

**CONFESSIONS OF AN
ENGLISH
OPIUM-EATER, AND
SUSPIRIA DE PROFUNDIS**

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Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, and Suspiria de Profundis by Thomas de Quincey

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THOMAS DE QUINCEY

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DE QUINCEY'S WRITINGS.

It is the intention of the Publishers to issue, at intervals, a complete collection of Mr. De Quincey's Writings, uniform with this volume. The three first volumes of the series will contain,—

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- II. Biographical Essays.
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CONFESIONS

OF AN

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BY

THOMAS DE QUINCEY.

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CONFESSIONS
OF
AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER,
BEING AN EXTRACT FROM
THE LIFE OF A SCHOLAR.

FROM THE AUTHOR TO THE READER.

I HERE present you, courteous reader, with the record of a remarkable period of my life; according to my application of it, I trust that it will prove, not merely an interesting record, but, in a considerable degree, useful and instructive. In *that* hope it is, that I have drawn it up; and *that* must be my apology for breaking through that delicate and honorable reserve, which, for the most part, restrains us from the public exposure of our own errors and infirmities. Nothing, indeed, is more revolting to English feelings, than the spectacle of a human being obtruding on our notice his moral ulcers or scars, and tearing away that "decent drapery," which time, or indulgence to human frailty, may have drawn over them: accordingly, the greater part of *our* confessions (that is, spontaneous and extra-judicial confessions) proceed from demireps, adven-

turers, or swindlers; and for any such acts of gratuitous self-humiliation from those who can be supposed in sympathy with the decent and self-respecting part of society, we must look to French literature, or to that part of the German, which is tainted with the spurious and defective sensibility of the French. All this I feel so forcibly, and so nervously am I alive to reproach of this tendency, that I have for many months hesitated about the propriety of allowing this, or any part of my narrative, to come before the public eye, until after my death (when, for many reasons, the whole will be published): and it is not without an anxious review of the reasons, for and against this step, that I have, at last, concluded on taking it.

Guilt and misery shrink, by a natural instinct, from public notice: they court privacy and solitude; and, even in the choice of a grave, will sometimes sequester themselves from the general population of the church-yard, as if declining to claim fellowship with the great family of man, and wishing (in the affecting language of Mr. Wordsworth)

— Humbly to express
A penitential loneliness,

It is well, upon the whole, and for the interest of us all, that it should be so; nor would I willingly, in my own person, manifest a disregard of