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A Recollection of George Richmond by His
Grandson

Ruthven Todd

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(but not necessarily those found by Mr. Beer) would have arisen.

To me, the design on *Jerusalem* 75 is the product of such a process, involving the Laocoön motifs and resulting in a new significance which is bound up with the revelation of Rahab, the dragon-harlot. There is a great deal more that could be said about this plate, both text and design, and about Mr. Beer's new comments, in which he will not allow Rahab to be both sinister and beautiful or error to wear an appearance of reconciliation. Much could be said, too, about Mr. Beer's theory of "visionary" criticism, which disappointingly turns out to be affective criticism, long familiar. In the hope of putting an end to this debate, which actually began between Mr. Beer and John Grant, I will say only that it has been a reminder that by no means do Blakeists nearly always agree with each other, or differ only on matters that can be resolved in dialogue. A consideration of critical methodology as such has been too long neglected in Blake studies; perhaps space can be found in the *Blake Newsletter* someday for an exploratory discussion.

Minute Particulars.

A RECOLLECTION OF GEORGE RICHMOND
BY HIS GRANDSON

Ruthven Todd

At Christmas 1971, David Bindman sent me the most generous gift of a page, c. 1850, from a sketchbook by George Richmond, of some semi-aquatic plants and a tiny woodland scene in the lower left corner. This sent me hunting through some unsorted papers in search of a note which I remembered making, although, as I had not then moved into the cottage which I now occupy, I feared that it might have been lost with so many other unfiled items. However, I was fortunate and it turned up. This reads:

Sir Arthur Richmond told me that he remembered his grandfather, George, very clearly and that, toward the end of his life, his memories of his early youth became particularly bright. It was a pity that Arthur was up here for such a short time as I wanted to know so much. He suggested that probably these recollections of extreme old age were more vivid than anything he had produced for Alexander Gilchrist in the 1850s. (I had introduced the name of Gilchrist.) One thing he told me was that, when Blake died, George closed his eyes: "to keep the vision in," George explained. Galilea.

Ruthven Todd's most recent published work on Blake is William Blake, the Artist. He is an authority on Blake's biography, among many other things. He lives on Mallorca.

I had stupidly forgotten to date the note, but an application to John Yeoman, who with his wife had accompanied Sir Arthur and his wife Greta on this and previous visits to Galilea, has supplied the information that it was in June 1966. I met Sir Arthur again, for the last time, at lunch in the Chelsea Arts Club at the end of August in 1967. George Richmond was born in 1809 and lived until 1896. Sir Arthur was born in 1879 and died in November 1968, three months short of his 90th birthday. This was the only occasion of our meetings upon which I remember having managed to bring up the subject of Blake. I think that, in explanation of his saying that George's memories of his youth were sharper as an old man than when trying to help Gilchrist, Sir Arthur made the point that, in the 1850s, George was extremely busy making a living and so had more things upon his mind. When Sir Arthur mentioned the detail of George Richmond's having closed Blake's eyes, I did not at once remember having seen it mentioned before, but then recollected that it was mentioned by H. H. Gilchrist, *Anne Gilchrist: Her Life and Writings*, 1887, pp. 258-59, and quoted by Mona Wilson in a note. The remark, "to keep the vision in," however, has not been previously recorded. There is no reason to doubt that it is a genuine recollection by a very old man trying to recapture the feelings of the teen-ager who was present at the deathbed, and who wrote the heartfelt and agitated note to Samuel Palmer, for his own young grandson. As such I feel that it deserves this explanation of how I came to be the recipient of the added detail from the only person I have known, so far as I can recall, who was able to give me anything new which he had actually received from the person who was present. The stretch from August 1827 to August 1967, 140 years, is long enough in all truth, but the fact that David Bindman's present now hangs in a cottage in the same village where I heard the remark helps strengthen the cord which pulls me back to examine the nearly seventy years preceding the first of these dates.