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Coleridge –Wordsworth Grasmere

Letters of Samuel Taylor Coleridge Vol. 2

Book by Ernest Hartley Coleridge; W. Heinemann, 1895. 820 pgs.

CHAPTER VII A LONG ABSENCE 1804-1806 CXLIV. TO RICHARD SHARP. ¹

KING'S ARMS, KENDAL, Sunday morning, January 15, 1804.

MY DEAR SIR, -- I give you thanks -- and, that I may make the best of so poor and unsubstantial a return, permit me to say, that they are such thanks as can only come from a nature unworldly by constitution and by habit, and now rendered more than ever impressible by sudden restoration -- resurrection I might say -- from a long, long sick-bed. I had gone to Grasmere to take my farewell of William Wordsworth, his wife, and his sister, and thither your letters followed me. I was at Grasmere a whole month, so ill, as that till the last week I was unable to read your letters. Not that my inner being was disturbed; on the contrary, it seemed more than usually serene and self-sufficing; but the exceeding pain, of which I suffered every now and then, and the fearful distresses of my sleep, had taken away from me the connecting link of voluntary power, which continually combines that part of us by which we know ourselves to be, with that outward picture or hieroglyphic, by which we hold communion with our like -- between the vital and

¹Richard Sharp, 1759-1835, known as "Conversation Sharp," a banker, Member of Parliament, and distinguished critic. He was a friend of Wordsworth's, and on intimate terms with Coleridge and Southey. *Life of W. Wordsworth*, i. 377; *Letters of R. Southey*, i. 279, *et passim*.

the organic -- or what Berkeley, I suppose, would call mind and its sensuous language. I had only just strength enough to smile gratefully on my kind nurses, who tended me with sister's and mother's love, and often, I well know, wept for me in their sleep, and watched for me even in their dreams. Oh, dear sir! it does a man's heart good, I will not say, to know such a family, but even to know that there *is* such a family. In spite of Wordsworth's occasional fits of hypochondriacal uncomfortableness, -- from which, more or less, and at longer or shorter intervals, he has never been wholly free from his very childhood, -- in spite of this hypochondriacal graft in his nature, as dear Wedgwood calls it, his is the happiest family I ever saw, and were it not in too great sympathy with my ill health -- were I in good health, and their neighbour -- I verily believe that the cottage in Grasmere Vale would be a proud sight for Philosophy. It is with no idle feeling of vanity that I speak of my importance to them; that it is I, rather than another, is almost an accident; but being so very happy within themselves they are too good, not the more, for that very reason, to want a friend and common object of love out of their household.