the Lake school. Compare Byron's postscript to *English Bards*: '... (the) great anthropophagus, Jeffrey; but what else was to be done with him and his dirty pack, who feed by "lying and slandering" and slake their thirst by "cvil speaking"? ...' This gift of money reveals Jeffrey as an admirer of the man and the poet, a thing not generally known, and in itself a remarkable tribute to the beauty of Southey's character.

<sup>5</sup> An intimate friend of Southey's, whose name is often to be found in the poet's correspondence.

the R<sup>t</sup> Hon. J. W. Croker, (much of the same reply — Wrote to Sir R. H. Ingles Bt 2 £. — Wrote to Mr Gutch — 2.2.0 — Wrote to Mr G. B. Fripp, 5 £. — Wrote to Dr Pritchards, 5 £. — Wrote to W. L. Bowles, (no notice) — Wrote to Ja<sup>s</sup> Montgomery (no notice) — Wrote to Sam Rogers 5 £. — Wrote to W. S. Landor, 20 £. — Wrote to our Member H. Berkeley (no notice) — Wrote to our other member, Mr Miles 5 £. — Wrote to E. H. Baily, 20 £.<sup>1</sup> — Wrote to Sir W. Milman Bart<sup>t</sup> (no time for an answer) — Wrote to Rev<sup>d</sup> J. Eagles — 1-1-0 — Wrote to C. H. Standert, (no time for an answer) — Wrote to Sir C. A. Elton Bart 5 £. The principal effort, however, must be made in Bristol; and as the Machine is fairly set going, I have now thought it prudent to call to my aid, two or three respectable friends, who with myself will form a Subcommittee, and I trust that we shall carry on the business to a successful issue.

Baily is a Bristol man, and, as you know an eminent sculptor. It was natural that I should apply to him. I requested him to send a Drawing of a Monument for Southey, such as he thought suitable. This he promised to do, and two mornings ago, the Case, containing the Drawing arrived. I had had suggested to him, to introduce a Bust of Southey, in Basso Relievo (taken from that fine Likeness, in my 'Recollections'.) — I opened the case — and when I saw the Monument, and Southey's Likeness, and his name upon it! the tear gushed into my eye, and the incidents of half a century, joyous and sorrowful, came over me like a Dream. — What a bubble is life, at longest, & best! — But the Christian has a hope beyond!

I should mention that some weeks ago, I sent a Vol. of Southey's Letters to Dr H. Southey. Yesterday he returned them, saying, when the Editor was fixed on, he would borrow it of me again. He said 'I rejoice to hear of the proposed Monument. But one part of his letter gave very acute pain. He spoke of 'such dissensions in my Brother's Family'. — Is it possible that this should be! — If it were not for my infirmity, I would go up to the North on a mission of peace, to see whether they could not be brought to a right mind. What is it all about? Could you relieve my anxiety? And especially cannot you, with your powerful influence, do something to harmonize discordant spirits?

<sup>1</sup> Francis Fitzhardinge Berkeley (1794-1870), 4th son of Frederick Augustus, 5th earl of Berkeley. Followed three of his brothers to Parliament in August 1837. Returned at the next general election of June 1841, was for 32 years one of the M.P.s for Bristol. In the course of his parliamentary life, he endeavoured for 20 years to bring in a bill for the cause of ballot. Philip William Skinner Miles (1816-81) was a member from a prominent banking family. Was an M.P. for Bristol from 1837 when his father was the retiring member, until 1852.

Edward Hodge Baily (1787-1867) was born in Bristol, where his father was a carver for figure-heads of ships. Was the pupil of Flaxman in 1807. In 1821 was elected a full member of the Royal Academy. His bust of Southey, from this design, is now one of the treasures of Bristol Cathedral.

On concluding this hasty letter I am going to address 'The Right Worshipful, the Mayor of Bristol', to prevail on him, if possible to head the Bristol list of Subscribers.<sup>1</sup>

With best respects to Mrs W. Your good Sister, & your amiable Daughter, I am

My dear Sir,

Yours, with every kind feeling

Joseph Cottle

Wm Wordsworth Esq<sup>r</sup>

P.S. Sunday last I was overturned in my Sister's carriage. . . .<sup>2,3</sup>

Letter 4: 2 April 1846: with the poem *The Weary Pilgrim*, published at the end of *Reminiscences*.

This letter is of no interest, being only made up of advice on the best way to rub off a coat of varnish from small paintings W. had from Sir George Beaumont. But it states that J.C. made his own varnish as a pastime: '. . . I generally go down to Bedminster, where my apparatus is, for two or three hours, once a week . . .' This tends to prove that Cottle did not always reside at Firfield, this place being his sister's.

Letter 5:

Firfield House, April 24. 1847

My dear Sir,

It would have given me great pleasure to see you, when you were recently in this neighbourhood, but I learned from Mr Peace that your time was restricted.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps, when you next come into this vicinity I may hope for the happiness of seeing you, but, at our time of life, we are birds of passage, and may next meet in a better world, but, with the hope of a Christian, that prospect is animating rather than terrible.

My object in now addressing you, is to say, that the printing of my 'Reminiscences of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, & Robert Southey' will be completed in about a fortnight. I have no interest in the sale. Unsolicited on my part, a Publisher applied to me to reprint my 'Early Recollections', and offered to take the whole impression. I have

<sup>1</sup> William Lewton Clarke was elected Mayor November 1843; R. J. P. King was elected Mayor November 1844.

<sup>2</sup> He continues to describe a coach accident from which he escaped unhurt 'musing on my odd and unexpected position'. Wordsworth experienced the same trouble nearly at the same age: compare his long letter to Lady Frederick Bentick, v, 1052, n<sup>o</sup> 1369, 16.11. 1840: his coach was overturned, about three miles beyond Keswick

<sup>3</sup> Wordsworth wrote next to Cottle: E. de S.: II, 1266, n<sup>o</sup> 1288: 6. 12. 1845, after the publication of Cottle's *Heresiarch Church of Rome*. on the Ambleside road.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Peace was the City Librarian. He already held this post when Wordsworth wrote to Cottle on 26 April 1839.

expunged much, & added more, particularly, Coleridge's correspondence with Thomas & Josiah Wedgwood. I was happy to notice, in one of the letters, a noble instance of generosity on your part. The work will be comprised in one thick volume, crown 8<sup>vo</sup>.<sup>1</sup>

I am at a loss to know the best way of transmitting you a Copy. You may be able to inform me. — It appears to me that this would be the most suitable medium. Who is your nearest Bookseller? He must have a London Agent, from whom he receives his weekly parcels. If you could furnish me with these particulars, I will direct the London Publishers to send you one of the earliest copies.

I have included a few of Southey's letters; generally such as related to the work. I am sorry your Friend concerning whom you wrote to me, some years ago, did not undertake the Biography of Southey; but health frustrates many a laudable plan.

When I have your Bookseller's London Agent, I shall not fail to direct the conveyance to Rydal Mount. — The additions to my Memoirs you will read with interest. I hope with approbation.

With kind remembrance to Mrs W., & your dear Sister, and best wishes to yourself, I am My dear Sir

Your affectionate old Friend

Joseph Cottle

W<sup>m</sup> Wordsworth Esq<sup>r</sup>

P.S. If your Son, or Daughter would be pleased to accept a 2<sup>d</sup> Copy, I shall feel pleasure in sending it.

You will be sorry to learn that my three Trials, arising out of the 'Early Recollections' occasioned a loss of nearly a thousand pounds! Judge Maule was exceedingly and unusually hostile; but it has furnished me with an opportunity of forgiveness.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Compare Preface to the *Reminiscences*, reprinted 1970 by Lime Tree Bower Press, and by Gregg; the preface is dated Bristol, 20 April 1847.

<sup>2</sup> The three trials were all to do with an action for libel brought against Cottle by the 'drunken and worthless servant of Hannah More, who was accused of what everybody knew to be true, but could not be legally proved': that he had plundered his mistress. Compare Henry Crabb Robinson: *On Books and their Writers*, ed. Edith J. Morley, 1938, 3 vols, II, 503 under 29 August 1836, this date being probably erroneous.

The grounds of the action were Cottle's strictures on the conduct of H. More's servants, which he printed in *Early Recollections*, 1837, 2 vols; compare I, 83-95. Therefore Crabb Robinson's date should be 1837, the libel action probably following the publication.

Crabb Robinson quotes Baron James Parke as having tried the case. As Cottle mentions Mr Justice Maule, it may be that either Crabb Robinson was mistaken, or that different judges tried the 'three trials', in which cases, two of them would have been appeals.

In William Roberts's *Memoirs of Hannah More* (2 ed., 4 vols, 1839) we can find allusions to the servants' misbehaviour but in terms of 'waste and misconduct'; Mrs More herself in a letter only complained: 'the shocking conduct of the people below, it seems, has been long the subject of discourse with the whole neighbourhood': IV, 318.

Letter 6:

July 19. 1847

My dear Sir

The day before yesterday I was reading, with deep interest, your dear Daughter's Portuguese narrative,<sup>1</sup> and from the loveliness of the narrative, indulged the hope that a warmer climate, with the blessing of the Almighty, had restored her health; but yesterday I read, in our Bristol paper, that Mrs Quillinan was dead!<sup>2</sup>

To lose a Daughter, and an only Daughter, and such a Daughter, must have afflicted you with a poignancy, of which I can but imperfectly conceive. But how aggravated would be the affliction, unsustained by the hope of the Christian. You had derived, I doubt not, in this inroad on your happiness, a solid consolation, from remembering Him who is the 'Resurrection and the Life'. You and I are verging fast on 'the four score years', which is the boundary of man's hope, and that not unattended with 'labour and sorrow', but what a privilege is ours, who believe that Christ 'died and rose again', and that he has prepared 'Mansions' for those who make him their refuge.<sup>3,4</sup>

I have some cause for thankfulness to a good Providence, but many of Earth's choicest blessings have been showered on you, yet the hope that extends beyond is worth it all. It is the setting sun with us, and night is hastening, but the morning of a brighter day is hastening also which will have neither cloud nor termination. Without this assurance, the death of those whom we tenderly loved, would come with a crushing weight, but with the confidence of soon meeting them, where parting and imperfection will be unknown, cheers my heart, and I trust equally consoles yours.

I refer now to a humbler subject. Some weeks ago, I addressed a letter to you, stating that I had published 'Reminiscences of Coleridge and Southey', and asking you to inform me, who your Booksellers Agent was in London, and thro' this medium, I might have the pleasure of sending you a Copy. This must have reached you at a Time

<sup>1</sup> *A Journal of a few months' Residence in Portugal and Glimpses of the South of Spain*, 1847, 2 vols, published anonymously by Ed. Moxon, then the printer of Wordsworth's works.

<sup>2</sup> Dora Wordsworth married Edward Quillinan on 11 May 1841 in Bath, but her marriage is mentioned in letter n° 1325, vi, 1003. For various motives, Wordsworth was very long in accepting the idea of Dora's marrying Quillinan. Wordsworth's daughter obviously did not enjoy a good state of health; compare vi, n° 1006, p. 723: to R. Jones: 'a consequent weakness has superinduced a spinal complaint'. Then her state of health was a succession of improvements and invalid periods until she died 9 July 1847.

<sup>3</sup> Biblical quotations: Authorized version: Psalm, 90. 10: The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength *they be* fourscore years, yet *is* their strength labour and sorrow . . .

Christ died and rose again: I. Thessalonians, 4. 14.

Resurrections: St John, 11, 25; Mansions: St John, 14. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Compare with Wordsworth's own terms of condolence to Lord Mounteagle on the loss of his wife, 30.12.1839: v, 991, n° 1313.

of great parental anxiety, and may have escaped your Recollection. If you should now wish to receive a copy, & will favour me with the above preliminary information, I shall be gratified by this slight testimony of respect to an old, and highly esteemed friend, who is now the solitary remainder of those who were prized in early life!

I might mention, as an explanation due to you, that four years ago you wrote to me, stating that Mr Taylor<sup>1</sup> was about to compile a Memoir of Southey, & requesting the one of his letters to me. This, in my letter to Mr T. I instantly promised, rejoicing that one so competent was about to become his Biographer. Subsequently I received a letter from him, stating that, on account of his health, he must decline the undertaking. I still considered my promise equally extending to any other Individual who might be nominated by the Family for that Office, but I have waited year after year, and have heard from no one. This being the case, and having been applied to, by a Publisher, to reprint my 'Recollections of Coleridge', I thought myself justified, without any violation of compact, to insert a few of Southey's letters, without trenching on that Biographical Memoir, which, it is quite time some suitable person should undertake. Do you think I have done wrong? — I wish you had lived nearer. I should then have consulted you on many points. As it was, I stood alone.

Allow me to congratulate you on your fine Cambridge Ode. It is a splendid composition; the subjects diversified, and delicately touched. Amongst other points that excited my admiration was your courageous avowal of Protestant Principles. But with you personally, how ungenial with such a theme must have been the state of your mind! A beloved, & lovely Daughter at the point of Death! A stern resolution sustaining the will, whilst the heart was melting with a Father's sympathies.

May the Almighty bless and support you, and dear Mrs Wordsworth under this heavy trial. My dear Sister, Mrs Hare, feels deeply, with myself, for you and Mrs W. but if it should urge you, with more zeal, to look beyond the low horizon of this world, the result will be blessed. Believe me to be

My dear Sir

Your old and affectionate friend

Joseph Cottle

W<sup>m</sup> Wordsworth Esq<sup>r</sup>

P.S. Will you convey my kind remembrance to your good sister Dorothy. — It is now about fifty years since you read me your 'Lyrical Ballads' in M.S. at Alfoxden!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mr Taylor should be Henry (later Sir Henry) Taylor (1800–86), a friend of Southey's age, and a distinguished civil servant, poet, essayist.

<sup>2</sup> Cottle never had an exact memory for dates, and *Early Recollections*, and *Reminiscences* are sad examples of it. But here, he seems to have faithfully remembered the approximate date of the then two young poets' plans; compare Wordsworth to Cottle, vi, 1339/40, n<sup>o</sup> 78, 9 May 1798.

Letter 7:

Firfield House, near Bristol March 25. 1848

My dear Sir,

You saw my first Poem, 'Malvern Hills', published fifty years ago, and I here enclose my last, recently written which, in every sense, will be my last; for certainly another stanza will never proceed from my pen. I am hardly convinced that it accords with my advanced age to indulge in this slight excursion into the region of Fable, nor should I so have done, had not the assurance prevailed, that it enforced a sound Moral.

You may remember that Cowper, in one of his letters, states, that while he was meditating the Writing of 'John Gilpin', he lay awake the night laughing, as one incident after another suggested itself to his imagination.<sup>1</sup> My case is somewhat similar as to the interest excited, but my nocturnal ruminations were not connected with humour, but rather with earnest, though somewhat amusing thoughts; when, in this exercise, the night waned, unconsciously away.

I suspect you will pronounce the subject of my 'Wizard, or Wishing Cured', a very foolish one, in which sentiment I am much inclined to concur; but in the chequered state of the human mind, and in some moods, lively romance is more acceptable than dull sense. But a little of the Advocate's pliability might suggest some plausible reasons in justification of my said Poem. In the first place, there may be in it an occult meaning, which, haply, thoughtful Readers may detect. You will please also to be aware, that although my 'Wizard' belongs, as it is commonly supposed, to a rather disputable order, yet, I am happy to say, he is not a black, but a white Wizard, and that you know makes a prodigious difference!

To be sure he talks rather more soberly than might have been expected in one of his proscribed class, (and so did one of old, of the name of Balaam, who, tho' a bad man, was constrained to say some good things) but there is a secret in the business. Without wishing ungenerously to diminish the modicum of praise to this proficient in the 'White Art', the fact is, I prompted the fellow, but of this the World is to know nothing, or to forget; meaning by 'the world', you, myself, two or three others. It must be confessed also that this Wizard of mine is to be found in the possession of some rather extra mundane qualities, but you may take my word for it, he came honestly by them, although, by what means, I have no time, just at this moment, to explain.

But enough of this balderdash. — I hope you continue in your usual good state of health; the comfortable possession of which, possessed by myself, demands from me gratitude to the Almighty;

<sup>1</sup> William Cowper (1731-1800), *The Diverting History of John Gilpin*, written October 1782, published anonymously in the *Public Advertiser*, 14 November 1782.

especially as I am disabled from using exercise, not having been able, for some years past, even to walk out on my Sister's lawn. This has arisen, as you know out of a Gig accident in early life, when my ancles were dislocated, the effects of which, (as is usual) increases with age. At present, I never put my foot to the ground without feeling pain, more or less; sometimes acute; but, from evil, in some form, few are exempt, and, while possessing so many alleviations it is profitable to consider, how much more severely many are exercised: — and it ill becomes those to complain who have nearly passed over the bridge, or a hilly and rough road, who see something better, in a fine campaign country before. The disaster alluded to, throws me largely on my own resources, and deprives me of many social and other advantages, but an old Man has no right to repine, who can eat, drink, and sleep well whose sight and hearing are good; & who is a stranger to Gout, Indigestion, or any known malady. To complain therefore of one providential evil, out of Humanity's dark catalogue, would be monotonous. I cannot doubt but that the bodily evils, to which some are subject, arise, often at least, less from the inflictions of Nature, than their own indiscretion. This inference is reasonably entertained by one, who (as secondary causes) ascribes his own present state of health to tolerable equanimity of mind, temperance, early rising, and the luxury of cold water. I say 'present', for it would be delusion not to know that I am standing on the verge of life, yet the hope of the Christian converts, in one sense, the most gloomy of prospects into a source of joy! I trust this feeling is entertained by you, with more justice than by myself, and in a higher degree.

I am quite ashamed of this egotism, into which I have inconsiderably been led; and entertaining every good wish toward you, for Time and Eternity,

I am My dear Sir (with best respects to M<sup>rs</sup> W)

Your faithful old Friend

Joseph Cottle

W<sup>m</sup> Wordsworth Esq<sup>r</sup>.

Letter 8:

Firfield House June 11. 1850

My dear Madam,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your obliging, and, at the same time, melancholy letter. On my first beholding the announcement of my old friend in the paper, it paralyzed me for some time; uttering with a sigh, Now the last of my early friends is gone!<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Wordsworth died 23 April 1850. By early friends, Cottle means those he knew in Bristol: Robert Lovell, the Quaker who died at an early age, 1799, and who was instrumental in introducing Cottle to Southey; thus did Cottle make afterwards Coleridge's and Wordsworth's acquaintance. Lovell dead, Coleridge followed in 1834, Southey in 1843, and Cottle was to outlive Wordsworth by three years.



Altho' arrived at a good old age, yet he appeared so hearty, was so temperate, and active, that, according to human appearances, he seemed likely to survive myself (who am a little his senior) at least ten years, but the Almighty ordained it otherwise. I must soon follow him, and it is the privilege of Christians to anticipate a meeting under infinitely better conditions than this world can furnish. In that hope, I doubt not, dear Madam, but you participate; and every friend, or beloved relative that precedes us, only lessens our attachment to this World, and confers attractions on the next.

I should have returned an immediate answer to your kind letter but I was on the point of publishing some Remarks on the Papacy, a subject on which my late valued friend and myself were perfectly agreed. It is hardly necessary to remark, the additional weight which will be given to my own sentiments by the concurrence of one whose opinions command so much deference. 'Ælfred' is not yet ready,<sup>1</sup> but as the above Remarks are, I send you a Copy, by the same Post as this Note; a transmission which I had fondly anticipated, towards one, whose memory will ever be cherished by me with respect and affection.

I have not the pleasure of knowing either of your Sons (to whom I beg my respectful compliments) but if either they, or yourself, should ever visit these parts, it would afford me peculiar pleasure to give you, or them, a hearty welcome. — I am, dear Madam, with great sympathy, and respect, most faithfully yours.

Joseph Cottle

To Mrs Wordsworth.

P.S. My Sister, Mrs Hare, begs her very kind condolence, and respects.

## THE WIZARD, OR WISHING CURED

(Prolegomina)

Is it a noon-day random dream,  
Or else a vision of the night?  
Whatever jarring Casuists deem  
It must be wrong, or must be right.  
For once, let Reason yield her sway,  
And Fancy hold her holyday.

In Albion's matchless Isle was born,  
(No matter where) a lovely Mary:  
Her cheek was like the blush of morn;

<sup>1</sup> *Ælfred, an epic poem* was published 1801, reprinted 1802 and again in 1814.

Lightsome and gay as fawn or fairy:  
 Yet still she was not free from ailing; —  
 She had one small, but common failing.

To Wish, and Wish was her delight, —  
 More changeful than the Shepherd's Fold:  
 The weather never suited quite;  
 It was too hot, or else too cold:  
 And then, some distant object pleased her,  
 But what was present always teased her.

It chanced that, on a Summer's morn,  
 She, musing, stray'd o'er neighbouring mountain;  
 And as she sped through braks and thorn,  
 She look'd into a Glassy Fountain! —  
 She starts! she shrieks! The frantic cry  
 Proclaims the Sufferer's agony!

In loneliness, she breathes her pain:—  
 'How shall my heart its anguish hide!  
 'I never shall be young again!  
 'The bud has drooped! the flower has died!  
 'Wishes have been my broken reed,  
 'And my days have pass'd with lightning speed!

While in the depths of sorrow drown'd,  
 (Where Hope no transient gleam might borrow)  
 The Wizard Mary weeping found,  
 When thus she faltering told her sorrow:  
 'For Wishes I my life have sold!  
 'I once was Young, but now am Old!

'I scarce have breath'd th'inspring air,  
 'Before my earthly periods close!  
 'The slow-declining years prepare —  
 'The weary Spirit for repose;  
 'And reverend is the Mouldering Tree,  
 'But Youth, and Age are one to me!

The Wizard thus.— 'I read thy fate!  
 'In vain thou mourn'st thy days mispent!  
 'Knowledge with thee hath come too late, —  
 'So steep'd in thankless discontent!  
 'Mourn on — thy wasted hours and years!  
 'And shed thine unavailing tears!

Bereft, disconsolate, opprest!  
 The Mourner stands with down-cast head!  
 Commotion revels in her breast,  
 But utterance from her lips has fled.  
 The Tear, — (to Magic Power allied!)  
 Now softens him, who came to chide.

‘Thou hast been first in Folly’s Train,  
 ‘But if’, (he uttered)” ‘at this time,  
 ‘I raise my Wand, and, once again —  
 ‘Restore thee to thy pristine prime,  
 ‘Wilt thou renounce thy Wishing Chains,  
 ‘And deem that best which HEAVEN ordains?’

She cried — Joy flashing from her eyes,  
 ‘Let others grasp at phantoms vain!  
 ‘Wishes! your treacheries I despise!  
 ‘I spurn my fetters with disdain!  
 ‘Give me my Youth, and I will strive —  
 ‘To keep Contentment’s spark alive!’

He touch’d her! — When she stands array’d —  
 All lovely — as the Roseate Spring! —  
 The graceful mien! — the blooming Maid!  
 (Brief honours, ever on the wing!)  
 When, thus the Sage, impressive, spake. —  
 ‘To loftier aspirations, wake!

‘With thee, all excellence is Youth, —  
 ‘Unmindful of thy nobler part!  
 ‘Prize, rather — Wisdom, Virtue, Truth, —  
 ‘The graces of the Mind and Heart:  
 These shall survive and lustre shed,  
 ‘When Beauty fades, and Youth is fled!

‘The days of Mortal Man are few! —  
 ‘There is a Heritage in sight!  
 ‘That Object, steadfast, keep in view,  
 ‘And plume thy pinions for the flight!  
 ‘Man’s Life is emblem’d by the Grass, —  
 ‘Improve the moments as they pass!’

JOSEPH COTTLE