

The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth — Volume 3 eBook

The Poetical Works of William Wordsworth — Volume 3 by William Wordsworth

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Composed 1804.—Published 1807

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The germ of this poem was four lines composed as a part of the verses on the 'Highland Girl'. Though beginning in this way, it was written from my heart, as is sufficiently obvious.—I. F.]

One of the "Poems of the Imagination."—Ed.

She was a Phantom of delight
When first she gleamed upon my sight; [A]
A lovely Apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair; 5
Like Twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn; [1]
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay. 10

I saw her upon nearer view,
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin-liberty;
A countenance in which did meet 15
Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A Creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food;
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles. 20

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller between [2] life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will, 25
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect Woman, [3] nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light. [4] 30

* * * * *



VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

From May-time's brightest, liveliest dawn; 1836

The text of 1840 returns to that of 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1832.

... betwixt ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

A perfect Woman; ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1845.

... of an angel light. 1807.

... angel-light. 1836.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare two references to Mary Wordsworth in 'The Prelude':

'Another maid there was, who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me,
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared;'

(Book vi. l. 224).

'She came, no more a phantom to adorn
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;'

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(Book xiv, l. 268).—Ed.]

It is not easy to say what were the “four lines composed as a part of the verses on the ‘Highland Girl’” which the Fenwick note tells us was “the germ of this poem.” They may be lines now incorporated in those ‘To a Highland Girl’, vol. ii. p. 389, or they may be lines in the present poem, which Wordsworth wrote at first for the ‘Highland Girl’, but afterwards transferred to this one. They *may* have been the first four lines of the later poem. The two should be read consecutively, and compared.

After Wordsworth’s death, a writer in the ‘Daily News’, January 1859—then understood to be Miss Harriet Martineau—wrote thus:

“In the ‘Memoirs’, by the nephew of the poet, it is said that these verses refer to Mrs. Wordsworth; but for half of Wordsworth’s life it was always understood that they referred to some other phantom which ‘gleamed upon his sight’ before Mary Hutchinson.”

This statement is much more than improbable; it is, I think, disproved by the Fenwick note. They cannot refer to the “Lucy” of the Goslar poems; and Wordsworth indicates, as plainly as he chose, to whom they actually do refer. Compare the Hon. Justice Coleridge’s account of a conversation with Wordsworth (‘Memoirs’, vol. ii. p. 306), in which the poet expressly said that the lines were written on his wife. The question was, however, set at rest in a conversation of Wordsworth with Henry Crabb Robinson, who wrote in his ‘Diary’ on

“May 12 (1842).—Wordsworth said that the poems ‘Our walk was far among the ancient trees’ [vol. ii. p. 167], then ‘She was a Phantom of delight,’ [B] and finally the two sonnets ‘To a Painter’, should be read in succession as exhibiting the different phases of his affection to his wife.”

(‘Diary, Reminiscences, and Correspondence of Henry Crabb Robinson’, vol. iii. p. 197.)

The use of the word “machine,” in the third stanza of the poem, has been much criticised, but for a similar use of the term, see the sequel to ‘The Waggoner’ (p. 107):

‘Forgive me, then; for I had been
On friendly terms with this Machine.’

See also ‘Hamlet’ (act *ii*. scene *ii*. l. 124):

‘Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him.’

The progress of mechanical industry in Britain since the beginning of the present century has given a more limited, and purely technical, meaning to the word, than it bore when Wordsworth used it in these two instances.—Ed.

[Footnote B: The poet expressly told me that these verses were on his wife.—H. C. R.]

* * * * *

"I wandered lonely as A cloud"

Composed 1804.—Published 1807

[Town-end, 1804. The two best lines in it are by Mary. The daffodils grew, and still grow, on the margin of Ullswater, and probably may be seen to this day as beautiful in the month of March, nodding their golden heads beside the dancing and foaming waves.—I. F.]

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This was No. VII. in the series of Poems, entitled, in the edition of 1807, “Moods of my own Mind.” In 1815, and afterwards, it was classed by Wordsworth among his “Poems of the Imagination.”—Ed.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden [1] daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees, 5
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze. [2]

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay: 10
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance. [3]

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay, [4] 15
In such a jocund [5] company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood, 20
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815.

... dancing ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:



1815.

Along the Lake, beneath the trees,
Ten thousand dancing in the breeze. 1807]

[Variant 3: This stanza was added in the edition of 1815.]

[Variant 4:

1807

... be but gay, 1836.

The 1840 edition returns to the text of 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... laughing ... 1807.]

The following is from Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, under date, Thursday, April 15, 1802:

"When we were in the woods beyond Gowbarrow Park, we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. We fancied that the sea had floated the seeds ashore, and that the little colony had so sprung up. But as we went along there were more, and yet more; and, at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw that there was a long belt of them along the shore, about the breadth of a country turnpike road. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones, about and above them; some rested their heads upon these stones, as on a pillow for weariness; and the rest tossed and reeled and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind that blew upon them over the lake. They looked so gay, ever glancing, ever changing. This wind blew directly over the lake to them. There was here and there a little knot, and a few stragglers higher up; but they were so few as not to disturb the simplicity, unity, and life of that one busy highway. We rested again and again. The bays were stormy, and we heard the waves at different distances, and in the middle of the water, like the sea...."

In the edition of 1815 there is a footnote to the lines

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'They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude'

to the following effect:

"The subject of these Stanzas is rather an elementary feeling and simple impression (approaching to the nature of an ocular spectrum) upon the imaginative faculty, than an exertion of it. The one which follows [A] is strictly a Reverie; and neither that, nor the next after it in succession, 'Power of Music', would have been placed here except for the reason given in the foregoing note."

The being "placed here" refers to its being included among the "Poems of the Imagination." The "foregoing note" is the note appended to 'The Horn of Egremont Castle'; and the "reason given" in it is "to avoid a needless multiplication of the Classes" into which Wordsworth divided his poems. This note of 181? [B], is reprinted mainly to show the difficulties to which Wordsworth was reduced by the artificial method of arrangement referred to. The following letter to Mr. Wrangham is a more appropriate illustration of the poem of "The Daffodils." It was written, the late Bishop of Lincoln says, "sometime afterwards." (See 'Memoirs of Wordsworth', vol. i. pp. 183, 184); and, for the whole of the letter, see a subsequent volume of this edition.

"*Grasmere*, Nov. 4.

"*My dear Wrangham*,—I am indeed much pleased that Mrs. Wrangham and yourself have been gratified by these breathings of simple nature. You mention Butler, Montagu's friend; not Tom Butler, but the conveyancer: when I was in town in spring, he happened to see the volumes lying on Montagu's mantelpiece, and to glance his eye upon the very poem of 'The Daffodils.' 'Aye,' says he, 'a fine morsel this for the Reviewers.' When this was told me (for I was not present) I observed that there were 'two lines' in that little poem which, if thoroughly felt, would annihilate nine-tenths of the reviews of the kingdom, as they would find no readers. The lines I alluded to were these:

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

These two lines were composed by Mrs. Wordsworth. In 1877 the daffodils were still growing in abundance on the shore of Ullswater, below Gowbarrow Park.

Compare the last four lines of James Montgomery's poem, 'The Little Cloud':

'Bliss in possession will not last:
Remembered joys are never past:

At once the fountain, stream, and sea,
They were—they are—they yet shall be.'

Ed.

[Footnote A: It was 'The Reverie of Poor Susan'.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: This is an error in the original printed text. Evidently a year before the above-mentioned publication in 1815: one of 1810-1815. text Ed.]

* * * * *

THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET—[A]

Composed 1804.—Published 1807



Page 5

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. This was taken from the case of a poor widow who lived in the town of Penrith. Her sorrow was well known to Mrs. Wordsworth, to my sister, and, I believe, to the whole town. She kept a shop, and when she saw a stranger passing by, she was in the habit of going out into the street to enquire of him after her son.—I. F.]

Included by Wordsworth among his “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

I Where art thou, my beloved Son,
Where art thou, worse to me than dead?
Oh find me, prosperous or undone!
Or, if the grave be now thy bed,
Why am I ignorant of the same 5
That I may rest; and neither blame
Nor sorrow may attend thy name?

II Seven years, alas! to have received
No tidings of an only child;
To have despaired, have hoped, believed, 10
And been for evermore beguiled; [1]
Sometimes with thoughts of very bliss!
I catch at them, and then I miss;
Was ever darkness like to this?

III He was among the prime in worth, 15
An object beauteous to behold;
Well born, well bred; I sent him forth
Ingenuous, innocent, and bold:
If things ensued that wanted grace,
As hath been said, they were not base; 20
And never blush was on my face.

IV Ah! little doth the young-one dream,
When full of play and childish cares,
What power is in [2] his wildest scream,
Heard by his mother unawares! 25
He knows it not, he cannot guess:
Years to a mother bring distress;
But do not make her love the less.

V Neglect me! no, I suffered long
From that ill thought; and, being blind, 30
Said, “Pride shall help me in my wrong:
Kind mother have I been, as kind



As ever breathed:" and that is true;
I've wet my path with tears like dew,
Weeping for him when no one knew. 35

VI My Son, if thou be humbled, poor,
Hopeless of honour and of gain,
Oh! do not dread thy mother's door;
Think not of me with grief and pain:
I now can see with better eyes; 40
And worldly grandeur I despise,
And fortune with her gifts and lies.

VII Alas! the fowls of heaven have wings,
And blasts of heaven will aid their flight;
They mount—how short a voyage brings 45
The wanderers back to their delight!
Chains tie us down by land and sea;
And wishes, vain as mine, may be
All that is left to comfort thee.

VIII Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan, 50
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a desert thrown
Inheritest the lion's den;
Or hast been summoned to the deep,
Thou, thou and all thy mates, to keep 55
An incommunicable sleep.



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IX I look for ghosts; but none will force
Their way to me: 'tis falsely said
That there was ever intercourse
Between [3] the living and the dead; 60
For, surely, then I should have sight
Of him I wait for day and night,
With love and longings infinite.

X My apprehensions come in crowds;
I dread the rustling of the grass; 65
The very shadows of the clouds
Have power to shake me as they pass:
I question things and do not find
One that will answer to my mind;
And all the world appears unkind. 70

XI Beyond participation lie
My troubles, and beyond relief:
If any chance to heave a sigh,
They pity me, and not my grief.
Then come to me, my Son, or send 75
Some tidings that my woes may end;
I have no other earthly friend!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

To have despair'd, and have believ'd,
And be for evermore beguil'd; 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1832.

What power hath even ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1832.

Betwixt ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the edition of 1807, the title was 'The Affliction of Margaret—of—'; in 1820, it was 'The Affliction of Margaret'; and in 1845, it was as above. In an early *Ms.* it was 'The Affliction of Mary—of—'. For an as yet unpublished Preface to it, see volume viii. of this edition.—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE FORSAKEN

Composed 1804.—Published 1842

[This was an overflow from 'The Affliction of Margaret', and was excluded as superfluous there, but preserved in the faint hope that it may turn to account by restoring a shy lover to some forsaken damsel. My poetry has been complained of as deficient in interests of this sort,—a charge which the piece beginning, "Lyre! though such power do in thy magic live," will scarcely tend to obviate. The natural imagery of these verses was supplied by frequent, I might say intense, observation of the Rydal torrent. What an animating contrast is the ever-changing aspect of that, and indeed of every one of our mountain brooks, to the monotonous tone and unmitigated fury of such streams among the Alps as are fed all the summer long by glaciers and melting snows. A traveller observing the exquisite purity of the great rivers, such as the Rhone at Geneva, and the Reuss at Lucerne, when they issue out of their respective lakes, might fancy for a moment that some power in nature produced this beautiful change, with a view to make amends for those Alpine sullyings which the waters exhibit near their fountain heads; but, alas! how soon does that purity depart before the influx of tributary waters that have flowed through cultivated plains and the crowded abodes of men.—I. F.]

Page 7

Included by Wordsworth among his “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

The peace which others seek they find;
The heaviest storms not longest last;
Heaven grants even to the guiltiest mind
An amnesty for what is past;
When will my sentence be reversed? 5
I only pray to know the worst;
And wish as if my heart would burst.

O weary struggle! silent years
Tell seemingly no doubtful tale;
And yet they leave it short, and fears 10
And hopes are strong and will prevail.
My calmest faith escapes not pain;
And, feeling that the hope is vain,
I think that he will come again.

* * * * *

REPENTANCE

A PASTORAL BALLAD

Composed 1804.—Published 1820

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. Suggested by the conversation of our next neighbour, Margaret Ashburner.—I. F.]

This “next neighbour” is constantly referred to in Dorothy Wordsworth’s Grasmere Journal.

Included in 1820 among the “Poems of Sentiment and Reflection”; in 1827, and afterwards, it was classed with those “founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

The fields which with covetous spirit we sold,
Those beautiful fields, the delight of the day,
Would have brought us more good than a burthen of gold, [1]
Could we but have been as contented as they.

When the troublesome Tempter beset us, said I, 5
“Let him come, with his purse proudly grasped in his hand;



But, Allan, be true to me, Allan,—we'll die [2]
Before he shall go with an inch of the land!"

There dwelt we, as happy as birds in their bowers;
Unfettered as bees that in gardens abide; 10
We could do what we liked [3] with the land, it was ours;
And for us the brook murmured that ran by its side.

But now we are strangers, go early or late;
And often, like one overburthened with sin,
With my hand on the latch of the half-opened gate, [4] 15
I look at the fields, but [5] I cannot go in!

When I walk by the hedge on a bright summer's day,
Or sit in the shade of my grandfather's tree,
A stern face it puts on, as if ready to say,
"What ails you, that you must come creeping to me!" 20

With our pastures about us, we could not be sad;
Our comfort was near if we ever were crost;
But the comfort, the blessings, and wealth that we had,
We slighted them all,—and our birth-right was lost. [6]

Oh, ill-judging sire of an innocent son 25
Who must now be a wanderer! but peace to that strain!
Think of evening's repose when our labour was done,
The sabbath's return; and its leisure's soft chain!

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And in sickness, if night had been sparing of sleep,
How cheerful, at sunrise, the hill where I stood, [7] 30
Looking down on the kine, and our treasure of sheep
That besprinkled the field; 'twas like youth in my blood!

Now I cleave to the house, and am dull as a snail;
And, oftentimes, hear the church-bell with a sigh,
That follows the thought—We've no land in the vale, 35
Save six feet of earth where our forefathers lie!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

the delight of our day, *Ms.*

O fools that we were—we had land which we sold *Ms.*

O fools that we were without virtue to hold *Ms.*

The fields that together contentedly lay
Would have done us more good than another man's gold *Ms.*]

[Variant 2:

1820.

When the bribe of the Tempter beset us, said I,
Let him come with his bags proudly grasped in his hand.
But, Thomas, be true to me, Thomas, we'll die *Ms.*]

[Variant 3:

1836.

... chose ... 1820 and *Ms.*]

[Variant 4:

1820.

When my hand has half-lifted the latch of the gate, *Ms.*]

[Variant 5:

1820.

... and ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 6:

1827.

But the blessings, and comfort, and wealth that we had,
We slighted them all,—and our birth-right was lost.
1820 and *Ms.*

But we traitorously gave the best friend that we had
For spiritless pelf—as we felt to our cost! *Ms.*]

[Variant 7:

1820.

When my sick crazy body had lain without sleep,
How cheering the sunshiny vale where I stood, *Ms.*]

* * * * *

ADDRESS TO MY INFANT DAUGHTER, DORA, [A]

ON BEING REMINDED THAT SHE WAS A MONTH OLD THAT DAY, SEPTEMBER 16

Composed September 16, 1804.—Published 1815

Included by Wordsworth among his “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

—Hast thou then survived—
Mild Offspring of infirm humanity,
Meek Infant! among all forlornest things
The most forlorn—one life of that bright star,
The second glory of the Heavens?—Thou hast; 5
Already hast survived that great decay,
That transformation through the wide earth felt,
And by all nations. In that Being’s sight
From whom the Race of human kind proceed,
A thousand years are but as yesterday;

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10

And one day's narrow circuit is to Him
Not less capacious than a thousand years.
But what is time? What outward glory? neither
A measure is of Thee, whose claims extend
Through "heaven's eternal year." [B]—Yet hail to Thee, 15
Frail, feeble, Monthling!—by that name, methinks,
Thy scanty breathing-time is portioned out
Not idly.—Hadst thou been of Indian birth,
Couched on a casual bed of moss and leaves,
And rudely canopied by leafy boughs, 20
Or to the churlish elements exposed
On the blank plains,—the coldness of the night,
Or the night's darkness, or its cheerful face
Of beauty, by the changing moon adorned,
Would, with imperious admonition, then 25
Have scored thine age, and punctually timed
Thine infant history, on the minds of those
Who might have wandered with thee.—Mother's love,
Nor less than mother's love in other breasts,
Will, among us warm-clad and warmly housed, 30
Do for thee what the finger of the heavens
Doth all too often harshly execute
For thy unblest coevals, amid wilds
Where fancy hath small liberty to grace
The affections, to exalt them or refine; 35
And the maternal sympathy itself,
Though strong, is, in the main, a joyless tie
Of naked instinct, wound about the heart.
Happier, far happier is thy lot and ours!
Even now—to solemnise thy helpless state, 40
And to enliven in the mind's regard
Thy passive beauty—parallels have risen,
Resemblances, or contrasts, that connect,
Within the region of a father's thoughts,
Thee and thy mate and sister of the sky. 45
And first;—thy sinless progress, through a world
By sorrow darkened and by care disturbed,
Apt likeness bears to hers, through gathered clouds,
Moving untouched in silver purity,
And cheering oft-times their reluctant gloom. 50
Fair are ye both, and both are free from stain:



But thou, how leisurely thou fill'st thy horn
With brightness! leaving her to post along,
And range about, disquieted in change,
And still impatient of the shape she wears. 55
Once up, once down the hill, one journey, Babe
That will suffice thee; and it seems that now
Thou hast fore-knowledge that such task is thine;
Thou travellest so contentedly, and sleep'st
In such a heedless peace. Alas! full soon 60
Hath this conception, grateful to behold,
Changed countenance, like an object sullied o'er
By breathing mist; and thine appears to be
A mournful labour, while to her is given
Hope, and a renovation without end.



Page 10

65

—That smile forbids the thought; for on thy face
Smiles are beginning, like the beams of dawn,
To shoot and circulate; smiles have there been seen;
Tranquil assurances that Heaven supports
The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers 70
Thy loneliness: or shall those smiles be called
Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore
This untried world, and to prepare thy way
Through a strait passage intricate and dim?
Such are they; and the same are tokens, signs, 75
Which, when the appointed season hath arrived,
Joy, as her holiest language, shall adopt;
And Reason's godlike Power be proud to own.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title from 1815 to 1845 was 'Address to my Infant Daughter, on being reminded that she was a Month old, on that Day'. After her death in 1847, her name was added to the title.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See Dryden's poem, 'To the pious memory of the accomplished young lady, Mrs. Anne Killigrew', l. l. 15.—Ed.]

The text of this poem was never altered.—Ed.

* * * * *

THE KITTEN AND FALLING LEAVES [A]

Composed 1804.—Published 1807

[Seen at Town-end, Grasmere. The elder-bush has long since disappeared; it hung over the wall near the cottage: and the kitten continued to leap up, catching the leaves as here described. The Infant was Dora.—J. F.]

One of the "Poems of the Fancy." In Henry Crabb Robinson's 'Diary, etc.', under date Sept. 10, 1816, we find,



“He” (Wordsworth) “quoted from ‘The Kitten and the Falling Leaves’ to show he had connected even the kitten with the great, awful, and mysterious powers of Nature.”

Ed.

That way look, my Infant, [1] lo!
What a pretty baby-show!
See the Kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall,
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—5
From the lofty elder-tree!
Through the calm and frosty [2] air
Of this morning bright and fair,
Eddying round and round they sink
Softly, slowly: one might think, 10
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or Faery hither tending,—
To this lower world descending,
Each invisible and mute, 15
In his wavering parachute.
—But the Kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts! [3]
First at one, and then its fellow
Just as light and just as yellow; 20
There are many now—now one—
Now they stop and there are none:
What intenseness of desire

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In her upward eye of fire!
With a tiger-leap half-way 25
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again:
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjurer; 30
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.
Were her antics played in the eye
Of a thousand standers-by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare, 35
What would little Tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd?
Over happy to be proud,
Over wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure! 40

'Tis a pretty baby-treat;
Nor, I deem, for me unmeet; [4]
Here, for neither Babe nor [5] me,
Other play-mate can I see.
Of the countless living things, 45
That with stir of feet and wings
(In the sun or under shade,
Upon bough or grassy blade)
And with busy revellings,
Chirp and song, and murmurings, 50
Made this orchard's narrow space,
And this vale so blithe a place;
Multitudes are swept away
Never more to breathe the day:
Some are sleeping; some in bands 55
Travelled into distant lands;
Others slunk to moor and wood,
Far from human neighbourhood;
And, among the Kinds that keep
With us closer fellowship, 60
With us openly abide,
All have laid their mirth aside.



Where is he that giddy [6] Sprite,
Blue-cap, with his colours bright,
Who was blest as bird could be, 65
Feeding in the apple-tree;
Made such wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out;
Hung—head pointing towards the ground—[7]
Fluttered, perched, into a round 70
Bound himself, and then unbound;
Lithest, gaudiest Harlequin!
Prettiest tumbler ever seen!
Light of heart and light of limb;
What is now become of Him? 75
Lambs, that through the mountains went
Frisking, bleating merriment,
When the year was in its prime,
They are sobered by this time.
If you look to vale or [8] hill, 80
If you listen, all is still,
Save a little neighbouring rill,
That from out the rocky ground
Strikes a solitary sound.
Vainly glitter [9] hill and plain, 85
And the air is calm in vain;
Vainly Morning spreads the lure
Of a sky serene and pure;
Creature none can she decoy
Into open sign of joy: 90
Is it that they have a fear
Of the dreary season near?
Or that other pleasures be
Sweeter even than gaiety?



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Yet, whate'er enjoyments dwell 95
In the impenetrable cell
Of the silent heart which Nature
Furnishes to every creature;
Whatsoever we feel and know
Too sedate for outward show, 100
Such a light of gladness breaks,
Pretty Kitten! from thy freaks,—
Spreads with such a living grace
O'er my little Dora's [10] face;
Yes, the sight so stirs and charms 105
Thee, Baby, laughing in my arms,
That almost I could repine
That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair! [11] 110
And I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason, [12]
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess 115
Hours of perfect gladsomeness. [13]
—Pleased by any random toy;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy; 120
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things [14] by sorrow wrought, 125
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

... Darling, ... *Ms.*]



[Variant 2:

... silent ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 3:

Knows not what she would be at,
Now on this side, now on that. *Ms.*]

[Variant 4:

One for me, too, as is meet. *Ms.*]

[Variant 5:

1815.

... or ... 1807.]

[Variant 6:

... busy ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 7:

1836,

Hung with head towards the ground, 1807.]

[Variant 8:

... and ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 9:

1836.

... glitters ... 1807.]

[Variant 10:

1849.

Laura's [a] 1807]

[Variant 11: Additional lines:

But I'll take a hint from you,
And to pleasure will be true, *Ms.*]

[Variant 12:

Be it songs of endless Spring
Which the frolic Muses sing,
Jest, and Mirth's unruly brood
Dancing to the Phrygian mood;
Be it love, or be it wine,
Myrtle wreath, or ivy twine,
Or a garland made of both;
Whether then Philosophy
That would fill us full of glee
Seeing that our breath we draw
Under an unbending law,

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That our years are halting never;
Quickly gone, and gone for ever,
And would teach us thence to brave
The conclusion in the grave;
Whether it be these that give
Strength and spirit so to live,
Or the conquest best be made,
By a sober course and staid,
I would walk in such a way, *Ms.*]

[Variant 13:

... joyousness. *Ms.*]

[Variant 14:

From the things by ... *Ms.*]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the editions of 1807-1832 the title was 'The Kitten and the Falling Leaves'.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footer a: Dora Wordsworth died in July 1847. Probably the change of text in 1849—one of the latest which the poet made—was due to the wish to connect this poem with memories of his dead daughter's childhood, and her "laughing eye."—Ed.]

* * * * *

THE SMALL CELANDINE [A]

Composed 1804.—Published 1807

[Grasmere, Town-end. 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.]

In pencil on opposite page “Has not Chaucer noticed it?”—W. W.

This was classed by Wordsworth among his “Poems referring to the Period of Old Age.”—Ed.

There is a Flower, the lesser Celandine,
That shrinks, like many more, from cold and rain;
And, the first moment that the sun may shine,
Bright as the sun himself, [1] 'tis out again!

When hailstones have been falling, swarm on swarm, 5
Or blasts the green field and the trees distress,
Oft have I seen it muffled up from harm,
In close self-shelter, like a Thing at rest.

But lately, one rough day, this Flower I passed
And recognised it, though an altered form, 10
Now standing forth an offering to the blast,
And buffeted at will by rain and storm.

I stopped, and said with inly-muttered voice,
“It doth not love the shower, nor seek the cold:
This neither is its courage nor its choice, 15
But its necessity in being old.

“The sunshine may not cheer [2] it, nor the dew;
It cannot help itself in its decay;
Stiff in its members, withered, changed of hue.”
And, in my spleen, I smiled that it was grey. 20

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To be a Prodigal's Favourite—then, worse truth,
A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
O Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

... itself, ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827

... bless ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Common Pilewort.—W. W. 1807.]

With the last stanza compare one from 'The Fountain', vol. ii. p. 93:

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

Compare also the other two poems on the Celandine, vol. ii. pp. 300, 303, written in a previous year.—Ed.

* * * * *

AT APPLETHWAITE, NEAR KESWICK

1804

Composed 1804.—Published 1842

[This was presented to me by Sir George Beaumont, with a view to the erection of a house upon it, for the sake of being near to Coleridge, then living, and likely to remain, at Greta Hall, near Keswick. The severe necessities that prevented this arose from his domestic situation. This little property, with a considerable addition that still leaves it very small, lies beautifully upon the banks of a rill that gurgles down the side of Skiddaw; and the orchard and other parts of the grounds command a magnificent prospect of Derwent Water, the mountains of Borrowdale and Newlands. Not many years ago I gave the place to my daughter.—I. F.]

In pencil on the opposite page in Dora Wordsworth's (Mrs. Quillinan's) handwriting—"Many years ago, Sir; for it was given when she was a frail feeble monthling."

One of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets."—Ed.

Beaumont! it was thy wish that I should rear
A seemly Cottage in this sunny Dell,
On favoured ground, thy gift, where I might dwell
In neighbourhood with One to me most dear,
That undivided we from year to year
Might work in our high Calling—a bright hope
To which our fancies, mingling, gave free scope
Till checked by some necessities severe.
And should these slacken, honoured *Beaumont!* still
Even then we may perhaps in vain implore
Leave of our fate thy wishes [1] to fulfil.
Whether this boon be granted us or not,
Old Skiddaw will look down upon the Spot
With pride, the Muses love it evermore. [2] [A]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

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[Variant 1:

... pleasure ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 2:

... will be proud, and that same spot
Be dear unto the Muses evermore. *Ms.*]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In the edition of 1842 the following footnote is given by Wordsworth,

“This biographical Sonnet, if so it may be called, together with the Epistle that follows, have been long suppressed from feelings of personal delicacy.”

The “Epistle” was that addressed to Sir George Beaumont in 1811.—Ed.]

This little property at Applethwaite now belongs to Mr. Gordon Wordsworth, the grandson of the poet. It is a “sunny dell” only in its upper reaches, above the spot where the cottage—which still bears Wordsworth’s name—is built. This sonnet, and Sir George Beaumont’s wish that Wordsworth and Coleridge should live so near each other, as to be able to carry on joint literary labour, recall the somewhat similar wish and proposal on the part of W. Calvert, unfolded in a letter from Coleridge to Sir Humphry Davy.—Ed.

* * * * *

VAUDRACOUR AND JULIA

Composed 1804.—Published 1820

The following Tale was written as an Episode, in a work from which its length may perhaps exclude it. [A] The facts are true; no invention as to these has been exercised, as none was needed.—W. W. 1820.

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. Faithfully narrated, though with the omission of many pathetic circumstances, from the mouth of a French lady, [B] who had been an eye-and-ear witness of all that was done and said. Many long years after, I was told that Duplignie was then a monk in the Convent of La Trappe.—I. F.]

This was included among the “Poems founded on the Affections.”—Ed.

O happy time of youthful lovers (thus
My story may begin) O balmy time,
In which a love-knot on a lady's brow
Is fairer than the fairest star in heaven!
To such inheritance of blessed fancy 5
(Fancy that sports more desperately with minds
Than ever fortune hath been known to do)
The high-born Vaudracour was brought, by years
Whose progress had a little overstepped
His stripling prime. A town of small repute, 10
Among the vine-clad mountains of Auvergne,
Was the Youth's birth-place. There he wooed a Maid
Who heard the heart-felt music of his suit
With answering vows. Plebeian was the stock,
Plebeian, though ingenuous, the stock, 15
From which her graces and her honours sprung:
And hence the father of the enamoured Youth,
With haughty indignation, spurned the thought
Of such alliance.—From their

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cradles up,
With but a step between their several homes, 20
Twins had they been in pleasure; after strife
And petty quarrels, had grown fond again;
Each other's advocate, each other's stay;
And, in their happiest moments, not content,
If more divided than a sportive pair [1] 25
Of sea-fowl, conscious both that they are hovering
Within the eddy of a common blast,
Or hidden only by the concave depth
Of neighbouring billows from each other's sight.

Thus, not without concurrence of an age 30
Unknown to memory, was an earnest given
By ready nature for a life of love,
For endless constancy, and placid truth;
But whatsoe'er of such rare treasure lay
Reserved, had fate permitted, for support 35
Of their maturer years, his present mind
Was under fascination;—he beheld
A vision, and adored the thing he saw.
Arabian fiction never filled the world
With half the wonders that were wrought for him. 40
Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring;
Life turned the meanest of her implements,
Before his eyes, to price above all gold;
The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine;
Her chamber-window did surpass in glory 45
The portals of the dawn; all paradise
Could, by the simple opening of a door,
Let itself in upon him:—pathways, walks,
Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
Surcharged, within him, overblest to move 50
Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
To its dull round of ordinary cares;
A man too happy for mortality!

So passed the time, till whether through effect
Of some unguarded moment that dissolved 55
Virtuous restraint—ah, speak it, think it, not!
Deem rather that the fervent Youth, who saw
So many bars between his present state



And the dear haven where he wished to be
In honourable wedlock with his Love, 60
Was in his judgment tempted to decline
To perilous weakness, [2] and entrust his cause
To nature for a happy end of all;
Deem that by such fond hope the Youth was swayed,
And bear with their transgression, when I add 65
That Julia, wanting yet the name of wife,
Carried about her for a secret grief
The promise of a mother.

To conceal

The threatened shame, the parents of the Maid 70
Found means to hurry her away by night,
And unforewarned, that in some distant spot
She might remain shrouded in privacy,
Until the babe was born. When morning came,
The Lover, thus bereft, stung with his loss, 75

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And all uncertain whither he should turn,
Chafed like a wild beast in the toils; but soon
Discovering traces of the fugitives,
Their steps he followed to the Maid's retreat.
Easily may the sequel be divined—[3] 80
Walks to and fro—watchings at every hour;
And the fair Captive, who, where'er she may,
Is busy at her casement as the swallow
Fluttering its pinions, almost within reach,
About the pendent nest, did thus espy 85
Her Lover!—thence a stolen interview,
Accomplished under friendly shade of night.

I pass the raptures of the pair;—such theme
Is, by innumerable poets, touched
In more delightful verse than skill of mine 90
Could fashion; chiefly by that darling bard
Who told of Juliet and her Romeo,
And of the lark's note heard before its time,
And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds
In the unrelenting east.—Through all her courts 95
The vacant city slept; the busy winds,
That keep no certain intervals of rest,
Moved not; meanwhile the galaxy displayed
Her fires, that like mysterious pulses beat
Aloft;—momentous but uneasy bliss! 100
To their full hearts the universe seemed hung
On that brief meeting's slender filament!

They parted; and the generous Vaudracour
Reached speedily the native threshold, bent
On making (so the Lovers had agreed) 105
A sacrifice of birthright to attain
A final portion from his father's hand;
Which granted, Bride and Bridegroom then would flee
To some remote and solitary place,
Shady as night, and beautiful as heaven, 110
Where they may live, with no one to behold
Their happiness, or to disturb their love.
But *now* of this no whisper; not the less,



If ever an obtrusive word were dropped
Touching the matter of his passion, still, 115
In his stern father's hearing, Vaudracour
Persisted openly that death alone
Should abrogate his human privilege
Divine, of swearing everlasting truth,
Upon the altar, to the Maid he loved. 120

"You shall be baffled in your mad intent
If there be justice in the court of France,"
Muttered the Father.—From these words the Youth [4]
Conceived a terror; and, by night or day,
Stirred nowhere without weapons, that full soon 125
Found dreadful provocation: for at night [5]
When to his chamber he retired, attempt
Was made to seize him by three armed men,
Acting, in furtherance of the father's will,
Under a private signet of the State. 130
One the rash Youth's ungovernable

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hand

Slew, and as quickly to a second gave [6]
A perilous wound—he shuddered to behold
The breathless corse; then peacefully resigned
His person to the law, was lodged in prison, 135
And wore the fetters of a criminal.

Have you observed [7] a tuft of winged seed
That, from the dandelion's naked stalk,
Mounted aloft, is suffered not to use
Its natural gifts for purposes of rest, 140
Driven by the autumnal whirlwind to and fro
Through the wide element? or have you marked
The heavier substance of a leaf-clad bough,
Within the vortex of a foaming flood,
Tormented? by such aid you may conceive 145
The perturbation that ensued; [8]—ah, no!
Desperate the Maid—the Youth is stained with blood;
Unmatchable on earth is their disquiet! [9]
Yet [10] as the troubled seed and tortured bough
Is Man, subjected to despotic sway. 150

For him, by private influence with the Court,
Was pardon gained, and liberty procured;
But not without exaction of a pledge,
Which liberty and love dispersed in air.
He flew to her from whom they would divide him—155
He clove to her who could not give him peace—
Yea, his first word of greeting was,—“All right
Is gone from me; my lately-towering hopes,
To the least fibre of their lowest root,
Are withered; thou no longer canst be mine, 160
I thine—the conscience-stricken must not woo
The unruffled Innocent,—I see thy face,
Behold thee, and my misery is complete!”

“One, are we not?” exclaimed the Maiden—“One,
For innocence and youth, for weal and woe?” 165
Then with the father's name she coupled words
Of vehement indignation; but the Youth
Checked her with filial meekness; for no thought
Uncharitable crossed his mind, no sense



Of hasty anger rising in the eclipse [11] 170
Of true domestic loyalty, did e'er
Find place within his bosom.—Once again
The persevering wedge of tyranny
Achieved their separation: and once more
Were they united,—to be yet again 175
Disparted, pitiable lot! But here
A portion of the tale may well be left
In silence, though my memory could add
Much how the Youth, in scanty space of time,
Was traversed from without; much, too, of thoughts 180
That occupied his days in solitude
Under privation and restraint; and what,
Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,
And what, through strong compunction for the past,
He suffered—breaking down in heart and mind! 185

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Doomed to a third and last captivity,
His freedom he recovered on the eve
Of Julia's travail. When the babe was born,
Its presence tempted him to cherish schemes
Of future happiness. "You shall return, 190
Julia," said he, "and to your father's house
Go with the child.—You have been wretched; yet
The silver shower, whose reckless burthen weighs
Too heavily upon the lily's head,
Oft leaves a saving moisture at its root. 195
Malice, beholding you, will melt away.
Go!—'tis a town where both of us were born;
None will reproach you, for our truth is known;
And if, amid those once-bright bowers, our fate
Remain unpitied, pity is not in man. 200
With ornaments—the prettiest, nature yields
Or art can fashion, shall you deck our [12] boy,
And feed his countenance with your own sweet looks
Till no one can resist him.—Now, even now,
I see him sporting on the sunny lawn; 205
My father from the window sees him too;
Startled, as if some new-created thing
Enriched the earth, or Faery of the woods
Bounded before him;—but the unweeting Child
Shall by his beauty win his grandsire's heart 210
So that it shall be softened, and our loves
End happily, as they began!"

These gleams
Appeared but seldom; oftener was he seen
Propping a pale and melancholy face 215
Upon the Mother's bosom; resting thus
His head upon one breast, while from the other
The Babe was drawing in its quiet food.
—That pillow is no longer to be thine,
Fond Youth! that mournful solace now must pass 220
Into the list of things that cannot be!
Unwedded Julia, terror-smitten, hears
The sentence, by her mother's lip pronounced,
That dooms her to a convent.—Who shall tell,
Who dares report, the tidings to the lord 225
Of her affections? so they blindly asked
Who knew not to what quiet depths a weight



Of agony had pressed the Sufferer down:
The word, by others dreaded, he can hear
Composed and silent, without visible sign 230
Of even the least emotion. Noting this,
When the impatient object of his love
Upbraided him with slackness, he returned
No answer, only took the mother's hand
And kissed it; seemingly devoid of pain, 235
Or care, that what so tenderly he pressed
Was a dependant on [13] the obdurate heart
Of one who came to disunite their lives
For ever—sad alternative! preferred,
By the unbending Parents of the Maid, 240
To secret 'spousals meanly disavowed.
—So be it!



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In the city he remained
A season after Julia had withdrawn
To those religious walls. He, too, departs—245
Who with him?—even the senseless Little-one.
With that sole charge he passed the city-gates,
For the last time, attendant by the side
Of a close chair, a litter, or sedan,
In which the Babe was carried. To a hill, 250
That rose a brief league distant from the town,
The dwellers in that house where he had lodged
Accompanied his steps, by anxious love
Impelled;—they parted from him there, and stood
Watching below till he had disappeared 255
On the hill top. His eyes he scarcely took,
Throughout that journey, from the vehicle
(Slow-moving ark of all his hopes!) that veiled
The tender infant: and at every inn,
And under every hospitable tree 260
At which the bearers halted or reposed,
Laid him with timid care upon his knees,
And looked, as mothers ne'er were known to look,
Upon the nursling which his arms embraced.

This was the manner in which Vaudracour 265
Departed with his infant; and thus reached
His father's house, where to the innocent child
Admittance was denied. The young man spake
No word [14] of indignation or reproof,
But of his father begged, a last request, 270
That a retreat might be assigned to him
Where in forgotten quiet he might dwell,
With such allowance as his wants required;
For wishes he had none. To a lodge that stood
Deep in a forest, with leave given, at the age 275
Of four-and-twenty summers he withdrew;
And thither took with him his motherless Babe, [15]
And one domestic for their common needs,
An aged woman. It consoled him here
To attend upon the orphan, and perform 280
Obsequious service to the precious child,
Which, after a short time, by some mistake
Or indiscretion of the Father, died.—
The Tale I follow to its last recess



Of suffering or of peace, I know not which: 285
Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine!

From this time forth he never shared a smile
With mortal creature. An Inhabitant
Of that same town, in which the pair had left
So lively a remembrance of their griefs, 290
By chance of business, coming within reach
Of his retirement, to the forest lodge
Repaired, but only found the matron there, [16]
Who told him that his pains were thrown away,
For that her Master never uttered word 295
To living thing—not even to her.—Behold!
While they were speaking, Vaudracour approached;
But, seeing some one near, as on the latch
Of the garden-gate his hand was laid, he shrunk—[17]
And, like a shadow, glided out of view. 300
Shocked at his savage aspect, from the place
The visitor retired.



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Thus lived the Youth
Cut off from all intelligence with man,
And shunning even the light of common day; 305
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own deep wrongs,
Rouse him: but in those solitary shades
His days he wasted, an imbecile mind! 310

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

And strangers to content if long apart,
Or more divided ... 1820.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Was inwardly prepared to turn aside
From law and custom, ... 1820.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

The sequel may be easily divined,—1820.]

[Variant 4:

1827.

... From this time the Youth 1820.]

[Variant 5:

1827.

Stirred no where without arms. To their rural seat,
Meanwhile, his Parents artfully withdrew,



Upon some feigned occasion, and the Son
Remained with one attendant. At midnight 1820.]

[Variant 6:

1836.

One, did the Youth's ungovernable hand
Assault and slay;—and to a second gave 1820.]

[Variant 7:

1836.

... beheld ... 1820.]

[Variant 8:

1836.

The perturbation of each mind;—... 1820.]

[Variant 9: This line was added in 1836.]

[Variant 10:

1836.

But ... 1820.]

[Variant 11:

1845.

... for no thought
Uncharitable, no presumptuous rising
Of hasty censure, modelled in the eclipse 1820.

... for no thought
Undutifully harsh dwelt in his mind,
No proud resentment cherished in the eclipse C.]

[Variant 12:

1840.

... your ... 1820.]

[Variant 13:



1827.

... upon ... 1820.]

[Variant 14:

1836.

No words ... 1820.]

[Variant 15:

1836.

... infant Babe, 1820.]

[Variant 16:

1827.

... to the spot repaired
With an intent to visit him. He reached
The house, and only found the Matron there, 1820]

[Variant 17:

1836.

But, seeing some one near, even as his hand
Was stretched towards the garden gate, he shrunk—1820]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

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[Footnote A: The work was 'The Prelude'. See book ix., p. 310 of this volume.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare 'The Prelude', book ix. l. 548, p. 310, where Wordsworth says it was told him "by my Patriot friend."—Ed.]

In the preface to his volume, "Poems of Wordsworth" chosen and edited by Matthew Arnold," that distinguished poet and critic has said (p. xxv.), "I can read with pleasure and edification ... everything of Wordsworth, I think, except 'Vaudracour and Julia'."—Ed.

* * * * *

1805

During 1805, the autobiographical poem, which was afterwards named by Mrs. Wordsworth 'The Prelude', was finished. In that year also Wordsworth wrote the 'Ode to Duty', 'To a Sky-Lark', 'Fidelity', the fourth poem 'To the Daisy', the 'Elegiac Stanzas suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle in a Storm', the 'Elegiac Verses' in memory of his brother John, 'The Waggoner', and a few other poems.—Ed.

* * * * *

FRENCH REVOLUTION,

AS IT APPEARED TO ENTHUSIASTS AT ITS COMMENCEMENT

Reprinted from 'the friend'

Composed 1805.—Published 1809

[An extract from the long poem on my own poetical education. It was first published by Coleridge in his 'Friend', which is the reason of its having had a place in every edition of my poems since.—I. F.]

These lines appeared first in 'The Friend', No. 11, October 26, 1809, p. 163. They afterwards found a place amongst the "Poems of the Imagination," in all the collective editions from 1815 onwards. They are part of the eleventh book of 'The Prelude', entitled "France— (concluded)," ll. 105-144. Wordsworth gives the date 1805, but these lines possibly belong to the year 1804.—Ed.

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were [1] the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we [2] who were strong in love!



Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven!—Oh! times, 5
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself 10
A prime Enchantress [3]—to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt [4] 15
Among the bowers of paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!



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20

They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred [5]
Among the grandest objects of the sense, 25
And dealt [6] with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild, 30
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that both [7] found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;
Were called upon to exercise their skill, 35
Not in Utopia, subterranean [8] fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all! 40

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: “were” omitted from the 1820 edition only.]

[Variant 2:

1809.

... us ... ‘The Prelude’, 1850.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

... Enchanter ... 1809.]

[Variant 4:



1832.

(To take an image which was felt no doubt 1809.

(As at some moments might not be unfelt 'The Prelude', 1850.]

[Variant 5:

1815.

Their ministers—used to stir in lordly wise 1809.]

[Variant 6:

1815.

And deal ... 1809.]

[Variant 7: "both" 'italicised' from 1815 to 1832, and also in 'The Prelude'.]

[Variant 8:

1832

... subterraneous ... 1809.]

Compare Coleridge's remarks in 'The Friend', vol. ii. p. 38, before quoting this poem,

"My feelings and imagination did not remain unkindled in this general conflagration; and I confess I should be more inclined to be ashamed than proud of myself if they had! I was a sharer in the general vortex, though my little world described the path of its revolution in an orbit of its own," *etc.*

Ed.

* * * * *

ODE TO DUTY

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

"Jam non consilio bonus, sed more eo perductus, ut non tantum recte facere possim, sed nisi recte facere non possim." [A]

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[This Ode is on the model of Gray's 'Ode to Adversity', which is copied from Horace's Ode to Fortune. Many and many a time have I been twitted by my wife and sister for having forgotten this dedication of myself to the stern law-giver. Transgressor indeed I have been from hour to hour, from day to day: I would fain hope, however, not more flagrantly, or in a worse way than most of my tuneful brethren. But these last words are in a wrong strain. We should be rigorous to ourselves, and forbearing, if not indulgent, to others; and, if we make comparison at all, it ought to be with those who have morally excelled us.—I. F.]

In pencil on the *Ms.*,

"But is not the first stanza of Gray's from a chorus of AEschylus? And is not Horace's Ode also modelled on the Greek?"

This poem was placed by Wordsworth among his "Poems of Sentiment and Reflection."—Ed.

Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!
O Duty! if that name thou love
Who art a light to guide, a rod
To check the erring, and reprove;
Thou, who art victory and law 5
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free;
And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity! [1]

There are who ask not if thine eye
Be on them; who, in love and truth, 10
Where no misgiving is, rely
Upon the genial sense of youth: [B]
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do thy work, [2] and know it not:
Oh, if through confidence misplaced 15
They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power! around them cast. [3]

Serene will be our days and bright,
And happy will our nature be,
When love is an unerring light,
And joy its own security. 20
And they a blissful course may hold
Even now, who, not unwisely bold, [4]
Live in the spirit of this creed;
Yet seek thy firm support, [5] according to their need.



I, loving freedom, and untried; 25
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust:
And oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred 30
The task, in smoother walks to stray; [6]
But thee I now [7] would serve more strictly, if I may.

Through no disturbance of my soul, Or strong compunction in me wrought, I supplicate
for thy control; 35 But in the quietness of thought: Me this unchartered freedom tires;
[C] I feel the weight of chance-desires: My hopes no more must change their name, I
long for a repose that [8] ever is the same. 40 [9] Stern Lawgiver! yet thou dost wear
The Godhead's most benignant

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grace; Nor know we any thing so [10] fair As is the smile upon thy face: [D] Flowers
laugh before thee on their beds 45 And fragrance in thy footing treads; [E] Thou dost
preserve the stars from wrong; And the most ancient heavens, through Thee, are fresh
and strong.

To humbler functions, awful Power!
I call thee: I myself commend 50
Unto thy guidance from this hour;
Oh, let my weakness have an end!
Give unto me, made lowly wise,
The spirit of self-sacrifice;
The confidence of reason give; 55
And in the light of truth thy Bondman let me live! [F]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1815

From strife and from despair; a glorious ministry. 1807.]

[Variant 2:

... the right ... Ms.

... thy will ... Ms.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

May joy be theirs while life shall last!
And Thou, if they should totter, teach them to stand fast! 1807.

Long may the kindly impulse last!
But Thou, ... 1827.

And may that genial sense remain, when youth is past. Ms.]

[Variant 4:



1827.

And bless'd are they who in the main
This faith, even now, do entertain: 1807.

Even now this creed do entertain *Ms.*

This holy creed do entertain *Ms.*]

[Variant 5:

1845.

Yet find that other strength, ... 1807.

Yet find thy firm support, ... 1837.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

Resolved that nothing e'er should press
Upon my present happiness,
I shoved unwelcome tasks away; 1807.

Full oft, when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task imposed, from day to day; 1815.]

[Variant 7:

But henceforth I would ... *Ms.*]

[Variant 8:

1827.

... which ... 1807.]

[Variant 9:

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

Only in the edition of 1807.]

[Variant 10:

... more ... *Ms.*]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

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[Footnote A: This motto was added in the edition of 1837.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare S. T. C. in 'The Friend' (edition 1818, vol. iii. p. 62),

"Its instinct, its safety, its benefit, its glory is to love, to admire, to feel, and to labour."

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare Churchill's 'Gotham', i. 49:

'An Englishman in chartered freedom born.'

Ed.]

[Footnote D: Compare in 'Sartor Resartus',

"Happy he for whom a kind of heavenly sun brightens it [Necessity] into a ring of Duty, and plays round it with beautiful prismatic refractions."

Ed.]

[Footnote E: Compare Persius, 'Satura', ii. l. 38:

'Quidquid calcaverit hic, rosa fiat.'

And Ben Jonson, in 'The Sad Shepherd', act I. scene i. ll. 8, 9:

'And where she went, the flowers took thickest root,
As she had sow'd them with her odorous foot.'

Also, a similar reference to Aphrodite in Hesiod, 'Theogony', vv. 192 'seq.'—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Compare S. T. C. in 'The Friend' (edition 1818), vol. iii. p. 64.—Ed.]

Mr. J. R. Tutin has supplied me with the text of a proof copy of the sheets of the edition of 1807, which was cancelled by Wordsworth, in which the following stanzas take the place of the first four of that edition:

'There are who tread a blameless way
In purity, and love, and truth,
Though resting on no better stay
Than on the genial sense of youth:
Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot;
Who do the right, and know it not:



May joy be theirs while life shall last
And may a genial sense remain, when youth is past.

Serene would be our days and bright;
And happy would our nature be;
If Love were an unerring light;
And Joy its own security.
And bless'd are they who in the main,
This creed, even now, do entertain,
Do in this spirit live; yet know
That Man hath other hopes; strength which elsewhere must grow.

I, loving freedom, and untried;
No sport of every random gust,
Yet being to myself a guide,
Too blindly have reposed my trust;
Resolv'd that nothing e'er should press
Upon my present happiness,
I shov'd unwelcome tasks away:
But henceforth I would serve; and strictly if I may.

O Power of *duty*! sent from God
To enforce on earth his high behest,
And keep us faithful to the road
Which conscience hath pronounc'd the best:
Thou, who art Victory and Law
When empty terrors overawe;
From vain temptations dost set free,
From Strife, and from Despair, a glorious Ministry! [G]

Ed.

[Footnote G: In the original *Ms.* sent to the printer, I find that this stanza was transcribed by Coleridge.—Ed.]

* * * * *

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TO A SKY-LARK

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

[Rydal Mount, 1825. [A]—I. F.]

In pencil opposite,

“Where there are no skylarks; but the poet is everywhere.”

In the edition of 1807 this is No. 2 of the “Poems, composed during a Tour, chiefly on foot.” [B] In 1815 it became one of the “Poems of the Fancy.”—Ed.

Up with me! up with me into the clouds!
For thy song, Lark, is strong;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds!
Singing, singing,
With clouds and sky [1] about thee ringing, 5
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind!

I have walked through wildernesses dreary,
And [2] to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings [3] of a Faery, 10
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Lift me, guide me high and high [4]
To thy banqueting-place in the sky. 15

Joyous as morning, [5]
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark! thou would'st be loth 20
To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy Liver,
With a soul as strong as a mountain river
Pouring out praise to the almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both! 25

Alas! my journey, rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind;
But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,



As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
I, with my fate contented, will plod on, 30
And hope for higher raptures, when life's day is done. [6]

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

With all the heav'ns ... 1807]

[Variant 2:

But ... Ms.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

the soul ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1832.

Up with me, up with me, high and high, ... 1807.]

[Variant 5: This and the previous stanza were omitted in the edition of 1827, but restored in that of 1832.]

[Variant 6:

1827.

Joy and jollity be with us both!
Hearing thee, or else some other,
As merry a Brother,
I on the earth will go plodding on,
By myself, chearfully, till the day is done. 1807.

What though my course be rugged and uneven,
To prickly moors and dusty ways confined,
Yet, hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
As full of gladness and as free of heaven,

I on the earth will go plodding on,
By myself, cheerfully, till the day is done. 1820.]

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* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: So it is printed in the 'Prose Works of Wordsworth' (1876); but the date was 1805.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: In a *Ms.* copy this series is called "Poems composed 'for amusement' during a Tour, chiefly on foot."—Ed.]

Compare this poem with Shelley's 'Skylark', and with Wordsworth's poem, on the same subject, written in the year 1825, and the last five stanzas of his 'Morning Exercise' written in 1827; also with William Watson's 'First Skylark of Spring', 1895.—Ed.

* * * * *

FIDELITY

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

[The young man whose death gave occasion to this poem was named Charles Gough, and had come early in the spring to Patterdale for the sake of angling. While attempting to cross over Helvellyn to Grasmere he slipped from a steep part of the rock where the ice was not thawed, and perished. His body was discovered as described in this poem. Walter Scott heard of the accident, and both he and I, without either of us knowing that the other had taken up the subject, each wrote a poem in admiration of the dog's fidelity. His contains a most beautiful stanza:

"How long did'st thou think that his silence was slumber!
When the wind waved his garment how oft did'st thou start!"

I will add that the sentiment in the last four lines of the last stanza of my verses was uttered by a shepherd with such exactness, that a traveller, who afterwards reported his account in print, was induced to question the man whether he had read them, which he had not.—I. F.]

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

A barking sound the Shepherd hears,
A cry as of a dog or fox;
He halts—and searches with his eyes
Among the scattered rocks:
And now at distance can discern



A stirring in a brake of fern;
And instantly a dog is seen,
Glancing through that covert green. [1]

The Dog is not of mountain breed;
Its motions, too, are wild and shy; 10
With something, as the Shepherd thinks,
Unusual in its cry:
Nor is there any one in sight
All round, in hollow or on height;
Nor shout, nor whistle strikes his ear; 15
What is the creature doing here?

It was a cove, a huge recess,
That keeps, till June, December's snow;
A lofty precipice in front,
A silent tarn [A] below! [B] 20
Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land;
From trace of human foot or hand.



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There sometimes doth [2] a leaping fish 25
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
The crags repeat the raven's croak, [C]
In symphony austere;
Thither the rainbow comes—the cloud—
And mists that spread the flying shroud; 30
And sunbeams; and the sounding blast,
That, if it could, would hurry past;
But that enormous barrier holds [3] it fast.

Not free from boding thoughts, [4] a while
The Shepherd stood; then makes his way 35
O'er rocks and stones, following the Dog [5]
As quickly as he may;
Nor far had gone before he found
A human skeleton on the ground;
The appalled Discoverer with a sigh [6] 40
Looks round, to learn the history.

From those abrupt and perilous rocks
The Man had fallen, that place of fear!
At length upon the Shepherd's mind
It breaks, and all is clear: 45
He instantly recalled the name, [7]
And who he was, and whence he came;
Remembered, too, the very day
On which the Traveller passed this way.

But hear a wonder, for whose sake 50
This lamentable tale I tell! [8]
A lasting monument of words
This wonder merits well.
The Dog, which still was hovering nigh,
Repeating the same timid cry, 55
This Dog, had been through three months' space
A dweller in that savage place.

Yes, proof was plain that, since the day
When this ill-fated Traveller died, [9]
The Dog had watched about the spot, 60
Or by his master's side:
How nourished here through such long time
He knows, who gave that love sublime;



And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate! 65

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1820.

From which immediately leaps out
A Dog, and yelping runs about. 1807.

And instantly a Dog is seen,
Glancing from that covert green. 1815.]

[Variant 2:

1820.

... does ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:

1837.

binds 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1815.

Not knowing what to think 1807.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

Towards the Dog, o'er rocks and stones, 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1815.

Sad sight! the Shepherd with a sigh 1807.]

[Variant 7:



And signs and circumstances dawned
Till everything was clear;
He made discovery of his name. *Ms.*]

[Variant 8:

1815.

But hear a wonder now, for sake
Of which this mournful Tale I tell! 1807.]

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[Variant 9:

1827.

On which the Traveller thus had died 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Tarn is a *small* Mere or Lake mostly high up in the mountains,—W. W.]

[Footnote B: Compare the reference to Helvellyn, and its “deep coves, shaped by skeleton arms,” in the ‘Musings near Aquapendente’ (1837). Wordsworth here describes Red Tarn, under Helvellyn, to the east; but Charles Gough was killed on the Kepplecove side of Swirell Edge, and not at Red Tarn. Bishop Watson of Llandaff, writing to Hayley (see ‘Anecdotes of the Life of Bishop Watson’, p. 440), writes about Charles Gouche (evidently Gough). He had been lodging at “the Cherry Inn,” near Wytheburn, sometime before his death.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare ‘The Excursion’, book iv. ll. 1185-94.—Ed.]

Thomas Wilkinson—referred to in the notes to ‘The Solitary Reaper’, vol. ii. pp. 399, 400, and the verses ‘To the Spade of a Friend’, in vol. iv.—alludes to this incident at some length in his poem, ‘Emont Vale’. Wilkinson attended the funeral of young Gough, and writes of the incident with feeling, but without inspiration. Gough perished early in April, and his body was not found till July 22nd, 1805. A reference to his fate will be found in Lockhart’s ‘Life of Scott’ (vol. ii. p. 274); also in a letter of Mr. Luff of Patterdale, to his wife, July 23rd, 1805. Henry Crabb Robinson records (see his ‘Diary, Reminiscences’, etc., vol. ii. p. 25) a conversation with Wordsworth, in which he said of this poem, that “he purposely made the narrative as prosaic as possible, in order that no discredit might be thrown on the truth of the incident.”—Ed.

* * * * *

INCIDENT CHARACTERISTIC OF A FAVOURITE DOG [A]

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

[This dog I knew well. It belonged to Mrs. Wordsworth’s brother, Mr. Thomas Hutchinson, who then lived at Sockburn-on-the-Tees, a beautiful retired situation, where



I used to visit him and his sisters before my marriage. My sister and I spent many months there after my return from Germany in 1799—I. F.]

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

On his morning rounds the Master
Goes to learn how all things fare;
Searches pasture after pasture,
Sheep and cattle eyes with care;
And, for silence or for talk, 5
He hath comrades in his walk;
Four dogs, each pair of different breed,
Distinguished two for scent, and two for speed.

See a hare before him started!
—Off they fly in earnest chase; 10
Every dog is eager-hearted,
All the four are in the race:
And the hare whom they pursue,
Knows from instinct [1] what to do;
Her hope is near: no turn she makes; 15
But, like an arrow, to the river takes.

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Deep the river was, and crusted
Thinly by a one night's frost;
But the nimble Hare hath trusted
To the ice, and safely crost; so 20
She hath crost, and without heed
All are following at full speed,
When, lo! the ice, so thinly spread,
Breaks—and the greyhound, *dart*, is over-head!

Better fate have *Prince* and *swallow*—25
See them cleaving to the sport!
Music has no heart to follow,
Little *music*, she stops short.
She hath neither wish nor heart,
Hers is now another part: 30
A loving creature she, and brave!
And fondly strives [2] her struggling friend to save.

From the brink her paws she stretches,
Very hands as you would say!
And afflicting moans she fetches, 35
As he breaks the ice away.
For herself she hath no fears,—
Him alone she sees and hears,—
Makes efforts with complainings; nor gives o'er
Until her fellow sinks to re-appear no more. [3] 40

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

Hath an instinct ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1815.

And doth her best ... 1807.]

[Variant 3:



1837.

Makes efforts and complainings; nor gives o'er
Until her Fellow sunk, and reappear'd no more. 1807.

... sank, ... 1820.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: In 1807 and 1815 the title was 'Incident, Characteristic of a favourite Dog, which belonged to a Friend of the Author'.—Ed.]

* * * * *

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF THE SAME DOG

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

[Was written at the same time, 1805. The Dog Music died, aged and blind, by falling into a draw-well at Gallow] Hill, to the great grief of the family of the Hutchinsons, who, as has been before mentioned, had removed to that place from Sockburn.—I. F.]

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

Lie [1] here, without a record of thy worth,
Beneath a [2] covering of the common earth!
It is not from unwillingness to praise,
Or want of love, that here no Stone we raise;
More thou deserv'st; but *this* man gives to man, 5
Brother to brother, *this* is all we can.
Yet [3] they to whom thy virtues made thee dear
Shall find thee through all changes of the year:
This Oak points out thy grave; the silent tree
Will gladly stand a monument of thee. 10

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We grieved for thee, and wished thy end were past; [4]
And willingly have laid thee here at last:
For thou hadst lived till every thing that cheers
In thee had yielded to the weight of years;
Extreme old age had wasted thee away, 15
And left thee but a glimmering of the day;
Thy ears were deaf, and feeble were thy knees,—
I saw thee stagger in the summer breeze,
Too weak to stand against its sportive breath,
And ready for the gentlest stroke of death. 20
It came, and we were glad; yet tears were shed;
Both man and woman wept when thou wert dead;
Not only for a thousand thoughts that were,
Old household thoughts, in which thou hadst thy share;
But for some precious boons vouchsafed to thee, 25
Found scarcely any where in like degree!
For love, that comes wherever life and sense
Are given by God, in thee was most intense; [5]
A chain of heart, a feeling of the mind,
A tender sympathy, which did thee bind 30
Not only to us Men, but to thy Kind:
Yea, for thy fellow-brutes in thee we saw
A soul [6] of love, love's intellectual law:—
Hence, if we wept, it was not done in shame;
Our tears from passion and from reason came, 35
And, therefore, shalt thou be an honoured name!

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: In the editions of 1807 to 1820 the following lines began the poem. They were withdrawn in 1827.

Lie here sequester'd:—be this little mound
For ever thine, and be it holy ground!]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Beneath the ... 1807.]



[Variant 3:

But ... Ms.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

I pray'd for thee, and that thy end were past; 1807.

I grieved for thee, and wished thy end were past; 1820.]

[Variant 5:

1837.

For love, that comes to all; the holy sense,
Best gift of God, in thee was most intense; 1807.]

[Variant 6:

1837.

The soul ... 1807.]

* * * * *

TO THE DAISY (#4)

Composed 1805.—Published 1815

Placed by Wordsworth among his “Epitaphs and Elegiac Pieces.”—Ed.

Sweet Flower! belike one day to have
A place upon thy Poet's grave,
I welcome thee once more:
But He, who was on land, at sea,
My Brother, too, in loving thee, 5
Although he loved more silently,
Sleeps by his native shore.

Ah! hopeful, hopeful was the day
When to that Ship he bent his way,
To govern and to guide: 10
His wish was gained: a little time
Would bring him back in manhood's prime
And free for life, these hills to climb;
With all his wants supplied.



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And full of hope day followed day 15
While that stout Ship at anchor lay
Beside the shores of Wight;
The May had then made all things green;
And, floating there, in pomp serene,
That Ship was goodly to be seen, 20
His pride and his delight!

Yet then, when called ashore, he sought
The tender peace of rural thought:
In more than happy mood
To your abodes, bright daisy Flowers! 25
He then would steal at leisure hours,
And loved you glittering in your bowers,
A starry multitude.

But hark the word!—the ship is gone;—
Returns from her long course: [1]—anon 30
Sets sail:—in season due,
Once more on English earth they stand:
But, when a third time from the land
They parted, sorrow was at hand
For Him and for his crew. 35

Ill-fated Vessel!—ghastly shock!
—At length delivered from the rock,
The deep she hath regained;
And through the stormy night they steer;
Labouring for life, in hope and fear, 40
To reach a safer shore [2]—how near,
Yet not to be attained!

“Silence!” the brave Commander cried;
To that calm word a shriek replied,
It was the last death-shriek. 45
—A few (my soul oft sees that sight)
Survive upon the tall mast’s height; [3]
But one dear remnant of the night—
For Him in vain I seek.

Six weeks beneath the moving sea 50
He lay in slumber quietly;
Unforced by wind or wave
To quit the Ship for which he died,



(All claims of duty satisfied;)
And there they found him at her side; 55
And bore him to the grave.

Vain service! yet not vainly done
For this, if other end were none,
That He, who had been cast
Upon a way of life unmeet 60
For such a gentle Soul and sweet,
Should find an undisturbed retreat
Near what he loved, at last—

That neighbourhood of grove and field
To Him a resting-place should yield, 65
A meek man and a brave!
The birds shall sing and ocean make
A mournful murmur for *his* sake;
And Thou, sweet Flower, shalt sleep and wake
Upon his senseless grave. [4] 70

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1837.

From her long course returns:—... 1815.]

[Variant 2:

1837.

Towards a safer shore—... 1815.]

[Variant 3:

1837

—A few appear by morning light,
Preserved upon the tall mast's height:
Oft in my Soul I see that sight; 1815.]



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[Variant 4: In the edition of 1827 and subsequent ones, Wordsworth here inserted a footnote, asking the reader to refer to No. VI. of the "Poems on the Naming of Places," beginning "When, to the attractions of the busy world," p. 66. His note of 1837 refers also to the poem which there precedes the present one, viz. the 'Elegiac Stanzas.'—Ed.]

* * * * *

ELEGIAC STANZAS [A]

*Suggested by A picture of Peele castle, in A storm,
painted by sir George Beaumont*

Composed 1805.—Published 1807

[Sir George Beaumont painted two pictures of this subject, one of which he gave to Mrs. Wordsworth, saying she ought to have it; but Lady Beaumont interfered, and after Sir George's death she gave it to Sir Uvedale Price, at whose house at Foxley I have seen it.—I. F.]

Placed by Wordsworth among his "Epitaphs and Elegiac Pieces."—Ed.

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

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air! 5
So like, so very like, was day to day!
Whene'er I looked, thy Image still was there;
It trembled, but it never passed away.

How perfect was the calm! it seemed no sleep;
No mood, which season takes away, or brings: 10
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

Ah! *Then*, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add the gleam,
The light that never was, on sea or land, 15
The consecration, and the Poet's dream; [1]



I would have planted thee, thou hoary Pile
Amid a world how different from this!
Beside a sea that could not cease to smile;
On tranquil land, beneath a sky of bliss. 20

Thou shouldst have seemed a treasure-house divine [2]
Of peaceful years; a chronicle of heaven;—
Of all the sunbeams that did ever shine
The very sweetest had to thee been given.

A Picture had it been of lasting ease, 25
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

Such, in the fond illusion [3] of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made: 30
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A stedfast peace that might not be betrayed. [4]

So once it would have been,—'tis so no more;
I have submitted to a new control:
A power is gone, which nothing can restore; 35
A deep distress hath humanised my Soul.

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Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. 40

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

O 'tis a passionate Work!—yet wise and well, 45
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime, 1 love to see the look with which it braves,
50 Cased in the unfeeling armour of old time, The lightning, the fierce wind, and
trampling waves.

Farewell, farewell the heart that lives alone,
Housed in a dream, at distance from the Kind!
Such happiness, wherever it be known, 55
Is to be pitied; for 'tis surely blind.

But welcome fortitude, and patient cheer,
And frequent sights of what is to be borne!
Such sights, or worse, as are before me here.—
Not without hope we suffer and we mourn. 60

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

and add a gleam,
The lustre, known to neither sea nor land,
But borrowed from the youthful Poet's dream; 1820.

... the gleam, 1827.

The edition of 1832 returns to the text of 1807. [a]]



[Variant 2:

1845.

... a treasure-house, a mine 1807.

The whole of this stanza was omitted in the editions of 1820-1843.]

[Variant 3:

1815.

... delusion ... 1807.]

[Variant 4:

1837.

A faith, a trust, that could not be betray'd. 1807.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The original title, in *Ms*, was 'Verses suggested', etc,—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footer a: Many years ago Principal Shairp wrote to me,

"Have you noted how the two lines, 'The light that never was,' *etc.*, stood in the edition of 1827? I know no other such instance of a change from commonplace to perfection of ideality."

The Principal had not remembered at the time that the "perfection of ideality" was in the original edition of 1807. The curious thing is that the prosaic version of 1820 and 1827 ever took its place. Wordsworth's return to his original reading was one of the wisest changes he introduced into the text of 1832.—Ed.]

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There is a Peele Castle, on a small rocky island, close to the town of Peele, in the Isle of Man; yet separated from it, much as St. Michael's Mount in Cornwall is separated from the mainland. This castle was believed by many to be the one which Sir George painted, and which gave rise to the foregoing lines. I visited it in 1879, being then ignorant that any other Peele Castle existed; and although, the day being calm, and the season summer, I thought Sir George had idealized his subject much—(as I had just left Coleorton, where the picture still exists)—I accepted the customary opinion. But I am now convinced, both from the testimony of the Arnold family, [B] and as the result of a visit to Piel Castle, near Barrow in Furness, that Wordsworth refers to it. The late Bishop of Lincoln, in his uncle's 'Memoirs' (vol. i. p. 299), quotes the line

"I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged pile,"

and adds,

"He had spent four weeks there of a college summer vacation at the house of his cousin, Mr. Barker."

This house was at Rampside, the village opposite Piel, on the coast of Lancashire. The "rugged pile," too, now "cased in the unfeeling armour of old time," painted by Beaumont, is obviously this Piel Castle near Barrow. I took the engraving of his picture with me, when visiting it: and although Sir George—after the manner of landscape artists of his day—took many liberties with his subjects, it is apparent that it was this, and not Peele Castle in Mona, that he painted. The "four summer weeks" referred to in the first stanza, were those spent at Piel during the year 1794.

With the last verse of these 'Elegiac Stanzas' compare stanzas ten and eleven of the 'Ode, Intimations of Immortality', vol. viii.

One of the two pictures of "Peele Castle in a Storm"—engraved by S. W. Reynolds, and published in the editions of Wordsworth's poems of 1815 and 1820—is still in the Beaumont Gallery at Coleorton Hall.

The poem is so memorable that I have arranged to make this picture of "Peele Castle in a Storm," the vignette to vol. xv. of this edition. It deserves to be noted that it was to the pleading of Barron Field that we owe the restoration of the original line of 1807,

'The light that never was, on sea or land.'

An interesting account of Piel Castle will be found in Hearne and Byrne's 'Antiquities'. It was built by the Abbot of Furness in the first year of the reign of Edward *iii.*—Ed.

[Footnote B: Miss Arnold wrote to me, in December 1893:



“I have never doubted that the Peele Castle of Wordsworth is the Piel off Walney Island. I know that my brother Matthew so believed, and I went with him some years ago from Furness Abbey over to Piel, visiting it as the subject of the picture and the poem.”

Ed.]

* * * * *

ELEGIAC VERSES,

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In memory of my brother, John Wordsworth, commander of the E. I. Company's ship, 'the Earl of Abergavenny', in which he perished by calamitous shipwreck, Feb. 6Th, 1805.

Composed near the Mountain track, that leads from Grasmere through Grisdale Hawes, where it descends towards Patterdale.

Composed 1805.—Published 1842

["Here did we stop; and here looked round,
While each into himself descends."

The point is two or three yards below the outlet of Grisedale Tarn, on a foot-road by which a horse may pass to Patterdale—a ridge of Helvellyn on the left, and the summit of Fairfield on the right.—I. F.]

This poem was included among the "Epitaphs and Elegiac Pieces."—Ed.

I The Sheep-boy whistled loud, and lo!
That instant, startled by the shock,
The Buzzard mounted from the rock
Deliberate and slow:
Lord of the air, he took his flight; 5
Oh! could he on that woeful night
Have lent his wing, my Brother dear,
For one poor moment's space to Thee,
And all who struggled with the Sea,
When safety was so near. 10

// Thus in the weakness of my heart
I spoke (but let that pang be still)
When rising from the rock at will,
I saw the Bird depart.
And let me calmly bless the Power 15
That meets me in this unknown Flower,
Affecting type of him I mourn!
With calmness suffer and believe,
And grieve, and know that I must grieve,
Not cheerless, though forlorn. 20

III Here did we stop; and here looked round
While each into himself descends,
For that last thought of parting Friends
That is not to be found.



Hidden was Grasmere Vale from sight, 25
Our home and his, his heart's delight,
His quiet heart's selected home.
But time before him melts away,
And he hath feeling of a day
Of blessedness to come. 30

IV Full soon in sorrow did I weep,
Taught that the mutual hope was dust,
In sorrow, but for higher trust,
How miserably deep!
All vanished in a single word, 35
A breath, a sound, and scarcely heard.
Sea—Ship—drowned—Shipwreck—so it came,
The meek, the brave, the good, was gone;
He who had been our living John
Was nothing but a name. 40

V That was indeed a parting! oh,
Glad am I, glad that it is past;
For there were some on whom it cast
Unutterable woe.
But they as well as I have gains;—45
From many a humble source, to pains
Like these, there comes a mild release;
Even here I feel it, even this Plant
Is in its beauty ministrant
To comfort and to peace. 50



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VI He would have loved thy modest grace,
 Meek Flower! To Him I would have said,
 "It grows upon its native bed
 Beside our Parting-place;
 There, cleaving to the ground, it lies 55
 With multitude of purple eyes,
 Spangling a cushion green like moss;
 But we will see it, joyful tide!
 Some day, to see it in its pride,
 The mountain will we cross." 60

VII—Brother and friend, if verse of mine
 Have power to make thy virtues known,
 Here let a monumental Stone
 Stand—sacred as a Shrine;
 And to the few who pass this way, 65
 Traveller or Shepherd, let it say,
 Long as these mighty rocks endure,—
 Oh do not Thou too fondly brood,
 Although deserving of all good,
 On any earthly hope, however pure! [A] 70

* * * * *

FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: See 2nd vol. of the Author's Poems, page 298, and 5th vol., pages 311 and 314, among Elegiac Pieces.—W. W. 1842.

These poems are those respectively beginning:

"When, to the attractions of the busy world ..."

"I was thy neighbour once, thou rugged Pile! ..."

"Sweet Flower! belike one day to have ..."

Ed.

The plant alluded to is the Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*, of Linnaeus).
 See note at the end of the volume.—W. W. 1842.

See among the "Poems on the Naming of Places," No. VI.—W. W. 1845.

The note is as follows:

“Moss Campion (*Silene acaulis*). This most beautiful plant is scarce in England, though it is found in great abundance upon the mountains of Scotland. The first specimen I ever saw of it in its native bed was singularly fine, the tuft or cushion being at least eight inches diameter, and the root proportionably thick. I have only met with it in two places among our mountains, in both of which I have since sought for it in vain. Botanists will not, I hope, take it ill, if I caution them against carrying off inconsiderately rare and beautiful plants. This has often been done, particularly from Ingleborough and other mountains in Yorkshire, till the species have totally disappeared, to the great regret of lovers of nature living near the places where they grew.”—W. W. 1842.

See also ‘The Prelude’, book xiv. 1. 419, p. 379.—Ed.]

This poem underwent no change in successive editions.

At a meeting of “The Wordsworth Society” held at Grasmere, in July 1881, it was proposed by one of the members, the Rev. H. D. Rawnsley, then Vicar of Wray, to erect some memorial at the parting-place of the brothers. The brothers John and William Wordsworth parted at Grisedale Tarn, on the 29th September 1800. The originator of the idea wrote thus of it in June 1882:

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"A proposition, made by one of its members to the Wordsworth Society when it met in Grasmere in 1881, to mark the spot in the Grisedale Pass of Wordsworth's parting from his brother John—and to carry out a wish the poet seems to have hinted at in the last of his elegiac verses in memory of that parting—is now being put into effect. It has been determined, after correspondence with Lord Coleridge, Dr. Cradock, Professor Knight, and Mr. Hills, to have inscribed—(on the native rock, if possible)—the first four lines of Stanzas *iii.* and *vii.* of these verses: 'Here did we stop; and here looked round While each into himself descends, For that last thought of parting Friends That is not to be found. ... Brother and friend, if verse of mine Have power to make thy virtues known, Here let a monumental Stone Stand—sacred as a Shrine.' The rock selected is a fine mass, facing the east, on the left of the track as one descends from Grisedale Tarn towards Patterdale, and is about 100 yards from the tarn. No more suitable one can be found, and we have the testimony of Mr. David Richardson of Newcastle, who has practical knowledge of engineering, that it is the fittest, both from shape and from slight incline of plane. It has been proposed to sink a panel in the face of the rock, that so the inscription may be slightly protected, and to engrave the letters upon the face of the panel thus obtained. But it is not quite certain yet that the grain of the rock—volcanic ash—will admit of the lettering. If this cannot be carried out, it has been determined to have the letters engraved upon a slab of Langdale slate, and imbed it in the Grisedale Rock.

It is believed that the simplicity of the design, the lonely isolation of this mountain memorial, will appeal at once

' ... to the few who pass this way,
Traveller or Shepherd.'

And we in our turn appeal to English tourists who may chance to see it, to forego the wish of adding to it, or taking anything from it, by engraving their own names; and to let the Monumental Stone stand, as the poet wished it might

' ... stand, *sacred* as a Shrine.'

We owe great thanks to Mrs. Sturge for first surveying the place, to ascertain the possibility of finding a mountain rock sufficiently striking in position; to Mr. Richardson, jun., for his etching of the rock, upon which the inscription is to be made; to his father for the kind trouble he took in the measurement of the said rock; and particularly to the seconder of the original proposal, and my coadjutor in the task of final selection and superintending the work, Mr. W. H. Hills.

H. D. Rawnsley.

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P. S.—When we came to examine the rock, we found the area for the panel less than we had hoped for, owing to certain rock fissures, which, by acting as drains for the rainwater on the surface, would have much interfered with the durability of the inscription. The available space for the panel remains 3 feet 7 in length by 1 foot 9 inches in depth. Owing to the fineness of the grain of the stone, it may be quite possible to letter the native rock; but it has been difficult to fix on a style of lettering for the inscription that shall be at once in good taste, forcible, and plain. It was proposed that the Script type of letter which was made use of in the inscription cut on the rock, in the late Mr. Ball's garden grounds below the Mount at Rydal, should be adopted; but a final decision has been given in favour of a style of lettering which Mrs. Rawnsley has designed. The panel is, from its position, certain to attract the eye of the wanderer from Patterdale up to the Grisedale Pass.

H. D. R.”

See the note to ‘The Waggoner’, p. 112, referring to the Rock of Names, on the shore of Thirlmere.

The following extract from ‘Recollections from 1803 to 1837, with a Conclusion in 1868, by the Hon. Amelia Murray’ (London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1868)—refers to the loss of the ‘Abergavenny’:

“One morning, coming down early, I saw what I thought was a great big ship without any hull. This was the ‘Abergavenny’, East Indiaman, which had sunk with all sails set, hardly three miles from the shore, and all on board perished. Had any of the crew taken refuge in the main-top, they might have been saved; but the bowsprit, which was crowded with human beings, gave a lurch into the sea as the ship settled down, and thus all were washed off—though the timber appeared again above water when the ‘Abergavenny’ touched the ground. The ship had sprung a leak off St. Alban’s Head; and in spite of pumps, she went to the bottom just within reach of safety.” Pp. 12, 13.

A ‘Narrative of the loss of the “Earl of Abergavenny” East Indiaman, off Portland, Feb. 5, 1805’, was published in pamphlet form (8vo, 1805), by Hamilton and Bird, 21 High Street, Islington.

For much in reference to John Wordsworth, which illustrates both these ‘Elegiac Verses’, and the poem “On the Naming of Places” which follows them, I must refer to his ‘Life’ to be published in another volume of this series; but there is one letter of Dorothy Wordsworth’s, written to her friend Miss Jane Pollard (afterwards Mrs. Marshall), in reference to her brother’s death, which may find a place here. For the use of it I am indebted to the kindness of Mrs. Marshall’s daughter, the Dowager Lady Monteagle:

“March 16th, 1805. Grasmere.

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"... It does me good to weep for him, and it does me good to find that others weep, and I bless them for it. ... It is with me, when I write, as when I am walking out in this vale, once so full of joy. I can turn to no object that does not remind me of our loss. I see nothing that he would not have loved, and enjoyed.... My consolations rather come to me in gusts of feeling, than are the quiet growth of my mind. I know it will not always be so. The time will come when the light of the setting sun upon these mountain tops will be as heretofore a pure joy; not the same *gladness*, that can never be—but yet a joy even more tender. It will soothe me to know how happy he would have been, could he have seen the same beautiful spectacle.... He was taken away in the freshness of his manhood; pure he was, and innocent as a child. Never human being was more thoroughly modest, and his courage I need not speak of. He was 'seen speaking with apparent cheerfulness to the first mate a few minutes before the ship went down;' and when nothing more could be done, He said, 'the will of God be done.' I have no doubt when he felt that it was out of his power to save his life he was as calm as before, if some thought of what we should endure did not awaken a pang.... He loved solitude, and he rejoiced in society. He would wander alone amongst these hills with his fishing-rod, or led on by the mere pleasure of walking, for many hours; or he would walk with W. or me, or both of us, and was continually pointing out—with a gladness which is seldom seen but in very young people—something which perhaps would have escaped our observation; for he had so fine an eye that no distinction was unnoticed by him, and so tender a feeling that he never noticed anything in vain. Many a time has he called out to me at evening to look at the moon or stars, or a cloudy sky, or this vale in the quiet moonlight; but the stars and moon were his chief delight. He made of them his companions when he was at sea, and was never tired of those thoughts which the silence of the night fed in him. Then he was so happy by the fireside. Any little business of the house interested him. He loved our cottage. He helped us to furnish it, and to make the garden. Trees are growing now which he planted.... He staid with us till the 29th of September, having come to us about the end of January. During that time Mary Hutchinson—now Mary Wordsworth—staid with us six weeks. John used to walk with her everywhere, and they were exceedingly attached to each other; so my poor sister mourns with us, not merely because we have lost one who was so dear to William and me, but from tender love to John and an intimate knowledge of him. Her hopes as well as ours were fixed on John.... I can think of nothing but of our departed Brother, yet I am very tranquil to-day. I honour him, and love him, and glory in his memory...."

Southey, writing to his friend, C. W. W. Wynn, on the 3rd of April 1805, says:

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"Dear Wynn,

I have been grievously shocked this evening by the loss of the 'Abergavenny', of which Wordsworth's brother was captain. Of course the news came flying up to us from all quarters, and it has disordered me from head to foot. At such circumstances I believe we feel as much for others as for ourselves; just as a violent blow occasions the same pain as a wound, and he who breaks his shin feels as acutely at the moment as the man whose leg is shot off. In fact, I am writing to you merely because this dreadful shipwreck has left me utterly unable to do anything else. It is the heaviest calamity Wordsworth has ever experienced, and in all probability I shall have to communicate it to him, as he will very likely be here before the tidings can reach him. What renders any near loss of this kind so peculiarly distressing is, that the recollection is perpetually freshened when any like event occurs, by the mere mention of shipwreck, or the sound of the wind. Of all deaths it is the most dreadful, from the circumstances of terror which accompany it...."

(See 'The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey', vol. ii. p. 321.)

The following is part of a letter from Mary Lamb to Dorothy Wordsworth on the same subject. It is undated:

"My dear miss Wordsworth,—

I wished to tell you that you would one day feel the kind of peaceful state of mind and sweet memory of the dead, which you so happily describe, as now almost begun; but I felt that it was improper, and most grating to the feelings of the afflicted, to say to them that the memory of their affliction would in time become a constant part, not only of their dreams, but of their most wakeful sense of happiness. That you would see every object with and through your lost brother, and that that would at last become a real and everlasting source of comfort to you, I felt, and well knew, from my own experience in sorrow; but till you yourself began to feel this, I did not dare to tell you so; but I send you some poor lines, which I wrote under this conviction of mind, and before I heard Coleridge was returning home.

...

*"Why is he wandering on the sea?—
Coleridge should now with Wordsworth be.
By slow degrees he'd steal away
Their woes, and gently bring a ray
(So happily he'd time relief,)
Of comfort from their very grief.
He'd tell them that their brother dead,
When years have passed o'er their head,*

Will be remembered with such holy,
True and tender melancholy,
That ever this lost brother John
Will be their heart's companion.
His voice they'll always hear,
His face they'll always see;
There's naught in life so sweet
As such a memory."

(See 'Final Memorials of Charles Lamb', by Thomas Noon Talfourd, vol. ii. pp. 233, 234.)—Ed.

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* * * * *

"When, to the attractions of the busy world"

Composed 1800 to 1805.—Published 1815

[The grove still exists; but the plantation has been walled in, and is not so accessible as when my brother John wore the path in the manner here described. The grove was a favourite haunt with us all while we lived at Town-end.—I. F.]

This was No. VI. of the "Poems on the Naming of Places." For several suggested changes in *Ms.* see Appendix I. p. 385.—Ed.

When, to the attractions of the busy world,
Preferring studious leisure, I had chosen
A habitation in this peaceful Vale,
Sharp season followed of continual storm
In deepest winter; and, from week to week, 5
Pathway, and lane, and public road, were clogged
With frequent showers of snow. Upon a hill
At a short distance from my cottage, stands
A stately Fir-grove, whither I was wont
To hasten, for I found, beneath the roof 10
Of that perennial shade, a cloistral place
Of refuge, with an unincumbered floor.
Here, in safe covert, on the shallow snow,
And, sometimes, on a speck of visible earth,
The redbreast near me hopped; nor was I loth 15
To sympathise with vulgar coppice birds
That, for protection from the nipping blast,
Hither repaired.—A single beech-tree grew
Within this grove of firs! and, on the fork
Of that one beech, appeared a thrush's nest; 20
A last year's nest, conspicuously built
At such small elevation from the ground
As gave sure sign that they, who in that house
Of nature and of love had made their home
Amid the fir-trees, all the summer long 25
Dwelt in a tranquil spot. And oftentimes,
A few sheep, stragglers from some mountain-flock,
Would watch my motions with suspicious stare,
From the remotest outskirts of the grove,—
Some nook where they had made their final stand, 30



Huddling together from two fears—the fear
Of me and of the storm. Full many an hour
Here did I lose. But in this grove the trees
Had been so thickly planted, and had thriven
In such perplexed and intricate array; 35
That vainly did I seek, beneath [1] their stems
A length of open space, where to and fro
My feet might move without concern or care;
And, baffled thus, though earth from day to day
Was fettered, and the air by storm disturbed, 40
I ceased the shelter to frequent, [2]—and prized,
Less than I wished to prize, that calm recess.



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The snows dissolved, and genial Spring returned
To clothe the fields with verdure. Other haunts
Meanwhile were mine; till, one bright April day, 45
By chance retiring from the glare of noon
To this forsaken covert, there I found
A hoary pathway traced between the trees,
And winding on with such an easy line
Along a natural opening, that I stood 50
Much wondering how I could have sought in vain [3]
For what was now so obvious. [4] To abide,
For an allotted interval of ease,
Under my cottage-roof, had gladly come
From the wild sea a cherished Visitant; [5] 55
And with the sight of this same path—begun,
Begun and ended, in the shady grove, [6]
Pleasant conviction flashed upon my mind [7]
That, to this opportune recess allured,
He had surveyed it with a finer eye, 60
A heart more wakeful; and had worn the track [8]
By pacing here, unwearied and alone, [A]
In that habitual restlessness of foot
That haunts the Sailor measuring [9] o'er and o'er
His short domain upon the vessel's deck, 65
While she pursues her course [10] through the dreary sea.

When thou hadst quitted Esthwaite's pleasant shore,
And taken thy first leave of those green hills
And rocks that were the play-ground of thy youth,
Year followed year, my Brother! and we two, 70
Conversing not, knew little in what mould
Each other's mind was fashioned; [11] and at length
When once again we met in Grasmere Vale,
Between us there was little other bond
Than common feelings of fraternal love. 75
But thou, a School-boy, to the sea hadst carried
Undying recollections; Nature there
Was with thee; she, who loved us both, she still
Was with thee; and even so didst thou become
A *silent* Poet; from the solitude 80
Of the vast sea didst bring a watchful heart
Still couchant, an inevitable ear,
And an eye practised like a blind man's touch.
—Back to the joyless Ocean thou art gone;



Nor from this vestige of thy musing hours 85
Could I withhold thy honoured name,—and now
I love the fir-grove [12] with a perfect love.
Thither do I withdraw when cloudless suns
Shine hot, or wind blows troublesome and strong;
And there I sit at evening, when the steep 90
Of Silver-how, and Grasmere's peaceful [13] lake,
And one green island, gleam between the stems
Of the dark firs, a visionary scene!
And, while I gaze upon the spectacle
Of clouded splendour, on this dream-like sight 95
Of solemn loveliness, I think on thee,
My Brother, and on all which thou hast



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lost.

Nor seldom, if I rightly guess, while Thou,
Muttering the verses which I muttered first
Among the mountains, through the midnight watch 100
Art pacing thoughtfully [14] the vessel's deck
In some far region, here, while o'er my head,
At every impulse of the moving breeze,
The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound, [B]
Alone I tread this path;—for aught I know, 105
Timing my steps to thine; and, with a store
Of undistinguishable sympathies,
Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale. 110

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1836.

... between ... 1815.]

[Variant 2:

1836.

And, baffled thus, before the storm relaxed,
I ceased that Shelter to frequent,—1815.

... the shelter ... 1827.]

[Variant 3:

1827.

Much wondering at my own simplicity
How I could e'er have made a fruitless search 1815.]

[Variant 4:



... At the sight Conviction also flashed upon my mind That this same path (within the shady grove Begun and ended) by my Brother's steps Had been impressed.—...

These additional lines appeared only in 1815 and 1820.]

[Variant 5:

1845.

... To sojourn a short while
Beneath my roof He from the barren seas
Had newly come—a cherished Visitant! 1815.

... To abide, For an allotted interval of ease, Beneath my cottage roof, had newly come
From the wild sea a cherished Visitant; 1827.

Beneath my cottage roof, had gladly come 1840.

... had meanwhile come C. [a]]

[Variant 6: This and the previous line were added in 1827.]

[Variant 7:

1827.

And much did it delight me to perceive 1815.]

[Variant 8:

1827.

A heart more wakeful; that, more both to part
From place so lovely, he had worn the track 1815.]

[Variant 9:

1845.

With which the Sailor measures ... 1815.]

[Variant 10:

1845.

While she is travelling ... 1815.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

... minds were fashioned;... 1815.]

[Variant 12:

1827.

... art gone;
And now I call the path-way by thy name,
And love the fir-grove 1815.]

[Variant 13:

1827.

... placid ... 1815.]

[Variant 14:



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1827.

Art pacing to and fro ... 1815.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Daniel's 'Hymens Triumph', ii. 4:

'And where no sun could see him, where no eye
Might overlook his lonely privacy;
There in a path of his own making, trod
Rare as a common way, yet led no way
Beyond the turns he made.'

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare the line in Coleridge's 'Hymn before Sun-rise, in the Vale of Chamouni':

'Ye pine groves with your soft and soul-like sound,'

Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footer a: In the late Lord Coleridge's copy of the edition of 1836, there is a footnote in Wordsworth's handwriting to the word "meanwhile" which is substituted for "newly." "If 'newly' come, could he have traced a visible path?"—Ed.]

This wish was not granted; the lamented Person, not long after, perished by shipwreck, in discharge of his duty as Commander of the Honourable East India Company's Vessel, the 'Earl of Abergavenny'.—W. W. 1815.

For the date of this poem in the Chronological Tables given in the editions of 1815 and 1820, Wordsworth assigned the year 1802. But, in the edition of 1836, he assigned it to the year 1805, the date retained by Mr. Carter in the edition of 1857. Captain Wordsworth perished on the 5th of February 1805; and if the poem was written in 1805, it must have been in the month of January of that year. The note to the poem is explicit—"Not long after" he "perished by shipwreck," *etc.* Thus the poem *may* have been



written in the beginning of 1805; but it is not at all certain that part of it at least does not belong to an earlier year. John Wordsworth lived with his brother and sister at the Town-end Cottage, Grasmere, during part of the winter, and during the whole of the spring, summer, and autumn of 1800, William and John going together on foot into Yorkshire from the 14th of May to the 7th of June. John left Grasmere on Michaelmas day (September 29th) 1800, and never returned to it again. The following is Miss Wordsworth's record of that day in her Journal of 1800:

"On Monday, 29th, John left us. William and I parted with him in sight of Ullswater. It was a fine day, showery, but with sunshine and fine clouds. Poor fellow, my heart was right sad, I could not help thinking we should see him again, because he was only going to Penrith."

In the spring of 1801, John Wordsworth sailed for China in the 'Abergavenny'. He returned from this voyage in safety, and the brothers met once again in London. He went to sea again in 1803, and returned to London in 1804, but could not visit Grasmere; and in the month of February 1805—shortly

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after he was appointed to the command of the 'Abergavenny'—the ship was lost at the Bill of Portland, and every one on board perished. It is clear that the latter part of the poem, "When, to the attractions of the busy world," was written between John Wordsworth's departure from Grasmere and the loss of the 'Abergavenny', i. e. between September 1800 and February 1805, as there are references in it both to what his brother did at Grasmere and to his return to sea:

'Back to the joyless Ocean thou art gone.'

There are some things in the earlier part of the poem that appear to negative the idea of its having been written in 1800. The opening lines seem to hint at an experience somewhat distant. He speaks of being "wont" to do certain things. But, on the other hand, I find an entry in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal, which leads me to believe that the poem may have been begun in 1800, and that the first part, ending (as it did then) with the line:

'While she is travelling through the dreary sea,'

may have been finished before John Wordsworth left Grasmere; the second part being written afterwards, while he was at sea; and that this is the explanation of the date given in the editions of 1815 and 1820, viz. 1802.

Passages occur in Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal to the following effect:

"Monday Morning, 1st September.—We walked in the wood by the lake. William read 'Joanna' and 'the Firgrove' to Coleridge."

A little earlier there is the record,

"Saturday, 22nd August.—William was composing all the morning.... William read us the poem of 'Joanna' beside the Rothay by the roadside."

Then, on Friday, the 25th August, there is the entry,

"We walked over the hill by the Firgrove, I sate upon a rock and observed a flight of swallows gathering together high above my head. We walked through the wood to the stepping stones, the lake of Rydale very beautiful, partly still, I left William to compose an inscription, that about the path...."

Then, next day,

“Saturday morning, 30th August.—William finished his inscription of the Pathway, then walked in the wood, and when John returned he sought him, and they bathed together.”

To what poem Dorothy Wordsworth referred under the name of the “Inscription of the Pathway” has puzzled me much. There is no poem amongst his “Inscriptions” (written in or before August 1800) that corresponds to it in the least. But, if my conjecture is right that this “Poem on the Naming of Places,” beginning:

‘When, to the attractions of the busy world,’

was composed at two different times, it is quite possible that “the Firgrove” which was read—along with ‘Joanna’—to Coleridge on September 1st, 1800, was the first part of this very poem.

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If this supposition is correct, some light is cast both on the “Inscription of the Pathway.” and on the date assigned by Wordsworth himself to the poem. There is a certain fitness, however, in this poem being placed—as it now is—in sequence to the ‘Elegiac Verses’ in memory of John Wordsworth, beginning, “The Sheep-boy whistled loud,” and near the fourth poem ‘To the Daisy’, beginning, “Sweet Flower! belike one day to have.”

The “Fir-grove” still exists. It is between Wishing Gate and White Moss Common, and almost exactly opposite the former. Standing at the gate and looking eastwards, the grove is to the left, not forty yards distant. Some of the firs (Scotch ones) still survive, and several beech trees, not “a single beech-tree,” as in the poem. From this, one might infer that the present colony had sprung up since the beginning of the century, and that the special tree, in which was the thrush’s nest, had perished; but Dr. Cradock wrote to me that “Wordsworth pointed out the tree to Miss Cookson a few days before Dora Wordsworth’s death. The tree is near the upper wall and tells its own tale.” The Fir-grove—“John’s Grove”—can easily be entered by a gate about a hundred yards beyond the Wishing-gate, as one goes toward Rydal. The view from it, the “visionary scene,”

‘the spectacle
Of clouded splendour, ... this dream-like sight
Of solemn loveliness,’

is now much interfered with by the new larch plantations immediately below the firs. It must have been very different in Wordsworth’s time, and is constantly referred to in his sister’s Journal as a favourite retreat, resorted to

‘when cloudless suns
Shone hot, or wind blew troublesome and strong.’

In the absence of contrary testimony, it might be supposed that “the track” which the brother had “worn,”

‘By pacing here, unwearied and alone,’

faced Silver-How and the Grasmere Island, and that the single beech tree was nearer the lower than the upper wall. But Miss Cookson’s testimony is explicit. Only a few fir trees survive at this part of the grove, which is now open and desolate, not as it was in those earlier days, when

‘the trees
Had been so thickly planted, and had thriven
With such perplexed and intricate array,
That vainly did I seek, beneath their stems
A length of open space ...’

Dr. Cradock remarks,

“As to there being more than one beech, Wordsworth would not have hesitated to sacrifice servile exactness to poetical effect.” He had a fancy for “one”—

‘Fair as a star when only one
Is shining in the sky;’

“‘One’ abode, no more;” Grasmere’s “one green island;” “one green field.”

Since the above note was printed, new light has been cast on the “Inscription of the Pathway,” for which see volume viii. of this edition.—Ed.

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* * * * *

THE COTTAGER TO HER INFANT

BY MY SISTER

Composed 1805.—Published 1815

[Suggested to her, while beside my sleeping children.—I. F.]

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

The days are cold, the nights are long,
The north-wind sings a doleful song;
Then hush again upon my breast;
All merry things are now at rest,
Save thee, my pretty Love! 5

The kitten sleeps upon the hearth,
The crickets long have ceased their mirth;
There's nothing stirring in the house
Save one wee, hungry, nibbling mouse,
Then why so busy thou? 10

Nay! start not at that sparkling light;
'Tis but the moon that shines so bright
On the window pane bedropped with rain:
Then, little Darling! sleep again,
And wake when it is day. 15

This poem underwent no change in successive editions. The title in all the earlier ones (1815 to 1843) was 'The Cottager to her Infant. By a Female Friend'; and in the preface to the edition of 1815, Wordsworth wrote,

“Three short pieces (now first published) are the work of a Female Friend; ... if any one regard them with dislike, or be disposed to condemn them, let the censure fall upon him, who, trusting in his own sense of their merit, and their fitness for the place which they occupy, *extorted* them from the Authoress.”

In the edition of 1845, he disclosed the authorship; and gave the more natural title, 'By my Sister'. Other two poems by her were introduced into the edition of 1815, and subsequent ones, *viz.* the 'Address to a Child', and 'The Mother's Return'. In an appendix to a MS. copy of the 'Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland', by Dorothy

Wordsworth, transcribed by Mrs. Clarkson, I find the poem 'The Cottager to her Infant' with two additional stanzas, which are there attributed to Wordsworth. The appendix runs thus:

"To my Niece Dorothy, a sleepless Baby

THE COTTAGER TO HER INFANT

(The third and fourth stanzas which follow by W. W.)

'Ah! if I were a lady gay
I should not grieve with thee to play;
Right gladly would I lie awake
Thy lively spirits to partake,
And ask no better cheer.

But, Babe! there's none to work for me.
And I must rise to industry;
Soon as the cock begins to crow
Thy mother to the fold must go
To tend the sheep and kine."

Ed.

* * * * *

THE WAGGONER [A]

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Composed 1805.—Published 1819

[Written at Town-end, Grasmere. The characters and story from fact.—I. F.]

“In Cairo’s crowded streets
The impatient Merchant, wondering, waits in vain,
And Mecca saddens at the long delay.”

THOMSON. [B]

TO CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

When I sent you, a few weeks ago, the Tale of ‘Peter Bell’, you asked “why THE WAGGONER was not added?”—To say the truth,—from the higher tone of imagination, and the deeper touches of passion aimed at in the former, I apprehended, this little Piece could not accompany it without disadvantage. In the year 1806, if I am not mistaken, THE WAGGONER was read to you in manuscript; and, as you have remembered it for so long a time, I am the more encouraged to hope, that, since the localities on which it partly depends did not prevent its being interesting to you, it may prove acceptable to others. Being therefore in some measure the cause of its present appearance, you must allow me the gratification of inscribing it to you; in acknowledgment of the pleasure I have derived from your Writings, and of the high esteem with which I am Very truly yours, WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

RYDAL MOUNT, *May 20th*, 1819.

CANTO FIRST

’Tis spent—this burning day of June!
Soft darkness o’er its latest gleams is stealing;
The buzzing dor-hawk, round and round, is wheeling,—
That solitary bird
Is all that can be heard [1] 5
In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon!

Confiding Glow-worms, ’tis a night
Propitious to your earth-born light!
But, where the scattered stars are seen
In hazy straits the clouds between, 10
Each, in his station twinkling not,
Seems changed into a pallid spot. [2]



The mountains against heaven's grave weight
Rise up, and grow to wondrous height. [3]
The air, as in a lion's den, 15
Is close and hot;—and now and then
Comes a tired [4] and sultry breeze
With a haunting and a panting,
Like the stifling of disease;
But the dews [5] allay the heat, 20
And the silence makes it sweet.

Hush, there is some one on the stir!
'Tis Benjamin the Waggoner;
Who long hath trod this toilsome way,
Companion of the night and [6] day. 25
That far-off tinkling's drowsy cheer,
Mix'd with a faint yet grating sound
In a moment lost and found,
The Wain announces—by whose side
Along the banks of Rydal Mere 30
He paces on, a trusty Guide,—
Listen! you can scarcely hear!
Hither he his course is bending;—
Now he leaves the lower ground,
And up the craggy hill ascending 35
Many a stop and stay he makes,
Many a breathing-fit he takes;—[7]
Steep the way and wearisome,
Yet all the while his whip is dumb!



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The Horses have worked with right good-will, 40
And so [8] have gained the top of the hill;
He was patient, they were strong,
And now they smoothly glide along,
Recovering [9] breath, and pleased to win
The praises of mild Benjamin. 45
Heaven shield him from mishap and snare!
But why so early with this prayer?
Is it for threatenings in the sky?
Or for some other danger nigh?
No; none is near him yet, though he 50
Be one of much infirmity; [10]
For at the bottom of the brow,
Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Offered a greeting of good ale
To all who entered Grasmere Vale; 55
And called on him who must depart
To leave it with a jovial heart;
There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Once hung, a Poet harbours now,
A simple water-drinking Bard; 60
Why need our Hero then (though frail
His best resolves) be on his guard?
He marches by, secure and bold;
Yet while he thinks on times of old,
It seems that all looks wondrous cold; 65
He shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head,
And, for the honest folk within,
It is a doubt with Benjamin
Whether they be alive or dead!

Here is no danger,—none at all! 70
Beyond his wish he walks secure; [11]
But pass a mile—and *then* for trial,—
Then for the pride of self-denial;
If he resist that tempting door,
Which with such friendly voice will call; 75
If he resist those casement panes,
And that bright gleam which thence will fall
Upon his Leaders' bells and manes,
Inviting him with cheerful lure:
For still, though all be dark elsewhere, 80

Some shining notice will be 'there'
Of open house and ready fare.

The place to Benjamin right well [12]
Is known, and by as strong a spell
As used to be that sign of love 85
And hope—the OLIVE-BOUGH and DOVE;
He knows it to his cost, good Man!
Who does not know the famous SWAN?
Object uncouth! and yet our boast, [13]
For it was painted by the Host; 90
His own conceit the figure planned,
'Twas coloured all by his own hand;
And that frail Child of thirsty clay,
Of whom I sing [14] this rustic lay,
Could tell with self-dissatisfaction 95
Quaint stories of the bird's attraction! [C]

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Well! that is past—and in despite
Of open door and shining light.
And now the conqueror essays
The long ascent of Dunmail-raise; 100
And with his team is gentle here
As when he clomb from Rydal Mere;
His whip they do not dread—his voice
They only hear it to rejoice.
To stand or go is at *their* pleasure; 105
Their efforts and their time they measure
By generous pride within the breast;
And, while they strain, and while they rest,
He thus pursues his thoughts at leisure.

Now am I fairly safe to-night—110
And with proud cause my heart is light: [15]
I trespassed lately worse than ever—
But Heaven has blest [16] a good endeavour;
And, to my soul's content, [17] I find
The evil One is left behind. 115
Yes, let my master fume and fret,
Here am I—with my horses yet!
My jolly team, he finds that ye
Will work for nobody but me!
Full proof of this the Country gained; 120
It knows how ye were vexed and strained,
And forced unworthy stripes to bear,
When trusted to another's care. [18]
Here was it—on this rugged slope,
Which now ye climb with heart and hope, 125
I saw you, between rage and fear,
Plunge, and fling back a spiteful ear,
And ever more and more confused,
As ye were more and more abused: [19]
As chance would have it, passing by 130
I saw you in that [20] jeopardy:
A word from me was like a charm; [D]
Ye pulled together with one mind; [21]
And your huge burthen, safe from harm,
Moved like a vessel in the wind! 135
—Yes, without me, up hills so high
'Tis vain to strive for mastery.
Then grieve not, jolly team! though tough



The road we travel, steep, and rough; [22]
Though Rydal-heights and Dunmail-raise, 140
And all their fellow banks and braes,
Full often make you stretch and strain,
And halt for breath and halt again,
Yet to their sturdiness 'tis owing
That side by side we still are going! 145

While Benjamin in earnest mood
His meditations thus pursued,
A storm, which had been smothered long,
Was growing inwardly more strong;
And, in its struggles to get free, 150
Was busily employed as he.
The thunder had begun to growl—
He heard not, too intent of soul;
The air was now without a breath—
He marked not that 'twas still as death. 155
But soon large rain-drops on his head [23]
Fell with the weight of drops of lead;—
He starts—and takes, at the



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admonition,

A sage survey of his condition. [24]
The road is black before his eyes, 160
Glimmering faintly where it lies;
Black is the sky—and every hill,
Up to the sky, is blacker still—
Sky, hill, and dale, one dismal room, [25]
Hung round and overhung with gloom; 165
Save that above a single height
Is to be seen a lurid light,
Above Helm-crag [E]—a streak half dead,
A burning of portentous red;
And near that lurid light, full well 170
The ASTROLOGER, sage Sidrophel,
Where at his desk and book he sits,
Puzzling aloft [26] his curious wits;
He whose domain is held in common
With no one but the ANCIENT WOMAN, 175
Cowering beside her rifted cell,
As if intent on magic spell;-
Dread pair, that, spite of wind and weather,
Still sit upon Helm-crag together!

The ASTROLOGER was not unseen 180
By solitary Benjamin;
But total darkness came anon,
And he and every thing was gone:
And suddenly a ruffling breeze,
(That would have rocked the sounding trees 185
Had aught of sylvan growth been there)
Swept through the Hollow long and bare: [27]
The rain rushed down—the road was battered,
As with the force of billows shattered;
The horses are dismayed, nor know 190
Whether they should stand or go;
And Benjamin is groping near them,
Sees nothing, and can scarcely hear them.
He is astounded,—wonder not,—
With such a charge in such a spot; 195
Astounded in the mountain gap
With thunder-peals, clap after clap,
Close-treading on the silent flashes—



And somewhere, as he thinks, by crashes [28]
Among the rocks; with weight of rain, 200
And sullen [29] motions long and slow,
That to a dreary distance go—
Till, breaking in upon the dying strain,
A rending o'er his head begins the fray again.

Meanwhile, uncertain what to do, 205
And oftentimes compelled to halt,
The horses cautiously pursue
Their way, without mishap or fault;
And now have reached that pile of stones,
Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones; 210
He who had once supreme command,
Last king of rocky Cumberland;
His bones, and those of all his Power,
Slain here in a disastrous hour!

When, passing through this narrow strait, 215
Stony, and dark, and desolate,
Benjamin can faintly hear
A voice that comes from some one near,
A female voice:—"Whoe'er you be,
Stop," it exclaimed, "and pity me!" 220
And, less in pity than in wonder,
Amid the darkness and the thunder,
The Waggoner, with prompt command,
Summons his horses to a stand.

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While, with increasing agitation, 225
The Woman urged her supplication,
In rueful words, with sobs between—
The voice of tears that fell unseen; [30]
There came a flash—a startling glare,
And all Seat-Sandal was laid bare! 230
'Tis not a time for nice suggestion,
And Benjamin, without a question,
Taking her for some way-worn rover, [31]
Said, "Mount, and get you under cover!"
Another voice, in tone as hoarse 235
As a swoln brook with rugged course,
Cried out, "Good brother, why so fast?
I've had a glimpse of you—'avast!"
Or, since it suits you to be civil,
Take her at once—for good and evil!" 240

"It is my Husband," softly said
The Woman, as if half afraid:
By this time she was snug within,
Through help of honest Benjamin;
She and her Babe, which to her breast 245
With thankfulness the Mother pressed;
And now the same strong voice more near
Said cordially, "My Friend, what cheer?
Rough doings these! as God's my judge,
The sky owes somebody a grudge! 250
We've had in half an hour or less
A twelvemonth's terror [32] and distress!"

Then Benjamin entreats the Man
Would mount, too, quickly as he can:
The Sailor—Sailor now no more, 255
But such he had been heretofore—
To courteous Benjamin replied,
"Go you your way, and mind not me;
For I must have, whate'er betide,
My Ass and fifty things beside,—260
Go, and I'll follow speedily!"

The Waggon moves—and with its load
Descends along the sloping road;
And the rough Sailor instantly
Turns to a little tent hard by: [33] 265



For when, at closing-in of day,
The family had come that way,
Green pasture and the soft warm air
Tempted [34] them to settle there.—
Green is the grass for beast to graze, 270
Around the stones of Dunmail-raise!

The Sailor gathers up his bed,
Takes down the canvass overhead;
And, after farewell to the place,
A parting word—though not of grace, 275
Pursues, with Ass and all his store,
The way the Waggon went before.

CANTO SECOND

If Wytheburn's modest House of prayer,
As lowly as the lowliest dwelling,
Had, with its belfry's humble stock, 280
A little pair that hang in air,
Been mistress also of a clock,
(And one, too, not in crazy plight)
Twelve strokes that clock would have been telling
Under the brow of old Helvellyn—285
Its bead-roll of midnight,

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Then, when the Hero of my tale
Was passing by, and, down the vale
(The vale now silent, hushed I ween
As if a storm had never been) 290
Proceeding with a mind at ease;
While the old Familiar of the seas [35]
Intent to use his utmost haste,
Gained ground upon the Waggon fast,
And gives another lusty cheer; 295
For spite of rumbling of the wheels,
A welcome greeting he can hear;—
It is a fiddle in its glee
Dinning from the CHERRY TREE!

Thence the sound—the light is there—300
As Benjamin is now aware,
Who, to his inward thoughts confined,
Had almost reached the festive door,
When, startled by the Sailor's roar, [36]
He hears a sound and sees the light, 305
And in a moment calls to mind
That 'tis the village MERRY-NIGHT! [F]

Although before in no dejection,
At this insidious recollection
His heart with sudden joy is filled,—310
His ears are by the music thrilled,
His eyes take pleasure in the road
Glittering before him bright and broad;
And Benjamin is wet and cold,
And there are reasons manifold 315
That make the good, tow'rds which he's yearning,
Look fairly like a lawful earning.

Nor has thought time to come and go,
To vibrate between yes and no;
For, cries the Sailor, "Glorious chance 320
That blew us hither!—let him dance,
Who can or will!—my honest soul,
Our treat shall be a friendly bowl!" [37]



He draws him to the door—"Come in,
Come, come," cries he to Benjamin! 325
And Benjamin—ah, woe is me!
Gave the word—the horses heard
And halted, though reluctantly.

"Blithe souls and lightsome hearts have we,
Feasting at the CHERRY TREE!" 330
This was the outside proclamation,
This was the inside salutation;
What bustling—jostling—high and low!
A universal overflow!
What tankards foaming from the tap! 335
What store of cakes in every lap!
What thumping—stumping—overhead!
The thunder had not been more busy:
With such a stir you would have said,
This little place may well be dizzy! 340
'Tis who can dance with greatest vigour—
'Tis what can be most prompt and eager;
As if it heard the fiddle's call,
The pewter clatters on the wall;
The very bacon shows its feeling, 345
Swinging from the smoky ceiling!



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A steaming bowl, a blazing fire,
What greater good can heart desire?
'Twere worth a wise man's while to try
The utmost anger of the sky: 350
To seek for thoughts of a gloomy cast,
If such the bright amends at last. [38]
Now should you say [39] I judge amiss,
The CHERRY TREE shows proof of this;
For soon of all [40] the happy there, 355
Our Travellers are the happiest pair;
All care with Benjamin is gone—
A Caesar past the Rubicon!
He thinks not of his long, long strife;—
The Sailor, Man by nature gay, 360
Hath no resolves to throw away; [41]
And he hath now forgot his Wife,
Hath quite forgotten her—or may be
Thinks her the luckiest soul on earth,
Within that warm and peaceful berth, [42] 365
 Under cover,
 Terror over,
Sleeping by her sleeping Baby.

With bowl that sped from hand to hand,

The gladdest of the gladsome band, 370
Amid their own delight and fun, [43]
They hear—when every dance is done,
When every whirling bout is o'er—[44]
The fiddle's *squeak* [G]—that call to bliss,
Ever followed by a kiss; 375
They envy not the happy lot,
But enjoy their own the more!

While thus our jocund Travellers fare,
Up springs the Sailor from his chair—
Limps (for I might have told before 380
That he was lame) across the floor—
Is gone—returns—and with a prize;
With what?—a Ship of lusty size;
A gallant stately Man-of-war,
Fixed on a smoothly-sliding car. 385
Surprise to all, but most surprise
To Benjamin, who rubs his eyes,



Not knowing that he had befriended
A Man so gloriously attended!

“This,” cries the Sailor, “a Third-rate is—390
Stand back, and you shall see her gratis!
This was the Flag-ship at the Nile,
The Vanguard—you may smirk and smile,
But, pretty Maid, if you look near,
You’ll find you’ve much in little here! 395
A nobler ship did never swim,
And you shall see her in full trim:
I’ll set, my friends, to do you honour,
Set every inch of sail upon her.”
So said, so done; and masts, sails, yards, 400
He names them all; and interlards
His speech with uncouth terms of art,
Accomplished in the showman’s part;
And then, as from a sudden check,
Cries out—“Tis there, the quarter-deck 405
On which brave Admiral Nelson stood—
A sight that would have roused your blood!
One eye he had, which, bright as ten,
Burned like a fire among his men;
Let this be land, and that be sea, 410
Here lay the French—and *thus* came we!” [H]

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Hushed was by this the fiddle's sound,
The dancers all were gathered round,
And, such the stillness of the house,
You might have heard a nibbling mouse; 415
While, borrowing helps where'er he may,
The Sailor through the story runs
Of ships to ships and guns to guns;
And does his utmost to display
The dismal conflict, and the might 420
And terror of that marvellous [45] night!
"A bowl, a bowl of double measure,"
Cries Benjamin, "a draught of length,
To Nelson, England's pride and treasure,
Her bulwark and her tower of strength!" 425
When Benjamin had seized the bowl,
The mastiff, from beneath the waggon,
Where he lay, watchful as a dragon,
Rattled his chain;—'twas all in vain,
For Benjamin, triumphant soul! 430
He heard the monitory growl;
Heard—and in opposition quaffed
A deep, determined, desperate draught!
Nor did the battered Tar forget,
Or flinch from what he deemed his debt: 435
Then, like a hero crowned with laurel,
Back to her place the ship he led;
Wheeled her back in full apparel;
And so, flag flying at mast head,
Re-yoked her to the Ass:—anon, 440
Cries Benjamin, "We must be gone."
Thus, after two hours' hearty stay,
Again behold them on their way!

CANTO THIRD

Right gladly had the horses stirred,
When they the wished-for greeting heard, 445
The whip's loud notice from the door,
That they were free to move once more.
You think, those [46] doings must have bred
In them disheartening doubts and dread;
No, not a horse of all the eight, 450
Although it be a moonless night,



Fears either for himself or freight;
For this they know (and let it hide,
In part, the offences of their guide)
That Benjamin, with clouded brains, 455
Is worth the best with all their pains;
And, if they had a prayer to make,
The prayer would be that they may take
With him whatever comes in course,
The better fortune or the worse; 460
That no one else may have business near them,
And, drunk or sober, he may steer them.

So, forth in dauntless mood they fare,
And with them goes the guardian pair.

Now, heroes, for the true commotion, 465
The triumph of your late devotion!
Can aught on earth impede delight,
Still mounting to a higher height;
And higher still—a greedy flight!
Can any low-born care pursue her, 470

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Can any mortal clog come to her? [J]
No notion have they—not a thought,
That is from joyless regions brought!
And, while they coast the silent lake,
Their inspiration I partake; 475
Share their empyreal spirits—yea,
With their enraptured vision, see—
O fancy—what a jubilee!
What shifting pictures—clad in gleams
Of colour bright as feverish dreams! 480
Earth, spangled sky, and lake serene,
Involved and restless all—a scene
Pregnant with mutual exaltation,
Rich change, and multiplied creation!
This sight to me the Muse imparts;—485
And then, what kindness in their hearts!
What tears of rapture, what vow-making,
Profound entreaties, and hand-shaking!
What solemn, vacant, interlacing,
As if they'd fall asleep embracing! 490
Then, in the turbulence of glee,
And in the excess of amity,
Says Benjamin, "That Ass of thine,
He spoils thy sport, and hinders mine:
If he were tethered to the waggon, 495
He'd drag as well what he is dragging;
And we, as brother should with brother,
Might trudge it alongside each other!"

Forthwith, obedient to command,
The horses made a quiet stand; 500
And to the waggon's skirts was tied
The Creature, by the Mastiff's side,
The Mastiff wondering, and perplexed
With dread of what will happen next;
And thinking it but sorry cheer, 505
To have such company so near! [47]

This new arrangement made, the Wain
Through the still night proceeds again;



No Moon hath risen her light to lend;
But indistinctly may be kenned 510
The VANGUARD, following close behind,
Sails spread, as if to catch the wind!

“Thy wife and child are snug and warm,
Thy ship will travel without harm;
I like,” said Benjamin, “her shape and stature: 515
And this of mine—this bulky creature
Of which I have the steering—this,
Seen fairly, is not much amiss!
We want your streamers, friend, you know;
But, altogether [48] as we go, 520
We make a kind of handsome show!
Among these hills, from first to last,
We’ve weathered many a furious blast;
Hard passage forcing on, with head
Against the storm, and canvass spread. 525
I hate a boaster; but to thee
Will say’t, who know’st both land and sea,
The unluckiest hulk that stems [49] the brine
Is hardly worse beset than mine,
When cross-winds on her quarter beat; 530
And, fairly lifted from my feet,
I stagger onward—heaven knows

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how;

But not so pleasantly as now:
Poor pilot I, by snows confounded,
And many a foundrous pit surrounded! 535
Yet here we are, by night and day
Grinding through rough and smooth our way;
Through foul and fair our task fulfilling;
And long shall be so yet—God willing!”

“Ay,” said the Tar, “through fair and foul—540
But save us from yon screeching owl!”
That instant was begun a fray
Which called their thoughts another way:
The mastiff, ill-conditioned car!
What must he do but growl and snarl, 545
Still more and more dissatisfied
With the meek comrade at his side!
Till, not incensed though put to proof,
The Ass, uplifting a hind hoof,
Salutes the Mastiff on the head; 550
And so were better manners bred,
And all was calmed and quieted.

“Yon screech-owl,” says the Sailor, turning
Back to his former cause of mourning,
“Yon owl!—pray God that all be well! 555
'Tis worse than any funeral bell;
As sure as I've the gift of sight,
We shall be meeting ghosts to-night!”
—Said Benjamin, “This whip shall lay
A thousand, if they cross our way. 560
I know that Wanton's noisy station,
I know him and his occupation;
The jolly bird hath learned his cheer
Upon [50] the banks of Windermere;
Where a tribe of them make merry, 565
Mocking the Man that keeps the ferry;
Hallooing from an open throat,
Like travellers shouting for a boat.
—The tricks he learned at Windermere
This vagrant owl is playing here—570



That is the worst of his employment:
He's at the top [51] of his enjoyment!"

This explanation stilled the alarm,
Cured the foreboder like a charm;
This, and the manner, and the voice, 575
Summoned the Sailor to rejoice;
His heart is up—he fears no evil
From life or death, from man or devil;
He wheels [52]—and, making many stops,
Brandished his crutch against the mountain tops; 580
And, while he talked of blows and scars,
Benjamin, among the stars,
Beheld a dancing—and a glancing;
Such retreating and advancing
As, I ween, was never seen 585
In bloodiest battle since the days of Mars!

CANTO FOURTH

Thus they, with freaks of proud delight,
Beguile the remnant of the night;
And many a snatch of jovial song
Regales them as they wind along; 590
While to the music, from on high,
The echoes make a glad reply.—
But the sage Muse the revel heeds
No farther than her story needs;

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Nor will she servilely attend 595
The loitering journey to its end.
—Blithe spirits of her own impel
The Muse, who scents the morning air,
To take of this transported pair
A brief and unreprieved farewell; 600
To quit the slow-paced waggon's side,
And wander down yon hawthorn dell,
With murmuring Greta for her guide.
—There doth she ken the awful form
Of Raven-crag—black as a storm—605
Glimmering through the twilight pale;
And Ghimmer-crag, [K] his tall twin brother,
Each peering forth to meet the other:—
And, while she roves [53] through St. John's Vale,
Along the smooth unpathwayed plain, 610
By sheep-track or through cottage lane,
Where no disturbance comes to intrude
Upon the pensive solitude,
Her unsuspecting eye, perchance,
With the rude shepherd's favoured glance, 615
Beholds the faeries in array,
Whose party-coloured garments gay
The silent company betray:
Red, green, and blue; a moment's sight!
For Skiddaw-top with rosy light 620
Is touched—and all the band take flight.
—Fly also, Muse! and from the dell
Mount to the ridge of Nathdale Fell;
Thence, look thou forth o'er wood and lawn
Hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn; 625
Across yon meadowy bottom look,
Where close fogs hide their parent brook;
And see, beyond that hamlet small,
The ruined towers of Threlkeld-hall,
Lurking in a double shade, 630
By trees and lingering twilight made!
There, at Blencathara's rugged feet,
Sir Lancelot gave a safe retreat
To noble Clifford; from annoy



Concealed the persecuted boy, 635
Well pleased in rustic garb to feed
His flock, and pipe on shepherd's reed
Among this multitude of hills,
Craggs, woodlands, waterfalls, and rills;
Which soon the morning shall enfold, 640
From east to west, in ample vest
Of massy gloom and radiance bold.

The mists, that o'er the streamlet's bed
Hung low, begin to rise and spread;
Even while I speak, their skirts of grey 645
Are smitten by a silver ray;
And lo!—up Castrigg's naked steep
(Where, smoothly urged, the vapours sweep
Along—and scatter and divide,
Like fleecy clouds self-multiplied) 650
The stately waggon is ascending,
With faithful Benjamin attending,
Apparent now beside his team—
Now lost amid a glittering steam: [54]
And with him goes his Sailor-friend, 655
By this time near their journey's

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end;

And, after their high-minded riot,
Sickening into thoughtful quiet;
As if the morning's pleasant hour,
Had for their joys a killing power. 660
And, sooth, for Benjamin a vein
Is opened of still deeper pain,
As if his heart by notes were stung
From out the lowly hedge-rows flung;
As if the warbler lost in light [L] 665
Reproved his soarings of the night,
In strains of rapture pure and holy
Upbraided his distempered folly. [55]

Drooping is he, his step is dull; [56]
But the horses stretch and pull; 670
With increasing vigour climb,
Eager to repair lost time;
Whether, by their own desert,
Knowing what cause there is [57] for shame,
They are labouring to avert 675
As much as may be of the blame, [58]
Which, they foresee, must soon alight
Upon *his* head, whom, in despite
Of all his failings, they love best; [59]
Whether for him they are distress, 680
Or, by length of fasting roused,
Are impatient to be housed:
Up against the hill they strain
Tugging at the iron chain,
Tugging all with might and main, 685
Last and foremost, every horse
To the utmost of his force!
And the smoke and respiration,
Rising like an exhalation,
Blend [60] with the mist—a moving shroud 690
To form, an undissolving cloud;
Which, with slant ray, the merry sun
Takes delight to play upon.
Never golden-haired Apollo,
Pleased some favourite chief to follow 695
Through accidents of peace or war,



In a perilous moment threw
Around the object of his care
Veil of such celestial hue; [61]
Interposed so bright a screen—700
Him and his enemies between!

Alas! what boots it?—who can hide,
When the malicious Fates are bent
On working out an ill intent?
Can destiny be turned aside? 705
No—sad progress of my story!
Benjamin, this outward glory
Cannot shield [62] thee from thy Master,
Who from Keswick has pricked forth,
Sour and surly as the north; 710
And, in fear of some disaster,
Comes to give what help he may,
And [63] to hear what thou canst say;
If, as needs he must forebode, [64]
Thou hast been loitering [65] on the road! 715
His fears, his doubts, [66] may now take flight—
The wished-for object is in sight;
Yet, trust the Muse, it rather hath
Stirred him up to livelier wrath;
Which he stifles, moody man! 720
With all the patience that he can;
To the end that, at your meeting,
He may give thee decent greeting.

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There he is—resolved to stop,
Till the waggon gains the top; 725
But stop he cannot—must advance:
Him Benjamin, with lucky glance,
Espies—and instantly is ready,
Self-collected, poised, and steady:
And, to be the better seen, 730
Issues from his radiant shroud,
From his close-attending cloud,
With careless air and open mien.
Erect his port, and firm his going;
So struts yon cock that now is crowing; 735
And the morning light in grace
Strikes upon his lifted face,
Hurrying the pallid hue away
That might his trespasses betray.
But what can all avail to clear him, 740
Or what need of explanation,
Parley or interrogation?
For the Master sees, alas!
That unhappy Figure near him,
Limping o'er the dewy grass, 745
Where the road it fringes, sweet,
Soft and cool to way-worn feet;
And, O indignity! an Ass,
By his noble Mastiffs side,
Tethered to the waggon's tail: 750
And the ship, in all her pride,
Following after in full sail!
Not to speak of babe and mother;
Who, contented with each other,
And snug as birds in leafy harbour, 755
Find, within, a blessed harbour!

With eager eyes the Master pries;
Looks in and out, and through and through;
Says nothing—till at last he spies
A wound upon the Mastiff's head, 760
A wound, where plainly might be read
What feats an Ass's hoof can do!
But drop the rest:—this aggravation,
This complicated provocation,
A hoard of grievances unsealed; 765



All past forgiveness it repealed;
And thus, and through distempered blood
On both sides, Benjamin the good,
The patient, and the tender-hearted,
Was from his team and waggon parted; 770
When duty of that day was o'er,
Laid down his whip—and served no more.—
Nor could the waggon long survive,
Which Benjamin had ceased to drive:
It lingered on;—guide after guide 775
Ambitiously the office tried;
But each unmanageable hill
Called for *his* patience and *his* skill;—
And sure it is, that through this night,
And what the morning brought to light, 780
Two losses had we to sustain,
We lost both WAGGONER and WAIN!

* * * * *

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Accept, O Friend, for praise or blame,
The gift of this adventurous song;
A record which I dared to frame, 785
Though timid scruples checked me long;
They checked me—and I left the theme
Untouched;—in spite of many a gleam
Of fancy which thereon was shed,
Like pleasant sunbeams shifting still 790
Upon the side of a distant hill:
But Nature might not be gainsaid;
For what I have and what I miss
I sing of these;—it makes my bliss!
Nor is it I who play the part, 795
But a shy spirit in my heart,
That comes and goes—will sometimes leap
From hiding-places ten years deep;
Or haunts me with familiar face, [67]
Returning, like a ghost unlaid, 800
Until the debt I owe be paid.
Forgive me, then; for I had been
On friendly terms with this Machine: [M]
In him, while he was wont to trace
Our roads, through many a long year's space, 805
A living almanack had we;
We had a speaking diary,
That in this uneventful place,
Gave to the days a mark and name
By which we knew them when they came. 810
—Yes, I, and all about me here,
Through all the changes of the year,
Had seen him through the mountains go,
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow,
Majestically huge and slow: 815
Or, with a milder grace [68] adorning
The landscape of a summer's morning;
While Grasmere smoothed her liquid plain
The moving image to detain;
And mighty Fairfield, with a chime 820
Of echoes, to his march kept time;
When little other business stirred,
And little other sound was heard;
In that delicious hour of balm,
Stillness, solitude, and calm, 825



While yet the valley is arrayed,
On this side with a sober shade;
On that is prodigally bright—
Crag, lawn, and wood—with rosy light.
—But most of all, thou lordly Wain! 830
I wish to have thee here again,
When windows flap and chimney roars,
And all is dismal out of doors;
And, sitting by my fire, I see
Eight sorry carts, no less a train! 835
Unworthy successors of thee,
Come straggling through the wind and rain:
And oft, as they pass slowly on,
Beneath my windows, [69] one by one,
See, perched upon the naked height 840
The summit of a cumbrous freight,
A single traveller—and there
Another; then perhaps a pair—
The lame, the sickly, and the old;
Men, women, heartless with the cold; 845
And babes in wet and starveling plight;

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Which once, [70] be weather as it might,
Had still a nest within a nest,
Thy shelter—and their mother's breast!
Then most of all, then far the most, 850
Do I regret what we have lost;
Am grieved for that unhappy sin
Which robbed us of good Benjamin;—
And of his stately Charge, which none
Could keep alive when He was gone! 855

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1819.

The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune,
Twirling his watchman's rattle about—1805. MS. [a]

The dor-hawk, solitary bird,
Round the dim crags on heavy pinions wheeling,
Buzzes incessantly, a tiresome tune;
That constant voice is all that can be heard 1820.

... on heavy pinions wheeling,
With untired voice sings an unvaried tune;
Those burring notes are all that can be heard 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to the first version of 1819.]

[Variant 2:

1819.

Now that the children are abed
The little glow-worms nothing dread,
Such prize as their bright lamps would be.
Sooth they come in company,



And shine in quietness secure,
On the mossy bank by the cottage door,
As safe as on the loneliest moor.
In the play, or on the hill,
Everything is hushed and still;
The clouds show here and there a spot
Of a star that twinkles not,
The air as in ...

From a MS. copy of the poem in Henry Crabb Robinson's 'Diary, etc'. 1812.

Now that the children's busiest schemes
Do all lie buried in blank sleep,
Or only live in stirring dreams,
The glow-worms fearless watch may keep;
Rich prize as their bright lamps would be,
They shine, a quiet company,
On mossy bank by cottage-door,
As safe as on the loneliest moor.
In hazy straits the clouds between,
And in their stations twinkling not,
Some thinly-sprinkled stars are seen,
Each changed into a pallid spot. 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 3:

1836.

The mountains rise to wond'rous height,
And in the heavens there is a weight; 1819.

And in the heavens there hangs a weight; 1827.

In the editions of 1819 to 1832, these two lines follow the line "Like the stifling of disease."]

[Variant 4:

1819.

... faint ... 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 5:

1819.

But welcome dewes ... 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 6:

1819.

... or ... 1836.



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The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 7:

1819.

Listen! you can hardly hear!
Now he has left the lower ground,
And up the hill his course is bending,
With many a stop and stay ascending;—1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 8:

1836.

And now ... 1819.]

[Variant 9:

1836.

Gathering ... 1819.]

[Variant 10:

1819.

No;—him infirmities beset,
But danger is not near him yet; 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 11:

1836.

is he secure; 1819.]

[Variant 12:

1836.

full well 1819.]



[Variant 13:

1836.

Uncouth although the object be,
An image of perplexity;
Yet not the less it is our boast, 1819.]

[Variant 14:

1827.

... I frame ... 1819.]

[Variant 15:

1836

And never was my heart more light. 1819.]

[Variant 16:

1836.

... will bless ... 1819.]

[Variant 17:

1836.

... delight, ... 1819.]

[Variant 18:

1836.

Good proof of this the Country gain'd,
One day, when ye were vex'd and strain'd—
Entrusted to another's care,
And forc'd unworthy stripes to bear. 1819.]

[Variant 19:

1836. (Expanding four lines into six.)

Here was it—on this rugged spot
Which now contented with our lot
We climb—that piteously abused
Ye plung'd in anger and confused: 1819.]



[Variant 20:

1836.

... in your ... 1819.]

[Variant 21:

1836.

The ranks were taken with one mind; 1819.]

[Variant 22:

1819.

Our road be, narrow, steep, and rough; 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 23:

1836.

large drops upon his head 1819.]

[Variant 24:

1836.

He starts-and, at the admonition,
Takes a survey of his condition. 1819.]

[Variant 25:

1836.

A huge and melancholy room, 1819.]

[Variant 26:

1836.

... on high ... 1819.]

[Variant 27: 1836. The previous four lines were added in the edition of 1820, where they read as follows:

And suddenly a ruffling breeze
(That would have sounded through the trees
Had aught of sylvan growth been there)
Was felt throughout the region bare: 1820.]

[Variant 28:



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1836.

By peals of thunder, clap on clap!
And many a terror-striking flash;—
And somewhere, as it seems, a crash, 1819.]

[Variant 29:

1820.

And rattling ... 1819,]

[Variant 30:

1836. (Compressing six lines into four.)

The voice, to move commiseration,
Prolong'd its earnest supplication—
“This storm that beats so furiously—
This dreadful place! oh pity me!”

While this was said, with sobs between,
And many tears, by one unseen; 1819.]

[Variant 31:

1845.

And Benjamin, without further question,
Taking her for some way-worn rover, 1819.

And, kind to every way-worn rover,
Benjamin, without a question, 1836.]

[Variant 32:

1820.

... trouble ... 1819.]

[Variant 33:

1845.

And to a little tent hard by
Turns the Sailor instantly; 1819.



And to his tent-like domicile,
Built in a nook with cautious skill,
The Sailor turns, well pleased to spy
His shaggy friend who stood hard by
Drenched—and, more fast than with a tether,
Bound to the nook by that fierce weather,
Which caught the vagrants unaware:
For, when, ere closing-in ... 1836.]

[Variant 34:

1836.

Had tempted ... 1819.]

[Variant 35:

1836.

Proceeding with an easy mind;
While he, who had been left behind, 1819.]

[Variant 36:

1820.

Who neither heard nor saw—no more
Than if he had been deaf and blind,
Till, startled by the Sailor's roar, 1819.]

[Variant 37:

1819.

That blew us hither! dance, boys, dance!
Rare luck for us! my honest soul,
I'll treat thee to a friendly bowl!" 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 38:

1836.

To seek for thoughts of painful cast,
If such be the amends at last. 1819.]

[Variant 39:



1836.

... think ... 1819.]

[Variant 40:

1819.

For soon among ... 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 41:

1819.

And happiest far is he, the One
No longer with himself at strife,
A Caesar past the Rubicon!
The Sailor, Man by nature gay,
Found not a scruple in *his* way; 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 42:

1836.

Deems that she is happier, laid
Within that warm and peaceful bed; 1819.]

[Variant 43:

1845.



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With bowl in hand,
(It may not stand)
Gladdest of the gladsome band,
Amid their own delight and fun, 1819.

With bowl that sped from hand to hand,
Refreshed, brimful of hearty fun,
The gladdest of the gladsome band, 1836.]

[Variant 44:

1836.

They hear—when every fit is o'er—1819.]

[Variant 45:

1836.

... wondrous ... 1819.]

[Variant 46:

1836.

... these ... 1819.]

[Variant 47:

1836.

... the Mastiff's side,
(The Mastiff not well pleased to be
So very near such company.) 1819.]

[Variant 48:

1832.

... all together, ... 1819.]

[Variant 49:

1836

... sails ... 1819.]



[Variant 50:

1836.

On ... 1819.]

[Variant 51:

1836.

He's in the height ... 1819.]

[Variant 52:

1836.

He wheel'd—... 1819.]

[Variant 53:

1827.

And, rambling on ... 1819.]

[Variant 54:

1819.

Now hidden by the glittering steam: 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 55:

1845. The previous eight lines were added in 1836, when they read thus:

Say more: for by that power a vein
Seems opened of brow-saddening pain:
As if their hearts by notes were stung
From out the lowly hedge-rows flung;
As if the warbler lost in light
Reproved their soarings of the night;
In strains of rapture pure and holy
Upbraided their distempered folly. 1836.]

[Variant 56:

1845.



They are drooping, weak, and dull; 1819.

Drooping are they, and weak and dull;—1836.]

[Variant 57:

1836.

Knowing that there's cause ... 1819.

Knowing there is cause ... 1827.]

[Variant 58:

1845.

They are labouring to avert
At least a portion of the blame 1819.

They now are labouring to avert
(Kind creatures!) something of the blame, 1836.]

[Variant 59:

1836.

Which full surely will alight
Upon his head, whom, in despite
Of all his faults, they love the best; 1819.

Upon *his* head, ... 1820.]

[Variant 60:

1836.

Blends ... 1819.]

[Variant 61:

1845.

Never, surely, old Apollo,
He, or other God as old,
Of whom in story we are told,
Who had a favourite to follow
Through a battle or elsewhere,
Round the object of his care,

In a time of peril, threw
Veil of such celestial hue; 1819.



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Never Venus or Apollo,
Pleased a favourite chief to follow
Through accidents of peace or war,
In a time of peril threw,
Round the object of his care,
Veil of such celestial hue; 1832.

Never golden-haired Apollo,
Nor blue-eyed Pallas, nor the Idalian Queen,
When each was pleased some favourite chief to follow
Through accidents of peace or war,
In a perilous moment threw
Around the object of celestial care
A veil so rich to mortal view. 1836.

Never Venus or Apollo,
Intent some favourite chief to follow
Through accidents of peace or war,
Round the object of their care
In a perilous moment threw
A veil of such celestial hue. C.

Round each object of their care C.]

[Variant 62:

1819.

Fails to shield ... 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]

[Variant 63:

1836.

Or ... 1819.]

[Variant 64:

1819.

If, as he cannot but forebode, 1836.

The text of 1845 returns to that of 1819.]



[Variant 65:

1836.

Thou hast loitered ... 1819.]

[Variant 66:

1836.

His doubts—his fears ... 1819.]

[Variant 67:

1827. (Compressing two lines into one.)

Sometimes, as in the present case,
Will show a more familiar face; 1819.

Or, proud all rivalry to chase,
Will haunt me with familiar face; 1820.]

[Variant 68:

1819.

Or, with milder grace ... 1832.

The edition of 1845 reverts to the text of 1819.]

[Variant 69:

1836.

... window ... 1819.]

[Variant 70: "Once" 'italicised' in 1820 only.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The title page of the edition of 1819 runs as follows: The Waggoner, A Poem. To which are added, Sonnets. By William Wordsworth.

"What's in a NAME?"

...

"Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Caesar!"

London, *etc. etc.*, 1819,—Ed.]

[Footnote B: See 'The Seasons' (Summer), ll. 977-79.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Such is the progress of refinement, this rude piece of self-taught art has been supplanted by a professional production.—W. W. 1819.

Mr. William Davies writes to me,

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“I spent a week there (the Swan Inn) early in the fifties, and well remember the sign over the door distinguishable from afar: the inn, little more than a cottage (the only one), with clean well-sanded floor, and rush-bottomed chairs: the landlady, good old soul, one day afraid of burdening me with some old coppers, insisted on retaining them till I should return from an uphill walk, when they were duly tendered to me. Here I learnt many particulars of Hartley Coleridge, dead shortly before, who had been a great favourite with the host and hostess. The grave of Wordsworth was at that time barely grassed over.”—Ed.]

[Footnote D: See Wordsworth’s note [Note I to this poem, below], p. 109.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: A mountain of Grasmere, the broken summit of which presents two figures, full as distinctly shaped as that of the famous cobbler, near Arracher, in Scotland.—W. W. 1819.]

[Footnote F: A term well known in the North of England, as applied to rural Festivals, where young persons meet in the evening for the purpose of dancing.—W. W. 1819.]

[Footnote G: At the close of each strathspey, or jig, a particular note from the fiddle summons the Rustic to the agreeable duty of saluting his Partner.—W. W. 1819.]

[Footnote H: Compare in ‘Tristram Shandy’:

“And this, said he, is the town of Namur, and this is the citadel: and there lay the French, and here lay his honour and myself.”—Ed.]

[Footnote J: See Wordsworth’s note [Note III to this poem, below], p. 109.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: The crag of the ewe lamb.—W. W. 1820.]

[Footnote L: Compare Tennyson’s “Farewell, we lose ourselves in light.”—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Compare Wordsworth’s lines, beginning, “She was a Phantom of delight,” p. i, and Hamlet, act II. sc. ii. l. 124.—Ed.]

* * * * *

SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footer a: See Wordsworth’s note [Note II to the poem, below], p. 109.—Ed.]

* * * * *

NOTES ON THE TEXT

(Added in the edition of 1836)

I

Several years after the event that forms the subject of the foregoing poem, in company with my friend, the late Mr. Coleridge, I happened to fall in with the person to whom the name of Benjamin is given. Upon our expressing regret that we had not, for a long time, seen upon the road either him or his waggon, he said:—"They could not do without me; and as to the man who was put in my place, no good could come out of him; he was a man of no *ideas*."

The fact of my discarded hero's getting the horses out of a great difficulty with a word, as related in the poem, was told me by an eye-witness.

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II

'The Dor-hawk, solitary bird.'

When the Poem was first written the note of the bird was thus described:

'The Night-hawk is singing his frog-like tune,
Twirling his watchman's rattle about—'

but from unwillingness to startle the reader at the outset by so bold a mode of expression, the passage was altered as it now stands.

III

After the line, 'Can any mortal clog come to her', followed in the MS. an incident which has been kept back. Part of the suppressed verses shall here be given as a gratification of private feeling, which the well-disposed reader will find no difficulty in excusing. They are now printed for the first time.

Can any mortal clog come to her? It can: But Benjamin, in his vexation,
Possesses inward consolation; He knows his ground, and hopes to find A spot with all
things to his mind, An upright mural block of stone, Moist with pure water trickling down.
A slender spring; but kind to man It is, a true Samaritan; Close to the highway, pouring
out Its offering from a chink or spout; Whence all, howe'er athirst, or drooping With toil,
may drink, and without stooping.

Cries Benjamin, "Where is it, where?
Voice it hath none, but must be near."
—A star, declining towards the west,
Upon the watery surface threw
Its image tremulously imprest,
That just marked out the object and withdrew:
Right welcome service! ...
...

ROCK OF NAMES!

Light is the strain, but not unjust
To Thee and thy memorial-trust,
That once seemed only to express
Love that was love in idleness;
Tokens, as year hath followed year,
How changed, alas, in character!
For they were graven on thy smooth breast



By hands of those my soul loved best;
Meek women, men as true and brave
As ever went to a hopeful grave:
Their hands and mine, when side by side
With kindred zeal and mutual pride,
We worked until the Initials took
Shapes that defied a scornful look.—
Long as for us a genial feeling
Survives, or one in need of healing,
The power, dear Rock, around thee cast,
Thy monumental power, shall last
For me and mine! O thought of pain,
That would impair it or profane!
Take all in kindness then, as said
With a staid heart but playful head;
And fail not Thou, loved Rock! to keep
Thy charge when we are laid asleep.

W. W.

There is no poem more closely identified with the Grasmere district of the English Lakes—and with the road from Grasmere to Keswick—than 'The Waggoner' is, and in none are the topographical allusions more minute and faithful.

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Wordsworth seemed at a loss to know in what “class” of his poems to place ‘The Waggoner,’ and his frequent changes—removing it from one group to another—shew the artificial character of these classes. Thus, in the edition of 1820, it stood first among the “Poems of the Fancy.” In 1827 it was the last of the “Poems founded on the Affections.” In 1832 it was reinstated among the “Poems of the Fancy.” In 1836 it had a place of its own, and was inserted between the “Poems of the Fancy” and those “Founded on the Affections;” while in 1845 it was sent back to its original place among the “Poems of the Fancy;” although in the table of contents it was printed as an independent poem, closing the series.

The original text of ‘The Waggoner’ underwent little change, till the year 1836, when it was carefully revised, and altered throughout. The final edition of 1845, however, reverted, in many instances—especially in the first canto—to the original text of 1819.

As this poem was dedicated to Charles Lamb, it may be of interest to note that, some six months afterwards, Lamb presented Wordsworth with a copy of the first edition of ‘Paradise Regained’ (the edition of 1671), writing on it the following sentence,

“Charles Lamb, to the best knower of Milton, and therefore the worthiest occupant of this pleasant edition.—Jan. 2nd, 1820.”

The opening stanzas are unrivalled in their description of a sultry June evening, with a thunder-storm imminent.

‘ ’Tis spent—this burning day of June! Soft darkness o’er its latest gleams is stealing;
The buzzing dor-hawk, round and round, is wheeling,— That solitary bird Is all that can
be heard In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon! ... The mountains against
heaven’s grave weight Rise up, and grow to wondrous height. The air, as in a lion’s
den, Is close and hot;—and now and then Comes a tired and sultry breeze With a
haunting and a panting, Like the stifling of disease; But the dewes allay the heat, And the
silence makes it sweet.’

The Waggoner takes what is now the middle road, of the three leading from Rydal to Grasmere (see the note to ‘The Primrose of the Rock’). The “craggy hill” referred to in the lines

‘Now he leaves the lower ground, And up the craggy hill ascending ... Steep the way
and wearisome,’

is the road from Rydal Quarry up to White Moss Common, with the Glowworm rock on the right, and the “two heath-clad rocks,” referred to in the last of the “Poems on the Naming of Places,” on the left. He next passes “The Wishing Gate” on the left, John’s Grove on the right, and descends by Dove Cottage—where Wordsworth lived—to Grasmere.



'... at the bottom of the brow, Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH Offered a greeting of good ale To all who entered Grasmere Vale; And called on him who must depart To leave it with a jovial heart; There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH Once hung, a Poet harbours now, A simple water-drinking Bard.'

He goes through Grasmere, passes the Swan Inn,

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'He knows it to his cost, good Man!
Who does not know the famous SWAN?
Object uncouth! and yet our boast,
For it was painted by the Host;
His own conceit the figure planned,
'Twas coloured all by his own hand.'

As early as 1819, when the poem was first published, "this rude piece of self-taught art had been supplanted" by a more pretentious figure. The Waggoner passes the Swan,

'And now the conqueror essays
The long ascent of Dunmail-raise.'

As he proceeds, the storm gathers, and "struggles to get free." Road, hill, and sky are dark; and he barely sees the well-known rocks at the summit of Helm-crag, where two figures seem to sit, like those on the Cobbler, near Arrochar, in Argyle.

'Black is the sky—and every hill,
Up to the sky, is blacker still—
Sky, hill, and dale, one dismal room,
Hung round and overhung with gloom;
Save that above a single height
Is to be seen a lurid light,
Above Helm-crag—a streak half dead,
A burning of portentous red;
And near that lurid light, full well
The ASTROLOGER, sage Sidrophel,
Where at his desk and book he sits,
Puzzling aloft his curious wits;
He whose domain is held in common
With no one but the ANCIENT WOMAN,
Cowering beside her rifted cell,
As if intent on magic spell;—
Dread pair, that, spite of wind and weather,
Still sit upon Helm-crag together!'

At the top of the "raise"—the water-shed between the vales of Grasmere and Wytheburn—he reaches the familiar pile of stones, at the boundary between the shires of Westmoreland and Cumberland.

'... that pile of stones, Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones; ... Green is the grass
for beast to graze, Around the stones of Dunmail-raise!'



The allusion to Seat-Sandal laid bare by the flash of lightning, and the description, in the last canto, of the ascent of the Raise by the Waggoner on a summer morning, are as true to the spirit of the place as anything that Wordsworth has written. He tells his friend Lamb, fourteen years after he wrote the poem of 'The Waggoner,'

'Yes, I, and all about me here,
Through all the changes of the year,
Had seen him through the mountains go,
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow,
Majestically huge and slow:
Or, with a milder grace adorning
The landscape of a summer's morning;
While Grasmere smoothed her liquid plain
The moving image to detain;
And mighty Fairfield, with a chime
Of echoes, to his march kept time;
When little other business stirred,
And little other sound was heard;
In that delicious hour of balm,
Stillness, solitude, and calm,
While yet the valley is arrayed,
On this side with a sober shade;
On that is prodigally bright—
Crag, lawn, and wood—with rosy light.'

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From Dunmail-raise the Waggoner descends to Wytheburn. Externally,

'... Wytheburn's modest House of prayer,
As lowly as the lowliest dwelling,'

remains very much as it was in 1805; but the primitive simplicity and "lowliness" of the chapel was changed by the addition a few years ago of an apse, by the removal of some of the old rafters, and by the reseating of the pews.

The Cherry Tree Tavern, where "the village Merry-night" was being celebrated, still stands on the eastern or Helvellyn side of the road. It is now a farm-house; but it will be regarded with interest from the description of the rustic dance, which recalls ('longo intervallo') 'The Jolly Beggars' of Burns. After two hours' delay at the Cherry Tree, the Waggoner and Sailor "coast the silent lake" of Thirlmere, and pass the Rock of Names.

This rock was, until lately, one of the most interesting memorials of Wordsworth and his friends that survived in the Lake District; but the vale of Thirlmere is now a Manchester water-tank, and the place which knew the Rock of Names now knows it no more. It was a sort of trysting place of the poets of Grasmere and Keswick—being nearly half-way between the two places—and there, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and other members of their households often met. When Coleridge left Grasmere for Keswick, the Wordsworths usually accompanied him as far as this rock; and they often met him there on his way over from Keswick to Grasmere. Compare the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge's *Reminiscences*. ('Memoirs of Wordsworth,' vol. ii. p. 310.)

The rock was on the right hand of the road, a little way past Waterhead, at the southern end of Thirlmere; and on it were cut the letters,

W. W.
M. H.
D. W.
S. T. C.
J. W.
S. H.

the initials of William Wordsworth, Mary Hutchinson, Dorothy Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Wordsworth, and Sarah Hutchinson. The Wordsworths settled at Grasmere at the close of the year 1799. As mentioned in a previous note, John Wordsworth lived with his brother and sister during most of that winter, and during the whole of the spring, summer, and autumn of 1800, leaving it finally on September 29, 1800. These names must therefore have been cut during the spring or summer of 1800. There is no record of the occurrence, and no allusion to the rock, in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Grasmere Journal* of 1800. But that *Journal*, so far as I have seen it, begins on the 14th of May 1800. Almost every detail of the daily life and ways of the

household at Dove Cottage is so minutely recorded in it, that I am convinced that this incident of the cutting of names in the Thirlmere Rock would have been mentioned, had it happened between the 14th of May and John Wordsworth's departure from Grasmere in September. Such references as this, for example, occur in the Journal:

“Saturday, August 2.—William and Coleridge went to Keswick. John went with them to Wytheburn, and staid all day fishing.”

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I therefore infer that it was in the spring or early summer of 1800 that the names were cut.

I may add that the late Dean of Westminster—Dean Stanley—took much interest in this Rock of Names; and doubt having been cast on the accuracy of the place and the genuineness of the inscriptions, in a letter from Dr. Fraser, then Bishop of Manchester, which he forwarded to me, he entered into the question with all the interest with which he was wont to track out details in the architecture or the history of a Church.

There were few memorials connected with Wordsworth more worthy of preservation than this “upright mural block of stone.” When one remembered that the initials on the rock were graven by the hands of William and John Wordsworth, by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, possibly with the assistance of Dorothy Wordsworth, the two Hutchinsons (Mary and Sarah), and that Wordsworth says of it,

‘We worked until the Initials took
Shapes that defied a scornful look,’

this Thirlmere Rock was felt to be a far more interesting memento of the group of poets that used to meet beside it, than the Stone in the grounds of Rydal Mount, which was spared at Wordsworth’s suit, “from some rude beauty of its own.” There was simplicity, as well as strength, in the way in which the initials were cut. But the stone was afterwards desecrated by tourists, and others, who had the audacity to scratch their own names or initials upon it. In 1877 I wrote, “The rock is as yet wonderfully free from such; and its preservation is probably due to the dark olive-coloured moss, with which the ‘pure water trickling down’ has covered the face of the ‘mural block,’ and thus secured it from observation, even on that highway;” but I found in the summer of 1882 that several other names had been ruthlessly added. When the Manchester Thirlmere scheme was finally resolved upon, an effort was made to remove the Stone, with the view of its being placed higher up the hill on the side of the new roadway. In the course of this attempt, the Stone was broken to pieces.

There is a very good drawing of “The Rock of Names” by Mr. Harry Goodwin, in ‘Through the Wordsworth Country, 1892’.

“The Muse” takes farewell of the Waggoner as he is proceeding with the Sailor and his quaint model of the ‘Vanguard’ along the road toward Keswick. She “scents the morning air,” and

‘Quits the slow-paced waggon’s side,
To wander down yon hawthorn dell,
With murmuring Greta for her guide.’

The “hawthorn dell” is the upper part of the Vale of St. John.

'—There doth she ken the awful form Of Raven-crag—black as a storm— Glimmering through the twilight pale; And Ghimmer-crag, his tall twin brother, Each peering forth to meet the other.'

Raven-crag is well known,—H.C. Robinson writes of it in his 'Diary' in 1818, as "the most significant of the crags at a spot where there is not one insignificant,"—a

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rock on the western side of Thirlmere, where the Greta issues from the lake. But there is no rock in the district now called by the name of Ghimmer-crag, or the crag of the Ewe-lamb. I am inclined to think that Wordsworth referred to the “Fisher-crag” of the Ordnance Survey and the Guide Books. No other rock round Thirlmere can with any accuracy be called the “tall twin brother” of Raven-crag: certainly not Great How, nor any spur of High Seat or Bleaberry Fell. Fisher-crag resembles Raven-crag, as seen from Thirlmere Bridge, or from the high road above it; and it is somewhat remarkable that Green—in his *Guide to the Lakes* (a volume which the poet possessed)—makes use of the same expression as that which Wordsworth adopts regarding these two crags, Raven and Fisher.

“The margin of the lake on the Dalehead side has its charms of wood and water; and Fischer Crag, twin brother to Raven Crag, is no bad object, when taken near the island called Buck’s Holm”

(‘A Description of Sixty Studies from Nature’, by William Green of Ambleside, 1810, p. 57). I cannot find any topographical allusion to a Ghimmer-crag in contemporary local writers. Clarke, in his ‘Survey of the Lakes’, does not mention it.

The Castle Rock, in the Vale of Legberthwaite, between High Fell and Great How, is the fairy castle of Sir Walter Scott’s ‘Bridal of Triermain’. “Nathdale Fell” is the ridge between Naddle Vale (Nathdale Vale) and that of St. John, now known as High Rigg. The old Hall of Threlkeld has long been in a state of ruinous dilapidation, the only habitable part of it having been for many years converted into a farmhouse. The remaining local allusions in ‘The Waggoner’ are obvious enough: Castrigg is the shortened form of Castlerigg, the ridge between Naddle Valley and Keswick.

In the “Reminiscences” of Wordsworth, which the Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge wrote for the late Bishop of Lincoln, in 1850, there is the following reference to ‘The Waggoner’. (See ‘Memoirs’, vol. ii. p. 310.)

“‘The Waggoner’ seems a very favourite poem of his. He said his object in it had not been understood. It was a play of the fancy on a domestic incident, and lowly character. He wished by the opening descriptive lines to put his reader into the state of mind in which he wished it to be read. If he failed in doing that, he wished him to lay it down. He pointed out with the same view, the glowing lines on the state of exultation in which Ben and his companions are under the influence of liquor. Then he read the sickening languor of the morning walk, contrasted with the glorious uprising of Nature, and the songs of the birds. Here he has added about six most exquisite lines.”

The lines referred to are doubtless the eight (p. 101), beginning

‘Say more; for by that power a vein,’

which were added in the edition of 1836.

The following is Sara Coleridge’s criticism of ‘The Waggoner’. (See ‘Biographia Literaria’, vol. ii. pp. 183, 184, edition 1847.)

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“Due honour is done to ‘Peter Bell’, at this time, by students of poetry in general; but some, even of Mr. Wordsworth’s greatest admirers, do not quite satisfy me in their admiration of ‘The Waggoner’, a poem which my dear uncle, Mr. Southey, preferred even to the former. ‘Ich will meine Denkungs Art hierin niemandem aufdringen’, as Lessing says: I will force my way of thinking on nobody, but take the liberty, for my own gratification, to express it. The sketches of hill and valley in this poem have a lightness, and spirit—an Allegro touch—distinguishing them from the grave and elevated splendour which characterises Mr. Wordsworth’s representations of Nature in general, and from the passive tenderness of those in ‘The White Doe’, while it harmonises well with the human interest of the piece; indeed it is the harmonious sweetness of the composition which is most dwelt upon by its special admirers. In its course it describes, with bold brief touches, the striking mountain tract from Grasmere to Keswick; it commences with an evening storm among the mountains, presents a lively interior of a country inn during midnight, and concludes after bringing us in sight of St. John’s Vale and the Vale of Keswick seen by day-break—‘Skiddaw touched with rosy light,’ and the prospect from Nathdale Fell ‘hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn:’ thus giving a beautiful and well-contrasted Panorama, produced by the most delicate and masterly strokes of the pencil. Well may Mr. Ruskin, a fine observer and eloquent describer of various classes of natural appearances, speak of Mr. Wordsworth as the great poetic landscape painter of the age. But Mr. Ruskin has found how seldom the great landscape painters are powerful in expressing human passions and affections on canvas, or even successful in the introduction of human figures into their foregrounds; whereas in the poetic paintings of Mr. Wordsworth the landscape is always subordinate to a higher interest; certainly, in ‘The Waggoner’, the little sketch of human nature which occupies, as it were, the front of that encircling background, the picture of Benjamin and his temptations, his humble friends and the mute companions of his way, has a character of its own, combining with sportiveness a homely pathos, which must ever be delightful to some of those who are thoroughly conversant with the spirit of Mr. Wordsworth’s poetry. It may be compared with the ale-house scene in ‘Tam o’Shanter’, parts of Voss’s Luise, or Ovid’s Baucis and Philemon; though it differs from each of them as much as they differ from each other. The Epilogue carries on the feeling of the piece very beautifully.”

The editor of Southey’s ‘Life and Correspondence’—his son, the Rev. Charles Cuthbert Southey—tells us, in a note to a letter from S.T. Coleridge to his father, that the Waggoner’s name was Jackson; and that “all the circumstances of the poem are accurately correct.” This Jackson, after retiring from active work as waggoner, became the tenant of Greta Hall, where first Coleridge, and afterwards Southey lived. The Hall was divided into two houses, one of which Jackson occupied, and the other of which he let to Coleridge, who speaks thus of him in the letter to Southey, dated Greta Hall, Keswick, April 13, 1801:

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“My landlord, who dwells next door, has a very respectable library, which he has put with mine; histories, encyclopedias, and all the modern poetry, *etc. etc. etc.* A more truly disinterested man I never met with; severely frugal, yet almost carelessly generous; and yet he got all his money as a common carrier, by hard labour, and by pennies and pennies. He is one instance among many in this country of the salutary effect of the love of knowledge—he was from a boy a lover of learning.”

(See ‘Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey,’ vol. ii. pp. 147, 148.)

Charles Lamb—to whom ‘The Waggoner’ was dedicated—wrote thus to Wordsworth on 7th June 1819:

“My dear Wordsworth,—You cannot imagine how proud we are here of the dedication. We read it twice for once that we do the poem. I mean all through; yet ‘Benjamin’ is no common favourite; there is a spirit of beautiful tolerance in it. It is as good as it was in 1806; and it will be as good in 1829, if our dim eyes shall be awake to peruse it. Methinks there is a kind of shadowing affinity between the subject of the narrative and the subject of the dedication.

...
“I do not know which I like best,—the prologue (the latter part especially) to ‘P. Bell,’ or the epilogue to ‘Benjamin.’ Yes, I tell stories; I do know I like the last best; and the ‘Waggoner’ altogether is a pleasanter remembrance to me than the ‘Itinerant.’

...
“C. LAMB.”

(See ‘The Letters of Charles Lamb,’ edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. ii. pp. 24-26.)

To this may be added what Southey wrote to Mr. Wade Browne on 15th June 1819:

“I think you will be pleased with Wordsworth’s ‘Waggoner’, if it were only for the line of road which it describes. The master of the waggon was my poor landlord Jackson, and the cause of his exchanging it for the one-horse cart was just as is represented in the poem; nobody but Benjamin could manage it upon these hills, and Benjamin could not resist the temptations by the wayside.”

(See ‘The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey’, vol. iv. p. 318.)—Ed.

* * * * *

THE PRELUDE,

OR, GROWTH OF A POET’S MIND;

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM

Composed 1799-1805.—Published 1850

ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the EXCURSION, first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:

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“Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

“As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

“That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the author’s intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled ‘The Recluse;’ as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.” The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author’s mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic Church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.”

Such was the Author’s language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory to the RECLUSE, and that the RECLUSE, if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone, viz. the EXCURSION, was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The First Book of the First Part of the RECLUSE still remains in manuscript; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author’s other Publications, written subsequently to the EXCURSION.

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country) are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the

'Sibylline Leaves,' p. 197, edition 1817, or 'Poetical Works, by S. T. Coleridge,' vol. i. p. 206.

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RYDAL MOUNT, *July 13th*, 1850.

This “advertisement” to the first edition of ‘The Prelude,’ published in 1850—the year of Wordsworth’s death—was written by Mr. Carter, who edited the volume. Mr. Carter was for many years the poet’s secretary, and afterwards one of his literary executors. The poem was not only kept back from publication during Wordsworth’s life-time, but it remained without a title; being alluded to by himself, when he spoke or wrote of it, as “the poem on my own poetical education,” the “poem on my own life,” *etc.*

As ‘The Prelude’ is autobiographical, a large part of Wordsworth’s life might be written in the notes appended to it; but, besides breaking up the text of the poem unduly, this plan has many disadvantages, and would render a subsequent and detailed life of the poet either unnecessary or repetitive. The notes which follow will therefore be limited to the explanation of local, historical, and chronological allusions, or to references to Wordsworth’s own career that are not obvious without them. It has been occasionally difficult to decide whether some of the allusions, to minute points in ancient history, mediaeval mythology, and contemporary politics, should be explained or left alone; but I have preferred to err on the side of giving a brief clue to details, with which every scholar is familiar.

‘The Prelude’ was begun as Wordsworth left the imperial city of Goslar, in Lower Saxony, where he spent part of the last winter of last century, and which he left on the 10th of February 1799. Only lines 1 to 45, however, were composed at that time; and the poem was continued at desultory intervals after the settlement at Grasmere, during 1800, and following years. Large portions of it were dictated to his devoted amanuenses as he walked, or sat, on the terraces of Lancrigg. Six books were finished by 1805.

“The seventh was begun in the opening of that year; ... and the remaining seven were written before the end of June 1805, when his friend Coleridge was in the island of Malta, for the restoration of his health.”

(The late Bishop of Lincoln.)

There is no uncertainty as to the year in which the later books were written; but there is considerable difficulty in fixing the precise date of the earlier ones. Writing from Grasmere to his friend Francis Wrangham—the letter is undated—Wordsworth says,

“I am engaged in writing a poem on my own earlier life, which will take five parts or books to complete, three of which are nearly finished.”

The late Bishop of Lincoln supposed that this letter to Wrangham was written “at the close of 1803, or beginning of 1804.” (See ‘Memoirs of Wordsworth,’ vol. i. p. 303.)

There is evidence that it belongs to 1804. At the commencement of the seventh book, p. 247, he says:

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Six changeful years have vanished since I first Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze Which met me issuing from the City's walls) *A glad preamble to this Verse:* I sang Aloud, with fervour irresistible Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting, From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth (So willed the Muse) *a less impetuous stream, That flowed awhile with unabating strength, Then stopped for years; not audible again Before last primrose-time.*

I have *italicised* the clauses which give some clue to the dates of composition. From these it would appear that the "glad preamble," written on leaving Goslar in 1799 (which, I think, included only the first two paragraphs of book first), was a "short-lived transport"; but that "soon" afterwards "a less impetuous stream" broke forth, which, after the settlement at Grasmere, "flowed awhile with unabating strength," and then "stopped for years." Now the above passage, recording these things, was written in 1805, and in the late autumn of that year; (as is evident from the reference which immediately follows to the "choir of redbreasts" and the approach of winter). We must therefore assign the flowing of the "less impetuous stream," to 1802; in order to leave room for the intervening "years," in which it ceased to flow, till it was audible again in the spring of 1804, "last primrose-time."

A second reference to date occurs in the sixth book, p. 224, entitled "Cambridge and the Alps," in which he says,

*Four years and thirty, told, this very week,
Have I been now a sojourner on earth.*

This fixes definitely enough the date of the composition of *that* part of the work, viz. April 1804, which corresponds exactly to the "last primrose-time" of the previous extract from the seventh book, in which he tells us that after its long silence, his Muse was heard again. So far Wordsworth's own allusions to the date of 'The Prelude.'

But there are others supplied by his own, and his sister's letters, and also by the Grasmere Journal. In the Dove Cottage household it was known, and talked of, as "the Poem to Coleridge;" and Dorothy records, on 11th January 1803, that her brother was working at it. On 13th February 1804, she writes to Mrs. Clarkson that her brother was engaged on a poem on his own life, and was "going on with great rapidity." On the 6th of March 1804, Wordsworth wrote from Grasmere to De Quincey,

"I am now writing a poem on my own earlier life: I have just finished that part of it in which I speak of my residence at the University." ... It is "better than half complete, viz. four books, amounting to about 2500 lines." [A]

On the 24th of March, Dorothy wrote to Mrs. Clarkson, that since Coleridge left them (which was in January 1804), her brother had added 1500 lines to the poem on his own life. On the 29th of April 1804, Wordsworth wrote to Richard Sharpe,

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"I have been very busy these last ten weeks: having written between two and three thousand lines—accurately near three thousand—in that time; namely, four books, and a third of another. I am at present at the Seventh Book."

On the 25th December 1804, he wrote to Sir George Beaumont,

"I have written upwards of 2000 verses during the last ten weeks."

We thus find that Books I. to IV. had been written by the 6th of March 1804, that from the 19th February to the 29th of April nearly 3000 lines were written, that March and April were specially productive months, for by the 29th April he had reached Book VII. while from 16th October to 25th December he wrote over 2000 lines.

Dorothy and Mary Wordsworth transcribed the earlier books more than once, and a copy of some of them was given to Coleridge to take with him to Malta.

It is certain that the remaining books of 'The Prelude' were all written in the spring and early summer of 1805; the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, and part of the twelfth being finished about the middle of April; the last 300 lines of book twelfth in the last week of April; and the two remaining books—the thirteenth and fourteenth—before the 20th of May. The following extracts from letters of Wordsworth to Sir George Beaumont make this clear, and also cast light on matters much more important than the mere dates of composition.

GRASMERE, Dec. 25, 1804.

"My dear Sir George,—You will be pleased to hear that I have been advancing with my work: I have written upwards of 2000 verses during the last ten weeks. I do not know if you are exactly acquainted with the plan of my poetical labour: It is twofold; first, a Poem, to be called 'The Recluse;' in which it will be my object to express in verse my most interesting feelings concerning man, nature, and society; and next, a poem (in which I am at present chiefly engaged) on *my earlier life, or the growth of my own mind*, taken up upon a large scale. This latter work I expect to have finished before the month of May; and then I purpose to fall with all my might on the former, which is the chief object upon which my thoughts have been fixed these many years. Of this poem, that of 'The Pedlar,' which Coleridge read to you, is part; and I may have written of it altogether about 2000 lines. It will consist, I hope, of about ten or twelve thousand."

GRASMERE, May 1, 1805.

"Unable to proceed with this work, [B] I turned my thoughts again to the 'Poem on my own Life', and you will be glad to hear that I have added 300 lines to it in the course of last week. Two books more will conclude it. It will not be much less than 9000 lines,—not hundred but thousand lines long,—an alarming length! and a thing unprecedented in

literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit, as you will know well, that

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has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was *unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers*. Here, at least, I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but describe what I had felt and thought, and therefore could not easily be bewildered. This might have been done in narrower compass by a man of more address; but I have done my best. If, when the work shall be finished, it appears to the judicious to have redundancies, they shall be lopped off, if possible; but this is very difficult to do, when a man has written with thought; and this defect, whenever I have suspected it or found it to exist in any writings of mine, I have always found it incurable. The fault lies too deep, and is in the first conception.”

GRASMERE, June 3, 1805.

“I have the pleasure to say that I *finished my poem* about a fortnight ago. I had looked forward to the day as a most happy one; ... But it was not a happy day for me; I was dejected on many accounts: when I looked back upon the performance, it seemed to have a dead weight about it,—the reality so far short of the expectation. It was the first long labour that I had finished; and the doubt whether I should ever live to write ‘The Recluse’, and the sense which I had of this poem being so far below what I seemed capable of executing, depressed me much; above all, many heavy thoughts of my poor departed brother hung upon me, the joy which I should have had in showing him the manuscript, and a thousand other vain fancies and dreams. I have spoken of this, because it was a state of feeling new to me, the occasion being new. This work may be considered as a sort of *portico* to ‘The Recluse’, part of the same building, which I hope to be able, ere long, to begin with in earnest; and if I am permitted to bring it to a conclusion, and to write, further, a narrative poem of the epic kind, I shall consider the task of my life as over. I ought to add, that I have the satisfaction of finding the present poem not quite of so alarming a length as I apprehended.”

These letters explain the delay in the publication of ‘The Prelude’. They show that what led Wordsworth to write so much about himself was not self-conceit, but self-diffidence. He felt unprepared as yet for the more arduous task he had set before himself. He saw its faults as clearly, or more clearly, than the critics who condemned him. He knew that its length was excessive. He tried to condense it; he kept it beside him unpublished, and occasionally revised it, with a view to condensation, in vain. The text received his final corrections in the year 1832.

Wordsworth’s reluctance to publish these portions of his great poem, ‘The Recluse’, other than ‘The Excursion’, during his lifetime, was a matter of surprise to his friends; to whom he, or the ladies of his household, had read portions of it. In the year 1819, Charles Lamb wrote to him,

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"If, as you say, 'The Waggoner', in some sort, came at my call, oh for a potent voice to call forth 'The Recluse' from his profound dormitory, where he sleeps forgetful of his foolish charge—the world!"

('The Letters of Charles Lamb', edited by Alfred Ainger, vol. ii. p. 26.)

The admission made in the letter of May 1st, 1805, is note-worthy:

"This defect" (of redundancy) "whenever I have suspected it or found it to exist in any writings of mine, *I have always found incurable. The fault lies too deep, and is in the first conception.*"

The actual result—in the Poem he had at length committed to writing—was so far inferior to the ideal he had tried to realise, that he could never be induced to publish it. He spoke of the MS. as forming a sort of *portico* to his larger work—the poem on Man, Nature, and Society—which he meant to call 'The Recluse', and of which one portion only, viz. 'The Excursion', was finished. It is clear that throughout the composition of 'The Prelude', he felt that he was experimenting with his powers. He wished to find out whether he could construct "a literary work that might live," on a larger scale than his Lyrics; and it was on the writing of a "philosophical poem," dealing with Man and Nature, in their deepest aspects, that his thoughts had been fixed for many years. From the letter to Sir George Beaumont, December 25, 1804, it is evident that he regarded the autobiographical poem as a mere prologue to this larger work, to which he hoped to turn "with all his might" after 'The Prelude' was finished, and of which he had already written about a fifth or a sixth (see 'Memoirs', vol. i. p. 304). This was the part known in the Grasmere household as "The Pedlar," a title given to it from the character of the Wanderer, but afterwards happily set aside. He did not devote himself, however, to the completion of his wider purpose, immediately after 'The Prelude' was finished. He wrote one book of 'The Recluse' which he called "Home at Grasmere"; and, though detached from 'The Prelude', it is a continuation of the narrative of his own life at the point where it is left off in the latter poem. It consists of 733 lines. Two extracts from it were published in the 'Memoirs of Wordsworth' in 1851 (vol. i. pp. 151 and 155), beginning,

'On Nature's invitation do I come,'

and

'Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak.'

These will be found in vol. ii. of this edition, pp. 118 and 121 respectively.

The autobiographical poem remained, as already stated, during Wordsworth's lifetime without a title. The name finally adopted—'The Prelude'—was suggested by Mrs.

Wordsworth, both to indicate its relation to the larger work, and the fact of its having been written comparatively early.

As the poem was addressed to Coleridge, it may be desirable to add in this place his critical verdict upon it; along with the poem which he wrote, on hearing Wordsworth read a portion of it to him, in the winter of 1806, at Coleorton.

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In his 'Table Talk' (London, 1835, vol. ii. p. 70), Coleridge's opinion is recorded thus:

"I cannot help regretting that Wordsworth did not first publish his thirteen (fourteen) books on the growth of an individual mind—superior, as I used to think, upon the whole to 'The Excursion'. You may judge how I felt about them by my own Poem upon the occasion. Then the plan laid out, and, I believe, partly suggested by me, was, that Wordsworth should assume the station of a man in mental repose, one whose principles were made up, and so prepared to deliver upon authority a system of philosophy. He was to treat man as man,—a subject of eye, ear, touch, and taste in contact with external nature, and informing the senses from the mind, and not compounding a mind out of the senses; then he was to describe the pastoral and other states of society, assuming something of the Juvenalian spirit as he approached the high civilisation of cities and towns, and opening a melancholy picture of the present state of degeneracy and vice; thence he was to infer and reveal the proof of, and necessity for, the whole state of man and society being subject to, and illustrative of a redemptive process in operation, showing how this idea reconciled all the anomalies, and promised future glory and restoration. Something of this sort was, I think, agreed on. It is, in substance, what I have been all my life doing in my system of philosophy." "I think Wordsworth possessed more of the genius of a great Philosopher than any man I ever knew, or, as I believe, has existed in England since Milton; but it seems to me that he ought never to have abandoned the contemplative position which is peculiarly—perhaps, I might say exclusively—fitted for him. His proper title is 'Spectator ab extra'."

The following are Coleridge's Lines addressed to Wordsworth:

TO WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

COMPOSED ON THE NIGHT AFTER HIS RECITATION OF A POEM ON THE
GROWTH OF
AN INDIVIDUAL MIND

Friend of the wise! and teacher of the good!
Into my heart have I received that lay
More than historic, that prophetic lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up
Of a Human Spirit thou hast dared to tell
What may be told, to the understanding mind
Revealable; and what within the mind
By vital breathings secret as the soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickens in the heart
Thoughts all too deep for words!—

Theme hard as high,
Of smiles spontaneous, and mysterious fears



(The first-born they of Reason and twin-birth),
Of tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determined, as might seem,
Or by some inner power; of moments awful,
Now in thy inner life, and now abroad,
When power streamed from thee, and thy soul received
The Light reflected, as a light bestowed—

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Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth,
Hyblean murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens,
Native or outland, lakes and famous hills!
Or on the lonely high-road, when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain-streams,
The guides and the companions of thy way!
Of more than Fancy, of the Social Sense
Distending wide, and man beloved as man,
Where France in all her towns lay vibrating
Like some becalmed bark beneath the burst
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud
Is visible, or shadow on the main.
For thou wert there, thine own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a realm aglow,
Amid a mighty nation jubilant,
When from the general heart of humankind
Hope sprang forth like a full-born Deity!
—Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summoned homeward, thenceforth calm and sure,
From the dread watch-tower of man's absolute self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a glory to behold.
The Angel of the vision! Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen laws controlling choice,
Action and joy!—An Orphic song indeed,
A song divine of high and passionate thoughts
To their own music chanted!

O great Bard!

Ere yet that last strain dying awed the air,
With steadfast eye I viewed thee in the choir
Of ever-enduring men. The truly great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence! They, both in power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it.
Nor less a sacred roll, than those of old,
And to be placed, as they, with gradual fame
Among the archives of mankind, thy work
Makes audible a linked lay of Truth,



Of Truth profound a sweet continuous lay,
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Ah! as I listened with a heart forlorn,
The pulses of my being beat anew:
And even as life returns upon the drowned,
Life's joy rekindling roused a throng of pains—
Keen pangs of Love, awakening as a babe
Turbulent, with an outcry in the heart;
And fears self-willed, that shunned the eye of hope;
And hope that scarce would know itself from fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And genius given, and knowledge won in vain;
And all which I had culled in wood-walks wild,
And all which patient toil had reared, and all,
Commune with thee had opened out—but flowers
Strewed on my corse, and borne upon my bier,
In the same coffin, for the self-same grave!

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... Eve following eve, Dear tranquil time, when the sweet sense of Home Is sweetest! moments for their own sake hailed, And more desired, more precious for thy song, In silence listening, like a devout child, My soul lay passive, by thy various strain Driven as in surges now beneath the stars, With momentary stars of my own birth, Fair constellated foam, [C] still darting off Into the darkness; now a tranquil sea, Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the moon.

And when—O Friend! my comforter and guide!
Strong in thyself, and powerful to give strength!—
Thy long-sustained Song finally closed,
And thy deep voice had ceased—yet thou thyself
Wert still before my eyes, and round us both
That happy vision of beloved faces—
Scarce conscious, and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my being blended in one thought
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?)
Absorbed, yet hanging still upon the sound—
And when I rose I found myself in prayer.

It was at Coleorton, in Leicestershire,—where the Wordsworths lived during the winter of 1806-7, in a farm-house belonging to Sir George Beaumont, and where Coleridge visited them,—that ‘The Prelude’ was read aloud by its author, on the occasion which gave birth to these lines.—Ed.

[Footnote A: See the ‘De Quincey Memorials,’ vol. i. p. 125.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: A poem on his brother John.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare

“A beautiful white cloud of foam at momentary intervals, coursed by the side of the vessel with a roar, and little stars of flame danced and sparkled and went out in it: and every now and then light detachments of this white cloud-like foam darted off from the vessel’s side, each with its own small constellation, over the sea, and scoured out of sight like a Tartar troop over a wilderness.”

S. T. C. in ‘Biographia Literaria’, Satyrane’s Letters, letter i. p. 196 (edition 1817).—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION.—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME



O there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come 5
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, [A] where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale 10
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. [B] With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,



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15

I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, 20
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day [C]
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
With any promises of human life), 25
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
Upon the river point me out my course? 30

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved 35
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial powers, that, while they join
In breaking up a long-continued frost, 40
Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
Of active days urged on by flying hours,—
Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
Matins and vespers of harmonious verse! 45

Thus far, O Friend! [D] did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a song,
Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
That would not be forgotten, and are here
Recorded: to the open fields I told 50
A prophecy: poetic numbers came
Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated spirit singled out,
Such hope was mine, for holy services.



My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's 55
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on 60
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green shady place, [E] where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness.
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day, 65
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the



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thoughts 70

Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale, [F] whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage [G] which methought I saw.
No picture of mere memory ever looked 75
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, 80
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately groves of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound. 85
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive, 90
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale. [F]
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked 95
Æolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
Why think of any thing but present good?" [H] 100
So, like a home-bound labourer I pursued
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence; nor left in me one wish
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
To a servile yoke. What need of many words? 105
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage, [I]
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things—the endless store of things,
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 110
Found all about me in one neighbourhood—



The self-congratulation, and, from morn
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene. [K]
But speedily an earnest longing rose
To brace myself to some determined aim, 115
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
By timely interference: and therewith
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
I might endue some airy phantasies 120
That had been floating loose about for years,
And to such beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear 125
And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning: if my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds 130
Impediments from day to day renewed.



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And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!
The Poet, gentle creature as he is, 135
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased
While she as duteous as the mother dove 140
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves; [L]
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
No otherwise than as it lasts too long. 145

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such an arduous work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often cheering; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul, 150
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind:
Nor am I naked of external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids 155
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice; 160
No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
To summon back from lonesome banishment,
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
Now living, or to live in future years. 165
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;
More often turning to some gentle place 170
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a river side



Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome 175
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
Whence inspiration for a song that winds 180
Through ever changing scenes of votive quest
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves. 185
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would

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relate

How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the Father of a race by whom
Perished the Roman Empire: [M] how the friends 190
And followers of Sertorius, [N] out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles, [O]
And left their usages, their arts and laws,
To disappear by a slow gradual death,
To dwindle and to perish one by one, 195
Starved in those narrow bounds: [P] but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold 200
And wasted down by glorious death that race
Of natural heroes: or I would record
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell, 205
How that one Frenchman, [Q] through continued force
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
Went single in his ministry across
The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed, 210
But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about
Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus sought
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines: [R]
How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower, 215
All over his dear Country; [S] left the deeds
Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
To people the steep rocks and river banks,
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
Of independence and stern liberty. 220
Sometimes it suits me better to invent
A tale from my own heart, more near akin
To my own passions and habitual thoughts;
Some variegated story, in the main
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts 225
Before the very sun that brightens it,
Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,



My best and favourite aspiration, mounts
With yearning toward some philosophic song
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life; 230
With meditations passionate from deep
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse [T]
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre; [U]
But from this awful burthen I full soon
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust 235
That mellow years will bring a riper mind
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past
In contradiction; with no skill to part
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
From paramount impulse not to be withstood, 240
A timorous capacity from prudence,
From circumspection, infinite delay.

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Humility and modest awe themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness; that now 245
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah! better far than this, to stray about 250
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreprieved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name 255
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes. 260
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose 265
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.
Was it for this
That one, the fairest of all rivers, [V] loved 270
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms 275
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm 280
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves?



When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers [W]
That yet survive, a shattered monument
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed 285
Along the margin of our terrace walk; [X]
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
Made one long bathing of a summer's day; 290
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves
Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height, 295
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport
A naked savage, in the thunder shower. 300

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Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted [Y]—there were we let loose 305
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, [Z] when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, [a] 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung 310
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Along the smooth green turf. [b] Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation;—moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone, 315
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befel
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil 320
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod. 325

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale, [c]
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung 330
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, [d] oh, at that time 335
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows 340
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles

Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries, 345
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end! 350
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry 355
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.



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One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, [e] its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in 360
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon, 365
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge, 370
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat 375
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. [f] I struck and struck again, 380
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned, 385
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen 390
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes 395
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live

Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams. 400

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn 405
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things—
With life and nature, purifying thus 410
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,

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Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 415
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley 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, 420
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun 425
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us—for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 430
The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase 435
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; 440
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; [g] while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west 445
The orange sky of evening died away.
Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideway, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star 450
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed



Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still 455
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! 460
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep. [h]



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Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills! 465
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills, 470
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employed, 475
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours; 480
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line, 485
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unproved enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks. [i] 490
—Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons, [j]
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser; 495
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours; 500
Can I forget you, being as you were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which



Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye 505
Delights and exultations of your own. [k]
Eager and never weary we pursued
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
In square divisions parcelled out and all 510
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
In strife too humble to be named in verse:
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
Cherry or maple, sate in close array, 515
And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,

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But husbanded through many a long campaign. 520
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards [l]
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth, [m]
Had dignified, and called to represent
The persons of departed potentates. 525
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
A congregation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
Those sooty knaves, precipitated down 530
With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven:
The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,
And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad 535
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting oft that eager game,
From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself, 540
Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main. [n]

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first 545
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time, 550
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm; that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities that fit 555
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.



Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped 560
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain 565
Of waters coloured by impending clouds. [o]

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills 570
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A stranger, linking with the spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,

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And bringing with me no peculiar sense 575
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers. 580

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
And is forgotten; even then I felt 585
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed 590
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral objects and appearances,
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
Until maturer seasons called them forth 595
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
—And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
Remained in their substantial lineaments 600
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
So frequently repeated, and by force 605
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
Habitually dear, and all their forms 610
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.



I began
My story early—not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
Disowned by memory—ere the breath of spring 615
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows: [p]
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch 620
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes 625
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from

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thee

Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit 630
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining? [q] 635

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
Through later years the story of my life.
The road lies plain before me;—'tis a theme 640
Single and of determined bounds; and hence
I choose it rather at this time, than work
Of ampler or more varied argument,
Where I might be discomfited and lost:
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee 645
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES TO BOOK THE FIRST

[Footnote A: On the authority of the poet's nephew, and others, the "city" here referred to has invariably been supposed to be Goslar, where he spent the winter of 1799. Goslar, however, is as unlike a "vast city" as it is possible to conceive. Wordsworth could have walked from end to end of it in ten minutes.

One would think he was rather referring to London, but there is no evidence to show that he visited the metropolis in the spring of 1799. The lines which follow about "the open fields" (l. 50) are certainly more appropriate to a journey from London to Sockburn, than from Goslar to Gottingen; and what follows, the "green shady place" of l. 62, the "known Vale" and the "cottage" of ll. 72 and 74, certainly refer to English soil.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare 'Paradise Lost', xii. l. 646.

'The world was all before them, where to choose.'

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare 'Lines composed above Tintern Abbey', ll. 52-5 (vol. ii. p. 53.)—Ed.]

[Footnote D: S. T. Coleridge.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: At Sockburn-on-Tees, county Durham, seven miles south-east of Darlington.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Grasmere.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Dove Cottage at Town-end.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: This quotation I am unable to trace.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Wordsworth spent most of the year 1799 (from March to December) at Sockburn with the Hutchinsons. With Coleridge and his brother John he went to Windermere, Rydal, Grasmere, *etc.*, in the autumn, returning afterwards to Sockburn. He left it again, with his sister, on Dec. 19, to settle at Grasmere, and they reached Dove Cottage on Dec. 21, 1799.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: See Dorothy Wordsworth's Grasmere Journal, *passim*.—Ed.]

[Footnote L: Compare the 2nd and 3rd of the 'Stanzas written in my pocket-copy of Thomson's Castle of Indolence', vol. ii. p. 306, and the note appended to that poem.—Ed.]

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[Footnote M: Mithridates (the Great) of Pontus, 131 B.C. to 63 B.C. Vanquished by Pompey, B.C. 65, he fled to his son-in-law, Tigranes, in Armenia. Being refused an asylum, he committed suicide. I cannot trace the legend of Mithridates becoming Odin. Probably Wordsworth means that he would invent, rather than “relate,” the story. Gibbon (*‘Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’*, chap. x.) says,

“It is supposed that Odin was the chief of a tribe of barbarians, who dwelt on the banks of Lake Maeotis, till the fall of Mithridates, and the arms of Pompey menaced the north with servitude; that Odin, yielding with indignant fury to a power which he was unable to resist, conducted his tribe from the frontiers of Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden.”

See also Mallet, *‘Northern Antiquities’*, and Crichton and Wheaton’s *‘Scandinavia’* (Edinburgh Cabinet Library):

“Among the fugitive princes of Scythia, who were expelled from their country in the Mithridatic war, tradition has placed the name of Odin, the ruler of a potent tribe in Turkestan, between the Euxine and the Caspian.”

Ed.]

[Footnote N: Sertorius, one of the Roman generals of the later Republican era (see Plutarch’s biography of him, and Corneille’s tragedy). On being proscribed by Sylla, he fled from Etruria to Spain; there he became the leader of several bands of exiles, and repulsed the Roman armies sent against him. Mithridates VI.—referred to in the previous note—aided him, both with ships and money, being desirous of establishing a new Roman Republic in Spain. From Spain he went to Mauritania. In the Straits of Gibraltar he met some sailors, who had been in the Atlantic Isles, and whose reports made him wish to visit these islands.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: Supposed to be the Canaries.—Ed.]

[Footnote P:

“In the early part of the fifteenth century there arrived at Lisbon an old bewildered pilot of the seas, who had been driven by tempests he knew not whither, and raved about an island in the far deep upon which he had landed, and which he had found peopled, and adorned with noble cities. The inhabitants told him that they were descendants of a band of Christians who fled from Spain when that country was conquered by the Moslems.”

(See Washington Irving’s *‘Chronicles of Wolfert’s Roost’*, etc.; and Baring Gould’s *‘Curious Myths of the Middle Ages’*.)—Ed.]



[Footnote Q: Dominique de Gourgues, a French gentleman, who went in 1568 to Florida, to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there. (Mr. Carter, in the edition of 1850.)—Ed.]

[Footnote R: Gustavus I. of Sweden. In the course of his war with Denmark he retreated to Dalecarlia, where he was a miner and field labourer.—Ed.]

[Footnote S: The name—both as Christian and surname—is common in Scotland, and towns (such as Wallacetown, Ayr) are named after him.

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“Passed two of Wallace’s caves. There is scarcely a noted glen in Scotland that has not a cave for Wallace, or some other hero.”

Dorothy Wordsworth’s ‘Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland in 1803’ (Sunday, August 21).—Ed.]

[Footnote T: Compare ‘L’Allegro’, l. 137.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Compare ‘Paradise Lost’, iii. 17.—Ed.]

[Footnote V: The Derwent, on which the town of Cockermouth is built, where Wordsworth was born on the 7th of April 1770.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: The towers of Cockermouth Castle.—Ed.]

[Footnote X: The “terrace walk” is at the foot of the garden, attached to the old mansion in which Wordsworth’s father, law-agent of the Earl of Lonsdale, resided. This home of his childhood is alluded to in ‘The Sparrow’s Nest’, vol. ii. p. 236. Three of the “Poems, composed or suggested during a Tour, in the Summer of 1833,” refer to Cockermouth. They are the fifth, sixth, and seventh in that series of Sonnets: and are entitled respectively ‘To the River Derwent’; ‘In sight of the Town of Cockermouth’; and the ‘Address from the Spirit of Cockermouth Castle’. It was proposed some time ago that this house—which is known in Cockermouth as “Wordsworth House,”—should be purchased, and since the Grammar School of the place is out of repair, that it should be converted into a School, in memory of Wordsworth. This excellent suggestion has not yet been carried out—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: The Vale of Esthwaite.—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: He went to Hawkshead School in 1778.—Ed.]

[Footnote a: About mid October the autumn crocus in the garden “snaps” in that district.—Ed.]

[Footnote b: Possibly in the Claife and Colthouse heights to the east of Esthwaite Water; but more probably the round-headed grassy hills that lead up and on to the moor between Hawkshead and Coniston, where the turf is always green and smooth.—Ed.]

[Footnote c: Yewdale: see next note. “Cultured Vale” exactly describes the little oat-growing valley of Yewdale.—Ed.]

[Footnote d: As there are no “naked crags” with “half-inch fissures in the slippery rocks” in the “cultured vale” of Esthwaite, the locality referred to is probably the Hohne Fells above Yewdale, to the north of Coniston, and only a few miles from Hawkshead, where



a crag, now named Raven's Crag, divides Tilberthwaite from Yewdale. In his 'Epistle to Sir George Beaumont', Wordsworth speaks of Yewdale as a plain

'spread

Under a rock too steep for man to tread,
Where sheltered from the north and bleak north-west
Aloft the Raven hangs a visible nest,
Fearless of all assaults that would her brood molest.'

Ed.]

[Footnote e: Dr. Cradock suggested the reading "rocky cove." Rocky cave is tautological, and Wordsworth would hardly apply the epithet to an ordinary boat-house. —Ed.]

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[Footnote f: The “craggy steep till then the horizon’s bound,” is probably the ridge of Ironkeld, reaching from high Arnside to the Tom Heights above Tarn Hows; while the “huge peak, black and huge, as if with voluntary power instinct,” may be either the summit of Wetherlam, or of Pike o’Blisco. Mr. Rawnsley, however, is of opinion that if Wordsworth rowed off from the west bank of Fasthwaite, he might see beyond the craggy ridge of Loughrigg the mass of Nab-Scar, and Rydal Head would rise up “black and huge.” If he rowed from the east side, then Pike o’Stickle, or Harrison Stickle, might rise above Ironkeld, over Borwick Ground.—Ed.]

[Footnote g: Compare S. T. Coleridge.

“When very many are skating together, the sounds and the noises give
an impulse to the icy trees, and the woods all round the lake
tinkle.”

‘The Friend’, vol. ii. p. 325 (edition 1818).—Ed.]

[Footnote h: The two preceding paragraphs were published in ‘The Friend’, December 28, 1809, under the title of the ‘Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects on the Imagination, in Boyhood and Early Youth’, and were afterwards inserted in all the collective editions of Wordsworth’s poems, from 1815 onwards. For the changes of the text in these editions, see vol. ii. pp. 66-69.—Ed.]

[Footnote i: The becks amongst the Furness Fells, in Yewdale, and elsewhere.—Ed.]

[Footnote j: Possibly from the top of some of the rounded moraine hills on the western side of the Hawkshead Valley.—Ed.]

[Footnote k: The pupils in the Hawkshead school, in Wordsworth’s time, boarded in the houses of village dames. Wordsworth lived with one Anne Tyson, for whom he ever afterwards cherished the warmest regard, and whose simple character he has immortalised. (See especially in the fourth book of ‘The Prelude’, p. 187, *etc.*) Wordsworth lived in her cottage at Hawkshead during nine eventful years. It still remains externally unaltered, and little, if at all, changed in the interior. It may be reached through a picturesque archway, near the principal inn of the village (The Lion); and is on the right of a small open yard, which is entered through this archway. To the left, a lane leads westwards to the open country. It is a humble dwelling of two storeys. The floor of the basement flat-paved with the blue flags of Coniston slate—is not likely to have been changed since Wordsworth’s time. The present door with its “latch” (see book ii. l. 339), is probably the same as that referred to in the poem, as in use in 1776, and onwards. For further details see notes to book iv.—Ed.]

[Footnote l: Compare Pope’s ‘Rape of the Lock’, canto iii. l. 54:



'Gained but one trump, and one plebeian card.'

Ed.]

[Footnote m: Compare Walton's 'Compleat Angler', part i. 4:

'I was for that time lifted above earth,
And possess'd joys not promised in my birth.'

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Ed.]

[Footnote n: The notes to this edition are explanatory rather than critical; but as this image has been objected to—as inaccurate, and out of all analogy with Wordsworth's use and wont—it may be mentioned that the noise of the breaking up of the ice, after a severe winter in these lakes, when it cracks and splits in all directions, is exactly as here described. It is not of course, in any sense peculiar to the English lakes; but there are probably few districts where the peculiar noise referred to can be heard so easily or frequently. Compare Coleridge's account of the Lake of Ratzeburg in winter, in 'The Friend', vol. ii. p. 323 (edition of 1818), and his reference to "the thunders and 'howlings' of the breaking ice."—Ed.]

[Footnote o: I here insert a very remarkable MS. variation of the text, or rather (I think) one of these experiments in dealing with his theme, which were common with Wordsworth. I found it in a copy of the Poems belonging to the poet's son:

I tread the mazes of this argument, and paint
How nature by collateral interest
And by extrinsic passion peopled first
My mind with beauteous objects: may I well
Forget what might demand a loftier song,
For oft the Eternal Spirit, He that has
His Life in unimaginable things,
And he who painting what He is in all
The visible imagery of all the World
Is yet apparent chiefly as the Soul
Of our first sympathies—O bounteous power
In Childhood, in rememberable days
How often did thy love renew for me
Those naked feelings which, when thou would'st form
A living thing, thou sendest like a breeze
Into its infant being! Soul of things
How often did thy love renew for me
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem in their simplicity to own
An intellectual charm: That calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born affinities which fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union betwixt life and joy.
Yes, I remember, when the changeful youth
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then



A child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lines
Of curling mist, or from the smooth expanse
Of waters coloured by the clouds of Heaven.

Ed.]

[Footnote p: Snowdrops still grow abundantly in many an orchard and meadow by the road which skirts the western side of Esthwaite Lake.—Ed.]

[Footnote q: Compare the 'Ode, Intimations of Immortality', stanza ix.—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME—continued ...

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Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet 5
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that came unsought; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed: 10
No chair remained before the doors; the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last, 15
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride 20
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem?
One is there, though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be;—who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillising spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days
Which yet have such self-presence in my mind, 30
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. A rude mass
Of native rock, left midway in the square
Of our small market village, was the goal 35
Or centre of these sports; [A] and when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,
Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream, 40
And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends! I know
That more than one of you will think with me
Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame

From whom the stone was named, who there had sate,
And watched her table with its huckster's wares 45
Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round
With giddy motion. But the time approached
That brought with it a regular desire
For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms 50
Of Nature were collaterally attached
To every scheme of holiday delight
And every boyish sport, less grateful else
And languidly pursued.

When summer came,
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,



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55

To sweep, along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; [B] and the selected bourne
Was now an Island musical with birds
That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown 60
With lilies of the valley like a field; [C]
And now a third small Island, where survived
In solitude the ruins of a shrine
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served
Daily with chaunted rites. [D] In such a race 65
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
And the vain-glory of superior skill, 70
Were tempered; thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart;
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days
Ensued a diffidence and modesty, 75
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength 80
Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude
A little weekly stipend, and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school
From the half-yearly holidays returned, 85
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
Or in the woods, or by a river side 90
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years, 95



We from our funds drew largely;—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed;
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud
Supplied our want, we haply might employ
Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound 100
Were distant: some famed temple where of yore
The Druids worshipped, [E] or the antique walls
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built, [F]
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch, 105
Belfry, [G] and images, and living trees,
A holy scene! Along the smooth green turf
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers 110
In that sequestered valley may be seen,
Both silent and both motionless alike;
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
The safeguard for repose and quietness.



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Our steeds remounted and the summons given, 115
With whip and spur we through the chauntry flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
And the stone-abbot, [H] and that single wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave
Of the old church, that—though from recent showers 120
The earth was comfortless, and touched by faint
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
And respirations, from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird 125
Sang to herself, that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
And down the valley, and, a circuit made
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth 130
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
And that still spirit shed from evening air!
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when 135
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
Within the crescent of a pleasant bay, [I]
A tavern stood; [K] no homely-featured house, 140
Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.
In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built 145
On the large island, had this dwelling been
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,
Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.
But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed
The threshold, and large golden characters, 150
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged
The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—[L]
Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay 155
Upon a slope surmounted by a plain

Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
And over the tree-tops; [M] nor did we want
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream. 160
There, while through half an afternoon we played
On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,
When in our pinnace we returned at leisure 165
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
Of some small island steered our course



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with one,

The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there, [N]
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute
Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm 170
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus 175
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light 180
Which we behold and feel we are alive; [O]
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds—
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain [P] touch his setting orb, 185
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.
And, from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love 190
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I could dream away my purposes,
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region, but belonged to thee, [Q] 195
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale! [R]

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell 200
How Nature, intervenient till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out
His intellect by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square? 205
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?



Who that shall point as with a wand and say
"This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain?" [S] Thou, my Friend! art one 210
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum, and a prop
To our infirmity. No officious slave 215
Art thou of that false secondary power
By which we multiply distinctions; then,
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts, 220
The unity of all hath been revealed,
And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled
Than many are to range the faculties

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In scale and order, class the cabinet
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase 225
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
If each most obvious and particular thought,
Not in a mystical and idle sense, 230
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.
Blest the infant Babe,
(For with my best conjecture I would trace
Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep 235
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense. 240
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
Of nature that connect him with the world.
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand 245
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
Hath beautified that flower; already shades
Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears 250
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
Emphatically such a Being lives,
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,
An inmate of this active universe.
For feeling has to him imparted power 255
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
Create, creator and receiver both,
Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds. Such, verily, is the first 260
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years,



In most, abated or suppressed; in some,
Through every change of growth and of decay,
Pre-eminent till death.

From early days, 265
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility, 270
Great birthright of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me; and I fear
That in its broken windings we shall need
The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing: 275
For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes. I was left alone
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
The props of my affections were removed,

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And yet the building stood, as if sustained 280
By its own spirit! All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes
The mind lay open to a more exact
And close communion. Many are our joys
In youth, but oh! what happiness to live 285
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,
And every season wheresoe'er I moved
Unfolded transitory qualities, 290
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
Had been neglected; left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown.
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
More active even than "best society"—[T] 295
Society made sweet as solitude
By silent inobtrusive sympathies—
And gentle agitations of the mind
From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye, 300
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
Sublimar joy; for I would walk alone,
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form 305
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds. 310
Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life; but that the soul, 315
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
With growing faculties she doth aspire,

With faculties still growing, feeling still 320
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.

And not alone,
'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
And tranquil scenes, that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities 325
And essences of things, by which the mind
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
Came, strengthened with a superadded soul,
A virtue not its own. My morning walks
Were early;—oft before the hours of school [U] 330
I travelled round our little lake, [V] five miles
Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear
For this, that one was by my side, a Friend, [W]
Then passionately loved; with heart how full
Would he peruse these lines! For



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many years 335

Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
Both silent to each other, at this time
We live as if those hours had never been.
Nor seldom did I lift—our cottage latch [X]
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen 340
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush
Was audible; and sate among the woods
Alone upon some jutting eminence, [Y]
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude. 345
How shall I seek the origin? where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
Oft in these moments such a holy calm
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw 350
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in the mind. [Z]

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
And what the summer shade, what day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought 355
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love
In which I walked with Nature. But let this
Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility; 360
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
A local spirit of his own, at war 365
With general tendency, but, for the most,
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed. An auxiliar light
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds, 370
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion, and the midnight storm
Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence, 375



And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
The exercise and produce of a toil,
Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem 380
Is more poetic as resembling more
Creative agency. The song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists 385
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind; or from excess
In the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy, 390

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To unorganic ratures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
Coming in revelation, did converse
With things that really are; I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea. 395
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
From Nature and her overflowing soul,
I had received so much, that all my thoughts
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented, when with bliss ineffable 400
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart; 405
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt, 410
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
With every form of creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
Of adoration, with an eye of love.
One song they sang, and it was audible, 415
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind, 420
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds 425
That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived



With God and Nature communing, removed 430
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
And wicked exultation when good men 435
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time 440
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life; the gift is yours, 445
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis

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yours,

Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy 450
And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared
In the great city, 'mid far other scenes; [a]
But we, by different roads, at length have gained
The self-same bourne. And for this cause to thee
I speak, unapprehensive of contempt, 455
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
And all that silent language which so oft
In conversation between man and man
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought 460
The truth in solitude, and, since the days
That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been
The most assiduous of her ministers;
In many things my brother, chiefly here 465
In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,
And yet more often living with thyself,
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days 470
Be many, and a blessing to mankind. [b]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The “square” of the “small market village” of Hawkshead still remains; and the presence of the new “assembly-room” does not prevent us from realising it as open, with the “rude mass of native rock left midway” in it—the “old grey stone,” which was the centre of the village sports.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare ‘The Excursion’, book ix. ll. 487-90:



'When, on thy bosom, spacious Windermere!
A Youth, I practised this delightful art;
Tossed on the waves alone, or 'mid a crew
Of joyous comrades.'

Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare 'The Excursion', book ix. l. 544, describing "a fair Isle with birch-trees fringed," where they gathered leaves of that shy plant (its flower was shed), the lily of the vale.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: These islands in Windermere are easily identified. In the Lily of the Valley Island the plant still grows, though not abundantly; but from Lady Holme the

'ruins of a shrine
Once to Our Lady dedicate'

have disappeared as completely as the shrine in St. Herbert's Island, Derwentwater.
The third island:

'musical with birds,
That sang and ceased not—'

may have been House Holme, or that now called Thomson's Holme. It could hardly have been Belle Isle; since, from its size, it could not be described as a "Sister Isle" to the one where the lily of the valley grew "beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert."—Ed.]

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[Footnote E: Doubtless the circle was at Conishead Priory, on the Cartmell Sands; or that in the vale of Swinside, on the north-east side of Black Combe; more probably the former. The whole district is rich in Druidical remains, but Wordsworth would not refer to the Keswick circle, or to Long Meg and her Daughters in this connection; and the proximity of the temple on the Cartmell Shore to the Furness Abbey ruins, and the ease with which it could be visited on holidays by the boys from Hawkshead school, make it almost certain that he refers to it.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Furness Abbey, founded by Stephen in 1127, in the glen of the deadly Nightshade—Bekansghyll—so called from the luxuriant abundance of the plant, and dedicated to St. Mary. (Compare West's 'Antiquities of Furness'.)—Ed.]

[Footnote G: What was the belfry is now a mass of detached ruins.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Doubtless the Cartmell Sands beyond Ulverston, at the estuary of the Leven.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: At Bowness.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: The White Lion Inn at Bowness.—Ed.]

[Footnote L: Compare the reference to the "rude piece of self-taught art," at the Swan Inn, in the first canto of 'The Waggoner', p. 81. William Hutchinson, in his 'Excursion to the Lakes in 1773 and 1774' (second edition, 1776, p. 185), mentions "the White Lion Inn at Bownas."—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Dr. Cradock told me that William Hutchinson—referred to in the previous note—describes "Bownas church and its cottages," as seen from the lake, arising "'above the trees'." Wordsworth, reversing the view, sees "gleams of water through the trees and 'over the tree tops'"—another instance of minutely exact description.—Ed.]

[Footnote N: Robert Greenwood, afterwards Senior Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: Compare 'Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey', vol. ii. p. 51.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: Wetherlam, or Coniston Old Man, or both.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q:

"The moon, as it hung over the southernmost shore of Esthwaite, with Gunner's How, as seen from Hawkshead rising up boldly to the spectator's left hand, would be thus described."



(H. D. Rawnsley.)—Ed.]

[Footnote R: Esthwaite. Compare 'Peter Bell' (vol. ii. p. 13):

'Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars.'

Ed.]

[Footnote S: See in the Appendix to this volume, Note II, p. 388.—Ed.]

[Footnote T: See 'Paradise Lost', ix. l. 249.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: The daily work in Hawkshead School began—by Archbishop Sandys' ordinance—at 6 A.M. in summer, and 7 A.M. in winter.—Ed.]

[Footnote V: Esthwaite.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: The Rev. John Fleming, of Rayrigg, Windermere, or, possibly, the Rev. Charles Farish, author of 'The Minstrels of Winandermere' and 'Black Agnes'. Mr. Carter, who edited 'The Prelude' in 1850, says it was the former, but this is not absolutely certain.—Ed.]



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[Footnote X: A “cottage latch”—probably the same as that in use in Dame Tyson’s time—is still on the door of the house where she lived at Hawkshead.—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: Probably on the western side of the Vale, above the village. There is but one “‘jutting’ eminence” on this side of the valley. It is an old moraine, now grass-covered; and, from this point, the view both of the village and of the vale is noteworthy. The jutting eminence, however, may have been a crag, amongst the Colthouse heights, to the north-east of Hawkshead.—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: Compare in the ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality’:

‘... those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings,’ *etc.*

Ed.]

[Footnote a: Coleridge’s school days were spent at Christ’s Hospital in London. With the above line compare S. T. C.’s ‘Frost at Midnight’:

‘I was reared
In the great city, pent ‘mid cloisters dim.’

Ed.]

[Footnote b: Compare ‘Stanzas written in my Pocket Copy of Thomsons “Castle of Indolence,”’ vol. ii. p. 305.—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK THIRD

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the wheels
Rolled over a wide plain o’erhung with clouds,
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
The long-roofed chapel of King’s College lift
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files, 5
Extended high above a dusky grove, [A]

Advancing, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o’ertasked by Time,



Or covetous of exercise and air; 10
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught, 15
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;
And at the 'Hoop' alighted, famous Inn. [B]

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
Seemed friends, poor simple school-boys, now hung round 20
With honour and importance: in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed 25
A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs,
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befel,
From street to street with loose and careless mind.

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I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed 30
Delighted through the motley spectacle;
Gowns, grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
A northern villager.

As if the change 35
Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
Behold me rich in monies, and attired
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.
My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by, 40
With other signs of manhood that supplied
The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on,
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array. 45

The Evangelist St. John my patron was:
Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure; [C]
Right underneath, the College kitchens made
A humming sound, less tuneable than bees, 50
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours 55
Twice over with a male and female voice.
Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;
And from my pillow, looking forth by light
Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold
The antechapel where the statue stood 60
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
The marble index of a mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room
All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand, 65
With loyal students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
And honest dunces—of important days,
Examinations, when the man was weighed
As in a balance! of excessive hopes, 70



Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad,
Let others that know more speak as they know.
Such glory was but little sought by me,
And little won. Yet from the first crude days 75
Of settling time in this untried abode,
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears
About my future worldly maintenance,
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind, 80
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
For (not to speak of Reason and her pure

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Reflective acts to fix the moral law
Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope, 85
Bowing her head before her sister Faith
As one far mightier), hither I had come,
Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers
And faculties, whether to work or feel.
Oft when the dazzling show no longer new 90
Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit
My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,
And as I paced alone the level fields
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
With which I had been conversant, the mind 95
Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
At least I more distinctly recognised
Her native instincts: let me dare to speak
A higher language, say that now I felt 100
What independent solaces were mine,
To mitigate the injurious sway of place
Or circumstance, how far soever changed
In youth, or to be changed in manhood's prime;
Or for the few who shall be called to look 105
On the long shadows in our evening years,
Ordained precursors to the night of death.
As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
I looked for universal things; perused
The common countenance of earth and sky: 110
Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;
And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.
I called on both to teach me what they might; 115
Or turning the mind in upon herself
Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
Incumbencies more awful, visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul, 120
That tolerates the indignities of Time,
And, from the centre of Eternity
All finite motions overruling, lives



In glory immutable. But peace! enough
Here to record that I was mounting now 125
To such community with highest truth—
A track pursuing, not untrod before,
From strict analogies by thought supplied
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.
To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower, 130
Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
That I beheld respired with inward meaning. 135
Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on
From transitory passion, unto this
I was as sensitive as waters are
To the sky's influence in a kindred



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mood 140

Of passion; was obedient as a lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—
I had a world about me—'twas my own;
I made it, for it only lived to me, 145
And to the God who sees into the heart.
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed
By outward gestures and by visible looks:
Some called it madness—so indeed it was,
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy, 150
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
To inspiration, sort with such a name;
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
By poets in old time, and higher up
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants, 155
May in these tutored days no more be seen
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,
It was no madness, for the bodily eye
Amid my strongest workings evermore
Was searching out the lines of difference 160
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
Which from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars, 165
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life 170
Up to an eminence, and told a tale
Of matters which not falsely may be called
The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,
Creation and divinity itself
I have been speaking, for my theme has been 175
What passed within me. Not of outward things
Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,
Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls, 180



And what they do within themselves while yet
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
This is, in truth, heroic argument,
This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch 185
With hand however weak, but in the main
It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
Points have we all of us within our souls
Where all stand single; this I feel, and make
Breathings for incommunicable powers; 190
But is not each a memory to himself?
And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,
I am not heartless, for there's not a man
That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
And feels not what an empire we inherit 195
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.



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No more: for now into a populous plain
We must descend. A Traveller I am,
Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt 200
To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend!
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

It hath been told, that when the first delight
That flashed upon me from this novel show 205
Had failed, the mind returned into herself;
Yet true it is, that I had made a change
In climate, and my nature's outward coat
Changed also slowly and insensibly.
Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts 210
Of loneliness gave way to empty noise
And superficial pastimes; now and then
Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes;
And, worst of all, a treasonable growth
Of indecisive judgments, that impaired 215
And shook the mind's simplicity.—And yet
This was a gladsome time. Could I behold—
Who, less insensible than sodden clay
In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
Could have beheld,—with undelighted heart, 220
So many happy youths, so wide and fair
A congregation in its budding-time
Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once
So many divers samples from the growth
Of life's sweet season—could have seen unmoved 225
That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
Decking the matron temples of a place
So famous through the world? To me, at least,
It was a goodly prospect: for, in sooth,
Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped, 230
And independent musings pleased me so
That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
Yet could I only cleave to solitude
In lonely places; if a throng was near
That way I leaned by nature; for my heart 235
Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate
My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,



Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
Even with myself divided such delight, 240
Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
In human language), easily I passed
From the remembrances of better things,
And slipped into the ordinary works
Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed. 245
Caverns there were within my mind which sun
Could never penetrate, yet did there not
Want store of leafy *arbours* where the light
Might enter in at will. Companionships,
Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all. 250
We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
Unprofitable talk at morning hours;

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Drifted about along the streets and walks,
Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
To gallop through the country in blind zeal 255
Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act
In this new life. Imagination slept, 260
And yet not utterly. I could not print
Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
Of generations of illustrious men,
Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept, 265
Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
Place also by the side of this dark sense
Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
Even the great Newton's own ethereal self, 270
Seemed humbled in these precincts thence to be
The more endeared. Their several memories here
(Even like their persons in their portraits clothed
With the accustomed garb of daily life)
Put on a lowly and a touching grace 275
Of more distinct humanity, that left
All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington [D]
I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;
Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales 280
Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State—
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,
I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend! 285
Yea, our blind Poet, who, in his later day,
Stood almost single; uttering odious truth—
Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
An awful soul—I seemed to see him here 290



Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth—
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride. 295
Among the band of my compeers was one
Whom chance had stationed in the very room
Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard!
Be it confest that, for the first time, seated
Within thy innocent lodge and oratory, 300
One of a festive circle, I poured out
Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride
And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
Never excited by the fumes of wine
Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran 305
From the assembly; through a length of streets,
Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel



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door

In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
Albeit long after the importunate bell
Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice 310
No longer haunting the dark winter night.
Call back, O Friend! [E] a moment to thy mind,
The place itself and fashion of the rites.
With careless ostentation shouldering up
My surplice, [F] through the inferior throng I clove 315
Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood
On the last skirts of their permitted ground,
Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts!
I am ashamed of them: and that great Bard,
And thou, O Friend! who in thy ample mind 320
Hast placed me high above my best deserts,
Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
In some of its unworthy vanities,
Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort

The months passed on, remissly, not given up 325
To wilful alienation from the right,
Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
Of a low pitch—duty and zeal dismissed,
Yet Nature, or a happy course of things 330
Not doing in their stead the needful work.
The memory languidly revolved, the heart
Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
Such life might not inaptly be compared 335
To a floating island, an amphibious spot
Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal
Not wanting a fair face of water weeds
And pleasant flowers. [G] The thirst of living praise,
Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight 340
Of those long vistas, sacred catacombs,
Where mighty minds lie visibly entombed,
Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
A fervent love of rigorous discipline.—
Alas! such high emotion touched not me. 345
Look was there none within these walls to shame
My easy spirits, and discountenance



Their light composure, far less to instil
A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed
To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame 350
Of others, but my own; I should, in truth,
As far as doth concern my single self,
Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere:
For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
Was a spoiled child, and rambling like the wind, 355
As I had done in daily intercourse
With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,
And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
I was ill-tutored for captivity;
To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month, 360
Take up a station calmly on the perch
Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
Had also left less space within my mind,

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Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
A freshness in those objects of her love, 365
A winning power, beyond all other power.
Not that I slighted books, [H]—that were to lack
All sense,—but other passions in me ruled,
Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
To in-door study than was wise or well, 370
Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used
In magisterial liberty to rove,
Culling such flowers of learning as might tempt
A random choice, could shadow forth a place
(If now I yield not to a flattering dream) 375
Whose studious aspect should have bent me down
To instantaneous service; should at once
Have made me pay to science and to arts
And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
A homage frankly offered up, like that 380
Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains
In this recess, by thoughtful Fancy built,
Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
Majestic edifices, should not want
A corresponding dignity within. 385
The congregating temper that pervades
Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught
To minister to works of high attempt—
Works which the enthusiast would perform with love.
Youth should be awed, religiously possessed 390
With a conviction of the power that waits
On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized
For its own sake, on glory and on praise
If but by labour won, and fit to endure
The passing day; should learn to put aside 395
Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed
Before antiquity and stedfast truth
And strong book-mindedness; and over all
A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
A seemly plainness, name it what you will, 400
Republican or pious.
If these thoughts
Are a gratuitous emblazonry



That mocks the recreant age we live in, then
Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect
Whatever formal gait of discipline 405
Shall raise them highest in their own esteem—
Let them parade among the Schools at will,
But spare the House of God. Was ever known
The witless shepherd who persists to drive
A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked? 410
A weight must surely hang on days begun
And ended with such mockery. Be wise,
Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
At home in pious service, to your bells 415
Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
And your officious doings bring disgrace

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On the plain steeples of our English Church,
Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees, 420
Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand
In daily sight of this irreverence,
Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
Loses her just authority, falls beneath
Collateral suspicion, else unknown. 425
This truth escaped me not, and I confess,
That having 'mid my native hills given loose
To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile
Upon the basis of the coming time,
That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy 430
To see a sanctuary for our country's youth
Informed with such a spirit as might be
Its own protection; a primeval grove,
Where, though the shades with cheerfulness were filled,
Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds 435
In under-coverts, yet the countenance
Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe;
A habitation sober and demure
For ruminating creatures; a domain
For quiet things to wander in; a haunt 440
In which the heron should delight to feed
By the shy rivers, and the pelican
Upon the cypress spire in lonely thought
Might sit and sun himself.—Alas! Alas!
In vain for such solemnity I looked; 445
Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed
By chattering popinjays; the inner heart
Seemed trivial, and the impresses without
Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight

Those venerable Doctors saw of old, 450
When all who dwelt within these famous walls
Led in abstemiousness a studious life;
When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped
And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung
Like caterpillars eating out their way 455
In silence, or with keen devouring noise
Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then



At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,
Trained up through piety and zeal to prize
Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds. 460
O seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world!
Far different service in those homely days
The Muses' modest nurslings underwent
From their first childhood: in that glorious time
When Learning, like a stranger come from far, 465
Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
Peasant and king; when boys and youths, the growth
Of ragged villages and crazy huts,
Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest
Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook, 470
Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,
From town to town and through wide scattered realms
Journeyed with ponderous folios in their

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hands;

And often, starting from some covert place,
Saluted the chance comer on the road, 475
Crying, "An obolus, a penny give
To a poor scholar!" [I]—when illustrious men,
Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
Before the doors or windows of their cells 480
By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

But peace to vain regrets! We see but darkly
Even when we look behind us, and best things
Are not so pure by nature that they needs
Must keep to all, as fondly all believe, 485
Their highest promise. If the mariner,
When at reluctant distance he hath passed
Some tempting island, could but know the ills
That must have fallen upon him had he brought
His bark to land upon the wished-for shore, 490
Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf
Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew
Inexorably adverse: for myself
I grieve not; happy is the gowned youth,
Who only misses what I missed, who falls 495
No lower than I fell.

I did not love,
Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course
Of our scholastic studies; could have wished
To see the river flow with ampler range
And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved 500
To see displayed among an eager few,
Who in the field of contest persevered,
Passions unworthy of youth's generous heart
And mounting spirit, pitiably repaid,
When so disturbed, whatever palms are won. 505
From these I turned to travel with the shoal
Of more unthinking natures, easy minds
And pillowy; yet not wanting love that makes
The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
And wisdom and the pledges interchanged 510
With our own inner being are forgot.



Yet was this deep vacation not given up
To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood
In my own mind remote from social life,
(At least from what we commonly so name,) 515
Like a lone shepherd on a promontory
Who lacking occupation looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,
That this first transit from the smooth delights 520
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
To something that resembles an approach
Towards human business, to a privileged world
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery, 525
Did better suit my visionary mind,
Far better, than to have been bolted forth;
Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way

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Among the conflicts of substantial life;
By a more just gradation did lead on 530
To higher things; more naturally matured,
For permanent possession, better fruits,
Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.
In serious mood, but oftener, I confess,
With playful zest of fancy did we note 535
(How could we less?) the manners and the ways
Of those who lived distinguished by the badge
Of good or ill report; or those with whom
By frame of Academic discipline
We were perforce connected, men whose sway 540
And known authority of office served
To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind,
Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring
Of the grave Elders, men unsecured, grotesque 545
In character, tricked out like aged trees
Which through the lapse of their infirmity
Give ready place to any random seed
That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here on my view, confronting vividly 550
Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left,
Appeared a different aspect of old age;
How different! yet both distinctly marked,
Objects embossed to catch the general eye,
Or portraitures for special use designed, 555
As some might seem, so aptly do they serve
To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments—
That book upheld as with maternal care
When she would enter on her tender scheme
Of teaching comprehension with delight, 560
And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life
And manners finely wrought, the delicate race
Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
Through that state arras woven with silk and gold; 565
This wily interchange of snaky hues,



Willingly or unwillingly revealed,
I neither knew nor cared for; and as such
Were wanting here, I took what might be found
Of less elaborate fabric. At this day 570
I smile, in many a mountain solitude
Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks
Of character, in points of wit as broad,
As aught by wooden images performed
For entertainment of the gaping crowd 575
At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
Remembrances before me of old men—
Old humourists, who have been long in their graves,
And having almost in my mind put off
Their human names, have into phantoms passed 580
Of texture midway between life and books.

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I play the loiterer: 'tis enough to note
That here in dwarf proportions were expressed
The limbs of the great world; its eager strifes
Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight, 585
A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
Though short of mortal combat; and whate'er
Might in this pageant be supposed to hit
An artless rustic's notice, this way less,
More that way, was not wasted upon me—590
And yet the spectacle may well demand
A more substantial name, no mimic show,
Itself a living part of a live whole,
A creek in the vast sea; for, all degrees
And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise 595
Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
Retainers won away from solid good;
And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope,
That never set the pains against the prize;
Idleness halting with his weary clog, 600
And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;
Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile
Murmuring submission, and bald government, 605
(The idol weak as the idolater),
And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
And blind Authority beating with his staff
The child that might have led him; Emptiness
Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth 610
Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
I cannot say what portion is in truth
The naked recollection of that time,
And what may rather have been called to life 615
By after-meditation. But delight
That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,
Is still with Innocence its own reward,
This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed
As through a wide museum from whose stores 620
A casual rarity is singled out
And has its brief perusal, then gives way
To others, all supplanted in their turn;



Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things
That are by nature most unneighbourly, 625
The head turns round and cannot right itself;
And though an aching and a barren sense
Of gay confusion still be uppermost,
With few wise longings and but little love,
Yet to the memory something cleaves at last, 630
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend!
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring,
Eight months! rolled pleasingly away; the ninth
Came and returned me to my native hills. 635

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT



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[Footnote A: Wordsworth went from York to Cambridge, entering it by the coach road from the north-west. This was doubtless the road which now leads to the city from Girton. "The long-roofed chapel of King's College" must have been seen from that road.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: The Hoop Inn still exists, not now so famous as in the end of last century.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: He entered St. John's College in October 1787. His rooms in the College were unknown to the officials a dozen years ago, although they are pretty clearly indicated by Wordsworth in this passage. They were in the first of the three courts of St. John's; they were above the College kitchens; and from the window of his bedroom he could look into the antechapel of Trinity, with its statue of Newton. They have been recently removed in connection with sundry improvements in the college kitchen. For details, see the 'Life of Wordsworth' which will follow this edition of his Works.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: A village two and a half miles south of Cambridge.

"There are still some remains of the mill here celebrated by Chaucer in his Reve's Tale."

(Lewis' 'Topographical Dictionary of England', vol. iv. p. 390.)—Ed.]

[Footnote E: S. T. C., who entered Cambridge when Wordsworth left it.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: On certain days a surplice is worn, instead of a gown, by the undergraduates.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Compare the poem 'Floating Island', by Dorothy Wordsworth.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: The following extract from a letter of Dorothy Wordsworth's illustrates the above and other passages of this book. It was written from Fornsett, on the 26th of June, 1791. She is speaking of her two brothers, William and Christopher. Of Christopher she says:

"His abilities, though not so great, perhaps, as his brother's, may be of more use to him, as he has not fixed his mind upon any particular species of reading or conceived an aversion to any. He is not fond of mathematics, but has resolution sufficient to study them; because it will be impossible for him to obtain a fellowship without them. William lost the chance, indeed the certainty, of a fellowship, by not combating his inclinations. He gave way to his natural dislike to studies so dry as many parts of the mathematics, consequently could not succeed in Cambridge. He reads Italian, Spanish, French, Greek, Latin, and English; but never opens a mathematical book.... Do not think from what I have said that he reads not at all; for he does read a great deal, and not only poetry, in these languages he is acquainted with, but History also," *etc. etc.*

Ed.]

[Footnote I: 'Date obolum Belisario'. Belisarius, a general of the Emperor Justinian's, died 564 A.D. The story of his begging charity is probably a legend, but the "begging scholar" was common in Christendom throughout the Middle Ages, and was met with in the last century.—Ed.]



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* * * * *

BOOK FOURTH

SUMMER VACATION

Bright was the summer's noon when quickening steps
Followed each other till a dreary moor
Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top [A]
Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,
I overlooked the bed of Windermere, 5
Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.
With exultation, at my feet I saw
Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,
A universe of Nature's fairest forms
Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst, 10
Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.
I bounded down the hill shouting amain
For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks
Replied, and when the Charon of the flood
Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier, [B] 15
I did not step into the well-known boat
Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed
Up the familiar hill I took my way [C]
Towards that sweet Valley [D] where I had been reared;
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round 20
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill [E]
Sit like a throned Lady, sending out
A gracious look all over her domain. [F]
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;
With eager footsteps I advance and reach 25
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.
Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,
From my old Dame, so kind and motherly, [G]
While she perused me with a parent's pride.
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew 30
Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart
Can beat never will I forget thy name.
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
After thy innocent and busy stir
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth 35
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
And more than eighty, of untroubled life, [H]



Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
Honoured with little less than filial love.
What joy was mine to see thee once again, 40
Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things
About its narrow precincts all beloved, [I]
And many of them seeming yet my own!
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
Have felt, and every man alive can guess? 45
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine, [K]
Friendly to studious or to festive hours;
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth, 50
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, [L] found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,

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Stripped of his voice [M] and left to dimple down
(Without an effort and without a will) 55
A channel paved by man's officious care. [N]
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,
And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts, [O]
"Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, 60
"An emblem here behold of thy own life;
In its late course of even days with all
Their smooth enthrallment;" but the heart was full,
Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame
Walked proudly at my side: she guided me; 65
I willing, nay—nay, wishing to be led.
—The face of every neighbour whom I met
Was like a volume to me; some were hailed
Upon the road, some busy at their work,
Unceremonious greetings interchanged 70
With half the length of a long field between.
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
Like recognitions, but with some constraint
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,
But with more shame, for my habiliments, 75
The transformation wrought by gay attire.
Not less delighted did I take my place
At our domestic table: and, [P] dear Friend
In this endeavour simply to relate
A Poet's history, may I leave untold 80
The thankfulness with which I laid me down
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now
Perhaps than if it had been more desired
Or been more often thought of with regret;
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind 85
Roar and the rain beat hard, where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood; [Q]
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro 90
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.



Among the favourites whom it pleased me well
To see again, was one by ancient right
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills; 95
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
Among the impervious crags, but having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed
Into a gentler service. And when first 100
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
The fermentation, and the vernal heat
Of poesy, affecting private shades
Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used 105
To watch me, an attendant and a friend,
Obsequious to my steps early and late,
Though often of such dilatory walk
Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.

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A hundred times when, roving high and low 110
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
Much pains and little progress, and at once
Some lovely Image in the song rose up
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;
Then have I darted forwards to let 115
My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
Caressing him again and yet again.
And when at evening on the public way
I sauntered, like a river murmuring
And talking to itself when all things 120
Are still, the creature trotted on before;
Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
A passenger approaching, he would turn
To give me timely notice, and straightway,
Grateful for that admonishment, I 125
My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air
And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
To give and take a greeting that might save
My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
On men suspected to be crazed in brain. 130

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved—
Regretted!—that word, too, was on my tongue,
But they were richly laden with all good,
And cannot be remembered but with thanks
And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart—135
Those walks in all their freshness now came back
Like a returning Spring. When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little lake,
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine, 140
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned; 145
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart



Have fulness in herself; even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul 150
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate:
Strength came where weakness was not known to be, 155
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
—Of that external scene which round me lay, 160
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind;



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How the immortal soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad 170
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end 175
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze 180
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,
And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,
Around me from among the hazel leaves,
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound, 185
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
The off and on companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head to look if he were there;
Then into solemn thought I passed once more. 190

A freshness also found I at this time
In human Life, the daily life of those
Whose occupations really I loved;
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring 195
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit
The things which were the same and yet appeared
Fair otherwise) amid this rural solitude,
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,
'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind 200
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook,
Where an old man had used to sit alone,
Now vacant; pale-faced babes whom I had left
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down; 205

And growing girls whose beauty, filched away
With all its pleasant promises, was gone
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,
And often looking round was moved to smiles 210
Such as a delicate work of humour breeds;
I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
Of those plain-living people now observed
With clearer knowledge; with another eye
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods, 215
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;
Saw her go forth to church or other work
Of state, equipped in monumental trim;
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the



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like), 220

A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers
Wore in old time. Her smooth domestic life,
Affectionate without disquietude,
Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less
Her clear though shallow stream of piety 225
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course;
With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep
And made of it a pillow for her head. 230

Nor less do I remember to have felt,
Distinctly manifested at this time,
A human-heartedness about my love
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth
Of my own private being and no more: 235
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
Might love in individual happiness.
But now there opened on me other thoughts
Of change, congratulation or regret, 240
A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;
The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks,
The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts—
White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven, 245
Acquaintances of every little child,
And Jupiter, my own beloved star!
Whatever shadings of mortality,
Whatever imports from the world of death
Had come among these objects heretofore, 250
Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,
Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings
Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way
In later youth to yearnings of a love
Enthusiastic, to delight and hope. 255

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
Of a still water, solacing himself
With such discoveries as his eye can make



Beneath him in the bottom of the deep, 260
Sees many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers.
Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth 265
Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
Of his own image, by a sun-beam now,
And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,
Impediments that make his task more sweet; 270
Such pleasant office have we long pursued
Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
With like success, nor often have appeared
Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned
Than these to which the Tale, indulgent



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Friend! 275

Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite
Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,
There was an inner falling off—I loved,
Loved deeply all that had been loved before,
More deeply even than ever: but a swarm 280
Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds,
And feast and dance, and public revelry,
And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,
Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,
Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh 285
Of manliness and freedom) all conspired
To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
And damp those yearnings which had once been mine—
A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up 290
To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
To paint these vanities, and how they wrought
In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
It seemed the very garments that I wore 295
Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase
Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
For books and nature at that early age.
'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained 300
Of character or life; but at that time,
Of manners put to school I took small note,
And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
Far better had it been to exalt the mind
By solitary study, to uphold 305
Intense desire through meditative peace;
And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
The memory of one particular hour
Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid, 310
A medley of all tempers, I had passed
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
And unaimed prattle flying up and down; [R] 315



Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky 320
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
And open field, through which the pathway wound,
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front, 325
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
And in the meadows and the lower grounds

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Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—330
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds, [S]
And labourers going forth to till the fields.
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me 335
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives. [T]

Strange rendezvous! My mind was at that time
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay, 340
Solid and light, short-sighted and profound;
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,
Consorting in one mansion unreprieved.
The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,
Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides, 345
That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
Transient and idle, lacked not intervals
When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time
Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself
Conformity as just as that of old 350
To the end and written spirit of God's works,
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,
Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop, 355
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;
How potent a mere image of her sway;
Most potent when impressed upon the mind
With an appropriate human centre—hermit, 360
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
Is treading, where no other face is seen)
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves; 365
Or as the soul of that great Power is met
Sometimes embodied on a public road,



When, for the night deserted, it assumes
A character of quiet more profound
Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months 370
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced
That—after I had left a flower-decked room
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived 375
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought
Were making night do penance for a day
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—[U]
My homeward course led up a long ascent,
Where the road's watery surface, to the top 380
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
And bore the semblance of another stream
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
That murmured in the vale. [V] All else



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was still;

No living thing appeared in earth or air, 385
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
Sound there was none—but, lo! an uncouth shape,
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,
So near that, slipping back into the shade
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, 390
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A span above man's common measure, tall,
Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man
Was never seen before by night or day.
Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth 395
Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,
A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken
That he was clothed in military garb,
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
No dog attending, by no staff sustained, 400
He stood, and in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity,
To which the trappings of a gaudy world
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain 405
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form
Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice, 410
I left the shady nook where I had stood
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm
In measured gesture lifted to his head
Returned my salutation; then resumed 415
His station as before; and when I asked
His history, the veteran, in reply,
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
A stately air of mild indifference, 420
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past:
That on his landing he had been dismissed,
And now was travelling towards his native home. 425



This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved—
A staff which must have dropt from his slack hand
And lay till now neglected in the grass. 430
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld,
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,
His ghostly figure moving at my side;
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear 435
To turn from present hardships to the past,
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,
On what he might himself have seen or

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felt.

He all the while was in demeanour calm, 440
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said
There was a strange half-absence, as of one
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse 445
Soon ended, and together on we passed
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.
Up-turning, then, along an open field,
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,
And earnestly to charitable care 450
Commended him as a poor friendless man,
Belated and by sickness overcome.
Assured that now the traveller would repose
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth
He would not linger in the public ways, 455
But ask for timely furtherance and help
Such as his state required. At this reproof,
With the same ghastly mildness in his look,
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,
And in the eye of him who passes me!" 460

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,
And now the soldier touched his hat once more
With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,
Whose tone bespoke reviving interests
Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned 465
The farewell blessing of the patient man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space,
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: On the road from Kendal to Windermere.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: At the Ferry below Bowness.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: From the Ferry over the ridge to Sawrey.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: The Vale of Esthwaite.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: Hawkshead Church; an old Norman structure, built in 1160, the year of the foundation of Furness Abbey. It is no longer “snow-white,” a so-called Restoration having taken place within recent years, on architectural principles. The plaster is stripped from the outside of the church, which is now of a dull stone colour.

“Apart from poetic sentiment,” wrote Dr. Cradock (the late Principal of Brasenose College, Oxford), “it may be doubted whether the pale colour, still preserved at Grasmere and other churches in the district, does not better harmonize with the scenery and atmosphere of the Lake country.”.

The most interesting feature in the interior is the private chapel of Archbishop Sandys. —Ed.]

[Footnote F: Hawkshead Church is a conspicuous object as you approach the town, whether by the Ambleside road, or from Sawrey. It is the latter approach that is here described.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Anne Tyson,—Ed.]

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[Footnote H: Anne Tyson seems to have removed from Hawkshead village to Colthouse, on the opposite side of the Vale, and lived there for some time before her death. Along with Dr. Cradock I examined the Parish Registers of Hawkshead in the autumn of 1882, and we found the following entry belonging to the year 1796.

“Anne Tyson of Colthouse, widow, died May 25th buried 28th, in Churchyard, aged 83.”

Her removal to Colthouse is confirmed, in a curious way, by a reminiscence of William Wordsworth’s (the poet’s son), who told me that if asked where the dame’s house was, he would have pointed to a spot on the eastern side of the valley, and out of the village altogether; his father having taken him from Rydal Mount to Hawkshead when a mere boy, and pointed out that spot. Doubtless Wordsworth took his son to the cottage at Colthouse, where Anne Tyson died, as the earlier abode in Hawkshead village is well known, and its site is indisputable.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Compare book i. ll. 499-506, p. 148.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: There is no trace and no tradition at Hawkshead of the “stone table under the dark pine,” For a curious parallel to this

‘sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine,’

I am indebted to Dr. Cradock. He points out that in the prologue to ‘Peter Bell’, vol. ii p.9, we have the lines,

‘To the stone-table in my garden,
Loved haunt of many a summer hour,’

Ed.]

[Footnote L: There can be little doubt as to the identity of “the famous brook” “within our garden” boxed, which gives the name of Flag Street to one of the alleys of Hawkshead.

“Persons have visited the cottage,” wrote Dr. Cradock, “without discovering it; and yet it is not forty yards distant, and is still exactly as described. On the opposite side of the lane leading to the cottage, and a few steps above it, is a narrow passage through some new stone buildings. On emerging from this, you meet a small garden, the farther side of which is bounded by the brook, confined on both sides by larger flags, and also covered by flags of the same Coniston formation, through the interstices of which you may see and hear the stream running freely. The upper flags are now used as a footpath, and lead by another passage back into the village. No doubt the garden has been reduced in size, by the use of that part of it fronting the lane for building purposes. The stream, before it enters the area of buildings and gardens, is open by the lane side,

and seemingly comes from the hills to the westwards. The large flags are extremely hard and durable, and it is probably that the very flags which paved the channel in Wordsworth's time may still be doing the same duty."

The house adjoining this garden was not Dame Tyson's but a Mr. Watson's. Possibly, however, some of the boys had free access to the latter, so that Wordsworth could speak of it as "our garden;" or, Dame Tyson may have rented it. See Note II. in the Appendix to this volume, p. 386.—Ed.]

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[Footnote M: Not wholly so.—Ed.]

[Footnote N: See note on preceding page.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: Compare the sonnet in vol. iv.:

‘Beloved Vale!’ I said, ‘when I shall con

...

By doubts and thousand petty fancies crost.’

There can be little doubt that it is to the “famous brook” of ‘The Prelude’ that reference is made in the later sonnet, and still more significantly in the earlier poem ‘The Fountain’, vol. ii. p. 91. Compare the MS. variants of that poem, printed as footnotes, from Lord Coleridge’s copy of the Poems:

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

with the lines in ‘The Prelude’:

‘The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed Within our garden, found himself at once, ... Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down, *etc.*’

This is doubtless the streamlet called Town Beck; and it is perhaps the most interesting of all the spots alluded to by Wordsworth which can be traced out in the Hawkshead district, I am indebted to Mr. Rawnsley for the following note:

“From the village, nay, from the poet’s very door when he lived at Anne Tyson’s, a good path leads on, past the vicarage, quite to its upland place of birth. It has eaten its way deeply into the soil; in one place there is a series of still pools, that overflow and fall into others, with quiet sound; at other spots, it is bustling and busy. Fine timber is found on either side of it, the roots of the trees often laid bare by the passing current. In one or two places by the side of this beck, and beneath the shadow of lofty oaks, may be found boulder stones, grey and moss-covered. Birds make hiding-places for themselves in these oak and hazel bushes by the stream. Following it up, we find it receives, at a tiny ford, the tribute of another stream from the north-west, and comes down between the adjacent hills (well wooded to the summit) from meadows of short-cropped grass, and to these from the open moorland, where it takes its rise. Every conceivable variety of beauty of sound and sight in streamlet life is found as we follow the course of this Town Beck. We owe much of Wordsworth’s intimate acquaintance with streamlet beauty to it.”

Compare ‘The Fountain’ in detail with this passage in ‘The Prelude’.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: So it is in the editions of 1850 and 1857; but it should evidently be “nor, dear Friend!”—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: The ash tree is gone, but there is no doubt as to the place where it grew. Mr. Watson, whose father owned and inhabited the house immediately opposite to Mrs. Tyson’s cottage in Wordsworth’s time (see a previous note), told me that a tall ash tree grew on the proper right front of the cottage, where an outhouse is now built. If this be so, Wordsworth’s bedroom must have been that on the proper left, with the smaller of the two windows. The cottage faces nearly south-west. In the upper flat there are two bedrooms to the front, with oak flooring, one of which must have been Wordsworth’s. See Note II. (p. 386) in Appendix to this volume.—Ed.]

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[Footnote R: In one of the small mountain farm-houses near Hawkshead.—Ed.]

[Footnote S: Compare ‘Paradise Lost’, book viii. l. 528:

‘Walks, and the melody of birds.’

Ed.]

[Footnote T: Dr. Cradock has suggested to me the probable course of that morning walk.

“All that can be safely said as to the course of that memorable morning walk is that, in that neighbourhood, a view of the sea can only be obtained at a considerable elevation; also that if the words ‘in *front* the sea lay laughing’ are to be taken as rigidly exact, the poet’s progress towards Hawkshead must have been in a direction mainly southerly, and therefore from the country north of that place. These and all other conditions of the description are answered in several parts of the range of hills lying between Elterwater and Hawkshead.”

See Appendix, Note III. p. 389.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Compare the sixth line of the poem, beginning

‘This Lawn, a carpet all alive.’

(1829.) And Horace, ‘Epistolae’, lib. i. ep. xi. l. 28:

‘Strenua nos exercet inertia.’

Ed.]

[Footnote V: The “brook” is Sawrey beck, and the “long ascent” is the second of the two, in crossing from Windermere to Hawkshead, and going over the ridge between the two Sawreys. It is only at that point that a brook can be heard “murmuring in the vale.” The road is the old one, above the ferry, marked in the Ordnance Survey Map, by the Briers, not the new road which makes a curve to the south, and cannot be described as a “sharp rising.”—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK FIFTH

BOOKS



When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
Into the soul its tranquillising power,
Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes 5
That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be,
Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine
Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved,
Through length of time, by patient exercise
Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is 10
That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign Intellect, 15
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with herself,
Things that aspire to unconquerable life; 20
And yet we feel—we cannot choose but feel—

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That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives, to think that our immortal being
No more shall need such garments; and yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth, 25
Might almost “weep to have” [A] what he may lose,
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive,
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,—
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes 30
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,
Yet would the living Presence still subsist
Victorious, and composure would ensue, 35
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure
Of day returning and of life revived. [B]
But all the meditations of mankind,
Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
By reason built, or passion, which itself 40
Is highest reason in a soul sublime;
The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes;
Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind 45
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own? [C]
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

One day, when from my lips a like complaint 50
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
He with a smile made answer, that in truth
’Twas going far to seek disquietude;
But on the front of his reproof confessed
That he himself had oftentimes given way 55
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,
That once in the stillness of a summer’s noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
The famous history of the errant knight 60



Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.
On poetry and geometric truth, 65
And their high privilege of lasting life,
From all internal injury exempt,
I mused, upon these chiefly: and at length,
My senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream. 70
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared 75
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:

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A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight 80
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
Which the new-comer carried through the waste 85
Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
(To give it in the language of the dream)
Was "Euclid's Elements;" and "This," said he,
"Is something of more worth;" and at the word
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape, 90
In colour so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony; 95
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, than the Arab with calm look declared
That all would come to pass of which the voice 100
Had given forewarning, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books:
The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time; 105
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem, 110
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The one to be a stone, the other a shell;
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt 115
To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
To share his enterprise, he hurried on



Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen,
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his twofold treasure.—Lance in rest, 120
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the knight,
But was an Arab of the desert too;
Of these was neither, and was both at once. 125
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed;
And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause:
“It is,” said he, “the waters of the deep 130
Gathering upon us;” quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,

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He left me: I called after him aloud;
He heeded not; but, with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view, 135
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book,
In which I had been reading, at my side. [D] 140

Full often, taking from the world of sleep
This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,
This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
A substance, fancied him a living man,
A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed 145
By love and feeling, and internal thought
Protracted among endless solitudes;
Have shaped him wandering upon this quest!
Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
Reverence was due to a being thus employed; 150
And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.
Enow there are on earth to take in charge
Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear; 155
Enow to stir for these; yea, will I say,
Contemplating in soberness the approach
Of an event so dire, by signs in earth
Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
That maniac's fond anxiety, and go 160
Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
Me hath such strong enhancement overcome,
When I have held a volume in my hand,
Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine! 165

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
Of living nature, which could thus so long
Detain me from the best of other guides
And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,
Even in the time of lisping infancy; 170



And later down, in prattling childhood even,
While I was travelling back among those days,
How could I ever play an ingrate's part?
Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
By intermingling strains of thankfulness 175
With their own thoughtless melodies; at least
It might have well beseemed me to repeat
Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now. 180
O Friend! O Poet! brother of my soul,
Think not that I could pass along untouched
By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak?
Why call upon a few weak words to say
What is already written in the hearts 185
Of all that breathe?—what in the path of all
Drops daily from the tongue of every child,
Wherever man is found? The trickling tear
Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
Proclaims it, and the insuperable look 190
That drinks as if it never could be full.

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That portion of my story I shall leave
There registered: whatever else of power
Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be
Peculiar to myself, let that remain 195
Where still it works, though hidden from all search
Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
That here, in memory of all books which lay
Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
Whether by native prose, or numerous verse, [E] 200
That in the name of all inspired souls—
From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice
That roars along the bed of Jewish song,
And that more varied and elaborate,
Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake 205
Our shores in England,—from those loftiest notes
Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made
For cottagers and spinners at the wheel,
And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,
Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes, 210
Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
And of old men who have survived their joys—
'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,
And of the men that framed them, whether known,
Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves, 215
That I should here assert their rights, attest
Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
Their benediction; speak of them as Powers
For ever to be hallowed; only less,
For what we are and what we may become, 220
Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
To transitory themes; yet I rejoice,
And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out 225
Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
Safe from an evil which these days have laid
Upon the children of the land, a pest
That might have dried me up, body and soul.
This verse is dedicate to Nature's self, 230
And things that teach as Nature teaches: then,
Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend!



If in the season of unperilous choice,
In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales 235
Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
Each in his several melancholy walk
Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed, 240
Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
Or rather like a stalled ox debarred
From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
A prelibation to the mower's scythe. [F] 245



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Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
And she herself from the maternal bond
Still undischarged; yet doth she little more 250
Than move with them in tenderness and love,
A centre to the circle which they make;
And now and then, alike from need of theirs
And call of her own natural appetites,
She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food, 255
Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
And hinge of all our learnings and our loves: [G]
She left us destitute, and, as we might,
Trooping together. Little suits it me 260
To break upon the sabbath of her rest
With any thought that looks at others' blame;
Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
Hence am I checked: but let me boldly say,
In gratitude, and for the sake of truth, 265
Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
Than shaping novelties for times to come,
Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust 270
Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
Doth also for our nobler part provide,
Under His great correction and control,
As innocent instincts, and as innocent food; 275
Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
In the simplicities of opening life
Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
From anxious fear of error or mishap, 280
And evil, overweeningly so called;
Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
Nor with impatience from the season asked
More than its timely produce; rather loved 285
The hours for what they are, than from regard
Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
Such was she—not from faculties more strong



Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
And spot in which she lived, and through a grace 290
Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign.

My drift I fear
Is scarcely obvious; but, that common sense
May try this modern system by its fruits, 295
Leave let me take to place before her sight
A specimen portrayed with faithful hand.
Full early trained to worship seemliness,
This model of a child is never known
To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath



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300

Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
As generous as a fountain; selfishness
May not come near him, nor the little throng
Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
The wandering beggars propagate his name, 305
Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,
And natural or supernatural fear,
Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see
How arch his notices, how nice his sense 310
Of the ridiculous; not blind is he
To the broad follies of the licensed world,
Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,
And can read lectures upon innocence;
A miracle of scientific lore, 315
Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
And tell you all their cunning; he can read
The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;
He knows the policies of foreign lands;
Can string you names of districts, cities, towns, 320
The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
All things are put to question; he must live
Knowing that he grows wiser every day
Or else not live at all, and seeing too 325
Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
Into the dimpling cistern of his heart:
For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
Pity the tree.—Poor human vanity,
Wert thou extinguished, little would be left 330
Which he could truly love; but how escape?
For, ever as a thought of purer, birth
Rises to lead him toward a better clime,
Some intermeddler still is on the watch
To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray, 335
Within the pinfold of his own conceit.
Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
The playthings, which her love designed for him,
Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn. 340
Oh! give us once again the wishing cap

Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap 345
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
The froward chaos of futurity,
Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill 350
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties,
Sages who in their prescience would control 355
All accidents, and to the very road

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Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines; when will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning progress of the world
A wiser spirit is at work for us, 360
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours? [H]

There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs
And islands of Winander!—many a time 365
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands 370
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
That they might answer him [I]; and they would shout
Across the watery vale, and shout again, 375
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill, 380
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind, 385
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old. 390
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs
Upon a slope above the village school, [K]
And through that churchyard when my way has led



On summer evenings, I believe that there 395
A long half hour together I have stood
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies! [L]
Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
That self-same village church; I see her sit
(The throned Lady whom erewhile we hailed) 400
On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy
Who slumbers at her feet,—forgetful, too,
Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
And listening only to the gladsome sounds
That, from the rural school ascending, [M] play 405
Beneath her and about her. May she long
Behold a race of young ones like to those
With whom I herded!—(easily, indeed,
We might have fed upon a fatter soil
Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven)—410
A race of real children; not too wise,

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Too learned, or too good; [N] but wanton, fresh,
And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy; 415
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth. 420
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
May books and Nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name—
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power! 425

Well do I call to mind the very week
When I was first intrusted to the care
Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
And brooks [O] were like a dream of novelty
To my half-infant thoughts; that very week, 430
While I was roving up and down alone,
Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake:
Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom 435
Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore
A heap of garments, as if left by one
Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,
But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast, 440
And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped
The breathless stillness. [P] The succeeding day,
Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale
Drew to the spot an anxious crowd; some looked
In passive expectation from the shore, 445
While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,
Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.
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 450



Of terror; yet no soul-debasing fear,
Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
Such sights before, among the shining streams
Of faery land, the forest of romance. 455
Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
With decoration of ideal grace;
A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

A precious treasure had I long possessed, 460
A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
And, from companions in a new abode,
When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine
Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—465
That there were four large volumes, laden

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all

With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,
With one not richer than myself, I made
A covenant that each should lay aside 470
The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,
Till our joint savings had amassed enough
To make this book our own. Through several months,
In spite of all temptation, we preserved
Religiously that vow; but firmness failed, 475
Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house
The holidays returned me, there to find
That golden store of books which I had left,
What joy was mine! How often in the course 480
Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind
Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish
For a whole day together, have I lain
Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun, 485
And there have read, devouring as I read,
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
I to the sport betook myself again. 490

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
It comes, to works of unreprieved delight,
And tendency benign, directing those
Who care not, know not, think not what they do. 495
The tales that charm away the wakeful night
In Araby, romances; legends penned
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun 500
By the dismantled warrior in old age,
Out of the bowels of those very schemes
In which his youth did first extravagat;
These spread like day, and something in the shape
Of these will live till man shall be no more. 505



Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
And *they must* have their food. Our childhood sits,
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
That hath more power than all the elements.
I guess not what this tells of Being past, 510
Nor what it augurs of the life to come; [Q]
But so it is, and, in that dubious hour,
That twilight when we first begin to see
This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,
And in the long probation that ensues, 515
The time of trial, ere we learn to live
In reconciliation with our stinted powers;
To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows 520
To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed

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And humbled down; oh! then we feel, we feel,
We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,
Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then,
Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape 525
Philosophy will call you: *then* we feel
With what, and how great might ye are in league,
Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,
An empire, a possession,—ye whom time
And seasons serve; all Faculties to whom 530
Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,
Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Relinquishing this lofty eminence
For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract 535
Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
In progress from their native continent
To earth and human life, the Song might dwell
On that delightful time of growing youth,
When craving for the marvellous gives way 540
To strengthening love for things that we have seen;
When sober truth and steady sympathies,
Offered to notice by less daring pens,
Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves
Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad 545
At thought of raptures now for ever flown; [R]
Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
To think of, to read over, many a page,
Poems withal of name, which at that time
Did never fail to entrance me, and are now 550
Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years
Or less I might have seen, when first my mind
With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet 555
For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power;
And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads



Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad 560
With a dear friend, [S] and for the better part
Of two delightful hours we strolled along
By the still borders of the misty lake, [T]
Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
Or conning more, as happy as the birds 565
That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad,
Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,
More bright than madness or the dreams of wine;
And, though full oft the objects of our love
Were false, and in their splendour overwrought, [U] 570
Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,
Than that most noble attribute of man,
Though yet untutored and inordinate,
That wish for something loftier, more



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adorned, 575

Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds
Of exultation echoed through the groves!
For, images, and sentiments, and words,
And everything encountered or pursued 580
In that delicious world of poesy,
Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
With music, incense, festival, and flowers!

Here must we pause: this only let me add,
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense 585
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
A daily wanderer among woods and fields
With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to extasy, as others are, 590
By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,
In measure only dealt out to himself,
Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty Poets. Visionary power 595
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words:
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,
As in a mansion like their proper home, 600
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine,
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognised,
In flashes, and with glory not their own. 605

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This quotation I am unable to trace.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare Emily Bronte's statement of the same, in the last verse she wrote:

'Though Earth and Man were gone,
And suns and universes ceased to be,
And Thou wert left alone,
Every existence would exist in Thee.

There is not room for Death,
Nor atom that His might could render void;
Thou—THOU art Being and Breath,
And what THOU art may never be destroyed.'

Ed.]

[Footnote C:

"Because she would then become farther and farther removed from the
source of essential life and being, diffused instead of concentrated."

(William Davies).—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Mr. A. J. Duffield, the translator of Don Quixote, wrote me the following
letter on Wordsworth and Cervantes, which I transcribe in full.

"So far as I can learn Wordsworth had not read any critical work on Don Quixote before
he wrote the fifth book of 'The Prelude', [a] nor for that matter had any criticism of the
master-piece of Cervantes then appeared. Yet Wordsworth,

'by patient exercise
Of study and hard thought,'



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has given us not only a most poetical insight into the real nature of the 'Illustrious Hidalgo of La Mancha'; he has shown us that it was a nature compacted of the madman and the poet, and this in language so appropriate, that the consideration of it cannot fail to give pleasure to all who have found a reason for weighing Wordsworth's words.

"He demands

'Oh! why hath not the Mind
Some element to stamp her image on?'

then falls asleep, 'his senses yielding to the sultry air,' and he sees before him

'stretched a boundless plain

Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared
Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
He seemed an Arab ...'

Here we have the plains of Montiel, and the poet realising all that Don Quixote felt on that day of July, 'the hottest of the year,' when he first set out on his quest and met with nothing worth recording.

'The uncouth shape'

is of course the Don himself,

the 'dromedary'

is Rozinante, and

the 'Arab'

doubtless is Cid Hamete Benengeli.

"Taking such an one for the guide,

'who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me,'



is a most sweet play of humour like to the lambent flame of his whose satire was as a summer breath, and who smiled all the time he wrote, although he wrote chiefly in a prison.

'The loud prophetic blast of harmony'

is doubtless a continuation of this humour, down to the lines

'Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.'

"Our poet now becomes positive,

'Lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; *yet not the knight*
But was an Arab of the desert too,
Of these was neither, and was both at once.'

This is absolutely true, and was one of the earliest complaints made a century and a half ago, when Spaniards began to criticise their one great book. They could not tell at times whether Don Quixote was speaking, or Cervantes, or Cid Hamete Benengeli.

'A bed of glittering light'

is a delightful description of the attitude of Don Quixote's mind towards external nature while passing through the desert.

'It is,' said he, 'the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us.'

"It was, of course, only the mirage; but this he changed to suit his own purpose into the 'waters of the deep,' as he changed the row of Castilian wind-mills into giants, and the roar of the fulling mills into the din of war.

"Wordsworth is now awake from his dream, but turning all he saw in it into a reality, as only the poet can, he feels that

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'Reverence was due to a being thus employed;
And thought that, *in the blind and awful lair*
Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.'

Here again is a most profound description of the creation of Cervantes. Don Quixote was mad, but his was a madness that proceeded from that 'blind and awful lair,' a disordered stomach, rather than from an injured brain. Had Don Quixote not forsaken the exercise of the chase and early rising, if he had not taken to eating chestnuts at night, cold spiced meat, together with onions and 'ollas podridas', then proceeding to read exciting, unnatural tales of love and war, he would not have gone mad. "But his reason only lay 'couched,' not overthrown. Only give him a dose of the balsam of Fierabras, his reason shall spring out of its lair, like a lion from out its hiding-place, as indeed it did; and you then have that wonderful piece of rhetoric, which describes the army of Alifanfaron in the eighteenth chapter, Part I.

"There are many other things worthy of note, such as

'crazed
By love and feeling, and internal thought
Protracted among endless solitudes,'

all of which are 'fit epithets blessed in the marriage of pure words,' which the author of 'The Prelude', without any special learning, or personal knowledge of Spain, has given us, and are so striking as to compel us once again to go to Wordsworth and say, 'we do not all understand thee yet, not all that thou hast given us.'

Very truly yours, A. J. Duffield."

Ed.]

[Footnote E: Compare 'Paradise Lost', v. 1. 150:

'In prose or numerous verse.'

Ed.]

[Footnote F: Wordsworth's earliest teachers, before he was sent to Hawkshead School, were his mother and the Rev. Mr. Gilbanks at Cockermouth, and Mrs. Anne Birkett at Penrith. His mother and Dame Birkett taught him to read, and trained his infant memory. Mr. Gilbanks also gave him elementary instruction; while his father made him commit to memory portions of the English poets. At Hawkshead he read English literature, learned Latin and Mathematics, and wrote both English and Latin verse. There was little or no method, and no mechanical or artificial drill in his early education. Though he was taught both languages and mathematics he was left as free to range the "happy pastures" of literature, as to range the Hawkshead woods on autumn nights in

pursuit of woodcocks. It is likely that the reference in the above passage is to his education both in childhood and in youth, although specially to the former. In his 'Autobiographical Memoranda', Wordsworth says,

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“Of my earliest days at School I have little to say, but that they were very happy ones, chiefly because I was left at liberty, then and in the vacations, to read whatever books I liked. For example, I read all Fielding’s works, ‘Don Quixote’, ‘Gil Blas’, and any part of Swift that I liked; ‘Gulliver’s Travels’ and the ‘Tale of a Tub’ being both much to my taste.”

As Wordsworth alludes to Coleridge’s education, along with his own, “in the season of unperilous choice,” the reference is probably to Coleridge’s early time at the vicarage of Ottery St. Mary’s, Devonshire, and at the Grammar School there, as well as at Christ’s Hospital in London, where (with Charles Lamb as school-companion) he was as enthusiastic in his exploits in the New River, as he was an eager student of books.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Mrs. Wordsworth died at Penrith, in the year 1778, the poet’s eighth year.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Compare, in ‘Expostulation and Reply’ (vol. i. p. 273),

‘Think you, ’mid all this mighty sum
Of things for ever speaking,
That nothing of itself will come,
But we must still be seeking?’

Ed.]

[Footnote I: See the Fenwick note to the poem, ‘There was a Boy’, vol. ii. p. 57, and Wordsworth’s reference to his schoolfellow William Raincock.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: Hawkshead Grammar School.—Ed.]

[Footnote L: Lines 364-97 were first published in “Lyrical Ballads,” 1800, and appeared in all the subsequent collective editions of the poems, standing first in the group of “Poems of the Imagination.”

The grave of this “immortal boy” cannot be identified. His name, and everything about him except what is here recorded, is unknown; but he was, in all likelihood, a school companion of Wordsworth’s at Hawkshead.

‘And through that churchyard when my way has led
On summer evenings.’

One may localize the above description almost anywhere at Hawkshead—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Hawkshead School, in which Wordsworth was taught for eight years—from 1778 to 1786—was founded by Archbishop Sandys of York, in 1585, and the

building is still very much as it was in Wordsworth's time. The main school-room is on the ground floor. One small chamber on the first floor was used, in the end of last century, by the head master, as a private class-room, for teaching a few advanced pupils. In another is a small library, formed in part by the donations of the scholars; it having been a custom for each pupil to present a volume on leaving the school, or to send one afterwards. Very probably one of the volumes now in the library was presented by Wordsworth. There are several which were presented by his school-fellows, during the years in which Wordsworth was at Hawkshead. The master, in 1877, promised me that he would search through his somewhat musty treasures, to see if he could discover a book with the poet's autograph;

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but I never heard of his success. On the wall of the room containing the library is a tablet, recording the names of several masters. There also, in an old oak chest, is kept the original charter of the school. The oak benches downstairs are covered with the names or initials of the boys, deeply cut; and, amongst them, the name of William Wordsworth—but not those of his brothers Richard, John, or Christopher—may be seen. For further details as to the Hawkshead School, see the ‘Life’ of the Poet in this edition. Towards the close of last century, when Wordsworth and his three brothers were educated there, the school was one of the best educational institutions in the north of England.—Ed.]

[Footnote N: Compare in the lines beginning “She was a Phantom of delight” p. 2:

‘Creature not too bright or good
For human nature’s daily food.’

Ed.]

[Footnote O: Compare book iv. ll. 50 and 383, with relative notes—Ed.]

[Footnote P: Compare in ‘Fidelity’, p. 45:

‘There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer.’

Ed.]

[Footnote Q: Compare the ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality’, stanza v.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: Compare, in ‘Tintern Abbey’, vol. ii. p.54:

‘That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures.’

And in the ‘Ode, Intimations of Immortality’, vol. viii.:

‘What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight.’

Ed.]

[Footnote S: This friend of his boyhood, with whom Wordsworth spent these “delightful hours,” is as unknown as is the immortal Boy of Windermere, who blew “mimic hootings



to the silent owls,” and who sleeps in the churchyard “above the village school” of Hawkshead, and the Lucy of the Goslar poems. Compare, however, p. 163. Wordsworth *may* refer to John Fleming of Rayrigg, with whom he used to take morning walks round Esthwaite:

‘... five miles
Of pleasant wandering ...’

Ed.]

[Footnote T: Esthwaite.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Probably they were passages from Goldsmith, or Pope, or writers of their school. The verses which he wrote upon the completion of the second century of the foundation of the school were, as he himself tells us, “a tame imitation of Pope’s versification, and a little in his style.”—Ed.]

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SUB-FOOTNOTE ON THE TEXT

[Sub-Footer a: Wordsworth studied Spanish during the winter he spent at Orleans (1792). Don Quixote was one of the books he had read when at the Hawkshead school.—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK SIXTH

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS



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The leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks
And the simplicities of cottage life
I bade farewell; and, one among the youth
Who, summoned by that season, reunite
As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure, 5
Went back to Granta's cloisters, [A] not so prompt
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In mind, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
Without repining from the coves and heights 10
Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern; [B]
Quitted, not both, the mild magnificence
Of calmer lakes and louder streams; and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth, 15
Relinquished, and your nights of revelry,
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.
The bonds of indolent society 20
Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
More to myself. Two winters may be passed
Without a separate notice: many books
Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,
But with no settled plan. [C] I was detached 25
Internally from academic cares;
Yet independent study seemed a course
Of hardy disobedience toward friends
And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.
This spurious virtue, rather let it bear 30
A name it now deserves, this cowardice,
Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
Of freedom which encouraged me to turn
From regulations even of my own
As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell—35
Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
And at a later season, or preserved;
What love of nature, what original strength
Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,
The deepest and the best, what keen research, 40
Unbiassed, unbewildered, and unawed?



The Poet's soul was with me at that time;
Sweet meditations, the still overflow
Of present happiness, while future years
Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams, 45
No few of which have since been realised;
And some remain, hopes for my future life.
Four years and thirty, told this very week, [D]
Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me 50
Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days
Which also first emboldened me to trust
With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
By such a daring thought, that I might leave 55
Some monument behind me which pure hearts

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Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
Maintained even by the very name and thought
Of printed books and authorship, began
To melt away; and further, the dread awe 60
Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
Approachable, admitting fellowship
Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,
Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy. 65

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
Did I by night frequent the College groves
And tributary walks; the last, and oft
The only one, who had been lingering there
Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell, 70
A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
Inexorable summons! Lofty elms,
Inviting shades of opportune recess,
Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood 75
Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,
Grew there; [E] an ash which Winter for himself
Decked out with pride, and with outlandish grace:
Up from the ground, and almost to the top, 80
The trunk and every master branch were green
With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs
And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
That hung in yellow tassels, while the air
Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood 85
Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, 90
Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers,
Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.



On the vague reading of a truant youth [F] 95
'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment
Not seldom differed from my taste in books.
As if it appertained to another mind,
And yet the books which then I valued most
Are dearest to me *now*; for, having scanned, 100
Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms
Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed
A standard, often usefully applied,
Even when unconsciously, to things removed
From a familiar sympathy.—In fine, 105
I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
Misled in estimating words, not only
By common inexperience of youth,
But by the trade in classic niceties,
The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase 110
From languages that want the living voice
To carry meaning to the natural heart;
To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
What reason, what simplicity and sense.



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Yet may we not entirely overlook 115
The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
Of geometric science. Though advanced
In these inquiries, with regret I speak,
No farther than the threshold, [G] there I found
Both elevation and composed delight: 120
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased
With its own struggles, did I meditate
On the relation those abstractions bear
To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
Those immaterial agents bowed their heads 125
Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man;
From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
From system on to system without end.

More frequently from the same source I drew
A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense 130
Of permanent and universal sway,
And paramount belief; there, recognised
A type, for finite natures, of the one
Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
Which—to the boundaries of space and time, 135
Of melancholy space and doleful time,
Superior, and incapable of change,
Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
And silence did await upon these thoughts 140
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'Tis told by one whom stormy waters threw,
With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared,
Upon a desert coast, that having brought
To land a single volume, saved by chance, 145
A treatise of Geometry, he wont,
Although of food and clothing destitute,
And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
To part from company and take this book
(Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths) 150
To spots remote, and draw his diagrams
With a long staff upon the sand, and thus
Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
Forget his feeling: so (if like effect
From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things 155
So different, may rightly be compared),



So was it then with me, and so will be
With Poets ever. Mighty is the charm
Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself, 160
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
So gracefully; even then when it appeared
Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
To sense embodied: not the thing it is 165
In verity, an independent world,
Created out of pure intelligence.

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Such dispositions then were mine unearned
By aught, I fear, of genuine desert—
Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes. 170
And not to leave the story of that time
Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,
Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring; [H] 175
A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
—To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang 180
Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called
“Good-natured lounging,” [I] and behold a map
Of my collegiate life—far less intense
Than duty called for, or, without regard
To duty, *might* have sprung up of itself 185
By change of accidents, or even, to speak
Without unkindness, in another place.
Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,
This I repeat, was mine; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art, 190
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks; [K]
Pried into Yorkshire dales, [L] or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest 195
Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn
Risen on mid noon; [M] blest with the presence, Friend!
Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long
Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine, [N] 200
Now, after separation desolate,
Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
A gift then first bestowed. [O] The varied banks
Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song, [P]
And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees, 205
Low-standing by the margin of the stream, [Q]
A mansion visited (as fame reports)
By Sidney, [R] where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen



Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love 210
Inspired;—that river and those mouldering towers
Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb
The darksome windings of a broken stair,
And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,
Not without trembling, we in safety looked 215
Forth, through some Gothic window's open space,
And gathered with one mind a rich reward
From the far-stretching landscape, by the light
Of morning beautified, or purple eve;
Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head, 220
Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.



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Another maid there was, [S] who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me, 225
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared;
That other spirit, Coleridge! who is now
So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields 230
In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,
And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste [T]
Of naked pools, and common crags that lay
Exposed on the bare felt, were scattered love, 235
The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.
O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time,
And yet a power is on me, and a strong
Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.
Far art thou wandered now in search of health 240
And milder breezes,—melancholy lot! [U]
But thou art with us, with us in the past,
The present, with us in the times to come.
There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
No languor, no dejection, no dismay, 245
No absence scarcely can there be, for those
Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,
Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift 250
Of gales Etesian or of tender thoughts. [V]

I, too, have been a wanderer; but, alas!
How different the fate of different men.
Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared
As if in several elements, we were framed 255
To bend at last to the same discipline,
Predestined, if two beings ever were,
To seek the same delights, and have one health,
One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind 260
For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,
Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days
Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee, 265



Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
Of the huge city, [W] on the leaded roof
Of that wide edifice, [X] thy school and home,
Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired, 270
To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream, [Y]
Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
Of a long exile. Nor could I forget,
In this late portion of my argument, 275
That scarcely, as my term of pupilage
Ceased, had I left those academic bowers
When thou wert thither guided. [Z] From



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the heart

Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,
And didst sit down in temperance and peace, 280
A rigorous student. [a] What a stormy course
Then followed. [b] Oh! it is a pang that calls
For utterance, to think what easy change
Of circumstances might to thee have spared
A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes, 285
For ever withered. Through this retrospect
Of my collegiate life I still have had
Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
Present before my eyes, have played with times
And accidents as children do with cards, 290
Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,
Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence, 295
And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms
Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
From things well-matched or ill, and words for things, 300
The self-created sustenance of a mind
Debarred from Nature's living images,
Compelled to be a life unto herself,
And unrelentingly possessed by thirst
Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone, 305
Ah! surely not in singleness of heart
Should I have seen the light of evening fade
From smooth Cam's silent waters: had we met,
Even at that early time, needs must I trust
In the belief, that my maturer age, 310
My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
Would with an influence benign have soothed,
Or chased away, the airy wretchedness
That battered on thy youth. But thou hast trod
A march of glory, which doth put to shame 315
These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
That ever harboured in the breast of man.



A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
On wanderings of my own, that now embraced 320
With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer, [c]
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side, 325
Bound to the distant Alps. [d] A hardy slight
Did this unprecedented course imply
Of college studies and their set rewards;
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
Without uneasy forethought of the pain, 330
The censures, and ill-omening of those
To whom my worldly interests were dear.
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,

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And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter to irregular hopes. 335
In any age of uneventful calm
Among the nations, surely would my heart
Have been possessed by similar desire;
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
France standing on the top of golden hours, [e] 340
And human nature seeming born again. [f]

Lightly equipped, [g] and but a few brief looks
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
To land at Calais on the very eve 345
Of that great federal day; [h] and there we saw,
In a mean city, and among a few,
How bright a face is worn when joy of one
Is joy for tens of millions. [h] Southward thence
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns, [i] 350
Gaudy with reliques of that festival,
Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
And window-garlands. On the public roads,
And, once, three days successively, through paths
By which our toilsome journey was abridged, [k] 355
Among sequestered villages we walked
And found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
Hath left no corner of the land untouched:
Where elms for many and many a league in files 360
With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads
Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads, [m]
For ever near us as we paced along:
How sweet at such a time, with such delight
On every side, in prime of youthful strength, 365
To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
Of undulations varying as might please
The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once,
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 370
Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
Of darkness, dances in the open air



Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills—

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy, 375
Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone
We glided forward with the flowing stream, [n]
Swift Rhone! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut
A winding passage with majestic ease
Between thy lofty rocks. [o] Enchanting show 380
Those woods and farms and orchards did present
And single cottages and lurking towns,
Reach after reach, succession without end
Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair
Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along, 385
Clustered together with a merry crowd
Of those emancipated, a blithe host
Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning

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From the great spousals newly solemnised
At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven. 390
Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;
Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,
And with their swords flourished as if to fight
The saucy air. In this proud company
We landed—took with them our evening meal, 395
Guests welcome almost as the angels were
To Abraham of old. The supper done,
With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts
We rose at signal given, and formed a ring
And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board; 400
All hearts were open, every tongue was loud
With amity and glee; we bore a name
Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
And hospitably did they give us hail,
As their forerunners in a glorious course; 405
And round and round the board we danced again.
With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed
At early dawn. The monastery bells
Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears;
The rapid river flowing without noise, 410
And each uprising or receding spire
Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew
By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave
Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side, 415
Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued
Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set
Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there
Rested within an awful *solitude*: [p]
Yes, for even then no other than a place 420
Of soul-affecting *solitude* appeared
That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,
As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,
Arms flashing, and a military glare
Of riotous men commissioned to expel 425
The blameless inmates, and belike subvert
That frame of social being, which so long
Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things

In silence visible and perpetual calm.

—“Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!”—The voice 430
Was Nature’s, uttered from her Alpine throne;
I heard it then and seem to hear it now—
“Your impious work forbear, perish what may,
Let this one temple last, be this one spot
Of earth devoted to eternity!” 435
She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno’s pines [q]
Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,
And while below, along their several beds,
Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death, [r]
Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart 440
Responded; “Honour to the patriot’s zeal!
Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
Hail to the mighty projects of the time!

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Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires, 445
Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.
But oh! if Past and Future be the wings,
On whose support harmoniously conjoined
Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare 450
These courts of mystery, where a step advanced
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
For penitential tears and trembling hopes
Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight 455
Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed
With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved
Through faith and meditative reason, resting
Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth, 460
Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim
Of that imaginative impulse sent
From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,
Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants, 465
These forests unapproachable by death,
That shall endure as long as man endures,
To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,
To struggle, to be lost within himself
In trepidation, from the blank abyss 470
To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled."
Not seldom since that moment have I wished
That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm
Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,
In sympathetic reverence we trod 475
The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
From their foundation, strangers to the presence
Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay
Upon the open lawns! Vallombre's groves 480
Entering, [s] we fed the soul with darkness; thence
Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
In different quarters of the bending sky,



The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there, [t] 485
Memorial revered by a thousand storms;
Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep
And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
That variegated journey step by step. 490
A march it was of military speed, [u]
And Earth did change her images and forms
Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
Day after day, up early and down late,
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill 495
Mounted—from province on to province swept,
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks, [u]
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship

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Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair:
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life, 500
Enticing valleys, greeted them and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam [v]
Of salutation were not passed away.
Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised 505
To patriarchal dignity of mind,
And pure simplicity of wish and will,
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,
Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round
With danger, varying as the seasons change), 510
Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,
Contented, from the moment that the dawn
(Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
Of soul-illumination) calls him forth
To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks, 515
Whose evening shadows lead him to repose, [w]
Well might a stranger look with bounding heart
Down on a green recess, [x] the first I saw
Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,
Quiet and lorded over and possessed 520
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
And by the river side.

That very day,
From a bare ridge [y] we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved 525
To have a soulless image on the eye
That had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice, 530
A motionless array of mighty waves,
Five rivers broad and vast, [z] made rich amends,
And reconciled us to realities;
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
The eagle soars high in the element, 535
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,



The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,
Descending from the mountain to make sport
Among the cottages by beds of flowers. 540

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
Of intellect and heart. With such a book
Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain 545
And universal reason of mankind,
The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side
Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound
In dreams and fictions, pensively composed: 550
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
And sober posies of funereal flowers,
Gathered among those solitudes sublime
From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow, 555
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.



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Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
Mixed something of stem mood, an under-thirst
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed.
And from that source how different a sadness 560
Would issue, let one incident make known.
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road, [Aa]
Following a band of muleteers, we reached
A halting-place, where all together took 565
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,
Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered,
Then paced the beaten downward way that led
Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;
The only track now visible was one 570
That from the torrent's further brink held forth
Conspicuous invitation to ascend
A lofty mountain. After brief delay
Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,
And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears 575
Intruded, for we failed to overtake
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
While every moment added doubt to doubt,
A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
That to the spot which had perplexed us first 580
We must descend, and there should find the road,
Which in the stony channel of the stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks;
And, that our future course, all plain to sight,
Was downwards, with the current of that stream. 585
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
We questioned him again, and yet again;
But every word that from the peasant's lips
Came in reply, translated by our feelings, 590
Ended in this,—'that we had crossed the Alps'.

Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech,
That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps, 595
At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say—



"I recognise thy glory:" in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense 600
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
There harbours; whether we be young or old,
Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there; 605
With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.
Under such banners militant, the soul
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils 610
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
That are their own perfection and reward,
Strong in herself and in beatitude
That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds 615
To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

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The melancholy slackening that ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given
Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed, 620
Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road [1]
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait, [Bb]
And with them did we journey several hours
At a slow pace. [2] The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed, 625
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, 630
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
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—635
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. 640

That night our lodging was a house that stood
Alone within the valley, at a point
Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled
The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;
A dreary mansion, large beyond all need, [Cc] 645
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
Lie melancholy among weary bones.

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,
Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified 650
Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
Dimpling along in silent majesty,
With mountains for its neighbours, and in view
Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake, [Dd] 655
Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
Locarno! spreading out in width like Heaven,
How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart,



Bask in the sunshine of the memory;
And Como! thou, a treasure whom the earth 660
Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth
Of Abyssinian privacy. I spake
Of thee, thy chestnut woods, [Ee] and garden plots
Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids;
Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines, 665
Winding from house to house, from town to town,
Sole link that binds them to each other; [Ff] walks,
League after league, and cloistral avenues,
Where silence dwells if music be not there:
While yet a youth undisciplined in verse, 670
Through fond ambition of that hour I strove

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To chant your praise; [Gg] nor can approach you now
Ungreeted by a more melodious Song,
Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art
May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze 675
Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
In motion without pause; but ye have left
Your beauty with me, a serene accord
Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
In their submissiveness with power as sweet 680
And gracious, almost might I dare to say,
As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked 685
Religiously, in silent blessedness;
Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

With those delightful pathways we advanced,
For two days' space, in presence of the Lake,
That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed 690
A character more stern. The second night,
From sleep awakened, and misled by sound
Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes
Whose import then we had not learned, we rose
By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh, 695
And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,
Along the winding margin of the lake,
Led, as before, we should behold the scene
Hushed in profound repose. We left the town
Of Gravedona [Hh] with this hope; but soon 700
Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.
An open place it was, and overlooked,
From high, the sullen water far beneath,
On which a dull red image of the moon 705
Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour
We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night
Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock
At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep, 710



But *could not* sleep, tormented by the stings
Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon,
Filled all the woods; the cry of unknown birds;
The mountains more by blackness visible
And their own size, than any outward light; 715
The breathless wilderness of clouds; the clock
That told, with unintelligible voice,
The widely parted hours; the noise of streams,
And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand,
That did not leave us free from personal fear; 720
And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set
Before us, while she still was high in heaven;—
These were our food; and such a summer's night [li]
Followed that pair of golden days that shed
On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay, 725
Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

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But here I must break off, and bid farewell
To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught
With some untried adventure, in a course
Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow 730
Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone
Be mentioned as a parting word, that not
In hollow exultation, dealing out
Hyperboles of praise comparative;
Not rich one moment to be poor for ever; 735
Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner
On outward forms—did we in presence stand
Of that magnificent region. On the front
Of this whole Song is written that my heart 740
Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up
A different worship. Finally, whate'er
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,
Confederate with the current of the soul, 745
To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
In its degree of power, administered
To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
Less often instantaneous in effect; 750
Led me to these by paths that, in the main,
Were more circuitous, but not less sure
Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,
A happy time that was; triumphant looks 755
Were then the common language of all eyes;
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
Their great expectancy: the fife of war
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
A black-bird's whistle in a budding grove. 760
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret [Kk]
For battle in the cause of Liberty. 765
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,



Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
I seemed to move along them, as a bird 770
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;
I wanted not that joy, I did not need
Such help; the ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories, 775
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

... gloomy Pass, 1845.]

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[Variant 2:

At a slow step 1845.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: To Cambridge. The Anglo-Saxons called it 'Grantabridge', of which Cambridge may be a corruption, Granta and Cam being different names for the same stream. Grantchester is still the name of a village near Cambridge. It is uncertain whether the village or the city itself is the spot of which Bede writes, "venerunt ad civitatulam quandam desolatam, quae lingua Anglorum 'Grantachester' vocatur." If it was Cambridge itself it had already an alternative name, viz. 'Camboricum'. Compare 'Cache-cache', a Tale in Verse, by William D. Watson. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1862:

"Leaving our woods and mountains for the plains
Of treeless level Granta." (p. 103.)

...

"'Twas then the time
When in two camps, like Pope and Emperor,
Byron and Wordsworth parted Granta's sons."

(p. 121.) Ed.]

[Footnote B: Note the meaning, as well as the 'curiosa felicitas', of this phrase.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: His Cambridge studies were very miscellaneous, partly owing to his strong natural disinclination to work by rule, partly to unmethodic training at Hawkshead, and to the fact that he had already mastered so much of Euclid and Algebra as to have a twelvemonth's start of the freshmen of his year.

"Accordingly," he tells us, "I got into rather an idle way, reading nothing but Classic authors, according to my fancy, and Italian poetry. As I took to these studies with much interest my Italian master was proud of the progress I made. Under his correction I translated the Vision of Mirza, and two or three other papers of the 'Spectator' into Italian."

Speaking of her brother Christopher, then at Cambridge, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote thus in 1793:

“He is not so ardent in any of his pursuits as William is, but he is yet particularly attached to the same pursuits which have so irresistible an influence over William, *and deprive him of the power of chaining his attention to others discordant to his feelings.*”

Ed.]

[Footnote D: April 1804.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: There is no ash tree now in the grove of St. John’s College, Cambridge, and no tradition as to where it stood. Covered as it was—trunk and branch—with “clustering ivy” in 1787, it survived till 1808 at any rate. See Note IV. in the Appendix to this volume, p. 390.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: See notes on pp. 210 [Footnote F to Book V] and 223 Footnote C to this Book, above].—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Before leaving Hawkshead he had mastered five books of Euclid, and in Algebra, simple and quadratic equations. See note, p. 223 [Footnote C to this Book, above].—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Compare the second stanza of the ‘Ode to Lycoris’:

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'Then, Twilight is preferred to Dawn,
And Autumn to the Spring.'

Ed.]

[Footnote I: Thomson. See the 'Castle of Indolence', canto I. stanza xv.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: Dovedale, a rocky chasm, rather more than two miles long, not far from Ashburn, in Derbyshire. Thomas Potts writes of it thus:

"The rugged, dissimilar, and frequently grotesque and fanciful appearance of the rocks distinguish the scenery of this valley from perhaps every other in the kingdom. In some places they shoot up in detached masses, in the form of spires or conical pyramids, to the height of 30 or 40 yards.... One rock, distinguished by the name of the Pike, from its spiry form and situation in the midst of the stream, was noticed in the second part of 'The Complete Angler', by Charles Cotton," *etc. etc.*

('The Beauties of England and Wales,' Derbyshire, vol. iii, pp. 425, 426, and 431. London, 1810.) Potts speaks of the "pellucid waters" of the Dove. "It is transparent to the bottom." (See Whately, 'Observations on Modern Gardening', p. 114.)—Ed.]

[Footnote L: Doubtless Wharfedale, Wensleydale, and Swaledale.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Compare 'Paradise Lost', v. 310, and in Chapman's 'Blind Beggar of Alexandria':

'Now see a morning in an evening rise.'

Ed.]

[Footnote N: For glimpses of the friendship of Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge, see the 'Life' of the poet in the last volume of this edition.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: The absence referred to—"separation desolate"—may refer both to the Hawkshead years, and to those spent at Cambridge; but doubtless the brother and sister met at Penrith, in vacation time from Hawkshead School; and, after William Wordsworth had gone to the university, Dorothy visited Cambridge, while the brother spent the Christmas holidays of 1790 at Fornsett Rectory in Norfolk, where his sister was then staying, and where she spent several years with their uncle Cookson, the Canon of Windsor. It is more probable that the "separation desolate" refers to the interval between this Christmas of 1790 and their reunion at Halifax in 1794. In a letter dated Fornsett, August 30, 1793, Dorothy says, referring to her brother, "It is nearly three years since we parted."—Ed.]

[Footnote P: Thomas Wilkinson's poem on the River Emont had been written in 1787, but was not published till 1824.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: Brougham Castle, at the junction of the Lowther and the Emont, about a mile out of Penrith, south-east, on the Appleby road. This castle is associated with other poems. See the 'Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle'.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: Sir Philip Sidney, author of 'Arcadia'.—Ed.]

[Footnote S: Mary Hutchinson.—Ed.]

[Footnote T: The Border Beacon is the hill to the north-east of Penrith. It is now covered with wood, but was in Wordsworth's time a "bare fell."—Ed.]

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[Footnote U: He had gone to Malta, “in search of health.”—Ed.]

[Footnote V: The Etesian gales are the mild north winds of the Mediterranean, which are periodical, lasting about six weeks in spring and autumn.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: A blue-coat boy in London.—Ed.]

[Footnote X: Christ’s Hospital. Compare Charles Lamb’s ‘Christ’s Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago’.

“Come back into memory, like as thou wert in the dayspring of thy fancies, with hope like a fiery column before thee—the dark pillar not yet turned—Samuel Taylor Coleridge—Logician, Metaphysician, Bard!—How have I seen the casual passer through the cloisters stand still, entranced with admiration (while he weighed the disproportion between the *speech* and the *garb* of the young *Mirandula*), to hear thee unfold, in thy deep and sweet intonations, the mysteries of Jamblichus, or Plotinus (for even in those years thou waxedst not pale at such philosophic draughts), or reciting Homer in his Greek, or Pindar—while the walls of the old Grey Friars re-echoed to the accents of the *inspired charity boy!*”

(‘Essays of Elia.’)—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: The river Otter, in Devon, thus addressed by Coleridge in one of his early poems:

‘Dear native Brook! wild Streamlet of the West!
How many various-fated years have passed,
What blissful and what anguished hours, since last
I skimmed the smooth thin stone along thy breast,
Numbering its light leaps! Yet so deep imprest
Sink the sweet scenes of Childhood, that mine eyes
I never shut amid the sunny haze,
But straight with all their tints, thy waters rise,
Thy crowning plank, thy margin’s willowy maze,
And bedded sand that veined with various dyes
Gleamed through thy bright transparency to the gaze!
Visions of childhood! oft have ye beguiled
Lone Manhood’s cares, yet waking fondest sighs,
Ah! that once more I were a careless child!’

Ed.]

[Footnote Z: Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in February 1791, just a month after Wordsworth had taken his B. A. degree, and left the university.—Ed.]

[Footnote a: Coleridge worked laboriously but unmethodically at Cambridge, studying philosophy and politics, besides classics and mathematics. He lost his scholarship however.—Ed.]

[Footnote b: Debt and despondency; flight to London; enlistment in the Dragoons; residence in Bristol; Republican lectures; scheme, along with Southey, for founding a new community in America; its abandonment; his marriage; life at Nether Stowey; editing 'The Watchman'; lecturing on Shakespeare; contributing to 'The Morning Chronicle'; preaching in Unitarian pulpits; publishing his 'Juvenile Poems', *etc. etc.*; and throughout eccentric, impetuous, original—with contagious enthusiasm and overflowing genius—but erratic, self-confident, and unstable.—Ed.]

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[Footnote c: Robert Jones, of Plas-yn-Ilan, near Ruthin, Denbighshire, to whom the 'Descriptive Sketches', which record the tour, were dedicated.—Ed.]

[Footnote d: See 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. p. 35.—Ed.]

[Footnote e: Compare Shakespeare, 'Sonnets', 16:

'Now stand you on the top of happy hours.'

Ed.]

[Footnote f: In 1790, most of what could be shaken in the order of European, and especially of French society and government, was shaken and changed. By the new constitution of 1790, to which the French king took an oath of fidelity, his power was reduced to a shadow, and two years later France became a Republic.

"We crossed at the time," wrote Wordsworth to his sister, "when the whole nation was mad with joy in consequence of the Revolution."

Ed.]

[Footnote g:

"We went staff in hand, without knapsacks, and carrying each his needments tied up in a pocket handkerchief, with about twenty pounds a-piece in our pockets."

W. W. ('Autobiographical Memoranda.')->Ed.]

[Footnote h: July 14, 1790.

"We crossed from Dover and landed at Calais, on the eve of the day when the King was to swear fidelity to the new constitution: an event which was solemnised with due pomp at Calais."

W. W. ('Autobiographical Memoranda.') See also the sonnet "dedicated to National Independence and Liberty," vol. ii. p. 332. beginning,

'Jones! as from Calais southward you and I,
and compare the human nature seeming born again'

of 'The Prelude', book vi. l. 341, with "the pomp of a too-credulous day" and the "homeless sound of joy" of the sonnet.—Ed.]



[Footnote i: They went by Ardres, Peronne, Soissons, Chateau Thierry, Sezanne, Bar le Duc, Chatillon-sur-Seine, Nuits, to Chalons-sur-Saone; and thence sailed down to Lyons. See Fenwick note to 'Stray Pleasures' (vol. iv.)

"The town of Chalons, where my friend Jones and I halted a day, when we crossed France, so far on foot. There we embarked, and floated down to Lyons."

Ed.]

[Footnote k: Compare 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. p 40:

'Or where her pathways straggle as they please
By lonely farms and secret villages.'

Ed.]

[Footnote m:

"Her road elms rustling thin above my head."

(See 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. pp. 39, 40, and compare the two passages in detail.)
—Ed.]

[Footnote n: On the 29th July 1790.—Ed.]

[Footnote o: They were at Lyons on the 30th July.—Ed.]

[Footnote p: They reached the Chartreuse on the 4th of August, and spent two days there "contemplating, with increasing pleasure," says Wordsworth, "its wonderful scenery."—Ed.]

[Footnote q: The forest of St. Bruno, near the Chartreuse.—Ed.]

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[Footnote r: "Names of rivers at the Chartreuse."—W. W. 1793.

They are called in 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. p. 41, "the mystic streams of Life and Death."—Ed.]

[Footnote s: "Name of one of the vallies of the Chartreuse."—W. W. 1793.]

[Footnote t: "Alluding to crosses seen on the spiry rocks of the Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible."—W. W. 1793.]

[Footnote u: It extended from July 13 to September 29. See the detailed Itinerary, vol. i. p. 332, and Wordsworth's letter to his sister, from Keswill, describing the trip.—Ed.]

[Footnote v: See the account of "Urseren's open vale serene," and the paragraph which follows it in 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. pp. 50, 51.—Ed.]

[Footnote w: See the account of these "abodes of peaceful man," in 'Descriptive Sketches', ll. 208-253.—Ed.]

[Footnote x: Probably the valley between Martigny and the Col de Balme.—Ed.]

[Footnote y: Wordsworth and Jones crossed from Martigny to Chamouni on the 11th of August. The "bare ridge," from which they first "beheld unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc," and were disenchanted, was doubtless the Col de Balme. The first view of the great mountain is not impressive as seen from that point, or indeed from any of the possible routes to Chamouni from the Rhone valley, until the village is almost reached. The best approach is from Sallanches by St. Gervais.—Ed.]

[Footnote z: Compare Coleridge's 'Hymn before sun-rise in the Vale of Chamouni', and Shelley's 'Mont Blanc', with Wordsworth's description of the Alps, here in 'The Prelude', in 'Descriptive Sketches', and in the 'Memorials of a Tour on the Continent'.—Ed.]

[Footnote Aa: August 17, 1790.—Ed.]

[Footnote Bb: This passage beginning, "The brook and road," was first published, amongst the "Poems of the Imagination," in the edition of 1845, under the title of 'The Simplon Pass' (see vol. ii. p. 69). It is doubtless to this walk down the Italian side of the Simplon route that Wordsworth refers in the letter to his sister from Keswill, in which he says,

"The impression of there hours of our walk among these Alps will never be effaced."

Ed.]



[Footnote Cc: The old hospice in the Simplon, which is beside a torrent below the level of the road, about 22 miles from Duomo d'Ossola.—Ed.]

[Footnote Dd:

“From Duomo d'Ossola we proceeded to the lake of Locarno, to visit the Boromean Islands, and thence to Como.”

(W. W. to his sister.) The lake of Locarno is now called Lago Maggiore.—Ed.]

[Footnote Ee:

“The shores of the lake consist of steeps, covered with large sweeping woods of chestnut, spotted with villages.”

(W. W. to his sister.)—Ed.]

[Footnote Ff:

“A small footpath is all the communication by land between one village and another on the side along which we passed, for upwards of thirty miles. We entered on this path about noon, and, owing to the steepness of the banks, were soon unmolested by the sun, which illuminated the woods, rocks, and villages of the opposite shore.”

(See letter of W. W. from Keswill.)—Ed.]



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[Footnote Gg: See 'Descriptive Sketches', vol. i. pp. 42-46.—Ed.]

[Footnote Hh: They followed the lake of Como to its head, leaving Gravedona on the 20th August.—Ed.]

[Footnote Ii: August 21, 1790.—Ed.]

[Footnote Kk: They reached Cologne on the 28th September, having floated down the Rhine in a small boat; and from Cologne went to Calais, through Belgium.—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK SEVENTH

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Six changeful years have vanished since I first
Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
Which met me issuing from the City's [A] walls)
A glad preamble to this Verse: [B] I sang
Aloud, with fervour irresistible 5
Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting,
From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side
To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth
(So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream,
That flowed awhile with unabating strength, 10
Then stopped for years; not audible again
Before last primrose-time, [C] Beloved Friend!
The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts
On thy departure to a foreign land [D]
Has failed; too slowly moves the promised work. 15
Through the whole summer have I been at rest, [E]
Partly from voluntary holiday,
And part through outward hindrance. But I heard,
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors between light and dark, 20
A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold,—minstrels from the distant woods
Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,
With preparation artful and benign,
That the rough lord had left the surly North 25
On his accustomed journey. The delight,
Due to this timely notice, unawares



Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,
"Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds, 30
Will chant together." Thereafter, as the shades
Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied
A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,
Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen 35
Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
No less than sound had done before; the child
Of Summer, lingering, shining, by herself,
The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir 40
Of Winter that had warbled at my door,
And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

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The last night's genial feeling overflowed
Upon this morning, and my favourite grove,
Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft, [F] 45
As if to make the strong wind visible,
Wakes in me agitations like its own,
A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,
Which we will now resume with lively hope,
Nor checked by aught of tamer argument 50
That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, [G] soon I bade
Farewell for ever to the sheltered seats [H]
Of gowned students, quitted hall and bower,
And every comfort of that privileged ground, 55
Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
The unfenced regions of society.

Yet, undetermined to what course of life
I should adhere, and seeming to possess
A little space of intermediate time 60
At full command, to London first I turned, [I]
In no disturbance of excessive hope,
By personal ambition unenslaved,
Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown [K] 65
Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock
Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced
Her endless streets, a transient visitant: [K]
Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind
Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly, 70
And life and labour seem but one, I filled
An idler's place; an idler well content
To have a house (what matter for a home?)
That owned him; living cheerfully abroad
With unchecked fancy ever on the stir, 75
And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned
Of airy palaces, and gardens built
By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
Authentic history been set forth of Rome, 80
Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis;
Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,
Of golden cities ten months' journey deep



Among Tartarian wilds—fell short, far short,
Of what my fond simplicity believed 85
And thought of London—held me by a chain
Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot
For me beyond its ordinary mark,
'Twere vain to ask; but in our flock of boys 90
Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance
Summoned from school to London; fortunate
And envied traveller! When the Boy returned,
After short absence, curiously I scanned
His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth, 95
From disappointment, not to find some change
In look and air, from that new region brought,
As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned

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him;

And every word he uttered, on my ears
Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note, 100
That answers unexpectedly awry,
And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things
Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears
Almost as deeply seated and as strong
In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived 105
For my enjoyment. Would that I could now
Recal what then I pictured to myself,
Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,
The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last,
Nor least, Heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor: 110
Dreams not unlike to those which once begat
A change of purpose in young Whittington,
When he, a friendless and a drooping boy,
Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out
Articulate music. [L] Above all, one thought 115
Baffled my understanding: how men lived
Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
Strangers, not knowing each the other's name.

O, wond'rous power of words, by simple faith
Licensed to take the meaning that we love! 120
Vauxhall and Ranelagh! I then had heard
Of your green groves, [M] and wilderness of lamps
Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
Floating in dance, or warbling high in air 125
The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
With less delight upon that other class
Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent:
The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top
And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's; the tombs 130
Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates, [N]
Perpetually recumbent; Statues—man,
And the horse under him—in gilded pomp
Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares; 135
The Monument, [O] and that Chamber of the Tower [P]
Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
Their steeds bestriding,—every mimic shape



Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,
Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed, 140
Or life or death upon the battle-field.
Those bold imaginations in due time
Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
And now I looked upon the living scene;
Familiarly perused it; oftentimes, 145
In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world! Before me flow, 150
Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—
With wonder heightened, or sublimed by



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awe—

On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din; 155
The comers and the goers face to face,
Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
And all the tradesman's honours overhead:
Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page, 160
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
Stationed above the door, like guardian saints;
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
Or physiognomies of real men,
Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea, 165
Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton, or the attractive head
Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
Abruptly into some sequestered nook, 170
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!
At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
We take our way. A raree-show is here,
With children gathered round; another street 175
Presents a company of dancing dogs,
Or dromedary, with an antic pair
Of monkeys on his back; a minstrel band
Of Savoyards; or, single and alone,
An English ballad-singer. Private courts, 180
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
The very shrillest of all London cries,
May then entangle our impatient steps;
Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares, 185
To privileged regions and inviolate,
Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
Following the tide that slackens by degrees, 190
Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.



Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;
Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
Press forward, in all colours, on the sight; 195
These, bold in conscious merit, lower down;
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.
As on the broadening causeway we advance,
Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong 200
In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
Another lies at length, beside a range 205
Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,
The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps. 210



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Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where
See, among less distinguishable shapes,
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand;
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images 215
Upon his head; with basket at his breast
The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm!

Enough;—the mighty concourse I surveyed
With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note 220
Among the crowd all specimens of man,
Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
And every character of form and face:
The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote 225
America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,
The spectacles within doors,—birds and beasts 230
Of every nature, and strange plants convened
From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape
The absolute presence of reality,
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
And what earth is, and what she has to shew. 235
I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
By means refined attaining purest ends,
But imitations, fondly made in plain
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill 240
Submits to nothing less than taking in
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
Or in a ship on waters, with a world 245
Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
Above, behind, far stretching and before;
Or more mechanic artist represent
By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
From blended colours also borrowing help, 250
Some miniature of famous spots or things,—
St. Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,



In microscopic vision, Rome herself;
Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,—the Falls
Of Tivoli; and, high upon that steep, 255
The Sibyl's mouldering Temple! every tree,
Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
Throughout the landscape; tuft, stone scratch minute—
All that the traveller sees when he is there.

Add to these exhibitions, mute and still, 260
Others of wider scope, where living men,
Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
Diversified the allurements. Need I fear
To mention by its name, as in degree,
Lowest of these and humblest in attempt, 265
Yet richly graced with honours of her



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own,

Half-rural Sadler's Wells? [Q] Though at that time
Intolerant, as is the way of youth
Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add, 270
With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,
Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,
Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds; 275
To note the laws and progress of belief;
Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
How willingly we travel, and how far!
To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo! 280
He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage
Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon
Hid in her vacant interlunar cave." [R]
Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought? 285
The garb he wears is black as death, the word
"*Invisible*" flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were "forms and pressures of the time," [S]
Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed
When Art was young; dramas of living men, 290
And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame,
Such as the daring brotherhood of late
Set forth, too serious theme for that light place—295
I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
From our own ground,—the Maid of Buttermere,—[T]
And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife
Deserted and deceived, the spoiler came
And wooed the artless daughter of the hills, 300
And wedded her, in cruel mockery
Of love and marriage bonds. [U] These words to thee
Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
Beheld her serving at the cottage inn, 305
Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,



With admiration of her modest mien
And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
We since that time not unfamiliarly
Have seen her,—her discretion have observed, 310
Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
Her patience, and humility of mind
Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
Of public notice—an offensive light
To a meek spirit suffering inwardly. 315

From this memorial tribute to my theme
I was returning, when, with sundry forms
Commingled—shapes which met me in the way
That we must tread—thy image rose again,
Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace 320
Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
Without contamination doth she live

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In quietness, without anxiety:
Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth
Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb 325
That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,
Rests underneath the little rock-like pile
When storms are raging. Happy are they both—
Mother and child!—These feelings, in themselves
Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think 330
On those ingenuous moments of our youth
Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,
Which yet survive in memory, appears 335
One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,
A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,
Not more, had been of age to deal about
Articulate prattle—Child as beautiful
As ever clung around a mother's neck, 340
Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.
There, too, conspicuous for stature tall
And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,
False tints too well accorded with the glare 345
From play-house lustres thrown without reserve
On every object near. The Boy had been
The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
A sort of alien scattered from the clouds. 350
Of lusty vigour, more than infantine
He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
Just three parts blown—a cottage-child—if e'er,
By cottage-door on breezy mountain side,
Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe 355
By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board
Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,
His little stage in the vast theatre,
And there he sate surrounded with a throng
Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men 360
And shameless women, treated and caressed;
Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,



While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
Were rife about him as the songs of birds
Contending after showers. The mother now 365
Is fading out of memory, but I see
The lovely Boy as I beheld him then
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells 370
Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths.
Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked
By special privilege of Nature's love, 375
Should in his childhood be detained for ever!
But with its universal freight the tide
Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,
Mary! may now have lived till he could look
With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps, 380
Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.



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Four rapid years had scarcely then been told [V]
Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,
I heard, and for the first time in my life,
The voice of woman utter blasphemy—385
Saw woman as she is, to open shame
Abandoned, and the pride of public vice;
I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
Humanity, splitting the race of man 390
In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.
Distress of mind ensued upon the sight
And ardent meditation. Later years
Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness.
Feelings of pure commiseration, grief 395
For the individual and the overthrow
Of her soul's beauty; farther I was then
But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take 400
Our argument. Enough is said to show
How casual incidents of real life,
Observed where pastime only had been sought,
Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
And measured passions of the stage, albeit 405
By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.
Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
And all the mean upholstery of the place,
Wanted not animation, when the tide 410
Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
Of thick entangled forest, like the moon 415
Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling 420
His slender manacles; or romping girl
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up



In all the tatters of infirmity
All loosely put together, hobbled in, 425
Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts [W]
Of one so overloaded with his years.
But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace, 430
The antics striving to outstrip each other,
Were all received, the least of them not lost,
With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
Between the show, and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each several nook 435
Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly
And with what flashes, as it were, the

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mind

Turned this way—that way! sportive and alert
And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
While winds are eddying round her, among straws 440
And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
Romantic almost, looked at through a space,
How small, of intervening years! For then,
Though surely no mean progress had been made
In meditations holy and sublime, 445
Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
Enjoyment haply handed down from times
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn
Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance 450
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
Gladdened me more than if I had been led
Into a dazzling cavern of romance, 455
Crowded with Genii busy among works
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,
To many, neither dignified enough
Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them, 460
Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
That bind the perishable hours of life
Each to the other, and the curious props
By which the world of memory and thought
Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes, 465
Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
Solicit our regard; but when I think
Of these, I feel the imaginative power
Languish within me; even then it slept,
When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart 470
Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
For though I was most passionately moved
And yielded to all changes of the scene
With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm 475
Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;
Save when realities of act and mien,



The incarnation of the spirits that move
In harmony amid the Poet's world,
Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth 480
By power of contrast, made me recognise,
As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
When, having closed the mighty Shakespeare's page,
I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude. 485

Pass we from entertainments, that are such
Professedly, to others titled higher,
Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
More near akin to those than names imply,—
I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts 490
Before the ermined judge, or that great stage [X]
Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform,
Admired and envied. Oh! the beating

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heart,

When one among the prime of these rose up,—
One, of whose name from childhood we had heard 495
Familiarly, a household term, like those,
The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old
Whom the fifth Harry talks of. [Y] Silence! hush!
This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit,
No stammerer of a minute, painfully 500
Delivered. No! the Orator hath yoked
The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car:
Thrice welcome Presence! how can patience e'er
Grow weary of attending on a track
That kindles with such glory! All are charmed, 505
Astonished; like a hero in romance,
He winds away his never-ending horn;
Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:
What memory and what logic! till the strain
Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed, 510
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced
By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men,
Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides, 515
And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—
Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.
I see him,—old, but Vigorous in age,—
Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start 520
Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
Against all systems built on abstract rights,
Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims 525
Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
Declares the vital power of social ties
Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
Exploding upstart Theory, insists
Upon the allegiance to which men are born—530
Some—say at once a froward multitude—
Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
As the winds fret within the AEolian cave,



Galled by their monarch's chain. The times were big
With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked 535
Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
But memorable moments intervened,
When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,
Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one 540
In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
Under the weight of classic eloquence,
Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?



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Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt 545
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
Endowed with various power to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!—550
There have I seen a comely bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
And, in a tone elaborately low
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze 555
A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
And only not invisible, again
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile 560
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
The Death of Abel, [Z] Shakespeare, and the Bard
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme 565
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars, [a]
And Ossian (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
Summoned from streamy Morven [b]—each and all
Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped 570
This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,
Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop, 575
In public room or private, park or street,
Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,
Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
And all the strife of singularity, 580
Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense—
Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
Although well pleased to be where they were found,
I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize, 585



Nor made unto myself a secret boast
Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
But, as a common produce, things that are
To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them
Such willing note, as, on some errand bound 590
That asks not speed, a Traveller might bestow
On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
Though most at home in this their dear domain, 595
Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
Me, rather, it employed, to note, and keep
In memory, those individual sights

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Of courage, or integrity, or truth, 600
Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,
Appeared more touching. One will I select;
A Father—for he bore that sacred name—
Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
Upon a corner-stone of that low wall, 605
Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air. 610
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
(The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
And from his work this moment had been stolen)
He held the child, and, bending over it, 615
As if he were afraid both of the sun
And of the air, which he had come to seek,
Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top
Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so 620
That huge fermenting mass of human-kind
Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief,
To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
For feeling and contemplative regard,
More than inherent liveliness and power. 625
How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
Unto myself, "The face of every one
That passes by me is a mystery!"
Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed 630
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
Until the shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond 635
The reach of common indication, lost
Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)



Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest 640
Wearing a written paper, to explain
His story, whence he came, and who he was.
Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
As with the might of waters; an apt type
This label seemed of the utmost we can know, 645
Both of ourselves and of the universe;
And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things, 650
Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
Builds for herself; scenes different there are,
Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
Possession of the faculties,—the peace
That comes with night; the deep solemnity



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655

Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
When the great tide of human life stands still;
The business of the day to come, unborn,
Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;
The blended calmness of the heavens and earth, 660
Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds
Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
The feeble salutation from the voice 665
Of some unhappy woman, now and then
Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,
As the mind answers to them, or the heart 670
Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,
To times, when half the city shall break out
Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
To executions, to a street on fire,
Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights 675
Take one,—that ancient festival, the Fair,
Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
And named of St. Bartholomew; [c] there, see
A work completed to our hands, that lays,
If any spectacle on earth can do, 680
The whole creative powers of man asleep!—
For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
Above the press and danger of the crowd,
Upon some showman's platform. What a shock 685
For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
Barbarian and infernal,—a phantasma,
Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
Below, the open space, through every nook
Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive 690
With heads; the midway region, and above,
Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
And children whirling in their roundabouts; 695
With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,



And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd
Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds
The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves, 700
Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,
Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.—705
All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,
The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,

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Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl, 710
The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts 715
Of man, his dullness, madness, and their feats
All jumbled up together, to compose
A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths
Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
Are vomiting, receiving on all sides, 720
Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
Of what the mighty City is herself,
To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
Living amid the same perpetual whirl 725
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
Oppression, under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free. [d] 730
But though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts 735
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
This, of all acquisitions, first awaits
On sundry and most widely different modes
Of education, nor with least delight
On that through which I passed. Attention springs, 740
And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
From early converse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power.
Think, how the everlasting streams and woods, 745
Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
The roving Indian, on his desert sands:
What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show



Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone, 750
Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life
Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft
Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects
Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul 755
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
However multitudinous, to move 760
With order and relation. This, if still,
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
Not violating any just restraint,
As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
This did I feel, in London's vast

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domain. 765

The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things, 770
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Goslar, February 10th, 1799. Compare Mr. Carter's note to 'The Prelude', book vii. l. 3.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: The first two paragraphs of book i.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: April 1804: see the reference in book vi. l. 48.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Before he left for Malta, Coleridge had urged Wordsworth to complete this work.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: The summer of 1804.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Doubtless John's Grove, below White Moss Common. On November 24, 1801, Dorothy Wordsworth wrote in her Journal,

"As we were going along, we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of fifty yards from our favourite birch tree. It was yielding to the gusty wind with all its tender twigs. The sun shone upon it, and it glanced in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower. It was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was like a spirit of water. The sun went in, and it resumed its purplish appearance, the twigs still yielding to the wind, but not so visibly to us. The other birch trees that were near it looked bright and cheerful, but it was a Creation by itself amongst them."

This does not refer to John's Grove, but it may be interesting to compare the sister's description of a birch tree "tossing in sunshine," with the brother's account of a grove of fir trees similarly moved.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: The visit to Switzerland with Jones in 1790, described in book vi.—Ed.]



[Footnote H: He took his B. A. degree in January 1791, and immediately afterwards left Cambridge.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Going to Fornsett Rectory, near Norwich, he spent six weeks with his sister, and then went to London, where he stayed four months.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: From the hint given in this passage, it would seem that he had gone up to London for a few days in 1788. Compare book viii. l. 543, and note [Footnote o].—Ed.]

[Footnote L: The story of Whittington, hearing the bells ring out the prosperity in store for him,

'Turn again, Whittington,
Thrice Lord Mayor of London,'

is well known.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Tea-gardens, till well on in this century; now built over.—Ed.]

[Footnote N: Bedlam, a popular corruption of Bethlehem, a lunatic hospital, founded in 1246. The old building, with its "carved maniacs at the gates," was taken down in 1675, and the hospital removed to Moorfields. The second building—the one to which Wordsworth refers—was demolished in 1814.—Ed.]

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[Footnote O: The London “Monument,” erected from a design by Sir Christopher Wren, on the spot where the great London Fire of 1666 began.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: The historic Tower of London.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: A theatre in St. John’s Street Road, Clerkenwell, erected in 1765.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: See ‘Samson Agonistes’, l. 88.—Ed.]

[Footnote S: See ‘Hamlet’, act I. sc. v. l. 100.—Ed.]

[Footnote T: The story of Mary, “The Maid of Buttermere,” as told in the guidebooks, is as follows:

‘She was the daughter of the inn-keeper at the Fish Inn. She was much admired, and many suitors sought her hand in vain. At last a stranger, named Hatfield, who called himself the Hon. Colonel Hope, brother of Lord Hopetoun, won her heart, and married her. Soon after the marriage, he was apprehended on a charge of forgery, surreptitiously franking a letter in the name of a Member of Parliament, tried at Carlisle, convicted, and hanged. It was discovered during the trial, that he had a wife and family, and had fled to these sequestered parts to escape the arm of the law.’

See ‘Essays on his own Times’, by S. T. Coleridge, edited by his daughter Sara. A melodrama on the story of the Maid of Buttermere was produced in all the suburban London theatres; and in 1843 a novel was published in London by Henry Colburn, entitled ‘James Hatfield and the Beauty of Buttermere, a Story of Modern Times’, with illustrations by Robert Cruikshank.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Compare S. T. C.’s ‘Essays on his own Times’, p. 585.—Ed.]

[Footnote V: He first went south to Cambridge, in October 1787; and he left London, at the close of his second visit to Town, in the end of May 1791.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: Compare ‘Macbeth’, act II. sc. i. l. 58:

‘Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts.’

Ed.]

[Footnote X: The Houses of Parliament.—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: See Shakespeare’s ‘King Henry the Fifth’, act IV. sc. iii. l. 53.—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: Solomon Gesner (or Gessner), a landscape artist, etcher, and poet, born at Zuerich in 1730, died in 1787. His ‘Tod Abels’ (the death of Abel), though the poorest

of all his works, became a favourite in Germany, France, and England. It was translated into English by Mary Collyer, a 12th edition of her version appearing in 1780. As 'The Death of Abel' was written before 1760, in the line "he who penned, the other day," Wordsworth probably refers to some new edition of the translation.—Ed.]

[Footnote a: Edward Young, author of 'Night Thoughts, on Life, Death, and Immortality'. —Ed.]

[Footnote b: In Argyleshire.—Ed.]

[Footnote c: Permission was given by Henry I. to hold a "Fair" on St. Bartholomew's day.—Ed.]

[Footnote d: In one of the MS. books in Dorothy Wordsworth's handwriting, on the outside leather cover of which is written, "May to December 1802," there are some lines which were evidently dictated to her, or copied by her, from the numerous experimental efforts of her brother in connection with this autobiographical poem. They are as follows:



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'Shall he who gives his days to low pursuits
Amid the undistinguishable crowd
Of cities, 'mid the same eternal flow
Of the same objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end,
Shall he feel yearning to those lifeless forms,
And shall we think that Nature is less kind
To those, who all day long, through a busy life,
Have walked within her sight? It cannot be.'

Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK EIGHT

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that [1] are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green? [2] 5
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed. 10
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that, [3]
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, [A] if clouds towards either ocean 15
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him [4] an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. [5] Long ere heat of noon, 20
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep [6]
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.



Booths are there none; a stall or two is here; 25
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
The other to make music; hither, too,
From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
Some aged woman finds her way again, 30
Year after year, a punctual visitant!
There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;
And in the lapse of many years may come [7]
Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he 35
Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
But one there is, [8] the loveliest of them all,
Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
Fruits of her father's orchard, are her wares, 40
And with the ruddy produce, she walks round [9]
Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed

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Of her new office, [10] blushing restlessly.
The children now are rich, for the old to-day
Are generous as the young; and, if content 45
With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
Sit in the shade together, while they gaze,
“A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
The days departed start again to life,
And all the scenes of childhood reappear, 50
Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve.” [B]
Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
And no one seems to want his share.—Immense [11] 55
Is the recess, the circumambient world
Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
They move about upon the soft green turf: [12]
How little they, they and their doings, seem,
And all that they can further or obstruct! [13] 60
Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
As tender infants are: and yet how great!
For all things serve them: them the morning light
Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
And them the silent rocks, which now from high 65
Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;
The wild brooks prattling from [14] invisible haunts;
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
Which animates this day [15] their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel, 70
In that enormous City’s turbulent world
Of men and things, what benefit I owed
To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
Was opened; [C] tract more exquisitely fair 75
Than that famed paradise often thousand trees, [D]
Or Gehol’s matchless gardens, [E] for delight
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
(Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous,
China’s stupendous mound) by patient toil 80
Of myriads and boon nature’s lavish help; [F]



There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes
Of pleasure [G] sprinkled over, shady dells 85
For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious hues,
Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase, 90
Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
In no discordant opposition, strong
And gorgeous as the colours side by side
Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds;
And mountains over all, embracing all; 95
And all the landscape, endlessly enriched
With waters running, falling, or asleep.



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But lovelier far than this, the paradise
Where I was reared; [H] in Nature's primitive gifts
Favoured no less, and more to every sense 100
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons as they change,
Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
Of time, and place, and object; by his wants, 105
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Cheerfully led to individual ends
Or social, and still followed by a train
Unwooded, unthought-of even—simplicity,
And beauty, and inevitable grace. 110

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
Would to a child be transport over-great,
When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
Would leave behind a dance of images,
That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks; 115
Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
And ordinary interests of man,
Which they embosom, all without regard
As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
Insensibly, each with the other's help. 120
For me, when my affections first were led
From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake
Love for the human creature's absolute self,
That noticeable kindness of heart
Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most 125
Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
And occupations which her beauty adorned,
And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first; [I]
Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,
With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives 130
Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
A bright tradition of the golden age; [K]
Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
Sequestered, handed down among themselves
Felicity, in Grecian song renowned; [L] 135
Nor such as—when an adverse fate had driven,
From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes
Entered, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods
Of Arden—amid sunshine or in shade,



Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours, 140
Ere Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede; [M]
Or there where Perdita and Florizel
Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King; [N]
Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is,
That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen) 145
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
Their May-bush [O], and along the streets in flocks
Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,
Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered, 150
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar; [O] and



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of youths,

Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,
To drink the waters of some sainted well, 155
And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;
But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:
The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
These lighter graces; and the rural ways
And manners which my childhood looked upon 160
Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
Intent on little but substantial needs,
Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
But images of danger and distress,
Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms; 165
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; nor was free
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
Wanting,—the tragedies of former times,
Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks 170
Immutable and overflowing streams,
Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks
Of delicate Galesus [P]; and no less 175
Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores: [Q]
Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd
To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
Devoted, on the inviolable stream
Of rich Clitumnus [R]; and the goat-herd lived 180
As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
Of cool Lucretilis [S], where the pipe was heard
Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks
With tutelary music, from all harm
The fold protecting. I myself, mature 185
In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
Though under skies less generous, less serene:
There, for her own delight had Nature framed
A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse 190
Of level pasture, islanded with groves
And banked with woody risings; but the Plain [T]



Endless, here opening widely out, and there
Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
And intricate recesses, creek or bay 195
Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
His flageolet to liquid notes of love 200
Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space
Where passage opens, but the same shall have
In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
In unlaborious pleasure, with no task 205
More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
For spring or fountain, which the traveller



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finds,

When through the region he pursues at will
His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life
I saw when, from the melancholy walls 210
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
My daily walk along that wide champaign, [U]
That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
Of the Hercynian forest, [V] Yet, hail to you 215
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice, [W]
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds, 220
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes!
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives 225
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs, 230
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun 235
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love, 240
Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies, 245
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.



Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
Might deign to follow him through what he does 250
Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
In those vast regions where his service lies,
A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
With that majestic indolence so dear 255
To native man. A rambling school-boy, thus
I felt his presence in his own domain,
As of a lord and master, or a power,
Or genius, under Nature, under God,
Presiding; and severest solitude 260
Had more commanding looks when he was



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there.

When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, [X] suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps, 265
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun: 270
Or him have I descried in distant sky,
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height! like an aerial cross
Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. [Y] Thus was man 275
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me became an index of delight, 280
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, [Z] who lives 285
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—[Z]
Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest 290
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man, 295
A shadow, a delusion? ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made, 300
And ye adore! But blessed be the God



Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified,
Removed, and to a distance that was fit: 305
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found, 310
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
Alone, that something of a better life
Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
Of most to move in, but that first I looked 315
At Man through objects that were great or fair;
First communed with him by their help.

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And thus

Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in 320
On all sides from the ordinary world
In which we traffic. Starting from this point
I had my face turned toward the truth, began
With an advantage furnished by that kind
Of prepossession, without which the soul 325
Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
No genuine insight ever comes to her.
From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
Happy, [a] and now most thankful that my walk 330
Was guarded from too early intercourse
With the deformities of crowded life,
And those ensuing laughters and contempts,
Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord, 335
Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
That to devotion willingly would rise,
Into the temple and the temple's heart.

Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me 340
Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities, and all
Their trivial pleasures; [b] and when these had drooped 345
And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
For her own sake, became my joy, even then—[b]
And upwards through late youth, until not less
Than two-and-twenty summers had been told—[c]
Was Man in my affections and regards 350
Subordinate to her, her visible forms
And viewless agencies: a passion, she,
A rapture often, and immediate love
Ever at hand; he, only a delight
Occasional, an accidental grace, 355
His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned



My spirit to that gentleness of love
(Though they had long been carefully observed),
Won from me those minute obeisances 360
Of tenderness, [d] which I may number now
With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

But when that first poetic faculty 365
Of plain Imagination and severe,
No longer a mute influence of the soul,
Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
To try her strength among harmonious words; [e]
And to book-notions and the rules of art 370
Did knowingly conform itself; there came
Among the simple shapes of human life
A wilfulness of fancy and conceit; [e]

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And Nature and her objects beautified
These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn, 375
They burnished her. From touch of this new power
Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
Beside the well-known charnel-house had then
A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,
That took his station there for ornament: 380
The dignities of plain occurrence then
Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps 385
To the cold grave in which her husband slept,
One night, or haply more than one, through pain
Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
The fact was caught at greedily, and there
She must be visitant the whole year through, 390
Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue
These cravings; when the fox-glove, one by one,
Upwards through every stage of the tall stem,
Had shed beside the public way its bells, 395
And stood of all dismantled, save the last
Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed
To bend as doth a slender blade of grass
Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat,
Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still 400
With this last relic, soon itself to fall,
Some vagrant mother, whose arch little ones,
All unconcerned by her dejected plight,
Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands
Gathered the purple cups that round them lay, 405
Strewing the turf's green slope.

A diamond light
(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose
Fronting our cottage. [f] Oft beside the hearth 410
Seated, with open door, often and long



Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,
That made my fancy restless as itself.
'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay 415
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
An entrance now into some magic cave
Or palace built by fairies of the rock;
Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
The spectacle, by visiting the spot. 420
Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
By pure Imagination: busy Power [g]
She was, and with her ready pupil turned
Instinctively to human passions, then 425
Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich

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As mine was through the bounty of a grand
And lovely region, [h] I had forms distinct
To steady me: each airy thought revolved 430
Round a substantial centre, which at once
Incited it to motion, and controlled.
I did not pine like one in cities bred,
As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend! [i]
Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams 435
Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things
Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm,
If, when the woodman languished with disease
Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground
Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise, 440
I called the pangs of disappointed love,
And all the sad etcetera of the wrong,
To help him to his grave? Meanwhile the man,
If not already from the woods retired
To die at home, was haply as I knew, 445
Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,
Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile
Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
Or spirit that full soon must take her flight. 450
Nor shall we not be tending towards that point
Of sound humanity to which our Tale
Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I shew
How Fancy, in a season when she wove
Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy 455
For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call
Some pensive musings which might well beseem
Maturer years.

A grove there is whose boughs
Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere, [k]
With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides 460
Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade
Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
In silent beauty on the naked ridge 465
Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts



In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart:
Dear native Regions, [m] wheresoe'er shall close
My mortal course, there will I think on you;
Dying, will cast on you a backward look; 470
Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)
Doth with the fond remains of his last power
Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose. 475

Enough of humble arguments; recal,
My Song! those high emotions which thy voice
Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth
Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,
When everywhere a vital pulse was felt, 480
And all the several frames of things,

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like stars,

Through every magnitude distinguishable,
Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man, 485
Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
As, of all visible natures, crown, though born
Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being,
Both in perception and discernment, first
In every capability of rapture, 490
Through the divine effect of power and love;
As, more than anything we know, instinct
With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved, 495
Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes
Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
Manners and characters discriminate,
And little bustling passions that eclipse, 500
As well they might, the impersonated thought,
The idea, or abstraction of the kind.

An idler among academic bowers,
Such was my new condition, as at large
Has been set forth; [n] yet here the vulgar light 505
Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times,
Old usages and local privilege,
Was welcome, softened, if not solemnised.

This notwithstanding, being brought more near 510
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness
I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim 515
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.



It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led
Gravely to ponder—judging between good 520
And evil, not as for the mind's delight
But for her guidance—one who was to *act*,
As sometimes to the best of feeble means
I did, by human sympathy impelled:
And, through dislike and most offensive pain, 525
Was to the truth conducted; of this faith
Never forsaken, that, by acting well,
And understanding, I should learn to love
The end of life, and every thing we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times 530
Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
London, to thee I willingly return.
Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
Enwrought upon thy mantle; satisfied
With that amusement, and a simple look 535
Of child-like inquisition now and then
Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect
Some inner meanings which might harbour



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there.

But how could I in mood so light indulge,
Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day, 540
When, having thridded the long labyrinth
Of the suburban villages, I first
Entered thy vast dominion? [o] On the roof
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
With vulgar men about me, trivial forms 545
Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,—
Mean shapes on every side: but, at the instant,
When to myself it fairly might be said,
The threshold now is overpast, (how strange
That aught external to the living mind 550
Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was),
A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,—
Power growing under weight: alas! I feel 555
That I am trifling: 'twas a moment's pause,—
All that took place within me came and went
As in a moment; yet with Time it dwells,
And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day, 560
Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
The Grotto of Antiparos, [p] or the Den
In old time haunted by that Danish Witch,
Yordas; [q] he looks around and sees the vault
Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees, 565
Erelong, the massy roof above his head,
That instantly unsettles and recedes,—
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
Commingled, making up a canopy
Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape 570
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like spectres,—ferment silent and sublime!
That after a short space works less and less,
Till, every effort, every motion gone,
The scene before him stands in perfect view 575
Exposed, and lifeless as a written book!—
But let him pause awhile, and look again,
And a new quickening shall succeed, at first



Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass, 580
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape,—there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail, 585
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk.
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff:
Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved, 590
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,
As I explored the vast metropolis,
Fount of my country's destiny and the world's;
That great emporium, chronicle at once
And burial-place of passions, and their home 595
Imperial, their chief living residence.



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With strong sensations teeming as it did
Of past and present, such a place must needs
Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time
Far less than craving power; yet knowledge came, 600
Sought or unsought, and influxes of power
Came, of themselves, or at her call derived
In fits of kindest apprehensiveness,
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me 605
A correspondent amplitude of mind;
Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and revered with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit 610
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
Of evidence from monuments, erect,
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn 615
From books and what they picture and record.

'Tis true, the history of our native land,
With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
And in our high-wrought modern narratives
Stript of their harmonising soul, the life 620
Of manners and familiar incidents,
Had never much delighted me. And less
Than other intellects had mine been used
To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
Of record or tradition; but a sense 625
Of what in the Great City had been done
And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,
Weighed with me, could support the test of thought;
And, in despite of all that had gone by,
Or was departing never to return, 630
There I conversed with majesty and power
Like independent natures. Hence the place
Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed—
Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks, 635
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
That into music touch the passing wind.



Here then my young imagination found
No uncongenial element; could here 640
Among new objects serve or give command,
Even as the heart's occasions might require,
To forward reason's else too scrupulous march.
The effect was, still more elevated views
Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt, 645
Debasement undergone by body or mind,
Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
In what we *may* become; induce belief 650
That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,

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A solitary, who with vain conceits
Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
Lo! every thing that was indeed divine 655
Retained its purity inviolate,
Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
Set off; such opposition as aroused
The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw 660
[r] Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
More orient in the western cloud, that drew
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.
Add also, that among the multitudes 665
Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
Is possible, the unity of man,
One spirit over ignorance and vice
Predominant, in good and evil hearts; 670
One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus
By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God. 675
Thus from a very early age, O Friend!
My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn
To human-kind, and to the good and ill
Of human life: Nature had led me on;
And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed [s] 680
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her; but no,
The world of human-kind outweighed not hers
In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
Though filling daily, still was light, compared 685
With that in which *her* mighty objects lay.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

... which ...

MS. letter to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 2:

Is yon assembled in the gay green field?

MS. letter to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 3:

... family of men, Twice twenty with their children and their wives, And here and there a stranger interspersed. Such show, on this side now, ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 4:

Sees annually; if storms be not abroad
And mists have left him ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 5:

It is a summer Festival, a Fair,
The only one which that secluded Glen
Has to be proud of ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 6:

... heat of noon,
Behold! the cattle are driven down, the sheep
That have for this day's traffic been call'd out

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

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[Variant 7:

... visitant!
The showman with his freight upon his back,
And once, perchance, in lapse of many years

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 8:

But one is here, ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 9:

... orchard, apples, pears,
(On this day only to such office stooping)
She carries in her basket and walks round

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 10:

... calling, ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 11:

... rich, the old man now (l. 44)
Is generous, so gaiety prevails
Which all partake of, young and old. Immense (l. 55)

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 12:

... green field:

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 13:



... seem,
Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves
And all which they can further ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 14:

The lurking brooks for their ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

[Variant 15:

And the blue sky that roofs ...

MS. to Sir George Beaumont, 1805.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Dorothy Wordsworth alludes to one of these “Fairs” in her Grasmere Journal, September 2, 1800. Her brothers William and John, with Coleridge, were all at Dove Cottage at that time.

“They all went to Stickle Tarn. A very fine, warm, sunny, beautiful morning. We walked to the fair. ... It was a lovely moonlight night. We talked much about our house on Helvellyn. The moonlight shone only upon the village. It did not eclipse the village lights; and the sound of dancing and merriment came along the still air. I walked with Coleridge and William up the lane and by the church....”

Ed.]

[Footnote B: These lines are from a descriptive Poem—‘Malvern Hills’—by one of Wordsworth’s oldest friends, Mr. Joseph Cottle of Bristol. Cottle was the publisher of the first edition of “Lyrical Ballads,” 1798 (Mr. Carter 1850).—Ed.]

[Footnote C: The district round Cockermouth.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Possibly an allusion to the hanging gardens of Babylon, said to have been constructed by Nebuchadnezzar for his Median queen. Berosus in Joseph, *contr. Ap.* I. 19, calls it a hanging *Paradise* (though Diodorus Siculus uses the term [Greek: *kaepos*]).—Ed.

The park of the Emperor of China at Gehol, is called ‘Van-shoo-yuen’, “the paradise of ten thousand trees.” Lord Macartney concludes his description of that “wonderful garden” by saying,

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"If any place can be said in any respect to have similar features to the western park of 'Van-shoo-yuen,' which I have seen this day, it is at Lowther Hall in Westmoreland, which (when I knew it many years ago) ... I thought might be reckoned ... the finest scene in the British dominions."

See Barrow's 'Travels in China', p. 134.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: 150 miles north-east of Pekin. See a description of them in Sir George Stanton's 'Authentic Account of an Embassy from the King of Great Britain to the Emperor of China' (from the papers of Lord Macartney), London, 1797, vol. ii. ch. ii. See also 'Encyclopaedia Britannica', ninth edition, article "Gehol."—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Compare 'Paradise Lost', iv. l. 242.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: Compare 'Kubla Khan', ll. 1, 2:

'In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree.'

Ed.]

[Footnote H: The Hawkshead district.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Compare 'Michael', vol. ii. p. 215, 'Fidelity', p. 44 of this vol., *etc.*—Ed.]

[Footnote K: See Virgil, 'Aeneid' viii. 319.—Ed.]

[Footnote L: See Polybius, 'Historiarum libri qui supersunt', vi. 20, 21; and Virgil, 'Eclogue' x. 32.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: See 'As You Like It', act III. scene v.—Ed.]

[Footnote N: See 'The Winter's Tale', act IV. scene iii.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: See Spenser, 'The Shepherd's Calendar (May)'.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: An Italian river in Calabria, famous for its groves and the fine-fleeced sheep that pastured on its banks. See Virgil, 'Georgics' iv. 126; Horace, 'Odes' II. vi. 10.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: The Adriatic Sea. See Acts xxvii. 27.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: An Umbrian river whose waters, when drunk, were supposed to make oxen white. See Virgil, 'Georgics' ii. 146; Pliny, 'Historia Naturalis', ii. 103.—Ed.]



[Footnote S: A hill in the Sabine country, overhanging a pleasant valley. Near it were the house and farm of Horace. See his 'Odes' I. xvii. 1.—Ed.]

[Footnote T: The plain at the foot of the Harz Mountains, near Goslar.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: In the Fenwick note to the poem 'Written in Germany', vol. ii. p. 73, he says that he "walked daily on the ramparts."—Ed.]

[Footnote V: 'Hercynian forest'.—(See Caesar, 'B. G.' vi. 24, 25.) According to Caesar it commenced on the east bank of the Rhine, stretching east and north, its breadth being nine days' journey, and its length sixty. Strabo (iv. p. 292) included within the Hercynia Silva all the mountains of southern and central Germany, from the Danube to Transylvania. Later, it was limited to the mountains round Bohemia and extending to Hungary. (See Tacitus, 'Germania', 28, 30; and Pliny, 'Historia Naturalis', iv. 25, 28.) A trace of the ancient name is retained in the 'Harz' mountains, which are clothed everywhere with conifers, Harz=resin.—Ed.]

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[Footnote W: Yewdale, Duddondale, Eskdale, Wastdale, Ennerdale.—Ed.]

[Footnote X: Compare the sonnet in “Yarrow Revisited,” *etc.*, No. XI., ‘Suggested at Tyndrum in a Storm’.—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: See book vi. l. 485 and note [Footnote Z, below].—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: Corin=Corydon? the shepherd referred to in the pastorals of Virgil and Theocritus. Phyllis, see Virgil, ‘Eclogue’ x. 37, 41.—Ed.]

[Footnote a: While living in Anne Tyson’s Cottage at Hawkshead.—Ed.]

[Footnote b: Compare ‘Tintern Abbey’, vol. ii. p. 54:

‘Nature then,
To me was all in all, *etc.*’

Ed.]

[Footnote c: He spent his twenty-second summer at Blois, in France.—Ed.]

[Footnote d: Compare ‘Hart-Leap Well’, vol. ii. p. 128, and ‘The Green Linnet’, vol. ii. p. 367.—Ed.]

[Footnote e: The ‘Evening Walk’, and ‘Descriptive Sketches’, published 1793. See especially the original text of the latter, in the appendix to vol. 1. p. 309.—Ed.]
TWO
FOOTNOTES

[Footnote f: It is difficult to say where this “smooth rock wet with constant springs” and the “copse-clad bank” were. There is no copse-clad bank fronting Anne Tyson’s cottage at Hawkshead. It may have been a rock on the wooded slope of the rounded hill that rises west of Cowper Ground, north-west of Hawkshead. A rock “wet with springs” existed there, till it was quarried for road-metal a few years since. But it is quite possible that the cottage referred to is Dove Cottage, Grasmere. In that case the “rock” and “copse-clad bank” may have been on Loughrigg, or more probably on Silver How. The “summer sun” goes down behind Silver How, so that it might smite a wet rock either on Hammar Scar or on the wooded crags above Red Bank. These could be seen from the window of one of the rooms of Dove Cottage. Seated beside the hearth of the “half-kitchen and half-parlour fire” in that cottage, and looking along the passage through the low door, the eye would rest on Hammar Scar, the wooded hill behind Allan Bank. The context of the poem points to Hawkshead; but the details of the description suggest the Grasmere cottage rather than Anne Tyson’s.—Ed.]

[Footnote g: See the distinction drawn by Wordsworth between Fancy and Imagination in the Preface to “Lyrical Ballads” (1800 and subsequent editions), and embodied in his classification of the Poems.—Ed.]

[Footnote h: Westmoreland.—Ed.]

[Footnote i: See note [Footnote a], book ii. l. 451.—Ed.]

[Footnote k: Coniston lake; see note [Footnote m below] on the following page.—Ed.]

[Footnote m: The eight lines which follow are a recast, in the blank verse of ‘The Prelude’, of the youthful lines entitled ‘Extract from the Conclusion of a Poem, composed in Anticipation of leaving School’. These were composed in Wordsworth’s sixteenth year. As the contrast is striking, the earlier lines may be transcribed:



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'Dear native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you.

Thus, while the Sun sinks down to rest
Far in the regions of the west,
Though to the vale no parting beam
Be given, not one memorial gleam,
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills where first he rose.'

The Fenwick note to this poem is as follows:

"The beautiful image with which this poem concludes suggested itself to me while I was resting in a boat along with my companions under the shade of a magnificent row of sycamores, which then extended their branches from the shore of the promontory upon which stands the ancient, and at that time the more picturesque, Hall of Coniston."

There is nothing in either poem definitely to connect "Thurstonmere" with Coniston, although their identity is suggested by the Fenwick note. I find, however, that Thurston was the ancient name of Coniston; and this carries us back to the time of the worship of Thor. (See Lewis's 'Topographical Dictionary of England', vol. i. p. 662; also the 'Edinburgh Gazetteer' (1822), articles "Thurston" and "Coniston.") The site of the grove "on the shore of the promontory" at Coniston Lake is easily identified, but the grove itself is gone.—Ed.]

[Footnote n: Compare book iii. ll. 30 and 321-26; also book vi, ll. 25 and 95, both text and notes.—Ed.]

[Footnote o: Probably in 1788. Compare book vii. ll. 61-68, and note [Footnote K].—Ed.]

[Footnote p: A stalactite cave, in a mountain in the south coast of the island of Antiparos, which is one of the Cyclades. It is six miles from Paros, was famous in ancient times, and was rediscovered in 1673.—Ed.]

[Footnote q: There is a cave, called Yordas Cave, four and a half miles from Ingleton in Lonsdale, Yorkshire. It is a limestone cavern, rich in stalactites, like the grotto of Antiparos; and is at the foot of the slopes of Gragreth, formerly called Greg-roof. It gets

its name from a traditional giant 'Yordas'; some of its recesses being called "Yordas' bed-chamber," "Yordas' oven," *etc.* See Allen's 'County of York', iii. p. 359; also Bigland's "Yorkshire" in 'The Beauties of England and Wales', vol. xvi. p. 735, and Murray's 'Handbook for Yorkshire', p. 392.—Ed.]

[Footnote r: From Milton, 'Paradise Lost', book xi. 1. 204:

'Why in the East
Darkness ere day's mid-course, and Morning light
More orient in yon Western Cloud, that draws
O'er the blue Firmament a radiant white,
And slow descends, with something heav'nly fraught?'

Ed.]

[Footnote s: See 'L'Allegro', l. 118.—Ed.]

* * * * *



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BOOK NINTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

Even as a river,—partly (it might seem)
Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed
In part by fear to shape a way direct,
That would engulf him soon in the ravenous sea—
Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, 5
Seeking the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset; so have we, my Friend!
Turned and returned with intricate delay.
Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts 10
For breathing-time, is tempted to review
The region left behind him; and, if aught
Deserving notice have escaped regard,
Or been regarded with too careless eye,
Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more 15
Last look, to make the best amends he may:
So have we lingered. Now we start afresh
With courage, and new hope risen on our toil
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Where'er it comes! needful in work so long, 20
Thrice needful to the argument which now
Awaits us! Oh, how much unlike the past!

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
Month after month [A]. Obscurely did I live, 25
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
By literature, or elegance, or rank,
Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent [A]
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
With less regret for its luxurious pomp, 30
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed
So lately [B], journeying toward the snow-clad Alps. 35
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
And all enjoyment which the summer sun



Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
With motion constant as his own, I went
Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town, [C] 40
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
Sojourning a few days, I visited,
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars 45
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,
And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
Of Genevieve [D]. In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power 50
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms; [E]
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
Of Orleans; [F] coasted round and round



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the line

Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk 55
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,
In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look 60
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear,
But seemed there present; and I scanned them all,
Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
All side by side, and struggling face to face, 65
With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
And pocketed the relic, [G] in the guise 70
Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
I looked for something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
For 'tis most certain, that these various sights,
However potent their first shock, with me 75
Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun, [H]
A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
Pale and bedropped with everflowing tears. 80

But hence to my more permanent abode
I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
And all the attire of ordinary life,
Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused, 85
I stood, 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub
That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
While every bush and tree, the country through, 90
Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared



With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
And busy with an action far advanced. 95
Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
And public news; but having never seen 100
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me 105
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,

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And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear 110
Now in connection with so great a theme
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth 115
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon 120
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers, 125
Then stationed in the city, were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords
That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
In age and temper differing, they had yet 130
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
(Save only one, hereafter to be named) [I]
Were bent upon undoing what was done:
This was their rest and only hope; therewith
No fear had they of bad becoming worse, 135
For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
In any thing, save only as the act
Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile 140
He had sate lord in many tender hearts;
Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:
His temper was quite mastered by the times,
And they had blighted him, had eaten away
The beauty of his person, doing wrong 145
Alike to body and to mind: his port,
Which once had been erect and open, now



Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed, 150
As much as any that was ever seen,
A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
That from the press of Paris duly brought
Its freight of public news, the fever came, 155
A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
Into a thousand colours; while he read,
Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
Continually, like an uneasy place 160
In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
Of universal ferment; mildest men
Were agitated; and commotions, strife
Of passion and opinion, filled the walls

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Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds. 165
The soil of common life, was, at that time,
Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
And not then only, "What a mockery this
Of history, the past and that to come!
Now do I feel how all men are deceived, 170
Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect
To future times the face of what now is!"
The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain 175
Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,—add
A hundred other names, forgotten now, [K]
Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
And felt through every nook of town and field. 180

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
Of my associates stood prepared for flight
To augment the band of emigrants in arms [L]
Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
With foreign foes mustered for instant war. 185
This was their undisguised intent, and they
Were waiting with the whole of their desires
The moment to depart.
An Englishman,
Born in a land whose very name appeared
To license some unruliness of mind; 190
A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
With these defenders of the Crown, and talked, 195
And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books
To reason well of polity or law,
And nice distinctions, then on every tongue, 200
Of natural rights and civil; and to acts



Of nations and their passing interests,
(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
Prizing but little otherwise than I prized 205
Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
Of orders and degrees, I nothing found 210
Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
And ill could brook, beholding that the best
Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet 215
Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
Than any other nook of English ground,
It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
The face of one, who, whether boy or man,



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Was vested with attention or respect
Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
Of many benefits, in later years
Derived from academic institutes
And rules, that they held something up to view 225
Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
In honour, as in one community,
Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
Distinction open lay to all that came, 230
And wealth and titles were in less esteem
Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
Add unto this, subservience from the first
To presences of God's mysterious power
Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty, 235
And fellowship with venerable books,
To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
And mountain liberty. It could not be
But that one tutored thus should look with awe
Upon the faculties of man, receive 240
Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
As best, the government of equal rights
And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause 245
In part lay here, that unto me the events
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
A gift that was come rather late than soon.
No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice, 250
And stung with injury, at this riper day,
Were impotent to make my hopes put on
The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet
Had slumbered, now in opposition burst 255
Forth like a Polar summer: every word
They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
Confusion-stricken by a higher power
Than human understanding, their discourse 260
Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,

I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
Were crowded with the bravest youth of France, [M]
And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
In gallant soldiership, and posting on 265
To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
Yet at this very moment do tears start
Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep—
I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
In memory of the farewells of that time, 270
Domestic severings, female fortitude
At dearest separation, patriot love
And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
Even files of strangers merely seen but once, 275

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And for a moment, men from far with sound
Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
Entering the city, here and there a face,
Or person singled out among the rest,
Yet still a stranger and beloved as such; 280
Even by these passing spectacles my heart
Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud, 285
Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
Already hinted at, [N] of other mould—
A patriot, thence rejected by the rest, 290
And with an oriental loathing spurned,
As of a different caste. A meeker man
Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then 295
Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
As through a book, an old romance, or tale 300
Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
With the most noble, but unto the poor
Among mankind he was in service bound,
As by some tie invisible, oaths professed 305
To a religious order. Man he loved
As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
And all the homely in their homely works,
Transferred a courtesy which had no air
Of condescension; but did rather seem 310
A passion and a gallantry, like that
Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,



But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy 315
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man 320
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change; 325
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind; 330
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment

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Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help 335
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find 340
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life 345
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment, 350
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
Man and his noble nature, as it is 355
The gift which God has placed within his power,
His blind desires and steady faculties
Capable of clear truth, the one to break
Bondage, the other to build liberty
On firm foundations, making social life, 360
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
As just in regulation, and as pure
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot, 365
That would be found in all recorded time,
Of truth preserved and error passed away;
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
And how the multitudes of men will feed
And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen 370



They are to put the appropriate nature on,
Triumphant over every obstacle
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
And what they do and suffer for their creed;
How far they travel, and how long endure; 375
How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
From least beginnings; how, together locked
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
To aspirations then of our own minds 380
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
A living confirmation of the whole
Before us, in a people from the depth
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked 385
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
And continence of mind, and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

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Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves, 390
Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
On rational liberty, and hope in man, 395
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—
Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
If nature then be standing on the brink
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
Of one devoted, one whom circumstance 400
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
In action, give it outwardly a shape,
And that of benediction, to the world.
Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—
A hope it is, and a desire; a creed 405
Of zeal, by an authority Divine
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
Such conversation, under Attic shades,
Did Dion hold with Plato; [O] ripened thus
For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such 410
He, on that ministry already bound,
Held with Eudemus and Timonides, [P]
Surrounded by adventurers in arms,
When those two vessels with their daring freight,
For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow, 415
Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,
Led by Philosophers. [Q] With harder fate,
Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend!
Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis (let the name
Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity) 420
Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse,
With like persuasion honoured, we maintained:
He, on his part, accoutred for the worst.
He perished fighting, in supreme command,
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire, 425
For liberty, against deluded men,
His fellow country-men; and yet most blessed
In this, that he the fate of later times
Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
Who have as ardent hearts as he had then. 430



Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;
Or in wide forests of continuous shade,
Lofty and over-arched, with open space 435
Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—
A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,
From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
And let remembrance steal to other times,
When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad, 440
And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,
Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace
In sylvan meditation undisturbed;
As on the pavement of a Gothic church
Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,



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In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,—
Heard, though unseen,—a devious traveller,
Retiring or approaching from afar
With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
From the hard floor reverberated, then 450
It was Angelica [R] thundering through the woods
Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid
Erminia, [S] fugitive as fair as she.
Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights
Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm 455
Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din
Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst, 460
A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.
The width of those huge forests, unto me
A novel scene, did often in this way
Master my fancy while I wandered on
With that revered companion. And sometimes—465
When to a convent in a meadow green,
By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,
And not by reverential touch of Time
Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—
In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies, 470
In spite of real fervour, and of that
Less genuine and wrought up within myself—
I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
And for the Matin-bell to sound no more
Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross 475
High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
(How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)
Of hospitality and peaceful rest.
And when the partner of those varied walks
Pointed upon occasion to the site 480
Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings, [T]
To the imperial edifice of Blois, [U]
Or to that rural castle, name now slipped
From my remembrance, where a lady lodged, [V]
By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him 485
In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,



As a tradition of the country tells,
Practised to commune with her royal knight
By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
'Twixt her high-seated residence and his 490
Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath; [W]
Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments
Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,
Imagination, potent to inflame 495
At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
Did also often mitigate the force
Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind;
And on these spots with many gleams I looked 500
Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
Hatred of absolute rule, where will of



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one

Is law for all, and of that barren pride
In them who, by immunities unjust,
Between the sovereign and the people stand, 505
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
And love; for where hope is, there love will be
For the abject multitude. And when we chanced
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl, 510
Who crept along fitting her languid gait
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood 515
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
In agitation said, "'Tis against 'that'
That we are fighting," I with him believed
That a benignant spirit was abroad
Which might not be withstood, that poverty 520
Abject as this would in a little time
Be found no more, that we should see the earth
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
All institutes for ever blotted out 525
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
Whether by edict of the one or few;
And finally, as sum and crown of all,
Should see the people having a strong hand 530
In framing their own laws; whence better days
To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
Was not this single confidence enough
To animate the mind that ever turned
A thought to human welfare? That henceforth 535
Captivity by mandate without law
Should cease; and open accusation lead
To sentence in the hearing of the world,
And open punishment, if not the air
Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man 540
Dread nothing. From this height I shall not stoop
To humbler matter that detained us oft
In thought or conversation, public acts,



And public persons, and emotions wrought
Within the breast, as ever-varying winds 545
Of record or report swept over us;
But I might here, instead, repeat a tale, [X]
Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree 550
Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus
The story might begin). Oh, balmy time,
In which a love-knot, on a lady's brow, 555
Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven! [Y]
So might—and with that prelude *did* begin
The record; and, in faithful verse, was given
The doleful sequel.



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But our little bark
On a strong river boldly hath been launched; 560
And from the driving current should we turn
To loiter wilfully within a creek,
Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost:
For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named 565
The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
Tears from the hearts of others, when their own
Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there may'st read,
At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
By public power abased, to fatal crime, 570
Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust
Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
Harassing both; until he sank and pressed
The couch his fate had made for him; supine, 575
Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,
Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind;
There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more; 580
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
Rouse him; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
His days he wasted,—an imbecile mind. [Z] 585

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: This must either mean a year from the time at which he took his degree at Cambridge, or it is inaccurate as to date. He graduated in January 1791, and left Brighton for Paris in November 1791. In London he only spent four months, the February, March, April, and May of 1791. Then followed the Welsh tour with Jones, and his return to Cambridge in September 1791.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: With Jones in the previous year, 1790.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Orleans.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: The Champ de Mars is in the west, the Rue du Faubourg St. Antoine (the old suburb of St. Antony) in the east, Montmartre in the north, and the dome of St. Genevieve, commonly called the Pantheon, in the south of Paris.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: The clergy, noblesse, and the 'tiers etat' met at Notre Dame on the 4th May 1789. On the following day, at Versailles, the 'tiers etat' assumed the title of the 'National Assembly'—constituting themselves the sovereign power—and invited others to join them. The club of the Jacobins was instituted the same year. It leased for itself the hall of the Jacobins' convent: hence the name.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: The Palais Royal, built by Cardinal Richelieu in 1636, presented by Louis XIV. to his brother, the Duke of Orleans, and thereafter the property of the house of Orleans (hence the name). The "arcades" referred to were removed in 1830, and the brilliant 'Galerie d'Orleans' built in their place.—Ed.]

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[Footnote G: On the 14th July 1789, the Bastille was taken, and destroyed by the Revolutionists. The stones were used, for the most part, in the construction of the Pont de la Concorde.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Charles Lebrun, Court painter to Louis XIV. of France (1619-1690)—Ed.]

[Footnote I: The Republican general, Michel Beaupuy. See p. 302 [Footnote N below], and the note upon him by *Mons.* Emile Legouis of Lyons, in the appendix [Note VII] to this volume, p. 401.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: Carra and Gorsas were journalist deputies in the first year of the French Republic. Gorsas was the first of the deputies who died on the scaffold. Carlyle thus refers to them, and to the “hundred other names forgotten now,” in his ‘French Revolution’ (vol. iii. book i. chap. 7):

“The convention is getting chosen—really in a decisive spirit. Some two hundred of our best Legislators may be re-elected, the Mountain bodily. Robespierre, with Mayor Petion, Buzot, Curate Gregoire and some threescore Old Constituents; though we men had only *thirty voices*. All these and along with them friends long known to the Revolutionary fame: Camille Desmoulins, though he stutters in speech, Manuel Tallein and Company; Journalists Gorsas, Carra, Mersier, Louvet of *Faubias*; Cloutz, Speaker of Mankind, Collet d’Herbois, tearing a passion to rags; Fahre d’Egalantine Speculative Pamphleteer; Legendre, the solid Butcher; nay Marat though rural France can hardly believe it, or even believe there is a Marat, except in print.” Ed.]

[Footnote L: Many of the old French Noblesse, and other supporters of Monarchy, fled across the Rhine, and with thousands of emigres formed a special Legion, which co-operated with the German army under the Emperor Leopold and the King of Prussia.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Compare book vi. l. 345, *etc.*—Ed.]

[Footnote N: Beaupuy. See p. 297 [Footnote I, above]:

“Save only one, hereafter to be named,” [Line 132]

and the note on Beaupuy, in the appendix [Note VII] to this volume, p. 401.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: Compare Wordsworth’s poem ‘Dion’, in volume vi. of this edition.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: When Plato visited Syracuse, in the reign of Dionysius, Dion became his disciple, and induced Dionysius to invite Plato a second time to Syracuse. But neither Plato nor Dion could succeed in their efforts to influence and elevate Dionysius. Dion withdrew to Athens, and lived in close intimacy with Plato, and with Speusippus. The latter urged him to return, and deliver Sicily from the tyrant Dionysius, who had become



unpopular in the island. Dion got some of the Syracusan exiles in Greece to join him, and “sailed from Zacynthus,” with two merchant ships, and about 800 troops. He took Syracuse, and became dictator of the district. But—as was the case with the tyrants of the French Revolution who took the place of those of the old regime (record later on in ‘The Prelude’)—the Syracusans found that they had only exchanged one form of rigour for another. It is thus that Plutarch refers to the occurrence.



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"Many statesmen and philosophers assisted him (*i. e.* Dion); "as for instance, Eudemus, the Cyprian, on whose death Aristotle wrote his dialogue of the Soul, and Timonides the Leucadian."

(See Plutarch's 'Dion'.) Timonides wrote an account of Dion's campaign in Sicily in certain letters to Speusippus, which are referred to both by Plutarch and by Diogenes Laertius,—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: See the previous note [Footnote P directly above].—Ed.]

[Footnote R: See the 'Orlando Furioso' of Ariosto, canto i.:

'La donna il palafreno a dietro volta,
E per la selva a tutta briglia il caccia;
Ne per la rara piu, che per la folta,
La piu sicura e miglior via procaccia.

The lady turned her palfrey round,
And through the forest drove him on amain;
Nor did she choose the glade before the thickest wood,
Riding the safest ever, and the better way.'

Ed.]

[Footnote S: See the 'Gerusalemme Liberata' of Tasso, canto vi. Erminia is the heroine of 'Jerusalem Delivered'. An account of her flight occurs at the opening of the seventh canto.—Ed.]

[Footnote T:

"*Rivus Romentini*, petite ville du Blaisois, et capitale de la Sologne, aujourd'hui sous-prefecture du depart. de Loir-et-Cher."

It was taken in 1356 and in 1429 by the English, in 1562 by the Catholics, in 1567 by the Calvinists, and in 1589 by the Royalists.

"Henri IV. l'erigea en comte pour sa maitresse Charlotte des Essarts, 1560. Francois I. y rendit un edit celebre qui attribuait aux prelates la connaissance du crime d'heresie, et la repression des assemblees illicites."

('Dictionnaire Historique de la France', par Ludovic Lalaune. Paris, 1872.)—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Blois,

“Louis XII., qui etait ne a Blois, y sejourna souvent, et reconstruisit completement le chateau, ou la cour habita frequemment au XVI’e. siecle.”

(‘Dict. Histor. de la France’, Lalaune.) The town is full of historical reminiscences of Louis XII., Francis I., Henry III., and Catherine and Mary de Medici. Wordsworth went from Orleans to Blois, in the spring of 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote V: Claude, the daughter of Louis XII.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: Chambord;

“celebre chateau du Blaisois (Loir-et-Cher), construit par Francois I., sur l’emplacement d’une maison de plaisance des comtes de Blois. Donne par Louis XV. a son beau-pere Stanislas, puis au Marechal de Saxe, il revint ensuit a la couronne; et en 1777 Louis XVI. en accorda la jouissance a la famille de Polignac.”

(Lalaune.)

A national subscription was got up in the ’twenties, under Charles X., to present the chateau to the posthumous son of the Duc de Berry, who afterwards became known as the Comte de Chambord, or Henri V.—Ed.]

[Footnote X: The tale of ‘Vaudracour and Julia’. (Mr. Carter, 1850.)]

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[Footnote Y: The previous four lines are the opening ones of the poem 'Vaudracour and Julia'. (See p. 24.)—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: The last five lines are almost a reproduction of the concluding five in 'Vaudracour and Julia'.—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK TENTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE—'continued'

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness,—
A day as beautiful as e'er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed, 5
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on, 10
Bound to the fierce Metropolis. [A] From his throne
The King had fallen, [B] and that invading host—
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty 15
Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
They—who had come elate as eastern hunters
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
Rajahs and Omrahs [C] in his train, intent 20
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,
Before the point of the life-threatening spear
Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned 25
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled
In terror. Disappointment and dismay
Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
With evil expectations; confidence
And perfect triumph for the better cause. 30



The State, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt 35
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,
That had stirred up her slackening faculties
To a new transition, when the King was crushed,
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste
Assumed the body and venerable name 40
Of a Republic. [D] Lamentable crimes,
'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
Of massacre, [E] in which the senseless sword
Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,—45
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!
Things that could only show themselves and die.



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Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned, [F]
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
The spacious city, and in progress passed 50
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associate with his children and his wife
In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
With roar of cannon by a furious host.
I crossed the square (an empty area then!) [G] 55
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed
On this and other spots, as doth a man
Upon a volume whose contents he knows
Are memorable, but from him locked up, 60
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
And half upbraids their silence. But that night
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed. 65
High was my room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
With unextinguished taper I kept watch, 70
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month, [H]
Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up 75
From tragic fictions or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The horse is taught his manage, and no star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
For the spent hurricane the air provides 80
As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding-place
In the great deep; all things have second-birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
And in this way I wrought upon myself, 85
Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness. 90



The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
Of Orleans eagerly I turned; as yet 95
The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
That greeted me on entering, I could hear
Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,
Bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes 100
Of Maximilian Robespierre;" the hand,
Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed

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speech,

The same that had been recently pronounced,
When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
Some words of indirect reproof had been 105
Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
The man who had an ill surmise of him
To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,
In silence of all present, from his seat 110
Louvét walked single through the avenue,
And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
“I, Robespierre, accuse thee!” [I] Well is known
The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt, 115
The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,
Was left without a follower to discharge
His perilous duty, and retire lamenting
That Heaven’s best aid is wasted upon men
Who to themselves are false. [K]

But these are things 120
Of which I speak, only as they were storm
Or sunshine to my individual mind,
No further. Let me then relate that now—
In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
That Liberty, and Life, and Death would soon 125
To the remotest corners of the land
Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
The capital City; what was struggled for,
And by what combatants victory must be won;
The indecision on their part whose aim 130
Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
Who in attack or in defence were strong
Through their impiety—my inmost soul
Was agitated; yea, I could almost
Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men, 135
By patient exercise of reason made
Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled
With zeal expanding in Truth’s holy light,
The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive
From the four quarters of the winds to do 140
For France, what without help she could not do,
A work of honour; think not that to this



I added, work of safety: from all doubt
Or trepidation for the end of things
Far was I, far as angels are from guilt. 145

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
Of opposition and of remedies:
An insignificant stranger and obscure,
And one, moreover, little graced with power
Of eloquence even in my native speech, 150
And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
Yet would I at this time with willing heart
Have undertaken for a cause so great
Service however dangerous. I revolved,
How much the destiny of Man had still 155
Hung upon single persons; that there was,
Transcendent to all local patrimony,

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One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
That objects, even as they are great, thereby
Do come within the reach of humblest eyes; 160
That Man is only weak through his mistrust
And want of hope where evidence divine
Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
Nor did the inexperience of my youth
Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong, 165
In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
Is for Society's unreasoning herd
A domineering instinct, serves at once
For way and guide, a fluent receptacle 170
That gathers up each petty straggling rill
And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest
Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
In circumspection and simplicity, 175
Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
A treachery that foils it or defeats;
And, lastly, if the means on human will,
Frail human will, dependent should betray 180
Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
Of life and death, in majesty severe 185
Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
From whatsoever region of our cares
Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
Earnest and blind, against the stern decree. 190

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
That are the common-places of the schools—
(A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,)
Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
In all their comprehensive bearings known 195
And visible to philosophers of old,



Men who, to business of the world untrained,
Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
And his compeer Aristogiton, [L] known
To Brutus—that tyrannic power is weak, 200
Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
Nor the support of good or evil men
To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
That nothing hath a natural right to last 205
But equity and reason; that all else
Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
Lives only by variety of disease.



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Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time 210
But that the virtue of one paramount mind
Would have abashed those impious crests—have quelled
Outrage and bloody power, and, in despite
Of what the People long had been and were
Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof 215
Of immaturity, and in the teeth
Of desperate opposition from without—
Have cleared a passage for just government,
And left a solid birthright to the State,
Redeemed, according to example given 220
By ancient lawgivers.

 In this frame of mind,
Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge,
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,—
To England I returned, [M] else (though assured 225
That I both was and must be of small weight,
No better than a landsman on the deck
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)
Doubtless, I should have then made common cause
With some who perished; haply perished too, [N] 230
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,—
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,
A Poet only to myself, to men
Useless, and even, beloved Friend! a soul 235
To thee unknown!

Twice had the trees let fall
Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
Beat against Albion's shore, [O] since ear of mine
Had caught the accents of my native speech 240
Upon our native country's sacred ground.
A patriot of the world, how could I glide
Into communion with her sylvan shades,
Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
To abide in the great City, [P] where I found 245
The general air still busy with the stir
Of that first memorable onset made
By a strong levy of humanity



Upon the traffickers in Negro blood; [Q]
Effort which, though defeated, had recalled 250
To notice old forgotten principles,
And through the nation spread a novel heat
Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
That this particular strife had wanted power
To rivet my affections; nor did now 255
Its unsuccessful issue much excite
My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith
That, if France prospered, good men would not long
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
And this most rotten branch of human shame, 260
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
Would fall together with its parent tree.
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms

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Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers! 265
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
Down to that very moment; neither lapse 270
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which, with a diversity of pace,
I had been travelling: this a stride at once 275
Into another region. As a light
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
Of my beloved country, wishing not 280
A happier fortune than to wither there:
Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul, 285
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
A conflict of sensations without name, 290
Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
When, in the congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
Or praises for our country's victories; 295
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited guest
Whom no one owned, sate silent; shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear, 300
By violence, at one decisive rent,
From the best youth in England their dear pride,



Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time
In which worst losses easily might wean
The best of names, when patriotic love 305
Did of itself in modesty give way,
Like the Precursor when the Deity
Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time
In which apostasy from ancient faith
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed; 310
Withal a season dangerous and wild,
A time when sage Experience would have snatched
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.



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When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag [R] 315
In that unworthy service was prepared
To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
Through a whole month of calm and glassy days 320
In that delightful island which protects
Their place of convocation [S]—there I heard,
Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
A monitory sound that never failed,—
The sunset cannon. While the orb went down 325
In the tranquillity of nature, came
That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
Without a spirit overcast by dark
Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart. 330

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
And thus, on every side beset with foes, 335
The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
Spread into madness of the many; blasts
From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
The sternness of the just, the faith of those
Who doubted not that Providence had times 340
Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned
The human Understanding paramount
And made of that their God, [T] the hopes of men
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
For a paradise of ages, the blind rage 345
Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
And all the accidents of life were pressed
Into one service, busy with one work. 350
The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
Her frenzy only active to extol
Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate. 355



Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook,
The maiden from the bosom of her love,
The mother from the cradle of her babe,
The warrior from the field—all perished, all—360
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
Head after head, and never heads enough
For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
They made it proudly, eager as a child,
(If like desires of innocent little ones 365
May with such heinous appetites be compared,)
Pleased in some open field to exercise
A toy that mimics with revolving wings
The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
Do of itself blow fresh, and make the



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vanes 370

Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
His front against the blast, and runs amain,
That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth

Of those enormities, even thinking minds 375
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being;
Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath
Her innocent authority was wrought,
Nor could have been, without her blessed name. 380
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
Of her composure, felt that agony,
And gave it vent in her last words. [U] O Friend!
It was a lamentable time for man,
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not; 385
A woful time for them whose hopes survived
The shock; most woful for those few who still
Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved: 390
The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
And throttled with an infant godhead's might
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,
And as it should be; yet no cure for them
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be 395
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;
Through months, through years, long after the last beat
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep 400
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
Such ghastly visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death;
And innocent victims sinking under fear,
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer, 405
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
And levity in dungeons, where the dust
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me 410



In long orations, which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
In the last place of refuge—my own soul. 415

When I began in youth's delightful prime
To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
And holy passion overcame me first,
Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free
From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme! 420
Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe,
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
The veins that branch through every frame of life,

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Making man what he is, creature divine,
In single or in social eminence, 425
Above the rest raised infinite ascents
When reason that enables him to be
Is not sequestered—what a change is here!
How different ritual for this after-worship,
What countenance to promote this second love! 430
The first was service paid to things which lie
Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.
Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure, 435
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
With them to take a troubled human heart,
Wanted not consolations, nor a creed 440
Of reconciliation, then when they denounced,
On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
Of their offences, punishment to come;
Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
Before them, in some desolated place, 445
The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;
So, with devout humility be it said,
So, did a portion of that spirit fall
On me uplifted from the vantage-ground
Of pity and sorrow to a state of being 450
That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw
Glimpses of retribution, terrible,
And in the order of sublime behests:
But, even if that were not, amid the awe
Of unintelligible chastisement, 455
Not only acquiescences of faith
Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
Within the folds of no ungentle breast
Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? 460
Wild blasts of music thus could find their way
Into the midst of turbulent events;



So that worst tempests might be listened to.
Then was the truth received into my heart,
That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring, 465
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
An elevation and a sanctity,
If new strength be not given nor old restored,
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt 470
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
From popular government and equality,"
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
Of wild belief engrafted on their names 475
By false philosophy had caused the woe,
But a terrific reservoir of guilt
And ignorance rilled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
But burst and spread in deluge through the land. 480

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And as the desert hath green spots, the sea
Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
So that disastrous period did not want
Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven 485
Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less,
For those examples in no age surpassed
Of fortitude and energy and love,
And human nature faithful to herself
Under worst trials, was I driven to think 490
Of the glad times when first I traversed France
A youthful pilgrim; [V] above all reviewed
That eventide, when under windows bright
With happy faces and with garlands hung,
And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street, 495
Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed, [W]
I paced, a dear companion at my side,
The town of Arras, [X] whence with promise high
Issued, on delegation to sustain
Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre, 500
He who thereafter, and in how short time!
Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
When the calamity spread far and wide—
And this same city, that did then appear
To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned 505
Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost
Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
For lingering yet an image in my mind
To mock me under such a strange reverse. 510

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine
Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
So dreaded, so abhorred. [Y] The day deserves
A separate record. Over the smooth sands
Of Leven's ample estuary lay 515
My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
With distant prospect among gleams of sky
And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
In one inseparable glory clad,
Creatures of one ethereal substance met 520
In consistory, like a diadem
Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit



In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
Among whose happy fields I had grown up 525
From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
As even their pensive influence drew from mine. 530
How could it otherwise? for not in vain
That very morning had I turned aside
To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
An honoured teacher of my youth was laid, [Z]
And on the stone were graven by his desire 535
Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.



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[a]

This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
But said to me, "My head will soon lie low;"
And when I saw the turf that covered him, 540
After the lapse of full eight years, [b] those words,
With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
Came back upon me, so that some few tears
Fell from me in my own despite. But now
I thought, still traversing that widespread plain, 545
With tender pleasure of the verses graven
Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:
He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
Would have loved me, as one not destitute
Of promise, nor belying the kind hope 550
That he had formed, when I, at his command,
Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs. [c]

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
And rocky island near, a fragment stood 555
(Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
(With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
Of a dilapidated structure, once
A Romish chapel, [d] where the vested priest
Said matins at the hour that suited those 560
Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
Not far from that still ruin all the plain
Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
Wading beneath the conduct of their guide 565
In loose procession through the shallow stream
Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile
Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
And cheerful, but the foremost of the band 570
As he approached, no salutation given
In the familiar language of the day,
Cried, "Robespierre is dead!"—nor was a doubt,
After strict question, left within my mind
That he and his supporters all were fallen. 575



Great was my transport, deep my gratitude
To everlasting Justice, by this fiat
Made manifest. "Come now, ye golden times,"
Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
A hymn of triumph: "as the morning comes 580
From out the bosom of the night, come ye:
Thus far our trust is verified; behold!
They who with clumsy desperation brought
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might 585
Of their own helper have been swept away;
Their madness stands declared and visible;
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace."—
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how 590
The madding factions might be tranquillised,

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And how through hardships manifold and long
The glorious renovation would proceed.
Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way 595
Along that very shore which I had skimmed
In former days, when—spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane, [e]
And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band 600
Of school-boys hastening to their distant home
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand. [f]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: He left Blois for Paris in the late autumn of 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: King Louis the Sixteenth, dethroned on August 10th, 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: "The Ormrahs or lords of the Moghul's court." See Francois Besnier's letter 'Concerning Hindusthan'.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: The "Republic" was decreed on the 22nd of September 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: The "September Massacres" lasted from the 2nd to the 6th of that month.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: He reached Paris in the beginning of October 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: The Place du Carrousel.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: See notes [E] and [F].—Ed.]

[Footnote I:

"One day, among the last of October, Robespierre, being summoned to the tribune by some new hint of that old calumny of the Dictatorship, was speaking and pleading there, with more and more comfort to himself; till rising high in heart, he cried out valiantly: Is



there any man here that dare specifically accuse me? "Moi!" exclaimed one. Pause of deep silence: a lean angry little Figure, with broad bald brow, strode swiftly towards the tribune, taking papers from its pocket: 'I accuse thee, Robespierre,—I, Jean Baptiste Louvet!' The Seagreen became tallow-green; shrinking to a corner of the tribune, Danton cried, 'Speak, Robespierre; there are many good citizens that listen;' but the tongue refused its office. And so Louvet, with a shrill tone, read and recited crime after crime: dictatorial temper, exclusive popularity, bullying at elections, mob-retinue, September Massacres;—till all the Convention shrieked again," *etc. etc.*

Carlyle's 'French Revolution', vol. iii. book ii. chap. 5.—Ed.]

[Footnote K: Robespierre got a week's delay to prepare a defence.

"That week he is not idle. He is ready at the day with his written Speech: smooth as a Jesuit Doctor's, and convinces some. And now?...poor Louvet, unprepared, can do little or nothing. Barrere proposes that these comparatively despicable *personalities* be dismissed by order of the day! Order of the day it accordingly is."

Carlyle, *ut supra*.—Ed.]

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[Footnote L: Harmodius and Aristogiton of Athens murdered the tyrant Hipparchus, 514 B.C., and delivered the city from the rule of the Pisistratidae, much as Brutus rose against Caesar.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: He crossed the Channel, and returned to England reluctantly, in December 1792. Compare p. 376, l. 349:

‘Since I withdrew unwillingly from France.’

Ed.]

[Footnote N: Had he remained longer in Paris, he would probably have fallen a victim, amongst the Brissotins, to the reactionary fury of the Jacobin party.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: He left England in November 1791, and returned in December 1792.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: He stayed in London during the winter of 1792-3 and spring of 1793, probably with his elder brother Richard (who was a solicitor there), writing his remarkable letter on the French Revolution to the Bishop of Landaff, and doubtless making arrangements for the publication of the ‘Evening Walk’. The ‘Descriptive Sketches’ were not written till the summer of 1793 (compare the thirteenth book of ‘The Prelude’, p. 366); but in a letter dated “Forncett, February 16th, 1793,” his sister sends to a friend an interesting criticism of her brother’s verses. The ‘Evening Walk’ must therefore have appeared in January 1793.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: The movement for the abolition of slavery, led by Clarkson and Wilberforce. Compare the sonnet ‘To Thomas Clarkson, on the final passing of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, March’ 1807, in vol. iv.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: The red-cross flag, i. e. the British ensign.

“On the union of the crowns of England and Scotland, James I. issued a proclamation that *all subjects of this isle and the kingdom of Great Britain should bear in the main-top the red cross commonly called St. George’s Cross, and the white cross commonly called St. Andrew’s Cross, joined together according to the form made by our own heralds*. This was the first Union Jack.”

‘Encyclopaedia Britannica’ (ninth edition), article “Flag.”—Ed.]

[Footnote S: In the Isle of Wight. Wordsworth spent a month of the summer of 1793 there, with William Calvert. (See the Advertisement to ‘Guilt and Sorrow’, vol. i. p. 77.)—Ed.]

[Footnote T: The goddess of Reason, enthroned in Paris, November 10th, 1793.—Ed.]

[Footnote U: Jeanne-Marie Phlipon—Madame Roland—was guillotined on the 8th of November 1793.

“Arrived at the foot of the scaffold, she asked for pen and paper *to write the strange thoughts that were rising in her*: a remarkable request; which was refused. Looking at the Statue of Liberty which stands there, she says bitterly: *O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!* ... Like a white Grecian Statue, serenely complete,” adds Carlyle, “she shines in that black wreck of things,—long memorable.”

‘French Revolution’, vol. iii. book v. chap. 2.



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Madame Roland's apostrophe was

'O Liberte, que de crimes l'on commet en ton nom!'

Ed.]

[Footnote V: In the long vacation of 1790, with his friend Jones.—Ed.]

[Footnote W: Compare the sonnet, vol. ii. p. 332, beginning:

'Jones! as from Calais southward you and I
Went pacing side by side, this public Way
Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day,
When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty.'

Ed.]

[Footnote X: Robespierre was a native of Arras.—Ed.]

[Footnote Y: Robespierre was guillotined with his confederates on the 28th July 1794. Wordsworth lived in Cumberland—at Keswick, Whitehaven, and Penrith—from the winter of 1793-4 till the spring of 1795. He must have made this journey across the Ulverston Sands, in the first week of August 1794. Compare Wordsworth's remarks on Robespierre, in his 'Letter to a Friend of Burns',—Ed.]

[Footnote Z: The "honoured teacher" of his youth was the Rev. William Taylor, of Emmanuel College, Cambridge, who was master at Hawkshead School from 1782 to 1786, who died while Wordsworth was at school, and who was buried in Cartmell Churchyard. See the note to the 'Address to the Scholars of the Village School of——' (vol. ii. p. 85).—Ed.]

[Footnote a: The following is the inscription on the head-stone in Cartmell Churchyard:

'In memory of the Rev. William Taylor, A. M., son of John Taylor of Outerthwaite, who was some years a Fellow of Eman. Coll., Camb., and Master of the Free School at Hawkshead. He departed this life June the 12th 1786, aged 32 years 2 months and 13 days.

His Merits, stranger, seek not to disclose,
Or draw his Frailties from their dread abode,
There they alike in trembling Hope repose,
The Bosom of his Father and his God.'

Ed.]

[Footnote b: This is exact. Taylor died in 1786. Robespierre was executed in 1794, eight years afterwards.—Ed.]

[Footnote c: He refers to the 'Lines written as a School Exercise at Hawkshead, anno aetatis' 14; and, probably, to 'The Summer Vacation', which is mentioned in the "Autobiographical Memoranda" as "a task imposed by my master," but whether by Taylor, or by his predecessors at Hawkshead School in Wordsworth's time—Parker and Christian—is uncertain.—Ed.]

[Footnote d: Compare Hausman's 'Guide to the Lakes' (1803), p. 209.

"Chapel Island on the right is a desolate object, where there are yet some remains of an oratory built by the monks of Furness, in which Divine Service was daily performed at a certain hour for passengers who crossed the sands with the morning tide."

This, evidently, is the ruin referred to by Wordsworth.—Ed.]

[Footnote e: See note, book ii. ll. 103-6.—Ed.]

[Footnote f: By Arrad Foot and Greenodd, beyond Ulverston, on the way to Hawkshead.—Ed.]



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* * * * *

BOOK ELEVENTH.

FRANCE—concluded.

From that time forth, [A] Authority in France
Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased,
Yet every thing was wanting that might give
Courage to them who looked for good by light
Of rational Experience, for the shoots 5
And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:
Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;
The Senate's language, and the public acts
And measures of the Government, though both
Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power 10
To daunt me; in the People was my trust,
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen. [1]
I knew that wound external could not take
Life from the young Republic; that new foes
Would only follow, in the path of shame, 15
Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
Great, universal, irresistible.
This intuition led me to confound
One victory with another, higher far,—
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home, 20
And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still
Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
That what was in degree the same was likewise
The same in quality,—that, as the worse
Of the two spirits then at strife remained 25
Untired, the better, surely, would preserve
The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,
In all conditions of society,
Communion more direct and intimate
With Nature,—hence, oftentimes, with reason too—30
Than age or manhood, even. To Nature, then,
Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
Had left an interregnum's open space
For *her* to move about in, uncontrolled.
Hence could I see how Babel-like their task, 35
Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
With their whole souls went culling from the day



Its petty promises, to build a tower
For their own safety; laughed with my compeers
At gravest heads, by enmity to France 40
Distempered, till they found, in every blast
Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn,
For her great cause record or prophecy
Of utter ruin. How might we believe
That wisdom could, in any shape, come near 45
Men clinging to delusions so insane?
And thus, experience proving that no few
Of our opinions had been just, we took
Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
And thought that other notions were as sound, 50
Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,

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And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
What in those days, through Britain, was performed 55
To turn *all* judgments out of their right course;
But this is passion over-near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And intermixed with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal, 60
That would profane the sanctity of verse.
Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men
Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law
A tool of murder; [B] they who ruled the State, 65
Though with such awful proof before their eyes
That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
And can reap nothing better, child-like longed
To imitate, not wise enough to avoid;
Or left (by mere timidity betrayed) 70
The plain straight road, for one no better chosen
Than if their wish had been to undermine
Justice, and make an end of Liberty. [B]

But from these bitter truths I must return
To my own history. It hath been told 75
That I was led to take an eager part
In arguments of civil polity,
Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
I had approached, like other youths, the shield
Of human nature from the golden side, 80
And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw.
What there is best in individual man,
Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,
Benevolent in small societies, 85
And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
By reason: nay, far from it; they were yet,
As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
Not proof against the injuries of the day; 90
Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,



And with such general insight into evil,
And of the bounds which sever it from good,
As books and common intercourse with life 95
Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,
When the world travels in a beaten road,
Guide faithful as is needed—I began
To meditate with ardour on the rule
And management of nations; what it is 100
And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
Their happiness or misery, depends
Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.

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O pleasant exercise of hope and joy! [C] 105
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! [D] O times,
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways 110
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress—to assist the work, 115
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of Paradise itself) 120
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams, 125
The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there 130
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves;—135
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—140
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
We find our happiness, or not at all!

Why should I not confess that Earth was then 145
To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,



Seems, when the first time visited, to one
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the spot
With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds, 150
And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends; I moved among mankind 155
With genial feelings still predominant;
When erring, erring on the better part,
And in the kinder spirit; placable,
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
See as they have been taught—Antiquity



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160

Gives rights to error; and aware, no less,
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of License as of Liberty;
And above all—for this was more than all—
Not caring if the wind did now and then 165
Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
Prospect so large into futurity;
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me, 170
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said
Was my condition, till with open war
Britain opposed the liberties of France. [E] 175
This threw me first out of the pale of love;
Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
My sentiments; was not, as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
But change of them into their contraries; 180
And thus a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
Was now a shame; my likings and my loves
Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry; 185
And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
Into sensations near the heart: meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged, 190
I had but lent a careless ear, assured
That time was ready to set all things right,
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
Would be oppressed no more.

But when events
Brought less encouragement, and unto these 195
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,



Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
Could through my understanding's natural growth 200
No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
Her hand upon her object—evidence
Safer, of universal application, such
As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere. 205

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of conquest, [F] losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for: now mounted up,
Openly in the eye of earth and heaven, 210
The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
Striving to hide, what nought could heal,



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the wounds 215

Of mortified presumption, I adhered
More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
Of contest, did opinions every day
Grow into consequence, till round my mind 220
They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes—
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man 225
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
For ever in a purer element—
Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*
For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
Where passions had the privilege to work, 230
And never hear the sound of their own names.
But, speaking more in charity, the dream
Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
With that which makes our Reason's naked self
The object of its fervour. What delight! 235
How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
To look through all the frailties of the world,
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
Build social upon personal Liberty, 240
Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
Superior, magisterially adopts
One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
Upon an independent intellect.
Thus expectation rose again; thus hope, 245
From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst
Of a secure intelligence, and sick
Of other longing, I pursued what seemed 250
A more exalted nature; wished that Man
Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight—
A noble aspiration! yet I feel 255



(Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
To feel it;—but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true—could such a plea excuse
Those aberrations—had the clamorous friends 260
Of ancient Institutions said and done
To bring disgrace upon their very names;
Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,
And sundry moral sentiments as props
Or emanations of those institutes, 265
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong



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shock 270

Was given to old opinions; all men's minds
Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
Already said of patriotic love,
Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern 275
In temperament, withal a happy man,
And therefore bold to look on painful things,
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
To anatomise the frame of social life, 280
Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth 285
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
Out of a heart that had been turned aside 290
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded, more and more
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind, 295
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles and her honours; now believing,
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
Of obligation, what the rule and whence 300
The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof*,
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
Yielded up moral questions in despair. 305

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed reason of least use
Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed, 310



“What are they but a mockery of a Being
Who hath in no concerns of his a test
Of good and evil; knows not what to fear
Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
And who, if those could be discerned, would yet 315
Be little profited, would see, and ask
Where is the obligation to enforce?
And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still,
As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime.” 320



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Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
In reconciliation with an utter waste
Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook, 325
(Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)
But turned to abstract science, and there sought
Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
Where the disturbances of space and time—330
Whether in matters various, properties
Inherent, or from human will and power
Derived—find no admission. [G] Then it was—
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
That the beloved Sister in whose sight 335
Those days were passed, [H] now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook [I]
That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now
Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—340
Maintained for me a saving intercourse
With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
Than as a clouded and a waning moon:
She whispered still that brightness would return, 345
She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
And that alone, my office upon earth;
And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
If willing audience fail not, Nature's self, 350
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
Which, through the later sinkings of this cause, 355
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now
In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
And nothing less), when, finally to close
And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope
Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—[K] 360
This last opprobrium, when we see a people,
That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
For manna, take a lesson from the dog



Returning to his vomit; when the sun
That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved 365
In exultation with a living pomp
Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,
And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend! 370
Through times of honour and through times of shame
Descending, have I faithfully retraced
The perturbations of a youthful mind
Under a long-lived storm of great events—
A story destined for thy ear, who now, 375
Among the fallen of nations, dost abide

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Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts
His shadow stretching towards Syracuse, [L]
The city of Timoleon! [M] Righteous Heaven!
How are the mighty prostrated! They first, 380
They first of all that breathe should have awaked
When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
For ill-requited France, by many deemed
A trifler only in her proudest day; 385
Have been distressed to think of what she once
Promised, now is; a far more sober cause
Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land.
To the reanimating influence lost
Of memory, to virtue lost and hope, 390
Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not,
And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead. 395

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
To health and joy and pure contentedness;
To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now 400
Stands single in her only sanctuary;
A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
Compelled and sickness, [N] at this latter day,
This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
I feel for thee, must utter what I feel: 405
The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,
Gather afresh, and will have vent again:
My own delights do scarcely seem to me
My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks 410
Abroad on many nations, are no more
For me that image of pure gladsomeness
Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,
For purpose, at a time, how different!



Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul 415
That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
Of Enna! [O] is there not some nook of thine, 420
From the first play-time of the infant world
Kept sacred to restorative delight,
When from afar invoked by anxious love?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
Ere yet familiar with the classic page, 425
I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo,
The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened
At thy command, at her command gives way;
A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,
Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold 430
Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales;

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Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name
Of note belonging to that honoured isle,
Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles, [P]
Or Archimedes, [Q] pure abstracted soul! 435
That doth not yield a solace to my grief:
And, O Theocritus, [R] so far have some
Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,
By their endowments, good or great, that they
Have had, as thou reportest, miracles 440
Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved,
When thinking on my own beloved friend,
I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
Divine Comates, [S] by his impious lord
Within a chest imprisoned; how they came 445
Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,
And fed him there, alive, month after month,
Because the goatherd, blessed man! had lips
Wet with the Muses' nectar.

Thus I soothe

The pensive moments by this calm fire-side, 450
And find a thousand bounteous images
To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
Our prayers have been accepted; thou wilt stand
On Etna's summit, above earth and sea,
Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens 455
Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs,
Worthy of poets who attuned their harps
In wood or echoing cave, for discipline
Of heroes; or, in reverence to the gods,
'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs 460
Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain
Those temples, where they in their ruins yet
Survive for inspiration, shall attract
Thy solitary steps: and on the brink
Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse; 465
Or, if that fountain be in truth no more,
Then, near some other spring—which, by the name
Thou gratest, willingly deceived—
I see thee linger a glad votary,

And not a captive pining for his home. 470

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1: In the editions of 1850 and 1857, the punctuation is as follows, but is evidently wrong:

in the People was my trust:
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
I knew ...

Ed.]

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: The Reign of Terror ended with the downfall of Robespierre and his "Tribe."—Ed.]

[Footnote B: He refers doubtless to the effect, upon the Government of the day, of the dread of Revolution in England. There were a few partisans of France and of the Revolution in England; and the panic which followed, though irrational, was widespread. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended, a Bill was passed against seditious Assemblies, the Press was prosecuted, some Scottish Whigs who clamoured for reform were sentenced to transportation, while one Judge expressed regret that the practice of torture for sedition had fallen into disuse.—Ed.] TWO



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[Footnote C: See p. 35 ['French Revolution'].—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Compare 'Ruth', in vol. ii. p. 112:

'Before me shone a glorious world—
Fresh as a banner bright, unfurled
To music suddenly:
I looked upon those hills and plains,
And seemed as if let loose from chains,
To live at liberty.'

Ed.]

[Footnote E: In 1795.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Referring probably to Napoleon's Italian campaign in 1796.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: In 1794 he returned, with intermittent ardour, to the study of mathematics and physics.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: In the winter of 1794 he went to Halifax, and there joined his sister, whom he accompanied in the same winter to Kendal, Grasmere, and Keswick. They stayed for several weeks at Windybrow farm-house, near Keswick. The brother and sister had not met since the Christmas of 1791. It is to those "days," in 1794, that he refers.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Compare in the first book of 'The Recluse', 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.]

[Footnote K: In 1804 Bonaparte sent for the Pope to anoint him as 'Empereur des Francais'. Napoleon wished the title to be as remote as possible from "King of France."—Ed.]

[Footnote L: Coleridge was then living in Sicily, whither he had gone from Malta. He ascended Etna. See Cottles' 'Early Recollections, chiefly relating to the late Samuel Taylor Coleridge' (vol. ii. p. 77), and also compare note [Book 6, Footnote U], p. 230 of this volume.—Ed.]

[Footnote M: Timoleon, one of the greatest of the Greeks, was sent in command of an expedition to reduce Sicily to order; and was afterwards the Master, but not the Tyrant, of Syracuse. He colonised it afresh from Corinth, and from the rest of Sicily; and

enacted new laws of a democratic character, being ultimately the ruler of the whole island; although he refused office and declined titles, remaining a private citizen to the end. (See Plutarch's Life of him.)—Ed.]

[Footnote N: See book vi. l. 240.—Ed.]

[Footnote O: Compare 'Paradise Lost', book iv. l. 269.—Ed.]

[Footnote P: Empedocles, the philosopher of Agrigentum, physicist, metaphysician, poet, musician, and hierophant.—Ed.]

[Footnote Q: The geometrician of Syracuse.—Ed.]

[Footnote R: The pastoral poet of Syracuse.—Ed.]

[Footnote S: Theocrit. Idyll vii. 78. (Mr. Carter, 1850.)]

* * * * *

BOOK TWELFTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED



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Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed, 5
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.—
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs, 10
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence [A]; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used, 15
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night; 20
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades, 25
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell 30
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,
In common with the children of her love,
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields, 35
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
So neither were complacency, nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through these distracted times; in Nature still 40
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height.
Maintained for me a secret happiness.



This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told
Of intellectual power, fostering love, 45
Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,
Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing
Prophetic sympathies of genial faith:
So was I favoured—such my happy lot—
Until that natural graciousness of mind 50
Gave way to overpressure from the times
And their disastrous issues. What availed,
When spells forbade the voyager to land,
That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore
Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower 55

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Of blissful gratitude and fearless love?
Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,
And hope that future times *would* surely see,
The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,
From him who had been; that I could no more 60
Trust the elevation which had made me one
With the great family that still survives
To illuminate the abyss of ages past,
Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed
That their best virtues were not free from taint 65
Of something false and weak, that could not stand
The open eye of Reason. Then I said,
“Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee
More perfectly of purer creatures;—yet
If reason be nobility in man, 70
Can aught be more ignoble than the man
Whom they delight in, blinded as he is
By prejudice, the miserable slave
Of low ambition or distempered love?”

In such strange passion, if I may once more 75
Review the past, I warred against myself—
A bigot to a new idolatry—
Like a cowed monk who hath forsworn the world,
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength; 80
And as, by simple waving of a wand,
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Those mysteries of being which have made, 85
And shall continue evermore to make,
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far
Perverted, even the visible Universe
Fell under the dominion of a taste 90
Less spiritual, with microscopic view
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?



O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds 95
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart 100
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been 105
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there 110
Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art; but more,—for



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this,

Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene, 115
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place, 120
Insensible. Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature, 125
A twofold frame of body and of mind.
I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind 130
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Could I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each 135
To counteract the other, and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
But leave we this: enough that my delights 140
(Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound;
I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
Still craving combinations of new forms,
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight, 145
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.
Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense 150
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid, [B]
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;



Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties, 155
Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
That was the best, to that she was attuned 160
By her benign simplicity of life,
And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field, 165
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself 170
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being; for her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.

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Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills, 175
I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time 180
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping then among the depth of things,
As piety ordained; could I submit 185
To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied. 190
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart:
In truth, the degradation—howsoe'er
Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,
Of custom that prepares a partial scale 195
In which the little oft outweighs the great;
Or any other cause that hath been named;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes 200
Inaudible—was transient; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again 205
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed 210
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired; 215



A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give 220
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. [C] I remember well, 225
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills: [D]
An ancient servant of my father's

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house

Was with me, my encourager and guide: 230
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom, where in former times 235
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name. 240
The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past; but still, from year to year,
By superstition of the neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
The characters are fresh and visible: 245
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near, 250
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man, 255
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed 260
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side, [E]
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell 265
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength 270



Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel, 275
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
Open; I would approach them, but they close. 280
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,

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Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past 285
For future restoration.—Yet another
Of these memorials;—
 One Christmas-time, [F]
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight 290
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home;
My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways [F]
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix 295
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep, 300
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—305
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared 310
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low 315
To God, Who thus corrected my desires;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music from that old stone wall, 320
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;



All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink, 325
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock 330
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease. 335

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare Shakespeare's "Stealing and giving odour." ('Twelfth Night', act I. scene i. l. 7.)—Ed.]

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[Footnote B: Mary Hutchinson.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare the 'Ode, Intimations of Immortality', stanzas v. and ix.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Either amongst the Lorton Fells, or the north-western slopes of Skiddaw.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: His sister.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: The year was evidently 1783, but the locality is difficult to determine. It may have been one or other of two places. Wordsworth's father died at Penrith, and it was there that the sons went for their Christmas holiday. The road from Penrith to Hawkshead was by Kirkstone Pass, and Ambleside; and the "led palfreys" sent to take the boys home would certainly come through the latter town. Now there are only two roads from Ambleside to Hawkshead, which meet at a point about a mile north of Hawkshead, called in the Ordnance map "Outgate." The eastern road is now chiefly used by carriages, being less hilly and better made than the western one. The latter would be quite as convenient as the former for horses. If one were to walk out from Hawkshead village to the place where the two roads separate at "Outgate," and then ascend the ridge between them, he would find several places from which he could overlook *both* roads "far stretched," were the view not now intercepted by numerous plantations. (The latter are of comparatively recent growth.) Dr. Cradock,—to whom I am indebted for this, and for many other suggestions as to localities alluded to by Wordsworth,—thinks that

"a point, marked on the map as 'High Crag' between the two roads, and about three-quarters of a mile from their point of divergence, answers the description as well as any other. It may be nearly two miles from Hawkshead, a distance of which an active eager school-boy would think nothing. The 'blasted hawthorn' and the 'naked wall' are probably things of the past as much as the 'single sheep.'"

Doubtless this may be the spot,—a green, rocky knoll with a steep face to the north, where a quarry is wrought, and with a plantation to the east. It commands a view of both roads. The other possible place is a crag, not a quarter of a mile from Outgate, a little to the right of the place where the two roads divide. A low wall runs up across it to the top, dividing a plantation of oak, hazel, and ash, from the firs that crown the summit. These firs, which are larch and spruce, seem all of this century. The top of the crag may have been bare when Wordsworth lived at Hawkshead. But at the foot of the path along the dividing wall there are a few (probably older) trees; and a solitary walk beneath them, at noon or dusk, is almost as suggestive to the imagination, as repose under the yews of Borrowdale, listening to "the mountain flood" on Glaramara. There one may still hear the bleak music from the old stone wall, and "the noise of wood and water," while the loud dry wind whistles through the underwood, or moans amid the fir trees of the Crag, on the summit

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of which there is a “blasted hawthorn” tree. It may be difficult now to determine the precise spot to which the boy Wordsworth climbed on that eventful day—afterwards so significant to him, and from the events of which, he says, he drank “as at a fountain”—but I think it may have been to one or other of these two crags. (See, however, Mr. Rawnsley’s conjecture in Note V. in the Appendix to this volume, p. 391.)—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK THIRTEENTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED—concluded.

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature’s gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange 5
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought. [A] 10

Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree; ’tis mine
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude, and confidence in truth. 15
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To re-appear, ’twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power 20
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason; that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal, 25
No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect; but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;



Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance 30
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure; and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set
On throwing off incumbrances, to seek
In man, and in the frame of social life, 35
Whate'er there is desirable and good
Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
And function, or, through strict vicissitude
Of life and death, revolving. Above all
Were re-established now those watchful thoughts 40
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon—power and energy detached
From moral purpose—early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love 45
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.



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Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love; 50
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust 55
Became more firm in feelings that had stood
The test of such a trial; clearer far
My sense of excellence—of right and wrong:
The promise of the present time retired
Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes, 60
Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
For present good in life's familiar face,
And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last
And what would disappear; prepared to find 65
Presumption, folly, madness, in the men
Who thrust themselves upon the passive world
As Rulers of the world; to see in these,
Even when the public welfare is their aim,
Plans without thought, or built on theories 70
Vague and unsound; and having brought the books
Of modern statist to their proper test,
Life, human life, with all its sacred claims
Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,
Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death; 75
And having thus discerned how dire a thing
Is worshipped in that idol proudly named
"The Wealth of Nations," *where* alone that wealth
Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained
A more judicious knowledge of the worth 80
And dignity of individual man,
No composition of the brain, but man
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
With our own eyes—I could not but inquire—
Not with less interest than heretofore, 85
But greater, though in spirit more subdued—
Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,
Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown



By Nature in the way of such a hope? 90
Our animal appetites and daily wants,
Are these obstructions insurmountable?
If not, then others vanish into air.
“Inspect the basis of the social pile:
Inquire,” said I, “how much of mental power 95
And genuine virtue they possess who live
By bodily toil, labour exceeding far
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
Ourselves entail.” Such estimate to frame 100
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works; [B] recalled

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to mind

My earliest notices; with these compared
The observations made in later youth, 105
And to that day continued.—For, the time
Had never been when throes of mighty Nations
And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
How far soe'er transported and possessed,
Full measure of content; but still I craved 110
An intermingling of distinct regards
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned
From the great City, else it must have proved
To me a heart-depressing wilderness; 115
But much was wanting: therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed 120
Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook, 125
Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir:
Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,
In my esteem, next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day 130
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird
Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves, 135
Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:
And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,
Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths
With long long ways before, by cottage bench, 140
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.



Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way? the sight,
Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
On my imagination since the morn 145
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far-off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
Was like an invitation into space 150
Boundless, or guide into eternity. [C]
Yes, something of the grandeur which invests
The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth; 155
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;
From many other uncouth vagrants (passed

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In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why
Take note of this? When I began to enquire, 160
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed; 165
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes. And-now convinced at heart
How little those formalities, to which
With overweening trust alone we give 170
The name of Education, have to do
With real feeling and just sense; how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most; and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked 175
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace 180
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair. 185

There are who think that strong affection, love [D]
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
A gift, to use a term which they would use,
Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires
Retirement, leisure, language purified 190
By manners studied and elaborate;
That whoso feels such passion in its strength
Must live within the very light and air
Of courteous usages refined by art.
True is it, where oppression worse than death 195
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,



And poverty and labour in excess
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature's self 200
Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed,
Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed. 205
—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,
How books mislead us, seeking their reward
From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
By artificial lights; how they debase 210
The Many for the pleasure of those Few;
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions, for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the



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heads 215

That framed them; nattering self-conceit with words,
That, while they most ambitiously set forth
Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
Whereby society has parted man
From man, neglect the universal heart. 220

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds, 225
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show,—
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects 230
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse
Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth 235
And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
Inspire, through unadulterated ears
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme 240
No other than the very heart of man,
As found among the best of those who live,
Not unexalted by religious faith,
Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,
In Nature's presence: thence may I select 245
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
And miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.
Be mine to follow with no timid step 250
Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
Speaking no dream, but things oracular;
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise 255



Do read the invisible soul; by men adroit
In speech, and for communion with the world
Accomplished; minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,
And elevated most when most admired. 260
Men may be found of other mould than these,
Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and will,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates. Others, too, 265
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse: 270

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Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them: this I speak 275
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive
Convictions still more strong than heretofore, 280
Not only that the inner frame is good,
And graciously composed, but that, no less,
Nature for all conditions wants not power
To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe 285
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life. I felt that the array
Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms 290
Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
That intermingles with those works of man
To which she summons him; although the works
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
And that the Genius of the Poet hence 295
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend!
If thou partake the animating faith 300
That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame 305
The humblest of this band who dares to hope
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
An insight that in some sort he possesses,
A privilege whereby a work of his,



Proceeding from a source of untaught things, 310
Creative and enduring, may become
A power like one of Nature's. To a hope
Not less ambitious once among the wilds
Of Sarum's Plain, [E] my youthful spirit was raised;
There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs 315
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with his retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw
Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear; 320
Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,
A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength, 325
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.

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I called on Darkness—but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames; 330
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men—how deep the groans! the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead. 335
At other moments (for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds, [F]
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent 340
Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
The constellations; gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands 345
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath
Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed 350
Or fancied in the obscurity of years
From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!
Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
That served those wanderings to beguile, [G] hast said
That then and there my mind had exercised 355
Upon the vulgar forms of present things,
The actual world of our familiar days,
Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
Not hitherto reflected. [H] Call we this 360
A partial judgment—and yet why? for *then*
We were as strangers; and I may not speak
Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,
Which on thy young imagination, trained
In the great City, broke like light from far. 365



Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself
Witness and judge; and I remember well
That in life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit 370
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange 375
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Compare 'Expostulation and Reply', vol. i. p. 273:

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

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

Mr. William Davies writes:

"Is he absolutely right in attributing these powers to the objects of Nature, which are only symbols after all? Is there not a more penetrative and ethereal perceptive power in the human mind, which is able to transfer itself immediately to the spiritual plane, transcending that of visible Nature? Plato saw it; the old Vedantist still more clearly—and what is more—reached it. He arrived at the knowledge and perception of essential Being: though he could neither define nor limit, in a human formula, because it is undefinable and illimitable, but positive and abstract, universally diffused, 'smaller than small, greater than great,' the internal Light, Monitor, Guide, Rest, waiting to be seen, recognised, and known in every heart; not depending on the powers of Nature for enlightenment and instruction, but itself enlightening and instructing: not merely a receptive, but the motive power of Nature; which bestows *itself* upon Nature, and only receives from it that which it bestows. Is it not, as he says farther on, better 'to see great truths,' even if not so strictly in line and form, 'touch and handle little ones,' to take the highest point of view we can reach, not a lower one? And surely it is a higher thing to rule over and subdue Nature, than to lie ruled and subdued by it? The highest form of Religion has always done this."

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare 'The Old Cumberland Beggar', l. 49 (vol. i. p. 301).—Ed.]

[Footnote C: For a hint in reference to this road, I am indebted to the late Dr. Henry Dodgson of Cockermouth. Referring to my suggestion that it might be the road from Cockermouth to Bridekirk, he wrote (July 1878),

"I scarcely think that road answers to the description. The hill over which it goes is not naked but well wooded, and has probably been so for many years. Besides, it is not visible from Wordsworth's house, nor from the garden behind it. This garden extends from the house to the river Derwent, from which it is separated by a wall, with a raised terraced walk on the inner side, and nearly on a level with the top. I understand that this terrace was in existence in the poet's time.... Its direction is nearly due east and west; and looking eastward from it, there is a hill which bounds the view in that direction, and

which fully corresponds to the description in 'The Prelude'. It is from one and a half to two miles distant, of considerable height, is bare and destitute of trees, and has a road going directly over its summit, as seen from the terrace in Wordsworth's garden. This

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road is now used only as a footpath; but, fifty or sixty years ago it was the highroad to Isel, a hamlet on the Derwent, about three and a half miles from Cockermouth, in the direction of Bassenthwaite Lake. The hill is locally called 'the Hay,' but on the Ordnance map it is marked 'Watch Hill.'"

There can be little doubt as to the accuracy of this suggestion. No other hill-road is visible from the house or garden at Cockermouth. The view from the front of the old mansion is limited by houses, doubtless more so now than in last century; but there is no hill towards the Lorton Fells on the south or south-east, with a road over it, visible from any part of the town. Besides, as this was a very early experience of Wordsworth's—it was in "the morn of childhood" that the road was "daily present to his sight"—it must have been seen, either from the house or from the garden. It is almost certain that he refers to the path over the Hay or Watch Hill, which he and his "sister Emmeline" could see daily from the high terrace, at the foot of their garden in Cockermouth, where they used to "chase the butterfly" and visit the "sparrow's nest" in the "impervious shelter" of privet and roses.

Dr. Cradock wrote to me (January 1886),

"an old map of the county round about Keswick, including Cockermouth, dated 1789, entirely confirms Dr. Dodgson's statement. The road over 'Hay Hill' is marked clearly as a carriage road to Isel. The miles are marked on the map. The 'summit' of the hill is 'naked': for the map marks woods, where they existed, and none are marked on Hay Hill."—Ed.]

[Footnote D: A part of the following paragraph is written with sundry variations of text, in Dorothy Wordsworth's MS. book, dated May to December 1802.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: In the summer of 1793, on his return from the Isle of Wight, and before proceeding to Bristol and Wales, he wandered with his friend William Calvert over Salisbury plain for three days.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Compare the reference to "Sarum's naked plain" in the third book of 'The Excursion', l. 148.—Ed.]

[Footnote G: The reference is to 'Guilt and Sorrow'. See the introductory, and the Fenwick, note to this poem, in vol. i. pp. 77-79.—Ed.]

[Footnote H: Coleridge read 'Descriptive Sketches' when an undergraduate at Cambridge in 1793—before the two men had met—and wrote thus of them:

"Seldom, if ever, was the emergence of a great and original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced."



See 'Biographia Literaria', i. p. 25 (edition 1842).—Ed.]

* * * * *

BOOK FOURTEENTH

CONCLUSION



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In one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend, [A]
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun 5
Rise from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth. 10

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round, 15
And, after ordinary travellers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked 20
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed 25
In that wild place and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up 30
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten, 35
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
The Moon hung naked in a firmament 40
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.



A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean; and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched, 45
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none 50
Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay 55

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All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice! 60
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought 65
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind 70
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, [B] intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power, 75
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime, 80
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive, 85
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own. 90
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create



A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns 95
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wind by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both 100
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live, 105
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come, 110
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,

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For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused 115
Through every image and through every thought,
And all affections by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive; [C] 120
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ 125
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long 130
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
For this alone is genuine liberty:
Where is the favoured being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?—135
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
And backward wanderings along thorny ways:
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received 140
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend 145
Their modulation with these vocal streams—
That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong, 150
Tamper with conscience from a private aim;



Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy 155
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death 160
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
In presence of sublime or beautiful forms, 165
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil, as one is rashly named by men
Who know not what they speak. By

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love subsists

All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields 170
In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is, 175
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable! 180
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Lifted, in union with the purest, best, 185
Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power 190
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard 195
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed:
Then given it greeting as it rose once more 200
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God. 205

Imagination having been our theme,
So also hath that intellectual Love,



For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man!
Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here; 210
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:
No other can divide with thee this work:
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine 215
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
Here, the foundation of his future years! 220
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,

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Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen 225
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of humble cares and delicate desires, 230
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out [D] for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis most true 235
That later seasons owed to thee no less;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that unassisted I had marked 240
In life or nature of those charms minute
That win their way into the heart by stealth
(Still to the very going-out of youth),
I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings, 245
Hath terror in it. [E] Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
In her original self too confident,
Retained too long a countenance severe; 250
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests 255
And warble in its chambers. At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, pleased to become
A handmaid to a nobler than herself, 260
When every day brought with it some new sense
Of exquisite regard for common things,



And all the earth was budding with these gifts
Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring 265
That went before my steps. Thereafter came
One whom with thee friendship had early paired;
She came, no more a phantom to adorn
A moment, [F] but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined 270
To penetrate the lofty and the low;
Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
Couched in the dewy grass.

With such a theme, 275
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,



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And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of? 280
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her over-weening grasp; thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
More rational proportions; mystery, 285
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become 290
A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed 295
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs, 300
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of a Poet's mind,
In everything that stood most prominent, 305
Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached
The time (our guiding object from the first)
When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
My knowledge, as to make me capable 310
Of building up a Work that shall endure. [G]
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was;
Of books how much! and even of the other wealth
That is collected among woods and fields,
Far more: for Nature's secondary grace 315
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,
The charm more superficial that attends



Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice
Apt illustrations of the moral world,
Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains. 320

Finally, and above all, O Friend! (I speak
With due regret) how much is overlooked
In human nature and her subtle ways,
As studied first in our own hearts, and then
In life among the passions of mankind, 325
Varying their composition and their hue,
Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes
That individual character presents
To an attentive eye. For progress meet,
Along this intricate and difficult path, 330
Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained,
As one of many schoolfellows compelled,
In hardy independence, to stand up
Amid conflicting interests, and the shock
Of various tempers; to endure and note



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335

What was not understood, though known to be;
Among the mysteries of love and hate,
Honour and shame, looking to right and left,
Unchecked by innocence too delicate,
And moral notions too intolerant, 340
Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called
To take a station among men, the step
Was easier, the transition more secure,
More profitable also; for, the mind
Learns from such timely exercise to keep 345
In wholesome separation the two natures,
The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern—
Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,
I led an undomestic wanderer's life, 350
In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,
Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
Of rural England's cultivated vales
Or Cambrian solitudes. [H] A youth—(he bore
The name of Calvert [I]—it shall live, if words 355
Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief
That by endowments not from me withheld
Good might be furthered—in his last decay
By a bequest sufficient for my needs
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk 360
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
Far less a common follower of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even 365
A necessary maintenance insures,
Without some hazard to the finer sense;
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature. [K]

Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains 370
Our present purpose seems not to require,
And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
The mood in which this labour was begun,
O Friend! The termination of my course



Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then, 375
In that distraction and intense desire,
I said unto the life which I had lived,
Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched 380
Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which like a lark
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attuned and her deep-drawn sighs, 385
Yet centring all in love, and in the end
All gratulant, if rightly understood.

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Whether to me shall be allotted life,
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
That will be deemed no insufficient plea 390
For having given the story of myself,
Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies, 395
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs, [L]
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, [L] and rueful woes 400
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel; [L]
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride, 405
Near the loud waterfall; [L] or her who sate
In misery near the miserable Thorn; [L]
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness, 410
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard:
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift 415
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
That were our daily portion when we first
Together wantoned in wild Poesy,
But, under pressure of a private grief, [M]
Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart, 420
That in this meditative history
Have been laid open, needs must make me feel
More deeply, yet enable me to bear
More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon 425
Restored to us in renovated health;
When, after the first mingling of our tears,
'Mong other consolations, we may draw
Some pleasure from this offering of my love.



Oh! yet a few short years of useful life, 430
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast 435
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day 440
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.

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Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified 445
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things 450
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: With Robert Jones, in the summer of 1793.—Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare 'Paradise Lost', book i. l. 21.—Ed.]

[Footnote C: Compare 'Paradise Lost', book v. l. 488.—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Compare 'The Sparrow's Nest', vol. ii. p. 236.—Ed.]

[Footnote E: See 'Paradise Lost', book ix. ll. 490, 491.—Ed.]

[Footnote F: Mary Hutchinson. Compare the lines, p. 2, beginning:

'She was a Phantom of delight.'

Ed.]

[Footnote G: Compare the preface to 'The Excursion'. "Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live," *etc.*—Ed.]

[Footnote H: After leaving London, he went to the Isle of Wight and to Salisbury Plain with Calvert; then to Bristol, the Valley of the Wye, and Tintern Abbey, alone on foot; thence to Jones' residence in North Wales at Plas-yn-Illan in Denbighshire; with him to



other places in North Wales, thence to Halifax; and with his sister to Kendal, Grasmere, Keswick, Whitehaven, and Penrith.—Ed.]

[Footnote I: Raisley Calvert.-Ed.]

[Footnote K: His friend, dying in January 1795, bequeathed to Wordsworth a legacy of L900. Compare the sonnet, in vol. iv., beginning

‘Calvert! it must not be unheard by them,’

and the ‘Life of Wordsworth’ in this edition.—Ed.]

[Footnote L: The Wordsworths went to Alfoxden in the end of July, 1797. It was in the autumn of that year that, with Coleridge,

‘Upon smooth Quantock’s airy ridge they roved
Unchecked, or loitered ‘mid her sylvan combs;’

when the latter chaunted his ‘Ancient Mariner’ and ‘Christabel’, and Wordsworth composed ‘The Idiot Boy’ and ‘The Thorn’. The plan of a joint publication was sketched out in November 1797. (See the Fenwick note to ‘We are Seven’, vol. i. p. 228.)—Ed.]

[Footnote M: The death of his brother John. Compare the ‘Elegiac Verses’ in memory of him, p. 58.—Ed.]

* * * * *

FROM THE ITALIAN OF MICHAEL ANGELO

Translated 1805?—Published 1807

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[Translations from Michael Angelo, done at the request of Mr. Duppa, whose acquaintance I made through Mr. Southey. Mr. Duppa was engaged in writing the life of Michael Angelo, and applied to Mr. Southey and myself to furnish some specimens of his poetic genius.—I. F.]

Compare the two sonnets entitled 'At Florence—from Michael Angelo', in the "Memorials of a Tour in Italy" in 1837.

The following extract from a letter of Wordsworth's to Sir George Beaumont, dated October 17, 1805, will cast light on the next three sonnets.

"I mentioned Michael Angelo's poetry some time ago; it is the most difficult to construe I ever met with, but just what you would expect from such a man, shewing abundantly how conversant his soul was with great things. There is a mistake in the world concerning the Italian language; the poetry of Dante and Michael Angelo proves, that if there be little majesty and strength in Italian verse, the fault is in the authors, and not in the tongue. I can translate, and have translated two books of Ariosto, at the rate, nearly, of one hundred lines a day; but so much meaning has been put by Michael Angelo into so little room, and that meaning sometimes so excellent in itself, that I found the difficulty of translating him insurmountable. I attempted, at least, fifteen of the sonnets, but could not anywhere succeed. I have sent you the only one I was able to finish; it is far from being the best, or most characteristic, but the others were too much for me."

The last of the three sonnets probably belongs to the year 1804, as it is quoted in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, dated Grasmere, August 6. The year is not given, but I think it must have been 1804, as he says that "within the last month," he had written, "700 additional lines" of 'The Prelude'; and that poem was finished in May 1805.

The titles given to them make it necessary to place these Sonnets in the order which follows.

One of the "Miscellaneous Sonnets."—Ed.

I

Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetrayed;
For if of our affections none finds [1] grace
In sight of Heaven, then, wherefore hath God made
The world which we inhabit? Better plea
Love cannot have, than that in loving thee
Glory to that eternal Peace is paid,
Who such divinity to thee imparts



As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies 10
With beauty, which is varying every hour;
But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower,
That breathes on earth the air of paradise.

* * * * *

VARIANT ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1849.



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... find ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FROM THE SAME

Translated 1805?—Published 1807

One of the “Miscellaneous Sonnets.”—Ed.

II

No mortal object did these eyes behold
 When first they met the placid light of thine,
 And my Soul felt her destiny divine, [1]
 And hope of endless peace in me grew bold:
 Heaven-born, the Soul a heaven-ward course must hold; 5
 Beyond the visible world she soars to seek
 (For what delights the sense is false and weak)
 Ideal Form, the universal mould.
 The wise man, I affirm, can find no rest
 In that which perishes: nor will he lend 10
 His heart to aught which doth on time depend.
 'Tis sense, unbridled will, and not true love,
 That [2] kills the soul: love betters what is best,
 Even here below, but more in heaven above.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1807.

When first saluted by the light of thine,
 When my soul ...

MS. letter to Sir George Beaumont.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Which ... 1807.]

* * * * *

FROM THE SAME. TO THE SUPREME BEING

Translated 1804?—Published 1807

One of the “Miscellaneous Sonnets.”—Ed.

III

The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed
If Thou the spirit give by which I pray:
My unassisted heart is barren clay,
That [1] of its native self can nothing feed:
Of good and pious works thou art the seed, 5
That [2] quickens only where thou say'st it may.
Unless Thou shew to us thine own true way
No man can find it: Father! Thou must lead.
Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred 10
That in thy holy footsteps I may tread;
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of thee,
And sound thy praises everlastingly.

* * * * *

VARIANTS ON THE TEXT

[Variant 1:

1827.

Which ... 1807.]

[Variant 2:

1827.

Which ... 1807.]

The sonnet from which the above is translated, is not wholly by Michael Angelo, the sculptor and painter, but is taken from patched-up versions of his poem by his nephew of the same name. Michael Angelo only wrote the first eight lines, and these have been garbled in his nephew's edition. The original lines are thus given by Guasti in his edition

of Michael Angelo's Poems (1863) restored to their true reading, from the autograph MSS. in Rome and Florence.

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Imperfect Sonnet transcribed from "Le Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti
Cavate dagli Autografi da Cesare Guasti. Firenze. 1863."

SONNET LXXXIX. [Vatican].

Ben sarien dolce le preghiere mie,
Se virtù mi prestassi da pregarte:
Nel mio fragil terren non e già parte
Da frutto buon, che da se nato sie.

Tu sol se' seme d' opre caste e pie,
Che la germoglian dove ne fa' parte:
Nessun proprio valor può seguitarte,
Se no gli mostri le tue sante vie.

The lines are thus paraphrased in prose by the Editor:

Le mie preghiere sarebbero grate, se tu mi prestassi quella virtù che rende efficace il pregare: ma io sono un terreno sterile, in cui non nasce spontaneamente frutto che sia buono. Tu solamente sei seme di opere caste e pie, le quali germogliano là dove tu ti spargi: e nessuna virtù vi ha che da per se possa venirti dietro, se tu stesso non le mostri le vie che conducono al bene, e che sono le tue....

The Sonnet as published by the Nephew is as follows:

Ben sarian dolci le preghiere mie,
Se virtù mi prestassi da pregarte:
Nel mio terreno infertil non e parte
Da produr frutto di virtù natie.

Tu il seme se' dell' opre giuste e pie,
Che la germoglian dove ne fai parte:
Nessun proprio valor può seguitarte,
Se non gli mostri le tue belle vie.

Tu nella mente mia pensieri infondi,
Che producano in me sì vivi effetti,
Signor, ch' io segua i tuoi vestigi santi.

E dalla lingua mia chiari, e facondi
Sciogli della tua gloria ardenti detti,
Perché sempre io ti lodi, esalti, e canti.

('Le Rime di Michelangelo Buonarroti, Pittore, Scultor e Architetto cavate degli autografi, e pubblicate da Cesare Guasti'. Firenze, 1863.)-Ed.

* * * * *

APPENDIX.

NOTE I

“POEMS ON THE NAMING OF PLACES”

‘When, to the attractions of the busy world’, p. 66

The following variants occur in a MS. Book containing ‘Yew Trees’, ‘Artegal’ and ‘Elidure’, ‘Laodamia’, ‘Black Comb,’ *etc.*—Ed.

When from the restlessness of crowded life
Back to my native vales I turned, and fixed
My habitation in this peaceful spot,
Sharp season was it of continuous storm
In deepest winter; and, from week to week,
Pathway, and lane, and public way were clogged
With frequent showers of snow ...

When first attracted by this happy Vale
Hither I came, among old Shepherd Swains
To fix my habitation, ’t was a time
Of deepest winter, and from week to week
Pathway, and lane, and public way were clogged

When to the { cares and pleasures of the world
{ attractions of the busy world

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Preferring {ease and liberty } I chose
{peace and liberty } I chose
{studious leisure I had chosen
A habitation in this peaceful vale
Sharp season {was it of } continuous storm
{followed by } continuous storm

* * * * *

NOTE II.—THE HAWKSHEAD BECK

(See pp. 188-89, 'The Prelude', book iv.)

Mr. Rawnsley, formerly of Wray Vicarage—now Canon Rawnsley of Crosthwaite Vicarage, Keswick—sent me the following letter in reference to:

... that unruly child of mountain birth,
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed
Within our garden, found himself at once,
As if by trick insidious and unkind,
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down

...
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,

...
'Ha,' quoth I, 'pretty prisoner, are you there!'

"I was not quite content with Dr. Cradock's identification of this brook, or of the garden; partly because, beyond the present garden square I found, on going up the brook, other garden squares, which were much more likely to have been the garden belonging to Anne Tyson's cottage, and because in these garden plots the stream was not 'stripped of his voice,' by the covering of Coniston flags, as is the case lower down towards the market place; and partly because—as you notice—you can both hear and see the stream through the interstices of the flags, and that it can hardly be described (by one who will listen) as stripped of its voice. At the same time I was bound to admit that in comparing the voice of the stream here in the 'channel paved by man's officious care' with the sound of it up in the fields beyond the vicarage, nearer its birth-place, it certainly might be said to be softer voiced; and as the poet speaks of it as 'that unruly child of mountain birth,' it looks as if he too had realised the difference. But whilst I thought that the identification of Dr. Cradock and yourself was very happy (in absence of other possibilities), I had not thought that Wordsworth would describe the stream as 'dimpling down,' or address it as a 'pretty prisoner.' A smaller stream seemed necessary. It was, therefore, not a little curious that, in poking about among the garden plots on the west bank of the stream, fronting (as nearly as I could judge) Anne Tyson's

cottage, to seek for remains of the ash tree, in which so often the poet—as he lay awake on summer nights—had watched ‘the moon in splendour couched among the leaves,’ rocking ‘with every impulse of the breeze,’ I not only stumbled upon the remains of an ash tree—now a ‘pollard’—which is evidently sprung from a larger tree since decayed (and which for all I know may be one of the actual parts of the ancient tree itself); but also had the good luck to fall into conversation with a certain Isaac Hodgson, who volunteered the following information.

First, that Wordsworth, it was commonly said, had lodged part of his time with one Betty Braithwaite, in the very house called Church Hill House.



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She was a widow, and kept a confectionery shop, and 'did a deal of baking,' he believed.

Secondly, that there was a little patch of garden at the back of the house, with a famous spring well—still called Old Betty's Well—in it, and that only a few paces from where I was then standing by the pollard ash. On jumping over the fence I found myself on the western side of the quaint old Church Hill House, with magnificent views of the whole of the western side of Hawkshead Vale; grassy swell and wooded rises taking the eye up to the moorland ridge between us and Coniston. 'But,' said I, 'what about Betty's Well.' 'Oh,' said my friend, 'that's a noted spring, that never freezes, and always runs; we all drink of it, and neighbours send to it. Here it is,' he continued; and, gazing down, I saw a little dripping well of water, lustrous, clear, coming evidently in continuous force from the springs or secret channels up hill, pausing for a moment at the trough, thence falling into a box or 'channel paved by man's officious care,' and in a moment out of sight and soundless, to pursue its way, 'stripped of its voice,' towards the main Town beck, that ran at the north-east border of the garden plot. 'Ha, pretty prisoner,' and the words 'dimple down' came to my mind at once as appropriate. 'Old Betty's Well gave the key-note of the 'famous brook'; and 'boxed within our garden' seemed an appropriate and exact description.

Trace of
'the sunny seat
Round the stone table under the dark pine,'

was there none. Not so, however, the Ash tree, the remains of which I have spoken of. From the bedroom of Betty Braithwaite's house the boy could have watched the moon,

'while to and fro
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.'

'In old times,' said my friend, 'the wall fence ran across the garden, just beyond this spring well, so you see it was but a small spot, was this garden close.' Yes; but the

'crowd of things
About its narrow precincts all beloved,'

were known the better, and loved the more on that account. Certainly, thought I to myself, here is the famous spring; a brook that Wordsworth must have known, and that may have been the centre of memory to him in his description of those early Hawkshead days, with its metaphor of fountain life.



May we not, as we gaze on this little fountain well, in a garden plot
at the back of one of the grey huts of this 'one dear vale,' point as
with a wand, and say,

'This portion of the river of his mind
Came from yon fountain.'

Is it not possible that the old dame whose

'Clear though shallow stream of piety,
Ran on the Sabbath days a fresher course,'

was Betty Braithwaite, the aged dame who owned the cottage hard by?"

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The following additional extract from a letter of Mr. Rawnsley's (Christmas, 1882) casts light, both on the Hawkshead beck and fountain, and on the stone seat in the market square, referred to in the fourth book of 'The Prelude'.

"Postlethwaite of the Sun Inn at Hawkshead, has a father aged 82, who can remember that there was a *stone* bench, not called old Betty's, but Old Jane's Stone, on which she used to spread nuts and cakes for the scholars of the Grammar School, but that it did not stand where the Market Hall now is, and no one ever remembers a stone or stone-bench standing there. This stone or stone-bench stood about opposite the Red Lion inn, in front of the little row of houses that run east and west, just as you pass out of the village in a northerly direction by the Red Lion. This stone or stone-bench is not associated with dark pine trees, but they may have passed away root and branch in an earlier generation. Next and most interesting, I think, as showing that I was right in the matter of the *famous fountain*, or spring in the garden, behind Betty Braithwaite's house. There exists in Hawkshead near this house a covered-in place or shed, to which all the village repair for their drinking-water, and always have done so. It is known by the name of the Spout House, and the water—which flows all the year from a longish spout, with an overflow one by its side—comes direct from the little drop well in Betty B.'s garden, after having its voice stripped and boxed therein; and, falling out of the spout into a deep stone basin and culvert, runs through the town to join the Town Beck. So wedded are the Hawkshead folk to this, their familiar fountainhead, that though water is supplied in stand-pipes now from a Reservoir, the folks won't have it, and come here to this spout-house, bucket and jug in hand, morn, noon and night. I have never seen anything so like a continental scene at the gathering at Hawkshead spout-house. Lastly, there is a very aged thorn-tree in the churchyard—blown over but propped up—in which the forefathers of the hamlet used to sit as boys (in the thorn, that is, not the churchyard), and which has been worn smooth by many Hawkshead generations. The tradition is, that *Wordsworth used to sit a deal in it when at school.*"

Ed.

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NOTE III.—THE HAWKSHEAD MORNING WALK: SUMMER VACATION

(See p. 197, 'The Prelude', book iv. ll. 323-38)

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If the farm-house where Wordsworth spent the evening before this memorable morning walk was either at Elterwater or High Arnside, and the homeward pathway led across the ridge of Ironkeld, either by the old mountain road (now almost disused), or over the pathless fells, there are two points from either of which the sea might be seen in the distance. The one is from the heights looking down to the Duddon estuary, across the Coniston valley; the other is from a spot nearer Hawkshead, where Morecambe Bay is visible. In the former case “the meadows and the lower grounds” would be those in Yewdale; in the latter case, they would be those between Latterbarrow and Hawkshead; and, on either alternative, the “solid mountains” would be those of the Coniston group—the Old Man and Wetherlam. It is also possible that the course of the walk was over the Latterbarrow fells, or heights of Colthouse; but, from the reference to the sunrise “not unseen” from the copse and field, through which the “homeward pathway wound,” it may be supposed that the course was south-east, and therefore not over these fells, when his back would have been to the sun. Dr. Cradock’s note [Footnote T to book iv] to the text (p. 197) sums up all that can “be safely said”; but Mr. Rawnsley has supplied me with the following interesting remarks:

“After a careful reading of the passage describing the poet’s return from a festal night, spent in some farm-house beyond the hills, I am quite unable to say that the path from High Arnside over the Ironkeld range entirely suits the description. Is it not possible that the lad had school-fellows whose parents lived in Yewdale? If he had, and was returning from the party in one of the Yewdale farms, he would, as he ascended towards Tarn Howes, and faced about south, to gain the main Coniston road, by traversing the meadows between Berwick ground and the top of the Hawkshead and Coniston Hill, command a view of the sea that ‘lay laughing at a distance’; and ‘near, the solid mountains’—Wetherlam and Coniston Old Man—would shine ‘bright as the clouds.’ I think this is likely to have been the poet’s track, because he speaks of labourers going forth to till the fields; and the Yewdale valley is one that is (at its head) chiefly arable, so that he would be likelier to have gazed on them there than in the vale of Hawkshead itself. One is here, however—as in a former passage, when we fixed on Yewdale as the one described as being a ‘cultured vale’—obliged to remember that in Wordsworth’s boyhood wheat was grown more extensively than is now the case in these parts. Of course, the Furness Fell, above Colthouse, might have been the scene. It is eminently suited to the description.”

Ed.

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NOTE IV.—DOROTHY WORDSWORTH AT CAMBRIDGE IN 1808. THE ASH TREE AT ST. JOHN’S COLLEGE

(See p. 224, ‘The Prelude’, book vi. ll. 76-94)

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The following is an extract from a letter of Dorothy Wordsworth's to Lady Beaumont at Coleorton, dated "14th August," probably in 1808:

"We reached Cambridge at half-past nine. In our way to the Inn we stopped at the gate of St. John's College to set down one of our passengers. The stopping of the carriage roused me from a sleepy musing, and I was awe-stricken with the solemnity of the old gateway, and the light from a great distance within streaming along the pavement. When they told me it was the entrance to 'St. John's' College, I was still more affected by the gloomy yet beautiful sight before me, for I thought of my dearest brother in his youthful days passing through that gateway to his home, and I could have believed that I saw him there even then, as I had seen him in the first year of his residence. I met with Mr. Clarkson at the Inn, and was, you may believe, rejoiced to hear his voice at the coach door. We supped together, and immediately after supper I went to bed, and slept well, and at 8 o'clock next morning went to Trinity Chapel. There I stood for many minutes in silence before the statue of Newton, while the organ sounded. I never saw a statue that gave me one hundredth part so much pleasure—but pleasure, that is not the word, it is a sublime sensation—in harmony with sentiments of devotion to the Divine Being, and reverence for the holy places where He is worshipped. We walked in the groves all the morning and visited the Colleges. I sought out a favourite ash tree which my brother speaks of in his poem on his own life—a tree covered with ivy. We dined with a fellow of Peter-House in his rooms, and after dinner I went to King's College Chapel. There, and everywhere else at Cambridge, I was even much more impressed with the effect of the buildings than I had been formerly, and I do believe that this power of receiving an enlarged enjoyment from the sight of buildings is one of the privileges of our later years. I have this moment received a letter from William...."

Ed.

* * * * *

NOTE V.—"THE MEETING-POINT OF TWO HIGHWAYS"

(See p. 353, 'The Prelude', book xii. l. 293)

The following extract from a letter of Mr. Rawnsley's casts important light on a difficult question of localization. Dr. Cradock is inclined now to select the Outgate Crag, the second of the four places referred to by Mr. Rawnsley. But the first may have been the place, and the extract which follows will show how much is yet to be done in this matter of localizing poetical allusions.

"As to



'the crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched,'

there seems to be no doubt but that we have four competitors for the
honour of being the place to which the poet:

'impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear them home'



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repaired with his brothers

'one Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays.'

And unless, as it seems is quite possible, from what one sees in other of Wordsworth's poems, he really stood on one of the crags, and then in his description drew the picture of the landscape at his feet from his memory of what it was as seen from another of the vantage places, we need a high crag, rising gradually or abruptly from the actual meeting-place of two highways, with, if possible at this distance of time, a wall—or traces of it—quite at its summit. (I may mention that the wallers in this country still give two hundred years as the length of time that a dry wall will stand.) We need also traces of an old thorn tree close by. The wall, too, must be so placed on the summit of the crag that, as it faces the direction in which the lad is looking for his palfrey, it shall afford shelter to him against

'the sleety rain,
And all the business of the elements.'

It is evident that the lad would be looking out in a north-easterly direction, i. e. towards the head of Windermere and Ambleside. So that

'the mist,
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes,'

was urged by a wind that found the poet at his look-out station, glad to have the wall between him and it. Further, there must be in close proximity wood and the sound of rushing water, or the lapping of a lake wind-driven against the marge, for the boy remembers that 'the bleak music from that old stone wall' was mingled with 'the noise of wood and water.' The roads spoken of must be two highways, and must be capable of being seen for some distance; unless, as it is just possible, the epithet 'far-stretched' may be taken as applying not so much to the roads, as to the gradual ascent of the crag from the meeting-place of the two highways.

The scene from the crag must be extended, and half plain half wood-land; at least one gathers as much from the lines:

'as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath.'

Lastly, it was a day of driving sleet and mist, and this of itself would necessitate that the poet and his brothers should only go to the place close to which the ponies must pass, or from which most plainly the roads were visible.

The boys too were

‘feverish, and tired, and restless,’

and a schoolboy, to gain his point on such a day and on such an errand, does not take much account of a mile of country to be travelled over.

So that it is immaterial, I think, to make the distance from Hawkshead of either of the four crags or vantage grounds a factor in decision.

The farther the lads were from home when they met their ponies, the longer ride back they would have, and this to schoolboys is matter of consideration at such times.

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Taking then a survey of the ground of choice, we have to decide whether the crag in question is situated at the first division or main split of the road from Ambleside furthest from Hawkshead, or whether at the place where the two roads converge again into one nearer Hawkshead. Whether, that is, the crag above the Pullwyke quarry, at the junction of the road to Water Barngates and the road to Wray and Outgate is to be selected, about two miles from Hawkshead; or whether we are to fix on the spot you have chosen, at the point about a mile north-east of Hawkshead, 'called in the ordnance map Outgate.'

Of the two I incline to the former, for these reasons. The boys could not be so certain of 'not missing the ponies', at any other place than here at Pullwyke.

The crag exactly answers the poet's description, a rising ground, the meeting-place of two highways. For in the poet's time the old Hawkshead and Outgate road at the Pullwyke corner ran at the very foot of the rising ground (roughly speaking) parallel to and some 60 to 100 yards west of the present road from the Pull to Wray.

It is true that no trace of wall is visible at its summit, but the summit has been planted since with trees, and walls are often removed at time of planting.

The poet would have a full view of the main road, down to, and round, the Pullwyke Bay; he would see the branch road from the fork, as it mounted the Water Barngates Hill, to the west, and would see the other road of the fork far-stretched and going south. He would also have an extended view of copse and meadow land. He might, if the wind were south-easterly, hear the noise of Windermere, sobbing in the Pullwyke Bay, and would without doubt hear also the roar of the Pull Beck water, as it passed down from the Ironkeld slopes on his left towards the lake. It might be objected that the poem gives us the idea of a crag which, from the Hawkshead side at any rate, would require to be of more difficult ascent than this is, to justify the idea of difficulty as suggested in the lines:

'thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit;'

but I do not think we need read more into the lines than that the boy felt—as he scanned the country with his eyes, on the 'qui vive' at every rise in the ground—the feelings of a scout, who questions constantly the distant prospect.

And certainly the Pullwyke quarry crag rises most steeply from the meeting-point of the two highways.



Next as to the Outgate crag, which you have chosen. I am out of love with it. First, if the lads wanted to make sure of the ponies, they would not have ascended it, but would have stayed just at the Hawkshead side of Outgate, or at the village itself, at the point of convergence of the ways.

Secondly, the crag can hardly be described as rising from the meeting-point of two highways; only one highway passes near it.

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The crag is of so curious a formation geologically, that I can't fancy the poet describing his memory of it, without calling it a terraced hill, or an ascent by natural terraces.

Then, again, the prospect is not sufficiently extended from it. The stream not near enough, or rather not of size enough, to be heard. Blelham Tarn is not too far to have added to the watery sound, it is true, but the wind we suppose to have been north-east, and the sound of the Blelham Tarn would be much carried away from him.

The present stone wall is not near the summit, and is of comparatively recent date. It is difficult to believe from the slope of the outcrop of rock that a wall could ever have been at the summit.

But there are two other vantage grounds intermediate between those extremes, both of which were probably in the mind and memory of the poet as he described the scene, and

'The intermitting prospect of the copse.
And plain beneath,'

allowed him by the mist. One of these is the High Crag, about three-quarters of a mile from the divergence or convergence of the two highways, which Dr. Cradock has selected.

There can be no doubt that this is the crag 'par excellence' for a wide and extended look-out over all the country between Outgate and Ambleside. Close at its summit there remain aged thorn trees, but no trace of a wall. But High Crag can hardly be said to have risen at 'the meeting-point of two highways,' unless we are to understand the epithet 'far-stretched' as applying to the south-western slopes or skirts of the hill; and the two highways, the roads between Water Barngates on the west, and the bridle road between Pullwyke and Outgate at their Outgate junction, and this is rather too far a stretch.

It is quite true that if bridle paths can be described as highways, there may be said to be a meeting-point of these close at the north-eastern side of the crag.

But, remembering that the ponies came from Penrith, the driver was not likely to have had any intimate knowledge of these bridle paths; while, at the same time, on that misty day, I much question whether the boys on the look-out at High Crag could have seen ponies creeping along between walled roads at so great a distance as half a mile or more.

And this would seem to have been the problem for them on that day.



I ought in fairness to say that it is not likely that the roads were then (as to-day) walled up high on either side. To-day, even from the summit of High Crag, only the head and ears of a pony could be seen as it passed up the Water Barngates Road; but at the end of last century many of the roads were only partially walled off from the moorlands they passed over in the Lake Country.

Still, as I said, High Crag was a point of vantage that the poet, as a lad, must have often climbed, in this part of the country, if he wanted to indulge in the delights of panoramic scene.

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There is a wall some hundred yards from the summit, on the south-westerly flank of High Crag; near this—at a point close by, two large holly trees—the boy might have sheltered himself against the north-eastern wind, and have got a closer and better view of the road between Barn gates and Outgate, and Randy Pike and Outgate.

Here, too, he could possibly hear the sound of the stream in the dingle or woody hollow immediately at his feet; but I am far from content with this as being the spot the poet watched from.

There is again a fourth possible look-out place, to which you will remember I directed your attention, nearer Randy Pike. The slope, covered with larches, rises up from the Randy Pike Road to a precipitous crag which faces north and east. From this, a grand view of the country between Randy Pike and Pullwyke is obtained, and if the bridle paths might—as is possible, but unlikely—be called two highways, then this crag could be spoken of as rising from the meeting place of the two highways. For the old Hawkshead Road passed along to the east, within calling distance (say ninety yards), and a bridle road from Pullwyke, now used chiefly by the quarrymen, passed within eighty yards to the west; while it is certain that the brook below, when swollen by winter rains, might be loud enough to be heard from the copse. This crag is known as Coldwell or Caudwell Crag, and is situated about half a mile east-south-east of the High Crag. It has this much in its favour, that a wall of considerable age crests its summit, and one can whilst sitting down on a rock close behind it be sheltered from the north and east, and yet obtain an extensive view of the subadjacent country. IF it were certain that the ponies when they got to Pullwyke did not go up towards Water Barn gates, and so to Hawkshead, then there is no crag in the district which would so thoroughly answer to all the needs of the boys, and to all the points of description the poet has placed on record. But it is just this IF that makes me decide on the Pullwyke Crag—the one first described—as being the actual spot to which, scout-like, the schoolboys clomb, on that eventful ‘eve of their dear holidays;’ while, at the same time, it is my firm conviction that Wordsworth—as he painted the memories of that event—had also before his mind’s eye the scene as viewed from Coldwell and High Crag.”

Ed.

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NOTE VI.—COLERIDGE’S LINES TO WORDSWORTH, ON HEARING ‘THE PRELUDE’ RECITED BY HIM AT COLEORTON, IN 1806

The following is a copy of a version of these ‘Lines’, sent by Coleridge to Sir George Beaumont, at Dunmow, Essex, in January, 1807. The variations, both in the title and in the text, from that which Coleridge finally adopted (see p. 129), are interesting in many ways:



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LINES

To William Wordsworth: Composed for the greater part on the same night after the finishing of his recitation of the Poem, in Thirteen Books, on the growth of his own mind.

O Friend! O Teacher! God's great Gift to me!
Into my Heart have I received that Lay
More than historic, that prophetic Lay
Wherein (high theme by thee first sung aright)
Of the foundations and the building up 5
Of thine own spirit thou hast loved to tell
What *may* be told, by words revealable:
With heavenly breathings, like the secret soul
Of vernal growth, oft quickening in the heart
Thoughts, that obey no mastery of words, 10
Pure Self-beholdings! Theme as hard as high,
Of Smiles spontaneous and mysterious Fear!
The first born they of Reason and twin birth!
Of tides obedient to external force,
And currents self-determin'd, as might seem, 15
Or by some inner power! Of moments awful,
Now in thy hidden life, and now abroad,
When power stream'd from thee, and thy soul receiv'd
The light reflected, as a light bestow'd!
Of fancies fair, and milder hours of youth, 20
Hybloean murmurs of poetic thought
Industrious in its joy, in vales and glens
Native or outland, Lakes and famous Hills;
Or on the lonely high-road, when the stars
Were rising; or by secret mountain streams, 25
The guides and the companions of thy way!
Of more than Fancy—of the SOCIAL SENSE
Distending, and of Man belov'd as Man,
Where France in all her Towns lay vibrating,
Even as a Bark becalm'd on sultry seas 30
Quivers beneath the voice from Heaven, the burst
Of Heaven's immediate thunder, when no cloud
Is visible, or shadow on the main!
For thou wert there, thy own brows garlanded,
Amid the tremor of a Realm aglow! 35
Amid a mighty nation jubilant!
When from the general Heart of Human Kind
Hope sprang forth, like an armed Deity!



Of that dear Hope afflicted and struck down,
So summon'd homeward; thenceforth calm and sure, 40
As from the Watch-tower of Man's absolute Self,
With light unwaning on her eyes, to look
Far on—herself a Glory to behold,
The Angel of the Vision! Then (last strain)
Of Duty, chosen Laws controlling choice, 45
Action and Joy!—an Orphic Tale indeed,
A Tale divine of high and passionate Thoughts,
To their own Music chaunted!—

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A great Bard!

Ere yet the last strain dying awed the air,
With steadfast eyes I saw thee in the choir 50
Of ever-enduring men. The truly Great
Have all one age, and from one visible space
Shed influence: for they, both power and act,
Are permanent, and Time is not with them,
Save as it worketh for them, they in it. 55
Nor less a sacred Roll, than those of old,
And to be plac'd, as they, with gradual fame
Among the Archives of Mankind, thy Work
Makes audible a linked Song of Truth,
Of Truth profound a sweet continuous Song 60
Not learnt, but native, her own natural notes!
Dear shall it be to every human heart,
To me how more than dearest! Me, on whom
Comfort from thee, and utterance of thy Love,
Come with such Heights and Depths of Harmony 65
Such sense of Wings uplifting, that its might
Scatter'd and quell'd me, till my Thoughts became
A bodily Tumult; and thy faithful Hopes,
Thy Hopes of me, dear Friend! by me unfelt!
Were troublous to me, almost as a Voice 70
Familiar once and more than musical;
As a dear Woman's Voice to one cast forth, [A]
A Wanderer with a worn-out heart forlorn,
Mid Strangers pining with untended wounds.

O Friend! too well thou know'st, of what sad years 75
The long suppression had benumbed my soul,
That, even as Life returns upon the Drown'd,
The unusual Joy awoke a throng of Pains—
Keen Pangs of LOVE, awakening, as a Babe,
Turbulent, with an outcry in the Heart! 80
And Fears self-will'd, that shunn'd the eye of Hope,
And Hope, that scarce would know itself from Fear;
Sense of past youth, and manhood come in vain,
And Genius given and Knowledge won in vain;
And all, which I had cull'd in wood-walks wild, 85
And all, which patient Toil had rear'd, and all,
Commune with THEE had open'd out—but Flowers
Strew'd on my Corse, and borne upon my Bier,
In the same Coffin, for the self-same Grave!



That way no more! and ill beseems it me, 90
Who came a Welcomer, in Herald's Guise,
Singing of Glory and Futurity,
To wander back on such unhealthful road
Plucking the Poisons of Self-harm! And ill
Such intertwine beseems triumphal wreaths 95
Strew'd before thy advancing! Thou too, Friend!
Impair thou not the memory of that hour
Of thy Communion with my nobler mind
By pity or grief, already felt too long!
Nor let my words import more blame than needs. 100
The tumult rose and ceas'd: for Peace is nigh
Where Wisdom's voice has found a list'ning Heart.
Amid the howl of more than wintry storms
The Halcyon hears the Voice of vernal Hours,
Already on the wing!



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Eve following Eve 105
Dear tranquil Time, when the sweet sense of Home
Is sweetest! Moments, for their own sake hail'd,
And more desired, more precious for thy Song!
In silence listening, like a devout child,
My soul lay passive, by the various strain 110
Driven as in surges now, beneath the stars
With momentary [B] stars of her [C] own birth,
Fair constellated Foam, still darting off
Into the Darkness; now a tranquil Sea,
Outspread and bright, yet swelling to the Moon. 115

And when—O Friend! my Comforter! my [D] Guide!
Strong in thyself and powerful to give strength!—
Thy long sustained Song finally clos'd,
And thy deep voice had ceas'd—yet thou thyself
Wert still before mine eyes, and round us both 120
That happy Vision of beloved Faces—
(All whom, I deepliest love—in one room all!)
Scarce conscious and yet conscious of its close
I sate, my Being blended in one Thought,
(Thought was it? or aspiration? or resolve?) 125
Absorb'd; yet hanging still upon the Sound—
And when I rose, I found myself in Prayer.

S. T. COLERIDGE.

'Jany'. 1807.

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FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: Different reading on same MS.:

'To one cast forth, whose Hope had seem'd to die.'

Ed.]

[Footnote B: Compare, as an illustrative note, the descriptive passage in Satyrane's first Letter in 'Biographia Literaria', beginning, "A beautiful white cloud of foam," etc.—S.T.C.]

[Footnote C: Different reading on same MS., “my’.”—Ed.]

[Footnote D: Different reading on same MS., “and’.”—Ed.]

In a MS. copy of ‘Dejection, An Ode’, transcribed for Sir George Beaumont on the 4th of April 1802—and sent to him, when living with Lord Lowther at Lowther Hall—there is evidence that the poem was originally addressed to Wordsworth.

The following lines in this copy can be compared with those finally adopted:

‘O dearest William! in this heartless mood,
To other thoughts by yonder throstle woo’d
All this long eve so balmy and serene
Have I been gazing on the western sky,’

...

‘O William, we *receive* but what we *give*:
And in our life alone does Nature live.’

...

‘Yes, dearest William! Yes!
There was a time when though my Path was rough
This Joy within me dallied with distress.’

The MS. copy is described by Coleridge as “imperfect”; and it breaks off abruptly at the lines:

‘Suspends what Nature gave me at my birth
My shaping spirit of Imagination.’

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And he continues:

'I am so weary of this doleful poem, that I must leave off....'

Another MS. copy of this poem, amongst the Coleorton papers, is signed "S. T. Coleridge to William Wordsworth." Ed.

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NOTE VII.—GENERAL BEAUPUY

(See pp. 297 and 302, 'The Prelude', book ix.)

Professor Emile Legouis of Lyons—a thorough student, and a very competent expounder, of our modern English Literature—supplied me, some years ago, with numerous facts in reference to Wordsworth's friend General Beaupuy, and his family, from which I extract the following:

'The Prelude' gives us very little precise information about the republican officer with whom Wordsworth became acquainted in France, and on whom he bestowed more praise than on almost any other of his contemporaries. We only gather the following facts:—That his name was 'Beaupuy', that he was quartered at Orleans, with royalist officers, sometime between November 1791 and the spring of 1792, and that

'He perished fighting, *in supreme command*,
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
For liberty, against deluded men,
His fellow-countrymen....'

Though it seems very easy to identify a general even with such scanty data, the task is rendered more difficult by two inaccuracies in Wordsworth's statement, which, however, can be explained and redressed without much difficulty. The first inaccuracy is in the spelling of the name, which is 'Beaupuy' and not 'Beaupuis'—a slight mistake considering that Wordsworth was a foreigner, and, besides, wrote down his friend's name ten years and perhaps more after losing sight of him. Moreover, the name of the general who, I think, was meant by Wordsworth, I have found spelt 'Beaupuy' in one instance, *viz.* the signature of a letter of his, as printed in 'Vie et Correspondance de Merlin de Thionville', publiee par Jean Reynaud, Paris, 1860 (2^e partie p. 241).

The spelling of proper names was not so fixed then as it is nowadays, and this irregularity is not to be wondered at.

The second inaccuracy consists in stating that General Beaupuy died on the banks of the Loire during the Vendean war. Indeed, he was grievously wounded at the Battle of

Chateau-Gonthier, on the 26th of October 1793, and reported as dead. His soldiers thought he had been killed, and the rumour must have spread abroad, as it was recorded by A. Thiers himself in his 'Histoire de la Revolution', and by A. Challemel in his 'Histoire Musee de la Republique Francaise'.

It is no wonder that Wordsworth, who was then in England, and could only read imperfect accounts of what took place in France, should have been mistaken too.

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No other General Beaupuy is recorded in the history of the Revolution, so far as I have been able to ascertain. The moral character of the officer, whose life I shall relate, answers to Wordsworth's description, and is worthy of his high estimate. Armand Michel de Bachelier, Chevalier de Beaupuy, was born at Mussidan, in Perigord, on the 15th of July 1757. He belonged to a noble family, less proud of its antiquity than of the blood it had shed for France on many battlefields. On his mother's side (Mlle. de Villars), he reckoned Montaigne, the celebrated essayist, among his ancestors. His parents having imbibed the philanthropic ideas of the time, educated him according to their principles.

He had four brothers, who were all destined to turn republicans and do good service to the new cause, though their interest certainly lay in the opposite direction.

...

He was made sub-lieutenant in the regiment of Bassigny (33rd division of foot) on the 2nd of March 1773, and lieutenant of grenadiers on the 1st of October of the same year.

In 1791 he was first lieutenant in the same regiment. Having sided with the Revolution, he was appointed commander of a battalion of national volunteers in the department of Dordogne. I have not found the exact date of this appointment, but it must have taken place immediately after his stay at Orleans with Wordsworth.

I have found no further mention of his name till September 1792, when he is known to have served in the "Armee du Rhin," under General Custine, and contributed to the taking of Spire.

He took an important part in the taking of Worms, 4th October; of Mayence (Maenz) 21st October. He was among the garrison of Mayence when this place was besieged by the Prussians, and obliged to capitulate after a long and famous siege (from 6th April 1793 to 22nd July 1793). [A] During the siege he wrote a journal of all the operations. Unfortunately, this journal is very short, and purely military. It has been handed down to us, and is found in the Bibliotheque Nationale of Paris in the 'Papiers de Merlin de Thionville', n. acq. fr. Nos. 244-252, 8 vol. in-8 deg.. Beaupuy's journal is in the 3rd volume, fol. 213-228.

...

In the Vendean war, the "Mayençais," or soldiers returned from Mayence, made themselves conspicuous, and bore almost all the brunt of the campaign. But none of them distinguished himself more than Beaupuy, then a General of Brigade. The Mayençais arrived in Vendee at the end of August or beginning of September 1793. To Beaupuy's skill the victory of Chollet (Oct. 17, 1793) is attributed by Jomini. In this

battle he fought hand to hand with and overcame a Vendean cavalier. He himself had three horses killed, and had a very narrow escape. On the

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battlefield he was made 'general of division' by the "Representants du peuple." It was after Chollet that the Vendéans made the memorable crossing of the Loire at St. Florent. At Laval and Chateau-Gonthier (Oct. 26) a terrible defeat was inflicted on the Republicans, owing to the incapacity of their commander-in-chief, Lechelle. The whole corps commanded by General Beaupuy was crushed by a terrible fire. He himself, after withstanding for two or three hours with 2000 or 3000 men all the attacks of the royalists, was disabled by a shot, and fell, crying out, "Laissez-moi la, et portez a mes grenadiers ma chemise sanglante'." His soldiers thought he was dead, and then the error was spread, which was repeated by Wordsworth, Thiers, and Challamel. Wordsworth's mistake is so far interesting, as it seems to prove that very little or no correspondence passed between the two friends after they had parted. Beaupuy, moreover, had too much work upon his hands to give much of his time to letter-writing. Though severely wounded, Beaupuy lived on, and less than six weeks after the battle of Chateau-Gonthier, he was seen on the ramparts of Angers, where he required himself to be carried to animate his soldiers and head the defenders of the place, from which the Vendéans were driven after a severe contest (Dec. 5 and 6). On the 22nd of December 1793 he shared in the victory of Savenay with his celebrated friends, Marceau, Kleber, and Westermann. After this battle, which put an end to the great Vendean war, he wrote the following letter to his friend Merlin de Thionville, the celebrated "representant du peuple."

"SAVENAY, le 4 Nivose au 2^e (25 Dec. 73).

"Enfin, enfin, mon cher Merlin, elle n'est plus cette armee royale ou catholique, comme tu voudras! J'en ai vu, avec tes braves collegues Prieur et Eurreau, les debris, consistant en 150 cavaliers battant l'eau dans le marais de Montaire; et comme tu connais ma veracite tu peux dire avec assurance que les deux combats de Savenay ont mis fin a la guerre de la nouvelle Vendee et aux chimeriques esperances des royalists. L'histoire ne vous presente point de combat dont le suites aient ete plus decisives. Ah! mon brave, comme tu aurais joui! quelle attaque! mais quelle deroute aussi! Il fallait les voir ces soldats de Jesus et de Louis XVII, se jetant dans les marais ou obliges de se rendre par 5 ou 600 a la fois; et Langreniere pris et les autres generaux disperses et aux abois! Cette armee, dont tu avais vu les restes de la terrasse de St. Florent, etait redevenue formidable par son recrutement dans les departements envahis. Je les ai bien vus, bien examines, j'ai reconnu meme de mes figures de Chollet et de Laval, et a leur contenance et a leur mine, je l'assure qu'il ne leur manquait du soldat que l'habit. Des troupes qui ont battu de tels Francais peuvent

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se flatter ainsi de vaincre des peuples assez lâches pour se réunir contre un seul et encore pour la cause des rois! Enfin, je ne sais si je me trompe, mais cette guerre de brigands, de paysans, sur laquelle on a jeté tant de ridicule, que l'on dédaignait, que l'on affectait de regarder comme méprisable, m'a toujours paru, pour la république, la grande partie, et il me semble à présent qu'avec nos autres ennemis, nous ne ferons plus que peloter. Adieu, brave montagnard, adieu! Actuellement que cette exécration de guerre est terminée, que les mânes de nos frères sont satisfaits, je vais guerir. J'ai obtenu de tes confrères un congé qui finira au moment où la guerre recommencera.

LE GENERAL DE BRIGADE BEAUPUY.

I think I can recognize in this letter some traits of Beaupuy's character as pointed out by Wordsworth, not excepting the half-suppressed criticism:

'... somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him ...'

Passing over numerous military incidents, on the 26th of June 1796 Beaupuy received seven or eight sabre-cuts at Jorich-Wildstadt. But on the 8th of July he was already back at his post.

He again greatly distinguished himself on the 1st of September 1796 at Greisenfeld and Langenbruck, where the victory of the French was owing to a timely attack made by Desaix and himself.

He was one of the generals under Moreau when the latter achieved his well-known retreat through the Black Forest, begun on the 15th of September 1796, and during which many battles were fought. In one of the actions on the banks of the Elz, Beaupuy was killed by a cannon-ball, while opposing General Latour on the heights of Malterdingen. His soldiers, who loved him passionately, fought desperately to avenge his death (Oct. 19, 1796).

One of Beaupuy's colleagues, General Duhem, in his account of the battle to the Government, thus expressed himself on General Beaupuy:

"Ecrivains patriotes, orateurs chaleureux, je vous propose un noble sujet, l'éloge du General Beaupuy, de Beaupuy, le Nestor et l'Achille de notre armée. Vous n'avez pas de recherches à faire; interrogez le premier soldat de l'armée du Rhin-et-Moselle, ses larmes exciteront les vôtres. Ecrivez alors ce que est vous en dira, et vous peindrez le Bayard de la République Française." Such bombastic style was then common, but what

we have seen of Beaupuy in this sketch shows that he had through his career united Nestor's prudence [B] with Achilles' bodily courage and Bayard's chivalric spirit,—to use the language of the time.

General Moreau had Beaupuy's remains transported to Brisach, where a monument was erected to his memory in 1802, after the peace of Luneville.

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In short, Beaupuy seems to have always remained worthy of the high praise bestowed on him by Wordsworth. His name is to be remembered along with those of the unspotted generals of the first years of the Revolution—Hoche, Marceau, *etc.*—before the craving for conquest had developed, and the love of liberty yielded to a fond admiration of Bonaparte as it did in the case of Kleber, Desaix, and so many others. [C]N. B.—The great influence which Beaupuy exercised at that time on Wordsworth will be easily understood, if we take into account not only his real qualities, but also his age. When they met, Wordsworth was only twenty-one, Beaupuy nearly thirty-five. The grown-up man could impart much of his knowledge of life, and of the favourite authors of the time, to a youth fresh from the University—though that youth was Wordsworth.

EMILE LEGOUIS.

* * * * *

FOOTNOTES ON THE TEXT

[Footnote A: His bravery shone forth at Coethen, where he was left alone in a group of Prussians. He fought with their chief and disarmed him. A few days after he was named General of Brigade.—8th March 1793.]

[Footnote B: The pacification of Vendee was for a great part owing to his valour and prudence.]

[Footnote C: Beaupuy is said to have united civic virtues with military talents. A good son and a good brother, he showed in many a circumstance that true valour does not exclude humanity, and that the soul can be both strong and full of feeling.]

These notes (B and C) are taken from 'Biographic Nouvelle de Contemporains'.