

**KLOSTERHEIM;
OR, THE MASQUE**

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Klosterheim; or, The masque by Thomas De Quincey & Shelton Mackenzie

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY & SHELTON MACKENZIE

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BY

THOMAS DE QUINCEY,

AUTHOR OF 'CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER.'

WITH A BIOGRAPHICAL PREFACE,

BY

DR. SHELTON MACKENZIE.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

BY

DR. SHELTON MACKENZIE.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY was born at Manchester (in England), on the 15th August, 1785. He passed the whole of his childhood, except for the few earliest weeks, in a rural retirement. The death of two of his young sisters, before he was six years old, first awakened in his mind the knowledge that mortality was the appointed fate of human beings. In his "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," he has recorded in what manner such deprivations affected him when they occurred, and how then, sinking into his mind, they influenced it in later years. At the age of sixty, recurring to the period of his childhood, he said that if he should return thanks to Providence for all the separate blessings of his early situation, these four he would single out as chiefly worthy to be commemorated: that he lived in the country; that he lived in solitude; that his infant feelings were moulded by the

gentlest of sisters, not by horrid pugilistic brothers; finally, that he and they were dutiful children of a pure, holy, and magnificent church.

His father, a Liverpool merchant of considerable wealth, was almost a stranger to him, passing the greater portion of each year in foreign climates supposed to be favorable to persons afflicted with pulmonary consumption, and rarely visiting Greenhay, (then a clear mile from the outskirts, but now a portion of the city of Manchester,) where his family resided. He returned home to die in his thirty-ninth year. This event took place in 1792, when Thomas De Quincey was only seven years old.

“Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,
Lord of himself — that heritage of woe.”

The elder De Quincey left a widow and six children, to whom he bequeathed £30,000, yielding an annual income of £1600. At the age of twenty-one, about £5000 of this capital would constitute the fortune or portion of each child.

The elder De Quincey, his son states, was “esteemed during his life for his great integrity,” and, himself an anonymous author, was “strongly attached to literary pursuits.” His widow appears (as has been so frequently noticed in reference to men who have won distinction) to have possessed abilities of a superior class. De Quincey says, “My mother I may mention with honor, as still more highly gifted; for though unpretending to the name and honors of a *literary* woman, I shall presume to call her (what many literary women are not) an *intellectual* woman; and I believe that if ever her letters should be collected and

published, they would be thought generally to exhibit as much strong and masculine sense, delivered in as pure 'mother English,' racy and fresh with idiomatic graces, as any in our language — hardly excepting those of Lady M. W. Montague."

During the four years next after his father's death, Thomas De Quincey and his brother (five years his senior) went to a day-school in Salford, — now an independent parliamentary borough, separated from Manchester by the small river Irwell. Here he was grounded in the classics. At the early age of eleven (as he confesses in his "Suspiria de Profundis,") he fell passionately in love with his cousin, a little girl a year younger than himself. He says that she "wore at that time upon her very lovely face the most angelic expression of character and temper I have almost ever seen." A year after (in 1796), when the family house and grounds at Greenhay were sold, for less than half what they had cost — (a few years later, this value would have been more than quadrupled), — De Quincey was removed to the grammar school of Bath, at which he speedily displayed a talent for making Latin verses, which obtained him consideration from his instructors and provoked hostility from his elder schoolmates. Subsequently he was sent to a school in Wiltshire, of which the chief recommendation lay in the religious character of its master.

There was an acquaintance of long standing between the elder De Quincey and the Earl of Altamont, an Irish peer, who was subsequently created Marquis of Sligo. This nobleman's eldest son, Lord Westport, was intimate with Thomas De Quincey, and, when at Eton, early in 1800, invited him to visit

Ireland with him in the ensuing summer and autumn. Accepting this invitation, De Quincey joined his friend at Eton, being then in his fifteenth year, and had the advantage (such as it was) of seeing and hearing Queen Charlotte and all the princesses, and even had an interview with George III., in an accidental rencontre at Frogmore — a pet residence of the Queen's — in which the king, as was his habit, asked a variety of questions, and rather annoyed the young interlocutor by supposing, from the foreign name, that his family had come over with the Huguenots at the revocation of the edict of Nantz, whereas they had been in England since the Conquest. Shortly after, Mr. De Quincey was an invited guest to one of the Queen's *fêtes* at Frogmore — a compliment with which, as a youth and an Englishman, he, naturally enough, was much pleased. In May, 1800, in company with Lord Westport, he first beheld and entered what he calls that "mighty wilderness, the city — no, not the city, but the nation — of London." They were merely passing through, but having to choose whether to visit Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's Cathedral, preferred the latter.

In his "Autobiographic Sketches," a full narrative is given of De Quincey's visit to Ireland, as Lord Westport's guest, through England and Wales to Holyhead — then as now the favorite port of communication with Ireland. The distance of sixty miles was traversed in thirty hours — steam navigation being then unknown. At this time, De Quincey wanted a few months of fifteen, but, thanks to the rank of his host, was introduced to Lord Cornwallis, the Viceroy of Ireland, as well as to Lord Clare (the Chancellor),

Lord Castlereagh, Foster (Speaker of the House of Commons), and other notorieties. Here, too, he witnessed the splendors of installing six knights (one of them being Lord Westport's father) of the Order of St. Patrick, and the not less impressive, but far more melancholy incident, of the final ratification, in the Irish House of Lords, of the Act by which the Parliament of Ireland was abolished, and the independence of a fine nation destroyed by the treachery of her own legislature. In one of his "Autobiographic Sketches," there is a graphic account of this "end of an auld sang" — to use Lord Bellhaven's plain-spoken criticism on the ratification of the Act of Union between Scotland and England. Soon after, De Quincey accompanied Lord Westport to that part of Connaught (the county of Mayo) in which the family estates chiefly lie, leisurely travelling in a series of short visits to the Irish nobility and gentry *en route*, and thus mixing with a higher class of society than school-boys of fifteen are generally in the way of associating with.

Early in November, 1800, De Quincey returned to Dublin, and after a short sojourn there — during which he fell in love with Miss Blake, a lovely Irishwoman, sister to Lord Wallscourt and to the Countess of Erroll — travelled back to England, Lord Westport returning to Eton, and De Quincey proceeding to Northamptonshire, on a visit to Lord Carbery, at which place intimation was made to him that some fixed resolution would be taken and announced to him with regard to the future disposal of his time until, two or three years later, he should be old enough to matriculate at Oxford or Cambridge. In the following year (1801), he was at Liverpool, where he became acquainted with Dr. Currie