SELECTED POEMS
OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

WITH MATTHEW ARNOLD'S
ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH

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The purpose of this volume is more than to present Wordsworth's work in little, with a kindly appreciative essay. The selection of the poems and the choice of the essay have been guided by the conviction that together they constitute an unusually clear and grateful introduction to the serious study of poetry. For this purpose I have ventured to divide the poems into sections of related kinds, and to present them in the order of readiest approach. Such an arrangement naturally invites criticism; but that it is not illogical in the case of Wordsworth may be seen in the fact that with maturer purposes in view, both Wordsworth and Arnold adopted classification of a like sort. The order of the poems in each grouping is almost strictly that of the dates of composition (so far as they are known), with a few exceptions where the relations of certain pieces make a different sequence desirable. The chronology used is that of Mr. Hutchinson's valuable Oxford Edition.

The text is eclectic. In the main, preference has been given to the earlier readings of the early poems. Yet if Wordsworth is to be seen at his best, it is quite as necessary to use a later version of Simon Lee as to use the first of Laodamia. It is believed that the selection is sufficiently large and varied to allow wide choice of material for study.

In the appendix I have risked adverse judgment as to the wisdom of offering illustrations of Wordsworth's writing in its unhappier and less effective aspects. It seems to me, however, that if Wordsworth's poetry may be taken—and I think it may—as a touchstone of poetic quality, there is a substantial something to be gained by showing where and how it may fail.

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H. R. S.
CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . . . . . . . vii

Wordsworth, by Matthew Arnold . . . . 1

SELECTED POEMS OF WORDSWORTH

Shorter Narratives and Poems of Reminiscence 23
Longer Narratives . . . . . . . . . . . . . 57
Lyric . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 99
Reflective and Didactic Poems . . . . 121
Sonnets . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 133
Odes . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 143
Passages from The Prelude and The Excursion 155

APPENDIX OF ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES . . . . 183

CHRONOLOGY OF ARNOLD'S LIFE . . . . 195

CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF WORDSWORTH . . . 196

NOTES . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 199

INDEX . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . 207
INTRODUCTION

The relation between a great poet and an important critic is seldom more complete and more happy than in the case of Arnold and Wordsworth. This is true not only because the two belonged to the same general movement in our literary history—although their active careers were separated by a half-century. It is true primarily because they are both apostles of reasoned optimism and of spiritual balance, as opposed to the passionate individualism of Byron and Shelley, Wordsworth’s contemporaries. It is true also because they are both discerning judges of realities, and wise critics of the pet political and commercial illusions of their day; and it is true, finally, because Arnold knew Wordsworth to be at his best one of the most gifted and most genuine of English poets.

It is a common misconception that the typical poet’s mind can not work in a normal way, a misconception that arises in part out of the prosaic drift of the average life. When we speak of the poet’s inspiration, we usually think of an impulse that lies quite outside of his work-day mind; and the sense of the externality of this impulse not infrequently leads us to feel that the poet is not to be approached with the serene reasonableness that we bring to every-day things. In Wordsworth’s poems we confront no such bogey of inspiration. Though the inspiration is emphatically there—in the sense that he has that perfect fluency and certainty of utterance combined with imaginative suggestion which the best of poetry must possess—there is nevertheless little or none of the taxing ingenuity of phrase, the strained magnificence, the excessive refinement of images and ideas, that many ages have regarded as the marks of superlative poetical accomplishment. The greatest of ancient critics, Aristotle, distin-
guishes between the inspiration that amounts to possession by an overwhelming and revealing emotional force, and the inspiration, on the other hand, which proceeds from a placid study of life and deliberate habits of work. Wordsworth was inspired in this latter wise, inspired to deal thoughtfully and reverently with man and the world of nature ever newly brought before his vision. It is this fact that makes Wordsworth a poet of unusually easy approach. In him there is a simple reading of life which is conveyed through designedly simple verse-forms and vocabulary.

This simplicity of aim and manner in Wordsworth makes him for Arnold a good example of what is elemental and indispensable in poetry of unquestioned quality. Arnold's own mind was, like the ethical Victorian type, concerned primarily with sincerity and seriousness as the traits of character which must precede artistic endeavor. The outstanding purpose of poetry was in his view to present a true image of life—of true life, that is—not the exceptional nor the bizarre, but the life that inward responses and the background of the race's social experience show us to be both useful and sweet. This purpose Arnold found consummately realized in the work of Wordsworth. The body of Wordsworth's work is frequently without many features that have distinguished individual poets—the lavish pictorial effects of Tennyson, the cleverness and flare of Byron, the supreme dignity of Milton—but its freedom from characteristics which may be exploited is the very fact that makes the best of it in a way the common denominator of poetical attainments. Arnold's essay, concerned with the plain but positive virtues of Wordsworth's writing, is therefore more than a commentary upon the work of an individual poet; it is a discourse upon poetry itself, filled with wisdom and with honest critical sense.
MATTHEW ARNOLD *

Arnold, as the son of the great Thomas Arnold, Master of Rugby, possessed by birth and environment a high sense of the value of cultivation, and of great literature, principally classic, as the first means of securing that cultivation. His mind was instinctively responsive to these influences, and throughout his maturing years at Rugby and Oxford, his Professorship of Poetry at Oxford, and his later busy occupation as Inspector of Schools and lecturer, he grew in his originally high regard for the life of expanded mental interests and of reflection. In his public appearances and utterances he stood so uncompromisingly for this "aristocracy of intellect" that his power was exerted most importantly through his appeals to the ruling and influential classes. To these he almost always directed his social criticism, with the result that before his death he had come to be regarded as one of the great leaders of conservative opinion.

Arnold, like Coleridge and Emerson, was of the type that combines the poetical view and grasp of life with a powerful and increasing interest in moral discourse. Like them, he sacrificed a youthful fondness for writing poetry—in his own case after more than mediocre promise—to what seemed to him the more constructive purpose of teaching people how to live. And the cardinal point in this teaching was his creed of "culture." It is unnecessary to suggest more than briefly what the substance of this creed was, for he himself has given it to us with his condescending gentleness of tone, yet convincing seriousness, in his essay "Sweetness and Light." His central idea, however, was that culture—as he defined it, "a knowledge of the best that has been thought and said in the world"—illuminates and strengthens modern life by bringing both the history of the race and

* For the chronology of Arnold's life and works see p. 195.
its spiritual sense to bear upon all the problems of society, "making reason and the will of God prevail." He professed little patience with the snobbery of intellect, but demanded that the cultured should possess and use their culture for beneficent ends. A culture not so used was to him as fanciful a patent of real superiority, as aristocratic birth without the acceptance of the responsibility that attaches to it. However, his very appearance as the champion of culture against the industrial preoccupations and slothfulness of mind of the rising middle classes gave birth to distrust and aversion on the part of the worshippers of material success, whom he habitually called the "Philistines." This failure to establish himself completely in the general confidence was also due in part to a half native and half academic touch of the intellectual snobbery which he himself so earnestly deprecated, and by an instinctive distaste for pure democracy; for like many of his thoughtful contemporaries, he felt that "the truth was not to be found by the counting of noses." On the whole, though, the timeliness and good sense of Arnold's addresses and essays made his message scarcely less profitable and no less necessary for the men of his time than Carlyle's gospel of work or Ruskin's repeated plea for sincerity of endeavor.

Arnold's interest in the diffusion of culture naturally placed great emphasis upon an acquaintance with literature. Literature, indeed, is always viewed in his writings as a means of spiritual perfection and a mirror of human ideals and interpretations of life. His books On Translating Homer and On the Study of Celtic Literature are illustrations of his abiding zest for the instruction contained in the views and habits of other races as pictured in their literature. The literature of the Bible held the same place in his esteem that it has held for many cultivated Englishmen for three centuries or more—not only, or primarily, as a body of doctrine, but as a powerfully penetrating human record, to be read with reason as well as faith.
Arnold's essays in purely literary criticism belong largely to his later years, and are in the main less pointedly directed to moral teaching than his early lectures and his writings on Biblical literature, though they are permeated by his sense that great literature should—or does—teach us how to live. These writings include most importantly his very widely known essay on *The Study of Poetry*—the most comprehensive expression of his literary doctrines, a modest sheaf of essays upon French writers and French literary tendencies, and particularly, for us, a very stimulating and sage volume of essays (the Second Series of *Essays in Criticism*) upon eminent English poets, including Milton, Gray, Keats, Byron, Shelley, and Wordsworth. These last essays have probably more than his other literary writings established his place as a critic. His outstanding critical virtues are the breadth and cosmopolitanism of his literary acquaintance, sound judicial sense, a peculiar aptness in illustrative quotation (often serving him in place of really precise formulation of critical pronouncements), and finally, and most typically, a careful weighing of his personal reactions in the light of his underlying assurance that the great function of literature, of poetry especially, is a moral one. His judgments of individual figures are always given with quiet force and firm confidence in their rightness. All of these traits are readily recognized in the essay on Wordsworth, one of the best of all because of its sympathy, and the clearness of the poetical philosophy expounded in it.

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH***

*Wordsworth*’s effective poetical career stands at the very opening of the nineteenth century, and at the beginning of the quarter-century which also gave to England Coleridge, Scott, Byron, Shelley, and Keats. This entire group belongs to what has been called “the Ro-

*For the chronology of Wordsworth’s life and works see p. 196.*
mantic Reaction”—that is, to the movement of declared or implied protest against the conventionalism and restricted opportunity of eighteenth century poetry, as seen, for example, in the works of Alexander Pope. The forms that this romantic impulse took were diverse. In Scott it was shown principally as a fondness for the atmosphere of medieval legend; in Shelley as a bitter outcry against the social injuries of his day; in Wordsworth as a deep sensitiveness to nature, which gradually merged with his social sympathies to create the conception of nature as a sentient inspiration and guide for humanity. In all these poets there was also a liberation from the subservience of the majority of early eighteenth century poets to the particular verse form known as the “heroic couplet”\(^1\); but we need not emphasize this point here, as its importance hinges upon a larger knowledge of the literature of the preceding age. To regard these romantic poets as a school, however, is scarcely proper, as there is no unifying principle in mere departure from older ideas and practices. As men and as poets they were too individual to be casually grouped. What they possessed in common was largely the result of the tonic life of their time; for they stood at the turning-point in European history which followed the French Revolution. The height of their collective attainment, however, reached and sustained by the many excitant influences in the new political order of things, marks a transformation in poetical taste that is quite as remarkable in its way as the political reconstruction through which they were living.

Wordsworth’s particular part in this transformation was to create or revive a taste for realities in the presentation of life, and to displace the exaggerated poetic imagery and the strained figurative diction of the previous age,\(^2\) or, to quote his own plain phrase, “to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate

Note:—Reference numbers throughout text indicate notes at back of book.
or describe them throughout, as far as possible in a selection of language really used by men.” The justification of this aim was in Wordsworth’s heart a moral one. His scenes are chosen largely from “humble and rustic life” because it seems to him more simple, more frank, and more open to the benign influences of nature. The language which fits these characters and scenes is to Wordsworth’s belief effective because it is more permanent, freer from “social vanity,” and, through its very simplicity, incapable of lending a poetic air to unpoetic or ignoble ideas. It is but a step from these high pleas for directness and sincerity in poetry to the assertion of a definite moral purpose for poetry, though Wordsworth means by this not that every poem shall convey the “moral” of a fable, but that the whole substance of a poet’s writing shall present general truths, leaving the reader with “his understanding enlightened and his affections strengthened and purified.”

Much more of Wordsworth’s exalted and severe sense of the poet’s art is to be found in the preface to the second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*, issued in 1800. But the pervading spiritual element in his poetry, of which he was solemnly conscious, is only cursorily discussed in this document: that is, his reverence for nature as a direct source of spiritual guidance. His keen and confident “love of nature”—and the phrase is no mere phrase to Wordsworth—and its effect upon his beliefs and associations, are to be seen most completely and impressively in his poems of introspective reminiscence, such as the *Lines Written above Tintern Abbey*, and *On the Influence of Natural Objects*, and in passages from the long autobiographical poem called *The Prelude*. No prose could with equal beauty or conviction reveal the intense depth of his faith in nature, for he felt it as the very voice and sign of God.

In Wordsworth’s poetry these aims are surprisingly realized. First of all, because he does see his subject steadily, rarely minutely, but with a sharp eye for de-
scriptive truth. In the second place, the simple phrase is with him the telling phrase, not always, as he thought, because it was more wholesome, but because it was the one correct artistic medium for his subject. These two elements seem to be the certain source of his power, for his greatest works are, in the general view, the lyrics and the narrative poems which combine in so impressively right a way this "objectivity," as we call it today, and this felicitous choice and movement of phrase. The "Lucy poems" and *Michael* are both in their way examples of rarely perfect poetry, unpretentious and undecorated.

It is not difficult to see, however, that the creed of simple situations and simple diction could be followed to a not altogether happy conclusion. To Wordsworth's mind, unfortunately devoid of humor, the distinction was difficult between a theme of importance, sufficient in its native dignity for adequate though simple treatment, and one trivial, or even comically suggestive, that could not be so treated. To many readers the *Idiot Boy* is senseless (the one defect that Wordsworth denied in any of his poems); to others it is foolish. Few readers can see in *Peter Bell* any more than a trite subject, unintentionally comic passages, and tame moralizing. It was this that made Wordsworth very susceptible to parody and very sensitive to it, and that accounts for his perverse indifference to well-meant criticism and his scathing resentment of criticism less generously intended.

Beyond the primary source of Wordsworth's poetic impulse in his early and intimate contact with the beauty of the English Lake Country and in his reflective habit of mind, there is a peculiar dependence upon the close friendships of his productive years. Largely under the encouragement of his sister Dorothy and his friend Coleridge, he brought out within a very few years the greater part of the small proportion of his work by which he really holds his literary place. The period might be given roughly as 1797 to 1807. What he wrote
after that time is in bulk large, but hopelessly out of proportion to its worth. With maturing years, reconsidered radical views, and increasing independence and ease in his home life, he gradually gained a public which admired him for what he had long before accomplished. There can be little doubt as to the connection between the intellectual ferment of his earlier years and the ready and fluent production of that period. This is not to imply that the verse of his earlier years is in any sense the emotional overflow of an unripened mind; for it was peculiarly not that. He was not, in the first place, a youthful poet—if he had died as young as Keats, the world would never have heard of him—and his poems were even at his most effervescent moments remarkable for their gravity and reserve. The fact is simply that when life became for him a settled thing, he practically ceased to write poetry of the first quality. An interesting mental turning-point is to be seen in his *Ode to Duty*, written in 1805.

The shift in political and social convictions which followed his early devotion to the cause of the French Revolutionists was merely one phase of his change to conservatism. His radical sympathies were not laid to rest either by cowardice or self-interest, but his spirit could not accept nor assimilate the tragic but temporary failure of progressive movements. His later years were remarkable for their relative eventlessness, both inner and outer, and his comfortable acceptance of a very gradually but surely increasing public approval. In 1843, two score years after his poetic prime, he secured the distinction of appointment to the Laureateship.
WORDSWORTH

By Matthew Arnold *

I remember hearing Lord Macaulay say, after Wordsworth's death, when subscriptions were being collected to found a memorial of him, that ten years earlier more money could have been raised in Cambridge alone, to do honour to Wordsworth, than was now raised all through the country. Lord Macaulay had, as we know, his own heightened and telling way of putting things, and we must always make allowance for it. But probably it is true that Wordsworth has never, either before or since, been so accepted and popular, so established in possession of the minds of all who profess to care for poetry, as he was between the years 1830 and 1840, and at Cambridge. From the very first, no doubt, he had his believers and witnesses. But I have myself heard him declare that, for he knew not how many years, his poetry had never brought him in enough to buy his shoe-strings. The poetry-reading public was very slow to recognise him, and was very easily drawn away from him. Scott effaced him with this public; Byron effaced him.

The death of Byron seemed, however, to make an opening for Wordsworth. Scott, who had for some time ceased to produce poetry himself, and stood before the public as a great novelist; Scott, too genuine himself not to feel the profound genuineness of Wordsworth, and with an instinctive recognition of his firm hold on nature and of his local truth, always admired him sincerely, and

* Arnold's essay on Wordsworth was published as the preface to his volume of selections from Wordsworth's poems in 1879, and in 1888 was included in his Essays in Criticism, Second Series.
praised him generously. The influence of Coleridge upon young men of ability was then powerful, and was still gathering strength; this influence told entirely in favour of Wordsworth's poetry. Cambridge was a place where Coleridge's influence had great action, and where Wordsworth's poetry, therefore, flourished especially. But even amongst the general public its sale grew large, the eminence of its author was widely recognised, and Rydal Mount became an object of pilgrimage. I remember Wordsworth relating how one of the pilgrims, a clergyman, asked him if he had ever written anything besides the Guide to the Lakes. Yes, he answered modestly, he had written verses. Not every pilgrim was a reader, but the vogue was established, and the stream of pilgrims came.

Mr. Tennyson's decisive appearance dates from 1842. One cannot say that he effaced Wordsworth as Scott and Byron had effaced him. The poetry of Wordsworth had been so long before the public, the suffrage of good judges was so steady and so strong in its favour, that by 1842 the verdict of posterity, one may almost say, had been already pronounced, and Wordsworth's English fame was secure. But the vogue, the ear and applause of the great body of poetry-readers, never quite thoroughly perhaps his, he gradually lost more and more, and Mr. Tennyson gained them. Mr. Tennyson drew to himself, and away from Wordsworth, the poetry-reading public, and the new generations. Even in 1850, when Wordsworth died, this diminution of popularity was visible, and occasioned the remark of Lord Macaulay which I quoted at starting.

The diminution has continued. The influence of Coleridge has waned, and Wordsworth's poetry can no longer draw succour from this ally. The poetry has not, however, wanted eulogists; and it may be said to have brought its eulogists luck, for almost every one who has praised Wordsworth's poetry has praised it well. But the public has remained cold, or, at least, undetermined.
Even the abundance of Mr. Palgrave's fine and skilfully chosen specimens of Wordsworth, in the *Golden Treasury,* surprised many readers, and gave offence to not a few. To tenth-rate critics and compilers, for whom any violent shock to the public taste would be a temerity not to be risked, it is still quite permissible to speak of Wordsworth's poetry, not only with ignorance, but with impertinence. On the Continent he is almost unknown.

I cannot think, then, that Wordsworth has, up to this time, at all obtained his deserts. "Glory," said M. Renan the other day, "glory after all is the thing which has the best chance of not being altogether vanity." Wordsworth was a homely man, and himself would certainly never have thought of talking of glory as that which, after all, has the best chance of not being altogether vanity. Yet we may well allow that few things are less vain than *real* glory. Let us conceive of the whole group of civilised nations as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working towards a common result; a confederation whose members have a due knowledge both of the past, out of which they all proceed, and of one another. This was the ideal of Goethe, and it is an ideal which will impose itself upon the thoughts of our modern societies more and more. Then to be recognised by the verdict of such a confederation as a master, or even as a seriously and eminently worthy workman, in one's own line of intellectual or spiritual activity, is indeed glory; a glory which it would be difficult to rate too highly. For what could be more beneficent, more salutary? The world is forwarded by having its attention fixed on the best things; and here is a tribunal, free from all suspicion of national and provincial partiality, putting a stamp on the best things, and recommending them for general honour and acceptance. A nation, again, is furthered by recognition of its real gifts and successes; it is encouraged to develop them further. And here is an honest verdict, telling us which
of our supposed successes are really, in the judgment of the great impartial world, and not in our own private judgment only, successes, and which are not.

It is so easy to feel pride and satisfaction in one's own things, so hard to make sure that one is right in feeling it! We have a great empire. But so had Nebuchadnezzar. We extol the "unrivalled happiness" of our national civilisation. But then comes a candid friend, and remarks that our upper class is materialised, our middle class vulgarized, and our lower class brutalised. We are proud of our painting, our music. But we find that in the judgment of other people our painting is questionable, and our music non-existent. We are proud of our men of science. And here it turns out that the world is with us; we find that in the judgment of other people, too, Newton among the dead, and Mr. Darwin among the living, hold as high a place as they hold in our national opinion.

Finally, we are proud of our poets and poetry. Now poetry is nothing less than the most perfect speech of man, that in which he comes nearest to being able to utter the truth. It is no small thing, therefore, to succeed eminently in poetry. And so much is required for duly estimating success here, that about poetry it is perhaps hardest to arrive at a sure general verdict, and takes longest. Meanwhile, our own conviction of the superiority of our national poets is not decisive, is almost certain to be mingled, as we see constantly in English eulogy of Shakspeare, with much of provincial infatuation. And we know what was the opinion current amongst our neighbours the French, people of taste, acuteness, and quick literary tact, not a hundred years ago, about our great poets. The old Biographie Universelle notices the pretension of the English to a place for their poets among the chief poets of the world, and says that this is a pretension which to no one but an Englishman can ever seem admissible. And the scornful, disparaging things said by foreigners about Shakspeare and Milton,
and about our national over-estimate of them, have been often quoted, and will be in everyone's remembrance.

A great change has taken place, and Shakspeare is now generally recognised, even in France, as one of the greatest of poets. Yes, some anti-Gallican \(^9\) cynic will say, the French rank him with Corneille \(^10\) and with Victor Hugo.\(^11\) But let me have the pleasure of quoting a sentence about Shakspeare, which I met with by accident not long ago in the *Correspondant*, a French review which not a dozen English people, I suppose, look at. The writer is praising Shakspeare's prose. With Shakspeare, he says, "prose comes in whenever the subject, being more familiar, is unsuited to the majestic English iambic." And he goes on: "Shakspeare is the king of poetic rhythm and style, as well as the king of the realm of thought; along with his dazzling prose, Shakspeare has succeeded in giving us the most varied, the most harmonious verse which has ever sounded upon the human ear since the verse of the Greeks." M. Henry Cochin, the writer of this sentence, deserves our gratitude for it; it would not be easy to praise Shakspeare, in a single sentence, more justly. And when a foreigner and a Frenchman writes thus of Shakspeare, and when Goethe says of Milton, in whom there was so much to repel Goethe rather than to attract him, that "nothing has been ever done so entirely in the sense of the Greeks as *Samson Agonistes,*" \(^12\) and that "Milton is in very truth a poet whom we must treat with all reverence," then we understand what constitutes a European recognition of poets and poetry as contradistinguished from a merely national recognition, and that in favour both of Milton and of Shakspeare the judgment of the high court of appeal has finally gone.

I come back to M. Renan's praise of glory, from which I started. Yes, real glory is a most serious thing, glory authenticated by the Amphictyonic Court \(^14\) of final appeal, definitive glory. And even for poets and poetry, long and difficult as may be the process of arriving at the right
award, the right award comes at last, the definitive glory rests where it is deserved. Every establishment of such a real glory is good and wholesome for mankind at large, good and wholesome for the nation which produced the poet crowned with it. To the poet himself it can seldom do harm; for he, poor man, is in his grave, probably, long before his glory crowns him.

Wordsworth has been in his grave for some thirty years, and certainly his lovers and admirers cannot flatter themselves that this great and steady light of glory as yet shines over him. He is not fully recognised at home; he is not recognised at all abroad. Yet I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakspeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognises 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, besides Shakspeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards, 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. Several of the poets named have gifts and excellences which Wordsworth has not. But taking the performance of each as a whole, I say that 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 one of the others has left.

But this is not enough to say. I think it certain, further, that if we take the chief poetical names of the Continent since the death of Molière, and, omitting Goethe, confront the remaining names with that of Wordsworth, the result is the same. Let us take Klopstock, Lessing, Schiller, Uhland, Rückert, and Heine for Germany;
Filicaia, Alfieri, Manzoni, and Leopardi for Italy; Racine, Boileau, Voltaire, André Chenier, Béranger, Lamartine, Musset, M. Victor Hugo (he has been so long celebrated that although he still lives I may be permitted to name him) for France. Several of these, again, have evidently gifts and excellences to which Wordsworth can make no pretension. But in real poetical achievement it seems to me indubitable that to Wordsworth, here again, belongs the palm. It seems to me that Wordsworth has left behind him a body of poetical work which wears, and will wear, better on the whole than the performance of any one of these personages, so far more brilliant and celebrated, most of them, than the homely poet of Rydal. Wordsworth’s performance in poetry is on the whole, in power, in interest, in the qualities which give enduring freshness, superior to theirs.

This is a high claim to make for Wordsworth. But if it is a just claim, if Wordsworth’s place among the poets who have appeared in the last two or three centuries is after Shakspeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, indeed, but before all the rest, then in time Wordsworth will have his due. We shall recognise him in his place, as we recognise Shakspeare and Milton; and not only we ourselves shall recognise him, but he will be recognised by Europe also. Meanwhile, those who recognise him already may do well, perhaps, to ask themselves whether there are not in the case of Wordsworth certain special obstacles which hinder or delay his due recognition by others, and whether these obstacles are not in some measure removable.

The Excursion and the Prelude, his poems of greatest bulk, are by no means Wordsworth’s best work. His best work is in his shorter pieces, and many indeed are there of these which are of first-rate excellence. But in his seven volumes the pieces of high merit are mingled with a mass of pieces very inferior to them; so inferior to them that it seems wonderful how the same poet should have produced both. Shakspeare frequently has
lines and passages in a strain quite false, and which are entirely unworthy of him. But one can imagine his smiling if one could meet him in the Elysian Fields and tell him so; smiling and replying that he knew it perfectly well himself, and what did it matter? But with Wordsworth the case is different. Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work. Now a drama or an epic fill the mind, and one does not look beyond them; but in a collection of short pieces the impression made by one piece requires to be continued and sustained by the piece following. In reading Wordsworth the impression made by one of his fine pieces is too often dulled and spoiled by a very inferior piece coming after it.

Wordsworth composed verses during a space of some sixty years; and it is no exaggeration to say that within one single decade of those years, between 1798 and 1808, almost all his really first-rate work was produced. A mass of inferior work remains, work done before and after this golden prime, imbedding the first-rate work and clogging it, obstructing our approach to it, chilling, not unfrequently, the high-wrought mood with which we leave it. To be recognised far and wide as a great poet, to be possible and receivable as a classic, Wordsworth needs to be relieved of a great deal of the poetical baggage which now encumbers him. To administer this relief is indispensable, unless he is to continue to be a poet for the few only, a poet valued far below his real worth by the world.

There is another thing. Wordsworth classified his poems not according to any commonly received plan of arrangement, but according to a scheme of mental physiology. He has poems of the fancy, poems of the imagination, poems of sentiment and reflexion, and so on. His categories are ingenious but far-fetched, and the result of his employment of them is unsatisfactory.
Poems are separated one from another which possess a kinship of subject or of treatment far more vital and deep than the supposed unity of mental origin which was Wordsworth’s reason for joining them with others.

The tact of the Greeks in matters of this kind was infallible. We may rely upon it that we shall not improve upon the classification adopted by the Greeks, for kinds of poetry; that their categories of epic, dramatic, lyric, and so forth, have a natural propriety, and should be adhered to. It may sometimes seem doubtful to which of two categories a poem belongs; whether this or that poem is to be called, for instance, narrative or lyric, lyric or elegiac. But there is to be found in every good poem a strain, a predominant note, which determines the poem as belonging to one of these kinds rather than the other; and here is the best proof of the value of the classification, and of the advantage of adhering to it. Wordsworth’s poems will never produce their due effect until they are freed from their present artificial arrangement, and grouped more naturally.

Disengaged from the quantity of inferior work which now obscures them, the best poems of Wordsworth, I hear many people say, would indeed stand out in great beauty, but they would prove to be very few in number, scarcely more than half-a-dozen. I maintain, on the other hand, that what strikes me with admiration, what establishes in my opinion Wordsworth’s superiority, is the great and ample body of powerful work which remains to him, even after all his inferior work has been cleared away. He gives us so much to rest upon, so much which communicates his spirit and engages ours!

This is of very great importance. If it were a comparison of single pieces, or of three or four pieces, by each poet, I do not say that Wordsworth would stand decisively above Gray, or Burns, or Coleridge, or Keats, or Manzoni, or Heine. It is in his ampler body of powerful work that I find his superiority. His good work itself, his work which counts, is not all of it, of course, of equal
value. Some kinds of poetry are in themselves lower kinds than others. The ballad kind is a lower kind; the didactic kind, still more, is a lower kind. Poetry of this latter sort, counts, too, sometimes, by its biographical interest partly, not by its poetical interest pure and simple; but then this can only be when the poet producing it has the power and importance of Wordsworth, a power and importance which he assuredly did not establish by such didactic poetry alone. Altogether, it is, I say, by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him, after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth's superiority is proved.

To exhibit this body of Wordsworth's best work, to clear away obstructions from around it, and to let it speak for itself, is what every lover of Wordsworth should desire. Until this has been done, Wordsworth, whom we, to whom he is dear, all of us know and feel to be so great a poet, has not had a fair chance before the world. When once it has been done, he will make his way best not by our advocacy of him, but by his own worth and power. We may safely leave him to make his way thus, we who believe that a superior worth and power in poetry finds in mankind a sense responsive to it and disposed at last to recognise it. Yet at the outset, before he has been duly known and recognised, we may do Wordsworth a service, perhaps, by indicating in what his superior power and worth will be found to consist, and in what it will not.

Long ago, in speaking of Homer, I said that the noble and profound application of ideas to life is the most essential part of poetic greatness. I said that a great poet receives his distinctive character of superiority from his application, under the conditions immutably fixed by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth, from his application, I say, to his subject, whatever it may be, of the ideas

"On man, on nature, and on human life,"
which he has acquired for himself. The line quoted is Wordsworth's own; and his superiority arises from his powerful use, in his best pieces, his powerful application to his subject, of ideas "on man, on nature, and on human life."

Voltaire, with his signal acuteness, most truly remarked that "no nation has treated in poetry moral ideas with more energy and depth than the English nation." And he adds: "There, it seems to me, is the great merit of the English poets." Voltaire does not mean, by "treating in poetry moral ideas," the composing moral and didactic poems;—that brings us but a very little way in poetry. He means just the same thing as was meant when I spoke above "of the noble and profound application of ideas to life"; and he means the application of these ideas under the conditions fixed for us by the laws of poetic beauty and poetic truth. If it is said that to call these ideas moral ideas is to introduce a strong and injurious limitation, I answer that it is to do nothing of the kind, because moral ideas are really so main a part of human life. The question, how to live, is itself a moral idea; and it is the question which most interests every man, and with which, in some way or other, he is perpetually occupied. A large sense is of course to be given to the term moral. Whatever bears upon the question, "how to live," comes under it.

"Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st,
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven."  

In those fine lines, Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line,

"For ever wilt thou love, and she be fair"—
he utters a moral idea. When Shakspeare says, that

"We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep," 20

he utters a moral idea.

Voltaire was right in thinking that the energetic and profound treatment of moral ideas, in this large sense, is what distinguishes the English poetry. He sincerely meant praise, not dispraise or hint of limitation; and they err who suppose that poetic limitation is a necessary consequence of the fact, the fact being granted as Voltaire states it. If what distinguishes the greatest poets is their powerful and profound application of ideas to life, which surely no good critic will deny, then to prefix to the term ideas here the term moral makes hardly any difference, because human life itself is in so preponderating a degree moral.

It is important, therefore, to hold fast to this: that poetry is at bottom a criticism of life; that the greatness of a poet lies in his powerful and beautiful application of ideas to life,—to the question: How to live. Morals are often treated in a narrow and false fashion, they are bound up with systems of thought and belief which have had their day, they are fallen into the hands of pedants and professional dealers, they grow tiresome to some of us. We find attraction, at times, even in a poetry of revolt against them; in a poetry which might take for its motto Omar Kheyam's 21 words: "Let us make up in the tavern for the time which we have wasted in the mosque." Or we find attractions in a poetry indifferent to them, in a poetry where the contents may be what they will, but where the form is studied and exquisite. We delude ourselves in either case; and the best cure for our delusion is to let our minds rest upon that great and inexhaustible word life, until we learn to enter into its meaning. A poetry of revolt against moral
ideas is a poetry of revolt against life; a poetry of indifference towards moral ideas is a poetry of indifference towards life.

Epictetus had a happy figure for things like the play of the senses, or literary form and finish, or argumentative ingenuity, in comparison with “the best and master thing” for us, as he called it, the concern, how to live. Some people were afraid of them, he said, or they disliked and undervalued them. Such people were wrong; they were unthankful or cowardly. But the things might also be over-prized, and treated as final when they are not. They bear to life the relation which inns bear to home. “As if a man, journeying home, and finding a nice inn on the road, and liking it, were to stay for ever at the inn! Man, thou hast forgotten thine object; thy journey was not to this, but through this. ‘But this inn is taking.’ And how many other inns, too, are taking, and how many fields and meadows! but as places of passage merely. You have an object, which is this: to get home, to do your duty to your family, friends, and fellow-countrymen, to attain inward freedom, serenity, happiness, contentment. Style takes your fancy, arguing takes your fancy, and you forget your home and want to make your abode with them and to stay with them, on the plea that they are taking. Who denies that they are taking? but as places of passage, as inns. And when I say this, you suppose me to be attacking the care for style, the care for argument. I am not; I attack the resting in them, the not looking to the end which is beyond them.”

Now, when we come across a poet like Théophile Gautier, we have a poet who has taken up his abode at an inn, and never got farther. There may be inducements to this or that one of us, at this or that moment, to find delight in him, to cleave to him; but after all, we do not change the truth about him.—we only stay ourselves in his inn along with him. And when we come across a poet like Wordsworth, who sings,
"Of truth, of grandeur, beauty, love and hope. 
And melancholy fear subdued by faith, 
Of blessed consolations in distress, 
Of moral strength and intellectual power, 
Of joy in widest commonalty spread" — 24

then we have a poet intent on "the best and master thing," and who prosecutes his journey home. We say, for brevity's sake, that he deals with life, because he deals with that in which life really consists. This is what Voltaire means to praise in the English poets,—this dealing with what is really life. But always it is the mark of the greatest poets that they deal with it; and to say that the English poets are remarkable for dealing with it, is only another way of saying, what is true, that in poetry the English genius has especially shown its power.

Wordsworth deals with it, and his greatness lies in his dealing with it so powerfully. I have named a number of celebrated poets above all of whom he, in my opinion, deserves to be placed. He is to be placed above poets like Voltaire, Dryden, Pope, Lessing, Schiller, because these famous personages, with a thousand gifts and merits, never, or scarcely ever, attain the distinctive accent and utterance of the high and genuine poets—

"Quique pii vates et Phæbo digna locuti," 25

at all. Burns, Keats, Heine, not to speak of others in our list, have this accent;—who can doubt it? And at the same time they have treasures of humour, felicity, passion, for which in Wordsworth we shall look in vain. Where, then, is Wordsworth's superiority? It is here; he deals with more of life than they do; he deals with life, as a whole, more powerfully.

No Wordsworthian will doubt this. Nay, the fervent Wordsworthian will add, as Mr. Leslie Stephen 26 does, that Wordsworth's poetry is precious because his philosophy is sound; that his "ethical system is as distinctive and
capable of exposition as Bishop Butler's";\(^\text{3}\) that his poetry is informed by ideas which "fall spontaneously into a scientific system of thought." But we must be on our guard against the Wordsworthians, if we want to secure for Wordsworth his due rank as a poet. The Wordsworthians are apt to praise him for the wrong things, and to lay far too much stress upon what they call his philosophy. His poetry is the reality, his philosophy,—so far, at least, as it may put on the form and habit of "a scientific system of thought," and the more that it puts them on,—is the illusion. Perhaps we shall one day learn to make this proposition general, and to say: Poetry is the reality, philosophy the illusion. But in Wordsworth's case, at any rate, we cannot do him justice until we dismiss his formal philosophy.

The *Excursion* abounds with philosophy, and therefore the *Excursion* is to the Wordsworthian what it never can be to the disinterested lover of poetry,—a satisfactory work. "Duty exists," says Wordsworth, in the *Excursion*; and then he proceeds thus:—

\[\ldots\] "Immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms,  
Which an abstract Intelligence supplies,  
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not." \(^\text{25}\)

And the Wordsworthian is delighted, and thinks that here is a sweet union of philosophy and poetry. But the disinterested lover of poetry will feel that the lines carry us really not a step farther than the proposition which they would interpret; that they are a tissue of elevated but abstract verbiage, alien to the very nature of poetry.

Or let us come direct to the centre of Wordsworth's philosophy, as "an ethical system, as distinctive and capable of systematical exposition as Bishop Butler's":—

\[\ldots\] "One adequate support  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists, one only;—an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe'er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power;
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good." 29

That is doctrine such as we hear in church too, religious
and philosophic doctrine; and the attached Words-
worthian loves passages of such doctrine, and brings them
forward in proof of his poet's excellence. But however
ture the doctrine may be, it has, as here presented, none
of the characters of poetic truth, the kind of truth which
we require from a poet, and in which Wordsworth is
really strong.

Even the "intimations" of the famous Ode,30 those
corner-stones of the supposed philosophic system of
Wordsworth,—the idea of the high instincts and affec-
tions coming out in childhood, testifying of a divine home
recently left, and fading away as our life proceeds,—this
idea, of undeniable beauty as a play of fancy, has itself
not the character of poetic truth of the best kind; it has
no real solidity. The instinct of delight in Nature and
her beauty had no doubt extraordinary strength in
Wordsworth himself as a child. But to say that uni-
versally this instinct is mighty in childhood, and tends to
die away afterwards, is to say what is extremely doubtful.
In many people, perhaps with the majority of educated
persons, the love of nature is nearly imperceptible at ten
years old, but strong and operative at thirty. In general
we may say of these high instincts of early childhood, the
base of the alleged systematic philosophy of Wordsworth,
what Thucydides31 says of the early achievements of the
Greek race:—"It is impossible to speak with certainty
of what is so remote; but from all that we can really
investigate, I should say that they were no very great
things."

Finally the "scientific system of thought" in Words-
worth gives us at last such poetry as this, which the
devout Wordsworthian accepts:—
"O for the coming of that glorious time
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this Imperial Realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation, on her part, to teach
Them who are born to serve her and obey;
Binding herself by statute to secure,
For all the children whom her soil maintains,
The rudiments of letters, and inform
The mind with moral and religious truth."

Wordsworth calls Voltaire dull, and surely the production of these un-Voltairian lines must have been imposed on him as a judgment! One can hear them being quoted at a Social Science Congress; one can call up the whole scene. A great room in one of our dismal provincial towns; dusty air and jaded afternoon daylight; benches full of men with bald heads and women in spectacles; an orator lifting up his face from a manuscript written within and without to declaim these lines of Wordsworth; and in the soul of any poor child of nature who may have wandered in thither, an unutterable sense of lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

"But turn we," as Wordsworth says, "from these bold, bad men," the haunters of Social Science Congresses. And let us be on our guard, too, against the exhibitors and extollers of a "scientific system of thought" in Wordsworth's poetry. The poetry will never be seen aright while they thus exhibit it. The cause of its greatness is simple, and may be told quite simply. Wordsworth's poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in nature, the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.

The source of joy from which he thus draws is the truest and most unfailing source of joy accessible to man. It is also accessible universally. Wordsworth brings us
word, therefore, according to his own strong and characteristic line, he brings us word

"Of joy in widest commonalty spread."

Here is an immense advantage for a poet. Wordsworth tells of what all seek, and tells of it at its truest and best source, and yet a source where all may go and draw for it.

Nevertheless, we are not to suppose that everything is precious which Wordsworth, standing even at this perennial and beautiful source, may give us. Wordsworthians are apt to talk as if it must be. They will speak with the same reverence of The Sailor's Mother, for example, as of Lucy Gray. They do their master harm by such lack of discrimination. Lucy Gray is a beautiful success; The Sailor's Mother is a failure. To give aright what he wishes to give, to interpret and render successfully, is not always within Wordsworth's own command. It is within no poet's command; here is the part of the Muse, the inspiration, the God, the "not ourselves." In Wordsworth's case, the accident, for so it may almost be called, of inspiration, is of peculiar importance. No poet, perhaps, is so evidently filled with a new and sacred energy when the inspiration is upon him; no poet, when it fails him, is so left "weak as is a breaking wave." I remember hearing him say that "Goethe's poetry was not inevitable enough." The remark is striking and true; no line in Goethe, as Goethe said himself, but its maker knew well how it came there. Wordsworth is right, Goethe's poetry is not inevitable; not inevitable enough. But Wordsworth's poetry, when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him. He has no style. He was too conversant with Milton not to catch at times his master's manner, and he has fine Miltonic lines; but he has no assured poetic style of his own, like
Milton. When he seeks to have a style he falls into ponderosity and pomposity. In the *Excursion* we have his style, as an artistic product of his own creation; and although Jeffrey completely failed to recognise Wordsworth’s real greatness, he was yet not wrong in saying of the *Excursion*, as a work of poetic style: “This will never do.” And yet magical as is that power, which Wordsworth has not, of assured and possessed poetic style, he has something which is an equivalent for it.

Every one who has any sense for these things feels the subtle turn, the heightening, which is given to a poet’s verse by his genius for style. We can feel it in the

“After life’s fitful fever, he sleeps well”—

of Shakspeare; in the

... “though fall’n on evil days,
On evil days though fall’n, and evil tongues”—

of Milton. It is the incomparable charm of Milton’s power of poetic style which gives such worth to *Paradise Regained*, and makes a great poem of a work in which Milton’s imagination does not soar high. Wordsworth has in constant possession, and at command, no style of this kind; but he had too poetic a nature, and had read the great poets too well, not to catch, as I have already remarked, something of it occasionally. We find it not only in his Miltonic lines; we find it in such a phrase as this, where the manner is his own, not Milton’s—

... “the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities;”

although even here, perhaps, the power of style, which is undeniably, is more properly that of eloquent prose than the subtle heightening and change wrought by
genuine poetic style. It is style, again, and the elevation given by style, which chiefly makes the effectiveness of Laodamia. Still the right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from Michael:

"And never lifted up a single stone."  

There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style, strictly so called, at all; yet it is expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind.

Wordsworth owed much to Burns, and a style of perfect plainness, relying for effect solely on the weight and force of that which with entire fidelity it utters, Burns could show him.

"The poor inhabitant below
Was quick to learn and wise to know,
And keenly felt the friendly glow
And softer flame;
But thoughtless follies laid him low
And stain'd his name."  

Every one will be conscious of a likeness here to Wordsworth; and if Wordsworth did great things with this nobly plain manner, we must remember, what indeed he himself would always have been forward to acknowledge, that Burns used it before him.

Still Wordsworth's use of it has something unique and unmatchable. Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincereness with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first-hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in
the poem of Resolution and Independence;" but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur.

Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique. His best poems are those which most perfectly exhibit this balance. I have a warm admiration for Laodameia and for the great Ode; but if I am to tell the very truth, I find Laodameia not wholly free from something artificial, and the great Ode not wholly free from something declamatory. If I had to pick out poems of a kind most perfectly to show Wordsworth's unique power, I should rather choose poems such as Michael, The Fountain," The Highland Reaper."

And poems with the peculiar and unique beauty which distinguishes these, Wordsworth produced in considerable number; besides very many other poems of which the worth, although not so rare as the worth of these, is still exceedingly high.

On the whole, then, as I said at the beginning, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent also by reason of the great body of good work which he has left to us. With the ancients I will not compare him. In many respects the ancients are far above us, and yet there is something that we demand which they can never give. Leaving the ancients, let us come to the poets and poetry of Christendom. Dante, Shakspeare, Molière, Milton, Goethe, are altogether larger and more splendid luminaries in the poetical heaven than Wordsworth. But I know not where else, among the moderns, we are to find his superiors.

To disengage the poems which show his power, and to present them to the English-speaking public and to the world, is the object of this volume." I by no means say that it contains all which in Wordsworth's poems is interesting. Except in the case of Margaret," a story composed separately from the rest of the Excursion, and
which belongs to a different part of England, I have not ventured on detaching portions of poems, or on giving any piece otherwise than as Wordsworth himself gave it. But, under the conditions imposed by this reserve, the volume contains, I think, everything, or nearly everything, which may best serve him with the majority of lovers of poetry, nothing which may disserve him.

I have spoken lightly of Wordsworthians: and if we are to get Wordsworth recognised by the public and by the world, we must recommend him not in the spirit of a clique, but in the spirit of disinterested lovers of poetry. But I am a Wordsworthian myself. I can read with pleasure and edification Peter Bell," and the whole series of Ecclesiastical Sonnets," and the address to Mr. Wilkinson's spade, " and even the Thanksgiving Ode;—everything of Wordsworth, I think, except Vaudracour and Julia." It is not for nothing that one has been brought up in the veneration of a man so truly worthy of homage; that one has seen him and heard him, lived in his neighbourhood and been familiar with his country. No Wordsworthian has a tenderer affection for this pure and sage master than I, or is less really offended by his defects. But Wordsworth is something more than the pure and sage master of a small band of devoted followers, and we ought not to rest satisfied until he is seen to be what he is. He is one of the very 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 recognised 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 co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, and will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier."
SELECTED POEMS OF WILLIAM WORDSWORTH
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—
I sit and sing 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 little 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?"
The little Maiden did reply, 
"O Master! we are seven."

"But they are dead; those two are dead! 
Their spirits are in Heaven!"
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little Maid would have her will, 
And said, "Nay, we are seven!"

ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS

I have a boy of five years old; 
His face is fair and fresh to see; 
His limbs are cast in beauty's mould, 
And dearly he loves me.

One morn we strolled on our dry walk, 
Our quiet home all full in view, 
And held such intermitted talk 
As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran; 
I thought of Kilve's delightful shore, 
Our pleasant home when Spring began, 
A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear 
Some fond regrets to entertain; 
With so much happiness to spare, 
I could not feel a pain.
The green earth echoed to the feet
Of lambs that bounded through the glade,
From shade to sunshine, and as fleet
From sunshine back to shade.

Birds warbled round me—every trace
Of inward sadness had its charm;
"Kilve," said I, "was a favoured place,
And so is Liswyn farm."

My Boy was by my side, so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress!
And, as we talked, I questioned him,
In very idleness.

"Now tell me, had you rather be,"
I said, and took him by the arm,
"On Kilve's smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm?"

In careless mood he looked at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, "At Kilve I'd rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm."

"Now, little Edward, say why so;
My little Edward, tell me why."—
"I cannot tell, I do not know."—
"Why, this is strange," said I;

"For, here are woods, and green hills warm:
There surely must some reason be
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
For Kilve by the green sea."

At this, my Boy hung down his head,
He blushed with shame, nor made reply;
And five times to the child I said,
"Why, Edward, tell me why?"
His head he raised—there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded Vane.

Then did the Boy his tongue unlock;
And thus to me he made reply:
"At Kilve there was no weather-cock,
And that's the reason why."

O dearest, dearest Boy! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

SIMON LEE, THE OLD HUNTSMAN

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,
Not far from pleasant Ivor Hall,
An old man dwells, a little man,—
'Tis said he once was tall.
Full five-and-thirty years he lived
A running huntsman merry;
And still the center of his cheek
Is red as a ripe cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,
And hill and valley rang with glee,
When Echo bandied, round and round,
The halloo of Simon Lee.
In those proud days he little cared
For husbandry or tillage;
To blither tasks did Simon rouse
The sleepers of the village.

He all the country could outrun,
Could leave both man and horse behind;
And often, ere the chase was done
He reel'd and was stone-blind.
And still there's something in the world
At which his heart rejoices;
For when the chiming hounds are out,
He dearly loves their voices.

But oh the heavy change!—bereft
Of health, strength, friends, and kindred, see!
Old Simon to the world is left
In liveried poverty:—
His master's dead, and no one now
Dwells in the Hall of Ivor;
Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;
He is the sole survivor.

And he is lean and he is sick,
His body, dwindled and awry,
Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;
His legs are thin and dry.
One prop he has, and only one,—
His wife, an aged woman,
Lives with him, near the waterfall,
Upon the village common.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,
Not twenty paces from the door,
A scrap of land they have, but they
Are poorest of the poor.
This scrap of land he from the heath
Inclosed when he was stronger;
But what to them avails the land
Which he can till no longer?

Oft, working by her husband's side,
Ruth does what Simon cannot do;
For she, with scanty cause for pride,
Is stouter of the two.
And, though you with your utmost skill
From labor could not wean them,
'Tis little, very little, all
That they can do between them.
Few months of life has he in store
As he to you will tell,
For still, the more he works, the more
Do his weak ankles swell.
My gentle Reader, I perceive
How patiently you've waited,
And now I fear that you expect
Some tale will be related.

O Reader! had you in your mind
Such stores as silent thought can bring,
O gentle Reader! you would find
A tale in everything.
What more I have to say is short,
And you must kindly take it:
It is no tale; but, should you think,
Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

One summer day I chanced to see
This old Man doing all he could
To unearth the root of an old tree,
A stump of rotten wood.
The mattock tottered in his hand;
So vain was his endeavor
That at the root of the old tree
He might have worked forever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,
Give me your tool," to him I said;
And at the word right gladly he
Received my proffered aid.
I struck, and with a single blow
The tangled root I severed,
At which the poor old man so long
And vainly had endeavored.

The tears into his eyes were brought,
And thanks and praises seemed to run
So fast out of his heart, I thought
They never would have done.
—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds
With coldness still returning;
Alas! the gratitude of men
Hath oftener left me mourning.

LUCY GRAY

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:
'Tis 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 a 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.

NUTTING

It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days which cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
I left our Cottage-threshold, sallying forth
With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
A nutting-crook in hand, and turned my steps
Toward the distant woods, a Figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded,
By exhortation of my frugal Dame;
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles,—and, in truth,
More ragged than need was! Among the woods,
And o'er the pathless rocks, I forced my way
Until, at length, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation, but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene!—A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet,—or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.—
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons re-appear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
For ever,—and I saw the sparkling foam,
And with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep,
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Even then, when from the bower I turned away
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky.—
Then, dearest Maiden! move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.
MATTHEW

In the School of Hawkshead is a Tablet, on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the Names of the several Persons who have been Schoolmasters there since the Foundation of the School, with the Time at which they entered upon and quitted their Office. Opposite to one of those Names the Author wrote the following Lines.

If Nature, for a favourite Child,
In thee hath tempered so her clay,
That every hour thy heart runs wild,
Yet never once doth go astray,

Read o'er these lines; and then review
This tablet, that thus humbly rears
In such diversity of hue
Its history of two hundred years.

—When through this little wreck of fame,
Cipher and syllable! thine eye
Has travelled down to Matthew's name,
Pause with no common sympathy.

And, if a sleeping tear should wake,
Then be it neither checked nor stayed:
For Matthew a request I make
Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
Is silent as a standing pool;
Far from the chimney's merry roar,
And murmur of the village school.

The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
Of one tired out with fun and madness;
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
Were tears of light, the dew of gladness.
Yet, sometimes, when the secret cup
Of still and serious thought went round,
It seemed as if he drank it up—
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God’s best earthly mould!
Thou happy Soul! and can it be
That these two words of glittering gold
Are all that must remain of thee?

THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

We walked along, while bright and red
Uprose the morning sun;
And Matthew stopped, he looked and said,
“The will of God be done!”

A village Schoolmaster was he,
With hair of glittering gray;
As blithe a man as you could see
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass
And by the steaming rills,
We travelled merrily, to pass
A day among the hills.

“Our work,” said I, “was well begun;
Then, from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun,
So sad a sigh has brought?”

A second time did Matthew stop;
And fixing still his eye
Upon the eastern mountain-top,
To me he made reply:
"Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left
Full thirty years behind.

"And just above yon slope of corn
Such colours, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother.

"With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave,
And, coming to the church, stopped short
Beside my daughter's grave.

"Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang;—she would have been
A very nightingale.

"Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e'er had loved before.

"And, turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the churchyard yew,
A blooming girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

"A basket on her head she bare;
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

"No fountain from its rocky cave
E'er tripped with foot so free;
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea.
"There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again:
—And did not wish her mine."

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough
Of wilding in his hand.

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 grey-haired man of glee:
"No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears; 
How merrily it goes! 
'Twill 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.

TO JOANNA

Amid the smoke of cities did you pass
The time of early youth; and there you learned,
From years of quiet industry, to love
The living beings by your own fireside,
With such a strong devotion, that your heart
Is slow toward the sympathies of them
Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.
Yet we, who are transgressors in this kind,
Dwelling retired in our simplicity
Among the woods and fields, we love you well, Joanna! and I guess, since you have been So distant from us now for two long years, That you will gladly listen to discourse, However trivial, if you thence are taught That they, with whom you once were happy, talk Familiarly of you and of old times.

While I was seated, now some ten days past, Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop Their ancient neighbour, the old steeple tower, The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by Came forth to greet me; and when he had asked, "How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid! And when will she return to us?" he paused: And, after short exchange of village news, He with grave looks demanded, for what cause, Reviving obsolete idolatry, I, like a Runic Priest, in characters Of formidable size had chiselled out Some uncouth name upon the native rock, Above the Rotha, by the forest side. —Now, by those dear immunities of heart Engendered betwixt malice and true love, I was not loth to be so catechised, And this was my reply:—"As it befel, One summer morning we had walked abroad At break of day, Joanna and myself. —"Twas that delightful season when the broom, Full-flowered, and visible on every steep, Along the copses runs in veins of gold. Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks; And when we came in front of that tall rock Which looks toward the East, I there stopped short, And traced the lofty barrier with my eye From base to summit; such delight I found To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower, That intermixture of delicious hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,
In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart.
—When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again:
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-Crag
Was ready with her cavern; Hammer-Scar,
And the tall Steep of Silver-How, sent forth
A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone:
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew
His speaking trumpet;—back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.
—Now whether (said I to our cordial friend,
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face) this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched
With dreams and visionary impulses
To me alone imparted, sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills:
And, while we both were listening, to my side
The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished
To shelter from some object of her fear.
—And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons
Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
Beneath this rock, at sunrise, on a calm
And silent morning, I sat down, and there,
In memory of affections old and true,
I chiselled out in those rude characters
Joanna's name upon the living stone.
And I, and all who dwell by my fireside,
Have called the lovely rock, 'Joanna's Rock.'
The Fir-Grove Path

When, to the attractions of the busy world
Preferring studious leisure, I had chosen
A habitation in this peaceful Vale,
Sharp season followed of continual storm
In deepest winter; and, from week to week,
Pathway, and lane, and public road, were clogged
With frequent showers of snow. Upon a hill
At a short distance from my cottage, stands
A stately Fir-grove, whither I was wont
To hasten; for I found, beneath the roof
Of that perennial shade, a cloistral place
Of refuge, with an unincumbered floor.
Here, in safe covert, on the shallow snow,
And, sometimes, on a speck of visible earth,
The Redbreast near me hopped; nor was I loth
To sympathise with vulgar coppice Birds
That, for protection from the nipping blast,
Hither repaired.—A single beech-tree grew
Within this grove of firs; and, on the fork
Of that one beech, appeared a thrush’s nest;
A last year’s nest, conspicuously built
At such small elevation from the ground
As gave sure sign that they who in that house
Of nature and of love had made their home
Amid the fir-trees, all the summer long
Dwelt in a tranquil spot. And oftentimes,
A few sheep, stragglers from some mountain-flock,
Would watch my motions with suspicious stare,
From the remotest outskirts of the grove,—
Some nook where they had made their final stand,
Huddling together from two fears—the fear
Of me and of the storm. Full many an hour
Here did I lose. But in this grove the trees
Had been so thickly planted, and had thriven
In such perplexed and intricate array,
That vainly did I seek, between their stems,
A length of open space, where to and fro
My feet might move without concern or care;
And, baffled thus, before the storm relaxed,
I ceased the shelter to frequent,—and prized,
Less than I wished to prize, that calm recess.

The snows dissolved, and genial Spring returned
To clothe the fields with verdure. Other haunts
Meanwhile were mine; till, one bright April day,
By chance retiring from the glare of noon
To this forsaken covert, there I found
A hoary path-way traced between the trees,
And winding on with such an easy line
Along a natural opening, that I stood
Much wondering how I could have sought in vain
For what was now so obvious. To abide,
For an allotted interval of ease,
Beneath my cottage roof, had newly come
From the wild sea a cherished Visitant;¹
And with the sight of this same path—begun,
Begun and ended, in the shady grove,
Pleasant conviction flashed upon my mind
That, to this opportune recess allured,
He had surveyed it with a finer eye,
A heart more wakeful; and had worn the track
By pacing here, unwearied and alone,
In that habitual restlessness of foot
With which the Sailor measures o'er and o'er
His short domain upon the vessel's deck,
While she is travelling through the dreary sea.

When thou hadst quitted Esthwaite's pleasant shore,
And taken thy first leave of those green hills
And rocks that were the play-ground of thy Youth,
Year followed year, my Brother! and we two,
Conversing not, knew little in what mould
Each other's minds were fashioned; and at length, When once again we met in Grasmere Vale, Between us there was little other bond Than common feelings of fraternal love. But thou, a School-boy, to the sea hadst carried Undying recollections; Nature there Was with thee; she, who loved us both, she still Was with thee; and even so didst thou become A *silent* Poet; from the solitude Of the vast sea didst bring a watchful heart Still couchant, an inevitable ear, And an eye practised like a blind man's touch. —Back to the joyless Ocean thou art gone; Nor from this vestige of thy musing hours Could I withhold thy honoured name, and now I love the fir-grove with a perfect love. Thither do I withdraw when cloudless suns Shine hot, or wind blows troublesome and strong: And there I sit at evening, when the steep Of Silver-how, and Grasmere's peaceful Lake, And one green Island, gleam between the stems Of the dark firs, a visionary scene! And, while I gaze upon the spectacle Of clouded splendour, on this dream-like sight Of solemn loveliness, I think on thee, My Brother, and on all which thou hast lost. Nor seldom, if I rightly guess,—while Thou, Muttering the Verses which I muttered first Among the mountains, through the midnight watch Art pacing thoughtfully the Vessel's deck In some far region,—here, while o'er my head, At every impulse of the moving breeze, The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound, Alone I tread this path;—for aught I know, Timing my steps to thine; and, with a store Of undistinguishable sympathies, Mingling most earnest wishes for the day.
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale.  

Note.—This wish was not granted; the lamented Person not long after perished by shipwreck, in discharge of his duty as Commander of the Honourable East India Company's Vessel, the *Earl of Abergavenny.*

**THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET**

Where art thou, my beloved Son,
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?
Oh find me, prosperous or undone!
Or if the grave be now thy bed,
Why am I ignorant of the same
That I may rest; and neither blame
Nor sorrow may attend thy name?

Seven years, alas! to have received
No tidings of an only child—
To have despaired, have hoped, believed,
And been forever more beguiled,—
Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss!
I catch at them, and then I miss;
Was ever darkness like to this?

He was among the prime in worth,
An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred; I sent him forth
Ingenuous, innocent, and bold:
If things ensued that wanted grace
As hath been said, they were not base;
And never blush was on my face.

Ah! little doth the young one dream
When full of play and childish cares,
What power is in his wildest scream
Heard by his mother unawares!
He knows it not, he cannot guess;
Years to a mother bring distress;
But do not make her love the less.

Neglect me! no, I suffered long
From that ill thought; and being blind
Said, "Pride shall help me in my wrong:
Kind mother have I been, as kind
As ever breathed:" and that is true;
I've wet my path with tears like dew,
Weeping for him when no one knew.

My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,
Hopeless of honor and of gain,
Oh! do not dread thy mother's door;
Think not of me with grief and pain:
I now can see with better eyes;
And worldly grandeur I despise
And fortune with her gifts and lies.

Alas! the fowls of heaven have wings,
And blasts of heaven will aid their flight;
They mount—how short a voyage brings
The wanderers back to their delight!
Chains tie us down by land and sea;
And wishes, vain as mine, may be
All that is left to comfort thee.

Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a desert thrown
Inheritest the lion's den;
Or hast been summoned to the deep
Thou, thou, and all thy mates to keep
An incommunicable sleep.

I look for ghosts: but none will force
Their way to me; 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Between the living and the dead;
For surely then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night
With love and longings infinite.

My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass;
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass:
I question things, and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind.

Beyond participation lie
My troubles, and beyond relief:
If any chance to heave a sigh,
They pity me, and not my grief.
Then come to me, my Son, or send
Some tidings that my woes may end!
I have no other earthly friend.

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

(THE LEECH-GATHERER)

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 rain-drops;—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 traveller 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 Sky-lark 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 from all 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 marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified;
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof comes in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befel, 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 grey 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 reposes, 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, his body, limbs, and face,
Upon a long grey 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 the 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."
He answered, while 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 within 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 labour, 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 travelled; 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 demeanour 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!”
YARROW UNVISITED

See the various Poems the Scene of which is laid upon the Banks of the Yarrow; in particular, the exquisite Ballad of Hamilton, beginning—

"Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny Bride,
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome Marrow!"—

From Stirling Castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unravelled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had travelled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "winsome Marrow;"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"Let Yarrow Folk, frae Selkirk Town,
Who have been buying, selling,
Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own;
Each Maiden to her Dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downward with the Tweed,
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

"There's Galla Water, Leader Haughs,
Both lying right before us;
And Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
The Lintwhites sing in chorus;
There's pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

"What's Yarrow but a River bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."
—Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;  
My True-love sighed for sorrow;  
And looked me in the face, to think  
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's Holms,  
And sweet is Yarrow's flowing!  
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock,*  
But we will leave it growing.  
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,  
We'll wander Scotland thorough;  
But, though so near, we will not turn  
Into the Dale of Yarrow.

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake  
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;  
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake  
Float double, swan and shadow!  
We will not see them; will not go,  
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;  
Enough if in our hearts we know  
There's such a place as Yarrow.

"Be Yarrow Stream unseen, unknown!  
It must, or we shall rue it:  
We have a vision of our own;  
Ah! why should we undo it?  
The treasured dreams of times long past,  
We'll keep them, winsome Marrow!  
For when we're there, although 'tis fair,  
'Twill be another Yarrow.

"If Care with freezing years should come,  
And wandering seem but folly,—  
Should we be loth to stir from home,  
And yet be melancholy;

* See Hamilton's Ballad as above.
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny Holms of Yarrow!"

YARROW VISITED,
SEPTEMBER, 1814

And is this—Yarrow?—This the Stream
Of which my fancy cherished,
So faithfully, a waking dream?
An image that hath perished!
O that some Minstrel's harp were near,
To utter notes of gladness,
And chase this silence from the air,
That fills my heart with sadness!

Yet why?—a silvery current flows
With uncontrolled meanderings;
Nor have these eyes by greener hills
Been soothed, in all my wanderings.
And, through her depths, Saint Mary's Lake
Is visibly delighted;
For not a feature of those hills
Is in the mirror slighted.

A blue sky bends o'er Yarrow vale,
Save where that pearly whiteness
Is round the rising sun diffused,
A tender hazy brightness;
Mild dawn of promise! that excludes
All profitless dejection;
Though not unwilling here to admit
A pensive recollection.
Where was it that the famous Flower
Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding?
His bed perchance was yon smooth mound
On which the herd is feeding:
And haply from this crystal pool,
Now peaceful as the morning,
The Water-wraith ascended thrice—
And gave his doleful warning.

Delicious is the Lay that sings
The haunts of happy Lovers,
The path that leads them to the grove,
The leafy grove that covers:
And Pity sanctifies the verse
That paints, by strength of sorrow,
The unconquerable strength of love;
Bear witness, rueful Yarrow!

But thou, that didst appear so fair
To fond imagination,
Dost rival in the light of day
Her delicate creation:
Meek loveliness is round thee spread,
A softness still and holy;
The grace of forest charms decayed,
And pastoral melancholy.

That Region left, the Vale unfolds
Rich groves of lofty stature,
With Yarrow winding through the pomp
Of cultivated nature;
And, rising from those lofty groves,
Behold a Ruin hoary!
The shattered front of Newark’s Towers,
Renowned in Border story.
Fair scenes for childhood's opening bloom,
For sportive youth to stray in;
For manhood to enjoy his strength;
And age to wear away in!
Yon Cottage seems a bower of bliss,
A covert for protection
Of tender thoughts that nestle there,
The brood of chaste affection.

How sweet, on this autumnal day,
The wild-wood fruits to gather,
And on my True-love's forehead plant
A crest of blooming heather!
And what if I enwreathed my own!
'Twere no offence to reason;
The sober Hills thus deck their brows
To meet the wintry season.

I see—but not by sight alone,
Loved Yarrow, have I won thee;
A ray of Fancy still survives—
Her sunshine plays upon thee!
Thy ever-youthful waters keep
A course of lively pleasure;
And gladsome notes my lips can breathe,
Accordant to the measure.

The vapours linger round the Heights,
They melt—and soon must vanish;
One hour is theirs, nor more is mine—
Sad thought, which I would banish,
But that I know, where'er I go,
Thy genuine image, Yarrow!
Will dwell with me—to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow.
LONGER NARRATIVES

RUTH

When Ruth was left half desolate,
Her father took another mate;
And Ruth, not seven years old,
A slighted child, at her own will
Went wandering over dale and hill,
In thoughtless freedom bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw,
And from that oaten pipe could draw
All sounds of winds and floods;
Had built a bower upon the green,
As if she from her birth had been
An infant of the woods.

Beneath her father's roof, alone
She seemed to live; her thoughts her own;
Herself her own delight;
Pleased with herself, nor sad, nor gay;
And, passing thus the livelong day,
She grew to woman's height.

There came a Youth from Georgia's shore—
A military casque he wore,
With splendid feathers drest;
He brought them from the Cherokees;
The feathers nodded in the breeze,
And made a gallant crest.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung:
Ah no! he spake the English tongue,
And bore a soldier's name;
And, when America was free
From battle and from jeopardy,
He 'cross the ocean came.

With hues of genius on his cheek
In finest tones the Youth could speak:
—While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
And streams that murmur as they run,
Had been his dearest joy.

He was a lovely Youth! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And, when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

Among the Indians he had fought
And with him many tales he brought
Of pleasure and of fear;
Such tales as told to any maid
By such a youth, in the green shade,
Were perilous to hear.

He told of girls—a happy rout!
Who quit their fold with dance and shout,
Their pleasant Indian town,
To gather strawberries all day long;
Returning with a choral song
When daylight is gone down.

He spake of plants divine and strange
That every hour their blossoms change,
Ten thousand lovely hues!
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of the bowers
From morn to evening dews.
He told of the magnolia, spread
High as a cloud, high over head!
The cypress and her spire;
—Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem
To set the hills on fire.

The Youth of green savannahs spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds.

And then he said, “How sweet it were
A fisher or a hunter there,
A gardener in the shade,
Still wandering with an easy mind
To build a household fire, and find
A home in every glade!

“What days and what sweet years! Ah me!
Our life were life indeed, with thee
So passed in quiet bliss,
And all the while,” said he, “to know
That we were in a world of woe,
On such an earth as this!”

And then he sometimes interwove
Fond thoughts about a father’s love:
“For there,” said he, “are spun
Around the heart such tender ties,
That our own children to our eyes
Are dearer than the sun.

“Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to hear;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A sylvan huntress at my side,
And drive the flying deer!

"Beloved Ruth!"—No more he said.
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed
A solitary tear:
She thought again—and did agree
With him to sail across the sea,
And drive the flying deer.

“And now, as fitting is and right,
We in the church our faith will plight,
A husband and a wife.”
Even so they did; and I may say
That to sweet Ruth that happy day
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,
Delighted all the while to think
That on those lonesome floods,
And green savannahs, she should share
His board with lawful joy, and bear
His name in the wild woods.

But, as you have before been told,
This Stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,
And with his dancing crest
So beautiful, through savage lands
Had roamed about, with vagrant bands
Of Indians in the West.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of Heaven,
And such impetuous blood.
Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seemed allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,
The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
Fair trees and lovely flowers;
The breezes their own languor lent;
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those gorgeous bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent:
For passions linked to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share
Of noble sentiment.

But ill he lived, much evil saw,
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known;
Deliberately, and undeceived,
Those wild men's vices he received,
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impaired, and he became
The slave of low desires:
A man who without self-control
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the Maiden, day and night
Had loved her, night and morn:
What could he less than love a maid
Whose heart with so much nature played?
So kind and so forlorn!

Sometimes, most earnestly, he said,
"O Ruth! I have been worse than dead;
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain,
Encompassed me on every side
When first, in confidence and pride,
I crossed the Atlantic Main.

"It was a fresh and glorious world,
A banner bright that was unfurled
Before me suddenly:
I looked upon those hills and plains,
And seemed as if let loose from chains,
To live at liberty.

"But wherefore speak of this? For now,
Sweet Ruth! with thee, I know not how,
I feel my spirit burn—
Even as the east when day comes forth;
And, to the west, and south, and north,
The morning doth return."

Full soon that purer mind was gone;
No hope, no wish remained, not one,—
They stirred him now no more;
New objects did new pleasure give,
And once again he wished to live
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,
They for the voyage were prepared,
And went to the sea-shore;
But, when they thither came, the Youth
Deserted his poor Bride, and Ruth
Could never find him more.
"God help thee, Ruth!"—Such pains she had,
That she in half a year was mad,
And in a prison housed;
And there she sang tumultuous songs,
By recollection of her wrongs
To fearful passion roused.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May,
—They all were with her in her cell;
And a wild brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play.

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain,
There came a respite to her pain;
She from her prison fled;
But of the vagrant none took thought;
And where it liked her best she sought
Her shelter and her bread.

Among the fields she breathed again:
The master-current of her brain
Ran permanent and free;
And, coming to the banks of Tone,
There did she rest; and dwell alone
Under the greenwood tree.

The engines of her pain, the tools
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,
And airs that gently stir
The vernal leaves, she loved them still,
Nor ever taxed them with the ill
Which had been done to her.

A barn her winter bed supplies;
But, till the warmth of summer skies
And summer days is gone,  
(And all do in this tale agree)  
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,  
And other home hath none.

An innocent life, yet far astray!  
And Ruth will, long before her day,  
Be broken down and old:  
Sore aches she needs must have! but less  
Of mind, than body's wretchedness,  
From damp, and rain, and cold.

If she is pressed by want of food  
She from her dwelling in the wood  
Repairs to a roadside;  
And there she begs at one steep place,  
Where up and down with easy pace  
The horsemen-travelers ride.

That oaten pipe of hers is mute  
Or thrown away: but with a flute  
Her loneliness she cheers;  
This flute, made of a hemlock stalk,  
At evening in his homeward walk  
The Quantock woodman hears.

I, too, have passed her on the hills  
Setting her little water mills  
By spouts and fountains wild—  
Such small machinery as she turned  
Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,—  
A young and happy child!

Farewell! and when thy days are told,  
Ill-fated Ruth! in hallowed mould  
Thy corpse shall buried be;  
For thee a funeral bell shall ring,  
And all the congregation sing  
A Christian psalm for thee.
LONGER NARRATIVES

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous Brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey hither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that place a story appertains,
Which, though it be ungarnished with events,
Is not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his Shepherd’s calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of Bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!"
And, truly, at all times, the storm—that drives
The traveller to a shelter—summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him and left him on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd’s thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; the hills, which he so oft
Had climbed with vigorous steps; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts,
The certainty of honourable gain,
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely Matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,
That small for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in Shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to their cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk,
Sat round their basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when their meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
That in our ancient uncouth country style
Did with a huge projection overbrow
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left the couple neither gay perhaps
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year
There by the light of this old lamp they sat,
Father and Son, while late into the night
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, North and South,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the Lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named The Evening Star.

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
LONGER NARRATIVES

Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Blind spirit, which is in the blood of all—
Than that a child more than all other gifts,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle with a woman's gentle hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love,
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Had work by his own door, or when he sat
With sheep before him on his shepherd's stool,
Beneath that large old oak, which near their door
Stood,—and, from its enormous breadth of shade
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The Clipping Tree, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect Shepherd's Staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights,
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the Old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means,—
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him,—and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had gathered so much strength
That he could look his trouble in the face,
It seemed that his sole refuge was to sell
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again,
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him—but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies, and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
May come again to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"

At this the Old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the Lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas: where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The Old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme,
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger,—but this hope is a good hope.
—Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he could go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the two last nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the Old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked;
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped
And thus the Old Man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should speak
Of things thou canst not know of.—After thou
First camest into the world—as oft befalls
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The Old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould.
I wished that thou shouldst live the life they lived,
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go.” At this the Old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
“ This was a work for us; and now, my Son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands,
Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part;
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes.—It should be so—Yes—yes—
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke; thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love: when thou art gone
What will be left to us!—But, I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
Mayst bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou returnest, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us—But, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The Old Man’s grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his son, he kissèd him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow’s dawn the Boy
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the Old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up towards the sun,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labour for his Sheep,
And for the land his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the Old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the Evening Star
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

THE BROTHERS

"These Tourists, Heaven preserve us! needs must live
A profitable life: some glance along,
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,
And they were butterflies to wheel about
Long as the summer lasted: some, as wise,
Perched on the forehead of a jutting crag,
Pencil in hand and book upon the knee,
Will look and scribble, scribble on and look,
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,
Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.
But, for that moping Son of Idleness,
Why can he tarry yonder?—In our church-yard
Is neither epitaph nor monument,
Tombstone nor name—only the turf we tread
And a few natural graves." To Jane, his wife,
Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.
It was a July evening; and he sate
Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves
Of his old cottage,—as it chanced, that day,
Employed in winter's work. Upon the stone
His Wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,
While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,
He fed the spindle of his youngest Child,
Who turned her large round wheel in the open air
With back and forward steps. Towards the field
In which the Parish Chapel stood alone,
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent
Many a long look of wonder: and at last,
Risen from his seat beside the snow-white ridge
Of carded wool which the old man had piled
He laid his implements with gentle care,
Each in the other locked; and, down the path
That from his cottage to the church-yard led,
He took his way, impatient to accost
The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,
A Shepherd-lad;—who ere his sixteenth year
Had left that calling, tempted to entrust
His expectations to the fickle winds
And perilous waters,—with the mariners
A fellow mariner,—and so had fared
Through twenty seasons; but he had been reared
Among the mountains, and he in his heart
Was half a Shepherd on the stormy seas.
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds
Of caves and trees:—and, when the regular wind
Between the tropics filled the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless Main, he, in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze;
And, while the broad green wave and sparkling foam
Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains,—saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country gray
Which he himself had worn.

And now, at last,
From perils manifold, with some small wealth
Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian Isles,
To his paternal home he is returned,
With a determined purpose to resume
The life he had lived there; both for the sake
Of many darling pleasures, and the love
Which to an only brother he has borne
In all his hardships, since that happy time
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two
Were brother Shepherds on their native hills.
—They were the last of all their race; and now,
When Leonard had approached his home, his heart
Failed in him; and, not venturing to enquire
Tidings of one whom he so dearly loved,
Towards the church-yard he had turned aside;
That, as he knew in what particular spot
His family were laid, 'e thence might learn
If still his Brother lived, or to the file
Another grave was added.—He had found
Another grave,—near which a full half-hour
He had remained; but, as he gazed, there grew
Such a confusion in his memory,
That he began to doubt; and hope was his
That he had seen this heap of turf before,—
That it was not another grave; but one
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walked
Through fields which once had been well known to him:
And oh what joy the recollection now
Sent to his heart! He lifted up his eyes,
And, looking round, imagined that he saw
Strange alteration wrought on every side
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,
And everlasting hills themselves were changed.
By this the Priest, who down the field had come, 
Unseen by Leonard, at the church-yard gate 
Stopped short,—and thence, at leisure, limb by limb 
Perused him with a gay complacency. 
Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself, 
’Tis one of those who needs must leave the path 
Of the world’s business to go wild alone: 
His arms have a perpetual holiday; 
The happy man will creep about the fields, 
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring 
Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles 
Into his face, until the setting sun 
Write Fool upon his forehead. Planted thus 
Beneath a shed that over-arched the gate 
Of this rude church-yard, till the stars appeared 
The good Man might have communed with himself, 
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave, 
Approached; he recognised the Priest at once, 
And, after greetings interchanged, and given 
By Leonard to the Vicar as to one 
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

LEONARD

You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life: 
Your years make up one peaceful family; 
And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come 
And welcome gone, they are so like each other, 
They cannot be remembered? Scarce a funeral 
Comes to this church-yard once in eighteen months; 
And yet, some changes must take place among you: 
And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks, 
Can trace the finger of mortality, 
And see, that with our threescore years and ten 
We are not all that perish.—I remember, 
(For many years ago I passed this road) 
There was a foot-way all along the fields 
By the brook-side—’tis gone—and that dark cleft!
To me it does not seem to wear the face
Which then it had.

PRIEST

Nay, Sir, for aught I know,
That chasm is much the same—

LEONARD

But, surely, yonder—

PRIEST

Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend
That does not play you false.—On that tall pike
(It is the loneliest place of all these hills)
There were two Springs which bubbled side by side,
As if they had been made that they might be
Companions for each other: the huge crag
Was rent with lightning—one hath disappeared;
The other, left behind, is flowing still.
For accidents and changes such as these,
We want not store of them;—a water-spout
Will bring down half a mountain; what a feast
For folks that wander up and down like you,
To see an acre’s breadth of that wide cliff
One roaring cataract!—a sharp May-storm
Will come with loads of January snow,
And in one night send twenty score of sheep
To feed the ravens; or a Shepherd dies
By some untoward death among the rocks:
The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge—
A wood is felled:—and then for our own homes!
A child is born or christened, a field ploughed,
A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
The old house-clock is decked with a new face;
And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates
To chronicle the time, we all have here
A pair of diaries,—one serving, Sir,
For the whole dale, and one for each fireside—
Yours was a stranger’s judgment: for historians,
Commend me to these valleys!

LEONARD

Yet your Church-yard

Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,
To say that you are heedless of the past:
An orphan could not find his mother’s grave:
Here’s neither head nor foot stone, plate of brass,
Cross-bones nor skull,—type of our earthly state
Nor emblem of our hopes: the dead man’s home
Is but a fellow to that pasture-field.

PRIEST

Why, there, Sir, is a thought that’s new to me!
The stone-cutters, ’tis true, might beg their bread
If every English church-yard were like ours;
Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth:
We have no need of names and epitaphs;
We talk about the dead by our firesides.
And then, for our immortal part! we want
No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale:
The thought of death sits easy on the man
Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

LEONARD

Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other’s thoughts
Possess a kind of second life: no doubt
You, Sir, could help me to the history
Of half these graves?
For eight-score winters past,
With what I've witnessed, and with what I've heard,
Perhaps I might; and, on a winter-evening,
If you were seated at my chimney's nook,
By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,
We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round;
Yet all in the broad highway of the world.
Now there's a grave—your foot is half upon it,—
It looks just like the rest; and yet that man
Died broken-hearted.

'Tis a common case.
We'll take another: who is he that lies
Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves?
It touches on that piece of native rock
Left in the church-yard wall.

That's Walter Ewbank.
He had as white a head and fresh a cheek
As ever were produced by youth and age
Engendering in the blood of hale four-score.
Through five long generations had the heart
Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds
Of their inheritance, that single cottage—
You see it yonder!—and those few green fields.
They toiled and wrought, and still, from sire to son,
Each struggled, and each yielded as before
A little—yet a little—and old Walter,
They left to him the family heart, and land
With other burthens than the crop it bore.
Year after year the old man still kept up
A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond,  
Interest, and mortgages; at last he sank,  
And went into his grave before his time.  
Poor Walter! whether it was care that spurred him  
God only knows, but to the very last  
He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale:  
His pace was never that of an old man:  
I almost see him tripping down the path  
With his two grandsons after him:—but you,  
Unless our Landlord be your host to-night,  
Have far to travel,—and on these rough paths  
Even in the longest day of midsummer—

LEONARD

But those two Orphans!

PRIEST

Orphans!—Such they were—  
Yet not while Walter lived:—for, though their parents  
Lay buried side by side as now they lie,  
The old man was a father to the boys,  
Two fathers in one father: and if tears,  
Shed when he talked of them where they were not,  
And hauntings from the infirmity of love,  
Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart,  
This old Man, in the day of his old age,  
Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir,  
To hear a stranger talking about strangers,  
Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred!  
Ay—you may turn that way—it is a grave  
Which will bear looking at.

LEONARD

These Boys—I hope  
They loved this good old man?
They did—and truly:

But that was what we almost overlooked,
They were such darlings of each other. For,
Though from their cradles they had lived with Walter,
The only kinsman near them, and though he
Inclined to them by reason of his age,
With a more fond, familiar tenderness,
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare,
And it all went into each other’s hearts.
Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,
Was two years taller: ’twas a joy to see,
To hear, to meet them!—From their house the school
Is distant three short miles—and in the time
Of storm and thaw, when every water-course
And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed
Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,
Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,
Would Leonard then, when elder boys perhaps
Remained at home, go staggering through the fords,
Bearing his brother on his back. I have seen him,
On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,
Ay, more than once I have seen him, mid-leg deep,
Their two books lying both on a dry stone,
Upon the hither side: and once I said,
As I remember, looking round these rocks
And hills on which we all of us were born,
That God who made the great book of the world
Would bless such piety—

LEONARD

It may be then—

PRIEST

Never did worthier lads break English bread;
The finest Sunday that the Autumn saw
With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,
Could never keep these boys away from church,
Or tempt them to an hour of Sabbath breach.
Leonard and James! I warrant, every corner
Among these rocks, and every hollow place
Where foot could come, to one or both of them
Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there.
Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills;
They played like two young ravens on the crags:
Then they would write, ay and speak too, as well
As many of their betters—and for Leonard!
The very night before he went away,
In my own house I put into his hand
A Bible, and I'd wager house and field
That, if he is alive, he has it yet.

LEONARD

It seems, these Brothers have not lived to be
A comfort to each other—

PRIEST

That they might
Live to such end, is what both old and young
In this our valley all of us have wished,
And what, for my part, I have often prayed:
But Leonard—

LEONARD

Then James still is left among you?

PRIEST

'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking:
They had an uncle;—he was at that time
A thriving man, and trafficked on the seas:
And, but for that same uncle, to this hour
Leonard had never handled rope or shroud:
For the boy loved the life which we lead here;
And though of unripe years, a stripling only,
His soul was knit to this his native soil.
But, as I said, old Walter was too weak
To strive with such a torrent; when he died,
The estate and house were sold; and all their sheep,
A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know,
Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years:—
Well—all was gone, and they were destitute.
And Leonard, chiefly for his Brother's sake,
Resolved to try his fortune on the seas.
Twelve years are past since we had tidings from him.
If there were one among us who had heard
That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,
From the great Gavel, down by Leeza's Banks,
And down the Enna, far as Egremont,
The day would be a very festival;
And those two bells of ours, which there you see—
Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir!
This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him—
Living or dead.—When last we heard of him,
He was in slavery among the Moors
Upon the Barbary Coast.—'Twas not a little
That would bring down his spirit; and no doubt,
Before it ended in his death, the Youth
Was sadly crossed—Poor Leonard! when we parted,
He took me by the hand, and said to me,
If e'er he should grow rich, he would return,
To live in peace upon his father's land,
And lay his bones among us.

LEONARD

If that day
Should come, 'twould needs be a glad day for him;
He would himself, no doubt, be happy then
As any that should meet him—
PRIEST

Happy! Sir—

LEONARD

You said his kindred all were in their graves,
And that he had one Brother—

PRIEST

That is but
A fellow tale of sorrow. From his youth
James, though not sickly, yet was delicate;
And Leonard being always by his side
Had done so many offices about him,
That, though he was not of a timid nature,
Yet still the spirit of a mountain boy
In him was somewhat checked; and, when his Brother
Was gone to sea, and he was left alone,
The little colour that he had was soon
Stolen from his cheek; he drooped, and pined, and pined—

LEONARD

But these are all the graves of full-grown men!

PRIEST

Ay, Sir, that passed away: we took him to us;
He was the Child of all the dale—he lived
Three months with one, and six months with another;
And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love:
And many, many happy days were his.
But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief
His absent Brother still was at his heart.
And, when he dwelt beneath our roof, we found
(A practice till this time unknown to him)
That often, rising from his bed at night,
He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping
He sought his Brother Leonard.—You are moved!
Forgive me, Sir: before I spoke to you,
I judged you most unkindly.

LEONARD
But this Youth,
How did he die at last?

PRIEST
One sweet May morning,
(It will be twelve years since when Spring returns)
He had gone forth among the new-dropped lambs,
With two or three companions, whom their course
Of occupation led from height to height
Under a cloudless sun, till he, at length,
Through weariness, or, haply, to indulge
The humour of the moment, lagged behind.
You see yon precipice;—it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called The Pillar.
Upon its aery summit crowned with heath,
The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades,
Lay stretched at ease; but, passing by the place
On their return, they found that he was gone.
No ill was feared; but one of them by chance
Entering, when evening was far spent, the house
Which at that time was James's home, there learned
That nobody had seen him all that day:
The morning came, and still he was unheard of:
The neighbours were alarmed, and to the brook
Some hastened, some towards the lake: ere noon
They found him at the foot of that same rock
Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after
I buried him, poor Youth, and there he lies!

LEONARD

And that then is his grave!—Before his death
You say that he saw many happy years?

PRIEST

Ay, that he did—

LEONARD

And all went well with him?—

PRIEST

If he had one, the youth had twenty homes.

LEONARD

And you believe, then, that his mind was easy?—

PRIEST

Yes, long before he died, he found that time
Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless
His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless fortune,
He talked about him with a cheerful love.

LEONARD

He could not come to an unhallowed end!

PRIEST

Nay, God forbid!—You recollect I mentioned
A habit which disquietude and grief
Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down
Upon the grass,—and waiting for his comrades,
He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep
He to the margin of the precipice
Had walked, and from the summit had fallen headlong.
And so, no doubt, he perished: at the time,
We guess, that in his hand he must have held
His Shepherd's staff; for midway in the cliff
It had been caught; and there for many years
It hung—and mouldered there.

The Priest here ended—
The Stranger would have thanked him, but he felt
A gushing from his heart, that took away
The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence;
And Leonard, when they reached the church-yard gate,
As the Priest lifted up the latch turned round,—
And, looking at the grave, he said, "My Brother!"
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,
Pointing towards the Cottage, he entreated
That Leonard would partake his homely fare:
The other thanked him with a fervent voice:
But added, that, the evening being calm,
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reached a grove
That overhung the road; he there stopped short,
And, sitting down beneath the trees, reviewed
All that the Priest had said: his early years
Were with him in his heart: his cherished hopes,
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
All pressed on him with such a weight, that now,
This vale, where he had been so happy, seemed
A place in which he could not bear to live:
So he relinquished all his purposes.
He travelled on to Egremont: and thence,
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,
Reminding him of what had passed between them;  
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven.  
That it was from the weakness of his heart  
He had not dared to tell him who he was.  

This done, he went on shipboard, and is now  
A seaman, a gray-headed Mariner.  

LAODAMIA¹  

"With sacrifice, before the rising morn  
Performed, my slaughtered Lord have I required;  
And in thick darkness, amid shades forlorn,  
Him of the infernal Gods have I desired:  
Celestial pity I again implore:—  
Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore!"

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.

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 mould?  
It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He!  
And a God leads him, wingèd Mercury!

Mild Hermes spake—and touched her with his wand  
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:
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.

"Protesilaos, 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 appal me have the Gods bestowed
This precious boon; and blest a sad abode."

"Great Jove, Laodamia! doth not leave
His gifts imperfect:—Spectre though I be,
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive;
But in reward of thy fidelity.
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:
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,
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,
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
That thou should'st cheat the malice of the grave:
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

"No Spectre 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\(^2\) threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

"This visage tells thee that my doom is past:
Know, virtue were not virtue, if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish.—Earth destroys
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;
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
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 favourite 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 colour 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 unsigh'd for, and the future sure;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued;

Of all that is most beauteous—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 counsel 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
LONGER NARRATIVES

The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

"Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife!
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
The paths which we have 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;
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our blest re-union in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathised;
Be thy affections raised and solemnised.

Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
Towards 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 re-appears!
Round the dear Shade she would have clung—'tis 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,
He through the portal takes his silent way,
And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse she lay.
Ah, judge her gently who so deeply loved!
Her, who in reason's spite, yet without crime,
Was in a trance of passion thus removed;
Delivered from the galling yoke of time
And these frail elements—to 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!
LYRICS

A lyric is a brief poem conveying a single emotional impression. Usually it presents the poet’s personal feelings or views, as in the Lines Written in Early Spring (page 100), though it may deal with descriptive or narrative effects in a personal way, as in The Reverie of Poor Susan (below), or The Sparrow’s Nest (page 104). The term has long been disassociated from the old idea of poetry intended to be sung.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears, Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years: Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment; what ails her? She sees A mountain ascending, a vision of trees; Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide, And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale, Down which she so often has tripped with her pail; And a single small Cottage, a nest like a dove’s, The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven: but they fade, The mist and the river, the hill and the shade: The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise, And the colours have all passed away from her eyes.
LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING

I heard a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sate reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopped and played;
Their thoughts I cannot measure:—
But the least motion which they made,
It seemed a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

From Heaven if this belief be sent,
If such be Nature's holy plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?
Strange fits of passion have I known: ¹
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befell.

When she I loved looked every day
Fresh as a rose in June,
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an evening-moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea;
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot
Came near, and nearer still.

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon.

My horse moved on, hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage-roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped.

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"
She dwelt among the untrodden ways
    Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise,
    And very few to love:

A violet by a mossy stone
    Half-hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
    Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
    When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
    The difference to me!

I traveled among unknown men,
    In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
    What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
    Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
    To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
    The joy of my desire;
And she I cherished turned her wheel
    Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
    The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field
    That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

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.

A slumber did my spirit seal;
I had no human fears:
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

THE SPARROW'S NEST

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight.
I started—seeming to espy
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My Sister Emmeline ² and I
Together visited.
LYRICS

She looked at it as if she feared it;
Still wishing, dreading, to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years
Was with me when a Boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
And love, and thought, and joy.

LOUISA

AFTER ACCOMPANYING HER ON A MOUNTAIN EXCURSION

I met Louisa in the shade,
And, having seen that lovely Maid,
Why should I fear to say
That, nymph-like, she is fleet and strong,
And down the rocks can leap along
Like rivulets in May?

And she hath smiles to earth unknown;
Smiles, that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes.

She loves her fire, her cottage-home;
Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
In weather rough and bleak;
And, when against the wind she strains,
Oh! might I kiss the mountain rains
That sparkle on her cheek.

Take all that's mine "beneath the moon,"
If I with her but half a noon
May sit beneath the walls
Of some old cave, or mossy nook,
When up she winds along the brook
To hunt the waterfalls.

TO THE DAISY

With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Sweet Daisy! oft 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;
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!

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.
TO A BUTTERFLY

I've watched you now a full half-hour,
Self-poised upon that yellow flower;
And, little Butterfly! indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed.
How motionless!—not frozen seas
More motionless! and then
What joy awaits you, when the breeze
Hath found you out among the trees,
And calls you forth again!

This plot of orchard-ground is ours;
My trees they are, my Sister's flowers;
Here rest your wings when they are weary;
Here lodge as in a sanctuary!
Come often to us, fear no wrong;
Sit near us on the bough!
We'll talk of sunshine and of song;
And summer days, when we were young;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now.

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 listen'd 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 blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

**THE GREEN LINNET**

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array
Presiding Spirit here to-day
Dost lead the revels of the May;
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment;
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair;
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives—
A Brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes;
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
While fluttering in the bushes.
TO A HIGHLAND GIRL AT INVERSNEYDE,  
UPON LOCH LOMOND

Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower  
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!  
Twice seven consenting years have shed  
Their utmost bounty on thy head:  
And these gray rocks, that household lawn,  
Those trees—a veil just half withdrawn,  
This fall of water that doth make  
A murmur near the silent lake,  
This little bay, a quiet road  
That holds in shelter thy Abode;  
In truth together ye do seem  
Like something fashioned in a dream;  
Such Forms as from their covert peep  
When earthly cares are laid asleep!  
But, O fair Creature! in the light  
Of common day, so heavenly bright,  
I bless Thee, Vision as thou art,  
I bless thee with a human heart;  
God shield thee to thy latest years!  
Thee neither know I nor thy peers:  
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray  
For thee when I am far away;  
For never saw I mien, or face,  
In which more plainly I could trace  
Benignity and home-bred sense  
Ripening in perfect innocence.  
Here scattered, like a random seed,  
Remote from men, Thou dost not need  
The embarrassed look of shy distress,  
And maidenly shamefacedness:  
Thou wear’st upon thy forehead clear  
The freedom of a Mountaineer:
A face with gladness overspread;
Soft smiles, by human kindness bred;
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach
Of thy few words of English speech:
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind—
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful?
O happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell;
Adopt your homely ways, and dress,
A Shepherd, thou a Shepherdess!
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality:
Thou art to me but as a wave
Of the wild sea: and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighborhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see!
Thy elder Brother I would be,
Thy Father—anything to thee.

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place:
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompense.
In spots like these it is we prize
Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes:
Then why should I be loth to stir?
I feel this place was made for her;
To give new pleasure like the past,  
Continued long as life shall last.  
Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,  
Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part;  
For I, methinks, till I grow old  
As fair before me shall behold  
As I do now, the cabin small,  
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;  
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

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;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chant  
So sweetly to reposing bands  
Of Travellers 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 till I had my fill,
And when I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

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 Traveller 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 an angel light.

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  
Out-did 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 A SKY-LARK

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 wouldst be loth
To be such a traveller 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.
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 ——

Look at the fate of summer flowers,
Which blow at daybreak, droop ere evensong;
And, grieved for their brief date, confess that ours,
Measured by what we are and ought to be,
Measured by all that, trembling, we foresee,
Is not so long!

If human Life do pass away,
Perishing yet more swiftly than the flower,
If we are creatures of a winter's day;
What space hath Virgin's beauty to disclose
Her sweets, and triumph o'er the breathing rose?
Not even an hour!
The deepest grove whose foliage hid
The happiest lovers Arcady might boast,
Could not the entrance of this thought forbid:
O be thou wise as they, soul-gifted Maid!
Nor rate too high what must so quickly fade,
    So soon be lost.

Then shall love teach some virtuous Youth
"To draw, out of the object of his eyes,"
The while on thee they gaze in simple truth,
Hues more exalted, "a refinèd Form,"
That dreads not age, nor suffers from the worm,
    And never dies.

TO A SKYLARK

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!

To the last point of vision, and beyond
Mount, daring warbler!—that love-prompted strain
—'Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond—
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain:
Yet might'st thou seem, proud privilege! to sing
All independent of the leafy Spring.⁵

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.
THE PRIMROSE OF THE ROCK

A Rock there is whose homely front
   The passing traveller slights;
Yet there the glow-worms hang their lamps,
   Like stars, at various heights;
And one coy Primrose to that Rock
   The vernal breeze invites.

What hideous warfare hath been waged,
   What kingdoms overthrown,
Since first I spied that Primrose-tuft
   And marked it for my own;
A lasting link in Nature's chain
   From highest heaven let down!

The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
   Their fellowship renew;
The stems are faithful to the root,
   *That worketh out of view;
And to the rock the root adheres
   In every fibre true.

Close clings to earth the living rock,
   Though threatening still to fall;
The earth is constant to her sphere;
   And God upholds them all:
So blooms this lonely Plant, nor dreads
   Her annual funeral.

Here closed the meditative strain;
   But air breathed soft that day,
The hoary mountain-heights were cheered,
   The sunny vale looked gay;
And to the Primrose of the Rock
   I gave this after-lay.
I sang—Let myriads of bright flowers,
   Like Thee, in field and grove
Revive unenvied;—mightier far
   Than tremblings that reprove
Our vernal tendencies to hope
   Is God's redeeming love;

That love which changed—for wan disease
   For sorrow that had bent
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
   Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
   To types beneficent.

Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
   The reasoning Sons of Men,
From one oblivious winter called
   Shall rise, and breathe again;
And in eternal summer lose
   Our threescore years and ten.

To humbleness of heart descends
   This prescience from on high,
The faith that elevates the just,
   Before and when they die;
And makes each soul a separate heaven,
   A court for Deity.
REFLECTIVE AND DIDACTIC POEMS

THERE WAS A BOY

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, Ye Cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him.—And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of mirth and jocund din! And, when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born: the grassy church-yard hangs
Upon a slope above the village-school;  
And, through that church-yard when my way has led  
At evening, I believe that oftentimes  
A long half-hour together I have stood  
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies!

**LINES,**

**COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR**

**JULY 13, 1798**

Five years have past; 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.*—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  
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb  
The wild green landscape. Once again I see  
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
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.

* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.
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 burthen 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 colours 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,
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
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
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 worshipper 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!

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS^2

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE IMAGINATION
IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
And givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain,
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul
Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man,
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature; purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear,—until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon; and mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills, I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
'Twas mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons:—happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
It was a time of rapture!—Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Meanwhile the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star;
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebleer, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

CHARACTER OF THE HAPPY WARRIOR

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 endeavours 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 skilful 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.
—'Tis 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 labours 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 honourable 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 honours, 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 gentle 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:—
'Tis, 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
For ever, and to noble deeds give birth,
Or he must go to dust 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.
EVENING VOLUNTARY

Not in the lucid intervals of life
That come but as a curse to party-strife;
Not in some hour when Pleasure with a sigh
Of languor puts his rosy garland by;
Not in the breathing-times of that poor slave
Who daily piles up wealth in Mammon’s cave—
Is Nature felt, or can be; nor do words,
Which practised talent readily affords,
Prove that her hand has touched responsive chords;
Nor has her gentle beauty power to move
With genuine rapture and with fervent love
The soul of Genius, if he dare to take
Life’s rule from passion craved for passion’s sake;
Untaught that meekness is the cherished bent
Of all the truly great and all the innocent.

But who is innocent? By grace divine,
Not otherwise, O Nature! we are thine,
Through good and evil thine, in just degree
Of rational and manly sympathy.
To all that Earth from pensive hearts is stealing,
And Heaven is now to gladdened eyes revealing,
Add every charm the Universe can show
Through every change its aspects undergo—
Care may be respited, but not repealed;
No perfect cure grows on that bounded field.
Vain is the pleasure, a false calm the peace,
If He, through whom alone our conflicts cease,
Our virtuous hopes without relapse advance,
Come not to speed the Soul’s deliverance;
To the distempered Intellect refuse
His gracious help, or give what we abuse.
SONNETS

A sonnet is a poem of precise plan, dealing formally with a single idea. Its length is always fourteen lines, and its rhyme-scheme is generally either one of two patterns. The first, which Wordsworth used, is the Italian or (from its great exponent, Petrarch) Petrarchan; the second is the Elizabethan, or Shaksperean, known almost wholly in England, and notably different in effect.

The rhyme-scheme of the Italian sonnet is as follows:

\[ a \ b \ b \ a, \ a \ b \ b \ a, \ c \ d \ c, \ d \ c \ d. \]

It will be seen that the first eight lines (the octave) appear as two identically rhymed sets of four lines each (the quatrains). The rhyme-pattern of the last six lines (the sestet) may vary considerably from the model given above, and may employ three instead of two rhymes.

The division into octave and sestet suggests the use of the octave for formulating an idea, and of the sestet for concluding it or commenting upon it. In the Italian usage this practice was closely followed; but English poets, including Milton and Wordsworth, have treated the form with greater freedom as to its organic division. That is, with them the break in the formal treatment of the theme frequently does not coincide exactly with the transition from octave to sestet. The second, third, and fourth examples in the following pages, however, show the sonnet in very nearly its typical Italian form.

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room,
And hermits are contented with their cells,
And students with their pensive citadels:
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest Peak of Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

ADMONITION

Intended more particularly for the perusal of those who may have happened to be enamoured of some beautiful place of Retreat, in the Country of the Lakes.

Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye!
—The lovely Cottage in the guardian nook
Hath stirred thee deeply; with its own dear brook,
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!
But covet not the Abode;—forbear to sigh,
As many do, repining while they look;
Intruders—who would tear from Nature's book
This precious leaf, with harsh impiety.
Think what the Home must be if it were thine,
Even thine, though few thy wants!—Roof, window,
    door,
The very flowers are sacred to the Poor;
The roses to the porch which they entwine.
Yea, all, that now enchants thee, from the day
On which it should be touched, would melt away.

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've thought of all by turns, and yet do 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, blessèd barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

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 is on 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.

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 Proteus¹ rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton² blow his wreathed horn.
COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE NEAR CALAIS,

AUGUST, 1802

Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
Star of my Country!—on the horizon's brink
Thou hангest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England's bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
Shouldst be my Country's emblem; and shouldst wink,
Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, it is England; there it lies.
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory! I with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,

SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

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, theaters, 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!
ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

Once did She hold the gorgeous East in fee
And was the safeguard of the West; the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free;
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay,—
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great is passed away.

THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJUGATION OF SWITZERLAND

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought’st against him,—but hast vainly striven:
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.
—Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft;
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left—
For, high-soul’d Maid, what sorrow would it be
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful Voice be heard by Thee!
O Friend! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
To think that now our Life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

LONDON, 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
Pure as the naked 'eavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.
When I have borne in memory what has tamed
Great nations; how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
The student's bower for gold,—some fears unnamed
I had, my Country!—am I to be blamed?
Now, when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men;
And I by my affection was beguiled:
What wonder if a Poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child!

PERSONAL TALK

I am not One who much or oft delight
To season my fireside with personal talk,—
Of friends, who live within an easy walk,
Or neighbours, daily, weekly, in my sight:
And, for my chance-acquaintance, ladies bright,
Sons, mothers, maidens withering on the stalk,
These all wear out of me, like Forms with chalk
Painted on rich men's floors for one feast-night.
Better than such discourse doth silence long,
Long, barren silence, square with my desire;
To sit without emotion, hope, or aim,
In the loved presence of my cottage-fire,
And listen to the flapping of the flame,
Or kettle whispering its faint undersong.
Surprised by joy—impatient as the Wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee—deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind—
But how could I forget thee? Through what power
Even for the least division of an hour
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss!—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

Look now on that Adventurer who hath paid
His vows to Fortune; who, in cruel slight
Of virtuous hope, of liberty, and right,
Hath followed wheresoe'er a way was made
By the blind Goddess,—ruthless, undismayed;
And so hath gained at length a prosperous height,
Round which the elements of worldly might
Beneath his haughty feet, like clouds, are laid.
O joyless power that stands by lawless force!
Curses are his dire portion, scorn, and hate,
Internal darkness and unquiet breath;
And, if old judgments keep their sacred course,
Him from that height shall Heaven precipitate
By violent and ignominious death.
I watch, and long have watched, with calm regret
Yon slowly-sinking star—immortal Sire
(So might he seem) of all the glittering quire!
Blue ether still surrounds him—yet—and yet;
But now the horizon’s rocky parapet
Is reached, where, forfeiting his bright attire,
He burns—transmuted to a sullen fire,
That droops and dwindles—and the appointed debt
To the flying moments paid, is seen no more.
Angels and gods! we struggle with our fate,
While health, power, glory, pitifully decline,
Depressed and then extinguished: and our state
In this, how different, lost Star, from thine,
That no to-morrow s’all our beams restore!

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.
ODES

The ode, in English use, is hard to define as a poetic medium of either fixed form or purpose. It falls, however, within the limits of lyric length, and has always a subject-matter of superior dignity and seriousness. The phrase, "a poetic oration," probably describes it as adequately as a brief definition can.

ODE TO DUTY

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eò perductus, ut non tantum rectè facere possim, sed nisi rectè facere non possim."¹

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:
Long may the kindly impulse last!
But Thou, if they should totter, teach them to stand fast!

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 unwisely 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 reposed 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.

Yet not the less would I throughout
Still act according to the voice
Of my own wish; and feel past doubt
That my submissiveness was choice:
Not seeking in the school of pride
For "precepts over-dignified,"
Denial and restraint I prize
No farther than they breed a second Will more wise.

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!

ODE TO LycORIS

MAY, 1817

I

An age hath been when Earth was proud 
Of lustre too intense 
To be sustained; and Mortals bowed 
The front in self-defence. 
Who then, if Dian's crescent gleamed, 
Or Cupid's sparkling arrow streamed 
While on the wing the Urchin played, 
Could fearlessly approach the shade? 
—Enough for one soft vernal day. 
If I, a bard of ebbing time, 
And nurtured in a fickle clime, 
May haunt this hornèd bay; 
Whose amorous water multiplies 
The flitting halcyon's vivid dyes; 
And smooths her liquid breast—to show 
These swan-like specks of mountain snow. 
White as the pair that slid along the plains 
Of Heaven, when Venus held the reins!
In youth we love the darksome lawn
Brushed by the owlet's wing;
Then, Twilight is preferred to Dawn,
And Autumn to the Spring.
Sad fancies do we then affect,
In luxury of disrespect
To our own prodigal excess
Of too familiar happiness.
Lycoris (if such name befit
Thee, thee my life's celestial sign!)
When Nature marks the year's decline,
Be ours to welcome it;
Pleased with the harvest hope that runs
Before the path of milder suns;
Pleased while the sylvan world displays
Its ripeness to the feeding gaze;
Pleased when the sullen winds resound the knell
Of the resplendent miracle.

But something whispers to my heart
That, as we downward tend,
Lycoris! life requires an art
To which our souls must bend;
A skill—to balance and supply;
And, ere the flowing fount be dry,
As soon it must, a sense to sip,
Or drink, with no fastidious lip.
Then welcome, above all, the Guest
Whose smiles, diffused o'er land and sea,
Seem to recall the Deity
Of youth into the breast;
May pensive Autumn ne'er present
A claim to her disparagement!
While blossoms and the budding spray
Inspire us in our own decay;
Still, as we nearer draw to life's dark goal,
Be hopeful Spring the favourite of the Soul!

ODE, ON INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

FROM RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled 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 past 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 fulness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
O evil day! if I were sullen
While the 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?

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.

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-learnèd 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 for ever 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 realised,
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 endeavour,
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 for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour 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.

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Think not of 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 colouring 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.
PASSAGES FROM THE PRELUDE AND THE EXCURSION

The Prelude was written as an introduction to a long philosophical poem, The Recluse, which was never completed. The design of this poem is given in Wordsworth's introduction to The Excursion (published in 1814). The Excursion was to have been the second of the three parts of The Recluse. Of the first and third parts, only a single book of the first was finished, and this was not printed until long after Wordsworth's death. The Prelude, although composed from 1799 to 1805, was not published until 1850, the year in which Wordsworth died. The Prelude is, as a poetical autobiography and a sort of diary of the poet's intellectual experiences, a work of peculiar personal interest, though of frequently inferior poetical quality.

PRELUDE, II, 396-451

Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling: I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt
Communing in this sort through Earth and Heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.  
One song they sang, and it was audible,  
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,  
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,  
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith  
Find easier access to the pious mind,  
Yet were I grossly destitute of all  
Those human sentiments that make this earth  
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice  
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes  
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds  
That dwell among the hills where I was born.  
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,  
If, mingling with the world, I am content  
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived  
With God and Nature communing, removed  
From little enmities and low desires,  
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,  
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,  
If, mid indifference and apathy,  
And wicked exultation when good men  
On every side fall off, we know not how,  
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names  
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,  
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers  
On visionary minds; if, in this time  
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet  
Despair not of our nature, but retain  
A more than Roman confidence, a faith  
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,  
The blessing of my life: the gift is yours,  
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed  
My lofty speculations; and in thee,  
For this uneasy heart of ours I find  
A never-failing principle of joy  
And purest passion.
Yet, hail to you
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes!
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love,
Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
Might deign to follow him through what he does
Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labor interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear
To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude
Had more commanding looks when he was there.
When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun:
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances—
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man—
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore! But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified,
Removed, and to a distance that was fit:
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found,
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!

PRELUDE, XIV, 1-275

In one of those excursions (may they ne’er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert’s huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise, from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain’s base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger’s steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.
It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
And, after ordinary travellers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
The Moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean; and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and gave up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss: only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to Heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive;
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
For this alone is genuine liberty:
Where is the favoured being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?—
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
And backward wanderings along thorny ways;
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering, man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend
Their modulation with these vocal streams—
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe’er misled,
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,
Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil, as one is rashly named by men
Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone; we are as dust.—Behold the fields
In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart: thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best,
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed;
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme,
So also hath that intellectual Love,
For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man!
Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:
No other can divide with thee this work;
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
Here, the foundation of his future years!
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness: his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of humble cares and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.
Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!  
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere  
Poured out for all the early tenderness  
Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis most true  
That later seasons owed to thee no less;  
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch  
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs  
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite  
Of all that unassisted I had marked  
In life or nature of those charms minute  
That win their way into the heart by stealth,  
Still (to the very going-out of youth)  
I too exclusively esteemed that love,  
And sought that beauty which, as Milton sings,  
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down  
This over- sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!  
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood  
In her original self too confident,  
Retained too long a countenance severe;  
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds  
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:  
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,  
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,  
And teach the little birds to build their nests  
And warble in its chambers. At a time  
When Nature, destined to remain so long  
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back  
Into a second place, pleased to become  
A handmaid to a nobler than herself,  
When every day brought with it some new sense  
Of exquisite regard for common things,  
And all the earth was budding with these gifts  
Of more refined humanity, thy breath,  
Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring  
That went before my steps. Thereafter came  
One whom with thee friendship had early paired;  
She came, no more a phantom to adorn  
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;
Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And, the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
Couched in the lowly grass.

'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
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
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,
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.

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
Him whom 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.

So was he framed; and such his course of life
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,
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
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
Had newly scooped a running stream. He rose,
And ere our lively greeting into peace
Had settled "'Tis," said I, "a burning day:
My lips are parched with thirst, but you, it seems,
Have somewhere found relief." He, at the word,
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,
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
Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a Well
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plumy 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;
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,
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
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
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
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
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:
There let the relic lie—fond thought—vain words!
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,
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
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!

"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
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
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
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
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
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!
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,
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,
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,
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 labour 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!

“A sad reverse it was for him who long
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,
This lonely cottage. At his 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,
He blended, where he might, the various tasks
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.
But this endured not; his good humour 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,
Without an errand, would direct his steps,
Or wander here and there among the fields.
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 'twas a rueful thing to see the looks
Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile,'
Said Margaret to me, here beneath these trees,
'Made my heart bleed.'"

At this the Wanderer paused;

And, looking up to those enormous elms,
He said, "'Tis now the hour of deepest noon.—
At this still season of repose and peace,
This hour when all things which are not at rest
Are cheerful; while this multitude of flies
Is filling all the air with melody;
Why should a tear be in an Old Man's eye?
Why should we thus, with an untoward mind,
And in the weakness of humanity,
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:
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.
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,
With such an active countenance, an eye
So busy, that the things of which he spake
Seemed present; and, attention now relaxed,
A heart-felt chillness crept along my veins.
I rose; and, having left the breezy shade,
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,
"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.
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! 'Tis 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.

"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  
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,  
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  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquired  
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  
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,  
Within her chamber-casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed  
To meet her waking eyes. This tremulously  
She opened—found no writing, but beheld  
Pieces of money carefully enclosed,  
Silver and gold.—'I shuddered at the sight,'  
Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand  
Which placed it there: and ere that day was ended,  
That long and anxious day! I learned from one  
Sent hither by my Husband to impart  
The heavy 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  
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
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.—’Twas the time of early spring;
I left her busy with her garden tools;
And well remember, o’er that fence she look’d,
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,
With tender cheerfulness; and with a voice
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,
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,
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,
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,
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
To lag behind the season, and had lost
Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift
Had broken their trim lines, and straggled o'er
The 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 pease,
And dragged them to the earth.

"Ere this an hour
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 sate 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—
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 discoloured, 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.
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
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 travelling 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.’

"It would have grieved
Your very soul to see her; Sir, I feel
The story linger in my heart; I fear
’Tis 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
Your very soul to see her: evermore
Her eyelids drooped, her eyes were downward 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
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,
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire
We sate 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,
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
With the best hope and comfort I could give;
She thanked me for my wish;—but for my hope
Methought she did not thank me.

"I returned,
And took my rounds along this road again
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower
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
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
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 its Mother caught the trick of grief,
And sighed among its playthings. Once again
I turned towards the garden gate, and saw,
More plainly still, that poverty and grief
Were now come nearer to her: weeds defaced
The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass:
No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,
No winter greenness; of her herbs and flowers,
It seemed the better part were gnawed away
Or trampled into earth; a chain of straw,
Which had been twined about the slender stem
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,
She said, 'I fear it will be dead and gone
Ere Robert come again.' Towards the house
Together we returned; and she enquired
If I had any hope:—but for her babe
And for her little orphan boy, she said,
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,
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:
And for this end had hired a neighbour'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
That any heart had ached to hear her, begged
That, wheresoe'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
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,
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate
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 sate; and evermore her eye
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 grey line;
There, to and fro, she paced through many a day
Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp
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 sate to turn the wheel
Ceased from his task; and she with faltering voice
Made many a fond enquiry; and when they,
Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,
That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully:
Most happy, if, from ought discovered there
Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat
The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor Hut
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 
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived 
Through the long winter, reckless and alone; 
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 
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, 
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. 
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. 
At length towards the Cottage I returned 
Fondly,—and traced, with 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. 
The Old Man, noting this, resumed, and said, 
"My Friend! enough to sorrow you have given, 
The purposes of wisdom ask no more; 
Be wise and cheerful; and no longer read 
The forms of things with an unworthy eye. 
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, did to my heart convey
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
The passing shows of Being leave behind,
Appeared an idle dream, that could not live
Where meditation was. I turned away,
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 sate on that low bench: and now we felt,
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on.
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.
APPENDIX OF ILLUSTRATIVE PASSAGES
FRAGMENT FROM THE RECLUSE

This fragment is printed here because of Arnold's numerous citations from it. For its connection with the intended poem of which it was to be a part, see the note on page 155. This passage from the Recluse is given by Wordsworth in his introduction to The Excursion (1814) as "a kind of prospectus of the design and scope of the whole poem." It has a definite value to the student of Wordsworth, however, as presenting compactly and clearly and with some poetical felicity the dignity of his poetical aims.

On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,
Musing in solitude, I oft perceive
Fair trains of imagery before me rise,
Accompanied by feelings of delight
Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;
And I am conscious of affecting thoughts
And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes
Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh
The good and evil of our mortal state.
—To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,
Whether from breath of outward circumstance,
Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—
I would give utterance in numerous verse.
Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,
And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;
Of blessèd consolations in distress;
Of moral strength, and intellectual Power;
Of joy in widest commonalty spread;
Of the individual Mind that keeps her own
Inviolate retirement, subject there
To Conscience only, and the law supreme
Of that Intelligence which governs all—
I sing:—"fit audience let me find though few!"

"So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard—
In holiest mood. Urania, I shall need
Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such
Descend to earth or dwell in highest Heaven!
For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink
Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds

185
To which the Heaven of Heavens is but a veil.
All strength—all terror, single or in bands,
That ever was put forth in personal form—
Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir
Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—
I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not
The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,
Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out
By help of dreams—can breathe such fear and awe
As fall upon us often when we look
Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—
My haunt, and the main region of my song.
—Beauty—a living Presence of the earth
Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms
Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed
From earth’s materials—waits upon my steps;
Pitches her tents before me as I move,
An hourly neighbor. Paradise, and groves
Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old
Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be
A history only of departed things,
Or a mere fiction of what never was?
For the discerning intellect of Man,
When wedded to this goodly universe
In love and holy passion, shall find these
A simple produce of the common day.
—I, long before the blissful hour arrives,
Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse
Of this great consummation;—and, by words
Which speak of nothing more than what we are,
Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep
Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain
To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims
How exquisitely the individual Mind
(And the progressive powers perhaps no less
Of the whole species) to the external World
Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—
Theme this but little heard of among men—
The external World is fitted to the Mind;
And the creation (by no lower name
Can it be called) which they with blended might
Accomplish:—this is our high argument.
—Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft
Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes
And fellowships of men, and see ill sights
Of madding passions mutually inflamed;
Must hear Humanity in fields and groves
Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang
Brooding above the fierce confederate storm
Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore
Within the walls of cities—may these sounds
Have their authentic comment; that even these
Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn!—
Descend, prophetic Spirit! that inspir’st
The human Soul of universal earth,
Dreaming on things to come; and dost possess
A metropolitan temple in the hearts
Of mighty poets: upon me bestow
A gift of genuine insight; that my Song
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,
Shedding benignant influence, and secure,
Itself, from all malevolent effect
Of those mutations that extend their sway
Throughout the nether sphere!—And if with this
I mix more lowly matter; with the thing
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man
Contemplating; and who, and what he was—
The transitory Being that beheld
This vision; when, and where, and how he lived;—
Be not this labour useless. If such theme
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power!
Whose gracious favor is the primal source
Of all illumination,—may my Life
Express the image of a better time,
More wise desires, and simpler manners;—nurse
My Heart in genuine freedom:—all pure thoughts
Be with me;—so shall thy unfailing love
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end!"

THE SAILOR’S MOTHER

In comparing this poem with *Lucy Gray*, Arnold speaks of it as a “failure” (See page 30).

One morning (raw it was and wet—
A foggy day in winter time)
A Woman on the road I met,
Not old, though something past her prime:
Majestic in her person, tall and straight;
And like a Roman matron’s was her mien and gait.
The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair:
She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.

When from these lofty thoughts I woke,
"What is it," said I, "that you bear,
Beneath the covert of your Cloak,
Protected from this cold damp air?"
She answered, soon as she the question heard,
"A simple burthen, Sir, a little Singing-bird."

And, thus continuing, she said,
"I had a Son, who many a day
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead;
In Denmark he was cast away:
And I have traveled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me.

"The bird and cage they both were his:
'Twas my Son's bird; and neat and trim
He kept it: many voyages
The singing-bird had gone with him;
When last he sailed, he left the bird behind;
From bodings, as might be, that hung upon his mind.

"He to a fellow-lodger's care
Had left it, to be watched and fed,
And pipe its song in safety;—there
I found it when my Son was dead;
And now, God help me for my little wit!
I bear it with me, Sir;—he took so much delight in it."

PETER BELL

(Selected passages)

This poem, composed in 1798, and published in 1819, is the one of Wordsworth's which above all others exhibits his peculiar lack of critical perspective regarding his own writings. Most of his followers have admitted it to be a "mistake." Its exaggerated simplicity of theme and style, and its excessive moral sentiment have frequently been parodied—even by Shelley. It must be kept in mind that the narrative is quite seriously meant: there is no intentional comic effect in any of the stanzas following.
He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;
They were his dwellings night and day,—
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Within the breast of Peter Bell
These silent raptures found no place;
He was a Carl as wild and rude
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,
As ever ran a felon's race.

Of all that lead a lawless life,
Of all that love their lawless lives,
In city or in village small,
He was the wildest far of all;—
He had a dozen wedded wives.

Nay, start not!—wedded wives—and twelve!
But how one wife could e'er come near him,
In simple truth I cannot tell;
For, be it said of Peter Bell,
To see him was to fear him.

Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together.

A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

To all the unshaped half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice,
Had Peter joined whatever vice
The cruel city breeds.
His face was keen as is the wind
That cuts along the hawthorn-fence;
Of courage you saw little there,
But, in its stead, a medley air
Of cunning and of impudence.

Across the deep and quiet spot
Is Peter driving through the grass—
And now has reached the skirting trees;
When, turning round his head, he sees
A solitary Ass.

"A prize!" cries Peter—but he first
Must spy about him far and near:
There's not a single house in sight,
No woodman's hut, no cottage light—
Peter, you need not fear!

There's nothing to be seen but woods,
And rocks that spread a hoary gleam,
And this one Beast, that from the bed
Of the green meadow hangs his head
Over the silent stream.

His head is with a halter bound;
The halter seizing, Peter leapt
Upon the Creature's back, and plied
With ready heels his shaggy side;
But still the Ass his station kept.

Then Peter gave a sudden jerk,
A jerk that from a dungeon-floor
Would have pulled up an iron ring;
But still the heavy-headed Thing
Stood just as he had stood before!

Quoth Peter, leaping from his seat,
"There is some plot against me laid;"
Once more the little meadow-ground
And all the hoary cliffs around
He cautiously surveyed.

All, all is silent—rocks and woods,
All still and silent—far and near!
Only the Ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turns round his long left ear.
Thought Peter, What can mean all this?  
Some ugly witchcraft must be here!  
—Once more the Ass, with motion dull,  
Upon the pivot of his skull  
Turned round his long left ear.

Suspicion ripened into dread;  
Yet, with deliberate action slow,  
His staff high-raising, in the pride  
Of skill, upon the sounding hide  
He dealt a sturdy blow.

The poor Ass staggered with the shock;  
And then, as if to take his ease,  
In quiet, uncomplaining mood,  
Upon the spot where he had stood,  
Dropped gently down upon his knees;

As gently on his side he fell;  
And by the river's brink did lie;  
And while he lay like one that mourned,  
The patient Beast on Peter turned  
His shining hazel eye.

'Twas but one mild, reproachful look,  
A look more tender than severe;  
And straight in sorrow, not in dread,  
He turned the eye-ball in his head  
Towards the smooth river deep and clear.

Upon the Beast the sapling rings;  
His lank sides heaved, his limbs they stirred;  
He gave a groan, and then another,  
Of that which went before the brother,  
And then he gave a third.

All by the moonlight river side  
He gave three miserable groans;  
And not till now hath Peter seen  
How gaunt the Creature is,—how lean  
And sharp his staring bones.

His scorn returns—his hate revives;  
He stoops the Ass's neck to seize  
With malice—that again takes flight;  
For in the pool a startling sight  
Meets him, among the inverted trees.
Never did pulse so quickly throb,  
And never heart so loudly panted;  
He looks, he cannot choose but look;  
Like someone reading in a book—  
A book that is enchanted.

Ah, well-a-day for Peter Bell!  
He will be turned to iron soon,  
Meet statue for the court of Fear!  
His hat is up—and every hair  
Bristles, and whitens in the moon!

He looks, he ponders, looks again;  
He sees a motion, hears a groan;  
His eyes will burst—his heart will break—  
He gives a loud and frightened shriek,  
And back he falls, as if his life were flown!

(Peter recovers, to find the face of the ass’s dead master  
staring at him from the water.)

Thought he, That is the face of one  
In his last sleep securely bound!  
So toward the stream his head he bent,  
And downward thrust his staff, intent  
The river’s depth to sound.

Now—like a tempest-shattered bark,  
That overwhelmed and prostrate lies,  
And in a moment to the verge  
Is lifted of a foaming surge—  
Full suddenly the Ass doth rise!

His staring bones all shake with joy,  
And close by Peter’s side he stands:  
While Peter o’er the river bends,  
The little Ass his neck extends,  
And fondly licks his hands.

(Peter draws the body to the bank.)

The meagre shadow that looks on—  
What would he now? what is he doing?  
His sudden fit of joy is flown,—  
He on his knees hath laid him down,  
As if he were his grief renewing;
But no—that Peter on his back
Must mount, he shows well as he can:
Thought Peter then, come weal or woe,
I'll do what he would have me do,
In pity to this poor drowned man.

With that resolve he boldly mounts
Upon the pleased and thankful Ass;
And then, without a moment's stay,
That earnest Creature turned away,
Leaving the body on the grass.

Intent upon his faithful watch,
The Beast four days and nights had passed;
A sweeter meadow ne'er was seen,
And there the Ass four days had been,
Nor ever once did break his fast.

(The ass carries Peter along the road to his master's house;
Peter, meanwhile, through the day's sombre experiences and
the sounds and mysteries of the night, being brought to a
strong conviction of his misdeeds. The sight of the orphaned
family to which he brings his sad news completes his trans-
formation.)

—Here ends my Tale: for in a trice
Arrived a neighbor with his horse;
Peter went forth with him straightway;
And, with due care, ere break of day,
Together they brought back the Corse.

And many years did this poor Ass,
Whom once it was my luck to see
Cropping the shrubs of Leming Lane,
Help by his labor to maintain
The Widow and her family.

And Peter Bell, who, till that night,
Had been the wildest of his clan,
Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,
And after ten months' melancholy,
Became a good and honest man.
CHRONOLOGY OF ARNOLD'S LIFE


1837-1841. School at Rugby.

1847-1851. Private secretary to Lord Lansdowne, President of the Council.


1851. Appointed Inspector of Schools. Arnold held this position until 1886, the demands of the work in travel, lecturing, etc., being very exacting throughout the greater part of his life.

1852. *Empedocles on Etna.*


1857. Elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford. This distinguished position he filled for ten years.

Critical and literary works of the earlier period:

1861. *On Translating Homer.*

1865. *Essays in Criticism (First Series).*


1869. *Culture and Anarchy,* an important and penetrating series of essays on social tendencies. The introductory essay, *Sweetness and Light,* is probably the best-known statement of Arnold's faith in culture as a means of social salvation.

Writings on religion and the Church:

1870. *Saint Paul and Protestantism.*

1873. *Literature and Dogma.*

1875. *God and the Bible.*

1883-1884. First lecture tour in America, providing the occasion and the material for:

1885. *Discourses in America,* followed by


1886. Tour on the Continent to study free educational systems. The closing act of his career as educator.

1888. *Essays in Criticism, Second Series.* A series of critical essays, including *The Study of Poetry* and a group of studies of English poets, among them *Wordsworth,* which was originally issued as the preface to his selections from *Wordsworth* in 1879.

Died 1888.
CHRONOLOGY OF THE LIFE OF WORDSWORTH

Born Cockermouth, Cumberland, England, 1770.

1778. Grammar School at Hawkshead.


Toured on the Continent with a friend in 1790; visited London in 1791, after having seen the first stages of the French Revolution.

1791. Trip to France, partly for the study of the language, but more from sympathy with the political struggles of the French. His life here was touched vitally by the episode of an attachment at Blois, which has only recently been drawn from purposed obscurity.

1793. First publication: *An Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*.

1795. Settled with his sister Dorothy at Racedown, and began to look upon poetry as a career. His attitude toward the French Revolution began to change as he saw it grow in atrocity and stimulate French national pride.

1797. Intimacy with Coleridge began.

1798. Publication of the *Lyrical Ballads*, in collaboration with Coleridge; second edition, with critical introduction, 1800. This volume contains many of the most significant poems of both writers.

1798-1799. Spent a year in Germany, near Coleridge.

1799. Dove Cottage, Grasmere, a small but beautiful place in his native Lake Country.

1802. Married Mary Hutchinson, an intimate of his sister's from his boyhood. Five children were born to him from 1803 to 1810.

1805. Finished *The Prelude*; not published until 1850.


1810. Moved to Grasmere, after Dove Cottage was outgrown by his young family.

1813. Final residence at Rydal Mount, after the death of two of his children. Became Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland.

1814. *The Excursion* published.

1815 on. Growing conservatism in political convictions and in his writing; increased interest in the sonnet. His literary and social acquaintance expanded, and he became friendly with Keats, Lamb, and Leigh Hunt, among others.
1830. Beginning of public acceptance. Rydal Mount became a centre of pilgrimage for his admirers.
1842. Resigned his position in the Stamp-Office, with a pension.
1843. Appointed Laureate on the death of Southey.
Died 1850.
INTRODUCTION

xii, 1. **Heroic Couplet.** Iambic lines of five feet, rhymed in pairs. The example below is from Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.

Hither the heroes and the nymphs resort,
To taste a while the pleasures of a court;
In various talk th' instructive hours they passed,
Who gave the ball, or paid the visit last;
One speaks the glory of the British Queen
And one describes a charming Indian screen;
A third interprets motions, looks, and eyes;
At ev'ry word a reputation dies.
Snuff, or the fan, supply each pause of chat,
With singing, laughing, ogling, and all that.

xii, 2. Wordsworth's own comment upon and illustration of this point may be found in the Appendix to the third edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, 1802:

"Perhaps in no way, by positive example, could more easily be given a notion of what I mean by the phrase *poetic diction* than by referring to a comparison between the metrical paraphrase which we have of passages in the Old and New Testament, and those passages as they exist in our common translation. . . . By way of immediate example, take the following of Dr. Johnson:

'Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes,
Observe her labours, Sluggard, and be wise;
No stern command, no monitory voice,
Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice;
Yet, timely provident, she hastes away
To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day;
When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain,
She crops the harvest, and she stores the grain.

199
How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,
Unnerve thy vigor, and enchain thy powers?
While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,
And soft solicitation courts repose,
Amid the drowsy charms of dull delight,
Year chases year with unremitted flight,
Till Want now following, fraudulent and slow,
Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambush’d foe.

From this hubbub of words, pass to the original. ‘Go to
the Ant, thou Sluggard; consider her ways and be wise:
which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her
meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the har-
vest. How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard? When wilt
thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little
slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall
thy poverty come as one that traveleth, and thy want as
an armoured man.’

ARNOLD’S ESSAY ON WORDSWORTH

2, 1. Rydal Mount. Wordsworth’s residence from 1813
until his death; in his later years a centre of pilgrimage for
his admirers.

2, 2. Tennyson published his Poems in Two Volumes in
1842.

3, 3. Francis Turner Palgrave’s Golden Treasury of
Songs and Lyrics, compiled with Tennyson’s aid, and pub-
lished in 1861.

3, 4. Joseph Ernest Renan, 1823-1892. French critic and
historian of Christianity from the skeptical point of view. Arnold held his intelligent and dispassionate criticism in very
high admiration.

3, 5. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 1749-1832. Poet,
dramatist, critic, and literary philosopher. The greatest name
in German literature, and an important influence in the Euro-
pean romanticism of the period.

4, 6. Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who subjugated
the Hebrew nation. See the book of Jeremiah.

4, 7. Sir Isaac Newton, 1642-1727. Mathematician and
physicist who formulated the law of gravitation.

4, 8. Charles Robert Darwin, 1809-1882. Naturalist, and
author of the Origin of Species (1859), the first complete and
judicial statement of the theory of evolution.


5, 10. Pierre Corneille, 1606-1684. French dramatist of
the classic seventeenth century.
5, 11. Victor Hugo, 1802-1885. French novelist, poet, and dramatist, the leader of the romantic school in France.

5, 12. Samson Agonistes. A sacred drama of severely classic type, Milton’s last poetical work.

5, 13. Amphictyonic Court. Arnold refers to the council of the Delphic Amphictyony, scarcely a court, and certainly not a court of final appeal.

8, 14. This scheme of classification Wordsworth first employed in the Collective Edition of his works which appeared in 1815.

10, 15. In the volume On Translating Homer.


11, 17. François Marie Arouet Voltaire, 1694-1778. French skeptic, philosopher and poet. A portion of Voltaire’s early years was spent in English literary society.


11, 19. Ode to a Grecian Urn.

12, 20. The Tempest, IV, I.

12, 21. More frequently spelt Omar Khayyam. A Persian poet who flourished about the year 1200. No single passage in Edward Fitzgerald’s loose translation of Omar’s Rubáiyát presents exactly the sentiment of Arnold’s quoted phrase. The following quatrain approximates it:

“And this I know: whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or wrath-consume me quite,
One flash of it within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost outright.”

13, 22. Epictetus. Phrygian stoic philosopher of the first century A.D.


14, 25. “Quique pii vates.” . . . Those who were reverent prophets, speaking things worthy of Apollo.


15, 28. Excursion, IV, 73-76.

16, 29. Excursion, IV, 10-17.

16, 30. Ode on Intimations of Immortality. See page 147.

16, 31. Thucydides, 471-401 B.C. Greek historian of the Peloponnesian War.
NOTES

18, 33. Line 18 of the fragment from *The Recluse*. See page 185.
19, 36. Francis, Lord Jeffrey, 1773-1850. One of the founders of the *Edinburgh Review*, and for many years its editor. A vigorous and bitter critic of most of the romantic poets of the Georgian period.
20, 42. From *Burns's A Bard's Epitaph*.
21, 43. *Resolution and Independence*. See page 47.
21, 46. Arnold refers to his own *Poems of Wordsworth*, 1879.
21, 47. *Margaret*, printed by Arnold as a separate narrative, is in the present volume printed as an excerpt from the first book of *The Excursion*. See page 167.
22, 50. *To the Spade of a Friend*. Neither this nor the *Thanksgiving Ode* is printed in the present volume.
22, 51. *Vaudracour and Julia*. A romantic story with a situation of considerable emotional intensity, but narrated with tedious circumstantiality and great excess of sentiment. The accumulation of tragic details is also harsh, although Wordsworth vouches for the facts of the story.

Vaudracour, son of an aristocratic house, entertains an overwhelming passion for the beautiful, sensitive, but plebeian Julia. Vaudracour's father will not tolerate the idea of their marriage. Through the violence and hopelessness of their love, Julia, "wanting yet the name of wife, carries about her for a secret grief the promise of a mother." Julia is sent away by her parents for concealment, and Vaudracour separated from her by force, but not until he has killed two of the men sent at his father's instance to arrest him. As Julia's parents realize the im-
possibility of the marriage, they send her to a convent. After a vain attempt to have their son acknowledged by his family, Vaudracour retires to a life of solitude, sinking into silent imbecility after the early death of the infant.

SHORTER NARRATIVES AND POEMS

39, 1. To Joanna. Addressed to Joanna Hutchinson, sister of Wordsworth's wife.
42, 2. This poem has been called, though not by Wordsworth, The Fir Grove Path.
45, 3. The visitant was John Wordsworth, a younger brother, who, as master of the Earl of Abergavenny, was drowned at sea in 1805.
49, 4. Thomas Chatterton, poet, born in 1752, who killed himself in poverty at the age of eighteen. His "Rowley Poems" he gave to the world as authentic ancient romances, but they were soon discovered to be of his own composition.
49, 5. Burns.
50, 6. Leeches were gathered for medical purposes. The use of leeches for drawing "superfluous" blood through the skin was an old and long established fallacy in medical practice.
52, 7. Yarrow Unvisited (1803) and Yarrow Visited (1814) were followed by an inferior poem, Yarrow Revisited, in 1834, commemorating a day spent with Sir Walter Scott.

LONGER NARRATIVES

93, 1. The classic legend of Laodamia underwent changes in Wordsworth's handling after it was published. The version here given is the original one of 1815. In the third collected edition of Wordsworth's works (1827) Laodamia's passion is regarded as a crime, and she is condemned

"To wander in a grosser clime
Apart from happy ghosts, that gather flowers
Of blissful quiet mid unfading bowers."

In the next collected edition (1832) this sentence is apparently made only temporary; for she is

"Doomed to wear out her appointed time
Apart from happy ghosts" . . .
Protesilaos, the husband of Laodamia, was one of the leaders of the Greeks against Troy. Knowing that the oracle had promised victory to the side on which the first victim should fall, he threw himself into the battle at the landing of the Greeks, in order to insure conquest for his countrymen.

95, 2. Parce. The Fates—the three sisters who spun the thread of human destiny.

95, 3. Erebus. The lower regions.

LYRICS

101, 1. "Strange Fits of Passion have I known." This poem, with the three following, are the so-called "Lucy poems." It is now generally conceded that there was no original for Lucy in actual life.

104, 2. Emmeline. Wordsworth's sister Dorothy, toward whom he felt an unusually strong affection and spiritual indebtedness. See the Lines written above Tintern Abbey (page 122). Laura is similarly used as a pseudonym for his daughter Dora, and Edward for his oldest child, Johnnie. It will be seen that the pseudonyms all correspond in rhythm and accent to the names which they represent.

114, 3. "She was a phantom of delight," was said by Wordsworth to have been written upon "his dear wife."

117, 4. To ———. No doubt addressed to the poet's daughter Dora.

118, 5. The second stanza of this poem To a Skylark was omitted by Wordsworth in the 1845 edition of his works, having been transferred to another poem—A Morning Exercise.

REFLECTIVE AND DIDACTIVE POEMS

121, 1. "There was a Boy." This poem appears also as a passage in the first book of The Prelude.

126, 2. Influence of Natural Objects. This poem also forms part of the first book of The Prelude.

128, 3. Wordsworth notes that "many elements of the character here portrayed were found in my brother John, who perished by shipwreck. . . . He often expressed his regret, after the war had continued some time, that he had not chosen the Naval, instead of the East India Company's service."

SONNETS

135, 1. Proteus. The "old man of the sea." Shepherd of Neptune's flocks (the seals).
NOTES

135, 2. *Triton.* Son of Neptune, at the blowing of whose horn the waves were calmed.

137, 3. This, with the preceding and the four following sonnets, was written in Wordsworth's dejection over the conquests of Napoleon and over England's preoccupation with the "politics of trade" and indifference to the moral issues in the European struggle. But see his fine apology in the sonnet on page 139.

137, 4. By Napoleon, in 1800. The "voice of the sea" is of course England, for whose moral integrity as well as political safety Wordsworth was concerned.

140, 5. His second daughter, Catherine, who died a child of four.

140, 6. "That Adventurer"—Napoleon.

ODES

143, 1. "Jam non consilio bonus"... Upright not through precept, but constrained thereto by practice; not so much that I may be able to act rightly, but that I may be unable to act unless rightly.

144, 2. This stanza appeared in the original poem, in 1807, but was omitted from all subsequent editions.
INDEX

**Titles in Roman Capitals; first lines in Lower Case**

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by, 134
A Rock there is whose homely front, 119
A simple child, 23
A slumber did my spirit seal, 104
Admonition, 134
Affliction of Margaret, 45
Amid the smoke of cities did you pass, 39
An age hath been when Earth was proud, 145
And is this—Yarrow?—this the stream, 54
Anecdote for Fathers, 25
At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears, 99
Behold her, single in the field, 113
Behold, within the leafy shade, 104
Beneath these fruit-trees boughs that shed, 109
Brothers, The, 78
Butterfly, To a, 108

**Character of the Happy Warrior, 128**

**Composed by the Seaside Near Calais**, 136

**Composed upon Westminster Bridge**, 136

**Cuckoo, To the**, 108

Daffodils (popular title), 115
Daisy, To the, 106
Duty, Ode to, 142

**Early Spring, Lines Written in**, 100
Earth has not anything to show more fair, 136
Ethereal minstrel! pilgrim of the sky!, 118
Evening Voluntary, 131
Excursion, Passages from the, 167

Fair Star of Evening, splendour of the west, 136
Fir-Grove Path, The, 42
Five years have passed; five summers with the length, 122
Fountain, The, 37
From Stirling Castle we had seen, 52

Green Linnet, The, 109

Happy Warrior, Character of the, 128

Highland Girl at Inversneyde, To a, 111

I am not one who much or oft delight, 139
I have a boy of five years old, 25
I heard a thousand blended notes, 100
I met Louisa in the shade, 105
INDEX

I traveled among unknown men, 102
I wandered lonely: a cloud, 115
I watch, and long have watched, with calm regret, 141
If from the public way you turn your steps, 65
If Nature, for a favourite child, 34
In the sweet shire of Cardigan, 27
Influence of Natural Objects, 126
Intimations of Immortality, Ode on, 147
It is a beauteous evening, calm and free, 135
It seems a day, 32
I've watched you now a full half-hour, 108

Joanna, To, 39

Laodamia, 93
Leech-Gatherer, The, 47
Lines Composed Above Tintern Abbey, 122
Lines Written in Early Spring, 100
London, 1802, 138
Look at the fate of summer flowers, 117
Look now on that Adventurer who hath paid, 140
Louisa, 105
Lucy Gray, 30
Lycoris, Ode to, 145

Matthew, 34
Michael, 65
Milton! Thou shouldst be living at this hour, 138
Most sweet it is with uplifted eyes, 141
My heart leaps up when I behold, 107

Natural Objects, Influence of, 126
Not in the lucid intervals of life, 131
Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room, 133

Nutting, 32

O blithe New-comer! I have heard, 108
O Friend! I know not which way I must look, 138
O Nightingale, thou surely art, 117
Ode on Intimations of Immortality, 147
Ode to Duty, 142
Ode to Lycoris, 145
Oft had I heard of Lucy Gray, 30
On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic, 137
Once did She hold the gorgeous East in fee, 137
One morning, raw it was and wet, 187

Personal Talk, 139
Peter Bell, 188
Prelude, Passages from the, 155
Primrose of the Rock, The, 119

Recluse, Fragment from The, 185
Resolution and Independence, 47
Reverie of Poor Susan, The, 99
Ruth, 57

Sailor's Mother, The, 187
She dwelt among the untrodden ways, 102
INDEX

She was a Phantom of delight, 114
SIMON LEE, THE OLD HUNSTMAN, 27
SKYLARK, To A, 116, 118
SLEEP, To, 134
SOLITARY REAPER, THE, 113
SPARROW'S NEST, THE, 104
Stern Daughter of the Voice of God, 142
Strange fits of passion have I known, 101
Surprised by joy—impatient as the wind, 140
Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower, 111
SWITZERLAND, THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON, 137
The world is too much with us, late and soon, 135
There was a Boy; ye knew him well, Ye Cliffs, 121
There was a roaring in the wind all night, 47
There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream, 147
These tourists, Heaven preserve us! needs must live, 78
THOUGHT OF A BRITON ON THE SUBJECTION OF SWITZERLAND, 137
Three years she grew in sun and shower, 103
TINTERN ABBEY, LINES COMPOSED ABOVE, 122
To ———, 117
To A BUTTERFLY, 108
To A HIGHLAND GIRL AT INVERSNEYDE, 111
To A SKYLARK, 116, 118
To JOANNA, 39
To SLEEP, 134
To THE CUCKOO, 108
To THE DAISY, 106
TWO APRIL MORNINGS, THE, 35
Two voices are there; one is of the sea, 137
Up with me! up with me into the clouds!, 116
VENETIAN REPUBLIC, ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE, 137
WE ARE SEVEN, 23
We talked with open heart and tongue, 37
We walked along, while bright and red, 35
WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, COMPOSED UPON, 136
When I have borne in memory what has tamed, 139
When Ruth was left half desolate, 57
When, to the attractions of the busy world, 42
Where art thou, my beloved son, 45
Who is the happy warrior? Who is he, 128
Wisdom and spirit of the Universe!, 126
With little here to do or see, 106
With sacrifice, before the rising morn, 93
WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802, 138
YARROW UNVISITED, 52
YARROW VISITED, 54
Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye!, 134
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