

CORRESPONDENCE

From: Patrick O'Leary,
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Dear Sir,

While researching a biography of Sir James Mackintosh I came across two previously unrecorded letters written by Coleridge from Somerset. In the first, dated "Stowey Nov 20, 1797," he told Mackintosh:

It is true I have long been grappling with poverty; but she has never been permitted to overthrow me; and although since I left college, I have known more than the name of misfortune I have been always preserved from the two heaviest calamities, Debt and Desertion.

The second, written on Feb 20th, 1798, sought his correspondent's help in asking Sheridan to stage Coleridge's play, at that time entitled *Osorio*. It ended:

If you find it troublesome, you must attribute it to your own kindness. The Lime, that has honey on its leaves, and honey in its blossom, will always have an importunate multitude of Bees and Flies, humming and buzzing about its branches.

These letters are still in family hands. I was permitted to quote from them in my book, and I hope the originals will eventually be placed in the public domain.

Mackintosh, then a struggling barrister, met Coleridge while visiting the West Country to court his second wife, Catherine Allen. She was sister-in-law to the Wedgwood brothers, and wrote to her future husband: "Coleridge is now with us for a day or two in very good spirits and very pleasant."

There is no indication in this correspondence of the hostility Coleridge later showed to Mackintosh. In 1822 he made some amends in a letter which, although published in part as early as 1836 in a footnote on pp. 394-95 of the second edition of Mackintosh's *Memoirs*, Vol. II, was

overlooked in the poet's *Collected Letters*. The complete letter is also among the family manuscripts.

Patrick O'Leary is author of *Sir James Mackintosh: The Whig Cicero* (Aberdeen University Press, 1989).

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