

not always as satisfactory as to remember his heroic ballads. But in the variegated mass of his writings, and in the impression of life and zest in all that he wrote, the particular faults and fallacies may easily and rightly pass out of notice.—KER, W. P., 1896, *English Prose, ed. Craik, vol. v, pp. 410, 417.*

*Clearness* is one of Macaulay's most obvious merits; he never leaves you in doubt as to his meaning. But this clearness is partly due to the fact that he never grapples with difficult problems or deep thoughts for which language offers inadequate expression. He never goes out of his own depth; but neither does he ever take you out of yours; and this, though it has won him many readers, is a doubtful virtue. Sometimes the clearness is gained at the expense of exactness; statements are made too absolutely. His complete mastery over his material is often astonishing, when the amount of that material, the wealth of detail, is considered. In the art of constructing a complex narrative he has few equals. *Animation*, a quality which depends on a good many others; in Macaulay's case on his own interest in his story, on the swing of his sentences, on his pictorial phrases, his contrasts and comparisons, his energy in bestowing praise and blame, above all, on his love of the concrete. His *diffuseness* is a very serious fault, but, as it is not combined with dullness, it attracts many readers who would be bewildered by a quick succession of thoughts. Of the qualities of *strength*, *pathos*, and *humour*, and again of the *rhythm*, it may be said briefly that Macaulay has them all in the degree in which a good, but not the very greatest, orator has them. Those finer and subtler effects which, though they would be lost in speech, are in place on the printed page, are not to be found in him.—FOWLER, T. H., 1897, *XIX-Century Prose, p. 57.*

Hallam and Wordsworth, Dickens and

Thackeray and Carlyle are names not hard to place. Each of these has his evident and peculiar stamp. The same cannot be said of Macaulay. The clue to his genius is not easy to follow. To read his works is to delight the attention and inspire the feelings. But when we are asked to estimate him, we hesitate. In the cause of this hesitation, real difficulty must be added to something of reluctance. . . . His was a mind whose strength was closely allied to its weakness; which was too brilliant to be cautious, and too quick to be profound. His faults therefore lie side by side with his merits. Yet from every repeated appeal to his work, from weighing what is best in it against its acknowledged blots, we return with a conscious right to the assertion that, despite many failings, time will vindicate a great and an immortal name.—MACGREGOR, D. H., 1901, *Lord Macaulay, pp. 2, 5.*

Macaulay's style is clear, highly-coloured, lively, almost passionate; and above all, it is filled with a strong personality. In every line we seem to hear these words:—"I, Thomas Macaulay, a conscientious man of learning, and a friend of liberty, have by my studies arrived at this result; whether the matter, from the point of view of an inhabitant of another world, happened exactly as I related it or not, I do not know; but that is how I saw it." The secret of Macaulay's style is antithesis. It occurs so often that one would think his use of it was intentional, but for the frequency which he had recourse to it in his parliamentary speeches which proves that this peculiar style was natural to him. Antithesis is quite suitable to Macaulay's conception of history; absolute historical truth too, is beyond the reach of the greatest human genius; it is only by presenting both sides of the question that a fair average amount of truth can be arrived at.—ENGEL, EDWARD, 1902, *A History of English Literature, rev. Hamley Bent, p. 467.*

## Thomas DeQuincey

1785-1859

Born, in Manchester, 15 Aug. 1785. Educated privately at Salford; at Bath Grammar School, 1797 [?]-99; at school at Winkfield, Wilts, 1799-1800. To Manchester Grammar School, winter of 1800. Ran away from latter, July 1802. Lived a roving life in Wales, July to Nov., 1802. To London, Nov. 1802; after great distress there reconciled with family. Matric. Worcester Coll., Oxford, 17 Dec. 1803; left, without degree, 1807. Friendship with Coleridge begun, 1807. Visit to Oxford, and in London 1808. Student

of Middle Temple, 1808 [?]. With Wordsworth at Grasmere, Dec. 1808 to Feb. 1809. Settled in cottage at Townend, Westmoreland, Nov. 1809. In Edinburgh with Professor Wilson, winters of 1814-15 and 1815-16. Habitual taking of opium began, 1813. Married Margaret Simpson, winter of 1816. Contrib. to "Blackwood" and "Quarterly Review." Edited "Westmoreland Gazette," 1819-1820. To London, 1821. Through Lamb's introduction, became contributor to "London Magazine," in which the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" appeared, Oct. to Nov., 1821. Contrib. to "London Magazine," 1821-24; to Knight's "Quarterly Magazine," 1824. In Westmoreland, 1825. Contrib. to "Blackwood," 1826-49. Settled in Edinburgh, 1828; wife and children joined him there, 1830. Contrib. to "Edinburgh Literary Gazette," 1828-30; to "Tait's Magazine," 1834-51. Relapse into opium habit after wife's death in 1837; improvement in 1844. In Glasgow, March 1841 to June 1847. To Edinburgh, 1847. Died there, 8 Dec. 1859. Buried in West Churchyard, Edinburgh. *Works*: "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater" (anon.), 1822; "Klosterheim" (anon.), 1832; "The Logic of Political Economy," 1844; "Selections, grave and gay, from his writings," edited by himself (4 vols.), 1853-60. *Collected Works*: in 20 vols., 1853-55. *Life*: by H. A. Page, 1877; by Prof. Masson, 1881.—SHARP, R. FARQUHARSON, 1897, *A Dictionary of English Authors*, p. 77.

## PERSONAL

De Quincey is a singular man, but better informed than any person almost that I ever met at his age.—SOUTHEY, ROBERT, 1810, *To John Rickman*, Jan. 21; *Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. C. C. Southey, ch. xxi.

His person is small, his complexion fair, and his air and manner are those of a sickly and enfeebled man. From this circumstance his sensibility, which I have no doubt is genuine, is in danger of being mistaken for effeminateness. At least coarser and more robustly healthful persons may fall into this mistake.—ROBINSON, HENRY CRABB, 1812, *Diary*, June 17; *Diary, Reminiscences and Correspondence*, ed. Sadler.

You make one mistake, indeed two, but I will notice only one. I have had, you say, no doubt many unavoidable reasons for the delay. Now, in fact I have not; scarcely any at all, excepting my own native stupidity, which I greatly regret, but cannot remedy. I move slowly whenever I am uncommonly witty. Nevertheless, if you are more particular about quantity than quality I am perfectly ready to oblige you by changing my style. But articles as droll as this I really cannot produce faster; dull reviews, morality, &c. (and some wit, such as some I saw in your December No.), as fast as you please. In fact I have never left my paper, except on Thursday once to see Prof. Wilson—twice during the week to get some breakfast—dinner every day, and to write three letters this morning.—DE QUINCEY, THOMAS, 1821, *Letter to W. Blackwood*, Jan. 6; *William Blackwood and His Sons*, ed. Oliphant, vol. 1, p. 426.

On Wednesday the 28th, and Thursday, 29th of October, 1821, I passed the evening at Taylor and Hessey's in company with the author of "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," published in Nos. 21 and 22 of the *London Magazine*. I had formed to myself the idea of a tall, thin, pale, gentlemanly-looking, courtier-like man; but I met a short, sallow-looking person, of a very peculiar cast of countenance, and apparently much an invalid. His demeanour was very gentle, modest, and unassuming; and his conversation fully came up to the idea I had formed of what would be that of the writer of those articles. . . . The Opium-Eater appears to have read a great deal, and to have thought much more. I was astonished at the depth and *reality*, if I may so call it, of his knowledge. He seems to have passed nothing that occurred in the course of his study unreflected on or unremembered. His conversation appeared like the elaboration of a mine of results: and if at any time a general observation of his became matter of question or ulterior disquisition it was found that he had ready his reasons at a moment's notice; so that it was clear that his opinions were the fruits of his own reflections on what had come before him, and had not been taken up from others.—WOODHOUSE, RICHARD, 1821, *Notes of Conversations with Thomas De Quincey, De Quincey and his Friends*, ed. Hogg, pp. 72, 73.

To-day, too, I saw De Quincey: alas, poor Yorick!—CARLYLE, THOMAS, 1828, *To B. W. Procter*, Jan. 17; *Life by Conway*, p. 244.

You will doubtless read the last "Tait's Magazine." It contains the first of a series

of articles by DeQuincey on Wordsworth. Poor DeQuincey had a small fortune of eight or nine thousand pounds, which he has lost or spent; and now he lets his pen for hire. You know his articles on Coleridge: Wordsworth's turn has come now. At the close of his article, he alludes to a killing neglect which he once received from the poet, and which embittered his peace. I know the facts, which are not given. De Quincey married some humble country-girl in the neighborhood of Wordsworth; she was of good character, but not of that rank in which W. moved. The family of the latter never made her acquaintance nor showed her any civilities, though living comparatively in the same neighborhood. "Hinc illæ lacrimæ." When you now read DeQuincey's lamentations you may thus better understand them.—SUMNER, CHARLES, 1839, *To George S. Hillard*, Jan. 23; *Memoir and Letters of Sumner*, ed. Pierce, vol. II, p. 45.

Conceive a little, pale-faced, wo-begone, and attenuated man, with short indescribable, no coat, check shirt, and neckcloth twisted like a wisp of straw, opening the front door of his room in — street, advancing toward you with a hurried movement, and half-recognizing glance; saluting you in low and hesitating tones, asking you to be seated, and after he had taken a seat opposite you, but without looking you in the face, beginning to pour into your willing ear a stream of learning and wisdom as long as you are contented to listen to, or lend him the slightest clue. . . . His head is small, how can it carry all he knows? His brow is singular in shape, but not particularly large or prominent: where has nature expressed his majestic intellect? His eyes—they sparkle not, they shine not, they are lustreless: can that be a squint which glances over from them towards you? No, it is only a slight habit one of them has of occasionally looking in a different direction from the other; there is nothing else particular about them: there is not even the glare which lights up sometimes dull eyes into eloquence; and yet, even at first, the *tout ensemble* strikes you as that of no common man, and you say, ere he has opened his lips: "He is either mad or inspired."—GILFILLAN, GEORGE, 1845, *Literary Portraits, First Series*.

DeQuincey is a small old man of seventy years, with a very handsome face, and a

face, too, expressing the highest refinement; a very gentle old man, speaking with the greatest deliberation and softness, and so refined in speech and manners as to make quite indifferent his extremely plain and poor dress. For the old man, summoned by message on Saturday by Mrs. Crowe to his dinner, had walked on this stormy, muddy Sunday ten miles, from Lass Wade, where his cottage is, and was not yet dry; and though Mrs. Crowe's hospitality is comprehensive and minute, yet she had no pantaloons in her house. Here De Quincey is very serene and happy among just these friends where I found him; for he has suffered in all ways, and lived the life of a wretch for many years, but Samuel Brown and Mrs. C. and one or two more have saved him from himself, and defended him from bailiffs and a certain Fury of a Mrs. Macbold (I think it is), whom he yet shudders to remember, and from opium; and he is now clean, clothed, and in his right mind. . . . He talked of many matters, all easily and well, but chiefly social and literary; and did not venture into any voluminous music. When they first agreed at my request, to invite him to dine, I fancied some figure like the organ of York Minster would appear. In *tête-à-tête*, I am told, he sometimes soars and indulges himself, but not often in company. He invited me to dine with him on the following Saturday at Lass Wade, where he lives with his three daughters, and I accepted.—EMERSON, RALPH WALDO, 1848, *Letter*, Feb. 21; *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, ed. Cabot, vol. II, p. 520.

When he came out to receive me at his garden-gate I thought I had never seen anything so small and pale in the shape of a great man, nor a more impressive head on human shoulders. The unmistakable alabaster shine, which I had noticed in other opium-eaters, was on his face, and the restlessness of his body also proclaimed his well-known habit. Next after his personal appearance I was struck with his exquisite courtesy. There was a finish and elegance in his diction also which recalled something of Leigh Hunt's manner, and belonged perhaps to a particular era. I need hardly say that the habits of my host at Lass Wade were very eccentric.—FIELDS, JAMES T., 1852, *Letter, A Second Shelf of Old Books by Mrs. Fields, Scribner's Magazine*, vol. 5, p. 467.

Very decisively he realized my plan of moving in a separate world (having no doubt realities of its own); moreover, he neither spoke nor acted in the every-day world like any one else, for which, of course, I greatly honored him. He was then (1814) in the habit of taking opium daily as an article of food, and the drug, though used for years, had scarcely begun to tell on his constitution, by those effects, which, sooner or later, overtake every one of its persevering votaries. . . . His voice was extraordinary; it came as if from dream-land; but it was the most musical and impressive of voices. In convivial life, what then seemed to me the most remarkable trait of DeQuincey's character, was the power he possessed of easily changing the tone of ordinary thought and conversation into that of his own dream-land, till his auditors, with wonder, found themselves moving pleasantly along with him in a sphere of which they might have heard and read perhaps, but which had ever appeared to them inaccessible and far, far away! Seeing that he was always good-natured and social, he could take part, at commencement, in any sort of tattle or twaddle. The talk might be of "beeves," and he could grapple with them, if expected to do so, but his musical cadences were not in keeping with such work, and in a few minutes (not without some strictly logical sequence) he could escape at will from the beeves to butterflies, and thence to the soul's immortality, to Plato, and Kant, and Schelling, and Fichte, to Milton's early years and Shakespeare's sonnets, to Wordsworth and Coleridge, to Homer and Æschylus, to St. Thomas of Aquin, St. Basil, and St. Chrysostom. But he by no means excluded them from real life, according to his own views of that life, but would recount profound mysteries from his own experiences—visions that had come over him in his loneliest walks among the mountains, and passages within his own personal knowledge, illustrating, if not proving, the doctrines of dreams, of warnings, of second sight, and mesmerism. And whatever the subject might be, every one of his sentences (or of his chapters, I might say) was woven into the most perfect logical texture, and uttered in a tone of sustained melody.—GILLIES, ROBERT PEARCE, 1854, *Memoirs of a Literary Veteran*.

Let this strange commentator on indi-

vidual character meet with more mercy and a wiser interpretation than he was himself capable of. He was not made like other men; and he did not live, think, or feel like them. A singular organization was singularly and fatally deranged in its action before it could show its best quality. Marvellous analytical faculty he had; but it all oozed out in barren words. Charming eloquence he had; but it degenerated into egotistical garrulity, rendered tempting by the gilding of his genius.—MARTINEAU, HARRIET, 1859, *Biographical Sketches*, p. 100.

Malmesbury met us, the future diplomatist, drinking claret and playing whist with Eden and Charles Fox; the brilliant though discursive writer whom we have so recently lost, DeQuincey, was there, entering hall with coat buttoned to the throat, and gown drawn close about him to conceal the rents in his threadbare habiliments.—GREEN, JOHN RICHARD, 1859-1901, *Oxford During the Eighteenth Century, Oxford Studies*, ed. Green and Norgate, p. 242.

His tastes were very simple, though a little troublesome, at least to the servant who prepared his repast. Coffee, boiled rice and milk, and a piece of mutton from the loin, were the materials that invariably formed his diet. The cook, who had an audience with him daily, received her instructions in silent awe, quite overpowered by his manner; for, had he been addressing a duchess, he could scarcely have spoken with more deference. He would couch his request in such terms as these: "Owing to dyspepsia afflicting my system, and the possibility of any additional derangement of the stomach taking place, consequences incalculably distressing would arise, so much indeed as to increase nervous irritation, and prevent me from attending to matters of overwhelming importance, if you do not remember to cut the mutton in a diagonal rather than a longitudinal form."—GORDON, MARY, 1862, *Christopher North, A Memoir of John Wilson*, p. 327.

The next slide of the lantern is to represent a quite peculiar and abnormal case. It introduces a strangely fragile, unsubstantial, and puerile figure, wherein, however, resided one of the most potent and original spirits that ever frequented a tenement of clay. He shall be called, on account of associations that may or may not be found out, Thomas Papaverius. . . . In what mood and shape, shall he be brought

forward? Shall it be as first we met at the table of Lucullus, whereto he was seduced by the false pretense that he would there meet with one who entertained novel and anarchical opinions regarding the Golden Ass of Apuleius? No one speaks of waiting dinner for him. He will come and depart at his own sweet will, neither burdened by punctualities nor burdening others by exacting them. The festivities of the afternoon are far on when the commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other stray animal had found its way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of his arrival; he opens the door, and fetches in the little stranger. What can it be? A street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a particoloured belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list-shoes, covered with snow, for it is a stormy winter-night; and the trousers—some one suggests that they are inner linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world—it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand. Had chance thrown to him a court single-breasted coat, with a bishop's apron, a kilt, and top-boots, in these he would have made his entry.—BURTON, JOHN HILL, 1862, *The Book Hunter*, ed. White, p. 29.

His sensitiveness was so extreme, in combination with the almost ultra-courtesy of a gentleman, that he hesitated to trouble a servant with any personal requests without a long prefatory apology. My family were in the country in the summer of 1825, when he was staying at my house in Pall Mall East. A friend or two had met him at dinner, and I had walked part of the way home with one of them. When I returned, I tapped at his chamber-door to bid him good night. He was sitting at the open window, habited as a prize-fighter when he enters the ring. "You will take cold," I exclaimed. "Where is your shirt?" "I have not a shirt—my shirts are unwashed." "But why not tell the servant to send them to the laundress?" "Ah! how could I presume to do that in Mrs. Knight's absence?" —KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1863, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century*, p. 236.

He was a pretty little creature, full of wire-drawn ingenuities; bankrupt enthusiasms, bankrupt pride; with the finest silver-toned low voice, and most elaborate gently-winding courtesies and ingenuities in conversation: "What wouldn't one give to have him in a Box, and take him out to talk!" (That was *Her* criticism of him; and it was right good). A bright, ready and melodious talker; but in the end an inconclusive and long-winded. One of the smallest man-figures I ever saw; shaped like a pair of tongs; and hardly above five feet in all: when he sat, you would have taken him, by candle light, for the beautifullest little Child; blue-eyed, blonde-haired, sparkling face,—had there not been a something too, which said, "*Eccovi*, this Child has been in Hell!"—CARLYLE, THOMAS, 1866, *Edward Irving, Reminiscences*, ed. Norton, vol. II, p. 152.

I did not like him.—PROCTER, BRYAN WALLER, 1874(?) *Recollections of Men of Letters*, ed. Patmore, p. 211.

With that noble honesty and candour for which, no less than for intellectual endowments and highest mental cultivation, he was distinguished, and with a child-like simplicity and most captivating kindness, he expressed the feeling—amounting to a deep-seated conviction of what was imperatively demanded—that the physician should be informed, with the most scrupulous fidelity, as to all the habits of his patient. I then learned, as I had been led to believe, that for a long period Mr. De Quincey's indulgence in opium was extremely limited; though the total abandonment of its use he had found to be (and with this conclusion, in a case of confirmed habit, medical men will not be disposed to differ) inconsistent with that enjoyment of that bodily health, but more particularly that state of mental calmness and tranquility, the possession of which he desiderated above all things. . . . How much the substantial power and brilliant fancy of his writings had to do with opium-eating, I do not inquire; but that it helped to keep active and entire, during so many years of bodily feebleness, that large and constant-working brain—that, in a word, it fed it, I have no manner of doubt. And further, that the almost singular immunity Mr. DeQuincey enjoyed from headache, which, in the course of his long life, he never knew—a common source of

annoyance, oftentimes of misery, to ordinary-living students—was likely enough due to the opium, I also believe.—BEGBIE, DR. WARBURTON, 1876, *Thomas DeQuincey; His Life and Writings*, ed. Japp, vol. II, pp. 296, 297.

Opium cannot communicate to the brain any power or faculty of which it is not already possessed; although (as in DeQuincey's case), by subduing an enemy, which had by its painful assaults on a remote part of the nervous system temporarily paralyzed the central powers of the intellect, it could again restore harmony of action to these powers. It could in no way *create* moral affections, though it might resuscitate them, by removing from them an overpowering load of physical suffering. It could add no iota to the great light of the majestic intellect, although when this might be suffering a temporary eclipse, as was too frequently the case with this great writer, when his gnawing malady pervaded his entire consciousness with torments which dominated the power of thought—it might, under such circumstances, restore that great light, by dissipating the shadow that obscured it.—EATWELL, SURGEON-MAJOR W. C. B., 1877, *A Medical View of Mr. DeQuincey's Case, Thomas DeQuincey; His Life and Writings*, ed. Japp, Appendix, vol. II, p. 338.

His other extravagance grew out of the morbid value he set upon his papers and their not being disturbed. He was in the habit of accumulating these till, according to his own description, he was "snowed up," which meant when matters came to such an extremity that there was not a square inch of room on the table to set a cup upon, that there was no possibility of making his bed for the weight of papers gathered there, that there was no chair which could be used for its legitimate purpose, and that the track from the door to the fireplace, which had always to be considered, had been blotted out, even for his own careful treading; then he locked the door upon this impracticable state of things, and turned elsewhere; leaving his landlady, if simple and honest, fearfully impressed with the mysterious sin of meddling with his papers, but, if dishonest, with such a handle for playing upon his morbid anxieties, as was a source of livelihood. At his death there were, I believe, about six places where he had these deposits, it may be imagined at

what expense.—SMITH, MRS. BAIRD, 1877, *Thomas DeQuincey; His Life and Writings*, ed. Japp, vol. I, p. 363.

The romance of Mignon is hardly more pathetically beautiful than that which passed in this vale at the time. DeQuincey, heart hungry, found in little Kate Wordsworth all that divine beauty and sweetness which Nature was aiming at in her flowers, streamlets, and rosy dawns. To walk these grassy lanes, to watch the growth of her mind, to listen to her lyrical voice—this was his library, his study, his heaven. He had often known what it was to wander all night, cold and nearly starved, along the streets of London, huddling with the wretched of both sexes under any rude shelter from sleet and rain; he had touched, albeit morally unscathed, the very floor of the pit of poverty and every horror; little by little he had toiled upward, and the benediction of his life, the spirit of his dawn after the long, black night, was little Kate, nestling in his heart, interpreting for him the meaning of the world in her unconscious grace and joyousness. At sunset on June 4, 1812, she went to bed in good health; at dawn she was dead. "Never," wrote her unhappy friend—"never from the foundations of those mighty hills was there so fierce a convulsion of grief as mastered my faculties on receiving that heart-shattering news." His visits were no longer to Allan Bank, but to the little grave. Many a night of frantic grief did DeQuincey pass on that grave. Then she rose again for him, and as he walked the fields her form appeared, but always on the opposite side of the field.—CONWAY, MONCURE DANIEL, 1881, *The English Lakes and their Genii*, *Harper's Magazine*, vol. 62, p. 177.

A more gracious and genial personage I never met. Picture to yourself a very diminutive man, carelessly—very carelessly—dressed; a face lined, careworn, and so expressionless that it reminded one of "that chill, changeless brow, where cold Obstruction's apathy appalls the gazing mourner's heart"—a face like death in life. The instant he began to speak, however, it lit up as though by electric light; this came from his marvellous eyes, brighter and more intelligent (though by fits) than I have ever seen in any other mortal. They seemed to me to glow with eloquence. . . . The announcement of luncheon was perhaps for the first time in my young life



unwelcome to me. Miss DeQuincey did the honors with gracious hospitality, pleased, I think, to find that her father had so rapt a listener. I was asked what wine I would take, and not caring which it was, I was about to pour myself out a glass from the decanter that stood next to me. "You must not take that," whispered my hostess, "it is not port-wine, as you think." It was in fact laudanum, to which DeQuincey presently helped himself with the greatest *sang-froid*. I regarded him aghast, with much the same feelings as those with which he himself had watched the Malay at Grasmere eat the cake of opium, and with the same harmless result. The liquor seemed to stimulate rather than dull his eloquence.—PAYN, JAMES, 1884, *Some Literary Recollections*, pp. 48, 49.

A man, once seen, never to be forgotten. His appearance has been often described, but generally, I think, with a touch of caricature. He was a very little man (about 5 feet 3 or 4 inches); his countenance the most remarkable for its intellectual attractiveness that I have ever seen. His features, though not regular, were aristocratically fine, and an air of delicate breeding pervaded the face. His forehead was unusually high, square, and compact. At first sight his face appeared boyishly fresh and smooth, with a sort of hectic glow upon it that contrasted remarkably with the evident appearances of age in the grizzled hair and dim-looking eyes. The flush or bloom on the cheek was, I have no doubt, an effect of his constant use of opium; and the apparent smoothness of the face disappeared upon examination. . . . Mr. DeQuincey's eyes were dark in colour, the iris large, but with a strange flatness and dimness of aspect, which, however, did not indicate any deficiency of sight. So far as I have observed he saw distant objects tolerably well, and almost to the very end of his life he could read the smallest print without spectacles. . . . No one who ever met DeQuincey could fail to be struck, after even the briefest intercourse, with the extreme sweetness and courtesy of his manners. He had the air of old-fashioned good manners of the highest kind; natural and studied politeness, free from the slightest ostentation or parade; a delicacy, gentleness, and elegance of demeanour that at once conciliated and charmed. . . . In his mode of conversing, as in everything else, his

courtesy of manner was observable. He never monopolized talk, allowed every one to have a fair chance, and listened with respectful patience to the most commonplace remarks from any one present. The fact that anyone was, for the time, a member of the company in which he also happened to be, evidently in his eyes entitled the speaker to all consideration and respect. But he had a just horror of bores, and carefully avoided them.—FINDLAY, JOHN RITCHIE, 1885, *Personal Recollections of Thomas DeQuincey*, pp. 2, 4, 5, 8.

There glided noiselessly into the room, like a shadow, a little weird-looking old man, saffron-colored, with unkempt hair, dirty collar, long snuff-brown coat, feet sliding about in large India-rubber galoches, and extended to me a wee, fleshless hand, more like a bird-claw than "the prehensile organ of man's supremacy." . . . As he closed the book a strange light seemed to glow through his eyes and illuminate his face. He began to talk with a voice that seemed to flow out of the unknown—low, mellifluous, ceaseless, filling one with awe. We listened almost breathless and soon found ourselves sitting on the floor at his feet, looking into his transfigured face like entranced children. On, on, he discoursed, as I have never heard mortal discourse before or since. If one could imagine all the wisdom, sentiment, and learning to be crushed from DeQuincey's many volumes of printed books, and to be poured out, a continuous stream, he might form some conception of that long discourse—how long we knew not. When the monologue ceased I looked at my watch, and found it was three o'clock in the morning.—WRIGHT, O. W., 1888, *A Winding Journey Around the World*.

DeQuincey, with his clever brains and shallow character.—MORLEY, JOHN, 1888-90, *Studies in Literature*, p. 17.

This inclusion of DeQuincey among those who were past and gone was one of the eccentric incidents which surrounded that man of genius. When Mr. Fields inquired for him more particularly he was assured of his death, although "after a search," he writes, "I found him alive and well in a cottage ten miles out of Edinburgh. I inquired for him again in London in 1852, and authors and critics, with very few exceptions, were uncertain where he lived, and one, a man of mark, declared to me

that he heard then his name for the first time." It is already too well known for me to dwell upon it here, that the writings of Thomas DeQuincey had never been collected until they were gathered together by Mr. Fields and printed in an edition of twenty-two volumes, published consecutively in Boston. This might well account for his being unknown in England by a busy writer, for "who read an American book" in those days, and these twenty-two volumes might be considered American, inasmuch as DeQuincey had never signed his papers in the English Reviews, which were therefore only discoverable by their style.—FIELDS, ANNE, 1889, *A Second Shelf of Old Books, Scribner's Magazine*, vol. 5, p. 466.

If, ever after this, the reader would still have something more, let him take these lines from Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" with the assurance that all who ever saw DeQuincey in his old age recognize in them the most startlingly accurate description of him, as if by some prophetic anticipation, that could possibly be given in succinct metre:

"He came, the bard, a little Druid wight  
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,  
With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,  
As is his sister of the copses green,  
He crept along, unpromising of mien.  
Gross he who judges so! his soul was fair."

If the name "bard" may be extended to a prose-writer of the bardic class, this description also is exact in almost every point.—MASSON, DAVID, 1889, ed. *The Collected Writings of Thomas DeQuincey, General Preface*, vol. I, p. xxvi.

So meagre are the known facts in a life of seventy-four years, during nearly forty years of which DeQuincey, though never popular, was still recognised as a great name in English letters, while during the same period he knew, and was known to, not a few distinguished men. But little as is recorded of the facts of his life, even less is recorded of his character, and for once it is almost impossible to discover that character from his works. The few persons who met him all agree as to his impenetrability,—an impenetrability not in the least due to posing, but apparently natural and fated. DeQuincey was at once egotistic and impersonal, at once delighted to talk and resolutely shunning society. To him, one is tempted to say, reading and

writing did come by nature, and nothing else was natural at all. With books he is always at home. A DeQuincey in a world where there was neither reading nor writing of books, would certainly either have committed suicide or gone mad.—SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1890, *DeQuincey, Essays in English Literature, 1780-1860*, p. 314.

From childhood to old age, indeed, De Quincey was a puzzle to all who knew him. In manners he was a courtly gentleman: in appearance, as Miss Mitford writes, he looked like a beggar. With knowledge that seemed boundless, he frequently acted like a child or a fool; always courteous in speech, he could be bitter, inconsiderate, and even malicious, in print; shy and reserved in society, he wrote of himself with a shamelessness that almost reminds us of Rousseau; regardless of money he scattered it among the most worthless of beggars, and was constantly in pecuniary difficulties. DeQuincey had the warmest affection for his wife and children, but he often left them to live, nobody knew how, in solitary lodgings. Throughout the night he would ramble for miles over the country, or write for the press, and the best part of the day was given to slumber, to be followed frequently by nervous suffering, and a wretchedness "not utterable to any human ear." With a mind of amazing versatility, and many a beautiful trait of character, it is impossible to read DeQuincey's life without seeing that it was, in great measure, a wreck, and that this failure was due, as in the case of Coleridge, to opium.—DENNIS, JOHN, 1891, *DeQuincey, Leisure Hour*, vol. 40, p. 241.

Another very slovenly fellow was De Quincey, and he was devoted to reading in bed. But DeQuincey was a very vandal when it came to the care and use of books. He never returned volumes he borrowed, and he never hesitated to mutilate a rare book in order to save himself the labor and trouble of writing out a quotation.—FIELD, EUGENE, 1895, *The Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*, p. 36.

It was on the 13th of July, 1852, that I saw Mr. DeQuincey for the first time; but the welcome that he gave me at this first meeting was that of an old friend. . . . And now I was seated beside the author himself, a listener to the dulcet tones of that earnest but softly subdued voice, often tremulous with emphasis, and most musical



when most melancholy. Gladly and gratefully would I have compounded for listening only. But Mr. DeQuincey was jealous of his rights as a listener too, even where, as in my case, those rights might have been absolutely renounced to our common advantage. Nothing could better manifest the innate courtesy, the even sensitive considerateness of the man, than his conduct in this respect. A master of the art of conversation, this he is on all sides known to have been; but I do not remember to have seen any injustice done to his surpassing attainments as a good listener. He was always for giving away; scrupulously on the watch for any, the slightest, token of interruption, objection, comment, assent, question, or answer, nothing could exceed the tone of unaffected deference with which he gave heed as well as ear to whatever his companion might have to say.—JACOX, FRANCIS, 1895, *Recollections, DeQuincey and his Friends*, ed. Hogg, pp. 219, 220.

From infancy to old age, we find in him this unique combination—love of meditation, and quick reactions which demanded the stimulus of contact with common human nature. There was in him none of the impatience with the ignorant and rude that is so commonly associated with culture, with the love of meditation and of abstract thought. Wherever he goes he has, in a very marked degree, the art of making himself at home. If others cannot sympathize with him in his lofty thoughts and imaginings, he can sympathize with them, in their thought and concerns, and in such a measure that he gains at once their secret and affection. As we follow him through his long life, we find him a kind of center of attraction for persons of the most contrasted natures, temperaments and social positions: his rare courtesy, which was born of his quick sympathies and kindly hospitalities, which delighted in making all with whom he had to do completely at home, has been celebrated by all with whom he came in contact; and by the servants as decidedly as by their masters.—JAPP, ALEXANDER H., 1895, *DeQuincey and His Friends*, ed. Hogg, p. 1.

In old Scottish fashion I have sought to place this "stone upon the cairn" of the man who treated me and counselled me with an utmost paternal tenderness. Above and beyond all questions of intellectual power, of scholarship, or beauty of style,—*what*

*human lesson stands out clear and strong throughout these recollections?* That, surely, of perfect, unswerving kindness in daily life; an antique, chivalrous courtesy and gracious consideration for people of every class, whatever their temper, whatever their foibles. If ever man attained unto the fullest measure of that Scripture which ordains—"having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous"—that man was THOMAS DEQUINCEY.—HOGG, JAMES, 1895, *DeQuincey and His Friends*, Preface, p. xii.

Poverty is sometimes a noble and respectable thing, and when the issues have any sort of greatness there is a kind of excitement in the alternate downfalls and successes of the penniless but courageous struggle. But when the strife is for a few pounds, when the milkman's bill is the rock in the way, and shillings and pence the munitions of war, the echo of that dreary and hopeless fighting in the dark has nothing but misery in it. DeQuincey puts forth his privations, his wanderings about from one lodging to another, sometimes waylaid in his bed by a furious creditor, sometimes suffering torture for want of a box of Seidlitz powders, always with elaborate explanation of how in the extraordinary combination of fate it has come to be so, but can never by any calculation of human probabilities be so again—to the publisher who never seems to refuse the necessary dole, but inevitably is sometimes a little impatient and provoked by the perpetual messengers and the dole on the other side of a page or two at a time.—OLIPHANT, MARGARET O. W., 1897, *William Blackwood and His Sons*, vol. I, p. 423.

#### CONFESSIONS OF AN ENGLISH OPIUM-EATER

1821-22

Have you heard anything of a book which every body (meaning every idle Athenian eager for novelty) is now reading? It is called the "Confessions of an English Opium Eater." Many strange things and persons have I encountered in my journey through life, and, among the rest, this same Opium Eater. I spent an idle half day talking with him fourteen years ago in London, when he was a student at Oxford, and met him once since. I directly recognised him through the thin disguise in his book: I am since assured that I have not been mistaken. Ask more about

him, if you have any taste remaining for oddities.—GRANT, ANNE, 1823, *To Mrs. Brown, Feb, 13; Memoir and Correspondence, ed. Grant, vol. II, p. 330.*

That thrice-double demoniac the æconomical opium-eater.—BEDDOES, THOMAS LOVELL, 1824, *To Thomas Forbes Kelsall, April 17; Letters, ed. Gosse, p. 24.*

I send you a bantering "Epistle of an Old Gentleman whose Education is supposed to have been neglected." Of course, it was suggested by some letters of your admirable Opium-Eater, the discontinuance of which has caused so much regret to myself in common with most of your readers.—LAMB, CHARLES, 1825, *To the Editor of the London Magazine.*

DeQuincey seems like a man bound on a journey to a certain place, the way to which is straight, but who prefers wandering out of the road, to which he occasionally returns—and immediately deviates off in another direction. It is not difficult to see that a long time must pass before he reaches his journey's end, or that, when he does reach it, the purpose for which he started may be rendered unavailable by the delay. This is the more unpardonable in DeQuincey, who, in the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," has produced one of the most charming books in the language, by making it simple in style and natural in expression.—MACKENZIE, R. SHELTON, 1854, *ed. Noctes Ambrosianæ, vol. I, p. 5, note.*

I wrote, in September, 1821: "We never read anything more deeply interesting than the 'Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.' We can put implicit faith in them. They have all the circumstantial sincerity of Defoe. They are written in a fine flowing style, in which the author is perfectly forgotten." After the publication of two articles on the Pleasures and Pains of Opium, the majority of their readers doubted the reality of these Confessions. The author, in a letter to the editor of the magazine, declared that the narrative contained a faithful statement of his own experience as an Opium-Eater, drawn up with entire simplicity, except in some trifling deviations of dates and suppressions of names which circumstance had rendered it expedient should not be published.—KNIGHT, CHARLES, 1863, *Passages of a Working Life During Half a Century, p. 185.*

Of all these miscellaneous writers Carlyle

was the most original, and Thomas De Quincey the greatest writer of English prose. DeQuincey's style has so peculiar a quality that it stands alone. The sentences are built up like passages in a fugue, and there is nothing in English literature which can be compared in involved melody to the prose of the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater."—BROOKE, STOPFORD A., 1876, *English Literature (Primer), p. 138.*

DeQuincey himself, in descanting on the Dream-faculty, says, "Habitually to dream magnificently, a man must have a constitutional determination to reverie." In that sentence he announces the true law of all literature that comes under the order of pure phantasy. But in his case, in spite of the strength of the dream-element, we cannot proceed far till we discover that his determination to reverie was but the extreme projection of one phase of a phenomenal nature balancing its opposite. He was also shrewd, observant, master of a fine humour that demanded contact with life for its free exercise. From a nice examination of details he was under an inborn necessity to rise to the principle that relates them, linking the disparate together; deeply interested in the most practical and dry of studies—political economy. He was skilled in the exercises of the analytic understanding—a logician exacting and precise—else his dreaming had never gained for him the eminence it has gained. Surely it is calculated to strike the most casual reader on a perusal of that first edition of the "Confessions," that his powers of following up sensational effects and tracing with absolute exactness the most delicately varying shades of experience, and recording them with conscientious precision, were as noticeable as were the dreams to which they were served to give effect. No proper ground has been laid for a liberal and sympathetic appreciation of DeQuincey till these points have been clearly apprehended; and assuredly this is one of the cases where, as he himself has well said, "not to sympathise is not to understand."—JAPP, ALEXANDER H., 1877, *Thomas DeQuincey; His Life and Writings, vol. I, p. 1.*

The extraordinary autobiography contained in these "Confessions" loses nothing in the telling; the style of DeQuincey is always refined, and his English perfect, while for the more striking qualities of the narrator we would almost say that the pictures of

the wanderings of the friendless lad through the pitiless streets and his strange companionship with poor Ann of Oxford Street and her unhappy sisters are almost too powerful. The sensation excited by the "Confessions" was immense. Many critics regarded them as entirely a work of imagination, and, as we have said, it is still doubtful how much of the narrative may be genuine. DeQuincey, however, always asserted it to be so, and the point can never be cleared up now.—OLIPHANT, MARGARET O. W., 1892, *The Victorian Age of English Literature*, p. 58.

While all controlled reasoning was suspended under the incantation of opium, his quick mind, without conscious intent, without prejudice or purpose, assembled such mysterious and wonderful sights and sounds as the naked soul might see and hear in the world of actual experience. For De Quincey's range of action and association was not as narrow as might seem. He had walked the streets of London friendless and starving, saved from death by a dram given by one even more wretched than he, only a few months after he had talked with the king. DeQuincey's latent images are therefore not grotesque, or mediæval, not conditioned by any philosophical theory, not of any Inferno or Paradise. The elements of his visions are the simple elements of all our striking experiences: the faces of the dead, the grieving child, the tired woman, the strange foreign face, the tramp of horses' feet. And opium merely magnified these simple elements, rendered them grand and beautiful without giving them any forced connection or relative meaning. We recognise the traces of our own transfigured experience, but we are relieved from the necessity of accepting it as having an inner meaning. DeQuincey's singular hold on our affection seems, therefore, to be his rare quality of presenting the unusual but typical dream or reverie as a beautiful object of interest, without endeavoring to give it the character of an allegory or a fable.—CARPENTER, GEORGE R., 1897, *Library of the World's Best Literature*, ed. Warner, vol. VIII, p. 4558.

#### GENERAL

Convince yourself that your work is what you call it, as nearly as your honest powers could make it; and the man who censures it either tells you nothing that you did not know before, or tells you lies; both of which

sorts of intelligence you will find it a very simple matter to light your pipe with. There was a luckless wight of an *opium-eater* here, one DeQuincey, for instance, who wrote a very vulgar and brutish Review of "Meister" in the *London Magazine*. I read three pages of it one *sick* day at Birmingham; and said: "Here is a man who writes of things which he does not rightly understand; I see clean over the top of *him*, and his vulgar spite, and his commonplace philosophy; and I will away and have a ride on (Badams') Taffy, and leave *him* to cry in the ears of the simple." So I went out, and had my ride accordingly; and if DeQuincey, poor little fellow, *made* anything of his review, he can put it in his waistcoat pocket, and thank the god Mercurius.—CARLYLE, THOMAS, 1825, *To John A. Carlyle*, Jan. 22; *Early Letters*, ed. Norton, p. 323.

Did you read "Blackwood"? and in that case have you had deep delight in an exquisite paper by the *Opium-eater*, which my heart trembled through from end to end? What a poet that man is! how he vivifies words, or deepens them, and gives them profound significance.—BROWNING, ELIZABETH BARRETT, 1843, *To Mr. Westwood*, Dec. 31; *Letters*, ed. Kenyon, vol. 1, p. 161.

This very clever work ["Logic of Political Economy"] is intended to unravel intricacies and to expose sundry errors in the application of the Ricardian theory of value. It would, however, have been more popular and successful had it been less scholastic. It is right to be logical, but not to be perpetually obtruding logical forms and technicalities on the reader's attention. This sort of affectation is little noticed in a brief essay like the *Templars' Dialogues*; but in a goodly-sized volume like the present it becomes tiresome and repulsive.—McCULLOCH, JOHN RAMSAY, 1847, *Literature of Political Economy*, p. 20.

Well learned in ancient and modern tongues, he has written a vast quantity, but when his transcendental and unintelligible metaphysics are weeded out, the actual substance of his works will be in a small space. With the German school of philosophy he is well acquainted, and has endeavored, chiefly by translation, to make his countrymen familiar with it. He has written a great deal—chiefly for magazines. Sometimes he is extremely graphic and picturesque, but his great fault is

diffuseness, want of concentration, and an inability to discuss a subject without digressions—*apropos* to nothing. His writings have been published in America in a collected form; this has not been done in England, where only a selection could obtain a sale.—MACKENZIE, R. SHELTON, 1854, *ed. Noctes Ambrosianæ*, vol. 1, p. 362, note.

Strip the style off and leave the matter in Mr. DeQuincey's essays, and you would find that it is like taking the sound out of a grove of pines.—KING, THOMAS STARR, 1861, *Books and Reading, Substance and Show and Other Essays*, ed. Whipple, p. 382.

The key-note of preparation, the claim which pre-eminently should be set forth in advance, is this: that DeQuincey was the prince of hierophants, or of pontifical hierarchs, as regards all those profound mysteries which from the beginning have swayed the human heart, sometimes through the light of angelic smiles lifting it upwards to an altitude just beneath the heavens, and sometimes shattering it, with a shock of quaking anguish, down to earth. As it was the function of the hierophant, in the Grecian mysteries, to show the sacred symbols as concrete incarnations of faith, so was it DeQuincey's to reveal in open light the everlasting symbols, universally intelligible when once disclosed, which are folded in the evolutions of dreams and of those meditations which most resemble dreams; and as to the manner of those revelations, no Roman *pontifex maximus*, were it even Cæsar himself, could have rivalled their magisterial pomp.—ALDEN, HENRY M., 1863, *Thomas DeQuincey*, *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 12, p. 345.

The books that Mr. DeQuincey, first and last, tantalized his admirers by projecting, in divers and diverse lines of authorship—now a great history, now an exhaustive philosophy of the mind, now an elaborate fiction,—were many enough to indicate his nearness of kin to Coleridge and Herder, both of whom he has somewhere termed "men of infinite title-pages"; indeed, he used to mention his hearing Coleridge own that his title-pages alone (titles, that is, of works meditated but unexecuted) would fill a large volume; and of Herder he takes it to be clear that, if his power had been commensurate with his will, all other authors must have been put down, and that many generations would have been unable

to read to the end of his works.—JACOX, FRANCIS, 1872, *Aspects of Authorship*, p. 307.

As a literary critic, his catholicity of spirit and breadth of view were unique among the men of his time. Rarely indeed, if ever, has a mind so calm, unprejudiced, and comprehensive, been applied to the work of criticism. In his own day he was usually numbered among the "Lakers," or partisans of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Southey. He was so only in the sense of treating these remarkable men with justice. He, better than Jeffrey himself, knew the shortcomings of Wordsworth, condemned his theory of poetic diction, and made fun of absurdities in "The Excursion;" but he felt the shortcomings with calm discrimination, and was not misled by them into undervaluing the striking originality of Wordsworth's genius. He was one of the most devout of the admirers of Shakespeare and as we have seen, entered with passionate rapture into the majestic harmonies of Milton; but he had no part in the common bond of the Lakers—their wholesale contempt for Pope. . . . The melody of DeQuincey's prose is pre-eminently rich and stately. He takes rank with Milton as one of our greatest masters of stately cadence, as well as of sublime composition. If one may trust one's ear for general impression, Milton's melody is sweeter and more varied; but for magnificent effects, at least in prose, the palm must probably be assigned to DeQuincey. In some of DeQuincey's grandest passages the language can be compared only to the swell and crash of an orchestra.—MINTO, WILLIAM, 1872-80, *Manual of English Prose Literature*, pp. 47, 71.

His paper entitled "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" is undoubtedly powerful writing; but his "Reminiscences" and "Biographical Essays" stand in a different predicament. These are in my opinion often poor and without merit. I do not know any instance in the writings of an author of note comprehending so much pedantry, pretension and impertinence. They are all divergence. Even in the splenetic parts he cannot adhere to his subject; but must recede to some opinion of his own which has no connection with the matter on hand, or he refers to some classical or German author for the sake of exhibiting his learning, or general knowledge. His style therefore becomes wearisome,

inconsequent, and parenthetical to an offensive degree.—PROCTER, BRYAN WALKER, 1874(?), *Recollections of Men of Letters*, ed. Patmore, p. 211.

None, we think, have so dipped their pens in the varied lines of sunshine and gloom, or been able to fix that which is fleeting and transient. . . . DeQuincey lived in a dream-world until dreams became, as it were, the substantial realities of his existence.—DAVEY, SAMUEL, 1876, *Darwin, Carlyle and Dickens*.

If we take the "Confessions of an Opium-Eater" and follow it with, for an example, the essay on Shakespeare, then pursue the fortunes of the Spanish Nun, and wind up with a careful reading of the "Logic of Political Economy," we shall come away with a dazzling impression of DeQuincey's range as a thinker, a student, and a writer. But this impression does not grow proportionately stronger on reviewing the whole bulk of his writings. We gradually lose faith in the comprehensiveness which at first seemed so positive and radical a characteristic. We observe also, that he repeats himself, that he covers large spaces with a very thin integument of thought, or with a sham, apparitional kind of humor, and that his monotony has not the charm of that other monotony belonging to the styles of more creative writers. To acknowledge this is by no means to belittle DeQuincey's claims to our remembrance, but it enables us to define some things concerning him more clearly, perhaps, than they have usually been defined.—LATHROP, GEORGE PARSONS, 1877, *Some Aspects of De Quincey*, *Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 40, p. 569.

To the appreciation of DeQuincey, the reader must bring an imaginative faculty somewhat akin to his own, a certain general culture and large knowledge of books and men and things. Otherwise much of that slight and delicate allusion that gives point and color and charm to his writings will be missed; and on this account the full enjoyment and comprehension of DeQuincey must always remain a luxury of the literary and intellectual. But his skill in narration, his rare pathos, his wide sympathies, the pomp of his dream descriptions, the exquisite playfulness of his lighter dissertations, and his abounding though delicate and subtle humor, commend him to a larger class.—FINDLAY, JOHN RITCHIE, 1878, *Encyclopædia Britannica*, vol. VII.

What would DeQuincey be without his style? Rob him of the dazzling fence of his rhetoric, his word-painting, and rhythm,—strip him of his organ-like fugues, his majestic swells and dying falls,—leave to him only the bare, naked ideas of his essays,—and he will be DeQuincey no longer.—MATHEWS, WILLIAM, 1881, *Literary Style*, p. 10.

The crowning glory of his writings is their style, so full of involved melody, so exact and careful, so rich in magnificent apostrophes, so markedly original, so polished and elaborate. He never forgot that the prose writer, if he wishes to attain excellence, must be as much of an artist as the poet, and fashion his periods and paragraphs with as much care as the poet elaborates his rhymes and cadences. Many passages might be quoted from DeQuincey of which the melody is so striking as to irresistibly attract attention, and make us linger lovingly over them, apart altogether from the matter they contain.—NICOLL, HENRY J., 1882, *Landmarks of English Literature*, p. 364.

Nobody puts better on his canvas an aspect of nature, or gives us in more detailed and faithful circumstance the surroundings of a human scene. He is not so happy with men, because, for one thing, of his habit of detractation, which forbade him from seeing into what Wordsworth prosaically calls "the very heart of the machine"; and finally, perhaps, from his own eccentricities and out-of-the-way thoughts. He wrote many volumes of essays, and criticisms of various kinds, and his best work has found a place among English classics. The delicate wit and irony of the essay upon "Murder as one of the Fine Arts" has moved many a reader to such a laugh, tempered with a thrill of visionary excitement and horror, as is rare among the laughers of literature. It is undue honour to this curious little monster in literature to place him by the side of Lamb; but the connection of both with the greater group of poets supplies an arbitrary link of association.—OLIPHANT, MARGARET O. W., 1882, *Literary History of England, XVIII-XIX Century*, vol. II, p. 28.

The master builder of the Eastern type is DeQuincey. . . . He gives us minarets and pinnacles, as well as domes and cupolas, in his terse, clean cut contractions and iterations. He piles thought on thought,

not in flats, nor yet altogether in climax, though climax plays its part, too; but in glittering and audacious phrases, which rear their slender shafts up to the very clouds, and look down, star-crowned, from their giddy heights, upon the impassive sphinx, the loathsome crocodile, the oozy mud of the Nile.—MORRISON, A. H., 1886, *The Art Gallery of the English Language*, p. 30.

Some of his sentences are almost as long and as sustained as those of Jeremy Taylor; while, in many passages of reasoning that glows and brightens with strong passion and emotion, he is not inferior to Burke. He possessed an enormous vocabulary—in wealth of words and phrases he surpasses both Macaulay and Carlyle; and he makes a very large—perhaps even an excessive—use of Latin words. He is also very fond of using metaphors, personifications, and other figures of speech. It may be said without exaggeration that, next to Carlyle's, DeQuincey's style is the most stimulating and inspiring that a young reader can find among modern writers.—MEIKLEJOHN, J. M. D., 1887, *The English Language: Its Grammar, History and Literature*, p. 349.

DeQuincey's infirmities caused many blemishes in his work; many articles are fragmentary; his reading, though wide, was desultory; he is often intolerably long-winded and discursive, and delights too much in logical wire-drawing; his reason is too often the slave of effeminate prejudices, and the humour with which he endeavours to relieve his stately passages is too often forced and strongly wanting in taste. But imperfect as is much of his work, he has left many writings which, in their special variety of excellence, are unrivalled in modern English.—STEPHEN, LESLIE, 1888, *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. XIV, p. 390.

For pure rigmarole, for stories, as Mr. Chadband has it, "of a cock and of a bull, and of a lady and of a half-crown," few things, even in DeQuincey, can exceed, and nothing out of DeQuincey can approach, the passages about the woman he met on the "cop" at Chester, and about the Greek letter that he did not send to the bishop of Bangor, in the preliminary part of the "Confessions." . . . Few English writers have touched so large a number of subjects with such competence both in information and in power of handling. Still

fewer have exhibited such remarkable logical faculty. One main reason why one is sometimes tempted to quarrel with him is that his play of fence is so excellent that one longs to cross swords. For this and for other reasons no writer has a more stimulating effect, or is more likely to lead his readers on to explore and to think for themselves. In none is that incurable curiosity, that infinite variety of desire for knowledge and for argument which age cannot quench, more observable. Few if any have the indefinable quality of freshness in so large a measure. You never quite know, though you may have a shrewd suspicion, what DeQuincey will say on any subject; his gift of sighting and approaching new facets of it is so immense. Whether he was in truth as accomplished a classical scholar as he claimed to be I do not know; he has left few positive documents to tell us. But I should think that he was, for he has all the characteristics of a scholar of the best and rarest kind—the scholar who is exact as to language without failing to comprehend literature, and competent in literature without being slipshod as to language.—SAINTSBURY, GEORGE, 1890, *DeQuincey, Essays in English Literature, 1780-1860*, pp. 317, 330.

I don't know DeQuincey well enough to write anything about him. I have not read a line of him these thirty years. I never write about anybody without reading him through so as to get a total impression, and I have not time enough to do that in his case now. The only feeling I find in my memory concerning him is, that he was a kind of inspired *cad*, and an amplification of that with critical rose-water wouldn't answer your purpose.—LOWELL, JAMES RUSSELL, 1890, *To R. W. Gilder, Oct. 9; Letters of James Russell Lowell, ed. Norton, vol. II, p. 421.*

This at least may be said without fear of controversy: that his position in literature is unique, for he dwells in a land of dreams to which no other English author has access. His phantasies have been called by the absurd name of prose-poetry, which is, and always must be, an impossible form of literature; but in the border-land between poetry and prose DeQuincey reigns supreme.—DENNIS, JOHN, 1891, *DeQuincey, Leisure Hour, vol. 40, p. 244.*

Not to know DeQuincey is to be ignorant of some of the most remarkable literary



products of the century. . . . For breadth of scope, for power and delicacy of thought, and for beauty and clearness of style, he is surpassed by none of his contemporaries, if, indeed, he is equalled by any one of them. In logic, humor, irony; in subtle power of analysis; in an apparently intuitive skill in adapting language to thought; in richness of illustration; in his unparalleled imagination, DeQuincey stands in the very front rank of authors of all time.—BELFIELD, HENRY H., 1892, *ed. Joan of Arc and Other Selections from DeQuincey, Prefatory Note*.

DeQuincey's talent lay more in a narrative and imaginative writing than in literary criticism. He was too digressive and sensational, too much of a rhetorician, to rank with the greatest critics. His liveliness of fancy and the rapid play of his remarkable information, together with his verbal brilliancy, found their most congenial field in his extraordinary rambling sketches. But his knowledge of literature was so wide and sympathetic, and he had such genuine philosophical insight, that he stands well as a writer on literary topics. His best work in this field is to be found fragmentarily all through those numerous volumes which he composed after his late commencement as an author.—MC LAUGHLIN, EDWARD T., 1893, *ed. Literary Criticism for Students*, p. 118.

DeQuincey is as hard to hold as the Old Man of the Sea. He eludes analysis and baffles description. His great fault as an author is best described, in the decayed language of the equity draughtsman, as multifariousness. His style lacks the charm of economy, and his workmanship the dignity of centralization. A literary spendthrift is, however, a very endurable sinner in these stingy days. . . . DeQuincey's magnificence, the apparent boundlessness of his information, the liberties he takes, relying upon his mastery of language, his sportiveness and freakish fancies, make him the idol of all hobbledehoys of a literary turn.—BIRRELL, AUGUSTINE, 1894, *Essays about Men, Women and Books*, pp. 67, 68.

When we ask ourselves whether DeQuincey's paragraphs are units we find it necessary to limit the word unity more closely than usual. Classical unity, severe, selective, exclusive, he rarely shows. On the other hand his essays were preceded by the most careful analysis, and there is no doubt

that he considered each paragraph with regard to unity. We may say of his longer paragraphs that the best show unity in somewhat wide variety, while in all cases he returns conscientiously, from digressions within the paragraph, to the topic. As a rule his long and numerous digressions proceed by whole paragraphs.—LEWIS, EDWIN HERBERT, 1894, *The History of the English Paragraph*, p. 137.

For range of power, for great diversity of subject, for poetic, philosophic, and logical cast of mind, for depth of feeling, for an *inspiring vitality of thinking*, for periodic and impassioned prose which, running through the whole gamut of expression, is unequalled in English Literature, no more educating author could be selected for advanced students than Thomas DeQuincey.—CORSON, HIRAM, 1894, *The Aims of Literary Study*, p. 60.

Through the door of Wordsworth and Coleridge, DeQuincey entered, and then became one of the main channels by which their influence was diffused and made operative in moulding the thoughts of other men after the image of theirs. . . . DeQuincey, by virtue of his combining great emotional sensibility with great intellectual subtilty, belongs to the order of genius; but he does not belong to the first rank in it. He has genius, but it is not creative; originality and independence, but they are employed in analysing, interpreting, and expounding.—HODGSON, SHADWORTH H., 1895, *On the Genius of DeQuincey, DeQuincey and his Friends*, ed. Hogg, p. 321.

Another author who was a prime favorite with me about this time was DeQuincey, whose books I took out of the State Library, one after another, until I had read them all. We who were young people of that day thought his style something wonderful, and so indeed it was, especially in those passages, abundant everywhere in his work, relating to his own life with an intimacy which was always more rather than less. His rhetoric there, and in certain of his historical studies, had a sort of luminous richness, without losing its colloquial ease. I keenly enjoyed this subtle spirit, and the play of that brilliant intelligence which lighted up so many ways of literature with its lambent glow or its tricky glimmer, and I had a deep sympathy with certain morbid moods and experiences so like my own, as I was pleased to fancy. I have not looked

at his "Twelve Cæsars" for twice as many years, but I should be greatly surprised to find it other than one of the greatest historical monographs ever written. His literary criticisms seemed to me not only exquisitely humorous, but perfectly sane and just; and it delighted me to have him personally present, with the warmth of his own temperament in regions of cold abstraction; I am not sure that I should like that so much now. . . . He was a great little creature, and through his intense personality he achieved a sort of impersonality, so that you loved the man, who was forever talking of himself, for his modesty and reticence. He left you feeling intimate with him but by no means familiar; with all his frailties, and with all those freedoms he permitted himself with the lives of his contemporaries, he is to me a figure of delicate dignity, and winning kindness.—HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN, 1895, *My Literary Passions*, pp. 175, 176.

It is significant that most estimates of the value of DeQuincey's work concern themselves with his style. He was not a great thinker. Keen as were his powers of analysis, he was not always a logical thinker. Above all, he was not capable of sustained, systematic thinking. His writings are full of beginnings that end nowhere, and of promises that are never performed. His very habit of analysis led to a lack of proportion in his work. Little ideas get as much space as big ones. One is sometimes wearied by the feeling that it is not the thought that he is getting, but the author's power of saying things, irrespective of their worth, in a pleasing and original form.—BAKER, FRANKLIN T., 1896, *ed. Revolt of the Tartars by Thomas DeQuincey*, p. 6.

As a critic his value is perhaps overestimated. On the one hand, he united with Coleridge and Carlyle in introducing English readers to German literature and philosophy. He was also among the first to appreciate the new poetry of Wordsworth and Coleridge, and to contend for its just place in literature. On the other hand, he failed to appreciate French literature, slighted Goethe, scorned Crabbe, preferred Dickens to Thackeray, and ventured to attack the Republic of Plato. . . . De Quincey's value as a critic is not the measure of his excellence. His most popular and interesting works, the works by which he himself set most store, are those pieces of

imaginative reminiscence beginning with the "Confessions of an English Opium-Eater," and proceeding through the "Suspiria de Profundis" (including "Levana," "Savannah-la-Mar," etc.), and the "Autobiographic Sketches," to "The English Mail Coach." Not only did these catch the taste of the time and set a fashion on both sides of the Atlantic, but they also hold a peculiar place in English literature.—BALDWIN, CHARLES SEARS, 1896, *ed. DeQuincey's Revolt of the Tartars, Introduction*, p. xxiv.

His writings are pre-eminently exegetical, lacking in the imperative mood. He analyzes, interprets, or expounds after his subtle, philosophic, though somewhat eccentric and paradoxical manner; taking nothing for granted, probing into everything he touches, and illuminating it by some flash of originality. Though not always a sound thinker, he marshals his arguments with an orderly precision, which is invaluable in a good cause. Exactness, carried to the verge of pedantry, is the conspicuous merit of his style; which is further strengthened by a scrupulous attention to the conditions of effective comparison, and by the explicitness with which his statements and clauses are connected. Even his grammar and punctuation are singularly clear and careful. Beneath this vigorous intellectuality lurks a curiously deliberate and "dæmonic" kind of humour, which largely consists in the sudden introduction of an unexpected point of view, and use of dignified language for the discussion of trivialities, and the application of artistic or professional terms to records of crime and passion. . . . His style is essentially decorative, and he aims consciously at sublimity of thought and diction. He does not shrink from daring appeals to the infinite, and risks bewildering his reader by dizzy flights to the uttermost limits of time and space. He builds up his sentences and his paragraphs with a sensitive ear for the music of words. One phrase seems like the echo of another, and even the impression of distance in sound is cunningly produced. His finest passages are distinguished by the crowded richness of fancy, the greater range and arbitrariness of combination, which are the peculiar attributes of poetry.—JOHNSON, R. BRIMLEY, 1896, *English Prose, ed. Craik, vol. v*, pp. 260, 261.

The prose of DeQuincey will always find some admirers attracted by its elaborate involution, its untiring amplitude of description and richness of ornament, which have all the appearances of eloquence except those that are true. We only see how limited and artificial it is when we imagine a prose style formed upon DeQuincey's model, and adapting that model to changing needs. The spuriousness of the coin is soon detected when we attempt to pass it outside the narrow circle which DeQuincey made his own, and where his ingenuity and inventiveness assure him a meed of respect.—CRAIK, HENRY, 1896, *English Prose, Introduction*, vol. v, p. 5.

He swayed men; but he rarely taught them, or fed them.—MITCHELL, DONALD G., 1897, *English Lands Letters and Kings, The Later Georges to Victoria*, p. 40.

His manner of writing was at once extremely splendid and extremely precise. He added to literature several branches or provinces which had up to his day scarcely been cultivated in English; among these, impassioned autobiography, distinguished by an exquisite minuteness in the analysis of recollected sensations, is pre-eminant. . . . DeQuincey is sometimes noisy and flatulent, sometimes trivial, sometimes unpardonably discursive. But when he is at his best, the rapidity of his mind, its lucidity, its humour and good sense, the writer's passionate loyalty to letters, and his organ-melody of style command our deep respect. He does not, like the majority of his critical colleagues, approach literature for purposes of research, but to obtain moral effects. DeQuincey, a dreamer of beautiful dreams, disdained an obstinate vassalage to mere matters of fact, but sought with intense concentration of effort after a conscientious and profound psychology of letters.—GOSSE, EDMUND, 1897, *A Short History of Modern English Literature*, pp. 322, 323.

His "prose fantasies" are the most popular parts of his writings. The instructed lover of the best English prose will probably feel that they are a little *too* popular—that they are not so perfect in art as the less known dreams of Boccaccio and Petrarch in Landor's "Imaginary Conversations"—but few would now deny to them an abiding place in English literature.—FOWLER, J.H., 1897, *XIX-Century Prose*, p. 35.

He himself classified his writings under

three heads,—autobiographical, critical and imaginative. In all three the matter is of less worth than the style which enshrines it; a style whose one weakness it is to deploy on too slight provocation its inexhaustible phraseological resources, and to recognize no season in which a miracle of expression is out of place.—HERFORD, C. H., 1897, *The Age of Wordsworth*, p. 70.

The interest of DeQuincey is that of an experimenter and pioneer in English prose. He may, in fact, be described as the inventor of that variety of prose—a questionable variety in the hands of many of his successors—which has been named the "poetic": a form in which to attain the ends of vivid description or of impassioned narrative, the restraints which the elder prose-masters deliberately imposed upon themselves in respect both of construction and vocabulary were as deliberately thrown off. In other words, the attempt was for the first time made to arouse emotions as vehement in the mind of a reader through the medium of prose as are or may be excited by the instrumentality of verse. In some of DeQuincey's most famous passages this exaltation of the *emotional* power of prose is overwhelmingly felt.—TRAILL, HENRY DUFF, 1897, *Social England*, vol. VI, p. 29.

He represents the reaction from the polish, reserve, and coldness of the eighteenth century to the warmth and glow of the seventeenth century,—the golden period of English prose. His masters are Milton, Jeremy Taylor, Fuller, and Browne, whose eloquence, rich coloring, and elaborate ornamentation he inherits. To these qualities he has added the finish and elegance of the eighteenth century writers, and the freedom, deep feeling, and lofty spiritual tone of our own age. In fineness of texture and in beauty of coloring he is unequalled save by Ruskin, whom he surpasses in form and general pictorial and sound effects. He is sometimes guilty of bad taste or bathos, but when at his best is a supreme master of the "grand style." With an imagination as great as Carlyle's, his style is more chastened, rhythmical, and exquisite, though not showing so much industry or moral earnestness. He has a finer rhetorical and critical faculty than Macaulay, and is more stately and vivacious than Landor. DeQuincey's unique power lies in his imagination, which is extraordinary. In his best

passages there is a poetic loftiness, a phantasmagoric charm, and a spectacular gorgeousness which seizes and holds the mind of the reader with its subtile power. Even when we cannot accept the soundness of his conclusions on philosophical questions, or the accuracy of his statements in the historical and biographical essays, we delight in surrendering ourselves to his wonderful fancy. When he has on his magic robes, few can mount so high.—WAUCHOPE, GEORGE ARMSTRONG, 1898, *ed. Confessions of an English Opium-Eater*, p. 18.

It is a cause of pride that Americans were the first to conceive the idea of putting the 150 magazine articles of DeQuincey into permanent form. It is not the only instance of our recognition of the value of the British article before it was praised at home. The sixteen volumes are full of the keenest intellectual perception—exact, penetrative, analytic. They are never dull, because they are lighted up with a playful humor and fun-loving fancy not at all incompatible with passion and pathos.—GEORGE, ANDREW J., 1898, *From Chaucer to Arnold, Types of Literary Art*, p. 651.

A trait of DeQuincey closely allied to his habit of digression, and one which the general reader must always regard as a defect, is his tendency to overload his sentences with irrelevant particulars. He appends relative clause to relative clause in several

degrees of subordination, and often adds to such a combination a parenthesis within a parenthesis. Obviously, this excessive qualification is generally due to DeQuincey's sometimes finical desire for exactness. . . . In one respect DeQuincey is far from a model writer, and that is in his ungovernable habit of digressing from his given theme. He not only digresses from his main theme, but he digresses from his first digression, and sometimes even from his third.—CLARK, J. SCOTT, 1898, *A Study of English Prose Writers*, pp. 397, 399.

Two serious charges are to be brought against DeQuincey as a writer,—diffuseness and triviality. He cannot resist the slightest temptation to digress, and even in the most solemn pages of his *Confessions*, and in the midst of the touching story of Joan of Arc's childhood, he is capable of falling into a queer kind of "rigmarole" made up of pedantry and mirthless jesting. In reading him we are often visited by an uncomfortable sense of dealing with a nature not quite responsible and not quite human. He illustrates both the defects and the virtues of the romantic temper; its virtues in the enkindled splendor of his fancy and the impassioned sweep of his style; its defects in his extravagance, his unevenness, his failure to exercise adequate self-criticism.—MOODY, AND LOVETT, 1902, *A History of English Literature*, p. 304.

## Washington Irving

1783-1859

Born, in New York, 3 April 1783. Educated at private schools, 1787-99. In a lawyer's office, 1801-04. Contrib. to "Morning Chronicle," under pseud. of "Jonathan Oldstyle," 1802. Travelled in Europe, 1804-06. Edited "Salmagundi," with his brother, William, and J. K. Paulding, Jan. to Oct., 1807. Partner with his brothers in a mercantile house, 1810-17. Assistant Editor of "Analectic Mag.," 1813-14. In England, 1815-20. Travelled on Continent, 1820-25. Attaché to the U. S. A. Legation at Madrid, 1826-29. Sec. to U. S. A. Legation in London, 1829-32. Medal of Roy. Soc. of Lit., 1830. Hon. LL.D., Oxford, 1831. Returned to New York, 1832; settled at Sunnyside. Contrib. to "Knickerbocker Mag.," 1839-40. U. S. A. Ambassador to Spain, 1842-46. Returned to America, April 1846. Unmarried. Died, at Sunnyside, 28 Nov. 1859. *Works*: "A History of New York" (under pseud. of "Diedrich Knickerbocker") 1809; "The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon," 1819; "Bracebridge Hall" (by "Geoffrey Crayon," 2 vols.), 1822; "Letters of Jonathan Oldstyle," 1824 (3rd edn. same year); "Tales of a Traveller" by ("Geoffrey Crayon"), 1824; "A History of . . . Christopher Columbus" (3 vols.), 1828; "A Chronicle of the Conquest of Granada," 1829; "Voyages . . . of the Companions of Columbus," 1831; "The Alhambra" (by "Geoffrey Crayon"), 1832; "Complete Works" (pubd. in Paris), 1834; "Abbotsford and Newstead Abbey" (anon.), 1835; "Tour on the Prairies," 1835; "Legends of the Conquest of Spain" (anon.), 1835; "The Crayon Miscellany" (anon.), 1835; "Astoria" (3 vols.), 1836; "The Adventures of Captain Bonneville," 1837; "Biography and Poetical Remains of M. M. Davidson," 1841;