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SELECTIONS FROM WORDSWORTH
Selections from Wordsworth

Preceded by
Lowell's Essay on Wordsworth

AND ANNOTATED BY

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Editor of 'Lycidas,' 'Evangeline,' 'Hiawatha,' Virgil's 'Aeneid I. and VI,'
Goethe's 'Iphigenie,' Extracts from the 'Nibelungenlied,' etc.

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PREFACE.

Lowell's Essay on Wordsworth and about thirty of Wordsworth's shorter poems having been chosen as subjects of examination by the Irish Intermediate Education Board, it has been thought advisable to print them together, and to append such annotation as might prove helpful to the student.

But the little volume will, I hope, be used by others besides examination candidates; for Lowell's Essay, although it by no means says all that one would wish to be said about Wordsworth, and although its tone is perhaps rather too superior, and although at times the attempts at humour are not entirely satisfactory, is interesting and suggestive, and gives biographical details in an attractive form, and altogether forms an admirable introduction to the selected poems.

The notes have been written independently of the introductory Essay, so it is more than possible that I may have expressed opinions not always coincident with those of Mr. Lowell.

The poems have been arranged in chronological order, as given in the Globe edition, and for punctuation, use of capital letters, etc., that edition is responsible. As the Education Board did not state which sonnet to Haydon and which poem to the Cuckoo was intended, both sonnets and both poems are included; but I have only annotated one of each.

H. B. C.

Château-d'Oex, 1904.
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A generation has now passed away since Wordsworth was laid with the family in the churchyard at Grasmere. Perhaps it is hardly yet time to take a perfectly impartial measure of his value as a poet. To do this is especially hard for those who are old enough to remember the last shot which the foe was sullenly firing in that long war of critics which began when he published his manifesto as Pretender, and which came to a pause rather than to an end when they flung up their caps with the rest at his final coronation. Something of the intensity of the *odium theologicum* (if indeed the *aestheticum* be not in these days the more bitter of the two) entered into the conflict. The Wordsworthians were a sect, who, if they had the enthusiasm, had also not a little of the exclusiveness and partiality to which sects are liable. The verses of the master had for them the virtue of religious canticles stimulant of zeal and not amenable to the ordinary tests of cold-blooded criticism. Like the hymns of the Huguenots and Covenanters, they were songs of battle no less than of worship, and the combined ardors of conviction and conflict lent them a fire that was not naturally their own. As we read them now, that virtue of the moment is gone out of them, and whatever of Dr. Wattsiness there is gives us a slight

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"I pay many little visits to the family in the churchyard at Grasmere," writes James Dixon (an old servant of Wordsworth) to Crabb Robinson, with a simple, one might almost say canine pathos, thirteen years after his master's death. Wordsworth was always considerate and kind with his servants, Robinson tells us.
shock of disenchantment. It is something like the difference between the *Marseillaise* sung by armed propagandists on the edge of battle, or by Brissotins in the tumbrel, and the words of it read coolly in the closet or recited with the factitious frenzy of Thérèse. It was natural in the early days of Wordsworth's career to dwell most fondly on those profounder qualities to appreciate which settled in some sort the measure of a man's right to judge of poetry at all. But now we must admit the shortcomings, the failures, the defects, as no less essential elements in forming a sound judgment as to whether the seer and artist were so united in him as to justify the claim first put in by himself and afterwards maintained by his sect to a place beside the few great poets who exalt men's minds, and give a right direction and safe outlet to their passions through the imagination, while insensibly helping them toward balance of character and serenity of judgment by stimulating their sense of proportion, form, and the nice adjustment of means to ends. In none of our poets has the constant propulsion of an unbending will, and the concentration of exclusive, if I must not say somewhat narrow, sympathies done so much to make the original endowment of nature effective, and in none accordingly does the biography throw so much light on the works, or enter so largely into their composition as an element whether of power or of weakness. (Wordsworth never saw, and I think never wished to see, beyond the limits of his own consciousness and experience.) He early conceived himself to be, and through life was confirmed by circumstances in the faith that he was, a "dedicated spirit," a state of mind likely to further an intense but at the same time one-sided development of the intellectual powers. The solitude in which the greater part of his mature life was passed, while it doubtless ministered to the passionate intensity of his musings upon man and nature, was, it may be suspected, harmful to him as an artist, by depriving him of any standard of proportion outside himself by which to test the comparative value of his thoughts, and by rendering him

1 In the *Prelude* he attributes this consecration to a sunrise seen (during a college vacation) as he walked homeward from some village festival where he had danced all night:—

"My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me: bond unknown to me
Was given that I should be, else sinning greatly.
A dedicated Spirit." (B. IV.)
more and more incapable of that urbanity of mind which could be gained only by commerce with men more nearly on his own level, and which gives tone without lessening individuality. Wordsworth never quite saw the distinction between the eccentric and the original. For what we call originality seems not so much anything peculiar, much less anything odd, but that quality in a man which touches human nature at most points of its circumference, which reinvigorates the consciousness of our own powers by recalling and confirming our own unvalued sensations and perceptions, gives classic shape to our own amorphous imaginings, and adequate utterance to our own stammering conceptions or emotions. The poet's office is to be a Voice, not of one crying in the wilderness to a knot of already magnetized acolytes, but singing amid the throng of men, and lifting their common aspirations and sympathies (so first clearly revealed to themselves) on the wings of his song to a purer ether and a wider reach of view. We cannot, if we would, read the poetry of Wordsworth as mere poetry; at every other page we find ourselves entangled in a problem of aesthetics. The world-old question of matter and form, of whether nectar is of precisely the same flavor when served to us from a Grecian chalice or from any jug of ruder pottery, comes up for decision anew. The Teutonic nature has always shown a sturdy preference of the solid bone with a marrow of nutritious moral to any shadow of the same on the flowing mirror of sense. Wordsworth never lets us long forget the deeply rooted stock from which he sprang,—viens ben da lui.

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth in Cumberland on the 7th of April, 1770, the second of five children. His father was John Wordsworth, an attorney-at-law, and agent of Sir James Lowther, afterwards first Earl of Lonsdale. His mother was Anne Cookson, the daughter of a mercer in Penrith. His paternal ancestors had been settled immemorially at Penistone in Yorkshire, whence his grandfather had emigrated to Westmoreland. His mother, a woman of piety and wisdom, died in March, 1778, being then in her thirty-second year. His father, who never entirely cast off the depression occasioned by her death, survived her but five years, dying in December, 1783, when William was not quite fourteen years old.

The poet's early childhood was passed partly at Cockermouth, and partly with his maternal grandfather at Penrith.
His first teacher appears to have been Mrs. Anne Birkett, a kind of Shenstone’s Schoolmistress, who practised the memory of her pupils, teaching them chiefly by rote, and not endeavoring to cultivate their reasoning faculties, a process by which children are apt to be converted from natural logicians into impertinent sophists. Among his schoolmates here was Mary Hutchinson, who afterwards became his wife.

In 1778 he was sent to a school founded by Edwin Sandys, Archbishop of York, in the year 1585, at Hawkshead in Lancashire. Hawkshead is a small market-town in the vale of Esthwaite, about a third of a mile northwest of the lake. Here Wordsworth passed nine years, among a people of simple habits and scenery of a sweet and pastoral dignity. (His earliest intimacies were with the mountains, lakes, and streams of his native district, and the associations with which his mind was stored during its most impressionable period were noble and pure.) The boys were boarded among the dames of the village, thus enjoying a freedom from scholastic restraints, which could be nothing but beneficial in a place where the temptations were only to sports that hardened the body while they fostered a love of nature in the spirit and habits of observation in the mind. Wordsworth’s ordinary amusements here were hunting and fishing, rowing, skating, and long walks around the lake and among the hills, with an occasional scamper on horseback. His life as a school-boy was favorable also to his poetic development, in being identified with that of the people among whom he lived. Among men of simple habits, and where there are small diversities of condition, the feelings and passions are displayed with less restraint, and the young poet grew acquainted with that primal human basis of character where the Muse finds firm foothold, and to which he ever afterward cleared his way through all the overlying drift of conventionalism. The dalesmen were a primitive and hardy race who kept alive the traditions and often the habits of a more picturesque time. A common level of interests and of social standing fostered unconventional ways of thought and speech, and friendly human sympathies. Solitude induced reflection, a reliance of the mind on its own resources, and

1 Father of George Sandys, Treasurer of the Virginia Company, translator, while in Virginia, of Ovid’s Metamorphoses, and author of a book of travels in the East dear to Dr. Johnson.

2 Prelude, Book II.
individuality of character. Where everybody knew everybody, and everybody's father had known everybody's father, the interest of man in man was not likely to become a matter of cold hearsay and distant report. When death knocked at any door in the hamlet, there was an echo from every fireside, and a wedding dropt its white flowers at every threshold. There was not a grave in the churchyard but had its story; not a crag or glen or aged tree untouched with some ideal hue of legend. It was here that Wordsworth learned that homely humanity which gives such depth and sincerity to his poems. Travel, society, culture, nothing could obliterate the deep trace of that early training which enables him to speak directly to the primitive instincts of man. He was apprenticed early to the difficult art of being himself.

At school he wrote some task-verses on subjects imposed by the master, and also some voluntaries of his own, equally undistinguished by any peculiar merit. But he seems to have made up his mind as early as in his fourteenth year to become a poet. "It is recorded," says his biographer vaguely, "that the poet's father set him very early to learn portions of the best English poets by heart, so that at an early age he could repeat large portions of Shakespeare, Milton, and Spenser."

The great event of Wordsworth's school-days was the death of his father, who left what may be called a hypothetical estate, consisting chiefly of claims upon the first Earl of Lonsdale, the payment of which, though their justice was acknowledged, that nobleman contrived in some unexplained way to elude so long as he lived. In October, 1787, he left school for St. John's College, Cambridge. He was already, we are told, a fair Latin scholar, and had made some progress in mathematics. The earliest books we hear of his reading were Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Gulliver's Travels, and the Tale of a Tub; but at school he had also become familiar with the works of some English poets, particularly Goldsmith and Gray, of whose poems he had learned many by

1 "I to the muses have been bound, These fourteen years, by strong indentures." *Idiot Boy* (1798).

2 I think this more than doubtful, for I find no traces of the influence of any of these poets in his earlier writings. Goldsmith was evidently his model in the *Descriptive Sketches* and the *Evening Walk*. I speak of them as originally printed.
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heart. What is more to the purpose, he had become, without knowing it, a lover of Nature in all her moods, and the same mental necessities of a solitary life which compel men to an interest in the transitory phenomena of scenery had made him also studious of the movements of his own mind, and the mutual interaction and dependence of the external and internal universe.

Doubtless his early orphanage was not without its effect in confirming a character naturally impatient of control, and his mind, left to itself, clothed itself with an indigenous growth, which grew fairly and freely, unstinted by the shadow of exotic plantations. It has become a truism, that remarkable persons have remarkable mothers; but perhaps this is chiefly true of such as have made themselves distinguished by their industry, and by the assiduous cultivation of faculties in themselves of only an average quality. It is rather to be noted how little is known of the parentage of men of the first magnitude, how often they seem in some foundlings, and how early an apparently adverse destiny begins the culture of those who are to encounter and master great intellectual or spiritual experiences.

Of his disposition as a child little is known, but that little is characteristic. He himself tells us that he was "stiff, moody, and of violent temper." His mother said of him that he was the only one of her children about whom she felt any anxiety,—for she was sure that he would be remarkable for good or evil. Once, in resentment at some fancied injury, he resolved to kill himself, but his heart failed him. I suspect that few boys of passionate temperament have escaped these momentary suggestions of despairing helplessness. "On another occasion," he says, "while I was at my grandfather’s house at Penrith, along with my eldest brother Richard, we were whipping toys together in the long drawing-room, on which the carpet was only laid down on particular occasions. The walls were hung round with family pictures, and I said to my brother, ‘Dare you strike your whip through that old lady’s petticoat?’ He replied, ‘No, I won’t.’ ‘Then,’ said I, ‘here goes,’ and I struck my lash through her hooped petticoat, for which, no doubt, though I have forgotten it, I was properly punished. But, possibly from some want of judgment in punishments inflicted, I had become perverse and obstinate in defying chastisement, and rather proud of it than otherwise.” This last anecdote is as happily typical as a bit of Greek mythology
which always prefigured the lives of heroes in the stories of their childhood. Just so do we find him afterward striking his defiant lash through the hooped petticoat of the artificial style of poetry, and proudly unsubdued by the punishment of the Reviewers.

Of his college life the chief record is to be found in "The Prelude." He did not distinguish himself as a scholar, and if his life had any incidents, they were of that interior kind which rarely appear in biography, though they may be of controlling influence upon the life. He speaks of reading Chaucer, Spenser, and Milton while at Cambridge, but no reflection from them is visible in his earliest published poems. The greater part of his vacations was spent in his native Lake-country, where his only sister, Dorothy, was the companion of his rambles. She was a woman of large natural endowments, chiefly of the receptive kind, and had much to do with the formation and tendency of the poet's mind. It was she who called forth the shyer sensibilities of his nature, and taught an originally harsh and austere imagination to surround itself with fancy and feeling, as the rock fringes itself with a sun-spray of ferns. She was his first Public, and belonged to that class of prophetically appreciative temperaments whose apparent office it is to cheer the early solitude of original minds with messages from the future. Through the greater part of his life she continued to be a kind of poetical conscience to him.

Wordsworth's last college vacation was spent in a foot journey upon the Continent (1790). In January, 1791, he took his degree of B.A., and left Cambridge. During the summer of this year he visited Wales, and, after declining to enter upon holy orders under the plea that he was not of age for ordination, went over to France in November, and remained during the winter at Orleans. Here he became intimate with the republican General Beaupuis, with whose hopes and aspirations he ardently sympathized. In the spring of 1792 he was at Blois, and returned thence to Orleans, which he finally quitted in October for Paris.

1Prelude, Book III. He studied Italian also at Cambridge; his teacher, whose name was Isola, had formerly taught the poet Gray. It may be pretty certainly inferred, however, that his first systematic study of English poetry was due to the copy of Anderson's British Poets, left with him by his sailor brother John on setting out for his last voyage in 1803. It was the daughter of this Isola, Emma, who was afterwards adopted by Charles and Mary Lamb.
remained here as long as he could with safety, and at the close of the year went back to England, thus, perhaps, escaping the fate which soon after overtook his friends the Brissotins.

As hitherto the life of Wordsworth may be called a fortunate one, not less so in the training and expansion of his faculties was this period of his stay in France. Born and reared in a country where the homely and familiar nestles confidingly amid the most savage and sublime forms of nature, he had experienced whatever impulses the creative faculty can receive from mountain and cloud and the voices of winds and waters, but he had known man only as an actor in fireside histories and tragedies, for which the hamlet supplied an ample stage. In France he first felt the authentic beat of a nation's heart; he was a spectator at one of those dramas where the terrible footfall of the Eumenides is heard nearer and nearer in the pauses of the action; and he saw man such as he can only be when he is vibrated by the orgasm of a national emotion. He sympathized with the hopes of France and of mankind deeply, as was fitting in a young man and a poet; and if his faith in the gregarious advancement of men was afterward shaken, he only held the more firmly by his belief in the individual, and his reverence for the human as something quite apart from the popular and above it. Wordsworth has been unwisely blamed, as if he had been recreant to the liberal instincts of his youth. But it was inevitable that a genius so regulated and metrical as his, a mind which always compensated itself for its artistic radicalism by an involuntary leaning toward external respectability, should recoil from whatever was convulsionary and destructive in politics, and above all in religion. He reads the poems of Wordsworth without understanding, who does not find in them the noblest incentives to faith in man and the grandeur of his destiny, founded always upon that personal dignity and virtue, the capacity for whose attainment alone makes universal liberty possible and assures its permanence. He was to make men better by opening to them the sources of an inalterable well-being; to make them free, in a sense higher than political, by showing them that these sources are within them, and that no contrivance of man can permanently emancipate narrow natures and depraved minds. His politics were always those of a poet, circling in the larger orbit of causes and principles, careless of the transitory oscillation of events.
The change in his point of view (if change there was) certainly was complete soon after his return from France, and was perhaps due in part to the influence of Burke.

"While he [Burke] forewarns, denounces, launches forth, Against all systems built on abstract rights, Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims Of institutes and laws hallowed by time; Declares the vital power of social ties Endeared by custom; and with high disdain, Exploding upstart theory, insists Upon the allegiance to which men are born . . . Could a youth, and one In ancient story versed, whose breast hath heaved Under the weight of classic eloquence, Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?" ¹

He had seen the French for a dozen years eagerly busy in tearing up whatever had roots in the past, replacing the venerable trunks of tradition and orderly growth with liberty-poles, then striving vainly to piece together the fibres they had broken, and to reproduce artificially that sense of permanence and continuity which is the main safeguard of vigorous self-consciousness in a nation. He became a Tory through intellectual conviction, retaining, I suspect, to the last, a certain radicalism of temperament and instinct. As in Carlyle, so in him something of the peasant survived to the last. Haydon tells us that, in 1809 Sir George Beaumont said to him and Wilkie, "Wordsworth may perhaps walk in; if he do, I caution you both against his terrific democratic notions"; and it must have been many years later that Wordsworth himself told Crabb Robinson, "I have no respect whatever for Whigs, but I have a great deal of the Chartist in me." In 1802, during his tour in Scotland, he travelled on Sundays as on the other days of the week. ² He afterwards became a theoretical churchgoer. "Wordsworth defended earnestly the Church establishment. He even said he would shed his blood for it. Nor was he disconcerted by a laugh raised against him on account of his

¹*Prelude*, Book VII. Written before 1805, and referring to a still earlier date. "Wordsworth went in powder, and with cocked hat under his arm, to the Marchioness of Stafford's rout." (Southey to Miss Barker, May, 1806.)

²This was probably one reason for the long suppression of Miss Wordsworth's journal, which she had evidently prepared for publication as early as 1805.
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having confessed that he knew not when he had been in a church in his own country. 'All our ministers are so vile,' said he. The mischief of allowing the clergy to depend on the caprice of the multitude he thought more than outweighed all the evils of an establishment.'

In December, 1792, Wordsworth had returned to England, and in the following year published "Descriptive Sketches" and the "Evening Walk." He did this, as he says in one of his letters, to show that, although he had gained no honors at the University, he could do something. They met with no great success, and he afterward corrected them so much as to destroy all their interest as juvenile productions, without communicating to them any of the merits of maturity. In commenting, sixty years afterward, on a couplet in one of these poems,—

"And, fronting the bright west, the oak entwines
Its darkening boughs and leaves in stronger lines,"—

he says: "This is feebly and imperfectly expressed, but I recollect distinctly the very spot where this first struck me. . . . The moment was important in my poetical history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them, and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency."

It is plain that Wordsworth's memory was playing him a trick here, misled by that instinct (it may almost be called) of consistency which leads men first to desire that their lives should have been without break or seam, and then to believe that they have been such. The more distant ranges of perspective are apt to run together in retrospection. How far could Wordsworth at fourteen have been acquainted with the poets of all ages and countries,—he who to his dying day could not endure to read Goethe and knew nothing of Calderon? It seems to me rather that the earliest influence traceable in him is that of Goldsmith, and later of Cowper, and it is, perhaps, some slight indication of its having already begun that his first volume of "Descriptive Sketches" (1793) was put forth by Johnson, who was Cowper's publisher. By and by the powerful impress of Burns is seen both in the topics of his verse and the form of his expression. But whatever the ultimate effect of these poets upon his style, certain it is that his juvenile poems

1Crabb Robinson, i. 250, Am. ed.
were clothed in the conventional habit of the eighteenth century. "The first verses from which he remembered to have received great pleasure were Miss Carter's 'Poem on Spring,' a poem in the six-line stanza which he was particularly fond of and had composed much in—for example, 'Ruth.'" This is noteworthy, for Wordsworth's lyric range, especially so far as tune is concerned, was always narrow. His sense of melody was painfully dull, and some of his lighter effusions, as he would have called them, are almost ludicrously wanting in grace of movement. We cannot expect in a modern poet the thrush-like improvisation, the bewitchingly impulsive cadences, that charm us in our Elizabethan drama and whose last warble died with Herrick; but Shelley, Tennyson, and Browning have shown that the simple pathos of their music was not irrecoverable, even if the artless poignancy of their phrase be gone beyond recall. We feel this lack in Wordsworth all the more keenly if we compare such verses as

``Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill,"

with Goethe's exquisite Ueber allen Gipfeln ist Ruh, in which the lines (as if shaken down by a momentary breeze of emotion) drop lingeringly one after another like blossoms upon turf.

The "Evening Walk" and "Descriptive Sketches" show plainly the prevailing influence of Goldsmith, both in the turn of thought and the mechanism of the verse. They lack altogether the temperance of tone and judgment in selection which have made the "Traveller" and the "Deserted Village," perhaps, the most truly classical poems in the language. They bear here and there, however, the unmistakable stamp of the maturer Wordsworth, not only in a certain blunt realism, but in the intensity and truth of picturesque epithet. Of this realism, from which Wordsworth never wholly freed himself, the following verses may suffice as a specimen. After describing the fate of a chamois-hunter killed by falling from a crag, his fancy goes back to the bereaved wife and son:

``Haply that child in fearful doubt may gaze,
Passing his father's bones in future days,
Start at the reliques of that very thigh
On which so oft he prattled when a boy."
In these poems there is plenty of that "poetic diction" against which Wordsworth was to lead the revolt nine years later.

"To wet the peak's impracticable sides
He opens of his feet the sanguine tides,
Weak and more weak the issuing current eyes
Lapped by the panting tongue of thirsty skies."

Both of these passages have disappeared from the revised edition, as well as some curious outbursts of that motiveless despair which Byron made fashionable not long after. Nor are there wanting touches of fleshliness which strike us oddly as coming from Wordsworth.¹

"Farewell! those forms that in thy noontide shade
Rest near their little plots of oaten glade,
Those steadfast eyes that beating breasts inspire
To throw the 'sultry ray' of young Desire;
Those lips whose tides of fragrance come and go
Accordant to the cheek's unquiet glow;
Those shadowy breasts in love's soft light arrayed,
And rising by the moon of passion swayed."

The political tone is also mildened in the revision, as where he changes "despot courts" into "tyranny." One of the alterations is interesting. In the "Evening Walk" he had originally written

"And bids her soldier come her wars to share
Asleep on Minden's charnel hill afar."

An erratum at the end directs us to correct the second verse, thus:—

"Asleep on Bunker's charnel hill afar."²

Wordsworth somewhere rebukes the poets for making the owl a bodeful bird. He had himself done so in the "Evening Walk," and corrects his epithets to suit his later judgment, putting "gladsome" for "boding," and replacing

"The tremulous sob of the complaining owl"

by

"The sportive outcry of the mocking owl."

¹ Wordsworth's purity afterwards grew sensitive almost to prudery. The late Mr. Clough told me that he heard him at Dr. Arnold's table denounce the first line in Keats's Ode to a Grecian Urn as indecent, and Haydon records that when he saw the group of Cupid and Psyche he exclaimed, "The dev-ils!"

² The whole passage is omitted in the revised edition. The original, a quarto pamphlet, is now very rare, but fortunately Charles Lamb's copy of it is now owned by my friend Professor C. E. Norton.
Indeed, the character of the two poems is so much changed in the revision as to make the dates appended to them a misleading anachronism. But there is one truly Wordsworthian passage which already gives us a glimpse of that passion with which he was the first to irradiate descriptive poetry, and which sets him on a level with Turner.

"'T is storm; and hid in mist from hour to hour
All day the floods a deepening murmur pour;
The sky is veiled and every cheerful sight;
Dark is the region as with coming night;
But what a sudden burst of overpowering light!
Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
Glances the fire-clad eagle's wheeling form;
Eastward, in long prospective glittering shine
The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline;
Those eastern cliffs a hundred streams unfold,
At once to pillars turned that flame with gold;
Behind his sail the peasant tries to shun
The West that burns like one dilated sun,
Where in the mighty crucible expire
The mountains, glowing hot like coals of fire."

Wordsworth has made only one change in these verses, and that for the worse, by substituting "glorious" (which was already implied in "glances" and "fire-clad") for "wheeling." In later life he would have found it hard to forgive the man who should have made cliffs recline over a lake. On the whole, what strikes us as most prophetic in these poems is their want of continuity, and the purple patches of true poetry on a texture of unmistakable prose; perhaps we might add the incongruous clothing of prose thoughts in the ceremonial robes of poesy.

During the same year (1793) he wrote, but did not publish, a political tract, in which he avowed himself opposed to monarchy and to the hereditary principle, and desirous of a republic, if it could be had without a revolution. He probably continued to be all his life in favor of that ideal republic "which never was on land or sea," but fortunately he gave up politics that he might devote himself to his own nobler calling, to which politics are subordinate, and for which he found freedom enough in England as it was.¹ Dr.

¹ Wordsworth showed his habitual good sense in never sharing, so far as is known, the communistic dreams of his friends Coleridge and Southey. The latter of the two had, to be sure, renounced them shortly after his marriage, and before his acquaintance with Wordsworth began. But Coleridge seems to have clung to them longer.
Wordsworth admits that his uncle's opinions were democratical so late as 1802. I suspect that they remained so in an esoteric way to the end of his days. He had himself suffered by the arbitrary selfishness of a great landowner, and he was born and bred in a part of England where there is a greater social equality than elsewhere. The look and manner of the Cumberland people especially are such as recall very vividly to a New Englander the associations of fifty years ago, ere the change from New England to New Ireland had begun. But meanwhile, Want, which makes no distinctions of Monarchist or Republican, was pressing upon him. The debt due to his father's estate had not been paid, and Wordsworth was one of those rare idealists who esteem it the first duty of a friend of humanity to live for, and not on, his neighbor. He at first proposed establishing a periodical journal to be called "The Philanthropist," but luckily went no further with it, for the receipts from an organ of opinion which professed republicanism, and at the same time discountenanced the plans of all existing or defunct republicans, would have been necessarily scanty. There being no appearance of any demand, present or prospective, for philanthropists, he tried to get employment as correspondent of a newspaper. Here also it was impossible that he should succeed; he was too great to be merged in the editorial We, and had too well defined a private opinion on all subjects to be able to express that average of public opinion which constitutes able editorials. But so it is that to the prophet in the wilderness the birds of ill omen are already on the wing with food from heaven; and while Wordsworth's relatives were getting impatient at what they considered his waste of time, while one thought he had gifts enough to make a good parson, and another lamented the

There is a passage in one of his letters to Cottle (without date, but apparently written in the spring of 1798) which would imply that Wordsworth had been accused of some kind of social heresy. "Wordsworth has been caballed against so long and so loudly that he has found it impossible to prevail on the tenant of the Alfoxden estate to let him the house after their first agreement is expired." Perhaps, after all, it was Wordsworth's insulation of character and habitual want of sympathy with anything but the moods of his own mind that rendered him incapable of this copartnery of enthusiasm. He appears to have regarded even his sister Dorothy (whom he certainly loved as much as it was possible for him to love anything but his own poems) as a kind of tributary dependency of his genius, much as a mountain might look down on one of its ancillary spurs.
rare attorney that was lost in him,\(^1\) the prescient muse guided the hand of Raisley Calvert while he wrote the poet’s name in his will for a legacy of £900. By the death of Calvert, in 1795, this timely help came to Wordsworth at the turning-point of his life, and made it honest for him to write poems that will never die, instead of theatrical critiques as ephemeral as play-bills, or leaders that lead only to oblivion.

In the autumn of 1795 Wordsworth and his sister took up their abode at Racedown Lodge, near Crewkerne, in Dorsetshire. Here nearly two years were passed, chiefly in the study of poetry, and Wordsworth to some extent recovered from the fierce disappointment of his political dreams, and regained that equable tenor of mind which alone is consistent with a healthy productiveness. Here Coleridge, who had contrived to see something more in the “Descriptive Sketches” than the public had discovered there, first made his acquaintance. The sympathy and appreciation of an intellect like Coleridge’s supplied him with that external motive to activity which is the chief use of popularity, and justified to him his opinion of his own powers. It was now that the tragedy of “The Borderers” was for the most part written, and that plan of the “Lyrical Ballads” suggested which gave Wordsworth a clue to lead him out of the metaphysical labyrinth in which he was entangled. It was agreed between the two young friends that Wordsworth

\(^1\) Speaking to one of his neighbors in 1845 he said, “that, after he had finished his college course, he was in great doubt as to what his future employment should be. He did not feel himself good enough for the Church; he felt that his mind was not properly disciplined for that holy office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulses would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the Law, although Southey often told him that he was well fitted for the higher parts of the profession. He had studied military history with great interest, and the strategy of war; and he always fancied that he had talents for command; and he at one time thought of a military life, but then he was without connections, and he felt, if he were ordered to the West Indies, his talents would not save him from the yellow-fever, and he gave that up.” (Memoirs, ii. 466.) It is curious to fancy Wordsworth a soldier. Certain points of likeness between him and Wellington have often struck me. They resemble each other in practical good sense, fidelity to duty, courage, and also in a kind of precise uprightness which made their personal character somewhat uninteresting. But what was decorum in Wellington was piety in Wordsworth, and the entire absence of imagination (the great point of dissimilarity) perhaps helped as much as anything to make Wellington a great commander.
was to be a philosophic poet, and, by a good fortune uncommon to such conspiracies, Nature had already consented to the arrangement. In July, 1797, the two Wordsworths removed to Allfoxden in Somersetshire, that they might be near Coleridge, who in the mean while had married and settled himself at Nether-Stowey. In November "The Borderers" was finished, and Wordsworth went up to London with his sister to offer it for the stage. The good Genius of the poet again interposing, the play was decisively rejected, and Wordsworth went back to Allfoxden, himself the hero of that first tragi-comedy so common to young authors.

The play has fine passages, but is as unreal as "Jane Eyre." It shares with many of Wordsworth's narrative poems the defect of being written to illustrate an abstract moral theory, so that the overbearing thesis is continually thrusting the poetry to the wall. Applied to the drama, such predestination makes all the personages puppets and disenables them from being characters. Wordsworth seems to have felt this when he published "The Borderers" in 1842, and says in a note that it was "at first written ... without any view to its exhibition upon the stage." But he was mistaken. The contemporaneous letters of Coleridge to Cottle show that he was long in giving up the hope of getting it accepted by some theatrical manager.

He now applied himself to the preparation of the first volume of the "Lyrical Ballads" for the press, and it was published toward the close of 1798. The book, which contained also "The Ancient Mariner" of Coleridge, attracted little notice, and that in great part contemptuous. When Mr. Cottle, the publisher, shortly after sold his copyrights to Mr. Longman, that of the "Lyrical Ballads" was reckoned at zero, and it was at last given up to the authors. A few persons were not wanting, however, who discovered the dawn-streaks of a new day in that light which the critical fire-brigade thought to extinguish with a few contemptuous spurts of cold water.¹

¹ Cottle says, "The sale was so slow and the severity of most of the reviews so great that its progress to oblivion seemed to be certain." But the notices in the Monthly and Critical reviews (then the most influential) were fair, and indeed favorable, especially to Wordsworth's share in the volume. The Monthly says, "So much genius and originality are discovered in this publication that we wish to see another from the same hand." The Critical, after saying that "in
Lord Byron describes himself as waking one morning and finding himself famous, and it is quite an ordinary fact that a blaze may be made with a little saltpetre that will be stared at by thousands who would have thought the sunrise tedious. If we may believe his biographer, Wordsworth might have said that he awoke and found himself in-famous, for the publication of the "Lyrical Ballads" undoubtedly raised him to the distinction of being the least popular poet in England. Parnassus has two peaks; the one where improvising poets cluster; the other where the singer of deep secrets sits alone,—a peak veiled sometimes from the whole morning of a generation by earth-born mists and smoke of kitchen fires, only to glow the more consciously at sunset, and after nightfall to crown itself with imperishable stars. Wordsworth had that self-trust which in the man of genius is sublime, and in the man of talent insufferable. It mattered not to him though all the reviewers had been in a chorus of laughter or a conspiracy of silence behind him. He went quietly over to Germany to write more Lyrical Ballads, and to begin a poem on the growth of his own mind, at a time when there were only two men in the world (himself and Coleridge) who were aware that he had one in anywise differing from those, mechanically uniform, which are stuck drearily, side by side, in the great pin-paper of society.

In Germany Wordsworth dined in company with Klopstock, and after dinner they had a conversation of which Wordsworth took notes. The respectable old poet, who was passing the evening of his days by the chimney-corner, Darby and Joan like, with his respectable Muse, seems to have been rather bewildered by the apparition of a living genius. The record is of value now chiefly for the insight it gives us into Wordsworth's mind. Among other things he said, "that it was the province of a great poet to raise people up to his own level, not to descend to theirs,"—memorable words, the more memorable that a literary life of sixty years was in keeping with them.

It would be instructive to know what were Wordsworth's studies during his winter in Goslar. De Quincey's statement

the whole range of English poetry we scarcely recollect anything superior to a passage in *Lines written near Tintern Abbey,*" sums up thus: "Yet every piece discovers genius; and ill as the author has frequently employed his talents, they certainly rank him with the best of living poets." Such treatment surely cannot be called discouraging.
is mere conjecture. It may be guessed fairly enough that he would seek an entrance to the German language by the easy path of the ballad, a course likely to confirm him in his theories as to the language of poetry. The Spinozism with which he has been not unjustly charged was certainly not due to any German influence, for it appears unmistakably in the “Lines composed at Tintern Abbey” in July, 1798. It is more likely to have been derived from his talks with Coleridge in 1797.\(^1\) When Emerson visited him in 1833, he spoke with loathing of “Wilhelm Meister,” a part of which he had read in Carlyle’s translation apparently. There was some affection in this, it would seem, for he had read Smollett. On the whole, it may be fairly concluded that the help of Germany in the development of his genius may be reckoned as very small, though there is certainly a marked resemblance both in form and sentiment between some of his earlier lyrics and those of Goethe. His poems of the “Thorn,” though vastly more imaginative, may have been suggested by Bürger’s Pfarrer’s Tochter von Taubenhain. The little grave drei Spannen lang, in its conscientious measurement, certainly recalls a famous couplet in the English poem.

After spending the winter at Goslar, Wordsworth and his sister returned to England in the spring of 1799, and settled at Grasmere in Westmoreland. In 1800, the first edition of the “Lyrical Ballads” being exhausted, it was republished with the addition of another volume, Mr. Longman paying £100 for the copyright of two editions. The book passed to a second edition in 1802, and to a third in 1805.\(^2\) Wordsworth sent a copy of it, with a manly letter, to Mr. Fox, particularly recommending to his attention the poems “Michael” and “The Brothers,” as displaying the strength

\(^1\) A very improbable story of Coleridge’s in the Biographia Literaria represents the two friends as having incurred a suspicion of treasonable dealings with the French enemy by their constant references to a certain “Spy Nosey.” The story at least seems to show how they pronounced the name, which was exactly in accordance with the usage of the last generation in New England.

\(^2\) Wordsworth found (as other original minds have since done) a hearing in America sooner than in England. James Humphreys, a Philadelphia bookseller, was encouraged by a sufficient list of subscribers to reprint the first edition of the Lyrical Ballads. The second English edition, however, having been published before he had wholly completed his reprinting, was substantially followed in the first American, which was published in 1802.
and permanence among a simple and rural population of those domestic affections which were certain to decay gradually under the influence of manufactories and poor-houses. Mr. Fox wrote a civil acknowledgment, saying that his favorites among the poems were “Harry Gill,” “We are Seven,” “The Mad Mother,” and “The Idiot,” but that he was prepossessed against the use of blank-verse for simple subjects. Any political significance in the poems he was apparently unable to see. To this second edition Wordsworth prefixed an argumentative Preface, in which he nailed to the door of the cathedral of English song the critical theses which he was to maintain against all comers in his poetry and his life. It was a new thing for an author to undertake to show the goodness of his verses by the logic and learning of his prose; but Wordsworth carried to the reform of poetry all that fervor and faith which had lost their political object, and it is another proof of the sincerity and greatness of his mind, and of that heroic simplicity which is their concomitant, that he could do so calmly what was sure to seem ludicrous to the greater number of his readers. Fifty years have since demonstrated that the true judgment of one man outweighs any counterpoise of false judgment, and that the faith of mankind is guided to a man only by a well-founded faith in himself. To this Defensio Wordsworth afterward added a supplement, and the two form a treatise of permanent value for philosophic statement and decorous English. Their only ill effect has been, that they have encouraged many otherwise deserving young men to set a Sibylline value on their verses in proportion as they were unsalable. The strength of an argument for self-reliance drawn from the example of a great man depends wholly on the greatness of him who uses it; such arguments being like coats of mail, which, though they serve the strong against arrow-flights and lance-thrusts, may only suffocate the weak or sink him the sooner in the waters of oblivion.

An advertisement prefixed to the “Lyrical Ballads,” as originally published in one volume, warned the reader that “they were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure.” In his preface to the second edition, in two volumes, Wordsworth already found himself forced to shift his ground a little (perhaps in deference to the wider view and finer sense of Coleridge), and now says of the former volume that “it was
published as an experiment which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement, a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted which a poet may rationally endeavor to impart.”

Here is evidence of a retreat towards a safer position, though Wordsworth seems to have remained unconvinced at heart, and for many years longer clung obstinately to the passages of bald prose into which his original theory had betrayed him. In 1815 his opinions had undergone a still further change, and an assiduous study of the qualities of his own mind and of his own poetic method (the two subjects in which alone he was ever a thorough scholar) had convinced him that poetry was in no sense that appeal to the understanding which is implied by the words “rationally endeavor to impart.” In the preface of that year he says, “The observations prefixed to that portion of these volumes which was published many years ago under the title of ‘Lyrical Ballads’ have so little of special application to the greater part of the present enlarged and diversified collection, that they could not with propriety stand as an introduction to it.”

It is a pity that he could not have become an earlier convert to Coleridge’s pithy definition, that “prose was words in their best order, and poetry the best words in the best order.” But idealization was something that Wordsworth was obliged to learn painfully. It did not come to him naturally, as to Spenser and Shelley, and to Coleridge in his higher moods. Moreover, it was in the too frequent choice of subjects incapable of being idealized without a manifest jar between theme and treatment that Wordsworth’s great mistake lay. For example, in “The Blind Highland Boy” he had originally the following stanzas:

“Strong is the current, but be mild,  
Ye waves, and spare the helpless child!  
If ye in anger fret or chafe,  
A bee-hive would be ship as safe  
As that in which he sails.

“But say, what was it? Thought of fear!  
Well may ye tremble when ye hear!  
—A household tub like one of those  
Which women use to wash their clothes,  
This carried the blind boy.”

1 Some of the weightiest passages in this Preface, as it is now printed, were inserted without notice of date in the edition of 1815.
In endeavoring to get rid of the downright vulgarity of phrase in the last stanza, Wordsworth invents an impossible tortoise-shell, and thus robs his story of the reality which alone gave it a living interest. Any extemporized raft would have floated the boy down to immortality. But Wordsworth never quite learned the distinction between Fact, which suffocates the Muse, and Truth, which is the very breath of her nostrils. Study and self-culture did much for him, but they never quite satisfied him that he was capable of making a mistake. He yielded silently to friendly remonstrance on certain points, and gave up, for example, the ludicrous exactness of

"I've measured it from side to side,
'Tis three feet long and two feet wide."

But I doubt if he was ever really convinced, and to his dying day he could never quite shake off that habit of over-minute detail which renders the narratives of uncultivated people so tedious, and sometimes so distasteful.1 "Simon Lee," after his latest revision, still contains verses like these:

"And he is lean and he is sick;
His body, dwindled and awry,
Rests upon ankles swollen and thick;
His legs are thin and dry;

Few months of life he has in store,
As he to you will tell,
For still, the more he works, the more
Do his weak ankles swell,"—

which are not only prose, but bad prose, and moreover guilty of the same fault for which Wordsworth condemned Dr. Johnson's famous parody on the ballad-style,—that their "matter is contemptible." The sonorousness of conviction with which Wordsworth sometimes gives utterance to common-places of thought and trivialities of sentiment has a ludicrous effect on the profane and even on the faithful in

1 "On my alluding to the line,
'Three feet long and two feet wide,
and confessing that I dared not read them aloud in company, he said, 'They ought to be liked.' " (Crabb Robinson, 9th May, 1815.) His ordinary answer to criticisms was that he considered the power to appreciate the passage criticised as a test of the critic's capacity to judge of poetry at all.
unguarded moments. We are reminded of a passage in "The Excursion":—

"List! I heard
From yon huge breast of rock a solemn bleat,
Sent forth as if it were the mountain's voice."

In 1800 the friendship of Wordsworth with Lamb began, and was thenceforward never interrupted. He continued to live at Grasmere, conscientiously diligent in the composition of poems, secure of finding the materials of glory within and around him; for his genius taught him that inspiration is no product of a foreign shore, and that no adventurer ever found it, though he wandered as long as Ulysses. Meanwhile the appreciation of the best minds and the gratitude of the purest hearts gradually centred more and more towards him. In 1802 he made a short visit to France, in company with Miss Wordsworth, and soon after his return to England was married to Mary Hutchinson, on the 4th of October of the same year. Of the good fortune of this marriage no other proof is needed than the purity and serenity of his poems, and its record is to be sought nowhere else.

On the 18th of June, 1803, his first child, John, was born, and on the 14th of August of the same year he set out with his sister on a foot journey into Scotland. Coleridge was their companion during a part of this excursion, of which Miss Wordsworth kept a full diary. In Scotland he made the acquaintance of Scott, who recited to him a part of the "Lay of the Last Minstrel," then in manuscript. The travellers returned to Grasmere on the 25th of September. It was during this year that Wordsworth's intimacy with the excellent Sir George Beaumont began. Sir George was an amateur painter of considerable merit, and his friendship was undoubtedly of service to Wordsworth in making him familiar with the laws of a sister art and thus contributing to enlarge the sympathies of his criticism, the tendency of which was toward too great exclusiveness. Sir George Beaumont, dying in 1827, did not forego his regard for the poet, but contrived to hold his affection in mortmain by the legacy of an annuity of £100, to defray the charges of a yearly journey.

In March, 1805, the poet's brother, John, lost his life by the shipwreck of the Abergavenny East-Indiaman, of which he was captain. He was a man of great purity and integrity,
and sacrificed himself to his sense of duty by refusing to leave the ship till it was impossible to save him. Wordsworth was deeply attached to him, and felt such grief at his death as only solitary natures like his are capable of, though mitigated by a sense of the heroism which was the cause of it. The need of mental activity as affording an outlet to intense emotion may account for the great productiveness of this and the following year. He now completed "The Prelude," wrote "The Wagoner," and increased the number of his smaller poems enough to fill two volumes, which were published in 1807.

This collection, which contained some of the most beautiful of his shorter pieces, and among others the incomparable Odes to Duty and on Immortality, did not reach a second edition till 1815. The reviewers had another laugh, and rival poets pillaged while they scoffed, particularly Byron, among whose verses a bit of Wordsworth showed as incongruously as a sacred vestment on the back of some buccaneering plunderer of an abbey. There was a general combination to put him down, but on the other hand there was a powerful party in his favor, consisting of William Wordsworth. He not only continued in good heart himself, but, reversing the order usual on such occasions, kept up the spirits of his friends. Meanwhile the higher order of minds

1 Byron, then in his twentieth year, wrote a review of these volumes, not, on the whole, unfair. Crabb Robinson is reported as saying that Wordsworth was indignant at the Edinburgh Review's attack on Hours of Idleness. "The young man will do something if he goes on," he said.

2 The Rev. Dr. Wordsworth has encumbered the memory of his uncle with two volumes of Memoirs, which for confused dreaminess are only matched by the Rev. Mark Noble's History of the Protectorate House of Cromwell. It is a misfortune that his materials were not put into the hands of Professor Reed, whose notes to the American edition are among the most valuable parts of it, as they certainly are the clearest. The book contains, however, some valuable letters of Wordsworth; and those relating to this part of his life should be read by every student of his works, for the light they throw upon the principles which governed him in the composition of his poems. In a letter to Lady Beaumont (May 21, 1807) he says, "Trouble not yourself upon their present reception; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny!—to console the afflicted, to add sunshine to daylight by making the happy happier; to teach the young and the gracious of every age, to see, to think and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous; this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform long after we (that is, all that is
among his contemporaries had described and acknowledged him. They see their peer over the mist and lower summits between.

"When Plinlimmon hath a cap, Snowdon wots well of that."

Wordsworth passed the winter of 1806-7 in the house of Sir George Beaumont's, at Coleorton in Leicestershire, the cottage at Grasmere having become too small for his increased family. On his return to the Vale of Grasmere he rented the house at Allan Bank, where he lived three years. During this period he appears to have written very little poetry, for which his biographer assigns as a primary reason the smokiness of the Allan Bank chimneys. This will hardly account for the failure of the summer crop, especially as Wordsworth composed chiefly in the open air. It did not prevent him from writing a pamphlet upon the Convention of Cintra, which was published too late to attract much attention, though Lamb says that its effect upon him was like that which one of Milton's tracts might have had upon a contemporary.\(^1\) It was at Allan Bank that Coleridge dictated "The Friend," and Wordsworth contributed to it two essays, one in answer to a letter of Mathetes\(^2\) (Professor Wilson), and the other on Epitaphs, republished in the Notes to "The Excursion." Here also he wrote his "Description of the Scenery of the Lakes." Perhaps a truer explanation of the comparative silence of Wordsworth's Muse during these years is to be found in the intense interest which he

mortal of us) are mouldered in our graves. . . . To conclude, my ears are stone-dead to this idle buzz [of hostile criticism], and my flesh as insensible as iron to these petty stings; and, after what I have said, I am sure yours will be the same. I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will cooperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society wherever found; and that they will in their degree be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." Here is an odd reversal of the ordinary relation between an unpopular poet and his little public of admirers; it is he who keeps up their spirits, and supplies them with faith from his own inexhaustible cistern.

\(^1\) "Wordsworth's pamphlet will fail of producing any general effect, because the sentences are long and involved; and his friend De Quincey, who corrected the press, has rendered them more obscure by an unusual system of punctuation." (Southey to Scott, 30th July, 1809.) The tract is, as Southey hints, heavy.

\(^2\) The first essay in the third volume of the second edition.
LOWELL’S ESSAY.

took in current events, whose variety, picturesqueness, and historical significance were enough to absorb all the energies of his imagination.

In the spring of 1811 Wordsworth removed to the Parsonage at Grasmere. Here he remained two years, and here he had his second intimate experience of sorrow in the loss of two of his children, Catharine and Thomas, one of whom died 4th June, and the other 1st December, 1812. Early in 1813 he bought Rydal Mount, and, having removed thither, changed his abode no more during the rest of his life. In March of this year he was appointed Distributor of Stamps for the county of Westmorland, an office whose receipts rendered him independent, and whose business he was able to do by deputy, thus leaving him ample leisure for nobler duties. De Quincey speaks of this appointment as an instance of the remarkable good luck which waited upon Wordsworth through his whole life. In our view it is only another illustration of that scripture which describes the righteous as never forsaken. Good luck is the willing hand-maid of upright, energetic character, and conscientious observance of duty. Wordsworth owed his nomination to the friendly exertions of the Earl of Lonsdale, who desired to atone as far as might be for the injustice of the first Earl, and who respected the honesty of the man more than he appreciated the originality of the poet. The Collectorship at Whitehaven (a more lucrative office) was afterwards offered to Wordsworth, and declined. He had enough for independence, and wished nothing more. Still later, on the death of the Stamp-Distributor for Cumberland, a part of that district was annexed to Westmorland, and Words-

1 Wordsworth’s children were,—
John, born 18th June, 1803, a clergyman.
Dorothy, born 16th August, 1804; died 9th July, 1847.
Thomas, born 16th June, 1806; died 1st December, 1812.
Catharine, born 6th September, 1808; died 4th June, 1812.
William, born 12th May, 1810; succeeded his father as Stamp-Distributor.

2 Good luck (in the sense of Chance) seems properly to be the occurrence of Opportunity to one who has neither deserved nor knows how to use it. In such hands it commonly turns to ill luck. Moore’s Bermudan appointment is an instance of it. Wordsworth had a sound common-sense and practical conscientiousness, which enabled him to fill his office as well as Dr. Franklin could have done. A fitter man could not have been found in Westmorland.
worth's income was raised to something more than £1,000 a year.

In 1814 he made his second tour in Scotland, visiting Yarrow in company with the Ettrick Shepherd. During this year "The Excursion" was published, in an edition of five hundred copies, which supplied the demand for six years. Another edition of the same number of copies was published in 1827, and not exhausted till 1834. In 1815 "The White Doe of Rylstone" appeared, and in 1816 "A Letter to a Friend of Burns," in which Wordsworth gives his opinion upon the limits to be observed by the biographers of literary men. It contains many valuable suggestions, but allows hardly scope enough for personal details, to which he was constitutionally indifferent. Nearly the same date may be ascribed to a rhymed translation of the first three books of the Æneid, a specimen of which was printed in the Cambridge "Philological Museum" (1832). In 1819 "Peter Bell," written twenty years before, was published, and, perhaps in consequence of the ridicule of the reviewers, found a more rapid sale than any of his previous volumes. "The Wagoner," printed in the same year, was less successful. His next publication was the volume of Sonnets on the river Duddon, with some miscellaneous poems, 1820. A tour on the Continent in 1820 furnished the subjects for another collection, published in 1822. This was followed in the same year by the volume of "Ecclesiastical Sketches." His subsequent publications were "Yarrow Revisited," 1835, and the tragedy of "The Borderers," 1842.

During all these years his fame was increasing slowly but steadily, and his age gathered to itself the reverence and the troops of friends which his poems and the nobly simple life reflected in them deserved. Public honors followed private appreciation. In 1838 the University of Dublin conferred upon him the degree of D.C.L. In 1839 Oxford did the same, and the reception of the poet (now in his seventieth year) at the University was enthusiastic. In 1842 he resigned his office of Stamp-Distributor, and Sir Robert Peel had the honor of putting him upon the civil list for a pension of £300. In 1843 he was appointed Laureate, with the express understanding that it was a tribute of respect, involving no duties except such as might be self-imposed.

1 "I am not one who much or oft delight In personal talk."
His only official production was an Ode for the installation of Prince Albert as Chancellor of the University of Cambridge. His life was prolonged yet seven years, almost, it should seem, that he might receive that honor which he had truly conquered for himself by the unflinching bravery of a literary life of half a century, unparalleled for the scorn with which its labors were received, and the victorious acknowledgment which at last crowned them. Surviving nearly all his contemporaries, he had, if ever any man had, a foretaste of immortality, enjoying in a sort his own posthumous renown, for the hardy slowness of its growth gave a safe pledge of its durability. He died on the 23d of April, 1850, the anniversary of the death of Shakespeare.

We have thus briefly sketched the life of Wordsworth,—a life uneventful even for a man of letters; a life like that of an oak, of quiet self-development, throwing out stronger roots toward the side whence the prevailing storm-blasts blow, and of tougher fibre in proportion to the rocky nature of the soil in which it grows. The life and growth of his mind, and the influences which shaped it, are to be looked for, even more than is the case with most poets, in his works, for he deliberately recorded them there.

Of his personal characteristics little is related. He was somewhat above the middle height, but, according to De Quincey, of indifferent figure, the shoulders being narrow and drooping. His finest feature was the eye, which was gray and full of spiritual light. Leigh Hunt says: "I never beheld eyes that looked so inspired, so supernatural. They were like fires, half burning, half smouldering, with a sort of acrid fixture of regard. One might imagine Ezekiel or Isaiah to have had such eyes." Southey tells us that he had no sense of smell, and Haydon that he had none of form. The best likeness of him, in De Quincey's judgment, is the portrait of Milton prefixed to Richardson's notes on Paradise Lost. He was active in his habits, composing in the open air, and generally dictating his poems. His daily life was regular, simple, and frugal; his manners were dignified and kindly; and in his letters and recorded conversations it is remarkable how little that was personal entered into his judgment of contemporaries.

The true rank of Wordsworth among poets is, perhaps, not even yet to be fairly estimated, so hard is it to escape into the quiet hall of judgment uninflamed by the tumult of partisanship which besets the doors.
Coming to manhood, predetermined to be a great poet, at a time when the artificial school of poetry was enthroned with all the authority of long succession and undisputed legitimacy, it was almost inevitable that Wordsworth, who, both by nature and judgment was a rebel against the existing order, should become a partisan. Unfortunately, he became not only the partisan of a system, but of William Wordsworth as its representative. Right in general principle, he thus necessarily became wrong in particulars. Justly convinced that greatness only achieves its end by implicitly obeying its own instincts, he perhaps reduced the following his instincts too much to a system, mistook his own resentments for the promptings of his natural genius, and, compelling principle to the measure of his own temperament or even of the controversial exigency of the moment, fell sometimes into the error of making naturalness itself artificial. If a poet resolve to be original, it will end commonly in his being merely peculiar.

Wordsworth himself departed more and more in practice, as he grew older, from the theories which he had laid down in his prefaces; but those theories undoubtedly had a great effect in retarding the growth of his fame. He had carefully constructed a pair of spectacles through which his earlier poems were to be studied, and the public insisted on looking

1 How far he swung backward toward the school under whose influence he grew up, and toward the style against which he had protested so vigorously, a few examples will show. The advocate of the language of common life has a verse in his *Thanksgiving Ode* which, if one met with it by itself, he would think the achievement of some later copyist of Pope:—

"While the tubed engine [the organ] feels the inspiring blast."

And in *The Italian Itinerant and the Swiss Goatherd* we find a thermometer or barometer called

"The well-wrought scale
Whose sentient tube instructs to time
A purpose to a fickle clime."

Still worse in the *Eclipse of the Sun*, 1821:—

"High on her speculative tower
Stood Science, waiting for the hour
When Sol was destined to endure
That darkening."

So in *The Excursion*,

"The cold March wind raised in her tender throat
Viewless obstructions."
through them at his mature works, and were consequently unable to see fairly what required a different focus. He forced his readers to come to his poetry with a certain amount of conscious preparation, and thus gave them beforehand the impression of something like mechanical artifice, and deprived them of the contented repose of implicit faith. To the child a watch seems to be a living creature; but Wordsworth would not let his readers be children, and did injustice to himself by giving them an uneasy doubt whether creations which really throbbed with the very heart's-blood of genius, and were alive with nature's life of life, were not contrivances of wheels and springs. A naturalness which we are told to expect has lost the crowning grace of nature. The men who walked in Cornelius Agrippa's visionary gardens had probably no more pleasurable emotions than that of a shallow wonder, or an equally shallow self-satisfaction, in thinking they had hit upon the secret of the thaumaturgy; but to a tree that has grown as God willed we come without a theory and with no botanical predilections, enjoying it simply and thankfully; or the Imagination recreates for us its past summers and winters, the birds that have nested and sung in it, the sheep that have clustered in its shade, the winds that have visited it, the cloud-bergs that have drifted over it, and the snows that have ermined it in winter. The Imagination is a faculty that flouts at foreordination, and Wordsworth seemed to do all he could to cheat his readers of her company by laying out paths with a peremptory Do not step off the gravel! at the opening of each, and preparing pitfalls for every conceivable emotion, with guide-boards to tell each when and where it must be caught.

But if these things stood in the way of immediate appreciation, he had another theory which interferes more seriously with the total and permanent effect of his poems. He was theoretically determined not only to be a philosophic poet, but to be a great philosophic poet, and to this end he must produce an epic. Leaving aside the question whether the epic be obsolete or not, it may be doubted whether the history of a single man's mind is universal enough in its interest to furnish all the requirements of the epic machinery, and it may be more than doubted whether a poet's philosophy be ordinary metaphysics, divisible into chapter and section. It is rather something which is more energetic in a word than in a whole treatise, and our hearts
unclose themselves instinctively at its simple *Open sesame!* while they would stand firm against the reading of the whole body of philosophy. In point of fact, the one element of greatness which "The Excursion" possesses indisputably is heaviness. It is only the episodes that are universally read, and the effect of these is diluted by the connecting and accompanying lectures on metaphysics. Wordsworth had his epic mould to fill, and, like Benvenuto Cellini in casting his Perseus, was forced to throw in everything, debasing the metal lest it should run short. Separated from the rest, the episodes are perfect poems in their kind, and without example in the language.

Wordsworth, like most solitary men of strong minds, was a good critic of the substance of poetry, but somewhat niggardly in the allowance he made for those subsidiary qualities which make it the charmer of leisure and the employment of minds without definite object. It may be doubted, indeed, whether he set much store by any contemporary writing but his own, and whether he did not look upon poetry too exclusively as an exercise rather of the intellect than as a nectar of the imagination.  

"In fine,
I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
Misled in estimating words, not only
By common inexperience of youth,
But by the trade in classic niceties,
The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase
From languages that want the living voice
To carry meaning to the natural heart;
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense."  

Though he here speaks in the preterite tense, this was always true of him, and his thought seems often to lean upon a word too weak to bear its weight. No reader of adequate insight can help regretting that he did not earlier give himself to "the trade of classic niceties." It was precisely this which gives to the blank-verse of Landor the severe dignity and reserved force which alone among later poets recall the tune of Milton, and to which Wordsworth

1 According to Landor, he pronounced all Scott's poetry to be "not worth five shillings."

2 *Prelude*, Book VI.
never attained. Indeed, Wordsworth's blank-verse (though the passion be profounder) is always essentially that of Cowper. They were alike also in their love of outward nature and of simple things. The main difference between them is one of scenery rather than of sentiment, between the life-long familiar of the mountains and the dweller on the plain.

It cannot be denied that in Wordsworth the very highest powers of the poetic mind were associated with a certain tendency to the diffuse and commonplace. It is in the understanding (always prosaic) that the great golden veins of his imagination are imbedded.¹ He wrote too much to write always well; for it is not a great Xerxes-army of words, but a compact Greek ten thousand, that march safely down to posterity. He set tasks to his divine faculty, which is much the same as trying to make Jove's eagle do the service of a clucking hen. Throughout "The Prelude" and "The Excursion" he seems striving to bind the wizard Imagination with the sand-ropes of dry disquisition, and to have forgotten the potent spell-word which would make the particles cohere. There is an arenaceous quality in the style which makes progress wearisome. Yet with what splendors as of mountain-sunsets are we rewarded! what golden rounds of verse do we not see stretching heavenward with angels ascending and descending! what haunting harmonies hover around us deep and eternal like the undying barytone of the sea! and if we are compelled to fare through sands and desert wildernes, how often do we not hear airy shapes that syllable our names with a startling personal appeal to our highest consciousness and our noblest aspiration, such as we wait for in vain in any other poet! Landor, in a letter to Miss Holford, says admirably of him, "Common minds alone can be ignorant what breadth of philosophy, what energy and intensity of thought, what insight into the heart, and what observation of nature are requisite for the production of such poetry."

¹ This was instinctively felt, even by his admirers. Miss Martineau said to Crabb Robinson in 1839, speaking of Wordsworth's conversation: "Sometimes he is annoying from the pertinacity with which he dwells on trifles; at other times he flows on in the utmost grandeur, leaving a strong impression of inspiration." Robinson tells us that he read Resolution and Independence to a lady who was affected by it even to tears, and then said, "I have not heard anything for years that so much delighted me; but, after all, it is not poetry."
Take from Wordsworth all which an honest criticism cannot but allow, and what is left will show how truly great he was. He had no humor, no dramatic power, and his temperament was of that dry and juiceless quality, that in all his published correspondence you shall not find a letter, but only essays. If we consider carefully where he was most successful, we shall find that it was not so much in description of natural scenery, or delineation of character, as in vivid expression of the effect produced by external objects and events upon his own mind, and of the shape and hue (perhaps momentary) which they in turn took from his mood or temperament. His finest passages are always monologues. He had a fondness for particulars, and there are parts of his poems which remind us of local histories in the undue relative importance given to trivial matters. He was the historian of Wordsworthshire. This power of particularization (for it is as truly a power as generalization) is what gives such vigor and greatness to single lines and sentiments of Wordsworth, and to poems developing a single thought or sentiment. It was this that made him so fond of the sonnet. That sequestered nook forced upon him the limits which his fecundity (if I may not say his garrulity) was never self-denying enough to impose on itself. It suits his solitary and meditative temper, and it was there that Lamb (an admirable judge of what was permanent in literature) liked him best. Its narrow bounds, but fourteen paces from end to end, turn into a virtue his too common fault of giving undue prominence to every passing emotion. He excels in monologue, and the law of the sonnet tempers monologue with mercy. In "The Excursion" we are driven to the subterfuge of a French verdict of extenuating circumstances. His mind had not that reach and elemental movement of Milton's, which, like the trade-wind, gathered to itself thoughts and images like stately fleets from every quarter; some deep with silks and spicery, some brooding over the silent thunders of their battailous armaments, but all swept forward in their destined track, over the long billows of his verse, every inch of canvas strained by the unifying breath of their common epic impulse. It was an organ that Milton mastered, mighty in compass, capable equally of the trumpet's ardors or the slim delicacy of the flute, and sometimes it bursts forth in great crashes through his prose, as if he touched it for solace in the intervals of his toil. If Wordsworth sometimes put the trumpet to his lips,
yet he lays it aside soon and willingly for his appropriate instrument, the pastoral reed. And it is not one that grew by any vulgar stream, but that which Apollo breathed through, tending the flocks of Admetus,—that which Pan endowed with every melody of the visible universe,—the same in which the soul of the despairing nymph took refuge and gifted with her dual nature,—so that ever and anon, amid the notes of human joy or sorrow, there comes suddenly a deeper and almost awful tone, thrilling us into dim consciousness of a forgotten divinity.

Wordsworth's absolute want of humor, while it no doubt confirmed his self-confidence by making him insensible both to the comical incongruity into which he was often led by his earlier theory concerning the language of poetry and to the not unnatural ridicule called forth by it, seems to have been indicative of a certain dulness of perception in other directions. We cannot help feeling that the material of his

1 Nowhere is this displayed with more comic self-complacency than when he thought it needful to rewrite the ballad of Helen of Kirkconnel,—a poem hardly to be matched in any language for swiftness of movement and savage sincerity of feeling. Its shuddering compression is masterly.

"Curst be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
That died to succor me!

O, think ye not my heart was sair
When my love dropt down and spake na mair?"

Compare this with,—

"Proud Gordon cannot bear the thoughts
That through his brain are travelling,
And, starting up, to Bruce's heart
He launched a deadly javelin.

Fair Ellen saw it when it came,
And, stepping forth to meet the same,
Did with her body cover
The Youth, her chosen lover.

And Bruce (as soon as he had slain
The Gordon) sailed away to Spain,
And fought with rage incessant
Against the Moorish Crescent."

These are surely the verses of an attorney's clerk "penning a stanza when he should engross." It will be noticed that Wordsworth here also departs from his earlier theory of the language of poetry by
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nature was essentially prose, which, in his inspired moments, he had the power of transmuting, but which, whenever the inspiration failed or was factitious, remained obstinately leaden. The normal condition of many poets would seem to approach that temperature to which Wordsworth's mind could be raised only by the white heat of profoundly inward passion. And in proportion to the intensity needful to make his nature thoroughly aglow is the very high quality of his best verses. They seem rather the productions of nature than of man, and have the lastingness of such, delighting our age with the same startle of newness and beauty that pleased our youth. Is it his thought? It has the shifting inward lustre of diamond. Is it his feeling? It is as delicate as the impressions of fossil ferns. He seems to have caught and fixed forever in immutable grace the most evanescent and intangible of our intuitions, the very ripple-marks on the remotest shores of being. But this intensity of mood which insures high quality is by its very nature incapable of prolongation, and Wordsworth, in endeavoring it, falls more below himself, and is, more even than many poets his inferiors in imaginative quality, a poet of passages. Indeed, one cannot help having the feeling sometimes that the poem is there for the sake of these passages, rather than that these are the natural jets and elations of a mind energized by the rapidity of its own substituting a javelin for a bullet as less modern and familiar. Had he written,—

"And Gordon never gave a hint,
But, having somewhat picked his flint,
Let fly the fatal bullet
That killed that lovely pullet,"

it would hardly have seemed more like a parody than the rest. He shows the same insensibility in a note upon the Ancient Mariner in the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads: "The poem of my friend has indeed great defects; first, that the principal person has no distinct character, either in his profession of mariner, or as a human being who, having been long under the control of supernatural impressions, might be supposed himself to partake of something supernatural; secondly, that he does not act, but is continually acted upon; thirdly, that the events, having no necessary connection, do not produce each other; and lastly, that the imagery is somewhat laboriously accumulated." Here is an indictment, to be sure, and drawn, plainly enough, by the attorney's clerk aforenamed. One would think that the strange charm of Coleridge's most truly original poems lay in this very emancipation from the laws of cause and effect.
motion. In other words, the happy couplet or gracious image seems not to spring from the inspiration of the poem conceived as a whole, but rather to have dropped of itself into the mind of the poet in one of his rambles, who then, in a less rapt mood, has patiently built up around it a setting of verse too often ungraceful in form and of a material whose cheapness may cast a doubt on the priceless quality of the gem it encumbers. During the most happily productive period of his life, Wordsworth was impatient of what may be called the mechanical portion of his art. His wife and sister seem from the first to have been his scribes. In later years, he had learned and often insisted on the truth that poetry was an art no less than a gift, and corrected his poems in cold blood, sometimes to their detriment. But he certainly had more of the vision than of the faculty divine, and was always a little numb on the side of form and proportion. Perhaps his best poem in these respects is the "Laodamia," and it is not uninstructive to learn from his own lips that "it cost him more trouble than almost anything of equal length he had ever written." His longer poems (miscalled epical) have no more intimate bond of union than their more or less immediate relation to his own personality. Of character other than his own he had but a faint conception, and all the personages of "The Excursion" that are not Wordsworth are the merest shadows of himself upon mist, for his self-concentrated nature was incapable of projecting itself into the consciousness of other men and seeing the springs of action at their source in the recesses of individual character. The best parts of these longer poems are bursts of impassioned soliloquy, and his fingers were always clumsy at the callida junctura. The stream of narration is sluggish, if varied by times with pleasing reflections (viridesque placido equore sylvas); we are forced to do our own rowing, and only when the current is hemmed in by some narrow gorge of the poet's personal consciousness do we feel ourselves snatched along on the smooth but impetuous rush of unmistakable inspiration. The fact that what is precious in Wordsworth's poetry was (more truly

1 "A hundred times when, roving high and low,
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
Much pains and little progress, and at once
Some lovely Image in the song rose up,
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea."

_Prelude_, Book IV.
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even than with some greater poets than he) a gift rather than an achievement should always be borne in mind in taking the measure of his power. I know not whether to call it height or depth, this peculiarity of his, but it certainly endows those parts of his work which we should distinguish as Wordsworthian with an unexpectedness and impressiveness of originality such as we feel in the presence of Nature herself. He seems to have been half conscious of this, and recited his own poems to all comers with an enthusiasm of wondering admiration that would have been profoundly comic but for its simple sincerity and for the fact that William Wordsworth, Esquire, of Rydal Mount, was one person, and the William Wordsworth whom he so heartily reverenced quite another. We recognize two voices in him, as Stephano did in Caliban. There are Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch. If the prophet cease from dictating, the amanuensis, rather than be idle, employs his pen in jotting down some anecdotes of his master, how he one day went out and saw an old woman, and the next day did not, and so came home and dictated some verses on this ominous phenomenon, and how another day he saw a cow. These marginal annotations have been carelessly taken up into the text, have been religiously held by the pious to be orthodox scripture, and by dexterous exegesis have been made to yield deeply oracular meanings. Presently the real prophet takes up the word again and speaks as one divinely inspired, the Voice of a higher and invisible power. Wordsworth's better utterances have the bare sincerity, the absolute abstraction from time and place, the immunity from decay, that belong to the grand simplicities of the Bible. They seen not more his own than ours and every man's, the word of the inalterable Mind. This gift of his was naturally very much a matter of temperament, and accordingly by far the greater part of his finer product belongs to the period of his prime, ere Time had set his lumpish foot on the pedal that deadens the nerves of animal sensibility. He did not grow as those

1 Mr. Emerson tells us that he was at first tempted to smile, and Mr. Ellis Yarnall (who saw him in his eightieth year) says, "These quotations [from his own works] he read in a way that much impressed me; it seemed almost as if he were awed by the greatness of his own power, the gifts with which he had been endowed." (The italics are mine.)

2 His best poetry was written when he was under the immediate influence of Coleridge. Coleridge seems to have felt this, for it is evidently to Wordsworth that he alludes when he speaks of "those
poets do in whom the artistic sense is predominant. One of the most delightful fancies of the Genevese humorist, Toepffer, is the poet Albert, who, having had his portrait drawn by a highly idealizing hand, does his best afterwards to look like it. Many of Wordsworth's later poems seem like rather unsuccessful efforts to resemble his former self. They would never, as Sir John Harrington says of poetry, "keep a child from play and an old man from the chimney-corner."¹

Chief Justice Marshall once blandly interrupted a junior counsel who was arguing certain obvious points of law at needless length, by saying, "Brother Jones, there are some things which a Supreme Court of the United States sitting in equity may be presumed to know." (Wordsworth has this fault of enforcing and restating obvious points till the reader feels as if his own intelligence were somewhat underrated.) He is over-conscientious in giving us full measure, and once profoundly absorbed in the sound of his own voice, he knows not when to stop. If he feels himself flagging, he has a droll way of keeping the floor, as it were, by asking himself a series of questions sometimes not needing, and often incapable of answer. There are three stanzas of such near the close of the First Part of "Peter Bell," where Peter first catches a glimpse of the dead body in the water, all happily incongruous, and ending with one which reaches the height of comicality:—

"Is it a fiend that to a stake
Of fire his desperate self is tethering?
Or stubborn spirit doomed to yell,
In solitary ward or cell,
Ten thousand miles from all his brethren?"

who have been so well pleased that I should, year after year, flow with a hundred nameless rills into their main stream." (Letters, Conversations, and Recollections of S. T. C., vol. i. pp. 5-6.) "Wordsworth found fault with the repetition of the concluding sound of the participles in Shakespeare's line about bees:

'The singing masons building roofs of gold.'

This, he said, was a line that Milton never would have written. Keats thought, on the other hand, that the repetition was in harmony with the continued note of the singers." (Leigh Hunt's Autobiography.) Wordsworth writes to Crabb Robinson in 1837, "My ear is susceptible to the clashing of sounds almost to disease." One cannot help thinking that his training in these niceties was begun by Coleridge.

¹ In the Preface to his translation of the Orlando Furioso.
The same want of humor which made him insensible to incongruity may perhaps account also for the singular unconsciousness of disproportion which so often strikes us in his poetry. For example, a little farther on in "Peter Bell" we find:

"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!"

And one cannot help thinking that the similes of the huge stone, the sea-beast, and the cloud, noble as they are in themselves, are somewhat too lofty for the service to which they are put.  

(The movement of Wordsworth's mind was too slow and his mood too meditative for narrative poetry.) (He values his own thoughts and reflections too much to sacrifice the least of them to the interests of his story.) Moreover, it is never action that interests him, but the subtle motives that lead to or hinder it. "The Wagoner" involuntarily suggests a comparison with "Tam O'Shanter" infinitely to its own disadvantage. "Peter Bell," full though it be of profound touches and subtle analysis, is lumbering and disjointed. Even Lamb was forced to confess that he did not like it. "The White Doe," the most Wordsworthian of them all in the best meaning of the epithet, is also only the more truly so for being diffuse and reluctant. What charms in Wordsworth and will charm forever is the

"Happy tone
Of meditation slipping in between
The beauty coming and the beauty gone."

A few poets, in the exquisite adaptation of their words to the tune of our own feelings and fancies, in the charm of their manner, indefinable as the sympathetic grace of woman, are everything to us without our being able to say that they are much in themselves. They rather narcotize than fortify. Wordsworth must subject our mood to his own before he admits us to his intimacy; but, once admitted, it is for life, and we find ourselves in his debt, not for what he has been to us in our hours of relaxation, but for what he has done for us as a reinforcement of faltering purpose and personal independence of character. His system of a Nature-cure,

1In Resolution and Independence.
first professed by Dr. Jean Jacques and continued by Cowper, certainly breaks down as a whole. The Solitary of “The Excursion,” who has not been cured of his scepticism by living among the medicinal mountains, is, so far as we can see, equally proof against the lectures of Pedler and Parson. Wordsworth apparently felt that this would be so, and accordingly never saw his way clear to finishing the poem. But the treatment, whether a panacea or not, is certainly wholesome, inasmuch as it inculcates abstinence, exercise, and uncontaminate air. I am not sure, indeed, that the Nature-cure theory does not tend to foster in constitutions less vigorous than Wordsworth’s what Milton would call a fugitive and cloistered virtue at a dear expense of manlier qualities. The ancients and our own Elizabethans, ere spiritual megrims had become fashionable, perhaps made more out of life by taking a frank delight in its action and passion and by grappling with the facts of this world, rather than muddling themselves over the insoluble problems of another. If they had not discovered the picturesque, as we understand it, they found surprisingly fine scenery in man and his destiny, and would have seen something ludicrous, it may be suspected, in the spectacle of a grown man running to hide his head in the apron of the Mighty Mother whenever he had an ache in his finger or got a bruise in the tussle for existence.

But when, as I have said, our impartiality has made all those qualifications and deductions against which even the greatest poet may not plead his privilege, what is left to Wordsworth is enough to justify his fame. Even where his genius is wrapped in clouds, the unconquerable lightning of imagination struggles through, flashing out unexpected vistas, and illuminating the humdrum pathway of our daily thought with a radiance of momentary consciousness that seems like a revelation. If it be the most delightful function of the poet to set our lives to music, yet perhaps he will be even more sure of our maturer gratitude if he do his part also as moralist and philosopher to purify and enlighten; if he define and encourage our vacillating perceptions of duty; if he piece together our fragmentary apprehensions of our own life and that larger life whose unconscious instruments we are, making of the jumbled bits of our dissected map of experience a coherent chart. In the great poets there is an exquisite sensibility both of soul and sense that sympathizes like gossamer sea-moss with every movement of the element
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in which it floats, but which is rooted on the solid rock of our common sympathies. Wordsworth shows less of this finer feminine fibre of organization than one or two of his contemporaries, notably than Coleridge or Shelley, but he was a masculine thinker, and in his more characteristic poems there is always a kernel of firm conclusion from far-reaching principles that stimulates thought and challenges meditation. Groping in the dark passages of life, we come upon some axiom of his, as it were a wall that gives us our bearings and enables us to find an outlet. Compared with Goethe we feel that he lacks that serene impartiality of mind which results from breadth of culture; nay, he seems narrow, insular, almost provincial. He reminds us of those saints of Dante who gather brightness by revolving on their own axis. But through this very limitation of range he gains perhaps in intensity and the impressiveness which results from eagerness of personal conviction. If we read Wordsworth through, as I have just done, we find ourselves changing our mind about him at every other page, so uneven is he. If we read our favorite poems or passages only, he will seem uniformly great. And even as regards "The Excursion" we should remember how few long poems will bear consecutive reading. For my part I know of but one,—the Odyssey.

None of our great poets can be called popular in any exact sense of the word, for the highest poetry deals with thoughts and emotions which inhabit, like rarest sea-mosses, the doubtful limits of that shore between our abiding divine and our fluctuating human nature, rooted in the one, but living in the other, seldom laid bare, and otherwise visible only at exceptional moments of entire calm and clearness. Of no other poet except Shakespeare have so many phrases become household words as of Wordsworth. If Pope has made current more epigrams of worldly wisdom, to Wordsworth belongs the nobler praise of having defined for us, and given us for a daily possession, those faint and vague suggestions of other-worldliness of whose gentle ministry with our baser nature the hurry and bustle of life scarcely ever allowed us to be conscious. He has won for himself a secure immortality by a depth of intuition which makes only the best minds at their best hours worthy, or indeed capable, of his companionship, and by a homely sincerity of human sympathy which reaches the humblest heart. Our language owes him gratitude for the habitual purity and
abstinence of his style, and we who speak it, for having emboldened us to take delight in simple things, and to trust ourselves to our own instincts. And he hath his reward. It needs not to bid

"Renowned Spenser, lie a thought more nigh
To learned Chaucer, and rare Beaumont lie
A little nearer Spenser ";

for there is no fear of crowding in that little society with whom he is now enrolled as fifth in the succession of the great English Poets.
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 centre 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 reeled, 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
Enclosed 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 labour 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 every thing.
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 endeavour,
That at the root of the old tree
He might have worked for ever.
"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 endeavoured.

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.

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 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, 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.

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 recompence. 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!

NUTTING.

—It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days that 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
Tow'rd some far-distant wood, 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! O'er pathless rocks,
Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,
Forcing my way, 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 tempting 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, under 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;
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw 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.
A POET'S EPITAPH.

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

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

Art thou a Man of purple cheer?
A rosy Man, right plump to see?
Approach; yet, Doctor, not too near,
This grave no cushion is for thee.

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

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

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

A Moralist perchance appears;
Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod:
And he has neither eyes nor ears;
Himself his world, and his own God;
One to whose smoothrubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or small;
A reasoning, self-sufficing thing,
An intellectual All-in-all!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I
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.

II
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.

III
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.

IV
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 come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace, A leading from above, a something given, Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place, When I with these untoward thoughts had striven, Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven —I saw a Man before me unawares: The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.
IX
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 hither come, and whence;
So that it seemed a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposeth, there to sun itself;

X
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.

XI
Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale 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.

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

XIV
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.

XV
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.

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

XVIII
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."

XIX
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.

XX
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!"
COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE,
SEPT. 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, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at its own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY."

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!
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 chaunt
More welcome notes to weary 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 plaintiff numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more,
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 school-boy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky.

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

And I can listen to thee yet;
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.
O blessèd Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

The Affliction of Margaret

I
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?

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

III
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.
IV
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.

V
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.

VI
My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,
Hopeless of honour 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.

VII
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.
THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET ——. 23

VIII
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.

IX
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.

X
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.

XI
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!
ODE TO DUTY.

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

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

Serene will be our days and bright  
And happy will our nature be,  
When love is an unerring light,  
And joy its own security.  
And they a blissful course may hold  
Even now, who, not 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.

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!
ELEGIA STANZAS.

SUGGESTED BY A PICTURE OF PEELE CASTLE, IN A STORM, PAINTED BY SIR GEORGE BEAUMONT.

I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile;
Four summer weeks I dwelt in sight of thee:
I saw thee every day; and all the while
Thy Form was sleeping on a glassy sea.

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!
So like, so very like, was day to day!
Where'er I looked, thy Image still was there;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings:
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah! then, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet's dream;

I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss.

Thou should'st have seemed a treasure-house divine
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine,
The very sweetest had to thee been given.
A Picture had it been of lasting ease,  
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;  
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion of my heart,  
Such Picture would I at that time have made;  
And seen the soul of truth in every part,  
A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed.

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;  
I have submitted to a new control:  
A power is gone, which nothing can restore;  
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold  
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:  
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;  
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene.

Then, Beaumont, Friend! who would have been  
the Friend,  
If he had lived, of Him whom I deplore,  
This work of mine I blame not, but commend;  
This sea in anger, and that dismal shore.

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well,  
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;  
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,  
I love to see the look with which it braves,  
Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time,  
The lightning, the fierce wind, and trampling waves.
Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known,
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

PERSONAL TALK.

I

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.

II

"Yet life," you say, "is life; we have seen and see,
And with a living pleasure we describe;
And fits of sprightly malice do but bribe
The languid mind into activity."
Sound sense, and love itself, and mirth and glee
Are fostered by the comment and the gibe."
Even be it so; yet still among your tribe,
Our daily world's true Wordlings, rank not me!
Children are blest, and powerful; their world lies
More justly balanced; partly at their feet,
And part far from them: sweetest melodies
Are those that are by distance made more sweet;
Whose mind is but the mind of his own eyes,
He is a Slave; the meanest we can meet!

III
Wings have we,—and as far as we can go,
We may find pleasure: wilderness and wood,
Blank ocean and mere sky, support that mood
Which with the lofty sanctifies the low.
Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good;
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastimes and our happiness will grow.
There find I personal themes, a plenteous store,
Matter wherein right voluble I am,
To which I listen with a ready ear;
Two shall be named, pre-eminently dear,—
The gentle Lady married to the Moor;
And heavenly Una with her milk-white Lamb.

IV
Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancour, never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought;
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbour, lodging peaceably.
Blessings be with them—and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares—
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!
Oh! might my name be numbered among theirs,
Then gladly would I end my mortal days.

“THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US;
LATE AND SOON.”

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!
The Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not.—Great God! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

“WHERE LIES THE LAND TO WHICH YON
SHIP MUST GO?”

Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go?
Fresh as a lark mounting at break of day,
Festively she puts forth in trim array;
Is she for tropic suns, or polar snow?
"WHERE LIEST THE LAND?"

What boots the inquiry?—Neither friend nor foe
She cares for; let her travel where she may,
She finds familiar names, a beaten way
Ever before her, and a wind to blow.
Yet still I ask, what haven is her mark?
And almost as it was when ships were rare,
(From time to time, like Pilgrims, here and there
Crossing the waters) doubt, and something dark,
Of the old Sea some reverential fear,
Is with me at thy farewell, joyous Bark!

TO SLEEP.

O gentle Sleep! do they belong to thee,
These twinklings of oblivion? Thou dost love
To sit in meekness, like the brooding Dove,
A captive never wishing to be free.
This tiresome night, O Sleep! thou art to me
A Fly, that up and down himself doth shove
Upon a fretful rivulet, now above
Now on the water vexed with mockery.
I have no pain that calls for patience, no;
Hence am I cross and peevish as a child:
Am pleased by fits to have thee for my foe,
Yet ever willing to be reconciled:
O gentle Creature! do not use me so,
But once and deeply let me be beguiled.

TO SLEEP.

A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I have thought of all by turns, and yet 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, blessed barrier between day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health!

TO SLEEP.

Fond words have oft been spoken to thee, Sleep!
And thou hast had thy store of tenderest names;
The very sweetest, Fancy culls or frames,
When thankfulness of heart is strong and deep!
Dear Bosom-child we call thee, that dost steep
In rich reward all suffering; Balm that tames
All anguish; Saint that evil thoughts and aims
Takest away, and into souls doth creep,
Like to a breeze from heaven. Shall I alone,
I surely not a man ungently made,
Call thee worst Tyrant by which Flesh is crost?
Perverse, self-willed to own and to disown,
Mere slave of them who never for thee prayed,
Still last to come where thou are wanted most.
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-souled 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!

TO B. R. HAYDON.

High is our calling, Friend! Creative Art
(Whether the instrument of words she use,
Or pencil pregnant with ethereal hues,)
Demands the service of a mind and heart,
Though sensitive, yet, in their weakest part,
Heroically fashioned—to infuse
Faith in the whispers of the lonely Muse,
While the whole world seems adverse to desert.
And, oh! when Nature sinks, as oft she may,
Through long-lived pressure of obscure distress,
Still to be strenuous for the bright reward,
And in the soul admit of no decay,
Brook no continuance of weak-mindedness—
Great is the glory for the strife is hard!
AFTER THOUGHT.

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide;
The Form remains, the Function never dies;
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith's transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

INSIDE THE KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL, CAMBRIDGE.

Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense,
With ill-matched aims the Architect who planned—
Albeit labouring for a scanty band
Of white robed Scholars only—this immense
And glorious Work of fine intelligence!
Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
Of nicely-calculated less or more;
So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
Self-poised, and scooped into ten thousand cells,
Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
Lingering—and wandering on as loth to die;
Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
That they were born for immortality.
THE SAME.

What awful perspective! while from our sight
With gradual stealth the lateral windows hide
Their Portraits, their stone-work glimmers, dyed
In the soft chequerings of a sleepy light.
Martyr, or King, or sainted Eremite,
Whoe'er ye be, that thus, yourselves unseen,
Imbue your prison-bars with solemn sheen,
Shine on, until ye fade with coming Night!—
But, from the arms of silence—list! O list!
The music bursteth into second life;
The notes luxuriate, every stone is kissed
By sound, or ghost of sound, in mazy strife;
Heart-thrilling strains, that cast, before the eye
Of the devout, a veil of ecstacy!

CONTINUED.

They dreamt not of a perishable home
Who thus could build. Be mine, in hours of fear
Or grovelling thought, to seek a refuge here;
Or through the aisles of Westminster to roam;
Where bubbles burst, and folly's dancing foam
Melts, if it cross the threshold; where the wreath
Of awe-struck wisdom droops; or let my path
Lead to that younger Pile, whose sky-like dome
Hath typified by reach of daring art
Infinity's embrace; whose guardian crest,
The silent Cross, among the stars shall spread
As now, when She hath also seen her breast
Filled with mementos, satiate with its part
Of grateful England's overflowing Dead.
"SCORN NOT THE SONNET."

Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned, Mindless of its just honours; with this key Shakspeare unlocked his heart; the melody Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound; A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound; With it Camœns soothed an exile's grief; The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp, It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faeryland To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew Soul-animating strains—alas, too few!

TO THE CUCKOO.

Not the whole warbling grove in concert heard When sunshine follows shower, the breast can thrill Like the first summons, Cuckoo! of thy bill, With its twin notes inseparably paired. The captive 'mid damp vaults unsunned, unaired, Measuring the periods of his lonely doom, That cry can reach; and to the sick man's room Sends gladness, by no languid smile declared. The lordly eagle-race through hostile search May perish; time may come when never more The wilderness shall hear the lion roar; But, long as cock shall crow from household perch To rouse the dawn, soft gales shall speed thy wing, And thy erratic voice be faithful to the Spring!
"There is a pleasure in poetic pains
Which only Poets know;—'twas rightly said;
Whom could the Muses else allure to tread
Their smoothest paths, to wear their lightest chains?
When happiest Fancy has inspired the strains,
How oft the malice of one luckless word
Pursues the Enthusiast to the social board,
Haunts him belated on the silent plains!
Yet he repines not, if his thought stand clear,
At last, of hindrance and obscurity,
Fresh as the star that crowns the brow of morn;
Bright, speckless, as a softly-moulded tear
The moment it has left the virgin's eye,
Or rain-drop lingering on the pointed thorn.

TO B. R. HAYDON, ON SEEING HIS PICTURE OF NAPOLEON BUONAPARTE ON THE ISLAND OF ST. HELENA.

Haydon! let worthier judges praise the skill
Here by thy pencil shown in truth of lines
And charm of colours; I applaud those signs
Of thought, that give the true poetic thrill;
That unencumbered whole of blank and still
Sky without cloud—ocean without a wave;
And the one Man that laboured to enslave
The World, sole-standing high on the bare hill—
Back turned, arms folded, the unapparent face
Tinged, we may fancy, in this dreary place,
With light reflected from the invisible sun
Set, like his fortunes; but not set for aye
Like them. The unguilty Power pursues his way,
And before him doth dawn perpetual run.
"THERE!" SAID A STRIPLING.

"THERE!" said a Stripling, pointing with meet pride Towards a low roof with green trees half concealed, "Is Mosgiel Farm; and that's the very field Where Burns ploughed up the Daisy." Far and wide A plain below stretched seaward, while, descried Above sea-clouds, the Peaks of Arran rose; And, by that simple notice, the repose Of earth, sky, sea, and air, was vivified. Beneath "the random bield of clod or stone" Myriads of daisies have shone forth in flower Near the lark's nest, and in their natural hour Have passed away; less happy than the One That, by the unwilling ploughshare, died to prove The tender charm of poetry and love.

A POET!

A Poet!—He hath put his heart to school, Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff Which Art hath lodged within his hand—must laugh By precept only, and shed tears by rule. Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff, And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool, In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph. How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold? Because the lovely little flower is free Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold; And so the grandeur of the Forest-tree Comes not by casting in a formal mould, But from its own divine vitality.
NOTES.

SIMON LEE.

This piece was written in 1798, and published in the same year in the *Lyrical Ballads*, together with *The Thorn*, *Goody Blake*, *We are Seven*, *Tables Turned*, etc., and the lines composed near Tintern Abbey.

In 1797 the Wordsworths left Racedown and settled at Alfoxden, a house near Netherstowey, in Somersetshire, where Coleridge was at that time living. It was here that Wordsworth and Coleridge, mostly during long walks on the Quantocks, composed the poems that they published in the *Lyrical Ballads*. (See notes on *Tintern Abbey*.)

Mr. Myers, who justly accuses of triviality several of Wordsworth’s contributions to the *Lyrical Ballads*, describes Simon Lee as triviality mingled with much real pathos. The thing seems to me to just miss the success attained by some of Wordsworth’s pieces of like character; and when not perfectly successful such poetry is apt to prove rather a disastrous failure. Probably most readers would wish the eighth and ninth stanzas away.

In 1842 Wordsworth made the following comment: ‘The old man had been huntsman to the squires of Alfoxden, which at the time he occupied it belonged to a minor. The old man’s cottage stood upon the common, a little way from the entrance to Alfoxden Park. But it had disappeared. . . . It is unnecessary to add, the fact was as mentioned in the poem; and I have, after an interval of forty-five years, the image of the old man as fresh before my eyes as if I had seen him yesterday. The expression when the hounds were out, “I dearly love their voice,” was word for word from his own lips.’

11. *bandied*. The word *bandy* is the French *bander* which, besides its ordinary meanings ‘to bind’ and ‘to bend,’ is used in tennis for striking back, ‘returning’ the ball (probably = ‘bending’ it back).
25. But, oh the heavy change. From Milton’s *Lycidas*, l. 37:

‘But, O the heavy change now thou art gone!’

28. liveried. I suppose we are to imagine him as still wearing his old hunting costume.

52. stouter: stronger; but perhaps also with allusion to Simon’s lean and dwindled body.

77. mattock: a Celtic word: in Welsh *matog*, in Gaelic *madag*. It means ‘a pickaxe with one or both of its ends broad instead of pointed.’ (Dict.)

96. mourning: because I have been so unable to deserve the gratitude that I have received.

**TINTERN ABBEY.**

In 1793, after his return from the Continent, Wordsworth was for a time in a very unsettled and unhappy state of mind, and led a homeless life. How he gradually passed from this state of ‘obscuration of the master-vision’ is told in the last books of the *Prelude*:

‘Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,
I led an undomestic wanderer’s life,
In London chiefly harbooured, whence I roamed,
Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
Of rural England’s cultivated vales
Or Cambrian solitudes.’

These excursions doubtless contributed much to his restoration. At the end of Book xiii. he describes a visit to Salisbury Plain and Stonehenge, and in Book xiv. we have a fine picture of a cloud-sea viewed from the summit of Snowdon by moonlight. It was probably during this long and solitary pedestrian tour that Wordsworth first visited the Wye. Five years later, in July, 1798, he revisited it, and wrote this poem, which was published in the same year in the *Lyrical Ballads*. During these five years very much had happened to make Wordsworth’s life happier, to deepen his knowledge and love of nature and of man, and to give him an insight into ‘the life of things.’ Among these influences perhaps the strongest was his love for his sister (see note to l. 115) and for Coleridge—to whom he afterwards addressed the *Prelude*. Speaking of this summer of 1798, at the close of which year the two poets published their *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says:

‘That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantocks’ airy ridge we roved
Uncheck’d, or loitered in her sylvan combs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel...

To the *Lyrical Ballads* Wordsworth contributed *The Thorn*, *Simon Lee*, *The Idiot Boy*, *We are Seven*, and other small pieces, besides these lines, 'On revisiting the Wye,' which stood last in the little volume. The book was published by Joseph Cottle of Bristol, a friend of Coleridge. 'He was bold enough,' says Prof. H. Mosley, 'to not only accept the book, but even to pay for it—£30. When he sold his stock and copyrights not long afterwards, the tender for *Lyrical Ballads* was £0 0s. 0d. Cottle thoughtfully therefore took the opportunity of passing back the despised copyright to its authors.' And this valueless book contained not only the *Ancient Mariner*, but also these verses composed near Tintern Abbey—some of the noblest and sublimest ever written. The following is Wordsworth's account of the composition of the poem: 'No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five days with my Sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately in the little volume (*Lyrical Ballads*) of which so much has been said in these notes.'

4. inland murmur. Mr. Webb well cites Tennyson's lines (*In Memoriam*, xix.):

'There twice a day the Severn fills;
The salt sea-water passes by,
And hushes half the babbling Wye,
And makes a silence in the hills.

. . . . . . .

The tide flows down, the wave again
Is vocal in its wooded walls.'

'The river,' as Wordsworth tells us, 'is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.'

7. connect: lead one's eye upwards with a gradation of colour and form from the bright hues and distinct outlines of the landscape to the more restful colouring and expanse of the sky. Wordsworth seems to have been always deeply impressed by the solitary and silent grandeur of mountain heights—although to the lover of Switzerland he appears to have scarcely realised the true grandeur of the Alps. In many passages he speaks of the influence of 'tall rock' and precipice and mountain peak; as, for instance, in the well-known lines:
'There is an Eminence—of these our hills
The last that parleys with the setting sun;
We can behold it from our orchard-seat;
And when at evening we pursue our walk
Along the public way, this peak, so high
Above us and so distant in its height,
Is visible, and often seems to send
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.'

(Naming of Places, iii.)

16. sportive: playful, or rather divergent, gadding. The word sport is a short form of disport, diversion (Fr. deport, from Lat. dis-portare, lit. to carry aside, divert).

23. have not been to me .... A forcible negative form of expression. The sense is that the landscape was vividly impressed on his memory through the medium of his eye.

25. But oft. Compare what he says about the Daffodils, words written about six years after this passage:

'For oft, when on the 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.'

By the way, the third and fourth—perhaps the best—of these beautiful lines were written, not by Wordsworth (if we are to accept his statement), but by his wife.

29. purer mind. We must not try to classify and criticise, as if Wordsworth were giving us here what is nowadays, curiously enough, called 'philosophy'—i.e. scientific metaphysics. This 'purer mind' has no allusion to what in the jargon of such 'philosophers' is called the 'pure reason.' He merely means that such physical sensations ('felt in the blood') not only excite transitory feelings in our heart, but supply material for quiet afterthought. The image is that of some deep transparent lake, where the turbid waters of a mountain river (such as the Rhone) are clarified and sink into its tranquil depths.

30. feelings too. It will be noticed that he speaks first of mere sensation, which supplies the memory with material for tranquil after-meditation. Then he speaks of something higher, viz. feelings which were aroused by some pleasure perhaps no longer remembered, and which had an influence on our character, on our acts, and not merely on our thoughts. And, lastly, he speaks (l. 37) of a still higher state at which we may arrive by communion with Nature—that of contemplative insight into the 'life of things'—a state in which our senses are laid asleep, or
act without our consciousness, and when even conscious thought ceases. In many passages—of the \textit{Prelude} and \textit{Excursion} especially—Wordsworth speaks of this power of the human spirit to recognise and to commune with the soul of Nature, that

'spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.'

The external world and the individual mind, he says, are exquisitely fitted to each other, and to the lover of Nature it is granted at moments of ecstatic contemplation to hold communion with this soul of the universe. And he not only speaks of this power, but by his poetry he aids us to 'see into the life of things'—to see their real nature and value—to see them, not merely in 'disconnexion dead and spiritless,' but in their vital connexion with the universe and with ourselves.

This power is to be attained not by what is ordinarily called knowledge—viz. the scientific knowledge of facts and physical causes—but by that knowledge which (as Dante says) is one with love, and which, as Socrates tells us, regards the \textit{true} causes of things, not merely their scientific explanations.

47. an eye made quiet. Cf. below, \textit{Poet's Epitaph}, l. 51.

48. of harmony. That Wordsworth saw deeper into the mystery of all this unintelligible world than such men as Tennyson I do not dare to assert; but where he saw nothing but Love and Harmony Tennyson saw (and this 'spectre of the mind' was for him never entirely laid) a vision of 'Nature red in tooth and claw.' It is true that Wordsworth was, during one period of his life, in a state of great mental doubt and depression, so that he,

'wearyied out with contrarieties,
Yielded up moral questions in despair.'

But although (see his \textit{Lines written in Early Spring}) he lamented 'what man has made of man,' he held it as a heaven-sent belief that there is happiness in Nature. The mystery of pain and suffering does not seem to affect some minds at all, and the fact of moral evil—on the supposition that only man is vile—is explained away, as in Wordsworth's case, by the doctrine of the Fall. To such as Wordsworth the music of humanity is sad indeed, but it chastens and subdues rather than excites to doubt in a God of Love.

53. Unprofitable, and the fever ... seem reminiscences of Shakespeare's 'weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable' (\textit{Hamlet}, i. ii.), and 'life's fitful fever' (\textit{Macbeth}, iii. ii.).

60. sad perplexity, \textit{i.e.} in recalling the unsettled state of mind in which he had been at that time; or possibly it means that he is saddened and perplexed at finding the reality not correspond fully with his memory of the scene. Cf.
'Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'

Somewhat in the same manner, when he saw Mont Blanc, he

'grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought,
That never more could be.'  (Prelude, vi.)

86. other gifts. With this passage should be compared the
latter part of the ode on Intimations of Immortality, where
Wordsworth describes the abundant recompense which in later
years we find for the loss of the dreams and raptures of youth:

'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.'

91. sad music of humanity. See on l. 48. Another metaphor
is given in the Ode descriptive of the same state of mind:

'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.'

92. of ample power. In a most beautiful passage of the
Excursion (iv.) Wordsworth describes the 'ample moon' burning
'like an un Consuming fire of light' as it is seen through the
foliage of the trees, and forming a glorious halo out of the
obstructing veil of leaves; and he adds:

'Like power abides
In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds
A calm, a beautiful, a silent fire
From the encumbrances of mortal life,
From error, disappointment—nay from guilt.'

The thought is somewhat differently cast in the present
passage, but is essentially the same—viz. suffering and even
sin may prove stepping-stones towards perfection.

96. Of something .... This that he here calls a 'motion and a
spirit,' and in other passages 'the Soul of all the worlds,' and an
'active Principle' (Exc. ix.), and 'the sentiment of Being' (Prel.
ii.), etc., is very much the same as what Virgil speaks of as the
'spiritus' which animates the material universe—that 'Life—or
vital principle—of the World' which was recognised both by old
Greek philosophers and by mediaeval Schoolmen. It is not
exactly what one means by the 'First Cause'—which is rather
the Nous or Mind which created order out of chaos—but
they are both Deity regarded by the human mind from different points of view.

Although holding strongly to the Anglican Church, Wordsworth, like Goethe and many other poets, was in his view of Nature decidedly pantheistic. Indeed, no such poetry as Wordsworth's is conceivable except in a pantheistic form. His was that 'Higher Pantheism' which Tennyson so finely describes, and which is perfectly consistent with a full acceptance of Christ's teaching, if not with all that is taught in His name.

106. *what they half create*. As Wordsworth himself remarks, this expression was anticipated by Young in his *Night Thoughts* (vii. 427), who says that the senses 'half create the world they use.' The same expression is used by Wordsworth in the *Recluse* (end of Bk. i., quoted generally at the beginning of the *Excursion*):

> 'While my voice proclaims
> How exquisitely the individual mind
> Is fitted; and how exquisitely too
> 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.'

How far any natural object may *exist*—and in what sense of the word—except for us, as presented to us by our senses and mind, it is impossible to know. We know absolutely nothing of any such object except that it is an hypothesis (as Prof. Huxley says) to account for certain sensations. But Wordsworth didn't bother his head about such metaphysical puzzles. He means, I think, that the full beauty and meaning of nature is only then apparent when creative, poetic imagination lends to it

> 'The light that never was on sea or land,
> The consecration and the poet's dream.'

113. *genial spirits* : from Milton's *Samson* (594):

> 'So much I feel my genial spirits droop.'

The word seems used in both passages—certainly in that from the *Samson*—not in the sense of 'cheery,' but rather in the sense of 'vital,' 'genius' being in Latin, as it were, a personification of 'self,' and corresponding to some extent with what we mean by one's 'soul.' To 'treat one's genius' meant to give offerings to one's genius or guardian spirit (on birthdays, etc.); hence to 'enjoy oneself'; hence genial came to mean cheerful, warm-hearted, etc. (unless this sense is from the idea of vital generative warmth).

115. *my dearest Friend* : his sister Dorothy. See preliminary note. In 1795 he and Dorothy had set up house together in Somersetshire, and it was her influence to which was largely due
his restoration to a happier state of mind. This is beautifully
described by him in the *Prelude* (xi.):

‘Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
That the belovéd Sister in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That did but cross a lonely road, and now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse . . .
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet. . . .’

131. The dreary intercourse. Wordsworth’s strong repugnance
to the ‘sprightly malice’ of tittle-tattle and all such things is
pictured in the four sonnets on *Personal Talk*, given later. The
numbing, deadening influence of what goes by the name of
‘society,’ with its dreary excitements and its strenuous in-
activities, was of course just that against which in all his poetry
and in all his life he especially made stand, although fortunately
he did not attempt to combat it by satire. In sentiment one
might compare the well-known lines of the great *Ode*:

‘Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy.’

NUTTING.

‘Written,’ says Wordsworth, ‘in Germany: intended as part
of a poem (*The Prelude*) on my own life, but struck out as not
being wanted there. Like most of my schoolfellows I was an
impassioned nutter. For this pleasure the vale of Esthwaite,
abounding in coppice-wood, furnished a very wide range. These
verses arise out of the remembrance of feelings I had often had
when a boy, and particularly in the extensive woods that still
stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite,
the seat of the ancient family of Sandys.’

Wordsworth was in Germany during the winter of 1799. See
notes to *A Poet’s Epitaph*.

3. cannot die: cannot fade from the memory.

8. quaint: originally meant neat, graceful, pretty (perhaps
from the Lat. *cognitus*, in the late sense of ‘skilful,’ ‘cunning in
device’). Thus in *Much Ado* (iii. iv.) Shakespeare speaks of the
‘fine, quaint, graceful, and excellent fashion’ of a dress; and
Milton (*Arcad.* 47) has ‘ringlets quaint’ in the same sense. In
Shakespeare it sometimes means 'artful'; e.g. 'how quaint an orator.' Its later meaning of 'fantastic,' 'strange,' occurs in Spenser and Milton: e.g. 'quaint habits' (Comus).

9. **Tricked out**: seems, in its close connexion with quaint, to be a reminiscence of Lycidas, where we have 'quaint enamelled eyes' (139) and 'tricks his beams' (170).

21. **A virgin scene**: in the same sense as a 'virgin forest.'

24. **Voluptuous**: i.e. luxuriating in triumphant joy.

27. **A temper**: a state of feeling; one, I imagine, known also to cats when they toy with a mouse.

31. **five**: i.e. season after season for perhaps as much as five years.

33. **fairy (faery) and elfin** are often used by Wordsworth for 'tiny,' 'miniature.'

**water-breaks.** In a description of the river Duddon (see his note to Sonnets xvii. and xviii. of the Duddon Series) Wordsworth says that what the writer calls 'waterfalls' should be rather named 'water-breaks,' as none of them are high. The word (not given in most dictionaries) of course means a rapid, where the water breaks into foam. Tennyson uses it in the Brook: 'With many a silvery water-break,' and Wordsworth in his Sonnet to the Brook: 'Dancing down thy water-breaks.'

37. **like a flock of sheep.** Cf. The Leech-gatherer, ix., where a huge stone is likened to a 'sea-beast crawled forth . . . to sun itself.' Mr. Webb remarks: 'Scattered stones in Wiltshire are called grey wethers.' In French one has ciel moutonné, and nuages moutonnés, used of round fleecy clouds, and a roche moutonnée is (not, as Mr. Webb says, a 'sheep-shaped rock,' but) 'une roche dont la surface offre des aspérités usées en forme de mamelons, après le passage d'un glacier' (Larousse).

41. **indifferent things**: may perhaps have a double meaning, i.e. 'things which to a mind in such a temper are really of no importance,' or 'things which cannot respond to one's feelings.' In moments of intense excitement the mind is apt to concentrate its attention on some trivial thing. One hears of a prisoner watching intently the manoeuvres of a spider while the judge was passing the sentence of death on him; and Mr. Rosetti has informed us in one of his poems that the only truth that remained for somebody after hours of agonizing and silent grief was that 'the woodspurge'—at which the mourner had been gazing half unconsciously—'has a cup of three.' But the second meaning seems to harmonize better with 'wasting its kindliness. . . .'

53. **intruding sky**: i.e. through the gaps that he had torn.
56. is a spirit. See on Tintern Abbey, 30. Cf.
'And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.'
(Lines written in Early Spring.)

A POET'S EPITAPH.

This poem was written at Goslar, in Germany, where Wordsworth and his sister spent four months during the winter of 1798-9. 'A bitter winter it was,' he tells us, 'when these verses (i.e. Lucy Gray, Ruth, There was a boy, Nutting, A Poet's Epitaph) were composed by the side of my sister, in our lodgings, at a draper's house, in the romantic imperial town of Goslar on the edge of the Harz forest... I walked daily on the ramparts, or in a sort of public ground or garden, in which was a pond. Here I had no companion but a kingfisher, a beautiful creature that used to glance by me; I consequently became much attached to it. During these walks I composed The Poet's Epitaph.'

The motive of this poem is one which is to be found very often in Wordsworth's poetry. Its burden is this: that all true knowledge is based on love—a doctrine taught by Socrates, and held by all really wise men.

Mr. Myers (p. 125) reminds us of the magnificent passage in which Virgil pays a tribute of glowing admiration to Lucretius—happy in having learnt the 'causes of things,' the scientific explanations of phenomena. 'But,' adds Mr. Myers, 'we find Virgil implying that scientific knowledge of Nature may not be the only way of arriving at the truth about her; that her loneliness is also a revelation, and that the Soul, which is in unison with her, is justified by its own peace.' This is the very substance of The Poet's Epitaph—of the poem in which Wordsworth at the beginning of his career described himself as he continued till its close—the poet who 'murmurs near the running brooks a music sweeter than their own'—who scorns the man of science, 'who would peep and botanise upon his mother's grave.' Wordsworth's Poet's Epitaph should be compared with Tennyson's lines on The Poet's Mind.

1. Statist: means now-a-days generally a 'statistician'—a man who deals in statistics. But I find it used by Milton in his Areopagitica (p. 3) as equivalent to 'statesman,' or 'politician'; and also by Shakespeare:

'I do believe
(Statist though I am none, nor like to be)
That this will prove a war.' (Cymb., ii. iv.)

and

'I once did hold it, as our statist do,
A baseness to write fair.' (Hamlet, v. ii.)
3. First learn .... Cf. Miscellaneous Sonnets, No. iii.
   ‘feel for all, as brother men!
   Rest not in hope want’s icy chain to thaw
   By casual boons and formal charities ...
   And, what ye cannot reach by statute, draw
   Each from his fountain of self-sacrifice.’

7. The keenness .... Cf. Tennyson’s
   ‘Dark-browed sophist, come not near!
   All the place is holy ground.
   Hollow smile and frozen tear,
   Come not here!’

17. Physician: what we should now call a ‘scientist’; one
   who professes ‘physics.’

18. Philosopher was at one time used to denote much the
   same as ‘physician’; one who professes ‘natural philosophy.’
   The word is nowadays not thus used—without some qualification
   —but is often misapplied to denote a writer on the ‘science of
   mind.’ A Philosopher really means a ‘lover of wisdom’ (which
   is a thing very different from scientific knowledge), and true
   philosophy is, as defined by Socrates, that which teaches us how
   to live and how to die.

19. and botanise .... The locus classicus in Wordsworth on
   the subject of science is in the fourth book of the Excursion
   where the Wanderer ‘contrasts the dignities of the imagination
   with the presumptuous littleness of certain modern philosophers.’
   Having proclaimed that ‘We live by Admiration, Hope, and
   Love,’ he cites the Greeks as having gained more through their
   poetic view of Nature than we have gained by all our scientific
   discoveries and our increase of material ease, and launches out
   into an eloquent denunciation of mere science. The passage has
   considerable resemblance to the celebrated passage in the 8th
   book of Paradise Lost, where the archangel Raphael speaks with
   similar disdain of astronomical scientists, assuring Adam that
   God has left the fabric of the heavens
   ‘to their disputes, perhaps to move
   His laughter at their quaint opinions wide.’
   Similarly Wordsworth, in regard ‘to our great discoverers,’
   exclaims: ‘Oh, there is laughter at their work in heaven!
   ... go demand
   Of mighty Nature, if ’twas ever meant
   That we should pry far off, yet be unraised :
   That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore,
   Viewing all objects unremittingly
   In disconnexion, dead and spiritless,
   And still dividing, and dividing still,
   Break down all grandeur.’

D
Goethe—although fully conscious of the dignity of true science, and himself no mean scientist—tells us very much the same. 'He who wishes,' he says in Faust, 'to learn and to describe anything living first attempts to expel the life: then he has got the dead parts in his hand; but what is wanting is unfortunately just the spiritual bond.'

21. fleece: a contemptuous expression, I think, for the thick woollen cloak, such as was a distinguishing mark of the old Greek philosophers (cf. Horace's 'I wrap myself up in my virtue'). But here there seems almost the suggestion that the scientific 'philosopher' grows his own fleece.

sensual means here, I fancy, what we might call 'materialistic'—having to do merely with things of the senses.

24. ever dwindling. Cf. 'pore, and dwindle as we pore,' in the quotation given above.

37. But who is He ...? See Mr. Myers' remarks given in the preliminary note.

51. a quiet eye: Cf.

'While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.' (Tintern Abbey.)


56. which others understand: i.e. can explain scientifically.

THE LEECH-GATHERER.

(Resolution and Independence.)

Written in 1802 at Town-end, Grasmere. Some of the various elements of which it is composed are thus given by Wordsworth. 'The old man,' he says, 'I met a few hundred yards from my cottage; and the account of him is taken from his own mouth. I was in the state of feeling described in the beginning of the poem, while crossing over Barton Fell from Mr. Clarkson's, at the foot of Ullswater, towards Askham. The image of the hare I then observed on the ridge of the Fell.' The poem was first called the 'Leech-gatherer,' but afterwards, rather unfortunately, received the high-sounding title, 'Resolution and Independence.' The following extract from a letter of Wordsworth will help us to enter into the spirit of the poem. 'I will explain to you, in prose, my feelings in writing that poem. I describe myself as having been exalted to the highest pitch of delight by the joyousness and beauty of Nature; and then as depressed, even in the midst of those beautiful objects, to the lowest dejection and despair. A young poet in the midst of the happiness of Nature is described as overwhelmed by the thoughts of the miserable reverses which have befallen the happiest of all men,
RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE. 51

viz. poets. I think of this till I am so deeply impressed with it, that I consider the manner in which I am rescued from my dejection and despair almost as an interposition of Providence. A person reading the poem with feelings like mine will have been awed and controlled, expecting something spiritual or supernatural. What is brought forward? A lonely place, "a pond, by which an old man was, far from all house or home:" not stood, nor sat, but was—the figure presented in the most naked simplicity possible. The feeling of spirituality or supernaturalness is again referred to as being strong in my mind in this passage. How came he here? thought I, or what can he be doing? I then describe him, whether ill or well is not for me to judge with perfect confidence; but this I can confidently affirm, that though I believe God has given me a strong imagination, I cannot conceive a figure more impressive than that of an old man like this, the survivor of a wife and ten children, travelling alone among the mountains and all lonely places, carrying with him his own fortitude, and the necessities which an unjust state of society has laid upon him. You speak of his speech as tedious. Everything is tedious when one does not read with the feelings of the author. The Thorn is tedious to hundreds; and so is The Idiot Boy to hundreds. It is in the character of the old man to tell his story, which an impatient reader must feel tedious. But, good heavens! such a figure, in such a place; a pious, self-respecting, miserably infirm and pleased old man, telling such a tale!

5. the Stock-dove broods. Wordsworth seems fond of the word 'stock-dove.' It has rather a prosaic meaning—viz. the bird which was the original 'stock' of our tame pigeon.

In his preface to the edition of 1815 (see note on The Cuckoo, l. 4), when speaking of the poetic treatment of sounds, Wordsworth cites this line, and adds: 'The stock-dove is said to coo—a sound well imitating the note of the bird; but by the intervention of the metaphor broods the affections are called in by the imagination to assist in marking the manner in which the bird reiterates and prolongs her soft note, as if herself delighting to listen to it, and participating of a still and quiet satisfaction, like that which may be supposed inseparable from the continuous process of incubation.' By his one line Wordsworth has told us all this far better than by all these long words. And, by-the-bye, does the male stock-dove incubate? and does the female bird coo? I'm ashamed to ask such questions, but in the verse it is 'his own sweet voice,' and in the explanation it is 'her soft note.' Perhaps, in spite of theories, Nature has here yielded to the exigencies of euphony—'over her own' offending the ear.

[P.S.—A friend informs me that both male and female coo, the male a good deal louder than his mate; and also that the male takes a turn at the 'process of incubation.']
39. genial seems used here not as in *Tintern Abbey*, l. 113 (which see), but with the meaning of ‘warm,’ ‘cheerful,’ ‘kindly.’ Cf. ‘the genial sense of youth,’ *Ode to Duty*, 12. I take the sense to be ‘a man who cheerfully trusts in providence, and is rich in cheery kindliness to all.’ With the following lines compare *A Poet’s Epitaph*, xiv., where Wordsworth had already described himself similarly:

‘But he is weak: both Man and Boy,
Hath been an idler in the land;
Contented if he might enjoy
The things which others understand.’

43. Chatterton was born at Bristol in 1752. He was the son of the sexton of St. Mary Redcliffe. As attorney’s clerk he learnt old handwriting, and when a boy of about sixteen applied himself with extraordinary skill and considerable literary power to manufacturing sham ancient poems, which he asserted had been discovered by his father in an old chest in the church of which he was sexton. These poems he ascribed to a fictitious monk of the fifteenth century, whom he named Thomas Rowley. Written with quaint spelling (says Mr. Stopford Brooke), and with a great deal of lyrical invention, they raised a great deal of controversy. Hoping for recognition by the literary world he came to London in 1769, at the age of seventeen (the year in which Johnson and Goldsmith were elected Professors of the newly instituted Royal Academy). But he met with total neglect, and, face to face with starvation, in a miserable garret, he poisoned himself, August 1770—a date at which Wordsworth was about four months old.

45. of Him: *i.e.* Burns. Wordsworth’s fine verses, *At the Grave of Burns*, should be studied in connexion with this passage. See also notes on the Sonnet, *There! said a stripling*. Burns’ lines *To a Mouse*, and *To a Mountain Daisy* should also be read. I have annotated them in the *Selections from Gray, Burns*, etc., lately published by Messrs. Macmillan. During the years when Burns followed his plough along the mountain side at Mossgiel farm, he was full of hope and vigour, but his latter years were sad—for, as he himself says, ‘thoughtless follies laid him low, and stained his name.’ His life was shortened by intemperance. He died in 1796, aged only 37.

57. As a huge stone. In his preface to the edition of 1815 (given in the Globe edition and others) Wordsworth cites this passage as an example of poetic imagination, ‘employed upon images in a conjunction by which they modify each other.’ He adds: ‘The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast; and the sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose
of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged man, who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison.'

Whether or not the theory explains the fact, it is a fact that this comparison of the great 'erratic' boulder to some huge sea-beast (an antediluvian beast it is in my imagining) impresses a picture on the memory which no lapse of time seems to dim.

59. the same. See The Affliction of Margaret, 1. 5.

75. as a cloud. This simile is also cited by Wordsworth as an example of poetic imagination; and it does certainly stand one test of a truly imaginative creation, for it lives in one's memory. But it is the picture of the great thundercloud, moving all together if it move at all, which seems to me the living thing of beauty, not the simile, which is quaint rather than strikingly appropriate.

91. yet-vivid: i.e. even yet, though such an old man. In her Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth describes the old man thus: 'We met an old man almost double. He had on a coat thrown over his shoulders above his waistcoat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on, and a nightcap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes and a long nose... His trade was to gather leeches; but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it.'

127. about his feet. Mr. Webb imagines the old man standing in the water with bare feet in order to allow the leeches to fasten on them. Whether Wordsworth meant this or not, it is a fact that leeches are not easily caught except by some such device. 'Leeches are generally caught,' tells me a friend versed in such lore, 'by sending people with bare legs into the ponds. The leeches are collected from them and put into clean water. Another method is to drive old horses into the water... The horses after a term of this work,' he adds, perhaps with more humour than scientific accuracy, 'become beautifully mellowed for sausage-making.'

SONNET COMPOSED ON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE.

'Written,' says Wordsworth, 'on the roof of a coach, on my way to France.' The date generally given is Sept. 3, 1802, but Wordsworth seems to have crossed London Bridge on the Dover stage-coach on July 31st of that year. In her Journal, Dorothy Wordsworth says: 'Left London between five and six o'clock of the morning outside the Dover coach. A beautiful morning.
The city, St. Paul's, with the river—a multitude of little boats—made a beautiful sight as we crossed Westminster Bridge; the houses not overhung by their clouds of smoke. . . . The sun shone so brightly, and with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles.'

I daresay many a Wordsworthian enthusiast has—as I remember doing some forty years ago—visited Westminster Bridge in the first splendour of a summer's day in order to see with his own eyes the picture so beautifully described in the sonnet. Nowhere, neither on the ocean, nor in the Alps (in the midst of which I live), nor in the most desolate regions of Central Africa have I ever experienced so intensely the sensation of utter solitude as at the sight of the mighty city lying in the bright sunlight, silent and apparently as deserted as the ruins of Nineveh.

It is perhaps not quite fair to remind the reader of a picture considerably less beautiful and pathetic, but still possessing a certain amount of imaginative power—Lord Macaulay's picture of the New Zealander sitting on a broken pile of London Bridge, and gazing at the ruins of the metropolis of the late British Empire.

WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY.

This sonnet and two others of similar tenor—O Friend, I know not, and Milton, thou shouldst be living—were written in September, 1802, after Wordsworth's return from the short visit to France, which he made with his sister in August. It was on starting on this visit to France that he wrote the sonnet Composed on Westminster Bridge; and at or near Calais were composed half a dozen sonnets, of which one (It is a beauteous evening) is of exquisite loveliness.

By this time—as one can see by the sonnets on Bonaparte and on Venice, written in this year—Wordsworth had lost much of his faith in France, and was beginning to turn towards England as a 'bulwark for the cause of men' against the new tyranny. This reviving trust in his own country is especially apparent in another sonnet (It is not to be thought of), also written in September of this year, in which occur the fine lines:

'We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake, the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.'

But, nevertheless, he mourned—as well he might—the state of England in 1802. ('London, 1802,' is the title of the famous Sonnet addressed to Milton). Both politically and socially we
were at that period at a very low level, though not so low as in the years of our national shame some twenty years previously.

In the present sonnet he half recants the very strong disapprobation to which he had lately given expression in the two above-mentioned sonnets (O Friend, and Milton). In reference to these two sonnets (which should be read—or learnt by heart—as necessary adjuncts to the present poem) Wordsworth says: 'They were written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country as contrasted with the quiet, and I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the reader may think that I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth.' Scholars will probably be reminded by this sonnet of the Ode in which Horace addressed the ship of the Roman State—his 'desiderium, curaque non levis.'

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

This is one of the poems that Wordsworth called 'Memorials of a Tour in Scotland.' This tour he made in 1803. 'Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself,' he says, 'started together from Town-end to make a tour in Scotland. Poor Coleridge was at that time in bad spirits, and somewhat too much in love with his own dejection, and he departed from us soon after we left Loch Lomond.' Among these 'Memorials' are At the Grave of Burns, To a Highland Girl, Stepping Westward, and The Solitary Reaper. In his sister's journal—to which Wordsworth refers constantly for illustration of his 'Memorials'—we are told: 'It was harvest-time, and the fields were quietly—might I be allowed to say pensively?—enlivened by small companies of reapers. It is not uncommon in the more lonely parts of the Highlands to see a single person so employed.'

In a note Wordsworth tells us that the poem was 'suggested by a beautiful sentence in a MS. Tour in Scotland, written by a friend, the last line being taken from it verbatim.' This sentence occurs in Wilkinson's Tours to the British Mountains, and is as follows: 'Passed a female who was reaping alone. She sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle: the sweetest human voice I ever heard. Her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious long after they were heard no more.'

9. No Nightingale .... The association of reaper and nightingale reminds one of the picture of Ruth amid the 'alien corn' given by Keats in his Nightingale.
13. voice so thrilling. See next piece and the Sonnet to the Cuckoo, given on p. 36.

15. the silence of the seas: a reminiscence of
   'And we did speak only to break
   The silence of the sea.' (Anc. Mar., ii. 6.)

20. battles: such perhaps as Flodden Field. The battle of Culloden had not been fought so very 'long ago'—only about sixty years.

TO THE CUCKOO.

'Composed,' says Wordsworth, 'in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.' In Prof. Morley's edition (Globe) and others, the date of composition is given as 1804. (It was first published in 1807.) Mr. Webb, however, states that in her Journal Dorothy Wordsworth mentions that her brother was 'working at the Cuckoo' as early as March, 1802. Wordsworth seems to have found a special attraction in the note of the cuckoo—which to many people is irritating in its mechanical monotony. 'There were,' he says, 'a thousand delightful feelings connected in my mind with the voice of the cuckoo,' and

'Not the whole warbling grove in concert heard
When sunshine follows shower, the breast can thrill
Like the first summons, Cuckoo, of thy bill,
With its twin notes inseparably paired.'

Besides this poem, and besides his paraphrase of Chaucer's Cuckoo and Nightingale, and besides his Cuckoo Clock (1845), he wrote a Sonnet to the Cuckoo (1827), and a rather long piece in blank verse on the Cuckoo at Laverna (1837), in which he speaks a good deal more about St. Francis than about cuckoos. These pieces should be read in connexion with the present poem.

1. I have heard. The sense is not very clear. I don't think it means, as sometimes explained, 'I have heard thee in times past,' but rather, 'I have caught thy note, and am still listening to its repeated sound.'

3. shall I call thee Bird. This evidently suggested Shelley's 'Bird thou never wert' in his Ode to a Skylark (1820). Some critics object to Shelley's words as 'meaningless,' seeing that a skylark is not such an invisible kind of bird as the cuckoo. But Shelley's words have a much deeper meaning. They do not, as Wordsworth's do, merely refer to the bird's invisibility.

4. a wandering Voice. Wordsworth, like his stock-dove, brooded over this 'wandering voice,' and was so pleased with it that he repeated it in his Cuckoo Clock, forty years later. In the sonnet he calls it an 'erratic voice,' and in his Cuckoo at Laverna
he uses 'vagrant voice,' and describes the bird as 'invisible as Echo's self.' In his preface to the edition of 1815, when discussing the imaginative description of sounds, he quotes 'the stock-dove broods,' and 'his voice was buried,' and also these two lines, and comments thus: 'This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the cuckoo and dispossesses the creature almost of a corporeal existence'—like Shelley's 'unbodied joy.'

12. visionary hours: past hours of the 'golden time' of youthful rapture. Cf. Ode, 56:

'Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?'

23. a hope, a love. Cf. 'passion,' 'appetite,' 'a feeling and a love,' Tintern Abbey, 77, 80. But here the words have no such deep meaning as in the other passage.

31. unsubstantial. Cf. Ode, 141 seq., where he speaks of 'obstinate questionings of sense and outward things,' and

'Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realised.'

It is by seeing into 'the life of things,' and assuring ourselves of their real existence, that we cease to be troubled by such misgivings as to the unreality of the external world.

THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET

'Written,' says Wordsworth, 'at Town-end, Grasmere. This was taken from the case of a poor widow who lived in the town of Penrith. Her sorrow was well known to Mrs. Wordsworth, to my sister, and, I believe, to the whole town. She kept a shop, and when she saw a stranger passing by she was in the habit of going out into the street to enquire of him after her son.' It was composed in 1804, and published in 1807. It is one of the many examples in Wordsworth's poetry of a rather crude mixture of the natural and the artificial. Some of the stanzas are wonderfully true and pathetic, the 'common phrase' being used with rare skill and feeling; but others (e.g. vii.) are quite out of tune with the rest of the poem.

5. of the same: a rather heavy prosaic expression, used not unfrequently by Wordsworth; e.g. Hart-leap Well, 63; Rob Roy's Grave, 118, etc. In such ballad-poems, and in the present passage, where a poor woman's forms of thought and language are imitated, the expression is by no means out of place.

18. Ingenuous: used of a frank, generous, unsuspicuous nature. The Latin word ingenuus means noble by birth rather
than by nature. The word 'ingenious' would certainly have been unknown to the poor Penrith widow. It does not, however, at all follow that it must grate dissonantly on the ear of the reader and spoil the illusion. What offends our logical sense by no means necessarily offends our sense of harmony and proportion in a work of imagination.

29. This stanza appears to me to be a very good specimen of Wordsworth's successful use of natural diction. It reads like an exact transcript of what such a poor old woman might naturally say. But it is a case of 'ars celare artem': no poor old woman—unless she were at the same time a superlative poetess—could ever put her thoughts and the words in such a form.

53. Inheritest ...: i.e. hast found shelter in some cave once inhabited by a lion. The conception is one quite possible in the case of the poor old woman, but the expression is scarcely so.

56. incommunicable: i.e. beyond all means of communication; cut off from the living by an impassable gulf. The word properly means 'not to be communicated,' 'incapable of transmission.' The expression reminds one of Virgil's irremeabilis unda, and several other similar expressions to be found in ancient poets. This stanza is, as I have said, out of tune with those parts of the poem in which the common phrase is so successfully used. But it is exceedingly noble in thought, diction, and rhythm. [I had just written these words when Myers' Wordsworth arrived by post, and, opening the book at hazard, I found this stanza given as the aptest illustration of 'the inadequacy of Wordsworth's theory to explain the merits of his own poetry.' Mr. Myers gives a long and careful analysis of the stanza, showing—as far as it can be shown—some of the means by which the beauty and nobility of the language and rhythm—so entirely different from that of ordinary speech—were attained. In the two pages that he devotes to this stanza he says—much better and more fully—very nearly what I have already said.]

74. They pity me, and not my grief: they pity me myself, but cannot enter into and realise my grief. Whoever has known great sorrow knows exactly what Wordsworth here means, and I think that whoever endeavours to express it otherwise will discover that nothing is so satisfactory as the few simple words of this verse.

ODE TO DUTY.

This poem was composed in 1805, and first published in 1807. Wordsworth's preface is: 'This ode is on the model of Gray's Ode to Adversity, which is copied from Horace's Ode to Fortune (O diva gratum quae regis Antium). Many and many a time have
I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern lawgiver. Transgressor indeed I have been from hour to hour, from day to day: I would fain hope, however, not more flagrantly, or in a worse way, than most of my tuneful brethren. But these last words are in a wrong strain. We should be rigorous to ourselves, and forbearing, if not indulgent, to others; and, if we make comparison at all, it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us.

As a motto for the poem he prefixed the following quotation from some Latin author: ‘Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus, ut non tantum recte facere possim, sed nisi recte facere non possim,’ the meaning of which is ‘I am no longer good by mere resolve (rule), but have by long habit reached such a point that not only am I able to do right, but I cannot act otherwise than rightly.’

6. When empty terrors ... i.e. when terrors vainly threaten and would deter from doing right; or possibly he means that, when the threats of ordinary law prove vain, duty proves a higher law.

25. untried: i.e. inexperienced in the danger of the ‘unchartered freedom’ of trusting solely to one’s natural feelings.

32. But thee I now .... This stanza seems to contain reminiscences of an ode of Horace in which he says that he had been misled by a false philosophy (Insanientis dum sapientiae consultus erro), and had resolved to retrace his course.

37. unchartered freedom. Mr. Webb quotes from Churchill: ‘An Englishman in chartered freedom born,’ i.e. a freedom secured under a certain constitutional form, a legalised freedom. A charter grants and secures privileges, but at the same time regulates and limits them; so unchartered freedom is unregulated and unauthorised freedom.

39. My hopes ... i.e. I wish to realise more definitely what it is that I have been too vaguely hoping and believing.

45. on their beds, seems a little forced, as if for the sake of the rime. But perhaps we are to imagine large beds of wild flowers, such as he describes in the Daffodils.

46. fragrance ... treads: a rather audacious way of saying that her footstep makes fragrant the ground on which she treads. The conceit is common: e.g. Quicquid calcaverit hic, rosa fiat (Persius), etc. Perhaps the finest example of it is to be found in Tennyson:

‘And at their feet the crocus brake like fire.’ (Oenone.)

47. the stars from wrong: i.e. from swerving out of their orbits. It was Divine Love that (according to Dante) first moved the stars upon their courses; but it is Law that restrains and
guides them. The analogy between natural and moral law—
between the natural firmament and the firmament, so to speak,
of man's moral nature is one that underlies much that is great in
poetry—such as the Paradiso of Dante. The great philosopher
Kant used to say that there were two things which never failed
to fill him with inexpressible awe and admiration, the sight of
the starry sky and the thought of man's moral nature.

53. lowly wise: from Milton:

'heaven is for thee too high
To know what passes there. Be lowly wise;
Think only what concerns thee and thy being.'

(Par. Lost, Bk. viii.)

55. The confidence of reason: the confidence that is based on
reason, not merely such confidence as is described in the second
stanza. Compare St. Paul's injunction: that we should be able
to give a reason of the faith that is in us.

PEELE CASTLE.

The full title of this poem is 'Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a
picture of Peele Castle in a storm, painted by Sir George Bea-
mont.' 'Sir George Beaumont,' says Wordsworth, 'painted two
pictures of this subject, one of which he gave Mrs. Wordsworth,
saying she ought to have it. But Lady Beaumont interfered,
and after Sir George's death she gave it to Sir Uvedale Price, in
whose house at Foxley I have seen it.' The other is in the
Beaumont Gallery at Coleorton. (See notes to Two Voices are
there.) There is a Peele Castle on a rocky islet near the town of
Peele (or rather Peel) in the Isle of Man; but it seems quite
certain that the subject of the picture was Piel Castle near
Barrow-in-Furness, on the coast of Lancashire; for Wordsworth
spent (in 1794) four weeks of the summer at the house of a
cousin, Mr. Barker, who lived at Rampside, a village that lies
facing this castle. 'Piel Castle,' says Mr. Webb, 'was built by
the Abbot of Furness in the first year of the reign of Edward III.'

The poem is mainly an elegy on the death of John Wordsworth,
the poet's brother. 'In the year 1800,' says Mr. Myers, 'his
brother, John Wordsworth, a few years younger than himself,
and captain of an East Indiaman, had spent eight months in the
poet's cottage at Grasmere. The two brothers had seen little of
each other since childhood, and the poet had now the delight of
discovering in the sailor a character congenial to his own, and an
appreciation of poetry—and of the Lyrical Ballads especially—
which was intense and delicate in an unusual degree. In both
brothers, too, there was the same love of nature; and after
John's departure, the poet pleased himself with imagining the visions of Grasmere which beguiled the watches of many a night at sea, or with tracing the pathway which the sailor's instinct had planned and trodden amid trees so thickly planted as to baffle a less practised skill. John Wordsworth, on the other hand, looked forward to Grasmere as the final goal of his wanderings, and intended to use his own savings to set the poet free from worldly cares.

'Two more voyages the sailor made with such hopes as these, and amid a frequent interchange of books and letters with his brother at home. Then, in February 1805, he set sail from Portsmouth, in command of the "Abergavenny" East Indiaman, bound for India and China. Through the incompetence of the pilot who was taking her out of the Channel, the ship struck on the Shambles off the Bill of Portland, on February 5, 1805.'

Wordsworth's account of the wreck is as follows: 'She struck at 5 p.m. Guns were fired immediately, and were continued to be fired. She was gotten off the rock at half-past seven, but had taken in so much water, in spite of constant pumping, as to be water-logged. They had, however, hope that she might still be run upon Weymouth sands, and with this view continued pumping and baling till eleven, when she went down. . . . A few minutes before the ship went down my brother was seen talking to the first mate with apparent cheerfulness; . . . he died, as he had lived, in the very place and point where his duty stationed him.'

Wordsworth felt the death of his brother very keenly. The 'last and later portions' of the Prelude, as he tells us (Prelude xiv.) were written during the first bitterness of his sorrow:

'under pressure of a grief
Keen and enduring.'

But from suffering he drew strength. A nature such as his, so sensitive and yet so strong in faith, while it made him 'feel more deeply, yet enabled him to bear more firmly.'

Two other of his poems written in this year, viz. To the Daisy, and Elegiac Verses in Memory of my Brother, relate to the same calamity, and should be read in connexion with Peele Castle. In the former poem the shipwreck is described.

9. no sleep: i.e. no transitory repose.

13. if mine had been. The following sonnet Upon the sight of a beautiful picture (another picture by Sir G. Beaumont), offers such apt illustration, and is of such beauty, that I cannot but quote it at length. It was written in 1811.

'Praised by the Art whose subtle power could stay
Yon cloud, and fix it in that glorious shape;
Nor would permit the thin smoke to escape,
Nor those bright sunbeams to forsake the day;
Which stopped that band of travellers on their way,  
Ere they were lost within the shady wood;  
And showed the bark upon the glassy flood  
For ever anchored in her sheltering bay.  
Soul-soothing Art! whom Morning, Noontide, Even,  
Do serve with all their changeful pageantry—  
Thou, with ambition modest yet sublime,  
Here, for the sight of mortal man, hast given  
To one brief moment caught from fleeting time  
The appropriate calm of blest eternity.'

15. that never was, on.... This is apparently how Wordsworth himself punctuated the sentence, I suppose in order to intimate that was has here a certain amount of emphasis: the sense not being 'never was on sea or land,' but 'never existed in the natural world—neither on sea nor on land.'

How ineffably superior Wordsworth's first inspirations were apt to be to his after ruminations may be seen by the fact that many years after writing these wondrous lines he actually substituted for them (in the editions of 1820 and 1827) what reads just like some school-girl's paraphrase:

'And add a gleam,  
The lustre, known to neither sea or land,  
But borrowed from the youthful poet's dream.'

26. Elysian quiet. A fine description of the Greek Elysium will be found in the eighteenth stanza of Laodamia, which is founded on Virgil, Aen., vi. 638 seq.

30. at that time. See on p. 40 for Wordsworth's state of mind at that period (1794). He was still full of aesthetic and political entusiasms, many of which afterwards took a soberer colouring.

32. betrayed. In the original version the line was, 'A faith, a trust that could not be betrayed.' Peace, instead of trust, expresses far better the calm of the scene, and the utter peace of a trust that refuses to believe in the possibility of betrayal is finely described by the verse.

35. A power is gone .... See note on Tintern Abbey, 86.

36. humanised: brought my soul into fuller sympathy with the sufferings of humanity. His artistic enthusiasms and aspirations had, as was inevitable, made him for a time somewhat deaf to the 'still sad music of humanity.' See Tintern Abbey, 88 seq.

38. A smiling sea, and be. Even a smiling sea—such as he described three years earlier in his It is a beauteous evening—would now remind him of his loss. Never again, after such sorrow, can we take that rapturous delight in Nature which was once possible for us. See the concluding stanza of the great Ode. Possibly a smiling sea would remind him of his sorrow still more
than a stormy sea, for (as in the case of Lycidas) the ship seems to have gone down in calm weather.

49. The castle braving the storm he accepts as a symbol of that fortitude with which we should bear heaven-sent sorrows. 'Ertragen muss man was der Himel sendet.'—'In la Sua volontade è nostra pace.'

54. the Kind: its own kindred, the human race.

PERSONAL TALK.

'Written,' says Wordsworth, 'at Town-end, Grasmere (1806). The last line but two (in the first sonnet) stood, at first, better and more characteristically, thus:

By my half-kitchen and half-parlour fire—
My sister and I were in the habit of having the tea-kettle in our little sitting room, and we toasted the bread ourselves. . . . By the bye, I have a spite at one of this series of sonnets (I will leave the reader to discover which) as having been the means of nearly putting off for ever our acquaintance with dear Miss Fenwick, who has always stigmatised one line of it as vulgar, and worthy only of having been composed by a country squire.'

'Whoever,' says John Morley, 'might be his friends within an easy walk, or dwelling afar, the poet knew how to live his own life. The three—why not four?—fine sonnets headed Personal Talk, so well known, so warmly accepted in our better hours, so easily forgotten in hours not so good between pleasant levities and grinding preoccupations, show us how little his neighbours had to do with the poet's genial seasons of smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous thought.'

I.

On this subject cf. note to Tintern Abbey, 131. It is, of course, indisputable that, as Mr. Myers reminds us, the blessing of meditative and lonely hours must be purchased by certain limitations—and Wordsworth, as a man and a poet, had his limitations; but it is perhaps wiser to accept such limitations as an essential part of his nature and his genius rather than to guess what he might have been without them.

6. maidens withering.... If this was the line that Miss Fenwick stigmatised as vulgar (I don't know whether it was) she should have been referred to a writer who was certainly something besides a country squire. In the Midsummer Night's Dream (r. i.) she would have found:

'Thrice blessed they that master so their blood
To undergo such maiden pilgrimage,
But earthlier happy is the rose distilled
Than that which, withering on the virgin thorn,
Grows, lives, and dies in single blessedness.'

7. wear out of me: get effaced from my memory; make no lasting impression.

with chalk .... This refers evidently to the practice of chalking smooth parquet floors for the purpose of dancing. He imagines figures drawn on the floor in chalk.

12. See introductory note. With all due respect for Wordsworth's opinion I cannot but feel that the line as it here stands is incomparably the better. The other, besides being very unmusical, offends one by obtrusively flaunting in one's face the fact that he lived so very simply that he cooked in his parlour—a fact that one nevertheless doesn't resent a bit when he tells it us in simple, straightforward prose.

II.

Notice that this sonnet has only four rimes, and that they are arranged in a strict Petrarchian system—the first form, viz. abba abba cdc dcd—as Milton's Sonnets, The Nightingale; Avenge, O Lord; Methought I Saw; and others. See on Scorn not the Sonnet.

23. Children are blest .... The argument seems to be that small-talk and gossip discuss merely what lies for the moment just before one—the superficialities of passing interests—the transitory shadows on the wall, such as Plato describes in his Allegory of the Cave; and that such jabber, even when nothing worse, is incomparably sillier and emptier than the prattle of children: for children, while they take a keen interest in the things of the senses, have imaginative insight into something beyond. It is, I think, incontestable that many—perhaps most—children live to a great extent in a kind of fairyland, and that in childhood the sense of 'something beyond' is very strong and determines in a child's thoughts and words and acts a great deal that often takes aback elders and betters, and makes the presence of a child often such an indescribable relief amid the babel of society small-talk. That this imagination and this sense of the ideal fade entirely away in many cases, when 'shades of the prison house begin to close,' is only too true. But surely there are also many whom the vision splendid—even more splendid—attends to the end of life's journey—who never see it die away into the common light of day. However, I am not trying to controvert Wordsworth's theory as if his Ode were a scientific psychological treatise.

III.

31. Blank ocean .... What seems monotonous and tame and uninteresting in nature (as also in humanity) often helps us to realise the true dignity and value of the apparently 'low' and its relation to the apparently great in God's universe.

'To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.'

33. Dreams: not in the ordinary sense—though Homer tells us that 'even a dream is from Zeus'—but musings and flights of the imagination.

34. substantial: because the poet's pen gives to such dreams a local habitation and a 'substantial' existence.

41. The gentle Lady: Desdemona.

42. Una is the companion of the Red Cross Knight (Faerie Queene, i. 4). She rides on a lowly ass more white than snow, 'and by her, in a line, a milkwhite lamb she led,'—symbols of truth, humility, and innocence. When deserted by the knight she is attacked by a lion, who is overcome by her purity (a lion according to old legends never harming a virgin) and follows her submissively. The name Una refers to the singleness of truth.

IV.

47. genial: full of warm deep feeling. See on Tintern Abbey, 113.

51-4. These four lines 'have been placed by Dean Stanley underneath the statue of Wordsworth in the Baptistery of Westminster Abbey' (Webb).

THE WORLD IS TOO MUCH WITH US.

Written in 1806 and published the following year.

1. late and soon: see Psalm, cxxvii. 2.

3. Little we see .... This line occurred to me very often when on a visit to England last summer. There were beautiful woods to be seen all around, every one rigorously barricaded by spiked rails, barbed wire, corrugated-iron sheeting, and other such amiable devices, and protected further by innumerable notices threatening trespassers with the law and with man-traps and spring-guns. One certainly saw little of Nature that one could call one's own, even in the most modest sense of the word. But Wordsworth of course does not mean this kind of ownership; far less does he mean such rights as might be claimed by a noble lord or an American millionaire over a Scotch mountain or an
English park. What he does mean is the ownership that is attained by that insight into the 'life of things' which is only possible through love and reverence.

Perhaps the following remarks on Wordsworth's poetry, taken mainly from a lecture which I published many years ago, may explain a little more distinctly what I think Wordsworth here meant.

'There are, as all true lovers of Wordsworth know, many passages in his poems which seem, ever since we first read them, to be our special possession—in the same way that we regard some scene, some star, or some flower, as peculiarly our own. . . . Probably each one of us could name a certain year of his life when his feelings seem to have become more than ever susceptible of the beauty and grandeur of Nature—when faint gleams of some far glory filled him from time to time with indescribable longings and raptures. At such a time it was probably that Wordsworth's poems came like the breath of spring to burst the bud and unfold it, to the sun, to reveal the real life of things to his heart. . . . For many of us Wordsworth has done a work that no other poet has done. He has not created for us new worlds, and peopled our memory with forms of unearthly grandeur and loveliness, but he has, as it were, recreated for us this world that lies around us. . . . He might have done great things otherwise; but he has done one thing supremely well. He has so placed common objects before us that they are no longer (as many things and persons are so apt to be for us) merely like lifeless meaningless stumps and blocks:

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

He has revealed to us the life, the true nature and meaning, of common things, so that the wayside flowers, the clouds, the stars, the acts and feelings of everyday life, the ordinary people that we meet, are now no longer mere "shadows on the wall," passing before us in "disconnexion, dead and spiritless," but have a vital connexion with our own existence, and form a part of that whole to which we also belong.

'This power of appropriating natural objects so that they become, as it were, our own—so that the whole universe, from the tiniest flower to the boundless expanses of space with their countless worlds is felt to be pulsating with that same Life in which we move and have our being—this power Wordsworth not only speaks of as a thinker, but develops within us by his poetry. . . . It cannot be expected that we should be able to discern and define the means by which he does this, any more than we can discern and define the agency that produces life in any form. By an act of creative power he puts things in such a relation to us that henceforth they live for us—that, when
present to the senses, they possess a meaning and reality which
before they did not possess, and, when absent, they ofttimes

flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude.

And doubtless it is this same power that not seldom imparts also
to his words a like living reality, so that their effect on us is not
seldom just like the effect produced by nature itself. For some
of us the sensations caused by much of Wordsworth's poetry are
seemingly identical with the sensations caused by the actual
visions of earth, and sea, and sky. Of how few poets or painters
can this be said!

[I have just noticed that Matthew Arnold, in his delightful
preface to the Golden Treasury selection of Wordsworth's poems,
says, '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.]

4. We have given ... : i.e. given it away to getting and spend-
ing; and a worthless sordid gift it proves.

6. that will be .... I suppose he means that the natural thing
for a wind to do when left to 'his own sweet will' is to bluster and
howl. He seems to purposely attribute feelings and will to the
sea and winds so as to lead up to the Greek personification of
Nature. It should be remembered that what is generally meant
by a personification of Nature was not practised by Wordsworth
in his poetry. Though he was fully conscious of the wondrous
charm and the poetic truth of Greek mythology, he rightly held
that a new and higher poetry had arisen, and that the poet of
Nature must put away such childish imaginings. In this
connexion the sonnet to the Brook should be read. 'I would
not do,' he says,

'Like Grecian artists—give thee human cheeks,
Channels for tears; no Naiad shouldst thou be—
Have neither limbs, feet, feathers, joints, nor hairs;
It seems the Eternal Soul is clothed in thee
With purer robes than those of flesh and blood.'

13. Proteus: the prophetic old man of the sea. He tended the
flocks of Poseidon (Neptune). 'At mid-day Proteus rose from
the sea and slept in the shade of the rocks, with monsters of the
deep lying around him' (Class. Dict.). Virgil relates how
Aristaeus caught him asleep, and how Proteus changed himself
into various shapes, but was at last compelled to submit, and
told Aristaeus how to recover the loss of his bees.

14. Triton: son of Poseidon and Amphitrite. He is generally
represented with fish-tail instead of legs, and with a spiral shell
(concha) as his trumpet. In the Lycidas Milton calls him the
'herald of the sea,' and in the *Arcades* he speaks of 'scaly Triton's winding shell.' A legend relates that it was by the blast of his conch that the waters of the deluge were recalled.

**WHERE LIES THE LAND?**

The two sonnets, *With ships the sea was sprinkled* and *Where lies the land*, were composed about the same time, in 1806. They are variations of the same theme, and both of them of rare beauty. Rather than distract attention by trivial remarks on what needs no more annotation than the great Alpine Columbine now before me—floating with its outspread wings of transparent blue—most beautiful of all wild flowers!—I will transcribe the sister sonnet, so that the two may be readily compared.

'With ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh,
Like stars in heaven, and joyously it showed:
Some lying fast at anchor in the road,
Some veering up and down, one knew not why.
A goodly vessel did I then espy
Come like a giant from a haven broad;
And lustily along the bay she strode,
Her tackling rich, and of apparel high.
This ship was nought to me, nor I to her,
Yet I pursued her with a lover's look;
This ship to all the rest did I prefer:
When will she turn? and whither? She will brook
No tarrying; where she comes the winds must stir.
On went she, and due north her journey took.'

**THREE SONNETS TO SLEEP.**

These three sonnets were written in 1806, and published in 1807. Together with *The world is too much with us*, *Where lies the land*, and *With ships the sea was sprinkled*, written in the same year, they are classed by Wordsworth under his 'Miscellaneous Sonnets,' whereas the four sonnets on *Personal Talk*, also written in 1806, he placed under 'Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.'

I.

The first of these sonnets seems to me to be wanting in that easy and natural unfolding of the thought which in the best sonnets reminds one of the unfolding of a flower; indeed it is painfully jerky and full of violent transitions; and the simile of
the fly 'shoving' himself up and down upon a rivulet is by no means attractive nor strikingly appropriate, though it cannot be denied that it is original and ingenious. By the way, I do not quite understand why the water should be 'vexed with mockery' because a gnat will not settle quietly on it, although the words apply well enough in the case of sleep refusing to visit one. The last four lines of the sonnet are dignified and musical.

II.

This is one of Wordsworth's most admired sonnets, and it is, I think, worthy of all admiration. To say nothing of other excellencies, what I have called the flower-like unfolding of thought is here natural and easy: first the feverish unrest of a sleepless night—its weary length impressed upon us by a series of pictures; then the waiting for the dawn and the voices of the birds—by which the long weary hours of darkness and silence are still more vividly brought before us; and then an appeal to sleep—so tender and pathetic that one can hardly believe it could have been refused!

For the first part of his sonnet Wordsworth, as has been pointed out, was indebted to Spenser:

'And more to lulle him in his slumber soft,
A trickling streame from high rock tumbling downe
And ever-drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring winde, much like the sowne
Of swarming bees, did cast him in a swowne.'

(F. Q., i. i. 41.)

Notice that the cuckoo's note, which (see on The Cuckoo) Wordsworth elsewhere always describes as blithe and joyful, and which he preferred to all the 'warbling grove in concert heard,' is here a 'melancholy cry'—a touch which well brings out the misery of the situation.

III.

Some of the fondest words and tenderest names that Fancy has framed to propitiate sleep are to be found in Shakespeare: e.g.

'O sleep, O gentle sleep,
Nature's soft nurse, how have I frightened thee,
That thou no more wilt weigh my eyelids down
And steep my senses in forgetfulness?'

(2 Henry IV., III. i.)

'Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast.'

(Macbeth, II. ii.)
With the latter part of the sonnet compare the latter part of King Henry's address to the 'dull god,' who 'seals up the ship-boys' eyes and rocks his brains in cradle of the rude imperious surge,' but denies repose to a king.

TWO VOICES ARE THERE.

The rather ponderous title of this sonnet is: 'Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland.' It was composed 'while pacing,' says Wordsworth, 'to and fro between the Hall of Coleorton, then rebuilding, and the principal farm-house of the estate, in which we lived for nine or ten months.' This was in 1807. Coleorton, in Leicestershire, was the residence of Sir George Beaumont, a great friend of Wordsworth's, and an artist of some power (see notes to Peele Castle). Many 'inscriptions' in verse were written by Wordsworth in the grounds of Coleorton, and many poems addressed to Sir George Beaumont—of which the sonnet beginning 'Praised be the Art,' is the most noticeable. The celebrated lines on Peele Castle were also suggested by a picture of the castle by Beaumont.

This sonnet, together with those known as To the Men of Kent, On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic, London, 1802 (To Milton), When I have borne in memory, and twenty-two others, were published by Wordsworth under the title, 'Sonnets dedicated to Liberty,' or (in later editions), 'Poems dedicated to national independence and liberty.'

Mr. Myers regards these Sonnets to Liberty as not only 'the most permanent record in our literature of the Napoleonic war'—having as competitors for this distinction only two magnificent songs of Campbell's, an ode of Coleridge's, and a few spirited stanzas of Byron's—but as 'worthy of comparison with the noblest passages of patriotic verse or prose which all our history has inspired.'

Wordsworth, as we have seen, had, like Coleridge and many others, hailed the French Revolution as the dawn of a new and better state of things, and 'when England first took up arms against France, Wordsworth's feeling had been that of unmixed sorrow and shame. . . . But France had not the wisdom, the courage, the constancy, to play to the end the part for which she had seemed chosen among the nations. It was her conduct towards Switzerland which decisively altered Wordsworth's view.' (See notes to When I have borne in memory.) He saw her forfeit her high privileges and grovel beneath a despot's hand. Ever higher rose his indignation against that 'one man, of men the meanest too,' who was

'Raised up to sway the world—to do, undo;
With mighty nations for his underlings,'
and ever louder did he call upon England to oppose the tyrant. (His later sonnets in praise of the Spanish uprising—that Spanish War of Independence which we are taught to regard as an entirely English affair, under the title of the 'Peninsular War'—should be read in this connexion.)

In 1797 Napoleon had extinguished the old Venetian Republic, and in 1798 the French Directoire began to meddle with the affairs of the Swiss Confederation (which had been recognised as independent ever since 1648). War ensued, and after a desperate struggle Bern, and then the original 'Forest Cantons' (Schwytz, Unterwalden, and Uri) were overpowered.

A 'Helvetic Republic' for some time took the place of the old Confederation, but in 1803 the country was again occupied by French troops, and until the fall of Napoleon Switzerland remained a mere province of the French Empire. By the way, the French view of the question is interesting. 'La France avait commencé l'année 1798 avec trois républiques à ses côtes, les républiques batave, cisalpine et ligurienne, et au commencement de 1799 il en existait deux autres, la romaine et la parthénopéenne (i.e. néaplitaine). Enfin la Suisse s'était donné une nouvelle constitution sur les bases les plus équitables, et avait signé avec la France un traité d'alliance qui nous permettait d'occuper le pays.' (Hist. Populaire.)

It is unfortunately true that parts of French Switzerland, Valais for instance, were induced by their hatred of their Bernese masters to make common cause with the French invader—a fact that was generously forgiven when they afterwards sued to be readmitted to the Confederation.

TO B. R. HAYDON.

Wordsworth addressed two sonnets to his friend, the painter Haydon, viz. the present one (written in 1815) and one 'on seeing his picture of Napoleon Buonaparte on the island of St. Helena,' written in 1832. A third was written in 1840, not addressed to Haydon, but 'on a portrait by him of the Duke of Wellington upon the field of Waterloo.' (This sonnet should be compared with the celebrated sonnet Praised be the art, addressed to Sir G. Beaumont, as to whom see notes on Peele Castle.)

The present sonnet does not, as the other two, treat of the nature of art, but is an exhortation to fortitude.

Benjamin Robert Haydon was born in 1786 at Plymouth, where his father had a printing and publishing establishment. In 1804 he entered the Royal Academy as student. About 1810-12 he was in Paris with Wilkie, studying at the Louvre. He became celebrated for his pictures on historical and heroic
subjects (*Judgment of Solomon, Alexander and Bucephalus, etc.*), but got involved in wild adventures, was imprisoned more than once for debt, and at last, in 1846, while still engaged on his picture of *King Alfred*, he shot himself. Even by 1815, after his return from Paris, he was in a bad way, and doubtless much in need of good advice and exhortations.

5. **Though sensitive ... Heroically fashioned.** Perhaps the two best examples of such an artist-nature (in English literature) would be Wordsworth himself and Walter Scott. For Wordsworth's deeply sensitive nature and his stoical (to use the word in its best sense) strength, see Myers' *Wordsworth*, pp. 86, 179, etc. Also see the last four stanzas of *Peple Castle*.

**I THOUGHT OF THEE.**

This sonnet is an 'after-thought' to the series of sonnets on the River Duddon, written in 1820.

Wordsworth has given us a long gossipy account of his acquaintance with the river, including a thoroughly unsuccessful fishing expedition in boyhood, and a not very successful walking tour in later life, when Mrs. Wordsworth got separated from the party. With considerable naïveté Wordsworth publishes the fact that on this occasion he 'lost his temper entirely,' but that circumstances 'may perhaps excuse my irritability, for I could not but think she had been much to blame.' She seems however to have explained the matter satisfactorily, having waved her handkerchief at them in vain from a high rock. This preface and the rather lengthy notes to the sonnets should perhaps be consulted by the student. They are all given in the Globe Edition.

The sonnets themselves are on a higher level than the prose annotations. They 'accompany with faithful pace Cerulean Duddon from his cloud-fed spring'—as Wordsworth expresses it in his introductory *Ecclesiastical Sonnet*—until he reaches the sea. They are not merely descriptive; they treat many subjects more or less directly suggested by the river—old traditions—a little stepping-stone romance—an old church, and so on. 'The river Duddon,' says Wordsworth, 'rises upon Wrynnose Fell, on the confines of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire; and, having served as a boundary to the last two counties for about 25 miles, it enters the Irish Sea between the Isle of Walney and the Lordship of Millum.'

2. **As being past away.** He had accompanied the river until it had reached the sea, 'where mightiest rivers into powerless sleep sink, and forget their nature,' and he had thought of it as having past away into nothingness, in the same way as we
ourselves are seemingly annihilated by death. But it is not the reality that ceases to exist; as Shelley expresses it,

‘The One remains, the Many change and pass;’

and on looking back he sees no longer the transitory waters of Time, but the vision, as it were, of an eternal stream, the type of the eternity of that Soul of the universe with which the human soul is one.

6. the Form remains. When we think of many a river, such as the Indus, we see that Wordsworth does not here use the word ‘form’ in its ordinary sense. It is, one feels, not quite fair to import the jargon of the schools into poetry—and still less fair to use such metaphysical terms in a vague unscientific fashion, as they seem here used. Form (Aristotle’s ἐἶδος and Dante’s ‘forma’) is used to denote that which distinguishes what belongs to an ordered cosmos from mere formless matter (Aristotle’s ὕλη=wood, material); it is used also to denote the agency or power which ‘informs’ matter, and thus is often equivalent to ‘spirit’ or ‘soul.’ Spenser, for instance, tells us that ‘form is soul,’ borrowing the expression from Aristotle’s celebrated definition of the soul, or the ‘vital principle,’ as ‘form (ἐῖδος) of a natural (φυσικόν) body which possesses life potentially.’

Thus we may regard ‘form’ as equivalent to reality or spirit,—active principle—whereas matter is passive, negative, possessing merely ‘potence,’ i.e. possibilities that can only be realised by the agency of form, or spirit. By Function I suppose Wordsworth means this realisation or ‘actualisation’ that is eternally going on, and which is called by Aristotle ἐνέργεια (‘energy’), or—regarded rather as a state of perfect actuality—ἐνελέξεια. To put things as simply as possible, I imagine that Wordsworth by his Form and Function means much the same as what in other passages he calls ‘the life of things,’ and the soul of Nature—that eternal, living, and active reality of which all visible nature is the transitory material appearance. ‘The Many change and pass,’ but the One (as Plato called it) remains, and of this active spiritual principle our souls are a part, so that although we, ‘the brave, the mighty, and the wise,’ who in the self-confidence of youth defied time and death itself, must pass and vanish, nevertheless this active spiritual element of our human nature can exert an influence which will never die, and can create living realities that will ‘live and act’ after we are gone.

14. Wordsworth’s note on this is:

‘“And feel that I am happier than I know ” (Milton).’

The line occurs in Par. Lost, viii. (l. 282). Wordsworth also says, ‘The allusion to the Greek poet will be obvious to the classical reader.’ There is no ‘allusion,’ as far as I can see. At first
I thought he meant that Milton's words were imitated from some Greek poet; but Professor Dowden has kindly pointed out to me that (as Sir R. Jebb seems to have discovered) Wordsworth's words 'While we, the brave, ... etc.,' are a paraphrase of I. 106 seq. of the celebrated 'Epitaph' written by Moschus on the poet Bion:

διόμην δ’ οἱ μεγάλοι καὶ καρπεροί καὶ σοφοὶ ἄνδρες, etc.

KING'S COLLEGE CHAPEL.

These two sonnets were written in 1821—soon after the Duddon sonnets—and published in 1822. They, as well as a third, in which King's Chapel shares the honours with Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, are to be found nearly at the end of the third part of the very long series of 132 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets.' (The third sonnet has been, I find, included in our text.)

'The productions of Wordsworth's later years,' says Mr. Myers, 'took for the most part a didactic rather than a descriptive form. In the volume entitled, Poems chiefly of Early and Later Years, published in 1842, were many hortatory or ecclesiastical pieces of inferior merit, and among them various additions to the Ecclesiastical Sketches (sic), a series of sonnets begun in 1821, but which he continued to enlarge, spending on them much of the energies of his later years. And although it is only in a few instances—as in the description of King's College, Cambridge—that these sonnets possess force or charm enough to rank high as poetry, yet they assume a certain value when we consider not so much their own adequacy as the greater inadequacy of all rival attempts in the same direction.'

Mr. Morley—as natural—is even still more severe. He says the sonnets are 'ecclesiastical, not religious ... formal, hard, and but thinly enriched with spiritual grace.' He prefers the Christian Year—which Mr. Myers alludes to above so disparagingly. Matthew Arnold says, in a lighter vein, '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. ...'

Wordsworth's preface to this series of sonnets is scarcely worth reproduction here. It consists mainly in a defence of Archbishop Laud. In a note he says that during the month of December, 1820, he accompanied a much-beloved and honoured

1 Mr. Morley's chronological table (Globe Edition) gives the impression (probably a wrong one) that all the 132 sonnets except the three on the Pilgrim Fathers, which were 'added in 1842,' were composed in 1821, although about 30 of them are marked as having been first published in 1827, 1835, 1836, or 1843.
friend through different parts of his estate, with a view to fix upon the site of a new church, which he intended to erect. This induced him to write three sonnets (Part III., 38, 39, 40) on the subject, and it then struck him 'that certain points in the Ecclesiastical History of our country might advantageously be presented to view in verse. Accordingly I took up the subject, and what I now offer to the reader was the result.' This note is dated January, 1822. Of how many sonnets this first edition of the series consisted I cannot say.

I.

1. the royal Saint. King's College was founded by Henry VI. in 1440. What claim Henry VI. has to saintship is not easy to discover; but it was the founding of churches and monasteries that gained the title for David I. of Scotland.

2. the Architect. Mr. J. W. Clarke says that the master-mason was Woluvych, and the master-builder Langton, and that the 'architect' (as often in the case of old cathedrals) is not named. The following extract, however, from Bishop Stubbs' Cambridge and its Story gives a different account. 'Who was the Architect of this master piece? The credit has commonly been given to one of two men, Nicholas Close or John Langton. Close was a man of Flemish family and one of the original six fellows of the College. Langton was Master of Pembroke and Chancellor of the University and one of the Commissioners appointed by the King to superintend the scheme of the works at their commencement. But both of these men were theologians and divines. We have no evidence that they were Architects. Mr. Gilbert Scott in his Essay on English Church Architecture has however given reasons which seem to be almost conclusive, that the man who should really have the credit of conceiving this great work was the master-mason Reginald of Ely, who as early as 1443 was appointed by a patent of Henry VI to "press carpenters, masons and other workmen" for the new building. Mr. Scott thinks Nicholas Close and his fellow-surveyors merely did the work which in modern days would be done by a building committee. It was the master-mason who planned the building and who continued to act as Architect until the work came to a standstill with the deposition of the King. Moreover, the character of the general design of King's Chapel and its architectural details, such as the setting out of its great windows, the plan of the vaulting shafts and the groining of the roofs of the small Chapels between its buttresses, lend force to Mr. Scott's contention. Whoever the Architect was, he had evidently been commissioned to design a chapel of magnificence worthy of a Royal foundation, and where more naturally could he look for his model for such a building as the King desired, than to that
Chapel, the largest and most splendid hitherto erected in England, that finest specimen of decorated architecture in the kingdom, Alan de Walsingham's Lady Chapel at Ely. The relationship between the two buildings is obvious to even an uninstructed eye, but Mr. Scott has shown how closely the original design of King's follows the Ely Lady Chapel lines. There seems little doubt then that the Architect of King's Chapel was its first master-builder Reginald of Ely, who trained under the shadow of the great minster buildings at Ely, probably in a mason's yard, naturally took as his model for the King's New Chapel at Cambridge, one of the most exquisite of the works of the great Cathedral builder of the previous century, Alan de Walsingham. Reginald of Ely's work ceased in 1461 when the battle of Towton gave the Crown to the young Duke of York. On the accession of Richard III in 1483 the new king ordered the building to go on with all dispatch. In 1485 there began another period of 20 years' stagnation. Then in 1506 Henry VII. paying a visit with his mother to Cambridge attended service in the unfinished Chapel and in the summer of 1508 more than 100 masons and carpenters were again at work, and in July 1515 the fabric of the Church was finished and had cost in all some £160,000."

9. branching roof. The roof is a fine specimen of what is called fan-vaulting and fan-tracery, an arrangement in the vaulted roof of the florid perpendicular style in which the principal lines spread upwards from the capitals of the pilasters in a fan-shape, and the decorative lines, spreading in like manner, form a network 'scooped into a thousand cells.' The roof of King's Chapel is arched across from side to side, 'self-poised'—without any central supports.

II.

1. perspective: accented on the preposition. Cf. Shak Rich. II. ii. 2, 'Like perspectives.' Similarly one says aspect, and prospect, and prospéctive (as well as prospéctive). Note however that Milton uses aspect. Verbs such as 'inspect' etc. have the accent on the verbal stem.

2. The idea seems to be that, when one moves up the nave, some of the side windows gradually disappear as one gets further from them, while others open out. The colours of such hidden windows are 'thrown on the stonework. In the Cromwellian age the splendid painted windows of King's College were, I believe, buried to save them from iconoclastic Puritans.

SCORN NOT THE SONNET.

'Composed,' Wordsworth tells us, 'almost extempore, in a short walk on the western side of Rydal Lake' (1827). In some
editions it serves as the introduction to *Miscellaneous Sonnets, Part II*. The following beautiful sonnet on the same subject was written twenty-one years earlier (1806).

‘Nuns fret not at their convents’ 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 fox-glove 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.’

In his preface to this sonnet of 1806 he tells us that the first sonnets that he wrote (‘except an irregular one at school’) were three which he produced on a single afternoon, in 1801, having ‘taken fire’ at hearing Milton’s sonnets read aloud by his sister. The only survivor of these first three sonnets is, ‘I grieved for Bonaparte.’ (By the way, it is dated 1802, not 1801, in the globe edition. Wordsworth’s dates are often inaccurate, and many may be corrected by reference to his sister’s Journal.)

3. *Shakspeare* wrote 154 sonnets. Of these 128 are addressed to some friend, and 28 to a woman. Whether this friend is the W. H. (perhaps William Herbert, Lord Pembroke) of the dedication—and who the woman was, if she were not fictitious—are questions that will probably never be settled. It is evident that in the sonnets he ‘unlocked his heart.’ Although full of metaphor and imagery they are instinct with passionate feeling, and are doubtless autobiographical. When at the climax of his popularity and prosperity ‘suddenly all his life seems to have grown dark. His best friends fell into ruin. Essex perished on the scaffold, Southampton went to the Tower, Pembroke was banished from the court; he may himself, some have thought, have been slightly involved in the rising of Essex. Added to this, we may conjecture from the imaginative pageantry of the sonnets, that he had unwisely loved, and been betrayed in his love by a dear friend’ (Stopford Brooke).

4. *Petrarch* (1304-1374) owes his fame chiefly to his two books of sonnets and canzoni on the life and death of Laura. They are like exquisitely chiselled little statuettes of no real poetic value. In the age of the Italian ‘Academies’ the enthusiasm of Italian writers for Petrarch ‘poured itself forth in tedious commentaries
upon every word of every sonnet' (Hallam). Petrarch also wrote many Latin poems—for one of which (Africa) he received the laurel crown on the Roman Capitol.

5. Tasso (1544-1595) wrote, besides his great epic La Gerusalemme Liberata, and the pastoral Aminta, a large number of sonnets addressed to the Princess Eleonora, sister to Alfonso, duke of Ferrara. I have never seen these sonnets, and cannot say if (like the French poet Ronsard) he really wrote a thousand. In 1582 a rival poet, Battista Guarini, re-edited Tasso's lyrics, including his sonnets, and Tasso being at this time imprisoned at Ferra (whether or not in the 'cell' pointed out to tourists) was unable to protest.

6. Camoens. The Portuguese poet was born in 1525. When a young man he was exiled, on account of love verses written to a lady of the court, to Santarem, but obtained leave to serve as common soldier against the Moors in Marocco, and on this campaign he lost his right eye. The commander of this expedition having been made Vice-roy of the East Indies, Camoens followed him to Goa. Thence he was exiled—for writing a satire on the authorities—and spent a considerable time at Macao, a French colony in S. China, where he is believed to have composed most of his great poem, the Lusiad (os Lusia das = 'the Lusitanians,' i.e. the Portuguese. The poem glorifies Vasco di Gama and his sailors, who discovered the passage round the Cape). When returning from Macao to Goa he was shipwrecked, and is said to have swum ashore holding aloft the MS. of his Lusiad in one hand. When he reached Portugal (having been in prison at Goa for some time), he was patronized by the young king, Sebastian, but when Philip II. of Spain took possession of Portugal, Camoens fell into neglect and destitution. He died in 1580. Besides the Lusiad he wrote three comedies, and a great number of odes, elegies, and sonnets, which were published after his death under the title Rimas. Lisbon erected a statue to Camoens first in 1860.

8. Dante (1265-1321) in his earlier days, as Cino of Pistoia, and his great friend Guido Calvalcante, wrote canzoni and sonnets in the new Italian 'vulgar tongue.' Some of these are interwoven in his Vita Nuova, a prose work, written about 1292, in which he records his first meeting with Beatrice and her early death. The myrtle was sacred to Venus, the goddess of love. The cypress, of which Wordsworth makes Dante's poet's crown to consist, instead of the usual laurel, is a symbol of mourning—sacred, as it were, to the dead. This, of course, refers to the fact that Dante is chiefly celebrated as the poet of the World of the Dead. His great poem, the Divina Commedia, describes his imaginary descent into the Inferno, his passage through the centre of the earth to the Mount of Purgatory, and
his ascent thence through the nine heavens to the presence of God.

10. Spenser (1552?-1599), besides his great work, the Faerie Queene, and besides various early pieces of small value, wrote the Shepheard’s Calendar (1579), the Epithalamium (a bridal song), and 88 Amoretti; ‘love-sonnets on his wife Elizabeth, as well as four other sonnets. ‘A long series of lovely sonnets—the Amoretti—’ says Mr. Stopford Brooke, ‘records the progress of his wooing, and the Epithalamium, his exultant marriage hymn, is the most glorious love-song in the English tongue.’ These were published in 1593. In 1590 he had published the first three books of the Faerie Queene, and it was while working at the next three, during 1592-3, that he found diversion in his love-making and his sonnets. The ‘dark ways,’ to struggle through which he was often called away from Faery-land, were the difficulties that he experienced in Ireland (Kilcolman). His worst difficulties, however, occurred some years later (1598), when his house was plundered and burnt, and he was obliged to leave the country. He came to London, and died there—in a tavern—soon after his arrival. Whether Wordsworth refers in the word ‘glow-worm lamp’ to any expression of Spenser’s I do not know. The ‘called from Faery-land’ is an allusion to the 80th sonnet of Spenser’s, in which he says:

‘After so long a race that I have run
Through Faery-land, which these six bookes compile,
Give leave to rest me, being half foredone,
And gather to myself new breath awhile.’

12. The first of Milton’s sonnets (How soon hath time) was written ‘on his being arrived to the age of twenty-three,’ at the end of 1631, or a little later, soon after leaving Cambridge. The second (To the Nightingale) was written at Horton in 1632 or 1633. Five Italian sonnets and a canzone follow, written (1638-9) in Italy. The eighth was written in 1642, and the last sixteen after he had entered into the arena of political controversy—most of them during a period almost entirely barren of other poetical production. It is these political sonnets that Wordsworth here compares with the blasts of a trumpet.

Some of the personal sonnets, as says Mr. Stopford Brooke, have great and solemn beauty—such as those on his blindness, and on the vision of his ‘late espoused saint.’ Of his political sonnets that addressed to Cromwell is likened by Mr. Brooke to ‘an organ song by Handel in his triumphant hour.’ It extols the Protector for having ‘ploughed his glorious way to peace and truth,’ and entreats him to save England from the ‘hireling

1 I see that Mr. Sidney Lee unfortunately shows that some at least of Spenser’s Amoretti are mere plagiarisms from Tasso and other Italians.
wolves' of an Established church. Some two years later (1655) he wrote the well-known lines on the massacre of the Vaudois, by some considered the greatest of all his sonnets. It is certainly grand and sonorous; it has a 'voice whose sound is like the sea.' But it offends some minds by its cry for vengeance. It always reminds me of some richly-coloured and beautifully proportioned flower—such as the wild Martagon lily—with a rank and unpleasant odour.

Although there are passages of wondrous organ-music in some of these political sonnets of Milton—as, for instance,

‘when temple and tower
Went to the ground, and the repeated air
Of sad Electra's poet had the power
To save the Athenian walls from ruin bare,'

I cannot but regard the three personal sonnets, How soon hath time, On his blindness, and On his deceased wife, as very much the finest, from a literary as well as from a moral standpoint. As to two of his English sonnets—those on the Tetrachordon—I am still strongly of the opinion which I expressed in my edition of Lycidas, that no one but a literary scavenger would regret to find them omitted from all future editions of Milton's poems. Milton also wrote five Italian sonnets and a canzone. The first and fourth sonnet are addressed to some Italian lady with whom he seems to have fallen in love. Who she was is not known, but I have given (in my edition of Lycidas) reasons for believing that her name was Alba.

THERE IS A PLEASURE . . .

Composed in 1827 and published in the same year.

2. 'twas rightly said: by Cowper (Task, ii 285).

4. The mixture of metaphors here (pains, paths, and chains) is not attractive, and the effect is frigid and prosaic. The pursuit of the poet by the malice of one luckless word is surely rather commonplace in thought, though graphically described. The last four lines of the sonnet are beautiful, and worthy of a better context.

'THERE!' SAID A STRIPLING.

This sonnet is one of the 'Poems composed or suggested during a tour in 1833.'

Just thirty years earlier (1803) Wordsworth visited the Grave of Burns (seven years after Burns' death) and wrote three pieces
in the metre used by the Scotch poet in his *Lines to a Mouse*, and *To a Mountain Daisy*, and other poems. On this occasion (1833) he visited Mossgiel, or, to quote his own words, 'Mossgiel was pointed out to me by a young man on the top of the coach on my way from Glasgow to Kilmarnock.'

After the death of the father, William Burns (or Burnes, as he spelt the name), in 1784; the brothers 'made shift to collect a little money in the family,' and took a farm in Ayrshire not far from the old place (Lochlea). This farm was Mossgiel. It was here that Burns composed many of his best known poems, such as the *Cottar's Saturday Night*, *Halloween*, *Address to the Unco Guid*, *The Twae Dogs*, etc., and it was here that while ploughing he 'turned up' the field mouse, and 'turned down' the mountain daisy.

6. Peaks of Arran. 'It is remarkable,' says Wordsworth, 'that though Burns lived some time here, and during much the most productive period of his poetical life, he nowhere adverts to the splendid prospects stretching towards the sea, and bounded by the peaks of Arran on one part, which in clear weather he must have had daily before his eyes.' He adds some remarks on the fact that Nature in Burns' poetry does not 'take a lead,' but is used mainly in association with personal and patriotic feelings. In his *At the Grave of Burns* he had spoken of Criefel (a mountain near Dumfries, where Burns spent his last years) and Skiddaw being in view of each other:

> 'Huge Criefel's hoary top ascends  
> By Skiddaw seen;—  
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends  
> We might have been.'

It may occur to some that they were probably better friends at a distance than they might have been at close quarters.

9. random bield: chance shelter. The words are from the *Lines to a Mountain Daisy*, which should be read. He alludes to Burns' *Daisy*, also in *At the Grave of Burns*:

> 'Fresh as the flower whose modest worth  
> He sang, his genius "glimted" forth.'

11. the lark's nest:

> 'Alas! 'tis no thy neebor sweet,  
> The bonnie lark, companion meet,  
> Bending thee 'mang the dewy weet  
> Wi' spreckled breast.'
A POET! HE HATH PUT...

WRITTEN and published in 1842.

'I was compelled,' Wordsworth tells us, 'to write this sonnet by the disgusting frequency with which the word artistical, imported with other impertinences from the Germans, is employed by writers of the present day. For "artistical" let them substitute "artificial," and the poetry written on this system, both at home and abroad, will be for the most part much better characterized.'

Professor Dowden tells me that he does not think any particular poet was aimed at by the sonnet. It sometimes has occurred to me that Wordsworth was thinking especially of Goethe and his admirers. 'Artistical' may be regarded perhaps as the English equivalent of the German 'künstlerisch' ('artificial' being 'künstlich').

At this time there was in Germany a great deal—mostly nonsense—talked and written on the subject of art (die Kunst). This Kunst-schwärmerei was due mainly to the influence of Goethe, who had died about ten years before Wordsworth wrote this sonnet, and whose exaltation of art into an object of religious sentiment had been finely allegorized by Tennyson in his Temple of Art (1832).

In defence of this worship of the beautiful, when rightly understood, there is much to be said—much too has been said by Plato.—But we need not raise this question here, for it is not against this 'impertinence' that Wordsworth in this sonnet seems to protest. What he speaks of so disdainfully is that 'ars poetica' which would not only give us laws for the external form of poetry, but 'put the poet's heart to school' and make him 'laugh by precept and shed tears by rule.'

To attempt here any discussion of the relative claims of Nature and Art would be absurd. I shall merely remark that not only in regard to rhythm and language and other externalities, but also in regard to conception, all true works of art must have form, and that this form (even in Wordsworth's simplest poems) is something essentially different from anything that can be found in Nature. And why we should not speak of such form as 'artistic,' it is difficult to see, for it certainly is not natural. It has always seemed to me that this question between 'art' and 'nature' has been settled for us very satisfactorily by Shakespeare—far better than by any art-theorist.

In the Winter's Tale Perdita says she does not care for 'carnations and streaked gilly flowers' because 'there is an art which in their piedness shares with great creating nature.' To this Polixenes answers:

'Say there be—
Yet nature is made better by no mean,
But nature makes that mean; so, o'er that art
Which, you say, adds to nature an art
That nature makes.'

Probably Wordsworth would have accepted this with all his heart. He would have admitted, I suppose, that the forest-tree has a form predestined, as it were, by nature in the germ of the acorn, and that without this predetermined form the ‘divine vitality’ of the tree would have to remain a mere unexpressed potentiality somewhat like those mute inglorious Miltons of whom he sings:

‘Oh, many are the poets that are sown
By nature; men endowed with highest gifts,
The vision and the faculty divine,
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse, ...
And go to the grave unthought of.’

In his preface to the second edition of the Lyrical Ballads Wordsworth asks and answers the question: ‘What is a poet?’ This preface is given as an appendix in many editions of Wordsworth’s poems, and it should be studied in connexion with this sonnet. The dedication to the edition of 1815 (also given in such editions as the Globe) contains much that is well worth reading on poetic imagination, etc. In Coleridge’s Biographia Literaria will be found a good deal of interesting discussion of Wordsworth’s theories, and much that is true and striking on the subject of Wordsworth as a poet.
APPENDIX ON SONNETS.

A true sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines divided into two systems. The first part, or system, consists of eight lines, and should be complete in itself. It should have only two rimes, arranged thus: abba, abba. At the end of the eighth line there should be a pause, and the second system, of six lines, should strictly also have only two rimes, but Petrarch, Dante, and Tasso, all allow themselves a third. These rimes of the latter part of a sonnet may be arranged in various ways, e.g. cdc, dcd, or cde, cde, or cde, dce, etc.

This is the ideal sonnet. But, as says Mr. Stopford Brooke, sonnet writers, especially in English, where rimes are not numerous, allowed themselves liberties. Wyatt brought the sonnet from Italy to England and wrote it more strictly than Surrey, who relaxed it. The poets who followed were content to interchange the rimes as they pleased, provided that the whole piece consisted of fourteen lines.

According to Mr. Lee (Elizabethan Sonnets) the best sonneteers of the Elizabethan period—men like Sidney, Watson, and Spenser—drew their inspiration direct from Petrarch and other Italians, while most of the many English writers of sonnets in that age derived their knowledge of the Italian sonnet through French imitators, whom they imitated servilely. But neither Spenser nor Shakespeare kept to the strict Petrarchian type. They both made the sonnet consist of three quatrains followed by a closing couplet. Spenser using five, and Shakespeare seven rimes. This riming couplet at the end, which is only used once by Milton (paw . . . maw), was regarded by the strict Petrarchians as an abomination. Milton brought back the sonnet to its original type. He called his first sonnet ‘a composition in the Petrarchian stanza.’

Wordsworth sometimes uses the strict form, or something nearly related to it, as for instance in the first sonnet (1801) that he wrote (I grieved for Bonaparte) where we have only four rimes arranged thus: abba abab ddcde; and in the sonnet composed (1802) on Westminster Bridge, and in I thought of thee (1820) where there are four rimes arranged thus: abba abba cdcdcd; but he often takes liberties both as regards pause and rimes. Thus in Scorn not the Sonnet (where one would have thought he should have been more than usually careful of the type) he gives us no pause between the octave and the sestet, six rimes, and a closing couplet. At times, as in the last sonnet that he wrote (Affections lose their object), in 1846, he admits a third rime in the octave.
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