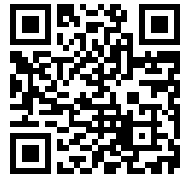

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THE
LIFE AND WORK
OF
SIR SAMUEL ROMILLY

Hommage de l'auteur

BY
SIR WILLIAM J. COLLINS, M.P.

M.D., M.S., B.S.C. (LOND.), F.R.C.S. (ENG.)
VICE-CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
CHAIRMAN OF THE L.C.C. 1897-8

Reprinted from the 'TRANSACTIONS OF THE HUGUENOT SOCIETY,' 1908

PRICE ONE SHILLING



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Sir Samuel Romilly.

By SIR WILLIAM J. COLLINS, M.P.

ALTHOUGH I have been for twenty years a Fellow of the Huguenot Society I have hitherto successfully evaded the courteous suggestions of the Honorary Officers that I should contribute a paper. I have been overawed by the wealth of erudition and archæological research which the papers contributed habitually display, and with which the fragment I now offer will bear no comparison.

As a scion of the House of Garnault, to which Sir Samuel Romilly's mother belonged, I have felt it something of a reproach that hitherto no appreciation of the life and work of one of the greatest of Huguenots has found a place in our Transactions.

Sir Samuel Romilly was not only a child of the Revocation (both his parents belonging to refugee families), but he was also a friend, at any rate in its earlier stages, of the Revolution which the succeeding century witnessed.

His life was full of interest alike from the years it covered and the friendships he enjoyed on both sides of the Channel, and though political memories are notoriously short I have been surprised to find how little the labours of this gentle soul are remembered even in parliamentary circles.

It was into the England of the later years of King George the Second that Samuel Romilly was born. Of that monarch and that time Thackeray has given an entertaining if unedifying and possibly overdrawn portrayal. Of that 'choleric little sovereign' who reigned in Britain, and revelled in Hanover, the author of the 'Four Georges' says: 'He gave Englishmen no conquests, but he gave them peace and ease

and freedom ; the Three per Cents. nearly at par ; and wheat at five and twenty shillings a quarter.' It was the England on which the sun of Walpole had set in mingled storm and glory, and on which the fairer and nobler star of 'the Great Commoner' was about to rise. In the first year of the ministry of the elder, and two years before the birth of the younger, Pitt, began the life of Romilly, which was abruptly closed, in overwhelming sorrow, one and sixty years later.

But it was not with the England of the Court nor of the Cabinet, then shaping into modern form, that this saintly soul claimed natural kinship, though we shall see he influenced both. The England in which he lived and moved and had his being was the England of 'the new philanthropy,' as it has been most fitly called.

It is a blessed paradox that the mid-eighteenth century epoch, given over to political place-hunting and corruption, to cock-fighting, hard swearing and deep drinking, to coarse pleasures and shallow orthodoxy, should have had running through it as a vein of precious ore the impassioned zeal of the Wesleys and Whitefield and the more practical philanthropy of John Howard. These lofty souls were instinct with that fiery rectitude which inflamed the later work of Romilly ; these saved from putrefaction the England which Hogarth satirised on canvas and Horace Walpole sketched in gossip.

Samuel Romilly was born on March 1, 1757, at No. 18 Frith Street, Soho (east side). His parents, Peter Romilly and Margaret Garnault, were both children of French Protestant refugees. An interesting account of his parents' rather chequered courtship appears in the Autobiography. Peter Romilly, our hero's father, who was born in 1712, had been apprenticed to a jeweller, by name Lafosse, in Broad Street, City. Among his fellow-apprentices was young Garnault, also a Huguenot. This lad had a sister, to whom Peter was presented. We learn from the Autobiography that this 'acquaintance grew into a mutual passion. The brother long encouraged it ; but afterwards, either from a change in his own prospects in life, founded on a hope which he conceived that a rich uncle would leave him his estate, or from mere

caprice, he began to look on my (Samuel's) father with coolness, disapproved the visits to his sister, and at last desired that they might be discontinued. She had no money, indeed, but she had rich relations, and they too were averse to her marrying a young man without fortune, and with no other expectations than what industry, honesty, youth and good health could enable him to form. The passion, however, which, under the sanction of her nearest relations, she had indulged, had taken too strong possession of her mind to be dismissed just as they should dictate; but what she could do she did, she submitted to their authority, resigned all hopes of marrying my (Samuel's) father, and gave herself up to a despair which destroyed her health, and endangered her life.'

Whether this exemplary though external obedience was only part of a deeply laid design on the part of Margaret Garnault whereby to achieve her heart's desire we are not permitted to know; but in the 'Life of Sir Samuel,' by his sons, there follows this pathetic passage an ominous gap, and in an editorial footnote we are informed: 'In this part of the MS. there is a considerable erasure. The writer had no doubt proceeded to give an account of his father's marriage, and of the circumstances connected with that event; but dissatisfied, as it would seem, with what he had written, he expunged several pages. This chasm in the narrative he never afterwards filled up; and the papers he has left do not afford any materials from which to supply the deficiency, beyond the fact that Miss Garnault's family at length consented to her union with Mr. Romilly's father, which accordingly took place.'¹

¹ The Garnault family came from Châtellerault in Poitou. I have searched the parish registers there and have found in those of the Church of Saint Jean Baptiste numerous entries of baptisms, marriages, and burials of Garnaults between 1665 and 1744. The branch from which Romilly's mother came is extinct in the male line, but in the female line survives in the families of Vautier, Ouvry, Bowles, Treacher, and Collins. The Garnaults were Governors of the New River Company, and Garnault Place, Islington, close to the New River Head perpetuates the association.

The Romilly family came from Montpellier, and is represented in the direct male line by the 4th Baron Romilly, born 1899. The 1st Baron, son of Sir Samuel, was Master of the Rolls. The families related to Romilly include those of Seymour, Elliott, Crompton, Swanston, Nicholson, Willink, Bigham.

Samuel Romilly, writing in 1796, then thirty-nine years of age, and twelve years after the death of his father, gives an amiable picture of the latter. He appears to have been a genial, homely man, religious without austerity, and charitable sometimes to the point of improvidence. He was very sensitive, quick in expressing what he felt, and liable to transient though violent transports of indignation. He yet bore no resentment, and was a warm friend; he delighted in his library, which he gathered as he prospered, and betrayed a weakness for the collection of old prints.

Finding the atmosphere of Frith Street, Soho, where Samuel was born, far from salubrious for his family, Peter Romilly migrated to the High Street in Marylebone, then a small village a mile west of London, and there in his leisure hours he busied himself with his garden. Of his mother Sir Samuel is less communicative; she seems to have been very delicate in health, and his up-bringing fell largely to a maternal relative, Madame Facquier, who instructed him, his brother Thomas and sister Catherine in the Bible, the 'Spectator,' and an English translation of Fénelon's 'Telemachus.' This strange curriculum was largely supplemented by a Methodist maid-servant, one Mary Evans, whose tender solicitude was apparently reciprocated by the warmest affection on the part of the young Romillys.

This ultra-evangelical up-bringing may have fostered a tendency to melancholy and that morbid introspection and foreboding of which his Autobiography betrays traces from first to last. He tells us how the enjoyment of witnessing the play of 'Zara,' in which the immortal Garrick figured, was marred by the fears it aroused in him of his father's early death. Amongst his lighter literature at this time were a 'Book of Martyrs' and the 'Newgate Calendar,' which, to say the least, were ill calculated to remove any predisposition towards melancholia in a peculiarly sensitive and shrinking character.

Sundays claimed a divided allegiance to the Huguenot service of the refugees and that of the Established Church in the land of their adoption.

For a while Samuel attended a school kept by another

refugee—Mr. Flack—whom he regarded with repugnance, and at fourteen his formal education terminated. His father predestined him for the law, though he held the doctrine that ‘few men succeed in any profession which they have not themselves adopted,’ and he accordingly did not press his preference imperatively. His father, it seems, possessed but one legal friend, a Mr. Liddel, a fat, ruddy, and slovenly personage, whose unpropitious individuality became identified with the law in young Romilly’s mind so as to fill him with disgust; and, for a while, he put aside all idea of adopting that faculty whose goal is the woolsack. He was then offered a clerkship in the counting-house of an ex-Lord Mayor, Sir Samuel Fludyer, a cousin of his father’s, and he was accordingly initiated into the science and art of bookkeeping; but the principal succumbed to apoplexy, and the mercantile career was thus nipped in the bud.

For the next two years he kept his father’s books, but he kept other books as well. His thirst for literature was prodigious, and he raided all the libraries within his reach. He renewed and improved his classical studies, mastering Cicero, Livy, Sallust, Tacitus, Ovid, Virgil, and Horace, with the help of a Mr. Paterson, of Bury Street, St. James’s. This stripling of sixteen summers also dipped into science, attended lectures by Martin, an optician in Fleet Street, and sharing his father’s love of prints and pictures, he was attracted to the Royal Academy, where he listened to discourses on architecture and painting. He even tried his hand at poetry, imitating Spenser, and in a flight of self-complacency, outclassed, in his own estimation, even Dryden himself. French came easily to him, as it was often spoken at home by these exiles from the sunny land; and, taking Boileau as his prototype in style, he attempted translations from the poems of that master.

About this time the family circumstances of the Romillys were materially advanced by substantial legacies from M. de la Haize, of High Cross, Tottenham, a wealthy relative of his mother’s family, the Garnaults, whose benefactions ameliorated the lot of several refugee families.

A pleasant picture is given in his diary of their home life in High Street, Marylebone. His mother's health improved; she was more with them. Years afterwards he recalls in happy reminiscence the little parlour with its green paper and Bartolozzis, and the cosy fireside with the Italian greyhound, the cat, and the spaniel basking before it in perfect harmony.

This desultory life of omnivorous reading at home and keeping the books of the jeweller's shop began to pall on the rapidly developing mind of our young hero. He was by this time stuffed with the classics almost to the same extent as that other juvenile prodigy, two years his junior, who as great Chatham's son, the younger Pitt, was destined to add yet greater lustre to an illustrious name, and guide the ship of state for near a score of years.

The Court of Chancery, that circumlocution office, which typified the law's delay, and upon which satirists and wits hurled their sarcasms in vain, next claimed the attention of young Romilly. It was projected that he should become a sworn clerk in Chancery, and accordingly to the amiable Mr. Lally, one of the official six, he was duly articulated. The cares of an office which dealt so inexpeditiously with the business of others appear to have left him ample time for the pursuit of his own, and in the leisure of his abundant vacation we find him busy with Addison, Swift, Bolingbroke, and Hume, noting down, as he tells us, every peculiar propriety and felicity of expression which he met with, and which he was conscious that he would not himself have employed.

Through the Rev. John Roget, of Geneva, the pastor of the French chapel he attended, he was introduced to the writings of Rousseau, that brilliant, erratic, philosophic, and unprincipled master of style, that paradox of philosophy and literature. Roget had a powerful influence over Romilly, whose elder sister he married, and to him are directed some thirty letters preserved in the Autobiography, full of delightful contemporary gossip, and instinct with the evolving thought of young Romilly in his twenties.

But the vision of the woolsack again began to dazzle his ambition, and, Mr. Liddel notwithstanding, the law claimed

him at last, and in his twenty-first year Samuel Romilly became a student at Gray's Inn. His decision he attributes to the perusal of an *éloge* by Antoine Thomas, but the encouragement he received from his brother-in-law Roget clearly incited him to the selection of this profession as opening to him a career in which he might, as an advocate and a senator, give vent and voice to the reforming zeal with which his spirit was already consumed. Indeed, we can trace in his case, as in that of the poet Wordsworth, a dedication—nay, almost a consecration—to his life's work. This was when staying in 1781 with Roget and his sister in Switzerland. At Lausanne one starlit night, as he and Roget paced the terrace overlooking the eastern end of the fair Lake Lemán, in that Alpine solitude, the cradle of freedom and the very temple of natural piety, his friend discovered to Romilly the powers that were latent in him. Years afterwards, in those curious introspective letters he directed to himself, he tells how the time, the scenery, the awful stillness of that night, the ideas which the conversation set afloat in his mind, animated them both; and how Roget, in a spirit of prophecy, unfolded to him his future life—how he would, in an exalted station, exercise the 'noblest faculties of the soul in improving the condition of mankind, and add to the happiness of millions yet unborn.'

He gave no vows but vows were then made for him
That he should be, else sinning greatly, a dedicated spirit.

At Gray's Inn he read in chambers with a Mr. Spranger. He started a commonplace book which he says proved of the greatest service to him, and, acting on a suggestion he found in 'Quintilian,' he was in the habit during his walks, even in crowded streets, of expressing to himself, in the best language he could command, the thoughts of the authors he had been reading. He attended the debates at the House of Commons, and even tried his hands at political journalism, and was gratified to find his anonymous contributions habitually accepted. This close application to study, however, told upon his health. He became morbid, dyspeptic and melancholy.

Bath and the chalybeate waters of Islington were recommended and tried, and the necessity of rest was impressed upon him by his doctor, Sir William Watson. But London was then in a state of unrest. Parliament had tardily removed some of the disabilities under which Roman Catholics laboured and groaned, and Lord George Gordon, at the head of his Protestant Association, was agitating for repeal of the measure. The excitement culminated in June 1780, when a mob of some 100,000 persons marched to Westminster with a monster petition. Riots ensued; Catholic chapels were raided. London was in flames in a dozen directions; prisons were broken open, and Lord Mansfield's furniture was bonfired in Bloomsbury Square. Romilly was sworn in as a special constable, and after some nights on duty at Holborn Gate he suffered a serious relapse, and began to despair that 'for the rest of his days he would be a wretched valetudinarian.' This gloomy vaticination appears to have been averted by a timely visit to his sister and Roget at Geneva. This Continental trip, by the friendships he acquired and the resolves he then formed, proved a most potent determining factor in his future career.

At that time the city of the Reformation that had yielded to Calvin's rigid rule and witnessed the fiery martyrdom of Servetus was seething with political revolution. The aristocrats, supported by foreign arms, were in close grips with the so-called popular party. The life and soul of the latter party was Etienne Dumont. He was almost of the same age as Romilly, a Protestant parson, with philosophic ideals and prepared for political action. Roget lost no time in putting these kindred souls into communication. A tour they undertook through the Savoy, over the Tête Noire, and round Lake Geneva served to cement a life-long friendship. Both a little later became ardent disciples and admirers of Jeremy Bentham, who was the senior of both by some ten years. Returning home revived in body and mind, Romilly passed through Paris, then rejoicing, by royal command, at the birth of a Dauphin. He saw the Court of Versailles, with the ill-fated Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, in all the pompous

pageantry of the proudest and vilest Society in Europe. Through a friend of his father's, a Genevese (M. Romilly), he was introduced to the academic groves of the Encyclopædists. He conversed with Diderot, then nearly threescore and ten, yet gay, buoyant, and confiding; they talked of politics, religion, and Rousseau, then recently dead. The old man was frankly atheistic and cautiously republican, but bitter and apprehensive when they spoke of the departed Jean Jacques and of his eagerly expected, posthumously published, 'Confessions.' D'Alembert he found infirm and taciturn, a praiser only of the times gone by. Returning to England, he brought back with him a little unacknowledged work by Condorcet on Slavery; this he translated, but he could find no bookseller who would undertake its publication in this country.

Romilly was called to the Bar in 1783, and went the Midland Circuit; later on he regularly attended the Quarter Sessions at Warwick. In his vacations he often returned to the Continent. At Passy, near Paris, in the spring of 1783, at the house of Madame Delessert, who had been a friend of Rousseau's in his later years, he made the acquaintance of Benjamin Franklin, then in his seventy-seventh year—that *beau idéal* of the self-taught and the self-made, to whom nothing human came amiss. He is thus sketched in Romilly's diary: 'Of all the celebrated persons whom in my life I have chanced to see, Dr. Franklin, both from his appearance and his conversation, seemed to me the most remarkable. His venerable patriarchal appearance, the simplicity of his manner and language, and the novelty of his observations—at least the novelty of them at that time to me—impressed me with an opinion of him as of one of the most extraordinary men that ever existed.'

In 1784 Romilly lost his father. This loss, following rapidly on the death of his much-loved brother-in-law, Roget, plunged their family circle into grief.

The Methodist maidservant married a yet more evangelical shoemaker by name Bickers, but prosperity did not attend their path, and Romilly, out of regard for his old nurse, took Bickers as his servant on circuit with him. Humour was

a quality with which our hero was, like many another philosophic Whig, not liberally endowed. Romilly's man became the sport of the Bar Mess, he was nicknamed 'the Quaker,' he occasionally got drunk, and he warned his master that he was ruining his prospects in his profession by seeking to reform its abuses instead of profiting by them. On this the diary laments: 'It is not easy to give an idea of the great familiarity which existed among the young men who went the circuit, of the strong disposition there was to turn things into ridicule which prevailed, and how very formidable that ridicule was.'

The year 1784 was a memorable one for the commencement of a friendship between Romilly and Mirabeau, a friendship only terminated by the untimely death of the Count in 1791. Carlyle does not romance when he declares that had this marvellous personality lived 'the history of France and of the world had been different'; it is not less true that the influence he had upon Romilly was profound, and the admiration this 'cloud-compeller,' this profligate, who knew every villainy yet knew not 'the word impossible, evoked in our Huguenot Puritan, was as striking as it was strange. They met frequently both in London and Paris, and there are letters extant which passed between them full of contemporary incidents of the exciting times which immediately preceded the French Revolution. Through Mirabeau Romilly was introduced to Lord Lansdowne, who at Bowood dispensed a noble hospitality to philanthropists and philosophers and extended a patronage worthy of Mæcenas to that Augustan age of literary genius. It was at Bowood that Romilly met Miss Anne Garbett, whom he married in 1798, with whom he lived in unbroken happiness for twenty years, and whose death he could not endure to survive. Romilly made excuses for the excesses, aberrations, and vain eccentricities of his friend the Count, who appears to have held that 'petty moralities are the enemies of the great morals.' The astounding egotism and consciousness of playing a great part on the world's stage which engrossed the *citoyens* of the revolutionary period found its most flamboyant develop-

ment in the Count de Mirabeau. Neither in life nor in death had he aught of delicacy false or real about him. As he breathed his last he said to the friend at his bedside, 'Support that head of mine: would I could bequeath it to you,' and he on more than one occasion reproved Romilly for his 'damnable timidity and amiable modesty: for a powerful mind (said he) ought to have the consciousness of its own power; shyness is not modesty, nor is timidity prudence.' Romilly translated a tract by Mirabeau directed against the order of the Cincinnati. Arising out of this tract there was a quarrel between Mirabeau and Sir Joseph Banks; the President of the Royal Society, and also with John Wilkes, who was then M.P. for Middlesex, and who had just succeeded in getting the resolutions which expelled him from the House expunged from its minutes. Mirabeau had met Romilly's Swiss friend Dumont in Paris, had recognised his abilities, and *more suo* had exploited his brains. He was an inveterate plagiarist. Indeed, many of the finest writings and speeches of the Count's emanated, as was afterwards established, from the cultured mind of the Pasteur Dumont.

The passion for letters, and the pursuit of a correct style, possessed the best minds of Western Europe in that last quarter of the eighteenth century. Hume, following Locke in his philosophy, had finished his 'History of England' in 1761. Gibbon was busy at Lausanne with his magniloquent 'Decline and Fall of Rome.' Samuel Johnson had closed his chequered life's work in 1784, and had been laid to rest alongside his old friend Garrick in the Abbey. Adam Smith had laid the foundations of 'Political Economy' by his 'Wealth of Nations,' which appeared in 1776, the year of the Declaration of Independence. Burke, though nicknamed the dinner-bell of the House, was in speech and writing composing some of the stateliest essays in our tongue, and Tom Paine's less polished but more vigorous English was 'trying the hearts of men' on both sides of the Atlantic. To have known these giants of literature in the flesh, as well as those on the Continent who followed or fell foul of the brilliant and erratic Rousseau, must have been a liberal education and an

inspiration indeed. This was Romilly's privilege, and to the full he enjoyed his citizenship of this republic of letters. Pamphleteering was the order of the day. Jeremy Bentham had won the regard of Lord Lansdowne and the hospitalities of Bowood by his 'Fragment on Government,' and Romilly soon followed him with his 'Fragment on the Constitutional Power and Duties of Juries.' This, like other essays whose object was to expound the principles of that amorphous marvel the British Constitution, was circulated gratuitously by the so-called Constitutional Society. Indeed, Burke caustically remarked these tracts were never as charitably read as they were charitably published. This literary trifle pleased Lord Lansdowne, and he was anxious that Romilly should enter the House of Commons; he also urged him to further essays in literature. A tract by Madan had then just appeared, entitled 'Thoughts on Executive Justice,' in which it was maintained that the certainty of punishment is more efficacious than its severity in the prevention of crime. Nevertheless, the author advocated the rigid enforcement of the barbarous and sanguinary penal code which at that time disgraced our statute book. The pamphlet was widely read and did its deadly work. In 1783, the year before the publication of Madan's tract, there were in London fifty-one executions. In 1785, the year after its circulation amongst the judges, there were ninety-seven, and indeed London that year gazed on the unfamiliar and gruesome spectacle of a score of executions taking place at one time. This fired the soul of the exile whose ancestors had tasted the severities of the law, and who could hold no terms with these methods of barbarism; he wrote a reply to Madan, but though it gratified his friends, the protest fell on deaf ears as far as the Bench was concerned. The time for reforming the code was not yet come.

In 1788 he paid his third visit to Paris with Pasteur Dumont as his companion. The Court of Versailles was still parading a dazzling magnificence, heedless of the volcano upon whose verge it sported, and in which ere long the whole godless *tartuferie* was to be engulfed.

Our Huguenot revisiting the land of his forebears took

stock of the situation. On the one hand he met the ill-fated but magnanimous Malesherbes, the less unfortunate and liberty-loving Lafayette, the brilliant but fearful Condorcet, and of course Mirabeau. On the other hand he observed the squalor and oppression which were destroying the common folk body and soul. He visited hospital and prison, and wrote at Mirabeau's request a pamphlet entitled 'An English Traveller's Letter on the Prison of Bicêtre,' in which he gave vent to the dismay and disgust with which the sights he had witnessed had inspired him. The publication was promptly suppressed by the Paris police. We learn from a letter to Roget that Romilly had made himself acquainted with the self-denying labours of John Howard, and in later life we read of his meeting Mrs. Elizabeth Fry. Of the life work of the former he says: 'What a singular journey, not to admire the wonders of art and nature, not to visit courts and ape their manners; but to dive into dungeons, to compare the misery of men in different climates, to study the arts of mitigating the torments of mankind!' It is not difficult to find in Romilly an *affinité de cœur* with these pioneers of prison reform.

Romilly, like Burke and Fox and many another Whig, watched with satisfaction the earlier stages of the French Revolution and the Assembly of the States General. Rousseau had been his idol, and indeed he had inscribed upon the first page of his 'Emile,' 'Malo cum Platone errare quam cum aliis vera sentire.' To the revolution he looked for the reign on earth of the lofty principles his master had enunciated. He had yet to learn that his idol had feet of clay, and that the revolution, having devoured her own children, was to leave a heritage of despotism, scarcely less oppressive than that it had destroyed.

While still a republican enthusiast he published in 1790, 'Thoughts on the Probable Influence of the late Revolution in France on Great Britain,' and at the request of the Count de Sarsfield he drew up a code of standing orders for the use of the Assembly of the States General, based upon the procedure of the House of Commons. It was, however, ignored by that

impetuous and disorderly National Assembly. They rushed their resolutions through without debate, and even without reducing them to writing, decreeing the principle, as they termed it, by acclamation, and leaving the *réduction* to a subsequent occasion. The rules of good debate and the science of order were accordingly thrown away on this riotous and undeliberate executive.

Romilly could not, however, resist the temptation of running over to France in the Long Vacation of 1789 and witnessing the sessions of the Assembly then being held at Versailles.

The Bastille, that emblem of political oppression, had fallen on July 14, and Paris was handed over to the excesses of mob law. He dined with the prudent Necker, who was no match for Mirabeau in debate. He conversed with the Abbé Sieyès, who complained of the abolition of tithes. 'These people who want to be free,' he exclaimed, 'know not how to be just.' He saw and heard the seagreen incorruptible Robespierre, but that fanatic had not yet risen to fame as the Man of the Mountain on the shoulders of the Jacobin Club. So far as this mad vortex of events may be said to have had a brain or presiding genius it was that of Pasteur Dumont, who fed Mirabeau with ideas and even words.¹ Romilly was anxious that Dumont should write the history of these epoch-making times. Part of this projected history was translated by him into English, and, together with some articles of his own, appeared as 'Letters containing an account of the late revolution in France, and observations on the laws, manners, and institutions of the English, written during the author's residence at Paris, Versailles, and London in the years 1789-90. Translated from the German of Henry Frederic Groenvelt.' When later events and developments sickened and estranged the earlier friends of the revolution, Romilly appears to have repented of this compilation, and so far as he was able destroyed every copy he could lay hands on.

By the kindness of Lady Seymour (Sir Samuel's granddaughter) I have been enabled to see one of the very sur-

¹ See *Recollections of Mirabeau*, by Etienne Dumont. 1832.

viving copies of this little octavo volume of some 371 pages. It was printed by Johnson, of St. Paul's Churchyard, in 1792. The preface modestly claims for the supposititious foreign critic of English ways 'nothing but plain sense.' The letters Nos. 1 to 12, doubtless from the pen of Dumont, were, it is there stated, added as an afterthought, since they were found to comprise a more complete account of the late revolution than had yet appeared in this country. The remaining letters would seem (with the exception of No. 23, which was by Scarlett, the first Lord Abinger) to have been by Romilly. They constitute a slashing contemporary indictment of the civil and criminal law and of the Constitution of England in the eighteenth century, all the freer in tone in consequence of their being naively represented as the innocent reflections of an unknown but critical German student visiting this country.

When Romilly returned to Paris in 1802 he relates with disillusioned regret that 'what strikes a foreigner as most extraordinary is that the despotism which prevails, and the vexatious and trifling regulations of the police are all carried on in the name of liberty and equality.' To Bonaparte, then first Consul, he declined to be presented. He, however, saw Napoleon, then in his thirty-third year, at the Louvre, and he notes: 'None of the prints of him are very like. He has a mildness, a serenity in his countenance which is very prepossessing; and none of that sternness which is to be found in his picture.' Yet he says it seems very wonderful by what means Bonaparte can maintain so absolute a power. 'His character is of that kind which inspires fear much more than it conciliates affection. He is not popular. The public have no attachment to him. They do not enjoy his greatness. He seems to despise popularity, and takes no pains to gain the affections of the people. That he meditates gaining fresh laurels in war can hardly be doubted, if the accounts which one hears of his restless disposition be true.' France was then habituated to bloodshed, the guillotine was still at work in the Place de Grève, as Romilly bears witness, and the marks of the cannon balls were yet visible on the Tuileries. All emblems of regality had been blotted out, and Liberté,

Egalité et Fraternité ou la mort were emblazoned on all the public buildings. The sanguinary Fouché, who had worn an aristocrat's ear in his hat as a national cockade, was chief of the police, and no man or woman's liberty was worth a moment's purchase. Yet Romilly tells us the opera and the theatres were in full swing, and at the former he saw Madame Récamier, then at the commencement of her reign as the unacknowledged queen of the salons of the gay and fickle city. Notre Dame he found re-established as the temple of Reason, and all the paraphernalia of Catholicism had been torn from its walls. He met at dinner the cold, crafty yet accomplished Talleyrand, of 'vulpine understanding,' as Carlyle has it, and Charles James Fox was also among the party.

From this highly coloured and dramatic life back to the drab of his new domestic hearth in prosaic Gower Street (No. 54¹), and to daily practice in the law-courts of London, was a transformation indeed. His rise to eminence at the bar was rapid, despite the early forebodings and searchings of heart in which his autobiography abounds. He had taken silk in 1800: in 1805 he was made Chancellor of the County Palatine of Durham, and the Prince of Wales had occasion to requisition his services. That scape-grace prince, 'the first gentleman in Europe,' who gambled at Brooks's and patronised the Whigs, seems to have formed a high opinion of Romilly and predestined him for office in the event of the overthrow of Pitt.

Meanwhile the news of Napoleon's triumphal progress through Europe and his formation of a huge camp at Boulogne sent terror through the stoutest hearts in the country. The armies of Austria and Russia had been crushed by the victorious Emperor of the French, and, according to Wilberforce, Austerlitz killed Pitt. In the dark days of January 1806, 'the great Commoner,' though but forty-seven, was known to be sick unto death, and according to the classical accounts died

¹ At my suggestion the London County Council proposed to indicate by a medallion that Sir Samuel Romilly lived at this house. The Duke of Bedford on learning of the proposal caused a bronze tablet to be put up.

crying, 'My country, oh my country,' on the 23rd of that month. His Cabinet could not survive him, and at once fell to pieces. The Whigs, with Lord Grenville as Prime Minister, came into office, and Romilly became Solicitor-General to the Government, which from its illustrious composition is known to history as the Ministry of All the Talents.

Lord Erskine was the Chancellor, but he clearly recognised his own limitations. He applied to Romilly for his assistance, saying, 'You must make me a Chancellor now, that I may make you one afterwards.' On February 12, 1806, the new Ministers kissed hands, and Romilly, according to custom, was knighted by the King, and on the 24th he took his seat in the House as Member for Queenborough.

The Cabinet of All the Talents was too good to last, and its liberal measures of domestic reform were conceived in a spirit far in advance of the time. Death had removed Fox, mourned alike by friend and foe, and on March 25, 1807, George III. dismissed Lord Grenville, while the Tories resumed office till the end of the great war. Romilly, however, was more at home in opposition than in office, and as leader of many reforms and the hero of many forlorn causes we find him constantly taking part in the debates of the Commons during the remaining twelve years of his life. He was now in his prime and in the position for which both destiny and inclination appear to have prepared him. Let us recall the impression he at this time made upon his contemporaries. We are told that he was of tall and graceful figure, that he had a melodious voice and possessed features of classical regularity. The well-known portrait by Sir Thomas Lawrence in our national collection confirms this word-picture. Scarlett says he was a man of reserved habits and cold demeanour, but under that exterior he carried the warmest heart and most generous emotions. In mixed company he was more a listener than a talker, but was animated and free with his intimates. He was austere to the verge of puritanism, and his chief relaxation during term was a long walk. When excited by controversy, Scarlett says, his temper was easily

provoked, and opponents thought him intolerant, and he was certainly severe upon bad reasoning. Like most reformers he was highly sensitive, and he sometimes carried political resentment to extremes. Thus he abandoned a lifelong friendship with Percival in consequence of a political difference. In speech it is said his diction was as chaste as his logic was cogent. He was not content with laying good matter before his audience, but he was ever aiming after and perfecting the form and style of his address. He did not persuade by his rhetoric, but convinced by his logic. He had the eye of a hawk for weak spots in his opponent's case, with unerring instinct he fastened on a fallacy, and with animated facility he would expose it to the derision of his audience. He was fearless in attack and formidable in reply. His memory was marvellous, and his capacity for reading inexhaustible; he was said to take in a whole page at a glance.

Romilly's reputation in the House, according to the testimony of his contemporaries, and even of his opponents, stood high. He was a parliamentarian first and a lawyer second. No place-hunting attorney was he, afraid to champion an unpopular cause or figure in a miserable minority. A genial politician of our own day has happily said of him, 'Among the many brilliant lawyers who have, like birds of passage, flitted through the House of Commons on their way to what they thought to be better things, I know but one of whom I could honestly say, "May my soul be with his!" I refer to Sir Samuel Romilly, the very perfection in my eyes of a lawyer, a gentleman, and a Member of Parliament, whose pure figure stands out in the frieze of our Parliamentary history like the figure of an Apollo amongst a herd of satyrs and goats.'¹

Romilly had in his own mind forecast his career with almost prophetic accuracy when only twenty-two years of age. In a letter of his dated June 17, 1779 (for which I am indebted to Lady Seymour), he says, 'The business of my life will be to render service to my country and my fellow citizens; it is my duty, however fruitless my efforts should prove, not to lose courage, but constantly to aspire to a degree of eminence

¹ A. Birrell, *Miscellanies*, 1901.

which will give a larger field to my industry.' He adds, 'This would, I know, with the world pass for a philosophic apology for vanity and ambition, but I hope from you I am not to expect the judgment of the world.'

Although Parliamentary reporting in the first two decades of last century was far from satisfactory, there have been compiled by William Peter two volumes of Romilly's speeches, published in 1820. We find him speaking on the Mutiny Bill in 1806 in favour of enlistment of soldiers for a limited period instead of for an indefinite time, and arguing for a citizen soldiery rather than a professional, anticipating by half a century the Volunteer movement of which we have witnessed such a striking development in our own time. The same year he employed his eloquent invective in denunciation of the slave trade, which he stigmatised as 'an abominable and disgraceful traffic,' 'a stain upon our national reputation that ought instantly to be wiped away.' He spoke in support of a motion by Fox for the final and complete abolition of the slave trade. This was one of the last oratorical efforts of him whom Burke called the 'greatest debater the world ever saw,' and the occasion was worthy of his powers. Lowell writing at the time of the American war apostrophises slavery as—

the earth-born Cyclops, fellest of the giant brood,
Sons of brutish Force and Darkness, who have drenched the earth
with blood.

And Romilly seems to have anticipated him, for he denounced the odious traffic as being carried on by 'robbery, rapine, and murder,' and in his diary he notes that these words gave great offence to some gentlemen, particularly to General Gascoyne, one of the members for Liverpool, Sir William Young, and George Rose; but he significantly adds, 'as I should think it criminal to speak of such a trade otherwise than as it really is, I shall probably use the same expressions again when I have next occasion to speak of it.' The mealy-mouthedness that dared not shock the smug proprieties of Mr. Worldly Wiseman, and the complacency of the Christian merchant who waxed fat on forced labour and scoffed at the horrors of the middle

passage, were foreign to the fiery rectitude of Samuel Romilly
He had learnt the lesson how—

to side with Truth is noble when you share her wretched crust,
Ere her cause bring fame and profit, and 'tis prosperous to be just.
'Then it is the brave man chooses while the coward stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit, till his Lord is crucified,
And the multitude make virtue of the faith they have denied.

The time for argument had, he held, gone by; at that time the trade could only be defended by refuted arguments and disproved assertions. Nearly twenty years had passed since Wilberforce under a spreading oak at Holwood had, in conversation with Pitt, resolved to address himself to that reform from which his name can never be dissevered. Fox's motion was carried by an overwhelming majority, and even passed the Lords. Romilly, who it appears had, from some reason not divulged, and not by any fault of his, been estranged from Wilberforce for some nine or ten years, was generous in his praise of the great abolitionist, and contrasted the feelings of Napoleon, then at the summit of his worldly glory, with 'the serener joy of him who would that day lay his head upon his pillow and remember that the slave trade was no more.'¹

In May 1806, at the trial of Lord Melville (better known as Henry Dundas) for 'gross malversation and breach of duty' while Treasurer of the Navy, Romilly, as one of the Managers for the Commons, summed up the evidence in a speech extending over three hours and twenty minutes. Dundas was nevertheless acquitted by the peers. During this year Romilly was also engaged in the unsavoury investigations instituted by the Prince of Wales into the conduct of his much wronged, imprudent, and never crowned consort.

Early in 1807 he pressed for a reform whereby the freehold estates of debtors should be made assets for payment of simple contract debts. This evoked from Lord Ellenborough the strange doctrine that no alteration in the law of such a nature should be proposed unless the judges had been first severally consulted. Canning opposed him in the Commons,

¹ *Autobiography*, ii. 140.

and Colonel Eyre, the member for Nottingham, detected in his innocent proposal revolutionary principles of alien extraction and twitted him upon his 'hereditary love of democracy.' To this Romilly retorted that he had never heard of any of his ancestors taking any part in politics, that 'they had lived in affluence under the French monarchy till the Edict of Nantes was revoked, and by a breach of public faith they were no longer permitted to worship God in the way they thought most acceptable to Him; they had preferred giving up the possessions which they had inherited to making a sacrifice of their consciences, and had left their posterity to trust to their own exertions for their support.'

In 1807 the Ministry of the Duke of Portland had come in on a Protestant wave, for the Whigs were suspected of desiring Catholic emancipation. The King was obstinately opposed to this reform, and it was understood that Ministers had pledged themselves in no case to advise the Sovereign to approve such a measure. This unconstitutional pledge was the occasion of debate on April 9, 1807, and Romilly spoke, but, as he records in his diary: 'I felt mortified and chagrined to the utmost degree. . . . It will be long I think before I shall venture to speak again.'

At the general election he was returned for Horsham, but was unseated on petition, and in accordance with the bad old custom of the times he bought a seat—that of Wareham, Dorset—for £3,000. On this questionable proceeding he notes: 'This buying of seats is detestable; and yet it is almost the only way in which one in my situation, who is resolved to be an independent man, can get into Parliament.' It was at least not true of him, as it was of many, that if they bought their seats they sold their votes.

In July 1807 we find him recovering his confidence and rising in the House to support Samuel Whitbread's Bill for the establishment of schools for the education of the poor in every parish in England. He was one of ten who voted against the iniquitous Coercion Act for Ireland which authorised domiciliary visits and arrests on suspicion. As he justly exclaimed, 'What triumphant arguments will not this Bill

furnish the disaffected with in Ireland! What laws more tyrannical could they have to dread, if the French yoke were imposed upon them?’

It was in 1808 that Sir Samuel addressed himself to that reform with which his name is most generally associated—the mitigation of the criminal code.

When he began this crusade our penal system was the most barbarous in Europe. More than a hundred offences, many venial in the extreme, were punishable by death. Romilly was opposed by all the leading lawyers of the day and all the bishops, and was twitted with setting aside ‘the wisdom of our ancestors.’ On one occasion, when it was alleged he had referred to a statute of Henry VIII. what was really contained in one of Edward I., Romilly incontinently retorted, ‘What care I whether this law was made by one set of barbarians or another?’ He proceeded to his attack by stages. His first step was to introduce a Bill to repeal an Act of Elizabeth which made it a capital offence to pick a pocket. Despite the aristocratic opposition of those who told him, ‘There is no good done by mercy—they only get worse—hang the lot,’ he had the satisfaction of piloting this modest measure into law before the session was over. Bentham kept up interest in the question by bringing out his ‘Theory of Punishments,’ which was conceived in the same humanitarian spirit as the book of Beccaria published in 1764 on ‘Crimes and Punishments.’

In 1809, on the motion for inquiry into the corrupt conduct of the Duke of York, Romilly, against the whole influence of the Court, voted for the inquiry, and Sir James Mackintosh considered that he thereby ‘sacrificed the highest objects of ambition to the dictates of conscience.’ He also supported a Bill of Erskine’s for the prevention of cruelty to animals. In the memorable attack on the liberty of the Press, which resulted in the committal of John Gale Jones to Newgate and the forcible removal of Sir Francis Burdett to the Tower, Romilly was as ever on the side of freedom, and moved, though without success, for the liberation of Jones.

In 1810 he got through the Commons two Bills abolishing

hanging for stealing to the value of forty shillings from shops and on board ship ; but he failed, by 83 to 81, though backed by Wilberforce and Canning, to abolish the death penalty for stealing to the value of forty shillings from a dwelling-house.

Another Bill introduced into the Lords to abolish hanging for stealing, to the value of five shillings, from a shop was defeated by 81 to 11, and (shameful to relate) the majority included the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Bishops of London, Salisbury, Ely, Hereford, and Chester.

In speaking upon the question of penitentiaries on May 9, 1810, Romilly condemned transportation, the hulks, and solitary confinement. He eulogised the work of 'the celebrated Mr. Howard,' as he styled him, and considered too little attention was devoted to the reformation of prisoners in our gaols. He said 'those confined in common gaols often return to society much worse than when they were withdrawn from it.' The indiscriminate mingling matured them in villainy. Newgate in particular, he said, combined every defect of which a place of confinement was capable ; a monument had been erected in St. Paul's hard by to the memory of John Howard, while Newgate was a 'monument of disgrace and inhumanity, and in contempt of those wise regulations which it was the object of his benevolent life to recommend.'

In 1812 he succeeded in passing a Bill abolishing hanging as a punishment for vagrancy and begging on the part of soldiers and sailors. He also spoke against flogging as a punishment in the Army as being a 'refinement of cruelty' and as 'a most disgraceful and degrading punishment, debasing the mind of the man on whom it is inflicted,' but he was beaten by, 79 to 6. The same year this tolerant Huguenot pleaded on behalf of Catholic emancipation.

Some have called Romilly a Deist, others have found a refined pantheism in his philosophy. He certainly was a reverent believer in a Supreme Being, held fast to the immortality of man's real essence, and practised a Christian charity which might have put bishops to the blush. Here are a few of his utterances. 'Although,' he said, 'there are

some of the doctrines of the Catholics which I abhor, I will not consent to make myself a party at this day to the persecution of my fellow-Christians of any description'; here he was rudely and unintelligibly interrupted by a Mr. Foster, and he swiftly retorted: 'I can only lament my unfortunate incapacity to understand the honourable gentleman.' As to the priesthood in Ireland, he said, 'having ministered to the people's comforts in distress, and healed the wounds of their flock, there was naturally excited in their bosoms reciprocal affection and esteem.' He roughly handled the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed, and declared 'the spiritual authority which once maintained a political dominion over the whole Christian world is gone for ever.'

At the general election this year Romilly was defeated for Bristol, but by the help of the Duke of Norfolk he reappeared as member for Arundel. He paid flying visits to Edinburgh, where he met Dugald Stewart, Jeffrey, Dr. Gregory, and George Wilson; also to Leith Hill, Surrey, where he afterwards had a villa called 'Tanhurst,' to which he constantly retired during vacations.

In 1813 he carried his Bill to abolish hanging for shop-lifting through the Commons, but it was killed in the Lords; and another Bill, for removing drawing and disembowelling from the penalty for high treason, was opposed successfully by the Government, so that, as he remarked, 'Ministers have the glory of having preserved the British law whereby it is ordained that the heart and bowels of a man convicted of treason shall be torn out of his body while he is yet alive.'

He was nerved to greater effort by these rebuffs, and devoted his leisure—none too ample—to planning further and more drastic reforms. The Long Vacation this year he passed, with his wife and family of seven, at Tanhurst and at Bowood. At the former his guests were Dumont, whose tales of the Revolution must have been engrossing; Bentham, the elder Mill, and Scarlett; while at Lord Lansdowne's he met Madame de Staël, Sir James Mackintosh, Rogers the poet, and many others.

In 1815 Romilly again showed his political prescience by

voting, in a small minority though it was, against a Bill to prohibit, under certain circumstances, the importation of foreign corn. In March of the same year came the news that Napoleon had escaped from Elba, and was marching on Paris to resume his throne. The Government was panic-stricken, and clamoured for the resumption of hostilities. Whitbread moved a petition in favour of peace, which Romilly supported, and they were defeated by 273 to 72. Then in June came Waterloo and the peace that Europe sorely needed, and Romilly that summer made a tour on the Continent with his wife and elder children. They visited the battlefield of Waterloo, the Rhine, Switzerland, and Northern Italy, returning through Paris, which was still held by foreign troops.

The year 1816 witnessed the introduction of an Aliens Bill by Lord Castlereagh. In Romilly's opinion, its tendency was to interfere with the right of asylum of which this country rightly boasted. The wags of the day made fun of his opposition, and the papers lampooned him thus:—

Pray tell us why, without his fees,
He thus defends the refugees,
And lauds the outcasts of society?
Good man, he's moved by filial piety.

In 1817 we find him active in exposing the severity of the Game Laws, and protesting against the threatened suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act. Among his friends at this time was the oddly-famous Dr. Parr, who persisted in presenting Romilly with his silver-plate. At Bentham's sybarite retreat at Ford Abbey he came across Francis Place, the political tailor of Charing Cross, who held the representation of Westminster in the hollow of his hand.

Brougham and Lord John Russell were now in the front ranks of the Opposition, and Peel was Irish Secretary. Romilly was sixty years of age, and certain of the Woolsack if the Whigs came in. To this end he conscientiously devoted himself, and the papers left at his death show the thoroughness with which he prepared for the faithful discharge of the duties of that august office.

In November 1817 there appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* a paper transmitted by Brougham from Romilly on the subject of the codification of law. It was occasioned by a publication of Bentham's in which the abortive efforts of the utilitarian reformer to induce the Czar of all the Russias and the President of the United States of America to codify their legislation were set out. Bentham had emphasised the perils and injustice of unwritten law such as is the common law of England. Romilly in his review shares the distrust of the *lex non scripta*, on which Bentham enlarged, but while he praised the great jurist's principles, he criticised his more recent style as harsh, diffuse, and abusive. He yields unstinted praise to Bentham's early 'Fragment on Government' asserting that 'English literature hardly affords any specimens of a more correct, concise, and perspicuous style,' yet he thinks Bentham owed much of his reputation to the interpretation of his teaching by Pasteur Dumont, but for whom, he holds, the hedonistic philosopher might never have emerged from obscurity. From an entry in his diary we see that Romilly had some qualms lest this plain speaking in regard to his old friend might give offence. *Tantaene animis celestibus irae?* Indeed, some coolness appears to have resulted, and during the Westminster election in the following summer Bentham was not averse to inditing a handbill charging Romilly with being a Whig, a lawyer, a friend only to moderate reform, and unfit to represent the enlightened burgesses of Westminster. The estrangement seems, however, to have been but brief, and philosophic rather than personal, for before the tragic close which the same year witnessed we read of 'a very pleasant party' at Bentham's, at which the elder Mill, Lord Brougham, and the American Ambassador Rush, together with Romilly, enjoyed the hospitality of the old sage as of yore, at Queen Square, Westminster.

Romilly's view on the relative value of written and unwritten law was that under statute law we know with certainty its whole extent, and can at once discern what it has not, as well as what it has, provided; but under the

common law there is no case unprovided for, though there may be many of which it is extremely difficult, and indeed impossible, to say beforehand what the provision is. In fact, every new decision in common law amounts to new law, and our judges are thereby converted into legislators.

On January 27, 1818, Parliament reassembled, and Romilly at once inveighed against the continued suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act as futile and vexatious. The Government had by this time also repented of the work of their hand, and with astonishing speed a Bill to repeal the suspension of this charter of popular liberty was read three times in the Lords in one day, passed with the same celerity through the Commons on the next, and received the Royal Assent within the week.

On June 5, 1818, Romilly's voice was heard for the last time within the precincts of Parliament. He spoke with more than ordinary warmth, reciting the misdeeds of the dying Government, and his ominous and telling indictment was suffused with a retrospective valediction. He said:—

‘Apprehending that we are within a very few hours of the termination of our political existence, before the moment of dissolution arrives let us recollect for what deeds we have to account. Let us recollect we are the Parliament which, for the first time in the history of this country, twice suspended the Habeas Corpus Act in a period of profound peace. Let us recollect that we are the confiding Parliament which entrusted His Majesty's Ministers with the authority emanating from that suspension, in expectation that when it was no longer wanted, they would call Parliament together to surrender it into their hands—which those Ministers did not do, though they subsequently acknowledged that the necessity for retaining that power had long ceased to exist. Let us recollect that we are the same Parliament which refused to inquire into the numerous grievances stated in petitions and memorials with which our table groaned: that we turned a deaf ear to the complaints of the oppressed, and even amused ourselves with their sufferings. Let us recollect that we are the same Parliament which sanctioned the shutting of the

ports of this once hospitable nation to unfortunate foreigners flying from persecution in their own country. This, sir, is what we have done, and we are about to crown all by the present most violent and most unjustifiable Act. Who our successors may be I know not; but God grant that this country may never see another Parliament so regardless of the liberties and rights of the people, and of the principles of general justice, as this Parliament has been.'

In June 1818 Parliament was dissolved. Just appreciation of Romilly's great gifts and public services was shown by an immediate requisition from the City of Westminster inviting him to accept nomination and 'abstain from all personal attendance, trouble, and expense.' Sir Francis Burdett, Captain Maxwell, and Hunt also went to the poll, and the final figures were :—

Romilly,	5,339.
Burdett,	5,238.
Maxwell,	4,808.
Hunt,	84.

In returning thanks he said :—

'I have indeed endeavoured to be useful to the public; but my endeavours have seldom been successful. The representative of Westminster should express his thanks by a faithful discharge of the sacred duties which you have imposed upon him; by being a vigilant guardian of the public interests, and a bold assertor of the people's rights; by resisting all attacks which may be made upon the liberty of the Press, the trial by jury, and the Habeas Corpus—the great security of all our liberties. By endeavouring to restrain the lavish and improvident expenditure of public money; by opposing all new and oppressive taxes; by being the friend of civil and religious liberty; and by seeking to restore this country to the proud station which it held amongst the nations when it was a secure asylum for those who are endeavouring to escape in foreign countries from religious or political persecution. These are the thanks which the electors of Westminster are entitled to expect; and when the time

comes that I shall have to render you an account of the trust you have committed to me I trust in God that I shall be able to show that I have discharged it honestly and faithfully.'

This was on July 4. On the 19th he took a cottage at the Vale of Health, Hampstead, for his wife's sake. In September they moved to Cowes in the Isle of Wight. On the 13th Lady Romilly was taken ill. After many anxious nights, on October 9 things seemed brighter. On the next day, however, there was a relapse, and on the 29th she died. Her husband was prostrated with grief. He returned to his house in town, 21 Russell Square. But the loss of his devoted comrade of twenty years, to whose virtues and reciprocated affection his diary bears abundant testimony, was more than that sensitive soul could face. The world was empty without her. He stood, as it were, but one remove from the zenith of his lofty ambition, but attainment was not to be. For three days he wrestled with despair; and on the fourth, by his own hand, he terminated his life. His corpse was laid beside that of his wife at Knill in Herefordshire.

High and low felt his loss—so unlooked for and so tragic—almost as a personal bereavement. Even the old Chancellor Eldon, his habitual foe, when he looked on the vacant place in Court, was dissolved in tears. 'I cannot stay here,' he cried, and rising in great agitation he broke up the Court. In the country of his fathers too, at the *Athénée Royal*, Benjamin Constant pronounced an *éloge* on that illustrious man 'who belonged to every country because he had deserved well of all countries in defending the cause of humanity, liberty, and justice.'

I have neither time nor need to moralise on the life and work of Sir Samuel Romilly, which I have hastily sketched. A life so full, and yet so painfully abbreviated—a work throughout interwoven with his life and that of the civilised world, then in travail with the birth-pains of a new age. With Tom Paine he might have claimed, 'The world is my country, and to do good is my religion,' but he was of a finer fibre and less pushful than Tom Paine. He was a puritan amid an age of libertines. A refugee from religious persecution himself, he

was the expounder of toleration and mercy, and pleaded eloquently for Catholic emancipation. He could face a hostile senate undismayed, but he could not survive a broken heart. His work was for all time, and the freshness and modernity of his views must strike every reader of his autobiography. It is not difficult to divine what would have been Romilly's attitude on many of the political problems that perplex us to-day. His work is not finished yet. But we seem to lack his fearless audacity in attacking tyranny and wrong in high places, and the self-sustaining resolution that can, alone, face fearful odds.

Call me o'er earth's chosen heroes,—they were souls that stood alone,

While the men they agonised for hurled the contumelious stone ;
 Stood serene and down the future saw the golden beam incline
 To the side of perfect justice, mastered by their faith divine,
 By one man's plain truth to manhood and to God's supreme design.

A society has recently been established to recall his labours and renew his work. Alike in public and in private there is plenty of room for imitations of Romilly :—

He needs no sculptured monument his worthiness to tell ;
 His name will live, oh could we all acquit ourselves as well !



