

**LETTERS,  
CONVERSATIONS, AND  
RECOLLECTIONS. IN  
TWO VOLUMES. VOL. II**

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Letters, conversations, and recollections. In two volumes. Vol. II by S. T. Coleridge

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**S. T. COLERIDGE**

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# LETTERS

## CONVERSATIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS

OF

S. T. COLERIDGE.

Pliny writ his Letters for the Public; so did Seneca, so did Balzac, Voiture, &c. &c.; Tully did not: and therefore these give us more pleasure than any which have come down to us from antiquity. When we read them we pry into a secret which was intended to be kept from us. That is a pleasure. We see Cato and Brutus and Pompey and others, such as they really were, and not such as the gaping multitude of their own age took them to be, or as Historians and Poets have represented them to ours. That is another pleasure. — BOTTICORNE to SWIFT.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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LETTERS, CONVERSATIONS,  
AND  
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LETTER XX.

*Sept. 15th, 1821.*

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I cannot rest until I have answered your last letter. I have contemplated your character, affectionately indeed, but through a clear medium. No film of passion, no glittering mist of outward advantages, has arisen between the sight and the object: I had no other prepossession than the esteem which my knowledge of your sentiments and conduct could not but secure for you. I soon

learnt to esteem you; and in esteeming, became attached to you. I began by loving the man on account of his conduct, but I ended in valuing the actions chiefly as so many looks and attitudes of the same person. "*Hast* thou any thing? Share it with me, and I will pay thee an equivalent. *Art* thou any thing? O then we will exchange souls."

We can none of us, not the wisest of us, brood over any source of affliction inwardly, keeping it back, and as it were pressing it in on ourselves; but we must MAGNIFY it. We cannot see it clearly, much less distinctly; and as the object enlarges beyond its real proportions, so it becomes vivid; and the feelings that blend with it assume a proportionate undue intensity. So the one acts on the other, and what at first was effect, in its turn becomes a cause; and when at length we have taken heart, and given the whole thing, with all its several parts, the proper distance from our mind's eye, by confiding it to a true friend, we are ourselves surprised to find what a dwarf the giant shrinks into, as soon as it steps out of the mist into clear sunlight.



I am aware that these are truths of which you do not need to be informed; but they will not be the less impressive on this account in your judgment, knowing, as you must know, that nothing short of my deep and anxious convictions of their importance in all cases of hidden distress, and of their *unspeakable* importance in yours, could impel me to *seek* and *entreat* your *entire* confidence, to beg you, so fervently as I here am doing, to open out to me the cause of your anxiety, that I may offer you the best advice in my power,—advice that will not be the less dispassionate from its being dictated by zealous friendship, and blended with the truest love.

I fear that in any decision to which you may come in any matter affecting yourself alone, you may, from a culpable delicacy of honour, which, forbidden by wisdom and the universal experience of others, cannot but be in contradiction to the genuine dictates of duty, want fortitude to choose the lesser evil, at whatever cost to your immediate feelings, and to put that choice into immediate and peremptory act. But I must finish. I trust that

the warmth and earnestness of my language are not warranted by the occasion ; but they are barely proportionate to the present solicitude of,

Your faithful and affectionate friend,

S. T. COLERIDGE.

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“ The German writers have acquired a style and an elegance of thought and of mind, just as we have attained a style and smartness of composition (thus in my notes), so that if you were to read an ordinary German author as an English one, you would say,—‘ This man *has something in him*, this man thinks ;’ whereas it is *merely* a method acquired by them, as we have acquired a style.”

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“ Dr. Young one day was speaking of John Hunter as being greatly over-rated, upon which I replied,—‘ Yes, to minds which, like birds entangled in the lime, scoff and sneer at those pinions of power that have emancipated themselves from the thrall which bound them, but are nevertheless

impeded in their upward progress by the shackles they have broken, but from the slime of which they are not freed.'

"The Doctor noticed my assimilating weight and gravity, *civilly* informing me that those who *understood* these matters considered them as different as fire and heat.

"I said, 'Yes, in that philosophy which, together with a great quantity of old clothes, I discarded thirty years ago, and which, by identifying cause and effect, destroys both.'"

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A copy of the *Lyrical Ballads* was sent to Mr. Fox, who dissented from the conclusions of Mr. Wordsworth as to *Ruth* and the *Brothers*, but expressed his admiration of "*We are Seven*," and "*The Linnet*," and conveyed his regret that he knew not to whom he was to refer the most beautiful poem in the language, "*Love*," adding,—“ I learn we are indebted to Mr. Coleridge for that exquisite poem, "*The Nightingale*.”

It is right that I should here observe, that the