

Letter to S. T. Coleridge, 13 February 1797

By the way, I spoke far too disparagingly of your lines, and, I am ashamed to say, purposely. I should like you to specify or particularise; the story of the "Tottering Eld," of "his eventful years all come and gone," is too general; why not make him a soldier, or some character, however, in which he has been witness to frequency of "cruel wrong and strange distress!" I think I should. When I laughed at the "miserable man crawling from beneath the coverture," I wonder I [? you] did not perceive it was a laugh of horror—such as I have laughed at Dante's picture of the famished Ugolino. Without falsehood, I perceive an [sic.] hundred beauties in your narrative.