

CONWAY HALL

HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

Background – William Johnson Fox and South Place

South Place Ethical Society began as a radical nonconformist congregation, founded in London in 1787 by an American, Elhanan Winchester (1751-1797). It acquired premises in Bishopsgate in 1793, and in 1824 built a new chapel in South Place, Finsbury. Over the course of the nineteenth century the congregation, guided by a series of charismatic leaders, notably William Johnson Fox MP (1786-1864) and another American, Moncure Daniel Conway (1832-1907), evolved continuously away from religious observance towards freethought and rationalism. It moved from Universalism to Unitarianism, and then, in 1888 it followed a third American, Dr Stanton Coit (1857-1944), into the Ethical Culture movement and adopted its present name.

William Johnson Fox was appointed Minister in 1817. Fox was both a religious and political radical. His aim was to establish a congregation whose guiding principle would be virtue rather than faith in a divine being. In 1819 Fox preached against the imprisonment of Richard Carlile for selling Tom Paine's 'The Age of Reason'. He was MP for Oldham from 1847 until 1862. He was also a journalist and editor of some repute, writing for the *Morning Chronicle* and publishing the *Monthly Repository*, which he changed from a theological journal into a literary magazine. He was the first literary critic to recognize the poetic genius of Robert Browning.

In 1834 Fox left his wife and set up house with Eliza Flower, the daughter of the radical printer Benjamin Flower, who, on his death in 1829, had appointed Fox as

guardian of his two daughters. The controversy over Fox's relationship with Eliza split the congregation and severed its Unitarian connection.

In the autumn of 1823, Fox had been invited to preach in Edinburgh, and a friend, Dr Thomas Southwood Smith, arranged a tour of the Highlands which included the Flower family.

The Manuscripts

The Humanist Library and Archives has in its possession two fragmentary manuscripts written by Fox. One is an autobiography, which gives details of his family and his own life to the age of 14, shortly after he became a bank clerk.

The second manuscript is a letter to an unknown correspondent providing a lengthy and very detailed account of the Highland tour. Internal evidence suggests that it was someone, possibly a relative, living in Norwich. This document is very fragile and the pages are torn, with several places where pieces are missing. The penultimate leaf has a large piece torn out of the lower edge, but this was obviously done before the page was written on, as the words flow around the gap. The last leaf is torn into three pieces.

Both manuscripts were transcribed by voluntary archivist Anita Miller in March 2010.

William Johnson Fox – Autobiography

I was born on the 1st of March 1786 in a farm house in the hamlet of Uggeshall in the Parish of Wrentham in the country of Suffolk. The season was very severe. The country people for many years remembered it as the hard winter: it was very hard to me as the pap was frozen in the spoon, and so I began life as perhaps I may end it, craving for bread and receiving stone. Nor was this the only mischief played me by the cold weather. The servant was of course more diligent and intent upon bed warming than usual, and forgetting the little new comer, she, one night clapped the

warming pan upon the palms of my hands, and was too much frightened by my vehement remonstrance to take it off so speedily as was expedient. One of my hands so now bears the marks to this day, having outlasted many other scars which seemed more deep & durable, inflicted by myself when I grew old enough to burn my own fingers.

My father cultivated a small farm for his mother, who was then a widow. With the exception of having been crossed in love and writing a comedy to shew he could bear his loss, forgive his false mistress and satirize his rival, I believe his life had been distinguished previous to his marriage, by only one great adventure. The farm wh[ich] he tilled either was, or adjoined the property of Sir Thomas Gooche, The father of Gaffer or Granny Gooche who for so many years ably represented the county of Silly Suffolk (as the natives call it) in Parliament. He was quite as accomplished a county squire or baronet I forget which, as his son. He was an old fashioned Lord of the Manor. His game was abundant, he was invincibly determ[in]ed to have it all to himself, at least so far as the plebeians of the neighbourhood were concerned, and thus he seemed to think that game was a genus of which girls were a species, for no village damsel within reach of his hands was safer than partridge within the range of his gun.

At least such was the parish scandal, as I remember to have heard it when a child. Whether his meddling with the girls had annoyed my father I don't know, but my father's meddling with the game annoyed him, and occasioned one of those degrading persecutions, by which the landholders of this country have been accustomed to render manifest the great blessing to the community of a resident gentry. The invasion of his sovereignty over the partridge race wh[ich] my father perpetrated was a very trifling one, and under circumstances of great provocation. An attack was made upon his little wheat rick by a whole multitude a sort of posse comitatus of these privileged subjects of the Lord of the Manor and enraged at seeing them reaping where they had not sown, or rather eating where they had not even reaped, he took the liberty of dispersing the crowd by making an example either with stick, stone or gun, I forget wh[ich] one of the ring leaders who was old enough to have known better. Some pick thankfellow witnessed the transaction, and posted off to the park to give information of this unpardonable sin.

My father was made to feel that his safest course was to emigrate for a time from the dominions of the insulted dynasty of the Gooches. He took shelter in London, that great city of refuge for those who have no country. He knew nobody, he could obtain no employment and his little stock of cash wh[ich] he could expect no remittance to renew, soon dwindled down to the last half guinea. But he managed to turn this remnant to good account, with a facility wh[ich] I at least have always found perfectly inimitable. As the lottery was to be drawn on the next day, he vested ten shillings of his only half guinea in the purchase of a sixteenth and subsisted on the sixpence, till he received his share of a handsome prize. This exquisite luck not only supplied his immediate wants but recommended him as a most appropriate person for their establishment to the keepers of the Lottery office. It must have been before the time of good luck, and he became one of their clerks, in which situation the rest of his banishment passed away much more comfortably than from its commencement could have been anticipated.

The venture ended in the regular way. Sir Thomas Gooche grew tired of being angry, or of exhibiting himself in the neighbourhood as continuing to injure a poor widow because her son had knocked down a saucy bird, and my father was allowed to return in safety to his native place and original occupation; and encouraged by his former success he now ventured on the more formidable lottery of matrimony; here also he drew a prize, and I suppose I may consider myself as the first instalment of its payment.

My mother was the eldest of two daughters of the village barber in the parish of Wrentham who also officiated as clerk in the calvinistic meeting house. His vocal powers have descended to two of my brothers, but the rest of us were cut off from that inheritance, and unless certain musical theories of my own may be regarded as an exception received from this ancestral fountain.

My mother was a delicate & sensitive woman, too much so perhaps for her lot in life. Her information less confined than might have been expected, her disposition liberal, her opinions sound, and her feelings right. The physical tendencies influencing mental and moral qualities which I presume myself to have derived from my parents are chiefly the rather contrasted ones of nervous irritability from my mother, and from my father a sluggishness and tenacity of brain occasioning slowness of perception, consistent with great clearness & retentiveness when once an idea is

fairly gained & not unfrequently manifesting itself in a quiet but dogged obstinacy. Habits of reason and an indisposition the expression of emotions of great strength & on subjects deeply interesting to me I derive from both parents, but this I take to be the result, rather of the influence of example rather than physical organization. Indeed I think my natural tendencies are rather towards a perfect frankness of character, although not having had fair play at the outset, they have been kept under by the acquired disposition through a considerable portion of my life.

When I was three years of age my fathers farming establishment was broken up then with the addition of my brother Paul removed to Norwich. I remember the journey: we travelled in one of those primitive vehicles y'clipped carriers cart. The distance is little more than twenty miles: it occupied us through a long summers day "from morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve". I was at that time learning to see. The road is at its commencement not far from the coast, and the little ships which I beheld up high in the clouds, long dwelt in my young imagination. Part of the road was level on both sides with trees visible for a considerable distance before us: and I marvelled much how we should squeeze through the end of the avenue where I saw that they met. I had seen the sea a few months before this; the coming in of the waves frightened me abominably: nor had I any conception of its immensity. I believe I took the more distant portion of the water for land which seemed to me to hem the billows in very closely.

That day was a great one for me, for introductions into elemental acquaintanceships. At its close the little town of Southwold was in a blaze with fireworks; sundry rockets being commissioned by its inhabitants to convey towards heaven the expression of their gratitude for the recovery of George the third. For all my other acquirements anterior to our removal to Norwich, I rely on the testimony of others who bear witness to my having been able to name every portrait There were two in each number, in two or three volumes of the town and country magazine. This was before I knew my letters, an attainment which made my grandmother feel to her annoyance that I had achieved by covering her clean swept holland-tile hearth with bits of stick from the faggot pile in the yard broken & twisted into all the shapes of the letters in the alphabet. This is all that I know of my infantile country life, of what I did in it & what it did for me.

My father's first enterprise in Norwich was I think the opening of a small shop but I am not sure as to the order of his experiments, for he was not fortunate & tried many in succession; his family increased rapidly: our removals were frequent and we had a new house and a new brother or sister with great regularity about every two years. Notwithstand[ing] his difficulties, & at times they were numerous & severe, to the best of my knowledge & belief, no debts were incurred, but what after a few years and from very stinted resources were faithfully & fully discharged.

A year after the removal, Charles (the first) was born: he died in infancy & on this occasion my father made the first attempt to inform my mind as to the existence of a heaven. It was rather premature, years afterwards my deity was a huge old muscular man, stretched out at full length on the upper side of the solid sky, & at this time, it was with great difficulty, that I attained such an elevation of thought as to understand that little Charles has gone up a long way above the height to wh[ich] the smoke ascended from the tallest chimneys in our street. Such was the commence[men]t of my theolog[ica]l knowledge. I was soon to become very profound in it.

After a year or two spelling with Mr Harmer in Rose Lane, of whom I only remember the oddness of his emphasis, for he used to pronounce come to me come tommy admission was procured for me into the school connected with the independant chapel of St Georges then under the care of old King Cole the father of the present alderman of that name, & who used to verify his title to the regal dignity by allowing the boys on Sat[urda]ys when they learned to sing after chanting the doxology God the father, God the son etc with due solemnity to quicken the time of the airs & praise the Trinity in gig time & with shouts of laughter.

There I learnt and accurately repeated twice over the assemblys catechism shorter and longer and & with all the scripture proofs. Proud creature was I when my exploit was duly reported to the trustees at the quarterly exam[inatio]n of the scholars on the found[atio]n. My glory did not endure so long as it ought to have done; it passed into premature oblivion in consequence of a resolution of our spiritual constitution.

The Rev[d] I Newton the minister of the chapel, of whom anon, was too clear, independ[en]t & liberal a mind to approve of the use in the school of that most extraordinary instrument of religious instruction . After many efforts he succeeded in inducing the trustees to displace it, and introduced his own syllabus of scripture doctrines & duties. This was shortly before I left school, & too late for me to gain

laurels in this new field of theology. To all my boasts of what I had done with the assemblies catechism the mortifying reply of my schoolfellows was 'Aye but what do you know of old Newtons syllabub'.

My other acquirement consisted of the three very common but very useful branches of learning taught in this and similar schools i.e. reading, writing & ciphering. After four years attendance with short holidays as they usually are in benevolent institutions, at least amongst dissenters, the church is sune liberal with its endowed gymnasium, and during such time I can only remember playing truant once. I had profited in the first department so as to read any English book whatever very well, except that my enunciation was perfectly devoid of emphasis, had the ordinary schoolboy twang & agreeably diversified my Norwich provincialisms by the hereditary sing song of my native Suffolk. My writing was but moderate, for I did not like writing, nor has any attachment even yet grown up on further acquaintance. It was only ciphering that I took kindly to, and there I established a reputation.

A Mr Tubby who was usher during my last years schooling detected & patronized my 'talent'. He was an extraord[inar]y man for an usher in such a school. He possessed a pair of globes, and some extraordinary books in quarto with diagrams & engravings, wh[ich] must I think so far as I can judge from my obscure but magnif[icen]t recollections, have been numbers of some encyclopedia. He enlarged our young minds by showing us that the earth was round; & by his assistance and three quarters of an hours intense contempl[at]ion, I rem[embe]r feeling enabled to underst[an]d an engrav[ing] in wh[ich] the top of a ship's mast shews itself on the upper segment of a circle represent[ing] the globe before the hull of the said vessel, wh[ich] was nearly one fourth as [large as] the represen[tatio]n of the globe. I under[stan]d too that these were not the exact proportions. I have never since doubted the sp[h]ericality of the earth and have always retained every line of that picture in my imag[inatio]n.

Mr Tubby after[ward]s set up a school on his own account in the enlight[ene]d village of Harleston and publis[he]d a prospectus enfolding the pecul[iaritie]s of his system of instruct[i]on to the farmers of the neighbour[ing] parishes of Pulham St John the Baptist & Pulham St Mary the Virgin. He took me under his especial care, for the masters learning began to be out of breath. I had darted into decimal fractions, & panting Cole toiled after me in vain.

Tubby indoctrinated me at an evening school of his own and taught my young ideas how to shoot into the mysteries of Mensuration, & even across the mighty gulph that seperates arithmetic from the new & boundless world of Algebra & Geometry. But here the hard necessity of circumstances for a time checked my progress. It was needful that I should work. My father was weaving cotton on his own account. I first filled bobbins for him; he then bought or hired another loom & I was promoted to the shuttle. This speculation failed. He took to the occupation of a walking schoolmaster, & I was hired as errandboy by Cotton Wright the woolcarder in St Mary's church yard at the rate of 2s a week for my mother, and 2d for my own pocket.

Thus passed altogether between two and three years from the time of my leav[ing] school bring[ing] me into the 14th year of my age. Of course my mind made some progress but a very motley and irregular one. Of child's books I do not rem[embe]r that I ever had any. A twopenny copy of Chevy Chace was my first literary purchase & an abridgement of Robinson Crusoe my second, & I think Bonnycastle's algebra my third. Of that work I mastered several pages in the street on way home from the booksellers. Philip Quarle, Robin Hoods garland the memoirs of Mrs Pilkington. A volio Rapin, & some add(itional] vols of the Spectator were all the books in our house besides the bible, of wh[ich] I have any recollect[tio]n & with these I was thoroughly familiar.

During the bobbin filling era I had my full serving of fiction. My mother had just at that time a strong fit of novel reading. I worked at home & the hum of the wheel did not interrupt my hearing her read, wh[ich] she did aloud. She often dispatched a vol[um]e in a day. They were of all sorts, good bad & indiff[eren]t but amongst their authors I should cert[ain]ly still remem[be]r, even if the recol[lectio]n had not been removed by their repu[tatio]n, the names of Miss Burnie, Richardson & Monk Lewis.

I fed on Novels and Romances till they ceased to excite me; I then took to dramatic reading, this did not suit my mothers taste our disposable funds were probably exhausted. My mathematical turn became more decided, & geometry & algebra were heaved as ballast into the vessel whose sails had been so amply and prematurely expanded. I managed first however by way of a long farewell, to devour the whole of Bells British Theatre, Tragedys, Comedys, Farces & Operas.

The next seven years from the summer of 1799, to that of 1806 were years of comparatively external stability & comfort. My father in the early part of that period succeeded to the sovereignty of King Cole in the school in which I was educated. My penmanship & arithmetic achieved the dignity which the poetry of Burns missed & lamented "I strutted in a bankers clerk my cash account". Those 7 years were passed in the banking house of Messrs Kett & Back. This was a step on the social ladder. Directly it did something for my mind & manners, indirectly it did much more and of more unquestionable worth for my character. A bankers clerk is necessarily but an anomalous being: he hangs, like Mahomets coffin above the floor of vulgarity and below the roof of gentility.

It was not the fault of my situation, if my native sheepishness did not acquire a dash of pertness, my original ignorance of the world yield to some acquaintance with cunning, if not with fraud, and my innocent simplicity be indulged with a sly bite of two of the fruit of forbidden knowledge. Habitual and unrestrained intercourse with my associates of the desk, occasional, but more regular and formal association with the employers, their families & friends & rapid but characteristic & constantly occurring glimpses into the dispositions, habits & mores of thought with the coarse variety of persons with whom business transactions brought me into contact were a school in which even the most inattentive must have learned something. They were altogether rather a soiled chapter in the book of human nature but luckily I had at the same time access to fairer pages which served to restrain the impression within the limits of truth in itself, & of utility in its influence upon me. My constitutional steadiness & my readiness in accounts soon recommended me to the principals & I was employed & trusted far beyond what was usual at my years, or in my relative position in the establishment. But it was out of doors that the most important influences were acting upon me. I had now a little money; my salary advanced by a graduated scale, from a nominal one of about £20 per annum to 60. I could buy a few books. I had time too. The hours of business, were from 9 in the morning till 6 in the evening and my reason exercised its prerogative of looking before and after.

There was also an hour allowed for dinner: as the distance from home was only about a mile I generally secured half this hour for study, accomplishing the eating & the locomotion in the remaining half. It was in this way, that I first digested Locke's essay on the understanding. But the mathematics were my regular pursuit. They occupied my mornings & evenings, with little intermission for the first two or three

years of this period. They had their share of the day too, & the rapidity with which I could cast up the columns of the ledgers & calculate interest, occupations wh[ich] had been prematurely devolved upon me on account of my peculiar aptitude, left me many odd minutes which I could appropriate without injury to my employers still retaining a handsome surplus of merit, for the quantity of work which I dispatched.

In these pursuits, I was joined with, guided and stimulated by one whom I must now introduce as my first friend. William Saint was the son of a tapster with a large family, small business, and a populous neighbourhood, consisting chiefly of radical weavers, whom he organized into a branch of the London corresponding society, thereby endangering his own organization by the compression of that revolutionary collar which Pitt & Grenville were then endeavouring to put upon the necks of Hardy, Tooke and Thelwall. Their acquittal saved the Norwich saint from becoming a martyr, and his fellow citizens confirmed his canonization by drawing him into the town in triumph on his return. His eldest son, little William went forth to meet him, shared the honours of the day, heard his fathers tale of the former, & revenge and glory conspired to stamp him a democrat for ever. Yet there were sophistries in the faith of Jacobinism which the logical mind of the future mathematician was keen enough to detect, & the perception of which subjected this character to the enfeebling influences of political scepticism, as another circumstance, soon after, did to those of religious scepticism.

He had a maternal uncle Mr Newson, a grocer & at that time a Unitarian whose house stands where three streets meet, as his mind did where many ways meet, all of which in succession had been traversed by his versatile intellect. He was about this time the father of four children who constituted three families, the husband of his fifth wife & the professor of his fifteenth religion. He had belonged to almost all the sects wh[ich] exist in Norwich, and that thinking town, has always been able to exhibit an ample and varied assortment of isms. He had been church man & dissenter, Calvinist & Armenian, Baptist & Pedobaptist, immortal-soul-ist, & soul-sleeper-ite, trinitarian, Arian, & finally, rational Xn, Presbyterian octagonite, & humanitarian in which or at least, disbelieving every other system, after having contended for all, quarrelled with all, & denounced all, he at last died & Pendelbury Houghton, preached his funeral sermon from 'Mark the perfect man', but assuredly

had his life been prolonged it would not have been safe for any faith the attempt to 'mark him for her own'.

It is astonishing how dreadfully pernicious he discerned every creed to be, which only six months before had filled him with peace & joy in believing, & how atrociously mismanaged were the affairs of every congregation, with which he had been united for a twelv[e]-month, & wh[ich] had not made him th[e] acme or committed man, or if the minister was monarch viceroy over him. In his latter days there was a beautiful freshness the symptoms of a green old age, in his astonishment, at the enormity of the doctrine of the Trinity, wh[ich] after having believed according to at least a dozen different interpretations, he regarded with as vivacious a surprize as if he had passed all his life within the walls of Constantinople.

I first heard of it from a Xn missionary. One Xmas day when I was about 14 years old he had me to dine with him; a feast it was to me, both rich and rare & when I came away, he lent me the first Unitarian book which I ever read. It was Fellowes Xn philosophy bound up with other tracts, one of them Robinson's history & mystery of Good Friday wh[ich] was in fact, the bait with which I was caught[.] My curiosity having been excited by some passages in that amusing essay so that I was induced to beg the loan of the vol[um]e wh[ich] of course was readily granted. It contained the hymn 'all seeing God tis thine to know' which I then learnt by heart & have never forgotten. But I was not yet ripe for theological controversy. This premature excitement ended in my blotting the pages of the New Testament, with the safe design of marking all the texts in which Xt was called God & those in which he was called man, & thus solving the difficulty by a sum in addition.

I believe I discerned before the process was complete, that a result so obtained would not be altogether decisive and although I felt honoured by the notice of Mr Newson and flattered by the kindness of the Miss Newsons, one of them Deborah, now Mrs Edward Taylor shewed me her scrapbook in which some lines of my own were neatly copied, & with the authors age appended; yet my conscience held true to its moorings. It was on the very day when my vanity had been gratified by this homage & while the sweet savour of the sacrifice was still in my nostrils that a humble friend of Mr Newsons came in, one of a little band that had taken tea with him in the same house for many years every Sunday, & drank sacramental wine with him every month through all those years in many chapels, who were always converted just after he was

converted, always renounced what he rejected & burnt away when he was offended – with hands & eyes upturned announcing as if it had been the appearance of a comet that he had just heard them talking about Father Son, & Holy Ghost three persons & one God, at the Roman Catholic Chapel! On which Mr Newson oracularly observed that it was as absurd as saying that three guineas were one guinea. Miss Deborah, I believe the scrap book was still in her hand, said to me with one of those smiles, wh[ich] seemed to imply the impossibility of more than one answer to the question “You do not say so, Master Fox”? I hesitated a moment, but my good angel was on duty, & after a struggle to deliver myself of a perfectly formed sentence, I replied “of the nature of guineas, I know something, but of the nature of Gods, I know nothing.” The affirmative part of this sentence must have been enunciated by me in the then new official capacity of a bankers clerk, for in my private & personal character any property of a guinea must have been almost as mysterious as an attribute of Deity. A dead silence ensued, in which it was almost possible to hear the crackling of my burning cheeks. Mr Newson returned to his counting house; Miss Deborah retired into her own thoughts; the family sat astonished at having heard the governor even by implication contradicted; & the toadeater having no hint did not speak, but thought that in the silence of affected contempt he was copying what in some at least was the silence of sincere respect.

William Johnson Fox – Letter to an unknown correspondent about a journey in the Scottish Highlands

On leaving Edinburgh we had a beautiful ride for a few miles near the banks of the Forth, which is here above 3 times as broad as the Thames at London, till we came to Queensferry where carriage, horses & all were taken cross in a boat to North Ferry – we were now in the road to Perth, & in a short time had our first view of Ben Lomond, in the opposite direction to that in which we were travelling, rising majestically at the distance of between 40 & 50 miles. The first very interesting place that we came to was Kinross on the banks of Loch Leven. (Loch is a Lake, & Ben a mountain with a conical summit). Leven is a small placid lake in the middle of which is a little Island just large enough to hold the Castle in which Queen Mary was confined & which remains in a state of ruin internally, tho’ the outside walls are

nearly perfect. We rowed hither & traced the rooms which Mary must have occupied, the gate thro' which she must have passed in making her escape, the spot on which she must have stepped into the boat, & afterwards the orchard at Kinross where she landed. The whole scenery is exactly that which Scott has described in the Abbott. From Kinross we went to Perth, a beautiful little town upon the river Tay, which is so clear that, where 40 feet deep, you see the fish playing, & the stones at the bottom seem within reach. Here we saw the Church where the first sermon against Popery was preached in Scotland by John Knox. We walked to Scone where the ancient kings of Scotland were crowned. Some fragments of the original Palace are built into a very splendid edifice erected on the spot by the late Lord Kenyon. A bed & tapestry wrought by Mary's own hands are here preserved, & the bed in which her son, Ja[me]s 1st was accustomed to sleep. We also saw Kinnoul Crag a rough rock where Wallace used to hide. We afterwards rode by the foot of Birnam Hill, where according to Shakespeare there was a wood in Macbeth's time, but it has all vanished now, except 2 trees at the bottom, left behind, I suppose, when the rest went to Dunsinane. The Grampians were now around us, towering into the clouds on every side. At Dunkeld we spent some time in the Duke of Athol's policy (as they call an estate), where there are the most magnificent waterfall that we had then ever seen. Judging by recollection, I should think the stream dashed down the rock about 50 feet. At a small distance were the fine remains of an old (? page torn) Cathedral. We were now properly in the Highlands, (? page torn) saw scarcely any shoes or stockings except our (?page torn). Some of the retired villages were very miserable. The cottages built of stone & turf, no chimneys, no windows – here & there a hole left, at which some air got in, & some smoke got out, tho' the greater part forced its way through the turf or thatch on the top. The inhabitants of these places were generally the finest formed people we had ever seen. Our next object was the Pass of Killicrankie. A Pass is a narrow way between two ranges of mountain, generally with a stream at the bottom. This is distinguished as the place where Claverhouse (so prominent a character in Old Mortality) lost his life after having beaten King William's troops. We rested against a large stone which marks the spot where he fell. Returning upon our road to Logierait, we were ferried across the Tay, & went on to the Birks (birches) of Aberfeldy, so well known by Burns's beautiful song, which the Flowers sung upon the spot. The water has a fall here of 270 feet - & flows at the bottom between banks ([of]?-page torn) considerably more than that height, & completely ([co]?- page torn) vered with birches & other trees, & a

profusion of ([s]? – *page torn*) herbs & plants. Though in the centre of a wild & mountainous Country, this spot is so sheltered as to be extremely mild & fertile. The whole is exceedingly beautiful. Soon after leaving it we passed from Kenmore to Killin along the banks of Loch Tay about 8 miles. This lake is about a mile & half broad, surrounded by lofty, barer, but romantic mountains. After Killin we passed a river which struggles along nearly a mile among huge masses of rock, foaming & splashing. Mountains & waterfalls now multiplied around us as we drove on to Lock-Earn-Head. One stream we saw rushing over the brow of a mountain probably 2000 feet high, & lost in spray as it descended. Our road was now along Loch Lubnaig & between Ben Ledi & Ben Vairlich, two noble mountains, & in sight of Uam Var, & several others mentioned by Scott in the Lady of the Lake to which we began to have recourse as we were already within the boundaries of its scenery. We were in the course taken by the Stag in Canto 1st - & also in that of Malise in the “Gathering”. We went by the ruin of the little chapel at the door of which Norman, who had been just married received the bloody cross to proceed with in summoning the Clan. By the Pass of Leny which might have charmed us had we not seen Killiecrankie, we arrived at Callender. A very steep walk of a mile & half led us to the Brig of Bracklynn, which consists simply of half a dozen fine branches (not planed) laid across a torrent which is rushing down a chasm in the rock at a considerable depth. There is no hand rail. The crossing was a fine trial of how much our nerves had been braced by the mountain air. After this we discharged our Carriage, & spent between 2 & 3 days in the neighbourhood of Loch Katrine, where we visited every spot, or nearly so, mentioned in the “Lady of the Lake”. Every line of the descriptive part of that poem seemed to gain additional beauty by the comparison. The window of our sitting room looked on “Lovely Loch Achray”. We crossed Coilantagie Ford, & the Brig of Turk; passed by Lanric Mead, & Duncraggan Hubs – went up to the Forest of Glenfinlass, & two-thirds of the ascent of Ben Ledi. The Trosachs we twice passed thro’, in rain, & in sunshine. They are an amazing, yet a beautiful scene. A complete enclosure of mountains, some as wild, bleak, & awful as Chaos itself; & others exuberantly rich in wood from top to bottom. The Lady’s Island is completely covered with wood. In our rainy walk here, we saw rainbows without number. Some thrown like a prodigious bridge from a mountain on one side to that on the other. Some, not in air, but resting completely on the thick foliage of the hill side. One, with the ends of the arch touching the opposite shores of Loch Katrine, & reflected in the water so as to complete the circle. I shall send you a volume if I get

on thus. The two days we spent here were the only wet days we had in the Highlands. Highland rain is a fine thing. We had it in perfection up the side of Ben Ledi. It does not descend, but moves straight along – in fact, it is not so properly the rain as the cloud itself. The wind carries it along, a huge mass of water moving horizontally, which meets you smack in the face, & you are wet through from head to foot in an instant. By the bye, being wet thro' was a very common thing with us - & knee deep at least it happened almost every day, sometimes oftener – but no colds of any consequence were ever taken. We were in full exercise till we got back to our Inn, when we always changed clothes, & generally took a drop of whisky, before sitting down. Thus we were never chilled. Leaving the Trosachs, we went in a boat to the other end of Loch Katrine, & taking 3 Guides to carry our luggage walked across the mountains to Inversnaid on the banks of Loch Lomond, the finest Lake in Scotland, & therefore in Britain. It is 30 miles long, & varies from ½ a mile to 6 miles in breadth beautifully studded with Islands. A Steam boat goes up & down it every day, which we were just in time to catch – this took us to Balloch, & then we went by coach 5 miles (past Smollett's monument, & the remains of the house in which he was born) to Dumbarton. By ½ past 3 next morning were rowing round the base of a noble rock in the Clyde on which Dumbarton Castle stands, a place celebrated in history, towards the Steam vessel that passes from Glasgow to Inverary. In this we went down to the Frith of Clyde, passed along the coast of the Isle of Bute, & afterwards that of Arran, which sees a huge mass of rocks, just my notion of St Helena which I could not help thinking of all the time it was in sight, entered Loch Fine, & finished a voyage of 80 miles before dinner. Here we were all carried thro' the water from the vessel to the shore by some huge highland fishermen. The Duke of Argyle has a very splendid castle here which we visited. A high hill rises behind it, wood all round, & the lake in front. The town is neat. All Scottish towns look well, because they are of stone. I don't remember that we saw a brick house in the country & besides (in the towns at least) there are no small houses. Several families generally inhabit one house, occupying the different stories (flats they call them) with a common staircase, & it seems bad enough inside, but without it looks well. The herrings of Loch Fine are said to be the finest in the world, & you would have readily believed that we thought them so, if you had seen us eating them at breakfast. From Inverary we set out in two Highland Shifts for Tarbert. These are square carts with a seat strapped on, & the driver sits in front with nothing but a halter to guide the horse with. Our road was thro' the Pass of Glencaie, the most

awful scenery that we met with. It is an immense chasm in the mountains, which seems to descend to the very bowels of the earth. As we descended into it, along the side of the mountain the sun was setting & twas twilight with us, but the summits above us were all bright & blazing, & at the same moment, below, it was pitch dark. I shall never forget that ride – the rocks were tremendous - & might cloud upon us before we cleared them, & came out on the edge of Loch Long, round the end of which we passed to our resting place at Tarbert, on the opposite bank of Loch Lomond to that which we had previously visited. The next morning by 6 o'clock we were on the lake, rowing 6 miles to Rowardennan on the other side at the foot of Ben Lomond, which we were to ascend after breakfast. & ascend it we did. From the bottom of the mountain to the top is 6 miles, some of it very steep, some of it very boggy, & all of it rough enough. We took Guides, sandwiches, whisky, & 2 horses. These horses are kept for the express purpose of ascending the mountain, & wonderfully clever they are at it. They climb like goats. They pick their way thro' the bogs with wonderful sagacity. Dr Smith & Sarah Flower (the youngest) did the whole on foot. The rest of us rode alternately. I more than my share, by the general desire, though by this time there was not much of the invalid about me. The descent we all liked best upon our own feet. The view from the top of this mountain is said to be unrivalled, for tho' there are many higher, yet they are generally surrounded by other mountains which obstruct the view. You must judge of its extent by consulting a map or Gazeteer. We saw distinctly Ben Nevis, the paps of Jura, Aisla Craig, the coast of Ireland, a bit of Cumberland, the river Forth from its source to its mouth – the view comprised 15 lakes. Its magnificence cannot be imagined. We came down perfectly satisfied with the reward of our toils. The next day we again embarked on Loch Lomond, visited Rob Roy's cave, a romantic cavern in which he is said to have often dwelt, & Rob Roy's prison, a shelf of rock to which his captives were let down, & from which they c[oul]d only escape by scaling a perpendicular precipice, or by jumping down into the lake below, or by flying away, which seems about as practicable as either of the other modes, & then got to Dumbarton as before, where we immediately took another Steam vessel on the Clyde & reached Glasgow that night. We had now done with the Highlands, & were again in a civilized country, which we scarcely knew how to relish, & certainly did not admire the really fine town of Glasgow so much as if we had gone to it from London. The principal streets are spacious & well built. The back lanes (Wynds) are worse than any thing I know of in London, & you have nothing in Norwich that is not princely to them. The public

walks along the Clyde are beautiful – On the banks were hundreds of washerwomen at work, in their way, with their clothes tucked up, treading & jumping on the linnen. We traced all Scott's Rob Roy scenery here – the bridge where he spoke to F. Osbaldiston, the garden where Rashleigh fought, & the subterranean Church (now a burying ground) under the Cathedral. We rambled the whole day, & rested in the evening by riding on to Lanark. My general health was now in very high order - but my ancles had given out with such exertions - & Dr S sat up with me till ½ past 12, applying leeches & poultices, which reduced the swelling & put that to rights. – By 6 next morning we were off on a before-breakfast walk of 5 miles altogether, to visit Cartlane Craig, another retreat of W[illia]m Wallace, in whose neighbourhood we were, & whose statue stands over the Church Gate of Old Lanark. After breakfast, we went over Owen's Establishment at New Lanark. This was indeed an interesting sight, tho' of a very different description from what we had been accustomed to. The children of this factory have every provision for amusement & instruction that could be coveted by the wealthiest - & when they get to the working age (none under 10 years) the fewer hours than others, the cleanliness, the reading rooms, lectures, concerts, dances, the comfortable dwellings, & all this in one of the most beautiful spots in Scotland, make one astonished that such a Paradise can be made of a Cotton Manufactory even by the talent benevolence & perseverance of Mr Owen. I never saw so many happy faces in my life. The examinations of the children proved that about the School at least there was no quackery. I believe the pupils of few boarding schools in England c[oul]d have stood such an examination so well. We walked thence to Corra-Linn a fall of the Clyde, which tho' not so high as many we had seen, was greater in effect from the magnitude of the river – this is also sacred to Wallace – then to Bonniton, another fall – where our chairs met us – took us back to lunch at Lanark, & thence to Edinbro' where we arrived at ½ past one on the morning of Friday Sep 12th.

We kept our little party together in Edinboro' by taking a common lodging, & made several excursions to different places, as Toplyn, & Stirling, accompanied by some of the Congregation, who exerted themselves incessantly, & in every way, to promote our enjoyment. The view from Stirling Castle includes 8 fields of battle, – 4 of them between Wallace or Bruce, & the English under Edward. We had also much to do at Edinburgh – John Knox's house is yet standing – & some interesting monuments of the Covenanters. We saw also at the advocates Library, the original

“Solemn League & Covenant” stuff, some of Mary’s writing, & other curious manuscripts. In Holyrood Palace her rooms are preserved in their original state, & the stain of David Rizzio’s blood is yet on the floor. The general appearance of Edinburgh is very striking. It is overlooked by Arthur’s Seat a hill of about 800 feet high (to walk up which seemed child’s play to us after BenLomond) the top of which has an accidental but striking resemblance to a sleeping lion. Beyond this is a fine range of rough hill, called Salisbury Craig, & at a little distance the Pentlands. The Calton Hill, with a monumental pillar to Nelson, is at one extremity of the city, the Forth flows about a mile below the other, & in the centre the Cas[tle] (*page torn*) rises on a steep rock. The buildings of the Old Town are crowded, lofty, & irregular. Those of the new are handsome, spacious, & all laid out in a uniform plan; & the streets generally are terminated with a public building, or open upon a fine view [of] the Forth & the mountains beyond. Between the two towns is a wide place, formerly a lake, but now drained, & handsome bridges thrown over it from which you look down upon markets & streets at a considerable depth below. Denny can probably find engravings in the Public Library which will give a clearer notion than any written description. I must draw to a close – I believe I have scarcely said anything of the people – whom we found most kind & hospitable. The Congregations were larger than the chapel would hold – Every possible attention was rendered both to myself & the whole party. In one way they amused us – by always having some dish, (*page torn*) [pe]culiarly Scotch, at dinner – which we knew was done merely for our gratification. – One day we had as fine a Haggis as that which Burns has celebrated. The difference of climate was perceptible in the fruits. We had broad beans repeatedly – green peas almost every day – & plucked ripe gooseberries (*page torn*) from the bush.

The journey must reckon among its charms that it was altogether the cheapest (considering time & distance) that I ever made. The whole expense including board etc.

(the following page is torn into three pieces)

& every thing from going out of my own door (*page torn*) [at D]alston to entering again, only exceeded the sum presented to me by the Edinburgh Congregation (£20) for my expenses, by £8. – This was partly owing to the number of our party - & partly to the cheapness of travelling by Steam. In one instance, we went 60 miles for 3/- each – In another 80 miles (& had a dinner also) for 5/- each – Steam Vessels of all sizes are continually passing on the Clyde. They are as plentiful as fish. Had our time allowed 3 days more, we should have gone by one of them to Mull & Staffa & [h]ad a sing from the Flowers in Fingal's Ca[ve] (*page torn*) But we could not do every thing. –