The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth — Volume 2 eBook

The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth — Volume 2 by William Wordsworth

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites".

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers".

Contents

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

Page 1

Peter Bell

Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798

There was a Boy

The Two Thieves; or, the Last Stage of Avarice

Written with a Slate Pencil upon a Stone, the largest of a Heap lying near a Deserted Quarry, upon one of the Islands at Rydal

1799

Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth

The Simplon Pass

Nutting

Written in Germany, on one of the Coldest Days of the Century

A Poet's Epitaph

"Strange fits of passion have I known"

"She dwelt among the untrodden ways"

"I travelled among unknown men"

"Three years she grew in sun and shower"

"A slumber did my spirit seal"

Address to the Scholars of the Village School of——

Matthew

The Two April Mornings

The Fountain

To a Sexton

The Danish Boy

Lucy Gray; or, Solitude

Ruth

1800

“On Nature’s invitation do I come”

“Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak”

Ellen Irwin; or, The Braes of Kirtle

Hart-Leap Well

The Idle Shepherd-Boys; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force

The Pet-Lamb

The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale

Poems on the Naming of Places:

“It was an April morning: fresh and clear”

To Joanna

“There is an Eminence,—of these our hills”

“A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags”

To M. H.

The Waterfall and the Eglantine

The Oak and the Broom

“’Tis said, that some have died for love”

The Childless Father

Song for the Wandering Jew

The Brothers

The Seven Sisters; or, The Solitude of Binnorie

Rural Architecture

A Character

Inscription for the spot where the Hermitage stood on St. Herbert's Island, Derwent-Water

Written with a Pencil upon a Stone in the Wall of the House (an Out-House), on the Island at Grasmere

Michael

1801

The Sparrow's Nest

"Pelion and Ossa flourish side by side"

Selections from Chaucer Modernised:

The Prioress' Tale

The Cuckoo and the Nightingale

Troilus and Cresida

1802

The Sailor's Mother

Alice Fell; or, Poverty

Beggars

Sequel to the Foregoing

To a Butterfly

The Emigrant Mother

To the Cuckoo

"My heart leaps up when I behold"

Page 2

Written in March, while resting on the Bridge at the Foot of Brothers Water

The Redbreast chasing the Butterfly

To a Butterfly

Foresight

To the Small Celandine

To the Same Flower

Stanzas written in my Pocket Copy of Thomson's "Castle of Indolence"

Resolution and Independence

"I grieved for Buonaparte"

A Farewell

"The sun has long been set"

Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802

Composed by the Sea-side, near Calais, August, 1802

Calais, August, 1802

Composed near Calais, on the Road leading to Ardres, August 7, 1802

Calais, August 15, 1802

"It is a beauteous evening, calm and free"

On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic

The King of Sweden

To Toussaint L'Ouverture

Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the Day of Landing

September 1, 1802

September, 1802, near Dover

Written in London, September, 1802

London, 1802

“Great men have been among us; hands that penned”

“It is not to be thought of that the Flood”

“When I have borne in memory what has tamed”

Composed after a Journey across the Hambleton Hills, Yorkshire

To H. C.

To the Daisy

To the Same Flower

To the Daisy

Louisa

To a Young Lady, who had been Reproached for taking Long Walks in the Country

1803

The Green Linnet

Yew-Trees

“Who fancied what a pretty sight”

“It is no Spirit who from heaven hath flown”

Memorials of a Tour in Scotland:

Departure from the Vale of Grasmere. August, 1803

At the Grave of Burns, 1803. Seven Years after his Death

Thoughts suggested the Day following, on the Banks of Nith, near the Poet’s Residence

To the Sons of Burns, after Visiting the Grave of their Father

To a Highland Girl

Glen-Almain; or, The Narrow Glen

Stepping Westward

The Solitary Reaper

Address to Kilchurn Castle

Rob Roy's Grave

Sonnet composed at——Castle

Yarrow Unvisited

The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband

"Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale"

The Blind Highland Boy

October, 1803

"There is a bondage worse, far worse, to bear"

October, 1803

"England! the time is come when thou should'st wean"

October, 1803

To the Men of Kent. October, 1803

In the Pass of Killicranky

Anticipation. October, 1803

Page 3

Lines on the Expected Invasion, 1803

* * * * *

Wordsworth'spoetical works

* * * * *

PETER BELL: A TALE [A]

Composed 1798. [B]—Published 1819.

'What's in a Name?' [C]

'Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Caesar!' [D]

To *Robert Southey*, ESQ., P.L., *Etc*., *Etc*.

My dear friend—The Tale of 'Peter Bell', which I now introduce to your notice, and to that of the Public, has, in its Manuscript state, nearly survived its *minority*:—for it first saw the light in the summer of 1798. During this long interval, pains have been taken at different times to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of our Country. This has, indeed, been the aim of all my endeavours in Poetry, which, you know, have been sufficiently laborious to prove that I deem the Art not lightly to be approached; and that the attainment of excellence in it, may laudably be made the principal object of intellectual pursuit by any man, who, with reasonable consideration of circumstances, has faith in his own impulses.The Poem of 'Peter Bell', as the Prologue will show, was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life. Since that Prologue was written, *you* have exhibited most splendid effects of judicious daring, in the opposite and usual course. Let this acknowledgment make my peace with the lovers of the supernatural; and I am persuaded it will be admitted, that to you, as a Master in that province of the art, the following Tale, whether from contrast or congruity, is not an unappropriate offering. Accept it, then, as a public testimony of affectionate admiration from one with whose name yours has been often coupled (to use your own words) for evil and for good; and believe me to be, with earnest wishes that life and health may be granted you to complete the many important works in which you are engaged, and with high respect,
Most faithfully yours,

William Wordsworth.

Rydal mount, April 7, 1819.

Page 4

[Written at Alfoxden. Founded upon an anecdote which I read in a newspaper, of an ass being found hanging his head over a canal in a wretched posture. Upon examination a dead body was found in the water, and proved to be the body of its master. The countenance, gait, and figure of Peter were taken from a wild rover with whom I walked from Builth, on the river Wye, downwards, nearly as far as the town of Hay. He told me strange stories. It has always been a pleasure to me through life, to catch at every opportunity that has occurred in my rambles of becoming acquainted with this class of people. The number of Peter's wives was taken from the trespasses, in this way, of a lawless creature, who lived in the county of Durham, and used to be attended by many women, sometimes not less than half a dozen, as disorderly as himself, and a story went in the country that he had been heard to say, while they were quarrelling, "Why can't ye be quiet, there's none so many of you?" Benoni, or the child of sorrow, I knew when I was a schoolboy. His mother had been deserted by a gentleman in the neighbourhood, she herself being a gentlewoman by birth. The circumstances of her story were told me by my dear old dame, Ann Tyson, who was her confidante. The lady died broken-hearted. In the woods of Alfoxden I used to take great delight in noticing the habits, tricks, and physiognomy of asses; and I have no doubt that I was thus put upon writing the poem out of liking for the creature that is often so dreadfully abused. The crescent moon, which makes such a figure in the prologue, assumed this character one evening while I was watching its beauty in front of Alfoxden House. I intended this poem for the volume before spoken of, but it was not published for more than twenty years afterwards. The worship of the Methodists, or Ranters, is often heard during the stillness of the summer evening, in the country, with affecting accompaniments of rural beauty. In both the psalmody and voice of the preacher there is, not unfrequently, much solemnity likely to impress the feelings of the rudest characters under favourable circumstances.—I. F.]

Classed by Wordsworth among his "Poems of the Imagination."—*Ed*.

PROLOGUE

There's something in a flying horse,
There's something [1] in a huge balloon;
But through the clouds I'll never float
Until I have a little Boat,
Shaped like [2] the crescent-moon. 5

And now I *have* a little Boat,
In shape a very crescent-moon:
Fast through the clouds my boat can sail;
But if perchance your faith should fail,
Look up—and you shall see me soon! 10

The woods, my Friends, are round you roaring,
Rocking and roaring like a sea;
The noise of danger's in [3] your ears,
And ye have all a thousand fears
Both for my little Boat and me! 15

Page 5

Meanwhile untroubled I admire [4]
The pointed horns of my canoe;
And, did not pity touch my breast,
To see how ye are all distrest,
Till my ribs ached, I'd laugh at you! 20

Away we go, my Boat and I—
Frail man ne'er sate in such another;
Whether among the winds we strive,
Or deep into the clouds [5] we dive,
Each is contented with the other. 25

Away we go—and what care we
For treasons, tumults, and for wars?
We are as calm in our delight
As is the crescent-moon so bright
Among the scattered stars. 30

Up goes my Boat among [6] the stars
Through many a breathless field of light,
Through many a long blue field of ether,
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her:
Up goes my little Boat so bright! 35

The Crab, the Scorpion, and the Bull—
We pry among them all; have shot
High o'er the red-haired race of Mars,
Covered from top to toe with scars;
Such company I like it not! 40

The towns in Saturn are decayed,
And melancholy Spectres throng them;—[7]
The Pleiads, that appear to kiss
Each other in the vast abyss,
With joy I sail among [8] them, 45

Swift Mercury resounds with mirth,
Great Jove is full of stately bowers;
But these, and all that they contain,
What are they to that tiny grain,
That little Earth [9] of ours? 50

Then back to Earth, the dear green Earth:—
Whole ages if I here should roam,

The world for my remarks and me
Would not a whit the better be;
I've left my heart at home. 55

See! there she is, [10] the matchless Earth!
There spreads the famed Pacific Ocean!
Old Andes thrusts yon craggy spear
Through the grey clouds; the Alps are here,
Like waters in commotion! 60

Yon tawny slip is Libya's sands
That silver thread the river Dnieper;
And look, where clothed in brightest green
Is a sweet Isle, of isles the Queen;
Ye fairies, from all evil keep her! 65

And see the town where I was born!
Around those happy fields we span
In boyish gambols;—I was lost
Where I have been, but on this coast
I feel I am a man. 70

Never did fifty things at once
Appear so lovely, never, never;—
How tunefully the forests ring!
To hear the earth's soft murmuring
Thus could I hang for ever! 75

"Shame on you!" cried my little Boat,
"Was ever such a homesick [11] Loon,
Within a living Boat to sit,
And make no better use of it;
A Boat twin-sister of the crescent-moon! 80

Page 6

[12]

“Ne’er in the breast of full-grown Poet
Fluttered so faint a heart before;—
Was it the music of the spheres
That overpowered your mortal ears?
—Such din shall trouble them no more. 85

“These nether precincts do not lack
Charms of their own;—then come with me;
I want a comrade, and for you
There’s nothing that I would not do;
Nought is there that you shall not see. 90

“Haste! and above Siberian snows
We’ll sport amid the boreal morning;
Will mingle with her lustres gliding
Among the stars, the stars now hiding,
And now the stars adorning. 95

“I know the secrets of a land
Where human foot did never stray;
Fair is that land [13] as evening skies,
And cool, though in the depth it lies
Of burning Africa. 100

“Or we’ll into the realm of Faery,
Among the lovely shades of things;
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair,
The shades of palaces and kings! 105

“Or, if you thirst with hardy zeal
Less quiet regions to explore,
Prompt voyage shall to you reveal
How earth and heaven are taught to feel
The might of magic lore!” 110

“My little vagrant Form of light,
My gay and beautiful Canoe,
Well have you played your friendly part;
As kindly take what from my heart
Experience forces—then adieu! 115

"Temptation lurks among your words;
But, while these pleasures you're pursuing
Without impediment or let,
No wonder if you quite forget [14]
What on the earth is doing. 120

"There was a time when all mankind Did listen with a faith sincere To tuneful tongues in mystery versed; *Then* Poets fearlessly rehearsed The wonders of a wild career. 125

"Go—(but the world's a sleepy world,
And 'tis, I fear, an age too late)
Take with you some ambitious Youth!
For, restless Wanderer! I, in truth, [15]
Am all unfit to be your mate. 130

"Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers;
The common growth of mother-earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears. 135

"The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power. 140

"These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or there create? 145

Page 7

“A potent wand doth Sorrow wield;
What spell so strong as guilty Fear!
Repentance is a tender Sprite;
If aught on earth have heavenly might,
’Tis lodged within her silent tear. 150

“But grant my wishes,—let us now
Descend from this ethereal height;
Then take thy way, adventurous Skiff,
More daring far than Hippogriff,
And be thy own delight! 155

“To the stone-table in my garden,
Loved haunt of many a summer hour, [E]
The Squire is come: his daughter Bess
Beside him in the cool recess
Sits blooming like a flower. 160

“With these are many more convened;
They know not I have been so far;—
I see them there, in number nine,
Beneath the spreading Weymouth-pine!
I see them—there they are! 165

“There sits the Vicar and his Dame;
And there my good friend, Stephen Otter;
And, ere the light of evening fail,
To them I must relate the Tale
Of Peter Bell the Potter.” 170

Off flew the Boat—away she flees,
Spurning her freight with indignation! [16]
“And I, as well as I was able,
On two poor legs, toward my stone-table
Limped on with sore vexation. [17] 175

“O, here he is!” cried little Bess—
She saw me at the garden-door;
“We’ve waited anxiously and long,”
They cried, and all around me throng,
Full nine of them or more! 180

“Reproach me not—your fears be still—
Be thankful we again have met;—

Resume, my Friends! within the shade
Your seats, and quickly [18] shall be paid
The well-remembered debt.” 185

I spake with faltering voice, like one
Not wholly rescued from the pale
Of a wild dream, or worse illusion;
But, straight, to cover my confusion,
Began the promised Tale. [19] 190

PART FIRST

All by the moonlight river side
Groaned the poor Beast—alas! in vain;
The staff was raised to loftier height,
And the blows fell with heavier weight
As Peter struck—and struck again. [20] 195

[21]

“Hold!” cried the Squire, “against the rules
Of common sense you’re surely sinning;
This leap is for us all too bold; [22]
Who Peter was, let that be told,
And start from the beginning.” 200

—“A Potter, [F] Sir, he was by trade,”
Said I, becoming quite collected;
“And wheresoever he appeared,
Full twenty times was Peter feared
For once that Peter was respected. 205

Page 8

“He two-and-thirty years or more,
Had been a wild and woodland rover;
Had heard the Atlantic surges roar
On farthest Cornwall’s rocky shore,
And trod the cliffs of Dover. 210

“And he had seen Caernarvon’s towers,
And well he knew the spire of Sarum;
And he had been where Lincoln bell
Flings o’er the fen that ponderous knell—
A far-renowned alarum. [23] 215

“At Doncaster, at York, and Leeds,
And merry Carlisle had he been;
And all along the Lowlands fair,
All through the bonny shire of Ayr;
And far as Aberdeen. 220

“And he had been at Inverness;
And Peter, by the mountain-rills,
Had danced his round with Highland lasses;
And he had lain beside his asses
On lofty Cheviot Hills: 225

“And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
Among the rocks and winding *scars*;
Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars: 230

“And all along the indented coast,
Bespattered with the salt-sea foam;
Where’er a knot of houses lay
On headland, or in hollow bay;—
Sure never man like him did roam! 235

“As well might Peter, in the Fleet,
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor;—
He travelled here, he travelled there;—
But not the value of a hair
Was heart or head the better. 240

“He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell;

They were his dwellings night and day,—
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell. 245

"In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more. 250

"Small change it made in Peter's heart
To see his gentle panniered train
With more than vernal pleasure feeding,
Where'er the tender grass was leading
Its earliest green along the lane. 255

"In vain, through water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed. 260

"At noon, when, by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky! 265

"On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been
A thing as steadfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away. 270

Page 9

“Within the breast of Peter Bell
These silent raptures found no place; [24]
He was a Carl as wild and rude
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,
As ever ran a felon’s race. 275

“Of all that lead a lawless life,
Of all that love their lawless lives,
In city or in village small,
He was the wildest far of all;—
He had a dozen wedded wives. 280

“Nay, start not!—wedded wives—and twelve!
But how one wife could e’er come near him,
In simple truth I cannot tell;
For, be it said of Peter Bell,
To see him was to fear him. 285

“Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent [25] weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once, that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together. 290

“A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors. 295

“To all the unshaped half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
’Mid summer storms or winter’s ice,
Had Peter joined whatever vice
The cruel city breeds. 300

“His face was keen as is the wind
That cuts along the hawthorn-fence;
Of courage you saw little there,
But, in its stead, a medley air
Of cunning and of impudence. 305

“He had a dark and sidelong walk,
And long and slouching was his gait;

Beneath his looks so bare and bold,
You might perceive, his spirit cold
Was playing with some inward bait. 310

"His forehead wrinkled was and furred;
A work, one half of which was done
By thinking of his '*whens*,' and '*hows*';
And half, by knitting of his brows
Beneath the glaring sun. 315

"There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky!" 320

* * * * *

One night, (and now my little Bess!
We've reached at last the promised Tale;)
One beautiful November night,
When the full moon was shining bright
Upon the rapid river Swale, 325Along the river's winding banks
Peter was travelling all alone;
Whether to buy or sell, or led
By pleasure running in his head,
To me was never known. 330

He trudged along through copse and brake,
He trudged along o'er hill and dale;
Nor for the moon cared he a tittle,
And for the stars he cared as little,
And for the murmuring river Swale. 335

Page 10

But, chancing to espy a path
That promised to cut short the way;
As many a wiser man hath done,
He left a trusty guide for one
That might his steps betray. 340

To a thick wood he soon is brought
Where cheerily [26] his course he weaves,
And whistling loud may yet be heard,
Though often buried, like a bird
Darkling, among the boughs and leaves. 345

But quickly Peter's mood is changed,
And on he drives with cheeks that burn
In downright fury and in wrath;—
There's little sign the treacherous path
Will to the road return! 350

The path grows dim, and dimmer still;
Now up, now down, the Rover wends,
With all the sail that he can carry,
Till brought to a deserted quarry—[27]
And there the pathway ends. 355

[28]

He paused—for shadows of strange shape,
Massy and black, before him lay;
But through the dark, and through the cold, [29]
And through the yawning fissures old,
Did Peter boldly press his way 360

Right through the quarry;—and behold
A scene of soft and lovely hue!
Where blue and grey, and tender green,
Together make [30] as sweet a scene
As ever human eye did view. 365

Beneath the clear blue sky he saw
A little field of meadow ground;
But field or meadow name it not;
Call it of earth a small green plot,
With rocks encompassed round. 370

The Swale flowed under the grey rocks,
But he flowed quiet and unseen;—
You need a strong and stormy gale
To bring the noises of the Swale
To that green spot, so calm and green! 375

[31]

And is there no one dwelling here,
No hermit with his beads and glass?
And does no little cottage look
Upon this soft and fertile nook?
Does no one live near this green grass? 380

Across the [32] deep and quiet spot
Is Peter driving through the grass—
And now has reached the skirting trees; [33]
When, turning round his head, he sees
A solitary Ass. 385

[34]

“A prize!” cries Peter—but he first
Must spy about him far and near: [35]
There’s not a single house in sight,
No woodman’s hut, no cottage light—
Peter, you need not fear! 390

There’s nothing to be seen but woods,
And rocks that spread a hoary gleam,
And this one Beast, that from the bed
Of the green meadow hangs his head
Over the silent stream. 395

His head is with a halter bound;
The halter seizing, Peter leapt
Upon the Creature’s back, [36] and plied
With ready heels his shaggy side; [37]
But still the Ass his station kept. 400

Page 11

[38]

Then Peter gave a sudden jerk,
A jerk that from a dungeon-floor
Would have pulled up an iron ring;
But still the heavy-headed Thing
Stood just as he had stood before! 405

Quoth Peter, leaping from his seat,
“There is some plot against me laid”;
Once more the little meadow-ground
And all the hoary cliffs around
He cautiously surveyed. 410

All, all is silent—rocks and woods,
All still and silent—far and near!
Only the Ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turns round his long left ear. 415

Thought Peter, What can mean all this?
Some ugly witchcraft must be here!
—Once more the Ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turned round his long left ear. 420

Suspicion ripened into dread;
Yet with deliberate action slow,
His staff high-raising, in the pride
Of skill, upon the sounding hide, [39]
He dealt a sturdy blow. 425

The poor Ass staggered with the shock;
And then, as if to take his ease, [40]
In quiet uncomplaining mood,
Upon the spot where he had stood,
Dropped gently down upon his knees; 430

As gently on [41] his side he fell;
And by the river’s brink did lie;
And, while [42] he lay like one that mourned,
The patient Beast on Peter turned
His shining hazel eye. [43] 435

’Twas but one mild, reproachful look,
A look more tender than severe;
And straight in sorrow, not in dread,
He turned the eye-ball in his head
Towards the smooth river [44] deep and clear. 440

Upon the Beast the sapling rings;
His lank sides heaved, [45] his limbs they stirred;
He gave a groan, and then another,
Of that which went before the brother,
And then he gave a third. 445

All by the moonlight river side
He gave three miserable groans;
And not till now hath Peter seen
How gaunt the Creature is,—how lean
And sharp his staring bones! [46] 450

With legs stretched out and stiff he lay:—
No word of kind commiseration
Fell at the sight from Peter’s tongue;
With hard contempt his heart was wrung,
With hatred and vexation. 455

The meagre beast lay still as death;
And Peter’s lips with fury quiver;
Quoth he, “You little mulish dog,
I’ll fling your carcass like a log
Head-foremost down the river!” 460

An impious oath confirmed the threat—
Whereat from the earth on which he lay [47]
To all the echoes, south and north,
And east and west, the Ass sent forth
A long and clamorous bray! [48] 465

Page 12

This outcry, on the heart of Peter,
Seems like a note of joy to strike,—
Joy at [49] the heart of Peter knocks;
But in the echo of the rocks
Was something Peter did not like. 470

Whether to cheer his coward breast,
Or that he could not break the chain,
In this serene and solemn hour,
Twined round him by demoniac power,
To the blind work he turned again. 475

Among the rocks and winding crags;
Among the mountains far away;
Once more the Ass did lengthen out
More ruefully a deep-drawn shout,
The hard dry see-saw of his horrible bray! [50] 480

What is there now in Peter's heart!
Or whence the might of this strange sound?
The moon uneasy looked and dimmer,
The broad blue heavens appeared to glimmer,
And the rocks staggered all around—485

From Peter's hand the sapling dropped!
Threat has he none to execute;
"If any one should come and see
That I am here, they'll think," quoth he,
"I'm helping this poor dying brute." 490

He scans the Ass from limb to limb,
And ventures now to uplift his eyes;
More steady looks the moon, and clear,
More like themselves the rocks appear
And touch more quiet skies. [51] 495

His scorn returns—his hate revives;
He stoops the Ass's neck to seize
With malice—that again takes flight;
For in the pool a startling sight
Meets him, among the inverted trees. [52] 500

Is it the moon's distorted face?
The ghost-like image of a cloud?

Is it a gallows [53] there portrayed?
Is Peter of himself afraid?
Is it a coffin,—or a shroud? 505

A grisly idol hewn in stone?
Or imp from witch's lap let fall?
Perhaps a ring of shining fairies?
Such as pursue their feared vagaries [54]
In sylvan bower, or haunted hall? 510

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? 515

[55]

Never did pulse so quickly throb,
And never heart so loudly panted; [56]
He looks, he cannot choose but look;
Like some one reading in a book—[57]
A book that is enchanted. 520

Ah, well-a-day for Peter Bell!
He will be turned to iron soon,
Meet Statue for the court of Fear!
His hat is up—and every hair
Bristles, and whitens in the moon! 525

He looks, he ponders, looks again;
He sees a motion—hears a groan;
His eyes will burst—his heart will break—
He gives a loud and frightful shriek,
And back he falls, [58] as if his life were flown! 530

Page 13

PART SECOND

We left our Hero in a trance,
Beneath the alders, near the river;
The Ass is by the river-side,
And, where the feeble breezes glide,
Upon the stream the moonbeams quiver. 535

A happy respite! but at length
He feels the glimmering of the moon;
Wakes with glazed eye, and feebly sighing—
To sink, perhaps, where he is lying,
Into a second swoon! [59] 540

He lifts his head, he sees his staff;
He touches—'tis to him a treasure!
Faint recollection seems to tell
That he is yet where mortals dwell—
A thought received with languid pleasure! 545

His head upon his elbow propped,
Becoming less and less perplexed,
Sky-ward he looks—to rock and wood—
And then—upon the glassy [60] flood
His wandering eye is fixed. 550

Thought he, that is the face of one
In his last sleep securely bound!
So toward the stream his head he bent,
And downward thrust his staff, intent
The river's depth to sound. [61] 555

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! 560

His staring bones all shake with joy,
And close by Peter's side he stands:
While Peter o'er the river bends,
The little Ass his neck extends,
And fondly licks his hands. 565

Such life is in the Ass's eyes,
Such life is in his limbs and ears;
That Peter Bell, if he had been

The veriest coward ever seen,
Must now have thrown aside his fears. 570

The Ass looks on—and to his work
Is Peter quietly resigned;
He touches here—he touches there—
And now among the dead man's hair
His sapling Peter has entwined. 575

He pulls—and looks—and pulls again;
And he whom the poor Ass had lost,
The man who had been four days dead,
Head-foremost from the river's bed
Uprises like a ghost! [G] 580

And Peter draws him to dry land;
And through the brain of Peter pass
Some poignant twitches, fast and faster;
"No doubt," quoth he, "he is the Master
Of this poor miserable Ass!" 585

The meagre shadow that looks on—
What would he now? [62] what is he doing?
His sudden fit of joy is flown,—
He on his knees hath laid him down,
As if he were his grief renewing; 590

But no—that Peter on his back
Must mount, he shows well as he can: [63]
Thought Peter then, come weal or woe
I'll do what he would have me do,
In pity to this poor drowned man. 595

Page 14

With that resolve he boldly mounts [64]
Upon the pleased and thankful Ass;
And then, without a moment's stay,
That [65] earnest Creature turned away,
Leaving the body on the grass. 600

Intent upon his faithful watch,
The Beast four days and nights had past;
A sweeter meadow ne'er was seen,
And there the Ass four days had been,
Nor ever once did break his fast: 605

Yet firm his step, and stout his heart;
The mead is crossed—the quarry's mouth
Is reached; but there the trusty guide
Into a thicket turns aside,
And deftly ambles [66] towards the south. 610

When hark a burst of doleful sound!
And Peter honestly might say,
The like came never to his ears,
Though he has been, full thirty years,
A rover—night and day! 615

'Tis not a plover of the moors,
'Tis not a bittern of the fen;
Nor can it be a barking fox,
Nor night-bird chambered in the rocks,
Nor wild-cat in a woody glen! 620

The Ass is startled—and stops short
Right in the middle of the thicket;
And Peter, wont to whistle loud
Whether alone or in a crowd,
Is silent as a silent cricket. 625

What ails you now, my little Bess?
Well may you tremble and look grave!
This cry—that rings along the wood,
This cry—that floats adown the flood,
Comes from the entrance of a cave: 630

I see a blooming Wood-boy there,
And if I had the power to say

How sorrowful the wanderer is,
Your heart would be as sad as his
Till you had kissed his tears away! 635

Grasping [67] a hawthorn branch in hand,
All bright with berries ripe and red,
Into the cavern's mouth he peeps;
Thence back into the moonlight creeps;
Whom seeks he—whom?—the silent dead: [68] 640

His father!—Him doth he require—
Him hath he sought [69] with fruitless pains,
Among the rocks, behind the trees;
Now creeping on his hands and knees,
Now running o'er the open plains. 645

And hither is he come at last,
When he through such a day has gone,
By this dark cave to be distrest
Like a poor bird—her plundered nest
Hovering around with dolorous moan! 650

Of that intense and piercing cry
The listening Ass conjectures well; [70]
Wild as it is, he there can read
Some intermingled notes that plead
With touches irresistible. 655

But Peter—when he saw the Ass
Not only stop but turn, and change
The cherished tenor of his pace
That lamentable cry [71] to chase—
It wrought in him conviction strange; 660

Page 15

A faith that, for the dead man's sake
And this poor slave who loved him well,
Vengeance upon his head will fall,
Some visitation worse than all
Which ever till this night befel. 665

Meanwhile the Ass to reach his home, [72]
Is striving stoutly as he may;
But, while he climbs the woody hill,
The cry grows weak—and weaker still;
And now at last it dies away. 670

So with his freight the Creature turns
Into a gloomy grove of beech,
Along the shade with footsteps [73] true
Descending slowly, till the two
The open moonlight reach. 675

And there, along the [74] narrow dell,
A fair smooth pathway you discern,
A length of green and open road—
As if it from a fountain flowed—
Winding away between the fern. 680

The rocks that tower on either side
Build up a wild fantastic scene;
Temples like those among the Hindoos,
And mosques, and spires, and abbey-windows,
And castles all with ivy green! 685

And, while the Ass pursues his way,
Along this solitary dell,
As pensively his steps advance,
The mosques and spires change countenance,
And look at Peter Bell! 690

That unintelligible cry
Hath left him high in preparation,—
Convinced that he, or soon or late,
This very night will meet his fate—
And so he sits in expectation! 695

[75]

The strenuous Animal hath clomb
With the green path; and now he wends
Where, shining like the smoothest sea,
In undisturbed immensity
A [76] level plain extends. 700

But whence this faintly-rustling sound
By which the journeying pair are chased?
—A withered leaf is close behind, [77]
Light plaything for the sportive wind
Upon that solitary waste. 705

When Peter spied the moving thing,
It only doubled his distress; [78]
“Where there is not a bush or tree,
The very leaves they follow me—
So huge hath been my wickedness!” 710

To a close lane they now are come,
Where, as before, the enduring Ass
Moves on without a moment’s stop,
Nor once turns round his head to crop
A bramble-leaf or blade of grass. 715

Between the hedges as they go,
The white dust sleeps upon the lane;
And Peter, ever and anon
Back-looking, sees, upon a stone,
Or in the dust, a crimson stain. 720

A stain—as of a drop of blood
By moonlight made more faint and wan;
Ha! why these sinkings of despair? [79]
He knows not how the blood comes there—
And Peter is a wicked man. 725

Page 16

At length he spies a bleeding wound,
Where he had struck the Ass's head; [80]
He sees the blood, knows what it is,—
A glimpse of sudden joy was his,
But then it quickly fled; 730

Of him whom sudden death had seized
He thought,—of thee, O faithful Ass!
And once again those ghastly pains,
Shoot to and fro through heart and reins,
And through his brain like lightning pass. [81] 735

PART THIRD

I've heard of one, a gentle Soul,
Though given to sadness and to gloom,
And for the fact will vouch,—one night
It chanced that by a taper's light
This man was reading in his room; 740

Bending, as you or I might bend
At night o'er any pious book, [82]
When sudden blackness overspread
The snow white page on which he read,
And made the good man round him look. 745

The chamber walls were dark all round,—
And to his book he turned again;
—The light had left the lonely taper, [83]
And formed itself upon the paper
Into large letters—bright and plain! 750

The godly book was in his hand—
And, on the page, more black than coal,
Appeared, set forth in strange array,
A *word*—which to his dying day
Perplexed the good man's gentle soul. 755

The ghostly word, thus plainly seen, [84]
Did never from his lips depart;
But he hath said, poor gentle wight!
It brought full many a sin to light
Out of the bottom of his heart. 760

Dread Spirits! to confound the meek [85]
Why wander from your course so far,
Disordering colour, form, and stature!
—Let good men feel the soul of nature,
And see things as they are. 765

Yet, potent Spirits! well I know,
How ye, that play with soul and sense,
Are not unused to trouble friends
Of goodness, for most gracious ends—[86]
And this I speak in reverence! 770

But might I give advice to you,
Whom in my fear I love so well;
From men of pensive virtue go,
Dread Beings! and your empire show
On hearts like that of Peter Bell. 775

Your presence often have I [87] felt
In darkness and the stormy night;
And, with like force, [88] if need there be,
Ye can put forth your agency
When earth is calm, and heaven is bright. 780

Then, coming from the wayward world,
That powerful world in which ye dwell,
Come, Spirits of the Mind! and try,
To-night, beneath the moonlight sky,
What may be done with Peter Bell! 785

Page 17

—O, would that some more skilful voice
My further labour might prevent!
Kind Listeners, that around me sit,
I feel that I am all unfit
For such high argument. 790

I've played, I've danced, [89] with my narration;
I loitered long ere I began:
Ye waited then on my good pleasure;
Pour out indulgence still, in measure
As liberal as ye can! 795

Our Travellers, ye remember well,
Are thridding a sequestered lane;
And Peter many tricks is trying,
And many anodynes applying,
To ease his conscience of its pain. 800

By this his heart is lighter far;
And, finding that he can account
So snugly [90] for that crimson stain,
His evil spirit up again
Does like an empty bucket mount. 805

And Peter is a deep logician
Who hath no lack of wit mercurial;
"Blood drops—leaves rustle—yet," quoth he,
"This poor man never, but for me,
Could have had Christian burial. 810

"And, say the best you can, 'tis plain,
That here has [91] been some wicked dealing;
No doubt the devil in me wrought;
I'm not the man who could have thought
An Ass like this was worth the stealing!" 815

So from his pocket Peter takes
His shining horn tobacco-box;
And, in a light and careless way,
As men who with their purpose play,
Upon the lid he knocks. 820

Let them whose voice can stop the clouds,
Whose cunning eye can see the wind,

Tell to a curious world the cause
Why, making here a sudden pause,
The Ass turned round his head, and *grinned*. 825

Appalling process! I have marked
The like on heath, in lonely wood;
And, verily, have seldom met
A spectacle more hideous—yet
It suited Peter's present mood. 830

And, grinning in his turn, his teeth
He in jocose defiance showed—
When, to upset [92] his spiteful mirth,
A murmur, pent within the earth,
In the dead earth beneath the road, 835

Rolled audibly! it swept along,
A muffled noise—a rumbling sound!—
'Twas by a troop of miners made,
Plying with gunpowder their trade,
Some twenty fathoms underground. 840

Small cause of dire effect! for, surely,
If ever mortal, King or Cotter,
Believed that earth was charged to quake
And yawn for his unworthy sake,
'Twas Peter Bell the Potter. 845

But, as an oak in breathless air
Will stand though to the centre hewn;
Or as the weakest things, if frost
Have stiffened them, maintain their post;
So he, beneath the gazing moon!—850

Page 18

The Beast bestriding thus, he reached
A spot where, in a sheltering cove, [93]
A little chapel stands alone,
With greenest ivy overgrown,
And tufted with an ivy grove; 855

Dying insensibly away
From human thoughts and purposes,
It seemed—wall, window, roof and tower [94]—
To bow to some transforming power,
And blend with the surrounding trees. 860

As ruinous a place it was,
Thought Peter, in the shire of Fife
That served my turn, when following still
From land to land a reckless will [95]
I married my sixth wife! 865

The unheeding Ass moves slowly on,
And now is passing by an inn
Brim-full of a carousing crew,
That make, [96] with curses not a few,
An uproar and a drunken din. 870

I cannot well express the thoughts
Which Peter in those noises found;—
A stifling power compressed his frame,
While-as a swimming darkness came [97]
Over that dull and dreary sound. 875

For well did Peter know the sound;
The language of those drunken joys
To him, a jovial soul, I ween,
But a few hours ago, had been
A gladsome and a welcome noise. 880

Now, [98] turned adrift into the past, He finds no solace in his course; Like planet-stricken men of yore, He trembles, smitten to the core By strong compunction and remorse. 885

But, more than all, his heart is stung
To think of one, almost a child;
A sweet and playful Highland girl,

As light and beauteous as a squirrel,
As beauteous and as wild! 890

Her dwelling was a lonely house, [99]
A cottage in a heathy dell;
And she put on her gown of green,
And left her mother at sixteen,
And followed Peter Bell. 895

But many good and pious thoughts
Had she; and, in the kirk to pray,
Two long Scotch miles, through rain or snow,
To kirk she had been used to go,
Twice every Sabbath-day. 900

And, when she followed Peter Bell,
It was to lead an honest life;
For he, with tongue not used to falter,
Had pledged his troth before the altar
To love her as his wedded wife. 905

A mother's hope is hers;—but soon
She drooped and pined like one forlorn;
From Scripture she a name [100] did borrow;
Benoni, or the child of sorrow,
She called her babe unborn. 910

For she had learned how Peter lived,
And took it in most grievous part;
She to the very bone was worn,
And, ere that little child was born,
Died of a broken heart. 915

Page 19

And now the Spirits of the Mind
Are busy with poor Peter Bell;
Upon the rights of visual sense
Usurping, with a prevalence
More terrible than magic spell. [101] 920

Close by a brake of flowering furze
(Above it shivering aspens play)
He sees an unsubstantial creature,
His very self in form and feature,
Not four yards from the broad highway: 925

And stretched beneath the furze he sees
The Highland girl—it is no other;
And hears her crying as she cried,
The very moment that she died,
“My mother! oh my mother!” 930

The sweat pours down from Peter’s face,
So grievous is his heart’s contrition;
With agony his eye-balls ache
While he beholds by the furze-brake
This miserable vision! 935

Calm is the well-deserving brute, *His* peace hath no offence betrayed; But now, while down that slope he wends, A voice to Peter’s ear [102] ascends, Resounding from the woody glade: 940

The voice, though clamorous as a horn
Re-echoed by a naked rock,
Comes from that tabernacle—List! [103]
Within, a fervent [104] Methodist
Is preaching to no heedless flock! 945

“Repent! repent!” he cries aloud,
“While yet ye may find mercy;—strive
To love the Lord with all your might;
Turn to him, seek him day and night,
And save your souls alive! 950

“Repent! repent! though ye have gone,
Through paths of wickedness and woe,
After the Babylonian harlot;

And, though your sins be red as scarlet,
They shall be white as snow!” 955

Even as he passed the door, these words
Did plainly come to Peter’s ears;
And they such joyful tidings were,
The joy was more than he could bear!—
He melted into tears. 960

Sweet tears of hope and tenderness!
And fast they fell, a plenteous shower!
His nerves, his sinews seemed to melt;
Through all his iron frame was felt
A gentle, a relaxing, power! 965

Each fibre of his frame was weak;
Weak all the animal within;
But, in its helplessness, grew mild
And gentle as an infant child,
An infant that has known no sin. 970

’Tis said, meek Beast! that, through Heaven’s grace,[105] [H]
He not unmoved did notice now
The cross [I] upon thy shoulder scored,
For lasting impress, by the Lord [106]
To whom all human-kind shall bow; 975

Memorial of his touch—that day [107]
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream [J]
Of shouting people deified! 980

Page 20

Meanwhile the persevering Ass,
Turned towards a gate that hung in view
Across a shady lane; [108] his chest
Against the yielding gate he pressed
And quietly passed through. 985

And up the stony lane he goes;
No ghost more softly ever trod;
Among the stones and pebbles, he
Sets down his hoofs inaudibly,
As if with felt his hoofs were shod. 990

Along the lane the trusty Ass
Went twice two hundred yards or more,
And no one could have guessed his aim,—
Till to a lonely house he came,
And stopped beside the door. [109] 995

Thought Peter, ’tis the poor man’s home!
He listens—not a sound is heard
Save from the trickling household rill;
But, stepping o’er the cottage-sill,
Forthwith a little Girl appeared. 1000

She to the Meeting-house was bound
In hopes [110] some tidings there to gather:
No glimpse it is, no doubtful gleam;
She saw—and uttered with a scream,
“My father! here’s my father!” 1005

The very word was plainly heard,
Heard plainly by the wretched Mother—
Her joy was like a deep affright:
And forth she rushed into the light,
And saw it was another! 1010

And, instantly, upon the earth,
Beneath the full moon shining bright,
Close to [111] the Ass’s feet she fell;
At the same moment Peter Bell
Dismounts in most unhappy plight. 1015

As he beheld the Woman lie [112]
Breathless and motionless, the mind

Of Peter sadly was confused;
But, though to such demands unused,
And helpless almost as the blind, 1020

He raised her up; and, while he held
Her body propped against his knee,
The Woman waked—and when she spied
The poor Ass standing by her side,
She moaned most bitterly. 1025

"Oh! God be praised—my heart's at ease—
For he is dead—I know it well!"
—At this she wept a bitter flood;
And, in the best way that he could,
His tale did Peter tell. 1030

He trembles—he is pale as death;
His voice is weak with perturbation;
He turns aside his head, he pauses;
Poor Peter from a thousand causes,
Is crippled sore in his narration. 1035

At length she learned how he espied
The Ass in that small meadow-ground;
And that her Husband now lay dead,
Beside that luckless river's bed
In which he had been drowned. 1040

A piercing look the Widow [113] cast
Upon the Beast that near her stands;
She sees 'tis he, that 'tis the same;
She calls the poor Ass by his name,
And wrings, and wrings her hands. 1045

Page 21

“O wretched loss—untimely stroke!
If he had died upon his bed!
He knew not one forewarning pain;
He never will come home again—
Is dead, for ever dead!” 1050

Beside the Woman Peter stands;
His heart is opening more and more;
A holy sense pervades his mind;
He feels what he for human-kind
Had never felt before. 1055

At length, by Peter’s arm sustained,
The Woman rises from the ground—
“Oh, mercy! something must be done,
My little Rachel, you must run,—
Some willing neighbour must be found. 1060

“Make haste—my little Rachel—do,
The first you meet with—bid him come,
Ask him to lend his horse to-night,
And this good Man, whom Heaven requite,
Will help to bring the body home.” 1065

Away goes Rachel weeping loud;—
An Infant, waked by her distress,
Makes in the house a piteous cry;
And Peter hears the Mother sigh,
“Seven are they, and all fatherless!” 1070

And now is Peter taught to feel
That man’s heart is a holy thing;
And Nature, through a world of death,
Breathes into him a second breath,
More searching than the breath of spring. 1075

Upon a stone the Woman sits
In agony of silent grief—
From his own thoughts did Peter start;
He longs to press her to his heart,
From love that cannot find relief. 1080

But roused, as if through every limb
Had past a sudden shock of dread,

The Mother o'er the threshold flies,
And up the cottage stairs [114] she hies,
And on the pillow lays [115] her burning head. 1085

And Peter turns his steps aside
Into a shade of darksome trees,
Where he sits down, he knows not how,
With his hands pressed against his brow,
His elbows on [116] his tremulous knees. 1090

There, self-involved, does Peter sit
Until no sign of life he makes,
As if his mind were sinking deep
Through years that have been long asleep!
The trance is passed away—he wakes; 1095

He lifts [117] his head—and sees the Ass
Yet standing in the clear moonshine;
"When shall I be as good as thou?
Oh! would, poor beast, that I had now
A heart but half as good as thine!" 1100

But *He*—who deviously hath sought
His Father through the lonesome woods,
Hath sought, proclaiming to the ear
Of night his grief and sorrowful fear—[118]
He comes, escaped from fields and floods;—1105

With weary pace is drawing nigh;
He sees the Ass—and nothing living
Had ever such a fit of joy
As hath [119] this little orphan Boy,
For he has no misgiving! 1110

Page 22

Forth to [120] the gentle Ass he springs,
And up about his neck he climbs;
In loving words he talks to him,
He kisses, kisses face and limb,—
He kisses him a thousand times! 1115

This Peter sees, while in the shade
He stood beside the cottage-door;
And Peter Bell, the ruffian wild,
Sobs loud, he sobs even like a child,
“Oh! God, I can endure no more!” 1120

—Here ends my Tale: for in a trice
Arrived a neighbour with his horse;
Peter went forth with him straightway;
And, with due care, ere break of day,
Together they brought back the Corse. 1125

And many years did this poor Ass,
Whom once it was my luck to see
Cropping the shrubs of Leming-Lane,
Help by his labour to maintain
The Widow and her family. 1130

And Peter Bell, who, till that night,
Had been the wildest of his clan,
Forsook his crimes, renounced [121] his folly,
And, after ten months’ melancholy,
Became a good and honest man. [K] 1135

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: 1827.

And something 1819.]

[Variant 2:

1849.

Whose shape is like 1819.

For shape just like 1845.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

The noise of danger fills 1819.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

Meanwhile I from the helm admire 1819.

... I soberly admire C.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

Or deep into the heavens 1819.
Or into massy clouds 1820.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

... between ... 1819.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

... are ill-built,
But proud let him be who has seen them; 1819.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

... between ... 1819.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

That darling speck ... 1819.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

And there it is, ... 1819.]

[Variant 11:

1827

... heartless ... 1819.]

[Variant 12:

In the editions of 1819 and 1820 only.

Out—out—and, like a brooding hen,
Beside your sooty hearth-stone cower;
Go, creep along the dirt, and pick
Your way with your good walking-stick,
Just three good miles an hour!]

[Variant 13:

1827.

... the land ... 1819.]

[Variant 14:

1845.

My radiant Pinnace, you forget 1819.]

[Variant 15:

Page 23

1827.

For I myself, in very truth, 1819.]

[Variant 16:

1845.

Off flew my sparkling Boat in scorn,
Yea in a trance of indignation! 1819.

Spurning her freight with indignation! 1820.]

[Variant 17:

1845.

... to my stone-table
Limp'd on with some vexation. 1819.

... tow'rd my stone-table 1827.]

[Variant 18:

1827.

... promptly ... 1819.]

[Variant 19:

1827.

Breath fail'd me as I spake—but soon
With lips, no doubt, and visage pale,
And sore too from a slight contusion,
Did I, to cover my confusion,
Begin the *promised* Tale. 1819.]

[Variant 20:

1820.

All by the moonlight river side
It gave three miserable groans;
"'Tis come then to a pretty pass,"

Said Peter to the groaning Ass,
"But I will *bang* your bones!" 1819.]

[Variant 21:

In the two editions of 1819 only.

"Good Sir!"—the Vicar's voice exclaim'd,
"You rush at once into the middle;"
And little Bess, with accent sweeter,
Cried, "O dear Sir! but who is Peter?"
Said Stephen,—"'Tis a downright riddle!"]

[Variant 22:

1836.

The Squire said, "Sure as paradise
Was lost to man by Adam's sinning,
This leap is for us all too bold; 1819.

Like winds that lash the waves, or smite
The woods, the autumnal foliage thinning—
"Hold!" said the Squire, "I pray you, hold! 1820.

The woods, autumnal foliage thinning—1827.]

[Variant 23:

1845.

... its ponderous knell,
Its far-renowned alarum! 1819.

... his ponderous knell,
A far-renowned alarum! 1836.

... that ponderous knell—
His far-renowned alarum! 1840.]

[Variant 24:

1820.

With Peter Bell, I need not tell
That this had never been the case;—1819.]

[Variant 25:

1819.

... placid ... 1820.

The text of 1827 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 26:

1836.
... cheerfully ... 1819.]

[Variant 27:

1827.

Till he is brought to an old quarry, 1819.]

[Variant 28: In the two editions of 1819 only.

“What! would’st thou daunt me grisly den?
Back must I, having come so far?
Stretch as thou wilt thy gloomy jaws,
I’ll on, nor would I give two straws
For lantern or for star!”]

[Variant 29:

1820.

And so, where on the huge rough stones
The black and massy shadows lay,
And through the dark, ... 1819.]

Page 24

[Variant 30:

1827.

... made ... 1819.]

[Variant 31: In the two editions of 1819 only.

Now you'll suppose that Peter Bell
Felt small temptation here to tarry,
And so it was,—but I must add,
His heart was not a little glad
When he was out of the old quarry.]

[Variant 32:

1827.

Across that ... 1819.]

[Variant 33:

1836.

And now he is among the trees; 1819.]

[Variant 34:

"No doubt I'm founder'd in these woods—
For once," quoth he, "I will be wise,
With better speed I'll back again—
And, lest the journey should prove vain,
Will take yon Ass, my lawful prize!"

Off Peter hied,—"A comely beast!
Though not so plump as he might be;
My honest friend, with such a platter,
You should have been a little fatter,
But come, Sir, come with me!" 1819.

(The first of these stanzas was omitted in 1827 and afterwards; the second was withdrawn in 1820.)]

[Variant 35:

1836.

But first doth Peter deem it fit
To spy about him far and near; 1819.

“A prize,” cried Peter, stepping back
To spy ... 1827.]

[Variant 36:

1827.

... Ass’s back, ... 1819.]

[Variant 37:

1836.

With ready heel the creature’s side; 1819.

With ready heel his shaggy side; 1827.]

[Variant 38: In the editions of 1819 to 1832 only.

“What’s this!” cried Peter, brandishing
A new-peel’d sapling white as cream;
The Ass knew well what Peter said,
But, as before, hung down his head
Over the silent stream. 1819.

A new-peeled sapling;—though, I deem,
The Ass knew well what Peter said,
He, as before, ... 1820.

...—though I deem,
This threat was understood full well,
Firm, as before, the Sentinel
Stood by the silent stream. 1827.]

[Variant 39:

1827.

“I’ll cure you of these desperate tricks”—
And, with deliberate action slow,
His staff high-raising, in the pride
Of skill, upon the Ass’s hide C. and 1819.]

[Variant 40:

1836.

What followed?—yielding to the shock
The Ass, as if ... 1819.]

[Variant 41:

1836.

And then upon ... 1819.]

[Variant 42:

1840.

... as ... 1819.]

[Variant 43:

1819.

The Beast on his tormentor turned
A shining hazel eye. 1827.

His shining ... 1832.

The edition of 1836 returns to the text of 1819.]

[Variant 44:

1836.

Towards the river ... 1819.]

Page 25

[Variant 45:

1832.

Heav'd his lank sides, ... 1819.]

[Variant 46: 1836. In the two editions of 1819 this stanza formed two stanzas, thus:

All by the moonlight river side
He gave three miserable groans,
"'Tis come then to a pretty pass,"
Said Peter to the groaning ass,
"But I will *bang* your bones!"

And Peter halts to gather breath,
And now full clearly was it shown
(What he before in part had seen)
How gaunt was the poor Ass and lean,
Yea wasted to a skeleton! 1819.

In the editions of 1820-1832, only the second of these stanzas is retained, with the following change of text in 1827:

And, while he halts, was clearly shown
(What he before in part had seen)
How gaunt the Creature was, and lean, 1827.

In the final text of 1836 the two stanzas of 1819 are compressed into one (ll. 446-50).]

[Variant 47:

1836.

But, while upon the ground he lay, 1819.

That instant, while outstretched he lay, 1827.]

[Variant 48:

1836.

A loud and piteous bray! 1819.]

[Variant 49:

1820.

Joy on ... 1819.]

[Variant 50:

1836.

... an endless shout,
The long dry see-saw ... 1819.]

[Variant 51:

1836.

And Peter now uplifts his eyes;
Steady the moon doth look and clear,
And like themselves the rocks appear,
And tranquil are the skies, 1819.

And quiet are the skies. 1820.]

[Variant 52:

1836.

Whereat, in resolute mood, once more
He stoops the Ass's neck to seize—
Foul purpose, quickly put to flight!
For in the pool a startling sight
Meets him, beneath the shadowy trees. 1819.]

[Variant 53:

1819.

... the gallows ... 1832.

The text of 1836 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 54:

1836.

Or a gay ring of shining fairies,
Such as pursue their brisk vagaries 1819.]

[Variant 55: In the two editions of 1819 only.

Is it a party in a parlour?
Cramm'd just as they on earth were cramm'd—

Some sipping punch, some sipping tea,
But, as you by their faces see,
All silent and all damn'd! [a]]

[Variant 56:

1827.

A throbbing pulse the Gazer hath—
Puzzled he was, and now is daunted; 1819.]

[Variant 57:

1836.

Like one intent upon a book—1819.]

[Variant 58:

1836.

And drops, a senseless weight, ... 1819.]

[Variant 59:

1827.

A happy respite!—but he wakes;—
And feels the glimmering of the moon—
And to stretch forth his hands is trying;—
Sure, when he knows where he is lying,
He'll sink into a second swoon. 1819.]

Page 26

[Variant 60:

1827.

... placid ... 1819.]

[Variant 61:

1827.

So, faltering not in *this* intent,
He makes his staff an instrument
The river's depth to sound—1819.

So toward the stream his head he bent,
And downward thrust his staff, intent
To reach the Man who there lay drowned.—1820.]

[Variant 62:

1836.

The meagre Shadow all this while—
What aim is his? ... 1819.]

[Variant 63:

1836.

That Peter on his back should mount
He shows a wish, well as he can,
"I'll go, I'll go, whate'er betide—
He to his home my way will guide,
The cottage of the drowned man." 1819.]

But no—his purpose and his wish
The Suppliant shews, well as he can;
Thought Peter whatsoe'er betide
I'll go, and he my way will guide
To the cottage of the drowned man. 1820.]

[Variant 64:

1836.

This utter'd, Peter mounts forthwith 1819.

This hoping, 1820.

Encouraged by this hope, he mounts 1827.

This hoping, Peter boldly mounts 1832.]

[Variant 65:

1827.

The 1819.]

[Variant 66:

1836.

And takes his way ... 1819.]

[Variant 67:

1840.

Holding ... 1819.]

[Variant 68:

1840 and c.

What seeks the boy?—the silent dead! 1819.

Seeking for whom?—... 1836.]

[Variant 69:

1836.

Whom he hath sought ... 1819.]

[Variant 70:

1820.

... doth rightly spell; 1819.]

[Variant 71:

1836.

... noise ... 1819.]

[Variant 72:

1820.

... to gain his end 1819.]

[Variant 73:

1845.

... footstep ... 1819.]

[Variant 74:

1836.

... along a ... 1819.]

[Variant 75: In the editions of 1819 and 1820 the following stanza occurs:

The verdant pathway, in and out,
Winds upwards like a straggling chain;
And, when two toilsome miles are past,
Up through the rocks it leads at last
Into a high and open plain.]

[Variant 76:

1827.

The ... 1819.]

[Variant 77:

1836.

How blank!—but whence this rustling sound
Which, all too long, the pair hath chased!
—A dancing leaf is close behind, 1819.

But whence that faintly-rustling sound 1820.

But whence this faintly rustling sound
By which the pair have long been chased? c.]

Page 27

[Variant 78:

1836.

When Peter spies the withered leaf,
It yields no cure to his distress—1819.]

[Variant 79:

1836.

Ha! why this comfortless despair? 1819.]

[Variant 80:

1819.

... the Creature's head; 1827.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 81:

1836.

... those darting pains,
As meteors shoot through heaven's wide plains,
Pass through his bosom—and repass! 1819.]

[Variant 82:

1827.

Reading, as you or I might read
At night in any pious book, 1819.]

[Variant 83:

1836.

... the good man's taper, 1819.]

[Variant 84:

1836.

The ghostly word, which thus was fram'd, 1819.

... full plainly seen, 1827.]

[Variant 85:

1836.

... to torment the good 1819.]

[Variant 86:

1836.

I know you, potent Spirits! well,
How with the feeling and the sense
Playing, ye govern foes or friends.
Yok'd to your will, for fearful ends—1819.]

[Variant 87:

1836.

... I have often ... 1819.]

[Variant 88:

1836.

And well I know ... 1819.]

[Variant 89:

1836.

... and danc'd ... 1819.]

[Variant 90:

1836.

... clearly ... 1819.]

[Variant 91:

1836.

... hath ... 1819.]

[Variant 92:

1836.

... to confound ... 1819.]

[Variant 93:

1836.

But now the pair have reach'd a spot
Where, shelter'd by a rocky cove, 1819.

Meanwhile the pair 1820.]

[Variant 94:

1836.

The building seems, wall, roof, and tower, 1819.]

[Variant 95:

1836.

Deep sighing as he pass'd along,
Quoth Peter, "In the shire of Fife,
'Mid such a ruin, following still
From land to land a lawless will, 1819.]

[Variant 96:

1827.

Making, ... 1819.]

[Variant 97:

1836.

As if confusing darkness came 1819.

And a confusing 1832.

While clouds of swimming darkness came
Over his eyesight with the sound. C.]

[Variant 98: *Italics* were first used in the edition of 1820.]

[Variant 99:

1836.

A lonely house her dwelling was, 1819.]

[Variant 100:

1819.

... her name ... 1820.

The edition of 1827 returns to the text of 1819.]

Page 28

[Variant 101:

1820.

Distraction reigns in soul and sense,
And reason drops in impotence
From her deserted pinnacle! 1819.]

[Variant 102:

1820.

... ears ... 1819.]

[Variant 103:

1836.

Though clamorous as a hunter’s horn
Re-echoed from a naked rock,
’Tis from that tabernacle—List! 1819.

The voice, though clamorous as a horn
Re-echoed by a naked rock,
Is from .... 1832.]

[Variant 104:

1819.

... pious ... c.]

[Variant 105:

1836.

’Tis said, that through prevailing grace 1819.]

[Variant 106:

1836.

... shoulders scored
Meek beast! in memory of the Lord 1819.

Faithful memorial of the Lord c.]

[Variant 107:

1836.

In memory of that solemn day 1819.]

[Variant 108:

1836.

Towards a gate in open view
Turns up a narrow lane; ... 1819.]

[Variant 109:

1836.

Had gone two hundred yards, not more;
When to a lonely house he came;
He turn'd aside towards the same
And stopp'd before the door. 1819.]

[Variant 110:

1836.

In hope ... 1819.]

[Variant 111:

1827.

Close at ... 1819.]

[Variant 112:

1832.

What could he do?—The Woman lay 1819.]

[Variant 113:

1836.

... the sufferer ... 1819.]

[Variant 114:

1819.

... stair ... 1820.

The edition of 1827 returns to the text of 1819.]

[Variant 115:

1836.

And to the pillow gives ... 1819.]

[Variant 116:

1827.

And resting on ... 1819.]

[Variant 117:

1827.

He turns ... 1819.]

[Variant 118:

1836.

... his inward grief and fear—1819.

... his sorrow and his fear—C.]

[Variant 119:

1827.

... had ... 1819.]

[Variant 120:

1836.

Towards ... 1819.]

[Variant 121:

1832.

... repressed ... 1819.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title in the two editions of 1819 was ’Peter Bell: A Tale in Verse.’—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In Dorothy Wordsworth’s Alfoxden Journal the following occurs, under date April 20, 1798: “The moon crescent. ‘Peter Bell’ begun.”—Ed.]

Page 29

[Footnote C: ‘Romeo and Juliet’, act II. scene ii. l. 44. This motto first appeared on the half-title of ‘Peter Bell’, second edition, 1819, under the advertisement of ‘Benjamin the Waggoner’, its first line being “What’s a Name?” When ‘The Waggoner’ appeared, a few days afterwards, the motto stood on its title-page. In the collective edition of the Poems (1820), it disappeared; but reappeared, in its final position, in the edition of 1827.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: ‘Julius Caesar’, act I. scene ii. l. 147.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: Compare ‘The Prelude’, book iv. l. 47:

’the sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine.’

Ed.]

[Footnote F: In the dialect of the North, a hawker of earthen-ware is thus designated.—-W. W. 1819 (second edition).]

[Footnote G: Compare ‘The Prelude’, book v. l. 448:

’At last, the dead man, ’mid that beauteous scene
Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape
Of terror.’

Ed.]

[Footnote H: This and the next stanza were omitted from the edition of 1827, but restored in 1832.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: The notion is very general, that the Cross on the back and shoulders of this Animal has the origin here alluded to.—W. W. 1819.]

[Footnote J: I cannot suffer this line to pass, without noticing that it was suggested by Mr. Haydon’s noble Picture of Christ’s Entry into Jerusalem.—W. W. 1820. Into the same picture Haydon “introduced Wordsworth bowing in reverence and awe.” See the essay on “The Portraits of Wordsworth” in a later volume, and the portrait itself, which will be reproduced in the volume containing the ‘Life’ of the poet.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: The first and second editions of ‘Peter Bell’ (1819) contained, as frontispiece, an engraving by J.C. Bromley, after a picture by Sir George Beaumont. In 1807, Wordsworth wrote to Sir George:

“I am quite delighted to hear of your picture for ‘Peter Bell’ .... But remember that no poem of mine will ever be popular, and I am afraid that the sale of ‘Peter’ would not

carry the expense of engraving .... The people would love the poem of ‘Peter Bell’, but the *public* (a very different thing) will never love it.”

Some days before Wordsworth’s ‘Peter Bell’ was issued in 1819, another ‘Peter Bell’ was published by Messrs. Taylor and Hessey. It was a parody written by J. Hamilton Reynolds, and issued as ’Peter Bell, a Lyrical Ballad’, with the sentence on its title page, “I do affirm that I am the *real* Simon Pure.” The preface, which follows, is too paltry to quote; and the stanzas which make up the poem contain allusions to the more trivial of the early “Lyrical Ballads” (Betty Foy, Harry Gill, *etc*.). Wordsworth’s ‘Peter Bell’ was published about a week later; and Shelley afterwards published his ‘Peter Bell the Third’. Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth, in May 1819:

Page 30

“Dear Wordsworth—I received a copy of ‘Peter Bell’ a week ago, and I hope the author will not be offended if I say I do not much relish it. The humour, if it is meant for humour, is forced; and then the price!—sixpence would have been dear for it. Mind, I do not mean *your* ‘Peter Bell’, but *a Peter Bell*, which preceded it about a week, and is in every bookseller’s shop window in London, the type and paper nothing differing from the true one, the preface signed W. W., and the supplementary preface quoting, as the author’s words, an extract from the supplementary preface to the ‘Lyrical Ballads.’ Is there no law against these rascals? I would have this Lambert Simnel whipt at the cart’s tail.” (’The Letters of Charles Lamb’, edited by A. Ainger, vol. ii. p. 20.)

Barron Field wrote on the title-page of his copy of the edition of ‘Peter Bell’, 1819,

“And his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it.”

1 Kings xiii. 24.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: This stanza, which was deleted from every edition of ‘Peter Bell’ after the two of 1819, was prefixed by Shelley to his poem of ‘Peter Bell the Third’, and many of his contemporaries thought that it was an invention of Shelley’s. See the note which follows this poem, p. 50. Crabb Robinson wrote in his ‘Diary’, June 6, 1812:

“Mrs. Basil Montagu told me she had no doubt she had suggested this image to Wordsworth by relating to him an anecdote. A person, walking in a friend’s garden, looking in at a window, saw a company of ladies at a table near the window, with countenances *fixed*. In an instant he was aware of their condition, and broke the window. He saved them from incipient suffocation.”

Wordsworth subsequently said that he had omitted the stanza only in deference to the “unco guid.” Crabb Robinson remonstrated with him against its exclusion.—Ed.]

* * * * *

LINES,[A] COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR, JULY 13, 1798 [B]

Composed July 1798.—Published 1798

[July 1798. No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye, and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening, after a ramble of four or five

days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered, and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol. It was published almost immediately after in the little volume of which so much has been said in these Notes, the “Lyrical Ballads,” as first published at Bristol by Cottle.—I.F.]

Included among the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

Page 31

Five years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters![C] and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
With a soft [1] inland murmur. [D]—Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, 5
That [2] 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 10
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. [3] Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines 15
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! [E]
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods, 20
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 [4]
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye: 25
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, [5] 30
With tranquil restoration:—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence [6]
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts 35
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 40
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 45
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. 50
    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, 55
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart—
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro'

Page 32

the woods, [7]
How often has my spirit turned to thee!
And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought, 60
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 65
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 70
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, 75
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, 80
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 [8] any interest
Unborrowed from the eye.—That time is past, 85
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. [F] 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 90
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor [9] harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt 95
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, 100
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, 105
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, [G]
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense, 110
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 115

Page 33

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 120
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes, [H] 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 125
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 130
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 135
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, 140
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, 145
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 150
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence [B]—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 155

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, 160
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

... sweet ... 1798.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Which ... 1798.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

... with their unripe fruits, Among the woods and copses lose themselves, Nor, with their green and simple hue, disturb The wild green landscape ... 1798.

Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb 1802.]

Page 34

[Variant 4:

1827.

... Though absent long,
These forms of beauty have not been to me, 1798.]

[Variant 5:

1798.

... inmost mind, MS.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

As may have had no trivial influence 1798.]

[Variant 7:

1798.

... wood, 1798 (some copies).]

[Variant 8:

1836.

... or ... 1798.]

[Variant 9:

1800.

Not ... 1798.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: I have not ventured to call this Poem an Ode; but it was written with a hope that in the transitions, and the impassioned music of the versification would be found the principal requisites of that species of composition.—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote B: The title in 1798 was ‘Lines, written a few miles’, *etc*. In 1815 it assumed its final form.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare the Fenwick note to the poem ‘Guilt and Sorrow’ (vol. i. p.78) This visit, five years before, was on his way from “Sarum plain,” on foot and alone—-after parting with his friend William Calvert—to visit another friend, Robert Jones, in Wales.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.—W. W. 1798.]

[Footnote E: In the edition of 1798, an additional line is here introduced, but it is deleted in the ‘errata’. It is

‘And the low copses—coming from the trees.’

Ed.]

[Footnote F: Compare ‘The Prelude’, book xi. l. 108:

’Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven.’

Ed.]

[Footnote G: This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect.—W. W. 1798.

It is the line:

‘And half-create the wondrous world they see.’

‘Night Thoughts’, (Night vi. l. 427).—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Compare, in *The Recluse*, canto “Home at Grasmere,” l. 91:

Her voice was like a hidden Bird that sang,
The thought of her was like a flash of light,
Or an *unseen* companionship.

Ed.]

* * * * *

THERE WAS A BOY

Composed 1798.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany, 1799. This is an extract from the Poem on my own poetical education. This practice of making an instrument of their own fingers is known to most boys, though some are more skilful at it than others. William Raincock of Rayrigg, a fine spirited lad, took the lead of all my schoolfellows in this art.—I. F.]

This “extract” will be found in the fifth book of ‘The Prelude’, ll. 364-397. It was included among the “Poems of the Imagination.” In the editions of 1800 to 1832 it had no title, except in the table of contents. In 1836, the finally adopted title of the poem was given in the text, as well as in the table of contents.—Ed.

Page 35

There was a Boy; ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time,
At evening, when the earliest stars began [1]
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone, 5
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls, 10
That they might answer him.—And they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild 15
Of jocund din! [2] And, when there came a pause
Of silence such as baffled his best skill: [3]
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice 20
Of mountain-torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake. 25

This boy was taken from his mates, and died [4]
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old. [5]
Pre-eminent in beauty is the vale
Where he was born and bred: the church-yard hangs [6]
Upon a slope above the village-school; 30
And, through that church-yard when my way has led
On summer-evenings, I believe, that there [7]
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies![A] [8]

Wordsworth sent this fragment in MS. to Coleridge, who was then living at Ratzeburg, and Coleridge wrote in reply on the 10th Dec. 1798:

“The blank lines gave me as much direct pleasure as was possible in the general bustle of pleasure with which I received and read your letter. I observed, I remember, that the ‘fingers woven,’ *etc*., only puzzled me; and though I liked the twelve or fourteen first lines very well, yet I liked the remainder much better. Well, now I have read them again, they are very beautiful, and leave an affecting impression. That

’uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake,’

I should have recognised anywhere; and had I met these lines, running wild in the deserts of Arabia, I should have instantly screamed out ’Wordsworth’!”

The MS. copy of this poem sent to Coleridge probably lacked the explanatory line,

‘Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth,’

as another MS., in the possession of the poet’s grandson, lacks it; and the line was possibly added—as the late Mr. Dykes Campbell suggested—“in deference to S. T. C.’s expression of puzzlement.”

Page 36

Fletcher Raincock—an elder brother of the William Raincock referred to in the Fenwick note to this poem, as Wordsworth's schoolfellow at Hawkshead—was with him also at Cambridge. He attended Pembroke College, and was second wrangler in 1790. [B] John Fleming of Rayrigg, his half-brother—the boy with whom Wordsworth used to walk round the lake of Esthwaite, in the morning before school-time, ("five miles of pleasant wandering")—was also at St. John's College, Cambridge, at this time, and had been fifth Wrangler in the preceding year, 1789. He is referred to both in the second and the fifth books of 'The Prelude' (see notes to that poem). It is perhaps not unworthy of note that Wrangham, whose French stanzas on "The Birth of Love" Wordsworth translated into English, was in the same year—1789—third Wrangler, second Smith's prizeman, and first Chancellor's medallist; while Robert Greenwood, "the Minstrel of the Troop," who "blew his flute, alone upon the rock" in Windermere,—also one of the characters referred to in the second book of 'The Prelude',—was sixteenth Wrangler in Wordsworth's year, *viz*. 1791. William Raincock was at St. John's College, Cambridge. —Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

... when the stars had just begun 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

... a wild scene
Of mirth and jocund din! ... 1800.

... concourse wild 1805.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

... And, when it chanced
That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill, 1800.

... and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
'The Prelude', 1850.]

[Variant 4: This and the following line were added in 1805.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... ere he was ten years old. 1805.]

[Variant 6:

1845.

  Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
  The vale where he was born: the Church-yard hangs 1800.

  Fair is the spot, most beautiful the Vale
  Where he was born: the grassy Church-yard hangs 1827.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

  And there along that bank when I have pass'd
  At evening, I believe, that near his grave 1800.

  ... I believe, that oftentimes 1805.

  And through that Church-yard when my way has led 1827.]

[Variant 8:

1815.

  A full half-hour together I have stood,
  Mute—for he died when he was ten years old. 1800.

  Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies. 1805.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

Page 37

[Footnote A: In ‘The Prelude’ the version of 1827 is adopted for the most part.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See ‘Graduati Cantabrigienses’ (1850), by Joseph Romily, the Registrar to the University 1832-1862.—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE TWO THIEVES; OR, THE LAST STAGE OF AVARICE

Composed 1798.—Published 1800

[This is described from the life, as I was in the habit of observing when a boy at Hawkshead School. Daniel was more than eighty years older than myself when he was daily, thus occupied, under my notice. No books have so early taught me to think of the changes to which human life is subject, and while looking at him I could not but say to myself—we may, one of us, I or the happiest of my playmates, live to become still more the object of pity, than this old man, this half-doating pilferer.—I.F.]

Included among the “Poems referring to the Period of Old Age.”—Ed.

O now that the genius of Bewick [A] were mine,
And the skill which he learned on the banks of the Tyne,
Then the Muses might deal with me just as they chose,
For I’d take my last leave both of verse and of prose. [1]

What feats would I work with my magical hand! 5
Book-learning and books should be banished the land: [2]
And, for hunger and thirst and such troublesome calls,
Every ale-house should then have a feast on its walls.

The traveller would hang his wet clothes on a chair;
Let them smoke, let them burn, not a straw. Would he care! 10
For the Prodigal Son, Joseph’s Dream and his sheaves,
Oh, what would they be to my tale of two Thieves?

The One, yet unbreeched, is not three birthdays old,[3]
His Grandsire that age more than thirty times told;
There are ninety good seasons of fair and foul weather 15
Between them, and both go a-pilfering [4] together.

With chips is the carpenter strewing his floor?
Is a cart-load of turf [5] at an old woman’s door?

Old Daniel his hand to the treasure will slide!
And his Grandson's as busy at work by his side. 20

Old Daniel begins; he stops short—and his eye,
Through the lost look of dotage, is cunning and sly:
'Tis a look which at this time is hardly his own,
But tells a plain tale of the days that are flown.

He once [6] had a heart which was moved by the wires 25
Of manifold pleasures and many desires:
And what if he cherished his purse? 'Twas no more
Than treading a path trod by thousands before.

'Twas a path trod by thousands; but Daniel is one
Who went something farther than others have gone, [7] 30
And now with old Daniel you see how it fares;
You see to what end he has brought his grey hairs.

Page 38

The pair sally forth hand in hand: ere the sun
Has peered o'er the beeches, their work is begun:
And yet, into whatever sin they may fall, 35
This child but half knows it, and that not at all.

They hunt through the streets [8] with deliberate tread,
And each, in his turn, becomes leader or led; [9]
And, wherever they carry their plots and their wiles,
Every face in the village is dimpled with smiles. 40

Neither checked by the rich nor the needy they roam;
For the grey-headed Sire [10] has a daughter at home,
Who will gladly repair all the damage that's done;
And three, were it asked, would be rendered for one.

Old Man! whom so oft I with pity have eyed, 45
I love thee, and love the sweet Boy at thy side:
Long yet may'st thou live! for a teacher we see
That lifts up the veil of our nature in thee. [B]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

Oh! now that the boxwood and graver were mine,
Of the Poet who lives on the banks of the Tyne,
Who has plied his rude tools with more fortunate toil
Than Reynolds e'er brought to his canvas and oil.
MS. 1798.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

Then Books, and Book-learning, I'd ring out your knell,
The Vicar should scarce know an A from an L. MS. 1798.]

[Variant 3:

1820.

Little Dan is unbreech'd, he is three birth-days old, 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

... a-stealing ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

... of peats ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

Dan once ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1800.

'Twas a smooth pleasant pathway, a gentle descent,
And leisurely down it, and down it, he went. MS. 1798.]

[Variant 8:

1802.

... street ... 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1837.

... is both leader and led; 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1837.

For grey-headed Dan ... 1800.

The grey-headed Sire ... 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Thomas Bewick, the wood engraver, born at Cherryburn, near Newcastle-on-Tyne, in 1753, died 1828. He revived the art of wood engraving in England. His illustrations—drawn for the 'General History of British Quadrupeds' (1790), and for his own 'History of British Birds' (1797 and 1804)—were unrivalled in their way.—Ed.]

Page 39

[Footnote B: Charles Lamb, writing to Wordsworth in 1815, spoke of

> “that delicacy towards aberrations from the strict path, which is so fine in the ‘Old Thief and the Boy by his side,’ which always brings water into my eyes.”

(See ‘Letters of Charles Lamb’, edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. i. p. 287.)—Ed.]

* * * * *

WRITTEN WITH A SLATE PENCIL UPON A STONE, THE LARGEST OF A HEAP LYING NEAR A DESERTED QUARRY, UPON ONE OF THE ISLANDS [A] AT RYDAL

Composed 1798.—Published 1800

Included among the “Inscriptions.”—Ed.

Stranger! this hillock of mis-shapen stones
Is not a Ruin spared or made by time, [1]
Nor, as perchance thou rashly deem’st, the Cairn
Of some old British Chief: ’tis nothing more
Than the rude embryo of a little Dome 5
Or Pleasure-house, once destined to be built [2]
Among the birch-trees of this rocky isle. [3]
But, as it chanced, Sir William having learned
That from the shore a full-grown man might wade,
And make himself a freeman of this spot 10
At any hour he chose, the prudent Knight [4]
Desisted, and the quarry and the mound
Are monuments of his unfinished task.
The block on which these lines are traced, perhaps,
Was once selected as the corner-stone 15
Of that [5] intended Pile, which would have been
Some quaint odd plaything of elaborate skill,
So that, I guess, the linnet and the thrush,
And other little builders who dwell here,
Had wondered at the work. But blame him not, 20
For old Sir William was a gentle Knight,
Bred in this vale, to which he appertained [6]
With all his ancestry. Then peace to him,
And for the outrage which he had devised
Entire forgiveness!—But if thou art one 25
On fire with thy impatience to become
An inmate of these mountains,—if, disturbed

By beautiful conceptions, thou hast hewn
Out of the quiet rock the elements
Of thy trim Mansion destined soon to blaze 30
In snow white splendour, [B] [7]—think again; and, taught
By old Sir William and his quarry, leave
Thy fragments to the bramble and the rose;
There let the vernal slow warm sun himself,
And let the redbreast hop from stone to stone. 35

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

Is not a ruin of the ancient time, 1800.

... antique ... MS.]

[Variant 2:

1802.

... which was to have been built 1800.]

[Variant 3:

Page 40

1800.

Of some old British warrior: so, to speak
The honest truth, ’tis neither more nor less
Than the rude germ of what was to have been
A pleasure-house, and built upon this isle. MS.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

... the Knight forthwith 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

Of the ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1800.

Bred here, and to this valley appertained MS. 1798.]

[Variant 7:

1800.

... glory, ... 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In a MS. copy this is given as “the lesser Island.”—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Wordsworth’s

“objections to white, as a colour, in large spots or masses in landscape,”

in his ‘Guide through the district of the Lakes’ (section third).—Ed.]

* * * * *

1799

The poems belonging to the year 1799 were chiefly, if not wholly, composed at Goslar, in Germany; and all, with three exceptions, appeared in the second edition of “Lyrical Ballads” (1800). The exceptions were the following: The lyric beginning, “I travelled among unknown men,” which was first published in the “Poems” of 1807; and two fragments from ‘The Prelude’, *viz*. ‘The Influence of Natural Objects’ (which appeared in ‘The Friend’ in 1809), and ‘The Simplon Pass’ (first published in the 8vo edition of the Poems in 1845).

Wordsworth reached Goslar on the 6th of October 1798, and left it on the 10th of February 1799. It is impossible to determine the precise order in which the nineteen or twenty poems associated with that city were composed. But it is certain that the fragment on the immortal boy of Windermere—whom its cliffs and islands knew so well—was written in 1798, and not in 1799 (as Wordsworth himself states); because Coleridge sent a letter to his friend, thanking him for a MS. copy of these lines, and commenting on them, of which the date is “Ratzeburg, Dec. 10, 1798.” For obvious reasons, however, I place the fragments originally meant to be parts of ‘The Recluse’ together; and, since Wordsworth gave the date 1799 to the others, it would be gratuitous to suppose that he erred in reference to them all, because we know that his memory failed him in reference to one of the series. Therefore, although he spent more than twice as many days in 1798 as in 1799 at Goslar, I set down this group of poems as belonging to 1799, rather than to the previous year. It will be seen that, after placing all the poems of this Goslar period in the year to which they belong, it is possible also to group them according to their subject matter, without violating chronological order. I therefore put the fragments, afterwards incorporated

Page 41

in ‘The Prelude’, together. These are naturally followed by ’Nutting’—a poem intended for ‘The Prelude’, but afterwards excluded, as inappropriate. The five poems referring to “Lucy” are placed in sequence, and the same is done with the four “Matthew” poems. A small group of four poems follows appropriately, *viz*. ‘To a Sexton’, ‘The Danish Boy’, ‘Lucy Gray’, and ‘Ruth’; while the Fenwick note almost necessitates our placing the ‘Poet’s Epitaph’ immediately after the Lines ‘Written in Germany’; and, with Wordsworth’s life at Goslar, we naturally associate five things—the cold winter, ‘The Prelude’, the “Lucy” and the “Matthew” poems, and the ’Poet’s Epitaph’.—Ed.

* * * * *

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE IMAGINATION IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH

FROM AN UNPUBLISHED POEM

[This extract is reprinted from “THE FRIEND."[A]]

Composed 1799.—Published 1809

It was included by Wordsworth among the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.”—Ed.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
And giv’st [1] to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain,
By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn 5
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not [2] with the mean and vulgar works of Man:
But with high objects, with enduring things,
With life and nature: purifying thus 10
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline
Both pain and fear,—until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 15
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valleys [3] made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods

At noon; and ’mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 20
Beneath the gloomy hills, homeward I went [4]
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it in the fields [5] both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
And in the frosty season, when the sun 25
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage-windows through the twilight blazed, [6]
I heeded not the summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me [7]
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 30
The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. [8]—All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase 35

Page 42

And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, [9] and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
Smitten, [10] the precipices rang aloud; 40
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far-distant hills [11]
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west 45
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex [12] of a star; 50
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes, [13]
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still 55
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round! 60
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea. [14]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1809.

That givest ... ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

Nor ... 1809.]

[Variant 3:

1809.

... valley ... The Prelude', 1850.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

... I homeward went 1809.]

[Variant 5:

1845.

'Twas mine among the fields ... 1809.]

[Variant 6:

1809.

... blazed through twilight gloom, 'The Prelude', 1850.]

[Variant 7:

1815.

... to me 1809.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

... car'd not for its home—... 1809.

... cares not ... 1815.]

[Variant 9:

1840.

... loud bellowing ... 1809.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

Meanwhile ... 1809.]

[Variant 11:

1845.

... while the distant hills 1809.]

[Variant 12:

1827.

To cut across the image ... 1809.

To cross the bright reflection ... 1820.]

[Variant 13:

1820.

That gleam'd upon the ice; and oftentimes 1809.

(This line occupied the place of lines 51-52 of the final text.)

Page 43

That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes, ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

[Variant 14:

1809.

... as a dreamless sleep. ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title of the fragment, as it appeared in ‘The Friend’, No. 19, (Dec. 28, 1809,) was ’Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects on the Imagination, in Boyhood and Early Youth’. It first appeared in Wordsworth’s Poems in the edition of 1815. It was afterwards included in the first book of ‘The Prelude’, l. 401.

The lake referred to with its “silent bays” and “shadowy banks” is that of Esthwaite; the village clock is that of Hawkshead (see the footnotes to ’The Prelude’). The only physical accomplishment in which Wordsworth thought he excelled was skating, an accomplishment in which his brother poet and acquaintance, Klopstock, also excelled. —Ed.]

* * * * *

THE SIMPLON PASS [A]

Composed 1799.—Published 1845

Included among the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

—Brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass, [1]
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow step. [2] The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed, 5
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears, 10
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside

As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—15
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
The types and symbols of Eternity,
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. 20

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

... gloomy strait, ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... pace ... ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This is an extract from the sixth book of ‘The Prelude’, l. 621. It refers to Wordsworth’s first experience of Switzerland, when he crossed the Alps by the Simplon route, in 1790, in company with his friend Robert Jones.—Ed.]

Page 44

* * * * *

NUTTING

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany; intended as part of a poem 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 arose 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.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

—It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out)
One of those heavenly days that [1] cannot die;
When, in the eagerness of boyish hope, [2]
I left our cottage-threshold, [A] sallying forth [3] 5
With a huge wallet o’er my shoulders slung, [4]
A nutting-crook in hand; and turned [5] my steps
Tow’rd some far-distant wood, [6] a Figure quaint,
Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded, 10
By exhortation of my frugal Dame—[7]
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, 15
Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook [8]
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 [9] hung, 20
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 25
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 30
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 35
That, fleeced with moss, under [10] 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, 40
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,

Page 45

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 45
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 [11] 50
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.—[12]
Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand 55
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

The woods round Esthwaite Lake have undergone considerable change since Wordsworth's school-days at Hawkshead; but hazel coppice is still abundant to the south and west of the Lake.—Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... which ... 1800.]

[Variant 2: This line was added in the edition of 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

When forth I sallied from our cottage-door, 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1832.

And with a wallet o’er my shoulder slung, 1800.

With a huge wallet o’er my shoulder slung, 1815.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... I turn’d ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1836.

Towards the distant woods, ... 1800.

Toward ... 1832.]

[Variant 7:

1815.

... of Beggar’s weeds
Put on for the occasion, by advice
And exhortation ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1836.

... Among the woods,
And o’er the pathless rocks, I forc’d my way
Until, at length, I came ... 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1845.

... milk-white clusters ... 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1845.

... beneath ... 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

Even then, when from the bower I turn'd away, 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1836.

... and the intruding sky.—1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The house at which I was boarded during the time I was at School.—W. W. 1800.]

* * * * *

WRITTEN IN GERMANY, ON ONE OF THE COLDEST DAYS OF THE CENTURY

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

I must apprize the Reader that the stoves in North Germany generally have the impression of a galloping Horse upon them, this being part of the Brunswick Arms.—W. W. 1800.

Page 46

[A bitter winter it was when these verses 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 Hartz Forest. In this town the German emperors of the Franconian Line were accustomed to keep their court, and it retains vestiges of ancient splendour. So severe was the cold of this winter, that when we passed out of the parlour warmed by the stove, our cheeks were struck by the air as by cold iron. I slept in a room over a passage that was not ceiled. The people of the house used to say rather unfeelingly, that they expected I should be frozen to death some night; but with the protection of a pelisse lined with fur, and a dog's skin bonnet, such as was worn by the peasants, I walked daily on the ramparts, or on 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 poem that follows, *A Poet's Epitaph*.—I.F.]

One of the "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection." Wordsworth originally gave to this poem the title "The Fly," but erased it before publication.—Ed.

A plague on [1] your languages, German and Norse! Let me have the song of the kettle; And the tongs and the poker, instead of that horse That gallops away with such fury and force On this [2] dreary dull plate of black metal. 5 [3] See that Fly, [4]—a disconsolate creature! perhaps A child of the field or the grove; And, sorrow for him! the [5] dull treacherous heat Has seduced the poor fool from his winter retreat, And he creeps to the edge of my stove. 10

Alas! how he fumbles about the domains
Which this comfortless oven environ!
He cannot find out in what track he must crawl,
Now back to the tiles, then in search of the wall, [6]
And now on the brink of the iron. 15

Stock-still there he stands like a traveller bemazed:
The best of his skill he has tried;
His feelers, methinks, I can see him put forth
To the east and the west, to [7] the south and the north
But he finds neither guide-post nor guide. 20

His spindles [8] sink under him, foot, leg, and thigh!
His eyesight and hearing are lost;
Between life and death his blood freezes and thaws;
And his two pretty pinions of blue dusky gauze
Are glued to his sides by the frost. 25

No brother, no mate [9] has he near him—while I
Can draw warmth from the cheek of my Love;

As blest and as glad, in this desolate gloom,
As if green summer grass were the floor of my room,
And woodbines were hanging above. 30

Yet, God is my witness, thou small helpless Thing!
Thy life I would gladly sustain
Till summer come [10] up from the south, and with crowds
Of thy brethren a march thou should'st sound through the clouds.
And back to the forests again! 35

Page 47

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

A fig for ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

On his ... 1827.

The text of 1837 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 3:

Our earth is no doubt made of excellent stuff,
But her pulses beat slower and slower,
The weather in Forty was cutting and rough,
And then, as Heaven knows, the glass stood low enough,
And *now* it is four degrees lower.

This stanza occurs only in the editions of 1800 to 1815.]

[Variant 4:

1820.

Here's a Fly, ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

... this ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1837.

... and not back to the wall, 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

... and the South ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1845.

See! his spindles ... 1800.

How his spindles ... 1827.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

... no Friend ... 1800.

No brother has he, no companion, while I MS.]

[Variant 10:

1837.

... comes ... 1800.]

* * * * *

A POET'S EPITAPH

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

One of the "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection."—Ed.

Art thou a Statist [1] in the van
Of public conflicts [2] 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! 5
Go, carry to some fitter place
The keenness of that practised eye,
The hardness of that sallow face. [3]

Art thou a Man of purple cheer?
A rosy Man, right plump to see? 10

Approach; yet, Doctor, [A] not too near,
This grave no cushion is for thee.

Or art thou one of gallant pride, [4]
A Soldier and no man of chaff?
Welcome!—but lay thy sword aside, 15
And lean upon a peasant's staff.

Physician art thou?—one, all eyes,
Philosopher!—a fingering slave,
One that would peep and botanize
Upon his mother's grave? 20

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! [5]

A Moralist perchance appears; 25
Led, Heaven knows how! to this poor sod:
And he has neither eyes nor ears;
Himself his world, and his own God;

Page 48

One to whose smooth-rubbed soul can cling
Nor form, nor feeling, great or [6] small; 30
A reasoning, self-sufficing [7] 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 35
Near this unprofitable dust.

But who is He, with modest looks,
And clad in homely russet brown? [B]
He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own. 40

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, 45
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,—50
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 55
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. 60

See the Fenwick note to the poem, 'Written in Germany, on one of the coldest Days of the Century' (p. 73).

“The ‘Poet’s Epitaph’ is disfigured to my taste by the common satire upon parsons and lawyers in the beginning, and the coarse epithet of ‘pin-point’, in the sixth stanza. All the rest is eminently good, and your own.”

(Charles Lamb to William Wordsworth, January 1801.)—Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... Statesman, ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

Of public business ... 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1820.

... to some other place
The hardness of thy coward eye,
The falsehood of thy sallow face. 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1820.

Art thou a man of gallant pride, 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

Thy pin-point of a soul away! 1800.

That abject thing, thy soul, away! 1815.]

[Variant 6:

1837.

... nor ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1800.

... self-sufficient ... 1802.

The edition of 1815 returns to the text of 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

Page 49

[Footnote A: D. D., not M. D. The physician is referred to in the fifth stanza.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Thomson's description of the Bard, in his 'Castle of Indolence' (canto ii., stanza xxxiii.):

He came, the bard, a little Druid wight,
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,
With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,
He crept along, *etc*.

Ed.]

* * * * *

"STRANGE FITS OF PASSION HAVE I KNOWN"

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany, 1799.—I.F.]

One of the "Poems founded on the Affections." In MS. Wordsworth gave, as the title, "A Reverie," but erased it.—Ed.

Strange fits of passion have I known: [1]
And I will dare to tell,
But in the Lover's ear alone,
What once to me befel.

When she I loved looked every day 5
Fresh as a rose in June, [2]
I to her cottage bent my way,
Beneath an [3] evening moon.

Upon the moon I fixed my eye,
All over the wide lea; 10
With quickening pace my horse drew nigh [4]
Those paths so dear to me.

And now we reached the orchard-plot;
And, as we climbed the hill,
The sinking moon to Lucy's cot 15
Came near, and nearer still. [5]

In one of those sweet dreams I slept,
Kind Nature's gentlest boon!
And all the while my eyes I kept
On the descending moon. 20

My horse moved on; hoof after hoof
He raised, and never stopped:
When down behind the cottage roof,
At once, the bright moon dropped. [6]

What fond and wayward thoughts will slide 25
Into a Lover's head!
"O mercy!" to myself I cried,
"If Lucy should be dead!"

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1832.

... I have known, 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

When she I lov'd, was strong and gay
And like a rose in June, 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

... the ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

My horse trudg'd on, and we drew nigh 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

Towards the roof of Lucy's cot
The moon descended still. [a] 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1815.

... the planet dropp'd. 1800.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: Compare the lines in Arthur Hugh Clough's poem, 'The Stream of Life':

Page 50

And houses stand on either hand
And thou descendest still.

Ed.]

* * * * *

“SHE DWELT AMONG THE UNTRODDEN WAYS”

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.” In the edition of 1800 it is entitled ’Song’.—Ed.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A Maid whom there were none to praise
And very few to love: [1]

A violet by a mossy stone 5
Half hidden from the eye!
—Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived [2] unknown, and few could know
When Lucy ceased to be; 10
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
The difference to me!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

A very few ... 1802.

The text of the edition of 1805 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 2: The word “lived” was italicised in the edition of 1800 only.]

* * * * *

“I TRAVELLED AMONG UNKNOWN MEN”

Composed 1799.-Published 1807

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

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

’Tis past, that melancholy dream! 5
  Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
  To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
  The joy of my desire; [1] 10
And she I cherished turned her wheel
  Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
  The bowers where Lucy played;
And thine too is the last green field 15
  That Lucy’s eyes surveyed. [2] [A]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

The gladness of desire; MS.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

And thine is, too, the last green field
Which ... 1807.

That ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Sara Coleridge's comment on this poem in the 'Biographia Literaria' (1847), vol. ii. chap. ix. p. 173. Also Mrs. Oliphant's remarks in her 'Literary History of the Nineteenth Century', vol. i. pp. 306-9.—Ed.]

* * * * *

"THREE YEARS SHE GREW IN SUN AND SHOWER"

Page 51

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[1799. Composed in the Hartz Forest.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Imagination.” It has no title in any edition, but from 1820 to 1836 the second page occupied by the poem is headed “Lucy.” In the editions of 1836 to 1843 it is called “Lucy” in the list of contents.—Ed.

Three years she grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, “A lovelier flower
On earth was never sown;
This Child I to myself will take;
She shall be mine, and I will make 5
A Lady of my own.

“Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse: [1] and with me
The Girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower, 10
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

“She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs; 15
And her’s shall be the breathing balm,
And her’s the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

“The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her; for her the willow bend; 20
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the Storm
Grace that shall mould the Maiden’s form [2]
By silent sympathy.

“The stars of midnight shall be dear 25
To her; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound [A]
Shall pass into her face. 30

"And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live 35
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run!
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene; 40
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be. [B]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

Her Teacher I myself will be,
She is my darling;—...

MS. 1801, and the edition of 1802.
The edition of 1805 returns to the text of 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

A reading—printed in the edition of 1800, but replaced in its list of 'errata' by that given in the text—may be quoted here,

A beauty that shall mould her form ... 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Dryden's 'Indian Emperor', iv. 3.—Ed.]

Page 52

[Footnote B: On Oct 9, 1800, S. T. Coleridge, in writing to Sir Humphry Davy of his own 'Christabel', said,

"I would rather have written 'Ruth', and 'Nature's Lady,' than a
million such poems."

This poem was printed in 'The Morning Post', March 2nd, 1801.—Ed.]

* * * * *

"A SLUMBER DID MY SPIRIT SEAL"

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany.—I.F.]

Included among the "Poems of the Imagination." [A]—Ed.

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

No motion has she now, no force; 5
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees. [B]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It was one of the "Lucy" Poems. In his instructions to the printer in 1807, Wordsworth told him to insert "I travelled among unknown men" after "A slumber did my spirit seal."—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Suckling's 'Fragmenta Aurea' (The Tragedy of Brennoralt), p. 170, edition 1658.

Heavens! shall this fresh ornament of the world,
These precious love-lines, pass with other common things,
Amongst the wastes of time? What pity 'twere.

Ed.]

* * * * *

ADDRESS TO THE SCHOLARS OF THE VILLAGE SCHOOL OF—

Composed 1798 or 1799.—Published 1842

[Composed at Goslar, in Germany.—I.F.]

First published in “Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years,” and included, in 1845, among the “Epitaphs and Elegiac Pieces.”—Ed.

I come, ye little noisy Crew,
Not long your pastime to prevent;
I heard the blessing which to you
Our common Friend and Father sent.
I kissed his cheek before he died; 5
And when his breath was fled,
I raised, while kneeling by his side,
His hand:—it dropped like lead.
Your hands, dear Little-ones, do all
That can be done, will never fall 10
Like his till they are dead.
By night or day blow foul or fair,
Ne’er will the best of all your train
Play with the locks of his white hair,
Or stand between his knees again. 15

Here did he sit confined for hours;
But he could see the woods and plains,
Could hear the wind and mark the showers
Come streaming down the streaming panes.
Now stretched beneath his grass-green mound 20
He rests a prisoner of the ground.
He loved the breathing air,
He loved the sun, but if it rise
Or set, to him where now he lies,
Brings not a moment’s care. 25

Page 53

Alas! what idle words; but take
The Dirge which for our Master's sake
And yours, love prompted me to make.
The rhymes so homely in attire
With learned ears may ill agree, 30
But chanted by your Orphan Quire
Will make a touching melody.

DIRGE

Mourn, Shepherd, near thy old grey stone;
Thou Angler, by the silent flood;
And mourn when thou art all alone, 35
Thou Woodman, in the distant wood!

Thou one blind Sailor, rich in joy
Though blind, thy tunes in sadness hum;
And mourn, thou poor half-witted Boy!
Born deaf, and living deaf and dumb. 40

Thou drooping sick Man, bless the Guide
Who checked or turned thy headstrong youth,
As he before had sanctified
Thy infancy with heavenly truth.

Ye Striplings, light of heart and gay, 45
Bold settlers on some foreign shore,
Give, when your thoughts are turned this way,
A sigh to him whom we deplore.

For us who here in funeral strain
With one accord our voices raise, 50
Let sorrow overcharged with pain
Be lost in thankfulness and praise.

And when our hearts shall feel a sting
From ill we meet or good we miss,
May touches of his memory bring 55
Fond healing, like a mother's kiss.

BY THE SIDE OF THE GRAVE SOME YEARS AFTER

Long time his pulse hath ceased to beat;
But benefits, his gift, we trace—

Expressed in every eye we meet
Round this dear Vale, his native place. 60

To stately Hall and Cottage rude
Flowed from his life what still they hold,
Light pleasures, every day, renewed;
And blessings half a century old.

Oh true of heart, of spirit gay, 65
Thy faults, where not already gone
From memory, prolong their stay
For charity's sweet sake alone.

Such solace find we for our loss;
And what beyond this thought we crave 70
Comes in the promise from the Cross,
Shining upon thy happy grave.

To this poem, when first published in the "Poems of Early and Late Years" (1842), Wordsworth appended the note, "See, upon the subject of the three foregoing pieces, 'The Fountain' [p. 91], *etc*. *etc*. in the fifth volume of the Author's Poems." He thus connects it with the poems referring to Matthew in such a way that it may be said to belong to that series; and, while he assigned it to the year 1798, both in the edition of 1845, and in that of 1849-50, it is quite possible that it was written in 1799. "The village school" was the Grammar School of Hawkshead, where Wordsworth spent his boyhood; and the schoolmaster was the Rev. William Taylor, M. A., Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who was the third of the four masters who taught in it during Wordsworth's residence there. He was master from 1782 to 1786. Just before his death he sent for the upper boys of the school (amongst whom was Wordsworth), and calling them into his room, took leave of them with a solemn blessing. This farewell doubtless suggested the lines:

Page 54

’the blessing which to you
Our common Friend and Father sent.’

Mr. Taylor was buried in Cartmell Churchyard. In ‘The Prelude’, Wordsworth writes of him as “an honoured teacher of my youth;” and there describes, with some minuteness, a visit to his grave. (See book x. l. 532.) It will be seen, however, from the Fenwick note to ‘Matthew’, that the Hawkshead Schoolmaster, like the Wanderer in ‘The Excursion’, was “made up of several both of his class and men of other occupations;” but of the four masters who taught Wordsworth at Hawkshead—Peake, Christian, Taylor, and Bowman—Taylor was far the ablest, the most interesting, and the most beloved by the boys, and it was doubtless the memory of this man that gave rise to the above poem, and the four which follow it. He was but thirty-two years old when he died, 12th June, 1786. This fact, taken in connection with line 14 of the ‘Address’, may illustrate the composite character of ’Matthew’.—Ed.

* * * * *

MATTHEW

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

In the School of—is a tablet on which are inscribed, in gilt letters, the names of the several persons who have been Schoolmasters there since the foundation of the School, with the time at which they entered upon and quitted their office. Opposite one of those names the Author wrote the following lines.—W. W. 1800.

[Such a tablet as is here spoken of continued to be preserved in Hawkshead School, though the inscriptions were not brought down to our time. This, and other poems connected with Matthew, would not gain by a literal detail of facts. Like the Wanderer in ‘The Excursion’ this Schoolmaster was made up of several, both of his class and men of other occupations. I do not ask pardon for what there is of untruth in such verses, considered strictly as matters of fact. It is enough, if, being true and consistent in spirit, they move and teach in a manner not unworthy of a Poet’s calling.—I.F.] [A]

In the editions of 1800 to 1820 this poem had no title except the note prefixed to it above, although in the Table of Contents it was called ‘Lines written on a Tablet in a School’. From 1820-32 “Matthew” is the page heading, though there is no title. In the editions of 1827 and 1832 it was named, in the Table of Contents, by its first line, “If Nature, for a favourite child.” In 1837 it was entitled ‘Matthew’. It was included among the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.” The Tablet, with the names of the Masters inscribed on it, still exists in Hawkshead School.—Ed.

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

Read o’er these lines; and then review 5
This tablet, that thus humbly rears
In such diversity of hue
Its history of two hundred years.

Page 55

—When through this little wreck of fame,
Cipher and syllable! thine eye 10
Has travelled down to Matthew's name,
Pause with no common sympathy.

And; if a sleeping tear should wake,
Then be it neither checked nor stayed:
For Matthew a request I make 15
Which for himself he had not made.

Poor Matthew, all his frolics o'er,
Is silent as a standing pool;
Far from the chimney's merry roar,
And murmur of the village school. 20

The sighs which Matthew heaved were sighs
Of one tired out with fun and madness;
The tears which came to Matthew's eyes
Were tears of light, the dew [1] of gladness.

Yet, sometimes, when the secret cup 25
Of still and serious thought went round,
It seemed as if he drank it up—
He felt with spirit so profound.

—Thou soul of God's best earthly mould!
Thou happy Soul! and can it be 30
That these two words of glittering gold
Are all that must remain of thee? [2]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

... the oil ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

... to thee? 1805, and MS.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: On the 27th March 1843, Wordsworth wrote to Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia:

“The character of the schoolmaster, had like the Wanderer in ’The Excursion’ a solid foundation in fact and reality, but like him it was also in some degree a composition: I will not, and need not, call it an invention—it was no such thing.”

Ed.]

* * * * *

THE TWO APRIL MORNINGS

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

One of the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.”—Ed.

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

A village schoolmaster was he, 5
With hair of glittering grey;
As blithe a man as you could see
On a spring holiday.

And on that morning, through the grass,
And by the steaming rills, 10
We travelled merrily, to pass
A day among the hills.

“Our work,” said I, “was well begun,
Then, from thy breast what thought,
Beneath so beautiful a sun, 15
So sad a sigh has brought?”

Page 56

A second time did Matthew stop;
And fixing still his eye
Upon the eastern mountain-top,
To me he made reply: 20

“Yon cloud with that long purple cleft
Brings fresh into my mind
A day like this which I have left
Full thirty years behind.

“And just above yon slope of corn 25
Such colours, and no other,
Were in the sky, that April morn,
Of this the very brother. [1]

“With rod and line I sued the sport
Which that sweet season gave, [2] 30
And, to the church-yard come, [3] stopped short
Beside my daughter’s grave.

“Nine summers had she scarcely seen,
The pride of all the vale;
And then she sang [4];—she would have been 35
A very nightingale.

“Six feet in earth my Emma lay;
And yet I loved her more,
For so it seemed, than till that day
I e’er had loved before. 40

“And, turning from her grave, I met,
Beside the church-yard yew,
A blooming Girl, whose hair was wet
With points of morning dew.

“A basket on her head she bare; 45
Her brow was smooth and white:
To see a child so very fair,
It was a pure delight!

“No fountain from its rocky cave
E’er tripped with foot so free; 50
She seemed as happy as a wave
That dances on the sea. [A]

“There came from me a sigh of pain
Which I could ill confine;
I looked at her, and looked again: 55
And did not wish her mine!”

Matthew is in his grave, yet now,
Methinks, I see him stand,
As at that moment, with a bough [5]
Of wilding in his hand. 60

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1802.

And on that slope of springing corn
The self-same crimson hue
Fell from the sky that April morn,
The same which now I view! 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

With rod and line my silent sport
I plied by Derwent’s wave, 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

And, coming to the church, ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1800.

... sung;—... 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1820.

... his bough 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare the ‘Winters Tale’, act IV. scene iii. ll. 140-2:

’when you do dance, I wish you
A wave o’ the sea, that you might ever do
Nothing but that, *etc*.’

Page 57

Ed.]

* * * * *

THE FOUNTAIN

A CONVERSATION

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

One of the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.”—Ed.

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

We lay beneath a spreading oak, 5
Beside a mossy seat;
And from the turf a fountain broke,
And gurgled at our feet.

“Now, Matthew!” said I, “let us match [1]
This water’s pleasant tune 10
With some old border-song, or catch
That suits a summer’s noon;

“Or of the church-clock and the chimes
Sing here beneath the shade,
That half-mad thing of witty rhymes 15
Which you last April made!”

In silence Matthew lay, and eyed
The spring beneath the tree;
And thus the dear old Man replied,
The grey-haired man of glee: 20

“No check, no stay, this Streamlet fears; [2]
How merrily it goes!
’Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows.

“And here, on this delightful day, 25
I cannot choose but think
How oft, a vigorous man, I lay
Beside this fountain’s brink.

“My eyes are dim with childish tears,
My heart is idly stirred, 30
For the same sound is in my ears
Which in those days I heard.

“Thus fares it still in our decay:
And yet the wiser mind
Mourns less for what age takes away 35
Than what it leaves behind. [A]

“The blackbird amid leafy trees,
The lark above the hill, [3]
Let loose their carols when they please,
Are quiet when they will. 40

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

“But we are pressed by heavy laws; 45
And often, glad no more,
We wear a face of joy, because
We have been glad of yore.

“If there be [4] one who need bemoan
His kindred laid in earth, 50
The household hearts that were his own;
It is the man of mirth.

“My days, my Friend, are almost gone,
My life has been approved,
And many love me; but by none 55
Am I enough beloved.”

“Now both himself and me he wrongs,
The man who thus complains!
I live and sing my idle songs
Upon these happy plains; 60

“And, Matthew, for thy children dead
I’ll be a son to thee!”

At this he grasped my hand, [5] and said,
“Alas! that cannot be.”

Page 58

We rose up from the fountain-side; 65
And down the smooth descent
Of the green sheep-track did we glide;
And through the wood we went;

And, ere we came to Leonard's rock,
He sang those witty rhymes 70
About the crazy old church-clock,
And the bewildered chimes.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

Now, Matthew, let us try to match 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

Down to the vale this water steers, 1800.

Down to the vale with eager speed
Behold this streamlet run,
From subterranean bondage freed,
And glittering in the sun. C.

From subterranean darkness freed,
A pleasant course to run. C.

Down to the vale this streamlet hies,
Look, how it seems to run,
As if 't were pleased with summer skies,
And glad to meet the sun. C.

And glad to greet the sun. MS.

No guide it needs, no check it fears,
How merrily it goes!

’Twill murmur on a thousand years,
And flow as now it flows. C.

Down towards the vale with eager speed,
Behold this streamlet run
As if ’twere pleased with summer skies
And glad to meet the sun. C.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

The blackbird in the summer trees,
The lark upon the hill, 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1832.

... is .... 1800 and MS.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... his hands, ... 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A:

“Pour me plaindre a moy, regarde noti tant ce qu’on moste, que ce qui me reste de sauvre, et dedans et dehors.”

Montaigne, ‘Essais’, iii. 12.

Compare also:

“Themistocles quidem, cum ei Simonides, an quis alius artem memoriae polliceretur, *Oblivionis*, inquit, *mallem*; *nam memini etiam quae nolo, oblivisci non possum quae volo*.”

Cicero, ‘De Finibus’, II. 32.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TO A SEXTON

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany, 1799.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Let thy wheel-barrow alone—
Wherefore, Sexton, piling still
In thy bone-house bone on bone?
’Tis already like a hill
In a field of battle made, 5
Where three thousand skulls are laid;
These died in peace each with the other,—
Father, sister, friend, and brother.

Page 59

Mark the spot to which I point!
From this platform, eight feet square, 10
Take not even a finger-joint:
Andrew's whole fire-side is there.
Here, alone, before thine eyes,
Simon's sickly daughter lies,
From weakness now, and pain defended, 15
Whom he twenty winters tended.

Look but at the gardener's pride—
How he glories, when he sees
Roses, lilies, side by side,
Violets in families! 20
By the heart of Man, his tears,
By his hopes and by his fears,
Thou, too heedless, [1] art the Warden
Of a far superior garden.

Thus then, each to other dear, 25
Let them all in quiet lie,
Andrew there, and Susan here,
Neighbours in mortality.
And, should I live through sun and rain
Seven widowed years without my Jane, 30
O Sexton, do not then remove her,
Let one grave hold the Loved and Lover!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

Thou, old Grey-beard! ... 1800.]

* * * * *

THE DANISH BOY

A FRAGMENT

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany, 1799. It was entirely a fancy; but intended as a prelude to a ballad-poem never written.—I.F.]

In the editions of 1800-1832 this poem was called ‘A Fragment’. From 1836 onwards it was named ‘The Danish Boy. A Fragment’. It was one of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—-Ed.

I Between two sister moorland rills
There is a spot that seems to lie
Sacred to flowerets of the hills,
And sacred to the sky.
And in this smooth and open dell 5
There is a tempest-stricken tree;
A corner-stone by lightning cut,
The last stone of a lonely hut; [1]
And in this dell you see
A thing no storm can e’er destroy, 10
The shadow of a Danish Boy. [A]

II In clouds above, the lark is heard,
But drops not here to earth for rest; [2]
Within [3] this lonesome nook the bird
Did never build her [4] nest. 15
No beast, no bird hath here his home;
Bees, wafted on [5] the breezy air,
Pass high above those fragrant bells
To other flowers:—to other dells
Their burthens do they bear; [6] 20
The Danish Boy walks here alone:
The lovely dell is all his own.

Page 60

III A Spirit of noon-day is he;
Yet seems [7] a form of flesh and blood;
Nor piping shepherd shall he be, 25
Nor herd-boy of the wood. [8]
A regal vest of fur he wears,
In colour like a raven's wing;
It fears not [9] rain, nor wind, nor dew;
But in the storm 'tis fresh and blue 30
As budding pines in spring;
His helmet has a vernal grace,
Fresh as the bloom upon his face.

IV A harp is from his shoulder slung;
Resting the harp upon his knee; 35
To words of a forgotten tongue,
He suits its melody. [10]
Of flocks upon the neighbouring hill [11]
He is the darling and the joy;
And often, when no cause appears, 40
The mountain-ponies prick their ears,
—They hear the Danish Boy,
While in the dell he sings [12] alone
Beside the tree and corner-stone.
[13]

V There sits he; in his face you spy 45
No trace of a ferocious air,
Nor ever was a cloudless sky
So steady or so fair.
The lovely Danish Boy is blest
And happy in his flowery cove: 50
From bloody deeds his thoughts are far;
And yet he warbles songs of war,
That seem [14] like songs of love,
For calm and gentle is his mien;
Like a dead Boy he is serene. 55

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... a cottage hut; 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

He sings his blithest and his best; 1800.

She sings, regardless of her rest, 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

But in ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1820.

... his ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

The bees borne on ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

Nor ever linger there. 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

He seems ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1802.

A piping Shepherd he might be,
A Herd-boy of the wood. 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1802.

... nor ... 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

He rests the harp upon his knee,
And there in a forgotten tongue
He warbles melody. 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1827.

Of flocks and herds both far and near 1800.

Page 61

Of flocks upon the neighbouring hills 1802.]

[Variant 12:

1845.

... sits ... 1800.]

[Variant 13:

When near this blasted tree you pass,
Two sods are plainly to be seen
Close at its root, and each with grass
Is cover'd fresh and green.
Like turf upon a new-made grave
These two green sods together lie,
Nor heat, nor cold, nor rain, nor wind
Can these two sods together bind,
Nor sun, nor earth, nor sky,
But side by side the two are laid,
As if just sever'd by the spade.

This stanza occurs only in the edition of 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1815.

They seem ... 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: These Stanzas were designed to introduce a Ballad upon the Story of a Danish Prince who had fled from Battle, and, for the sake of the valuables about him, was murdered by the Inhabitant of a Cottage in which he had taken refuge. The House fell under a curse, and the Spirit of the Youth, it was believed, haunted the Valley where the crime had been committed.—W. W. 1827.]

* * * * *

LUCY GRAY; OR, SOLITUDE

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written at Goslar, in Germany, in 1799. It was founded on a circumstance told me by my sister, of a little girl, who, not far from Halifax in Yorkshire, was bewildered in a snow storm. Her footsteps were tracked by her parents to the middle of a lock of a canal, and no other vestige of her, backward or forward, could be traced. The body, however, was found in the canal. The way in which the incident was treated, and the spiritualizing of the character, might furnish hints for contrasting the imaginative influences, which I have endeavoured to throw over common life, with Crabbe's matter-of-fact style of handling subjects of the same kind. This is not spoken to his disparagement, far from it; but to direct the attention of thoughtful readers into whose hands these notes may fall, to a comparison that may enlarge the circle of their sensibilities, and tend to produce in them a catholic judgment.—I.F.]

One of the "Poems referring to the Period of Childhood."—Ed.

Oft I had heard [1] of Lucy Gray:
And, when I crossed the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade Lucy knew; 5
She dwelt on a wide moor, [2]
—The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green; 10
But the sweet [3] face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

"To-night will be a stormy night—
You to the town must go;
And take a lantern, Child, to light 15
Your mother through the snow."

Page 62

“That, Father! will I gladly do:
’Tis scarcely afternoon—
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon!” 20

At this the Father raised his hook,
And snapped [4] a faggot-band;
He plied his work;—and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe: 25
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time:
She wandered up and down; 30
And many a hill did Lucy climb
But never reached the town.

The wretched parents all that night
Went shouting far and wide;
But there was neither sound nor sight 35
To serve them for a guide.

At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door. 40

They wept—and, turning homeward, cried, [5]
“In heaven we all shall meet;”
—When in the snow the mother spied [6]
The print of Lucy’s feet.

Then downwards [7] from the steep hill’s edge 45
They tracked the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone-wall;

And then an open field they crossed:
The marks were still the same; 50
They tracked them on, nor ever lost;
And [8] to the bridge they came.

They followed from the snowy bank
Those [9] footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank; 55
And further there were [10] none!

—Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild. 60

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

This poem was illustrated by Sir George Beaumont, in a picture of some merit, which was engraved by J. C. Bromley, and published in the collected editions of 1815 and 1820. Henry Crabb Robinson wrote in his 'Diary', September 11, 1816 (referring to Wordsworth):

"He mentioned the origin of some poems. 'Lucy Gray', that tender and pathetic narrative of a child lost on a common, was occasioned by the death of a child who fell into the lock of a canal. His object was to exhibit poetically entire 'solitude', and he represents the child as observing the day-moon, which no town or village girl would ever notice."

A contributor to 'Notes and Queries', May 12, 1883, whose signature is F., writes:

Page 63

“THE SCENE OF ’LUCY GRAY’.—In one of the editions of Wordsworth’s works the scene of this ballad is said to have been near Halifax, in Yorkshire. I do not think the poet was acquainted with the locality beyond a sight of the country in travelling through on some journey. I know of no spot where all the little incidents mentioned in the poem would exactly fit in, and a few of the local allusions are evidently by a stranger. There is no ‘minster’; the church at Halifax from time immemorial has always been known as the ‘parish church,’ and sometimes as the ‘old church,’ but has never been styled ‘the minster.’ The ‘mountain roe,’ which of course may be brought in as poetically illustrative, has not been seen on these hills for generations, and I scarcely think even the ‘fawn at play’ for more than a hundred years. These misapplications, it is almost unnecessary to say, do not detract from the beauty of the poetry. Some of the touches are graphically true to the neighbourhood, as, for instance, ‘the wide moor,’ the ‘many a hill,’ the ‘steep hill’s edge,’ the ‘long stone wall,’ and the hint of the general loneliness of the region where Lucy ’no mate, no comrade, knew.’ I think I can point out the exact spot—no longer a ‘plank,’ but a broad, safe bridge—where Lucy fell into the water. Taking a common-sense view, that she would not be sent many miles at two o’clock on a winter afternoon to the town (Halifax, of course), over so lonely a mountain moor—-bearing in mind also that this moor overlooked the river, and that the river was deep and strong enough to carry the child down the current—I know only one place where such an accident could have occurred. The clue is in this verse:

’At day-break on a hill they stood
That overlooked the moor;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.’

The hill I take to be the high ridge of Greetland and Norland Moor, and the plank she had to cross Sterne Mill Bridge, which there spans the Calder, broad and rapid enough at any season to drown either a young girl or a grown-up person. The mountain burns, romantic and wild though they be, are not dangerous to cross, especially for a child old enough to go and seek her mother. To sum up the matter, the hill overlooking the moor, the path to and distance from the town, the bridge, the current, all indicate one point, and one point only, where this accident could have happened, and that is the bridge near Sterne Mill. This bridge is so designated from the Sterne family, a branch of whom in the last century resided close by. The author of ’Tristram Shandy’ spent his boyhood here; and Lucy Gray, had she safely crossed the plank, would immediately have passed Wood Hall, where the boy Laurence had lived, and, pursuing her way to Halifax, would have gone through the meadows in which stood Heath School, where young Sterne had been educated. The mill-weir at Sterne Mill

Page 64

Bridge was, I believe, the scene of Lucy Gray's death."

Sterne Mill Bridge, however, crosses the river Calder, while Wordsworth tells us that the girl lost her life by falling "into the lock of a canal." The Calder runs parallel with the canal near Sterne Mill Bridge. See J.R. Tutin's 'Wordsworth in Yorkshire'.—Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

Oft had I heard ...

Only in the second issue of 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800 (2nd issue).

She dwelt on a wild Moor 1800.

She lived on a wide Moor MS.]

[Variant 3:

1800.

... bright ... C.]

[Variant 4:

1800.

He snapped ... MS.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

And now they homeward turn'd, and cry'd 1800.

And, turning homeward, now they cried 1815.]

[Variant 6:

1800.

The Mother turning homeward cried,
“We never more shall meet,”
When in the driven snow she spied MS.]

[Variant 7:

1840.

Then downward ... 1800.

Half breathless ... 1827.]

[Variant 8:

1800.

... and never lost
Till ... MS.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

The ... 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1800.

... was ... 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Gray’s ode, ’On a Distant Prospect of Eton College’, II. 38-9:

’Still as they run they look behind,
They hear a voice in every wind.’

Ed.]

* * * * *

RUTH

Composed 1799.—Published 1800

[Written in Germany, 1799. Suggested by an account I had of a wanderer in Somersetshire.—I.F.]

Classed among the “Poems founded on the Affections” in the editions of 1815 and 1820. In 1827 it was transferred to the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

When Ruth was left half desolate,
Her Father took another Mate;
And Ruth, not seven years old,
A slighted child, at her own will [1]
Went wandering over dale and hill, 5
In thoughtless freedom, bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw,
And music from that pipe could draw
Like sounds of winds and floods; [2]
Had built a bower upon the green, 10
As if she from her birth had been
An infant of the woods.

Beneath her father’s roof, alone [3]
She seemed to live; her thoughts her own;
Herself her own delight; 15
Pleased with herself, nor sad, nor gay;
And, passing thus the live-long day,
She grew to woman’s height. [4]

Page 65

There came a Youth from Georgia's shore—
A military casque he wore, 20
With splendid feathers drest; [A]
He brought them from the Cherokees;
The feathers nodded in the breeze,
And made a gallant crest.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung: 25
But no! [5] he spake the English tongue,
And bore [6] a soldier's name;
And, when America was free
From battle and from jeopardy,
He 'cross the ocean came. 30

With hues of genius on his cheek
In finest tones the Youth could speak:
—While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
And streams that murmur as they run, 35
Had been his dearest joy.

He was a lovely Youth! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he;
And, when he chose to sport and play, 40
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

Among the Indians he had fought,
And with him many tales he brought
Of pleasure and of fear; 45
Such tales as told to any maid
By such a Youth, in the green shade,
Were perilous to hear.

He told of girls—a happy rout!
Who quit their fold with dance and shout, 50
Their pleasant Indian town,
To gather strawberries all day long;
Returning with a choral song
When daylight is gone down.

He spake of plants that hourly change 55
Their blossoms, through a boundless range

Of intermingling hues; [7] [B]
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of the bowers
From morn to evening dews, [C] 60
[8]
He told of the magnolia, [D] spread
High as a cloud, high over head!
The cypress and her spire; [E]
—Of flowers [F] that with one scarlet gleam
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem 65
To set the hills on fire. [G]

The Youth of green savannahs spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie 70
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds. [H]

“How pleasant,” then he said, “it were [9]
A fisher or a hunter there,
In sunshine or in shade 75
To wander with an easy mind;
And build a household fire, and find [10]
A home in every glade!

“What days and what bright [11] years! Ah me!
Our life were life indeed, with thee 80
So passed in quiet bliss,
And all the while,” said he, “to know
That we were in a world of woe,
On such an earth as this!”

And then he sometimes interwove 85
Fond [12] thoughts about a father’s love:
“For there,” said he, “are spun
Around the heart such tender ties,
That our own children to our eyes
Are dearer than the sun. 90

Page 66

“Sweet Ruth! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to rear;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A sylvan huntress at my side, 95
And drive the flying deer!

“Beloved Ruth!”—No more he said.
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed [13]
A solitary tear:
She thought again—and did agree 100
With him to sail across the sea,
And drive the flying deer.

“And now, as fitting is and right,
We in the church our faith will plight,
A husband and a wife.” 105
Even so they did; and I may say
That to sweet Ruth that happy day
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,
Delighted all the while to think 110
That on those lonesome floods,
And green savannahs, she should share
His board with lawful joy, and bear
His name in the wild woods.

But, as you have before been told, 115
This Stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,
And, with his dancing crest,
So beautiful, through savage lands
Had roamed about, with vagrant bands
Of Indians in the West. 120

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven, 125
And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound

Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seemed allied 130
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous [14] thought,
The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
Fair trees and gorgeous [15] flowers; 135
The breezes their own languor lent;
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those favored [16] bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes [17] there did intervene 140
Pure hopes of high intent:
For passions linked to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share [18]
Of noble sentiment.

But ill he lived, [19] much evil saw, 145
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known;
Deliberately, and undeceived,
Those wild men's vices he received,
And gave them back his own. 150

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impaired, and he became
The slave of low desires:
A Man who without self-control
Would seek what the degraded soul 155
Unworthily admires.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the Maiden, day and night
Had loved her, night and morn:
What could he less than love a Maid 160
Whose heart with so much nature played
So kind and so forlorn!

Page 67

Sometimes, most earnestly, he said,
“O Ruth! I have been worse than dead;
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain, 165
Encompassed me on every side
When I, in confidence and pride,
Had crossed the Atlantic main. [20]

“Before me shone a glorious world— Fresh as a banner bright, unfurled 170 To music suddenly: [21] I looked upon those hills and plains, And seemed as if let loose from chains, To live at liberty. [22] “No more of this; for now, by thee, 175 Dear Ruth! more happily set free With nobler zeal I burn; [23] My soul from darkness is released, Like the whole sky when to the east [24] The morning doth return.” 180 [25] Full soon that better mind was gone; [26] No hope, no wish remained, not one,— They stirred him now no more; New objects did new pleasure give, And once again he wished to live 185 As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,
They for the voyage were prepared,
And went to the sea-shore,
But, when they thither came, the Youth 190
Deserted his poor Bride, and Ruth
Could never find him more.

God help thee, Ruth!-Such pains she had,
That she in half a year was mad,
And in a prison housed; 195
And there, with many a doleful song
Made of wild words, her cup of wrong
She fearfully caroused. [27]

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew, 200
Nor pastimes of the May;
—They all were with her in her cell;
And a clear brook [28] with cheerful knell
Did o’er the pebbles play.

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain, 205
There came a respite to her pain;
She from her prison fled;
But of the Vagrant none took thought;
And where it liked her best she sought
Her shelter and her bread. 210

Among the fields she breathed again:
The master-current of her brain
Ran permanent and free;
And, coming to the Banks of Tone, [I]
There did she rest; and dwell alone [29] 215
Under the greenwood tree.

The engines of her pain, [30] the tools
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,
And airs that gently stir
The vernal leaves—she loved them still; 220
Nor ever taxed them with the ill
Which had been done to her.

A Barn her *winter* bed supplies;
But, till the warmth of summer skies
And summer days is gone, 225
(And all do in this tale agree) [31]
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,
And other home hath none.

An innocent life, yet far astray!
And Ruth will, long before her day, [32] 230
Be broken down and old:
Sore aches she needs must have! but less
Of mind, than body's wretchedness,
From damp, and rain, and cold. [33]

Page 68

If she is prest by want of food, 235
She from her dwelling in the wood
Repairs to a road-side;
And there she begs at one steep place
Where up and down with easy pace
The horsemen-travellers ride. 240

That oaten pipe of hers is mute,
Or thrown away; but with a flute
Her loneliness she cheers:
This flute, made of a hemlock stalk,
At evening in his homeward walk 245
The Quantock woodman hears.

I, too, have passed her on the hills
Setting her little water-mills
By spouts and fountains wild—
Such small machinery as she turned 250
Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,
A young and happy Child!

Farewell! and when thy days are told,
Ill-fated Ruth, in hallowed mould
Thy corpse shall buried be, 255
For thee a funeral bell shall ring,
And all the congregation sing
A Christian psalm for thee.

The following extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal gives the date of the stanzas added to 'Ruth' in subsequent editions:

"Sunday, March 8th, 1802.—I stitched up 'The Pedlar,' wrote out 'Ruth', read it with the alterations.... William brought two new stanzas of 'Ruth'."

The transpositions of stanzas, and their omission from certain editions and their subsequent re-introduction, in altered form, in later ones, make it extremely difficult to give the textual history of 'Ruth' in footnotes. They are even more bewildering than the changes introduced into 'Simon Lee'.—Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1802.

And so, not seven years old,
The slighted Child ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

And from that oaten pipe could draw
All sounds ... 1800.]

[Variant 3: This stanza was added in the edition of 1802.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

She pass'd her time; and in this way
Grew up to Woman's height. 1802.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

Ah no! ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1805.

... bare ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

He spake of plants divine and strange
That ev'ry day their blossoms change,
Ten thousand lovely hues! 1800.

... every hour ... 1802.]

[Variant 8:

Of march and ambush, siege and fight,
Then did he tell; and with delight
The heart of Ruth would ache;
Wild histories they were, and dear:
But ’twas a thing of heaven to hear
When of himself he spake!

Only in the editions of 1802 and 1805.

Page 69

The following is the order of the stanzas in the edition of 1802.
The first, fifth, and last had not appeared before.

Sometimes most earnestly he said;
“O Ruth! I have been worse than dead:
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain
Encompass’d me on every side
When I, in thoughtlessness and pride,
Had cross’d the Atlantic Main.

Whatever in those Climes I found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to my mind impart
A kindred impulse, seem’d allied
To my own powers, and justified
The workings of my heart.

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

Yet, in my worst pursuits, I ween,
That often there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent;
My passions, amid forms so fair
And stately, wanted not their share
Of noble sentiment.

So was it then, and so is now:
For, Ruth! with thee I know not how
I feel my spirit burn
Even as the east when day comes forth;
And to the west, and south, and north,
The morning doth return.

It is a purer better mind:
O Maiden innocent and kind
What sights I might have seen!
Even now upon my eyes they break!”
—And he again began to speak
Of Lands where he had been.

The last stanza is only in the editions of 1802-1805. [a]]

[Variant 9:

1836.

And then he said “How sweet it were 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1845.

A gardener in the shade,
Still wandering with an easy mind
To build ... 1800.

In sunshine or through shade
To wander with an easy mind;
And build ... 1836.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

... sweet ... 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1832.

Dear ... 1800.]

[Variant 13:

1820.

Sweet Ruth alone at midnight shed 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1800.

... unhallow’d ... 1802 and MS.

The edition of 1805 returns to the reading of 1800.]

[Variant 15:

1845.

... lovely ... 1800.]

[Variant 16:

1845.

... magic ... 1800.

... gorgeous ... 1815.]

[Variant 17:

1800.

That often ... 1802.

The text of 1805 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 18:

1800.

For passions, amid forms so fair
And stately, wanted not their share 1802.

The text of 1805 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 19:

1800.

Ill did he live ... 1802.

Page 70

The text of 1805 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 20:

1805.

When I, in thoughtlessness and pride,
Had crossed ... 1802.

When first, in confidence and pride,
I crossed ... 1820.

C., and the edition of 1840, revert to the reading of 1805.]

[Variant 21:

1840 and C.

“It was a fresh and glorious world,
A banner bright that was unfurled
Before me suddenly: 1805.

A banner bright that shone unfurled 1836.]

[Variant 22: Lines 163-168, and 175-180, were added in 1802. Lines 169-174 were added in 1805. All these were omitted in 1815, but were restored in 1820.]

[Variant 23:

1845

So was it then, and so is now:
For, Ruth! with thee I know not how
I feel my spirit burn 1802.

“But wherefore speak of this? for now,
Sweet Ruth! with thee, ... 1805.

Dear Ruth! with thee ... 1836.]

[Variant 24:

1836.

Even as the east when day comes forth;
And to the west, and south, and north, 1802.]

[Variant 25:

It is my purer better mind
O maiden innocently kind
What sights I might have seen!
Even now upon my eyes they break!
And then the youth began to speak
Of lands where he had been. MS.]

[Variant 26:

1845.

But now the pleasant dream was gone, 1800.

Full soon that purer mind ... 1820.]

[Variant 27:

1836.

And there, exulting in her wrongs,
Among the music of her songs
She fearfully carouz'd. [b] 1800.

And there she sang tumultuous songs,
By recollection of her wrongs,
To fearful passion rouzed. 1820.]

[Variant 28:

1836.

wild brook ... 1800.]

[Variant 29:

1802.

And to the pleasant Banks of Tone
She took her way, to dwell alone 1800.]

[Variant 30:

1802.

... grief, ... 1800.]

[Variant 31:

1805.

(And in this tale we all agree) 1800.]

[Variant 32:

1805.

The neighbours grieve for her, and say
That she will ... 1802.]

[Variant 33: This stanza first appeared in the edition of 1802.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Taken from the portrait of the chief in Bartram's frontispiece.—Ed.]

[Footnote B:

"The tall aspiring Gordonia lacianthus ... gradually changing colour, from green to golden yellow, from that to a scarlet, from scarlet to crimson, and lastly to a brownish purple, ... so that it may be said to change and renew its garments every morning throughout the year."

See 'Travels through North and South Carolina, Georgia, East Florida, the Cherokee Country', *etc*., by William Bartram (1791), pp. 159, 160.—Ed.]

Page 71

[Footnote C:

“Its thick foliage of a dark green colour is flowered over with large milk-white, fragrant blossoms, ... renewed every morning, and that in such incredible profusion that the tree appears silvered over with them, and the ground beneath covered with the fallen flowers. It, at the same time, continually pushes forth new twigs, with young buds on them.”

(Bartram’s ‘Travels’, *etc*., p. 159.)—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Magnolia grandiflora.—W. W. 1800; and Bartram’s ‘Travels’, p. 8.—Ed.]

[Footnote E:

“The Cypressus distichia stands in the first order of North American trees. Its majestic stature, lifting its cumbrous top towards the skies, and casting a wide shade upon the ground, as a dark intervening cloud,” *etc*.

(Bartram’s ‘Travels’, p. 88).—Ed.]

[Footnote F: The splendid appearance of these scarlet flowers, which are scattered with such profusion over the Hills in the Southern parts of North America is frequently mentioned by Bartram in his ’Travels’.—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote G: Mr. Ernest Coleridge tells me he

“has traced, to a note-book of Coleridge’s in the British Museum, the source from which Wordsworth derived his description of Georgian scenery in ‘Ruth’. He does, I know, refer to Bartram, but the whole passage is a poetical rendering, and a pretty close one, of Bartram’s poetical narrative. I have a portrait—the frontispiece of Bartram’s ’Travels’—of Mico Chlucco, king of the Seminoles, whose feathers nod in the breeze just as did the military casque of the ’youth from Georgia’s shore.’”

Ed.]

[Footnote H:

> “North and south almost endless green plains and meadows, embellished with islets and projecting promontories of high dark forests, where the pyramidal Magnolia grandiflora ... conspicuously towers.”

(Bartram’s ‘Travels’, p. 145).—Ed.]

[Footnote I: The Tone is a River of Somersetshire, at no great distance from the Quantock Hills. These Hills, which are alluded to a few stanzas below, are extremely beautiful, and in most places richly covered with Coppice woods. W. W. 1800.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: The edition of 1805 substitutes the stanzas beginning,

> 'It was a fresh and glorious world'

for stanzas 2, 3, and 4 of the above six in this note, but it inserts these omitted stanzas later on as Nos. 27, 28, 29.—Ed.]

[Sub-Footnote b: Wordsworth wrote to Barren Field in 1828 that this stanza

> "was altered, Lamb having observed that it was not English. I like it better myself;'

(i.e. the version of 1800)

> "but certainly to carouse cups—that is to empty them—is the genuine English."

Page 72

Ed.]

* * * * *

1800

Towards the close of December 1799, Wordsworth came to live at Dove Cottage, Town-end, Grasmere. The poems written during the following year (1800), are more particularly associated with that district of the Lakes. Two of them were fragments of a canto of 'The Recluse', entitled "Home at Grasmere," referring to his settlement at Dove Cottage. Others, such as 'Michael', and 'The Brothers'—classed by him afterwards among the "Poems founded on the Affections,"—deal with incidents in the rural life of the dalesmen of Westmoreland and Cumberland. Most of the "Poems on the Naming of Places" were written during this year; and the "Places" are all in the neighbourhood of Grasmere. To these were added several "Pastoral Poems"—such as 'The Idle Shepherd Boys; or, Dungeon-Ghyll Force'—sundry "Poems of the Fancy," and one or two "Inscriptions." In all, twenty-five poems were written in the year 1800; and, with the exception of the two fragments of 'The Recluse', they were published during the same year in the second volume of the second edition of "Lyrical Ballads." It is impossible to fix the precise date of the composition of the fragments of 'The Recluse'; but, as they refer to the settlement at Dove Cottage—where Wordsworth went to reside with his sister, on the 21st of December 1799—they may fitly introduce the poems belonging to the year 1800. They were first published in 1851 in the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth' (vol. i. pp. 157 and 155 respectively), by the poet's nephew, the late Bishop of Lincoln. The entire canto of 'The Recluse', entitled "Home at Grasmere," will be included in this edition.

The first two poems which follow, as belonging to the year 1800, are parts of 'The Recluse', *viz*. "On Nature's invitation do I come," (which is ll. 71-97, and 110-125), and "Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak," (which is ll. 152-167). They are not reprinted from the 'Memoirs' of 1851, because the text there given was, in several instances, inaccurately reproduced from the original MS., which has been re-examined. They were printed here, in 'The Recluse '(1888), and in my 'Life of Wordsworth' (vol. i. 1889). —Ed.

* * * * *

"ON NATURE'S INVITATION DO I COME"

Composed (probably) in 1800.—Published 1851

On Nature's invitation do I come,
By Reason sanctioned. Can the choice mislead,

That made the calmest, fairest spot of earth,
With all its unappropriated good,
My own, and not mine only, for with me 5
Entrenched—say rather peacefully embowered—
Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,
A younger orphan of a home extinct,
The only daughter of my parents dwells:
Aye, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir; 10
Pause upon that, and let the breathing

Page 73

frame
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.
Oh, if such silence be not thanks to God
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then
Shall gratitude find rest? Mine eyes did ne'er 15
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,
But either she, whom now I have, who now
Divides with me this loved abode, was there,
Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned, 20
Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang;
The thought of her was like a flash of light
Or an unseen companionship, a breath
Or fragrance independent of the wind.
In all my goings, in the new and old 25
Of all my meditations, and in this
Favourite of all, in this the most of all....
Embrace me then, ye hills, and close me in.
Now in the clear and open day I feel
Your guardianship: I take it to my heart; 30
'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.
But I would call thee beautiful; for mild,
And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art,
Dear valley, having in thy face a smile,
Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased, 35
Pleased with thy crags, and woody steeps, thy lake,
Its one green island, and its winding shores,
The multitude of little rocky hills,
Thy church, and cottages of mountain-stone
Clustered like stars some few, but single most, 40
And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,
Or glancing at each other cheerful looks,
Like separated stars with clouds between.

This Grasmere cottage is identified, much more than Rydal Mount, with Wordsworth's "poetic prime." It had once been a public-house, bearing the sign of the Dove and Olive Bough—and as such is referred to in 'The Waggoner'—from which circumstance it was for a long time, and is now usually, called "Dove Cottage." A small two storied house, it is described somewhat minutely—as it was in Wordsworth's time—by De Quincey, in his 'Recollections of the Lakes', and by the late Bishop of Lincoln, in the 'Memoirs' of his uncle.

“The front of it faces the lake; behind is a small plot of orchard and garden ground, in which there is a spring and rocks; the enclosure shelves upwards towards the woody sides of the mountains above it.” [A]

The following is De Quincey’s description of it, as he saw it in the summer of 1807.

“A white cottage, with two yew trees breaking the glare of its white walls” (these yews still stand on the eastern side of the cottage). “A little semi-vestibule between two doors prefaced the entrance into what might be considered the principal room of the cottage. It was an oblong square, not above eight and a half feet high, sixteen feet long, and twelve broad; wainscoted from floor to ceiling with dark polished oak, slightly

Page 74

embellished with carving. One window there was—a perfect and unpretending cottage window, with little diamond panes, embowered at almost every season of the year with roses; and, in the summer and autumn, with a profusion of jasmine, and other fragrant shrubs.... I was ushered up a little flight of stairs, fourteen in all, to a little drawing-room, or whatever the reader chooses to call it. Wordsworth himself has described the fireplace of this room as his

‘Half-kitchen and half-parlour fire.’

It was not fully seven feet six inches high, and in other respects pretty nearly of the same dimensions as the rustic hall below. There was, however, in a small recess, a library of perhaps three hundred volumes, which seemed to consecrate the room as the poet’s study and composing room, and such occasionally it was. But far oftener he both studied, as I found, and composed on the high road.” [B]

Other poems of later years refer, much more fully than the above, to this cottage, and its orchard ground, where so many of Wordsworth’s lyrics were composed.

The “orchard ground,” which was for the most part in grass, sloped upwards; but a considerable portion of the natural rock was exposed; and on its face, some rough stone steps were cut by Wordsworth, helped by a near neighbour of his—John Fisher—so as more conveniently to reach the upper terrace, where the poet built for himself a small arbour. All this garden and orchard ground is not much altered since 1800. The short terrace walk is curved, with a sloping bank of grass above, shaded by apple trees, hazel, holly, laburnum, laurel, and mountain ash. Below the terrace is the well, which supplied the cottage in Wordsworth’s time; and there large leaved primroses still grow, doubtless the successors of those planted by his own and his sister’s hands. Above, and amongst the rocks, are the daffodils, which they also brought to their “garden-ground;” the Christmas roses, which they planted near the well, were removed to the eastern side of the garden, where they flourished luxuriantly in 1882; but have now, alas! disappeared. The box-wood planted by the poet grows close to the cottage. The arbour is now gone; but, in the place where it stood, a seat is erected. The hidden brook still sings its under-song, as it used to do, “its quiet soul on all bestowing,” and the green linnet may doubtless be seen now, as it used to be in 1803. The allusions to the garden ground at Dove Cottage, in the poems which follow, will be noted as they occur. —Ed.

FOOTNOTES:

[Footnote A: See the ‘Memoirs of Wordsworth’, vol. i. p. 156.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See ‘Recollections of the Lakes’, *etc*., pp. 130-137, Works, vol. ii., edition of 1862.—Ed.]

* * * * *

“BLEAK SEASON WAS IT, TURBULENT AND BLEAK” [A]

Composed (probably) in 1800.—Published 1851

Page 75

Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak,
When hitherward we journeyed, side by side,
Through burst of sunshine and through flying showers,
Paced the long vales, how long they were, and yet
How fast that length of way was left behind, 5
Wensley's rich vale and Sedbergh's naked heights.
The frosty wind, as if to make amends
For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,
And drove us onward like two ships at sea;
Or, like two birds, companions in mid-air, 10
Parted and reunited by the blast.
Stern was the face of nature; we rejoiced
In that stern countenance; for our souls thence drew
A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,
The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared 15
To question us, "Whence come ye? To what end?"

This poem refers to a winter journey on foot, which Wordsworth and his sister took from Sockburn to Grasmere, by Wensleydale and Askrigg; and, since he has left us an account of this journey, in a letter to Coleridge, written a few days after their arrival at Grasmere—a letter in which his characterisation of Nature is almost as happy as it is in his best poems—some extracts from it may here be appended.

"We left Sockburn last Tuesday morning. We crossed the Tees by moonlight in the Sockburn fields, and after ten good miles riding came in sight of the Swale. It is there a beautiful river, with its green banks and flat holms scattered over with trees. Four miles further brought us to Richmond, with its huge ivied castle, its friarage steeple, its castle tower resembling a huge steeple.... We were now in Wensleydale, and D. and I set off side by side to foot it as far as Kendal.... We reached Askrigg, twelve miles, before six in the evening, having been obliged to walk the last two miles over hard frozen roads.... Next morning the earth was thinly covered with snow, enough to make the road soft and prevent its being slippery. On leaving Askrigg we turned aside to see another waterfall. It was a beautiful morning, with driving snow showers, which disappeared by fits, and unveiled the east, which was all one delicious pale orange colour. After walking through two small fields we came to a mill, which we passed, and in a moment a sweet little valley opened before us, with an area of grassy ground, and a stream dashing over various laminae of black rocks close under a bank covered with firs; the bank and stream on our left, another woody bank on our right, and the flat meadow in front, from which, as at Buttermere, the stream had retired, as it were, to hide itself under the shade. As we walked up this delightful valley we were tempted to look back perpetually on the stream, which reflected the orange lights of the morning among the gloomy rocks, with a brightness varying with the agitation of the current. The steeple of Askrigg was between us and the east,

Page 76

at the bottom of the valley; it was not a quarter of a mile distant.... The two banks seemed to join before us with a facing of rock common to them both. When we reached this bottom the valley opened out again; two rocky banks on each side, which, hung with ivy and moss, and fringed luxuriantly with brushwood, ran directly parallel to each other, and then approaching with a gentle curve at their point of union, presented a lofty waterfall, the termination of the valley. It was a keen frosty morning, showers of snow threatening us, but the sun bright and active. We had a task of twenty-one miles to perform in a short winter's day.... On a nearer approach the waters seemed to fall down a tall arch or niche that had shaped itself by insensible moulderings in the wall of an old castle. We left this spot with reluctance, but highly exhilarated.... It was bitter cold, the wind driving the snow behind us in the best style of a mountain storm. We soon reached an inn at a place called Hardrane, and descending from our vehicles, after warming ourselves by the cottage fire, we walked up the brook-side to take a view of a third waterfall. We had not walked above a few hundred yards between two winding rocky banks before we came full upon the waterfall, which seemed to throw itself in a narrow line from a lofty wall of rock, the water, which shot manifestly to some distance from the rock, seeming to be dispersed into a thin shower scarcely visible before it reached the bason. We were disappointed in the cascade itself, though the introductory and accompanying banks were an exquisite mixture of grandeur and beauty.... After cautiously sounding our way over stones of all colours and sizes, encased in the clearest water formed by the spray of the fall, we found the rock, which before had appeared like a wall, extending itself over our heads, like the ceiling of a huge cave, from the summit of which the waters shot directly over our heads into a bason, and among fragments wrinkled over with masses of ice as white as snow, or rather, as Dorothy says, like congealed froth. The water fell at least ten yards from us, and we stood directly behind it, the excavation not so deep in the rock as to impress any feeling of darkness, but lofty and magnificent; but in connection with the adjoining banks excluding as much of the sky as could well be spared from a scene so exquisitely beautiful. The spot where we stood was as dry as the chamber in which I am now sitting, and the incumbent rock, of which the groundwork was limestone, veined and dappled with colours which melted into each other with every possible variety of colour. On the summit of the cave were three festoons, or rather wrinkles, in the rock, run up parallel like the folds of a curtain when it is drawn up. Each of these was hung with icicles of various length, and nearly in the middle of the festoon, in the deepest valley of the waves that ran parallel to each other, the stream shot from the rows of icicles in irregular

Page 77

fits of strength, and with a body of water that varied every moment. Sometimes the stream shot into the bason in one continued current; sometimes it was interrupted almost in the midst of its fall, and was blown towards part of the waterfall at no great distance from our feet like the heaviest thunder shower. In such a situation you have at every moment a feeling of the presence of the sky. Large fleecy clouds drove over our heads above the rush of the water, and the sky appeared of a blue more than usually brilliant. The rocks on each side, which, joining with the side of this cave, formed the vista of the brook, were chequered with three diminutive waterfalls, or rather courses of water. Each of these was a miniature of all that summer and winter can produce of delicate beauty. The rock in the centre of the falls, where the water was most abundant, a deep black, the adjoining parts yellow, white, purple, and dove colour, covered with water—plants of the most vivid green, and hung with streaming icicles, that in some places seem to conceal the verdure of the plants and the violet and yellow variegation of the rocks; and in some places render the colours more brilliant. I cannot express to you the enchanting effect produced by this Arabian scene of colour as the wind blew aside the great waterfall behind which we stood, and alternately hid and revealed each of these fairy cataracts in irregular succession, or displayed them with various gradations of distinctness as the intervening spray was thickened or dispersed. What a scene too in summer! In the luxury of our imagination we could not help feeding upon the pleasure which this cave, in the heat of a July noon, would spread through a frame exquisitely sensible. That huge rock on the right, the bank winding round on the left with all its living foliage, and the breeze stealing up the valley, and bedewing the cavern with the freshest imaginable spray. And then the murmur of the water, the quiet, the seclusion, and a long summer day.”

Ed.

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT:

[Footnote A: This is a fragment of ‘The Recluse’, ll. 152-167; but it was originally published in the ‘Memoirs of Wordsworth’ by his nephew (1851).—Ed.]

* * * * *

ELLEN IRWIN; OR, THE BRAES OF KIRTLE [A]

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[It may be worth while to observe that as there are Scotch Poems on this subject in simple ballad strain, I thought it would be both presumptuous and superfluous to attempt treating it in the same way; and, accordingly, I chose a construction of stanza

quite new in our language; in fact, the same as that of Buerger's 'Leonora', except that the first and third lines do not, in my stanzas, rhyme. At the outset I threw out a classical image to prepare the reader for the style in which I meant to treat the story, and so to preclude all comparison.—I.F.]

Page 78

In the editions of 1815 and 1820 this was included among the “Poems founded on the Affections.” In 1827 it was placed in the “Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803.”—Ed.

Fair Ellen Irwin, when she sate
Upon the braes of Kirtle,
Was lovely as a Grecian maid
Adorned with wreaths of myrtle;
Young Adam Bruce beside her lay, 5
And there did they beguile the day
With love and gentle speeches,
Beneath the budding beeches.

From many knights and many squires
The Bruce had been selected; 10
And Gordon, fairest of them all,
By Ellen was rejected.
Sad tidings to that noble Youth!
For it may be proclaimed with truth,
If Bruce hath loved sincerely, 15
That Gordon [1] loves as dearly.

But what are Gordon’s form and face,
His shattered hopes and crosses,
To them, ’mid Kirtle’s pleasant braes,
Reclined on flowers and mosses? [2] 20
Alas that ever he was born!
The Gordon, couched behind a thorn,
Sees them and their caressing;
Beholds them blest and blessing.

Proud Gordon, maddened by the thoughts [3] 25
That through his brain are travelling,
Rushed forth, and at the heart of Bruce [4]
He launched a deadly javelin!
Fair Ellen saw it as it came,
And, starting up to meet the same, [5] 30
Did with her body cover
The Youth, her chosen lover.

And, falling into Bruce’s arms,
Thus died the beauteous Ellen,
Thus, from the heart of her True-love, 35
The mortal spear repelling.
And Bruce, as soon as he had slain

The Gordon, sailed away to Spain;
And fought with rage incessant
Against the Moorish crescent. 40

But many days, and many months,
And many years ensuing,
This wretched Knight did vainly seek
The death that he was wooing.
So, coming his last help to crave, 45
Heart-broken, upon Ellen's grave [6]
His body he extended,
And there his sorrow ended.

Now ye, who willingly have heard
The tale I have been telling, 50
May in Kirkonnel churchyard view
The grave of lovely Ellen:
By Ellen's side the Bruce is laid;
And, for the stone upon his head,
May no rude hand deface it, 55
And its forlorn Hic jacet.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

The Gordon ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

But what is Gordon's beauteous face?
And what are Gordon's crosses
To them who sit by Kirtle's Braes
Upon the verdant mosses? 1800.]

Page 79

[Variant 3:

1837.

  Proud Gordon cannot bear the thoughts 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

  And, starting up, to Bruce's heart 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

  Fair Ellen saw it when it came,
  And, stepping forth ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

  So coming back across the wave,
  Without a groan on Ellen's grave 1800.

  And coming back ... 1802.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE:

[Footnote A: The Kirtle is a River in the Southern part of Scotland, on whose banks the events here related took place.—W. W. 1800.]

No Scottish ballad is superior in pathos to 'Helen of Kirkconnell'. It is based on a traditionary tale—the date of the event being lost—but the locality, in the parish of Kirkpatrick-Fleming in Dumfriesshire, is known; and there the graves of "Burd Helen" and her lover are still pointed out.

The following is Sir Walter Scott's account of the story:

"A lady of the name of Helen Irving, or Bell (for this is disputed by the two clans), daughter of the laird of Kirkconnell in Dumfriesshire, and celebrated for her beauty, was beloved by two gentlemen in the neighbourhood. The name of the favoured suitor was

Adam Fleming of Kirkpatrick: that of the other has escaped tradition, although it has been alleged he was a Bell of Blackel-house. The addresses of the latter were, however, favoured by the friends of the lady, and the lovers were therefore obliged to meet in secret, and by night, in the Churchyard of Kirkconnell, a romantic spot, surrounded by the river Kirtle. During one of their private interviews, the jealous and despised lover suddenly appeared on the opposite bank of the stream, and levelled his carbine at the breast of his rival. Helen threw herself before her lover, received in her bosom the bullet, and died in his arms. A desperate and mortal combat ensued between Fleming and the murderer, in which the latter was cut to pieces."

See 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border', vol. ii. p. 317.

The original ballad—well known though it is—may be quoted as an admirable illustration of the different types of poetic genius in dealing with the same, or a kindred, theme.

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries;
O that I were where Helen lies,
  On fair Kirkconnell lee!

Cursed be the heart that thought the thought,
And curst the hand that fired the shot,
When in my arms burd Helen dropt,
  And died to succour me!

Oh think ye na my heart was sair,
When my love dropt down and spake nae mair!
There did she swoon wi' meikle care,
  On fair Kirkconnell lee.

As I went down the water side,
None but my foe to be my guide,
None but my foe to be my guide,
  On fair Kirkconnell lee—

Page 80

I lighted down, my sword did draw,
I hacked him in pieces sma',
I hacked him in pieces sma',
  For her sake that died for me.

Oh, Helen fair, beyond compare!
I'll weave a garland of thy hair
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
  Until the day I dee!

Oh that I were where Helen lies!
Day and night on me she cries;
Out of my bed she bids me rise,
  Says, "Haste, and come to me!"

O Helen fair! O Helen chaste!
Were I with thee I would be blest,
Where thou lies low and takes thy rest,
  On fair Kirkconnell lee.

I wish my grave were growing green,
A winding sheet drawn o'er my e'en,
And I in Helen's arms lying
  On fair Kirkconnell lee.

I wish I were where Helen lies!
Night and day on me she cries,
And I am weary of the skies,
  For her sake that died for me!

Ed.

* * * * *

HART-LEAP WELL

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

Hart-Leap Well is a small spring of water, about five miles from Richmond in Yorkshire, and near the side of the road which leads from Richmond to Askrigg. Its name is derived from a remarkable chace, the memory of which is preserved by the monuments spoken of in the second Part of the following Poem, which monuments do now exist as I have there described them.—W. W. 1800.

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The first eight stanzas were composed extempore one winter evening in the cottage, when, after having tired myself with labouring at an awkward passage in 'The Brothers', I started with a sudden impulse to this to get rid of the other, and finished it in a day or two. My sister and I had passed the place a few weeks before in our wild winter journey from Sockburn on the banks of the Tees to Grasmere. A peasant whom we met near the spot told us the story so far as concerned the name of the Well, and the Hart, and pointed out the Stones. Both the stones and the well are objects that may easily be missed. The tradition by this time may be extinct in the neighbourhood. The man who related it to us was very old.—I. F.]

Included among the "Poems of the Imagination,"—Ed.

The Knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor
With the slow motion of a summer's cloud
And now, as he approached a vassal's door,
"Bring forth another horse!" he cried aloud. [1]

"Another horse!"—That shout the vassal heard 5
And saddled his best Steed, a comely grey;
Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third
Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing courser's eyes;
The horse and horseman are a happy pair; 10
But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,
There is a doleful silence in the air.

Page 81

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's Hall,
That as they galloped made the echoes roar;
But horse and man are vanished, one and all; 15
Such race, I think, was never seen before.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain:
Blanch, [2] Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain. 20

The Knight hallooed, he cheered and chid them on [3]
With suppliant gestures [4] and upbraidings stern;
But breath and eyesight fail; and, one by one,
The dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the race? [5] 25
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?
—This chase it looks not like an earthly chase; [6]
Sir Walter and the Hart are left alone.

The poor Hart toils along the mountain-side;
I will not stop to tell how far he fled, 30
Nor will I mention by what death he died;
But now the Knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting, then, he leaned against a thorn;
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy:
He neither cracked [7] his whip, nor blew his horn, 35
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter leaned,
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious feat; [8]
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is yeaned;
And white with foam as if with cleaving sleet. [9] 40

Upon his side the Hart was lying stretched:
His nostril touched [10] a spring beneath a hill,
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetched
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest, 45
(Never had living man such joyful lot!) [11]
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,
And gazed and gazed upon that darling spot. [12]

And climbing [13] up the hill—(it was at least
Four [14] roods of sheer ascent) Sir Walter found 50
Three several hoof-marks which the hunted Beast [15]
Had left imprinted on the grassy [16] ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face, and cried, “Till now
Such sight was never seen by human [17] eyes:
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow, 55
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

“I’ll build a pleasure-house upon this spot,
And a small arbour, made for rural joy;
’Twill be the traveller’s shed, the pilgrim’s cot,
A place of love for damsels that are coy. 60

“A cunning artist will I have to frame
A basin for that fountain in the dell!
And they who do make mention of the same,
From this day forth, shall call it HART-LEAP WELL.

Page 82

“And, gallant Stag! [18] to make thy praises known, 65
Another monument shall here be raised;
Three several pillars, each a rough-hewn stone,
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have grazed.

“And, in the summer-time when days are long,
I will come hither with my Paramour; 70
And with the dancers and the minstrel’s song
We will make merry in that pleasant bower.

“Till the foundations of the mountains fail
My mansion with its arbour shall endure;—
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale, 75
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure!”

Then home he went, and left the Hart, stone-dead,
With breathless nostrils stretched above the spring.
—Soon did the Knight perform what he had said;
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring. [19] 80

Ere thrice the Moon into her port had steered,
A cup of stone received the living well;
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

And near the fountain, flowers of stature tall 85
With trailing plants and trees were intertwined,—
Which soon composed a little sylvan hall,
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer days were long
Sir Walter led his wondering Paramour; [20] 90
And with the dancers and the minstrel’s song
Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

The Knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.—
But there is matter for a second rhyme, 95
And I to this would add another tale.

PART SECOND

The moving accident [A] is not my trade;
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:

’Tis my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for [21] thinking hearts. 100

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,
It chanced that I saw standing in a dell
Three aspens at three corners of a square;
And one, not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine: 105
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,
I saw three pillars standing in a line,—
The last stone-pillar on a dark hill-top.

The trees were grey, with neither arms nor head:
Half wasted the square mound of tawny green; 110
So that you just might say, as then I said,
“Here in old time the hand of man hath [22] been.”

I looked upon the hill [23] both far and near,
More doleful place did never eye survey;
It seemed as if the spring-time came not here, 115
And Nature here were willing to decay.

Page 83

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost, [B]
When one, who was in shepherd's garb attired,
Came up the hollow:—him did I accost,
And what this place might be I then inquired. 120

The Shepherd stopped, and that same story told
Which in my former rhyme I have rehearsed.
"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!
But something ails it now: the spot is curst.

"You see these lifeless stumps of aspen wood—125
Some say that they are beeches, others elms—
These were the bower; and here a mansion stood,
The finest palace of a hundred realms!

"The arbour does its own condition tell;
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream; 130
But as to the great Lodge! you might as well
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.

"There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone;
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep, 135
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

"Some say that here a murder has been done,
And blood cries out for blood: but, for my part,
I've guessed, when I've been sitting in the sun,
That it was all for that unhappy Hart. 140

"What thoughts must through the creature's brain have past!
Even from the topmost stone, upon the steep, [24]
Are but three bounds—and look, Sir, at this last—
O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

"For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race; 145
And in my simple mind we cannot tell
What cause the Hart might have to love this place,
And come and make his death-bed near the well.

"Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,
Lulled by the [25] fountain in the summer tide; 150
This water was perhaps the first he drank
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

“In April here beneath the flowering [26] thorn
He heard the birds their morning carols sing;
And he, perhaps, for aught we know, was born 155
Not half a furlong from that self-same spring.

“Now, here is [27] neither grass nor pleasant shade;
The sun on drearier hollow never shone;
So will it be, as I have often said,
Till trees, and stones, and fountain, all are gone.” 160

“Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well;
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine:
This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

“The Being, that is in the clouds and air, 165
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures [28] whom he loves.

“The pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before,
This is no common waste, no common gloom; 170
But Nature, in due course of time, once more
Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

Page 84

“She leaves these objects to a slow decay,
That what we are, and have been, may be known;
But at the coming of the milder day, 175
These monuments shall all be overgrown.

“One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals; [C]
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels.” 180

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

He turn’d aside towards a Vassal’s door,
And, “Bring another Horse!” he cried aloud. 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Brach, ... 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

... he chid and cheer’d them on 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1800.

With fawning kindness ... MS.]

[Variant 5:

1802.

... of the chace? 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1802.

This race it looks not like an earthly race; 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1820.

... smack'd ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1820.

... act; 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1820.

And foaming like a mountain cataract. 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1820.

His nose half-touch'd ... 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1820.

Was never man in such a joyful case, 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1820.

.... place. 1800.]

[Variant 13:

1802.

... turning ... 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1845.

Nine ... 1800.]

[Variant 15:

1802.

Three several marks which with his hoofs the beast 1800.]

[Variant 16:

1820.

... verdant ... 1800.]

[Variant 17:

1836.

... living ... 1800.]

[Variant 18:

1827.

... gallant brute! ... 1800.]

[Variant 19:

1815.

And soon the Knight perform'd what he had said,
The fame whereof through many a land did ring. 1800.]

[Variant 20:

1820.

... journey'd with his paramour; 1800.]

[Variant 21:

1815.

... to ... 1800.]

[Variant 22:

1815.

... has ... 1800.]

[Variant 23:

1815.

... hills ... 1800.]

[Variant 24:

1815.

From the stone on the summit of the steep 1800.

... upon ... 1802.]

[Variant 25:

Page 85

1832.

... this ... 1800.]

[Variant 26:

1836.

... scented ... 1800.]

[Variant 27:

1827.

But now here's ... 1800.]

[Variant 28:

1815.

For them the quiet creatures ... 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare 'Othello', act I. scene iii. l. 135:

'Of moving accidents by flood and field.'

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare the sonnet (vol. iv.) beginning:

"Beloved Vale!" I said. "when I shall con ...

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare Tennyson, 'In Memoriam', v. II. 3, 4.

'For words, like Nature, half reveal
And half conceal the Soul within.'

Ed.]

This poem was suggested to Wordsworth in December 1799 during the journey with his sister from Sockburn in Yorkshire to Grasmere. I owe the following local note on 'Hart-Leap Well' to Mr. John R. Tutin of Hull.

"June 20, 1881. Visited 'Hart-Leap Well,' the subject of Wordsworth's poem. It is situated on the road side leading from Richmond to Askrigg, at a distance of not more than three and a-half miles from Richmond, and not five miles as stated in the prefatory note to the poem. The 'three aspens at three corners of a square' are things of the past; also the 'three stone pillars standing in a line, on the hill above. In a straight line with the spring of water, and where the pillars would have been, a wall has been built; so that it is very probable the stone pillars were removed at the time of the building of this wall. The scenery around answers exactly to the descriptionMore doleful place did never eye survey; It seemed as if the spring time came not here, And Nature here were willing to decay. ... Now, here is neither grass nor pleasant shade."It is barren moor for miles around. The water still falls into the 'cup of stone,' which appeared to be of very long standing. Within ten yards of the well is a small tree, at the same side of the road as the well, on the right hand coming from Richmond."

The Rev. Thomas Hutchinson of Kimbolton wrote to me on June 18, 1883:

"The tree is not a Thorn, but a Lime. It is evidently an old one, but is now in full and beautiful leaf. It stands on the western side of the road, and a few yards distant from it. The well is somewhat nearer the road. This side of the road is open to the fell. On the other side the road is bounded by a stone wall: another wall meeting this one at right angles, exactly opposite the well. I ascended the hill on the north side of this wall for some distance, but could find no trace of any rough-hewn stone. Descending on the other side, I found in the wall one, and

Page 86

only one, such stone. I should say the base was in the wall. The stone itself leans outwards; so that, at the top, three of its square faces can be seen; and two, if not three, of these faces bear marks of being hammer-dressed. The distance from the stone to the well is about 40 yards, and the height of the stone out of the ground about 3 or 4 feet.“The ascent from the well is a gentle one, not ‘sheer’; nor does there appear to be any hollow by which the shepherd could ascend. On the western side of the road there is a wide plain, with a slight fall in that direction.”

“‘Hart-Leap Well’ is the tale for me; in matter as good as this
(’Peter Bell’); in manner infinitely before it, in my poor judgment.”

Charles Lamb to Wordsworth, May 1819. (See ’The Letters of Charles Lamb’, edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. ii. p. 20.)—Ed.

* * * * *

THE IDLE SHEPHERD-BOYS; OR, DUNGEON-GHYLL FORCE [A]

A PASTORAL

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. I will only add a little monitory anecdote concerning this subject. When Coleridge and Southey were walking together upon the Fells, Southey observed that, if I wished to be considered a faithful painter of rural manners, I ought not to have said that my shepherd-boys trimmed their rustic hats as described in the poem. Just as the words had passed his lips two boys appeared with the very plant entwined round their hats. I have often wondered that Southey, who rambled so much about the mountains, should have fallen into this mistake, and I record it as a warning for others who, with far less opportunity than my dear friend had of knowing what things are, and far less sagacity, give way to presumptuous criticism, from which he was free, though in this matter mistaken. In describing a tarn under Helvellyn I say:

“There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer.”

This was branded by a critic of these days, in a review ascribed to Mrs. Barbauld, as unnatural and absurd. I admire the genius of Mrs. Barbauld and am certain that, had her education been favourable to imaginative influences, no female of her day would

have been more likely to sympathise with that image, and to acknowledge the truth of the sentiment.—I. F.]

Included among the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.”—Ed.

The valley rings with mirth and joy;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never never ending song,
To welcome in the May. [1]
The magpie chatters with delight; 5
The mountain raven’s youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food;
Or through the glittering vapours dart 10
In very wantonness of heart.

Page 87

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun;
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done. [2] 15
On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim: 20
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those Shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song;
The thrush is busy in the wood, 25
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, [B] and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal; 30
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

Said Walter, leaping from the ground,
"Down to the stump of yon old yew 35
We'll for our whistles run a race." [3]
—Away the shepherds flew;
They leapt—they ran—and when they came
Right opposite to Dungeon-Ghyll,
Seeing that he should lose the prize, 40
"Stop!" to his comrade Walter cries—
James stopped with no good will:
Said Walter then, exulting; "Here
You'll find a task for half a year. [4]

"Cross, if you dare, where I shall cross—45
Come on, and tread where I shall tread." [5]
The other took him at his word,
And followed as he led. [6]
It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go; 50
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock:

The gulf is deep below;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall. 55

With staff in hand across the cleft
The challenger pursued [7] his march;
And now, all eyes and feet, hath gained
The middle of the arch.
When list! he hears a piteous moan—60
Again!—his heart within him dies—
His pulse is stopped, his breath is lost,
He totters, pallid as a ghost, [8]
And, looking down, espies [9]
A lamb, that in the pool is pent 65
Within that black and frightful rent.

The lamb had slipped into the stream,
And safe without a bruise or wound
The cataract had borne him down
Into the gulf profound. 70
His dam had seen him when he fell,
She saw him down the torrent borne;
And, while with all a mother's love
She from the lofty rocks above
Sent forth a cry forlorn, 75
The lamb, still swimming round and round,
Made answer to that plaintive sound.

Page 88

When he had learnt what thing it was,
That sent this rueful cry; I ween
The Boy recovered heart, and told 80
The sight which he had seen.
Both gladly now deferred their task;
Nor was there wanting other aid—
A Poet, one who loves the brooks
Far better than the sages' books, 85
By chance had thither strayed;
And there the helpless lamb he found
By those huge rocks encompassed round.

He drew it from the troubled pool, [10]
And brought it forth into the light: 90
The Shepherds met him with his charge,
An unexpected sight!
Into their arms the lamb they took,
Whose life and limbs the flood had spared; [11]
Then up the steep ascent they hied, 95
And placed him at his mother's side;
And gently did the Bard
Those idle Shepherd-boys upbraid,
And bade them better mind their trade.

The "bridge of rock" across Dungeon-Ghyll "chasm," and the "lofty waterfall," with all its accessories of place as described in the poem, remain as they were in 1800.—Ed.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

The valley rings with mirth and joy;
And, pleased to welcome in the May,
From hill to hill the echoes fling
Their liveliest roundelay. 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

It seems they have no work to do
Or that their work is done. 1800.

Boys that have had no work to do,
Or work that now is done. 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1805.

I'll run with you a race."—No more—1800.

We'll for this Whistle run a race." ... 1802.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

Said Walter then, "Your task is here,
'Twill keep you working half a year. 1800.

'Twill baffle you for half a year. 1827.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

Till you have cross'd where I shall cross,
Say that you'll neither sleep nor eat." 1800.

"Now cross where I shall cross,—come on
And follow me where I shall lead—" 1802.

"Cross, if you dare, where I shall cross—
Come on, and in my footsteps tread!" 1827.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

James proudly took him at his word,
But did not like the feat. 1800.

... the deed. 1802.

The other took him at his word, 1805.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

... began ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

... pale as any ghost, 1800.]

[Variant 9:

Page 89

1827.

... he spies 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

He drew it gently from the pool, 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

Said they, “He’s neither maim’d nor scarr’d”—1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: ‘Ghyll’, in the dialect of Cumberland and Westmoreland is a short and for the most part a steep narrow valley, with a stream running through it. ‘Force’ is the word universally employed in these dialects for Waterfall.—W. W. 1800.

“Ghyll” was spelt “Gill” in the editions of 1800 to 1805.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare the ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality’, iv. l. 3 (vol. viii.)—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE PET-LAMB

A PASTORAL

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. Barbara Lewthwaite, now living at Ambleside (1843), though much changed as to beauty, was one of two most lovely sisters. Almost the first words my poor brother John said, when he visited us for the first time at Grasmere, were, “Were those two Angels that I have just seen?” and from his description, I have no doubt they were those two sisters. The mother died in childbed; and one of our neighbours at Grasmere told me that the loveliest sight she had ever seen was that mother as she lay in her coffin with her babe in her arm. I mention this to notice what I

cannot but think a salutary custom once universal in these vales. Every attendant on a funeral made it a duty to look at the corpse in the coffin before the lid was closed, which was never done (nor I believe is now) till a minute or two before the corpse was removed. Barbara Lewthwaite was not in fact the child whom I had seen and overheard as described in the poem. I chose the name for reasons implied in the above; and here will add a caution against the use of names of living persons. Within a few months after the publication of this poem, I was much surprised, and more hurt, to find it in a child's school book, which, having been compiled by Lindley Murray, had come into use at Grasmere School where Barbara was a pupil; and, alas! I had the mortification of hearing that she was very vain of being thus distinguished; and, in after life she used to say that she remembered the incident, and what I said to her upon the occasion.—I. F.]

Included among the "Poems referring to the Period of Childhood."—Ed.

The dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink;
I heard a voice; it said, "Drink, pretty creature, drink!"
And, looking o'er the hedge, before me I espied
A snow white mountain-lamb with a Maiden at its side.

Nor sheep nor kine [1] were near; the lamb was all alone, 5
And by a slender cord was tethered to a stone;
With one knee on the grass did the little Maiden kneel,
While to that mountain-lamb she gave its evening meal.

Page 90

The lamb, while from her hand he thus his supper took,
Seemed to feast with head and ears; and his tail with pleasure shook.
“Drink, pretty creature, drink,” she said in such a tone
That I almost received her heart into my own.

’Twas little Barbara Lewthwaite, a child of beauty rare!
I watched them with delight, they were a lovely pair.
Now with her empty can the Maiden turned away: 15
But ere ten yards were gone her footsteps did she stay.

Right towards the lamb she looked; and from a shady place [2]
I unobserved could see the workings of her face:
If Nature to her tongue could measured numbers bring,
Thus, thought I, to her lamb that little Maid might sing: 20

“What ails thee, young One? what? Why pull so at thy cord?
Is it not well with thee? well both for bed and board?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be;
Rest, little young One, rest; what is’t that aileth thee?

“What is it thou wouldst seek? What is wanting to thy heart? 25
Thy limbs are they not strong? And beautiful thou art:
This grass is tender grass; these flowers they have no peers;
And that green corn all day is rustling in thy ears!

“If the sun be [3] shining hot, do but stretch thy woollen chain,
This beech is standing by, its covert thou canst gain; 30
For rain and mountain-storms! the like thou need’st not fear,
The rain and storm are things that [4] scarcely can come here.

“Rest, little young One, rest; thou hast forgot the day
When my father found thee first in places far away;
Many flocks were [5] on the hills, but thou wert owned by none, 35
And thy mother from thy side for evermore was gone.

“He took thee in his arms, and in pity brought thee home:
A blessed day for thee! then whither wouldst thou roam?
A faithful nurse thou hast; the dam that did thee yean
Upon the mountain tops no kinder could have been. 40

“Thou know’st that twice a day I have brought thee in this can
Fresh water from the brook, as clear as ever ran;
And twice in the day, when the ground is wet with dew
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is and new.

“Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now, 45
Then I’ll yoke thee to my cart like a pony in the plough;
My playmate thou shalt be; and when the wind is cold
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.

“It will not, will not rest!—Poor creature, can it be
That ’tis thy mother’s heart which is working so in thee? [6] 50
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,
And dreams of things which thou canst neither see nor hear.

“Alas, the mountain-tops that look so green and fair!
I’ve heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there;
The little brooks that seem all pastime and all play, 55
When they are angry, roar like lions for their prey.

Page 91

“Here thou need’st not dread the raven in the sky;
Night and day thou art safe,—our cottage is hard by.
Why bleat so after me? Why pull so at thy chain?
Sleep—and at break of day I will come to thee again!” [7] 60

—As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat;
And it seemed, as I retraced the ballad line by line,
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was *mine*. [8]

Again, and once again, did I repeat the song; 65
“Nay,” said I, “more than half to the damsel [9] must belong,
For she looked with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own.”

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

No other sheep ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

Towards the Lamb she look’d, and from that shady place 1800]

[Variant 3:

1802.

... is ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

... which ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1802.

... are ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1800.

... Poor creature, it must be
That thou hast lost thy mother, and ’tis that which troubles thee.
MS.]

[Variant 7:

1802.

... the raven in the sky, He will not come to thee, our Cottage is hard by, Night and day thou art safe as living thing can be, Be happy then and rest, what is’t that aileth thee?”
1800.]

[Variant 8: *Italics* first used in 1815.]

[Variant 9: This word was *italicised* from 1813 to 1832.]

* * * * *

THE FARMER OF TILSBURY VALE

Composed 1800.—Published 1815 [A]

[The character of this man was described to me, and the incident upon which the verses turn was told me, by Mr. Poole of Nether Stowey, with whom I became acquainted through our common friend, S. T. Coleridge. During my residence at Alfoxden, I used to see much of him, and had frequent occasions to admire the course of his daily life, especially his conduct to his labourers and poor neighbours; their virtues he carefully encouraged, and weighed their faults in the scales of charity. If I seem in these verses to have treated the weaknesses of the farmer and his transgressions too tenderly, it may in part be ascribed to my having received the story from one so averse to all harsh judgment. After his death was found in his escritoir, a lock of grey hair carefully preserved, with a notice that it had been cut from the head of his faithful shepherd, who had served him for a length of years. I need scarcely add that he felt for all men as his brothers. He was much beloved by distinguished persons—Mr. Coleridge, Mr. Southey, Sir H. Davy, and many others; and in his own neighbourhood was highly valued as a magistrate, a man of business, and in every other social relation. The latter part of the poem perhaps requires some apology, as being too much of an echo to ’The Reverie of Poor Susan’.—I.F.]

Page 92

Included in the “Poems referring to the Period of Old Age.”—Ed.

’Tis not for the unfeeling, the falsely refined,
The squeamish in taste, and the narrow of mind,
And the small critic wielding his delicate pen,
That I sing of old Adam, the pride of old men.

He dwells in the centre of London’s wide Town; 5
His staff is a sceptre—his grey hairs a crown;
And his bright eyes look brighter, set off by the streak
Of the unfaded rose that still blooms on his cheek. [1]

’Mid the dews, in the sunshine of morn,—’mid the joy
Of the fields, he collected that bloom, when a boy; 10
That countenance there fashioned, which, spite of a stain [2]
That his life hath received, to the last will remain. [3]

A Farmer he was; and his house [4] far and near
Was the boast of the country [5] for excellent cheer:
How oft have I heard in sweet Tilsbury Vale 15
Of the silver-rimmed horn whence he dealt his mild ale! [6]

Yet Adam was far as the farthest from ruin,
His fields seemed to know what their Master was doing;
And turnips, and corn-land, [7] and meadow, and lea,
All caught the infection—as generous as he. 20

Yet Adam prized little the feast and the bowl, [8]—
The fields better suited the ease of his soul:
He strayed through the fields like an indolent wight,
The quiet of nature was Adam’s delight.

For Adam was simple in thought; and the poor, 25 Familiar with him, made an inn of his door: He gave them the best that he had; or, to say What less may mislead you, they took it away. [9] Thus thirty smooth years did he thrive on his farm: The Genius of plenty preserved him from harm: 30 At length, what to most is a season of sorrow, His means are [10] run out,—he must beg, or must borrow.

To the neighbours he went,—all were free with their money;
For his hive had so long been replenished with honey,
That they dreamt not of dearth;—He continued his rounds, [11] 35
Knocked here-and knocked there, pounds still adding to pounds.

He paid what he could with his [12] ill-gotten pelf,
And something, it might be, reserved for himself: [13]
Then (what is too true) without hinting a word,
Turned his back on the country—and off like a bird. 40

You lift up your eyes!—but I guess that you frame
A judgment too harsh of the sin and the shame; [14]
In him it was scarcely [15] a business of art,
For this he did all in the *ease* [16] of his heart.

To London—a sad emigration I ween—45
With his grey hairs he went from the brook [17] and the green;
And there, with small wealth but his legs and his hands,
As lonely he stood as [18] a crow on the sands.

Page 93

All trades, as need [19] was, did old Adam assume,— Served as stable-boy, errand-boy, porter, and groom; 50 But nature is gracious, necessity kind, And, in spite of the shame that may lurk in his mind, [20] [21] He seems ten birthdays younger, is green and is stout; [22] Twice as fast as before does his blood run about; You would [23] say that each hair of his beard was alive, 55 And his fingers are busy as bees in a hive.

For he's not like an Old Man that leisurely goes
About work that he knows, [24] in a track that he knows;
But often his mind is compelled to demur,
And you guess that the more then his body must stir. 60

In the throng of the town like a stranger is he,
Like one whose own country's far over the sea;
And Nature, while through the great city he hies,
Full ten times a day takes his heart by surprise.

This gives him the fancy of one that is young, 65
More of soul in his face than of words on [25] his tongue;
Like a maiden of twenty he trembles and sighs,
And tears of fifteen will come [26] into his eyes.

What's a tempest to him, or the dry parching heats?
Yet he watches the clouds that pass over the streets; 70
With a look of such earnestness often will stand, [27]
You might think he'd twelve reapers at work in the Strand.

Where proud Covent-garden, in desolate hours Of snow and hoar-frost, spreads her fruits and her flowers, Old Adam will smile at the pains that have made 75 Poor winter look fine in such strange masquerade. [28] [29] 'Mid coaches and chariots, a waggon of straw, Like a magnet, the heart of old Adam can draw; With a thousand soft pictures his memory will teem, And his hearing is touched with the sounds of a dream. 80

Up the Haymarket hill he oft whistles his way,
Thrusts his hands in a waggon, and smells at the hay; [30]
He thinks of the fields he so often hath mown,
And is happy as if the rich freight were his own. [31]

But chiefly to Smithfield he loves to repair,—85
If you pass by at morning, you'll meet with him there.
The breath of the cows you may see him inhale,
And his heart all the while is in Tilsbury Vale.

Now farewell, old Adam! when low [32] thou art laid,
May one blade of grass spring over [33] thy head; 90

And I hope that thy grave, wheresoever it be,
Will hear the wind sigh through the leaves of a tree.

With this picture, which was taken from real life, compare the imaginative one of ‘The Reverie of Poor Susan’ [vol. i. p. 226]; and see (to make up the deficiencies of this class) ’The Excursion, passim’.—W. W. 1837.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

Page 94

[Variant 1:

1837.

Erect as a sunflower he stands, and the streak
Of the unfaded rose is expressed on his cheek. 1815.

... still enlivens his cheek. 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1840.

There fashion'd that countenance, which, in spite of a stain 1815.]

[Variant 3:

There's an old man in London, the prime of old men,
You may hunt for his match through ten thousand and ten,
Of prop or of staff, does he walk, does he run,
No more need has he than a flow'r of the sun. 1800.

This stanza appeared only in 1800, occupying the place of the three first stanzas in the final text.]

[Variant 4:

1815.

... name ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

Was the Top of the Country, ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

Not less than the skill of an Exchequer Teller
Could count the shoes worn on the steps of his cellar. 1800.

How oft have I heard in sweet Tilsbury Vale
Of the silver-rimmed horn whence he dealt his good ale. 1815.]

[Variant 7:

1815.

... plough'd land, ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1815.

... the noise of the bowl, 1800]

[Variant 9:

On the works of the world, on the bustle and sound,
Seated still in his boat, he look'd leisurely round;
And if now and then he his hands did employ,
'Twas with vanity, wonder, and infantine joy.

Only in the text of 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1815.

... were ... 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1815.

For they all still imagin'd his hive full of honey;
Like a Church-warden, Adam continu'd his rounds, 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1837.

... this ... 1800.]

[Variant 13:

1815.

... he kept to himself; 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1820.

You lift up your eyes, “O the merciless Jew!”
But in truth he was never more cruel than you; 1800.

...—and I guess that you frame
A judgment too harsh of the sin and the shame; 1815.]

[Variant 15:

1815.

... scarce e’en ... 1800.]

[Variant 16: *Italics* first used in 1815.]

[Variant 17:

1815.

... lawn ... 1800.]

[Variant 18:

1815.

He stood all alone like ... 1800.]

[Variant 19:

1800.

... needs ... 1815.

The edition of 1827 returns to the text of 1800.]

[Variant 20:

1815.

Both stable-boy, errand-boy, porter and groom;
You’d think it the life of a Devil in H—l,
But nature was kind, and with Adam ’twas well. 1800.]

Page 95

[Variant 21:

He’s ten birth-days younger, he’s green, and he’s stout,
Twice as fast as before does his blood run about,
You’d think it the life of a Devil in H—l,
But Nature is kind, and with Adam ’twas well.

This stanza appeared only in 1800. It was followed by that which now forms lines 53-56 of the final text.]

[Variant 22:

1815.

He’s ten birth-days younger, he’s green, and he’s stout, 1800.]

[Variant 23:

1815.

You’d ... 1800.]

[Variant 24:

1815.

... does ... 1800.]

[Variant 25:

1815.

... in ... 1800.]

[Variant 26:

1800.

... have come ... 1815.

The text of 1820 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 27:

1815.

...he'll stand 1800.]

[Variant 28:

1837.

Where proud Covent-Garden, in frost and in snow,
Spreads her fruits and her flow'rs, built up row after row;
Old Adam will point with his finger and say,
To them that stand by, "I've seen better than they." 1800.

... her fruit ... 1815.

(The text of 1815 is otherwise identical with that of 1837.)]

[Variant 29:

Where the apples are heap'd on the barrows in piles,
You see him stop short, he looks long, and he smiles;
He looks, and he smiles, and a Poet might spy
The image of fifty green fields in his eye.

Only in the text of 1800.]

[Variant 30:

1837.

... in the waggons, and smells to the hay; 1800.

... in the Waggon, and smells at ... 1815.]

[Variant 31:

1815.

... has mown,
And sometimes he dreams that the hay is his own. 1800.]

[Variant 32:

1815.

... where'er ... 1800.]

[Variant 33:

1850.

... spring up o’er ... 1800.

... over ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: i. e. first published in the 1815 edition of the Poems: but, although dated by Wordsworth 1803, it had appeared in ’The Morning Post’ of July 21, 1800, under the title, ’The Farmer of Tilsbury Vale. A Character’. It was then unsigned.—Ed.]

* * * * *

POEMS ON THE NAMING OF PLACES

ADVERTISEMENT

By Persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents will have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents or renew the gratification of such Feelings, Names have been given to Places by the Author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence. [A]—W. W. 1800.

Page 96

[Footnote A: It should be explained that owing to the chronological plan adopted in this edition (see the preface to vol. i.), two of the poems which were placed by Wordsworth in his series of “Poems on the Naming of Places,” but which belong to later years, are printed in subsequent volumes.—Ed.]

* * * * *

“IT WAS AN APRIL MORNING: FRESH AND CLEAR”

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at Grasmere. This poem was suggested on the banks of the brook that runs through Easdale, which is, in some parts of its course, as wild and beautiful as brook can be. I have composed thousands of verses by the side of it.—I. F.]

It was an April morning: fresh and clear
The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,
Ran with a young man’s speed; and yet the voice
Of waters which the winter had supplied
Was softened down into a vernal tone. 5
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
And hopes and wishes, from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.
The budding groves seemed eager to urge on
The steps of June; as if their various hues 10
Were only hindrances that stood between
Them and their object: but, meanwhile, prevailed
Such an entire contentment in the air [1]
That every naked ash, and tardy tree
Yet leafless, showed as if [2] the countenance 15
With which it looked on this delightful day
Were native to the summer.—Up the brook
I roamed in the confusion of my heart,
Alive to all things and forgetting all.
At length I to a sudden turning came 20
In this continuous glen, where down a rock
The Stream, so ardent in its course before,
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all
Which I till then had heard, appeared the voice
Of common pleasure: beast and bird, the lamb, 25
The shepherd’s dog, the linnet and the thrush
Vied with this waterfall, and made a song,
Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth

Or like some natural produce of the air,
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here; 30
But ’twas the foliage of the rocks—the birch,
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
With hanging islands of resplendent furze:
And, on a summit, distant a short space,
By any who should look beyond the dell, 35
A single mountain-cottage might be seen.
I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
“Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.”
—Soon did the spot become my other home, 40
My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves, 45
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of EMMA’S DELL.

Page 97

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

The budding groves appear'd as if in haste
To spur the steps of June; as if their shades
Of *various* green were hindrances that stood
Between them and their object: yet, meanwhile,
There was such deep contentment in the air 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... seem'd as though ... 1800.]

The text of the "Poems on the Naming of Places" underwent comparatively little alteration in successive editions. Both the changes in the first poem were made in 1845. From the Fenwick note, it is evident that "the Rivulet" was Easdale beck. But where was "Emma's Dell"? In the autumn of 1877, Dr. Cradock, the Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford, took me to a place, of which he afterwards wrote,

"I have a fancy for a spot just beyond Goody Bridge to the left, where the brook makes a curve, and returns to the road two hundred yards farther on. But I have not discovered a trace of authority in favour of the idea farther than that the wooded bend of the brook with the stepping stones across it, connected with a field-path recently stopped, was a very favourite haunt of Wordsworth's. At the upper part of this bend, near to the place where the brook returns to the road, is a deep pool at the foot of a rush of water. In this pool, a man named Wilson was drowned many years ago. He lived at a house on the hill called Score Crag, which, if my conjecture as to Emma's Dell is right, is the 'single mountain cottage' on a 'summit, distant a short space.' Wordsworth, happening to be walking at no great distance, heard a loud shriek. It was that of Mr. Wilson, the father, who had just discovered his son's body in the beck."

In the "Reminiscences" of the poet, by the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge, which were contributed to the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth', written by his nephew (vol. ii. pp. 300-315), there is a record of a walk they took up Easdale to this place, entering the field just at the spot which Dr. Cradock supposes to be "Emma's Dell."

“He turned aside at a little farm-house, and took us into a swelling field to look down on the tumbling stream which bounded it, and which we saw precipitated at a distance, in a broad white sheet, from the mountain.” (This refers to Easdale Force.) “Then, as he mused for an instant, he said,’I have often thought what a solemn thing it would be could we have brought to our mind at once all the scenes of distress and misery which any spot, however beautiful and calm before us, has been witness to since the beginning. That water break, with the glassy quiet pool beneath it, that looks so lovely, and presents no images to the mind but of peace—there, I remember, the only son of his father, a poor man who lived

Page 98

yonder, was drowned.'"

This walk and conversation took place in October 1836. If any one is surprised that Wordsworth, supposing him to have been then looking into the very dell on which he wrote the above poem in 1800, did not name it to Mr. Coleridge, he must remember that he was not in the habit of speaking of the places he had memorialised in verse, and that in 1836 his "Sister Emmeline" had for a year been a confirmed invalid at Rydal. I have repeatedly followed Easdale beck all the way up from its junction with the Rothay to the Tarn, and found no spot corresponding so closely to the realistic detail of this poem as the one suggested by Dr. Cradock. There are two places further up the dale where the "sallies of glad sound" such as are referred to in the poem, are even more distinctly audible; but they are not at "a sudden turning," as is the spot above Goody Bridge. If one leaves the Easdale road at this bridge, and keeps to the side of the beck for a few hundred yards, till he reaches the turning,—especially if it be a bright April morning, such as that described in the poem,—and remembers that this path by the brook was a favourite resort of Wordsworth and his sister, the probability of Dr. Cradock's suggestion will be apparent. Lady Richardson, who knew the place, and appreciated the poem as thoroughly as any of Wordsworth's friends, told me that she concurred in this identification of the "dell."—Ed.

* * * * *

TO JOANNA

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at Grasmere. The effect of her laugh is an extravagance, though the effect of the reverberation of voices in some parts of the mountains is very striking. There is, in 'The Excursion', an allusion to the bleat of a lamb thus re-echoed, and described without any exaggeration, as I heard it, on the side of Stickle Tarn, from the precipice that stretches on to Langdale Pikes.—I.F.]

Amid the smoke of cities did you pass
The time [1] of early youth; and there you learned,
From years of quiet industry, to love
The living Beings by your own fire-side,
With such a strong devotion, that your heart 5
Is slow to meet [2] the sympathies of them
Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.
Yet we, who are transgressors in this kind,
Dwelling retired in our simplicity 10

Among the woods and fields, we love you well,
Joanna! and I guess, since you have been
So distant from us now for two long years,
That you will gladly listen to discourse,
However trivial, if you thence be taught [3] 15
That they, with whom you once were happy, talk
Familiarly of you and of old times.

Page 99

While I was seated, now some ten days past,
Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop
Their ancient neighbour, the old steeple-tower, 20
The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by [A]
Came forth to greet me; and when he had asked,
"How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid!
And when will she return to us?" he paused;
And, after short exchange of village news, 25
He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,
Reviving obsolete idolatry,
I, like a Runic Priest, in characters
Of formidable size had chiselled out
Some uncouth name upon the native rock, 30
Above the Rotha, by the forest-side.
—Now, by those dear immunities of heart
Engendered between [4] malice and true love,
I was not loth to be so catechised,
And this was my reply:—"As it befel, 35
One summer morning we had walked abroad
At break of day, Joanna and myself.
—'Twas that delightful season when the broom,
Full-flowered, and visible on every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold. 40
Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks;
And when we came in front of that tall rock
That eastward looks, I there stopped short—and stood [5]
Tracing [6] the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit; such delight I found 45
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower
That intermixture of delicious hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,
In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart. 50
—When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again; 55
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern; Hammar-scar,
And the tall Steep of Silver-how, sent forth
A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone; 60

Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew
His speaking-trumpet;—back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head. 65
—Now whether (said I to our cordial Friend,
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face) this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched 70
With dreams and visionary impulses
To me alone imparted, sure I am [7]
That there was a loud uproar in the hills.
And, while we both were listening, to my side
The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished

Page 100

75
To shelter from some object of her fear.
—And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons
Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
Beneath this rock, at sunrise, on a calm
And silent morning, I sat down, and there, 80
In memory of affections old and true,
I chiselled out in those rude characters
Joanna's name deep in the living stone:—[8]
And I, and all who dwell by my fireside,
Have called the lovely rock, JOANNA'S ROCK." 85

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

Your time ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

Is slow towards... 1800.

... toward.... 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1836.
... are taught... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

... betwixt ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

Which looks towards the East, I there stopp'd short, 1800.

... toward ... 1827.]

[Variant 6:

1836.

And trac'd ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

Is not for me to tell; but sure I am 1800]

[Variant 8:

1845.

Joanna's name upon the living stone. 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The Rectory at Grasmere, where Wordsworth lived from 1811 to 1813, and where two of his children died.—Ed.]

In Cumberland and Westmoreland are several Inscriptions upon the native rock which from the wasting of Time and the rudeness of the Workmanship had been mistaken for Runic. They are without doubt Roman.

The Rotha, mentioned in this poem, is the River which flowing through the Lakes of Grasmere and Rydale falls into Wyndermere. On Helm-Crag, that impressive single Mountain at the head of the Vale of Grasmere, is a Rock which from most points of view bears a striking resemblance to an Old Woman cowering. Close by this rock is one of those Fissures or Caverns, which in the language of the Country are called Dungeons. The other Mountains either immediately surround the Vale of Grasmere, or belong to the same Cluster.—W. W. 1800.

Most of the Mountains here mentioned immediately surround the vale of Grasmere; of the others, some are at a considerable distance, but they belong to the same cluster.—-W. W. 1802.

The majority of the changes introduced into the text of this poem were made in the year 1836.

Page 101

The place where the echo of the bleat of the lamb was heard—referred to in the Fenwick note—may be easily found. The “precipice” is Pavy Ark. “The ’lofty firs, that overtop their ancient neighbour, the old steeple-tower,’ stood by the roadside, scarcely twenty yards north-west from the steeple of Grasmere church. Their site is now included in the road, which has been widened at that point. They were Scotch firs of unusual size, and might justly be said to ‘overtop their neighbour’ the tower. Mr. Fleming Green, who well remembers the trees, gave me this information, which is confirmed by other inhabitants.

> “When the road was enlarged, not many years ago, the roots of the trees were found by the workmen.”

(Dr. Cradock to the editor.) The

> ’tall rock
> That eastward looks’

by the banks of the Rotha, presenting a “lofty barrier” “from base to summit,” is manifestly a portion of Helmcrag. It is impossible to know whether Wordsworth carved Joanna Hutchinson’s name anywhere on Helmcrag, and it is useless to enquire. If he did so, the discovery of the place would not help any one to understand or appreciate the poem. It is obvious that he did not intend to be literally exact in details, as the poem was written in 1800, and addressed to Joanna Hutchinson,—who is spoken of as having been absent from Grasmere “for two long years;” and Wordsworth says that he carved the Runic characters ‘in memoriam’ eighteen months after that summer morning when he heard the echo of her laugh. But the family took up residence at Grasmere only in December 1799, and the “Poems on the Naming of Places” were published before the close of 1800. The effect of these lines to Joanna, however, is certainly not impaired—it may even be enhanced—by our inability to localise them. Only one in the list of places referred to can occasion any perplexity, *viz*., Hammar-scar, since it is a name now disused in the district. It used to be applied to some rocks on the flank of Silver-how, to the wood around them, and also to the gorge between Silver-how and Loughrigg. Hammar, from the old Norse ‘hamar’, signifies a steep broken rock.

The imaginative description of the echo of the lady’s laugh suggests a parallel passage from Michael Drayton’s ‘Polyolbion’, which Wordsworth must doubtless have read. (See his sister’s reference to Drayton in her ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’, in 1803: in the note to the poem, ‘At the grave of Burns’, p. 382 of this volume.)

’Which *Copland* scarce had spoke, but quickly every Hill Upon her verge that stands, the neighbouring valleys fill; *Helvillon* from his height, it through the mountains threw, From whence as soon again, the sound *Dunbalrase* drew, From whose stone-trophed head, it on the *Wendrosse* went, Which tow’rds the sea again, resounded it to *Dent*, That *Brodwater* therewith within her banks astound, In sailing to the sea, told it to

Egremound, Whose buildings, walks, and streets, with echoes loud and long, Did mightily commend old *Copland* for her song.'

'Polyolbion', The Thirtieth Song, ll. 155-164.

Page 102

Any one who compares this passage with Wordsworth's 'Joanna' will see the difference between the elaborate fancy of a topographical narrator, and the vivid imagination of a poetical idealist. A somewhat similar instance of indebtedness—in which the debt is repaid by additional insight—is seen when we compare a passage from Sir John Davies's 'Orchestra, or a poem on Dancing' (stanza 49), with one from 'The Ancient Mariner', Part VI. stanzas 2 and 3—although there was more of the true imaginative light in Davies than in Drayton.

'For lo, the sea that fleets about the land,
And like a girdle clips her solid waist,
Music and measure both doth understand;
For his great crystal eye is always cast
Up to the moon, and on her fixed fast:
And as she danceth in her palid sphere
So danceth he about his centre here.'

DAVIES

'Still as a slave before his lord,
The ocean hath no blast;
His great bright eye most silently
Up to the moon is cast—

If he may know which way to go;
For she guides him smooth or grim.
See, brother, see! how graciously
She looketh down on him.'

COLERIDGE.

These extracts show how both Wordsworth and Coleridge assimilated past literary products, and how they glorified them by reproduction. There was little, however, in the poetic imagery of previous centuries that Wordsworth reproduced. His imagination worked in a sphere of its own, free from the trammels of precedent; and he was more original than any other nineteenth century poet in his use of symbol and metaphor. The poem 'To Joanna' was probably composed on August 22, 1800, as the following occurs in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal under that date:

"William was composing all the morning ... W. read us the poem of Joanna, beside the Rothay, by the roadside."

Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in January 1801, of

> “these continuous echoes in the story of ‘Joanna’s laugh,’ when the mountains and all the scenery seem absolutely alive.”

Ed.

* * * * *

“THERE IS AN EMINENCE,—OF THESE OUR HILLS”

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[It is not accurate that the Eminence here alluded to could be seen from our orchard-seat. It rises above the road by the side of Grasmere Lake towards Keswick, and its name is Stone-Arthur.—I.F.]

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, [1] so high 5
Above us, and so distant in its height,
Is visible; and often seems to send
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.

Page 103

The meteors make of it a favourite haunt:
The star of Jove, so beautiful and large 10
In the mid heavens, is never half so fair
As when he shines above it. 'Tis in truth
The loneliest place we have among the clouds.
And She who dwells with me, whom I have loved
With such communion, that no place on earth 15
Can ever be a solitude to me,
Hath to this lonely Summit given my Name. [2]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1840.

... this Cliff, ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

Hath said, this lonesome Peak shall bear my Name. 1800.]

Stone-Arthur is the name of the hill, on the east side of the Vale of Grasmere, opposite Helm Crag, and between Green Head Ghyll and Tongue Ghyll.—Ed.

* * * * *

"A NARROW GIRDLE OF ROUGH STONES AND CRAGS"

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[The character of the eastern shore of Grasmere Lake is quite changed since these verses were written, by the public road being carried along its side. The friends spoken of were Coleridge and my Sister, and the facts occurred strictly as recorded.—I.F.]

A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,
A rude and natural causeway, interposed
Between the water and a winding slope
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy: [A] 5
And there myself and two beloved Friends,
One calm September morning, ere the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun,
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.
—Ill suits the road with one in haste; but we 10
Played with our time; and, as we strolled along,
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore—
Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough,
Each on the other heaped, along the line 15
Of the dry wreck. And, in our vacant mood,
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,
Suddenly halting now—a lifeless stand! 20
And starting off again with freak as sudden; [1]
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while,
Making report of an invisible breeze
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,
Its playmate, rather say, its moving soul. [2] 25
—And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair
Either to be divided from the place 30

Page 104

On which it grew, or to be left alone
To its own beauty. Many such there are,
Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern, [3]
So stately, of the queen Osmunda named;
Plant lovelier, in its own retired abode 35
On Grasmere's beach, than Naiad by the side
Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.
—So fared we that bright [4] morning: from the fields,
Meanwhile, a noise was heard, the busy mirth 40
Of reapers, men and women, boys and girls.
Delighted much to listen [5] to those sounds,
And feeding thus our fancies, we advanced [6]
Along the indented shore; when suddenly,
Through a thin veil of glittering haze was seen [7] 45
Before us, on a point of jutting land,
The tall and upright figure of a Man
Attired in peasant's garb, who stood alone,
Angling beside the margin of the lake. [8]
"Improvident and reckless," we exclaimed, 50
"The Man must be, who thus can lose a day [9]
Of the mid harvest, when the labourer's hire
Is ample, and some little might be stored
Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time."
Thus talking of that Peasant, we approached 55
Close to the spot where with his rod and line
He stood alone; whereat he turned his head
To greet us—and we saw a Man worn down
By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks
And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean 60
That for my single self I looked at them,
Forgetful of the body they sustained.—
Too weak to labour in the harvest field,
The Man was using his best skill to gain
A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake 65
That knew not of his wants. I will not say
What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how
The happy idleness of that sweet morn,
With all its lovely images, was changed
To serious musing and to self-reproach. 70

Nor did we fail to see within ourselves
What need there is to be reserved in speech,
And temper all our thoughts with charity.
—Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,
My Friend, Myself, and She who then received 75
The same admonishment, have called the place
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed
As e'er by mariner was given to bay
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast;
And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT is the name it bears. 80

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815. (Compressing five lines into three.)

... thistle's beard, Which, seeming lifeless half, and half impell'd By some internal feeling, skimm'd along Close to the surface of the lake that lay Asleep in a dead calm, ran closely on Along the dead calm lake, now here, now there, 1800.]

[Variant 2:

Page 105

1820.

Its very playmate, and its moving soul. 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1802.

... tall plant ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

... sweet ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1800.

... with listening ... C.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

And in the fashion which I have describ'd,
Feeding unthinking fancies, we advanc'd 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

... we saw 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1800.

... a lake. 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

... the margin of the lake. That way we turn'd our steps; nor was it long, Ere making ready comments on the sight Which then we saw, with one and the same voice We all cried out, that he must be indeed An idle man, who thus could lose a day 1800.

Did all cry out, that he must be indeed
An Idler, he who thus ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: A new road has destroyed this retirement. (MS. footnote in Lord Coleridge's copy of the edition of 1836.)—Ed.]

The text of this poem reached its final state in the edition of 1827. The same is true of the poem which follows, 'To M. H.', with the exception of a single change.

In Wordsworth's early days at Grasmere, a wild woodland path of quiet beauty led from Dove Cottage along the margin of the lake to the "Point" referred to in this poem, leaving the eastern shore truly "safe in its own privacy"—a "retired and difficult way"; the high-way road for carriages being at that time over White Moss Common. The late Dr. Arnold, of Rugby and Foxhowe, used to name the three roads from Rydal to Grasmere thus: the highest, "Old Corruption"; the intermediate, "Bit by bit Reform"; the lowest and most level, "Radical Reform." Wordsworth was never quite reconciled to the radical reform effected on a road that used to be so delightfully wild and picturesque. The spot which the three friends rather infelicitously named "Point Rash-Judgment" is easily identified; although, as Wordsworth remarks, the character of the shore is changed by the public road being carried along its side. The friends were quite aware that the "memorial name" they gave it was "uncouth." In spite of its awkwardness, however, it will probably survive; if not for Browning's reason

'The better the uncouther;
Do roses stick like burrs?'

at least because of the incident which gave rise to the poem. The date of composition is fixed by Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal,

"10th Oct. 1800, Wm. sat up after me, writing 'Point
Rash-Judgment.'"

Ed.

* * * * *

Page 106

TO M. H.

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[To Mary Hutchinson, two years before our marriage. The pool alluded to is in Rydal Upper Park.—I.F.]

Our walk was far among the ancient trees:
There was no road, nor any woodman's path;
But a [1] thick umbrage—checking the wild growth
Of weed and sapling, along soft green turf [2]
Beneath the branches—of itself had made 5
A track, that [3] brought us to a slip of lawn,
And a small bed of water in the woods.
All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink
On its firm margin, even as from a well,
Or some stone-basin which the herdsman's hand 10
Had shaped for their refreshment; nor did sun,
Or wind from any quarter, ever come,
But as a blessing to this calm recess,
This glade of water and this one green field.
The spot was made by Nature for herself; 15
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them; but it is beautiful;
And if a man should plant his cottage near,
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
And blend its waters with his daily meal, 20
He would so love it, that in his death-hour
Its image would survive among his thoughts:
And therefore, my sweet MARY, this still Nook,
With all its beeches, we have named from You! [4]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

But the ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

... on the soft green turf 1800.

... smooth dry ground MS.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

... which ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1800.

... for You. 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

To find the pool referred to in the Fenwick note, I have carefully examined the course of Rydal beck, all the way up to the foot of the Fell. There is a pool beyond the enclosures of the Hall property, about five hundred feet above Rydal Mount, which partly corresponds to the description in the poem, but there is no wood around it now; and the trees which skirt its margin are birch, ash, oak, and hazel, but there are no beeches. It is a short way below some fine specimens of ice-worn rocks, which are to the right of the stream as you ascend it, and above these rocks is a well-marked moraine. It is a deep crystal pool, and has a “firm margin” of (artificially placed) stones. This may be the spot described in the poem; or another, within the grounds of the Hall, may be the place referred to. It is a sequestered nook, beside the third waterfall as you ascend the

Page 107

beck—this third cascade being itself a treble fall. Seen two or three days after rain, when the stream is full enough to break over the whole face of the rock in showers of snowy brightness, yet low enough to shew the rock behind its transparent veil, it is specially beautiful. Trees change so much in eighty years that the absence of "beeches" now would not make this site impossible. In a MS. copy of the poem (of date Dec. 28, 1800), the last line is

> 'With all its poplars, we have named from you.'

Of the circular pool beneath this fall it may be said, as Wordsworth describes it, that

> '... both flocks and herds might drink
> On its firm margin, even as from a well;'

and a "small slip of lawn" might easily have existed there in his time. We cannot, however, be confident as to the locality, and I add the opinion of several, whose judgment may be deferred to. Dr. Cradock writes:

"As to Mary Hutchinson's pool, I think that it was not on the beck anywhere, but some detached little pool, far up the hill, to the eastwards of the Hall, in 'the woods.' The description does not well suit any part of Rydal beck; and no spot thereon could long 'remain unknown,' as the brook was until lately much haunted by anglers."

My difficulty as to a site "far up the hill" is, that it must have been a pool of some size, if "both flocks and herds might drink" all round it; and there is no stream, scarce even a rill that joins Rydal beck on the right, all the way up from its junction with the Rothay. The late Mr. Hull of Rydal Cottage, wrote:

"Although closely acquainted with every nook about Rydal Park, I have never been able to discover any spot corresponding to that described in Wordsworth's lines to M. H. It is possible, however, that the 'small bed of water' may have been a temporary rain pool, such as sometimes lodges in the hollows on the mountain-slope after heavy rain."

Mr. F. M. Jones, the agent of the Rydal property, writes:

> "I do not know of any pool of water in the Upper Rydal Park. There are some pools up the river, 'Mirror Pool' among them; but I hardly think there can ever have been 'beech-trees' growing near them."

There are many difficulties, and the place cannot now be identified. Wordsworth's own wish will doubtless be realised,

’The travellers know it not, and ’twill remain
Unknown to them.’

Ed.

* * * * *

THE WATERFALL AND THE EGLANTINE

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Suggested nearer to Grasmere, in the same mountain track as that referred to in the following note. The Eglantine remained many years afterwards, but is now gone.—I.F.]

Included among the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Page 108

I “Begone, thou fond presumptuous Elf,”
Exclaimed an angry Voice, [1]
“Nor dare to thrust thy foolish self
Between me and my choice!”
A small Cascade fresh swoln with snows 5
Thus threatened a poor Briar-rose, [2]
That, all bespattered with his foam,
And dancing high and dancing low,
Was living, as a child might know,
In an unhappy home. 10

II “Dost thou presume my course to block?
Off, off! or, puny Thing!
I’ll hurl thee headlong with the rock
To which thy fibres cling.”
The Flood was tyrannous and strong; [A] 15
The patient Briar suffered long,
Nor did he utter groan or sigh,
Hoping the danger would be past;
But, seeing no relief, at last,
He ventured to reply. 20

III “Ah!” said the Briar, “blame me not;
Why should we dwell in strife?
We who in this sequestered spot [3]
Once lived a happy life!
You stirred me on my rocky bed—25
What pleasure through my veins you spread
The summer long, from day to day,
My leaves you freshened and bedewed;
Nor was it common gratitude
That did your cares repay. 30

IV “When spring came on with bud and bell, [B]
Among these rocks did I
Before you hang my wreaths [4] to tell
That gentle days were nigh!
And in the sultry summer hours, 35
I sheltered you with leaves and flowers;
And in my leaves—now shed and gone,
The linnet lodged, and for us two
Chanted his pretty songs, when you
Had little voice or none. 40

V “But now proud thoughts are in your breast—
What grief is mine you see,
Ah! would you think, even yet how blest
Together we might be!
Though of both leaf and flower bereft, 45
Some ornaments to me are left—
Rich store of scarlet hips is mine,
With which I, in my humble way,
Would deck you many a winter day, [5]
A happy Eglantine!” 50

VI What more he said I cannot tell,
The Torrent down the rocky dell
Came thundering loud and fast; [6]
I listened, nor aught else could hear;
The Briar quaked—and much I fear 55
Those accents were his last.

* * * * *

Page 109

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... a thundering Voice, 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1820.

A falling Water swoln with snows
Thus spake to a poor Briar-rose, 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1820.

... in this, our natal spot, 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1815.

... wreath ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

... Winter's day, 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1840.

The stream came thundering down the dell
And gallop'd loud and fast; 1800.

The Torrent thundered down the dell
With unabating haste; 1815.

With aggravated haste; 1827.

The Stream came thundering down the dell 1836.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare 'The Ancient Mariner' (part I. stanza II.):

And now the Storm-blast came, and he
Was tyrannous and strong.

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare 'A Farewell', p. 325, l. 17.—Ed.]

The spot referred to in this poem can be identified with perfect accuracy. The Eglantine grew on the little brook that runs past two cottages (close to the path under Nab Scar), which have been built since the poet's time, and are marked Brockstone on the Ordnance Map.

"The plant itself of course has long disappeared: but in following up the rill through the copse, above the cottages, I found an unusually large Eglantine, growing by the side of the stream."

(Dr Cradock to the editor, in 1877.) It still grows luxuriantly there.

The following extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal illustrates both this and the next poem:

"Friday, 23rd April 1802.—It being a beautiful morning, we set off at eleven o'clock, intending to stay out of doors all the morning. We went towards Rydal, under Nab Scar. The sun shone and we were lazy. Coleridge pitched upon several places to sit down upon; but we could not be all of one mind respecting sun and shade, so we pushed on to the foot of the Scar. It was very grand when we looked up, very stony; here and there a budding tree. William observed that the umbrella Yew-tree that breasts the wind had lost its character as a tree, and had become like solid wood. Coleridge and I pushed on before. We left William sitting on the stones, feasting with silence, and I sat down upon a rocky seat, a couch it might be, under the Bower of William's 'Eglantine,' 'Andrew's Broom.' He was below us, and we could see him. He came to us, and repeated his Poems, while we sat beside him. We lingered long, looking into the vales; Ambleside Vale, with the copses, the village under

Page 110

the hill, and the green fields; Rydale, with a lake all alive and glittering, yet but little stirred by breezes; and our own dear Grasmere, making a little round lake of Nature's own, with never a house, never a green field, but the copses and the bare hills enclosing it, and the river flowing out of it. Above rose the Coniston Fells, in their own shape and colour, ... the sky, and the clouds, and a few wild creatures. Coleridge went to search for something new. We saw him climbing up towards a rock. He called us, and we found him in a bower,—the sweetest that was ever seen. The rock on one side is very high, and all covered with ivy, which hung loosely about, and bore bunches of brown berries. On the other side, it was higher than my head. We looked down on the Ambleside vale, that seemed to wind away from us, the village lying under the hill. The fir tree island was reflected beautifully.... About this bower there is mountain-ash, common ash, yew tree, ivy, holly, hawthorn, roses, flowers, and a carpet of moss. Above at the top of the rock there is another spot. It is scarce a bower, a little parlour, not enclosed by walls, but shaped out for a resting-place by the rocks, and the ground rising about it. It had a sweet moss carpet. We resolved to go and plant flowers, in both these places to-morrow."

This extract is taken from the "Journal" as originally transcribed by me in 1889. When it appears in this edition it will be greatly enlarged.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE OAK AND THE BROOM

A PASTORAL

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Suggested upon the mountain pathway that leads from Upper Rydal to Grasmere. The ponderous block of stone, which is mentioned in the poem, remains, I believe, to this day, a good way up Nab-Scar. Broom grows under it, and in many places on the side of the precipice.—I.F.]

One of the "Poems of the Fancy."—Ed.

I His simple truths did Andrew glean
Beside the babbling rills;
A careful student he had been
Among the woods and hills.
One winter's night, when through the trees 5
The wind was roaring, [1] on his knees

His youngest born did Andrew hold:
And while the rest, a ruddy quire,
Were seated round their blazing fire,
This Tale the Shepherd told. 10

II “I saw a crag, a lofty stone
As ever tempest beat!
Out of its head an Oak had grown,
A Broom out of its feet.
The time was March, a cheerful noon—15
The thaw wind, with the breath of June,
Breathed gently from the warm south-west:
When, in a voice sedate with age,
This Oak, a giant and a sage, [2]
His neighbour thus addressed:—20

Page 111

III "'Eight weary weeks, through rock and clay,
Along this mountain's edge,
The Frost hath wrought both night and day,
Wedge driving after wedge.
Look up! and think, above your head 25
What trouble, surely, will be bred;
Last night I heard a crash—'tis true,
The splinters took another road—
I see them yonder—what a load
For such a Thing as you! 30

IV "'You are preparing as before
To deck your slender shape;
And yet, just three years back—no more—
You had a strange escape:
Down from yon cliff a fragment broke; 35
It thundered down, with fire and smoke,
And hitherward pursued its way; [3]
This ponderous block was caught by me,
And o'er your head, as you may see,
'Tis hanging to this day! 40

V "'If breeze or bird to this rough steep
Your kind's first seed did bear;
The breeze had better been asleep,
The bird caught in a snare: [4]
For you and your green twigs decoy 45
The little witless shepherd-boy
To come and slumber in your bower;
And, trust me, on some sultry noon,
Both you and he, Heaven knows how soon!
Will perish in one hour. 50

VI "'From me this friendly warning take'—
The Broom began to doze,
And thus, to keep herself awake,
Did gently interpose:
'My thanks for your discourse are due; 55
That more than what you say is true, [5]
I know, and I have known it long;
Frail is the bond by which we hold
Our being, whether young or old, [6]
Wise, foolish, weak, or strong. 60

VII "'Disasters, do the best we can,
Will reach both great and small;
And he is oft the wisest man,
Who is not wise at all.
For me, why should I wish to roam? 65
This spot is my paternal home,
It is my pleasant heritage;
My father many a happy year,
Spread here [7] his careless blossoms, here
Attained a good old age. 70

VIII "'Even such as his may be my lot.
What cause have I to haunt
My heart with terrors? Am I not
In truth a favoured plant!
On me such bounty Summer pours, 75
That I am covered o'er with flowers; [8]

Page 112

And, when the Frost is in the sky,
My branches are so fresh and gay
That you might look at me [9] and say,
This Plant can never die. 80

IX "'The butterfly, all green and gold,
To me hath often flown,
Here in my blossoms to behold
Wings lovely as his own.
When grass is chill with rain or dew, 85
Beneath my shade, the mother-ewe
Lies with her infant lamb; I see
The love they to each other make,
And the sweet joy which they partake,
It is a joy to me.' 90

X "Her voice was blithe, her heart was light;
The Broom might have pursued
Her speech, until the stars of night
Their journey had renewed;
But in the branches of the oak 95
Two ravens now began to croak
Their nuptial song, a gladsome air;
And to her own green bower the breeze
That instant brought two stripling bees
To rest, or [10] murmur there. 100

XI "One night, my Children! from the north
There came a furious blast; [11]
At break of day I ventured forth,
And near the cliff I passed.
The storm had fallen upon the Oak, 105
And struck him with a mighty stroke,
And whirled, and whirled him far away;
And, in one hospitable cleft,
The little careless Broom was left
To live for many a day." 110

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

... thundering, ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

... half giant and half sage, 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1820.

It came, you know, with fire and smoke
And hither did it bend its way. 1800.

And hitherward it bent its way. 1802.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

The Thing had better been asleep,
Whatever thing it were,
Or Breeze, or Bird, or fleece of Sheep,
That first did plant you there. 1800.

Or Breeze, or Bird, or Dog, or Sheep, 1802.]

[Variant 5:

1820.

That it is true, and more than true, 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

... be we young or old, 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

Here spread ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1815.

The Spring for me a garland weaves
Of yellow flowers and verdant leaves, 1800.]

Page 113

[Variant 9:

1802.

... on me ... 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1827.

To feed and ... 1800.

To rest and ... 1815.]

[Variant 11:

1815.

One night the Wind came from the North
And blew a furious blast, 1800.]

The spot is fixed within narrow limits by the Fenwick note. It is, beyond doubt, on the wooded part of Nab-Scar, through which the upper path from Grasmere to Rydal passes. There is one huge block of stone high above the path, which answers well to the description in the second stanza. Crabb Robinson wrote in his 'Diary' (Sept. 11, 1816):

"The poem of 'The Oak and the Broom' proceeded from his" (Wordsworth)
"beholding a tree in just such a situation as he described the broom
to be in."

Ed.

* * * * *

"'TIS SAID, THAT SOME HAVE DIED FOR LOVE"

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

One of the "Poems founded on the Affections."—Ed.

'Tis said, that some have died for love:
And here and there a church-yard grave is found
In the cold north's unhallowed ground,
Because the wretched man himself had slain,

His love was such a grievous pain. 5
And there is one whom I five years have known;
He dwells alone
Upon Helvellyn's side:
He loved—the pretty Barbara died;
And thus he makes his moan: 10
Three years had Barbara in her grave been laid
When thus his moan he made:

"Oh, move, thou Cottage, from behind that oak!
Or let the aged tree uprooted lie,
That in some other way yon smoke 15
May mount into the sky!
The clouds pass on; they from the heavens depart:
I look—the sky is empty space;
I know not what I trace;
But when I cease to look, my hand is on my heart. 20

"O! what a weight is in these shades! Ye leaves,
That murmur once so dear, when will it cease?
Your sound my heart of rest bereaves,
It robs my heart of peace. [1]
Thou Thrush, that singest loud—and loud and free, 25
Into yon row of willows flit,
Upon that alder sit;
Or sing another song, or choose another tree.

"Roll back, sweet Rill! back to thy mountain-bounds,
And there for ever be thy waters chained! 30
For thou dost haunt the air with sounds
That cannot be sustained;
If still beneath that [2] pine-tree's ragged bough
Headlong yon waterfall must come,
Oh let it then be dumb! 35
Be anything, sweet Rill, but that which thou art now.

Page 114

“Thou Eglantine, so bright with sunny showers,
Proud as a rainbow spanning half the vale, [3]
Thou one fair shrub, oh! shed thy flowers,
And stir not in the gale. 40
For thus to see thee nodding in the air,
To see thy arch thus stretch and bend,
Thus rise and thus descend,—
Disturbs me till the sight is more than I can bear.”

The Man who makes this feverish complaint 45
Is one of giant stature, who could dance
Equipped from head to foot in iron mail.
Ah gentle Love! if ever thought was thine
To store up kindred hours for me, thy face
Turn from me, gentle Love! nor let me walk 50
Within the sound of Emma’s voice, nor [4] know
Such happiness as I have known to-day.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... Ye leaves, When will that dying murmur be suppress’d? Your sound my heart of peace bereaves, It robs my heart of rest. 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

... yon ... MS.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

Thou Eglantine whose arch so proudly towers
(Even like a rainbow ... 1800.

... the rainbow ... 1802.

The text of 1815 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

... or ... 1800.]

If the second, third, and fourth stanzas of this poem had been published without the first, the fifth, and the last, it would have been deemed an exquisite fragment by those who object to the explanatory preamble, and to the moralising sequel. The intermediate stanzas suggest Burns's

'Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,
How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!
How can ye chant, ye little birds,
An' I sae weary, fu' o' care!'

and Browning's 'May and Death':

'I wish that when you died last May,
Charles, there had died along with you
Three parts of spring's delightful things;
Ay, and, for me, the fourth part too.'

This mood of mind Wordsworth appreciated as fully as the opposite, or complementary one, which finds expression in the great 'Ode, Intimations of Immortality' (vol. viii.), l. 26.

'No more shall grief of mine the season wrong,'

and which Browning expresses in other verses of his lyric, and repeatedly elsewhere. The allusion in the last stanza of this poem is to Wordsworth's sister Dorothy.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE CHILDLESS FATHER

Composed 1800.-Published 1800 [A]

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. When I was a child at Cockermouth, no funeral took place without a basin filled with sprigs of boxwood being placed upon a table covered with a white cloth in front of the house. The huntings on foot, in which the old man is supposed to join as here described, were of common, almost habitual, occurrence in our vales when I was a boy, and the people took much delight in them. They are now less frequent.—I.F.]

Page 115

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

“Up, Timothy, up with your staff and away!
Not a soul in the village this morning will stay;
The hare has just started from Hamilton’s grounds,
And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds.”

—Of coats and of jackets grey, scarlet, and green, 5
On the slopes of the pastures all colours were seen;
With their comely blue aprons, and caps white as snow,
The girls on the hills made a holiday show.

Fresh sprigs of green box-wood, not six months before,
Filled the funeral basin [B] at Timothy’s door; [1] 10
A coffin through Timothy’s threshold had past;
One Child [C] did it bear, and that Child was his last.

Now fast up the dell came the noise and the fray,
The horse and the horn, and the hark! hark away!
Old Timothy took up his staff, and he shut 15
With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

Perhaps to himself at that moment he said;
“The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead.”
But of this in my ears not a word did he speak;
And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek. 20

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

The basin of box-wood, just six months before,
Had stood on the table at Timothy’s door, 1800.

The basin had offered, just six months before,
Fresh sprigs of green box-wood at Timothy’s door; 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Also in ‘The Morning Post’, Jan. 30, 1801.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In several parts of the North of England, when a funeral takes place, a basin full of Sprigs of Box-wood is placed at the door of the house from which the Coffin is taken up, and each person who attends the funeral ordinarily takes a Sprig of this Box-wood, and throws it into the grave of the deceased.—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote C: In the list of *errata*, in the edition of 1820 “one child” is corrected, and made “a child”; but the text remained “one child” in all subsequent editions.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SONG FOR THE WANDERING JEW

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

Included among the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Though the torrents from their fountains
Roar down many a craggy steep,
Yet they find among the mountains
Resting-places calm and deep.

Clouds that love through air to hasten, 5
Ere the storm its fury stills,
Helmet-like themselves will fasten
On the heads of towering hills. [1]

Page 116

What, if through the frozen centre
Of the Alps the Chamois bound, 10
Yet he has a home to enter
In some nook of chosen ground: [2]

And the Sea-horse, though the ocean
Yield him no domestic cave,
Slumbers without sense of motion, 15
Couched upon the rocking wave. [3]

If on windy days the Raven
Gambol like a dancing skiff,
Not the less she loves her haven [4]
In [5] the bosom of the cliff. [A] 20

The fleet Ostrich, till day closes,
Vagrant over desert sands,
Brooding on her eggs reposes
When chill night that care demands. [6]

Day and night my toils redouble, 25
Never nearer to the goal;
Night and day, I feel the trouble
Of the Wanderer in my soul. [7]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: This stanza was added in the edition of 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Though almost with eagle pinion
O’er the rocks the Chamois roam,
Yet he has some small dominion
Which no doubt he calls his home. 1800.

Though, as if with eagle pinion
O’er the rocks the Chamois roam,
Yet he has some small dominion
Where he feels himself at home. 1815.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

Though the Sea-horse in the ocean
Own no dear domestic cave;
Yet he slumbers without motion
On the calm and silent wave. 1800.

Yet he slumbers—by the motion
Rocked of many a gentle wave. 1827.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

... he loves his haven 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

On ... 1800.]

[Variant 6: This stanza was added in 1827.]

[Variant 7:

1800.

Never—never does the trouble
Of the Wanderer leave my soul. 1815.

The text of 1827 returns to that of 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the editions of 1800 to 1832 stanzas 4 and 5 were transposed. Their present order was adjusted in the edition of 1836.—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE BROTHERS [A]

Composed 1800. [B]—Published 1800

[This poem was composed in a grove at the north-eastern end of Grasmere lake, which grove was in a great measure destroyed by turning the high road along the side of the water. The few trees that are left were spared at my intercession. The poem arose out of the fact, mentioned to me at Ennerdale, that a shepherd had fallen asleep upon the top of the rock called the Pillar, and perished as here described, his staff being left midway on the rock.—I. F.]

Page 117

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

These Tourists, heaven preserve us! needs must live
A profitable life: some glance along,
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,
And they were butterflies to wheel about
Long as the [1] summer lasted: some, as wise, 5
Perched on the forehead of a jutting crag,
Pencil in hand and book upon the knee,
Will look and scribble, scribble on and look, [2]
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,
Or reap an acre of his neighbour’s corn. 10
But, for that moping Son of Idleness,
Why can he tarry *yonder*?—In our church-yard
Is neither epitaph nor monument,
Tombstone nor name—only the turf we tread
And a few natural graves.” 15

To Jane, his wife,
Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.
It was a July evening; and he sate
Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves
Of his old cottage,—as it chanced, that day, 20
Employed in winter’s work. Upon the stone
His wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,
While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,
He fed the spindle of his youngest child,
Who, in the open air, with due accord 25
Of busy hands and back-and-forward steps,
Her large round wheel was turning. [3] Towards the field
In which the Parish Chapel stood alone,
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent 30
Many a long look of wonder: and at last,
Risen from his seat, beside the snow white ridge
Of carded wool which the old man had piled
He laid his implements with gentle care,
Each in the other locked; and, down the path 35
That [4] from his cottage to the church-yard led,
He took his way, impatient to accost
The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

’Twas one well known to him in former days,
A Shepherd-lad; who ere his sixteenth year 40

Had left that calling, tempted to entrust
His expectations to the fickle winds
And perilous waters; with the mariners [5]
A fellow-mariner;—and so had fared
Through twenty seasons; but he had been reared 45
Among the mountains, and he in his heart
Was half a shepherd on the stormy seas.
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds
Of caves and trees:—and, when the regular wind 50
Between the tropics filled the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless Main, he, in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang

Page 118

55
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze;
And, while the broad blue [6] wave and sparkling foam
Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome, 60
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains; saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country grey 65
Which he himself had worn. [C]

And now, at last, [7]
From perils manifold, with some small wealth
Acquired by traffic 'mid [8] the Indian Isles,
To his paternal home he is returned, 70
With a determined purpose to resume
The life he had lived there; [9] both for the sake
Of many darling pleasures, and the love
Which to an only brother he has borne
In all his hardships, since that happy time 75
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two
Were brother-shepherds on their native hills.
—They were the last of all their race: and now,
When Leonard had approached his home, his heart
Failed in him; and, not venturing to enquire 80
Tidings of one so long and dearly loved, [10]
He to the solitary church-yard turned; [11]
That, as he knew in what particular spot
His family were laid, he thence might learn
If still his Brother lived, or to the file 85
Another grave was added.—He had found
Another grave,—near which a full half-hour
He had remained; but, as he gazed, there grew
Such a confusion in his memory,
That he began to doubt; and even to hope [12] 90
That he had seen this heap of turf before,—
That it was not another grave; but one
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walked [13]
Through fields which once had been well known to him: 95

And oh what joy this [14] recollection now
Sent to his heart! he lifted up his eyes,
And, looking round, imagined that he saw [15]
Strange alteration wrought on every side
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks, 100
And everlasting hills [16] themselves were changed.

By this the Priest, who down the field had come,
Unseen by Leonard, at the church-yard gate
Stopped short,—and thence, at leisure, limb by limb
Perused him [17] with a gay complacency. 105
Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,
'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path
Of the world's business to go wild alone:
His arms have a perpetual holiday;
The happy man will creep about the fields,

Page 119

110
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
Tears down his cheek, [18] or solitary smiles
Into his face, until the setting sun
Write fool upon his forehead.—Planted thus
Beneath a shed that over-arched the gate 120
Of this rude church-yard, till the stars appeared
The good Man might have communed with himself,
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,
Approached; he recognised the Priest at once,
And, after greetings interchanged, and given 120
By Leonard to the Vicar as to one
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

Leonard. You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life: Your years make up one peaceful family; And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come 125 And welcome gone, they are so like each other, They cannot be remembered? Scarce a funeral Comes to this church-yard once in eighteen months; And yet, some changes must take place among you: And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks, 130 Can trace the finger of mortality, And see, that with our threescore years and ten We are not all that perish.—I remember, (For many years ago I passed this road) There was a foot-way all along the fields 135 By the brook-side—'tis gone—and that dark cleft! To me it does not seem to wear the face Which then it had!

Priest. Nay, Sir, [19] for aught I know,
That chasm is much the same—140

Leonard. But, surely, yonder—

Priest. Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend That does not play you false.—On that tall pike (It is the loneliest place of all these hills) There were two springs which bubbled side by side, [D] 145 As if they had been made that they might be Companions for each other: the huge crag Was rent with lightning—one hath disappeared; [20] The other, left behind, is flowing still, For accidents and changes such as these, 150 We want not store of them; [21]—a water-spout Will bring down half a mountain; what a feast For folks that wander up and down like you, To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff One roaring cataract! a sharp May-storm 155 Will come with loads of January snow, And in one night send twenty score of sheep To feed the ravens; or a shepherd dies By some untoward death among the rocks: The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge; 160 A wood is felled:—and then for our own homes! A child is born or christened, a field ploughed, A daughter sent to service, a web spun, The old house-clock is decked with a new face; And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates 165 To chronicle the time, we all have here A pair of diaries,—one serving, Sir, For the whole dale, and one for each fire-side— Yours was a stranger's judgment: for historians, Commend me to these

Page 120

valleys! 170*Leonard*. Yet your Church-yard Seems, if such freedom may be used with you, To say that you are heedless of the past: An orphan could not find his mother's grave: Here's neither head nor foot-stone, plate of brass, 175 Cross-bones nor skull,—-type of our earthly state Nor emblem of our hopes: [22] the dead man's home Is but a fellow to that pasture-field.*Priest*. Why, there, Sir, is a thought that's new to me! The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread 180 If every English church-yard were like ours; Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth: We have no need of names and epitaphs; We talk about the dead by our fire-sides. And then, for our immortal part! *we* want 185 No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale: The thought of death sits easy on the man Who has been born and dies among the mountains. [E]*Leonard*. Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts Possess a kind of second life: no doubt 190 You, Sir, could help me to the history Of half these graves?*Priest*. For eight-score winters past, With what I've witnessed, and with what I've heard, Perhaps I might; and, on a winter-evening, [23] 195 If you were seated at my chimney's nook, By turning o'er these hillocks one by one, We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round; Yet all in the broad highway of the world. Now there's a grave—your foot is half upon it,—200 It looks just like the rest; and yet that man Died broken-hearted.*Leonard*. 'Tis a common case. We'll take another: who is he that lies Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves? 205 It touches on that piece of native rock Left in the church-yard wall.*Priest*. That's Walter Ewbank. [F] He had as white a head and fresh a cheek As ever were produced by youth and age 210 Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore. Through five [24] long generations had the heart Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds Of their inheritance, that single cottage— You see it yonder! and those few green fields. 215 They toiled and wrought, and still, from sire to son, Each struggled, and each yielded as before A little—yet a little,—and old Walter, They left to him the family heart, and land With other burthens than the crop it bore. 220 Year after year the old man still kept up [25] A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond, Interest, and mortgages; at last he sank, And went into his grave before his time. Poor Walter! whether it was care that spurred him 225 God only knows, but to the very last He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale: His pace was never that of an old man: I almost see him tripping down the path With his two grandsons after him:—but you, 230 Unless our Landlord be your host to-night, Have far to travel,—and on [26] these rough paths Even in the longest day of midsummer—

Leonard. But those [27] two Orphans!

Page 121

Priest. Orphans!—Such they were—235 Yet not while Walter lived:—for, though their parents Lay buried side by side as now they lie, The old man was a father to the boys, Two fathers in one father: and if tears, Shed when he talked of them where they were not, 240 And hauntings from the infirmity of love, Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart, This old Man, in the day of his old age, Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir, To hear a stranger talking about strangers, 245 Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred! Ay—you may turn that way—it is a grave Which will bear looking at.

Leonard. These boys—I hope
They loved this good old Man?—250

Priest. They did—and truly: But that was what we almost overlooked, They were such darlings of each other. Yes, Though from the cradle they had lived with Walter, The only kinsman near them, and though he 255 Inclined to both by reason of his age, With a more fond, familiar, tenderness; They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare, [28] And it all went into each other's hearts. Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months, 260 Was two years taller: 'twas a joy to see, To hear, to meet them!—From their house the school Is [29] distant three short miles, and in the time Of storm and thaw, when every water-course And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed 265 Crossing our roads at every hundred steps, Was swoln into a noisy rivulet Would Leonard then, when elder boys remained At home, go staggering through the slippery fords, [30] Bearing his brother on his back. I have [31] seen him, 270 On windy days, in one of those stray brooks, Ay, more than once I have [31] seen him, mid-leg deep, Their two books lying both on a dry stone, Upon the hither side: and once I said, As I remember, looking round these rocks 275 And hills on which we all of us were born, That God who made the great book of the world Would bless such piety—

Leonard. It may be then—

Priest. Never did worthier lads break English bread; 280 The very brightest Sunday Autumn saw [32] With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts, Could never keep those [33] boys away from church, Or tempt them to an hour of sabbath breach. Leonard and James! I warrant, every corner 285 Among these rocks, and every hollow place That venturous foot could reach, to one or both [34] Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there. Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills; They played like two young ravens on the crags: 290 Then they could write, ay and speak too, as well As many of their betters—and for Leonard! The very night before he went away, In my own house I put into his hand A bible, and I'd wager house and field 295 That, if he be alive, he has it yet. [35]

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

Page 122

Priest. That they might Live to such end [36] is what both old and young 300 In this our valley all of us have wished, And what, for my part, I have often prayed: But Leonard—

Leonard. Then James still is left among you!

Priest. 'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking: 305 They had an uncle;—he was at that time A thriving man, and trafficked on the seas: And, but for that [37] same uncle, to this hour Leonard had never handled rope or shroud: For the boy loved the life which we lead here; 310 And though of unripe years, a stripling only, [38] His soul was knit to this his native soil. But, as I said, old Walter was too weak To strive with such a torrent; when he died, The estate and house were sold; and all their sheep, 315 A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know, Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years:— Well—all was gone, and they were destitute, And Leonard, chiefly for his Brother's sake, Resolved to try his fortune on the seas. 320 Twelve years are past [39] since we had tidings from him. If there were [40] one among us who had heard That Leonard Ewbank was come home again, From the Great Gavel, [G] down by Leeza's banks, And down the Enna, far as Egremont. 325 The day would be a joyous festival; [41] And those two bells of ours, which there you see— Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir! This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him— Living or dead.—When last we heard of him, 330 He was in slavery among the Moors Upon the Barbary coast.—'Twas not a little That would bring down his spirit; and no doubt, Before it ended in his death, the Youth [42] Was sadly crossed.—Poor Leonard! when we parted, 335 He took me by the hand, and said to me, If e'er he should grow rich, he would return, To live in peace upon his father's land, And lay his bones among us. [43]*Leonard*. If that day 340 Should come, 'twould needs be a glad day for him; He would himself, no doubt, be happy then As any that should meet him—

Priest. Happy! Sir—

Leonard. You said his kindred all were in their graves, 345
And that he had one Brother—

Priest. That is but A fellow-tale of sorrow. From his youth James, though not sickly, yet was delicate; And Leonard being always by his side 350 Had done so many offices about him, That, though he was not of a timid nature, Yet still the spirit of a mountain-boy In him was somewhat checked; and, when his Brother Was gone to sea, and he was left alone, 355 The little colour that he had was soon Stolen from his cheek; he drooped, and pined, and pined—

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

Page 123

Priest. Ay, Sir, that passed away: we took him to us; He was the child of all the dale—-he lived 360 Three months with one, and six months with another; And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love: And many, many happy days were his. But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief His absent Brother still was at his heart. 365 And, when he dwelt [44] beneath our roof, we found (A practice till this time unknown to him) That often, rising from his bed at night, He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping He sought his brother Leonard.—You are moved! 370 Forgive me, Sir: before I spoke to you, I judged you most unkindly.

Leonard. But this Youth,
How did he die at last?

Priest. One sweet May-morning, 375 (It will be twelve years since when Spring returns) He had gone forth among the new-dropped lambs, With two or three companions, whom their course Of occupation led from height to height Under a cloudless sun—till he, at length, 380 Through weariness, or, haply, to indulge The humour of the moment, lagged behind. [45] You see yon precipice;—it wears the shape Of a vast building made of many crags; [46] And in the midst is one particular rock 385 That rises like a column from the vale, Whence by our shepherds it is called, THE PILLAR. Upon its aery summit crowned with heath, The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades, Lay stretched at ease; but, passing by the place 390 On their return, they found that he was gone. No ill was feared; till one of them by chance Entering, when evening was far spent, the house Which at that time was James's home, there learned [47] That nobody had seen him all that day: [H] 395 The morning came, and still he was unheard of: The neighbours were alarmed, and to the brook Some hastened; some ran to the lake: [48] ere noon They found him at the foot of that same rock Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after 400 I buried him, poor Youth, [49] and there he lies!

Leonard. And that then *is* his grave!—Before his death
You say [50] that he saw many happy years?

Priest. Ay, that he did—

Leonard. And all went well with him?—405

Priest. If he had one, the Youth [51] had twenty homes.

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

Priest. Yes, long before he died, he found that time Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless fortune, 410 He talked about him with a cheerful love.

Leonard. He could not come to an unhallowed end!

Page 124

Priest. Nay, God forbid!—You recollect I mentioned A habit which disquietude and grief Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured 415 That, as the day was warm, he had lain down On the soft heath, [52] and, waiting for his comrades, He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep He to the margin of the precipice Had walked, and from the summit had fallen headlong: 420 And so no doubt he perished. When the Youth Fell, in his hand he must have grasp'd, we think, [53] His shepherd's staff; for on that Pillar of rock It had been caught mid way; and there for years [54] It hung;—and mouldered there. 425

The Priest here ended—
The Stranger would have thanked him, but he felt
A gushing from his heart, that took away
The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence; [55]
And Leonard, when they reached the church-yard gate, 430
As the Priest lifted up the latch, turned round,—
And, looking at the grave, he said, "My Brother!"
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,
He pointed towards his dwelling-place, entreating [56]
That Leonard would partake his homely fare: 435
The other thanked him with an earnest [57] voice;
But added, that, the evening being calm,
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reached a grove
That overhung the road: he there stopped short, 440
And, sitting down beneath the trees, reviewed
All that the Priest had said: his early years
Were with him:—his long absence, cherished hopes, [58]
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
All pressed on him with such a weight, that now, 445
This vale, where he had been so happy, seemed
A place in which he could not bear to live:
So he relinquished all his purposes.
He travelled back [59] to Egremont: and thence,
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest, [60] 450
Reminding him of what had passed between them;
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,
That it was from the weakness of his heart
He had not dared to tell him who he was.
This done, he went on shipboard, and is now 455
A Seaman, a grey-headed Mariner.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

... their ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Upon the forehead of a jutting crag
Sit perch'd with book and pencil on their knee,
And look and scribble, ... 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

... youngest child,
Who turn'd her large round wheel in the open air
With back and forward steps.... 1800.]

Page 125

[Variant 4:

1827.

Which ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... who ere his thirteenth year
Had chang'd his calling, with the mariners 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1840.

... green ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1815.

... at length, ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

... traffic in ... 1800.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

... which he liv'd there, ... 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

... of one whom he so dearly lov'd, 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

Towards the church-yard he had turn'd aside, 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1836.

... and he had hopes 1800.

... and hope was his 1832.]

[Variant 13:

1815.

As up the vale he came that afternoon, 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1836.

... the ... 1800.]

[Variant 15:

1815.

... he thought that he perceiv'd 1800.]

[Variant 16:

1827.

And the eternal hills, ... 1800.

And the everlasting hills, ... 1820.]

[Variant 17:

1815.

He scann'd him ... 1800.]

[Variant 18:

1800.

... cheeks, ... 1802.

The text of 1827 returns to that of 1800.]

[Variant 19:

1815.

Why, Sir, ... 1800.]

[Variant 20:

1827.

Companions for each other: ten years back,
Close to those brother fountains, the huge crag
Was rent with lightning—one is dead and gone, 1800.]

[Variant 21:

1815.

Why we have store of them! ... 1800.]

[Variant 22:

1815.

Cross-bones or skull, type of our earthly state
Or emblem of our hopes: ... 1800.]

[Variant 23:

1827.

... winter's evening, 1800.]

[Variant 24:

1815.

For five ... 1800.]

[Variant 25:

1802.

... still preserv'd 1800.]

[Variant 26:

1815.

... in ... 1800.]

[Variant 27:

1815.

... these ... 1800.]

[Variant 28:

1836.

... For Though from their cradles they had liv'd with Walter, The only kinsman near them in the house, Yet he being old, they had much love to spare, 1800.

The only Kinsman near them, and though he
Inclined to them, by reason of his age,
With a more fond, familiar tenderness,
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare, 1815.]

Page 126

[Variant 29:

1820.

Was ... 1800.]

[Variant 30:

1836.

... when elder boys perhaps
Remain'd at home, go staggering through the fords 1800.]

[Variant 31:

1832.

... I've ... 1800.]

[Variant 32:

1836.

The finest Sunday that the Autumn saw, 1800.]

[Variant 33:

1836.

... these .... 1800.]

[Variant 34:

1836.

Where foot could come, to one or both of them 1800.]

[Variant 35:

1836.

... and I'd wager twenty pounds,
That, if he is alive, ... 1800.

... and I'd wager house and field 1827.]

[Variant 36:

1815.

... that end, ... 1800.]

[Variant 37:

1815.

... this ... 1800.]

[Variant 38:

1815.

And, though a very Stripling, twelve years old; 1800.]

[Variant 39:

1827.

'Tis now twelve years ... 1800.]

[Variant 40:

1820.

... was ... 1800.]

[Variant 41:

1836.

... a very festival, 1800.]

[Variant 42:

1815.

... the Lad 1800.]

[Variant 43.

1832.

If ever the day came when he was rich,
He would return, and on his Father's Land
He would grow old among us. 1800.]

[Variant 44:

1827.

... liv'd ... 1800.]

[Variant 45:

1820.

With two or three companions whom it chanc'd
Some further business summon'd to a house
Which stands at the Dale-head. James, tir'd perhaps,
Or from some other cause remain'd behind. 1800.]

[Variant 46:

... it almost looks
Like some vast building ... 1800.]

[Variant 47:

1827.

... it is called, *The Pillar*. James pointed to its summit, over which They all had purpos'd to return together, And told them that he there would wait for them: They parted, and his comrades pass'd that way Some two hours after, but they did not find him At the appointed place, a circumstance Of which they took no heed: but one of them, Going by chance, at night, into the house Which at this time was James's home, ... 1800.

... but they did not find him
Upon the Pillar—at the appointed place.
Of this they took no heed: ... 1802.

Which at that time ... 1802.

Upon the Summit—at the appointed place. 1815.

... they found that he was gone.
From this no ill was feared; but one of them,
Entering by chance, at even-tide, the house 1820.

Page 127

In all else the edition of 1820 is identical with the final text of 1827.]

[Variant 48:

1836.

Some went, and some towards the Lake; ... 1800.

Some hastened, some towards the Lake: ... 1820.]

[Variant 49:

1815.

... Lad ... 1800.]

[Variant 50:

1820.

... said ... 1800.]

[Variant 51:

1815.

... Lad ... 1800.]

[Variant 52:

1836.

Upon the grass, ... 1800.]

[Variant 53:

1836.

... he perish'd: at the time,
We guess, that in his hands he must have had 1800.

must have held 1827.]

[Variant 54:

1836.

... for midway in the cliff
It had been caught, and there for many years 1800.]

[Variant 55:

1815.

... but he felt
Tears rushing in; both left the spot in silence, 1800.]

[Variant 56:

1836.

Pointing towards the Cottage, he entreated 1800.]

[Variant 57:

1836.

... fervent 1800.]

[Variant 58:

1836.

Were with him in his heart: his cherish'd hopes, 1800.]

[Variant 59:

1836.

... travell'd on ... 1800.]

[Variant 60:

1802.

That night, address'd a letter to the Priest 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This Poem was intended to be the concluding poem of a series of pastorals, the scene of which was laid among the mountains of Cumberland and Westmoreland. I mention this to apologise for the abruptness with which the poem begins.—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote B: In Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal the following entry occurs:

"Friday, 6th August (1800).—In the morning I copied 'The Brothers'."

Ed.]

[Footnote C: This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, Author of 'The Hurricane'.—W. W. 1800.

Compare another reference to 'The Hurricane; a Theosophical and Western Eclogue' *etc*., by William Gilbert, in one of the notes to 'The Excursion', book iii. l. 931.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: The impressive circumstance here described, actually took place some years ago in this country, upon an eminence called Kidstow Pike, one of the highest of the mountains that surround Hawes-water. The summit of the pike was stricken by lightning; and every trace of one of the fountains disappeared, while the other continued to flow as before.—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote E: There is not any thing more worthy of remark in the manners of the inhabitants of these mountains, than the tranquillity, I might say indifference, with which they think and talk upon the subject of death. Some of the country church-yards, as here described, do not contain a single tomb-stone, and most of them have a very small number.—W. W. 1800.]

Page 128

[Footnote F: The name in the original MS. was “Wilfred Evans.”—Ed.]

[Footnote G: The great Gavel, so called I imagine, from its resemblance to the Gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale.

The Leeza is a River which flows into the Lake of Ennerdale: on issuing from the Lake, it changes its name, and is called the End, Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont—W. W. 1800.]

[Footnote H: See Coleridge’s criticism of these lines in a note to chapter xviii. of ‘Biographia Literaria’ (vol. ii. p. 83 of the edition of 1817).—Ed.]

This poem illustrates the way in which Wordsworth’s imagination worked upon a minimum of fact, idealizing a simple story, and adding

’the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land,
The consecration, and the Poet’s dream.’

It is the only poem of his referring to Ennerdale; but perhaps the chief association with that dale, to those who visit it after becoming acquainted with this poem, will be the fact that the brothers Ewbank were supposed to have spent their youth under the shadow of the Pillar, and Leonard to have had this conversation, on his return from sea, with the venerable priest of Ennerdale. The district is described with all that local accuracy which Wordsworth invariably showed in idealization. The height whence James Ewbank is supposed to have fallen is not the Pillar-Rock—a crag somewhat difficult to ascend, except by practised climbers, and which has only been accessible since mountaineering became an art and a passion to Englishmen. But, if we suppose the conversation with the priest of Ennerdale to have taken place at the Bridge, below the Lake—as that is the only place where there is both a hamlet and “a churchyard”—the “precipice” will refer to the Pillar “Mountain.” Both are alluded to in the poem. The lines,

’You see yon precipice;—it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called, *The Pillar*,’

are definite enough. The great mass of the Pillar Mountain is first referred to, and then the Rock which is a characteristic spur, halfway up the mountain on its northern side. The “aery summit crowned with heath,” however, on which “the loiterer” “lay stretched at ease,” could neither be the top of this “rock” nor the summit of the “mountain”: not the former, because there is no heath on it, and it would be impossible for a weary man,

loitering behind his companions, to ascend it to rest; not the latter, because no one resting on the summit of the mountain could be “not unnoticed by his comrades,” and they would not pass that way over the top of the mountain “on their return” to Ennerdale. This is an instance, therefore, in which precise localization is impossible. Probably Wordsworth did not know either that the pillar “rock” was bare on the summit, or that it had never been ascended in 1800; and he idealised it to suit his imaginative purpose. In connection with this poem, a remark he made to the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge may be recalled.

Page 129

“He said there was some foundation in fact, however slight, for every poem he had written of a narrative kind; ... ‘The Brothers’ was founded on a young shepherd, in his sleep, having fallen down a crag, his staff remaining suspended mid-way.”

(See the ‘Memoirs of Wordsworth’, by the late Bishop of Lincoln, vol. ii. p. 305.) It should be added that the character of Leonard Ewbank was drawn in large part from that of the poet’s brother John—Ed.

* * * * *

THE SEVEN SISTERS; OR, THE SOLITUDE OF BINNORIE [A]

Composed 1800. [B]—Published 1807

The Story of this Poem is from the German of Frederica Brun. [C]—W. W. 1807.

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

I Seven Daughters had Lord Archibald,
All children of one mother:
You could [1] not say in one short day
What love they bore each other.
A garland, of seven lilies, wrought! 5
Seven Sisters that together dwell;
But he, bold Knight as ever fought,
Their Father, took of them no thought,
He loved the wars so well.
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully, 10
The solitude of Binnorie!

II Fresh blows the wind, a western wind,
And from the shores of Erin,
Across the wave, a Rover brave
To Binnorie is steering: 15
Right onward to the Scottish strand
The gallant ship is borne;
The warriors leap upon the land,
And hark! the Leader of the band
Hath blown his bugle horn. 20
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

III Beside a grotto of their own,
With boughs above them closing,
The Seven are laid, and in the shade 25
They lie like fawns reposing.
But now, upstarting with affright
At noise of man and steed,
Away they fly to left, to right—
Of your fair household, Father-knight, 30
Methinks you take small heed!
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

IV Away the seven fair Campbells fly,
And, over hill and hollow, 35
With menace proud, and insult loud,
The youthful Rovers [2] follow.
Cried they, “Your Father loves to roam:
Enough for him to find
The empty house when he comes home; 40
For us your yellow ringlets comb,
For us be fair and kind!”
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

Page 130

V Some close behind, some side by side, 45
Like clouds in stormy weather;
They run, and cry, “Nay, let us die,
And let us die together.”
A lake was near; the shore was steep;
There never foot had been; 50
They ran, and with a desperate leap
Together plunged into the deep, [3]
Nor ever more were seen.
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie. 55

VI The stream that flows out of the lake,
As through the glen it rambles,
Repeats a moan o’er moss and stone,
For those seven lovely Campbells.
Seven little Islands, green and bare, 60
Have risen from out the deep:
The fishers say, those sisters fair,
By faeries all are buried there,
And there together sleep.
Sing, mournfully, oh! mournfully, 65
The solitude of Binnorie.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

I could ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

The Irish Rovers ... MS.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

The sisters ran like mountain sheep MS.

And in together did they leap MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It is a well-known Scottish Ballad. In Jamieson's 'Popular Ballads', vol. i. p. 50 (1806), its title is "The Twa Sisters." In Walter Scott's 'Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border', vol. iii. p. 287, it is called "The Cruel Sisters." In 'The Ballads of Scotland', collected by W. Edmonstone Aytoun (1858), vol. i. p. 194, it is printed "Binnorie." In 1807 Wordsworth printed the sub-title 'The Solitude of Binnorie'.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal there is an entry, under date August 16, 1800,

"William read us 'The Seven Sisters'."

It is uncertain whether this refers to his own poem or not, but I incline to think it does.—-Ed.]

[Footnote C: In a MS. copy this note runs thus:

"This poem, in the groundwork of the story, is from the German of Frederica Brun."

Ed.]

* * * * *

RURAL ARCHITECTURE

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. These structures, as every one knows, are common amongst our hills, being built by shepherds, as conspicuous marks, and occasionally by boys in sport.—I. F.]

Page 131

Included among the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.”—Ed.

There’s George Fisher, Charles Fleming, and Reginald Shore, [1]
Three rosy-cheeked school-boys, the highest not more
Than the height of a counsellor’s bag;
To the top of GREAT HOW [A] did it please them to climb: [2]
And there they built up, without mortar or lime, 5
A Man on the peak of the crag.

They built him of stones gathered up as they lay:
They built him and christened him all in one day,
An urchin both vigorous and hale;
And so without scruple they called him Ralph Jones. 10
Now Ralph is renowned for the length of his bones;
The Magog of Legberthwaite dale.

Just half a week after, the wind sallied forth,
And, in anger or merriment, out of the north,
Coming on with a terrible pother, 15
From the peak of the crag blew the giant away.
And what did these school-boys?—The very next day
They went and they built up another.

—Some little I’ve seen of blind boisterous works
By Christian disturbers more savage than Turks, [3] 20
Spirits busy to do and undo:
At remembrance whereof my blood sometimes will flag;
Then, light-hearted Boys, to the top of the crag;
And I’ll build up a giant with you. [4]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1800.

From the meadows of ARMATH, on THIRLMERE’S wild shore, 1827.

The text of 1832 reverts to that of 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1800.

... were once tempted to climb; 1827

The text of 1832 reverts to that of 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1820.

In Paris and London, ’mong Christians or Turks, 1800]

[Variant 4: This last stanza was omitted from the editions of 1805 and 1815. It was restored in 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Great How is a single and conspicuous hill, which rises towards the foot of Thirl-mere, on the western side of the beautiful dale of Legberthwaite, along the high road between Keswick and Ambleside.—W. W. 1800.]

The editions of 1836, 1840, 1841, 1842, 1843, and 1845, and the Fenwick note, assign this poem to the year 1801. It must, however, have been composed during the previous year, because it was published in the “Lyrical Ballads” of 1800. The locality referred to —which is also associated with ’The Waggoner’—is easily identified.

Page 132

In a letter to Wordsworth, written in the year 1815, Charles Lamb said: “How I can be brought in, *felo de omittendo*, for that ending to the Boy-builders is a mystery. I can’t say positively now, I only know that no line oftener or readier occurs than that ’Light-hearted boys, I will build up a Giant with you.’ It comes naturally, with a warm holiday, and the freshness of the blood. It is a perfect summer amulet, that I tie round my legs to quicken their motion when I go out a maying.” (See *Letters of Charles Lamb*, edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. i. p. 287.)—Ed.

* * * * *

A CHARACTER

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[The principal features are taken from my friend Robert Jones.—I. F.]

Included among the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.”—Ed.

I marvel how Nature could ever find space
For so many strange contrasts in one human face: [1]
There’s thought and no thought, and there’s paleness and bloom
And bustle and sluggishness, pleasure and gloom.

There’s weakness, and strength both redundant and vain; 5
Such strength as, if ever affliction and pain
Could pierce through a temper that’s soft to disease,
Would be rational peace—a philosopher’s ease.

There’s indifference, alike when he fails or [2] succeeds,
And attention full ten times as much as there needs; 10
Pride where there’s no envy, there’s so much of joy;
And mildness, and spirit both forward and coy.

There’s freedom, and sometimes a diffident stare
Of shame scarcely seeming to know that she’s there,
There’s virtue, the title it surely may claim, 15
Yet wants heaven knows what to be worthy the name.

This picture from nature may seem to depart, [3]
Yet the Man would at once run away with your heart;
And I for five centuries right gladly would be
Such an odd such a kind happy creature as he. 20

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

For the weight and the levity seen in his face: 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

... and ... 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

What a picture! 'tis drawn without nature or art, 1800.]

The full title of this poem, in "Lyrical Ballads," 1800, is 'A Character, in the antithetical Manner'. It was omitted from all subsequent editions till 1837. With this early friend, Robert Jones—a fellow collegian at St. John's College, Cambridge—Wordsworth visited the Continent (France and Switzerland), during the long vacation of 1790; and to him he dedicated the first edition of 'Descriptive Sketches', in 1793. With him he also made a pedestrian tour in Wales in 1791. Jones afterwards became the incumbent of Soulderne, near Deddington, in Oxfordshire; and Wordsworth described his parsonage there in the sonnet, beginning "Where holy ground begins, unhallowed ends." (See Wordsworth's note to the sonnet 'Composed near Calais', p. 333.)—Ed.

Page 133

* * * * *

INSCRIPTION FOR THE SPOT WHERE THE HERMITAGE STOOD ON ST. HERBERT'S ISLAND, DERWENT-WATER

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

Included in 1815 among the "Poems referring to the Period of Old Age," and in all subsequent editions among the "Inscriptions."—Ed.

If thou in the dear love of some one Friend
Hast been so happy that thou know'st what thoughts
Will sometimes in the happiness of love
Make the heart sink, [A] then wilt thou reverence
This quiet spot; and, Stranger! not unmoved 5
Wilt thou behold this shapeless heap of stones,
The desolate ruins of St. Herbert's Cell.
Here stood his threshold; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man,
After long exercise in social cares 10
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity, with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things,
In utter solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man loved 15
As his own soul. And, when with eye upraised
To heaven he knelt before the crucifix,
While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore
Pealed to his orisons, and when he paced
Along the beach of this small isle and thought 20
Of his Companion, he would pray that both
(Now that their earthly duties were fulfilled)
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
So prayed he:—as our chronicles report,
Though here the Hermit numbered his last day 25
Far from St. Cuthbert his beloved Friend,
Those holy Men both died in the same hour. [1]

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1832.

The text of this poem underwent so many changes, which are not easily shown by the plan adopted throughout this edition—portions of the earliest version of 1800 being abandoned and again adopted, and the whole arrangement of the passages being altered—that it seems desirable to append the entire text of 1800, and extensive parts of that of subsequent years. The final text of 1832 is printed above.

If thou in the dear love of some one friend
Hast been so happy, that thou know'st what thoughts
Will, sometimes, in the happiness of love
Make the heart sink, then wilt thou reverence
This quiet spot.—St. Herbert hither came
And here, for many seasons, from the world
Remov'd, and the affections of the world
He dwelt in solitude. He living here,
This island's sole inhabitant! had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom the good Man lov'd
As his own soul; and when within his cave
Alone he knelt before the crucifix

Page 134

While o'er the lake the cataract of Lodore
Peal'd to his orisons, and when he pac'd
Along the beach of this small isle and thought
Of his Companion, he had pray'd that both
Might die in the same moment. Nor in vain
So pray'd he:—as our Chronicles report,
Though here the Hermit number'd his last days,
Far from St. Cuthbert his beloved friend,
Those holy men both died in the same hour. 1800.

The text of the editions of 1802 and 1805 (which are identical), omits one line of the text of 1800. The passage reads:

He dwelt in solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, whom ...

And the following variants occur in 1802 and 1805:

Make the heart sick, ...

... he would pray that both

The text of 1815, which is continued in 1820, begins thus:

This Island, guarded from profane approach
By mountains high and waters widely spread,
Is that recess to which St. Herbert came
In life's decline; a self-secluded Man,
After long exercise in social cares
And offices humane, intent to adore
The Deity, with undistracted mind,
And meditate on everlasting things.
—Stranger! this shapeless heap of stones and earth
(Long be its mossy covering undisturbed!)
Is reverenced as a vestige of the Abode
In which, through many seasons, from the world
Removed, and the affections of the world,
He dwelt in solitude.—But he had left
A Fellow-labourer, ... 1815 and 1820.

In 1827 the poem began thus:

Stranger! this shapeless heap of stones and earth
Is the last relic of St. Herbert's Cell.
Here stood his threshold; here was spread the roof
That sheltered him, a self-secluded Man, 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare the last stanza of "Strange fits of passion have I known," p. 79 of this volume.—Ed.]

The "shapeless heap of stones" in St. Herbert's Island, which were "desolate ruins" in 1800, are even more "shapeless" and "desolate" now, but they can easily be identified. The island is near the centre of the lake, and is in area about four acres. The legend of St. Herbert dates from the middle of the seventh century. The rector of Clifton, Westmoreland, Dr. Robinson, writing in 1819, says:

"The remains of his hermitage are still visible, being built of stone and mortar, and formed into two apartments, one of which, about twenty feet long and sixteen feet wide, seems to have been his chapel; the other, of less dimensions, his cell. Near these ruins the late Sir Wilfred Lawson (to whose representative the island at present belongs) erected some years ago a small octagonal cottage, which, being built of unhewn stone, and artificially mossed over, has a venerable appearance."

(See *Guide to the Lakes*, by John Robinson, D.D., 1819). This cottage has now disappeared. The following version of this "Inscription" occurs in a letter from Wordsworth to Lady Beaumont, dated 26th November 1811:

Page 135

This Island, guarded from profane approach By mountains high and waters widely spread, Gave to St. Herbert a benign retreat. Upon a staff supported, and his Brow White with the peaceful diadem of age. Hither he came—a self-secluded Man, ... Behold that shapeless Heap of stones and earth! “Tis reverenced as a Vestige of the Abode ... ...—And when within his Cell Alone he knelt before the crucifix,

In a previous letter to Sir George Beaumont, dated 16th November 1811:

By mountains high and waters widely spread, Is that Seclusion which St. Herbert chose; ... Hither he came in life’s austere decline: And, Stranger! this blank Heap of stones and earth Is reverenced ...

Ed.

* * * * *

WRITTEN WITH A PENCIL UPON A STONE IN THE WALL OF THE HOUSE (AN OUT-HOUSE), ON THE ISLAND AT GRASMERE [A]

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

Included among the “Inscriptions.”—Ed.

Rude is this Edifice, and Thou hast seen
Buildings, albeit rude, that have maintained
Proportions more harmonious, and approached
To closer fellowship with ideal grace.
But take it in good part:—alas! the poor [1] 5
Vitruvius of our village had no help
From the great City; never, upon leaves [2]
Of red Morocco folio saw displayed,
In long succession, pre-existing ghosts [3]
Of Beauties yet unborn—the rustic Lodge 10
Antique, and Cottage with verandah graced,
Nor lacking, for fit company, alcove,
Green-house, shell-grot, and moss-lined hermitage. [4]
Thou see’st a homely Pile, [5] yet to these walls
The heifer comes in the snow-storm, and here 15
The new-dropped lamb finds shelter from the wind.
And hither does one Poet sometimes row
His pinnace, a small vagrant barge, up-piled
With plenteous store of heath and withered fern,
(A lading which he with his sickle cuts, 20
Among the mountains) and beneath this roof

He makes his summer couch, and here at noon
Spreads out his limbs, while, yet unshorn, the Sheep,
Panting beneath the burthen of their wool,
Lie round him, even as if they were a part 25
Of his own Household: nor, while from his bed
He looks, through the open door-place, [6] toward the lake
And to the stirring breezes, does he want
Creations lovely as the work of sleep—
Fair sights, and visions of romantic joy! 30

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... and approach'd To somewhat of a closer fellowship With the ideal grace. Yet as it is
Do take it in good part; for he, the poor 1800.

... alas! the poor 1815.]

Page 136

[Variant 2:

1837.

  ... on the leaves 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

  The skeletons and pre-existing ghosts 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

  ... yet unborn, the rustic Box,
  Snug Cot, with Coach-house, Shed and Hermitage. 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

  It is a homely pile, ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1837.

  He through that door-place looks ... 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title of this poem in the edition of 1800 was simply ’Inscription for the House (an Out-house) on the Island at Grasmere’.—Ed.]

This “homely pile” on the island of Grasmere—very homely—still remains.—Ed.

* * * * *

MICHAEL

A PASTORAL POEM [A]

Composed 1800.—Published 1800

[Written at the Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as 'The Brothers'. The sheepfold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north. —I.F.]

Included among the "Poems founded on the Affections."—Ed.

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face. 5
But, courage! for around [1] that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone [2] 10
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by, 15
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears [3] a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that simple object appertains
A story—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, [4] 20
Or for the summer shade. It was the first
Of those domestic tales that spake to me [5]
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men

Page 137

Whom I already loved;—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned [6] the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, He heard the South 50
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
"The winds are now devising work for me!" 55
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose

That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; [7] which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honourable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less? had laid [8]
Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

Page 138

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—[9]
Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work. 85
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son, 90
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone, 95
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then,
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the [10] cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk, 100
Sat round the [11] basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the [12] meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ 105
Their hands by the fire-side; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge, 110
That [13] in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed [14]
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed 115
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,

And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his [15] eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far [16] into the night 125
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies. [B]
[17] This [18] light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life 130
That [19] thrifty Pair had lived.

Page 139

For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake; 135
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, [20] the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all—[21] 145
Than [22] that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man, [23]
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
[24] Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime [25] and delight, as is the use 155
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand. [26]
And, in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love, 160
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door 165
Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade, [27]
Chosen for the Shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The CLIPPING TREE, [C] a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,

Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts 175
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 180
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed

Page 140

185
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe, 190
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though nought was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights, 200
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 205
Feelings and emanations—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

Thus in his Father's sight the Boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 210
He was his comfort and his daily hope. [D]

While in this sort the simple household lived [28]
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 215
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 220
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost. 225
As soon as he had armed himself with strength
To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once [29]

A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again, 230
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours 235
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself [30]
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last 240
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but 245
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

Page 141

"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free; 250
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman—he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade—and Luke to him shall go, 255
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. [31] If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?" 260
At this the old Man paused,
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself, [E]
He was a parish-boy—at the church-door 265
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there, 270
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and monies to the poor,
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored 275
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed:—"Well, Isabel! this scheme 280
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best 285
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* [32] go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. [F] The Housewife for five days 290
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work: for, when she lay 295
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights [33]
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves 300

Page 142

Were sitting at the door, “Thou must not go:
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die.”
The Youth [34] made answer with a jocund voice; 305
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight [35] Isabel resumed her work; 310
And all the ensuing week the house appeared
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy; 315
To which, requests were added, that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land 320
A prouder heart than Luke’s. When Isabel
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
“He shall depart to-morrow.” To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go, 325
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; [G] and, before he heard 330
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet’s edge [36]
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked: 335
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,
And thus the old Man spake to him:—“My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart

I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth, 340
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; ’twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things [37] thou canst not know of.—After thou 345
First cam’st into the world—as oft befals [38]
To new-born infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father’s tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love. 350
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While [39] thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother’s breast. Month followed month, 355

Page 143

And in the open fields my life was passed
And on [40] the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young 360
Have played together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know."
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, "Nay, do not take it so—I see 365
That these are things of which I need not speak.
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father: and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old 370
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together: here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth 375
To give their bodies to the family mould.
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived:
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years. [41]
These fields were burthened when they came to me; 380
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure 385
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou should'st go,"
At this the old Man paused; Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood, 390
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed: "This was a work for us; and now, my Son, It is a work for me. But, lay one stone— Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands. [42] Nay, Boy, be of good hope;—we both may live 395 To see a better day. At eighty-four I still am strong and hale [43];—do thou thy part; I will do mine.—I will begin again With many tasks that were resigned to thee: Up to the heights, and in among the storms, 400 Will I without thee go again, and do All works which I was wont to do alone, Before I

knew thy face.—Heaven bless thee, Boy! Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast With many hopes; it should be so—yes—yes—405 I knew that thou could'st never have a wish To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me Only by links of love: when thou art gone, What will be left to us!—But, I forget My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone, 410 As I requested; and hereafter, Luke, When thou art gone away, should evil men Be thy companions, think of me, my Son, And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts, And God will

Page 144

strengthen thee: amid all fear 415 And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived, [44] Who, being innocent, did for that cause Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well— When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see 420 A work which is not here: a covenant 'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate Befal thee, I shall love thee to the last, And bear thy memory with me to the grave."

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down, 425
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissed him and wept;
And to the house together they returned. 430
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace, [45]
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy [46]
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors, 435
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news, 440
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout
"The prettiest letters that were ever seen."
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on: and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work 445
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length, 450
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love; 455
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: [47]
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was

Years after he had heard this heavy news. 460
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud, [48]
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep, 465
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart 470
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.

Page 145

There, by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog, [49] 475
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time,
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel 480
Survive her Husband: at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The Cottage which was named the EVENING STAR
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought 485
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... beside ... 1800.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

No habitation there is seen; but such
As journey thither ... 1800.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

There is ... 1800.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

And to that place a story appertains,
Which, though it be ungarnish'd with events,
Is not unfit, ... 1800.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

... It was the first,
The earliest of those tales ... 1800.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

... he had learn'd ... 1800.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

... the hills, which he so oft
Had climb'd with vigorous steps; ... 1800.]

[Variant 8:

1832.

... linking to such acts, So grateful in themselves, the certainty Of honourable gains; these fields, these hills Which were his living Being, even more Than his own Blood—-what could they less? had laid 1800.

... gain ... 1805.]

[Variant 9:

1815.

He had not passed his days in singleness.
He had a Wife, a comely Matron, old 1800.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

... their ... 1800.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

... their ... 1800.]

[Variant 12:

1836.

... their ... 1800.]

[Variant 13:

1827.

Which ... 1800.]

[Variant 14:

1836.

Did with a huge projection overbrow 1800.]

[Variant 15:

1827.

... was in his ... 1800.]

[Variant 16:

1836.

... while late ... 1800.]

Page 146

[Variant 17:

Not with a waste of words, but for the sake
Of pleasure, which I know that I shall give
To many living now, I of this Lamp
Speak thus minutely: for there are no few
Whose memories will bear witness to my tale.

These lines appeared only in the editions of 1800 and 1802.]

[Variant 18:

1815.

The ... 1800.]

[Variant 19:

1832.

The ... 1800.]

[Variant 20:

1827.

... yet more dear—
Effect which might perhaps have been produc'd
By that instinctive tenderness, ... 1800.]

[Variant 21:

1836.

Blind Spirit, which is in the blood of all, 1800.]

[Variant 22:

1827.

Or ... 1800.]

[Variant 23: This line was first printed in the edition of 1836.]

[Variant 24:

From such, and other causes, to the thoughts
Of the old Man his only Son was now
The dearest object that he knew on earth.

Only in the editions of 1800 to 1820.]

[Variant 25:

1827.

For dalliance ... 1800.]

[Variant 26:

1836.

His cradle with a woman's gentle hand. 1800.]

[Variant 27:

1836.

... when he Had work by his own door, or when he sate With sheep before him on his Shepherd's stool, Beneath that large old Oak, which near their door Stood, and from its enormous breadth of shade 1800.]

[Variant 28:

1815.

While this good household thus were living on 1800.

While in the fashion which I have described
This simple Household thus were living on 1800 (2nd issue).]

[Variant 29:

1836.

As soon as he had gather'd so much strength
That he could look his trouble in the face,
It seem'd that his sole refuge was to sell 1800.]

[Variant 30:

1827.

... itself 1800.]

[Variant 31:

1836.

May come again to us ... 1800.]

[Variant 32: Italics were first used in 1827.]

[Variant 33:

1836.

... for the two last nights 1800.

... through the 1815.]

[Variant 34:

1815.

The Lad ... 1800.]

[Variant 35:

1820.

Next morning ... 1800.]

[Variant 36:

1815.

... which close to the brook side 1800.]

[Variant 37:

1836.

... should speak
Of things ... 1800.]

[Variant 38:

1827.

... as it befalls 1800.]

[Variant 39:

1836.

When ... 1800.]

Page 147

[Variant 40:

1815.

... in ... 1800.]

[Variant 41:

1827.

... from sixty years. 1800.]

[Variant 42:

I for the purpose brought thee to this place.

This line appears only in the edition of 1800.]

[Variant 43:

1827.

... stout; ... 1800.]

[Variant 44:

1802.

... should evil men Be thy companions, let this Sheep-fold be Thy anchor and thy shield; amid all fear And all temptation, let it be to thee An emblem of the life thy Fathers liv'd, 1800.]

[Variant 45: This line was added in the edition of 1815.]

[Variant 46:

1815.

Next morning, as had been resolv'd, the Boy 1800.]

[Variant 47:

1820.

Would break the heart:—Old Michael found it so. 1800.]

[Variant 48:

1836.

... look'd up upon the sun, 1800.

... towards the sun, 1832.]

[Variant 49:

1836.

Sitting alone, with that his faithful Dog, 1800.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The Rev. Thomas Hutchinson, Kimbolton, tells me that in his copy of the edition of "Lyrical Ballads" of 1800 there is

"on the blank page facing the announcement, written in Wordsworth's handwriting, the following lines:

'Though it be in th' humblest rank of life,
And in the lowest region of our speech,
Yet is it in that kind as best accords
With rural passion.'"

Ed.]

[Footnote B: The following lines were written before April 1801, and were at one time meant to be inserted after "summer flies," and before "Not with a waste of words." They are quoted in a letter of Wordsworth's to Thomas Poole of Nether Stowey, dated April 9th, 1801.

'Though in their occupations they would pass
Whole hours with but small interchange of speech,
Yet were there times in which they did not want
Discourse both wise and prudent, shrewd remarks
Of daily providence, clothed in images
Lively and beautiful, in rural forms
That made their conversation fresh and fair
As is a landscape;—And the shepherd oft
Would draw out of his heart the obscurities
And admirations that were there, of God
And of His works, or, yielding to the bent

Of his peculiar humour, would let loose
The tongue and give it the wind's freedom,—then
Discoursing on remote imaginations, story,
Conceits, devices, day-dreams, thoughts and schemes,
The fancies of a solitary man.'

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.—W. W. 1800]

Page 148

[Footnote D: The lines from “Though nought was left,” to “daily hope” (192-206) were, by a printer’s blunder, omitted from the first issue of 1800. In the second issue of that year they are given in full.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ings Chapel; and is on the right hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside.—W. W. 1800.

Ings chapel is in the parish of Kendal, about two miles east of Windermere. The following extract from Lewis’s Topographical Dictionary further explains the allusion in the poem:

“*Hugil*, a chapelry six and a quarter miles from Kendal. The chapel, rebuilt in 1743 by Robert Bateman, stands in the village of Ings, which is in this chapelry. The free school was endowed with land in 1650 by Roland Wilson, producing at present L12 per annum. The average number of boys is twenty-five. This endowment was augmented by L8 per annum by Robert Bateman, who gave L1000 for purchasing an estate, and erected eight alms-houses for as many poor families, besides a donation of L12 per annum to the curate. This worthy benefactor was born here, and from a state of indigence succeeded in amassing considerable wealth by mercantile pursuits. He is stated to have been poisoned, in the straits of Gibraltar, on his voyage from Leghorn, with a valuable cargo, by the captain of the vessel,”

(See ‘The Topographical Dictionary of England’, by Samuel Lewis, vol. ii. p. 1831.)—-Ed.]

[Footnote F: There is a slight inconsistency here. The conversation is represented as taking place in the evening (see l. 227).—Ed.]

[Footnote G: It may be proper to inform some readers, that a sheep-fold in these mountains is an unroofed building of stone walls, with different divisions. It is generally placed by the side of a brook, for the convenience of washing the sheep; but it is also useful as a shelter for them, and as a place to drive them into, to enable the shepherds conveniently to single out one or more for any particular purpose.—W. W. 1800.]

From the Fenwick note it will be seen that Michael’s sheep-fold, in Green-head Ghyll, existed—at least the remains of it—in 1843. Its site, however, is now very difficult to identify. There is a sheep-fold above Boon Beck, which one passes immediately on entering the common, going up Green-head Ghyll. It is now “finished,” and used when required. There are remains of walling, much higher up the ghyll; but these are probably the work of miners, formerly engaged there. Michael’s cottage had been destroyed when the poem was written, in 1800. It stood where the coach-house and stables of “the Hollins” now stand. But one who visits Green-head Ghyll, and wishes to

realize Michael in his old age—as described in this poem—should ascend the ghyll till it almost reaches the top of Fairfield; where the old man, during eighty years,

Page 149

’had learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone,’

and where he

’had been alone,
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights.’

By so doing he will be better able to realize the spirit of the poem, than by trying to identify the site either of the “unfinished sheep-fold,” or of the house named the “Evening Star.” What Wordsworth said to the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge in reference to ‘The Brothers’ has been quoted in the note to that poem, p. 203. On the same occasion he remarked, in reference to ‘Michael’:

“‘Michael’ was founded on the son of an old couple having become dissolute, and run away from his parents; and on an old shepherd having been seven years in building up a sheep-fold in a solitary valley.”

(’Memoirs of Wordsworth’, by the late Bishop of Lincoln, vol. ii. p. 305.)

The following extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere Journal, show the carefulness with which the poem ‘Michael’ was composed, and the frequent revisions which it underwent:

’Oct. 11 [1800.] “We walked up Green-head ghyll in search of a sheepfold.... The sheepfold is falling away. It is built nearly in the form of a heart unequally divided.”

13. “William composing in the evening.”

15. “W. composed a little.” ... “W. again composed at the sheepfold after dinner.”

18. “W. worked all the morning at the sheepfold, but in vain. He lay down till 7 o’clock, but did not sleep.”

19. “William got to work.”

20. “W. worked in the morning at the sheepfold.”

21. “W. had been unsuccessful in the morning at the sheepfold.”

22. “W. composed, without much success, at the sheepfold.”

23. “W. was not successful in composition in the evening.”

24. “W. was only partly successful in composition.”

26. “W. composed a good deal all the morning.”

28. “W. could not compose much; fatigued himself with altering.”

30. “W. worked at his poem all the morning.”

Nov. 10. “W. at the sheepfold.”

12. “W. has been working at the sheepfold.”

Dec. 9. “W. finished his poem to-day.'”

It is impossible to say with certainty that the entry under Dec. 9 refers to ‘Michael’, but if it does, it is evident that Wordsworth wrought continuously at this poem for nearly two months.

On April 9, 1801, Wordsworth wrote to Thomas Poole:

> “In writing it” (’Michael’), “I had your character often before my eyes; and sometimes thought that I was delineating such a man as you yourself would have been, under the same circumstances.”

The following is part of a letter written by Wordsworth to Charles James Fox in 1802, and sent with a copy of “Lyrical Ballads”:

Page 150

“In the two poems, ‘The Brothers’ and ‘Michael’, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist amongst a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent ‘proprietors’ of land, here called ‘statesmen,’ men of respectable education, who daily labour on their own little properties. The domestic affections will always be strong amongst men who live in a country not crowded with population; if these men are placed above poverty. But, if they are proprietors of small estates which have descended to them from their ancestors, the power which these affections will acquire amongst such men, is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired labourers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet on which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. It is a fountain fitted to the nature of social man, from which supplies of affection as pure as his heart was intended for, are daily drawn. This class of men is rapidly disappearing.... The two poems that I have mentioned were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. ’Pectus enim est quod disertos facit, et vis mentis. Ideoque imperitis quoque, si modo sint aliquo affectu concitati, verba non desunt.’ The poems are faithful copies from nature; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts; and may in some small degree enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species, and our knowledge of human nature, by showing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider, not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us.” (See ’Correspondence of Sir Thomas Hanmer’, by Sir Henry Burnbury, p. 436.)

A number of fragments, originally meant to be parts of ’Michael’,—or at least written with such a possibility in view,—will be found in the Appendix to the eighth volume of this edition.—Ed.

* * * * *

1801

‘The Sparrow’s Nest’, and the sonnet on Skiddaw, along with some translations from Chaucer, belong to the year 1801. During this year, however, ‘The Excursion’ was in progress. In its earlier stages, and before the plan of ‘The Recluse’ was matured, the introductory part was familiarly known, and talked of in the Wordsworth household, by the name of “The Pedlar.” The following extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal of 1801 will show the progress that was being made with it:

“Dec. 21.—Wm. sate beside me, and wrote ‘The Pedlar.’ 22nd.—W. composed a few lines of ‘The Pedlar.’ 23rd.—William worked at ’The Ruined Cottage’” (this was the

name of the first part of ’The Excursion’, in which ‘The Pedlar’ was included), “and made himself very ill,” *etc*.

Ed.

Page 151

* * * * *

THE SPARROW'S NEST

Composed 1801.—Published 1807

[Written in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere. At the end of the garden of my father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace that commanded a fine view of the river Derwent and Cockermouth Castle. This was our favourite play-ground. The terrace wall, a low one, was covered with closely-clipt privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds who built their nests there. The latter of these stanzas [A] alludes to one of those nests.—I.F.]

This poem was first published in the series entitled "Moods of my own Mind," in 1807. In 1815 it was included among the "Poems founded on the Affections," and in 1845 was transferred to the "Poems referring to the Period of Childhood."—Ed.

Behold, within the leafy shade,
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discovered sight
Gleamed like a vision of delight. [1]
I started—seeming to espy 5
The home and sheltered bed,
The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My Father's house, in wet or dry
My sister Emmeline and I
    Together visited. 10

She looked at it and seemed to fear it;
Dreading, tho' wishing, to be near it: [2]
Such heart was in her, being then
A little Prattler among men.
The Blessing of my later years 15
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears;
    And love, and thought, and joy. 20

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!
Few visions have I seen more fair,
Nor many prospects of delight
More pleasing than that simple sight! 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

She look'd at it as if she fear'd it;
Still wishing, dreading to be near it: 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE

[Footnote A: So it stands in the Fenwick note; but it should evidently read, "The following stanzas allude."—Ed.]

Wordsworth's "sister Emmeline" was his only sister, Dorothy; and in the MS. sent originally to the printer the line was "My sister Dorothy and I." This poem is referred to in a subsequent one, 'A Farewell', l. 56. See page 326 of this volume.—Ed.

* * * * *

"PELION AND OSSA FLOURISH SIDE BY SIDE"

Composed 1801.—Published 1815

Page 152

One of the “Miscellaneous Sonnets.” From 1836 onwards it bore the title ’1801’.—Ed.

Pelion and Ossa flourish side by side,
Together in immortal [1] books enrolled:
His ancient dower Olympus hath not sold;
And that inspiring Hill, which “did divide
Into two ample horns his forehead wide,” [A] 5
Shines with poetic radiance as of old;
While not an English Mountain we behold
By the celestial Muses glorified.
Yet round our sea-girt shore they rise in crowds:
What was the great Parnassus’ self to Thee, 10
Mount Skiddaw? In his natural sovereignty
Our British Hill is nobler [2] far; he shrouds
His double front among Atlantic clouds, [3]
And pours forth streams more sweet than Castaly.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

illustrious ... MS.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

fairer ... 1815.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

His double-fronted head in higher clouds, 1815.

... among Atlantic clouds, MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See Spenser's translation of 'Virgil's Gnat', ll. 21-2:

'Or where on Mount Parnasse, the Muses brood.
Doth his broad forehead like two horns divide,
And the sweet waves of sounding Castaly
With liquid foot doth glide down easily.'

Ed.]

* * * * *

SELECTIONS FROM CHAUCER

MODERNISED

Wordsworth's modernisations of Chaucer were all written in 1801. Two of them were from the Canterbury Tales, but his version of one of these—'The Manciple's Tale'—has never been printed. Of the three poems which were published, the first—'The Prioress' Tale'—was included in the edition of 1820. The 'Troilus and Cressida' and 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale' were included in the "Poems of Early and Late Years" (1842); but they had been published the year before, in a small volume entitled 'The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernised' (London, 1841), a volume to which Elizabeth Barrett, Leigh Hunt, R. H. Home, Thomas Powell, and others contributed. Wordsworth wrote thus of the project to Mr. Powell, in an unpublished and undated letter, written probably in 1840:

Page 153

“I am glad that you enter so warmly into the Chaucerian project, and that Mr. L. Hunt is disposed to give his valuable aid to it. For myself, I cannot do more than I offered, to place at your disposal ‘The Prioress’ Tale’ already published, ’The Cuckoo and the Nightingale’, ‘The Manciple’s Tale’, and I rather think (but I cannot just now find it) a small portion of the ‘Troilus and Cressida’. You ask my opinion about that poem. Speaking from a recollection only, of many years past, I should say it would be found too long and probably tedious. ‘The Knight’s Tale’ is also very long; but, though Dryden has executed it, in his own way observe, with great spirit and harmony, he has suffered so much of the simplicity, and with that of the beauty and occasional pathos of the original to escape, that I should be pleased to hear that a new version was to be attempted upon my principle by some competent person. It would delight me to read every part of Chaucer over again—for I reverence and admire him above measure—-with a view to your work; but my eyes will not permit me to do so. Who will undertake the Prologue to the Canterbury Tales? For your publication that is indispensable, and I fear it will prove very difficult. It is written, as you know, in the couplet measure; and therefore I have nothing to say upon its metre, but in respect to the poems in stanza, neither in ‘The Prioress’ Tale’ nor in ’The Cuckoo and Nightingale’ have I kept to the rule of the original as to the form, and number, and position of the rhymes; thinking it enough if I kept the same number of lines in each stanza; and this is, I think, all that is necessary, and all that can be done without sacrificing the substance of sense too often to the mere form of sound.”

In a subsequent letter to Professor Henry Reed of Philadelphia, dated “Rydal Mount, January 13th, 1841,” Wordsworth said:

“So great is my admiration of Chaucer’s genius, and so profound my reverence for him as an instrument in the hands of Providence, for spreading the light of literature through his native land, that notwithstanding the defects and faults in this publication” (referring, I presume, to the volume, ’The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernised’), “I am glad of it, as a means of making many acquainted with the original, who would otherwise be ignorant of everything about him but his name.”

Ed.

* * * * *

THE PRIORESS’ TALE

Translated 1801. [A]—Published 1820

“Call up him who left half told
The story of Cambuscan bold.” [B]

In the following Piece I have allowed myself no farther deviations from the original than were necessary for the fluent reading, and instant understanding, of the Author: so much however is the language altered since Chaucer's time, especially in pronunciation, that much was to be removed, and its place supplied with as little incongruity as possible. The ancient accent has been retained in a few conjunctions, such as *also* and *alway*, from a conviction that such sprinklings of antiquity would be admitted, by persons of taste, to have a graceful accordance with the subject.—W. W. (1820).

Page 154

The fierce bigotry of the Prioress forms a fine back ground for her tender-hearted sympathies with the Mother and Child; and the mode in which the story is told amply atones for the extravagance of the miracle.—W. W. (added in 1827).

In the editions of 1820 and 1827 'The Prioress' Tale' followed 'The White Doe of Rylstone'. In 1832 it followed the "Inscriptions"; and in 1836 it was included among the "Poems founded on the Affections." In 1845 it found its appropriate place in the "Selections from Chaucer modernised."—Ed.

I "O Lord, our Lord! how wondrously," (quoth she)
"Thy name in this large world is spread abroad!
For not alone by men of dignity
Thy worship is performed and precious laud;
But by the mouths of children, gracious God! 5
Thy goodness is set forth; they when they lie
Upon the breast thy name do glorify.

II "Wherefore in praise, the worthiest that I may,
Jesu! of thee, and the white Lily-flower
Which did thee bear, and is a Maid for aye, 10
To tell a story I will use my power;
Not that I may increase her honour's dower,
For she herself is honour, and the root
Of goodness, next her Son, our soul's best boot.

III "O Mother Maid! O Maid and Mother free! 15
O bush unburnt! burning in Moses' sight!
That down didst ravish from the Deity,
Through humbleness, the spirit that did alight
Upon thy heart, whence, through that glory's might,
Conceived was the Father's sapience, 20
Help me to tell it in thy reverence!

IV "Lady! thy goodness, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
Surpass all science and all utterance;
For sometimes, Lady! ere men pray to thee 25
Thou goest before in thy benignity,
The light to us vouchsafing of thy prayer,
To be our guide unto thy Son so dear.

V "My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen!
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness, 30
That I the weight of it may not sustain;

But as a child of twelvemonths old or less,
That laboureth his language to express,
Even so fare I; and therefore, I thee pray,
Guide thou my song which I of thee shall say. 35

VI “There was in Asia, in a mighty town,
’Mong Christian folk, a street where Jews might be,
Assigned to them and given them for their own
By a great Lord, for gain and usury,
Hateful to Christ and to his company; 40
And through this street who list might ride and wend;
Free was it, and unbarred at either end.

Page 155

VII “A little school of Christian people stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
A nest of children come of Christian blood, 45
That learned in that school from year to year
Such sort of doctrine as men used there,
That is to say, to sing and read also,
As little children in their childhood do.

VIII “Among these children was a Widow’s son, 50
A little scholar, scarcely seven years old, [C]
Who day by day unto this school hath gone,
And eke, when he the image did behold
Of Jesu’s Mother, as he had been told,
This Child was wont to kneel adown and say 55
Ave Marie, as he goeth by the way.

IX “This Widow thus her little Son hath taught
Our blissful Lady, Jesu’s Mother dear,
To worship aye, and he forgat it not;
For simple infant hath a ready ear. 60
Sweet is the holiness of youth: and hence,
Calling to mind this matter when I may,
Saint Nicholas in my presence standeth aye,
For he so young to Christ did reverence. [D]

X “This little Child, while in the school he sate 65
His Primer conning with an earnest cheer, [E]
The whilst the rest their anthem-book repeat
The *Alma Redemptoris* did he hear;
And as he durst he drew him near and near,
And hearkened to the words and to the note, 70
Till the first verse he learned it all by rote.

XI “This Latin knew he nothing what it said,
For he too tender was of age to know;
But to his comrade he repaired, and prayed
That he the meaning of this song would show, 75
And unto him declare why men sing so;
This oftentimes, that he might be at ease,
This child did him beseech on his bare knees.

XII “His Schoolfellow, who elder was than he,
Answered him thus:—’This song, I have heard say, 80
Was fashioned for our blissful Lady free;

Her to salute, and also her to pray
To be our help upon our dying day:
If there is more in this, I know it not:
Song do I learn,—small grammar I have got.' 85

XIII "'And is this song fashioned in reverence
Of Jesu's Mother?' said this Innocent;
'Now, certes, I will use my diligence
To con it all ere Christmas-tide be spent;
Although I for my Primer shall be shent, 90
And shall be beaten three times in an hour,
Our Lady I will praise with all my power.'

Page 156

XIV “His Schoolfellow, whom he had so besought,
As they went homeward taught him privily
And then he sang it well and fearlessly, 95
From word to word according to the note:
Twice in a day it passed through his throat;
Homeward and schoolward whensoe’er he went,
On Jesu’s Mother fixed was his intent.

XV “Through all the Jewry (this before said I) 100
This little Child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O *Alma Redemptoris!* high and low:
The sweetness of Christ’s Mother pierced so
His heart, that her to praise, to her to pray, 105
He cannot stop his singing by the way.

XVI “The Serpent, Satan, our first foe, that hath
His wasp’s nest in Jew’s heart, upswelled—’O woe,
O Hebrew people!’ said he in his wrath,
’Is it an honest thing? Shall this be so? 110
That such a Boy where’er he lists [1] shall go
In your despite, and sing his hymns and saws,
Which is against the reverence of our laws!’

XVII “From that day forward have the Jews conspired
Out of the world this Innocent to chase; 115
And to this end a Homicide they hired,
That in an alley had a privy place,
And, as the Child ’gan to the school to pace,
This cruel Jew him seized, and held him fast
And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast. 120

XVIII “I say that him into a pit they threw,
A loathsome pit, whence noisome scents exhale;
O cursed folk! away, ye Herods new!
What may your ill intentions you avail?
Murder will out; certes it will not fail; 125
Know, that the honour of high God may spread,
The blood cries out on your accursed deed.

XIX “O Martyr ’stablished in virginity!
Now may’st thou sing for aye before the throne,
Following the Lamb celestial,” quoth she, 130
“Of which the great Evangelist, Saint John,

In Patmos wrote, who saith of them that go
Before the Lamb singing continually,
That never fleshly woman they did know.

XX “Now this poor widow waiteth all that night 135
After her little Child, and he came not;
For which, by earliest glimpse of morning light,
With face all pale with dread and busy thought,
She at the School and elsewhere him hath sought,
Until thus far she learned, that he had been 140
In the Jews’ street, and there he last was seen.

Page 157

XXI “With Mother’s pity in her breast enclosed
She goeth, as she were half out of her mind,
To every place wherein she hath supposed
By likelihood her little Son to find; 145
And ever on Christ’s Mother meek and kind
She cried, till to the Jewry she was brought,
And him among the accursed Jews she sought.

XXII “She asketh, and she piteously doth pray
To every Jew that dwelleth in that place 150
To tell her if her child had passed that way;
They all said—Nay; but Jesu of his grace
Gave to her thought, that in a little space
She for her Son in that same spot did cry
Where he was cast into a pit hard by. 155

XXIII “O thou great God that dost perform thy laud
By mouths of Innocents, lo! here thy might;
This gem of chastity, this emerald,
And eke of martyrdom this ruby bright,
There, where with mangled throat he lay upright, 160
The *Alma Redemptoris* ’gan to sing
So loud, that with his voice the place did ring.

XXIV “The Christian folk that through the Jewry went
Come to the spot in wonder at the thing;
And hastily they for the Provost sent; 165
Immediately he came, not tarrying,
And praiseth Christ that is our heavenly King,
And eke his Mother, honour of Mankind:
Which done, he bade that they the Jews should bind.

XXV “This Child with piteous lamentation then 170
Was taken up, singing his song alway;
And with procession great and pomp of men
To the next Abbey him they bare away;
His Mother swooning by the body [2] lay:
And scarcely could the people that were near 175
Remove this second Rachel from the bier.

XXVI “Torment and shameful death to every one
This Provost doth for those bad Jews prepare
That of this murder wist, and that anon:
Such wickedness his judgments cannot spare; 180

Who will do evil, evil shall he bear;
Them therefore with wild horses did he draw,
And after that he hung them by the law.

XXVII "Upon his bier this Innocent doth lie
Before the altar while the Mass doth last: 185
The Abbot with his convent's company
Then sped themselves to bury him full fast;
And, when they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this Child when sprinkled was the water;
And sang, O *Alma Redemptoris Mater!* 190

Page 158

XXVIII “This Abbot, for he was a holy man,
As all Monks are, or surely ought to be, [3]
In supplication to the Child began
Thus saying, ’O dear Child! I summon thee
In virtue of the holy Trinity 195
Tell me the cause why thou dost sing this hymn,
Since that thy throat is cut, as it doth seem.’

XXIX “‘My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,’
Said this young Child, ’and by the law of kind
I should have died, yea many hours ago; 200
But Jesus Christ, as in the books ye find,
Will that his glory last, and be in mind;
And, for the worship of his Mother dear,
Yet may I sing, *O Alma!* loud and clear.

XXX “’This well of mercy, Jesu’s Mother sweet, 205
After my knowledge I have loved alway;
And in the hour when I my death did meet
To me she came, and thus to me did say,
“Thou in thy dying sing this holy lay,”
As ye have heard; and soon as I had sung 210
Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

XXXI “’Wherefore I sing, nor can from song refrain,
In honour of that blissful Maiden free,
Till from my tongue off-taken is the grain;
And after that thus said she unto me; 215
“My little Child, then will I come for thee
Soon as the grain from off thy tongue they take:
Be not dismayed, I will not thee forsake!"’

XXXII “This holy Monk, this Abbot—him mean I,
Touched then his tongue, and took away the grain; 220
And he gave up the ghost full peacefully;
And, when the Abbot had this wonder seen,
His salt tears trickled down like showers of rain;
And on his face he dropped upon the ground,
And still he lay as if he had been bound. 225

XXXIII “Eke the whole Convent on the pavement lay,
Weeping and praising Jesu’s Mother dear;
And after that they rose, and took their way,
And lifted up this Martyr from the bier,

And in a tomb of precious marble clear 230
Enclosed his uncorrupted body sweet.—[F]
Where'er he be, God grant us him to meet!

XXXIV "Young Hew of Lincoln! in like sort laid low
By cursed Jews—thing well and widely known,
For it was done a little while ago—[4] 235
Pray also thou for us, while here we tarry
Weak sinful folk, that God, with pitying eye,
In mercy would his mercy multiply
On us, for reverence of his Mother Mary!"

Page 159

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... list ... 1820.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... by the Bier ... 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

This Abbot who had been a holy man
And was, as all Monks are, or ought to be, [a] 1820.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

For not long since was dealt the cruel blow, 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A:

"Friday, 4th December 1801.... William translating 'The Prioress' Tale'."

"Saturday, 5th. William finished 'The Prioress' Tale', and after tea, Mary and he wrote it out"

(Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal).—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See 'Il Penseroso', l. 110.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Chaucer's phrase is "a litel clergeon," Wordsworth's, "a little scholar;" but "clergeon" is a chorister, not a scholar.—Ed.]

[Footnote D:

"Chaucer's text is:

'Thus hath this widow her litel child i-taught
Our blissful lady, Criste's moder deere,
To worschip ay, and he forgat it nought;
For sely child wil alway soone leere.'

'For sely child wil alway soone leere,' *i.e*. for a happy child will always learn soon. Wordsworth renders:

'For simple infant hath a ready ear,'

and adds:

'Sweet is the holiness of youth,'

extending the stanza to receive this addition from seven to eight lines, with an altered rhyme-system."

(Professor Edward Dowden, in the 'Transactions of the Wordsworth Society', No. III.) —Ed.]

[Footnote E: Chaucer's text is:

'This litel child his litel book lernynge
As he sat in the schole in his primere.'

Ed.]

[Footnote F: Chaucer's text is:

'And in a tombe of marble stoones clere
Enclosed they this litel body swete.'

Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: This was erased in the 'Errata' of 1820, but it may be reproduced here.—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE CUCKOO AND THE NIGHTINGALE

Translated 1801. [A]—Published 1841 [B]

I The God of Love—*ah, benedicite!*
How mighty and how great a Lord is he!
For he of low hearts can make high, of high
He can make low, and unto death bring nigh;
And hard hearts he can make them kind and free. [1] 5

II Within a little time, as hath been found,
He can make sick folk whole and fresh and sound:
Them who are whole in body and in mind,
He can make sick,—bind can he and unbind
All that he will have bound, or have unbound. 10

Page 160

III To tell his might my wit may not suffice;
Foolish men he can make them out of wise;—
For he may do all that he will devise;
Loose livers he can make abate their vice,
And proud hearts can make tremble in a trice. 15

IV In brief, the whole of what he will, he may;
Against him dare not any wight say nay;
To humble or afflict whome'er he will,
To gladden or to grieve, he hath like skill;
But most his might he sheds on the eve of May. 20

V For every true heart, gentle heart and free,
That with him is, or thinketh so to be,
Now against May shall have some stirring—whether
To joy, or be it to some mourning; never
At other time, methinks, in like degree. 25

VI For now when they may hear the small birds' song,
And see the budding leaves the branches throng,
This unto their remembrance doth bring
All kinds of pleasure mix'd with sorrowing;
And longing of sweet thoughts that ever long. 30

VII And of that longing heaviness doth come,
Whence oft great sickness grows of heart and home;
Sick are they all for lack of their desire;
And thus in May their hearts are set on fire,
So that they burn forth in great martyrdom. 35

VIII In sooth, I speak from feeling, what though now
Old am I, and to genial pleasure slow;
Yet have I felt of sickness through the May,
Both hot and cold, and heart-aches every day,—
How hard, alas! to bear, I only know. 40

IX Such shaking doth the fever in me keep
Through all this May that I have little sleep;
And also 'tis not likely unto me,
That any living heart should sleepy be
In which Love's dart its fiery point doth steep. 45

X But tossing lately on a sleepless bed,
I of a token thought which Lovers heed;

How among them it was a common tale,
That it was good to hear the Nightingale,
Ere the vile Cuckoo's note be uttered. 50

XI And then I thought anon as it was day,
I gladly would go somewhere to essay
If I perchance a Nightingale might hear,
For yet had I heard none, of all that year,
And it was then the third night of the May. 55

XII And soon as I a glimpse of day espied,
No longer would I in my bed abide,
But straightway to a wood that was hard by,
Forth did I go, alone and fearlessly,
And held the pathway down by a brook-side; 60

XIII Till to a lawn I came all white and green,
I in so fair a one had never been.
The ground was green, with daisy powdered over;
Tall were the flowers, the grove a lofty cover,
All green and white; and nothing else was seen. [C] 65

XIV There sate I down among the fair fresh flowers,
And saw the birds come tripping from their bowers,
Where they had rested them all night; and they,
Who were so joyful at the light of day,
Began to honour May with all their powers. 70

Page 161

XV Well did they know that service all by rote,
And there was many and many a lovely note,
Some, singing loud, as if they had complained;
Some with their notes another manner feigned;
And some did sing all out with the full throat. 75

XVI They pruned themselves, and made themselves right gay,
Dancing and leaping light upon the spray;
And ever two and two together were,
The same as they had chosen for the year,
Upon Saint Valentine's returning day. 80

XVII Meanwhile the stream, whose bank I sate upon,
Was making such a noise as it ran on
Accordant to the sweet Birds' harmony;
Methought that it was the best melody
Which ever to man's ear a passage won. 85

XVIII And for delight, but how I never wot,
I in a slumber and a swoon was caught,
Not all asleep and yet not waking wholly;
And as I lay, the Cuckoo, bird unholy,
Broke silence, or I heard him in my thought. 90

XIX And that was right upon a tree fast by,
And who was then ill satisfied but I?
Now, God, quoth I, that died upon the rood,
From thee and thy base throat, keep all that's good,
Full little joy have I now of thy cry. 95

XX And, as I with the Cuckoo thus 'gan chide,
In the next bush that was me fast beside,
I heard the lusty Nightingale so sing,
That her clear voice made a loud rioting,
Echoing through all the green wood wide. [D] 100

XXI Ah! good sweet Nightingale! for my heart's cheer,
Hence hast thou stayed a little while too long;
For we have had [2] the sorry Cuckoo here,
And she hath been before thee with her song;
Evil light on her! she hath done me wrong. 105

XXII But hear you now a wondrous thing, I pray;
As long as in that swooning-fit I lay,

Methought I wist right well what these birds meant,
And had good knowing both of their intent,
And of their speech, and all that they would say. 110

XXIII The Nightingale thus in my hearing spake:—
Good Cuckoo, seek some other bush or brake,
And, prithee, let us that can sing dwell here;
For every wight eschews thy song to hear,
Such uncouth singing verily dost thou make. 115

XXIV What! quoth she then, what is't that ails thee now?
It seems to me I sing as well as thou;
For mine's a song that is both true and plain,—
Although I cannot quaver so in vain
As thou dost in thy throat, I wot not how. 120

XXV All men may understanding have of me,
But, Nightingale, so may they not of thee;
For thou hast many a foolish and quaint cry:—
Thou say'st, OSEE, OSEE, then how may I
Have knowledge, I thee pray, what this may be? 125

XXVI Ah, fool! quoth she, wist thou not what it is?
Oft as I say OSEE, OSEE, I wis,
Then mean I, that I should be wondrous fain
That shamefully they one and all were slain,
Whoever against Love mean aught amiss. 130

Page 162

XXVII And also would I that they all were dead,
Who do not think in love their life to lead;
For who is both the God of Love to obey,
Is only fit to die, I dare well say,
And for that cause OSEE I cry; take heed! 135

XXVIII Ay, quoth the Cuckoo, that is a quaint law,
That all must love or die; but I withdraw,
And take my leave of all such company,
For mine intent it neither is to die,
Nor ever while I live Love's yoke to draw. 140

XXIX For lovers of all folk that be alive,
The most disquiet have and least do thrive;
Most feeling have of sorrow [3] woe and care,
And the least welfare cometh to their share;
What need is there against the truth to strive? 145

XXX What! quoth she, thou art all out of thy mind,
That in thy churlishness a cause canst find
To speak of Love's true Servants in this mood;
For in this world no service is so good
To every wight that gentle is of kind. 150

XXXI For thereof comes all goodness and all worth;
All gentiless [4] and honour thence come forth;
Thence worship comes, content and true heart's pleasure,
And full-assured trust, joy without measure,
And jollity, fresh cheerfulness, and mirth; 155

XXXII And bounty, lowliness, and courtesy,
And seemliness, and faithful company,
And dread of shame that will not do amiss;
For he that faithfully Love's servant is,
Rather than be disgraced, would chuse to die. 160

XXXIII And that the very truth it is which I
Now say—in such belief I'll live and die;
And Cuckoo, do thou so, by my advice.
Then, quoth she, let me never hope for bliss,
If with that counsel I do e'er comply. 165

XXXIV Good Nightingale! thou speakest wondrous fair,
Yet for all that, the truth is found elsewhere;

For Love in young folk is but rage, I wis;
And Love in old folk a great dotage is;
Who most it useth, him ’twill most impair. 170

XXXV For thereof come all contraries to gladness;
Thence sickness comes, and overwhelming sadness,
Mistrust and jealousy, despite, debate,
Dishonour, shame, envy importunate,
Pride, anger, mischief, poverty, and madness. 175

XXXVI Loving is aye an office of despair,
And one thing is therein which is not fair;
For whoso gets of love a little bliss,
Unless it alway stay with him, I wis
He may full soon go with an old man’s hair. 180

XXXVII And, therefore, Nightingale! do thou keep nigh,
For trust me well, in spite of thy quaint cry,
If long time from thy mate thou be, or far,
Thou’lt be as others that forsaken are;
Then shall thou raise a clamour as do I. 185

XXXVIII Fie, quoth she, on thy name, Bird ill beseen!
The God of Love afflict thee with all teen,
For thou art worse than mad a thousand fold;
For many a one hath virtues manifold,
Who had been nought, if Love had never been. 190

Page 163

XXXIX For evermore his servants Love amendeth,
And he from every blemish them defendeth;
And maketh them to burn, as in a fire,
In loyalty, and worshipful desire,
And, when it likes him, joy enough them sendeth. 195

XL Thou Nightingale! the Cuckoo said, be still,
For Love no reason hath but his own will;—
For to th' untrue he oft gives ease and joy;
True lovers doth so bitterly annoy,
He lets them perish through that grievous ill. 200

XLI With such a master would I never be; [E]
For he, in sooth, is blind, and may not see,
And knows not when he hurts and when he heals;
Within this court full seldom Truth avails,
So diverse in his wilfulness is he. 205

XLII Then of the Nightingale did I take note,
How from her inmost heart a sigh she brought,
And said, Alas! that ever I was born,
Not one word have I now, I am so forlorn,—
And with that word, she into tears burst out. 210

XLIII Alas, alas! my very heart will break,
Quoth she, to hear this churlish bird thus speak
Of Love, and of his holy services;
Now, God of Love! thou help me in some wise,
That vengeance on this Cuckoo I may wreak. 215

XLIV And so methought I started up anon,
And to the brook I ran and got a stone,
Which at the Cuckoo hardily I cast,
And he for dread did fly away full fast;
And glad, in sooth, was I when he was gone. 220

XLV And as he flew, the Cuckoo, ever and aye,
Kept crying, "Farewell!—farewell, Popinjay!"
As if in scornful mockery of me;
And on I hunted him from tree to tree,
Till he was far, all out of sight, away. 225

XLVI Then straightway came the Nightingale to me,
And said, Forsooth, my friend, do I thank thee,

That thou wert near to rescue me; and now
Unto the God of Love I make a vow,
That all this May I will thy songstress be. 230

XLVII Well satisfied, I thanked her, and she said,
By this mishap no longer be dismayed,
Though thou the Cuckoo heard, ere thou heard'st me;
Yet if I live it shall amended be,
When next May comes, if I am not afraid. 235

XLVIII And one thing will I counsel thee also,
The Cuckoo trust not thou, nor his Love's saw;
All that she said is an outrageous lie.
Nay, nothing shall me bring thereto, quoth I,
For Love, and it hath done me mighty woe. 240

XLIX Yea, hath it? use, quoth she, this medicine;
This May-time, every day before thou dine,
Go look on the fresh daisy; then say I,
Although for pain thou may'st be like to die,
Thou wilt be eased, and less wilt droop and pine. 245

L And mind always that thou be good and true,
And I will sing one song, of many new,
For love of thee, as loud as I may cry;
And then did she begin this song full high,
"Beshrew all them that are in love untrue." 250

Page 164

LI And soon as she had sung it to the end,
Now farewell, quoth she, for I hence must wend;
And, God of Love, that can right well and may,
Send unto thee as mickle joy this day,
As ever he to Lover yet did send. 255

LII Thus takes the Nightingale her leave of me;
I pray to God with her always to be,
And joy of love to send her evermore;
And shield us from the Cuckoo and her lore,
For there is not so false a bird as she. 260

LIII Forth then she flew, the gentle Nightingale,
To all the Birds that lodged within that dale,
And gathered each and all into one place;
And them besought to hear her doleful case,
And thus it was that she began her tale. 265

LIV The Cuckoo—'tis not well that I should hide
How she and I did each the other chide,
And without ceasing, since it was daylight;
And now I pray you all to do me right
Of that false Bird whom Love can not abide. 270

LV Then spake one Bird, and full assent all gave;
This matter asketh counsel good as grave,
For birds we are—all here together brought;
And, in good sooth, the Cuckoo here is not;
And therefore we a Parliament will have. 275

LVI And thereat shall the Eagle be our Lord,
And other Peers whose names are on record;
A summons to the Cuckoo shall be sent,
And judgment there be given; or that intent
Failing, we finally shall make accord. 280

LVII And all this shall be done, without a nay,
The morrow after Saint Valentine's day,
Under a maple that is well beseen,
Before the chamber-window of the Queen,
At Woodstock, on the meadow green and gay. 285

LVIII She thanked them; and then her leave she took,
And flew into a hawthorn by that brook;

And there she sate and sung—upon that tree—
“For term of life Love shall have hold of me”—
So loudly, that I with that song awoke. 290

Unlearned Book and rude, as well I know,
For beauty thou hast none, nor eloquence,
Who did on thee the hardiness bestow
To appear before my Lady? but a sense
Thou surely hast of her benevolence, 295
Whereof her hourly bearing proof doth give;
For of all good she is the best alive.Alas, poor Book! for thy unworthiness,
To show to her some pleasant meanings writ
In winning words, since through her gentiless, [5] 300
Thee she accepts as for her service fit!
Oh! it repents me I have neither wit
Nor leisure unto thee more worth to give;
For of all good she is the best alive.Beseech her meekly with all lowliness, 305
Though I be far from her I reverence,
To think upon my truth and stedfastness,
And to abridge my sorrow’s violence,
Caused by the wish, as knows your sapience,
She of her liking proof to me would give; 310
For of all good she is the best alive.

Page 165

L'ENVOY Pleasure's Aurora, Day of gladsomeness!
Luna by night, with heavenly influence
Illumined! root of beauty and goodnesse,
Write, and allay, by your beneficence, 315
My sighs breathed forth in silence,—comfort give!
Since of all good, you are the best alive.

EXPLICIT

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: In 1819 Wordsworth wrote the opening stanza of his version of 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale', in the album of Mrs. Calvert at Keswick, thus:

'The God of Love—ah, benedicite!'
How mighty and how great a Lord is He!
High can he make the heart that's low and poor,
And high hearts low—through pains that they endure,
And hard hearts, He can make them kind and free.

W. W., Nov. 27, 1819.]

[Variant 2:

1842.

... have heard ... 1841.]

[Variant 3:

1842

... sorrow's ... 1841.]

[Variant 4:

1842.

... gentleness ... 1841.]

[Variant 5:

1842.

... gentleness, ... 1841.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The following extracts from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal show the date of the composition of this poem.

"Sunday, 6th December 1801. A very fine beautiful sun-shiny morning. William worked a while at Chaucer; then he set forward to walk into Easdale.... In the afternoon I read Chaucer aloud."

"Monday, 7th.... William at work with Chaucer, 'The God of Love'...."

"8th November ... William worked at 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale' till he was tired."

"Wednesday, December 9th. I read 'Palemon and Arcite', William writing out his alterations of Chaucer's 'Cuckoo and Nightingale'."

The question as to whether 'The Cuckoo and the Nightingale' was written by Chaucer or not, may be solved either way without affecting the literary value of Wordsworth's "modernisation" of it.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In 'The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernised'.—Ed.]

[Footnote C:

"In 'The Cuckoo and Nightingale', a poem of the third of May—a date corresponding to the mid-May, the very heart of May according to our modern reckoning—the poet after a wakeful night rises, and goes forth at dawn, and comes to a 'laund' or plain 'of white and green.'

'So feire oon had I nevere in bene,
The grounde was grene, y poudred with dayse,
The floures and the gras ilike al hie,
Al grene and white, was nothing elles sene.'

Nothing seen but the short green grass and the white daisies,—grass and daisies being of equal height. Unfortunately in Tyrwhitt's text the description is nonsensical,

Page 166

‘The flowres and the greves like hie.’

The daisy flowers are as high as the *groves*! Wordsworth retained the groves, but refused to make daisies of equal height with them.

’Tall were the flowers, the grove a lofty cover,
All green and white; and nothing else was seen.’”

(Professor Dowden, in the ‘Transactions of the Wordsworth Society’. No. III.)—Ed.]

[Footnote D:

“In Chaucer’s poem, after ‘the cuckoo, bird unholy,’ has said his evil say, the Nightingale breaks forth ‘so lustily,’

’That with her clere voys she made rynge
Thro out alle the grene wode wide,’

Wordsworth has taken a poet’s licence with these lines:

’I heard the lusty Nightingale so sing,
That her clear voice made ‘a loud rioting’,
Echoing through all the green wood wide.’

This ‘loud rioting’ is Wordsworth’s, not Chaucer’s; and it belongs, as it were, to that other passage of his:

’O Nightingale, thou surely art
A creature of a fiery heart,
These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce;
Tumultuous harmony and fierce!
Thou sing’st as if the God of wine
Had helped thee to a Valentine.’”

(Professor Dowden, in the ‘Transactions of the Wordsworth Society’, No. III.)—Ed.]

[Footnote E: From a manuscript in the Bodleian, as are also stanzas 44 and 45—W. W.

(1841), which are necessary to complete the sense—W. W. (added in 1842).]

* * * * *

TROILUS AND CRESIDA

Translated 1801.—Published 1841 [A]

Next morning Troilus began to clear
His eyes from sleep, at the first break of day,
And unto Pandarus, his own Brother dear,
For love of God, full piteously did say,
We must the Palace see of Cresida; 5
For since we yet may have no other feast,
Let us behold her Palace at the least!

And therewithal to cover his intent
A cause he found into the Town to go, [B]
And they right forth to Cresid's Palace went; 10
But, Lord, this simple Troilus was woe,
Him thought his sorrowful heart would break [1] in two;
For when he saw her doors fast bolted all,
Well nigh for sorrow down he 'gan to fall.

Therewith when this true Lover 'gan behold, 15
How shut was every window of the place,
Like frost he thought his heart was icy cold;
For which, with changed, pale, and deadly face,
Without word uttered, forth he 'gan to pace;
And on his purpose bent so fast to ride, 20
That no wight his continuance espied. [C]

Then said he thus,—O Palace desolate!
O house of houses, once so richly dight!
O Palace empty and disconsolate!
Thou lamp of which extinguished is the light; 25
O Palace whilom day that now art night,
Thou ought'st to fall and I to die; since she
Is gone who held us both in sovereignty.

Page 167

O, of all houses once the crowned boast!
Palace illumined with the sun of bliss; 30
O ring of which the ruby now is lost,
O cause of woe, that cause has [2] been of bliss:
Yet, since I may no better, would I kiss
Thy cold doors; but I dare not for this rout;
Farewell, thou shrine of which the Saint is out! 35

Therewith he cast on Pandarus an eye, [3]
With changed face, and piteous to behold;
And when he might his time aright espy,
Aye as he rode, to Pandarus he told
Both his new sorrow and his joys of old, 40
So piteously, and with so dead a hue,
That every wight might on his sorrow rue.

Forth from the spot he rideth up and down,
And everything to his rememberance
Came as he rode by places of the town 45
Where he had felt such perfect pleasure once.
Lo, yonder saw I mine own Lady dance,
And in that Temple she with her bright eyes,
My Lady dear, first bound me captive-wise.

And yonder with joy-smitten heart have I 50
Heard my own Cresid's laugh; and once at play
I yonder saw her eke full blissfully;
And yonder once she unto me 'gan say—
Now, my sweet Troilus, love me well, I pray!
And there so graciously did me behold, 55
That hers unto the death my heart I hold.

And at the corner of that self-same house
Heard I my most beloved Lady dear,
So womanly, with voice melodious
Singing so well, so goodly, and so clear, 60
That in my soul methinks I yet do hear
The blissful sound; and in that very place
My Lady first me took unto her grace.

O blissful God of Love! then thus he cried,
When I the process have in memory, 65
How thou hast wearied [D] me on every side,
Men thence a book might make, a history;

What need to seek a conquest over me,
Since I am wholly at thy will? what joy
Hast thou thy own liege subjects to destroy? 70

Dread Lord! so fearful when provoked, thine ire
Well hast thou wreaked on me by pain and grief;
Now mercy, Lord! thou know'st well I desire
Thy grace above all pleasures first and chief;
And live and die I will in thy belief; 75
For which I ask for guerdon but one boon,
That Cresida again thou send me soon.

Constrain her heart as quickly to return,
As thou dost mine with longing her to see,
Then know I well that she would not sojourn. 80
Now, blissful Lord, so cruel do not be
Unto the blood of Troy, I pray of thee,
As Juno was unto the Theban blood,
From whence to Thebes came griefs in multitude.

Page 168

And after this he to the gate did go 85
Whence Cresid rode, as if in haste she was;
And up and down there went, and to and fro,
And to himself full oft he said, alas!
From hence my hope, and solace forth did pass.
O would the blissful God now for his joy, 90
I might her see again coming to Troy!

And up to yonder hill was I her guide;
Alas, and there I took of her my leave;
Yonder I saw her to her Father ride,
For very grief of which my heart shall cleave;—95
And hither home I came when it was eve;
And here I dwell an outcast from all joy,
And shall, unless I see her soon in Troy.

And of himself did he imagine oft,
That he was blighted, pale, and waxen less 100
Than he was wont; and that in whispers soft
Men said, what may it be, can no one guess
Why Troilus hath all this heaviness?
All which he of himself conceited wholly
Out of his weakness and his melancholy. 105

Another time he took into his head,
That every wight, who in the way passed by,
Had of him ruth, and fancied that they said,
I am right sorry Troilus will die:
And thus a day or two drove wearily; 110
As ye have heard; such life ’gan he to lead
As one that standeth betwixt hope and dread.

For which it pleased him in his songs to show
The occasion of his woe, as best he might;
And made a fitting song, of words [4] but few, 115
Somewhat his woeful heart to make more light;
And when he was removed from all men’s sight,
With a soft night voice, [5] he of his Lady dear,
That absent was, ’gan sing as ye may hear.

O star, of which I lost have all the light, 120
With a sore heart well ought I to bewail,
That ever dark in torment, night by night,
Toward my death with wind I steer and sail; [E]

For which upon the tenth night if thou fail
With thy bright beams to guide me but one hour, 125
My ship and me Charybdis will devour.

As soon as he this song had thus sung through,
He fell again into his sorrows old;
And every night, as was his wont to do,
Troilus stood the bright moon to behold; 130
And all his trouble to the moon he told,
And said; I wis, when thou art horn'd anew,
I shall be glad if all the world be true.

Thy horns were old as now upon that morrow,
When hence did journey my bright Lady dear, 135
That cause is of my torment and my sorrow;
For which, oh, gentle Luna, bright and clear,
For love of God, run fast above [F] thy sphere;
For when thy horns begin once more to spring,
Then shall she come, that with her bliss may bring. 140

Page 169

The day is more, and longer every night
Than they were wont to be—for he thought so;
And that the sun did take his course not right,
By longer way than he was wont to go;
And said, I am in constant dread I trow, 145
That Phaeeton his son is yet alive,
His too fond father's car amiss to drive.

Upon the walls fast also would he walk,
To the end that he the Grecian host might see;
And ever thus he to himself would talk:—150
Lo! yonder is my [6] own bright Lady free;
Or yonder is it that the tents must be;
And thence does come this air which is so sweet,
That in my soul I feel the joy of it.

And certainly this wind, that more and more 155
By moments thus increaseth in my face,
Is of my Lady's sighs heavy and sore;
I prove it thus; for in no other space
Of all this town, save only in this place,
Feel I a wind, that soundeth so like pain; 160
It saith, Alas, why severed are we twain?

A weary while in pain he tosseth thus,
Till fully past and gone was the ninth night;
And ever [7] at his side stood Pandarus,
Who busily made use of all his might 165
To comfort him, and make his heart more light; [8]
Giving him always hope, that she the morrow
Of the tenth day will come, and end his sorrow.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1842.

... burst 1841.]

[Variant 2:

1842.

... hast ... 1841.]

[Variant 3:

1842.

... his eye, 1841.]

[Variant 4:

1842.

... whose words ... 1841.]

[Variant 5:

1842.

With a soft voice, ... 1841.]

[Variant 6:

1842.

... mine ... 1841.]

[Variant 7: The “even” of 1841 is evidently a misprint.]

[Variant 8:

1842.

... too light; 1841.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In ‘The Poems of Geoffrey Chaucer Modernised’. It is an extract from ‘Troilus and Cressida’, book v. ll. 518-686.—Ed.]

[Footnote B:

“Chaucer’s text is:

’And therwithalle his meynye for to blende
A cause he fonde in toune for to go.’

‘His meynye for to blende,’ i. e. to keep his household or his domestics in the dark. But Wordsworth writes:

‘And therewithal to cover his *intent*,’

possibly mistaking ‘meynye’ for ’meaning’.”

(Professor Dowden, in the ‘Transactions of the Wordsworth Society’, No. III.)—Ed.]

Page 170

[Footnote C:

"When Troilus sees the shut windows and desolate aspect of his lady's house, his face grows blanched, and he rides past in haste, so fast, says Wordsworth,

'That no wight his continuance espied.'

But in Chaucer he rides fast that his white face may not be noticed:

'And as God wolde he gan so faste ride
That no wight of his countenance espied.'"

(Professor Dowden, in the 'Transactions of the Wordsworth Society', No. III.)—Ed.]

[Footnote D: In Chaucer "werreyed" = warred on = fought against.—Ed.]

[Footnote E:

"'Toward my death with wind I steer and sail.'

This is Urry's version, but Chaucer's text is,

'Toward my death, with wind *in stern* I sail,'

Troilus' bark careering towards death, with all sails set, before a fierce stern-wind."

(Professor Dowden, in the 'Transactions of the Wordsworth Society', No. III.)—Ed.]

[Footnote F: In Chaucer "aboute" = around.—Ed.]

* * * * *

1802

The Lyrical Ballads and Sonnets which follow were written in 1802; but during that year Wordsworth continued mainly to work at 'The Excursion', as the following extracts from his sister's Journal indicate:

"Feb. 1, 1802.—William worked hard at 'The Pedlar,' and tired himself.

2nd Feb.—Wm. worked at 'The Pedlar.' I read aloud the 11th book of 'Paradise Lost'.

Thursday, 4th.—William thought a little about ‘The Pedlar.’

5th.—Wm. sate up late at ‘The Pedlar.’

7th.—W. was working at his poem. Wm. read ‘The Pedlar,’ thinking it was done. But lo! ... it was uninteresting, and must be altered.”

Similar records occur each day in the Journal from the 10th to the 14th Feb. 1802.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE SAILOR’S MOTHER

Composed March 11th and 12th, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written in Town-end, Grasmere. I met this woman near the Wishing-gate, on the high road that then led from Grasmere to Ambleside. Her appearance was exactly as here described, and such was her account, nearly to the letter.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

One morning (raw it was and wet—
A foggy day in winter time)
A Woman on [1] the road I met,
Not old, though something past her prime:
Majestic in her person, tall and straight; 5
And like a Roman matron’s was her mien and gait.

The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I, are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair: 10
She begged an alms, like one in poor estate;
I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.

Page 171

When from these lofty thoughts I woke,
“What is it,” said I, “that you bear,
Beneath the covert of your Cloak, 15
Protected from this cold damp air?” [2]
She answered, soon as she the question heard,
“A simple burthen, Sir, a little Singing-bird.”

And, thus continuing, she said,
“I had a Son, who many a day 20
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead; [3]
In Denmark he was cast away:
And I have travelled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me. [4]

“The bird and cage they both were his: 25
’Twas my Son’s bird; and neat and trim
He kept it: many voyages
The singing-bird had gone [5] with him;
When last he sailed, he left the bird behind;
From bodings, as might be, that hung upon his mind. [6] 30

“He to a fellow-lodger’s care
Had left it, to be watched and fed,
And pipe its song in safety;—there [7]
I found it when my Son was dead;
And now, God help me for my little wit! 35
I bear [8] it with me, Sir;—he took so much delight in it.”

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

... in ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

... I woke, With the first word I had to spare I said to her, “Beneath your Cloak What’s that which on your arm you bear?” 1807.

“What treasure,” said I,"do you bear,
Beneath the covert of your Cloak
Protected from the cold damp air?” 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

“I had a Son,—the waves might roar,
He feared them not, a Sailor gay!
But he will cross the waves no more: 1820.

... cross the deep ... 1827.

The text of 1832 returns to that of 1807. [a]]

[Variant 4:

1827.

And I have been as far as Hull, to see
What clothes he might have left, or other property. 1807.

And I have travelled far as Hull, to see 1815.

And I have travelled many miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me. 1820.]

[Variant 5:

1845.

This Singing-bird hath gone ... 1807.

... had gone ... 1820.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

As it might be, perhaps, from bodings of his mind. 1807.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

Till he came back again; and there 1807.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

I trail ... 1807.]

* * * * *

Page 172

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: This return, in 1832, to the original text of the poem was due to Barren Field's criticism, the justice of which Wordsworth admitted.—Ed.]

In the Wordsworth household this poem went by the name of "The Singing Bird" as well as 'The Sailor's Mother'.

> "Thursday (March 11th).—A fine morning. William worked at the poem of 'The Singing Bird.' ..."
>
> "Friday (March 12th).—William finished his poem of 'The Singing Bird.'"

(Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal.)—Ed.

* * * * *

ALICE FELL; OR, POVERTY [A]

Composed March 12th and 13th, 1802.—Published 1807

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

It was only excluded from the editions of 1820, 1827, and 1832. In the edition of 1807 it was placed amongst a group of "Poems composed during a Tour, chiefly on foot." In 1815, in 1836, and afterwards, it was included in the group "referring to the Period of Childhood."

In Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal, the following reference to this poem occurs:

"Feb. 16, 1802.—Mr. Graham said he wished William had been with him the other day. He was riding in a post-chaise, and he heard a strange cry that he could not understand. The sound continued, and he called to the chaise-driver to stop. It was a little girl that was crying as if her heart would burst. She had got up behind the chaise, and her cloak had been caught by the wheel, and was jammed in, and it hung there.

She was crying after it, poor thing. Mr. Graham took her into the chaise, and her cloak was released from the wheel, but the child's misery did not cease, for her cloak was torn to rags. It had been a miserable cloak before; but she had no other, and it was the greatest sorrow that could befall her. Her name was Alice Fell. She had no parents, and belonged to the next town. At the next town Mr. G. left money to buy her a new cloak."

"Friday (March 12).—In the evening after tea William wrote 'Alice Fell'."

"Saturday Morning (13th March).—William finished 'Alice Fell'...."

Ed.

The post-boy drove with fierce career,
For threatening clouds the moon had drowned;
When, as we hurried on, my ear
Was smitten with a startling sound. [1]

Page 173

As if the wind blew many ways, 5
I heard the sound,—and more and more;
It seemed to follow with the chaise,
And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy called out;
He stopped his horses at the word, 10
But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

The boy then smacked his whip, and fast
The horses scampered through the rain;
But, hearing soon upon the blast 15
The cry, I bade him halt again. [2]

Forthwith alighting on the ground,
“Whence comes,” said I, “this piteous moan?” [3]
And there a little Girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise, alone. 20

“My cloak!” no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break; [4]
And down from off her seat [5] she leapt.

“What ails you, child?”—she sobbed “Look here!” 25
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather-beaten rag as e’er
From any garden scare-crow dangled.

There, twisted between nave and spoke,
It hung, nor could at once be freed; 30
But our joint pains unloosed the cloak, [6]
A miserable rag indeed! [7]

“And whither are you going, child,
To-night along these lonesome ways?”
“To Durham,” answered she, half wild—35
“Then come with me into the chaise.”

Insensible to all relief
Sat the poor girl, and forth did send
Sob after sob, as if her grief [8]
Could never, never have an end. 40

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

"And I to Durham, Sir, belong." 45
Again, [9] as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong;
And all was for her tattered cloak!

The chaise drove on; our journey's end
Was nigh; and, sitting by my side, 50
As if she had lost [10] her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern-door we post;
Of Alice and her grief I told;
And I gave money to the host, 55
To buy a new cloak for the old.

"And let it be of duffil grey,
As warm a cloak as man can sell!"
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell! 60

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

When suddenly I seem'd to hear
A moan, a lamentable sound. 1807.]

Page 174

[Variant 2:

1845.

And soon I heard upon the blast
The voice, and bade .... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

Said I, alighting on the ground,
“What can it be, this piteous moan?” 1807.

Forthwith alighted on the ground
To learn what voice the piteous moan
Had made, a little girl I found, C.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

“My Cloak!” the word was last and first,
And loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her very heart would burst; 1807.

“My cloak, my cloak” she cried, and spake
No other word, but loudly wept, C.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... off the Chaise ... 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1845.

’Twas twisted betwixt nave and spoke;
Her help she lent, and with good heed
Together we released the Cloak; 1807.

... between ... 1840.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

A wretched, wretched rag indeed! 1807.]

[Variant 8:

1845.

She sate like one past all relief;
Sob after sob she forth did send
In wretchedness, as if her grief 1807.]

[Variant 9:

1836.

And then, ... 1807.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

... she'd lost ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: There was no sub-title in the edition of 1807.—Ed.]

Charles Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in 1815, referring to the revisions of this and other poems:

"I am glad that you have not sacrificed a verse to those scoundrels. I would not have had you offer up the poorest rag that lingered upon the stript shoulders of little Alice Fell, to have atoned all their malice; I would not have given 'em a red cloak to save their souls."

See 'Letters of Charles Lamb' (Ainger), vol. i. p. 283.—Ed.

* * * * *

BEGGARS

Composed March 13th and 14th, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. Met, and described to me by my sister, near the quarry at the head of Rydal Lake, [A] a place still a chosen resort of vagrants travelling with their families.—I.F.]

The following are Dorothy Wordsworth's references to this poem in her Grasmere Journal. They justify the remark of the late Bishop of Lincoln,

> "his poems are sometimes little more than poetical versions of her descriptions of the objects which she had seen, *and he treated them as seen by himself*."

(See
'Memoirs of Wordsworth', vol. i. pp. 180-1.)

Page 175

“Saturday (March 13, 1802).—William wrote the poem of the Beggar Woman, taken from a woman whom I had seen in May (now nearly two years ago), when John and he were at Gallow Hill. I sat with him at intervals all the morning, and took down his stanzas. After tea I read W. the account I had written of the little boy belonging to the tall woman: and an unlucky thing it was, for he could not escape from those very words, and so he could not write the poem. He left it unfinished, and went tired to bed. In our walk from Rydal he had got warmed with the subject, and had half cast the poem.”

> “Sunday Morning (March 14).—William had slept badly. He got up at 9 o’clock, but before he rose he had finished the Beggar Boy.”

The following is the “account” written in her Journal on Tuesday, May 23, 1800:

“A very tall woman, tall much beyond the measure of tall women, called at the door. She had on a very long brown cloak, and a very white cap, without bonnet. Her face was brown, but it had plainly once been fair. She led a little barefooted child about two years old by the hand, and said her husband, who was a tinker, was gone before with the other children. I gave her a piece of bread. Afterwards, on my road to Ambleside, beside the bridge at Rydal, I saw her husband sitting at the roadside, his two asses standing beside him, and the two young children at play upon the grass. The man did not beg. I passed on, and about a quarter of a mile farther I saw two boys before me, one about ten, the other about eight years old, at play, chasing a butterfly. They were wild figures, not very ragged, but without shoes and stockings. The hat of the elder was wreathed round with yellow flowers; the younger, whose hat was only a rimless crown, had stuck it round with laurel leaves. They continued at play till I drew very near, and then they addressed me with the begging cant and the whining voice of sorrow. I said, ‘I served your mother this morning’ (the boys were so like the woman who had called at our door that I could not be mistaken). ‘O,’ says the elder, ’you could not serve my mother, for she’s dead, and my father’s in at the next town; he’s a potter.’ I persisted in my assertion, and that I would give them nothing. Says the elder, ‘Come, let’s away,’ and away they flew like lightning. They had, however, sauntered so long in their road that they did not reach Ambleside before me, and I saw them go up to Mathew Harrison’s house with their wallet upon the elder’s shoulder, and creeping with a beggar’s complaining foot. On my return through Ambleside I met, in the street, the mother driving her asses, in the two panniers of one of which were the two little children, whom she was chiding and threatening with a wand with which she used to drive on her asses, while the little things hung in wantonness over the pannier’s edge. The woman had told me in the morning that she was of Scotland, which her accent fully proved, and that she had lived (I think at Wigtown); that they could not keep a house, and so they travelled.”

This was one of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

Page 176

She had a tall man's height or more;
Her face from summer's noontide heat
No bonnet shaded, but she wore
A mantle, to her very feet
Descending with a graceful flow, 5
And on her head a cap as white as new-fallen snow. [1]

Her skin was of Egyptian brown:
Haughty, as if her eye had seen
Its own light to a distance thrown,
She towered, fit person for a Queen [2] 10
To lead [3] those ancient Amazonian files;
Or ruling Bandit's wife among the Grecian isles.

Advancing, forth she stretched her hand
And begged an alms with doleful plea
That ceased not; on our English land 15
Such woes, I knew, could never be; [4]
And yet a boon I gave her, for the creature
Was beautiful to see—a weed of glorious feature. [B]

I left her, and pursued my way;
And soon before me did espy 20
A pair of little Boys at play,
Chasing a crimson butterfly;
The taller followed with his hat in hand,
Wreathed round with yellow flowers the gayest of the land. [5]

The other wore a rimless crown 25
With leaves of laurel stuck about;
And, while both [6] followed up and down,
Each whooping with a merry shout,
In their fraternal features I could trace
Unquestionable lines of that wild Suppliant's face. [7] 30

Yet *they*, so blithe of heart, seemed fit [8]
For finest tasks of earth or air:
Wings let them have, and they might flit
Precursors to [9] Aurora's car,
Scattering fresh flowers; though happier far, I ween, 35
To hunt their fluttering game o'er rock and level green.

They dart across my path—but lo, [10]
Each ready with a plaintive whine!

Said I, “not half an hour ago
Your Mother has had alms of mine.” 40
“That cannot be,” one answered—“she is dead:”—
I looked reproof—they saw—but neither hung his head. [11]

“She has been dead, Sir, many a day.”—
“Hush, boys! you’re telling me a lie; [12]
It was your Mother, as I say!” 45
And, in the twinkling of an eye,
“Come! come!” cried one, and without more ado,
Off to some other play the joyous Vagrants flew! [13] [C]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

She had a tall Man’s height, or more;
No bonnet screen’d her from the heat;
A long drab-colour’d Cloak she wore,
A Mantle reaching to her feet:
What other dress she had I could not know;
Only she wore a Cap that was as white as snow. 1807.

Page 177

Before me as the Wanderer stood,
No bonnet screened her from the heat;
Nor claimed she service from the hood
Of a blue mantle, to her feet
Depending with a graceful flow;
Only she wore a cap pure as unsullied snow. 1827.

Before my eyes a Wanderer stood;
Her face from summer's noon-day heat
Nor bonnet shaded, nor the hood
Of that blue cloak which to her feet
Depended with a graceful flow;
Only she wore a cap as white as new-fallen snow. 1832.

No bonnet shaded, nor the hood
Of the blue cloak ... 1836.

She had a tall man's height or more;
And while, 'mid April's noontide heat,
A long blue cloak the vagrant wore,
A mantle reaching to her feet,
No bonnet screened her lofty brow,
Only she wore a cap as white as new-fallen snow. C.

She had a tall man's height or more;
A garment for her stature meet,
And for a vagrant life, she wore
A mantle reaching to her feet.
Nor hood, nor bonnet screened her lofty brow, C.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

In all my walks, through field or town,
Such Figure had I never seen:
Her face was of Egyptian brown:
Fit person was she for a Queen, 1807.

Such figure had I never seen
In all my walks through field or town,
Fit person seemed she for a Queen, C.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

To head ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

Before me begging did she stand,
Pouring out sorrows like a sea;
Grief after grief:—on English Land
Such woes I knew could never be; 1807.

Her suit no faltering scruples checked;
Forth did she pour, in current free,
Tales that could challenge no respect
But from a blind credulity; 1827.

She begged an alms; no scruple checked
The current of her ready plea,
Words that could challenge ... 1832.

Before me begging did she stand
And boldly urged a doleful plea,
Grief after grief, on English land
Such woes I knew could never be. C.]

[Variant 5:

1807.

With yellow flowers around, as with a golden band. C.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

And they both ... 1807.]

[Variant 7:

1820.

Two Brothers seem'd they, eight and ten years old;
And like that Woman's face as gold is like to gold. 1807.]

[Variant 8: This stanza was added in the edition of 1827.]

[Variant 9:

1836.

Precursors of ... 1827.]

[Variant 10:

1827.

They bolted on me thus, and lo! 1807.]

[Variant 11:

Page 178

1827.

"Nay but I gave her pence, and she will buy you bread." 1807.]

[Variant 12:

1845.

"Sweet Boys, you're telling me a lie; 1807.

... Heaven hears that rash reply; 1827.

The text of 1807 was resumed in 1836.]

[Variant 13:

1827.

... they both together flew. 1807.

... the thoughtless vagrants flew. C.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The spot is easily identified, as the quarry still exists.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In the MS. of this poem (1807) the words, "a weed of glorious feature," are placed within inverted commas. The quotation is from Spenser's 'Muiopotmos' ('The Fate of the Butterflie'), stanza 27; and is important, as it affects the meaning of the phrase. It is curious that Wordsworth dropped the commas in his subsequent editions. —Ed.]

[Footnote C: In Wordsworth's letter to Barron Field, of 24th October 1828 (see the volumes containing his correspondence), a detailed account is given of the reasons which had led him to alter the text of this poem.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SEQUEL TO THE FOREGOING,

COMPOSED MANY YEARS AFTER

Composed 1817.—Published 1827

In the edition of 1840 the year assigned to this Sequel is 1817. It does not occur in the edition of 1820, but was first published in 1827. It was one of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

Where are they now, those wanton Boys?
For whose free range the daedal earth
Was filled with animated toys,
And implements of frolic mirth;
With tools for ready wit to guide; 5
And ornaments of seemlier pride,
More fresh, more bright, than princes wear;
For what one moment flung aside,
Another could repair;
What good or evil have they seen 10
Since I their pastime witnessed here,
Their daring wiles, their sportive cheer?
I ask—but all is dark between!
[1]

They met me in a genial hour,
When universal nature breathed 15
As with the breath of one sweet flower,—
A time to overrule the power
Of discontent, and check the birth
Of thoughts with better thoughts at strife,
The most familiar bane of life 20
Since parting Innocence bequeathed
Mortality to Earth!
Soft clouds, the whitest of the year,
Sailed through the sky—the brooks ran clear;
The lambs from rock to rock were bounding; 25
With songs the budded groves resounding;

Page 179

And to my heart are still endeared
The thoughts with which it then was cheered; [2]
The faith which saw that gladsome pair
Walk through the fire with unsinged hair. 30
Or, if such faith [3] must needs deceive—
Then, Spirits of beauty and of grace, [A]
Associates in that eager chase;
Ye, who within the blameless mind
Your favourite seat of empire find—35
Kind Spirits! may we not believe
That they, so happy and so fair
Through your sweet influence, and the care
Of pitying Heaven, at least were free
From touch of *deadly* injury? 40
Destined, whate'er their earthly doom,
For mercy and immortal bloom?

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

Spirits of beauty and of grace!
Associates in that eager chase;
Ye, by a course to nature true,
The sterner judgment can subdue;
And waken a relenting smile
When she encounters fraud or guile;
And sometimes ye can charm away
The inward mischief, or allay,
Ye, who within the blameless mind
Your favourite seat of empire find!

The above is a separate stanza in the editions of 1827 and 1832. Only the first two and the last two lines of this stanza were retained in the edition of 1836, and were then transferred to the place they occupy in the final text.—Ed.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

And to my heart is still endeared
The faith with which ... 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

... such thoughts ... 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This and the three following lines were placed here in the edition of 1836. See note to the previous page.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TO A BUTTERFLY (#1)

Composed March 14, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written in the Orchard, Town-end, Grasmere. My sister and I were parted immediately after the death of our mother, who died in 1778, both being very young.—I. F.]

One of the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.”—Ed.

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart! 5
Dead times revive in thee:
Thou bring’st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
My father’s family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days, 10
The time, when, in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline [A] and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey:—with leaps and springs 15
I followed on from brake to bush;

But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

Page 180

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the MS. for the edition of 1807 the transcriber (not W. W.) wrote "Dorothy." This, Wordsworth erased, putting in "Emmeline."—Ed.]

The text of this poem was never changed. It refers to days of childhood spent at Cockermouth before 1778. "My sister Emmeline" is Dorothy Wordsworth. In her Grasmere Journal, of Sunday, March 14, 1802, the following occurs:

"While we were at breakfast he" (William) "wrote the poem 'To a Butterfly'. He ate not a morsel, but sate with his shirt neck unbuttoned, and his waistcoat open when he did it. The thought first came upon him as we were talking about the pleasure we both always felt at the sight of a butterfly. I told him that I used to chase them a little, but that I was afraid of brushing the dust off their wings, and did not catch them. He told me how he used to kill all the white ones when he went to school, because they were Frenchmen. Mr. Simpson came in just as he was finishing the poem. After he was gone, I wrote it down, and the other poems, and I read them all over to him.... William began to try to alter 'The Butterfly', and tired himself."

Compare the later poem 'To a Butterfly' (#2) (April 20), p. 297.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE EMIGRANT MOTHER

Composed March 16th and 17th, 1802.—Published 1807

[Suggested by what I have noticed in more than one French fugitive during the time of the French Revolution. If I am not mistaken the lines were composed at Sockburn when I was on a visit to Mary and her brothers.—I. F.]

In the editions of 1807 and 1815, this poem had no distinctive title; but in the Wordsworth circle, it was known from the year 1802 as 'The Emigrant Mother', and at least one copy was transcribed with this title in 1802. It was first published under that name in 1820. It was revised and altered in 1820, 1827, 1832, 1836, and more especially in 1845.

In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal the following entries occur:

> "Tuesday (March 16).—William went up into the orchard, and wrote a part of 'The Emigrant Mother'."

“Wednesday.—William went up into the orchard, and finished the poem.... I went and sate with W., and walked backwards and forwards in the orchard till dinner-time. He read me his poem.”

This poem was included among those “founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

Once in a lonely hamlet I sojourned
In which a Lady driven from France did dwell;
The big and lesser griefs with which she mourned,
In friendship she to me would often tell.This Lady, [1] dwelling upon British [2] ground, 5
Where she was childless, daily would [3] repair
To a poor neighbouring cottage; as I found,
For sake of a young Child whose home was there.

Page 181

Once having seen her clasp with fond embrace
This Child, I chanted to myself a lay, 10
Endeavouring, in our English tongue, to trace
Such things as she unto the Babe might say: [4]
And thus, from what I heard and knew, or guessed, [5]
My song the workings of her heart expressed.

I "Dear Babe, thou daughter of another, 15
One moment let me be thy mother!
An infant's face and looks are thine
And sure a mother's heart is mine:
Thy own dear mother's far away,
At labour in the harvest field: 20
Thy little sister is at play;—
What warmth, what comfort would it yield
To my poor heart, if thou wouldst be
One little hour a child to me!

II "Across the waters I am come, 25
And I have left a babe at home:
A long, long way of land and sea!
Come to me—I'm no enemy:
I am the same who at thy side
Sate yesterday, and made a nest 30
For thee, sweet Baby!—thou hast tried,
Thou know'st the pillow of my breast;
Good, good art thou:—alas! to me
Far more than I can be to thee.

III "Here, little Darling, dost thou lie; 35
An infant thou, a mother I!
Mine wilt thou be, thou hast no fears;
Mine art thou—spite of these my tears.
Alas! before I left the spot,
My baby and its dwelling-place; 40
The nurse said to me, 'Tears should not
Be shed upon an infant's face,
It was unlucky'—no, no, no;
No truth is in them who say so!

IV "My own dear Little-one will sigh, 45
Sweet Babe! and they will let him die.
'He pines,' they'll say, 'it is his doom,
And you may see his hour is come.'

Oh! had he but thy cheerful smiles,
Limbs stout as thine, and lips as gay, 50
Thy looks, thy cunning, and thy wiles,
And countenance like a summer's day,
They would have hopes of him;—and then
I should behold his face again!

V "'Tis gone—like dreams that we forget; 55
There was a smile or two—yet—yet [6]
I can remember them, I see
The smiles, worth all the world to me.
Dear Baby! I must lay thee down;
Thou troublest me with strange alarms; 60
Smiles hast thou, bright [7] ones of thy own;
I cannot keep thee in my arms;
For they confound me;—where—where is
That last, that sweetest smile of his? [8]

VI "Oh! how I love thee!—we will stay 65
Together here this one half day.
My sister's child, who bears my name,
From France to sheltering England came; [9]
She with her mother crossed the sea;
The babe and mother near me dwell: 70
Yet does my yearning heart to thee
Turn rather, though I love her well: [10]
Rest, little Stranger, rest thee here!
Never was any child more dear!

Page 182

VII “—I cannot help it; ill intent 75
I’ve none, my pretty Innocent!
I weep—I know they do thee wrong,
These tears—and my poor idle tongue.
Oh, what a kiss was that! my cheek
How cold it is! but thou art good; So 80
Thine eyes are on me—they would speak,
I think, to help me if they could. [11]
Blessings upon that soft, warm face, [12]
My heart again is in its place!

VIII

“While thou art mine, my little Love, 85
This cannot be a sorrowful grove;
Contentment, hope, and mother’s glee, [13]
I seem to find them all in thee: [14]
Here’s grass to play with, here are flowers;
I’ll call thee by my darling’s name; 90
Thou hast, I think, a look of ours,
Thy features seem to me the same;
His little sister thou shalt be;
And, when once more my home I see,
I’ll tell him many tales of Thee.” 95

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

This Mother ... MS.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... English ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

... did ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

Once did I see her clasp the Child about,
And take it to herself; and I, next day,
Wish'd in my native tongue to fashion out
Such things as she unto this Child might say: 1807.

Once did I see her take with fond embrace
This Infant to herself; and I, next day,
Endeavoured in my native tongue to trace
Such things as she unto the Child might say: 1820.

Once, having seen her take with fond embrace
This Infant to herself, I framed a lay,
Endeavouring, in my native tongue, to trace 1827.]

[Variant 5:

1845.

And thus, from what I knew, had heard, and guess'd, 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

'Tis gone—forgotten—let me do
My best—there was a smile or two, 1807.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

... sweet ... 1807.]

[Variant 8:

1836.

For they confound me: as it is,
I have forgot those smiles of his. 1807.

For they bewilder me—even now
His smiles are lost,—I know not how! 1820.

By those bewildering glances crost
In which the light of his is lost. [a] 1827.]

[Variant 9:

1827.

From France across the Ocean came; 1807.]

[Variant 10:

1845.

My Darling, she is not to me
What thou art! though I love her well: 1807.

Page 183

But to my heart she cannot be 1836.]

[Variant 11:

1807.

And I grow happy while I speak,
Kiss, kiss me, Baby, thou art good. MS.]

[Variant 12:

1820.

... that quiet face, 1807.]

[Variant 13:

1807.

A Joy, a Comforter thou art;
Sunshine and pleasure to my heart;
And love and hope and mother's glee, MS.]

[Variant 14:

1807.

My yearnings are allayed by thee,
My heaviness is turned to glee. MS.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: In a letter to Barron Field (24th Oct. 1828), Wordsworth says that his substitution of the text of 1827 for that of 1807, was due to the objections of Coleridge. —Ed.]

* * * * *

TO THE CUCKOO

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

[Composed in the Orchard at Town-end, 1804.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice? [A]

While I am lying on the grass 5
Thy twofold shout I hear,
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near. [1]

Though babbling only to the Vale,
Of sunshine and of flowers, 10
Thou bringest unto me a tale [2]
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing, [3] 15
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. 20

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; 25
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be 30
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

While I am lying on the grass,
I hear thy restless shout:
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
About, and all about! 1807.

Thy loud note smites my ear!—
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off and near! 1815.

Page 184

Thy loud note smites my ear!
It seems to fill the whole air's space,
At once far off and near! 1820.

Thy twofold shout I hear,
That seems to fill the whole air's space,
As loud far off as near. [a] 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

To me, no Babbler with a tale
Of sunshine and of flowers,
Thou tellest, Cuckoo! in the vale 1807.

I hear thee babbling to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers;
And unto me thou bring'st a tale 1815.

But unto me .... 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

No Bird; but an invisible Thing, 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A:

"*Vox et praterea nihil*. See Lipsius 'of the Nightingale.'"

Barron Field.—Ed.

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: Barron Field remonstrated with Wordsworth about this reading, and he agreed to restore that of 1820; saying, at the same time, that he had “made the change to record a fact observed by himself.”—Ed.]

In the chronological lists of his poems, published in 1815 and 1820, Wordsworth left a blank opposite this one, in the column containing the year of composition. From 1836 to 1849, the date assigned by him was 1804. But in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal the following occurs under date Tuesday, 22nd March 1802:

“A mild morning. William worked at the Cuckoo poem.... At the closing in of day, went to sit in the orchard. William came to me, and walked backwards and forwards. W. repeated the poem to me. I left him there; and in 20 minutes he came in, rather tired with attempting to write.”

> “Friday (March 25).—A beautiful morning. William worked at ’The Cuckoo’.”

It is therefore evident that it belongs to the year 1802; although it may have been altered and readjusted in 1804. The connection of the seventh stanza of this poem with the first of that which follows it, “My heart leaps up,” *etc*., and of both with the ’Ode, Intimations of Immortality’ (vol. viii.), is obvious.—Ed.

* * * * *

“MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD”

Composed March 26, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.” In 1807 it was No. 4 of the series called “Moods of my own Mind.”—Ed.

My heart leaps up when I behold
  A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old, 5
  Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man; [A]
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Page 185

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Milton's phrase in 'Paradise Regained' (book iv. l. 220):

'The childhood shews the man,
As morning shews the day.'

Dryden's 'All for Love', act IV. scene I:

'Men are but children of a larger growth.'

And Pope's 'Essay on Man', Ep. iv. l. 175:

'The boy and man an individual makes.'

Also Chatterton's 'Fragment' (Aldine edition, vol. 1. p. 132):

'Nature in the infant marked the man.'

Ed.]

"March 26, 1802.—While I was getting into bed he" (W.) "wrote 'The Rainbow.'"

"May 14th.—... William very nervous. After he was in bed, haunted with altering 'The Rainbow.'"

(Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal.) This poem was known familiarly in the household as "The Rainbow," although not printed under that title. The text was never changed.

In 'The Friend', vol. i. p. 58 (ed. 1818), Coleridge writes:

"Men laugh at the falsehoods imposed on them during their childhood, because they are not good and wise enough to contemplate the past in the present, and so to produce that continuity in their self-consciousness, which Nature has made the law of their animal life. Men are ungrateful to others, only when they have ceased to look back on their former selves with joy and tenderness. They exist in fragments."

He then quotes the above poem, and adds:

"I am informed that these lines have been cited as a specimen of despicable puerility. So much the worse for the citer; not willingly in *his* presence would I behold the sun

setting behind our mountains.... But let the dead bury their dead! The poet sang for the living.... I was always pleased with the motto placed under the figure of the rosemary in old herbals:

‘Sus, apage! Haud tibi spiro.’”

Compare the passage in ‘The Excursion’ (book ix. l. 36) beginning:

’... Ah! why in age
Do we revert so fondly, *etc*.’

also that in ‘The Prelude’ (book v. l. 507) beginning:

‘Our childhood sits.’

* * * * *

WRITTEN IN MARCH, WHILE RESTING ON THE BRIDGE AT THE FOOT OF BROTHERS WATER

Composed April 16, 1802.—Published 1807

[Extempore. This little poem was a favourite with Joanna Baillie.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

The Cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun; 5
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising;
There are forty feeding like one! 10

Page 186

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill;
The Ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon: [A] 15
There's joy in the mountains;
There's life in the fountains;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing;
The rain is over and gone! 20

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This line was an afterthought.—Ed.]

The text of this poem was never altered. It was not "written in March" (as the title states), but on the 16th of April (Good Friday) 1802. The bridge referred to crosses Goldrill Beck, a little below Hartsop in Patterdale. The following, from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, records the walk from Ullswater, over Kirkstone Pass, to Ambleside:

"Friday, 16th April (Good Friday).—... When we came to the foot of Brothers Water, I left William sitting on the bridge, and went along the path on the right side of the lake through the wood. I was delighted with what I saw: the water under the boughs of the bare old trees, the simplicity of the mountains, and the exquisite beauty of the path. There was one grey cottage. I repeated 'The Glowworm' as I walked along. I hung over the gate, and thought I could have stayed for ever. When I returned, I found William writing a poem descriptive of the sights and sounds we saw and heard. There was the gentle flowing of the stream, the glittering lively lake, green fields, without a living creature to be seen on them; behind us, a flat pasture with forty-two cattle feeding; to our left, the road leading to the hamlet. No smoke there, the sun shone on the bare roofs. The people were at work, ploughing, harrowing, and sowing; lasses working; a dog barking now and then; cocks crowing, birds twittering; the snow in patches at the top of the highest hills; yellow palms, purple and green twigs on the birches, ashes with their glittering stems quite bare. The hawthorn a bright green, with black stems under the oak. The moss of the oaks glossy.... As we went up the vale of Brothers Water, more and more cattle feeding, a hundred of them. William finished his poem before we got to the foot of Kirkstone. There were hundreds of cattle in the vale.... The walk up Kirkstone was very interesting. The becks among the rocks were all alive. William shewed me the little mossy streamlet which he had before loved, when he saw its bright green track in the snow. The view above Ambleside very beautiful. There we sate, and

looked down on the green vale. We watched the crows at a little distance from us become white as silver, as they flew in the sunshine; and, when they went still farther, they looked like shapes of water passing over the green fields."

Ed.

* * * * *

Page 187

THE REDBREAST CHASING THE BUTTERFLY [A]

Composed April 18, 1802.—Published 1807

[Observed, as described, in the then beautiful orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.—I.F.]

Included among the “Poems of the Fancy.”

In some editions this poem is assigned to the year 1806; but, in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal the following occurs, under date “Sunday, 18th” (April 1802):

“A mild grey morning with rising vapours. We sate in the orchard. William wrote the poem on the Robin and the Butterfly.... W. met me at Rydal with the conclusion of the poem to the Robin. I read it to him in bed. We left out some lines.”

Ed.

Art thou the bird whom Man loves best,
The pious bird [B] with the scarlet breast,
  Our little English Robin;
The bird that comes about our doors
When Autumn-winds are sobbing? 5
Art thou the Peter of Norway Boors?
  Their Thomas in Finland,
  And Russia far inland?
The bird, that [1] by some name or other
All men who know thee call their brother, 10
The darling of children and men?
Could Father Adam [C] open his eyes
And see this sight beneath the skies,
He’d wish to close them again.
—If the Butterfly knew but his friend, 15
Hither his flight he would bend;
And find his way to me,
Under the branches of the tree:
In and out, he darts about;
Can this be the bird, to man so good, 20
That, after their bewildering, [2]
Covered [3] with leaves the little children,
  So painfully in the wood?

What ailed thee, Robin, that thou could’st pursue
  A beautiful creature, 25
That is gentle by nature?

Beneath the summer sky
From flower to flower let him fly;
’Tis all that he wishes to do.
The cheerer Thou of our in-door sadness, 30
He is the friend of our summer gladness:
What hinders, then, that ye should be
Playmates in the sunny weather,
And fly about in the air together!
His beautiful wings in crimson are drest, 35
A crimson as bright as thine own: [4]
Would’st thou be [5] happy in thy nest,
O pious Bird! whom man loves best,
Love him, or leave him alone!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1849.

... whom ... 1807.

... who ... 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

In and out, he darts about;
His little heart is throbbing:
Can this be the Bird, to man so good,
Our consecrated Robin!
That, after ... 1807.

Page 188

... Robin! Robin!
His little heart is throbbing;
Can this ... MS.]

[Variant 3:

1832.

Did cover ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1815.

... Like thine own breast
His beautiful wings in crimson are drest,
As if he were bone of thy bone. MS.

Like the hues of thy breast
His beautiful wings in crimson are drest,
A brother he seems of thine own: 1807.

... in the air together!
His beautiful bosom is drest,
In crimson as bright as thine own: 1832.

The edition of 1836 resumes the text of 1815.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

If thou would'st be ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title, in the editions 1807 to 1820, was 'The Redbreast and the Butterfly'. In the editions 1827 to 1843 it was 'The Redbreast and Butterfly'. The final title was given in 1845.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Cowley:

’And Robin Redbreasts whom men praise,
For pious birds.’

Ed.]

[Footnote C: See ‘Paradise Lost’, book XI., where Adam points out to Eve the ominous sign of the Eagle chasing “two Birds of gayest plume,” and the gentle Hart and Hind pursued by their enemy.—W. W. 1815.

The passage in book XI. of ‘Paradise Lost’ includes lines 185-90.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TO A BUTTERFLY (#2)

Composed April 20, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written at the same time and place. The Orchard, Grasmere Town-end, 1801.—I.F.]

Included among the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

I’ve watch’d you now a full [1] half-hour,
Self-poised upon that yellow flower;
And, little Butterfly! indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed.
How motionless!—not frozen seas 5
More motionless! and then
What joy awaits you, when the breeze
Hath found you out among the trees,
And calls you forth again!

This plot of orchard-ground is ours; 10
My trees they are, my Sister’s flowers;
Here rest your wings when they are weary;
Here lodge as in a sanctuary! [2]
Come often to us, fear no wrong;
Sit near us on the bough! 15
We’ll talk of sunshine and of song,
And summer days, when we were young;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... short ... 1836.

Page 189

The text of 1845 reverts to the reading of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

Stop here whenever you are weary,
And rest as in a sanctuary! 1807.

And feed ... MS.]

Wordsworth's date, as given to Miss Fenwick, is incorrect. In her Journal, April 20, 1802, Dorothy Wordsworth writes:

"William wrote a conclusion to the poem of 'The Butterfly', 'I've
watch'd you now a full half-hour.'"

This, and the structure of the two poems, makes it probable that the latter was originally meant to be a sort of conclusion to the former (p. 283); but they were always printed as separate poems.

Many of the "flowers" in the orchard at Dove Cottage were planted by Dorothy Wordsworth, and some of the "trees" by William. The "summer days" of childhood are referred to in the previous poem, 'To a Butterfly', written on the 14th of March 1802.—-Ed.

* * * * *

FORESIGHT

Composed April 28, 1802.—Published 1807

[Also composed in the Orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.—I.F.]

Included among the "Poems referring to the Period of Childhood."—Ed.

That is work of waste and ruin—[1]
Do as Charles and I are doing!
Strawberry-blossoms, one and all,
We must spare them—here are many:
Look at it—the flower is small, 5
Small and low, though fair as any:
Do not touch it! summers two
I am older, Anne, than you.

Pull the primrose, sister Anne!
Pull as many as you can. 10
—Here are daisies, take your fill;
Pansies, and the cuckoo-flower:
Of the lofty daffodil
Make your bed, or [2] make your bower;
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom; 15
Only spare the strawberry-blossom!

Primroses, the Spring may love them—
Summer knows but little of them:
Violets, a barren kind,
Withered on the ground must lie; 20
Daisies leave no fruit behind
When the pretty flowerets die;
Pluck them, and another year
As many will be blowing here. [3]

God has given a kindlier power [4] 25
To the favoured strawberry-flower.
Hither soon as spring is fled
You and Charles and I will walk; [5]
Lurking berries, ripe and red,
Then will hang on every stalk, 30
Each within its leafy bower;
And for that promise spare the flower!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

That is work which I am rueing—1807.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

Page 190

... and ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

Violets, do what they will,
Wither'd on the ground must lie;
Daisies will be daisies still;
Daisies they must live and die:
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom,
Only spare the Strawberry-blossom! 1807.]

[Variant 4: This last stanza was added in the edition of 1815.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

When the months of spring are fled
Hither let us bend our walk; 1815.]

The full title of this poem, in the editions of 1807 to 1832, was 'Foresight, or the Charge of a Child to his younger Companion', but it was originally known in the household as "Children gathering Flowers." The shortened title was adopted in 1836. The following is from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal:

"Wednesday, 28th April (1802).—Copied the 'Prioress's Tale'. William was in the orchard. I went to him; he worked away at his poem, though he was ill, and tired. I happened to say that when I was a child I would not have pulled a strawberry blossom; I left him, and wrote out the 'Manciple's Tale'. At dinner time he came in with the poem of 'Children gathering Flowers,' but it was not quite finished, and it kept him long from his dinner. It is now done. He is working at 'The Tinker.'"

At an earlier date in the same year,—Jan. 31st, 1802,—the following occurs:

"I found a strawberry blossom in a rock. The little slender flower had more courage than the green leaves, for *they* were but half expanded and half grown, but the blossom was spread full out. I uprooted it rashly, and I felt as if I had been committing an outrage; so I planted it again. It will have but a stormy life of it, but let it live if it can."

With this poem compare a parallel passage in Marvel's 'The Picture of T. C. in a Prospect of Flowers':

’But oh, young beauty of the woods,
Whom nature courts with fruits and flowers,
Gather the flowers, but spare the buds;
Lest Flora, angry at thy crime
To kill her infants in their prime,
Should quickly make the example yours;
And, ere we see,
Nip in the blossom all our hopes in thee.’

Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE [A]

Composed April 30, 1802.—Published 1807

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

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.” In the original MS. this poem is called ‘To the lesser Celandine’, but in the proof “small” was substituted for “lesser.”

Page 191

In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal the following occurs, under date April 30, 1802:

"We came into the orchard directly after breakfast, and sat there. The lake was calm, the sky cloudy. William began to write the poem of 'The Celandine'.... I walked backwards and forwards with William. He repeated his poem to me, then he got to work again, and would not give over."

Ed.

Pansies, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory;
Long as there are violets, 5
They will have a place in story:
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little Celandine.

Eyes of some men travel far
For the finding of a star; 10
Up and down the heavens they go,
Men that keep a mighty rout!
I'm as great as they, I trow,
Since the day I found thee out,
Little Flower!—I'll make a stir, 15
Like a sage [1] astronomer.

Modest, yet withal an Elf
Bold, and lavish of thyself;
Since we needs must first have met
I have seen thee, high and low, 20
Thirty years or more, and yet
'Twas a face I did not know;
Thou hast now, go where I may,
Fifty greetings in a day.

Ere a leaf is on a bush, 25
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her [2] nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless Prodigal; 30
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth, or none.

Poets, vain men in their mood!
Travel with the multitude:
Never heed them; I aver 35
That they all are wanton wooers;
But the thrifty cottager,
Who stirs little out of doors,
Joys to spy thee near her home;
Spring is coming, Thou art come! 40

[B]

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming Spirit!
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood, 45
In the lane;—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee.

Ill befal the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours! 50
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no;
Others, too, of lofty mien;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine, 55
Little, humble Celandine!

Prophet of delight and mirth,
Ill-requited [3] upon earth;
Herald of a mighty band,
Of a joyous train ensuing, 60
Serving at my heart's command,
Tasks that are no tasks renewing, [4]
I will sing, as doth behove,
Hymns in praise of what I love!

Page 192

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

  ... great ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1832.

  ... it's ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

  Scorn'd and slighted ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

  Singing at my heart's command,
  In the lanes my thoughts pursuing, 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Common Pilewort.—W. W. 1807.]

[Footnote B: The following stanza was inserted in the editions of 1836-1843:

  'Drawn by what peculiar spell,
  By what charm for sight or smell,
  Do those winged dim-eyed creatures,
  Labourers sent from waxen cells,
  Settle on thy brilliant features,
  In neglect of buds and bells

Opening daily at thy side,
By the season multiplied?’

In 1845 it was transferred to the following poem, where it will be found, with a change of text.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TO THE SAME FLOWER

Composed May 1, 1802.—Published 1807

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Pleasures newly found are sweet
When they lie about our feet:
February last, my heart
First at sight of thee was glad;
All unheard of as thou art, 5
Thou must needs, I think, have had,
Celandine! and long ago,
Praise of which I nothing know.

I have not a doubt but he,
Whosoe’er the man might be, 10
Who the first with pointed rays
(Workman worthy to be sainted)
Set the sign-board in a blaze,
When the rising [1] sun he painted,
Took the fancy from a glance 15
At thy glittering countenance.

Soon as gentle breezes bring
News of winter’s vanishing,
And the children build their bowers,
Sticking ’kerchief-plots of mould 20
All about with full-blown flowers,
Thick as sheep in shepherd’s fold!
With the proudest thou art there,
Mantling in the tiny square.

Often have I sighed to measure 25
By myself a lonely pleasure,
Sighed to think, I read a book
Only read, perhaps, by me;
Yet I long could overlook
Thy bright coronet and Thee, 30

And thy arch and wily ways,
And thy store of other praise.

Blithe of heart, from week to week
Thou dost play at hide-and-seek;
While the patient primrose sits 35
Like a beggar in the cold,
Thou, a flower of wiser wits,
Slip’st into thy sheltering [2] hold;
Liveliest of the vernal train [3]
When ye all are out again. 40

Page 193

Drawn by what peculiar spell,
By what charm of sight or smell,
Does the dim-eyed curious Bee,
Labouring for her waxen cells,
Fondly settle upon Thee 45
Prized above all buds and bells
Opening daily at thy side,
By the season multiplied? [4]

Thou art not beyond the moon,
But a thing “beneath our shoon:” [A] 50
Let the bold Discoverer thrid
In his bark the polar sea;
Rear who will a pyramid; [5]
Praise it is enough for me,
If there be but three or four 55
Who will love my little Flower.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... risen ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1832.

... shelter’d ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

Bright as any of the train 1807.]

[Variant 4: This stanza was added in 1845. (See note [Footnote B, To the Small Celandine], p. 302.)]

[Variant 5:

1845.

Let, as old Magellen did,
Others roam about the sea;
Build who will a pyramid; [a] 1807.

Let, with bold advent'rous skill,
Others thrid the polar sea;
Rear a pyramid who will; 1820.

Let the bold Adventurer thrid
In his bark the polar sea;
Rear who will a pyramid; 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This may be an imperfect reminiscence of 'Comus', ll. 634-5.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: Barron Field asked Wordsworth to restore these lines of 1807, and Wordsworth promised to do so, but never did it.—Ed.]

The following is an extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal. Saturday, May 1.

"A heavenly morning. We went into the garden, and sowed the scarlet beans about the house. It was a clear sky. I sowed the flowers, William helped me. We then went and sat in the orchard till dinner time. It was very hot. William wrote 'The Celandine' (second part). We planned a shed, for the sun was too much for us."

Ed.

* * * * *

STANZAS WRITTEN IN MY POCKET COPY OF THOMSON'S "CASTLE OF INDOLENCE"

Begun 9th May, finished 11th May, 1802.—Published 1815

[Composed in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere, Coleridge living with us much at this time: his son Hartley has said, that his father's character and habits are here preserved in a livelier way than in anything that has been written about him. I.F.]

Page 194

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

Within our happy Castle there dwelt One
Whom without blame I may not overlook;
For never sun on living creature shone
Who more devout enjoyment with us took:
Here on his hours he hung as on a book, 5
On his own time here would he float away,
As doth a fly upon a summer brook;
But go to-morrow, or belike to-day,
Seek for him,—he is fled; and whither none can say.

Thus often would he leave our peaceful home, 10
And find elsewhere his business or delight;
Out of our Valley’s limits did he roam:
Full many a time, upon a stormy night, [A]
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height:
Oft could [1] we see him driving full in view 15
At midday when the sun was shining bright;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us, a withered flower,—20
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour:
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower, 25
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay; [B]
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our Valley he withdrew;
For happier soul no living creature has 30
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo:
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong;
But verse was what he had been wedded to;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong 35
Come to him thus, and drove the weary Wight along.[C]

With him there often walked in friendly guise,
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,

A noticeable Man with large grey eyes,
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly 40
As if a blooming face it ought to be;
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy;
Profound his forehead was, though not severe;
Yet some did think that he had little business here: 45

Sweet heaven forefend! his was a lawful right;
Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy;
His limbs would toss about him with delight
Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy 50
To banish listlessness and irksome care;
He would have taught you how you might employ
Yourself; and many did to him repair,—
And certes not in vain; he had inventions rare.

Page 195

Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried: 55
Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,
Made, to his ear attentively applied,
A pipe on which the wind would deftly play;
Glasses he had, that little things display,
The beetle panoplied in gems and gold, [2] 60
A mailed angel on a battle-day;
The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold, [3]
And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

He would entice that other Man to hear
His music, and to view his imagery: 65
And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear:
No livelier love in such a place could be: [4]
There did they dwell-from earthly labour free,
As happy spirits as were ever seen;
If but a bird, to keep them company, 70
Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,
As pleased as if the same had been a Maiden-queen.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... did ... 1815.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

The beetle with his radiance manifold, 1815.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

And cups of flowers, and herbage green and gold; 1815.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

And, sooth, these two did love each other dear,
As far as love in such a place could be; 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare

'And oft he traced the uplands to survey,
When o'er the sky advanced the kindling dawn,
The crimson cloud.'

Beattie's 'Minstrel', book I, st. 20.

'And oft the craggy cliff he loved to climb
When all in mist the world below was lost.'

Book I. st. 21.

'And of each gentle, and each dreadful scene
In darkness, and in storm, he found delight.'

Book I. st. 22. Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare the stanza in 'A Poet's Epitaph' (p. 77), beginning

'He is retired as noontide dew.'

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Many years ago Canon Ainger pointed out to me a parallel between Beattie's description of 'The Minstrel' and Wordsworth's account of himself in this poem. It is somewhat curious that Dorothy Wordsworth, writing to Miss Pollard from Forncett in 1793, quotes the line from 'The Minstrel', book I. stanza 22,

"In truth he was a strange and wayward wight,"

and adds

"That verse of Beattie's 'Minstrel' always reminds me of him, and
indeed the whole character of Edwin resembles much what William was
when I first knew him after leaving Halifax."

Page 196

Mr. T. Hutchinson called the attention of Professor Dowden to the same resemblance between the two pictures. With lines 35, 36, compare in Shelley's 'Adonais', stanza xxxi.:

'And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.'

Ed.]

There can now be no doubt that, in the first four of these 'Stanzas', Wordsworth refers to himself; and that, in the last four, he refers to Coleridge. For a time it was uncertain whether in the earlier stanzas he had Coleridge, or himself, in view; and whether, in the later ones, some one else was, or was not, described. De Quincey, quoting (as he often did) in random fashion, mixes up extracts from each set of the stanzas, and applies them both to Coleridge; and Dorothy Wordsworth, in her Journal, gives apparent (though only apparent) sanction to a reverse order of allusion, by writing of "the stanzas about C. and himself" (her brother). The following are her references to the poem in that Journal:

"9th May (1802).-After tea he (W.) wrote two stanzas in the manner of Thomson's 'Castle of Indolence', and was tired out.

"10th May.—William still at work, though it is past ten o'clock ... William did not sleep till three o'clock."

"11th May.—William finished the stanzas about C. and himself. He did not go out to-day. ... He completely finished his poem. He went to bed at twelve o'clock."

From these extracts two things are evident,

(1) who the persons are described in the stanzas, and

(2) the immense labour bestowed upon the poem.

In the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth', by the late Bishop of Lincoln, there is a passage (vol. ii. chap. li. p. 309) amongst the "Personal Reminiscences, 1836," in which the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge virtually decides the question of the identity of the two persons referred to, in his record of a conversation with the poet. It is as follows:

"October 10th.—I have passed a great many hours to-day with Wordsworth in his home. I stumbled on him with proof sheets before him. He read me nearly all the sweet stanzas written in his copy of the 'Castle of Indolence', describing himself and my uncle; and he and Mrs. W. both assured me the description of the latter at that time was perfectly accurate; and he was almost as a great boy in feelings, and had all the tricks

and fancies there described. Mrs. W. seemed to look back on him, and those times, with the fondest affection."

I think "the neighbouring height" referred to is the height of White Moss Common, behind the Fir-Grove, where Wordsworth was often heard murmuring out his verses," booing" as the country folks said: and the

'driving full in view
At midday when the sun was shining bright,'

aptly describes his habits as recorded in his sister's Journal, and elsewhere. The "withered flower," the "creature pale and wan," are significant of those terrible reactions of spirit, which followed his joyous hours of insight and inspiration. Stanzas IV. to VII. of 'Resolution and Independence' (p. 314), in which Wordsworth undoubtedly described himself, may be compared with stanza III. of this poem. The lines

Page 197

’Down would he sit; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour,’

are aptly illustrated by such passages in his sister’s Journal, as the following, of 29th April 1802:

“We went to John’s Grove, sate a while at first; afterwards William lay, and I lay in the trench, under the fence—he with his eyes closed, and listening to the waterfalls and the birds. There was no one waterfall above another—it was a kind of water in the air—the voice of the air. We were unseen by one another.”

Again, April 23rd,

“Coleridge and I pushed on before. We left William sitting on the stones, feasting with silence.”

And this recalls the first verse of ‘Expostulation and Reply’, written at Alfoxden in 1798;

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

The retreat where “apple-trees in blossom made a bower,” and where he so often “slept himself away,” was evidently the same as that described in the poem ‘The Green Linnet’:

’Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow white blossoms on my head.’

On the other hand, the “low-hung lip” and “profound” forehead of the other, the “noticeable Man with large grey eyes,” mark him out as S. T. C.; “the rapt One, of the god-like forehead,” described in the ‘Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg’. The description “Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy,” is verified by what the poet and his wife said to Mr. Justice Coleridge in 1836. In addition, Mr. Hutchinson of Kimbolton tells me he “often heard his father say that Coleridge was uproarious in his mirth.”

Matthew Arnold wrote me an interesting letter some years ago about these stanzas, from which I make the following extract:

“When one looks uneasily at a poem it is easy to fidget oneself further, and neither the Wordsworth nor the Coleridge of our common notions seem to be exactly hit off in the ‘Stanzas’; still, I believe that the first described is Wordsworth and that the second described is Coleridge. I have myself heard Wordsworth speak of his prolonged

exhausting wanderings among the hills. Then Miss Fenwick's notes show that Coleridge is certainly one of the two personages of the poem, and there are points in the description of the second man which suit him very well. The 'profound forehead' is a touch akin to the 'god-like forehead' in the mention of Coleridge in a later poem.

> "I have a sort of recollection of having heard something about the 'inventions rare,' and Coleridge is certain to have dabbled, at one time or other, in natural philosophy."

In 1796 Coleridge wrote to his friend Cottle from Nether Stowey:

Page 198

" ... I should not think of devoting less than 20 years to an Epic Poem: ten to collect materials and warm my mind with universal science. I would be a tolerable Mathematician, I would thoroughly know Mechanics, Hydrostatics, Optics, and Astronomy, Botany, Metallurgy, Fossilism, Chemistry, Geology, Anatomy, Medicine—-then the 'mind of man'—then the 'minds of men'—in all Travels, Voyages, and Histories. So I would spend ten years—the next five to the composition of the poem—-and the last five to the correction of it. So would I write, haply not unhearing of the divine and rightly whispering Voice," *etc*.

Mr. T. Hutchinson (Dublin) writes in 'The Athenaeum', Dec. 15, 1894:

"I take it for granted these lines were written, not only on the fly-leaf of Wordsworth's copy of the 'Castle of Indolence', but also by way of Supplement to that poem; i. e. as an 'addendum' to the descriptive list of the denizens of the Castle given in stanzas LVII-LXIX of Canto I.; that, in short, they are meant to be read as though they were an after-thought of James Thomson's. Their author, therefore, has rightly imparted to them the curiously blended flavour of 'romantic melancholy and slippered mirth,' of dreamlike vagueness and smiling hyperbole, which forms the distinctive mark of Thomson's poem; and thus the Poet and the Philosopher-Friend of Wordsworth's stanzas, like Thomson's companion sketches of the splenetic Solitary, the 'bard more fat than bard beseems,' and the 'little, round, fat, oily Man of God,' are neither more nor less than gentle caricatures."

It has been suggested by Coleridge's grandson that Wordsworth was describing S. T. C. in all the stanzas of this poem; that he drew two separate pictures of him; in the first four stanzas a realistic "character portrait," and in the last four a "companion picture, figuring the outward semblance of Coleridge, but embodying characteristics drawn from a third person"; so that we have a "fancy sketch" mixed up with a real one. I cannot agree with this. The evidence against it is

(1) Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal; (2) the poet's and his wife's remarks to Mr. Justice Coleridge; (3) the fact that Wordsworth was not in the habit of "passing from realism into artistic composition," except where he distinctly indicated it, as in the case of the Hawkshead Schoolmaster, in the "Matthew" poems. Such composite or conglomerate work was quite foreign to Wordsworth's genius.

Ed.

* * * * *

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE

Begun May 3, finished July 4, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. This old man 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.—I.F.]

Page 199

This poem was known in the Wordsworth household as “The Leech-Gatherer,” although it never received that name in print. An entry in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal of Friday, 3rd October 1800, may preface what she wrote in 1802 about the composition of the poem.

“When William and I returned from accompanying Jones, we met an old man almost double. He had on a coat thrown over his shoulders above his waistcoat and coat. Under this he carried a bundle, and had an apron on, and a night-cap. His face was interesting. He had dark eyes, and a long nose. John, who afterwards met him at Wytheburn, took him for a Jew. He was of Scotch parents, but had been born in the army. He had had a wife, ’and a good woman, and it pleased God to bless him with ten children.’ All these were dead but one, of whom he had not heard for many years, a sailor. His trade was to gather leeches; but now leeches were scarce, and he had not strength for it. He lived by begging, and was making his way to Carlisle where he would buy a few books to sell. He said leeches were very scarce, partly owing to this dry season; but many years they had been scarce. He supposed it was owing to their being much sought after; that they did not breed fast; and were of slow growth. Leeches were formerly 2s. 6d. the 100; now they were 30s. He had been hurt in driving a cart, his leg broken, his body driven over, his skull fractured. He felt no pain till he recovered from his first insensibility. It was late in the evening, when the light was just going away.”

It is most likely that this walk of William and Dorothy Wordsworth “accompanying Jones,” was on the day of Jones’s departure from Dove Cottage, *viz*. 26th September.

The Journal continues:

“Tuesday, 4th May, 1802.—Though William went to bed nervous and jaded in the extreme, he rose refreshed. I wrote out ‘The Leech-Gatherer’ for him, which he had begun the night before, and of which he wrote several stanzas in bed this morning....”

(They started to walk up the Raise to Wytheburn.)

“It was very hot; we rested several times by the way, read, and repeated ‘The Leech-Gatherer.’”

“Friday, 7th May.—William had slept uncommonly well, so, feeling himself strong, he fell to work at ‘The Leech-Gatherer’; he wrote hard at it till dinner time, then he gave over, tired to death—he had finished the poem.”“Sunday morning, 9th May.—William worked at ‘The Leech-Gatherer’ almost incessantly from morning till tea-time. I copied ’The Leech-Gatherer’ and other poems for Coleridge. I was oppressed and sick at heart, for he wearied himself to death.”

“Sunday, 4th July.—... William finished ‘The Leech-Gatherer’ to-day.”

“Monday, 5th July.—I copied out ‘The Leech-Gatherer’ for Coleridge, and for us.”

Page 200

From these extracts it is clear that Dorothy Wordsworth considered the poem as "finished" on the 7th of May, and on the 9th she sent a copy to Coleridge; but that it was not till the 4th of July that it was really finished, and then a second copy was forwarded to Coleridge. It is impossible to say from which of the two MSS. sent to him Coleridge transcribed the copy which he forwarded to Sir George Beaumont. From that copy of a copy (which is now amongst the Beaumont MSS. at Coleorton) the various readings given, on Coleridge's authority, in the notes to the poem, were obtained some years ago.

The Fenwick note to the poem illustrates Wordsworth's habit of blending in one description details which were originally separate, both as to time and place. The scenery and the incidents of the poem are alike composite. As he tells us that he met the leech-gatherer a few hundred yards from Dove Cottage, the "lonely place" with its "pool, bare to the eye of heaven," at once suggests White Moss Common and its small tarn; but he adds that, in the opening stanzas of the poem, he is describing a state of feeling he was in, when crossing the fells at the foot of Ullswater to Askam, and that the image of the hare "running races in her mirth," with the glittering mist accompanying her, was observed by him, not on White Moss Common, but in one of the ridges of Moor Divock. To H. C. Robinson he said of the "Leech-Gatherer" (Sept. 10, 1816), that "he gave to his poetic character powers of mind which his original did not possess." (Robinson's 'Diary', *etc*., vol. ii. p. 24.)

One of the "Poems of the Imagination."—Ed.

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; 5
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 10
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist; that, [1] glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

III I was a Traveller then upon the moor; 15
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; 20
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; 25
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.

Page 201

V I heard the sky-lark warbling [2] in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare: 30
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful [3] 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. 35

VI 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; [4]
But how can He expect that others should 40
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all? [A]

VII I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride; [5]
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy 45
Following his plough, along the mountain-side: [6]
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come [7] in the end despondency and madness.

VIII Now, whether it were [8] by peculiar grace, 50
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befel, that, in this [9] lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven [10]
I saw [11] a Man before me unawares: 55
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.
[12]

IX As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who [13] do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence; 60
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that [14] 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: 65
His body was bent double, feet and head

Coming together in life's pilgrimage; [15]
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 [16] had cast. 70

XI Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face, [17]
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,
Upon the margin of that moorish flood [18]
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood, 75
That heareth not the loud winds when they call;
And moveth all together, if it move [19] at all.
[20]

XII At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned, 80
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took; [21]
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

Page 202

XIII A gentle answer did the old Man make, 85
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:
And him with further words I thus bespake,
“What occupation do you there pursue? [22
This is a lonesome place for one like [23] you.”
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise 90
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes. [24] [B]

XIV His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But [25] each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty [26] utterance drest—
Choice word [27] and measured phrase, above [27] the reach 95
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 [28]
To gather leeches, being old and poor: 100
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure: [29]
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. 105

XVI The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now [30] 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; 110
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment. [31]

XVII My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And [32] hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills; 115
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted, [33]
My question eagerly did I renew,
“How is it that you live, and what is it you do?” [34]

XVIII He with a smile did then his words repeat; 120
And said, that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide. [35]

“Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay; 125
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.” [36]

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, 130
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

XX And soon [37] with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind, 135
But stately in the main; and when he ended, [38]
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!” 140

Page 203

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... which, ... 1807.

And in MS. letter from Coleridge to Sir George Beaumont, 1802.[i]]

[Variant 2:

1820.

... singing ... 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

... happy ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 4:

1807.

And they who lived in genial faith found nought
that grew more willingly than genial good; MS. 1802.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... who perished in his pride; MS. 1802.

... that perished in its pride; 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1820.

Behind his plough, upon the mountain-side: 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

... comes ... 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 8:

1807.

... was ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 9:

1807.

... that ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 10:

1820.

When up and down my fancy thus was driven,
And I with these untoward thoughts had striven, 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 11:

1807.

I spied ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 12:

My course I stopped as soon as I espied
The Old Man in that naked wilderness:
Close by a Pond, upon the further side, [i]
He stood alone: a minute's space I guess
I watch'd him, he continuing motionless:
To the Pool's further margin then I drew;
He being all the while before me full in view. [ii] 1807.

This stanza, which appeared in the editions of 1807 and 1815, was, on Coleridge's advice, omitted from subsequent ones.]

[Variant 13:

1807.

... that ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 14:

1820.

... which ... 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 15:

1820.

... in their pilgrimage 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 16:

1807.

... his age ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 17:

1836.

Himself he propp'd, both body, limbs, and face, MS. 1802.

... his body, ... 1807.]

[Variant 18:

1820.

Beside the little pond or moorish flood 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 19.

1807.

... moves . . MS. 1802.]

[Variant 20.

He wore a Cloak the same as women wear
As one whose blood did needful comfort lack;
His face look'd pale as if it had grown fair;
And, furthermore he had upon his back,
Beneath his cloak, a round and bulky Pack;
A load of wool or raiment as might seem.
That on his shoulders lay as if it clave to him.

Page 204

This stanza appeared only in MS. 1802.]

[Variant 21.

1820.

And now such freedom as I could I took; 1807.

And Ms. 1802.]

[Variant 22.

1820.

“What kind of work is that which you pursue? 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 23.

1807.

... for such as ... MS.]

[Variant 24.

1836.

He answer’d me with pleasure and surprize;
And there was, while he spake, a fire about his eyes. 1807.

And MS. 1802.

He answered, while a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes. 1820.]

[Variant 25.

1820.

Yet ... 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 26.

1807.

... pompous ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 27.

1807.

...words ... MS.

...beyond ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 28.

1827.

He told me that he to the pond had come ... MS. 1802.

....this pond ... 1807.]

[Variant 29.

1807.

This was his calling, better far than some,
Though he had ..... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 30:

1807.

But soon ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 31:

1827.

... and strong admonishment. 1807.

... by strong admonishment. 1820.]

[Variant 32:

1815.

The ... 1807.

And MS. 1802.]

[Variant 33:

1820.

And now, not knowing what the Old Man had said, 1807.

And MS. 1802.

But now, perplex'd by what the Old Man had said, 1815.]

[Variant 34.

1807.

... live? what is it that you do?" MS. 1802.]

[Variant 35:

1827.

And said, that wheresoe'er they might be spied
He gather'd Leeches, stirring at his feet
The waters in the Ponds ... MS. 1802.

And said, that, gathering Leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the Ponds ... 1807.]

[Variant 36:

1807.

Once he could meet with them on every side;
But fewer they became from day to day,
And so his means of life before him died away. MS. 1802.]

[Variant 37:

1807.

And now ... MS. 1802.]

[Variant 38:

1807.

Which he delivered with demeanour kind,
Yet stately ... MS. 1802.]

* * * * *

SUB-VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Variant i:

... hither side, MS. 1802.]

Page 205

[Sub-Variant ii:

He all the while before me being full in view. MS. 1802.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Some have thought that Wordsworth had S.T.C. in his mind, in writing this stanza. I cannot agree with this. The value and interest of the poem would be lessened by our imagining that Wordsworth's heart never failed him; and that, when he appears to moralise at his own expense, he was doing so at Coleridge's. Besides, the date of this poem, taken in connection with entries in the Grasmere Journal of Dorothy Wordsworth, makes it all but certain that Coleridge was not referred to.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare in 'The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband', p. 417, ll. 66-69:

'Some inward trouble suddenly
Broke from the Matron's strong black eye—
A remnant of uneasy light,
A flash of something over-bright!'

Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote i: Additional variants obtained from this source are inserted as "MS. 1802."—Ed.]

The late Bishop of Lincoln, in the 'Memoirs' of his uncle (vol. i. pp. 172, 173), quotes from a letter, written by Wordsworth "to some friends, which has much interest as bearing on this poem. [C] The following are extracts from it:

"It is not a matter of indifference whether you are pleased with his figure and employment, it may be comparatively whether you are pleased with *this Poem*; but it is of the utmost importance that you should have had pleasure in contemplating the fortitude, independence, persevering spirit, and the general moral dignity of this old man's character." Again, "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, *viz*. poets. I think of this till I am so deeply impressed with it, that I consider the manner in which I was 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. This feeling of spirituality or supernaturalness is again referred to as being strong in my mind

Page 206

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. Every thing 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!"

Ed.

[Footnote A: It is unfortunate that in this, as in many other similar occasions in these delightful volumes by the poet's nephew, the reticence as to names—warrantable perhaps in 1851, so soon after the poet's death—has now deprived the world of every means of knowing to whom many of Wordsworth's letters were addressed. Professor Dowden asks about it—and very naturally:

> "Was it the letter to Mary and Sara" (Hutchinson) "about 'The Leech-Gatherer,' mentioned in Dorothy's Journal of 14th June 1802?"

Ed.]

* * * * *

"I GRIEVED FOR BUONAPARTE"

Composed May 21, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

[In the cottage of Town-end, one afternoon in 1801, my sister read to me the sonnets of Milton. I had long been well acquainted with them, but I was particularly struck on that occasion with the dignified simplicity and majestic harmony that runs through most of them—in character so totally different from the Italian, and still more so from Shakespeare's fine sonnets. I took fire, if I may be allowed to say so, and produced three sonnets the same afternoon, the first I ever wrote, except an irregular one at school. Of these three the only one I distinctly remember is 'I grieved for Buonaparte, *etc*.'; one of the others was never written down; the third, which was I believe preserved, I cannot particularise.—I.F.]

One of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty,” afterwards called “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.” From the edition of 1815 onwards, it bore the title ’1801’.—Ed.

I grieved for Buonaparte, with a vain
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood [1]
Of that Man’s mind—what can it be? what food
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?
’Tis not in battles that from youth we train 5
The Governor who must be wise and good,
And temper with the sternness of the brain

Page 207

Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk 10
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... grief! the vital blood
Of that man's mind, what can it be? What food
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could he gain? 1802.

... grief! for, who aspires
To genuine greatness but from just desires,
And knowledge such as *He* could never gain? 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It had twice seen the light previously in 'The Morning Post', first on September 16, 1802, unsigned, and again on January 29, 1803, when it was signed W. L. D.—Ed.]

Wordsworth's date 1801, in the Fenwick note, should have been 1802. His sister writes, in her Journal of 1802:

"May 21.—W. wrote two sonnets on Buonaparte, after I had read
Milton's sonnets to him."

The “irregular” sonnet, written “at school,” to which Wordsworth refers, is probably the one published in the ‘European Magazine’ in 1787, vol. xi. p. 202, and signed Axiologus. —Ed.

* * * * *

A FAREWELL

Composed May 29, 1802.—Published 1815

[Composed just before my Sister and I went to fetch Mrs. Wordsworth from Gallow-hill, near Scarborough.—I.F.]

This was one of the “Poems founded on the Affections.” It was published in 1815 and in 1820 without a title, but with the sub-title ’Composed in the Year 1802’. In 1827 and 1832 it was called ‘A Farewell’, to which the sub-title was added. The sub-title was omitted in 1836, and afterwards.—Ed.

Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain-ground,
Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare;
Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair, 5
The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
Farewell!—we leave thee to Heaven’s peaceful care,
Thee, and the Cottage which thou dost surround.

Our boat is safely anchored by the shore,
And there will safely ride [1] when we are gone; 10
The flowering shrubs that deck our humble door [2]
Will prosper, though untended and alone:
Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none:
These narrow bounds contain our private store
Of things earth makes, and sun doth shine upon; 15
Here are they in our sight—we have no more.

Page 208

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell!
For two months now in vain we shall be sought;
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought; 20
Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell!
Whom from the borders of the Lake we brought,
And placed together near our rocky Well.

We go for One to whom ye will be dear; 25
And she will prize this Bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, Building without peer!
—A gentle Maid, whose heart is lowly bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gathered,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer, 30
Will come [3] to you; to you herself will wed;
And love the blessed life that [4] we lead here.

Dear Spot! which we have watched with tender heed,
Bringing thee chosen plants and blossoms blown
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed, 35
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own.
Making all kindness registered and known;
Thou for our sakes, though Nature's child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need. 40

And O most constant, yet most fickle Place,
That hast thy wayward moods, as thou dost show
To them who look not daily on [5] thy face;
Who, being loved, in love no bounds dost know,
And say'st, when we forsake thee, "Let them go!" 45
Thou easy-hearted Thing, with thy wild race
Of weeds and flowers, till we return be slow,
And travel with the year at a soft pace.

Help us to tell Her tales of years gone by,
And this sweet spring, the best beloved and best; 50
Joy will be flown in its mortality;
Something must stay to tell us of the rest.
Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky;
And in this bush our sparrow built her nest, 55
Of which I sang [6] one song that will not die. [A]

O happy Garden! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers, 60
And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers;
Two burning months let summer overleap,
And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
Into thy bosom we again shall creep.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

And safely she will ride ... 1815.

... will she ... 1832.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

... that decorate our door 1815.]

Page 209

[Variant 3:

1820.

She'll come ... 1815.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

... which ... 1815]

[Variant 5:

1827.

... in ... 1815.]

[Variant 6:

1832.

... sung ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See 'The Sparrow's Nest', p. 236.—Ed.]

> "May 29.—William finished his poem on going for Mary. I wrote it out.
> A sweet day. We nailed up the honeysuckle and hoed the scarlet beans."

She added on the 31st,

> "I wrote out the poem on our departure, which he seemed to have
> finished;"

and on June 13th,

> "William has been altering the poem to Mary this morning."

The "little Nook of mountain-ground" is in much the same condition now, as it was in 1802. The "flowering shrubs" and the "rocky well" still exist, and "the steep rock's

breast” is “thronged with primroses” in spring. The “bower” is gone; but, where it used to be, a seat is now erected.

The Dove Cottage orchard is excellently characterised in Mr. Stopford Brooke’s pamphlet describing it (1890). See also ‘The Green Linnet’, p. 367, with the note appended to it, and Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere Journal, *passim*.—Ed.

* * * * *

“THE SUN HAS LONG BEEN SET”

Composed June 8, 1802.—Published 1807

[This *Impromptu* appeared, many years ago, among the Author’s poems, from which, in subsequent editions, it was excluded. [A] It is reprinted, at the request of the Friend in whose presence the lines were thrown off.—I.F.]

One of the “Evening Voluntaries.”—Ed.

The sun has long been set,
  The stars are out by twos and threes,
The little birds are piping yet
Among the bushes and trees; [1]
There’s a cuckoo, and one or two thrushes, 5
And a far-off wind that rushes,
And a sound of water that gushes, [2]
And the cuckoo’s sovereign cry
Fills all the hollow of the sky.

Who would go “parading” 10
In London, “and masquerading,” [B]
On such a night of June
With that beautiful soft half-moon,
And all these innocent blisses?
On such a night as this is! 15

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... and the trees; 1836.

The edition of 1837 returns to the text of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1835.

And a noise of wind that rushes,
With a noise of water that gushes; 1807.]

Page 210

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It appeared in 1807 as No. II. of “Moods of my own Mind,” and not again till the publication of “Yarrow Revisited” in 1835.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare:

’At operas and plays parading,
Mortgaging, gambling, masquerading.’

Burns, ‘The Two Dogs, a Tale’, II. 124-5.—Ed.]

“June 8th (1802).—After tea William came out and walked, and wrote that poem, ‘The sun has long been set,’ *etc*. He walked on our own path, and wrote the lines; he called me into the orchard and there repeated them to me.”

(Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal.) The “Friend in whose presence the lines were thrown off,” was his sister.—Ed.

* * * * *

COMPOSED UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE, SEPTEMBER 3, 1802

Composed July 31, 1802.—Published 1807

[Written on the roof of a coach, on my way to France.—I.F.]

One of the “Miscellaneous Sonnets.”—Ed.

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul [1] 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, 5
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; 10
Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!

The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... heart ... MS.]

The date which Wordsworth gave to this sonnet on its first publication in 1807, *viz*. September 3, 1803,—and which he retained in all subsequent editions of his works till 1836,—is inaccurate. He left London for Dover, on his way to Calais, on the 31st of July 1802. The sonnet was written that morning as he travelled towards Dover. The following record of the journey is preserved in his sister's Journal:

"July 30. [A]—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, and were hung out endlessly; yet the sun shone so brightly, with such a pure light, that there was something like the purity of one of Nature's own grand spectacles."

This sonnet underwent no change in successive editions.

Page 211

In illustration of it, an anecdote of the late Bishop of St. David's may be given, as reported by Lord Coleridge.

"In the great debate on the abolition of the Irish Establishment in 1869, the Bishop of St. David's, Dr. Thirlwall, had made a very remarkable speech, and had been kept till past daybreak in the House of Lords, before the division was over, and he was able to walk home. He was then an old man, and in failing health. Some time after, he was asked whether he had not run some risk to his health, and whether he did not feel much exhausted. 'Yes,' he said, 'perhaps so; but I was more than repaid by walking out upon Westminster Bridge after the division, seeing London in the morning light as Wordsworth saw it, and repeating to myself his noble sonnet as I walked home.'"

This anecdote was told to the Wordsworth Society, at its meeting on the 3rd of May 1882, after a letter had been read by the Secretary, from Mr. Robert Spence Watson, recording the following similar experience:

"... As confirming the perfect truth of Wordsworth's description of the external aspects of a scene, and the way in which he reached its inmost soul, I may tell you what happened to me, and may have happened to many others. Many years ago, I think it was in 1859, I chanced to be passing (in a pained and depressed state of mind, occasioned by the death of a friend) over Waterloo Bridge at half-past three on a lovely June morning. It was broad daylight, and I was alone. Never when alone in the remotest recesses of the Alps, with nothing around me but the mountains, or upon the plains of Africa, alone with the wonderful glory of the southern night, have I seen anything to approach the solemnity—the soothing solemnity—of the city, sleeping under the early sun:

'Earth has not any thing to show more fair.'

"How simply, yet how perfectly, Wordsworth has interpreted it! It was a happy thing for us that the Dover coach left at so untimely an hour. It was this sonnet, I think, that first opened my eyes to Wordsworth's greatness as a poet. Perhaps nothing that he has written shows more strikingly the vast sympathy which is his peculiar dower."

Ed.

[Footnote A: This is an error of date. Saturday, the day of their departure from London, was the 31st of July.—Ed.]

* * * * *

COMPOSED BY THE SEA-SIDE, NEAR CALAIS, AUGUST, 1802

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807

One of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; re-named in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Fair Star of evening, Splendour of the west,
Star of my Country!—on the horizon’s brink
Thou hangest, stooping, as might seem, to sink
On England’s bosom; yet well pleased to rest,
Meanwhile, and be to her a glorious crest

Page 212

5
Conspicuous to the Nations. Thou, I think,
Should'st be my Country's emblem; and should'st wink,
Bright Star! with laughter on her banners, drest
In thy fresh beauty. There! that dusky spot
Beneath thee, that is England; there she lies. [1] 10
Blessings be on you both! one hope, one lot,
One life, one glory!—I, with many a fear
For my dear Country, many heartfelt sighs,
Among men who do not love her, linger here.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... it is England; there it lies. 1807.]

This sonnet, and the seven that follow it, were written during Wordsworth's residence at Calais, in the month of August, 1802. The following extract from his sister's Journal illustrates it:

"We arrived at *Calais* at four o'clock on Sunday morning the 31st of July. We had delightful walks after the heat of the day was passed—seeing far off in the west the coast of England, like a cloud, crested with Dover Castle, the evening Star, and the glory of the sky; the reflections in the water were more beautiful than the sky itself; purple waves brighter than precious stones, for ever melting away upon the sands."

Ed.

* * * * *

CALAIS, AUGUST, 1802

Composed August 7, 1802—Published 1807 [A]

One of the "Sonnets dedicated to Liberty"; re-named in 1845, "Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty."—Ed.

Is it a reed that's shaken by the wind,
Or what is it that ye go forth to see?
Lords, lawyers, statesmen, squires of low degree,
Men known, and men unknown, sick, lame, and blind,
Post forward all, like creatures of one kind, 5
With first-fruit offerings crowd to bend the knee
In France, before the new-born Majesty.
'Tis ever thus. Ye men of prostrate mind, [1]
A seemly reverence may be paid to power;
But that's a loyal virtue, never sown 10
In haste, nor springing with a transient shower:
When truth, when sense, when liberty were flown,
What hardship had it been to wait an hour?
Shame on you, feeble Heads, to slavery prone!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

Thus fares it ever. Men of prostrate mind! 1803.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This sonnet was first published in 'The Morning Post', Jan. 29, 1803, under the signature W. L. D., along with the one beginning, "I grieved for Buonaparte, with a vain," and was afterwards printed in the 1807 edition of the Poems. Mr. T. Hutchinson (Dublin) suggests that the W. L. D. stood either for *Wordsworthius Libertatis Defensor*, or (more likely) *Wordsworthii Libertati Dedicatunt* (carmen).—Ed.]

Page 213

* * * * *

COMPOSED NEAR CALAIS, ON THE ROAD LEADING TO ARDRES, AUGUST 7, 1802 [A]

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807

One of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; re-named in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Jones! as [1] from Calais southward you and I Went pacing side by side, this public Way Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day, [B] When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty: [2] A homeless sound of joy was in the sky: 5 From hour to hour the antiquated Earth, [3] Beat like the heart of Man: songs, garlands, mirth, [4] Banners, and happy faces, far and nigh! And now, sole register that these things were, Two solitary greetings have I heard, 10 “*Good morrow, Citizen!*” a hollow word, As if a dead man spake it! Yet despair Touches me not, though pensive as a bird Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare. [5]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... when ... 1807.

... while ... 1820.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

Travell’d on foot together; then this Way,
Which I am pacing now, was like the May
With festivals of new-born Liberty: 1807.

Where I am walking now ... MS.

Urged our accordant steps, this public Way
Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day,
When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty: 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

The antiquated Earth, as one might say, 1807.

The antiquated Earth, hopeful and gay, 1837.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

... garlands, play, 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

I feel not: happy am I as a Bird:
Fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair. 1807.

I feel not: jocund as a warbling Bird; 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the editions of 1807 to 1837 this is a sub-title, the chief title being 'To a Friend'. In the editions of 1840-1843, the chief title is retained in the Table of Contents, but is erased in the text.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: 14th July 1790.—W. W. 1820.]

This sonnet, originally entitled 'To a Friend, composed near Calais, on the Road leading to Ardres, August 7th, 1802', was addressed to Robert Jones, of Plas-yn-llan, near Ruthin, Denbighshire, a brother collegian at Cambridge, and afterwards a fellow of St. John's College, and incumbent of Soulderne, near Deddington, in Oxfordshire. It was to him that Wordsworth dedicated his 'Descriptive Sketches', which record their wanderings together in Switzerland; and it is to the pedestrian tour, undertaken by the two friends in the long vacation of 1790, that he refers in the above sonnet. The character of Jones is sketched in the poem written in 1800, beginning:

Page 214

‘I marvel how Nature could ever find space,’ [A]

and his parsonage in Oxfordshire is described in the sonnet—

’Where holy ground begins, unhallowed ends,
Is marked by no distinguishable line.’

The following note on Jones was appended to the edition of 1837:

“This excellent Person, one of my earliest and dearest friends, died in the year 1835. We were under-graduates together of the same year, at the same college; and companions in many a delightful ramble through his own romantic Country of North Wales. Much of the latter part of his life he passed in comparative solitude; which I know was often cheered by remembrance of our youthful adventures, and of the beautiful regions which, at home and abroad, we had visited together. Our long friendship was never subject to a moment’s interruption,—and, while revising these volumes for the last time, I have been so often reminded of my loss, with a not unpleasing sadness, that I trust the Reader will excuse this passing mention of a Man who well deserves from me something more than so brief a notice. Let me only add, that during the middle part of his life he resided many years (as Incumbent of the Living) at a Parsonage in Oxfordshire, which is the subject of one of the ‘Miscellaneous Sonnets.’”

Ed.

[Footnote A: See p. 208 [’A Character’].—Ed.]

* * * * *

CALAIS, AUGUST 15, 1802

Composed August 15, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

One of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; re-named in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Festivals have I seen that were not names:
This is young Buonaparte’s natal day,
And his is henceforth an established sway—
Consul for life. With worship France proclaims
Her approbation, and with pomps and games. 5
Heaven grant that other Cities may be gay!
Calais is not: and I have bent my way
To the [1] sea-coast, noting that each man frames

His business as he likes. Far other show
My youth here witnessed, in a prouder time; [2] 10
The senselessness of joy was then sublime!
Happy is he, who, caring not for Pope,
Consul, or King, can sound himself to know
The destiny of Man, and live in hope.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... this ... 1803.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

... Another time
That was, when I was here twelve years ago. 1803.

... long years ago: 1807.

... Far different time
That was, which here I witnessed, long ago; 1820.]

Page 215

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It had appeared in 'The Morning Post', February 26, 1803, under the initials W. L. D.—Ed.]

* * * * *

"IT IS A BEAUTEOUS EVENING, CALM AND FREE"

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807

[This was composed on the beach near Calais, in the autumn of 1802.—I. F.]

One of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets." In 1807 it was No. 19 of that series.—Ed.

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free, [1]
The holy time is quiet as a Nun
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea: [2] 5
Listen! [3] the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here, [A]
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, [4] 10
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,
God being with thee when we know it not. [B]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

Air sleeps,—from strife or stir the clouds are free; 1837.

A fairer face of evening cannot be; 1840.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

... is on the Sea: 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

But list! ... 1837.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,
If thou appear'st untouch'd by solemn thought, 1807.

Dear Child! dear happy Girl! if thou appear
Heedless—untouched with awe or serious thought, 1837.

Heedless-unawed, untouched with serious thought, 1838.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: I thought, for some time, that the "girl" referred to was Dorothy Wordsworth. Her brother used to speak, and to write, of her under many names, "Emily," "Louisa," *etc*.; and to call her a "child" in 1802—a "child of Nature" she was to the end of her days—or a "girl," seemed quite natural. However, a more probable suggestion was made by Mr. T. Hutchinson to Professor Dowden, that it refers to the girl Caroline mentioned in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal.

Page 216

“We arrived at Calais at four o’clock on Sunday morning, the 3rd of July.... We found out Annette and C., chez Madame Avril dans la rue de la Tete d’or. The weather was very hot. We walked by the shore almost every evening with Annette and Caroline, or William and I alone.... It was beautiful on the calm hot night to see the little boats row out of harbour with wings of fire, and the sail-boats with the fiery track which they cut as they went along, and which closed up after them with a hundred thousand sparkles and streams of glowworm light. Caroline was delighted.”

I have been unable to discover who Annette and Caroline were. Dorothy Wordsworth frequently records in her Grasmere Journal that either William, or she, “wrote to Annette,” but who she was is unknown to either the Wordsworth or the Hutchinson family.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare:

‘The Child is father of the Man, *etc*.’

p. 292.

Also S. T. C. in ‘The Friend’, iii. p. 46:

‘The sacred light of childhood,’

and ‘The Prelude’, book v. l. 507. Ed.]

* * * * *

ON THE EXTINCTION OF THE VENETIAN REPUBLIC

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807

This and the following ten sonnets were included among the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; re-named in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee;
And was the safeguard of the west: the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth,
Venice, the eldest Child of Liberty.
She was a maiden City, bright and free; 5
No guile seduced, no force could violate;
And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea. [A]
And what if she had seen those glories fade,

Those titles vanish, and that strength decay; 10
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reached its final day:
Men are we, and must grieve when even the Shade
Of that which once was great, is passed away.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' (canto iv. II):

'The spouseless Adriatic mourns her lord.'

Ed.]

"Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee."

The special glory of Venice dates from the conquest of Constantinople by the Latins in 1202. The fourth Crusade—in which the French and Venetians alone took part—started from Venice, in October 1202, under the command of the Doge, Henry Dandolo. Its aim, however, was not the recovery of Palestine, but the conquest of Constantinople. At the close of the crusade, Venice received the Morea, part of Thessaly, the Cyclades, many of the Byzantine cities, and the coasts of the Hellespont, with three-eighths of the city of Constantinople itself, the Doge taking the curious title of Duke of three-eighths of the Roman Empire.

Page 217

"And was the safeguard of the west."

This may refer to the prominent part which Venice took in the Crusades, or to the development of her naval power, which made her mistress of the Mediterranean for many years, and an effective bulwark against invasions from the East.

"The eldest Child of Liberty."

The origin of the Venetian State was the flight of many of the inhabitants of the mainland—on the invasion of Italy by Attila—to the chain of islands that lie at the head of the Adriatic.

"In the midst of the waters, free, indigent, laborious, and inaccessible, they gradually coalesced into a republic: the first foundations of Venice were laid in the island of Rialto.... On the verge of the two empires the Venetians exult in the belief of primitive and perpetual independence."

Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire', chap. lx.

"And, when she took unto herself a Mate,
She must espouse the everlasting Sea."

In 1177, Pope Alexander III. appealed to the Venetian Republic for protection against the German Emperor. The Venetians were successful in a naval battle at Saboro, against Otho, the son of Frederick Barbarossa. In return, the Pope presented the Doge Liani with a ring, with which he told him to wed the Adriatic, that posterity might know that the sea was subject to Venice, "as a bride is to her husband."

In September 1796, nearly six years before this sonnet was written, the fate of the old Venetian Republic was sealed by the treaty of Campo Formio. The French army under Napoleon had subdued Italy, and, having crossed the Alps, threatened Vienna. To avert impending disaster, the Emperor Francis arranged a treaty which extinguished the Venetian Republic. He divided its territory between himself and Napoleon, Austria retaining Istria, Dalmatia, and the left bank of the Adige in the Venetian State, with the "maiden city" itself; France receiving the rest of the territory and the Ionian Islands. Since the date of that treaty the city has twice been annexed to Italy.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE KING OF SWEDEN

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807

The Voice of song from distant lands shall call
To that great [1] King; shall hail the crowned Youth
Who, taking counsel of unbending Truth,
By one example hath set forth to all
How they with dignity may stand; or fall, 5
If fall they must. Now, whither doth it tend?
And what to him and his shall be the end?
That thought is one which neither can appal
Nor cheer him; for the illustrious Swede hath done
The thing which ought to be; is raised *above* [2] 10
All consequences: work he hath begun
Of fortitude, and piety, and love,
Which all his glorious ancestors approve:
The heroes bless him, him their rightful son.

Page 218

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... bold ... In 1838 only.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... He stands *above* 1807.]

The following is Wordsworth's note to this sonnet, added in 1837:

"In this and a succeeding Sonnet on the same subject, let me be understood as a Poet availing himself of the situation which the King of Sweden occupied, and of the principles AVOWED IN HIS MANIFESTOS; as laying hold of these advantages for the purpose of embodying moral truths. This remark might, perhaps, as well have been suppressed; for to those who may be in sympathy with the course of these Poems, it will be superfluous; and will, I fear, be thrown away upon that other class, whose besotted admiration of the intoxicated despot hereafter placed [A] in contrast with him, is the most melancholy evidence of degradation in British feeling and intellect which the times have furnished."

The king referred to is Gustavus IV., who was born in 1778, proclaimed king in 1792, and died in 1837. His first public act after his accession was to join in the coalition against Napoleon, and dislike of Napoleon was the main-spring of his policy. It is to this that Wordsworth refers in the sonnet:

'... the illustrious Swede hath done
The thing which ought to be ...'

It made him unpopular, however, and gave rise to a conspiracy against him, and to his consequent abdication in 1809. He "died forgotten and in poverty."—Ed.

[Footnote A: See the sonnet beginning "Call not the royal Swede unfortunate," vol. iv. p. 224.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TO TOUSSAINT L'OUVERTURE

Composed August, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men! [B]
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den;—[1]
O miserable Chieftain! where and when 5
Wilt thou find patience? Yet die not; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. [2] Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies; 10
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind. [C]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

Whether the rural milk-maid by her cow
Sing in thy hearing, or thou liest now
Alone in some deep dungeon's earless den, 1803.

Page 219

Whether the all-cheering sun be free to shed
His beams around thee, or thou rest thy head
Pillowed in some dark dungeon's noisome den, 1815.

Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough
Within thy hearing, or Thou liest now
Buried in some deep dungeon's earless den;—1820.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

... Yet die not; be thou Life to thyself in death; with chearful brow Live, loving death, nor let one thought in ten Be painful to thee ... 1803.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: But previously printed in 'The Morning Post' of February 2, 1803, under the signature W. L. D.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Massinger, 'The Bondman', act I. scene iii. l. 8:

'Her man of men, Timoleon.'

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Rowe's 'Tamerlane', iii. 2:

'But to subdue the unconquerable mind.'

Also Gray's poem 'The Progress of Poesy', ii. 2, l. 10:

'Th' unconquerable Mind, and Freedom's holy flame.'

Ed.]

Francois Dominique Toussaint (who was surnamed L'Ouverture), the child of African slaves, was born at St. Domingo in 1743. He was a Royalist in political sympathy till 1794, when the decree of the French convention, giving liberty to the slaves, brought him over to the side of the Republic. He was made a general of division by Laveux, and succeeded in taking the whole of the north of the island from the English. In 1796 he was made chief of the French army of St. Domingo, and first the British commander,

and next the Spanish, surrendered everything to him. He became governor of the island, which prospered under his rule. Napoleon, however, in 1801, issued an edict re-establishing slavery in St. Domingo. Toussaint professed obedience, but showed that he meant to resist the edict. A fleet of fifty-four vessels was sent from France to enforce it. Toussaint was proclaimed an outlaw. He surrendered, and was received with military honours, but was treacherously arrested and sent to Paris in June 1802, where he died, in April 1803, after ten months' hardship in prison. He had been two months in prison when Wordsworth addressed this sonnet to him.—Ed.

* * * * *

COMPOSED IN THE VALLEY NEAR DOVER, ON THE DAY OF LANDING

Composed August 30, 1802.—Published 1807

Here, on our native soil, we breathe once more. [1]
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
Of bells;—those boys who [2] in yon meadow-ground
In white-sleeved shirts are playing; [A] and the roar
Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore;—[3] 5
All, all are English. Oft have I looked round
With joy in Kent's green vales;

Page 220

but never found
  Myself so satisfied in heart before.
  Europe is yet in bonds; but let that pass,
  Thought for another moment. Thou art free, 10
  My Country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
  For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
  Of England once again, and hear and see,
  With such a dear Companion at my side.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

  Dear fellow Traveller! here we are once more. 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1820.

  ... that ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

  In white sleev'd shirts are playing by the score,
  And even this little River's gentle roar, 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: At the beginning of Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Journal of a Tour on the Continent' in 1820, she writes (July 10, 1820):

"When within a mile of Dover saw crowds of people at a cricket match, the numerous combatants dressed in 'white-sleeved shirts;' and it was in the very same field, where,

when we ’trod the grass of England once again,’ twenty years ago, we had seen an assemblage of youths, engaged in the same sport, so very like the present that all might have been the same. (See my brother’s sonnet.)”

Ed.]

Dorothy Wordsworth writes in her Journal,

“On Sunday, the 29th of August, we left Calais, at twelve o’clock in the morning, and landed at Dover at one on Monday the 30th. It was very pleasant to me, when we were in the harbour at Dover, to breathe the fresh air, and to look up and see the stars among the ropes of the vessel. The next day was very hot, we bathed, and sat upon the Dover Cliffs, and looked upon France with many a melancholy and tender thought. We could see the shores almost as plain as if it were but an English lake. We mounted the coach, and arrived in London at six, the 30th August.”

Ed.

* * * * *

SEPTEMBER 1, 1802

Composed September 1, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

Among the capricious acts of Tyranny that disgraced these times, was the chasing of all Negroes from France by decree of the Government: we had a Fellow-passenger who was one of the expelled.—W. W. 1827.

We had a female Passenger who came [1]
From Calais with us, spotless [2] in array,
A white-robed Negro, [3] like a lady gay,
Yet downcast [4] as a woman fearing blame;
Meek, destitute, as seemed, of hope or aim [5] 5
She sate, from notice turning not away,
But on all proffered intercourse did lay

Page 221

[6]
A weight of languid speech, or to the same
No sign of answer made by word or face:
Yet still her eyes retained their tropic fire, 10
That, burning independent of the mind,
Joined with the lustre of her rich attire
To mock the Outcast—O ye Heavens, be kind!
And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race![7]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

We had a fellow-passenger that came 1803.

... who ... 1807.

Driven from the soil of France, a Female came 1827.

The edition of 1838 returns to the text of 1807, but the edition of 1840 reverts to that of 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

... gaudy ... 1803.

... brilliant ... 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

A negro woman, ... 1803.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

Yet silent ... 1803.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

Dejected, downcast, meek, and more than tame: 1803.

Dejected, meek, yea pitiably tame, 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

But on our proffer'd kindness still did lay 1803.]

[Variant 7:

1845.

... or at the same Was silent, motionless in eyes and face. She was a negro woman, out of France, Rejected, like all others of that race: Not one of whom may now find footing there. What is the meaning of this ordinance? Dishonour'd Despots, tell us if ye dare. 1803.... driv'n from France, Rejected like all others of that race, Not one of whom may now find footing there; This the poor Out-cast did to us declare, Nor murmur'd at the unfeeling Ordinance. 1807.

Meanwhile those eyes retained their tropic fire,
Which, burning independent of the mind,
Joined with the lustre of her rich attire
To mock the outcast—O ye Heavens, be kind!
And feel, thou Earth, for this afflicted Race! 1827.

Yet still those eyes retained their tropic fire, 1837.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: First printed in 'The Morning Post', February 11, 1803, under the title of 'The Banished Negroes', and signed W. L. D.—Ed.]

It was a natural arrangement which led Wordsworth to place this sonnet, in his edition of 1807, immediately after the one addressed 'To Toussaint L'Ouverture'.—Ed.

* * * * *

SEPTEMBER, 1802, NEAR DOVER [A]

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807

Page 222

Inland, within a hollow vale, I stood;
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.
I shrunk; for verily the barrier flood 5
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters; yet what power is there!
What mightiness for evil and for good! [B]
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow, and waters roll, 10
Strength to the brave, and Power, and Deity;
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only, the Nations shall be great and free.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: From 1807 to 1843 the title was ‘September, 1802’; “near Dover” appeared in the “Sonnets” of 1838, but did not become a permanent part of the title until 1845.—-Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare in S. T. ‘Coleridge’s Ode to the Departing Year’, stanza vii.:

’And Ocean ’mid his uproar wild
Speaks safety to his island-child.’

Ed.]

In ‘The Friend’ (ed. 1818, vol. i. p. 107), Coleridge writes:

“The narrow seas that form our boundaries, what were they in times of old? The convenient highway for Danish and Norman pirates. What are they now? Still, but a ‘Span of Waters.’ Yet they roll at the base of the Ararat, on which the Ark of the Hope of Europe and of Civilization rested!”

He then quotes this sonnet from the line “Even so doth God protect us if we be.”

The note appended to the sonnet, ’Composed in the Valley near Dover, on the day of Landing’ (p. 341), shows that this one refers to the same occasion; and that while “Inland, within a hollow vale,” Wordsworth was, at the same time, on the Dover Cliffs; the “vale” being one of the hollow clefts in the headland, which front the Dover coast-line. The sonnet may, however, have been finished afterwards in London.—Ed.

* * * * *

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807

[This was 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, especially in great towns and cities, 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 in this and the succeeding Sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth. It would not be easy to conceive with what a depth of feeling I entered into the struggle carried on by the Spaniards for their deliverance

Page 223

from the usurped power of the French. Many times have I gone from Allan Bank in Grasmere Vale, where we were then residing, to the top of Raise-gap, as it is called, so late as two o'clock in the morning, to meet the carrier bringing the newspapers from Keswick. Imperfect traces of the state of mind in which I then was may be found in my tract on the Convention of Cintra, as well as in these Sonnets.—I. F.]

O FRIEND! [A] I know not which way I must look [1]
For comfort, being, as I am, opprest,
To think that now our life is only drest
For show; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook 5
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest:
The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature or in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore: 10
Plain living and high thinking are no more:
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws. [B]

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

O thou proud City! which way shall I look 1838.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The "Friend" was Coleridge. In the original MS. it stands "Coleridge! I know not," *etc*. Wordsworth changed it in the proof stage.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare—in Hartley Coleridge's 'Lives of Distinguished Northerners'—-what is said of this sonnet, in his life of Anne Clifford, where the passing cynicism of Wordsworth's poem is pointed out.—Ed.]

Wordsworth stayed in London from August 30th to September 22nd 1802.—Ed.

* * * * *

LONDON, 1802

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
England hath need of thee: she is a fen
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower 5
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: 10
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet [A] thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself [1] did lay.

* * * * *

Page 224

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

... itself ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In old English “yet” means “continuously” or “always”; and it is still used in Cumberland with this signification.—Ed.]

* * * * *

“GREAT MEN HAVE BEEN AMONG US; HANDS THAT PENNED”

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807

Great men have been among us; hands that penned
And tongues that uttered wisdom—better none:
The later Sidney, Marvel, Harrington,
Young Vane, [A] and others who called Milton friend.
These moralists could act and comprehend: 5
They knew how genuine glory was put on;
Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
In splendour: what strength was, that would not bend
But in [1] magnanimous meekness. France, ’tis strange,
Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then. 10
Perpetual emptiness! unceasing change!
No single volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road;
But equally a want of books and men!

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

But to ... MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See Clarendon's 'History of the Rebellion', book iii.—Ed.]

* * * * *

"IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF THAT THE FLOOD"

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flowed, "with pomp of waters, unwithstood,"[B]
Roused though it be full often to a mood 5
Which spurns the check of salutary bands, [1]
That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
Should perish; and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible Knights of old: 10
We must be [2] free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held.—In every thing we are sprung
Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... unwithstood,
Road by which all might come and go that would,
And bear out freights of worth to foreign lands; 1803.]

Page 225

[Variant 2:

1807.

... must live ... 1803.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It was first printed in 'The Morning Post', April 16. 1803, and signed W. L. D.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Daniel's 'Civil War', book ii. stanza 7.—Ed.]

* * * * *

"WHEN I HAVE BORNE IN MEMORY WHAT HAS TAMED"

Composed September, 1802.—Published 1807 [A]

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? 5
Now, [1] when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed. [2]
For dearly must we prize thee; we who find
In thee a bulwark for the cause of men; [3] 10
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!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1.

1845.

But,... 1803.]

[Variant 2.

1807.

I of those fears of mine am much ashamed. 1803.]

[Variant 3.

1845.

But dearly do I prize thee for I find
In thee a bulwark of the cause of men; 1803.

But dearly must we prize thee; we who find 1807.

... for the cause of men; 1827.

Most dearly 1838.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: But printed previously in 'The Morning Post', September 17, 1803, under the title 'England', and signed W. L. D. Also, see Coleridge's 'Poems on Political Events', 1828-9.—Ed.]

* * * * *

COMPOSED AFTER A JOURNEY ACROSS THE HAMBLETON HILLS, [A] YORKSHIRE

Composed October 4, 1802.—Published 1807

[Composed October 4th, 1802, after a journey over the Hambleton Hills, on a day memorable to me—the day of my marriage. The horizon commanded by those hills is most magnificent. The next day, while we were travelling in a post-chaise up Wensleydale, we were stopped by one of the horses proving restive, and were obliged to wait two hours in a severe storm before the post-boy could fetch from the inn another to supply its place. The spot was in front of Bolton Hall, where Mary Queen of Scots was kept prisoner, soon after her unfortunate landing at Workington. The place then belonged to the Scroops, and memorials of her are yet preserved there. To beguile the

time I composed a Sonnet. The subject was our own confinement contrasted with hers; but it was not thought worthy of being preserved.—I. F.]

Page 226

One of the “Miscellaneous Sonnets.”—Ed.

Dark and more dark the shades of evening fell;
The wished-for point was reached—but at an hour
When little could be gained from that rich dower [1]
Of prospect, whereof many thousands tell.
Yet did the glowing west with marvellous power 5
Salute us; there stood Indian citadel,
Temple of Greece, and minster with its tower
Substantially expressed—a place for bell
Or clock to toll from! Many a tempting isle,
With groves that never were imagined, lay 10
’Mid seas how steadfast! objects all for the eye
Of silent rapture; but we felt the while [2]
We should forget them; they are of the sky,
And from our earthly memory fade away.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

Ere we had reach’d the wish’d-for place, night fell:
We were too late at least by one dark hour,
And nothing could we see of all that power
Of prospect, ... 1807.

Dark, and more dark, the shades of Evening fell;
The wish’d-for point was reach’d—but late the hour;
And little could we see of all that power 1815.

And little could be gained from all that dower 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

The western sky did recompence us well
With Grecian Temple, Minaret, and Bower;
And, in one part, a Minster with its Tower
Substantially distinct, a place for Bell

Or Clock to toll from. Many a glorious pile
Did we behold, sights that might well repay
All disappointment! and, as such, the eye
Delighted in them; but we felt, the while, 1807.

Substantially expressed—... 1815.

Did we behold, fair sights that might repay 1815.

Yet did the glowing west in all its power 1827.

The text of 1827 is otherwise identical with that of 1837.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Called by Wordsworth, “The Hamilton Hills” in the editions from 1807 to 1827.—Ed.]

The following extract from Dorothy Wordsworth’s Journal indicates, as fully as any other passage in it, the use which her brother occasionally made of it. We have the “Grecian Temple,” and the “Minster with its Tower”:

Page 227

“Before we had crossed the Hambleton Hill and reached the point overlooking Yorkshire it was quite dark. We had not wanted, however, fair prospects before us, as we drove along the flat plain of the high hill; far, far off from us, in the western sky, we saw shapes of castles, ruins among groves—a great, spreading wood, rocks, and single trees—a Minster with its Tower unusually distinct, Minarets in another quarter, and a round Grecian Temple also; the colours of the sky of a bright grey, and the forms of a sober grey, with a dome. As we descended the hill there was no distinct view, but of a great space, only near us, we saw the wild (and as the people say) bottomless Tarn in the hollow at the side of the hill. It seemed to be made visible to us only by its own light, for all the hill about us was dark.”

Wordsworth and his sister crossed over the Hambleton (or Hamilton) Hills, on their way from Westmoreland to Gallow Hill, Yorkshire, to visit the Hutchinsons, before they went south to London and Calais, where they spent the month of August, 1802. But after his marriage to Mary Hutchinson, on the 4th of October, Wordsworth, his wife, and sister, recrossed these Hambleton Hills on their way to Grasmere, which they reached on the evening of the 6th October. The above sonnet was composed on the evening of the 4th October, as the Fenwick note indicates.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO H. C.

SIX YEARS OLD

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

One of the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood.”—Ed.

O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought;
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
Thou faery voyager! that dost float 5
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air [A] than on an earthly stream;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery; 10
O blessed vision! happy child!
Thou [1] art so exquisitely wild,

I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest, 15
Lord of thy house and hospitality;
And Grief, uneasy lover! never rest
But when she sate within the touch of thee.
O too industrious folly!
O vain and causeless melancholy! 20
Nature will either end thee quite;
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.
What hast thou to do with sorrow, 25
Or the injuries of to-morrow?

Page 228

Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
Ill fitted to sustain [2] unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth;
A gem that glitters while it lives, 30
And no forewarning gives;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

That ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Not doom'd to jostle with ... 1807.

Not framed to undergo ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See Carver's Description of his Situation upon one of the Lakes of America.—W. W. 1807.]

These stanzas were addressed to Hartley Coleridge. The lines,

'I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years,'

taken in connection with his subsequent career, suggest the similarly sad “presentiment” with which the ‘Lines composed above Tintern Abbey’ conclude. The following is the postscript to a letter by his father, S. T. C., addressed to Sir Humphry Davy, Keswick, July 25, 1800:

“Hartley is a spirit that dances on an aspen leaf; the air that yonder sallow-faced and yawning tourist is breathing, is to my babe a perpetual nitrous oxide. Never was more joyous creature born. Pain with him is so wholly trans-substantiated by the joys that had rolled on before, and rushed on after, that oftentimes five minutes after his mother has whipt him he has gone up and asked her to whip him again.”

(’Fragmentary Remains, Literary and Scientific’, of Sir Humphry Davy, Bart., pp. 78, 79.) —Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE DAISY

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

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

G. WITHER. [1]

[Composed in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.—I. F.]

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

In youth from rock to rock I went,
From hill to hill in discontent
Of pleasure high and turbulent,
    Most pleased when most uneasy;
But now my own delights I make,—5
My thirst at every rill can slake, [2]

And gladly Nature's love partake,
Of Thee, sweet Daisy! [3]

Page 229

Thee Winter in the garland wears
That thinly decks his few grey hairs; 10
Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
  That she may sun thee; [4]
Whole Summer-fields are thine by right;
And Autumn, melancholy Wight!
Doth in thy crimson head delight 15
  When rains are on thee.

In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane;
Pleased at his greeting thee again;
  Yet nothing daunted, 20
Nor grieved if thou be set at nought: [5]
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
  When such are wanted.

Be violets in their secret mews 25
The flowers the wanton Zephyrs choose;
Proud be the rose, with rains and dews
  Her head impearling,
Thou liv'st with less ambitious aim,
Yet hast not gone without thy fame; 30
Thou art indeed by many a claim
    The Poet's darling.

If to a rock from rains he fly,
Or, some bright day of April sky,
Imprisoned by hot sunshine lie 35
    Near the green holly,
And wearily at length should fare;
He needs [6] but look about, and there
Thou art!—a friend at hand, to scare
    His melancholy. 40

A hundred times, by rock or bower,
Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
Have I derived from thy sweet power
    Some apprehension;
Some steady love; some brief delight; [7] 45
Some memory that had taken flight;
Some chime [8] of fancy wrong or right;
    Or stray invention.

If stately passions in me burn,
And one [9] chance look to Thee should turn, 50
I drink out of an humbler urn
    A lowlier pleasure;
The homely sympathy that heeds
The common life, our nature breeds;
A wisdom fitted to the needs 55
    Of hearts at leisure.

Fresh-smitten by the morning ray,
When thou art up, alert and gay,
Then, cheerful Flower! my spirits play
    With kindred gladness: [10] 60
And when, at dusk, by dews opprest
Thou sink'st, the image of thy rest
Hath often eased my pensive breast
    Of careful sadness. [11]

And all day long I number yet, 65
All seasons through, another debt,
Which I, wherever thou art met,
    To thee am owing; [12]
 An instinct call it, a blind sense;
A happy, genial influence, 70
Coming one knows not how, nor whence,
    Nor whither going.

Page 230

Child of the Year! that round dost run
Thy pleasant course,—when day's begun
As ready to salute the sun 75
    As lark or leveret,
Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain; [B]
Nor be less dear to future men
Than in old time;—thou not in vain [13]
    Art Nature's favourite. [C] 80

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: The extract from Wither was first prefixed to this poem in the edition of 1815. The late Mr. Dykes Campbell was of opinion that Charles Lamb had suggested this motto to Wordsworth, as 'The Shepherd's Hunting' was Lamb's "prime favourite" amongst Wither's poems. It may be as well to note that his quotation was erroneous in two places. His "instruction" should be "invention" (l. 3), and his "the" (in l. 4) should be "her."—Ed.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

To gentle sympathies awake, MS.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

And Nature's love of Thee partake,
  Her much-loved Daisy! 1836.

The text of 1840 returns to the reading of 1807.

  Of her sweet Daisy. C.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

When soothed a while by milder airs,
Thee Winter in the garland wears

That thinly shades his few grey hairs;
Spring cannot shun thee; 1807.

When Winter decks his few grey hairs
Thee in the scanty wreath he wears;
Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
That she may sun thee; 1827.]

[Variant 5:

1836.

... in the lane;
If welcome once thou count'st it gain;
Thou art not daunted,
Nor car'st if thou be set at naught; 1807.

If welcom'd ... 1815.

The text of 1827 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1820

He need..... 1807]

[Variant 7:

1807

....some chance delight; MS.]

[Variant 8:

1807

Some charm..... C.]

[Variant 9:

1807

And some..... MS.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

When, smitten by the morning ray,
I see thee rise alert and gay,
Then, chearful Flower! my spirits play
With kindred motion: 1807.

With kindred gladness: 1815.

Then Daisy! do my spirits play,
With cheerful motion. MS.]

[Variant 11:

1815.

At dusk, I've seldom mark'd thee press
The ground, as if in thankfulness
Without some feeling, more or less,
Of true devotion. 1807.

Page 231

The ground in modest thankfulness MS.]

[Variant 12:

1807.

But more than all I number yet
O bounteous Flower! another debt
Which I to thee wherever met
Am daily owing; MS.]

[Variant 13:

1836.

Child of the Year! that round dost run
Thy course, bold lover of the sun,
And chearful when the day's begun
As morning Leveret,
Thou long the Poet's praise shalt gain;
Thou wilt be more belov'd by men
In times to come; thou not in vain 1807.

Thy long-lost praise thou shalt regain;
Dear shalt thou be to future men
As in old time;—1815.

Dear thou shalt be 1820.

The text of 1827 returns to that of 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: His Muse.—W. W. 1815.

The extract is from 'The Shepherds Hunting', eclogue fourth, ll. 368-80.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See, in Chaucer and the elder Poets, the honours formerly paid to this flower.—W. W. 1815.]

[Footnote C: This Poem, and two others to the same Flower, which the Reader will find in the second Volume, were written in the year 1802; which is mentioned, because in

some of the ideas, though not in the manner in which those ideas are connected, and likewise even in some of the expressions, they bear a striking resemblance to a Poem (lately published) of Mr. Montgomery, entitled, ‘A Field Flower’. This being said, Mr. Montgomery will not think any apology due to him; I cannot however help addressing him in the words of the Father of English Poets:

’Though it happe me to rehersin—
That ye han in your freshe songis saied,
Forberith me, and beth not ill apaied,
Sith that ye se I doe it in the honour
Of Love, and eke in service of the Flour.’

W. W. 1807.

In the edition of 1836, the following variation of the text of this note occurs: “There is a resemblance to passages in a Poem.”—Ed.]

For illustration of the last stanza, see Chaucer’s Prologue to ’The Legend of Good Women’.

’As I seyde erst, whanne comen is the May, That in my bed ther daweth me no day, That I nam uppe and walkyng in the mede, To seen this floure agein the sonne sprede, Whan it up rysith erly by the morwe; That blisful sight softneth al my sorwe, So glad am I, whan that I have presence Of it, to doon it alle reverence, As she that is of alle floures flour.’ ... To seen this flour so yong, so fresshe of hewe, Constreynde me with so gredy desire, That in myn herte I feele yet the fire, That made me to ryse er yt wer day, And this was now the firste morwe of May, With dredful hert, and glad devocioun For to ben at the resurreccion Of this flour, whan that yt shulde

Page 232

unclose Agayne the sonne, that roos as rede as rose ... And doune on knes anoon ryght I me sette, And as I koude, this fresshe flour I grette, Knelying alwey, til it unclosed was, Upon the smale, softe, swote gras.

Again, in The 'Cuckoo and the Nightingale', after a wakeful night, the Poet rises at dawn, and wandering forth, reaches a "laund of white and green."

'So feire oon had I nevere in bene,
The grounde was grene, y poudred with dayse,
The floures and the gras ilike al hie,
Al grene and white, was nothing elles sene.'

Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE SAME FLOWER [A]

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

[Composed in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere.-I. F.]

One of the "Poems of the Fancy."—Ed.

With little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Daisy! again I talk to thee, [1]
For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming Common-place 5
Of Nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace,
Which Love makes for thee!

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play with similes, [2] 10
Loose types of things through all degrees,
Thoughts of thy raising:
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game, 15
While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
  Of all temptations; 20
A queen in crown of rubies drest;
A starveling in a scanty vest;
Are all, as seems [3] to suit thee best,
  Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye 25
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly
  The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold, 30
That spreads itself, some faery bold
  In fight to cover!

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star;
Not quite so fair as many are 35
  In heaven above thee!
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest;—
May peace come never to his nest,
Who shall reprove thee! 40

Bright *Flower!* [4] for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air, 45
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature!

Page 233

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

Sweet Daisy! oft I talk to thee, 1807.

Yet once again I talk . . 1836.]

[Variant 2:

1820.

Oft do I sit by thee at ease,
And weave a web of similies, 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

... seem ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1836.

Sweet Flower!.... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The two following Poems were overflowings of the mind in composing the one which stands first in the first Volume (i.e. the previous Poem),—W. W. 1807.]

In his editions 1836-1849 Wordsworth gave 1805 as the year in which this poem was composed, but the Fenwick note prefixed to it renders this impossible. It evidently belongs to the same time, and “mood,” as the previous poem.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE DAISY (#2)

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

[This and the other Poems addressed to the same flower were composed at Town-end, Grasmere, during the earlier part of my residence there. I have been censured for the last line but one—“thy function apostolical”—as being little less than profane. How could it be thought so? The word is adopted with reference to its derivation, implying something sent on a mission; and assuredly this little flower, especially when the subject of verse, may be regarded, in its humble degree, as administering both to moral and to spiritual purposes.—I.F.]

This was included among the “Poems of the Fancy” from 1815 to 1832. In 1837 it was transferred to the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.”—Ed.

Bright Flower! whose home is everywhere,
Bold in maternal Nature’s care,
And all the long year through the heir [1]
Of joy and [2] sorrow.
Methinks that there abides in thee 5
Some concord [3] with humanity,
Given to no other flower I see
The forest thorough!

Is it that Man is soon deprest? [4]
A thoughtless Thing! who, once unblest, 10
Does little on his memory rest,
Or on his reason,
And [5] Thou would’st teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind 15
And every season?

Thou wander’st the wide world about,
Uncheck’d by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
Yet pleased and willing; 20
Meek, yielding to the occasion’s call,
And all things suffering from all,
Thy function apostolical
In peace fulfilling. [6]

Page 234

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1840.

Bright Flower, whose home is every where!
A Pilgrim bold in Nature's care,
And all the long year through the heir 1807.

Bright flower, whose home is every where!
A Pilgrim bold in Nature's care,
And oft, the long year through, the heir 1827.

Confiding Flower, by Nature's care
Made bold,—who, lodging here or there,
Art all the long year through the heir 1837.]

[Variant 2:

1850.

... or ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

Communion ... 1837.

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1807.

And wherefore? Man is soon deprest; 1827.

The text of 1837 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1807.

But ... 1827.

The text of 1837 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1807.

This stanza was omitted in the editions of 1827 and 1832, but replaced in 1837.]

The three preceding poems ‘To the Daisy’ evidently belong to the same time, and are, as Wordsworth expressly says, “overflowings of the mind in composing the one which stands first.” Nevertheless, in the revised edition of 1836-7, he gave the date 1802 to the first, 1803 to the third, and 1805 to the second of them. In the earlier editions 1815 to 1832, they are all classed among the “Poems of the Fancy,” but in the edition of 1837, and afterwards, the last, “Bright Flower! whose home is everywhere,” is ranked among the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection.” They should manifestly be placed together. Wordsworth’s fourth poem ’To the Daisy’, which is an elegy on his brother John, and belongs to a subsequent year—having no connection with the three preceding poems, will be found in its chronological place.—Ed.

* * * * *

LOUISA

AFTER ACCOMPANYING HER ON A MOUNTAIN EXCURSION

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

[Town-end 1805.—I. F.]

One of the “Poems founded on the Affections.” From 1807 to 1832 the title was simply ’Louisa’.—Ed.

I met Louisa in the shade, And, having seen that lovely Maid, Why should I fear to say [1] That, nymph-like, she is fleet and strong, [2] And down the rocks can leap along 5 Like rivulets in May? [3] She loves her fire, her cottage-home; Yet o’er the moorland will she roam In weather rough and bleak; And, when against the wind she strains,

Page 235

10 Oh! might I kiss the mountain rains That sparkle on her cheek.

Take all that's mine "beneath the moon," [A]
If I with her but half a noon
May sit beneath the walls 15
Of some old cave, or mossy nook,
When up she winds along the brook [4]
To hunt the waterfalls.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

Though, by a sickly taste betrayed,
Some will dispraise the lovely Maid,
With fearless pride I say 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

That she is ruddy, fleet, and strong; 1807.

That she is healthful, ... 1836.]

[Variant 3: In the editions of 1807 to 1843 occurs the following verse, which was omitted from subsequent editions:

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

[Variant 4:

1807.

When she goes barefoot up the brook MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Young's 'Night Thoughts', where the phrase occurs three times. See also 'Lear', act IV. scene vi. l. 26:

'For all beneath the moon.'

Haywood, 'The English Traveller', v. 1:

'All things that dwell beneath the moon.'

It was also used by William Drummond, in one of his sonnets,

'I know that all beneath the moon decays.'

Ed.]

Wordsworth gave as the date of the composition of this poem the year 1805; but he said of the following one, 'To a Young Lady, who had been Reproached for taking Long Walks in the Country'—"composed at the same time" and "designed to make one piece"—that it was written in 1803.

But it is certain that these following lines appeared in 'The Morning Post', on Feb. 12, 1802, where they are headed 'To a beautiful Young Lady, who had been harshly spoken of on account of her fondness for taking long walks in the Country'. There is difficulty, both in ascertaining the exact date of composition, and in knowing who "Louisa" or the "Young Lady" was. Mrs. Millicent G. Fawcett wrote to me several years ago, suggesting, with some plausibility, a much earlier date, if Dorothy Wordsworth was the lady referred to. She referred me to Dorothy's letter to her aunt, Mrs. Crackenthorpe, written from Windybrow, Keswick, in 1794, when staying there with her brother; and says

Page 236

“What inclined me to think that the poem was written earlier than 1805 was that it anticipates Dorothy’s marriage, and this would more naturally be present as a probable event in W. W.’s mind in 1794 or thereabouts than in 1805, after Dorothy had dedicated her life to her brother, to the exclusion of all wish to make a home of her own by marriage. The expression ‘Healthy as a shepherd boy’ is also more applicable to a girl of twenty-two than to a woman of thirty-three. Do you think it possible that the poem may have been written in 1794, and not published till later, when its application would be less evident to the family circle?”

Dorothy Wordsworth’s letter will be quoted in full in a later volume, but the following extract from it may be given now:

“I cannot pass unnoticed that part of your letter in which you speak of my ‘rambling about the country on foot.’ So far from considering this as a matter for condemnation I rather thought it would have given my friends pleasure that I had courage to make use of the strength with which Nature has endowed me, when it not only procured me infinitely more pleasure than I should have received from sitting in a post-chaise, but was also the means of saving me at least thirty shillings.”

I do not think the date of composition can be so early as 1794. What may be called internal, or structural, evidence is against it. Wordsworth never could have written these two poems till after his settlement at Dove Cottage. Besides, in 1794, he could have no knowledge of a possible “nest in a green dale, a harbour and a hold”; while at that time his sister had certainly no “cottage home.” I believe they were written after he took up his residence at Town-end (the date being uncertain); and that they refer to his sister, and not to his wife. It has been suggested by Mr. Ernest Coleridge (see ‘The Athenaeum’, Oct. 21, 1893) that they refer to Mary Hutchinson: but there is no evidence of Wordsworth taking long country walks with her before their marriage, or that she was “nymph-like,” “fleet and strong,” that she loved to “roam the moorland,” “in weather rough and bleak,” or that she “hunted waterfalls.” The reference to his sister is confirmed by the omission of the delightful second stanza of the poem in the last edition revised by the poet, that of 1849, when she was a confirmed invalid at Rydal Mount. Those “smiles to earth unknown,” had then ceased for ever. The reason why Wordsworth erased so delightful and wonderful a stanza, is to me only explicable on the supposition, that it was his sister he referred to, she who had accompanied him in former days, in so many of his “long walks in the country.” His wife never did this; she had not the physical strength to do it; and, if she had been the person referred to, Wordsworth would hardly, in 1845, have erased such a description of her, as occurs in the stanza written in 1802, when she was still so vigorous.

Page 237

Besides, Mary Wordsworth was in no sense “a Child of Nature,” as Dorothy was: while the testimony of the Wordsworth household is explicit, that it was to his sister, and not to his wife, that the poet referred. I find no difficulty in the allusion made in the second poem to Dorothy being yet possibly a “Wife and Friend”; nor to the fact that it was originally addressed “To a beautiful Young Lady.” Neither Dorothy nor Mary Wordsworth were physically “beautiful,” according to our highest standards; although the poet addressed the latter as “a Phantom of delight,” and as “a lovely apparition.” It is quite true that it was Mary Wordsworth’s old age that was “serene and bright,” while Dorothy’s was the very reverse; but the poet’s anticipation of the future was written when his sister was young, and was by far the stronger of the two.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO A YOUNG LADY, WHO HAD BEEN REPROACHED FOR TAKING LONG WALKS IN THE COUNTRY [A]

Composed 1802.—Published 1807

[Composed at the same time and on the same view as “I met Louisa in the shade:” indeed they were designed to make one piece.—I.F.]

From 1815 to 1832 this was classed among the “Poems proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection.” In 1836 it was transferred to the group of “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

Dear Child of Nature, let them rail!
—There is a nest in a green dale,
A harbour and a hold;
Where thou, a Wife and Friend, shalt see
Thy own heart-stirring days, [1] and be 5
A light to young and old.

There, healthy as a shepherd boy,
And treading among flowers of joy
Which at no season fade, [2]
Thou, while thy babes around thee cling, 10
Shalt show us how divine a thing
A Woman may be made.

Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
Nor leave thee, when grey hairs are nigh
A melancholy slave; 15
But an old age serene [3] and bright,

And lovely as a Lapland night,
Shall lead thee to thy grave.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

Thy own delightful days, ... 1802.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

As if thy heritage were joy,
And pleasure were thy trade. 1802.

And treading among flowers of joy,
That at no season fade, 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

... alive ... 1802.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: For the original title of this poem,—as published in 'The Morning Post and Gazetteer',—see the note to the previous poem. When first published it was unsigned. —Ed.]

Page 238

See the editorial note to the preceding poem.—Ed.

* * * * *

1803

The poems associated with the year 1803 consist mainly of the “Memorials of a Tour in Scotland,” which Wordsworth and his sister took—along with Coleridge—in the autumn of that year, although many of these were not written till some time after the Tour was finished. ‘The Green Linnet’ and ‘Yew-trees’ were written in 1803, and some sonnets were composed in the month of October; but, on the whole, 1803 was not a fruitful year in Wordsworth’s life, as regards his lyrics and smaller poems. Doubtless both ‘The Prelude’ and ‘The Excursion’ were revised in 1803.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE GREEN LINNET

Composed 1803.—Published 1807

[Composed in the orchard, Town-end, Grasmere, where the bird was often seen as here described.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Beneath these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
  Of spring’s unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet 5
To sit upon my orchard-seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
  My last year’s friends together. [1]

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest: 10
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
  In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May; 15
  And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
  Art sole in thy employment: 20
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair;
  Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Amid [2] yon tuft of hazel trees, 25
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstacies,
  Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings 30
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
  That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight he oft deceives,
A Brother of the dancing leaves;
Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves 35
  Pours forth his song in gushes; [3]
As if by that exulting strain
He mocked and treated with disdain
The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
  While fluttering in the bushes. [4] 40

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

Page 239

[Variant 1:

1827.

The May is come again:—how sweet
To sit upon my Orchard-seat!
And Birds and Flowers once more to greet,
My last year's Friends together:
My thoughts they all by turns employ;
A whispering Leaf is now my joy,
And then a Bird will be the toy
That doth my fancy tether. 1807.

And Flowers and Birds once more to greet, 1815.

The text of 1815 is otherwise identical with that of 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

Upon ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A Brother of the Leaves he seems;
When in a moment forth he teems
His little song in gushes: 1807.

My sight he dazzles, half deceives,
A Bird so like the dancing Leaves;
Then flits, and from the Cottage eaves
Pours forth his song in gushes; 1827.

My dazzled sight the Bird deceives,
A Brother of the dancing Leaves; 1832.

The Bird my dazzled sight deceives, 1840.

The Bird my dazzling sight deceives C.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

As if it pleas'd him to disdain
And mock the Form which he did feign,
While he was dancing with the train
Of Leaves among the bushes. 1807.

The voiceless Form he chose to feign, 1820.]

Of all Wordsworth's poems this is the one most distinctively associated with the Orchard, at Town-end, Grasmere. Dorothy Wordsworth writes in her Journal under date May 28th, 1802:

"We sat in the orchard. The young bull-finches in their pretty coloured raiment, bustle about among the blossoms, and poise themselves like wire-dancers or tumblers, shaking the twigs and dashing off the blossoms."

Ed.

* * * * *

YEW-TREES

Composed 1803.—Published 1815

[Written at Grasmere. These Yew-trees are still standing, but the spread of that at Lorton is much diminished by mutilation. I will here mention that a little way up the hill, on the road leading from Rosthwaite to Stonethwaite (in Borrowdale) lay the trunk of a Yew-tree, which appeared as you approached, so vast was its diameter, like the entrance of a cave, and not a small one. Calculating upon what I have observed of the slow growth of this tree in rocky situations, and of its durability, I have often thought that the one I am describing must have been as old as the Christian era. The Tree lay in the line of a fence. Great masses of its ruins were strewn about, and some had been rolled down the hillside and lay near the road at the bottom. As you approached the tree, you were struck with the number of shrubs and young plants, ashes, *etc*., which had found

Page 240

a bed upon the decayed trunk and grew to no inconsiderable height, forming, as it were, a part of the hedgerow. In no part of England, or of Europe, have I ever seen a yew-tree at all approaching this in magnitude, as it must have stood. By the bye, Hutton, the old guide, of Keswick, had been so impressed with the remains of this tree, that he used gravely to tell strangers that there could be no doubt of its having been in existence before the flood.—I.F.]

One of the "Poems of the Imagination."—Ed.

There is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
Which to this day stands single, in the midst
Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore:
Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched 5
To Scotland's heaths; or those that crossed the sea
And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.
Of vast circumference and gloom profound
This solitary Tree! a living thing 10
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed. But worthier still of note
Are those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove; 15
Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwisted fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved;
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane;—a pillared shade, 20
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes 25
May meet at noontide; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone, 30
United worship; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

The text of this poem was never altered. The Lorton Yew-tree—which, in 1803, was “of vast circumference,” the “pride of Lorton Vale,” and described as:

’a living thing
Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed—’

does not now verify its poet’s prediction of the future. Mr. Wilson Robinson of Whinfell Hall, Cockermouth, wrote to me of it in May 1880:

Page 241

“The tree in outline expanded towards the root considerably: then, at about two feet from the ground, the trunk began to separate into huge limbs, spreading in all directions. I once measured this trunk at its least circumference, and found it 23 feet 10 inches. For the last 50 or 60 years the branches have been gradually dying on the S. E. side, and about 25 years ago a strong S. E. gale, coming with accumulated force down Hope Gill, and—owing to the tree being so open on that side—taking it laterally at a disadvantage, wrenched off one of the great side branches down to the ground, carrying away nearly a third of the tree. This event led to farther peril; for, the second portion having been sold to a cabinetmaker at Whitehaven for L15, this gave the impression that the wood was very valuable (owing to the celebrity of the tree); and a local woodmonger bought the remainder. Two men worked half a day to grub it up; but a Cockermouth medical gentleman, hearing what was going on, made representations to the owner, and it ended in the woodmen sparing the remainder of the tree, which was not much the worse for what had been done. Many large dead branches have also been cut off, and now we have to regret that the ’pride of Lorton Vale,’ shorn of its ancient dignity, is but a ruin, much more venerable than picturesque.”

The “fraternal Four of Borrowdale” are certainly “worthier still of note.” The “trunk” described in the Fenwick note, as on the road between Rosthwaite and Stonethwaite, has disappeared long ago; but the “solemn and capacious grove” existed till 1883 in its integrity. The description in the poem is realistic throughout, while the visible scene suggests

“an ideal grove, in which the ghostly masters of mankind meet, and sleep, and offer worship to the Destiny that abides above them, while the mountain flood, as if from another world, makes music to which they dimly listen.”

(Stopford A. Brooke, in ‘Theology in the English Poets’, p. 259.) With the first part of the poem Wordsworth’s ‘Sonnet composed at——Castle’ during the Scotch Tour of 1803 may be compared (p. 410). For a critical estimate of the poem see ‘Modern Painters’, part III. sec. II, chap. iv. Ruskin alludes to “the real and high action of the imagination in Wordsworth’s ‘Yew-trees’ (perhaps the most vigorous and solemn bit of forest landscape ever painted). It is too long to quote, but the reader should refer to it: let him note especially, if painter, that pure touch of colour, ‘by sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged.’” See also Coleridge’s criticism in ‘Biographia Literaria’, vol. ii. p. 177, edition 1847, and his daughter Sara’s comment on her father’s note. There can be little doubt that, as Professor Dowden has suggested, the lines 23 to 28 were suggested to Wordsworth by Virgil’s lines in the Sixth Book of the ‘AEneid’, 273-284—

Page 242

’Vestibulum ante ipsum primisque in faucibus Orci
Luctus et ultrices posuere cubilia Curae;
Pallentesque habitant Morbi, tristisque Senectus,
Et Metus, et malesuada Fames, ac turpis Egestas,
Terribiles visu formae, Letumque, Labosque;
Tum consanguineus Leti Sopor, et mala mentis
Gaudia, mortiferumque adverso in limine Bellum,
Ferreique Eumenidum thalami, et Discordia demens,
Vipereum crinem vittis innexa cruentis.
In medio ramos annosaque bracchia pandit
Ulmus opaca, ingens, quam sedem Somnia volgo
Vana tenere ferunt, foliisque sub omnibus haerent.’

“The ‘Four Yew Trees,’ and the mysterious company which you have assembled there, ‘Death the Skeleton and Time the Shadow.’ It is a sight not for every youthful poet to dream of; it is one of the last results he must have gone thinking for years for.”

(Charles Lamb to Wordsworth, 1815.)

In Crabb Robinson’s ‘Diary’, a reference to the Yew-trees of Lorton and Borrowdale will be found under date Sept. 16 and 20, 1816.

“The pride of Lorton Vale” is now a ruin, and has lost all its ancient majesty: but, until the close of 1883, the “fraternal four” of Borrowdale were still to be seen “in grand assemblage.” Every one who has felt the power of Wordsworth’s poetry,—and especially those who had visited the Seathwaite valley, and read the ‘Yew-Trees’ under the shade of that once “solemn and capacious grove” before 1884,—must have felt as if they had lost a personal friend, when they heard that the “grove” was gone. The great gale of December 11, 1883, smote it fiercely, uprooting one of the trees, and blowing the others to ribbands. The following is Mr. Rawnsley’s account of the disaster: ’Last week the gale that ravaged England did the Lake country much harm. We could spare many of the larch plantations, and could hear (with a sigh) of the fall of the giant Scotch firs opposite the little Scafell Inn at Rosthwaite, and that Watendlath had lost its pines; but who could spare those ancient Yews, the great“... fraternal Four of Borrowdale, Joined in one solemn and capacious grove; Huge trunks! and each particular trunk a growth Of intertwisted fibres serpentine Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved.”

’For beneath their pillared shade since Wordsworth wrote his poem,
that Yew-tree grove has suggested to many a wanderer up Borrowdale,
and visitant to the Natural Temple,

“an ideal grove in which the ghostly masters of mankind meet, and sleep, and offer worship to the Destiny that abides above them, while the mountain flood, as if from another world, makes music to which they dimly listen.”

’These Yew-trees, seemingly

“Produced too slowly ever to decay;
Of form and aspect too magnificent
To be destroyed,”

Page 243

’have been ruthlessly overthrown. One has been uprooted bodily; all the leaders and branches of the others have been wrenched from the main trunk; and the three still standing are bare poles and broken wreckage. Until one visits the spot one can have no conception of the wholesale destruction that the hurricane has wrought; until he looks on the huge rosy-hearted branches he cannot guess the tremendous force with which the tornado had fallen upon that “sable roof of boughs.”’For tornado or whirlwind it must needs have been. The Yews grew under the eastern flank of the hill called Base Brown. The gale raged from the westward. One could hardly believe it possible that the trees could have been touched by it; for the barrier hill on which they grew,—and under whose shelter they have seen centuries of storm,—goes straight upwards, betwixt them and the west. It was only realizable when, standing amid the wreckage, and looking across the valley, it was seen that a larch plantation had been entirely levelled, and evidently by a wind that was coming from the east, and directly toward the Yew-trees. On enquiring at Seathwaite Farm, one found that all the slates blown from the roof of that building on the west side, had been whirled up clean over the roof: and we can only surmise that the winds rushing from the west and north-west, and meeting the bastions of Glaramara and the Sty-head slopes, were whirled round in the ‘cul-de-sac’ of the valley, and moved with churning motion back from east to west over the Seathwaite Farm, and so in straight line across the beck, and up the slope to the Yew-tree cluster. With what a wrenching, and with what violence, these trees were in a moment shattered, only those can guess who now witness the ruins of the pillared shade, upon the “grassless floor of red-brown hue."’”

Ed.

* * * * *

“WHO FANCIED WHAT A PRETTY SIGHT”

Composed 1803.—Published 1807

In the edition of 1807 this poem was No. VIII. of the series entitled “Moods of my own Mind.” It was afterwards included among the “Poems of the Fancy,” and in a MS. copy it was named “The Coronet of Snowdrops.”—Ed.

Who fancied what a pretty sight
This Rock would be if edged around
With living snow-drops? circlet bright!
How glorious to this orchard-ground!
Who loved the little Rock, and set 5
Upon its head this coronet?

Was it the humour of a child?
Or rather of some gentle [1] maid,
Whose brows, the day that she was styled
The shepherd-queen, were thus arrayed? 10
Of man mature, or matron sage?
Or old man toying with his age?

I asked—'twas whispered; The device
To each and [2] all might well belong:
It is the Spirit of Paradise 15
That prompts such work, a Spirit strong,
That gives to all the self-same bent
Where life is wise and innocent.

Page 244

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... love-sick ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

... or ... 1807.]

* * * * *

“IT IS NO SPIRIT WHO FROM HEAVEN HATH FLOWN”

Composed 1803.—Published 1807

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. I remember the instant my sister S. H., called me to the window of our Cottage, saying, “Look how beautiful is yon star! It has the sky all to itself.” I composed the verses immediately.—I.F.]

This was No. XIII. of “Moods of my own Mind,” in the edition of 1807. It was afterwards included among the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

It is no Spirit who from heaven hath flown,
And is descending on his embassy;
Nor Traveller gone from earth the heavens to espy!
’Tis Hesperus—there he stands with glittering crown,
First admonition that the sun is down! 5
For yet it is broad day-light: clouds pass by;
A few are near him still—and now the sky,
He hath it to himself—’tis all his own.
O most ambitious Star! an inquest wrought
Within me when I recognised thy light; 10
A moment I was startled at the sight:
And, while I gazed, there came to me a thought
That I might step beyond my natural race
As thou seem’st now to do; might one day trace [1]

Some ground not mine; and, strong her strength above, 15
My Soul, an Apparition in the place,
Tread there with steps that no one shall reprove! [A]

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: 1807.

O most ambitious Star! an inquest wrought
Within me when I recognised thy light;
A moment I was startled at the sight:
And, while I gazed, there came to me a thought
That even I beyond my natural race
Might step as thou dost now: might one day trace 1815.

O most ambitious Star! thy Presence brought
A startling recollection to my mind
Of the distinguished few among mankind,
Who dare to step beyond their natural race,
As thou seem'st now to do:—nor was a thought
Denied—that even I might one day trace 1820.

The text of 1836 returns to that of 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Professor Dowden directs attention to the relation between these lines and the poem beginning "If thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven."—Ed.]

* * * * *

MEMORIALS OF A TOUR IN SCOTLAND

Page 245

1803

These poems were first collected, under the above title, in the edition of 1827. In 1807, nine of them—viz. 'Rob Roy's Grave', 'The Solitary Reaper', 'Stepping Westward', 'Glen Almain, or, The Narrow Glen', 'The Matron of Jedborough and her Husband', 'To a Highland Girl', 'Sonnet', 'To the Sons of Burns after visiting the Grave of their Father', 'Yarrow Unvisited',—were printed under the title, "Poems written during a Tour in Scotland." This group begins the second volume of the edition of that year. But in 1815 and 1820—when Wordsworth began to arrange his poems in groups—they were distributed with the rest of the series in the several artificial sections. Although some were composed after the Tour was finished—and the order in which Wordsworth placed them is not the order of the Scotch Tour itself—it is advisable to keep to his own method of arrangement in dealing with this particular group, for the same reason that we retain it in such a series as the Duddon Sonnets.—Ed.

* * * * *

DEPARTURE FROM THE VALE OF GRASMERE. AUGUST, 1803 [A]

Composed 1811.—Published 1827

[Mr. Coleridge, my sister, and myself 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, as is recorded in my Sister's Journal, soon after we left Loch Lomond. The verses that stand foremost among these Memorials were not actually written for the occasion, but transplanted from my 'Epistle to Sir George Beaumont'.—I. F.]

The gentlest Shade that walked Elysian plains
Might sometimes covet dissoluble chains;
Even for the tenants of the zone that lies
Beyond the stars, celestial Paradise,
Methinks 'twould heighten joy, to overleap 5
At will the crystal battlements, and peep
Into some other region, though less fair,
To see how things are made and managed there.
Change for the worse might please, incursion bold
Into the tracts of darkness and of cold; 10
O'er Limbo lake with aery flight to steer,
And on the verge of Chaos hang in fear.
Such animation often do I find,
Power in my breast, wings growing in my mind,

Then, when some rock or hill is overpast, 15
Perchance without one look behind me cast,
Some barrier with which Nature, from the birth
Of things, has fenced this fairest spot on earth.
O pleasant transit, Grasmere! to resign
Such happy fields, abodes so calm as thine; 20
Not like an outcast with himself at strife;
The slave of business, time, or care for life,
But moved by choice; or, if constrained in part,
Yet still with Nature's freedom at the heart;—
To cull contentment upon wildest shores,

Page 246

25
And luxuries extract from bleakest moors;
With prompt embrace all beauty to enfold,
And having rights in all that we behold.
—Then why these lingering steps?—A bright adieu,
For a brief absence, proves that love is true; 30
Ne'er can the way be irksome or forlorn
That winds into itself for sweet return.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This first poem referring to the Scottish Tour of 1803, was not actually written till 1811. It originally formed the opening paragraph of the 'Epistle to Sir George Beaumont'. Wordsworth himself dated it 1804. It is every way desirable that it should introduce the series of poems referring to the Tour of 1803.—Ed.]

The following is from Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland':

"William and I parted from Mary on Sunday afternoon, August 14th, 1803; and William, Coleridge, and I left Keswick on Monday morning, the 15th."

Ed.

* * * * *

AT THE GRAVE OF BURNS, 1803. SEVEN YEARS AFTER HIS DEATH

Composed 1803. [A]—Published 1842

[For illustration, see my Sister's Journal. It may be proper to add that the second of these pieces, though *felt* at the time, was not composed till many years after.—I. F.]

I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold,
At thought of what I now behold:
As vapours breathed from dungeons cold
Strike pleasure dead,

So sadness comes from out [1] the mould 5
Where Burns is laid.

And have I then thy bones so near,
And thou forbidden to appear?
As if it were thyself that's here
I shrink with pain; 10
And both my wishes and my fear
Alike are vain.
[2]
Off weight—nor press on weight!—away
Dark thoughts!—they came, but not to stay;
With chastened feelings would I pay 15
The tribute due
To him, and aught that hides his clay
From mortal view.

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius "glinted" forth, [B] 20
Rose like a star that touching earth,
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow, 25
The struggling heart, where be they now?—
Full soon the Aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave. 30

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth [3]
How Verse may build a princely throne 35
On humble truth.

Page 247

Alas! where'er the current tends,
Regret pursues and with it blends,—
Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
By Skiddaw seen,—40
Neighbours we were, and loving friends
We might have been;

True friends though diversely inclined;
But heart with heart and mind with mind,
Where the main fibres are entwined, 45
Through Nature's skill,
May even by contraries be joined
More closely still.

The tear will start, and let it flow;
Thou "poor Inhabitant below," [C] 50
At this dread moment—even so—
Might we together
Have sate and talked where gowans blow,
Or on wild heather.

What treasures would have then been placed 55
Within my reach; of knowledge graced
By fancy what a rich repast!
But why go on?—
Oh! spare to sweep, thou mournful blast,
His grave grass-grown. 60

There, too, a Son, his joy and pride,
(Not three weeks past the Stripling died,)
Lies gathered to his Father's side,
Soul-moving sight!
Yet one to which is not denied 65
Some sad delight.

For *he* is safe, a quiet bed
Hath early found among the dead,
Harboured where none can be misled,
Wronged, or distrest; 70
And surely here it may be said
That such are blest.

And oh for Thee, by pitying grace
Checked oft-times in a devious race,

May He who halloweth the place 75
    Where Man is laid
Receive thy Spirit in the embrace
    For which it prayed!

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell I heard, or seemed to hear, 80
Music that sorrow comes not near,
    A ritual hymn,
Chanted in love that casts out fear
    By Seraphim. [D]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1842.

... out of ... MS.]

[Variant 2:

But wherefore tremble? ’tis no place
Of pain and sorrow, but of grace,
Of shelter, and of silent peace,
    And “friendly aid”;
Grasped is he now in that embrace
    For which he prayed. [a] MS.]

[Variant 3:

1845.

Well might I mourn that He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
When, breaking forth as nature’s own,
    It showed my youth 1842.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: It is dated thus by Wordsworth himself on three occasions, and the year of its composition is also indicated in the title of the poem.—Ed.]

Page 248

[Footnote B: Compare Burns's poem 'To a Mountain Daisy', l. 15.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: See Burns's 'A Bard's Epitaph', l. 19.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Compare 'The Tomb of Burns', by William Watson, 1895.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footnote a: See in his poem the 'Ode to Ruin'.—Ed.]

The following is an extract from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal of the Tour in Scotland:

"Thursday, August 18th.—Went to the churchyard where Burns is buried. A bookseller accompanied us. He showed us the outside of Burns's house, where he had lived the last three years of his life, and where he died. It has a mean appearance, and is in a bye situation, whitewashed.... Went on to visit his grave. He lies at a corner of the churchyard, and his second son, Francis Wallace, beside him. There is no stone to mark the spot; but a hundred guineas have been collected, to be expended on some sort of monument.'There,' said the bookseller, pointing to a pompous monument, 'there lies Mr. Such-a-one. I have forgotten his name. A remarkably clever man; he was an attorney, and hardly ever lost a cause he undertook. Burns made many a lampoon upon him, and there they rest, as you see.'

We looked at the grave with melancholy and painful reflections,
repeating to each other his own verses.

'Is there a man whose judgment clear,
Can others teach the way to steer,
Yet runs himself life's mad career,
        Wild as the wave?
Here let him pause, and through a tear
        Survey this grave.

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

"I cannot take leave of the country which we passed through to-day without mentioning that we saw the Cumberland Mountains, within half-a-mile of Ellisland, Burns's house,

the last view we had of them. Drayton has prettily described the connection which this neighbourhood has with ours when he makes Skiddaw say:

> ’Seurfell [E] from the sky,
> That Anadale [F] doth crown, with a most amorous eye,
> Salutes me every day, or at my pride looks grim,
> Oft threatening me with clouds, as I oft threatening him!’

“These lines recurred to William’s memory, and we talked of Burns, and of the prospect he must have had, perhaps from his own door, of Skiddaw and his companions, including ourselves in the fancy, that we *might* have been personally known to each other, and he have looked upon those objects with more pleasure for our sakes.”

Ed.

Page 249

[Footnote E: Criffel.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Annandale.—Ed.]

* * * * *

THOUGHTS SUGGESTED THE DAY FOLLOWING, ON THE BANKS OF NITH, NEAR THE POET'S RESIDENCE

Composed 1803. [A]—Published 1842

Too frail to keep the lofty vow
That must have followed when his brow
Was wreathed—"The Vision" [B] tells us how—
    With holly spray,
He faultered, drifted to and fro, 5
    And passed away.

Well might such thoughts, dear Sister, throng
Our minds when, lingering all too long,
Over the grave of Burns we hung
    In social grief—10
Indulged as if it were a wrong
    To seek relief.

But, leaving each unquiet theme
Where gentlest judgments may misdeem,
And prompt to welcome every gleam 15
    Of good and fair,
Let us beside this limpid Stream
    Breathe hopeful air.

Enough of sorrow, wreck, and blight;
Think rather of those moments bright 20
When to the consciousness of right
    His course was true,
When Wisdom prospered in his sight
    And virtue grew.

Yes, freely let our hearts expand, 25
Freely as in youth's season bland,
When side by side, his Book in hand,
    We wont to stray,

Our pleasure varying at command
    Of each sweet Lay. 30

How oft inspired must he have trod
These pathways, yon far-stretching road!
There lurks his home; in that Abode,
    With mirth elate,
Or in his nobly-pensive mood, 35
    The Rustic sate.

Proud thoughts that Image overawes,
Before it humbly let us pause,
And ask of Nature, from what cause
  And by what rules 40
She trained her Burns to win applause
  That shames the Schools.

Through busiest street and loneliest glen
Are felt the flashes of his pen;
He rules mid winter snows, and when 45
  Bees fill their hives;
Deep in the general heart of men
  His power survives.

What need of fields in some far clime
Where Heroes, Sages, Bards sublime, 50
And all that fetched the flowing rhyme
    From genuine springs,
Shall dwell together till old Time
    Folds up his wings?

Sweet Mercy! to the gates of Heaven 55
This Minstrel lead, his sins forgiven;
The rueful conflict, the heart riven
    With vain endeavour,
And memory of Earth's bitter leaven,
    Effaced for ever. 60

Page 250

But why to Him confine the prayer,
When kindred thoughts and yearnings bear
On the frail heart the purest share
With all that live?—
The best of what we do and are, 65
Just God, forgive!

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Though “suggested” on “the day following,” these stanzas were not written then; but “many years after.” They must, however, find a place in the “Memorials” of this 1803 Tour in Scotland.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Burns’s poem, thus named.—Ed.]

See the note to the previous poem. The line

‘These pathways, yon far-stretching road!’

refers probably to the road to Brownhill, past Ellisland farmhouse where Burns lived. “The day following” would be Aug. 19th, 1803. The extract which follows from the Journal is a further illustration of the poem. August 8th.

“... Travelled through the vale of Nith, here little like a vale, it is so broad, with irregular hills rising up on each side, in outline resembling the old-fashioned valances of a bed. There is a great deal of arable land; the corn ripe; trees here and there—plantations, clumps, coppices, a newness in everything. So much of the gorse and broom rooted out that you wonder why it is not all gone, and yet there seems to be almost as much gorse and broom as corn; and they grow one among another you know not how. Crossed the Nith; the vale becomes narrow, and very pleasant; cornfields, green hills, clay cottages; the river’s bed rocky, with woody banks. Left the Nith about a mile and a half, and reached Brownhill, a lonely inn, where we slept. The view from the windows was pleasing, though some travellers might have been disposed to quarrel with it for its general nakedness; yet there was abundance of corn. It is an open country—open, yet all over hills. At a little distance were many cottages among trees, that looked very pretty. Brownhill is about seven or eight miles from Ellisland. I fancied to myself, while I was sitting in the parlour, that Burns might have caroused there, for most likely his rounds extended so far, and this thought gave a melancholy interest to the smoky walls....”

On Dec. 23, 1839, Wordsworth wrote to Professor Henry Reed, Philadelphia:

“The other day I chanced to be looking over a MS. poem belonging to the year 1803, though not actually composed till many years afterwards. It was suggested by visiting the neighbourhood of Dumfries, in which Burns had resided, and where he died: it concluded thus:

‘Sweet Mercy! to the gates of Heaven, *etc*.’

I instantly added, the other day,

‘But why to Him confine the prayer, *etc*.’

Page 251

The more I reflect upon this, the more I feel justified in attaching comparatively small importance to any literary monument that I may be enabled to leave behind. It is well however, I am convinced, that men think otherwise in the earlier part of their lives....”

It may be mentioned that in his note to the “Poems, chiefly of Early and Late Years,” (1842), Wordsworth does not quote from the text of his sister’s Journal,—which was first published in 1875,—but from some other copy of it.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE SONS OF BURNS, AFTER VISITING THE GRAVE OF THEIR FATHER [A]

Composed before 1807 [B]—Published 1807

The Poet’s grave is in a corner of the church-yard. We looked at it with melancholy and painful reflections, repeating to each other his own verses:

‘Is there a man whose judgment clear, *etc*.’

’Extract from the Journal of my Fellow-Traveller.’—W. W. 1827. [C]

One of the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection” in the 1815 and 1820 editions.—Ed.

’Mid crowded obelisks and urns
I sought the untimely grave of Burns;
Sons of the Bard, my heart still mourns
With sorrow true;
And more would grieve, but that it turns 5
Trembling to you!

Through twilight shades of good and ill
Ye now are panting up life’s hill, [1]
And more than common strength and skill
Must ye display; 10
If ye would give the better will
Its lawful sway.

Hath Nature strung your nerves to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if the Poet’s wit ye share, 15
Like him can speed

The social hour—of tenfold care [2]
    There will be need;

For honest men delight will take
To spare your failings for his sake, 20
Will flatter you,—and fool and rake [3]
    Your steps pursue;
And of your Father's name will make
    A snare for you.

Far from their noisy haunts retire, 25
And add your voices to the quire
That sanctify the cottage fire
    With service meet;
There seek the genius of your Sire,
    His spirit greet; 30

Or where,'mid "lonely heights and hows," [D]
He paid to Nature tuneful vows;
Or wiped his honourable brows
    Bedewed with toil,
While reapers strove, or busy ploughs 35
    Upturned the soil;

His judgment with benignant ray
Shall guide, his fancy cheer, your way;
But ne'er to a seductive lay
    Let faith be given; 40
Nor deem that "light which leads astray,
    Is light from Heaven." [E]

Page 252

Let no mean hope your souls enslave;
Be independent, generous, brave;
Your Father such example gave, 45
    And such revere;
But be admonished by his grave,
    And think, and fear! [F]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

Ye now are panting up life's hill!
'Tis twilight time of good and ill, 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1840.

Strong bodied if ye be to bear
Intemperance with less harm, beware!
But if your Father's wit ye share,
    Then, then indeed,
Ye Sons of Burns! for watchful care 1807.

... for tenfold care 1827.

The text of 1827 is otherwise identical with that of 1840.]

[Variant 3:

1840.

For honest men delight will take
To shew you favor for his sake,
Will flatter you; and Fool and Rake 1807.

For their beloved Poet's sake,
Even honest men delight will take
To flatter you; ... 1820.

Even honest Men delight will take
To spare your failings for his sake,
Will flatter you,—... 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the edition of 1807, this poem has the title 'Address to the Sons of Burns after visiting their Father's Grave (August 14th, 1803)'. Slight changes were made in the title afterwards.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Dorothy Wordsworth wrote, in her 'Recollections' of this tour, under date August 18th, 1803,

"William wrote long afterwards the following Address to the sons of the ill-fated poet."

Ed.]

[Footnote C: This explanatory note appears in every edition of the Poems from 1827 to 1850. It is taken (but not literally) from the 'Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland' as published in 1875.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: From Burns's 'Epistle to James Smith', l. 53.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: From Burns's poem, 'The Vision', Duan Second.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: In the edition of 1807, the poem began with what is now the second stanza, and consisted of four stanzas only, *viz*. Nos. ii., iii., iv., and viii. Stanzas i., v., vi., and vii. were added in 1827. Stanza iii. was omitted in 1820, but restored in 1827. —Ed.]

In Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Recollections' of this Tour we find, under date August 18, 1803:

Page 253

“The grave of Burns’s Son, which we had just seen by the side of his Father, and some stories heard at Dumfries respecting the dangers his surviving children were exposed to, filled us with melancholy concern, which had a kind of connection with ourselves.”“The body of Burns was not allowed to remain long in this place. To suit the plan of a rather showy mausoleum his remains were removed into a more commodious spot of the same kirkyard on the 5th July 1815.”—(Allan Cunningham.)

‘Ellen Irwin; or, the Braes of Kirtle’, comes next in this series of “Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803.” It has already been printed, however, (p. 124), in its proper chronological place, among the poems belonging to the year 1800.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO A HIGHLAND GIRL

(AT INVERSNEYDE, UPON LOCH LOMOND)

Composed 1803.—Published 1807

Classed in 1815 and 1820 as one of the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

[This delightful creature and her demeanour are particularly described in my Sister’s Journal. The sort of prophecy with which the verses conclude has, through God’s goodness, been realized; and now, approaching the close of my 73rd year, I have a most vivid remembrance of her and the beautiful objects with which she was surrounded. She is alluded to in the poem of ‘The Three Cottage Girls’ among my Continental Memorials. In illustration of this class of poems I have scarcely anything to say beyond what is anticipated in my Sister’s faithful and admirable Journal.—I. F.]

Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower
Of beauty is thy earthly dower!
Twice seven consenting years have shed
Their utmost bounty on thy head:
And these grey rocks; that [1] household lawn; 5
Those trees, [A] a veil just half withdrawn;
This fall of water that doth make
A murmur near the silent lake;
This little bay; a quiet road
That holds in shelter thy Abode—10
In truth together do ye seem [2]
Like something fashioned in a dream;
Such Forms as from their covert peep

When earthly cares are laid asleep!
But, O fair Creature! in the light 15
Of common day, so heavenly bright, [3]
I bless Thee, Vision [4] as thou art,
I bless thee with a human heart;
God shield thee to thy latest years!
Thee, neither know I, [5] nor thy peers; 20
And yet my eyes are filled with tears.

With earnest feeling I shall pray
For thee when I am far away:
For never saw I mien, or face,
In which more plainly I could trace 25
Benignity and home-bred sense
Ripening in perfect innocence.
Here scattered, like a random seed,

Page 254

Remote from men, Thou dost not need
The embarrassed look of shy distress, 30
And maidenly shamefacedness:
Thou wear'st upon thy forehead clear
The freedom of a Mountaineer:
A face with gladness overspread!
Soft smiles, [6] by human kindness bred! 35
And seemliness complete, that sways
Thy courtesies, about thee plays;
With no restraint, but such as springs
From quick and eager visitings
Of thoughts that lie beyond the reach 40
Of thy few words of English speech:
A bondage sweetly brooked, a strife
That gives thy gestures grace and life!
So have I, not unmoved in mind,
Seen birds of tempest-loving kind—45
Thus beating up against the wind.

What hand but would a garland cull
For thee who art so beautiful?
O happy pleasure! here to dwell
Beside thee in some heathy dell; 50
Adopt your homely ways and dress,
A Shepherd, thou a Shepherdess!
But I could frame a wish for thee
More like a grave reality:
Thou art to me but as a wave 55
Of the wild sea; and I would have
Some claim upon thee, if I could,
Though but of common neighbourhood.
What joy to hear thee, and to see!
Thy elder Brother I would be, 60
Thy Father—anything to thee! [B]

Now thanks to Heaven! that of its grace
Hath led me to this lonely place.
Joy have I had; and going hence
I bear away my recompence. 65
In spots like these it is we prize

Our Memory, feel that she hath eyes:
Then, why should I be loth to stir?
I feel this place was made for her;
To give new pleasure like the past, 70
Continued long as life shall last.
Nor am I loth, though pleased at heart,
Sweet Highland Girl! from thee to part;
For I, methinks, till I grow old,
As fair before me shall behold, 75
As I do now, the cabin small,
The lake, the bay, the waterfall;
And Thee, the Spirit of them all!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... this ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

In truth together ye do seem 1807.

In truth, unfolding thus, ye seem 1837.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1827.]

[Variant 3: The two preceding lines were added in 1845.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

Yet, dream and vision ... 1807.

... or vision ... 1837.]

[Variant 5:

1845.

Page 255

I neither know thee ... 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

Sweet looks, ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A:

“The distribution of ‘these,’ ‘that,’ and ‘those’ in these two lines, was attained in 1845, after various changes. "

(Edward Dowden.)]

[Footnote B: Compare Virgil’s ‘Eclogues’, x. 35:

‘Atque utinam ex vobis unus, *etc*.’

Ed.]

In her ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’, 1803, Dorothy Wordsworth writes:

“Sunday, August 28th.—... After long waiting, the girls, who had been on the look-out, informed us that the boat was coming. I went to the waterside, and saw a cluster of people on the opposite shore; but, being yet at a distance, they looked more like soldiers surrounding a carriage than a group of men and women; red and green were the distinguishable colours. We hastened to get ourselves ready as soon as we saw the party approach, but had longer to wait than we expected, the lake being wider than it appears to be. As they drew near we could distinguish men in tartan plaids, women in scarlet cloaks, and green umbrellas by the half-dozen. The landing was as pretty a sight as ever I saw. The bay, which had been so quiet two days before, was all in motion with small waves, while the swollen waterfall roared in our ears. The boat came steadily up, being pressed almost to the water’s edge by the weight of its cargo; perhaps twenty people landed, one after another. It did not rain much, but the women held up their umbrellas; they were dressed in all the colours of the rainbow, and with their scarlet cardinals, the tartan plaids of the men, and Scotch bonnets, made a gay appearance. There was a joyous bustle surrounding the boat, which even imparted something of the same character to the waterfall in its tumult, and the restless grey waves; the young men laughed and shouted, the lasses laughed, and the elder folks

seemed to be in a bustle to be away. I remember well with what haste the mistress of the house where we were ran up to seek after her child, and seeing us, how anxiously and kindly she inquired how we had fared, if we had had a good fire, had been well waited upon, *etc*. All this in three minutes—for the boatman had another party to bring from the other side, and hurried us off.“The hospitality we had met with at the two cottages and Mr. Macfarlane’s gave us very favourable impressions on this our first entrance into the Highlands, and at this day the innocent merriment of the girls, with their kindness to us, and the beautiful face and figure of the elder, come to my mind whenever I think of the ferry-house and waterfall of Loch Lomond, and I never think of the two girls but the whole image of that romantic spot is before me, a living image as it will be to my dying day. The following poem was written by William not long after our return from Scotland.”

Compare the poem called ‘The Three Cottage Girls’, in the “Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820,” published in 1822.—Ed.

Page 256

* * * * *

GLEN-ALMAIN; OR, THE NARROW GLEN

Composed (possibly) in 1803.—Published 1807

Classed in 1815 and 1820 with the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

In this still place, remote from men,
Sleeps Ossian, in the NARROW GLEN;
In this still place, where murmurs on
But one meek streamlet, only one:
He sang of battles, and the breath 5
Of stormy war, and violent death;
And should, methinks, when all was past,
Have rightfully been laid at last
Where rocks were rudely heaped, and rent
As by a spirit turbulent; 10
Where sights were rough, and sounds were wild,
And everything unreconciled;
In some complaining, dim retreat,
For fear and melancholy meet;
But this is calm; there cannot be 15
A more entire tranquillity.

Does then the Bard sleep here indeed?
Or is it but a groundless creed?
What matters it?—I blame them not
Whose Fancy in this lonely Spot 20
Was moved; and in such [1] way expressed
Their notion of its perfect rest.
A convent, even a hermit’s cell,
Would break the silence of this Dell: [A]
It is not quiet, is not ease; 25
But something deeper far than these:
The separation that is here
Is of the grave; and of austere
Yet [2] happy feelings of the dead:
And, therefore, was it rightly said 30
That Ossian, last of all his race!
Lies buried in this lonely place.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... in this ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

And ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare the poem 'To the Lady Fleming', stanza iii. ll. 28-9.—Ed.]

The glen is Glenalmond, in Perthshire, between Crieff and Amulree, known locally as "the Sma' Glen." I am not aware that it was ever called "Glen Almain," till Wordsworth gave it that singularly un-Scottish name. [B] It must have been a warm August day, after a tract of dry weather, when he went through it, or the Almond would scarcely have been called a "small streamlet." In many seasons of the year the distinctive features of the Glen would be more appropriately indicated by the words, which the poet uses by way of contrast with his own experience of it, *viz*. a place

'Where sights are rough, and sounds are wild,
And everything unreconciled.'

Page 257

But his characterization of the place—a glen, the charm of which is little known—in the stillness of an autumn afternoon, is as true to nature as any of his interpretations of the spirit of the hills and vales of Westmoreland. As yet there is no farm-house, scarcely even a sheiling, to “break the silence of this Dell.”

The following is Dorothy Wordsworth’s account of their walk through it on Friday, September 9th, 1803:

“Entered the glen at a small hamlet at some distance from the head, and, turning aside a few steps, ascended a hillock which commanded a view to the top of it—a very sweet scene, a green valley, not very narrow, with a few scattered trees and huts, almost invisible in a misty green of afternoon light. At this hamlet we crossed a bridge, and the road led us down the glen, which had become exceedingly narrow, and so continued to the end: the hills on both sides heathy and rocky, very steep, but continuous; the rock not single or overhanging, not scooped into caverns, or sounding with torrents; there are no trees, no houses, no traces of cultivation, not one outstanding object. It is truly a solitude, the road even making it appear still more so; the bottom of the valley is mostly smooth and level, the brook not noisy: everything is simple and undisturbed, and while we passed through it the whole place was shady, cool, clear, and solemn. At the end of the long valley we ascended a hill to a great height, and reached the top, when the sun, on the point of setting, shed a soft yellow light upon every eminence. The prospect was very extensive; over hollows and plains, no towns, and few houses visible—a prospect, extensive as it was, in harmony with the secluded dell, and fixing its own peculiar character of removedness from the world, and the secure possession of the quiet of nature more deeply in our minds. The following poem was written by William on hearing of a tradition relating to it, which we did not know when we were there.”

Ed.

[Footnote B: In the Statistical Account of Scotland, however—drawn up by the parish ministers of the county, and edited by Sir John Sinclair—both the river and the glen are spelt Almon, by the Rev. Mr. Erskine, who wrote the account of Monzie Parish in Perthshire. This was in 1795. A recent authority states:

“‘Glenamon,’ in Ayrshire, and ‘Glenalmond,’ in Perthshire, are both from the corrupted spelling of the word ‘Avon,’ which derives from its being very nearly the pronunciation of the Gaelic word for ‘a river.’ These names are from ‘Gleann-abhuinn,’ that is,’the valley of the river.’”

(See the ‘Gaelic Topography of Scotland’, by James A. Robertson, Edinburgh, 1859.)—-Ed.]

* * * * *

STEPPING WESTWARD

Composed between 1803 and 1805.—Published 1807

While my Fellow-traveller and I were walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sun-set, in our road to a Hut where in the course of our Tour we had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well dressed Women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, “What, you are stepping westward?”—W. W. 1807.

Page 258

Classed in 1815 and 1820 among the “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

“*What, you are stepping westward?”—” Yea*.”
’Twould be a *wildish* [A] destiny,
If we, who thus together roam
In a strange Land, and far from home,
Were in this place the guests of Chance: 5
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?

The dewy ground was dark and cold;
Behind, all gloomy to behold; 10
And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of *heavenly* destiny:
I liked the greeting; ’twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right 15
To travel through that region bright.

The voice was soft, and she who spake
Was walking by her native lake:
The salutation had to me [1]
The very sound of courtesy: 20
Its power was felt; and while my eye
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,
The echo of the voice enwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of travelling through the world that lay 25
Before me in my endless way.

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... seemed to me

In MS. letter to Sir G. Beaumont. N. D.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Italics were first used in 1855.—Ed.]

The following is from the ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’:

“Sunday, Sept. 11th.—We have never had a more delightful walk than this evening. Ben Lomond and the three pointed-topped mountains of Loch Lomond, which we had seen from the garrison, were very majestic under the clear sky, the lake perfectly calm, the air sweet and mild. I felt that it was much more interesting to visit a place where we have been before than it can possibly be the first time, except under peculiar circumstances. The sun had been set for some time, when, being within a quarter of a mile of the ferry man’s hut, our path having led us close to the shore of the calm lake, we met two neatly-dressed women, without hats, who had probably been taking their Sunday evening’s walk. One of them said to us in a friendly, soft tone of voice, ‘What, you are stepping westward?’ I cannot describe how affecting this simple expression was in that remote place, with the western sky in front, yet glowing with the departed sun. William wrote the following poem long after, in remembrance of his feelings and mine.”

Ed.

* * * * *

THE SOLITARY REAPER

Page 259

Composed between 1803 and 1805.—Published 1807

One of the “Poems of the Imagination” in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

Behold her, single [1] in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!
Alone she cuts and binds the grain, 5
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 [2] 10
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
A voice so thrilling ne’er was heard [3]
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas [A] 15
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago: 20
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 [4] 25
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; [5]
And, as [6] I mounted up the hill, 30
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... singing ...

MS.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

So sweetly to reposing bands 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

No sweeter voice was ever heard 1807.

... sound ... MS.

Such thrilling voice was never heard 1827.]

[Variant 4:

1815.

... sung 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1820.

I listen'd till I had my fill: 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1807.

And when ... 1827.

The text of 1837 returns to that of 1807.]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare ’The Ancient Mariner’(part ii. stanza 6):

’And we did speak only to break
The silence of the sea.’

Ed.]

The following is from Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘Recollections’ of the Tour: 13th Sept. 1803.

Page 260

“As we descended, the scene became more fertile, our way being pleasantly varied—-through coppices or open fields, and passing farm-houses, though always with an intermixture of cultivated ground. 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. The following poem was suggested to William by a beautiful sentence in Thomas Wilkinson’s ‘Tour in Scotland.’”

In a note appended to the editions 1807 to 1820, Wordsworth wrote:

> “This 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*.”

The first part of Wilkinson’s ‘Tours to the British Mountains’, which was published in 1824, narrates his journey in Scotland (it took place in 1787); and the following sentence occurs in the record of his travels near Loch Lomond (p. 12),

“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.”

There can be no doubt that this is the sentence referred to both by Dorothy and William Wordsworth. Thomas Wilkinson was the friend, in whose memory Wordsworth wrote the poem ’To the Spade of a Friend, composed while we were labouring together in his pleasure-ground’. They were comparatively near neighbours, as Wilkinson lived near Yanwath on the Emont; and he had given his MS. to the Wordsworth family to read. I have received some additional information about this MS., and Wordsworth’s knowledge of it, from Mr. Wilson Robinson, who writes,

“From all the evidence, I conclude that Wilkinson’s ’Tour to the Highlands’ was shown in manuscript to his friends soon after his return;—that he was not only willing to show it, but even to allow it to be copied, though reluctant to publish it;—that there was sufficient intimacy between him and the Wordsworths to account for his showing or lending the manuscript to them, especially as they had travelled over much of the same ground, and would therefore be more interested in it; and that in fact it was never published till 1824.”

When Wordsworth was living at Coleorton during the late autumn of 1806 he wrote to Wilkinson:

“... What shall I say in apology for your Journal, which is now locked up with my manuscripts at Grasmere. As I could not go over to your part of the country myself, my intention was to have taken it with me to Kendal ... to be carefully transmitted to you;

unluckily, most unluckily, in the hurry of departure, I forgot it, together with two of my own manuscripts which were along with it; and I am afraid you will be standing in great need of it.... If you do not want it, it is in a place where it can take no injury, and I may have the pleasure of delivering it to you myself in the spring....”

Ed.

Page 261

* * * * *

ADDRESS TO KILCHURN CASTLE

UPON LOCH AWE

Begun 1803.—Published 1827

“From the top of the hill a most impressive scene opened upon our view,—a ruined Castle on an Island (for an Island the flood had made it) [A] at some distance from the shore, backed by a Cove of the Mountain Cruachan, down which came a foaming stream. The Castle occupied every foot of the Island that was visible to us, appearing to rise out of the Water,—mists rested upon the mountain side, with spots of sunshine; there was a mild desolation in the low-grounds, a solemn grandeur in the mountains, and the Castle was wild, yet stately—not dismantled of Turrets—nor the walls broken down, though obviously a ruin.”

’Extract from the Journal of my Companion.’—W. W. 1827.

[The first three lines were thrown off at the moment I first caught sight of the Ruin, from a small eminence by the wayside; the rest was added many years after.—I.F.]

Child of loud-throated War! the mountain Stream
Roars in thy hearing; but thy hour of rest
Is come, and thou art silent in thy age;
Save when the wind sweeps by and sounds are caught
Ambiguous, neither wholly thine nor theirs. 5
Oh! there is life that breathes not; Powers there are
That touch each other to the quick in modes
Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,
No soul to dream of. What art Thou, from care
Cast off—abandoned by thy rugged Sire, 10
Nor by soft Peace adopted; though, in place
And in dimension, such that thou might’st seem
But a mere footstool to yon sovereign Lord,
Huge Cruachan, (a thing that meaner hills
Might crush, nor know that it had suffered harm;) 15
Yet he, not loth, in favour of thy claims
To reverence, suspends his own; submitting
All that the God of Nature hath conferred,
All that he holds [1] in common with the stars,

To the memorial majesty of Time 20
Impersonated in thy calm decay!

Take, then, thy seat, Vicegerent unreproved!
Now, while a farewell gleam of evening light
Is fondly lingering on thy shattered front,
Do thou, in turn, be paramount; and rule 25
Over the pomp and beauty of a scene
Whose mountains, torrents, lake, and woods, unite
To pay thee homage; and with these are joined,
In willing admiration and respect,
Two Hearts, which in thy presence might be called 30
Youthful as Spring.—Shade of departed Power,
Skeleton of unfleshed humanity,
The chronicle were welcome that should call
Into the compass of distinct regard
The toils and struggles of thy infant

Page 262

years! [2] 35
  Yon foaming flood seems motionless as ice;
  Its dizzy turbulence eludes the eye,
  Frozen by distance; so, majestic Pile,
  To the perception of this Age, appear
  Thy fierce beginnings, softened and subdued 40
  And quieted in character—the strife,
  The pride, the fury uncontrollable,
  Lost on the aerial heights of the Crusades!” [B]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

  ... has ... 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1845.

  ... of thy infancy! 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The clause within brackets was added in 1837.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: The Tradition is, that the Castle was built by a Lady during the absence of her Lord in Palestine.—W. W. 1827.]

From the following passage in Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘Recollections’ of their Tour, it will be seen that the poet altered the text considerably in making his quotation in 1827: August 31, 1803.

“When we had ascended half-way up the hill, directed by the man, I took a nearer foot-path, and at the top came in view of a most impressive scene, a ruined castle on an

island almost in the middle of the last compartment of the lake, backed by a mountain cove, down which came a roaring stream. The castle occupied every foot of the island that was visible to us, appearing to rise out of the water; mists rested upon the mountain side, with spots of sunshine between; there was a mild desolation in the low grounds, a solemn grandeur in the mountains, and the castle was wild, yet stately, not dismantled of its turrets, nor the walls broken down, though completely in ruin. After having stood some minutes I joined William on the highroad, and both wishing to stay longer near this place, we requested the man to drive his little boy on to Dalmally, about two miles further, and leave the car at the inn. He told us the ruin was called Kilchurn Castle, that it belonged to Lord Breadalbane, and had been built by one of the ladies of that family for her defence, during her lord's absence at the Crusades; for which purpose she levied a tax of seven years' rent upon her tenants; he said that from that side of the lake it did not appear, in very dry weather, to stand upon an island, but that it was possible to go over to it without being wet-shod. We were very lucky in seeing it after a great flood; for its enchanting effect was chiefly owing to its situation in the lake, a decayed palace rising out of the plain of waters! I have called it a palace, for such feeling it gave me, though having been built as a place of defence, a castle or fortress. We turned again and reascended the hill, and sate a long time in the middle of it looking on the castle, and the huge mountain cove opposite, and William, addressing himself to the ruin, poured out these verses."

Compare Wordsworth's description of this ruin in his 'Guide through the District of the Lakes'.—Ed.

Page 263

* * * * *

ROB ROY'S GRAVE

Composed between 1803 and 1805.—Published 1807

The History of Rob Roy is sufficiently known; his Grave is near the head of Loch Ketterine, in one of those small Pin-fold-like Burial-grounds, of neglected and desolate appearance, which the Traveller meets with in the Highlands of Scotland.—W. W. 1807.

[I have since been told that I was misinformed as to the burial-place of Rob Roy. If so, I may plead in excuse that I wrote on apparently good authority, namely, that of a well educated Lady who lived at the head of the Lake, within a mile or less of the point indicated as containing the remains of One so famous in the neighbourhood.—I. F.]

In the copy of 'Rob Roy's Grave', transcribed in Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Recollections' of the Tour in Scotland of 1803, there are several important variations of text, which occur in none of the printed editions of the poem. These are indicated (to distinguish them from other readings) by the initials D. W.—Ed.

One of the "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection" in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

A famous man is Robin Hood,
The English ballad-singer's joy!
And Scotland has a thief as good,
An outlaw of as daring mood;

She has her brave ROB ROY! [1] 5
Then clear the weeds from off his Grave,
And let us chant a passing stave,
In honour of that Hero [2] brave!

Heaven gave Rob Roy a dauntless [3] heart
And wondrous length and strength of arm: [A] 10
Nor craved he more to quell his foes,
  Or keep his friends from harm.

Yet was Rob Roy as *wise* as brave;
Forgive me if the phrase be strong;—
A Poet worthy of Rob Roy 15
  Must scorn a timid song.

Say, then, that he was wise as brave;
As wise in thought as bold in deed:

For in the principles of things
  He sought his moral creed. [4] 20

Said generous Rob, “What need of books?
Burn all the statutes and their shelves:
They stir us up against our kind;
  And worse, against ourselves.

“We have a passion—make a law, 25
Too false to guide us or control!
And for the law itself we fight
  In bitterness of soul.

“And, puzzled, blinded thus, we lose
Distinctions that are plain and few: 30
These find I graven on my heart:
  That tells me what to do.

“The creatures see of flood and field,
And those that travel on the wind!
With them no strife can last; they live 35
  In peace, and peace of mind.

“For why?—because the good old rule
Sufficeth them, the simple plan,
That they should take, who have the power,
  And they should keep who can. 40

Page 264

“A lesson that [5] is quickly learned,
A signal this which all can see!
Thus nothing here provokes the strong
  To wanton [6] cruelty.

“All freakishness [7] of mind is checked; 45
He tamed, who foolishly aspires;
While to the measure of his might [8]
  Each fashions his desires. [9]

“All kinds, and creatures, stand and fall
By strength of prowess or of wit: 50
’Tis God’s appointment who must sway,
  And who is to submit.

“Since, then, the rule of right is plain, [10]
And longest life is but a day;
To have my ends, maintain my rights, 55
  I’ll take the shortest way.”

And thus among these rocks he lived,
Through summer heat and winter snow: [11]
The Eagle, he was lord above,
  And Rob was lord below. 60

So was it—*would*, at least, have been
But through untowardness of fate;
For Polity was then too strong—
  He came an age too late;

Or shall we say an age too soon? 65
For, were the bold Man living *now*,
How might he flourish in his pride,
  With buds on every bough!

Then rents and factors, rights of chase,
Sheriffs, and lairds and their domains, [12] 70
Would all have seemed but paltry things,
  Not worth a moment’s pains.

Rob Roy had never lingered here,
To these few meagre Vales confined;
But thought how wide the world, the times 75
  How fairly to his mind!

And to his Sword he would have said,
“Do Thou my sovereign will enact
From land to land through half the earth!
  Judge thou of law and fact! 80

“’Tis fit that we should do our part,
Becoming, that mankind should learn
That we are not to be surpassed
  In fatherly concern.

“Of old things all are over old, 85
Of good things none are good enough:—
We’ll show that we can help to frame
  A world of other stuff.

“I, too, will have my kings that take
From me the sign of life and death: 90
Kingdoms shall shift about, like clouds,
  Obedient to my breath.”

And, if the word had been fulfilled,
As *might* have been, then, thought of joy!
France would have had her present Boast, 95
  And we our own [13] Rob Roy!

Oh! say not so; compare them not;
I would not wrong thee, Champion brave!
Would wrong thee nowhere; least of all
  Here standing by thy grave. 100

For Thou, although with some wild thoughts
Wild Chieftain of a savage Clan!
Hadst this to boast of; thou didst love
  The *liberty* of man.

Page 265

And, had it been thy lot to live 105
With us who now behold the light,
Thou would’st have nobly stirred thyself,
  And battled for the Right.

For thou wert still [14] the poor man’s stay,
The poor man’s heart, the poor man’s hand; 110
And all the oppressed, who wanted strength,
  Had thine at their command. [15]

Bear witness many a pensive sigh
Of thoughtful Herdsman when he strays
Alone upon Loch Veol’s heights, 115
  And by Loch Lomond’s braes!

And, far and near, through vale and hill,
Are faces that attest the same;
The proud heart flashing through the eyes, [16]
  At sound of ROB ROY’S name. 120

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

And Scotland boasts of one as good,
She has her own Rob Roy. 1803. D.W.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

... Outlaw ... 1803. D.W.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

... daring ... 1803. D.W.]

[Variant 4:

1807.

Stanzas 3 and 4 are thus combined by D.W., and also in a printed (not published) version, given in a copy of the 1807 edition.

Yet Robin was as wise as brave,
As wise in thought as bold in deed,
For in the principles of things
He sought his moral creed.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

... which ... 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1807.

... tyrannous ... 1803. D. W.]

[Variant 7:

1807.

And freakishness ... 1803. D. W.]

[Variant 8:

1807.

... their ... MS.]

[Variant 9:

1807.

All fashion their desires. 1803. D. W.]

[Variant 10:

1815.

“Since then,” said Robin, “right is plain, 1807.]

[Variant 11:

1827.

Through summer's heat and winter's snow: 1807.]

[Variant 12:

1807.

The Rents and Land-marks, Rights of Chase,
Sheriffs and Factors, Lairds and Thanes, 1803. D. W.

Sheriffs and Factors, rights of chase,
Their Lairds, and their domains, MS.]

[Variant 13:

1827.

... our brave ... 1807.]

[Variant 14:

1815.

For Robin was ... 1807.]

[Variant 15:

1815.

Had Robin's to command. 1807.]

[Variant 16:

1827.

Kindling with instantaneous joy 1803. D.W.

And kindle, like a fire new stirr'd, 1807.]

Page 266

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The people of the neighbourhood of Loch Ketterine, in order to prove the extraordinary length of their Hero's arm, tell you that "he could garter his Tartan Stockings below the knee when standing upright." According to their account he was a tremendous Swordsman; after having sought all occasions of proving his prowess, he was never conquered but once, and this not till he was an Old Man.—W. W. 1807.]

In Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Recollections' of the Scotch Tour the following occurs:

"August 27, 1803.—We mentioned Rob Roy, and the eyes of all glistened; even the lady of the house, who was very diffident, and no great talker, exclaimed, 'He was a good man, Rob Roy! he had been dead only about eighty years, had lived in the next farm, which belonged to him, and there his bones were laid.' He was a famous swordsman. Having an arm much longer than other men, he had a greater command with his sword. As a proof of the length of his arm, they told us that he could garter his tartan stockings below the knee without stooping, and added a dozen different stories of single combats, which he had fought, all in perfect good humour, merely to prove his prowess. I daresay they had stories of this kind which would hardly have been exhausted in the long evenings of a whole December week, Rob Roy being as famous here as even Robin Hood was in the forest of Sherwood; *he* also robbed from the rich, giving to the poor, and defending them from oppression. They tell of his confining the factor of the Duke of Montrose in one of the islands of Loch Ketterine, after having taken his money from him —the Duke's rents—in open day, while they were sitting at table. He was a formidable enemy of the Duke, but being a small laird against a greater, was overcome at last, and forced to resign all his lands on the Braes of Loch Lomond, including the caves which we visited, on account of the money he had taken from the Duke and could not repay."

September 12:

"Descended into Glengyle, above Loch Ketterine, and passed through Mr. Macfarlane's grounds, that is, through the whole of the glen, where there was now no house left but his. We stopped at his door to inquire after the family, though with little hope of finding them at home, having seen a large company at work in a hay-field, whom we conjectured to be his whole household, as it proved, except a servant-maid who answered our enquiries. We had sent the ferryman forward from the head of the glen to bring the boat round from the place where he left it to the other side of the lake. Passed the same farm-house we had such good reason to remember, and went up to the burying-ground that stood so sweetly near the water-side. The ferryman had told us that Rob Roy's grave was there, so we could not pass on without going up to the

Page 267

spot. There were several tombstones, but the inscriptions were either worn-out or unintelligible to us, and the place choked up with nettles and brambles. You will remember the description I have given of the spot. I have nothing here to add, except the following poem which it suggested to William."

Rob Roy was buried at the Kirkton of Balquhidder, near the outlet of Loch Voil in Perthshire. There are three sculptured stones in the rude burial-place of the Macgregors, at the eastern end of the old church. The one with the long claymore marks the resting-place of Rob Roy's wife; the one opposite on the other side is the tomb of his eldest son; and the central stone, more elaborately carved, marks the grave of the hero himself.—Ed.

* * * * *

SONNET COMPOSED AT——CASTLE

Composed September 18, 1803.—Published 1807

[The castle here mentioned was Nidpath near Peebles. The person alluded to was the then Duke of Queensbury. The fact was told to me by Walter Scott.—I. F.]

In 1815 and 1820 this was one of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets."—Ed.

Degenerate Douglas! oh, the unworthy Lord!
Whom mere despite of heart could so far please, [1]
And love of havoc, (for with such disease
Fame taxes him,) that he could send forth word
To level with the dust a noble horde, 5
A brotherhood of venerable Trees,
Leaving an ancient dome, and towers like these,
Beggared and outraged!—Many hearts deplored
The fate of those old Trees; and oft with pain
The traveller, at this day, will stop and gaze 10
On wrongs, which Nature scarcely seems to heed:
For sheltered places, bosoms, nooks, and bays,
And the pure mountains, and the gentle Tweed,
And the green silent pastures, yet remain.

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

Now as I live, I pity that great Lord,
Whom pure despite ...

MS. letter to Sir Walter Scott. Oct. 1803.

Ill wishes shall attend the unworthy Lord MS.]

“Sunday, September 18th.—After breakfast walked up the river to Neidpath Castle, about a mile and a half from the town. The castle stands upon a green hill, over-looking the Tweed, a strong square-towered edifice, neglected and desolate, though not in ruin, the garden overgrown with grass, and the high walls that fenced it broken down. The Tweed winds between green steeps, upon which, and close to the river side, large flocks of sheep pasturing; higher still are the grey mountains; but I need not describe the scene, for William has done it better than I could do in a sonnet which he wrote the same day; the five last lines, at least, of his poem will impart to you more of the feeling of the place than it would be possible for me to do.”

(Dorothy Wordsworth’s ’Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’.) Writing to Sir Walter Scott (October 16, 1803), Wordsworth enclosed a copy of this sonnet, with the variation of text which has been quoted. Lockhart tells us

Page 268

"in that original shape Scott always recited it, and few lines in the language were more frequently in his mouth."

Compare Burns' 'Verses on the destruction of the Woods near Drumlanrig', which refer to the same subject.—Ed.

* * * * *

YARROW UNVISITED

Composed 1803.—Published 1807

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

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

W. W. 1807.

One of the "Poems of the Imagination" in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

From Stirling castle we had seen
The mazy Forth unravelled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had travelled;
And when we came to Clovenford, 5
Then said my "*winsome Marrow*,"
"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside,
And see the Braes of Yarrow."

"Let Yarrow folk, *frae* Selkirk town,
Who have been buying, selling, 10
Go back to Yarrow, 'tis their own;
Each maiden to her dwelling!
On Yarrow's banks let herons feed,
Hares couch, and rabbits burrow!
But we will downward [1] with the Tweed, 15
Nor turn aside to Yarrow.

"There's Galla Water, Leader Haughs,
Both lying right before us;
And Dryborough, where with chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus; 20

There's pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

"What's Yarrow but a river bare, 25
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."
—Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;
My True-love sighed for sorrow; 30
And looked me in the face, to think
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

"Oh! green," said I, "are Yarrow's holms,
And sweet is Yarrow flowing!
Fair hangs the apple frae the rock, [A] 35
But we will leave it growing.
O'er hilly path, and open Strath,
We'll wander Scotland thorough;
But, though so near, we will not turn
Into the dale of Yarrow. 40

"Let beeves and home-bred kine partake
The sweets of Burn-mill meadow;
The swan on still St. Mary's Lake
Float double, swan and shadow! [B]
We will not see them; will not go, 45
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;
Enough if in our hearts we know
There's such a place as Yarrow.

Page 269

“Be Yarrow stream unseen, unknown!
It must, or we shall rue it: 50
We have a vision of our own;
Ah! why should we undo it?
The treasured dreams of times long past,
We’ll keep them, winsome Marrow!
For when we’re there, although ’tis fair, 55
’Twill be another Yarrow.

“If Care with freezing years should come,
And wandering seem but folly,—
Should we be loth to stir from home,
And yet be melancholy; 60
Should life be dull, and spirits low,
’Twill soothe us in our sorrow,
That earth has something yet to show,
The bonny holms of Yarrow!”

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1832.

... downwards ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See Hamilton’s Ballad as above.—W. W. 1807.]

[Footnote B: In his “Recollections of Wordsworth,” Aubrey de Vere reports a conversation, in which the poet said to him,

“Scott misquoted in one of his novels my lines on ‘Yarrow’, He makes me write,

’The swans on sweet St. Mary’s Lake
Float double, swans and shadow;’

but I wrote,

‘The *swan* on *still* St. Mary’s Lake.’

Never could I have written ‘swans’ in the plural. The scene when I saw it, with its still and dim lake, under the dusky hills, was one of utter loneliness: there was *one* swan, and one only, stemming the water, and the pathetic loneliness of the region gave importance to the one companion of that swan, its own white image in the water. It was for that reason that I recorded the Swan and the Shadow. Had there been many swans and many shadows, they would have implied nothing as regards the character of the place; and I should have said nothing about them.”

See his ‘Essays, chiefly on Poetry’, vol. ii. p. 277.

Wordsworth wrote to his friend, Walter Scott, to thank him for a copy of ‘The Lay of the Last Minstrel’, and in return sent a copy of these stanzas, ‘Yarrow Unvisited’. Scott replied gratefully on the 16th March 1805, and said,

“... I by no means admit your apology, however ingeniously and artfully stated, for not visiting the bonny holms of Yarrow, and certainly will not rest till I have prevailed upon you to compare the ideal with the real stream.”

Wordsworth had asked him if he could suggest any name more true to the place than Burnmill, in the line, “The sweets of Burn-mill meadow.” Scott replied:

“We have Broad-meadow upon Yarrow, which with the addition of green or fair or any other epithet of one syllable, will give truth to the locality, and supply the place of Burnmill meadow, which we have not. ... I like your swan upon St. Mary’s Lake. How came you to know that it is actually frequented by that superb bird?”

(See ‘Familiar Letters of Sir Walter Scott’, vol. i. pp. 28, 29.)—Ed.]

Page 270

“September 18, 1803.—We left the Tweed when we were within about a mile and a half or two miles of Clovenford, where we were to lodge. Turned up the side of a hill, and went along sheep-grounds till we reached the spot—a single stone house, without a tree near it or to be seen from it. On our mentioning Mr. Scott’s name, the woman of the house showed us all possible civility, but her slowness was really amusing. I should suppose it a house little frequented, for there is no appearance of an inn. Mr. Scott, who she told me was a very clever gentleman, ‘goes there in the fishing season;’ but indeed Mr. Scott is respected everywhere; I believe that by favour of his name one might be hospitably entertained throughout all the borders of Scotland. We dined and drank tea—did not walk out, for there was no temptation; a confined barren prospect from the window.“At Clovenford, being so near to the Yarrow, we could not but think of the possibility of going thither, but came to the conclusion of reserving the pleasure for some future time, in consequence of which, after our return, William wrote the poem which I shall here transcribe.”

(From Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’, 1803.)—Ed.

* * * * *

THE MATRON OF JEDBOROUGH AND HER HUSBAND

Composed between 1803 and 1805.—Published 1807

At Jedborough we went into private Lodgings for a few days; and the following Verses were called forth by the character, and domestic situation, of our Hostess.—W. W. 1807.

One of the “Poems referring to the Period of Old Age” in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

Age! twine thy brows with fresh spring flowers,
And call a train of laughing Hours;
And bid them dance, and bid them sing;
And thou, too, mingle in the ring!
Take to thy heart a new delight; 5
If not, make merry in despite
That [1] there is One who scorns thy power:—
But dance! for under Jedborough Tower,
A Matron dwells who, though she bears
The weight of more than seventy years, 10
Lives in the light of youthful glee, [2]
And she will dance and sing with thee.

Nay! start not at that Figure—there!
Him who is rooted to his chair!
Look at him—look again! for he 15
Hath long been of thy family.
With legs that move not, if they can,
And useless arms, a trunk of man,
He sits, and with a vacant eye;
A sight to make a stranger sigh! 20
Deaf, drooping, that is now his doom:
His world is in this single room:
Is this a place for mirthful cheer? [3]
Can merry-making enter here? [A]

Page 271

The joyous Woman is the Mate 25
Of him in that forlorn estate!
He breathes a subterraneous damp;
But bright as Vesper shines her lamp:
He is as mute as Jedborough Tower:
She jocund as it was of yore, 30
With all its bravery on; in times
When all alive with merry chimes,
Upon a sun-bright morn of May,
It roused the Vale to holiday.

I praise thee, Matron! and thy due 35
Is praise, heroic praise, and true!
With admiration I behold
Thy gladness unsubdued and bold:
Thy looks, thy gestures, all present
The picture of a life well spent: 40
This do I see; and something more;
A strength unthought of heretofore!
Delighted am I for thy sake;
And yet a higher joy partake:
Our Human-nature throws away 45
Its second twilight, and looks gay;
A land of promise and of pride
Unfolding, wide as life is wide.

Ah! see her helpless Charge! enclosed
Within himself as seems, composed; 50
To fear of loss, and hope of gain,
The strife of happiness and pain,
Utterly dead! yet in the guise
Of little infants, when their eyes
Begin to follow to and fro 55
The persons that before them go,
He tracks her motions, quick or slow.
Her buoyant spirit can prevail
Where common cheerfulness would fail;
She strikes upon him with the heat 60
Of July suns; he feels it sweet;
An animal delight though dim!
’Tis all that now remains for him!

The more I looked, I wondered more—
And, while I scanned them o’er and o’er, [4] 65

Some inward trouble suddenly
Broke from the Matron's strong black eye—[5]
A remnant of uneasy light,
A flash of something over-bright![B]
Nor long this mystery did detain 70
My thoughts;—she told in pensive strain [6]
That she had borne a heavy yoke,
Been stricken by a twofold stroke;
Ill health of body; and had pined
Beneath worse ailments of the mind. 75

So be it!—but let praise ascend
To Him who is our lord and friend!
Who from disease and suffering
[7] Hath called for thee a second spring;
Repaid thee for that sore distress 80
By no untimely joyousness;
Which makes of thine a blissful state;
And cheers thy melancholy Mate!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

For ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

Page 272

1837.

... under Jedborough Tower There liveth in the prime of glee, A Woman, whose years are seventy-three, And She ... 1807.

There lives a woman of seventy-three,
And she will dance and sing with thee, MS.

A Matron dwells, who though she bears
Our mortal complement of years,
Lives in the light of youthful glee, 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

... for mirth and cheer? 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

I look'd, I scann'd her o'er and o'er;
The more I look'd I wonder'd more: 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

When suddenly I seem'd to espy
A trouble in her strong black eye; 1807.

A moment gave me to espy
A trouble . . . 1827.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

And soon she made this matter plain;
And told me, in a thoughtful strain, 1807.]

[Variant 7:

As bad almost as Life can bring, Added in MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Tennyson's 'Deserted House', stanza iv.:

'Come away: no more of mirth
Is here, or merry-making sound.'

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare stanza xiii. of 'Resolution and Independence', p. 318.—Ed.]

Sept. 20, 1803.

"We were received with hearty welcome by a good woman, who, though above seventy years old, moved about as briskly as if she was only seventeen. Those parts of the house which we were to occupy were neat and clean; she showed me every corner, and, before I had been ten minutes in the house, opened her very drawers that I might see what a stock of linen she had; then asked how long we should stay, and said she wished we were come for three months. She was a most remarkable person; the alacrity with which she ran up-stairs when we rung the bell, and guessed at, and strove to prevent, our wants was surprising; she had a quick eye, and keen strong features, and a joyousness in her motions, like what used to be in old Molly when she was particularly elated. I found afterwards that she had been subject to fits of dejection and ill-health: we then conjectured that her overflowing gaiety and strength might in part be attributed to the same cause as her former dejection. Her husband was deaf and infirm, and sate in a chair with scarcely the power to move a limb—an affecting contrast! The old woman said they had been a very hard-working pair; they had wrought like slaves at their trade—her husband had been a currier; and she told me how they had portioned off their daughters with money, and each a feather bed, and that in their old age they had laid out the little they could spare in

Page 273

building and furnishing that house, and she added with pride that she had lived in her youth in the family of Lady Egerton, who was no high lady, and now was in the habit of coming to her house whenever she was at Jedburgh, and a hundred other things; for when she once began with Lady Egerton, she did not know how to stop, nor did I wish it, for she was very entertaining. Mr. Scott sat with us an hour or two, and repeated a part of the 'Lay of the Last Minstrel'. When he was gone our hostess came to see if we wanted anything, and to wish us good-night. On all occasions her manners were governed by the same spirit: there was no withdrawing one's attention from her. We were so much interested that William, long afterwards, thought it worth while to express in verse the sensations which she had excited, and which then remained as vividly in his mind as at the moment when we lost sight of Jedburgh."

(From Dorothy Wordsworth's 'Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland', 1803.)—Ed.

* * * * *

"FLY, SOME KIND HARBINGER, TO GRASMERE-DALE" [A]

Composed September 25, 1803.—Published 1815

[This was actually composed the last day of our tour between Dalston and Grasmere. —I.F.]

One of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets" in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

Fly, some kind Harbinger, to Grasmere-dale! [1]
Say that we come, and come by this day's light;
Fly upon swiftest wing round field and height, [2]
But chiefly let one Cottage hear the tale;
There let a mystery of joy prevail, 5
The kitten frolic, like a gamesome sprite, [3]
And Rover whine, as at a second sight
Of near-approaching good that shall not fail:
And from that Infant's face let joy appear;
Yea, let our Mary's one companion child—10
That hath her six weeks' solitude beguiled
With intimations manifold and dear,
While we have wandered over wood and wild—
Smile on his Mother now with bolder cheer.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

Fly, some kind Spirit, fly to Grasmere Vale! 1815.

... dale, 1827.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

Glad tidings!—spread them over field and height; 1815.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

The Kitten frolic with unruly might, 1815.

The happy Kitten bound with frolic might, 1827.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the editions of 1815 and 1820, this poem bore the title, 'On approaching Home, after a Tour in Scotland, 1803',—Ed.]

Page 274

“Sunday, September 25, 1803.—A beautiful autumnal day. Breakfasted at a public-house by the road-side; dined at Threlkeld; arrived at home between eight and nine o’clock, where we found Mary in perfect health, Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes-basket by the fire.”

(From Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’, 1803.)—Ed.

* * * * *

THE BLIND HIGHLAND BOY

A TALE TOLD BY THE FIRE-SIDE, AFTER RETURNING TO THE VALE OF GRASMERE[A]

Date of composition uncertain.—Published 1807

[The story was told me by George Mackereth, for many years parish-clerk of Grasmere. He had been an eye-witness of the occurrence. The vessel in reality was a washing-tub, which the little fellow had met with on the shores of the Loch.—I.F.]

One of the “Poems referring to the Period of Childhood” in 1815 and 1820.—Ed.

Now we are tired of boisterous joy,
Have [1] romped enough, my little Boy!
Jane hangs her head upon my breast,
And you shall bring your stool and rest;
This corner is your own. 5

There! take your seat, and let me see
That [2] you can listen quietly:
And, as I promised, I will tell [3]
That strange adventure which befel
A poor blind Highland Boy. 10

A *Highland* Boy!—why call him so?
Because, my Darlings, ye must know
That, under hills which rise like towers, [4]
Far higher hills than these of ours!
He from his birth had lived. 15

He ne’er had seen one earthly sight
The sun, the day; the stars, the night;
Or tree, or butterfly, or flower,

Or fish in stream, or bird in bower,
  Or woman, man, or child. 20

And yet he neither drooped nor pined,
Nor had a melancholy mind;
For God took pity on the Boy,
And was his friend; and gave him joy
  Of which we nothing know. 25

His Mother, too, no doubt, above
Her other children him did love:
For, was she here, or was she there,
She thought of him with constant care,
  And more than mother's love. 30

And proud she was of heart, when clad
In crimson stockings, tartan plaid,
And bonnet with a feather gay,
To Kirk he on the sabbath day
  Went hand in hand with her. 35

A dog too, had he; not for need,
But one to play with and to feed;
Which would [5] have led him, if bereft
Of company or friends, and left
  Without a better guide. 40

Page 275

And then the bagpipes he could blow—
And thus from house to house would go;
And all were pleased to hear and see,
For none made sweeter melody
  Than did the poor blind Boy. 45

Yet he had many a restless dream;
Both when he heard the eagles scream,
And when he heard the torrents roar,
And heard the water beat the shore
  Near which their cottage stood. 50

Beside a lake their cottage stood,
Not small like ours, a peaceful flood;
But one of mighty size, and strange;
That, rough or smooth, is full of change,
  And stirring in its bed. 55

For to this lake, by night and day,
The great Sea-water finds its way
Through long, long windings of the hills
And drinks up all the pretty [B] rills
  And rivers large and strong: [C] 60

Then hurries back the road it came—
Returns, on errand still the same;
This did it when the earth was new;
And this for evermore will do,
  As long as earth shall last. 65

And, with the coming of the tide,
Come boats and ships that safely [6] ride
Between the woods and lofty rocks;
And to the shepherds with their flocks
Bring tales of distant lands. 70

And of those tales, whate'er they were,
The blind Boy always had his share;
Whether of mighty towns, or vales
With warmer suns and softer gales,
    Or wonders of the Deep. 75

Yet more it pleased him, more it stirred,
When from the water-side he heard

The shouting, and the jolly cheers;
The bustle of the mariners
    In stillness or in storm. 80

But what do his desires avail?
For He must never handle sail;
Nor mount the mast, nor row, nor float
In sailor's ship, or fisher's boat,
    Upon the rocking waves. 85

His Mother often thought, and said,
What sin would be upon her head
If she should suffer this: "My Son,
Whate'er you do, leave this undone;
    The danger is so great." 90

Thus lived he by Loch-Leven's side
Still sounding with the sounding tide,
And heard the billows leap and dance,
Without a shadow of mischance,
    Till he was ten years old. 95

When one day (and now mark me well,
Ye [7] soon shall know how this befell)
He in a vessel of his own,
On the swift flood is hurrying down,
    Down to the mighty Sea. [8] 100

Page 276

In such a vessel never more
May human creature leave the Shore! [9]
If this or that way he should stir,
Woe to the poor blind Mariner!
  For death will be his doom. 105
[10]
But say what bears him?—Ye have seen
The Indian's bow, his arrows keen,
Rare beasts, and birds with plumage bright;
Gifts which, for wonder or delight,
  Are brought in ships from far. [11] 110

[D] Such gifts had those seafaring men
Spread round that haven in the glen;
Each hut, perchance, might have its own;
And to the Boy they all were known—
   He knew and prized them all. 115

The rarest was a Turtle-shell
Which he, poor Child, had studied well;
A shell of ample size, and light
As the pearly car of Amphitrite,
  That sportive dolphins drew. [12] 120

And, as a Coracle that braves
On Vaga's breast the fretful waves,
This shell upon the deep would swim,
And gaily lift its fearless brim
  Above the tossing surge. [13] 125

And this the little blind Boy knew:
And he a story strange yet true
Had heard, how in a shell like this
An English Boy, O thought of bliss!
  Had stoutly launched from shore; 130

Launched from the margin of a bay
Among the Indian isles, where lay
His father's ship, and had sailed far—
To join that gallant ship of war,
  In his delightful shell. 135

Our Highland Boy oft visited
'The house that [14] held this prize; and, led

By choice or chance, did thither come
One day when no one was at home,
  And found the door unbarred. 140

While there he sate, alone and blind,
That story flashed upon his mind;—
A bold thought roused him, and he took
The shell from out its secret nook,
   And bore it on his head. [15] 145

He launched his vessel,—and in pride
Of spirit, from Loch-Leven's side,
Stepped into it—his thoughts all free
As the light breezes that with glee
   Sang through the adventurer's hair. [16] 150

A while he stood upon his feet;
He felt the motion—took his seat;
Still better pleased as more and more
The tide retreated from the shore,
   And sucked, and sucked him in. [17] 155

And there he is in face of Heaven.
How rapidly the Child is driven!
The fourth part of a mile, I ween,
He thus had gone, ere he was seen
   By any human eye. 160

But when he was first seen, oh me
What shrieking and what misery!
For many saw; among the rest
His Mother, she who loved him best,
  She saw her poor blind Boy. 165

Page 277

But for the child, the sightless Boy,
It is the triumph of his joy!
The bravest traveller in balloon,
Mounting as if to reach the moon,
  Was never half so blessed. 170

And let him, let him go his way,
Alone, and innocent, and gay!
For, if good Angels love to wait
On the forlorn unfortunate,
  This Child will take no harm. 175

But now the passionate lament,
Which from the crowd on shore was sent,
The cries which broke from old and young
In Gaelic, or the English tongue,
  Are stifled—all is still. 180

And quickly with a silent crew
A boat is ready to pursue;
And from the shore their course they take,
And swiftly down the running lake
  They follow the blind Boy. 185

But soon they move with softer pace;
So have ye seen the fowler chase
On Grasmere's clear unruffled breast
A youngling of the wild-duck's nest
  With deftly-lifted oar; 190

Or as the wily sailors crept
To seize (while on the Deep it slept)
The hapless creature which did dwell
Erewhile within the dancing shell,
  They steal upon their prey. [18] 195

With sound the least that can be made,
They follow, more and more afraid,
More cautious as they draw more near;
But in his darkness he can hear,
  And guesses their intent. 200

"*Lei-gha—Lei-gha*"—he then cried out,
"*Lei-gha—Lei-gha*"—with eager shout; [19]

Thus did he cry, and thus did pray,
And what he meant was, “Keep away,
  And leave me to myself!” [E] 205

Alas! and when he felt their hands—
You’ve often heard [20] of magic wands,
That with a motion overthrow
A palace of the proudest show,
  Or melt it into air: 210

So all his dreams—that inward light
With which his soul had shone so bright—
All vanished;—’twas a heartfelt cross
To him, a heavy, bitter loss,
  As he had ever known. 215

But hark! a gratulating voice,
With which the very hills rejoice:
’Tis from the crowd, who tremblingly
Have [21] watched the event, and now can see
  That he is safe at last. 220

And then, when he was brought to land,
Full sure they were a happy band,
Which, gathering round, did on the banks
Of that great Water give God thanks,
  And welcomed the poor Child. 225

And in the general joy of heart
The blind Boy’s little dog took part;
He leapt about, and oft did kiss
His master’s hands in sign of bliss,
  With sound like lamentation. 230

Page 278

But most of all, his Mother dear,
She who had fainted with her fear,
Rejoiced when waking she espies
The Child; when she can trust her eyes,
And touches the blind Boy. 235

She led him home, and wept amain,
When he was in the house again:
Tears flowed in torrents from her eyes;
She kissed him—how could she chastise? [22]
She was too happy far. 240

Thus, after he had fondly braved
The perilous Deep, the Boy was saved;
And, though his fancies had been wild,
Yet he was pleased and reconciled
To live in peace on shore. 245

And in the lonely Highland dell
Still do they keep the Turtle-shell;
And long the story will repeat
Of the blind Boy's adventurous feat,
And how he was preserved. [23] 250

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

We've ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

How ... MS.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

Aye, willingly, and what is more
One which you never heard before,
True story this which I shall tell MS.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

In land where many a mountain towers, 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1807.

... could ... MS.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

... sweetly ... 1807.]

[Variant 7:

1815.

You ... 1807.]

[Variant 8:

1837.

He's in a vessel of his own,
On the swift water hurrying down
Towards the mighty Sea. 1807.

He in a vessel of his own,
On the swift flood is hurrying down 1827.

Towards the great, great Sea. MS.]

[Variant 9:

1815.

... ne'er before
Did human Creature ... 1807.]

[Variant 10: The following stanza was only in the edition of 1807:

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.]

[Variant 11:

1815.

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. 1807.]

[Variant 12:

1820.

And one, the rarest, was a Shell
Which he, poor Child, had studied well;
The Shell of a green Turtle, thin
And hollow;—you might sit therein.
It was so wide and deep. 1815.]

Page 279

[Variant 13:

1820.

’Twas even the largest of its kind,
Large, thin, and light as birch-tree rind;
So light a Shell that it would swim,
And gaily lift its fearless brim
  Above the tossing waves. 1815.]

[Variant 14:

1837.

... which ... 1815.]

[Variant 15:

1827.

... in his arms. 1815.]

[Variant 16:

1827.

Close to the water he had found
This Vessel, push’d it from dry ground,
Went into it; and, without dread,
Following the fancies in his head,
  He paddled up and down. 1807.

And with the happy burthen hied,
And pushed it from Loch Levin’s side,—
Stepped into it; and, without dread, 1815.]

[Variant 17:

1827.

And dallied thus, till from the shore
The tide retreating more and more
  Had suck’d, and suck’d him in. 1807.]

[Variant 18: The two previous stanzas were added in the edition of 1815.]

[Variant 19:

1837.

... then did he cry
... most eagerly; 1807.]

[Variant 20:

1807.

... read ... MS.]

[Variant 21:

1837.

Had ... 1807.]

[Variant 22:

1832.

She could not blame him, or chastise; 1807.]

[Variant 23: This stanza was added in the edition of 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title in the editions of 1807 to 1820 was 'The Blind Highland Boy. (A Tale told by the Fireside.)'

This poem gave its title to a separate division in the second volume of the edition of 1807, *viz*. "The Blind Highland Boy; with other Poems."—Ed.]

[Footnote B: This reading occurs in all the editions. But Wordsworth, whose MS. was not specially clear, may have written, or meant to write "petty," (a much better word), and not perceived the mistake when revising the sheets. If he really wrote "petty," he may have meant either small rills (rillets), or used the word as Shakespeare used it, for "pelting" rills.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare Tennyson's 'In Memoriam', stanza 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, *etc*.'

Ed.]

[Footnote D: This and the following six stanzas were added in 1815.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: Writing to Walter Scott, from Coleorton, on Jan. 20, 1807, Wordsworth sent him this stanza of the poem, and asked

"Could you furnish me, by application to any of your Gaelic friends, a phrase in that language which could take its place in the following verse of eight syllables, and have the following meaning."

Page 280

He adds,

> “The above is part of a little poem which I have written on a Highland story told me by an eye-witness ...”

This is the nearest clue we have to the date of the composition of the poem.—Ed.]

It is recorded in Dampier’s Voyages that a Boy, the Son of a Captain of a Man of War, seated himself in a Turtle-shell and floated in it from the shore to his Father’s Ship, which lay at anchor at the distance of half a mile. Upon the suggestion of a Friend, I have substituted such a Shell for that less elegant vessel in which my blind voyager did actually intrust himself to the dangerous current of Loch Levin, as was related to me by an Eye-witness.—W. W. 1815.

This note varies slightly in later editions.

The Loch Leven referred to is a sea-loch in Argyllshire, into which the tidal water flows with some force from Loch Linnhe at Ballachulish.

> ’By night and day
> The great Sea-water finds its way
> Through long, long windings of the hills.’

The friend referred to in the note of 1815, who urged Wordsworth to give his blind voyager a Shell, instead of a washing-tub to sail in, was Coleridge. The original tale of the tub was not more unfortunate than the lines in praise of Wilkinson’s spade, and several of Wordsworth’s friends, notably Charles Lamb and Barren Field, objected to the change. Lamb wrote to Wordsworth in 1815,

“I am afraid lest that substitution of a shell (a flat falsification of the history) for the household implement, as it stood at first, was a kind of tub thrown out to the beast” [*i. e.* the reviewer!] “or rather thrown out for him. The tub was a good honest tub in its place, and nothing could fairly be said against it. You say you made the alteration for the ‘friendly reader,’ but the ‘malicious’ will take it to himself.”

(’The Letters of Charles Lamb’, edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. i. p. 283.) Wordsworth could not be induced to “undo his work,” and go back to his own original; although he evidently agreed with what Lamb had said (as is seen in a letter to Barren Field, Oct. 24, 1828).—Ed.

* * * * *

OCTOBER, 1803

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807

Included among the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; renamed in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

One might believe that natural miseries
Had blasted France, and made of it a land
Unfit for men; and that in one great band
Her sons were bursting forth, to dwell at ease.
But ’tis a chosen soil, where sun and breeze 5
Shed gentle favours: rural works are there,
And ordinary business without care;
Spot rich in all things that can soothe and please!
How piteous then that there should be such dearth
Of knowledge; that whole myriads should unite 10
To work against themselves such fell despite:
Should come in phrensy and in drunken mirth,
Impatient to put out the only light
Of Liberty that yet remains on earth!

Page 281

* * * * *

“THERE IS A BONDAGE WORSE, FAR WORSE, TO BEAR”

Composed possibly in 1803.—Published 1807

Included among the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; renamed in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

There is a bondage worse, far worse, to bear [1]
Than his who breathes, by roof, and floor, and wall,
Pent in, a Tyrant’s solitary Thrall:
’Tis his who walks about in the open air,
One of a Nation who, henceforth, must wear 5
Their fetters in their souls. For who could be,
Who, even the best, in such condition, free
From self-reproach, reproach that [2] he must share
With Human-nature? Never be it ours
To see the sun how brightly it will shine, 10
And know that noble feelings, manly powers,
Instead of gathering strength, must droop and pine;
And earth with all her pleasant fruits and flowers
Fade, and participate in man’s decline.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

... which is worse to bear 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

... which ... 1807.]

* * * * *

OCTOBER, 1803 (#2)

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807

This was one of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; afterwards called, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

These times strike [1] monied worldlings with dismay:
Even rich men, brave by nature, taint the air
With words of apprehension and despair:
While tens of thousands, thinking on the affray,
Men unto whom sufficient for the day 5
And minds not stinted or unfilled are given,
Sound, healthy, children of the God of heaven,
Are cheerful as the rising sun in May.
What do we gather hence but firmer faith
That every gift of noble origin 10
Is breathed upon by Hope’s perpetual breath;
That virtue and the faculties within
Are vital,—and that riches are akin
To fear, to change, to cowardice, and death?

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... touch ... 1807.]

* * * * *

“ENGLAND! THE TIME IS COME WHEN THOU SHOULD’ST WEAN”

Composed possibly in 1803.—Published 1807

This was one of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; afterwards called, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Page 282

England! the time is come when thou should’st wean
Thy heart from its emasculating food;
The truth should now be better understood;
Old things have been unsettled; we have seen
Fair seed-time, better harvest might have been 5
But for thy trespasses; and, at this day,
If for Greece, Egypt, India, Africa,
Aught good were destined, thou would’st step between.
England! all nations in this charge agree:
But worse, more ignorant in love and hate, 10
Far—far more abject, is thine Enemy:
Therefore the wise pray for thee, though the freight
Of thy offences be a heavy weight:
Oh grief that Earth’s best hopes rest all with Thee!

* * * * *

OCTOBER, 1803 (#3)

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807

Included among the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; afterwards called, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

When, looking on the present face of things,
I see one man, of men the meanest too!
Raised up to sway the world, to do, undo,
With mighty Nations for his underlings,
The great events with which old story rings 5
Seem vain and hollow; I find nothing great:
Nothing is left which I can venerate;
So that a doubt almost [1] within me springs
Of Providence, such emptiness at length
Seems at the heart of all things. But, great God! 10
I measure back the steps which I have trod;
And tremble, seeing whence proceeds the strength [2]
Of such poor Instruments, with thoughts sublime
I tremble at the sorrow of the time.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1845.

... almost a doubt ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

... seeing, as I do, the strength 1807.]

The reference is, of course, to Napoleon.—Ed.

* * * * *

TO THE MEN OF KENT. OCTOBER, 1803

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807

One of the “Sonnets dedicated to Liberty”; re-named in 1845, “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Vanguard of Liberty, ye men of Kent, [A]
Ye children of a Soil that doth advance
Her [1] haughty brow against the coast of France,
Now is the time to prove your hardiment!
To France be words of invitation sent! 5
They from their fields can see the countenance
Of your fierce war, may ken the glittering lance
And hear you shouting forth your brave intent.
Left single, in bold parley, ye, of yore,

Page 283

Did from the Norman win a gallant wreath; 10
Confirmed the charters that were yours before;—
No parleying now! In Britain is one breath;
We all are with you now from shore to shore:—
Ye men of Kent, ’tis victory or death!

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

It’s ... 1807.

It’s haughty forehead ’gainst ... MS.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Michael Drayton’s ‘Barons’ Wars’, book i.:

’Then those of Kent, unconquered of the rest,
That to this day maintain their ancient right.’

Ed.]

* * * * *

IN THE PASS OF KILLICRANKY,

An invasion being expected, October 1803

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807

From 1807 to 1820 this sonnet was one of those “dedicated to Liberty.” In 1827 it was included among the “Memorials of a Tour in Scotland, 1803.” From 1807 to 1820 the title was simply October, 1803.—Ed.

Six thousand veterans practised in war’s game,
Tried men, at Killicranky were arrayed
Against an equal host that wore the plaid,
Shepherds and herdsmen.—Like a whirlwind came
The Highlanders, the slaughter spread like flame; 5
And Garry, thundering down his mountain-road,
Was stopped, and could not breathe beneath the load
Of the dead bodies.—’Twas a day of shame
For them whom precept and the pedantry
Of cold mechanic battle do enslave. 10
O for a single hour of that Dundee, [A]
Who on that day the word of onset gave!
Like conquest would the Men of England see;
And her Foes find a like inglorious grave.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See an anecdote related in Mr. Scott’s Border Minstrelsy. —W. W. 1807.

“Oh for an hour of Dundee” was an exclamation of Gordon of Glenbucket at Sheriffmuir. —Ed.]

The following is from Dorothy Wordsworth’s ’Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland’, 1803:

“Thursday, September 8th.—Before breakfast we walked to the Pass of Killicrankie. A very fine scene; the river Garry forcing its way down a deep chasm between rocks, at the foot of high rugged hills covered with wood, to a great height. The pass did not, however, impress us with awe, or a sensation of difficulty or danger, according to our expectations; but, the road being at a considerable height on the side of the hill,

Page 284

we at first only looked into the dell or chasm. It is much grander seen from below, near the river's bed. Everybody knows that this Pass is famous in military history. When we were travelling in Scotland, an invasion was hourly looked for, and one could not but think with some regret of the times when, from the now depopulated Highlands forty or fifty thousand men might have been poured down for the defence of the country, under such leaders as the Marquis of Montrose or the brave man who had so distinguished himself upon the ground where we were standing. I will transcribe a sonnet suggested to William by this place, and written in Oct. 1803."

Ed.

* * * * *

ANTICIPATION. OCTOBER, 1803

Composed October 1803.—Published 1807 [A]

Included among the "Sonnets dedicated to Liberty"; re-named in 1845, "Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty."—Ed.

Shout, for a mighty Victory is won!
On British ground the Invaders are laid low;
The breath of Heaven has drifted them like snow,
And left them lying in the silent sun,
Never to rise again!—the work is done. 5
Come forth, ye old men, now in peaceful show
And greet your sons! drums beat and trumpets blow!
Make merry, wives! ye little children, stun
Your grandame's ears with pleasure of your noise! [1]
Clap, infants, clap your hands! Divine must be 10
That triumph, when the very worst, the pain,
And even the prospect of our brethren slain, [2]
Hath something in it which the heart enjoys:—
In glory will they sleep and endless sanctity. [3]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

... with transports of your own. C.

... with transport of your noise! 1838.

The edition of 1840 returns to the text of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1807.

The loss and e'en the prospect of the slain, MS. 1803.

And in 'The Poetical Register', 1803.

And prospect of our Brethren to be slain, MS. 1803.]

[Variant 3:

1807.

True glory, everlasting sanctity. MS. 1803.

And in 'The Poetical Register', 1803.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: *i. e.* in the edition of 1807, but this sonnet was previously printed in 1803 in 'The Poetical Register', vol. iii. p. 340, in the 'Anti-Gallican' (1804), and in the 'Poetical Repository' (1805).—Ed.]

Page 285

This sonnet, as the title indicates, does not refer to an actual victory; because, since the Norman conquest, no “Invaders” have ever set foot “on British ground.” It was written —like the two preceding sonnets, and the one that follows it—“in anticipation” of Napoleon’s project for the invasion of England being actually carried out; a project never realised. The assembling of the immense French army destined for this purpose—one of the finest brought together since the days of the Roman legions—between the mouths of the Seine and the Texel, roused the spirit of English patriotism as it had never been roused before. Three hundred thousand volunteers were enlisted in Great Britain by the 10th of August 1803;

> “all the male population of the kingdom from seventeen years of age to fifty-five were divided into classes to be successively armed and exercised” (Dyer).

The story of the failure of Napoleon’s scheme is too well known to be repeated in this note. Wordsworth seems to have written his sonnet in anticipation of what he believed would have been the inevitable issue of events, had the French army actually landed on British soil.—Ed.

* * * * *

LINES ON THE EXPECTED INVASION

1803

Composed 1803.—Published 1842

Included among the “Poems dedicated to National Independence and Liberty.”—Ed.

Come ye—who, if (which Heaven avert!) the Land
Were with herself at strife, would take your stand,
Like gallant Falkland, by the Monarch’s side,
And, like Montrose, make Loyalty your pride—
Come ye—who, not less zealous, might display 5
Banners at enmity with regal sway,
And, like the Pyms and Miltons of that day,
Think that a State would live in sounder health
If Kingship bowed its head to Commonwealth—
Ye too—whom no discreditable fear 10
Would keep, perhaps with many a fruitless tear,
Uncertain what to choose and how to steer—
And ye—who might mistake for sober sense

And wise reserve the plea of indolence—
Come ye—whate'er your creed—O waken all, 15
Whate'er your temper, at your Country's call;
Resolving (this a free-born Nation can)
To have one Soul, and perish to a man,
Or save this honoured Land from every Lord
But British reason and the British sword. 20

* * * * *

END OF VOLUME II (OF EIGHT)