

New Letters of Sara Coleridge to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 1829–1832

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WITHIN THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania are seven letters by Sara Coleridge (1802–52), daughter of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and a significant author in her own right as well as the first authoritative editor of her father's works.¹ Among these letters is one addressed to Henry Crabb Robinson from March 1841 as well as a January 1843 letter to the publisher Edward Moxon.² More important, however, are the five letters by Sara to her friend and fellow writer and reviewer, Maria Jane Jewsbury (1800–33), composed between June 1829 and March 1832.³ These previously unknown letters form a small but significant part of a collection of literary manuscripts once belonging to Samuel Carter Hall (1800–89) and his wife, Anna Maria Hall (1800–81), both of whom enjoyed long careers as writers and editors between 1825 and 1880, during which time they collected thousands of letters, poems, and prose works. These manuscripts formed the basis for S. C. Hall's *A Book of Memories of Great Men and Women of the Age, from Personal Experience* (London, 1871, 1876) and his *Retrospect of a Long Life: From 1815 to 1883* (London, 1883). For these two works Hall composed vignettes on nearly every popular writer during the many decades of his literary career, most of whom he and his wife had known personally and corresponded with at various times. The Halls' collection of manuscripts was purchased for £250 in 1881 by George W. Childs of Philadelphia (founder and editor of the Philadelphia *Public Ledger*), who had them carefully inserted (with glued edges) into fifteen handsomely bound

¹ For recent scholarship on Sara Coleridge, see Bradford Keyes Mudge, *Sara Coleridge, a Victorian Daughter* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), Kathleen Jones, *A Passionate Sisterhood* (1998), Dennis Low, *The Literary Protégées of the Lake Poets* (2006), Katie Waldegrave, *The Poets' Daughters: Dora Wordsworth and Sara Coleridge* (London: Hutchinson, 2013), Jeffrey W. Barbeau, *Sara Coleridge: Her Life and Thought* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), Peter Swaab, *Regions of Sara Coleridge's Thought: Selected Literary Criticism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), and two works by Robin Schofield: *The Vocation of Sara Coleridge: Authorship and Religion* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) and *Sara Coleridge and the Oxford Movement: Selected Religious Writings* (London: Anthem, 2020). Pertinent articles on Sara Coleridge in *The Coleridge Bulletin* include Dennis Low, "'The very way to be not read': The Creative Significance of Literary Inconsequentiality in Sara Coleridge's Phantasmon", *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 12 (1998): 27–56; Jeffrey W. Barbeau, 'Grief and Consolation in Sara Coleridge's Poems', *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 33 (2009): 80–88; and Hilary Newman, 'Henry Crabb Robinson and Sara Coleridge', *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 46 (2015): 101–14.

² See Sara Coleridge to Henry Crabb Robinson, [22] March 1841, Simon Gratz Collection, Case 11, Box 6, Folder 14; also Sara Coleridge to Edward Moxon, January 1843, Ferdinand J. Dreer Collection of English Prose Writers, Box 209, Folder 46. The first letter refers to tensions between Edith and Katherine Southey, two daughters of Robert Southey, most likely concerning their diverse receptions to their father's second wife, the poet Caroline Bowles Southey. The second letter details some financial matters between Henry Nelson Coleridge and the publisher William Pickering and the possible sale of some remainder books to Moxon, a publisher himself; the letter was written shortly before the death of H. N. Coleridge on 26 January 1843 and the publication of his edition of S. T. Coleridge's *Aids to Reflection*. For more on Sara Coleridge's correspondence with Crabb Robinson, see Newman, 'Henry Crabb Robinson and Sara Coleridge'; the above letter, however, is not discussed in that article. Surprisingly, in the Gratz folder is a misplaced letter by Sara Fricker Coleridge, Sara's mother, to Matilda Betham, dated 16 February [1811]. For a transcription of this letter, as well as extensive background on the provenance of these letters by Sara Coleridge and her mother, see Timothy Whelan, 'A New Letter by Sara Fricker Coleridge to Matilda Betham, 16 February 1811', *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s. 59 (2022): 1–11.

³ Hall Series, 2:171–80, Ferdinand Dreer Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia.

volumes complete with printed title pages.⁴ Childs later presented these volumes as a Christmas gift to his friend, Ferdinand Julius Dreer (1812–1902), who served for many years as Vice-President of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania. In 1890, Dreer donated his impressive manuscript collection to the Society, of which the Hall Series (the designation given in the card catalogue to the volumes owned by Childs) now belongs, though the original connection the volumes held to S. C. and Anna Maria Hall has largely escaped scholarly notice.

Sara Coleridge's letters to Maria Jane Jewsbury in the Hall Series are typical of extant letters from that period. Several are cross-written, in which a letter is continued by writing sideways across an existing page; others are slightly smudged, torn, and even clipped on the edges, and one is a fragment. The friendship between these two gifted writers has been briefly noticed by Kathleen Jones in *A Passionate Sisterhood: The Sisters, Wives and Daughters of the Lake Poets* (1998) (she suggests the two had a 'romantic attachment' amidst their 'intense' friendship) and by Joanne Wilkes in *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2010), where she argues that, based upon references to Sara Coleridge in Jewsbury's letters to Dora Wordsworth, letters must have passed between the two women, letters that Wilkes believes 'have not survived'.⁵ Fortunately, these letters did survive, allowing the speculation by Jones and Wilkes to be more fully delineated. When situated within the existing correspondence between Jewsbury and Dora Wordsworth belonging to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania and the Wordsworth Trust, as well as newly uncovered letters to Jewsbury by Caroline Bowles (1786–1854), Felicia Hemans (1793–1835) and letters by Letitia Elizabeth Landon [L.E.L.] (1802–38) to Anna Maria Hall, all belonging to the Hall Series, a greater frequency of communication and level of intimacy emerges within this remarkable circle of women writers than has been previously known.⁶

I

After Maria Jane Jewsbury's introduction to the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount at the end of May 1825, she vacationed with them later that summer at Kent's Bank, at which time she developed an intimate friendship with Dora Wordsworth and learned about Dora's counterparts at Greta Hall, primarily

⁴ For details on the purchase of the Halls' manuscript collection by Childs, see S. C. Hall, London, to George Childs, Philadelphia, 7 August 1881, 20 November 1881, and 1 and 5 December 1883, Hall Series, 1.1–8.

⁵ See Kathleen Jones, *A Passionate Sisterhood: The Sisters, Wives and Daughters of the Lake Poets* (London: Virago Press, 1998), xix, 251; Joanne Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), 42.

⁶ Jewsbury's letters to Dora Wordsworth belong to the collections of the Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere, WLMS A/Jewsbury, Maria Jane/ 1–40. Dora's letters to Jewsbury (and a few by William and Dorothy Wordsworth) can be found in volumes IV and VIII in the Hall Series; they were transcribed and edited (with many errors, unfortunately) by Howard Paton Vincent in *Letters of Dora (Wordsworth)* (Chicago: Packard & Company, [1944]). Hemans's letters to Jewsbury can be found in the Hall Series, 13:185–311. Another eleven letters by Hemans to a wide range of correspondents are scattered among various collections in the Historical Society, making the library an important source for material on Hemans. For Bowles' letters to Jewsbury (including one to Anna Maria Hall), see Hall Series, 1:279–90; for Landon's letters to Hall, see Hall Series, 5:139–71, 253–54.

Sara Coleridge and Edith Southey (1804–71). All four women were born between 1800 and 1804 and all would become friends with Jewsbury. Dora first mentions Sara to Jewsbury in a letter composed between 22 and 31 August 1825, not long after Jewsbury's return to Manchester from Kent's Bank. She provides an account of Sara's health in her next letter that September, provoking a sympathetic response from Jewsbury on 8 October. By the following August Jewsbury had yet to meet Sara; she implored Dora to tell Sara to 'add her promised P.S. or add a note in one of your packets – I much wish to make her acquaintance on paper at least. My portrait must do ~~for~~ ^instead of ^ myself – Alas I may never see her in person – of ages – if then'.⁷ They would finally meet at Rydal Mount during Jewsbury's stay with the Wordsworths in May and June 1829, and a correspondence commenced upon Jewsbury's departure for home via Lancaster. Dora had a hand in the correspondence, informing Jewsbury that she had 'prepared a packet for Keswick' that included transcriptions of two poems by Jewsbury, to which she would 'add your [Jewsbury's] love & message today'.⁸ The message and poems were duly received within a day or so, provoking Sara's initial letter to Jewsbury on 19 June 1829, at a time when Sara was in the midst of preparations for her upcoming wedding that September. Sara sent the letter to Rydal Mount, even though Jewsbury was already at Lancaster by that date. As her letter reveals, their friendship was immediate and intense, based upon a mutual attraction to each woman's intellect and personality, two vital aspects of their lives that would soon be put to trial by societal demands of domesticity and their own powerful internal drives toward achieving literary recognition.

*Sara Coleridge, Greta Hall, Keswick, to Maria Jane Jewsbury, at the Wordsworths, Rydal Mount, Ambleside, 19 June 1829.*⁹

Greta Hall June 19 – 1829

My dear Miss Jewsbury¹⁰

Your letter & verses were given me yesterday just as I was dressing for a duty tea-visit – the best time to forgive a sinner, we are told, is after a good dinner; now it is equally true that the worst time to receive an offering of friendship & poetry is when one is contending with a labyrinth of obstinate hair, & anticipating two or three hours of ennui & constraint; you know our dear Dora used to say the only two evils of her life were Willy's¹¹ having not a black tongue on a morning & her being obliged sometimes to pay visits in an evening: dear girl! – may she never have some afflictions! she will never

⁷ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 29 August 1826, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 6, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁸ Dora Wordsworth to Maria Jane Jewsbury, [June 1829], Hall Series, 4:324; see also Vincent, *Letters*, 50.

⁹ Hall Series, 2:175–76. Words in square brackets are editorial suggestions for missing or illegible words in the original manuscript.

¹⁰ Jewsbury spent several weeks from late May through mid-June at Rydal Mount, one of several visits she had with various members of the Wordsworth family, either in the Lakes or in other locations, after her initial overture to the poet in 1825.

¹¹ Dora Wordsworth (1804–47) and her younger brother, William ('Willy') Wordsworth, Jr. (1810–83).

manufacture any; but this is a long &, I must say, rather heartless digression from my sweet starting place your kind note & pretty poems; I was going to tell you what a triumph you achieved in illumining my mind & filling me with pleasurable sensations and poetical notions – (not my own, but borrowed ones, which I trust I have humility enough to enjoy,) just at that dull prosaic moment. The bright flowers of your brain, my dear, are certainly of much quicker growth than the rose and I hope they may survive the oak; when they appear in a certain ‘bloomery’ I shall call you Reynolds’s Maria when I want to provoke you: Reynolds’ not Sterne’s Maria; neither Sterne’s [*paper torn*] Maria I hear you exclaim – perhaps when you read this you will cry – ‘no thanks for putting your bad joke into my mouth Miss Jenny Bull’: you are serving me worse than Roger is served every week by a certain paper.¹²

Seriously my dear though a new friend I feel sufficiently fond of you and interested about you to look as a pleased spectator, while you array your temples with the garland of the Muses, & feel no desire to snatch away one of the roses, or shily to turn a thorns Mind. Envy and a love of looking up are two warring propensities in human business; the latter has the field I assure you in mine as far as you are concerned, & now that I have made this frank communication, & praised myself with so much unreserve I trust you will assure me in your next that your little despicable Sara Coleridge whom you were determined not to like much less to love is in no way identified in your mind with the Sara Coleridge who talked with and listened to you at Rydal Mount¹³ – in short that it is *none of I* as the old woman said in the ballad,¹⁴ the real Sara looking like a sort of Angel of Light by the side of that insipid little [woman]. N.B. I don’t call on you absolutely to subscribe to this last flight of fancy, but something of the sort must be said. – I trust to your genius to devise the fashion of it.

This letter ought to be very sweet for it must be very short – & the cause my serious avocations & my very inefficient fingers. Edith is a sort of moral Briareus¹⁵ so much is she able to disparate with her one pair of hands by dint of skill and contrariness possessing as she does a mind to invent and a hand to prepare. [*paper smudged*] my mind is most at home in musing on the inventions of others & my hands never so well *pleased* as when they are holding a book. This I confess to you having a comfortable conviction that I am secure from lectures on housewifery or having my true strictness thrown in my face – not cast after me in superstitious good nature. I’m sure today I have been virtuous

¹² A number of allusions in this passage pertain to literature and art: the first ‘Maria’ is Maria, Duchess of Gloucester (1739–1807) (she was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Edward Walpole), painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723–92) in 1774; the second Maria is a melancholy young lady in Laurence Sterne’s short novel, *Sentimental Journey* (1768). ‘Jenny Bull’ was the female counterpart to the generic Englishman, John Bull. ‘Roger’ is most likely a reference to Roger de Coverley, a Tory country squire created by Joseph Addison and Richard Steele; his opinions graced the pages of *The Spectator* during Queen Anne’s reign and continued to have a life of their own well into the nineteenth century.

¹³ A reference to Jewsbury’s visit to Rydal Mount in June 1829.

¹⁴ Taken from the old English folk song, ‘The Old Woman and the Pedlar’; the text appeared in James Orchard Halliwell’s *The Nursery Rhymes of England* (London and New York: Frederick Warne and Co., 1886), 141. The phrase appears at the end of two stanzas and reads as follows: ‘Oh, deary, deary me, this is none of I!’

¹⁵ Briareus, also called Aegaeon, was one of three figures in Greek mythology with one hundred arms and fifty heads, all sons of Uranus (Heaven) and Gaea (Earth).

enough & have cut [through] a web [that has] imparted to my mind a dire image of a joyless infinity – a miserable endless blank: surely brides elect would be blinded with the dreary wastes of cloth and calico their eyes have to traverse – were not those snowy deserts imprinted with lines reflected from the wings of a certain Cherub who of course sits up aloft and presides over the construction of the wedding wardrobe. Then by way of vanity I repaired to the garden to rake away [leaves &] pull up weeds arising as I did this my dear cousins fully expressed [*paper clipped*] –: agreeably astonished by the fruits of my extreme kindness to their little domain in their absence whereupon the midges, who thought no doubt that I was sent out on purpose to feast them, made a better use of opportunity than their less sensible fellow mortals in human shape are often wont to do, & I am feeling the effects of my services to them at this moment.

In the evening we expect Mr & Mrs Townshend¹⁶ – the former a poet & nervous invalide; – the latter a smaller elegant woman – also an invalid; she [*next line cut off at the bottom of the page*] which he does not. He would probably have been healthier and happier had he been born to labour instead of good fortune – a voluntary power is wanting in him & external fire would have been a blessed substitute for it. He is to be pitied in my opinion rather than blamed. This is your black Friday – I pity you sincerely – our lovely Dora will serve at your pleasure – I have not time to rave about her now as I wish to do – the near prospect of the gallows Dr Johnson¹⁷ says, has a wonderful power of concentrating a man's ideas; the notion that post-time is approaching always has the effect of curdling mine: even Dora's image cannot dispel this imperious thought. I shall talk of you to Edith¹⁸ & tell her that literary lady who can mend & make clothes, & does not deal [*paper smudged*] may be [*paper torn*] for her florid style of conversation and for venturing into print: Especially as the Bard of the Excursion has said that she writes well,¹⁹ a tribute which would be cheaply purchased in my opinion by much more labour than your productions cost you. Some one said lovers are happy in each other's company because they are always talking of one another: if that be true this letter should be very agreeable both to the writer and receiver for it is all about them & scarce anything else. I must now conclude it however and return to my [*paper smudged*] which I should be right sorry to serve as Penelope did hers.

¹⁶ Chauncey Hare Townshend (1798–1868) was a poet, clergyman, avid collector (most of the remains of his collections now belong to the Victoria and Albert Museum), and somewhat of a hypochondriac, as the above letter suggests. Townshend met Southey in 1815 and through him the Wordsworths and the Coleridges; his first volume, *Poems*, appeared in 1821. He married Elizabeth Frances Norcott in 1826, but they separated in 1843.

¹⁷ Samuel Johnson (1709–84).

¹⁸ Edith Southey (1804–71), Sara's cousin and housemate at Greta Hall.

¹⁹ In his response on 4 May 1825 to Jewsbury's letter from April of that year, Wordsworth expressed his 'admiration of the good sense, the vivacity, the versatility & the ease & vigour diffused thro' [Jewsbury's] very interesting volume'. The reference was to *Phantasmagoria*, which appeared in two volumes in the spring of 1825 with a dedication (without his permission) to Wordsworth, which he saw in the complimentary copy of the first volume sent him by Jewsbury shortly after its publication; see Vincent, *Letters*, 20.

I know not what stay you make at Lancaster, & therefore must not keep you another day. [*paper torn*] you bear the journey well, and will soon recover your spirits after my saying the sad word farewell. I must say it now & beg you to believe me your obedient & affectionate friend

Sara Coleridge

Address: Miss Jewsbury | ~~J. [?] Esq^{re}~~ | W Wordsworth's Esq^{re} | Rydal Mount ~~Ln~~
| Ambleside
Postmark: illegible

II

As Sara's allusion to the 'Bard of the Excursion' makes clear, Jewsbury's popularity among the Wordsworths had not declined since her first visit to Rydal Mount in 1825, a popularity that had spread to Greta Hall by the summer of 1829. Upon returning to her home in Manchester, Jewsbury wrote to Dora requesting her to 'Tell Sara C— with my love, & a Kehama blessing for not sending me a letter, that she shall never know the fine reports that the D^r has set afloat concerning her beauty – thought – Silence – &c &c &c'.²⁰ Dora responded to Jewsbury on 17 July:

I have not written to Sara since I received yours but your blessing shall not be forgotten I am grieved to hear from Edith that this dear little Creature is looking, ^{^and^} is very far from well – now that her marriage & all its sad accompaniments of partings &c &c is so nigh at hand her strength & spirits seem to fail her and they have many friends & acquaintances about them & the exertion of affected cheerfulness is very trying to her – She has not written to me for some time –²¹

A week later she wrote again, having just returned from Keswick:

I was over at Keswick on Wednesday & gave your message to Sara & promised to say from her that she thanked you kindly for it but that you must not be hurt at her silence – she really has more to do than enough; your heart would ache could you see how ill she looks – <-> ^{^neither^} time nor heart to write[.] She is to be married on the third of Sep^{tr} (not on a Friday) when all is over & her spirits recover she will write – I assured her [you] would excuse her & not attribute it to indifference this assurance seemed to comfort her –²²

Sara's remarks may have slightly stung Jewsbury; she confessed to Dora in her next letter on 30 July, 'I am quite sorry I sent the message to Sara – when you

²⁰ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 10 July 1829, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 22, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

²¹ Dora Wordsworth to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 17 July 1829, Hall Series, 4.260; Vincent, *Letters*, 57.

²² Dora Wordsworth to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 25 July 1829, Hall Series, 4.280; Vincent, *Letters*, 60.

have read my note to her send it sometime – Poor dear little thing’.²³ Sara finally responded to Jewsbury on 6 August, but the surviving letter is missing its opening pages; important passages remain, nevertheless, especially her comments on her father and Caroline Bowles, a writer already known to Sara (Bowles had previously made a pilgrimage to Keswick) and Jewsbury. Bowles would later become an inhabitant of Greta Hall as the second wife of Robert Southey.

*Sara Coleridge, Greta Hall, Keswick, to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 42 Grosvenor Street, Manchester, 6 August 1829.*²⁴

... that would become of bardlings? Apropos to Reynolds²⁵ who honoured you for saying you sent him your book; some folks keep their best as snug as Macpherson did his manuscript of Ossian²⁶; according to them it is a sort of El Dorado²⁷ a land of unimaginable perfection which however no one ever obtains even a Pisgah over or much less sets foot on. Your poem of the ‘Sleeping Slave’ is very sweet and lovely. I was pleased to see your name given with it in the Gazette.²⁸ I read a few of M^{rs} Heman’s ‘Records of Woman’ the other day and was much pleased with them. I think there is rather a sameness in her strains; but having read so little of her I should not pretend to judge.²⁹ I will send you Barry Cornwall’s lines by my next as my Album³⁰ is now due a visit. Hartley is still with Profess^r Wilson.³¹ I regret that you did not see both while you were in the country. [My] Father’s health, I grieve to say, is declining & M^r Gillman says he is obliged to give up his Thursday evening parties, which I regret both in itself and for the company³² thereby the ‘salle assemblée’ and

²³ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 30 July 1829, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 25, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

²⁴ Hall Series, 2:179–80. Fortunately, the letter was dated on the address page.

²⁵ Frederic Mansell Reynolds (1800–50) was the editor of *The Keepsake*, one of the many literary annuals that flourished in the 1830s. Jewsbury’s ‘book’ was most likely her 1829 work, *Lays of Leisure Hours*, which she dedicated to Felicia Hemans.

²⁶ The Scottish poet James Macpherson (1736–96) is best known for *The Poems of Ossian* (1765), a popular work consisting of supposed translations (most likely compositions) of a cycle of poems derived from the work of a Scottish Gaelic poet Oisín.

²⁷ The place designed to represent Utopia in Voltaire’s *Candide*.

²⁸ Jewsbury’s poem, ‘The Sleeping Slave’, appeared under ‘Miss Jewsbury, of Manchester’ in the *Oriental Herald* 29 (May 1829), 333. *The Literary Gazette* published a review of her *Lays of Leisure Hours* in the February 1829 issue (123), but nothing about the Jewsbury poem mentioned above appeared in that periodical. Most likely the reference is to the *Manchester Gazette*, in which Jewsbury’s poetry had appeared on numerous occasions since 1821.

²⁹ Felicia Hemans was the most popular woman poet at that time in England and America. She became known to the Wordsworths largely through the efforts of Jewsbury; Hemans visited Grasmere, Ambleside, and the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount in the summer of 1830. Her *Records of Woman: with Other Poems* appeared in 1828.

³⁰ Barry Cornwall was the literary pseudonym used by Bryan Waller Procter (1787–1874). He published *Dramatic Scenes and Other Works* in 1819 and *English Songs* in 1832, his poems appearing often during that time in the *Literary Gazette*. Sara’s reference to her ‘Album’ suggests she may have been keeping her own commonplace scrap book of literary pieces, a practice common to both women and men at that time.

³¹ John Wilson (1785–1854) was a poet and educator who lived for a time at Elleray, not far from Grasmere, where he first met Hartley Coleridge. Wilson became Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1820 and served as editor of *Blackwood’s Magazine* from 1826 through 1831 (his pseudonym was ‘Christopher North’), publishing numerous poems by Hartley in *Blackwood’s* during those years.

³² As Tom Mayberry writes, Coleridge described his weekly gatherings as ‘the Grove Conversazione’, ‘the Thursday Conversation Evenings’, ‘Attic nights’, and once as the ‘Oneversazioni’. Guests included Crabb Robinson, Charles Lamb, Basil Montagu, Thomas Carlyle, Thomas De Quincey, and the Revd Edward Irving. These conversational gatherings began in the summer of 1824, shortly after the Gillmans moved to their new home at 3, The Grove, in

‘depository of Fashion’, which I had occasion to consult the other day, are both agreed that ‘S. T. C’s grasp of music is all but omnipotent’. You see in what tasks of criticism little books engage, and that soft bosoms, even in their highest moods, are to be troubled with the mighty sage for poetry and literature. The other day I could not resist reading ‘The Grave of the Broken Heart’ which I had vowed to abstain from; I turned over the pages & like the foolish moth hovering about the flame of the candle end was at last drawn in to tears as it to[o] [was] burning. The comic touches in this tale too are exquisite: the author has a great turn for humour, which gives an exquisite seasoning of contrast (not incongruity) to her tender melancholy strain; her feelings and a fine imagination are the source of both. She is reserved in her Disposition, & her manners though great and unambitious are refined and negatively high styled. The stuff is plain but of superfine materials. I can see that Millicent Aboyne is Caroline Bowles idealized.³³ –

I have just received your kind note, & must now conclude with thanking you for the affectionate interest it expresses, & assuring you that it is mutual between us. You may wish to see me in your mind’s eye by [the 3rd of]³⁴ September – Thursday ten oclock. That you may do so with the more distinctness I will give you a sketch of my dress I am to wear a white crepe hat with long drooping white feathers (the said hat was sent by wagon instead of coach & as wagons are not in the habit of escorting wedding hats, the one in question played the bear with mine.) My gown is to be of figured white silk & in fact it will be my best dinner dress, which I shall wear to avoid the fuss of getting on purpose a wedding robe fit for no ordinary occasions. This gown is to be made *morningey*³⁵ by a cape trimmed with blonde lace. My bridesmaids have not yet determined whether they will wear hats or veils, so that the picture after all will be very sketchy and incomplete. Believe me my dear Miss Jewsbury your affectionate friend

Sara Coleridge

Address: Keswick August Six 1829 | Miss Jewsbury | 42 Grosvenor Street | Manchester

Postmark: none

Highgate, and ended in July 1829 when Coleridge’s health began to decline (as Sara notes in the above letter). See Tom Mayberry, ‘S. T. Coleridge, Edwin Atherstone and the Grove *Conversazione*: Some Newly-Discovered Letters’, *Coleridge Bulletin*, n.s., 18 (2001), 46–47.

³³ Bowles’s ‘The Grave of the Broken Heart’ appeared in four parts between February and May in *Blackwood’s* 25 (1829), 163–72, 348–61, 477–78, 601–10, as part of a series titled ‘Chapters on Churchyards’. The opening part discusses the inscription on the grave tablet of Millicent Aboyne, daughter of a Colonel Aboyne, who died at the age of 29 ‘of a broken heart’ (163). Jewsbury may have mentioned Bowles in her previous letter to Sara, for Bowles’s letter to Jewsbury on 10 May 1829 mentions Aboyne: ‘– The rough sketch has lain in a rubbish drawer these three years – at last finished I sent away to M^r Blackwood – because I had nothing else ready – Alas! I did write that story from facts – tho’ I knew only one of the parties – the Gentleman – the poor Millicent of real life did die of that common disease (I am persuaded it is a common one) a broken heart –’ (Hall Series, 1:287–88).

³⁴ This passage (the date has been smudged and no longer readable) refers to Sara’s upcoming wedding at the Crosthwaite Parish Church, Keswick, to her cousin, Henry Nelson Coleridge (1798–1843) and the formal attire worn by her and her bridesmaids on the occasion.

³⁵ This appears to be a made-up word, not an uncommon occurrence in the letters of these women.



Maria Jane Jewsbury³⁶

III

Jewsbury was not averse to sharing her news of Sara with her other literary friends and correspondents. She wrote to Bowles about two weeks after the

³⁶ Maria Jane Jewsbury (Mrs. Fletcher), by G. Freeman, in *The National Portrait Gallery of Illustrious and Eminent Personages Encyclopedia* (1833). Wikimedia Commons.

above letter (22 August 1829), relaying Sara's comments about reading the 'Broken Heart' amid her preparations for her wedding:

In a letter I received a few days [ago] from Miss Coleridge she mentions having been beguiled (quite contrary to her intentions) into tears and tenderness by the 'Broken Heart'. Probably you are aware that the 4th of September³⁷ makes her a bride – such a one 'red as a rose' as she who gleams amongst the strange & supernatural incidents of her father's 'Ancient Mariner'. I was charmed into affection during the visit she paid us at Rydal Mount [June 1829], and felt no little pleasure in conversing with one who could speak somewhat of you from first hand knowledge. –³⁸

Bowles responded to Jewsbury on 31 August, having heard from other friends that

four days hence, one of the loveliest and most intellectual of Heaven's creatures – Sara Coleridge will exchange her maiden state, for one of higher responsibility – and I earnestly hope she may know that 'earthlier happy is the Rose distilled'³⁹ – I am not acquainted with the Bridegroom (except from reading his entertaining book)⁴⁰ – but I know & I hope he knows that he is a very enviable person – Do you know Miss Coleridge's fair cousin – Edith Southey? – A special favourite of mine – the very personification in mind and person of modesty and truth – creating so beautiful a [comradry?] of intellectually dignified simplicity, as is utterly unattainable by artificial harmony – I used to think the two Cousins were the loveliest imaginable specimens among human flowers – of the Lily and the Rose –⁴¹

Jewsbury closes this phase of her correspondence with Sara Coleridge by sending her congratulations via Dora on the very day of her wedding, a letter primarily comprised of a long poem entitled 'The Bridal Band', complete with an enigmatic reference at the end to the 'Rime of the Ancient Mariner':

Float on thou vision soft & fair,
As clouds sail thro' the sunny air
And but in light depart, –
Float on, in loveliness enshrined,

³⁷ Sara was married on 3 September 1829.

³⁸ Jewsbury to Bowles, 22 August 1829, MS. P165A:1, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas, Lawrence, KS.

³⁹ Taken from Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream*, I.i.78.

⁴⁰ Most likely a reference to Henry Nelson Coleridge's early work, *Six Months in the West Indies* (London: J. Murray, 1826).

⁴¹ Bowles to Jewsbury, 31 August 1829, Hall Series, 1:284.

One with all blessed things & kind,
A vision of the heart!⁴²

That reference had been in her mind since her letter to Bowles the previous week, when she described Sara as one ‘who gleams amongst the strange & supernatural incidents of her father’s ‘Ancient Mariner’.⁴³

Jewsbury received her first account of the wedding not from Dora but from Dorothy Wordsworth, who completed Dora’s letter to Jewsbury of 11 September on Tuesday the 15th, the day Sara and her new husband, accompanied by Dora (Sara’s attendant for her honeymoon), left Keswick.⁴⁴ Jewsbury responded on 29 September, anxious to hear about her friend’s honeymoon experience and upcoming settlement in London. ‘When you see dear Sara give my love to her’, Jewsbury writes, ‘let me know how I may address her in London – when she gets there I will write – at present – to tell you the truth, now she belongs to some one I never saw, I don’t know how to write’.⁴⁵ She did not write to Sara for some time, at least not until the new year, as her letter to Dora on 28 December makes clear. Dora continued to send pertinent news and information about Sara to Jewsbury, such as Sara’s new London address (12 Bernard Street, Russell Square, the home of John Taylor Coleridge, Sara’s brother-in-law), and requested that Jewsbury provide her with her London address as soon as she arrived in London, along with an account of ‘your Lovers’, the Coleridges.⁴⁶ Jewsbury arrived in town shortly thereafter, staying with her friends, Anna Maria and S. C. Hall at 59 Upper Charlotte Street, Fitzroy Square, and for a time, as Sara’s letter reveals, with her even older friends, Alaric Watts and his wife, the former Priscilla Wiffen, at 58 Torrington Square. Jewsbury immediately promised Henry Coleridge she would stay a night with them at Highgate towards the end of the month, a promise readily claimed by Sara in her letter to Jewsbury on 18 April. The day before her letter, Sara had visited her father (despite his dislike of her going out while pregnant), witnessing ‘the soul triumph over the body’ as his pained face became illuminated during their conversation over one of his ‘grand all-embracing topics’. Jewsbury stayed two days with Sara at Mrs. Goodman’s in Highgate prior to 29 April, for Sara writes to her husband at New Square, Lincoln’s Inn, on that day and mentions that ‘Miss Jewsbury said her visit to Lord Southampton with my Father was like walking in the Elysian fields led by

⁴² Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 3 September 1829, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 26, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁴³ Though Samuel Taylor Coleridge could not attend his daughter’s wedding, he did provide the bride with a gift which some may have thought more like the Ancient Mariner than the typical father – a copy of *Georgica Publii Virgilii Maronis Hexaglotta* (1827), by William Sotheby (1757–1833).

⁴⁴ Dora and Dorothy Wordsworth to Jewsbury, 11–15 September 1829, Hall Series, 4:261–62; also Vincent, *Letters*, 62–63.

⁴⁵ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 29 September 1829, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 27, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁴⁶ Dora Wordsworth to Jewsbury, 29 March 1830, Hall Series, 4:284; also Vincent, *Letters*, 70.

the spirit of Plato!⁴⁷ By the end of the month Jewsbury had left London to stay with some friends in the country, but she would return to London later that spring, residing at 6 Poland Street, Marlborough Street, and commencing her work as a reviewer for the *Athenaeum*.⁴⁸

*Sara Coleridge, Highgate, to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 58 Torrington Square, London, 18 April [1830].*⁴⁹

Highgate April 18

My dear Miss Jewsbury

Henry rejoiced me by telling me that you had promised to come and see us at Highgate and spend the night, for without that there is no comfort in such excursions. We will fetch you in a Fly any day that you will name except the 28th or the 29th when we have promised to visit some long refused friends at Stamford Hill if my Father continues better. Henry no doubt told you how ill he has been, how your note was delayed & how anxious I am to see you. Could you not have come hither I should have made an effort to see you. I gather from what Henry says that you must be looking well, and I trust you feel so and are not over-fatigued. I saw my father yesterday; he would not admit ^me^ while he was looking so ghastly, fearing that his altered face might make an undesirable impression on me in my present state, for you must know he believes on this subject what medical men are apt to laugh at, and has curious stories to tell in support of [his im]pression. But Oh I wish you could have been present at my yesterday's interview and seen the soul triumph over the body as I did. His expression when I entered was of great bodily misery and uneasiness but soon he got upon one of his grand all-embracing topics. Then his face seemed to expand & become illuminated – his eyes phrenzied & his colour rose – a few minutes after I left him M^{rs} Gillman saw him looking wretchedly, all pale and shrunk. However he really is much better. His friend Green⁵⁰ seemed as if he had drunk oxygen on leaving his apartment, & witnessed his improvement. My dear friend I will write no more now happy soon to see you. Did Dora give you my thanks for your letter?⁵¹ I meant to have answered it from this place.

⁴⁷ Sara's comment about Jewsbury was repeated in a letter to her sister-in-law, Mary Pridham Coleridge (1807–87). See Sara Coleridge to Henry Nelson Coleridge, 29 April 1830, and Sara Coleridge to Mrs. Derwent Coleridge, 3 May 1830, Grantz ALS 548 and 144, Sara Coleridge Collection, MS-0866, Containers 8 and 6, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin.

⁴⁸ See letters by William Wordsworth c. 19 April 1830 and 27 April 1830, in Alan G. Hill, ed., *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 8:204, and 5:251; and Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 19 June 1830, WLMS A / 29, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁴⁹ Hall Series, 2:171–72.

⁵⁰ Joseph Henry Green (1791–1863) was a physician and Professor of Anatomy at the College of Surgeons and at the Royal Academy; from 1830 to 1837 he was also Professor of Surgery at King's College, London. Green met Coleridge in 1817 and over the next seventeen years became a frequent guest (and amanuensis) at the Gillmans in Highgate, later serving as executor of the literary remains of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

⁵¹ This letter by Jewsbury is not extant.

I remain

my dear Miss Jewsbury

affectionately yours

Sara Coleridge

Address: Miss Jewsbury | 58 Torrington Square

Postmark: none

IV

Jewsbury wrote to Dora from London on 19 June, but without any news of Sara, who was pregnant now with her first child, Herbert Coleridge. News finally came in Jewsbury's next letter on 21 August, having just spent a week with the Coleridges at their new home at Downshire Hill, Hampstead:

I spent a week at Hampstead – Sara is very sweet, & gentle, & *happy*, & cheerful – & Henry C— I like much, & suspect Marriage & intercourse with his father in law have mellowed him, & if you read his *last* book I think you will feel that this has been the case. You are severe on London, but I shall certainly (if all be well) settle there for some months next year – I can make more money with less labour – & I like London – & when tired of it, I can go to the country, which is a kind of feather bed for body & mind!⁵²

Later that year, about a month after Herbert's birth, Sara wrote to Jewsbury in Manchester, discoursing on her new role as mother buttressed by some comments about children by her father (Herbert was his first grandchild). Samuel Taylor Coleridge was living about two miles away with the Gillmans in Highgate, where Jewsbury visited him on at least one occasion during her stay, most likely with Sara. Mrs. Sara Fricker Coleridge had already moved in with her daughter (she arrived shortly after Jewsbury's visit) to assist in the care of Sara's newborn son; she had been living with her son, Derwent, in Helston, Cornwall.⁵³ Her arrival brought father, mother, and daughter within a proximity they had not shared since Coleridge's last stay at Greta Hall in 1812. Despite the weight of motherhood and marriage (she hints at having suffered a slight case of *postpartum* depression), Sara was not above relaying to Jewsbury a bit of juicy gossip on the Wordsworths, as well as some name-dropping of important

⁵² Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 21 August 1830, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 30, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁵³ Mudge, *Sara Coleridge*, 54. Sara Coleridge had previously mentioned Jewsbury's upcoming visit to Hampstead in a letter to Henry Nelson Coleridge on 15 July 1830. She mentions it again in a letter to Emily Trevenen that commenced on 9 September 1830 (see Grantz ALS 554 and 1336, Sara Coleridge Collection, MS-0866, Containers 6 and 11, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin).

female visitors such as Lucy Aikin (she mainly came to see Mrs. Coleridge) and Joanna Baillie, who also lived in Hampstead.⁵⁴

*Sara Coleridge, Hampstead, to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 42 Grosvenor Street, Manchester, 3 November [1830].*⁵⁵

Hampstead November 3rd

My dear Miss Jewsbury

Having many letters on hand I am tempted to defer them all as sometimes the more we ought to do the less we do. I will resist the demon of procrastination however & answer a civil question, but in consideration of my numerous inquiring friends and not over abundance of present strength you will excuse brevity. A month ^{ago} I was confined or rather, to use a less evasive phrase, I became the mother of a healthy little boy,⁵⁶ not particularly undersized or deficient in any particular – he is no beauty even for a ‘frail mouthling’ and his papa daily abuses his broad nose, grey eyes, and other personal defects – but I am quite content with my little sucking, sleeping, and crying piece of humanity, and console myself with thinking that the less perfect and delicate his features are now the more room there is for them to expand into beauty hereafter. You know my Father calls such youthful gentry ‘little Kingdom of Heavenites’ and says we love them for what they are to be, for the hope and promise that is in them. Mamas however love them for what they are – for their dependence, their helplessness & their innocence & see in them something more than mere lumps of flesh, as D^r Johnson called them.⁵⁷ I had what is called a very good time, and have every reason to be thankful for the manner in which I got through my trial. A confinement however is a mighty disagreeable thing altogether even under the more favorable circumstances and the excessive dejection and irritability which take the possession of the mind about the third week of the time are almost the worst part of the business. I am now gaining strength – have walked out five times & am beginning to resume my old habits. I shall soon have the pleasure of seeing my Uncle Southey & my cousin Bertha who is coming to town, what stay to make I yet know not. Edith

⁵⁴ Lucy Aikin (1781–1864) was the daughter of Dr. John Aikin (1747–1822), the brother of Anna Letitia Aikin Barbauld (1743–1825). Like her father and aunt, she too was a successful writer, composing historical works on British royalty and women’s history as well as numerous titles for young readers. Joanna Baillie (1762–1851) was one of the most important woman writers at that time. Originally from Scotland, Baillie was best known for her volumes of plays (essentially closet dramas) that appeared in 1798, 1802, 1804, and 1812, and 1836.

⁵⁵ Hall Series, 2:173–74.

⁵⁶ Herbert Coleridge (1830–61), Sara’s first child, was born on 7 October, about one month before she composed the above letter.

⁵⁷ Hester Piozzi recorded a conversation by Johnson in which he argued that children may ‘make wise men, or amiable women; and we suffer ’em to take up our affection beforehand. One cannot love *lumps of flesh*, and little infants are nothing more’. See Hester Lynch Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* 4th ed. (London: T. Cadell, 1786), 273.

and Kate will be very quiet this winter at Keswick – I hope that they and dear Dora will see a good deal of each other.⁵⁸

I suppose you have had the whole account of John Wordsworth's wedding from the fountain-head.⁵⁹ The matter of the house is most unfortunate – young men are not fit to chuse a house to take a bride to; – before marriage how can they know what a lady requires or what they themselves as married men would find comfortable and necessary. The lady's health seems the only drawback to the happiness of the pair – they are both calm spirits & will bear the trials [&] troubles of wedded life as well as any I know. I rejoice in Dora's amended health & hope it may continue.

My dear mother arrived soon after you left us & has been cheered since her stay here with such good accounts of my brother Derwent, his wife and lovely boy⁶⁰ that her spirits have been greatly restored and my confinement was so prosperous on the whole that though she has been a little fagged & somewhat anxious I trust she has not suffered materially in consequence of it. My losing my nurse at the end of a fortnight occasioned her some care & trouble. She looks very well and is complimented as an evergreen by her acquaintances. Miss Lucy Aikin called on her yesterday and they had a long confab about old friends. M^{rs} Joanna Baillie we often see and are more & more ^delighted^ with her – she seemed quite pleased to hear that I had become a mother in safety and added to her congratulations that she was thankful when there was only one child for she really feared there might be *ten*. She often inquires for you. She has been staying a few days with M^r Sotheby,⁶¹ who *entre nous* is rather a *Botherby* to my husband & is always wanting to keep up a sort of commerce of flatteries with him. This soon proves very wearisome – even were it not so fine. – You pay a higher price for a worse article inasmuch as this compliment you are forced to pay has less of genuine necessity ^and goes against the grain^ and that which you receive is stale and flat to your palate from the consciousness that it is dictated by greedy vanity rather than by genuine admiration. [*paper has been clipped and next line not legible*] in your various literary undertakings nor give me any news of literary acquaintances in town. Miss Douglas called here the other day. I think you know her. An American

⁵⁸ References here are to Robert Southey and his daughters Bertha (1809–77), Edith May, and Katherine (1810–64); also mentioned is Dora Wordsworth.

⁵⁹ John Wordsworth (1803–75), eldest son of William Wordsworth, married Isabella Curwen (d. 1848) on 11 October 1830 at Workington Hall, Cumberland. He would become Vicar of Brigham, Cumberland, and Rector of Plumland, Cumberland.

⁶⁰ Sara Fricker Coleridge had been living with Derwent and Mary Pridham Coleridge and their two-year-old son, Derwent Moultrie (1828–80).

⁶¹ William Sotheby (1757–1833) was a poet and translator known to Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey and most of the Romantic literary figures, including Baillie, who was his close friend for some thirty years.

lady of good fortune & friend of the Wordsworths, admirer [of] literary people and so on.⁶²

I must now conclude being rather longer than I ought already & must hastily assure you that I am very sincerely yours

Sara Coleridge

My father has not been worse in health since you saw him M^r Gillman [*closing words illegible as the paper has been clipped*]

Address: Miss Jewsbury | 42 Grosvenor Street | Manchester

Postmark: 4 November 1830

V

On 15 November Jewsbury sent Bowles a short summary of Sara's letter, along with some comments on her situation as a wife and mother in London, another instance of how this circle of gifted women writers maintained a knowledge of each other's activities despite facing substantial geographical barriers:

I will occupy the remainder with an extract from a letter which I received last week from M^{rs} H. Coleridge, & which if the news has novelty, will I know interest you. 'A month ago' she writes 'I became the mother of a healthy little boy not particularly undersized, or deficient in any particulars; he is no beauty even for a 'frail mouthling', & his papa daily abuses his broad nose, grey eyes, & other personal defects – but I am quite content with my little sucking, sleeping, crying piece of humanity, & console myself with thinking that the less delicate his features are now, the more room there is for them to expand into beauty hereafter'. – When in Town last summer I spent a week with Sara & her husband, & rejoiced to see in their married life a beautiful passage of domestic poetry; a good sort of conjugal happiness abounds in the world, but theirs was 'bright, with something of an angel light'.⁶³

Bowles was pleased with the news of Sara, responding to Jewsbury on 20 November:

⁶² Harriet Douglass of New York had been in England for some time by the date of this letter. According to Crabb Robinson, she was present at a dinner at the home of Edward Quillinan (1791–1851), Wordsworth's future son-in-law, on 28 May 1828 in London, in which Wordsworth and Southey were among the guests. Wordsworth later said of her (as recorded by Robinson): 'She is anxious to see famous people & talk herself'. Douglass corresponded with the Wordsworths over the course of several years. See Edith J. Morley, ed., *Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Lamb, Etc. being Selections from the Remains of Henry Crabb Robinson* (Manchester and London: University Press and Longmans, Green, & Co., 1922), 90; Hill, *Letters*, 5:283–85.

⁶³ Jewsbury to Bowles, 15 November 1830, MS. P165A:2, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas; closing line is from Wordsworth's poem, 'She was a Phantom of Delight'.

You gave me news indeed – & welcome news of M^{rs} S. Coleridge's having become a Mother – I was just writing to her Uncle, M^r Southey, when your letter reached me, who is now in London. I will I hope bring my [*paper damaged*] father intelligence of his charming niece when he comes to see me sometime in [the] next month – I reproached him for not having told me of her child's birth in his last letter, but indeed it was filled with matter more painfully intreating – the present state of publick affairs –⁶⁴

That same month Dora Wordsworth and her father visited London and Cambridge, a visit that included a stop at the Coleridge home. 'We are here as my Uncle's appendages', Dora informs Jewsbury,

going with him to his living [in Cambridge]. We have seen the Coleridges Sara & her baby most interesting it is difficult to say which is the most beautiful he in his baby's beauty she in Womans . . . Bertha ^Southey^ was here this evening & Henry but Sara did not venture out[.]⁶⁵

Sara Coleridge wrote to Jewsbury at some point between mid-November and late December (this letter is not extant), but Jewsbury writes in her next letter to Bowles that 'I have heard again from M^{rs} H. Coleridge; she writes happily, & continues fully satisfied with her little "Knave of Spades" as she terms her son'.⁶⁶ When Dora returned to London in March 1831, Jewsbury requested that Dora give her 'Love to the Coleridges'.⁶⁷ Nothing further about Sara arrived in Jewsbury's mailbox until December, when Dora informed her that Edith had returned from London and that 'Sara Coleridge was very pleasant all well and happy'.⁶⁸

Whether Jewsbury and Coleridge corresponded during 1831 is unknown, since no letters from that year have survived. Their letters resumed in early 1832, although Jewsbury's letter is now lost. Sara sent her a lengthy reply on 7 March 1832, having heard that Jewsbury was to marry William Kew Fletcher (1802–67) in late summer and then leave for India, where he would commence his work as a chaplain with the East India Company. Sara's mind was focused at this time on her marriage and motherhood, two significant events Jewsbury was looking forward to herself, though they were not without inherent difficulties, as Sara had already discovered in her marriage and child-bearing experiences (her second child, Edith, would be born in July). The demands of motherhood and authorship may have induced a cynicism in Sara that she

⁶⁴ Bowles to Jewsbury, 20 November 1830, Hall Series, 1:290.

⁶⁵ Dora Wordsworth to Jewsbury, [November 1830], Hall Series, 4:301. This letter is incorrectly dated by Vincent as spring 1828 (*Letters*, 36–37).

⁶⁶ Jewsbury to Bowles, 29 December 1830, MS.P165A:3, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas.

⁶⁷ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 12 March 1831, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 32, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere.

⁶⁸ Dora Wordsworth to Jewsbury, 3 December 1831, Hall Series, 8:292; also Vincent, *Letters*, 94.

could not repress, offering her friend the hope of ‘contentment’ in her marriage but not ‘joy’. Sara had previously loaned Jewsbury some books which she could return on her next visit to London. After some gossip about the usual dramas occurring at Rydal Mount and Greta Hall, Sara informed Jewsbury that her brothers were doing well and that she and Henry Nelson, despite her comments on marriage to Jewsbury, were ‘great comforts . . . to one another’. She also mentioned that her father’s health was steadily failing and that he ‘would die happy’ if his ‘ideas respecting the Church and convictions of the strongest kind . . . could be conveyed ^to the world^ by any channel’, a request his daughter would never forget, working tirelessly after his death in 1834 in editing his writings and establishing a more complete and accurate foundation for his work, especially his views on religion and the Church of England.

*Sara Coleridge, Hampstead, to Maria Jane Jewsbury, 42 Grosvenor Street, Manchester, 7 March 1832.*⁶⁹

Hampstead March 7th 1832

My dear friend,

Ere your letter arrived, I began to wonder what you were about, & to think these bad times for all literary undertakings, whether private profit or bonum publicum is chiefly arrived at, must have palsied your pen since we heard of no independent work forth coming from you: your letter very clearly unfolds the mystery, for marrying & going to India are realities.⁷⁰ I should rather say practicalities, which, giving ample materials for the shaping imagination & at the same time making considerable demands on the moral energies & powers of action, are quite sufficient to engross the whole woman. I will not wish you joy, my dear friend, for that cannot be the portion of any sensitive & well regulated bride, of such a bride as bids fair to be a happy wife; – what I wish for you is good hopes & firm confidence now & hereafter the deep & broad contentment of a fortunate wife & mother. An Indian home will probably spare you a good many domestic *rufflements* & *disagreeables* which the unhinging state of English society,⁷¹ & the unpleasant relation which at present exists between domestics & their employers contribute I think a good deal to occasion: O you will have time enough I dare say for literary pursuits and I hope you will be able to engage in them unfettered by any view to increasing your income. You don’t mention the precise time of your visit in London – Of course we shall be anxious to see you and your congenial *unlikeness*. I hope your

⁶⁹ Hall Series, 2:177–78.

⁷⁰ The Fletchers were married on 1 August 1832 and sailed for India on 22 September. She died there on 4 October 1833. He remained as chaplain for the East India Company until his retirement in 1866.

⁷¹ Sara may have taken the phrase from a January 1832 article in *Blackwood’s* titled ‘Remote Causes of the Reform Passion’ in which the writer compares the tumult around reform at that time to the unrest in France just prior to the revolution there. The writer contends that ‘the energies of the people [were] so cramped by feudal restraints, that it was impossible to set them free without such fundamental changes as necessarily unhinged the frame of society, and unlocked the perilous torrent of democratic ambition’ (4), a situation that was being aggravated, as Sara also suggests, by advocates of Reform.

diverse dispositions will only *dovetail* you the more indissolubly together, & that your union will be strengthened and perfected by your differences. You may be unlike yet love like things – many couples are unhappy & incompatible because they are too much alike in temper and constitution. We hope the books have been useful to you & our pleasure in welcoming them home is not enhanced by any great uneasiness that we endured on account of their absence. I suppose you will take a great stack of books out to India. Have you any thoughts of keeping a journal there?⁷² I shall be anxious to hear how you go on after the radical changes you are about to make.

You will be sorry to hear that ^my^ poor dear father's health is gradually but surely getting worse & worse: his weakness is more confirmed & his pains are more frequent; what in some respects aggravates his sufferings is that his intellectual faculties are unclouded as ever; nay more intense & vivid in the midst of severest pain of body; but all power of making use of them is absolutely precluded: I don't mean at all times but during great part of his time. He has ideas respecting the Church and convictions of the strongest kind that he would die happy could they be conveyed ^to the world^ by any channel: would any one else give them publicity, originate them, have all the credit, & so that these important ^truths^ could be in any way promulgated, his mind would be at ease but he can do nothing toward effecting this ardently desired consummation. I fear he will be able to write very little more during his sojourn here. Henry sees him as often as he can but I am at present deprived of his society, not being in a state⁷³ to render a long walk prudent & not well enough to indulge in the wings of a Fly. My dear husband is well and not unprosperous according to the prosperity of these settled times, but he is not ambitious & I rejoice in this circumstance both because if he were so he would probably not be gratified & because I think such a temper whether it meet with success or the contrary, is not conducive to happiness. He has had an article on Hesiod in the Q. Review & about the beginning of the Reform mania he published a pamphlet 'Notes on the Reform Bill' which procured him a good deal of credit with the Conservative ^Party.^ He also published a Life of Francis Swing.⁷⁴ Our little son is 17 months old today: we have had almost all pleasure & no anxiety except not as the precariousness of infant life & health must ever produce in this dear child since his birth. He appears very strong & healthy & is forward in all things but in speaking & he is beginning now to make a few attempts at his mother tongue but he is fonder of sounds & signals & gestures than of articulation. He is of a sensitive & I fear of an irritable temperament, but irritability when accompanied by general strength of body is not such an

⁷² Jewsbury did keep a detailed journal of her voyage to India and her few months there prior to her death, a portion of which was published in the *Athenaeum* on 1 December 1832; she also composed a set of twelve poems about her journey under the title *Oceanides*, which also appeared in the *Athenaeum* from 29 December 1832 through 28 December 1833.

⁷³ Sara was pregnant with her daughter, Edith (1832–1911). Herbert and Edith were the only two children of Sara and Henry Nelson Coleridge to survive into adulthood (three died in early infancy and there were several miscarriages).

⁷⁴ See Henry Nelson Coleridge's 'The Life and Writings of Hesiod', *Quarterly Review* 47 (March 1832): 1–39; *Notes on the Reform Bill, by a Barrister* (London: Roake and Varty, 1831), a work generally attributed to John Taylor Coleridge; and *The Genuine Life of Mr. F. S* (London: W. Joy, 1831).

evil as where it is found in a weakly frame. What *moral* strength he may have to subdue his enemy I know not, but I shall pray that he may have grace from above, without attempting to foster fortitude, energy, generosity & such other innate articles into him by great doses at a time, which I see many good sorts of mamas making violent efforts to do with their children. Don't conclude from this that I think education nugatory – far from it – I believe a good deal may be done in the way of producing good habits & infusing ^right^ views of the things of this world & of the next. I also believe that the education of circumstances greatly modifies the individual but I do think that preaching up certain estimable qualities continually and trying to make him act them in *little* upon all childish occasions, has a tendency to make him vainglorious and hypocritical & to substitute '*motives* for *impulses*'.

I cannot conclude this letter without saying a word about our mutual friends the Wordsworths. I suppose you have heard that dear Miss W.⁷⁵ has had a return of her dangerous complaint, I believe that of the bowels, & that her habits are quite changed by the circumstance; she says however that she is as happy by her friends as ever she was on the hills & in the woods, & I rejoice that she has such a friend to sit by & love to watch her at home as well as abroad. Poor Dora has been suffering from tooth ache & they say two have been *pulling* at her but neither suitor will suit. I suspect an attachment elsewhere – a mutual one I guess but I fear it is one the course of which can never run smooth.⁷⁶ My fair & dear cousin Edith is engaged to a young clergyman of a good family in Shropshire: he is now Chaplain to the Embassy at Copenhagen⁷⁷ – I think him likely to make her a happy wife, & to place her in favorable circumstances for her real permanent welfare. My brother Derwent has lately suffered great anxiety having seen himself on the brink of losing his lovely & beloved wife. He is now wonderfully recovered after a very severe weakness & an attack of inflammation on the lungs.

Dear Hartley is going on quietly at Grasmere; he inserted several pieces in the last Winters Wreath.⁷⁸ Henry & I are great comforts I believe to one another. We want a larger house especially as there is to be a new member in the nursery, if all goes well with me in June or July: but that which you occupied is easy & comfortable in comparison with the Attic nurseries of the non-efficient in London.

⁷⁵ Dorothy Wordsworth (1771–1855), William Wordsworth's unmarried sister, lived with the Wordsworths at Rydal Mount and was an avid walker of the mountains and valleys in the Lake District. She was a friend and correspondent of Jewsbury after their initial meeting at Rydal Mount in 1825 and even visited Jewsbury at her home in Manchester. Dorothy became seriously ill in 1829 and was largely an invalid thereafter, also suffering from a progressive form of dementia after 1835.

⁷⁶ Most likely a reference to Edward Quillinan, whose feelings toward Dora appear to have been known by this date, though they would not marry until 1843.

⁷⁷ Edith Southey married John Wood Warter (1806–78), an English clergyman and antiquarian, on 15 January 1834; shortly thereafter he became vicar of West Tarring, Sussex, a position he maintained until his death.

⁷⁸ The *Winter's Wreath* was one of the many popular poetry annuals that arose in the 1820s and '30s in England. Hartley published the following essays and poems in the 1832 volume: 'Thoughts on Horsemanship' (137–43), 'An Old Man's Wish' (157), 'On the First of November' (201–02), 'Defence of Portrait Painting' (205–11), 'The Sabbath Day's Child' (330–32), and 'To Wordsworth' (351).

Henry is out or he would send regards and congratulations. Believe me my dear friend

Your ever affectionate
Sara Coleridge

I hope your sister is well.⁷⁹ How do you [*paper clipped*] the thoughts of Indian Suns? I suppose you have read Heber's Journal⁸⁰ & every other book that conveys any notion of India. M^{rs} J. Baillie has been at the point of death with a low fever, but is happily recovered. She will be interested to hear about you.

Serjeant Coleridge, Recorder of Exeter, is our good brother John. Our sister Fanny's husband Patteson was raised to the Bench last year.⁸¹

We continue to like Hampstead very much. I hope India will renovate you – this is ^not^ unlikely. My kind regard to M^r White.⁸²

Address: Miss Jewsbury | 42 Grosvenor Street | Manchester
Postmark: 8 March 1832

Only a few references remain concerning Sara Coleridge and Maria Jane Jewsbury. On 19 July, Dora wrote to Jewsbury, the latter having already arrived at Penegoes Rectory near Machynlleth, Wales, in preparation for her wedding on 1 August. Greta Hall was alive as well with the expectations of the marriage of Edith Southey to John Wood Warter, and in London, Sara had just given birth, 'perfectly happy in the possession of an infant daughter which is to be named Edith after her sweet Cousin', Dora writes.⁸³ After the wedding, Jewsbury and her new husband made their way to London where, on 17 September 1832, just two days prior to their departure for India, Jewsbury informed Dora that they had 'dined with the Coleridges; they are quietly happy – & I enjoyed the visit much; I asked her to write to you thinking some notice of us would please ~~us~~ you. To the care of Henry Coleridge I have committed the portrait of your dear Aunt, whom may Providence long preserve'.⁸⁴ Jewsbury may not have been aware of Sara's growing nervous disorder,

⁷⁹ Geraldine Jewsbury (1812–80) was raised by her sister after the death of their mother in 1819; she became a popular novelist and periodical writer (she wrote 17 short stories for Dickens's *Household Words*) and developed friendships with some of the leading women writers and figures of her day, including Jane Carlyle and Anna Maria Hall.

⁸⁰ Reginald Heber (1783–1826) became Bishop of Calcutta in 1823. Besides being known for his hymns, such as 'Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty' and 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains', his *Narrative of a Journey through the Upper Provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay 1824–1825* (1825) was a popular source of information on sections of India not widely known at that time. Heber became acquainted with Felicia Hemans during his time as Canon at St. Asaphs from 1817 to 1822.

⁸¹ John Taylor Coleridge (1790–1876), a lawyer and judge, was the brother of Henry Nelson Coleridge and thus Sara's brother-in-law. At the time of the above letter, he had only recently been appointed Recorder of Exeter. Previously he had served as editor of the *Quarterly Review* and had published a major work on William Blackstone's *Commentaries* (1825). John Coleridge Patteson (1790–1861) was called to the Bar in 1821. In 1831 he was appointed a Judge in the King's Bench and was knighted. In 1824 he married Frances Coleridge (d. 1842), sister of Henry Nelson and John Taylor Coleridge. Their son, John Coleridge Patteson, became the first Bishop of Melanesia and was martyred there in 1871.

⁸² Unidentified.

⁸³ Dora Wordsworth to Jewsbury, 19 July 1832, Hall Series, 8:290; also Vincent, *Letters*, 97.

⁸⁴ Jewsbury to Dora Wordsworth, 17 September 1832, WLMS A / Jewsbury, Maria Jane / 39, Wordsworth Trust, Grasmere. The 'Aunt' is Dorothy Wordsworth.

aggravated by the demands of motherhood and marriage and the extreme reduction of intellectual pursuits, a conflict similar to Jewsbury's struggle at times between pursuing literary greatness and achieving spiritual happiness, the latter not necessarily precluding the former but the pair rarely being congenial bedfellows.⁸⁵ When news arrived in 1834 of Jewsbury's death from cholera the preceding October, Sara, like Dora, was greatly saddened. She told Dora that Jewsbury was one of the 'few persons whom I have not seen more of that I remember so vividly'. Much like Sara herself, Jewsbury had been torn between domestic duties and literary ambition, between the life of the mother-wife and the life of the mind. Achieving these objectives required 'burning the taper at both ends', an observation William Wordsworth had previously made of Jewsbury and what Sara Coleridge understood all too well by 1834.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ See Mudge, *Sara Coleridge*, 57–59; Harriet Devine Jump, "My dearest Geraldine": Maria Jane Jewsbury's Letters', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 81 (1999), 67.

⁸⁶ Last two quotations from Wilkes, *Women Reviewing Women*, 43. The latter one is from a letter by Sara Coleridge to Emily Trevenen, 5 July 1834 (Grantz ALS 1350, Sara Coleridge Collection, MS-0866, Container 11, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin).