

to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Iamblichus or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek or Pindar,—while the walls of the old Grey Friars reëchoed with the accents of the inspired charity boy!"

A reaction in favour of poetry took place in his seventeenth year under the influence of what are now considered the mediocre sonnets of William Lisle Bowles,* and to poetry he mainly devoted himself until he fell under the influence of opium in 1801, or thereabouts.

So devoid of ordinary ambition was Coleridge, and so much did he desire to escape from school that he attempted to get himself apprenticed to a shoemaker. To this the head master would not consent, but put him in the University Class. He left school in 1790, and proceeded to Cambridge in 1791. Here he is reported to have been studious, but withal ever ready to talk; his room being a constant rendezvous of conversation-loving friends. He won the Brown Medal for a Greek Ode on the Slave Trade, and competed unsuccessfully for other similar prizes; but his reading was for the most part desultory and capricious. He here became an avowed democrat and admirer of the French Revolution like Wordsworth, Southey, and many other youthful contemporaries. Here he also became a Unitarian under the influence of one Friend, a fellow of his college, who was deprived of his fellowship for sedition and defamation of the Church of England by printing Unitarian doctrines.

In the latter part of 1793 a singular episode occurred in his college career. On account of a disappointment in love or the pressure of debt, or of both combined, Coleridge suddenly left Cambridge for London and, after exhausting his slender stock of money, enlisted as a private in the Fifteenth Light Dragoons under the name of Silas Titus Comberback, thus preserving the initials S. T. C. As his assumed surname denotes (Comberback=cumber back), a more unpromising recruit has seldom entered a cavalry regiment. Here he remained for some months, but not long enough to receive the benefits, moral, mental, and physical, of a thorough course of drill and discipline—a course which Mr. Traill appears to be right in thinking would have assisted in remedying some of the weaknesses and defects of Coleridge's nature. His discovery is said to have been due to his attracting the attention of his captain by having written a Latin quotation on a wall of the stables. The officer interested himself forthwith to procure a dis-

* Delightful Bowles! still blessing and still blest;
All like thy strains, but children like them best.—Byron,