

LIFE OF JOHN COLERIDGE PATTESON

BY

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Preface

There are of course peculiar advantages as well as disadvantages in endeavouring to write the life of one recently departed. On the one hand, the remembrances connected with him are far fresher; his contemporaries can be consulted, and much can be made matter of certainty, for which a few years would have made it necessary to trust to hearsay or probable conjecture. On the other, there is necessarily much more reserve; nor are the results of the actions, nor even their comparative importance, so clearly discernible as when there has been time to ripen the fruit.

These latter drawbacks are doubled when the subject of the biography has passed away in comparatively early life: when the persons with whom his life is chiefly interwoven are still in full activity; and when he has only lived to sow his seed in many waters, and has barely gathered any portion of his harvest.

Thus what I have written of Bishop Patteson, far more what I have copied of his letters, is necessarily only partial, although his nearest relations and closest friends have most kindly permitted the full use of all that could build up a complete idea of the man as he was. Many letters relate to home and family matters, such as it would be useless and impertinent to divulge; and yet it is necessary to mention that these exist, because without them we might not know how deep was the lonely man's interest and sympathy in all that concerned his kindred and friends. Other letters only repeat the narrative or the reflections given elsewhere; and of these, it has seemed best only to print that which appeared to have the fullest or the clearest expression. In general, the story is best told in letters to the home party; while thoughts are generally best expressed in the correspondence with Sir John Taylor Coleridge, to whom the Nephew seems to have written with a kind of unconscious carefulness of diction. There is as voluminous a correspondence with the Brother, and letters to many Cousins; but as these either repeat the same adventures or else are purely domestic, they have been little brought forward, except where any gap occurred in the correspondence which has formed the staple material.

Letters upon the unhappy Maori war have been purposely omitted; and, as far as possible, such criticisms on living personages as it seemed fair towards the writer to omit. Criticisms upon their publications are of course a different thing. My desire has been to give enough expression of Bishop Patteson's opinions upon Church and State affairs, to represent his manner of thinking, without transcribing every detail of remarks, which were often made upon an imperfect report, and were, in fact, only written down, instead of spoken and forgotten, because correspondence served him instead of conversation.

I think I have represented fairly, for I have done my best faithfully to select passages giving his mind even where it does not coincide completely with my own opinions; being quite convinced that not only should a biographer never attempt either to twist or conceal the sentiments of the subject, but that either to apologise for, or as it were to argue with them, is vain in both senses of the word.

The real disadvantage of the work is my own very slight personal acquaintance with the externals of the man, and my ignorance of the scenes in which the chief part of his life was passed. There are those who would have been far more qualified in these respects than myself, and, above all, in that full and sympathetic masculine grasp of a man's powerful mind, which is necessarily denied to me. But these fittest of all being withheld by causes which are too well known to need mention, I could only endeavour to fulfil the work as best I might; trusting that these unavoidable deficiencies may be supplied, partly by Coleridge Patteson's own habit of writing unreservedly, so that he speaks for himself, and partly by the very full notes and records with which his friends have kindly supplied me, portraying him from their point of view; so that I could really trust that little more was needed than ordinary judgment in connecting and selecting. Nor until the work is less fresh from my hand will it be possible to judge whether I have in any way been allowed to succeed in my earnest hope and endeavour to bring the statue out of the block, and as it were to carve the figure of the Saint for his niche among those who have given themselves soul and body to God's Work.

It has been an almost solemn work of anxiety, as well as one of love. May I only have succeeded in causing these letters and descriptions to leave a true and definite impression of the man and of his example!

Let me here record my obligations for materials--I need hardly say to the immediate family and relations--for, in truth, I act chiefly as their amanuensis; but likewise to the Bishop of Lichfield, Bishop Abraham.

Lady Martin, the Rev. B. T. Dudley, the Rev. E. Codrington, and Captain Tilly, for their valuable aid--the two first mentioned by correction and revision, the others by contributions such as could only be supplied by eye-witnesses and fellow-workers. Many others I must thank for kindly supplying me with letters.

CHARLOTTE
ELDERFIELD,
September 19, 1873.

MARY

YONGE.

Childhood At Home And At School, 1827-1838

So much of a man's cast of character depends upon his home and parentage, that no biography can be complete which does not look back at least as far as the lives of the father and mother, from whom the disposition is sure to be in part inherited, and by whom it must often be formed. Indeed, the happiest natures are generally those which have enjoyed the full benefit of parental training without dictation, and have been led, but not forced, into the way in which they should go.

Therefore it will not be irrelevant to dwell on the career of the father whose name, though still of great weight in his own profession, may not be equally known to the younger generation who have grown up since the words 'Mr. Justice Patteson' were of frequent occurrence in law reports.

John Patteson, father of the subject of the present memoir, was son to a clergyman of a Norfolk family, and was born at Coney Weston, on February 11, 1790. He was educated at Eton, and there formed more than one friendship, which not only lasted throughout his life, but extended beyond his own generation. Sport and study flourished alike among such lads as these; and while they were taught by Dr. Goodall to delight in the peculiarly elegant and accurate scholarship which was the characteristic of the highest education of their day, their boyhood and youth were full of the unstained mirth that gives such radiance to recollections of the past, and often causes the loyalty of affectionate association to be handed on to succeeding generations. The thorough Etonian impress, with all that it involved, was of no small account in his life, as well as in that of his son.

The elder John Patteson was a colleger, and passed on to King's College, Cambridge, whence, in 1813, he came to London to study law. In 1816 he opened his chambers as a special pleader, and on February 23, 1818, was married to his cousin, Elizabeth Lee, after a long engagement. The next year, 1819, he was called to the Bar, and began to go the Northern circuit. On April 3, 1820, Mrs. Patteson died, leaving one daughter, Joanna Elizabeth. Four years later, on April 22, 1824, Mr. Patteson married Frances Duke Coleridge, sister of his friend and fellow-barrister, John Taylor Coleridge. This lady, whose name to all who remember her calls up a fair and sweet memory of all that was good, bright, and beloved, was the daughter of James Coleridge, of Heath's Court, Ottery St. Mary, Devon, Colonel of the South Devon Volunteers. He was the eldest of the numerous family of the Rev. John Coleridge, Master of Ottery St. Mary School, and the poet, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was the youngest.

The strong family affection that existed between all Colonel Coleridge's children, and concentrated itself upon the only sister among them, made marriage with her an adoption into a group that could not fail to exercise a strong influence on all connected with it, and the ties of kindred will be found throughout this memoir to have had peculiar force.

John Coleridge Patteson, his mother's second child and eldest son, was born at No. 9, Grower Street, Bedford Square, on the 1st of April, 1827, and baptized on the 8th.

Besides the elder half-sister already mentioned, another sister, Frances Sophia Coleridge, a year older than, and one brother, James Henry, nearly two years younger than Coleridge, made up the family.

Three years later, in 1830, Mr. Patteson was raised to the Bench, at the unusually early age of forty.

It is probable that there never was a period when the Judicial Bench could reckon a larger number of men distinguished not only for legal ability but for the highest culture and for the substantial qualities that command confidence and respect. The middle of the nineteenth century was a time when England might well be proud of her Judges.

There was much in the habits of the Bench and Bar to lead to close and friendly intimacy, especially on the circuits. When legal etiquette forbade the use of any public conveyance, and junior barristers shared post-chaises, while the leaders travelled in their own carriages, all spent a good deal of time together, and it was not unusual for ladies to go a great part of the circuit with their husbands, especially when it lay in the direction of their own neighbourhood. The Judges' families often accompanied them, especially at the summer assize, and thus there grew up close associations between their children, which made their intimacy almost like that of relationship. Almost all, too, lived in near neighbourhood in those parts of London that now are comparatively deserted, but which were then the especial abodes of lawyers, namely, those adjacent to Bedford Square, where the gardens were the daily resort of their children, all playing together and knowing one another with that familiarity that childhood only gives.

'Sir John Patteson's contemporaries have nearly all, one by one, passed away,' writes one of them, Sir John Taylor Coleridge. 'He has left few, if any, literary monuments to record what his intellectual powers were; and even in our common profession the ordinary course and practice are so changed, that I doubt whether many lawyers are now familiar with his masterly judgments; but I feel that I speak the truth when I describe him as a man of singularly strong common sense, of great acuteness, truthfulness, and integrity of judgment. These were great judicial qualities, and to these he added much simplicity and geniality of temper and manners; and all these were crowned by a firm, unhesitating, devout belief in the doctrines of our faith, which issued in strictness to himself and the warmest, gentlest charity to his fellow-creatures. The result was what you might expect. Altogether it would be hard to say whether you would characterise him as a man unusually popular or unusually respected.'

Such was the character of Mr. Justice Patteson, a character built upon the deep, solid groundwork of religion, such as would now be called that of a sound Churchman of the old school, thoroughly devout and scrupulous in observance, ruling his family and household on a principle felt throughout, making a conscience of all his and their ways, though promoting to the utmost all innocent enjoyment of pleasure, mirth, or gaiety. Indeed, all who can look back on him or on his home remember an unusual amount of kindly genial cheerfulness, fun, merriment, and freedom, i.e. that obedient freedom which is the most perfect kind of liberty.

Though this was in great part the effect of having such a head of the family, the details of management could not but chiefly depend upon the mother, and Lady Patteson was equally loved for her tenderness and respected for her firmness. 'She was, indeed,' writes her brother, 'a sweet and pious person, of the most affectionate, loving disposition, without a grain of selfishness, and of the stoutest adherence to principle and duty. Her tendency was to deal with her children fondly, but this never interfered with good training and discipline. What she felt right, she insisted on, at whatever pain to herself.'

She had to deal with strong characters. Coleridge, or Coley, to give him the abbreviation by which he was known not only through childhood but through life, was a fair little fellow, with bright deep-blue eyes, inheriting much of his nature from her and her family, but not by any means a model boy. He was, indeed, deeply and warmly affectionate, but troublesome through outbreaks of will and temper, showing all the ordinary instinct of trying how far the authorities for the time being will endure resistance; sufficiently indolent of mind to use his excellent abilities to save exertion of intellect; passionate to kicking and screaming pitch, and at times showing the doggedness which is such a trial of patience to the parent. To this Lady Patteson 'never yielded; the thing was to be done, the point given up, the temper subdued, the mother to be obeyed, and all this upon a principle sooner understood than parents suppose.'

There were countless instances of the little boy's sharp, stormy gusts of passion, and his mother's steady refusal to listen to his 'I will be good' until she saw that he was really sorry for the scratch or pinch which he had given, or the angry word he had spoken; and she never waited in vain, for the sorrow was very real, and generally ended in 'Do you think God can forgive me?' When Fanny's love of teasing had exasperated Coley into stabbing her arm with a pencil, their mother had resolution enough to decree that no provocation could excuse 'such unmanliness' in a boy, and inflicted a whipping which cost the girl more tears than her brother, who was full of the utmost grief a child could feel for the offence. No fault was lightly passed over; not that punishment was inflicted for every misdemeanour, but it was always noticed, and the children were shown with grave gentleness where they were wrong; or when there was a squabble among them, the mother's question, 'Who will give up?' generally produced a chorus of 'I! I! I!' Withal 'mamma' was the very life of all the fun, and play, and jokes, enjoying all with spirits and merriment like the little ones' own, and delighting in the exchange of caresses and tender epithets. Thus affection and generosity grew up almost spontaneously towards one another and all the world.

On this disposition was grafted that which was the one leading characteristic of Coley's life, namely, a reverent and religious spirit, which seems from the first to have been at work, slowly and surely subduing inherent defects, and raising him, step by step, from grace to grace.

Five years old is in many cases an age of a good deal of thought. The intelligence is free from the misapprehensions and misty perceptions of infancy; the first course of physical experiments is over, freedom of speech and motion have been attained, and yet there has not set in that burst of animal growth and spirits that often seems to swamp the deeper

nature throughout boyhood. By this age Coley was able to read, and on his birthday he received from his father the Bible which was used at his consecration as Bishop twenty-seven years later.

He had an earnest wish to be a clergyman, because he thought saying the Absolution to people must make them so happy, 'a belief he must have gleaned from his Prayer-book for himself, since the doctrine was not in those days made prominent.' The purpose was fostered by his mother. 'She delighted in it, and encouraged it in him. No thought of a family being to be made, and of Coley being the eldest son, ever interfered for a moment. That he should be a good servant at God's altar was to her above all price.'

Of course, however, this was without pressing the thought on him. He grew on, with the purpose accepted but not discussed, except from time to time a half-playful, half-grave reference to himself as a future clergyman.

Reverence was strongly implanted in him. His old nurse (still his sister's valued servant) remembers the little seven years old boy, after saying his own prayers at her knee, standing opposite to his little brother, admonishing him to attention with 'Think, Jemmy; think.' In fact, devoutness seems to have been natural to him. It appears to have been the first strongly traceable feature in him, and to have gradually subdued his faults one by one.

Who can tell how far this was fostered by those old-fashioned habits of strictness which it is the present habit to view as repellent? Every morning, immediately after breakfast, Lady Patteson read the Psalms and Lessons for the day with the four children, and after these a portion of some book of religious instruction, such as 'Horne on the Psalms' or 'Daubeny on the Catechism.' The ensuing studies were in charge of Miss Neill, the governess, and the life-long friend of her pupils; but the mother made the religious instruction her individual care, and thus upheld its pre-eminence. Sunday was likewise kept distinct in reading, teaching, employment, and whole tone of conversation, and the effect was assuredly not that weariness which such observance is often supposed to produce, but rather lasting benefit and happy associations. Coley really enjoyed Bible-reading, and entered into explanations, and even then often picked up a passage in the sermons he heard at St. Giles's-in-the-Fields from the Rev. J. Endell Tyler, and would give his home-oracles no peace till they had made it as clear to his comprehension as was possible.

The love of his home may be gathered from the fact that his letters have been preserved in an unbroken series, beginning from a country visit in 1834, after a slight attack of scarlet fever, written in the round-hand of a boy of seven years old, and finished off with the big Roman capitals FINIS, AMEN, and ending with the uncompleted sheets, bearing as their last date September 19, 1871.

The boy's first school was at Ottery St. Mary, in Devonshire, of which his great-grandfather and great-uncle had both been head-masters.

There was much to make Ottery homelike to Coley, for his grandparents lived at Heath's Court, close to the church, and in the manor-house near at hand their third son, Francis George Coleridge, a solicitor, whose three boys were near contemporaries of Coley, and two of them already in the school.

From first to last his letters to his parents show no symptom of carelessness; they are full of ease and confidence, outpourings of whatever interested him, whether small or great, but always respectful as well as affectionate, and written with care and pains, being evidently his very best; nor does the good old formula, 'Your affectionate and dutiful son,' ever fail or ever produce stiffness.

The shrinking from rough companions, and the desire to be with the homelike relatives around, proved a temptation, and the little boy was guilty of making false excuses to obtain leave of absence. We cannot refrain from giving his letter of penitence, chiefly for the sake of the good sense and kindness of his uncle's treatment:--

'April 26, 1836.

'My dear Papa,--I am very sorry for having told so many falsehoods, which Uncle Frank has told mamma of. I am very sorry for having done so many bad things, I mean falsehoods, and I heartily beg your pardon; and Uncle Frank says that he thinks, if I stay, in a month's time Mr. Cornish will begin to trust me again. Uncle Frank to-day had me into his house and told me to reflect upon what I had done. He also lectured me in the Bible, and asked me different questions about it. He told me that if I ever told another falsehood he should that instant march into the school and ask Mr. Cornish to strip and birch me; and if I followed the same course I did now and did not amend it, if the birching did not do, he should not let me go home for the holidays; but I will not catch the birching...

'So believe me your dear Son,

'J. C. PATTESON.'

On the flap of the letter 'Uncle Frank' writes to the mother:--

'My dear Fanny,--I had Coley in my room to-day, and talked to him seriously about his misdeeds, and I hope good has been done. But I could scarcely keep my countenance grave when he began to reduce by calculation the exact number of fibs he had told. He did not think it was more than two or three at the utmost: and when I brought him to book, I had much to do to prevent the feeling that the sin consisted in telling many lies. However the dear boy's confession was as free as could be expected, and I have impressed on his mind the meanness, cowardice, and wickedness of the habit, and what it will end in here and hereafter. He has promised that he will never offend in future in like manner, and I really believe that his desire to be away from the school and at ease among his friends induced him to trump up the invitations, &c., to Mr. Cornish, in which consisted his first fibs. I shall watch him closely, as I would my own child; and Cornish

has done wisely, I think, by giving the proper punishment of confining him to the school-court, &c., and not letting him go to his friends for some time. The dear boy is so affectionate, and has so much to work on, that there is no fear of him; only these things must be looked after promptly, and he must learn practically (before his reason and religion operate) that he gains nothing by a lie... He is very well, and wins one's heart in a moment...

'Ever your affectionate Brother,

'F. G. C.'

The management was effectual, and the penitence real, for this fault never recurred, nor is the boy's conduct ever again censured, though the half-yearly reports often lament his want of zeal and exertion. Coley was sufficiently forward to begin Greek on his first arrival at Ottery, and always held a fair place for his years, but throughout his school career his character was not that of an idle but of an uninterested boy, who preferred play to work, needed all his conscience to make him industrious, and then was easily satisfied with his performances; naturally comparing them with those of other boys, instead of doing his own utmost, and giving himself full credit for the diligence he thought he had used. For it must be remembered that it was a real, not an ideal nature; not a perfect character, but one full of the elements of growth.

A childish, childlike boy, he was now, and for many years longer, intensely fond of all kinds of games and sports, in which his light active form, great agility, and high spirit made him excel. Cricket, riding, running-races, all the school amusements were his delight; fireworks for the 5th of November sparkle with ecstasy through his letters, and he was a capital dancer in the Christmas parties at his London home. He had likewise the courage and patience sure to be needed by an active lad. While at Ottery he silently bore the pain of a broken collar-bone for three weeks, and when the accident was brought to light by his mother's embrace, he only said that 'he did not like to make a fuss.'

Consideration for others, kindness, and sweetness of nature were always his leading characteristics, making him much beloved by all his companions, and an excellent guardian and example to his little brother, who soon joined him at Ottery. Indeed, the love between these two brothers was so deep, quiet, and fervid, that it is hard to dwell on it while 'one is taken and the other left.' It was at this time a rough buffeting, boyish affection, but it was also a love that made separation pain and grief, and on the part of the elder, it showed itself in careful protection from all harm or bullying, and there was a strong underlying current of tenderness, most endearing to all concerned with the boys, whether masters, relations, friends, or servants.

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