

## A Correction

To the Editor of the *Saturday Review*:

Sir:

We note with interest Arthur Colton's review in the January 26th issue of *The Saturday Review of Literature* of "Thomas Lovell Beddoes, Eccentric and Poet," by Royal H. Snow, and also Mr. Colton's statement that the only edition now in print seems to be the two-shilling series issued by Routledge.

We thought it might be of interest to you to know that there has just been issued a new and complete edition of the works of Thomas Beddoes edited with a new memoir by Sir Edmund Gosse and decorated by "The Dance of Death" pictures of Hans Holbein by the Fanfrolico Press of London. We are the American distributors of this book which is in two volumes and is limited to seven hundred and fifty sets for sale at \$17.50 each.

WALTER V. MCKEE, INC.

## Beddoes Editions

To the Editor of *The Saturday Review*:

Sir:

I was very much interested in the review by Arthur Colton, of the life of Thomas Lovell Beddoes, which appeared in your issue of January 26th. Mr. Colton erroneously believes that the only edition of Beddoes is in the two shilling Routledge series. The Fanfrolico Press of London issued, a few months ago, a very handsome edition of the nineteenth century poet, limited to 750 copies and illustrated by the entire set of Holbein's "Dance of Death." It was edited by Sir Edmond Gosse and bears a critical introduction by him.

The appearance of the set provoked a seething retort to an unappreciative critic. J. C. Squire dismissed Beddoes with the irrelevant remark, "He has been called 'The Last of the Elizabethans.' Is that not an adverse criticism in itself?"

The militant editors of the Fanfrolico Press replied: "This remark is a characteristic self-exposure of Mr. Squire, who has been called 'The Last of the Quidnuncs.' Every lover of imagic poetry must have a Beddoes somewhere accessible. Beddoes alone in all literature concerns himself *vitally* with death. The comparison with modern necrophilia (Beaudelaire and his derivatives) is literally odious; for Beddoes's corpses have a lyrical, not a medical stink. Hence the academic dislike, as mirrored in Mr. Squire's rhetorical question quoted above."

BARNET B. RUDER.

New York.

65 M82

[Times Lit. Suppl. 16 May, 1929]

## Correspondence

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES

Sir,—I wish to correct a slight error of date in the late Sir Edmund Gosse's introduction to the Fanfrolico Press edition of the "Complete Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes." Captain F. L. Pleadwell has given me, with permission to reproduce, the copy of a letter from Kelsall to Browning which is in his collection. This letter, sent accompanying the manuscripts, is dated November 13, 1867, while Sir Edmund states that it was in the spring of the next year that Kelsall took this step. The letter runs as follows:—

Dear Mr. Browning,—I have now the pleasure of placing before you, according to promise, some of the Beddoes MSS. and of anticipating the gratification their inspection will give you. The whole of these MSS. are at your service, but I was unwilling to stifle your enthusiastic regard for Beddoes under too great a weight of MS. not very easy to decypher & partially obliterated. I have therefore commenced with only a portion, selected so as to present the writer in various attitudes of thought & at different times of life. The packet is too bulky for the post, & I therefore commit it to the care of the L. & Southwestern railway authorities, by whom, I trust, it will be safely delivered (to the address of this note, furnished to me by Procter) not very long after the arrival of this.

The MSS sent comprise,

1. The complete copy of Deaths Jest Book mentioned in my memoirs, p. cxx. as of No. 2.
2. "The enlarged version" of the 1st. Act.
3. A book containing early poems, & later fragments.
4. Two chapters from the Ivory Gate filling 5 closely packed sheets of letter paper.

All the alterations & comments made on any of these in ink, & most of those in pencil, are by Beddoes himself—but Nos. 1 & 2 have passed thro' the hands of Procter & Bourne, who both pencilled in them a few notes of praise or blame. You will find many passages omitted in my publication, being almost entirely relative to Mandrake—This passage I was anxious from various motives, to keep as much as possible out of sight. I was publishg. agst. the inclination of the near relatives, & to these I know that Mandrake & his belongings wd. as well as to the almost universal public, be most distasteful. Neither did I much admire them myself. They seem laboured & artificial & quite unworthy of the company they are in. They have nevertheless strokes of wit here & there—especially in the omitted scene, which commences the 2nd. Act—& 2 very clever lyrics—"The New St. Cecilia" & "vaiporous tailor"—which were of course unpublishable, so "unpolite." You will also find his prefatory remarks on the drama, which were excluded from my limited publication. On all these omissions & manipulations of mine I shd. like very much to have your opinion & where, & how, you consider them faulty.

Such passages or phrases as I have printed not in accordance with these MSS. exist in the oldest copy not now sent, & where there was a fair choice I sometimes consulted my own taste. The little book contains at one end apparently some of his earliest compositions—between Chester house & Oxford, & soon afterwd. They have little value in themselves, but are very interesting for his sake—& they are far from commonplace. The fragments at the other end are evidently later & very superior. They breathe the tones of the Brides Trag: & even of the D.J.B. and as such I published most of them. The book came into my possession in 1823, or a little later, & was soon forgotten by Beddoes.

I have left with the MSS. a little artistic fancy, sketched by one of my sons, in boyhood, who had seen Beddoes & aimed at a grotesque likeness. Hold it up before the light.

The detached MSS. are fragmentary in the last degree, as B. was very stingy of paper, & generally jotted down his concepts. on the backs of letters or any scrap of vilest paper. I enclose 2 specimens, which you may permanently retain as memorials. Is not the "Dream-Pedlary" a charming composition? The fragment of Bourne's letter shows his estimate of Beddoes. He rightly regrets the long suppression of the D.J.B. He and Procter were agst. publication with great amendments. I was for prompt publication with such amendments as might be readily obtained: but the majority prevailed.

You need be in no hurry to return the MSS. keep them for months, or longer.

I must ask for a few early lines after recd. of the parcel, as I shall be anxious for its safety—& hereafter you will perhaps oblige me with your ideas about the unpublished portions. Can they in any way be made use of in maintenance of the writer's fame? or shall we do wisely to let it rest on what is published?

Mr. Moxon has long promised the public a "miniature" selection from Shelley's poems, with a critical estimate, by R.B., and my bookseller has more than once inquired for it,—but in vain. Can you not cheer me with some good tidings of it? May I presume to put to you another personal question, suggested partly by the last, but more by your once contemplated Oxonian lecture on Beddoes. Is a selection of his poems an attainable desideratum, under the same auspices as the promised selection from Shelley? There is of course no copyright in the way & your name wd. win purchasers. Surely with you it wd. be a labour of love—& the publication wd. have a freshness not attaching to the more celebrated authors. I entreat you to entertain the idea. Of course you wd. freely command all the MSS. & Knowledge in my possessn. or power.

Believe me,

Dear Mr. Browning,

Yours very faithfully,

Faeham.

Nov. 13, 1867.

THOS. F. KELSALL.

Chester house is of course an error for Charterhouse.

I remain yours faithfully,

JACK LINDSAY.

The Fanfrolico Press, Five Bloomsbury-square.

Wed. Dec.

1935.

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# York Times

March

MARCH 18, 1934.

## LOSES SUIT TO VOID OWN TRUST FUND

Daughter-in-Law of Robert  
Browning Gave Up \$325,000  
Forever, Court Holds.

### UNDUE INFLUENCE HINTED

Judge Says New Companion  
of Plaintiff Over 80 Might  
Have Suggested Action.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.  
MINEOLA, L. I., March 17.—The story of how Mrs. Fannie Coddington Browning, daughter-in-law of Robert Browning, the poet, placed \$325,000 irrevocably beyond her reach three years ago, was revealed here today in a Supreme Court ruling denying her the right to use the principal of the fund.

Mrs. Browning, a resident of Hayward Heath, London, is more than 80 years old. In 1931, just before she returned to England to live, she signed a deed of trust containing an irrevocable clause and providing for the disposition of her estate after her death. Last summer she changed her mind about the trust fund and sought to regain control of the money.

#### Action Ruled Irrevocable.

Supreme Court Justice Henry G. Wenzel ruled today that Mrs. Browning had signed away all right to everything but the interest on the money which she had inherited from three sisters. In his opinion, Justice Wenzel suggested that the elderly woman's change of heart might have been inspired by a Miss Dorothy Ivatt, who supplanted Miss Louise Vincent, her companion for twenty years.

The case was referred to the court after Mrs. Browning notified the two trustees, Percy S. Weeks of Oyster Bay, and Schuyler Meyer, a nephew of Huntington, L. I., that she wished to abrogate the trust. They sought the court's advice. In a deposition, taken in England, Mrs. Browning alleged that Mr. Meyer, who was a legatee under the trust, had concealed from her the fact that the deed of trust contained an irrevocable clause.

Justice Wenzel thrust this allegation aside together with Mrs. Browning's statement that her mental and physical faculties had been impaired by an operation she underwent in 1929. In his opinion, Justice Wenzel said:

"Her memory is never at fault, [except on cross examination] and she evidences more than the average woman's grasp of business affairs. Yet, with all this, it is apparent that she is dominated by the will and personality of another. Recent history is not without example of such a complete mental and spiritual dominance. But that other is not Schuyler Meyer."

#### Friend of 20 Years Discharged.

Miss Vincent, who has been Mrs. Browning's friend and companion since before 1914, when Mrs. Browning became a resident of Washington, D. C., was discharged in 1931 after Miss Ivatt, formerly an employe of the Hayward Heath Hospital became a member of the household. Miss Vincent's annuity of \$50 a month was protected by Justice Wenzel's decision.

Regarding Miss Vincent and Miss Ivatt, Justice Wenzel said:

"It must be apparent to any one from the reading of the record what has caused this dear old lady in a few short months to discharge her devoted companion of twenty years [Miss Vincent], dispense with the services of her London solicitor, impugn to her dear friend and religious counselor, Father Powell, the morals of a libertine, brand her nurses and doctors as liars and attack the professional reputation and honesty of her favorite nephew, whom she loved so well."

"The fine Italian hand of Miss Ivatt stands out boldly. Here lies matter for the pen of a Dickens. Miss Vincent had to go because she was too loyal and old a friend of Mrs. Browning, and Miss Ivatt wanted her—alone. So Miss Vincent was sent to Oberammergau, and while she was gone the plan by which she was to live with Mrs. Browning at the English 'Anchorhold' was changed because, forsooth, Miss Ivatt's social position forbade her living in the same house with a 'plumber's daughter.'"

Mrs. Browning was married to Robert Widemann Barrett Browning, an artist, son of Robert Browning, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, in 1887. She is a daughter of the late Henry Coddington, American manufacturer of railroad steel. Mrs. Browning and her husband separated after six years. He is dead.



*To be obtained in the United States of America*

from

WALTER V. McKEE

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32 UNIVERSITY PLACE

NEW YORK CITY

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## BEDDOES

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF BEDDOES, edited, with a new memoir and an unpublished portrait, by the late Sir Edmund Gosse. With the complete set of Hans Holbein's *Dance of Death* woodcuts as decorations. In two volumes, Royal 8vo, pp. xxxv, 590, printed in Scotch type on Dutch mould-made paper, the binding in quarter buckram and stout Japanese floral paper; the edition limited to 725 sets for subscription at \$17.00; also an edition de luxe on English hand-made paper, in one volume, bound in goat-skin, 75 copies only, fully subscribed.

*This (definitive) edition of the complete poetry and prose of Thomas Lovell Beddoes was the last editorial task undertaken by Sir Edmund Gosse, to whom the original manuscripts of Beddoes were transmitted by Robert Browning, for Gosse's edition of the '90's, now very scarce. For the present edition, Sir Edmund Gosse collected new biographical and some unpublished material, including the only known portrait of the poet, which is described as a "very good likeness." With this dignified and beautiful production, Beddoes will now come into his own as one of the foremost imagic poets of the language, whose blank verse, as Sir Edmund Gosse says, is "wonderful, although all his writing, prose or verse, seems a threnody to be chanted in procession to the graveyard."*

Sinda Carl

ON OTHER PAGES

- A Huxley Diary
- The Failure of Radicalism
- Chinese Culture
- English Medieval Costume

Full List of Contents  
On Back Page

THE



TIMES

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

No. 1,763 (34th Year) LONDON SATURDAY NOVEMBER 16 1935 REGISTERED AS A NEWSPAPER POSTAGE: Inland and Canada 1d.; Abroad 1/6. PRICE 3d

Ready on Monday

ENGLAND SPEAKS

By SIR PHILIP GIBBS

Being talks with barbers, road sweepers, cab-drivers, major-generals and all manner of folk with a panorama of the English scene in this Year of Grace. 8s. 6d.

BALKAN HOLIDAY

By DAVID FOOTMAN

A witty account of travels in unfrequented parts by one whom Vernon Bartlett has called "the

Mr. Bartlett might like this.

ON THE TRAIL OF BEDDOES  
SECRETS FROM THE VANISHED BROWNING BOX

AN immense literature has been and is still being inspired by the English poets who, early in the nineteenth century, left their own country and passed the rest of their days on the Continent. It is not the wildest of fancies which suggests that their number might easily have been increased. Wordsworth, as we all know in 1935, had at one time quite a vigorous chance of making his home over the Channel. There was that in Coleridge which could have turned his visit to Germany into a permanent residence "without our special wonder." Thomas Campbell, who died at Boulogne, had been very near expressing his passion for the regeneration of Poland by accepting a professorship at Wilna. Thomas Hood, although "on a march to Berlin, with the 19th Prussian Infantry, he could never succeed in passing himself off as anything but the Regimental Chaplain," became almost a Rhinelander. But of all the poetical exiles who were or who might have been, a century or more ago, the most drastic and versatile was probably Thomas Lovell Beddoes.

The facts of Beddoes's life, particularly in its later stages, form one of the curiosities of biography. A man who, having revealed uncommon powers and attracted valuable admirers in his own land, seeks out another country and shapes his course anew there, with at least notorious results, can hardly fail to provide the chronicler with picturesque opportunity. At the same time, he adds considerably to the difficulty of the chronicler, so far as the recovery of accurate and coherent information is concerned. Beddoes, naturally a difficult man to keep in sight, moved maziily about the Continent during the last half of his life; and it has been only a long and laborious series of inquiries, from his own time almost until now, which enables us to read his story in the detailed form now available. His old friends in England did much to collect it, and felt that some things were not to be divulged in their day. Sir Edmund Gosse had access to their records while they were in the keeping of Robert Browning, and published memoirs of Beddoes which, whatever their faults may have been, were long our main authority. Lately there has been much punctilious investigation, which, it may safely be said, has culminated in the work of Mr. Donner. With his name it is proper to mention that of Professor Weber, to whose discoveries of documents on Beddoes still extant in Germany Mr. Donner acknowledges his important obligation.

Literary detectives are above all their fellow-men a hopeful race, and no doubt others will follow in the footsteps of T. L. Beddoes and Mr. Donner. We cannot anticipate that anything of consequence awaits them. Mr. Donner has clearly done nothing to encourage them in the way of omission or careless observation. With his volumes before us, it seems entirely proved that we can know nothing further of Beddoes's life, and that what is therein stated is correct. And, since the previous accounts of this strange poet are superseded, it is time to gather in brief outline the passages of experience which Mr. Donner has narrated in a study of the poet's mind and work, beginning, of course, with Dr. Beddoes the elder. Some think him the bigger man of the two. He did not write the poems, at all events, nor did he live to see his son Thomas

Lovell write them. This son was born at Clifton on June 30 (not July 20), 1803. A daughter had preceded him, and she outlived him nearly half a century. The death of Dr. Beddoes in 1808 left Thomas Lovell and the other children to the guardianship of their mother and of Davies Gilbert, sometime President of the Royal Society. This excellent man sent the boys to Charterhouse School in 1817. T. L. Beddoes promptly showed some tendencies towards literature, and published some verses in the *Morning Post* of July 6, 1819; and yet he distinguished himself in official studies, was a prize-winner, and left the school in something like glory for Pembroke College, Oxford, in 1820.

At Oxford the poets, if not encouraged by statute, encourage one another; and the following March Beddoes published a volume of verse called "The Improvisatore." In 1822 he did better; he published *The Brides' Tragedy*, and it struck a good many enthusiasts that a new genius was arriving. Beddoes was not dazzled by praise; he stuck to his business as a student, and when he had completed his course at Oxford his mind was set upon studies elsewhere. He had already conceived a work, *Death's Jest-Book*, but that and similar visions did not lure him aside from preparations for a medical career. On July 27, 1825, he matriculated in the University of Göttingen. If anyone doubts whether the young and bold poet was realistic in this matter, the simplest answer is the list of books borrowed by him from the University library (a list brought to light by Professor Weber). When (in 1829) Beddoes was sent down from Göttingen for an outburst of wild behaviour, he promptly entered himself as a student of medicine at Würzburg; and that University gave him his degree in 1831. It was not poetry but politics which derailed him next. His radical speeches and activities led to a deportation order against him; and in spite of his appeals to his University and the British Ambassador at Munich that order took effect on July 21, 1832. The following April he matriculated at the new University of Zurich.

Probably the dominant misfortune for Beddoes occurred when, in 1835, he came near a professorship and was rejected on a technicality. Mr. Donner speaks of the "surfeit of leisure" which thus seemed to force itself on Beddoes—a political refugee from Germany, and spiritually and habitually sundered from England. He had property enough in England to supply his needs. *Death's Jest-Book*, that already ancient scheme, went on growing, but there was a danger in it; it should have been done and published long before. Beddoes was beginning to publish German poems. His Zürich life was shattered in 1840, something political being the cause. He reappeared in London, and even lectured (on "Dramatic Poetry of the Caucasian Race in Europe") at the Polytechnic Institution. But he was, like another English poet of that era, "homeless at home"; and we see him going more or less as we should expect, back to Germany and to Switzerland. Still a student, he attended medical lectures in Berlin from November 1, 1840, to March 8, 1842. He travelled often, in very much resembling that other scholar-gipsy, Hartley Coleridge. Once again, in 1846, he came to England. "I believe I have all the dulness, if not the other qualities—of your British respectability." Escaping afresh he remained a year or so in Frankfurt, or with some sort of headquarters there. He went to Basle in May, 1848, and now his sense of failure aroused him; he asked himself Byron's question, "Why live?" The attempt to end his life, by opening an artery in his leg, was not successful. The leg was amputated in October, and possibly Beddoes thought awhile that he would face his disenchanted life again. An artificial leg was

being made. But on January 26, 1849, Beddoes died in Basle Hospital, and the evidence is almost certain that he died of a poison found in his possession.

Such, very briefly, is the story of one who, to several very able men, appeared the potential leader of English poetry after Keats and Shelley had gone. His death, "doubtful" as it was, did not command general attention. The *Gentleman's Magazine* necessarily registered it. But there was to be a sequel, in its way almost as remarkable as the life-story of Beddoes, and even now (as this article itself evidences) in progress. A lawyer named Woodhouse was the chief agent in preserving many of Keats's writings for posterity; a lawyer named Kelsall, a quick man and himself a poet, played the same part for Beddoes. At an early date he undertook the collection of all that related to the poet's life and work; and in 1850 he succeeded in publishing, from three versions in his possession, a text of *Death's Jest-Book*. In his enterprise he had the initial support of at least one well-known writer—"Barry Cornwall," or B. W. Procter. He had also the opposition of the poet's brother, Captain Beddoes, R.N.; but this was converted into gratitude and financial backing when the Captain had read *Death's Jest-Book* as Kelsall had edited it. In 1851 Kelsall added, again through William Pickering as publisher, a second volume, containing what Procter called "Beddoes's Remains."

The next important chapter of the Kelsall history is that which has given Mr. Donner his title, "The Browning Box." Browning, who had some genius for discovering poets, was an admirer of Beddoes; it came about that Procter gave him Kelsall's edition, and that Kelsall and Browning became acquainted in 1867. After Kelsall's death in 1872, and in accordance with his wish, Mrs. Kelsall sent the Beddoes archives to Browning in "the Box," with a letter in which she disclosed the fact, which "the family have evidently wished to conceal," that Beddoes had taken his own life. It was surely not this information which prevented Browning from editing Beddoes himself, but rather his own poetical labours and his lack of the editorial bacillus; at all events, after a delay of ten years, he sent for his friend Gosse, already busy about Beddoes.

Will you look in here next Sunday morning—after your "early" wont? I mean to make a thorough examination of the contents of that dismal Box—[dismal, one supposes, because it had got on Browning's nerves]—and see how much of them I can give you with a free conscience: all I "can give";—for the particular fact about which you enquire is painful enough.

The Box provided Gosse with the chief means to bring out his editions of Beddoes—and vanished. When and how nobody knows, not even Mr. Donner. Sir Edmund Gosse used to refer darkly to some malignant Italian servants, paying off old scores against Pen Browning. But this is not the end of the matter, nor was Gosse the only person who had been permitted to explore the Box during its better days. Another was that accomplished literary worker Dykes Campbell. Well may Mr. Donner call him "a patient transcriber." It was in 1886 that Browning gave him the freedom of the Box, although Gosse was of course left responsible for publishing Beddoes; and Dykes Campbell proceeded with extreme industry and minuteness to copy everything that seemed in the least degree significant. After the death of this transcriber, his labours on the Box were practically forgotten—in fact, they passed into the library of the late H. T. Butler, and the generosity of that collector at length enabled Mr. Donner to do what many would have declared impossible—to edit Beddoes as though from the Browning Box itself.

His work has shaped itself into a triptych. One division, which he calls "The Browning

THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES: the Making of a Poet. By H. W. DONNER. Oxford: Blackwell. 18s.

THE BROWNING BOX, or, the Life and Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes as reflected in letters by his friends and admirers. Edited with an introduction by H. W. DONNER. Oxford University Press. London: Milford. 15s.

THE WORKS OF THOMAS LOVELL BEDDOES. Edited with an introduction by H. W. DONNER. Oxford University Press. London: Milford. 25s.

BRISTOLS BEDEUTUNG FÜR DIE ENGLISCHE ROMANTIK UND DIE DEUTSCH-ENGLISCHE BEZIEHUNGEN. VON CARL AUGUST WEBER. Halle: Max Niemeyer. RM.12.50.

Box," is an array of documents illustrating the life and after-fame of Beddoes in the actual words of his friends and contemporaries and those subsequently connected with the story. It begins with the poet's mother writing about some rents; and among the letters of latest date is one from Beddoes's cousin Zoë King (1874), concluding with some exquisite stanzas about her by Sara Coleridge. All that we can hear of the devoted Zoë asserts that she deserved such a poem, and mingles with a melancholy beauty in the troubled life of Beddoes. Had he only been able to feel towards her something of what she felt for him, then the episode at Basle Hospital could not have been dreamed of. Among other correspondents in "The Browning Box," there is Wordsworth—but not quite directly. He is found answering a request from Kelsall to send him the then unpublished "Yarrow Revisited." He sends it in a transcript, and comments generally on the tricks played upon him as a "Public Man" by entire strangers. Not the least attractive offering in Mr. Donner's book is the specimen of Kelsall's own blank verse, and a truly appropriate example it is; for it records his visit in 1868 to the grave of Beddoes, and a journey to Zürich. The verse is characteristic of the accomplished writing which fine personalities practised when Wordsworth was pre-eminent; but there is something more than that:—

But o'er this lonely nook in alien ground  
Silence and darkness cover, and make their own  
Its dust, and that dissolving brain which once  
Streamed light and music with creative power;  
And with magnetic influence, even now,  
Through shroud, and coffin, and o'er-umbering earth,  
Reaches and sways the sympathetic chords  
Which string, to finest touch, poetic minds.

This volume then assembles much of the information on which is founded Mr. Donner's own biography of the poet; but not all, for he has carried out such investigations as were required in Germany and Switzerland, and as Professor Weber has also undertaken for his very learned book on the literary traditions of Bristol. (To that monograph we can only direct, in this place, besides the lover of Beddoes, those who seek more light on Chatterton, Coleridge and the Romantic movement at large.) In his sub-title, "The Making of a Poet," Mr. Donner indicates the extensive passages of interpretation which this second section of his work has demanded. Where shall we find, not the Browning Box but the central point of this extraordinary poet Beddoes, this

insatiable student and indefatigable innovator in poetry? What was the objective which lured so strongly, which called forth so many and so many endeavours, and which finally mocked and defeated a man of very great courage? Was it that indefinite demon who almost reveals his *vera effigies* in Wordsworth's lines,

We poets in our youth begin our gladness,  
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness?

In the short biographical summary above allusion was made to a material disappointment suffered by Beddoes in 1835 as a probable turning-point whence the path began to slope rather steeply. Something deeper is suggested in Mr. Donner's contemplations, and strengthened by one of Beddoes's letters of 1825 specifying the intention underlying his medical studies.

It is evident [Mr. Donner writes] that in the mechanism of the body he hoped to find a clue to the origin of life itself. It is more than likely that the ambitious youth dreamt of finding, as Goethe had done before him, some hitherto unknown bone or organ, the function of which might explain the very phenomenon of life. Only the search for such an organ of immortality can completely explain Beddoes's attitude to medicine and the development he underwent in the course of his studies.

This, then, was the knot. The ambitious youth found that time and circumstance were more than a match for his intellectual passion. Matthew Arnold has described the case as it affects a great many youths and men—but he did not quite visualize so intense a hope, so grey a failure, as belonged to T. L. Beddoes.

The failure existed within Beddoes; for, after all, at a period made exceedingly formidable for the new poets by the originality and abundance of the recent masters, Beddoes created a province in our literature which is inalienably his, and remains fascinating. It is not there for comparisons, of the "major" and "minor" kind. To use the language of the tourist advertisement, we have among others the Beddoes Country; and the third part of Mr. Donner's achievement is the complete access to that country which in "The Works of Thomas Lovell Beddoes" he has arranged. Of this immaculate labour the most conspicuous portion is a variorum edition of *Death's Jest-Book*. Much as his more popular contemporary P. J. Bailey used his *Festus* as a kind of poetic amphitheatre,

capable of receiving an indefinite number of new notions, so Beddoes dealt with his *Death's Jest-Book*. The first fair copy is dated 1828 by the present editor. The author was still working over that, and intermediate shapes, towards 1844. "I have thought it right," Mr. Donner says, "to present the play as it stood after the poet had done his best to improve on it"; but every touch that went to that result is to be found accompanying it. Is it heresy to say that, with all the improvements, *Death's Jest-Book* never really grew up? Its first inception is referred to a time when the fashion of emulating the Elizabethan dramatists was comparatively new, and even in its latest state the appreciation of it upon the whole depends on the reader's acceptance of a precarious mode. "The sufferings and hardships of life"—to quote Mr. Donner—"had made of Beddoes a greater and a deeper mind, but not all the suffering in the world could have made a dramatist of the lyrical poet."

Among the large number of poetical gleanings which Mr. Donner publishes for the first time, many appear to spring from the same Old Play atmosphere as *Death's Jest-Book* did; if one may localize further, they were in part the result of those ingenious anthologies, such as Dodd's "Beauties of Shakespeare" in 1752 and somebody's "Beauties of Massinger" in 1817 and above all Lamb's "Specimens of the Dramatic Poets" in 1808, which worked on the principle, *Ex pede Herculem*. The young poets of the eighteenth centuries delighted in these glimpses. Without going so far as to write another *Macbeth* they could at least bring on a Murderer:

I want a whistle, Sir; aye, and a comb  
To keep my hair straight on my forehead; and  
A porridge-spoon. Are your bones sound? I mean  
To drink my punch out of your skull tonight.

But still we seek the lyric poet Beddoes in as direct a vein as his inveterate habit of preliminary disguise or transference permits; and Mr. Donner is able to reward our quest not merely with juvenilia. These additional poems are some of them among Beddoes's latest inspirations; and it is pathetic that they argue by their fragmentary form a will at length grown tired, relinquishing the task of translating unheard melodies into word and image. The imperfect music and the ruinous imagery are nevertheless most fortunately recovered. Lyrics of a true sublimity were just within the range of Beddoes at this very time when he was abandoning his claim. Such are "Tiberius Caesar" and "The Last Judgment," the latter a solemn swelling chant, the former a shaft of clear fire:

Crowned with icy gold  
And laurel, dewed with blood,  
Up amid pale slaves stood  
Tiberius  
Tiberius Caesar, robed in blood,  
Palest among pale Romans, stood  
That highest height  
Of Alp 't the sun's last gush of light  
Around whose rocky . . .

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