

Yes! as I stood and gaz'd, my forehead bare,
 And shot my being thro' earth, sea, and air,
 Possessing all things by intensest love—
 O LIBERTY! my spirit felt thee there!

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175. FEARS IN SOLITUDE:

WRITTEN IN APRIL 1798,

DURING THE ALARM OF AN INVASION

[Apr 1798]

Fears of a French invasion were exacerbated by rumours of new conspiracies at home during Apr 1798: the citizenry were armed and preparations were made along the coasts. On 18 Apr C returned from a visit to Ottery, where his brother James was at the time Major-Commandant of the Exmouth and Sidmouth Volunteers and during which time 174 *France: An Ode* had been published (16 Apr). The next ten days were spent visiting the Wordsworths and walking on the hills (Reed I 233–4), presumably discussing and meditating on their projected two-year withdrawal to Germany, outside the war zone. C was careful to subjoin the place and date of writing to each printing of the poem.

When he first repeated or read the poem to the Wedgwoods, he had "great apparent confidence" in it, or so Thomasina Dennis reported in Aug 1798 (Francis

105*. In c 1807 C wrote in a copy of the 1798 pamphlet, following the poem:

wise & good."

S T C

Southey in a review made some (me judge) unfounded Objections to this last Stanza—as if I had confounded moral with political Freedom—but surely the Object of the Stanza is to shew, that true political Freedom can only arise out of moral Freedom—What indeed is it but a *Dilatation* of those golden Lines of Milton—

"Licence they mean, when they cry—Liberty!
 For who loves that must first be

The review to which C refers must be the unsigned "Fears in Solitude"

Critical Review 2nd ser xxvi (1799) 472–5 at 474. The verse lines are (var) from Milton's Sonnet XII. One might also compare Burke *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly* (1791) 69 "Society cannot exist unless a controlling power upon will and appetite be placed somewhere, and the less of it there is within, the more there must be without. It is ordained in the eternal constitution of things, that men of intemperate minds cannot be free. Their passions forge their fetters."

Doherty "Some First-hand Impressions of Coleridge in the Correspondence of Thomasin Dennis and Davies Giddy" *Neophilologus* LXIII—Apr 1979—300–8 at 303; cf R. S. Woolf "Coleridge and Thomasina Dennis" *UTQ* xxxii—1962—37–54 at 42–3). Before a year was out, when he transcribed it for Carlyon in Germany, his confidence had waned, and he added the following postscript:

N.B. The above is perhaps not Poetry—it is but rather a sort of Middle thing between Poetry & Oratory.—Sermoni propior.—Some parts are, I am conscious, too tame even for animated Prose.—

The reference is to Horace *Satires* 1.4.42: see 129 *Reflections on Having Left a Place of Retirement* headnote (also 84 *To a Young Ass* headnote).

The parts C had in mind were lines 160–76 and possibly lines 46–54, which he omitted from the Carlyon transcript. When he annotated Sir George Beaumont's copy of the first printing in 1807, he drew a line alongside lines 160–76 and wrote in the margins:

All the Lines so marked convey, according to my Conscience, sound good sense; but unfortunately they are neither poetry, nor any thing—as eloquence for instance—which approximates to it.—They are *Prose* that in a frolic has put on a masquerade Dress of Metre, & like most Masquerades, blundered in the assumed character.—What follows, I hope, will redeem it, for tho' in religion abhorring, yet in poetry, I cleave to the Catholic Doctrine of *supererogation*—& easily forgive many faults, where I find any true beauty, when the faults are purely *literary*, not moral ones. And surely, with reason—for such faults are merely *negative*—they do us *no harm*—surely the reading of a little innocent dullness is no worse, than looking (half-vacantly) at the Paper of a Room (I speak, as one of that rank of Life, in which Rooms are papered). But the Good, that which is good to the Recipient, is a positive gain—it either awakens him to new Thought or Feeling or both combined (as is *always* the case in Wordsworth's Poetry, & forms perhaps an unexampled Instance) or it recalls &—permit the word—*wives* Thoughts & Feelings already acquired. S. T. Coleridge—

It will be noticed that C defers to literary standards here almost as a way of defending the "sound good sense" of his matter. There is reason to think that his opinion of the poem was affected by the use made of it by the *Anti-Jacobin*, which accused him of renegeing on his family (see 146–54bc).

There are two ms and seven full printed texts of the poem, and lines 130–98 were reprinted with omissions and slight revisions in *M Post* and in the 1809 (and 1812) *Friend*, and the texts differ very little. Phrases, passages, and parallels appear (var) in C's published and unpublished writings: e.g. 139 *The Destiny of Nations* 416–17 (cf lines 48–9 here); *CL* I 478; to TP 6 Apr 1799; *EOT* (CC) II 363; *SM* (CC) 22; *CL* IV 963; to M. Starke 28 [=30] Oct 1819; *C&S* (CC) 178. The present text reproduces that of *SL*, correcting an error in line 113.

A green and silent spot, amid the hills,
 A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
 No singing sky-lark ever pois'd himself.
 The hills are heathy, save that swelling slope,
 Which hath a gay and gorgeous covering on,
 All golden with the never-bloomless furze,
 Which now blooms most profusely; but the dell,
 Bath'd by the mist, is fresh and delicate
 As vernal corn-field, or the unripe flax,
 When, through its half-transparent stalks, at eve,
 The level Sunshine glimmers with green light.
 Oh! 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook!
 Which all, methinks, would love; but chiefly he,
 The humble man, who, in his youthful years,
 Knew just so much of folly, as had made
 His early manhood more securely wise!
 Here he might lie on fern or wither'd heath,
 While from the singing-lark (that sings unseen
 The minstrelsy that solitude loves best.)
 And from the Sun, and from the breezy Air,
 Sweet influences trembled o'er his frame;
 And he, with many feelings, many thoughts,
 Made up a meditative joy, and found
 Religious meanings in the forms of nature!
 And so, his senses gradually wrapt
 In a half sleep, he dreams of better worlds,
 And dreaming hears thee still, O singing-lark,
 That singest like an angel in the clouds!

My God! it is a melancholy thing
 For such a man, who would full fain preserve
 His soul in calmness, yet perforce must feel
 For all his human brethren—O my God!
 It is indeed a melancholy thing,

6. the never-bloomless furze] *C. ropaeus* in the Quantock countryside, wrote the phrase in the Gutch Note-book and proceeded to quote Barrett's description of another never-bloomless shrub (CV 1222; cf. *RX* 513 n. 76). He was surrounded by furze (otherwise gorse or whin, *Ulex eu-*

And weighs upon the heart, that he must think
 What uproar and what strife may now be stirring
 This way or that way o'er these silent hills—
 Invasion, and the thunder and the shout,
 And all the crash of onset; fear and rage,
 And undetermin'd conflict—even now,
 Even now, perchance, and in his native isle:
 Carnage and groans beneath this blessed Sun!
 We have offended, Oh! my countrymen!
 We have offended very grievously,
 And been most tyrannous. From east to west
 A groan of accusation pierces Heaven!
 The wretched plead against us; multitudes
 Countless and vehement, the Sons of God,
 Our Brethren! Like a cloud that travels on,
 Steam'd up from Cairo's swamps of pestilence,
 Ev'n so, my countrymen! have we gone forth
 And borne to distant tribes slavery and pangs,
 And, deadlier far, our vices, whose deep taint
 With slow perdition murders the whole man,
 His body and his soul! Meanwhile, at home,
 All individual dignity and power
 Engulph'd in Courts, Committees, Institutions,
 Associations and Societies,
 A vain, speech-mouthing, speech-reporting Guild,
 One BENEFIT-CLUB for mutual flattery,
 We have drunk up, demure as at a grace,
 Pollutions from the brimming cup of wealth;
 Contemptuous of all honorable rule,
 Yet bartering freedom and the poor man's life
 For gold, as at a market! The sweet words
 Of Christian promise, words that even yet
 Might stem destruction, were they wisely preach'd,

55-61. The present text was introduced at the proof stage of *SL*. Prior to that, the lines read:

We have been drinking with a riotous thirst
 Pollutions from the brimming cup
 of wealth,

A selfish, lewd, effeminated race,

59. BENEFIT-CLUB] The words are in capitals partly because they were a new coinage. The first instance recorded by the *OED* is *The Examiner* CCLXXXVIII (11 [for 10] May 1812) 291.

Are mutter'd o'er by men, whose tones proclaim
How flat and wearisome they feel their trade:

Rank scoffers some, but most too indolent

To deem them falsehoods or to know their truth.

Oh! blasphemous! the book of life is made

A superstitious instrument, on which

We gabble o'er the oaths we mean to break;

For all must swear—all and in every place,

College and wharf, council and justice-court;

All, all must swear, the briber and the bribed,

Merchant and lawyer, senator and priest,

The rich, the poor, the old man and the young:

All, all make up one scheme of perjury,

That faith doth reel; the very name of God

Sounds like a juggler's charm; and, bold with joy,

Forth from his dark and lonely hiding-place,

(Portentous sight!) the owl, *ATHEISM*,

Sailing on obscene wings athwart the noon,

Drops his blue-fringed lids, and holds them close,

And hooting at the glorious Sun in Heaven,

Cries out, "Where is it?"

Thankless too for peace;

(Peace long preserv'd by fleets and perilous seas)

Secure from actual warfare, we have lov'd

To swell the war-whoop, passionate for war!

Alas! for ages ignorant of all

It's ghastlier workings, (famine or blue plague,

Battle, or siege, or flight through wintry snows,)

We, this whole people, have been clamorous

For war and bloodshed; animating sports,

To which we pay for as a thing to talk of,

Spectators and not combatants! No Guess

Anticipative of a wrong unfelt.

No speculation on contingency,
However dim and vague, too vague and dim

To yield a justifying cause; and forth,

(Stuff'd out with big preamble, holy names,
And adjurations of the God in Heaven,)

We send our mandates for the certain death

Of thousands and ten thousands! Boys and girls,

And women, that would groan to see a child

Pull off an insect's leg, all read of war,

The best amusement for our morning-meal!

The poor wretch, who has learnt his only prayers

From curses, who knows scarcely words enough

To ask a blessing from his Heavenly Father,

Becomes a fluent phraseman, absolute

And technical in victories and defeats,

And all our dainty terms for fratricide:

Terms which we trundle smoothly o'er our tongues

Like mere abstractions, empty sounds to which

We join no feeling and attach no form!

As if the soldier died without a wound;

As if the fibres of this godlike frame

Were gor'd without a pang; as if the wretch,

Who fell in battle, doing bloody deeds,

Pass'd off to Heaven, translated and not kill'd:—

As though he had no wife for him,

No God to judge him! Therefore, evil days

Are coming on us, O my countrymen!

And what if all-avenging Providence,

Strong and retributive, should make us know

The meaning of our words, force us to feel

The desolation and the agony

Of our fierce doings?

Spare us yet awhile,

Father and God! Oh! spare us yet awhile!

Oh! let not English women drag their flight

Fainting beneath the burthen of their babes,

Of the sweet infants, that but yesterday

71-87. The movement for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts (which, directed against Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, specified that holders of public office should take the Oaths of Allegiance

and Supremacy, receive the Church of England sacrament, renounce the doctrine of Transubstantiation, etc.) was a live one in 1787-90, but not particularly in 1798. (They were not in fact repeated until 1828.)

112. phraseman] The *OED* does not record a previous occurrence of the word.

Laugh'd at the breast! Sons, brothers, husbands, all
 Who ever gaz'd with fondness on the forms
 Which grew up with you round the same fire-side,
 And all who ever heard the sabbath-bells
 Without the infidel's scorn, make yourselves pure!
 Stand forth! be men! repel an impious foe,
 Impious and false, a light yet cruel race,
 Who laugh away all virtue, mingling mirth
 With deeds of murder; and still promising
 Freedom, themselves too sensual to be free,
 Poison life's amities, and cheat the heart
 Of faith and quiet hope, and all that soothes
 And all that lifts the spirit! Stand we forth;
 Render them back upon the insulted ocean,
 And let them toss as idly on it's waves
 As the vile sea-weed, which some mountain-blast
 Swept from our shores! And oh! may we return
 Not with a drunken triumph, but with fear,
 Repenting of the wrongs with which we stung
 So fierce a foe to frenzy!

I have told,
 O Britons! O my brethren! I have told
 Most bitter truth, but without bitterness.

146-54. C drew lines in both margins alongside this passage in Sir George Beaumont's copy of the first printing, which he annotated in 1807, and added the following comments, which are heavily deleted:

And at this very time, or rather immediately a few months after the Publication, I was declared in "the Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin" a traitor, and proselyting at that a renegade from his Country, who had denounced all patriotic feelings, and to quote the very words "become a Citizen of the World, & left my children fatherless, & my Wife destitute"—So much for the candor and Christian Charity of Mr Gifford, the Author of the Baeviad.

&c &c—

Not the author of the Baeviad!

The quotation is from the "New Morality" in *The Beauties of the Anti-Jacobin* (1799) 306fn (var). C quoted the same passage and elaborated his defence in his preamble to the extract printed in the 1809 *Friend* (see CC II 22-5fn and n, where further references are given). His second comment, after the rule, is intended to gloss the fierce and frenzied foe of line 154. The *Anti-Jacobin* attack probably influenced C's later attitude towards the poem, and his defence of its matter at the expense of its manner.

Nor deem my zeal or factious or mis-tim'd;
 For never can true courage dwell with them,
 Who, playing tricks with conscience, dare not look
 At their own vices. We have been too long
 Dupes of a deep delusion! Some, belike,
 Groaning with restless enmity, expect
 All change from change of constituted power.
 As if a Government had been a robe,
 On which our vice and wretchedness were tagg'd
 Like fancy-points and fringes, with the robe
 Pull'd off at pleasure. Fondly these attach
 A radical causation to a few
 Poor drudges of chastising Providence,
 Who borrow all their hues and qualities
 From our own folly and rank wickedness,
 Which gave them birth and nurse them. Others, meanwhile,
 Dote with a mad idolatry; and all
 Who will not fall before their images,
 And yield them worship, they are enemies
 Even of their country!

Such have I been deem'd—
 But, O dear Britain! O my Mother Isle!
 Needs must thou prove a name most dear and holy
 To me, a son, a brother, and a friend,
 A husband, and a father! who reverse
 All bonds of natural love, and find them all
 Within the limits of thy rocky shores.
 O native Britain! O my Mother Isle!
 How shouldst thou prove aught else but dear and holy
 To me, who from thy lakes and mountain-hills,
 Thy clouds, thy quiet dales, thy rocks and seas,
 Have drunk in all my intellectual life,
 All sweet sensations, all ennobling thoughts,

185-6. The language better evokes the revision.

WW's experience of the Lake District and the North than of C's Devon and Somerset. C revised the lines to encompass brooks, seas and rocky shores, quiet fields, streams, and wooded hills, but did not sustain

In the lines that follow, compare 188 "sweet sensations" with the "sensations sweet" of WW's *Tintern Abbey* 27 (WPP II 260); also 171 *Frost at Midnight* 54-64 and EC.

All adoration of the God in Nature,
 All lovely and all honorable things,
 Whatever makes this mortal spirit feel
 The joy and greatness of its future being?
 There lives nor form nor feeling in my soul
 Unborrow'd from my country. O divine
 And beauteous island! thou hast been my sole
 And most magnificent temple, in the which
 I walk with awe, and sing my stately songs,
 Loving the God that made me!

May my fears,
 My filial fears, be vain! and may the vaunts
 And menace of the vengeful enemy
 Pass like the gust, that roar'd and died away
 In the distant tree: which heard, and only heard
 In this low dell, bow'd not the delicate grass.

But now the gentle dew-fall sends abroad
 The fruit-like perfume of the golden furze:
 The light has left the summit of the hill,
 Though still a sunny gleam lies beautiful
 Aslant the ivied beacon. Now farewell,
 Farewell, awhile. O soft and silent spot!
 On the green sheep-track, up the heathy hill,
 Homeward I wind my way; and, lo! recall'd
 From bodings that have well nigh wearied me,
 I find myself upon the brow, and pause
 Startled! And after lonely sojourning
 In such a quiet and surrounded nook,
 This burst of prospect, here the shadowy Main,
 Dim tinted, there the mighty majesty
 Of that huge amphitheatre of rich
 And elmy Fields, seems like society—

Conversing with the mind, and giving it
 A livelier impulse and a dance of thought!
 And now, beloved Stowey! I behold
 Thy church-tower, and, methinks, the four huge elms
 Clustering, which mark the mansion of my friend;
 And close behind them, hidden from my view,
 Is my own lowly cottage, where my babe
 And my babe's mother dwell in peace! With light
 And quicken'd footsteps thitherward I tend,
 Remembering thee, O green and silent dell!
 And grateful, that by nature's quietness
 And solitary musings, all my heart
 Is soften'd, and made worthy to indulge
 Love, and the thoughts that yearn for human kind.

176. CHRISTABEL

[Feb-Apr 1798; Aug-Oct 1800]

Each of the two parts of *Christabel*, and each conclusion to each part, was written at a different time; and the whole was revised, when the Preface was

222-9. In 1807 C wrote in the margin of Sir George Beaumont's copy of the first printing: "My heart bids me say, after an interval of ten years, when the Poem is just the same to me as if it had been written by a dead man now dead—that he who can read these Lines without some pleasure, is—perhaps the Author—of the *Principles of Taste*—or one of his *Brotherhood*—in the *Family of Monkey-intellect* S.T.C.—"
 The second deletion is very heavy. Richard Payne Knight's *Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste* (3rd ed 1806) was annotated by C and WW while they were at Coleorton (CM—CC—III 400-13), and C retained the book to quote in the first of his 1808 lectures (*L Lects—CC—1* 31). The deletion deflects what might have appeared as a gratuitous insult to Sir George Beaumont, in whose library the book was or who had presented WW arrived to lay den at Coleorton. son for C's deletion almost certainly t Beaumont (and WW the side of Uvedal troversy with Knit gardening and the
 223-4. The elm have stood near about 1870 (PW— himself wrote in own copy of *SL*. "How little I merit

197-8. The two lines appear (var) in the Gutch Notebook (CW 1 268), deriving from Eccius 47.8.

208. the ivied beacon] The folly on Cothelstone Hill? Now a heap of ruins.

216. burst of prospect] *OED* cites

this instance of "burst" for the first occurrence in the sense of "a sudden opening on the view", but the editors of *W Prose* (II 429) point out that the usage is frequent in Gilpin's *Observations* (1788).