

Effusion XV: a memory of Pantisocracy

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Two young revolutionary idealists, embryonic poets, met at Oxford in June 1794 and planned their Utopia; a round century later a New Zealand bibliophile was gathering together a library which was becoming the centre of his life. A link was established between these men when Alexander Turnbull bought for his collection of English literary works a copy of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's *Poems on Various Subjects* published by Joseph Cottle of Bristol in 1796. Slipped in beside a sonnet, *Effusion XV* "Pale Roamer thro' the Night! thou poor Forlorn!" on page 60, lay a small folded leaf, an emended draft in Coleridge's hand headed *Effusion 15*¹ "Poor wanderer of the Night! thou pale Forlorn!". Interest in the discrepancies between the two versions has led to an investigation into the circumstances which brought the sonnet into being and into the provenance of this defective and undistinguished volume in its original grey boards. Turnbull's extant papers provide no positive record of his purchase of this volume which was sold at Sotheby's, on behalf of an unnamed vendor, on 4 December 1902 and bought for £13.15.0 by Pickering and Chatto, booksellers and publishers.² Their invoice of 8 May 1907 lists a vaguely specified purchase by Turnbull of "Coleridge's Poems" for £21 at a time when a finely bound edition was bringing £3-4. Turnbull, who left ample evidence of knowing and using his collections was, for some reason, apparently unaware of the existence of the manuscript and merely noted, in characteristically meticulous fashion and neat hand "pp. 19-29 misplaced in binding" on the front flyleaf when in fact his annotation should have recorded the misfolding of one sheet spanning pp. 17-32.³

Coleridge in his preface to the edition of *Poems on Various Subjects* acknowledges that the first half of *Effusion XV* was written by Robert Southey.⁴ From their meeting at Balliol College in June 1794 the two young poets and a small group of friends, inspired by the French Revolution and *The Rights of Man*, and disillusioned with the quality of life in England, evolved a plan to set up a select community in America. "Twelve gentlemen of good education and liberal principles were to embark with twelve ladies"⁵ to establish a pantisocracy "of equal government of all." The colony was to be supported by two or three hours of manual labour by all members, with leisure hours to be spent in study, liberal discussion and the education of their children. They planned to purchase a