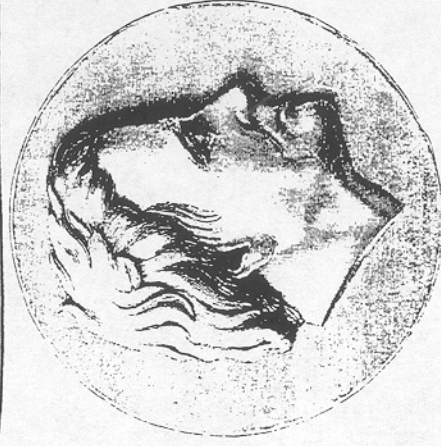


THE COLLECTED WRITINGS
OF
THOMAS DE QUINCEY

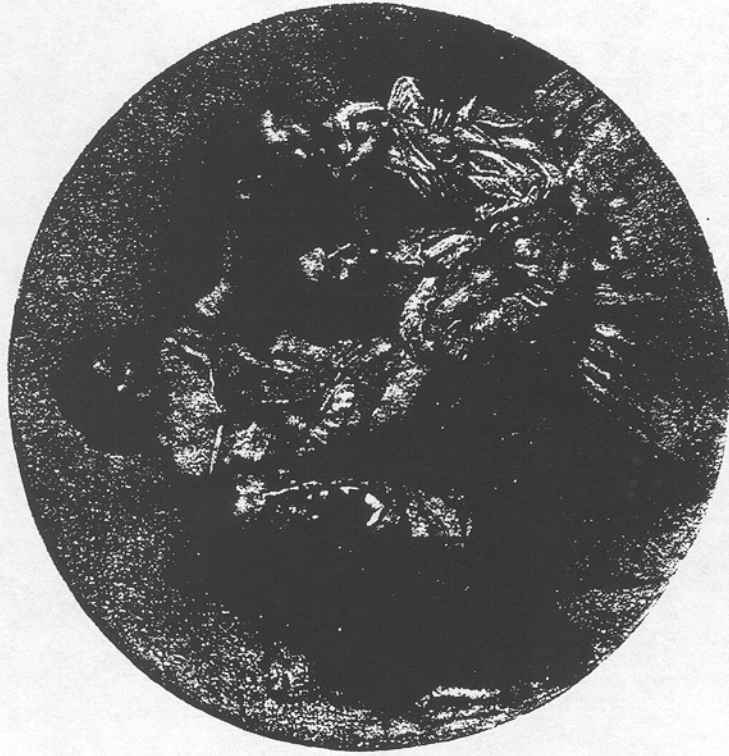
NEW AND ENLARGED EDITION

BY
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VOL. I
AUTOBIOGRAPHY FROM 1785 TO 1803



EDINBURGH
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK
1889



DE QUINCEY FAMILY GROUP
(1855)

*From chalk-drawing by James Archer, R.S.A.
In the possession of Mrs. F. Ward Smith.*

of which was this: Both my brother and myself, for the sake of varying our intellectual amusements, occupied ourselves at times in governing imaginary kingdoms. I do not mention this as anything unusual; it is a common resource of mental activity and of aspiring energies amongst boys. Hartley Coleridge, for example, had a kingdom which he governed for many years; whether well or ill, is more than I can say. Kindly, I am sure, he would govern it; but, unless a machine had been invented for enabling him to write without effort (as was really done for our Fourth George during the pressure of illness), I fear that the public service must have languished deplorably for want of the royal signature. In sailing past his own dominions, what dolorous outcries would have saluted him from the shore—"Holloa, royal sir! here's the deuce to pay: a perfect lock there is, as tight as locked jaw, upon the course of our public business; throats there are to be cut, from the product of ten jail-deliveries, and nobody dares to cut them, for want of the proper warrant; archbishops there are to be filled, and, because they are *not* filled, the whole nation is running helter-skelter into heresy;—and all in consequence of your majesty's sacred laziness." Our governments were less remissly administered; since each of us, by continued reports of improvements and gracious concessions to the folly or the weakness of our subjects, stimulated the zeal of his rival. And here, at least, there seemed to be no reason why I should come into collision with my brother. At any rate, I took pains *not* to do so. But all was in vain. My destiny was, to live in one eternal element of feud.

My own kingdom was an island called Gombroon. But in what parallel of north or south latitude it lay, I concealed for a time as rigorously as ancient Rome through every century concealed her real name.¹ The object in this pro-

¹ One reason, I believe, why it was held a point of wisdom, in ancient days, that the metropolis of a warlike state should have a secret name hidden from the world, lay in the Pagan practice of *evocation*, applied to the tutelary deities of such a state. These deities might be lulled by certain rites and bribes into a transfer of their favours to the besieging army. But, in order to make such an evocation effectual, it was necessary to know the original and secret name of the beleaguered city: and this, therefore, was religiously concealed.

visional concealment was, to regulate the position of my own territory by that of my brother's; for I was determined to place a monstrous world of waters between us, as the only chance (and a very poor one it proved) for compelling my brother to keep the peace. At length, for some reason unknown to me, and much to my astonishment, he located his capital city in the high latitude of 65 deg. north. That fact being once published and settled, instantly I snacked my little kingdom of Gombroon down into the tropics, 10 deg., I think, south of the line. Now, at least, I was on the right side of the hedge, or so I flattered myself; for it struck me that my brother never would degrade himself by fitting out a costly nautical expedition against poor little Gombroon; and how else could he get at me? Surely the very fiend himself, if he happened to be in a high arctic latitude, would not indulge his malice so far as to follow its trail into the Tropic of Capricorn. And what was to be got by such a freak? There was no Golden Fleece in Gombroon. If the fiend or my brother fancied *that*, for once they were in the wrong box; and there was no variety of vegetable produce, for I never denied that the poor little island was only 270 miles in circuit. Think, then, of sailing through 75 deg. of latitude only to crack such a miserable little filbert as that. But my brother stunned me by explaining that, although his capital lay in lat. 65 deg. N., not the less his dominions swept southwards through a matter of 80 or 90 deg.; and, as to the Tropic of Capricorn, much of it was his own private property. I was aghast at hearing *that*. It seemed that vast horns and promontories ran down from all parts of his dominions towards any country whatsoever, in either hemisphere—empire, or republic; monarchy, polyarchy, or anarchy—that he might have reasons for assaulting.

Here in one moment vanished all that I had relied on for protection: distance I had relied on, and suddenly I was found in close neighbourhood to my most formidable enemy. Poverty I had relied on, and *that* was not denied; he granted the poverty, but it was dependent on the barbarism of the Gombroonians. It seems that in the central forests of Gombroonia there were diamond mines, which my people,

from their low condition of civilisation, did not value, nor had any means of working. Farewell, therefore, on *my* side, to all hopes of enduring peace, for here was established, in legal phrase, *a lien* for ever upon my island, and not upon its margin, but its very centre, in favour of any invaders, better able than the natives to make its treasures available. For, of old, it was an article in my brother's code of morals—that, supposing a contest between any two parties, of which one possessed an article, whilst the other was better able to use it, the rightful property vested in the latter. As if you met a man with a musket, then you might justly challenge him to a trial in the art of making gunpowder; which if you *could* make, and he could *not*, in that case the musket was *de jure* yours. For what shadow of a right had the fellow to a noble instrument which he could not “maintain” in a servicable condition, and “feed” with its daily rations of powder and shot? Still, it may be fancied that, since all the relations between us as independent sovereigns (whether of war, or peace, or treaty) rested upon our own representations and official reports, it was surely within my competence to deny or qualify, as much as within his to assert. But, in reality, the *law* of the contest between us, as suggested by some instinct of propriety in my own mind, would not allow me to proceed in such a method. What he said was like a move at chess or draughts, which it was childish to dispute. The move being made, my business was—to face it, to parry it, to evade it, and, if I could, to overthrow it. I proceeded as a lawyer who moves as long as he can, not by blank denial of facts (or *coming to an issue*), but by *denurring* (i.e., admitting the allegations of fact, or otherwise interpreting their construction). It was the understood necessity of the case, that I must passively accept my brother's statements so far as regarded their verbal expression; and, if I would extricate my poor islanders from their troubles, it must be by some distinction or evasion lying *within* this expression, or not blankly contradicting it.

“How, and to what extent,” my brother asked, “did I raise taxes upon my subjects?” My first impulse was to say, that I did not tax them at all, for I had a perfect horror of doing so; but prudence would not allow of my saying *that*;

because it was too probable he would demand to know how, in that case, I maintained a standing army; and if I once allowed it to be supposed that I had none, there was an end for ever to the independence of my people. Poor things! they would have been invaded and dragooned in a month. I took some days, therefore, to consider that point, but at last replied, that my people, being maritime, supported themselves mainly by a herring fishery, from which I deducted a part of the produce, and afterwards sold it for manure to neighbouring nations. This last hint I borrowed from the conversation of a stranger who happened to dine one day at Greenhay, and mentioned that in Devonshire, or at least on the western coast of that country, near Ilfracombe, upon any excessive take of herrings, beyond what the markets could absorb, the surplus was applied to the land as a valuable dressing. It might be inferred from this account, however, that the arts must be in a languishing state, amongst a people that did not understand the process of salting fish; and my brother observed derisively, much to my grief, that a wretched ichthyophagous people must make shocking soldiers, weak as water, and liable to be knocked over like nine-pins; whereas, in *his* army, not a man ever ate herrings, pilchards, mackerels, or, in fact, condescended to anything worse than sirloins of beef.

At every step I had to contend for the honour and independence of my islanders; so that early I came to understand the weight of Shakspeare's sentiment—

“Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!”

Oh, reader, do not laugh! I lived for ever under the terror of two separate wars in two separate worlds: one against the factory boys, in a real world of flesh and blood, of stones and brickbats, of flight and pursuit, that were anything but figurative; the other in a world purely aerial, where all the combats and the sufferings were absolute moonshine. And yet the simple truth is—that, for anxiety and distress of mind, the reality (which almost every morning's light brought round) was as nothing in comparison of that dream-kingdom which rose like a vapour from my own brain, and which apparently by the *fiat* of my will could be for ever dissolved

Al! but no; I had contracted obligations to Gombroon; I had submitted my conscience to a yoke; and in secret truth my will had no such autocratic power. Long contemplation of a shadow, earnest study for the welfare of that shadow, sympathy with the wounded sensibilities of that shadow under accumulated wrongs, these bitter experiences, nursed by brooding thought, had gradually frozen that shadow into a rigour of reality far denser than the material realities of brass or granite. Who builds the most durable dwellings? asks the labourer in "Hamlet"; and the answer is, The gravedigger. He builds for corruption; and yet *his* tene-ments are incorruptible: "the houses which *he* makes last to doomsday."¹ Who is it that seeks for concealment? Let him hide himself² in the unsearchable chambers of light—

¹ "Hamlet," Act v. scene 1.

² "*Hide himself in—light*."—"The greatest scholar, by far, that this island ever produced (viz., Richard Bentley) published (as is well known) a 4to volume that in some respects is the very worst 4to now extant in the world—viz., a critical edition of the "*Paradise Lost*." I observe, in the "*Edinburgh Review*" (July, 1851, No. 191, p. 15), that a learned critic supposes Bentley to have meant this edition as a "practical jest." Not at all. Neither could the critic have fancied such a possibility, if he had taken the trouble (which *I* did many a year back) to examine it. A jest-book it certainly is, and the most prosperous of jest-books, but undoubtedly never meant for such by the author. A man whose lips are livid with anger does not jest, and does not understand jesting. Still, the *Edinburgh Reviewer* is right about the proper functions of the book, though wrong about the intentions of the author. The fact is, the man was manically in error, and always in error, as regarded the ultimate or poetic truth of Milton; but, as regarded truth reputed and truth *apparent*, he often had the air of being furiously in the right; an example of which I will cite. Milton, in the First Book of the "*Paradise Lost*," had said—

"That from the secret top
Of Oreb or of Sinai didst inspire;"

upon which Bentley comments in effect thus: "How!—the exposed summit of a mountain *secret*? Why, it's like Charing Cross—always the least secret place in the whole county." So one might fancy: since the summit of a mountain, like Plinlimmon or Cader Idris in Wales, like Skiddaw or Helvellyn in England, constitutes a central object of attention and gaze for the whole circumjacent district, measured by a radius sometimes of 15 to 20 miles. Upon this consideration, Bentley instructs us to substitute as the true reading—"That on the *secret* top," &c. Meantime, an actual experiment will

of light which at noonday, more effectually than any gloom, conceals the very brightest stars, rather than in labyrinths of darkness the thickest. What criminal is that who wishes to abscond from public justice? Let him hurry into the frantic publicities of London, and by no means into the quiet privacies of the country. So, and upon the analogy of these cases, we may understand that, to make a strife overwhelming by a thousandfold to the feelings, it must not deal with gross material interests, but with such as rise into the world of dreams, and act upon the nerves through spiritual, and not through fleshly, torments. Mine, in the present case, rose suddenly, like a rocket, into their meridian altitude, by means of a hint furnished to my brother from a Scottish advocate's reveries.

This advocate, who by his writings became the remote cause of so much affliction to my childhood, and struck a blow at the dignity of Gombroon that neither my brother nor all the forces of Tigrosylvania (my brother's kingdom) ever could have devised, was the celebrated James Burnett, better known to the English public by his judicial title of Lord Monboddo. The Burnetts of Monboddo, I have often heard, were a race distinguished for their intellectual accomplishments through several successive generations; and the judge in question was eminently so. It did him no injury that many people regarded him as crazy. In England, at the beginning of the last century, we had a saying,¹ in reference to the Harveys of Lord Bristol's family, equally distinguished for wit, beauty, and eccentricity, that at the creation there had been three kinds of people made—viz., men, women, and Harveys; and by all accounts something of the same kind might plausibly have

demonstrate that there is no place so absolutely secret and hidden as the exposed summit of a mountain, 3500 feet high, in respect to an eye stationed in the valley immediately below. A whole party of men, women, horses, and even tents, looked at under those circumstances, is absolutely invisible unless by the aid of glasses; and it becomes evident that a murder might be committed on the bare open summit of such a mountain with more assurance of absolute secrecy than anywhere else in the whole surrounding district.

¹ Which "*saying*," is sometimes ascribed, I know not how truly, to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

been said in Scotland about the Burnetts. Lord Monboddo's nieces, of whom one perished by falling from a precipice (and, as I have heard, through mere absence of mind, whilst musing upon a book which she carried in her hand), still survive in the affection of many friends, through the interest attached to their intellectual gifts; and Miss Burnett, the daughter of the judge, is remembered in all the memorials of Burns the poet, as the most beautiful, and otherwise the most interesting, of his female aristocratic friends in Edinburgh. Lord Monboddo himself trod an eccentric path in literature and philosophy; and our tutor, who spent his whole life in reading, withdrawing himself in that way from the anxieties incident to a narrow income and a large family, found, no doubt, a vast fund of interesting suggestions in Lord M.'s "Dissertations on the Origin of Language"; but to us he communicated only one section of the work. It was a long passage, containing some very useful illustrations of a Greek idiom; useful I call them, because four years afterwards, when I had made great advances in my knowledge of Greek, they so appeared to me.¹ But then, being scarcely seven years old, as soon as

¹ It strikes me, upon second thoughts, that the particular idiom which Lord Monboddo illustrated as regarded the Greek language merits a momentary notice; and for this reason—that it plays a part not at all less conspicuous or less delicate in the Latin. Here is an instance of its use in Greek, taken from the well-known Night-scene in the "Iliad":—*γρηγορε δε ποιμενος ηρος*,

"and the heart of the shepherd rejoices"; where the verb *γρηγορε* is in the indefinite or aorist tense, and is meant to indicate a condition of feeling not limited to any time whatever—past, present, or future. In Latin the force and elegance of this usage are equally impressive, if not more so. At this moment I remember two cases of this in Horace—

1. "Raro antecessentem scelestum
Deseruit pede pena claudo";
2. "sepe Diespiter
Neglectus incesto addidit integrum."

That is—"Oftentimes the Supreme Ruler, when treated with neglect, confounds or unites (not *has united*, as the tyro might fancy) the impure man with the upright in one common fate."

Exceedingly common is this usage in Latin poetry, when the object is to generalise a remark—as not connected with one mode of time

our tutor had finished his long extract from the Scottish judge's prelection, I could express my thankfulness for what I had received only by composing my features to a deeper solemnity and sadness than usual—no very easy task, I have been told; otherwise, I really had not the remotest conception of what his lordship meant. I knew very well the thing called a *tense*; I knew even then by name the *Aoristus Primus*, as a respectable tense in the Greek language. It (or shall we say *he*?) was known to the whole Christian world by this distinction of *Primus*; clearly, therefore, there must be some low, vulgar tense in the background, pretending also to the name of Aorist, but universally scouted as the *Aoristus Secundus*, or Birmingham counterfeit. So that, unable as I was, from ignorance, to go along with Lord M.'s appreciation of his pretensions, still, had it been possible to meet an Aoristus Primus in the flesh, I should have bowed to him submissively, as to one apparently endowed with the mysterious rights of primogeniture. Not so my brother. Aorist, indeed! Primus or Secundus, what mattered it? Paving-stones were something, brickbats were something, but an old superannuated tense! That any grown man should trouble himself about *that*! Indeed, there *was* something extraordinary there. For it is not amongst the ordinary functions of lawyers to take charge of Greek; far less, one might suppose, of lawyers in Scotland, where the *general* system of education has moved for two centuries upon a principle of slight regard to classical literature. Latin literature was very much neglected, and Greek nearly altogether. The more was the astonishment at finding a rare delicacy of critical instinct, as well as of critical more than another. In reality, all three modes of time—past, present, future—are used (though not equally used) in all languages for this purpose of generalisation. Thus,

1. The *future*: as, *Sapiens dominabitur astris*.
2. The *present*: as, *Fortes fortuna juvat*.
3. The *past*: as in the two cases cited from Horace.

But this practice holds equally in English: as to the future and the present, nobody will doubt it; and here is a case from the past—"The fool *hath said* in his heart, There is no God"; not meaning that in some past time he hath said so, but that generally in all times he *does* say so, and *will* say so.

sagacity, applied to the Greek idiomatic niceties by a Scottish lawyer—viz., that same eccentric judge, first made known to us by our tutor.

To the majority of readers, meantime, at this day, Lord M. is memorable chiefly for his craze about the degeneracy of us poor moderns, when compared with the men of Pagan antiquity; which craze itself might possibly not have been generally known, except in connection with the little skirmish between him and Dr. Johnson, noticed in Boswell's account of the Doctor's Scottish tour. "Ah, doctor," said Lord M., upon some casual suggestion of that topic, "poor creatures are we of this eighteenth century; our fathers were better men than we!" "Oh no, my lord," was Johnson's reply; "we are quite as strong as our forefathers, and a great deal wiser!" Such a craze, however, is too widely diffused, and falls in with too obstinate a preconception!

1 "*The obstinate a preconception*":—Until the birth of geology, and of fossil paleontology, concurring with vast strides ahead in the science of comparative anatomy, it is a well-established fact, that oftentimes the most scientific museum admitted as genuine fragments of the human osteology what in fact belonged to the gigantic brutes of our earth in her earliest stages of development. This mistake would go some way in accounting for the absurd disposition in all generations to view themselves as abridged editions of their forefathers. Added to which, as a separate cause of error, there can be little doubt, that intermingled with the human race there has at most periods of the world been a separate and Titanic race, such as the Anakim amongst the peoples of Palestine, the Cyclopean race diffused over the Mediterranean in the elder ages of Greece, and certain tribes amongst the Alps, known to Evelyn in his youth (about Cromwell's time) by an unpleasant travelling experience. These gigantic races, however, were no arguments for a degeneration amongst the rest of mankind. They were evidently a variety of man, co-existent with the ordinary races, but liable to be absorbed and gradually lost by intermarriage amongst other tribes of the ordinary standard. Occasional exhumations of such Titan skeletons would strengthen the common prejudice. They would be taken not for a local variety, but for an antediluvian or prehistoric type, from which the present races of man had arisen by gradual degeneration.

These cases of actual but misinterpreted experience, at the same time that they naturally must tend to fortify the popular prejudice, would also, by accounting for it, and engrafting it upon a reasonable origin, so far tend to take from it the reproach of a prejudice. Though erroneous, it would yet seem to us, in looking back upon it, a rational and even an inevitable opinion, having such plausible grounds to

in the human race, which has in every age hypochondriacally regarded itself as under some fatal necessity of dwindling, much to have challenged public attention. As real paradoxes (spite of the idle meaning attached usually to the word *paradox*) have often no falsehood in them, so here, on the contrary, was a falsehood which had in it nothing paradoxical. It contradicted all the indications of history and experience, which uniformly had pointed in the very opposite direction; and so far it ought to have been paradoxical (that is, revolting to popular opinion); but was *not* so; for it fell in with prevailing opinions, with the oldest, blindest, and most inveterate of human super-

stand upon; plausible, I mean, until science and accurate examination of the several cases had begun to read them into a different construction. Yet, on the other hand, in spite of any colourable excuses that may be pleaded for this prejudice, it is pretty plain that, after all, there is in human nature a deep-laid predisposition to an obstinate craze of this nature. Else why is it that, in every age alike, men have asserted or even assumed the downward tendency of the human race in all that regards *moral* qualities. For the *physical* degeneration of man there really were some apparent (though erroneous) arguments; but for the moral degeneration, no argument at all, small or great. Yet, a bigotry of belief in this idle notion has always prevailed amongst moralists, Pagan alike and Christian. Horace, for example, informs us that

"Aetas parentum, pejor avis, tulit
Nos nequiores—noxx daturos
Progeniem vitiosorem."

The last generation was worse, it seems, than the penultimate, as the present is worse than the last. We, however, of the present, bad as we may be, shall be kept in countenance by the coming generation, which will prove much worse than ourselves. On the same precedent, all the sermons through the three last centuries, if traced back through decennial periods, so as to form thirty successive strata, will be found regularly claiming the precedence in wickedness for the immediate period of the writer. Upon which theories, as men ought physically to have dwindled long ago into pigmies, so, on the other hand, morally they must by this time have left Sodom and Gomorrah far behind. What a strange animal must man upon this scheme offer to our contemplation; shrinking in size, by graduated process, through every century, until at last he would not rise an inch from the ground; and, on the other hand, as regards villany, towering ever more and more up to the heavens. What a dwarf! what a giant! Why, the very crows would combine to destroy such a little monster.

stitions. If extravagant, yet to the multitude it did not seem extravagant. So natural a craze, therefore, however baseless, would never have carried Lord Monboddó's name into that meteoric notoriety and atmosphere of astonishment which soon invested it in England. And, in that case, my childhood would have escaped the deadliest blight of mortification and despondency that could have been incident to a most morbid temperament concurring with a situation of visionary (yes! if you please, of fantastic) but still of most real distress.

How much it would have astonished Lord Monboddó to find himself made answerable—virtually made answerable, by the evidence of secret tears—for the misery of an unknown child in Lancashire. Yet night and day these silent memorials of suffering were accusing him as the founder of a wound that could not be healed. It happened that the several volumes of his work lay for weeks in the study of our tutor. Chance directed the eye of my brother, one day, upon that part of the work in which Lord M. unfolds his hypothesis that originally the human race had been a variety of the ape. On which hypothesis, by the way, Dr. Adam Clarke's substitution of *ape* for *serpent*, in translating the word *nachash* (the brute tempter of Eve), would have fallen to the ground, since this would simply have been the case of one human being tempting another. It followed inevitably, according to Lord M., however painful it might be to human dignity, that, in this their early stage of brutality, men must have had tails. My brother mused upon this reverie, and, in a few days, published an extract from some scoundrel's travels in Gombroon, according to which the Gombroonians had not yet emerged from this early condition of apedom. They, it seems, were still *homines caudati*. Overwhelming to me and stunning was the ignominy of this horrible discovery. Lord M. had not overlooked the natural question, In what way did men get rid of their tails! To speak the truth, they never *would* have got rid of them had they continued to run wild; but growing civilisation introduced arts, and the arts introduced sedentary habits. By these it was, by the mere necessity of continually sitting down, that men gradually wore off their

tails! Well, and what should hinder the Gombroonians from sitting down? *Their* tailors and shoemakers would and could, I hope, sit down, as well as those of Tigrisylvania. Why not? Ay, but my brother had insisted already that they *had* no tailors, that they *had* no shoemakers; which, *then*, I did not care much about, as it merely put back the clock of our history—throwing us into an earlier, and therefore, perhaps, into a more warlike stage of society. But, as the case stood now, this want of tailors, &c., showed clearly that the process of sitting down, so essential to the ennobling of the race, had not commenced. My brother, with an air of consolation, suggested that I might even now, without an hour's delay, compel the whole nation to sit down for six hours a-day, which would always "make a beginning." But the truth would remain as before—viz., that I was the king of a people that had tails; and the slow, slow process by which, in a course of many centuries, their posterity might rub them off, a hope of vintages never to be enjoyed by any generations that are yet heaving in sight—*that* was to me the worst form of despair.

Still there was one resource: if I "didn't like it"—meaning the state of things in Gombroon—I might "abdicate." Yes, I knew *that*. I might abdicate; and, once having cut the connection between myself and the poor abject islanders, I might seem to have no further interest in the degradation that affected them. After such a disruption between us, what was it to me if they had even three tails apiece? Ah, *that* was fine talking; but this connection with my poor subjects had grown up so slowly and so genially, in the midst of struggles so constant against the encroachments of my brother and his rascally people; we had suffered so much together; and the filaments connecting them with my heart were so acridally fine and fantastic, but for that reason so inscissurable, that I abated nothing of my anxiety on their account; making this difference only in my legislation and administrative cares, that I pursued them more in a spirit of despondency, and retreated more shyly from communicating them. It was in vain that my brother counselled me to dress my people in the Roman toga, as the best means of concealing their ignominious appendages: if

he meant this as comfort, it was none to me ; the disgrace lay in the fact, not in its publication ; and, in my heart, though I continued to honour Lord Monboddo (whom I heard my guardian also daily delighting to honour) as a good Grecian, yet secretly I cursed the Aoristus Primus, as the indirect occasion of a misery which was not and could not be comprehended.

From this deep degradation of myself and my people, I was drawn off at intervals to contemplate a different mode of degradation affecting two persons, twin sisters, whom I saw intermittingly ; sometimes once a-week, sometimes frequently on each separate day. You have heard, reader, of pariahs. The pathos of that great idea possibly never reached you. Did it ever strike you how far that idea had extended ? Do not fancy it peculiar to Hindostan. Before Delhi was, before Agra, or Lahore, might the pariah say, I was. The most interesting, if only as the most mysterious, race of ancient days, the Pelasgi, that overspread, in early times of Greece, the total Mediterranean—a race distinguished for beauty and for intellect, and sorrowful beyond all power of man to read the cause that could lie deep enough for so imperishable an impression—they were pariahs. The Jews that, in the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, were cursed in a certain contingency with a sublimer curse than ever rang through the passionate wrath of prophecy, and that afterwards, in Jerusalem, cursed themselves, voluntarily taking on their own heads, and on the heads of their children's children for ever and ever, the guilt of innocent blood—they are pariahs to this hour. Yet for *them* there has ever shone a sullen light of hope. The gipsies, for whom no conscious or acknowledged hope burns through the mighty darkness that surrounds them—they are pariahs of pariahs. Lepers were a race of mediæval pariahs, rejected of men, that now have gone to rest. But travel into the forests of the Pyrenees, and there you will find their modern representatives in the Cagots. Are these Pyrenean Cagots Pagans ? Not at all. They are good Christians. Wherefore, then, that low door in the Pyrenean churches, through which the Cagots are forced to enter, and which, obliging them to stoop almost to the ground, is a perpetual memento of their

degradation ? Wherefore is it that men of pure Spanish blood will hold no intercourse with the Cagot ? Wherefore is it that even the shadow of a Cagot, if it falls across a fountain, is held to have polluted that fountain ? All this points to some dreadful taint of guilt, real or imputed, in ages far remote.¹

But in ages far nearer to ourselves, nay, in our own generation, and our own land, are many pariahs, sitting amongst us all, nay, oftentimes sitting (yet not recognised for what they really are) at good men's tables. How general is that sensuous dulness, that deafness of the heart, which the Scriptures attribute to human beings ! "Having ears, they hear not ; and, seeing, they do not understand." In the very act of facing or touching a dreadful object, they will utterly deny its existence. Men say to me daily, when I ask them, in passing, "Anything in this morning's paper ?" "Oh no, nothing at all." And, as I never had any other answer, I am bound to suppose that there never *was* anything in a daily newspaper ; and, therefore, that the horrible burden of misery and of change which a century accumulates as its *facit* or total result, has not been distributed at all amongst its thirty-six thousand five hundred and twenty-five days : every day, it seems, was separately a blank day, yielding absolutely nothing—what children call a deaf nut, offering no kernel ; and yet the total product has caused angels to weep and tremble. Meantime, when I come to look at the newspaper with my own eyes, I am astonished at the misreport of my

¹ The name and history of the Pyrenean Cagots are equally obscure. Some have supposed that, during the period of the Gothic warfare with the Moors, the Cagots were a Christian tribe that betrayed the Christian cause and interests at a critical moment. But all is conjecture. As to the name, Southey has somewhere offered a possible interpretation of it ; but it struck me as far from felicitous, and not what might have been expected from Southey, whose vast historical research and commanding talent should naturally have unlocked this most mysterious of modern secrets, if any unlocking does yet lie within the resources of human skill and combining power, now that so many ages divide us from the original steps of the case. I may here mention, as a fact accidentally made known to myself, and apparently not known to Southey, that the Cagots, under a name very slightly altered, are found in France also, as well as Spain ; and in provinces of France that have no connection at all with Spain.