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SELECTED POEMS

of

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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EDITED BY
JOSEPH B. SEABURY

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The Silver Series of Classics

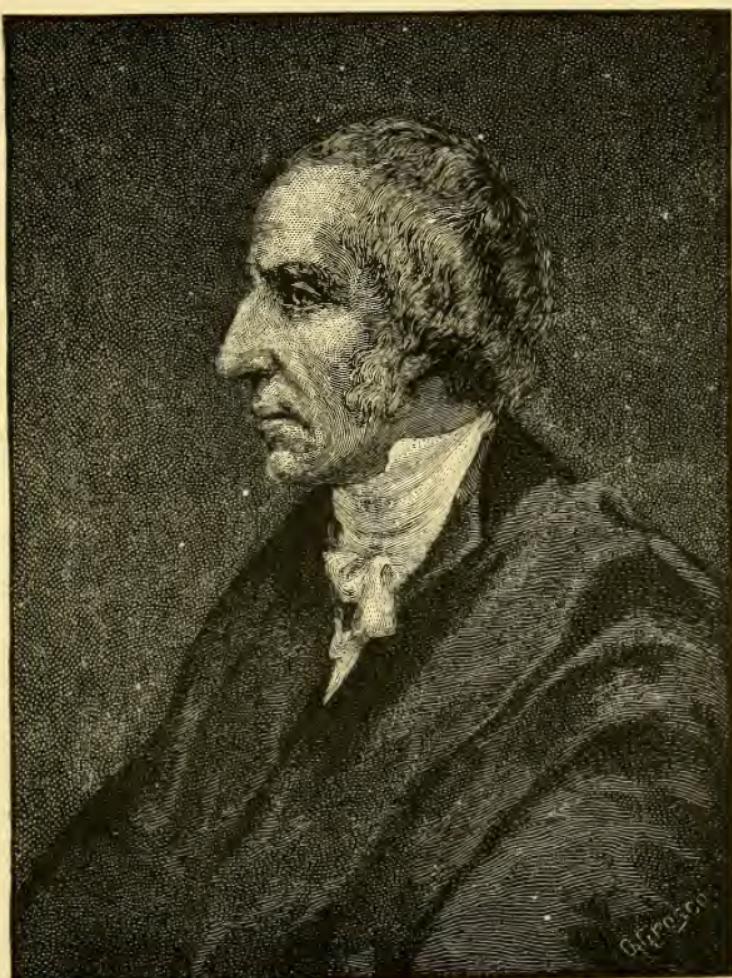
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BOSTON

CHICAGO



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EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

JOSEPH B. SEABURY



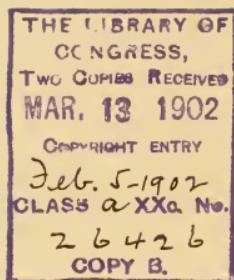
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INTRODUCTION.

WORDSWORTH—THE MAN.

WORDSWORTH was constitutionally averse to giving in distinct form, or with any detail, the story of his life. He was the last man to write an autobiography ; as he himself expresses it :—

“I am not one who much or oft delights
In personal talk.”

And yet, much of the life of this great poet, his mental and spiritual aspirations, and the wide range of his studies, are chronicled in his poems. They picture his surroundings, the atmosphere in which he lived, the episodes of his career, the crises through which he passed. No poet reflects his environment so completely as does Wordsworth.

It is an easy task to set forth the salient events in his life, but to reproduce him as he was, to look upon the man himself, is difficult. In our effort to find a true portraiture of his personal appearance, we must depend upon the descriptive powers of his friends.

Thomas De Quincey, who was his neighbor at Grasmere for a quarter of a century, informs us that Wordsworth was somewhat above medium height, of indifferent figure, with “narrow and drooping shoulders.”

His face was meditative, but full of force. Its central feature was the eyes. "I have seen them assume an appearance the most solemn and spiritual that it is possible for the human eye to wear," said De Quincey.

Leigh Hunt, another friend and companion of Wordsworth, bears similar testimony: "I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired, so supernatural. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes." They were gray in color, sympathetic, penetrating. His was "the eye that was in itself a soul."

Among the wooded hills of Cumberland, at Cockermouth on the Derwent, April 7, 1770, these eyes first saw the light. It was the year that Hegel, the philosopher; John Foster, the preacher; George Canning, the orator; and Thorwaldsen, the sculptor, were born. It was the year that Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" was published; in American history, the year of the "Boston Massacre."

John Wordsworth, the poet's father, was attorney-at-law and legal agent of Sir James Lowther, afterward first Earl of Lonsdale. His mother was Anne Cookson, daughter of a mercer in Penrith. William was the second of five children. His mother died when he was eight years old; his father, when he was thirteen. At the age of eight he was sent to a school at Hawkshead, Lancashire. Here he spent nine years "among a people of simple habits, and scenery of a sweet and pastoral dignity." During this susceptible period he formed a close friendship with the mountains, the valleys, the lakes, and the rivers of his native district. Here the deep passion of his devotion to the beautiful in nature began to

appear. As he tells us in the "Prelude," his favorite amusements were hunting, fishing, boating, skating. He enjoyed long walks among the hills and about the lakes. He knew the people among whom he lived; learned their ways; felt their common losses and pleasures; noted the habits of the domestic animals; watched with eager delight the flight of the birds.

His surroundings induced a receptive attitude of mind, and an insight into life at its uniform level which breaks out so spontaneously into poetic song. It is here that he learned that "homely humanity" which gives such artlessness and genuineness to his poems.

In the year 1787, when the poet was seventeen, he entered St. John's College, Cambridge. In point of numbers and scholarly attainment, it ranked second among the colleges of the University. His career as a student was not a distinguished one. He chafed under official restraint and developed that "stiff, moody, and violent temper" of which he speaks and which his mother had noted in his childhood. Failing to adapt himself to the coercive curriculum of the college, he outlined a course of study for himself.

Wordsworth observed carefully the movements of his own mind. His intellectual powers expanded under the impulse of his own will. While at the University he read largely the great masters of English,—Chaucer, Spenser, Milton, Shakespeare.

Upon graduation (1791) he spent a year in France. It was the period of the French Revolution. He threw himself into its exciting scenes with all the enthusiasm of his chivalrous nature. Thus far he had been accustomed to

the quietude of a rural and intellectual environment; now he touched the beating heart of a nation in the throes of a great upheaval. He was by nature patriot as well as poet, and he embraced the radical views of republican independence. These he expressed boldly, but in after life in modified form.

In 1792 Wordsworth returned to England. Some of his friends hoped he would enter the priesthood of the church, but for this calling he claimed no aptitude. He had one purpose, one absorbing ambition,—literature. His earliest poems, entitled “Descriptive Sketches” and “The Evening Walk,” he published in 1793. He took this step, as he himself says, “with great reluctance,” and to show that he *“could do something.”*

At this time he projected the scheme of issuing a monthly “Miscellany,” which should contain “critical remarks on poetry, the arts, painting, gardening, etc., besides essays on morals and polities.” A ponderous undertaking! The scheme failed. A bequest of £900 from Raisley Calvert, who urged him to make poetry his life work, came as an opportune stroke of good fortune and made a life solely given to literature a tangible reality. A few years later, the heirs to the estate of Lord Lonsdale, who owed the poet’s father a goodly sum for professional services, paid the entire amount, including interest. With this sum in hand, Wordsworth could give himself more freely to his favorite pursuit. As Lowell observes, “the timely help which he received made it honest for him to write poems that will never die, instead of theatrical critiques as ephemeral as play-bills, or leaders that led only to oblivion.”

The literary life of Wordsworth is gracefully interwoven with that of his sister Dorothy, who was his congenial companion for many years. The manual effort of writing was irksome to the poet; but his sister was a most sympathetic and painstaking amanuensis. She was devotion itself; her life and that of the poet were of one fabric. All visitors at Wordsworth's home agree in praising its abounding intellectual life. De Quincey is among those who have extolled it. He describes the poet's sister as of "warm, even ardent manner," with an eye open to all that was engaging, quickly responding to the beautiful in nature and art, quick to note all the poet said or quoted, "consumed by a subtle fire of impassioned intellect." Mr. J. C. Shairp, writing of her, says that she was "so little of a literary lady, so entirely removed from being a blue-stocking, that she was ignorant of many books and subjects which, to most educated persons, were quite commonplace. . . . It was she who maintained for him a saving intercourse with his true self, opened for him the obstructed passage between head and heart, whence in time came genuine self-knowledge and peace. She it was who softened and humanized him, opened his eyes to the more hidden beauties, his heart to the gentler affections."

These two kindred minds formed that sweet domestic felicity which led Coleridge to say, "This is the happiest family I ever saw." In his home life, Wordsworth realized his own sentiment, "so much of earth, so much of heaven." Innocent, ardent, loving, Dorothy Wordsworth seemed to enter the hidden portals of nature whose secrets were disclosed to her. All the deep discoveries of her heart she

laid at the poet's feet. No words can express more exquisitely than his own his appreciation of her fidelity:—

“ She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,
And humble cares and delicate fears,
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,
And love, and faith, and joy.”

In 1795 the two Wordsworths settled at Racedown, Dorsetshire, in Southern England, where they remained for two years. The poet lived in seclusion. He began his work in a half-hearted way, waiting, as it were, for the complete control of his Muse. His imperfect poetical productions show a distrustful, a semi-industrious spirit. This unnatural epoch in his career speedily came to an end through a visit from Coleridge, who had seen in Wordsworth's earliest poems a prophecy of that “original poetic genius” which afterward so completely fascinated English readers.

The presence of Coleridge at Racedown marks the beginning of Wordsworth's fame as an English poet. In his struggles to find a way out of the entangling mazes of his introspection, Coleridge was his guide, his new genius, his better self. Wordsworth read to him his story of the ruined cottage, afterward incorporated into the first book of the “Excursion.” It charmed his admiring visitor, who declared it had “a character by books not hitherto reflected.” His judicious praise gave new courage to the disheartened poet. As a result of the new companionship, Wordsworth (1798) issued “Lyrical Ballads,” containing twenty-three poems, the first being Coleridge's “Ancient Mariner.” The remaining poems were from the pen of Wordsworth.

After a year's absence in Germany, William and Dorothy Wordsworth settled at Grasmere, in Westmoreland. No region could be more congenial to the poet, for it was near the place where he was born, and which he so fondly loved. While living there, he was married to Mary Hutchinson, a former pupil. Of their union, five children were born, of whom three died young. The personal virtues of Wordsworth's wife are written in immortal verse, in the poem, "She was a Phantom of Delight."

In 1812 Wordsworth removed to Allan Bank, and in 1813 to Rydal Mount. These places are near the charming English Lakes. Here Coleridge and Southey were frequent visitors and, with our poet, gave the name to the "Lake School of Poetry." It was the object of this coterie of poets to withstand the formal and inflexible mannerisms of the poetry of the day. Wordsworth, himself a populist of the best type, maintained that the true poet should set forth, in his poetic strains, the emotions of the popular heart. His poetry should be a transcript of life among the common people. He should avoid the stilted phrases and the high-sounding metaphors of the schools and come down to the dialect of the home and the street. Into this theory he threw himself with characteristic impetuosity. It is possible that he went to too great an extreme of literalness in his intense desire to popularize poetry, and yet he clad the homeliest scenes of domestic life with a certain native fascination that is irresistible to the unprejudiced reader. He chose the exact idioms of the people; he translated homespun life

into homespun phrase. He dignified the common toil of the toiler; everyday occurrences, the most ordinary aspects of nature, were transfigured by his magic touch. The simplicity of his style was all the more striking because it was in such strong contrast to the studied elaboration of the poetry of his time.

The conscientious purpose of the “Lake Poets” was misunderstood by the critics. The *Edinburgh Review* selected Wordsworth for its special ridicule, and published a travesty on his style. No doubt this had much to do with the diminution of the sale of his poems, but the poet kept a sweet temper; he persevered; he wrote and published. He grew in breadth of poetic feeling and knowledge of men; in sympathy with their needs; in responsiveness to the awakening of the universal soul. No subject was too trivial for him; he was the prophet of the commonplace. This kindliness of spirit toward humanity was sure to triumph over the rancor of the critic and the cynic.

The success of the “Lake School of Poets” was preëminently Wordsworth’s success. He attempted what at first sight seemed the impossible,—to produce a revolution in poetry. At the same time it was necessary to overcome prejudice, and to bring his readers into a favorable and receptive relationship with himself. It was a work of education quite as much as inspiration, but he conquered all prejudices and won an enviable place in the affections of the people.

It is not the purpose of this sketch to give in detail the literary product of the fifty-two years spent among the

green hills of Westmoreland and by her sparkling waters. The number of Wordsworth's poems runs far into the hundreds. We may note them in classification only. He wrote ballads, narrative poems, lyrics, poems akin to the antique style, odes, sonnets, and poems reflective and elegiac. Although he lacked a sense of humor, and strains of pleasantry are absent from his lines, he possessed the art of interpreting life in a way that no one has equaled in his generation or in ours.

We may picture the poet of the world's heart dwelling among the forests and beside the lakes of his beloved Grasmere. His was the ideal life of the meditative poet, a smooth and unvexed current of satisfied ambition. The rural setting of his life's work was in full accord with his intellectual and emotional nature, and yet he was not wholly removed from the business of the world. In 1813 he was appointed Distributor of Stamps for the County of Westmoreland, an office which he could fill largely by deputy. De Quincey speaks of the appointment as an instance of the remarkable good luck which waited upon Wordsworth through his whole life. "In our view it is only another illustration of that scripture which describes the righteous as never forsaken," are the words of Lowell.

Wordsworth received a pension of £300 from the English government, this being the third time his fortune was increased. It may be that De Quincey's observation was not far from the truth. Wordsworth's highest honor came in the year 1843, when he was made poet laureate, succeeding his friend Southey to that merited distinction.

Wordsworth died at Rydal Mount, April 23, 1850,—the

anniversary of the birth and the death of William Shakespeare. Wordsworth was buried in the churchyard at Grasmere. Upon that enchanting region he has written his name in imperishable characters. Annually hundreds of visitors pass in solemn meditation before the sacred spot where lies his dust, and pause in respectful silence before the plain marble slab bearing the poet's name. Near by are the ivy-mantled church, the abrupt hill, the sparkling waterfall, the quiet-flowing Rotha. It is the shrine of a poet whose praises ages to come will continue to sing.

WORDSWORTH—THE POET.

As some great painters have painted their own portraits, so some eminent writers have left us sketches of themselves, their style, their place in literature. These autobiographical touches have not always been modest, or free from egotism; and many of them have given the author a rank quite as high as he deserves. In contrast with these poets, Wordsworth writes of himself with becoming reserve: “I yield to no one in *love for my art*. I therefore labor at it with reverence, affection, and industry. My main endeavor as to style has been that my poems should be written in pure, intelligible English.”

This is the first quality that impresses the reader of Wordsworth's poems,—*their thorough workmanship*. He never wearied of remodeling, reconstructing, and polishing his verse. He had a fixed standard of literary merit, and labored unceasingly to bring each poem up to that standard. Self-reliant as he was, confident of his true position in his

relation to the reader, he always carried within himself such deference for his subject, and such a strong desire to give his thought adequate expression, that no poem was beneath his conscientious effort. Poetry was, in his view, invested with a sort of divine flavor; it demanded the best that was in him; he could not profane it by an indifferent, an inexact, a languid style.

"In Wordsworth were the very highest powers of the poetic mind." Lowell, in thus speaking of our poet, did not forget the four great masters of English verse that had preceded him,—Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton. As each of these writers was eminent in his sphere, so Wordsworth was in his. Comparisons are futile; a just estimate is essential. The opinion of some of our best judges is that Wordsworth is the fifth in the order of English poets. In him were the true qualities of poetic sentiment, and in him flowed the deep currents of poetic feeling.

He protested against all the factitious devices which buttressed life about him. It was an era of which Carlyle said, "Our age is mechanical." Against this tendency Wordsworth entered his plea for contemplation. He called a halt in the rushing tide of business and bade men think; *to be* as well as *to do*. He would do away with much of the apparatus, the useless furniture of life, its costly trappings, its artificial paraphernalia. He had a deep-felt philosophy of life which he sought to impress upon his age: man is deathless, his being is super-mundane. Into his magnificent Ode, instinct with immortality, our poet has compressed the sublime realities of the origin of human life:—

“ Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar.
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home;
Heaven lies about us in our infancy.”

Wordsworth was a true poet of *nature*. “ I, a Worshiper of Nature,” he exclaims, not in sentimentality but in strictness of faith in the natural and in the supernatural. He believed in “ Nature’s self,” which is “ the breath of God,” or, as Goethe expresses it, “ nature, the living garment of the Deity.”

The extraordinary hold Wordsworth had upon the entire century to which he belonged is due to his marvelous power to interpret nature. All the strings of this aeolian harp vibrate with life as the breezes of nature play through them. The current of his feeling runs deep. The purest in nature, that which seems to be hidden from the ordinary beholder, he sees with soul-eyes. Some of his poems are outbursts of song as he greets some messenger from the sky. “ O, blithe newcomer,” he sings, and again :—

“ Ethereal minstrel; pilgrim of the sky !
Dost thou despise the earth where care abounds ? ”

All poems of address are, in their initial words, an uplifting, passionate admiration for the chaste in nature’s holy realm, the songful, the gayly attired, the modest, the free. His penetrating eye detects action where we see languor; brilliant color where we see only a blank.

Wordsworth clothed with sacredness the common things of life. The earth is not a cold clod, but —

“ Mother earth, her mirth, her tears,
Her humblest mirth and tears,”

are lyric personalities to his open soul. He diffuses his being through every avenue of nature. He makes a confidant of the “fair river,” “the green earth,” “the misty mountain.”

“ Knowing that nature never did betray
The heart that loved her,”

he trusts her absolutely. It is said that Wordsworth lacked the sense of smell, but no one ever possessed a clearer perception of the hidden perfume that was in the flower:—

“ Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads ;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens, through thee,
Are fresh and strong.”

How sweetly he sings to the daisy! how charmingly he discourses to the celandine! Few poems in our language are lovelier than “The Daffodils.”

“ I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”

When the mantle of vision actually falls upon him, he sings as one inspired. His thoughts move upon a high plane; his words come with startling rapidity. As Matthew Arnold suggests, not only does Nature give him the

matter of his poem ; she seems to write his poem for him. Wordsworth, in advanced years, commenting on his early life, speaks of the hour when the consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances, which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, first broke upon him : “ I made a resolution to supply, in some degree, the deficiency.” That resolution, fully carried out, made him our foremost poet of nature. The unity and consistency of his poems, which are their chief characteristic, are due to his living for a lifetime in fraternal intimacy with nature.

That which was within said to that which was without,—to the great mass of mountains, the world of leaf and blossom,—“ we are friends, we are one.” To the poet’s discerning eye, Helvellyn and Skiddaw, his companions for nearly eight decades, were like Hermon and Tabor, filled with rejoicing. The secret of his melodious song was in his own soul, but its themes, its setting, its visible shapes, abode in the rugged slope of the mountains, the liquid flow of the river. He was familiar with the changing phenomena of nature, with the full round of the seasons, and all the pleasures and charms which each brings. He was a part of the soil, the lakes, the fauna and flora, of Westmoreland. He acted upon his own theory that “ it is essential for every poet that would peacefully possess his faculty in these modern times, to associate himself with some appropriate spot or tract of scenery, the whole influence of which he may thoroughly exhaust and incorporate with his verse.”

Wordsworth’s view of nature was broad and far-reaching.

In the clear expanse of field, the placid stream, the pellucid air, in the bold outline of the mountain, he took exquisite delight. The “poet of the twilight,” speaking from the heart of nature to the heart of man, made his noblest songs the media between the visible and the invisible, the material and the spiritual. He had one maxim: let us seek truth; let us enter into the temple of truth through the vestibule of nature. Wordsworth put his ear down to the earth and listened to the throbings of nature’s heart.

As typical of his relation to nature we may quote the following representative lines:—

“ For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth, but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns
And the round ocean and the living air
And the blue sky and in the mind of man.”

With all his poetic fancy, he was sometimes too realistic, writing with ludicrous, mathematical precision. The couplet,—

“ I’ve measured it from side to side,
‘Tis three feet long and two feet wide,”

was so exact that he omitted it, but only at the solicitation of friends. It is, however, very Wordsworthian.

He was convinced that no poet can be great unless he follows his own bent. This mental drift may, however, become enslaving. Wordsworth's desire for naturalness, at times, made this very naturalness unnatural, artificial, and stilted.

Wordsworth was distinctively *the poet of the spirit of man*. Man and nature were closely allied in his mind. "Wordsworth is the poet of nature because he possesses the kinship between nature and man by reason of their common origin and life in God." He regarded it as his mission to show that life is pervaded with beauty, whose heart beats with the rapture of the Eternal. Nothing seems lifeless or valueless, for in each and every object are the "Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe." As man stands highest in the order of creation, so man is the supreme passion of Wordsworth's pen. He interpreted nature not for its own sake, but for the sake of man, whose every condition, circumstance, emotion, appealed to him. The homely incidents of rural life,—the child at play, the woes of the afflicted, the merriment of the gay, the pathos of the disappointed, the soldier on crutches, the vagrant beggar, the tattered cloak of a poor girl, a wooden bowl, a drum, a spade,—all find in him an interpreter.

Wordsworth took nothing second-hand. He was the poet of man, whose life he knew and whose lot he shared. He sketched in their native dialects the actual experiences through which men pass. He sang them in such a way as to reflect them as they are, not as they might be or ought to be. He saw and combated not imaginary but

existent evils. His intellectual sanity was vitalized by his human sympathy. He was nobly loyal to man wherever he found him. His patriotism was without the alloy of personal ambition. Among his choicest sonnets are those dedicated to liberty. They come from the quiet walks of a recluse, but have been called the most permanent record in English literature of the war with Napoleon. In his youth Wordsworth partook of the highest hopes of the great reformers for universal emancipation. He lived to see all slaves in the British Colonies set free.

His poems teach us that in provincial minds are to be found faculties strongly intellectual. Beneath the coarse corduroy there breathes a true patriotism, a fine sentiment. By his genius in painting life about the hearthstone and at the spinning wheel, our poet has done much to enthrone manhood and womanhood, to abate the unseemly rivalry for social rank. In Wordsworth's view, the distinction of station based upon the accident of birth, or the possession of wealth, is meretricious and despicable. Let the blood in human veins be the healthful red of sturdy thinking and noble doing, and the man is at once a member of the nobility.

Wordsworth has been called a "lonely man; his life a long soliloquy." It is rather a long colloquy with nature and man in their simplicity. He looked out upon —

"the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world."

He knew its stress of competitive overwork, its strife, its bitter heartburnings. He was a prophet of the work-a-day

world. It is noticeable that as he grew older, a change passed over him. Sadness crept into his poetry; not bald pessimism, but a spiritless lament. This passing from buoyancy to somberness was too speedily registered in his poetry, which fell off in its true poetic flavor and in its hold upon the people. Within fifteen years (1798-1813) his great work was done. This is the period of his masterpieces, although from time to time after this he produced a poem of great literary merit.

The philosophic tastes, which Wordsworth possessed to so fine a degree, appear repeatedly in his poems. His brain was high-arched; it could compass great subjects. With an art that was masterful, he introduced into many of his poems some of the deepest philosophies of life. Some of these philosophic unfoldings appear incidentally, and for that reason are all the more effective.

There are three poems which stand out from the great mass of his poetic material in gravity of importance and in breadth of treatment,—“Ode to Duty,” “Lines composed above Tintern Abbey,” and “Ode on Intimations of Immortality.” They reach the highest pinnacle of his reflective imagery. In the first of this trio of poems, the author recognizes the supremacy of God, as a personal Deity. Man is allied with Him by a love of truth and freedom. Duty, “Stern Daughter of the Voice of God,” summons man to service for God, not for a pantheistic image of Divinity:—

“Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice.”

The second of these poems, “Lines composed above Tintern Abbey,” describes the fond delight of the heart

returning to its early joy. What fascinating allusions to natural scenery are found here! How closely the poet connects "the landscape with the quiet of the sky"! He follows "the lines of sportive mood run wild"; he casts himself into the lap of that dear region which he loved. After giving the splendid picture its full glory in words, he passes on to consider the change wrought in him during his long absence. "The still, sad music of humanity," with its "ample power to chasten and subdue," mingles with the memories of the past.

The last of the three poems, "Ode on Intimations of Immortality," is regarded by many as the finest poem in the English language. Man existed before he was upon the earth, therefore he will exist after he leaves it. All these poems have many quotable lines that have passed into our language, into the social and ethical philosophy of our time.

No other poet seemed to care so little for style. Matthew Arnold claimed that he had none. The truth is, Wordsworth was so filled with the momentum of his thought as to make the "music of mere meter" secondary to the deeper flow of ideas, the swaying governance of truth. Our poet believed it was "the tendency of meter to divest language, to a certain degree, of its reality."

In order to read Wordsworth appreciatively we must rise to a high moral and spiritual vantage-ground. We must come to know and feel that nature has a voice; that man is not a machine, but a soul into whose innermost being enter feelings that cannot be treated lightly. Love is the medium of insight into nature and man. Words-

worth, from spiritual motives of the highest order, by intuitions of beauty and truth unsurpassed in the entire range of modern poetry, has defined for us the world that lies about us.

His fame, built on a great purpose,—to open to us the unseen and shape into form the vague and the intangible,—is impregnably fixed. Shining through all his poems, which at times reach the sublimest heights of poetic vision, we see the noble character of the man, of whom Tennyson declares that the laurel crown was greener because worn by a poet of such moral elevation.

ESTIMATES.

“I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time. Chaucer is anterior, and on other grounds, too, he cannot well be brought into the comparison. But taking the roll of our chief poetical names, beside Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth down, and going through it,—Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats (I mention those only who are dead),—I think it certain that Wordsworth’s name deserves to stand, and will finally stand, above them all. Wordsworth seems to me to have left a body of poetical work superior in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, to that which any of the others

have left. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him. He is one of the chief glories of English poetry, and by nothing is England so glorious as by her poetry. Let us lay aside every weight which hinders our getting him recognized as this, and let our one study be to bring to pass, as widely as possible and as truly as possible, his own word concerning his poems: ‘They will coöperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier.’”—SELECTED.

“Wordsworth’s mission has been a lofty one and loftily fulfilled,—to raise the mean, to dignify the obscure, to reveal that natural nobility which lurks under the russet gown and the clouted shoe; to extract poetry from the cottage, from the turf-fire upon its hearth, and from the solitary shieling, and from the mountain tarn, and from the gray ancestral stone at the door of the mansion, and from the lichens of the rock, and from the furze of the melancholy moor. . . . It was to interweave the deductions of a subtle philosophy with ‘the short and simple annals of the poor.’ And how to the waste and meaningless parts of creation has he, above all men, given a voice, an intelligence, a beauty. The sweet and solitary laugh of a joyous female, echoing among the hills, is to the ear more delightful than the music of many forests. A wooden bowl is dipped into the well, and comes out heavy, not merely with water, but with the weight of his thoughts.

“A village drum, touched by the strong finger of his

genius, produces a voice which is poetry. A thorn on the summit of a hill, ‘known to every star and every wind that blows,’ bending and whispering over a maniac, becomes a banner staff to his imagination. A silent tarn collects within and without it the sad and terrible histories of a sea, and a fern-stalk floating on its surface has the interest of a forest of masts.

“If he skates, it is ‘across the image of a star.’ Icicles are to him things of imagination; a snow-ball is a Mount Blanc; a day-dream among the hills of more importance than the dates and epochs of an empire.”—GEORGE GILFILLAN.

“There are those who refuse to call Wordsworth a great poet, for the reason that there are so many commonplace and prosaic pages in his collected works. But there are two reasons for calling him great which these critics overlook. First, the large body of genuine poetry which these works contain; and, secondly, the rare bent and insight which these works have communicated to literature. The Sonnets of Wordsworth constitute of themselves our noblest collection after those of Shakespeare and Milton, and there is a grave and serious beauty even in poems as long as the ‘Prelude’ and the ‘Excursion.’ His chief claim to greatness, however, is this, that he has not only apprehended and expressed the divinity of nature as it had never been apprehended and expressed before, but that he has done this in such a way as to mold and change the poetry of the country and of the world and to begin a new epoch in the history of literature.”—A. H. STRONG.

“ It may be that his manly chant, beside
More dainty numbers, seems a rustic tune ;
It may be that thought has broadened since he died
Upon the century’s noon :
Enough that there is none since risen who sings
A song so gotten of the immortal soul,
So instant from the vital point of things
Which is our source and goal :
And though at touch of later hands there float
More artful tones than from his lyre he drew,
Ages may pass ere trills another note
So sweet, so great, so true.”

— WILLIAM WATSON.

“ He spoke and loosed our hearts in tears ;
He laid us as we lay at birth,
On the cool flowery lap of earth ;
Smiles broke from us and we had ease ;
The hills were round us, and the breeze
Went o’er the sunlight fields again ;
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain,
Our youth return’d ; for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl’d,
The freshness of the early world.”

— MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE EXCURSION.

The “Excursion” is Wordsworth’s longest poem. It was published in 1814, although large portions of it were writ-

ten several years before. Wordsworth intended to use it as the second part of a still longer poem to be called "The Recluse." Of this larger work we have, besides "The Excursion," only the closing lines of the first part. Wordsworth planned, but did not produce, the third part. His conceptions of human life, intended for this portion, found their way into some of his later poems.

"The Excursion" is the record of Wordsworth's purpose to build up something on which his fame might permanently rest. He believed that in order to do this he must write on philosophical subjects, though he disclaimed all "intention of formally announcing a system." If the poet succeeds in stirring up in the mind "clear thought, lively images, and strong feelings," the reader can frame his own system.

In the four books that comprise "The Excursion," subjects of a somewhat recondite nature are treated under the following divisions, viz., Book I. "The Wanderer"; Book II. "The Solitary"; Book III. "Despondency"; Book IV. "Despondency Corrected." Instead of calling these poems philosophy, we may better characterize them as casuistry under a philosophic mode of treatment, in unscholastic and unpedantic language.

Wordsworth discussed some of the deepest problems in philosophy; but he never assumed to be profound. The dedication of this poem to the Earl of Lonsdale is full of genuine respect, as this quotation shows:—

"Oft through the fair domains, illustrious peer!
In youth I roamed on youthful pleasures bent
And mused in rocky cell or sylvan tent,

Beside swift-flowing Lowther's current clear.
— Now, by thy care befriended, I appear
Before thee, Lonsdale, and this work present ;
A token (may it prove a monument !)
Of high respect and gratitude sincere."

This production of the man with the "wizard imagination" was pronounced "madness." It was the madness which Seneca regarded a proof of genius. Wordsworth presents a fine example of judicious disregard of the carp-ing criticisms of his day. He was actuated by a strict literary conscientiousness which would not yield to the floods of caustic criticism that surged about him.

Jeffries said of "The Excursion," "This will never do." But it has done well, and holds its own against the echoes of remonstrance that come down to us from the day it was given to the world. As a narrative poem, it lacks dramatic action, which is so prominent a feature of Matthew Arnold's "Sohrab and Rustum," but as a work of broad ethical thinking, chaste spirit, and refined diction, it is of the choicest mold. That a common peddler should converse like a sage, treat the most obscure themes as if he were versed in philosophy, is an incongruity, but the trend of the poem is strong, healthful, wise.

When one thinks of the varied charm of this poem, he chooses it without hesitation as worthy the attention of the student of English literature. How genuine its intimacy with Nature! how graphic and at times uplifting its recital of her graces! "what haunting memories hover around us, deep and eternal, like the undying baritone of the sea!" How intense and absorbing the thought! how broad the

philosophy of life! how accurate the diagnosis of human motive! how penetrating the insight into the emotions of the heart! how vivid the description of domestic devotion, the pathos of domestic sorrow!

This discriminating pastoral will amply repay the close, sympathetic study of the student.

SELECTED POEMS OF WORDSWORTH.

THE EXCURSION — BOOK FIRST.

THE WANDERER.

ARGUMENT.

A summer forenoon — The author reaches a ruined cottage upon a common, and there meets with a revered friend, the wanderer, of whose education and course of life he gives an account — The wanderer, while resting under the shade of the trees that surround the cottage, relates the history of its last inhabitant.

'TWAS summer, and the sun had mounted high ;
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared
Through a pale steam ; but all the northern downs,
In clearest air ascending, showed far off
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung 5
From brooding clouds ; shadows that lay in spots
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed ;
To him most pleasant who on soft cool moss
Extends his careless limbs along the front 10
Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts
A twilight of its own, an ample shade,
Where the wren warbles, while the dreaming man,
Half conscious of the soothing melody,
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene, 15
By power of that impending covert, thrown

To finer distance. Mine was at that hour
Far other lot, yet with good hope that soon
Under a shade as grateful I should find
Rest, and be welcomed there to livelier joy.
Across a bare wide common I was toiling
With languid steps that by the slippery turf
Were baffled; nor could my weak arm disperse
The host of insects gathering round my face,
And ever with me as I paced along.

20

25

Upon that open moorland stood a grove,
The wished-for port to which my course was bound.
Thither I came, and there, amid the gloom
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,
Appeared a roofless hut; four naked walls
That stared upon each other! — I looked round,
And to my wish and to my hope espied
The friend I sought; a man of reverend age,
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.
There was he seen upon the cottage-bench,
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

30

35

Him had I marked the day before,—alone
And stationed in the public way, with face
Turned toward the sun then setting, while that staff 40
Afforded, to the figure of the man
Detained for contemplation or repose,
Graceful support; his countenance as he stood
Was hidden from my view, and he remained
Unrecognized; but, stricken by the sight,
With slackened footsteps I advanced, and soon
A glad congratulation we exchanged
At such unthought-of meeting.—For the night
We parted, nothing willingly; and now

He by appointment waited for me here, 50
 Under the covert of these clustering elms.

We were tried friends : amid a pleasant vale,
 In the antique market-village where was passed
 My school-time, an apartment he had owned,
 To which at intervals the wanderer drew, 55
 And found a kind of home or harbor there.
 He loved me ; from a swarm of rosy boys
 Singled out me, as he in sport would say,
 For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.
 As I grew up, it was my best delight 60
 To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,
 On holidays, we rambled through the woods :
 We sat,— we walked ; he pleased me with report
 Of things which he had seen ; and often touched
 Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind 65
 Turned inward ; or at my request would sing
 Old songs, the product of his native hills ;
 A skillful distribution of sweet sounds,
 Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed
 As cool refreshing water, by the care 70
 Of the industrious husbandman, diffused
 Through a parched meadow-ground, in time of drought.
 Still deeper welcome found his pure discourse ;
 How precious, when in riper days I learned
 To weigh with care his words, and to rejoice 75
 In the plain presence of his dignity !

Oh ! many are the poets that are sown
 By Nature ; men endowed with highest gifts,
 The vision and the faculty divine ;
 Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse, 80
 (Which, in the docile season of their youth,
 It was denied them to acquire, through lack
 Of culture and the inspiring aid of books,

Or haply by a temper too severe,
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame) 85
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led
By circumstance to take unto the height
The measure of themselves, these favored beings,
All but a scattered few, live out their time,
Husbanding that which they possess within, 90
And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds
Are often those of whom the noisy world
Hears least; else surely this man had not left
His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed.
But, as the mind was filled with inward light, 95
So not without distinction had he lived,
Beloved and honored,—far as he was known.
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,
And something that may serve to set in view
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness, 100
His observations, and the thoughts his mind
Had dealt with, I will here record in verse;
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink
Or rise as venerable nature leads,
The high and tender muses shall accept 105
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,
And listening time reward with sacred praise.

Among the hills of Athol he was born;
Where, on a small hereditary farm,
An unproductive slip of rugged ground, 110
His parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt;
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor!
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,
And fearing God; the very children taught
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word, 115
And an habitual piety, maintained
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

From his sixth year, the boy of whom I speak,
 In summer, tended cattle on the hills ;
 But through the inclement and the perilous days
 Of long-continuing winter, he repaired,
 Equipped with satchel, to a school that stood
 Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,
 Remote from view of city spire, or sound
 Of minster clock ! From that bleak tenement 120
 He, many an evening, to his distant home
 In solitude returning, saw the hills
 Grow larger in the darkness ; all alone
 Beheld the stars come out above his head,
 And traveled through the wood, with no one near 125
 To whom he might confess the things he saw. 130

So the foundations of his mind were laid.
 In such communion, not from terror free,
 While yet a child, and long before his time,
 Had he perceived the presence and the power
 Of greatness ; and deep feelings had impressed 135
 So vividly great objects, that they lay
 Upon his mind like substances, whose presence
 Perplexed the bodily sense. He had received
 A precious gift ; for, as he grew in years, 140
 With these impressions would he still compare
 All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms ;
 And, being still unsatisfied with aught
 Of dimmer character, he thence attained
 An active power to fasten images 145
 Upon his brain ; and on their pictured lines
 Intensely brooded, even till they acquired
 The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,
 While yet a child, with a child's eagerness
 Incessantly to turn his ear and eye 150
 On all things which the moving seasons brought

To feed such appetite, — nor this alone
Appeased his yearning : — in the after-day
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags
He sat, and even in their fixèd lineaments,
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,
Or by creative feeling overborne,
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,
Expression ever varying !

155

Thus informed,
He had small need of books ; for many a tale
Traditional round the mountains hung,
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,
Nourished imagination in her growth,
And gave the mind that apprehensive power
By which she is made quick to recognize
The moral properties and scope of things.

165

But eagerly he read, and read again,
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied ;
The life and death of martyrs, who sustained,
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs
Triumphantly displayed in records left
Of persecution, and the covenant — times

170

Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour !

And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved

A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,

That left half-told the preternatural tale,

Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,

175

Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts

Strange and uncouth ; dire faces, figures dire,

Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,

With long and ghostly shanks, — forms which once seen
Could never be forgotten !

In his heart,

185

Where fear sat thus, a cherished visitant,
 Was wanting yet the pure delight of love
 By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,
 Or by the silent looks of happy things,
 Or flowing from the universal face 190
 Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power
 Of Nature and already was prepared,
 By his intense conceptions, to receive
 Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,
 Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught 195
 To feel but intensely, cannot but receive.

Such was the boy,—but for the growing youth
 What soul was his, when, from the naked top
 Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
 Rise up, and bathe the world in light!

He looked : 200

Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
 And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
 Beneath him :—Far and wide the clouds were touched,
 And in their silent faces could he read
 Unutterable love. Sound needed none, 205
 Nor any voice of joy ; his spirit drank
 The spectacle : sensation, soul, and form,
 All melted into him ; they swallowed up
 His animal being ; in them did he live,
 And by them did he live ; they were his life. 210
 In such access of mind, in such high hour
 Of visitation from the living God,
 Thought was not ; in enjoyment it expired.
 No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request ;
 Rapt into still communion that transcends 215
 The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
 His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
 That made him ; it was blessedness and love !

A herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes *possessed*.

220

O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared
The written promise! Early had he learned
To reverence the volume that displays
The mystery, the life which cannot die;
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith.
All things, responsive to the writing, there
Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:

225

There littleness was not; the least of things
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he *saw*.
What wonder if his being thus became
Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,
Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,
And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired
Wisdom, which works through patience; thence he
learned

230

In oft-recurring hours of sober thought
To look on Nature with a humble heart,
Self-questioned where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

240

So passed the time; yet to the nearest town
He duly went with what small overplus
His earnings might supply, and brought away
The book that most had tempted his desires
While at the stall he read. Among the hills
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,
The annual savings of a toilsome life,

245

250

His schoolmaster supplied ; books that explain
 The purer elements of truth involved
 In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,
 (Especially perceived where nature droops
 And feeling is suppressed,) preserve the mind
 Busy in solitude and poverty.

255

These occupations oftentimes deceived
 The listless hours, while in the hollow vale,
 Hollow and green, he lay on the green turf
 In pensive idleness. What could he do,
 Thus daily thirsting, in that lonesome life,
 With blind endeavors ? Yet, still uppermost,
 Nature was at his heart as if he felt,
 Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power
 In all things that from her sweet influence
 Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,
 Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,
 He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.

265

While yet he lingered in the rudiments
 Of science, and among her simplest laws,
 His triangles they were the stars of heaven,
 The silent stars ! Oft did he take delight
 To measure the altitude of some tall crag
 That is the eagle's birthplace, or some peak
 Familiar with forgotten years, that shows,
 Inscribed upon its visionary sides,
 The history of many a winter storm,
 Or obscure records of the path of fire.

270

275

And thus before his eighteenth year was told,
 Accumulated feelings pressed his heart
 With still increasing weight ; he was o'erpowered
 By Nature ; by the turbulence subdued
 Of his own mind ; by mystery and hope,
 And the first virgin passion of a soul

280

285

Communing with the glorious universe.
 Full often wished he that the winds might rage
 When they were silent: far more fondly now
 Than in his earlier season did he love
 Tempestuous nights, — the conflict and the sounds 290
 That live in darkness. From his intellect
 And from the stillness of abstracted thought
 He asked repose; and, failing oft to win
 The peace required, he scanned the laws of light
 Amid the roar of torrents, where they send 295
 From hollow clefts up to the clearer air
 A cloud of mist, that, smitten by the sun,
 Varies its rainbow hues. But vainly thus,
 And vainly by all other means, he strove
 To mitigate the fever of his heart. 300

In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,
 Thus was he reared; much wanting to assist
 The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,
 And every moral feeling of his soul
 Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content 305
 The keen, the wholesome air of poverty,
 And drinking from the well of homely life.
 — But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,
 He now was summoned to select the course
 Of humble industry that promised best 310
 To yield him no unworthy maintenance.
 Urged by his mother, he essayed to teach
 A village-school, — but wandering thoughts were then
 A misery to him; and the youth resigned
 A task he was unable to perform. 315

That stern yet kindly spirit, who constrains
 The Savoyard to quit his naked rocks,
 The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales,

- (Spirit attached to regions mountainous
 Like their own steadfast clouds,) did now impel 320
 His restless mind to look abroad with hope.
 — An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,
 Through hot and dusty ways, or pelting storm,
 A vagrant merchant under a heavy load,
 Bent as he moves, and needing frequent rest; 325
 Yet do such travelers find their own delight;
 And their hard service, deemed debasing now,
 Gained merited respect in simpler times;
 When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt
 In rustic sequestration — all dependent 330
 Upon the peddler's toil — supplied their wants,
 Or pleased their fancies, with the wares he brought.
 Not ignorant was the youth that still no few
 Of his adventurous countrymen were led
 By perseverance in this track of life 335
 To competence and ease : — to him it offered
 Attractions manifold ; — and this he chose.
 — His parents on the enterprise bestowed
 Their farewell benediction, but with hearts
 Foreboding evil. From his native hills 340
 He wandered far ; much did he see of men,
 Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,
 Their passions and their feelings ; chiefly those
 Essential and eternal in the heart,
 That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life, 345
 Exist more simple in their elements,
 And speak a plainer language. In the woods,
 A lone enthusiast, and among the fields,
 Itinerant in this labor, he had passed
 The better portion of his time ; and there 350
 Spontaneously had his affections thriven
 Amid the bounties of the year, the peace
 And liberty of nature ; there he kept

In solitude and solitary thought
 His mind in a just equipoise of love.
 Serene it was, unclouded by the cares
 Of ordinary life; unvexed, unwarped
 By partial bondage. In his steady course,
 No piteous revolutions had he felt,
 No wild varieties of joy and grief.

355

Unooccupied by sorrow of its own,
 His heart lay open; and, by nature tuned
 And constant disposition of his thoughts
 To sympathy with man, he was alive
 To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,
 And all that was endured; for, in himself
 Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,
 He had no painful pressure from without
 That made him turn aside from wretchedness
 With coward fears. He could afford to suffer
 With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came
 That in our best experience he was rich,
 And in the wisdom of our daily life.

365

For hence, minutely, in his various rounds,
 He had observed the progress and decay
 Of many minds, of minds and bodies too;
 The history of many families;
 How they had prospered; how they were o'erthrown
 By passion or mischance, or such misrule
 Among the unthinking masters of the earth
 As makes the nations groan.

370

375

380

This active course

He followed till provision for his wants
 Had been obtained;—the Wanderer then resolved
 To pass the remnant of his days, untasked
 With needless services, from hardship free.
 His calling laid aside, he lived at ease:
 But still he loved to pace the public roads

385

And the wild paths ; and, by the summer's warmth
Invited, often would he leave his home
And journey far, revisiting the scenes 390
That to his memory were most endeared.
— Vigorous in health, of hopeful spirits, undamped
By worldly-mindedness or anxious care ;
Observant, studious, thoughtful, and refreshed
By knowledge gathered up from day to day ; 395
Thus had he lived a long and innocent life.

The Scottish church, both on himself and those
With whom from childhood he grew up, had held
The strong hand of her purity ; and still
Had watched him with an unrelenting eye. 400

This he remembered in his riper age
With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.
But by the native vigor of his mind,
By his habitual wanderings out of doors,
By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,
Whate'er, in docile childhood or in youth,
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought
Was melted all away ; so true was this,
That sometimes his religion seemed to me
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods ; 410
Who to the model of his own pure heart
Shaped his belief, as grace divine inspired,
And human reason dictated with awe.

— And surely never did there live on earth
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports
And teasing ways of children vexed not him ;
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue
Of garrulous age ; nor did the sick man's tale,
To his fraternal sympathy addressed,
Obtain reluctant hearing. 415

Plain his garb; 420

Such as might suit a rustic sire, prepared
 For Sabbath duties ; yet he was a man
 Whom no one could have passed without remark.
 Active and nervous was his gait ; his limbs
 And his whole figure breathed intelligence. 425
 Time had compressed the freshness of his cheek
 Into a narrower circle of deep red,
 But had not tamed his eye ; that, under brows
 Shaggy and gray, had meanings which it brought
 From years of youth ; which, like a being made
 Of many beings, he had wondrous skill 430
 To blend with knowledge of the years to come,
 Human, or such as lie beyond the grave.

So was he framed ; and such his course of life
 Who now, with no appendage but a staff, 435
 The prized memorial of relinquished toils,
 Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs,
 Screened from the sun. Supine the wanderer lay,
 His eyes as if in drowsiness half shut,
 The shadows of the breezy elms above 440
 Dappling his face. He had not heard the sound
 Of my approaching steps, and in the shade
 Unnoticed did I stand some minutes' space.
 At length I hailed him, seeing that his hat
 Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim 445
 Had newly-scooped a running stream. He rose,
 And ere our lively greeting into peace
 Had settled, “ ‘T is,” said I, “ a burning day :
 My lips are parched with thirst, but you, it seems
 Have somewhere found relief.” He, at the word, 450
 Pointing towards a sweet-brier, bade me climb
 The fence where that aspiring shrub looked out
 Upon the public way. It was a plot

Of garden ground run wild, its matted weeds
 Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they passed, 455
 The gooseberry trees that shot in long, lank slips,
 Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems,
 In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap
 The broken wall. I looked around, and there,
 Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs 460
 Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well
 Shrouded with willow-flowers and plumpy fern.
 My thirst I slaked, and, from the cheerless spot
 Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned
 Where sat the old man on the cottage-bench ; 465
 And, while, beside him, with uncovered head,
 I yet was standing, freely to respire,
 And cool my temples in the fanning air,
 Thus did he speak : "I see around me here
 Things which you cannot see : we die, my friend, 470
 Nor we alone, but that which each man loved
 And prized in his peculiar nook of earth
 Dies with him, or is changed ; and very soon
 Even of the good is no memorial left.
 —The poets, in their elegies and songs 475
 Lamenting the departed, call the groves,
 They call upon the hills and streams, to mourn,
 And senseless rocks ; nor idly ; for they speak,
 In these their invocations, with a voice
 Obedient to the strong creative power 480
 Of human passion. Sympathies there are
 More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,
 That steal upon the meditative mind,
 And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,
 And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel 485
 One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
 Of brotherhood is broken : time has been
 When, every day, the touch of human hand

Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up
 In mortal stillness ; and they ministered 490
 To human comfort. Stooping down to drink,
 Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied
 The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,
 Green with the moss of years, and subject only
 To the soft handling of the elements : 495
 There let it lie ; — how foolish are such thoughts !
 Forgive them ; — never, never did my steps
 Approach this door but she who dwelt within
 A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her
 As my own child. Oh Sir ! the good die first, 500
 And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
 Burn to the socket. Many a passenger
 Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,
 When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
 From that forsaken spring ; and no one came 505
 But he was welcome ; no one went away
 But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,
 The light extinguished of her lonely hut,
 The hut itself abandoned to decay,
 And she forgotten in the quiet grave. 510

“ I speak,” continued he, “ of one whose stock
 Of virtues bloomed beneath this lowly roof.
 She was a woman of a steady mind,
 Tender and deep in her excess of love ;
 Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy 515
 Of her own thoughts : by some especial care
 Her temper had been framed, as if to make
 A being, who by adding love to peace
 Might live on earth a life of happiness.
 Her wedded partner lacked not on his side 520
 The humble worth that satisfied her heart :
 Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal

Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell
 That he was often seated at his loom,
 In summer, ere the mower was abroad 525
 Among the dewy grass,— in early spring,
 Ere the last star had vanished.— They who passed
 At evening, from behind the garden fence
 Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,
 After his daily work, until the light 530
 Had failed, and every leaf and flower were lost
 In the dark hedges. So their days were spent
 In peace and comfort; and a pretty boy
 Was their best hope, next to the God in heaven.

“Not twenty years ago, but you I think 535
 Can scarcely bear it now in mind, there came
 Two blighting seasons, when the fields were left
 With half a harvest. It pleased heaven to add
 A worse affliction in the plague of war:
 This happy land was stricken to the heart! 540
 A wanderer then among the cottages,
 I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw
 The hardships of that season: many rich
 Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor;
 And of the poor did many cease to be, 545
 And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged
 Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled
 To numerous self-denials, Margaret
 Went struggling on through those calamitous years
 With cheerful hope, until the second autumn, 550
 When her life’s helpmate on a sick-bed lay,
 Smitten with perilous fever. In disease
 He lingered long; and, when his strength returned,
 He found the little he had stored, to meet
 The hour of accident or crippling age, 555
 Was all consumed. A second infant now

Was added to the troubles of a time
Laden, for them and all of their degree,
With care and sorrow ; shoals of artisans,
From ill-requited labor turned adrift
Sought daily bread from public charity,
They, and their wives and children,— happier far
Could they have lived as do the little birds
That peck along the hedge-rows, or the kite
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks !

560
565

“ A sad reverse it was for him who long
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,
This lonely cottage. At the door he stood,
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes
That had no mirth in them ; or with his knife
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks—
Then, not less idly, sought, through every nook
In house or garden, any casual work
Of use or ornament ; and with a strange,
Amusing, yet uneasy, novelty,

570
575

He mingled, where he might, the various tasks
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.
But this endured not ; his good humor soon
Became a weight in which no pleasure was ;
And poverty brought on a petted mood
And a sore temper : day by day he drooped,
And he would leave his work — and to the town
Would turn without an errand his slack steps ;
Or wander here and there among the fields.

580
585

One while he would speak lightly of his babes,
And with a cruel tongue : at other times
He tossed them with a false, unnatural joy :
And ‘t was a rueful thing to see the looks
Of the poor, innocent children. ‘ Every smile,’
Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,

590

‘Made my heart bleed.’”

At this the wanderer paused ;

And, looking up to those enormous elms,
He said, “ ’T is now the hour of deepest noon.
At this still season of repose and peace,
This hour when all things which are not at rest 595
Are cheerful ; while this multitude of flies
With tuneful hum is filling all the air ;
Why should a tear be on an old man’s cheek ?
Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,
And in the weakness of humanity, 600
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away ;
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears ;
And, feeding on disquiet, thus disturb
The calm of nature with our restless thoughts ?”

He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone : 605
But, when he ended, there was in his face
Such easy cheerfulness, a look so mild,
That for a little time it stole away
All recollection ; and that simple tale
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound. 610
A while on trivial things we held discourse,
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite,
I thought of that poor woman as of one
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed
Her homely tale with such familiar power, 615
With such an active countenance, an eye
So busy, that the things of which he spake
Seemed present ; and, attention now relaxed,
A heartfelt chillness crept along my veins.
I rose ; and, having left the breezy shade, 620
Stood drinking comfort from the warmer sun,
That had not cheered me long, ere, looking round

Upon that tranquil ruin, I returned,
And begged of the old man that, for my sake,
He would resume his story.

He replied:

625

"It were a wantonness, and would demand
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery
Even of the dead; contented thence to draw
A momentary pleasure, never marked
By reason, barren of all future good.

630

But we have known that there is often found
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,
A power to virtue friendly; were 't not so,
I am a dreamer among men, indeed
An idle dreamer! 'T is a common tale,
An ordinary sorrow of man's life,
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed
In bodily form.— But without further bidding
I will proceed.

635

640

“ While thus it fared with them,
To whom this cottage, till those hapless years,
Had been a blessed home, it was my chance
To travel in a country far remote ;
And when these lofty elms once more appeared,
What pleasant expectations lured me on 645
O'er the flat common ! — With quick step I reached
The threshold, lifted with light hand the latch ;
But, when I entered, Margaret looked at me
A little while ; then turned her head away
Speechless,—and, sitting down upon a chair, 650
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,
Nor how to speak to her. Poor wretch ! at last
She rose from off her seat, and then,—O Sir !
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name :—
With fervent love, and with a face of grief 655

Unutterably helpless, and a look
 That seemed to cling upon me, she inquired
 If I had seen her husband. As she spake
 A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,
 Nor had I power to answer ere she told 660
 That he had disappeared,—not two months gone.
 He left his house: two wretched days had past,
 And on the third, as wistfully she raised
 Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,
 Like one in trouble, for returning light, 665
 Within her chamber-casement she espied
 A folded paper, lying as if placed
 To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly
 She opened,—found no writing, but beheld
 Pieces of money carefully enclosed, 670
 Silver and gold. ‘I shuddered at the sight,’
 Said Margaret, ‘for I knew it was his hand
 That must have placed it there; and ere that day
 Was ended, that long anxious day, I learned,
 From one who by my husband had been sent 675
 With the sad news, that he had joined a troop
 Of soldiers, going to a distant land.
 — He left me thus,—he could not gather heart
 To take a farewell of me; for he feared
 That I should follow with my babes, and sink 680
 Beneath the misery of that wandering life.’

“This tale did Margaret tell with many tears:
 And, when she ended, I had little power
 To give her comfort, and was glad to take
 Such words of hope from her own mouth as served 685
 To cheer us both. But long we had not talked
 Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,
 And with a brighter eye she looked around,
 As if she had been shedding tears of joy.

We parted. — 'T was the time of early spring ; 690
I left her busy with her garden tools ;
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,
With tender cheerfulness, and with a voice 695
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

“ I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale,
With my accustomed load ; in heat and cold,
Through many a wood and many an open ground,
In sunshine and in shade, in wet and fair, 700
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall ;
My best companions now the driving winds,
And now the ‘trotting brooks’ and whispering trees,
And now the music of my own sad steps,
With many a short-lived thought that passed between, 705
And disappeared.

“ I journeyed back this way,
When, in the warmth of midsummer, the wheat
Was yellow ; and the soft and bladed grass,
Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread
Its tender verdure. At the door arrived, 710
I found that she was absent. In the shade,
Where now we sit, I waited her return.
Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore
Its customary look,—only, it seemed,
The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch, 715
Hung down in heavier tufts ; and that bright weed,
The yellow stone-crop, suffered to take root
Along the window’s edge, profusely grew,
Blinding the lower panes. I turned aside,
And strolled into her garden. It appeared 720
To lag behind the season, and had lost
Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift

Had broken their trim border-lines, and straggled
 O'er paths they used to deck : carnations, once
 Prized for surpassing beauty, and no less
 For the peculiar pains they had required,
 Declined their languid heads, wanting support.
 The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,
 Had twined about her two small rows of peas,
 And dragged them to the earth.

“ Ere this an hour 730

Was wasted.—Back I turned my restless steps ;
 A stranger passed ; and, guessing whom I sought,
 He said that she was used to ramble far.—
 The sun was sinking in the west ; and now
 I sat with sad impatience. From within
 Her solitary infant cried aloud :

Then, like a blast that dies away self-stilled,
 The voice was silent. From the bench I rose ;
 But neither could divert nor soothe my thoughts.

The spot, though fair, was very desolate, — 740

The longer I remained, more desolate :
 And, looking round me, now I first observed
 The corner stones, on either side the porch,
 With dull red stains discolored, and stuck o'er
 With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,
 That fed upon the common, thither came
 Familiarly, and found a couching-place
 Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell
 From these tall elms ; the cottage-clock struck eight :—

I turned, and saw her distant a few steps. 750

Her face was pale and thin,—her figure, too,
 Was changed. As she unlocked the door, she said,
 ‘ It grieves me you have waited here so long,
 But, in good truth, I ’ve wandered much of late ;
 And sometimes — to my shame I speak — have need 755
 Of my best prayers to bring me back again.’

While on the board she spread our evening meal,
She told me — interrupting not the work
Which gave employment to her listless hands —
That she had parted with her elder child ;
To a kind master on a distant farm
Now happily apprenticed. — ‘I perceive
You look at me, and you have cause ; to-day
I have been traveling far ; and many days
About the fields I wander, knowing this
Only, that what I seek I cannot find ;
And so I waste my time : for I am changed ;
And to myself,’ said she, ‘have done much wrong
And to this helpless infant. I have slept
Weeping, and weeping have I waked ; my tears
Have flowed as if my body were not such
As others are ; and I could never die.
But I am now in mind and in my heart
More easy ; and I hope,’ said she, ‘that God
Will give me patience to endure the things
Which I behold at home.’

78

"It would have grieved
Your very soul to see her. Sir, I feel
The story linger in my heart; I fear
'T is long and tedious; but my spirit clings
To that poor woman:—so familiarly
Do I perceive her manner, and her look,
And presence; and so deeply do I feel
Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks
A momentary trance comes over me;
And to myself I seem to muse on one
By sorrow laid asleep; or borne away,
A human being destined to awake
To human life, or something very near
To human life, when he shall come again
For whom she suffered. Yes, it would have grieved 790

Your very soul to see her : evermore
 Her eyelids drooped, her eyes downward were cast ;
 And, when she at her table gave me food,
 She did not look at me. Her voice was low,
 Her body was subdued. In every act 795
 Pertaining to her house-affairs, appeared
 The careless stillness of a thinking mind
 Self-occupied ; to which all outward things
 Are like an idle matter. Still she sighed,
 But yet no motion of the breast was seen, 800
 No heaving of the heart. While by the fire
 We sat together, sighs came on my ear,
 I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

“ Ere my departure, to her care I gave,
 For her son’s use, some tokens of regard, 805
 Which with a look of welcome she received ;
 And I exhorted her to place her trust
 In God’s good love, and seek his help by prayer.
 I took my staff, and, when I kissed her babe,
 The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then 810
 With the best hope and comfort I could give :
 She thanked me for my wish ; — but for my hope
 It seemed she did not thank me.

“ I returned,
 And took my rounds along this road again
 When on its sunny bank the primrose flower 815
 Peeped forth, to give an earnest of the spring.
 I found her sad and drooping : she had learned
 No tidings of her husband ; if he lived,
 She knew not that he lived ; if he were dead,
 She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same 820
 In person and appearance ; but her house
 Bespoke a sleepy hand of negligence ;
 The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth

- Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,
Which, in the cottage-window, heretofore 825
Had been piled up against the corner panes
In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe
Had from his mother caught the trick of grief, 830
And sighed among its playthings. I withdrew,
And, once again, entering the garden saw,
More plainly still, that poverty and grief
Were now come nearer to her: weeds defaced
The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass : 835
No ridges there appeared of clear black mold,
No winter greenness ; of her herbs and flowers,
It seemed the better part was gnawed away
Or trampled into earth ; a chain of straw,
Which had been twined about the slender stem 840
Of a young apple tree, lay at its root;
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.
— Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,
And, noting that my eye was on the tree, 845
She said, ‘I fear it will be dead and gone
Ere Robert come again.’ When to the house
We had returned together, she inquired
If I had any hope : — but for her babe
And for her little orphan boy, she said, 850
She had no wish to live, that she must die
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom
Still in its place; his Sunday garments hung
Upon the self-same nail; his very staff
Stood undisturbed behind the door.
- “ And when,
- In bleak December, I retraced this way, 855
She told me that her little babe was dead,
And she was left alone. She now, released

From her maternal cares, had taken up
 The employment common through these wilds, and
 gained,
 By spinning hemp, a pittance for herself; 860
 And for this end had hired a neighbor's boy
 To give her needful help. That very time
 Most willingly she put her work aside,
 And walked with me along the miry road,
 Heedless how far; and, in such piteous sort 865
 That any heart had ached to hear her, begged
 That, whereso'er I went, I still would ask
 For him whom she had lost. We parted then—
 Our final parting; for from that time forth
 Did many seasons pass ere I returned 870
 Into this tract again.

“ Nine tedious years;

From their first separation, nine long years,
 She lingered in unquiet widowhood;
 A wife and widow. Needs must it have been
 A sore heart-wasting! I have heard, my friend, 875
 That in yon arbor oftentimes she sat
 Alone, through half the vacant Sabbath day;
 And, if a dog passed by, she still would quit
 The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench
 For hours she sat; and evermore her eye 880
 Was busy in the distance, shaping things
 That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,
 Now faint,—the grass has crept o'er its gray line;
 There, to and fro, she paced through many a day
 Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp 885
 That girt her waist, spinning the long-drawn thread
 With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed
 A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,
 Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,
 The little child who sat to turn the wheel 890

Ceased from his task ; and she with faltering voice
Made many a fond inquiry ; and when they,
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,
That bars the traveler's road, she often stood, 895
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully ;
Most happy, if, from aught discovered there
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor hut 900
Sank to decay ; for he was gone, whose hand,
At the first nipping of October frost,
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw
Checkered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived
Through the long winter, reckless and alone ; 905
Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,
Was sapped ; and while she slept, the nightly damps
Did chill her breast ; and in the stormy day
Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind,
Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still 910
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds
Have parted hence ; and still that length of road,
And this rude bench, one torturing hope endeared,
Fast rooted at her heart : and here, my friend,
In sickness she remained ; and here she died ; 915
Last human tenant of these ruined walls ! ”

The old man ceased : he saw that I was moved ;
From that low bench rising instinctively,
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power
To thank him for the tale which he had told. 920
I stood, and leaning, o'er the garden wall,
Reviewed that woman's sufferings ; and it seemed
To comfort me while with a brother's love
I blessed her in the impotence of grief.

- Then towards the cottage I returned ; and traced 925
 Fondly, though with an interest more mild,
 That secret spirit of humanity
 Which, 'mid the calm, oblivious tendencies
 Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,
 And silent overgrowings, still survived. 930
- The old man, noting this, resumed, and said :
 " My friend ! enough to sorrow you have given,
 The purposes of wisdom ask no more :
 Nor more would she have craved as due to one
 Who, in her worst distress, had oftentimes felt 935
 The unbounded might of prayer ; and learned, with soul
 Fixed on the cross, that consolation springs,
 From sources deeper far than deepest pain,
 For the meek sufferer. Why then should we read
 The forms of things with an unworthy eye ? 940
 She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.
 I well remember that those very plumes,
 Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,
 By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,
 As once I passed, into my heart conveyed 945
 So still an image of tranquillity,
 So calm and still, and looked so beautiful
 Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,
 That what we feel of sorrow and despair
 From ruin and from change, and all the grief 950
 That passing shows of being leave behind,
 Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain,
 Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit
 Whose meditative sympathies repose
 Upon the breast of faith. I turned away, 955
 And walked along my road in happiness."

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot
 A slant and mellow radiance, which began

To fall upon us, while, beneath the trees,
We sat on that low bench : and now we felt,
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on. 960

A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.

The old man rose, and, with a sprightly mien
Of hopeful preparation, grasped his staff ;
Together casting then a farewell look
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade ;
And, ere the stars were visible, had reached
A village-inn, — our evening resting-place. 965
970

ALICE FELL;

OR, POVERTY.

Written to gratify Mr. Grahame, of Glasgow, brother of the author of *The Sabbath*. He was a zealous coadjutor of Mr. Clarkson, and a man of ardent humanity. The incident had happened to himself, and he urged me to put it into verse for humanity's sake. The humbleness, meanness, if you like, of the subject, together with the homely mode of treating it, brought upon me a world of ridicule by the small critics, so that in policy I excluded it from many editions of my poems, till it was restored at the request of some of my friends, in particular my son-in-law, Edward Quillinan.

THE post-boy drove with fierce career,
For threatening clouds the moon had drowned,
When, as we hurried on, my ear
Was smitten with a startling sound.

As if the wind blew many ways,
I heard the sound,—and more and more;
It seemed to follow with the chaise,
And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy called out.
He stopped his horses at the word,
But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

The boy then smacked his whip, and fast
The horses scampered through the rain;
But, hearing soon upon the blast
The cry, I bade him halt again.

Forthwith alighting on the ground,
“ Whence comes,” said I, “ this piteous moan ? ”
And there a little girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise, alone.

“ My cloak ! ” no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break ;
And down from off her seat she leapt.

“ What ails you, child ? ” She sobbed, “ Look here ! ”
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather-beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scarecrow dangled.

There, twisted between nave and spoke,
It hung, nor could at once be freed ;
But our joint pains unloosed the cloak,
A miserable rag indeed !

“ And whither are you going, child,
To-night, along these lonesome ways ? ”
“ To Durham,” answered she, half wild.
“ Then come with me into the chaise.”

Insensible to all relief
Sat the poor girl, and forth did send

Sob after sob, as if her grief
Could never, never have an end.

“ My child, in Durham do you dwell ? ”
She checked herself in her distress,
And said, “ My name is Alice Fell ;
I’m fatherless and motherless.

“ And I to Durham, Sir, belong.”
Again, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong ;
And all was for her tattered cloak !

The chaise drove on ; our journey’s end
Was nigh ; and, sitting by my side,
As if she had lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern door we post ;
Of Alice and her grief I told ;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

“ And let it be of duffel gray,
As warm a cloak as man can sell ! ”
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell !

LUCY GRAY ;

OR, SOLITUDE.

OFT I had heard of Lucy Gray :
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see, at break of day,
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew ;
She dwelt on a wide moor,—
The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door !

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green ;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

“ To-night will be a stormy night,—
You to the town must go ;
And take a lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow.”

“ That, Father ! will I gladly do :
’T is scarcely afternoon,—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon ! ”

At this the father raised his hook,
And snapped a fagot-band ;
He plied his work ; — and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe :
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time :
She wandered up and down ;
And many a hill did Lucy climb :
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide ;

But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on the hill they stood
That overlooked the moor ;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

They wept,—and, turning homeward, cried,
“In heaven we all shall meet;”—
When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy’s feet.

Then downwards from the steep hill’s edge
They tracked the footmarks small ;
And through the broken hawthorn-hedge,
And by the long stone wall ;

And then an open field they crossed :
The marks were still the same ;
They tracked them on, nor ever lost ;
And to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank ;
And further there were none !

— Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child ;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O’er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind ;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

WE ARE SEVEN.

The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goderich Castle, in the year 1793. I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate, and while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first, having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited it to Mr. Coleridge and my sister, and said, "A prefatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task was finished." I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza thus:—

"A little child, dear brother Jem."

I objected to the rhyme, "dear brother Jem," as being ludicrous; but we all enjoyed the joke of hitching in our friend James Tobin's name.

— A SIMPLE child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death ?

I met a little cottage girl :
She was eight years old, she said ;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad :
Her eyes were fair, and very fair ;—
Her beauty made me glad.

"Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be ?"
"How many ? Seven in all," she said,
And wondering looked at me.

"And where are they ? I pray you tell."
She answered, "Seven are we ;

And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

“Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother ;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“ You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven ! I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little maid reply,
“ Seven boys and girls are we ;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree.”

“ You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive ;
If two are in the churchyard laid
Then ye are only five.”

“ Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little maid replied,
“ Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side.

“ My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem ;
And there upon the ground I sit
And sing a song to them.

“ And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

“The first that died was sister Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

“So in the churchyard she was laid;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

“And when the ground was white with snow
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.”

“How many are you, then,” said I,
“If they two are in heaven ?”
Quick was the little maid’s reply,
“O Master! we are seven.”

“But they are dead; those two are dead!
Their spirits are in heaven!”
’T was throwing words away; for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, “Nay, we are seven!”

THE DAFFODILS.

I WANDERED lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils,
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
 And twinkle on the milky way,
 They stretched in never-ending line
 Along the margin of a bay :
 Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
 Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced ; but they
 Outdid the sparkling waves in glee :
 A poet could not but be gay,
 In such a jocund company :
 I gazed, and gazed, but little thought
 What wealth the show to me had brought :

For oft, when on my couch I lie,
 In vacant or in pensive mood,
 They flash upon that inward eye
 Which is the bliss of solitude ;
 And then my heart with pleasure fills,
 And dances with the daffodils.

TO THE DAISY.

“ Her¹ divine skill taught me this,
 That from everything I saw
 I could some instruction draw,
 And raise pleasure to the height
 Through the meanest object’s sight.
 By the murmur of a spring,
 Or the least bough’s rustelling ;
 By a daisy whose leaves spread
 Shut when Titan goes to bed ;
 Or a shady bush or tree ;
 She could more infuse in me,
 Than all nature’s beauties can
 In some other wiser man.”

G. WITHER.

¹ His Muse.

In youth from rock to rock I went,
From hill to hill, in discontent
Of pleasure high and turbulent,
 Most pleased when most uneasy;
But now my own delights I make,—
My thirst at every rill can slake,
And gladly nature's love partake,
 Of thee, sweet Daisy!

Thee winter in the garland wears
That thinly decks his few gray hairs;
Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
 That she may sun thee;
Whole summer-fields are thine by right;
And autumn, melancholy wight!
Doth in thy crimson head delight
 When rains are on thee.

In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveler in the lane;
Pleased at his greeting thee again;
 Yet nothing daunted,
Nor grieved, if thou be set at naught:
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
 When such are wanted.

Be violets in their sacred mews
The flowers the wanton zephyrs choose;
Proud be the rose, with rains and dews
 Her head impearling;
Thou liv'st with less ambitious aim,
Yet hast not gone without thy fame;
Thou art indeed by many a claim
 The poet's darling.

If to a rock from rains he fly,
Or, some bright day of April sky,
Imprisoned by hot sunshine lie
 Near the green holly,
And wearily at length should fare;
He needs but look about, and there
Thou art! — a friend at hand, to scare
 His melancholy.

A hundred times, by rock or bower,
Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
Have I derived from thy sweet power
 Some apprehension;
Some steady love; some brief delight;
Some memory that had taken flight;
Some chime of fancy wrong or right;
 Or stray invention.

If stately passions in me burn,
And one chance look to thee should turn,
I drink out of an humbler urn
 A lowlier pleasure;
The homely sympathy that heeds
The common life, our nature breeds;
A wisdom fitted to the needs
 Of hearts at leisure.

Fresh-smitten by the morning ray,
When thou art up, alert and gay,
Then, cheerful flower! my spirits play
 With kindred gladness:
And when, at dusk, by dews opprest
Thou sink'st, the image of thy rest
Hath often eased my pensive breast
 Of careful sadness.

And all day long I number yet,
 All seasons through, another debt,
 Which I, wherever thou art met,
 To thee am owing ;
 An instinct call it, a blind sense ;
 A happy, genial influence,
 Coming one knows not how, nor whence,
 Nor whither going.

Child of the year ! that round dost run
 Thy pleasant course, — when day's begun
 As ready to salute the sun
 As lark or leveret,
 Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain ;
 Nor be less dear to future men
 Than in old time ; — thou not in vain
 Art nature's favorite.¹

TO THE SAME FLOWER.

WITH little here to do or see
 Of things that in the great world be,
 Daisy ! again I talk to thee,
 For thou art worthy,
 Thou unassuming commonplace
 Of nature, with that homely face,
 And yet with something of a grace,
 Which love makes for thee !

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
 I sit and play with similes,
 Loose types of things through all degrees,
 Thoughts of thy raising :

¹ See, in Chaucer and the elder poets, the honors formerly paid to this flower. — W. W.

And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humor of the game,
 While I am gazing.

A nun demure, of lowly port :
Or sprightly maiden, of love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
 Of all temptations ;
A queen in crown of rubies drest ;
A starveling in a scanty vest ;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
 Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next, — and instantly
 The freak is over,
The shape will vanish, — and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some faery bold
 In fight to cover !

I see thee glittering from afar, —
And then thou art a pretty star ;
Not quite so fair as many are
 In heaven above thee !
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest ; —
May peace come never to his nest,
 Who shall reprove thee !

Bright *Flower!* for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
 Sweet, silent creature !

That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature !

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE.

WRITTEN AT TOWN-END, GRASMERE.

It is remarkable that this flower, coming out so early in the spring as it does, and so bright and beautiful, and in such profusion, should not have been noticed earlier in English verse. What adds much to the interest that attends it is its habit of shutting itself up and opening out according to the degree of light and temperature of the air.

PANSIES, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises ;
Long as there 's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory ;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story :
There 's a flower that shall be mine.
'Tis the little Celandine.

Eyes of some men travel far
For the finding of a star ;
Up and down the heavens they go,
Men that keep a mighty rout !
I 'm as great as they, I trow,
Since the day I found thee out,
Little flower ! — I 'll make a stir,
Like a sage astronomer.

Modest, yet withal an elf
Bold, and lavish of thyself ;
Since we needs must first have met,
I have seen thee, high and low,

Thirty years or more, and yet
'T was a face I did not know :
Thou hast now, go where I may,
Fifty greetings in a day.

Ere a leaf is on a bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless prodigal ;
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth, or none.

Poets, vain men in their mood !
Travel with the multitude :
Never heed them ; I aver
That they all are wanton wooers ;
But the thrifty cottager,
Who stirs little out of doors,
Joys to spy thee near at home ;
Spring is coming, thou art come !

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming spirit !
Careless of thy neighborhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane ; — there 's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 't is good enough for thee.

Ill befall the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours !
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no ;

Others, too, of lofty mien ;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine,
Little, humble Celandine.

Prophet of delight and mirth,
Ill-requited upon earth ;
Herald of a mighty band,
Of a joyous train ensuing,
Serving at my heart's command,
Tasks that are no tasks renewing,
I will sing, as doth behoove,
Hymns in praise of what I love !

TO A SKYLARK.

FIRST POEM.

UP with me ! up with me into the clouds !
For thy song, lark, is strong ;
Up with me ! up with me into the clouds !
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind !

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary ;
Had I now the wings of a faery,
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine ;
Lift me, guide me high and high
To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

Joyous as morning,
 Thou art laughing and scorning ;
 Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
 And, though little troubled with sloth,
 Drunken lark ! thou wouldest be loth
 To be such a traveler as I.
 Happy, happy liver,
 With a soul as strong as a mountain river
 Pouring out praise to the Almighty Giver,
 Joy and jollity be with us both !

Alas ! my journey, rugged and uneven,
 Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind ;
 But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
 As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
 I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
 And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done.

SECOND POEM.

ETHEREAL minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
 Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?
 Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
 Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?
 Thy nest, which thou canst drop into at will,
 Those quivering wings composed, that music still.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
 A privacy of glorious light is thine ;
 Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
 Of harmony, with instinct more divine ;
 Type of the wise who soar, but never roam ;
 True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.

TO A NIGHTINGALE.

O NIGHTINGALE ! thou surely art
A creature of a “fiery heart” :—
These notes of thine, — they pierce and pierce :
Tumultuous harmony and fierce !
Thou sing’st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a valentine ;
A song in mockery and despite
Of shades, and dews, and silent night :
And steady bliss, and all the loves
Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.
I heard a stock-dove sing or say
His homely tale, this very day ;
His voice was buried among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze :
He did not cease ; but cooed — and cooed ;
And somewhat pensively he wooed :
He sang of love, with quiet blending,
Slow to begin, and never ending ;
Of serious faith, and inward glee ;
That was the song, — the song for me !

TO THE CUCKOO.

O BLITHE new-comer ! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo ! shall I call thee bird,
Or but a wandering voice ?

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the spring !
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery ;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to ; that cry
Which made me look a thousand ways,
In bush, and tree, and sky.

To seek thee did I often rove
Through woods and on the green ;
And thou wert still a hope, a love ;
Still longed for, never seen.

And I can listen to thee yet ;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed bird ! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place ;
That is fit home for thee !

SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT.

SHE was a phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight ;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament ;

Her eyes as stars of twilight fair ;
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair ;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn ;
A dancing shape, an image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too !
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty ;
A countenance in which did meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet ;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food ;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine ;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveler between life and death ;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill ;
A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command ;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

THREE YEARS SHE GREW.

THREE years she grew in sun and shower :
Then Nature said, " A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown ;

This child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make
A lady of my own.

“ Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower,
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

“ She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs;
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute, insensate things.

“ The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend;
Nor shall she fail to see,
Even in the motions of the storm,
Grace that shall mold the maiden’s form
By silent sympathy.

“ The stars of midnight shall be dear
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face.

“ And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;

Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake.—The work was done.—
How soon my Lucy's race was run !
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm and quiet scene ;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

EXPOSTULATION AND REPLY.

"WHY, William, on that old gray stone,
Thus for the length of half a day,
Why, William, sit you thus alone,
And dream your time away ?

"Where are your books ?—that light bequeathed
To beings else forlorn and blind !
Up ! up ! and drink the spirit breathed
From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your Mother Earth,
As if she for no purpose bore you ;
As if you were her first-born birth,
And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
When life was sweet, I knew not why,
To me my good friend Matthew spake,
And thus I made reply :—

"The eye,—it cannot choose but see ;
We cannot bid the year be still ;
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
Against or with our will.

“Nor less I deem that there are powers
Which of themselves our minds impress ;
That we can feed this mind of ours
In a wise passiveness.

“Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum
Of things forever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking ?

“Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
Conversing as I may,
I sit upon this old gray stone,
And dream my time away.”

STEPPING WESTWARD.

While my fellow-traveler and I were walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sunset, in our road to a hut where, in the course of our tour, we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well-dressed women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, “What, you are stepping westward ?”

“*What, you are stepping westward ?*” — “*Yea.*”
— “T would be a *wildish* destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of chance :
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on ?

The dewy ground was dark and cold ;
Behind, all gloomy to behold ;
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny :

I liked the greeting; 't was a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me
The very sound of courtesy:
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing sky,
The echo of the voice inwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of traveling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
Oh, listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings ? —
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago :
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day ?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again ?

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending ;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending ; —
I listened, motionless and still ;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

SONNET,

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

EARTH has not anything to show more fair :
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty :
This city now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning ; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep,
In his first splendor, valley, rock, or hill ;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep !
The river glideth at his own sweet will :
Dear God ! the very houses seem asleep ;
And all that mighty heart is lying still !

TO SLEEP.

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one ; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring ; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky ;
I have thought of all by turns, and yet to lie
Sleepless ! and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first uttered from my orchard trees ;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth ;
So do not let me wear to-night away :
Without thee what is all the morning's wealth ?
Come, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,
The holy time is quiet as a nun
Breathless with adoration ; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity ;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the sea.
Listen ! the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder -- everlastingly.
Dear child ! dear girl ! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,
Thy nature is not therefore less divine :
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year ;
And worship'st at the temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not.

SONNET.

THE world is too much with us ; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers :
Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon ;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers ;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune ;
It moves us not.—Great God ! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn ;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

SONNET.

Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes
To pace the ground, if path be there or none,
While a fair region round the traveler lies
Which he forbears again to look upon ;
Pleased rather with some soft ideal scene,
The work of fancy, or some happy tone
Of meditation, slipping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone.
If thought and love desert us, from that day
Let us break off all commerce with the muse :
With thought and love companions of our way
Whate'er the senses take or may refuse,
The mind's internal heaven shall shed her dews
Of inspiration on the humblest lay.

A POET'S EPITAPH.

ART thou a statist, in the van
Of public conflicts trained and bred ?
First learn to love one living man ;
Then may'st thou think upon the dead.

A lawyer art thou ? — draw not nigh !
Go, carry to some fitter place
The keenness of that practiced eye,
The hardness of that sallow face.

Art thou a man of purple cheer ?
A rosy man, right plump to see ?
Approach ! yet, doctor, not too near :
This grave no cushion is for thee.

Or art thou one of gallant pride,
A soldier and no man of chaff ?
Welcome ! — but lay thy sword aside,
And lean upon a peasant's staff.

Physician art thou ? — one all eyes,
Philosopher ! — a fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave ?

Wrapt closely in thy sensual fleece,
Oh, turn aside, — and take, I pray,
That he below may rest in peace,
Thy ever-dwindling soul away !

A moralist perchance appears ;
Led, Heaven knows how ! to this poor sod ;
And he has neither eyes nor ears ;
Himself his world, and his own God ;

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small ;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All-in-all !

Shut close the door; press down the latch ; •
Sleep in thy intellectual crust ;
Nor lose ten tickings of thy watch
Near this unprofitable dust.

But who is he, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet-brown ?
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.

He is retired as noontide dew,
Or fountain in a noonday grove ;
And you must love him, ere to you
He will seem worthy of your love.

The outward shows of sky and earth,
Of hill and valley, he has viewed ;
And impulses of deeper birth
Have come to him in solitude.

In common things that round us lie
Some random truths he can impart,
The harvest of a quiet eye,
That broods and sleeps on his own heart.

But he is weak ; both man and boy,
Hath been an idler in the land,
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand.

— Come hither in thy hour of strength ;
 Come, weak as is a breaking wave !
 Here stretch thy body at full length ;
 Or build thy house upon this grave.

EXTEMPORE EFFUSION UPON THE DEATH OF
 JAMES HOGG.

WHEN first, descending from the moorlands,
 I saw the stream of Yarrow glide
 Along a bare and open valley,
 The Ettrick shepherd was my guide.

When last along its banks I wandered,
 Through groves that had begun to shed
 Their golden leaves upon the pathways,
 My steps the border-minstrel led.

The mighty minstrel breathes no longer,
 'Mid moldering ruins low he lies ;
 And death upon the braes of Yarrow
 Has closed the shepherd-poet's eyes ;

Nor has the rolling year twice measured,
 From sign to sign, its steadfast course,
 Since every mortal power of Coleridge
 Was frozen at its marvelous source ;

The rapt one, of the godlike forehead,
 The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth ;
 And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,
 Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,
 Or waves that own no curbing hand,
 How fast has brother followed brother,
 From sunshine to the sunless land !

Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber
Were earlier raised, remain to hear
A timid voice, that asks in whispers,
“Who next will drop and disappear?”

Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,
Like London with its own black wreath,
On which, with thee, O Crabbe! forth-looking,
I gazed from Hampstead’s breezy heath.

As if but yesterday departed,
Thou too art gone before; but why,
O’er ripe fruit, seasonably gathered,
Should frail survivors heave a sigh?

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
For her who, ere her summer faded,
Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

No more of old romantic sorrows,
For slaughtered youth or lovelorn maid!
With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,
And Ettrick mourns with her their poet dead.

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE.

THERE was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the stock-dove broods;
The jay makes answer as the magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors ;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth ;
The grass is bright with raindrops ; — on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth ;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist ; that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a traveler then upon the moor ;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy ;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar ;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy :
The pleasant season did my heart employ :
My old remembrances went from me wholly ;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low ;
To me that morning did it happen so ;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;
Dim sadness, and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could
name.

I heard the skylark warbling in the sky ;
And I bethought me of the playful hare :
Even such a happy child of earth am I ;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare ;
Far from the world I walk, and all from care ;
But there may come another day to me, —
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life's business were a summer mood ;
As if all needful things would come unsought

To genial faith, still rich in genial good ;
But how can he expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all ?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvelous boy,
The sleepless soul that perished in his pride ;
Of him who walked in glory and in joy,
Following his plow, along the mountain-side :
By our own spirits we are deified :
We poets in our youth begin in gladness ;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven,
I saw a man before me unawares :
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore gray hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence,
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence :
So that it seems a thing endued with sense ; —
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself ; —

Such seemed this man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age :
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage ;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long gray staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon that muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew;
And him with further words I thus bespake:
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest,—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:

From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor ;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance ;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old man still stood talking by my side ;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard ; nor word from word could I divide ;
And the whole body of the man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream ;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned : the fear that kills
And hope that is unwilling to be fed ;
Cold, pain, and labor, and all fleshly ills ;
And mighty poets in their misery dead.
— Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
“ How is it that you live, and what is it you do ? ”

He with a smile did then his words repeat ;
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He traveled ; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
“ Once I could meet with them on every side ;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay ;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.”

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old man's shape, and speech, — all troubled me :
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
 Cheerfully uttered, with demeanor kind,
 But stately in the main ; and when he ended,
 I could have laughed myself to scorn, to find
 In that decrepit man so firm a mind.

“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure ;
 I ’ll think of the leech-gatherer on the lonely moor !”

ODE TO DUTY.

STERN daughter of the Voice of God !
 O Duty ! if that name thou love,
 Who art a light to guide, a rod
 To check the erring, and reprove ;
 Thou, who art victory and law
 When empty terrors overawe,
 From vain temptations dost set free,
 And calm’st the weary strife of frail humanity !

There are who ask not if thine eye
 Be on them ; who, in love and truth,
 Where no misgiving is, rely
 Upon the genial sense of youth :
 Glad hearts ! without reproach or blot ;
 Who do thy work, and know it not :
 Oh ! if through confidence misplaced
 They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power ! around them
 cast.

Serene will be our days and bright
 And happy will our nature be,
 When love is an unerring light,
 And joy its own security.
 And they a blissful course may hold

Even now, who, not unwiseley bold,
Live in the spirit of this creed;
Yet seek thy firm support, according to their need.

I, loving freedom, and untried,
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have repos'd my trust:
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task, in smoother walks to stray;
But thee I now would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought;
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires:
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant grace;
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face:
Flowers laugh before thee on their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads;
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong;
And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh
and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!

Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice:
The confidence of reason give;
And in the light of truth thy bondman let me live.

CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR.

Many elements of the character here portrayed were found in my brother John, who perished by shipwreck. His messmates used to call him *the Philosopher*, from which it may be inferred that the qualities and dispositions I allude to had not escaped their notice. He greatly valued moral and religious instruction for youth, as tending to make good sailors. The best, he used to say, came from Scotland; the next to them, from the North of England, especially from Westmoreland and Cumberland, where, thanks to the piety and local attachments of our ancestors, endowed, or, as they are called, free schools, abound.

Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he
That every man in arms should wish to be?
— It is the generous spirit, who, when brought
Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought
Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:
Whose high endeavors are an inward light
That makes the path before him always bright:
Who, with a natural instinct to discern
What knowledge can perform, is diligent to learn;
Abides by this resolve, and stops not there,
But makes his moral being his prime care;
Who, doomed to go in company with pain,
And fear, and bloodshed, miserable train!
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;
In face of these doth exercise a power
Which is our human nature's highest dower;
Controls them and subdues, transmutes, bereaves
Of their bad influence, and their good receives:

By objects, which might force the soul to abate
Her feeling, rendered more compassionate ;
Is placable, — because occasions rise
So often that demand such sacrifice ;
More skillful in self-knowledge, even more pure,
As tempted more ; more able to endure,
As more exposed to suffering and distress ;
Thence, also, more alive to tenderness :
— 'T is he whose law is reason ; who depends
Upon that law as on the best of friends ;
Whence, in a state where men are tempted still
To evil for a guard against worse ill,
And what in quality or act is best
Doth seldom on a right foundation rest ;
He labors good on good to fix, and owes
To virtue every triumph that he knows :
— Who, if he rise to station of command,
Rises by open means ; and there will stand
On honorable terms, or else retire,
And in himself possess his own desire :
Who comprehends his trust, and to the same
Keeps faithful with a singleness of aim ;
And therefore does not stoop, nor lie in wait
For wealth, or honors, or for worldly state ;
Whom they must follow, on whose head must fall,
Like showers of manna, if they come at all :
Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,
A constant influence, a peculiar grace ;
But who, if he be called upon to face
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,
Is happy as a lover ; and attired
With sudden brightness, like a man inspired ;
And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law

In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw ;
Or if an unexpected call succeed,
Come when it will, is equal to the need :
— He who, though thus endued as with a sense
And faculty for storm and turbulence,
Is yet a soul whose master-bias leans
To homefelt pleasures and to gentler scenes ;
Sweet images ! which, wheresoe'er he be,
Are at his heart ; and such fidelity
It is his darling passion to approve ;
More brave for this, that he hath much to love : —
'T is, finally, the man, who, lifted high,
Conspicuous object in a nation's eye,
Or left unthought of in obscurity, —
Who, with a toward or untoward lot.
Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not,
Plays, in the many games of life, that one
Where what he most doth value must be won :
Whom neither shape of danger can dismay,
Nor thought of tender happiness betray :
Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
Looks forward, persevering to the last,
From well to better, daily self-surpast :
Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth
Forever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must fall, to sleep without his fame,
And leave a dead, unprofitable name,
Finds comfort in himself and in his cause ;
And, while the mortal mist is gathering, draws
His breath in confidence of heaven's applause, —
This is the happy warrior ; this is he
That every man in arms should wish to be.

MY HEART LEAPS UP.

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky :
So was it when my life began ;
So is it now I am a man ;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die !
The child is father of the man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

THE FOUNTAIN.

A CONVERSATION.

WE talked with open heart, and tongue
Affectionate and true,
A pair of friends, though I was young,
And Matthew seventy-two.

We lay beneath a spreading oak,
Beside a mossy seat ;
And from the turf a fountain broke,
And gurgled at our feet.

“ Now, Matthew ! ” said I, “ let us match
This water’s pleasant tune
With some old border song, or catch
That suits a summer’s noon ;

“ Or of the church-clock and the chimes
Sing here beneath the shade,
That half-mad thing of witty rhymes
Which you last April made ! ”

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed
The spring beneath the tree;
And thus the dear old man replied,
The gray-haired man of glee:

“No check, no stay, this streamlet fears;
How merrily it goes!
‘T will murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

“And here, on this delightful day,
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this fountain’s brink.

“My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred,
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

“Thus fares it still in our decay:
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away
Than what it leaves behind.

“The blackbird amid leafy trees,
The lark above the hill,
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will.

“With Nature never do *they* wage
A foolish strife; they see
A happy youth, and their old age
Is beautiful and free:

“But we are pressed by heavy laws;
And often, glad no more,

We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

“If there be one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth,
The household hearts that were his own ;
It is the man of mirth.

“My days, my friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me ; but by none
Am I enough beloved.”

“Now both himself and me he wrongs,
The man who thus complains ;
I live and sing my idle songs
Upon these happy plains ;

“And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I’ll be a son to thee !”
At this he grasped my hand, and said,
“Alas ! that cannot be.”

We rose up from the fountain-side ;
And down the smooth descent
Of the green sheep-track did we glide ;
And through the wood we went ;

And, ere we came to Leonard’s rock,
He sang those witty rhymes
About the crazy old church-clock,
And the bewildered chimes.

ODE.

INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF
EARLY CHILDHOOD.

This was composed during my residence at Town-end, Grasmere. Two years, at least, passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in advertising here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere —

“A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death! ” —

But it was not so much from feelings of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the Spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost persuade myself that whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines —

“Obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ; ” etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendor which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to

some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of man presents an analogy in its favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations ; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind ? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this poem on the “ Immortality of the Soul,” I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a poet.

“ The child is father of the man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.”

I.

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Appareled in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore ;—
Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose ;
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare ;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair ;

The sunshine is a glorious birth ;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath passed away a glory from the earth.

III.

Now while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief :
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong :
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep ;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong ;
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay ;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday ; —
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
Shepherd-boy !

IV.

Ye blessed creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make ; I see
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee ;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel, I feel it all.
O evil day ! if I were sullen
While earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May morning,

And the children are culling
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arm :—
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear !
— But there's a tree, of many, one,
A single field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone :
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat :
Whither is fled the visionary gleam ?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream ?

V.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting :
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar :
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
From God, who is our home :
Heaven lies about us in our infancy !
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy ;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended ;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim,
 The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size !
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes !
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learned art ;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral ;
 And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song :
 Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;
 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part ;
Filling from time to time his "humorous stage"
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That life brings with her in her equipage ;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

VIII.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy soul's immensity ;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage, thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever by the eternal mind, —
 Mighty prophet ! seer blest !
 On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave ;
Thou, over whom thy Immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A Presence which is not to be put by ;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife ?
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

IX.

O joy ! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive !

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benediction : not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be blest ;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,

With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :

 Not for these I raise

 The song of thanks and praise ;

But for those obstinate questionings

Of sense and outward things,

Fallings from us, vanishings ;

Blank misgivings of a creature

Moving about in worlds not realized,

High instincts before which our mortal nature

Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised :

 But for those first affections,

 Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,

Are yet the fountain light of all our day,

Are yet a master light of all our seeing ;

 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make

Our noisy years seem moments in the being

Of the eternal silence : truths that wake,

 To perish never ;

Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavor,

 Nor man nor boy,

Nor all that is at enmity with joy,

Can utterly abolish or destroy !

 Hence in a season of calm weather,

 Though inland far we be, .

Our souls have sight of that immortal sea

 Which brought us hither,

 Can in a moment travel thither,

And see the children sport upon the shore,

And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X.

Then sing, ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song !

 And let the young lambs bound

As to the tabor's sound !

We in thought will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May !
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower ;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind ;
In the primal sympathy
Which, having been, must ever be ;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering ;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

xi.

And O ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Forebode not any severing of our loves !
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might ;
I only have relinquished one delight
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they ;
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet ;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality ;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

LAODAMIA.

Written at Rydal Mount. The incident of the trees growing and withering put the subject into my thoughts, and I wrote with the hope of giving it a loftier tone than, so far as I know, has been given to it by any of the Ancients who have treated of it. It cost me more trouble than almost anything of equal length I have ever written.

“WITH sacrifice before the rising morn
 Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired ;
 And from the infernal gods 'mid shades forlorn
 Of night, my slaughtered lord have I required :
 Celestial pity I again implore ;—
 Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !”

5

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
 With faith, the suppliant heavenward lifts her hands ;
 While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
 Her countenance brightens — and her eye expands ;
 Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows ;
 And she expects the issue in repose.

10

O terror ! what hath she perceived ? — O joy !
 What doth she look on ? — whom doth she behold ?
 Her hero slain upon the beach of Troy ?
 His vital presence ? his corporeal mold ?
 It is — if sense deceive her not — 't is he !
 And a God leads him, wingèd Mercury !

15

Mild Hermes spake — and touched her with his wand 19
 That calms all fear ; “ such grace hath crowned thy prayer,
 Laodamia ! that at Jove's command
 Thy husband walks the paths of upper air :
 He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space ;
 Accept the gift, behold him face to face ! ”

Forth sprang the impassioned queen her lord to clasp ;
 Again that consummation she essayed ; 26
 But unsubstantial form eludes her grasp
 As often as that eager grasp was made.
 The phantom parts,— but parts to re-unite,
 And re-assume his place before her sight. 30

“Protesilaus, lo ! thy guide is gone !
 Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice :
 This is our palace,— yonder is thy throne ;
 Speak, and the floor thou tread’st on will rejoice.
 Not to appall me have the gods bestowed 35
 This precious boon ; and blest a sad abode.”

“Great Jove, Laodamia ! doth not leave
 His gifts imperfect :— Specter though I be,
 I am not sent to scare thee or deceive ;
 But in reward of thy fidelity. 40
 And something also did my worth obtain ;
 For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

“Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
 That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
 Should die ; but me the threat could not withhold : 45
 A generous cause a victim did demand ;
 And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain ;
 A self-devoted chief — by Hector slain.”

“Supreme of heroes — bravest, noblest, best !
 Thy matchless courage I bewail no more, 50
 Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest
 By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore ;
 Thou found’st — and I forgive thee — here thou art —
 A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

“ But thou, though capable of sternest deed, 55
 Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave ;
 And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
 Thou should’st elude the malice of the grave :
 Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
 As when their breath enriched Thessalian air. 60

“ No specter greets me,—no vain shadow this ;
 Come, blooming hero, place thee by my side !
 Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
 To me, this day, a second time thy bride !”
 Jove frowned in heaven : the conscious Parcae threw 65
 Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

“ This visage tells thee that my doom is past :
 Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
 Of sense were able to return as fast
 And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys 70
 Those raptures duly — Erebus disdains :
 Calm pleasures there abide — majestic pains.

“ Be taught, O faithful consort, to control
 Rebellious passion : for the gods approve
 The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul ; 75
 A fervent, not ungovernable, love.
 Thy transports moderate ; and meekly mourn
 When I depart, for brief is my sojourn — ”

“ Ah, wherefore ? — did not Hercules by force
 Wrest from the guardian monster of the tomb 80
 Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
 Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom ?
 Medea’s spells dispersed the weight of years,
 And Æson stood a youth ’mid youthful peers.

"The Gods to us are merciful — and they
Yet further may relent: for mightier far
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favorite seat be feeble woman's breast.

"But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said,—
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered;
The ghastly color from his lips had fled;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure;
No fears to beat away — no strife to heal —
The past unsighed for, and the future sure ;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued ;

Of all that is most beau teous — imaged there
In happier beauty ; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams ;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue. — “ Ill,” said he,
“ The end of man’s existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night;

"And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

"The wished-for wind was given:— I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,— 125
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

“ Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, belovèd wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,— 130
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers,
My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers.

“But should suspense permit the foe to cry,
‘Behold they tremble! — haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?’
In soul I swept the indignity away :
Old frailties then recurred : — but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

"And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow ; 140
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our blest re-union in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathized ;
Be thy affections raised and solemnized.

“Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend —
 Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
 Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end ;
 For this the passion to excess was driven —
 That self might be annulled : her bondage prove
 The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.” —
 Aloud she shrieked ! for Hermes reappears !
 Round the dear shade she would have clung — ’t is
 vain :

The hours are past — too brief had they been years ;
 And him no mortal effort can detain :
 Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day, 155
 He through the portal takes his silent way,
 And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse she lay.

Thus, all in vain exhorted and reproved,
 She perished ; and, as for a willful crime,
 By the just gods whom no weak pity moved, 160
 Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
 Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers
 Of blissful quiet ’mid unfading bowers.

— Yet tears to human suffering are due ;
 And mortal hopes defeated and o’erthrown
 Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
 As fondly he believes. — Upon the side
 Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
 A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
 From out the tomb of him for whom she died ;
 And ever, when such stature they had gained
 That Ilium’s walls were subject to their view,
 The trees’ tall summits withered at the sight ;
 A constant interchange of growth and blight !¹

¹ For the account of these long-lived trees, see Pliny’s *Natural History*, lib. xvi. cap. 44 ; and for the features in the character of Protesilaus see

LINES.

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR. JULY 13, 1798.

No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume, called *Lyrical Ballads*.

FIVE years have passed ; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters ! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft inland murmur.¹—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild, secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,

the *Iphigenia in Aulis* of Euripides. Virgil places the Shade of Laodamia in a mournful region, among unhappy Lovers,

“ — His Laodamia,
It comes. — ”

¹ The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.

Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration : — feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,
In which the burden of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world,
Is lightened : — that serene and blessed mood,
In which the affections gently lead us on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
And even the motion of our human blood
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft—
In darkness and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again:
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever nature led: more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all.—I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, nor any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,

And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh, nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,— both what they half create,¹
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,

If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river; thou my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch

¹ This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young's, the exact expression of which I do not recollect.

The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister ! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that nature never did betray
The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance, —
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence, — wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together ; and that I, so long

A worshiper of nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service: rather say
With warmer love,—oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

NOTES.

THE EXCURSION — BOOK I.

Line 2. “Landscape.” Altered from the old *landskip*, as used by Tennyson in “The Princess,” Bk. IV. German *landschaft*. The English *scape* is from the Anglo-Saxon *scapan*, to shape.

Line 3. “Downs.” From a Celtic word, *dun*, a hill of moderate elevation.

“She went by dale and she went by down.” (Tennyson.)

Line 5. “Dappled.” Covered with spots.

“Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play at similes.”

(Wordsworth, “To the Daisy.”)

Line 6. “Brooding.” From an Old English word, *bredan*, allied with the Saxon *bredan*, to keep warm, to nourish. It suggests the German *brod*, bread.

Line 11. “Ceiling.” Early forms, *cyling*, *siling*, *syling*: hangings from above one’s head; hence any overhead surface.

“and now the thickening sky
Like a dark ceiling stood.”

(“Paradise Lost,” XI. 742.)

Line 15. “Side-long.” Note Scott’s use of the word:—

“His frantic chase
Sidelong he turns, and now ‘t is bent
Right up the rock’s tall battlement.”

(“Rokeby,” II. 14.)

Line 29. “Brotherhood,” etc. A figure used by this poet in other poems, as in “Sonnet composed at —— Castle,” where the words “brotherhood of venerable trees” occur.

Line 34. “Hale.” Anglo-Saxon *hāl* = whole.

Line 53. "Antique market-village." Reference to Hawkshead, where the poet passed his school days (1779-1787).

Line 55. "Drew," *i.e.* withdrew.

Line 65. "Abstrusest." Used here in a literal sense. Concealed, thrust out of sight, as in "Don Quixote," — "Hidden in the most *abstruse* dungeons of Bombay" (L. iv. 15).

Line 68. "A skillful," etc. Suggests Shakespeare's familiar phrase, "Concord of sweet sounds." ("Merchant of Venice," V. 1.)

Line 77. "Many are the poets." From the Greek *ποιητής*, a maker. Elsewhere ("Personal Traits") Wordsworth has described the mission of

"The poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays."

Line 78. "Men endowed." The familiar saying, "Poets are born, not made," is thus corrected by Ben Jonson : —

"For a good poet's made as well as born."
(*"To the Memory of Shakespeare."*)

Note Wordsworth's further thought in line 80.

Line 81. "Docile season." Points to the age when the mind is easily taught.

Line 84. "Temper too severe." A certain seriousness of mind that hampered the free flow of thought in song.

Line 85. "A nice backwardness afraid of shame." "Nice" = discriminating, highly critical. The poet marks here an oversensitive shrinking from ridicule.

Line 87. "Unto the height," *i.e.* to the full measure of their ability.

Line 90. "Husbanding." From the Anglo-Saxon *hūsbonda*, master of the house.

"For my means, I'll *husband* them so well,
They shall go far." (*Shakespeare.*)

Line 94. "Graces." Mental endowments. It may also include embellishments of literary style.

Line 95. "Inward light." Poetic insight.

Line 100. "Feeling pleasures." The poet here describes the soulful emotions that throb within this man of poetic genius, while he dwells apart from the busy and noisy world.

Line 104. "Venerable nature." More suggestive and impressive than the word "old." Macaulay speaks of "the venerable stream."

Line 106. "Deliberately pleased." The poet here pays gracious

tribute to the Muse, who inspires his pen, and who thoughtfully and considerately approves his work.

Line 108. "Athol." A district in Perthshire County, Scotland. It is 450 square miles in extent. The county itself is the fourth in size in Scotland and surpasses all the other counties in picturesqueness and variety of scenery.

Line 113. "Austere." This word should not be understood in its ordinary sense,—harsh, severe; but strict, firm. The reader will note how full and vivid is the poet's description of a typical Scotch home.

Line 121. "Long-continuing winter." In reading this line one is reminded of the winter season in New England, which "lingering, chills the lap of May."

Line 122. "Satchel." From the Latin *saccus*, a bag. "Nyle ze bere a *sachel*, neither scrip." (Wyclif.)

Line 125. "Minster." From *monos*, alone; to live in solitude. Originally a minster was a monastery; later the church belonging to a monastery. As many such churches became cathedrals, the word is now used of any cathedral church having such an origin.¹

Line 128. "Grow larger in the darkness." Allusion is here made to the well-known fact that in the semi-darkness of evening the dim outlines of surrounding objects are magnified to the eye.

Line 133. "Communion." Communion with nature is a favorite theme with the poets. Matthew Arnold writes:—

"Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,
That there abides a peace of thine
Man did not make, and cannot mar."

Line 134. "Long before his time," i.e. earlier in life than one would naturally expect.

Line 136. "Deep feelings," etc., a twofold statement of a single thought. Our feelings interpret the presence and dominant action of deep thoughts. "External things produced in him such intense feelings that he came to regard these impressions as the sole realities, while the very senses through which alone they came appeared sources of obstruction and illusion."

"Such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten; and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect of the mind."

(Wordsworth, "The Prelude.")

Line 145. "Active power," *i.e.* the power of holding in memory, as contrasted with the involuntary capacity for receiving impressions.

Line 157. "A peculiar eye," *i.e.* clear, definite, fixed; a vision that sees afar.

Line 161. "An ebbing and a flowing mind." Notice the graphic and forcible manner in which the poet makes even the rocks, with their ever varying hues, to shape the changing moods of his mind.

Line 167. "Apprehensive." Alert, quick to grasp the meaning of life and the moral relationships and measures of visible forces.

Line 172. "The life and death of martyrs." It is probable that Wordsworth had in mind "Fox's Book of Martyrs," which appeared in 1563. This book was read in all the homes of Scotland. Its author was a devout and earnest defender of the faith, who was born in Boston, Lincolnshire, 1516, and died in London, 1587.

Line 175. "Covenant." The author here refers to the persecutions of the seventeenth century in Scotland, which grew out of the refusal of the people to accept the Liturgy imposed upon them by Charles I. The Scottish Covenant was a bold statement of the views of the Presbyterians, to which they vowed adherence even unto death.

Line 178. "A straggling volume," *i.e.* a stray roll; *volume* from *volvo*, to roll.

Line 181. "Garniture." Anything that furnishes or adorns. "The finest *garnitures* of art." (Addison.) Here used by the poet to mean illustrations of a weird sort.

Line 187. "Wanting yet the pure delight of love." The poet alludes to his belief that nature teaches the love of God. He carries over into nature his own consciousness of an ever existent Creator, and makes His pervading presence a divine reality. Wordsworth was not a Pantheist, but he believed in an intimate interrelation between God and nature.

Line 188. "The breathing air," *i.e.* the pulsating, palpitating air. The poet sees in the very atmosphere about him evidence of almost human consciousness.

Line 201. "The solid frame of earth." Suggests Shakespeare's words:—

"This goodly frame, the earth." ("Hamlet," II. 2.)

Line 207. "Sensation, soul, and form." "Sensation" refers to the subtle pleasure produced by the gentler offices of nature, in the delicate fragrance of the flowers and the soft zephyrs; "form," to the engaging pictures of mountain scenery, the sunsets, etc. "Soul" is the

spirit that animates all and brings the entire realm of nature close to the heart of man.

Line 211. "Access of mind." Increase of mental force.

Line 213. "Thought was not." The currents of feeling ran so deep as to allow little chance for thought.

Line 221. "*Possessed.*" Taken possession of; entranced. "I have been touched, yea, and possessed with an extreme wonder at those four virtues." (Bacon.)

Line 225. "The mystery." Reference to such Biblical passages as Mark iv. 11, "Unto you is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." See also 1 Cor. ii. 7 and Eph. iii. 9.

Lines 226-232. This noble passage is representative of Wordsworth's exaltation of nature as the interpreter of the Deity. Nature makes one *feel* God and immortality. The Scriptures inspire one with reverence for the Infinite.

Line 237. "Ecstasies." The mind is pictured as being removed from its normal bearings, lifted up. Astonishment and wonder rule in the observer's soul.

Line 243. "A superstitious eye." Love in her intensity makes even superstition subserve her ends.

Line 249. "That mighty orb of song." In Wordsworth's sonnet to Milton are other evidences of his admiration.

"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart."

Line 250. "Lore." From Anglo-Saxon *lār*, teaching, learning. These words are used interchangeably in some parts of England.

Line 253. "The purer elements." As distinct from the complex, as pure abstract mathematics is distinguished from that which is mixed or applied.

Line 254. "Charm severe." A fascination which was still dependent on hard study.

Line 277. "Visionary sides." The lofty peak is a reminder of past events, requiring in the beholder visions of the imagination to reproduce them.

Line 279. "The path of fire." The lightning stroke leaving behind it indistinct traces of its course.

Line 292. "From the stillness of abstracted thought." In the quiet hours of the night, when every sound seems unnaturally magnified, he sought relief to his turbulent mind by engaging in abstract meditation.

Lines 293-297. These exquisite effects produced by the sunlight

falling on ascending mist are seen below the Falls of Niagara, where the rainbow makes a complete circle.

Line 307. "The well of homely life." The domestic life of all nations was a very fascinating study to Wordsworth. The word "homely" is used here as in Gray's "Elegy":—

"Their homely joys and destiny obscure."

Line 317. "Savoyard." Savoy, the loftiest mountain region of Europe. Northward is the Lake of Geneva; eastward, Piedmont in France. The Swiss cantons, with their memories of William Tell and Arnold Winkelried, are eloquent of struggle and liberty.

Line 330. "Sequestration." From the Latin *sequester*, an arbitrator. To sequester was to set aside for arbitration. The word finally came to mean simply to set aside. Wordsworth uses the word in one of his sonnets.

"The sacred book
In dusty sequestration wrapt too long."

Line 346. "Exist more simple in their elements." This poet did not accept some of the scientific claims of his day. The phrase, "modern civilization," was not congenial to his thought.

Line 359. "No piteous revolutions." Wordsworth no doubt referred to the horrors of the French Revolution. This great crisis in French history made a profound impression upon him.

Line 370. "Afford to suffer." Used here in the sense of having the capacity to endure sympathetic pain.

Line 397. "The Scottish Church." The Church of Scotland is Presbyterian, made up of three bodies, the Established Church, the Free Church, and the United Presbyterian Church.

Line 399. "Purity." The term "Puritan" was originally applied in reproach. The poet here seeks to reclaim the word, referring to the quality of the religious belief of the people.

Line 408. "Melted all away." Reference here to the fact that the austerity of Puritanism was displaced by the sweetness of his life.

Line 425. "Breathed intelligence."

"Bright-eyed fancy, hov'ring o'er,
Scatters from her pictured urn
Thoughts that breathe and words that burn." (Gray.)

Line 490. "Mortal stillness." The picture in the poet's mind is water so motionless as to remind one of death.

Line 500. "The good die first." "He whom the gods favor dies in youth." (Plautus.)

"Heaven gives its favorites early death," so Byron wrote in "Childe Harold," thus repeating the false philosophy of ancient times.

Line 501. "Dry as summer dust," etc. Mark the great force and vividness of this figure.

Line 511. "Stock," etc. Here is the figure of a tree with spreading branches, shown further in the use of the word "bloomed."

Line 514. "Excess of love." Not going beyond rational limits.

Line 517. "Her temper." Her native qualities; her disposition.

Line 524. "Seated at his loom." This was the age when weaving was done exclusively by a hand machine.

Line 539. "The plague of war." From the Latin *plaga*, a blow, used here in the sense of chastisement.

Line 546. "Knew them not." See Psalm ciii. 16.

Line 559. "Shoals of artisans." "Shoal" is from the Anglo-Saxon *scolu*, a company. "A shoal of darting fishes." (Tennyson.)

Line 568. "At the door he stood." Denotes continued action; it was his custom to stand. So in the use of the verbs "carved" and "mingled," below.

Line 578. "His good humor." Originally used in a medical sense; moisture, fluid exhalations which determine a person's physical and mental condition. Hence one's special state of mind or feeling.

"He is there; see what humor he is in."

("Merry Wives of Windsor," II. 3.)

Line 580. "A petted mood." Pettish, or, more commonly, petulant.

Line 581. "Temper." Irritable disposition.

Line 586. "Cruel tongue." *Tongue* may be traced through the Anglo-Saxon *tunga* to the Latin *lingua*.

Line 588. "Rueful." Lamentable, pitiable. "A rueful spectacle." (Spenser.)

Line 594. "Repose and peace." "Repose" is quietness after activity; "peace," absence of anything that clashes.

Line 599. "Untoward." The figure is of one who turns his face away from the path he ought to take; hence to be froward or unruly. See Acts of the Apostles ii. 40.

Line 628. "Dalliance." To *dally* means, primarily, to trifle, then to waste time in idle deeds; here "dalliance" means fondling.

Line 647. "Lifted with light hand the latch." Occasionally the poet uses alliteration.

Line 652. "Poor wretch!" Originally used of one driven out, banished. Hence, one miserable and forlorn; the word is not associated with evil or guilt.

Line 657. "That seemed to cling upon me." With what vigor does the poet here represent the eye riveting itself upon its object.

Line 701. "Blithe." From an old Saxon word meaning kind, gentle. Then it came to mean merry, gay; the poet uses it in this sense here and elsewhere, as in the poem "To the Cuckoo."

Line 703. "Trotting brooks." Wordsworth incloses these words in single quotation marks. The lines referred to are those of Robert Burns:—

"The muse, na poet ever fand her
Till by himself he learned to wander
Adoun some trotting burn's meander."

Line 708. "The soft and bladed grass." "Decking with liquid pearl the bladed grass." ("Midsummer Night's Dream," I. 1.)

Line 717. "The yellow stone-crop." The wall-pepper, so called because it grows upon walls and rocks.

Line 722. "Thrift." A plant of the genus *Armeria*, usually of a pink color, resembling the marsh rosemary; it is cultivated for borders.

Line 728. "Cumbrous bind-weed." Common name for the genus *Convolvulus*.

Line 744. "Dull red stains." The colored wash used in marking sheep.

Line 766. "What I seek I cannot find." News of her absent husband.

Line 780. "So familiarly." He brings back to mind her whole bearing with vividness.

Line 784. "A momentary trance." That which quickly passes away. From the Latin *transitus*.

Line 794. "Her voice was low."

"Her voice was ever soft,
Gentle and low — an excellent thing in woman."
("King Lear," V. 3.)

Line 795. "Subdued." Brought into complete subjection.

Line 815. "Primrose." A plant of the genus *Primula*, in which the flowers appear as if on separate peduncles.

Line 822. "A sleepy hand of negligence." It was the custom of

Elizabethan writers to transpose words as Wordsworth does here. Ben Jonson in his "Sejan" has: "More than ten criers and six noise of trumpets."

Line 823. "Hearth." The people of northern England early worshiped the goddess *Hertha*, in whose name the place where the household fire was kindled, and about which the family gathered, was held sacred.

Line 830. "The trick of grief." The habit, the very atmosphere of sorrow.

Line 836. "Clear black mold." Rich soil, clear of weeds.

Line 855. "Bleak." The original meaning of this word was, without color, then pale and of a sickly appearance. Here the poet means desolate, void of vegetation, as in this line, "Wastes too bleak to rear the common growth of earth."

Line 860. "Pittance." From the Latin *pittus*, pity. The old English word "pittance" means an allowance of food in a monastery.

Line 871. "Tract." Way, route. "A shorter tract to India." (Cabot.)

Line 902. "Nipping." Pinching; as Horatio says in "Hamlet," "It is a nipping and an eager air."

Line 904. "Checkered." From an old French word, *eschequier*, a chess-board, which was marked off in squares. In this sense it is used here. "The Court of Exchequer owes its name to the cheque cloth which covers the table, and on which the king's accounts are made up." (Blackstone.)

Line 924. "The impotence of grief." The debility occasioned by prolonged sorrow.

Line 927. "That secret spirit of humanity." The marks of human emotion and intelligence which those who have gone leave behind them.

Line 928. "The calm, oblivious tendencies." It is nature's way to blot out the evidences of man's presence on the earth.

Line 933. "Purposes." Old French *pourpos*, an aim, an end.

Line 941. "And peace is here." See line 510.

Line 945. "Into my heart conveyed." See closing couplet of the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality."

Line 958. "Mellow." Reference to the rich color on ripe fruit.

Line 961. "The sweet hour." The evening hour.

LUCY GRAY.

(Page 64.)

“Fagot-band.” A fagot was a bundle of fish placed on a drying platform. The cords with which the fish were bound together were called fagot-bands.

TO THE DAISY.

(Page 70.)

To this poem Wordsworth prefixes a verse from George Wither, an English poet of some note. He was born in Brentworth, Hampshire, June 11, 1588, and died in London, May 2, 1667. For issuing the poem, “Abuses Stript and Whipt,” he was imprisoned. His active participation in the Civil War, and his loyalty to Cromwell, occasioned him much abuse and suffering.

In the verse from Wither, with which the poet introduced this poem, “Titan” is used of the sun, the name being substituted for the Greek *Helios*, god of the sun.

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE.

(Page 75.)

A perennial, herbaceous plant of Europe, its foliage covered with a fine powder, and its flowers bright yellow. The common pilewort.

TO A SKYLARK.

(Page 77.)

“Drunken lark.” “So we sometimes say that one is intoxicated with joy.”

EXTEMPORE EFFUSION UPON THE DEATH OF
JAMES HOGG.

(Page 91.)

Hogg was born at Ettrick, in the south of Scotland, in 1770; called “the Ettrick Shepherd,” from his occupation. He began to write songs at twenty years of age. His first poem appeared in 1796. It

has been said of him, "There are few poets who impress us so much with the idea of direct inspiration, and that poetry is, indeed, an art 'unteachable and untaught.' " Hogg died in 1835.

The Yarrow is a river in Selkirkshire, Scotland, twenty-five miles in length, on whose banks the poet Hogg used to tend sheep.

The border-minstrel was Sir Walter Scott, who died September 21, 1832, aged sixty-one years.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a noted man of letters, an astute philosopher, a man of vast learning.

Charles Lamb, a noted English *littérateur*, humorist, and critic, died December 27, 1834, aged fifty-nine years.

George Crabbe, an English poet of note in his day. He had a checkered career. In his poverty and failure as a surgeon he was befriended by Burke, who was instrumental in his publishing "The Library" and thereby becoming known as a poet. He died in 1832, at the age of seventy-eight years. In his introduction to this poem Wordsworth speaks of him at length.

Hampstead was a well-known rendezvous for literary men and is now a pleasure resort. It is four and one-half miles northwest of St. Paul's, London.

"For her who, ere her summer faded," etc. Reference is here made to Mrs. Felicia Hemans, an English poet, who died in 1835, aged forty-two years. She is best known by her lyrics.

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE.

(Page 92.)

Thomas Chatterton (1752-1770), a precocious youth with poetic aspirations; was fond of solitude and inclined to revery and moodiness. He wrote under pressure and produced poem after poem with great rapidity. Reduced to extreme destitution, he took his own life.

"Of him who walked in glory." Robert Burns.

LAODAMIA.

(Page 113.)

Acastus, according to Greek legend, was the son of Pelias, the Argonaut; he was the father of Laodamia, who married Protesilaus,

the first to die after touching Trojan soil, as the Delphic oracle had declared.

Line 19. "Hermes." Son of Zeus, messenger of the gods.

Line 65. "Parcæ" is the Latin name for the Fates, as Mœræ was the Greek name.

Line 66. "Stygian." Wordsworth means dark, dismal, hellish, infernal — a strong descriptive adjective.

Line 71. "Erebus." In Greek mythology, the son of Chaos and brother of Nox.

Line 81. "Alcestis." Daughter of Pelias, who, when her husband, Admetus, was stricken with disease, gave up her life for his, according to Apollo's promise that in this way his life would be spared.

Line 83. "Medea." A sorceress, daughter of Aretas and wife of Jason. Ovid, the Latin poet, relates that Æson was rejuvenated by Medea after the return of the Argonauts.

Line 172. "Ilium." Greek name for Troy. Dr. Schliemann has identified the site of Ilium as lying about one hundred miles northwest of Smyrna.

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