

appreciate Mrs Evans!¹—but I suspect, his intellect is not tall enough even to measure her's!—Hartley is well—& will not walk or run, having discovered the art of crawling with wonderful ease & rapidity!—Wordsworth & his Sister are well—

I want to see your Wife—God bless her!—

Oh! my Tragedy—it is finished, transcribed, & to be sent off to day²—but I have no hopes of it's success—or even of it's being acted.—

God bless [you] &
S. T. Coleridge

210. To Thomas Poole

Address: Mr T. Poole
MS. Victoria University Lib. Pub. with omis. Letters, i. 13. This is the fourth of the autobiographical letters.

[Endorsed Octr 16th, (17)97]

Dear Poole

From October 1779 to Oct. 1781.—I had asked my mother one evening to cut my cheese *entire*, so that I might toast it: this was no easy matter, it being a *crumbly* cheese—My mother however did it—/ I went into the garden for some thing or other, and in the mean time my Brother Frank *minced* my cheese, 'to disappoint the

¹ Walter Evans had married Mrs. Evans of Darley. Cf. Letter 186.

² Two copies of *Osorio* were sent off, the first to William Linley, Sheridan's brother-in-law, on 14 Oct., the second via Bowles to Sheridan two days later (see Letter 211). On 2 Dec. Coleridge wrote that he had received a letter from Linley 'the long & the short of which is that Sheridan rejects the Tragedy' (cf. Letter 213). Coleridge had met Linley when he visited Bowles in Sept. 1797 and addressed the following sonnet to him:

To Mr William Linley
While my young cheek preserves it's healthful hues
And I have many friends, who hold me dear—
LINLEY! methinks, I would not often hear
Such melodies as thine, lest I should lose
All memory of the wrongs and sore distress
For which my miserable brethren weep:
But should uncomforted misfortunes steep
My daily bread in tears and bitterness,
And if in Death's dread moment I should lie
With no beloved face by my bed side
To catch the last glance of my closing eye—
O God! such songs breath'd by my angel guide
Would make me pass the cup of anguish by,
Mix with the blest, nor know that I had died!

S. T. Coleridge

Donhead | September 12th, | 1797 [MS. Buffalo Public Lib.]

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favorite'. I returned, saw the exploit, and in an agony of passion flew at Frank—he pretended to have been seriously hurt by my blow, flung himself on the ground, and there lay with outstretched limbs—I hung over him moaning & in a great fright—he leaped up, & with a horse-laugh gave me a severe blow in the face—I seized a knife, and was running at him, when my Mother came in & took me by the arm—/ I expected a flogging & struggling from her I ran away, to a hill at the bottom of which the Otter flows—about one mile from Ottery.— There I stayed; my rage died away; but my obstinacy vanquished my fears—& taking out a little shilling book which had, at the end, morning & evening prayers, I very devoutly repeated them—thinking at the same time with inward & gloomy satisfaction, how miserable my Mother must be!—I distinctly remember my feelings when I saw a Mr Vaughan pass over the Bridge, at about a furlong's distance—and how I watched the Calves in the fields beyond the river. It grew dark—& I fell asleep—it was towards the latter end of October—and it proved a dreadful stormy night—/ I felt the cold in my sleep, and dreamt that I was pulling the blanket over me, & actually pulled over me a dry thorn bush, which lay on the hill—in my sleep I had rolled from the top of the hill to within three yards of the River, which flowed by the unfenced edge of the bottom.—I awoke several times, and finding myself wet & stiff, and cold, closed my eyes again that I might forget it.—In the mean time my Mother waited about half an hour, expecting my return, when the *Sulks* had evaporated—I not returning, she sent into the Church-yard, & round the town—not found!—Several men & all the boys were sent to ramble about & seek me—in vain! My Mother was almost distracted—and at ten o'clock at night I was *cry'd* by the crier in Ottery, and in two villages near it—with a reward offered for me.—No one went to bed—indeed, I believe, half the town were up all one night! To return to myself—About five in the morning or a little after, I was broad awake; and attempted to get up & walk—but I could not move—I saw the Shepherds & Workmen at a distance—& cryed but so faintly, that it was impossible to hear me 30 yards off—and there I might have lain & died—for I was now almost given over, the ponds & even the river near which I was lying, having been dragged.—But by good luck Sir Stafford Northcote, who had been out all night, resolved to make one other trial, and came so near that he heard my crying—He carried me in his arms, for near a quarter of a mile; when we met my father & Sir Stafford's Servants.—I remember, & never shall forget, my father's face as he looked upon me while I lay in the servant's arms—so calm, and the tears stealing down his face: for I was the

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A a

child of his old age.—My Mother, as you may suppose, was outrageous with joy—in rushed a *young Lady*, crying out—‘I hope, you’ll whip him, Mrs Coleridge!’—This woman still lives at Ottery—& neither Philosophy or Religion have been able to conquer the antipathy which I *feel* towards her, whenever I see her.—I was put to bed—& recovered in a day or so—but I was certainly injured—For I was weakly, & subject to the ague for many years after.—

My Father (who had so little of parental ambition in him, that he had destined his children to be Blacksmiths &c, & had accomplished his intention but for my Mother’s pride & spirit of aggrandizing her family) my father had however resolved, that I should be a Parson. I read every book that came in my way without distinction—and my father was fond of me, & used to take me on his knee, and hold long conversations with me. I remember, that at eight years old I walked with him one winter evening from a farmer’s house, a mile from Ottery—& he told me the names of the stars—and how Jupiter was a thousand times larger than our world—and that the other twinkling stars were Suns that had worlds rolling round them—& when I came home, he shewed me how they rolled round— / . I heard him with a profound delight & admiration; but without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. For from my early reading of Faery Tales, & Genii &c &c—my mind had been habituated to the *Vast*—& I never regarded *my senses* in any way as the criteria of my belief. I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions not by my *sight*—even at that age. Should children be permitted to read Romances, & Relations of Giants & Magicians, & Genii?—I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative.—I know no other way of giving the mind a love of ‘the Great’, & ‘the Whole’.—Those who have been led to the same truths step by step thro’ the constant testimony of their senses, seem to me to want a sense which I possess—They contemplate nothing but *parts*—and all *parts* are necessarily little—and the Universe to them is but a mass of *little things*.¹—It is true, that the mind *may* become credulous & prone to superstition by the former method—but are not the Experimentalists credulous even to madness in believing any absurdity, rather than believe the grandest truths, if they have not the testimony of their own senses in their favor?—I have known some who have been *rationaly* educated, as it is styled. They were marked by a microscopic acuteness; but when they looked at great things, all became a blank & they saw nothing—and denied

¹ The similarity between the foregoing passage and Letter 209 has been obscured, since E. H. Coleridge printed the autobiographical letters at the beginning of his edition, thus placing them out of their chronological order.

(very illogically) that any thing could be seen; and uniformly put the negation of a power for the possession of a power—& called the want of imagination Judgment, & the never being moved to Rapture Philosophy!—

Towards the latter end of September 1781 my Father went to Plymouth with my Brother Francis, who was to go as Midshipman under Admiral Graves; the Admiral was a friend of my Father’s.—My Father settled my Brother; & returned Oct. 4th, 1781.—He arrived at Exeter about six o’clock—& was pressed to take a bed there by the Harts—but he refused—and to avoid their intreaties he told them—that he had never been superstitious—but that the night before he had had a dream which had made a deep impression. He dreamt that Death had appeared to him, as he is commonly painted, & touched him with his Dart. Well he returned home—& all his family, I excepted, were up. He told my mother his dream—; but he was in high health & good spirits—& there was a bowl of Punch made—& my Father gave a long & particular account of his Travel, and that he had placed Frank under a religious Captain &c—/ At length, he went to bed, very well, & in high Spirits.—A short time after he had lain down he complained of a pain in his bowells, which he was subject to, from the wind—my mother got him some peppermint water—and after a pause, he said—‘I am much better now, my dear!’—and lay down again. In a minute my mother heard a noise in his throat—and spoke to him—but he did not answer—and she spoke repeatedly in vain. Her *shriek* awaked me—& I said, ‘Papa is dead.’—I did not know [of] my Father’s return, but I knew that he was expected. How I came to think of his Death, I cannot tell; but so it was.—Dead he was—some said it was the Gout in the Heart—probably, it was a fit of Apoplexy / —He was an Israelite without guile; simple, generous, and, taking some scripture texts in their literal sense, he was conscientiously indifferent to the good & the evil of this world.—

God love you & S. T. Coleridge

211. To William Lisle Bowles

Address: The Revd W. L. Bowles | Donhead
MS. Yale University Lib. Pub. A Wiltshire Parson, by Garland Greever, 1926. 32.

Stowey near Bridgewater. Monday, Oct. 16th, 1797

My dear Sir

At last I send you the Tragedy complete & neatly transcribed—I have sent another to Mr Linley.—I endeavoured to strike out the character of Warville, the Englishman; and to substitute