

Selections from Wordsworth and Tennyson eBook

Selections from Wordsworth and Tennyson by William Wordsworth

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Wordsworth

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Tennyson

Biographical Sketch
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WORDSWORTH

MICHAEL

A pastoral poem

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for around that boisterous brook
The mountains have all opened out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation can be seen; but they
Who journey thither find themselves alone 10
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell
But for one object which you might pass by, 15
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones,
And to that simple object appertains
A story,—unenriched with strange events,
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside, 20
Or for the summer shade. It was the first



Of those domestic tales that spake to me
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men
Whom I already loved:—not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills 25
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy
Careless of books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects, led me on to feel 30
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.
Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same 35
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale 40
There dwelt a Shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout of heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength: his mind was keen,
Intense, and frugal, apt for all affairs, 45
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence had he learned the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and oftentimes,

Page 2

When others heeded not, he heard the South 50
Make subterranean music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,
“The winds are now devising work for me!” 55
And, truly, at all times, the storm, that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summoned him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him, and left him, on the heights. 60
So lived he till his eightieth year was past.
And grossly that man errs, who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks,
Were things indifferent to the Shepherd’s thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed 65
The common air; hills, which with vigorous step
He had so often climbed; which had impressed
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill or courage, joy or fear;
Which, like a book, preserved the memory 70
Of the dumb animals whom he had saved,
Had fed or sheltered, linking to such acts
The certainty of honorable gain;
Those fields, those hills—what could they less?—had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him 75
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been passed in singleness.
His Helpmate was a comely matron, old—
Though younger than himself full twenty years. 80
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form; this large, for spinning wool;
That small, for flax; and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work. 85
The Pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only Child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o’er his years, began



To deem that he was old,—in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only Son, 90
With two brave sheep-dogs tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone, 95
And from their occupations out of doors
The Son and Father were come home, even then
Their labor did not cease; unless when all
Turned to the cleanly supper board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimmed milk, 100
Sat round the basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when the meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the Son was named)
And his old Father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ 105
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the Housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,
Or other implement of house or field.



Page 3

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge, 110
That in our ancient uncouth country style
With huge and black projection overbrowed
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim the Housewife hung a lamp;
An aged utensil, which had performed 115
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn,—and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found,
And left the couple neither gay perhaps 120
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,
Father and Son, while far into the night 125
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighborhood,
And was a public symbol of the life 130
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced;
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,
And westward to the village near the lake; 135
And from this constant light, so regular,
And so far seen, the House itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named the *evening star*.

Thus living on through such a length of years, 140
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear—
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all— 145
Than that a child, more than all other gifts
That earth can offer to declining man,
Brings hope with it, and forward-looking thoughts,
And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail. 150
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,



His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For pastime and delight, as is the use 155
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked
His cradle, as with a woman's gentle hand.
And in a later time, ere yet the Boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love, 160
Albeit of a stern, unbending mind,
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool
Sat with a fettered sheep before him stretched
Under the large old oak, that near his door 165



Page 4

Stood single, and, from matchless depth of shade,
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was called
The *clipping tree*, a name which yet it bears.
There, while they two were sitting in the shade, 170
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestowed
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts 175
Scared them while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the Boy grew up
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek
Two steady roses that were five years old;
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut 180
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped
With iron, making it throughout in all
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipped
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed 185
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;
And, to his office prematurely called,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help;
And for this cause not always, I believe, 190
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;
Though naught was left undone which staff, or voice,
Or looks, or threatening gestures, could perform,

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts; and to the heights, 195
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,
He with his Father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the Shepherd loved before
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came 200
Feelings and emanations,—things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind;
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?



Thus in his Father's sight the boy grew up:
And now, when he had reached his eighteenth year, 205
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound 210
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means;
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had pressed upon him; and old Michael now
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture, 215
A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost. 220
As soon as he had armed himself with strength

Page 5

To look his trouble in the face, it seemed
The Shepherd's sole resource to sell at once
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve; he thought again, 225
And his heart failed him. "Isabel," said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
"I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours 230
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;
And I have lived to be a fool at last 235
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us; and if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him;—but 240
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

"When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free; 245
He shall possess it, free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman; he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade; and Luke to him shall go, 250
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
He may return to us. If here he stay,
What can be done? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained?"

At this the old Man paused, 255
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
There's Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,



He was a parish-boy,—at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence, 260
And half-pennies, wherewith the neighbors bought
A basket, which they filled with pedlar's wares;
And, with his basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy 265
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and moneys to the poor,
And at his birthplace built a chapel, floored
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands. 270
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,
And thus resumed: "Well, Isabel, this scheme,
These two days, has been meat and drink to me. 275
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
—We have enough—I wish indeed that I
Were younger;—but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth 280
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."



Page 6

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long 285
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work; for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the last two nights 290
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, "Thou must not go: 295
We have no other Child but thee to lose,
None to remember—do not go away,
For if thou leave thy Father he will die."
The Youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears, 300
Recovered heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appeared 305
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;
To which requests were added, that forthwith 310
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbors round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel 315
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,
"He shall depart to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length 320
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.
Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had designed
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard



The tidings of his melancholy loss, 325
For this same purpose he had gathered up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked;
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped, 330
And thus the old man spake to him:—"My Son,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me; with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth
And all thy life hast been my daily joy. 335
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should touch
On things thou canst not know of.-----After



Page 7

thou

First cam'st into the world—as oft befalls 340
To newborn infants—thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds 345
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune;
While thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy Mother's breast. Month followed month,
And in the open fields my life was passed, 350
And on the mountains; else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke; among these hills,
As well thou knowest, in us the old and young
Have played together, nor with me didst thou 355
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.”
Luke had a manly heart; but at these words
He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,
And said, “Nay, do not take it so—I see
That these are things of which I need not speak. 360
—Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good Father; and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands; for, though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still 365
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together; here they lived,
As all their Forefathers had done; and, when
At length their time was come, they were not loath
To give their bodies to the family mould. 370
I wished that thou should'st live the life they lived;
But 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me;
Till I was forty years of age, not more 375
Than half of my inheritance was mine.
I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,
And till the three weeks past the land was free.
—It looks as if it never could endure
Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke, 380



If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go.”

At this the old Man paused;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:
“This was a work for us; and now, my Son, 385
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone,—
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, Boy, be of good hope; we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and hale;—do thou thy part; 390
I will do mine.—I will begin again
With many tasks that were resigned to thee;
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,



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395

Before I knew thy face. Heaven bless thee, Boy!
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes; it should be so—yes, yes,—
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke; thou hast been bound to me 400
Only by links of love: when thou art gone
What will be left to us!—But I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men 405
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived, 410
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well—
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see
A work which is not here: a covenant
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate 415
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.”

The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,
And, as his Father had requested, laid
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight 420
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart
He pressed his Son, he kissed him and wept;
And to the house together they returned.
—Hushed was that House in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell:—with morrow's dawn the Boy 425
Began his journey, and when he had reached
The public way, he put on a bold face;
And all the neighbors, as he passed their doors,
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That followed him till he was out of sight. 430

A good report did from their Kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well doing: and the Boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the Housewife phrased it, were throughout



“The prettiest letters that were ever seen.” 435
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months passed on; and once again
The Shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour 440
He to that valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the Sheep-fold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty; and, at length,
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses: ignominy and shame 445
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding place beyond the seas.



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There is a comfort in the strength of love;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would overset the brain, or break the heart: 450
I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember the old Man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks 455
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,
And listened to the wind; and, as before,
Performed all kinds of labor for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time 460
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old Man—and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went, 465
And never lifted up a single stone.

There by the Sheep-fold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, or with his faithful Dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years, from time to time 570
He at the building of this Sheep-fold wrought,
And left the work unfinished when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her Husband; at her death the estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand. 475
The Cottage which was named the *evening star*
Is gone,—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighborhood:—yet the oak is left,
That grew beside their door; and the remains 480
Of the unfinished Sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Green-head Ghyll.

2. *Green-head Ghyll*. Near Dove Cottage, Wordsworth's home at Grasmere.

Ghyll. A short, steep, and narrow valley with a stream running through it.

5. *The pastoral mountains*. In Professor Knight's *Life of Wordsworth* are found fragments which the poet intended for *Michael* and which were recovered from Dorothy Wordsworth's manuscript book. Among these are the following lines, which as Professor Dowden suggests, are given as Wordsworth's answer to the question, "What

feeling for external nature had such a man as Michael?" The lines, which correspond to lines 62-77 of the poem, are as follows;

“No doubt if you in terms direct had asked
Whether beloved the mountains, true it is
That with blunt repetition of your words
He might have stared at you, and said that they
Were frightful to behold, but had you then
Discoursed with him
Of his own business and the goings on
Of earth and sky, then truly had you seen
That in his thoughts there were obscurities,
Wonder and admiration, things that wrought
Not less than a religion of his heart.”



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17. In Dorothy Wordsworth's Journal for October 11, 1800, we read: "After dinner, we walked up Greenhead Gill in search of a sheepfold. . . The sheepfold is falling away. It is built in the form of a heart unequally divided."

48. *The meaning of all winds*. This is not a figurative Statement. Michael knows by experience whether the sound and direction of the wind forebode storm or fair weather, —precisely the practical kind of knowledge which a herdsman should possess.

51. *Subterraneous*. The meaning of this word has given rise to discussion. "Subterraneous" cannot here be literally employed, unless it refer to the sound of the wind in hollow places, and beneath overhanging crags.

51-52. *Like the noise, etc*. Is there a special appropriateness in the use of a Scottish simile? What is the general character of the similes throughout the poem?

56-77. Wordsworth never attributes to Michael the subtler and more philosophical sensations which he himself derived from nature. Such poems as *The Prelude* or *The Excursion* contain many elevated passages on the influence of nature, which would have been exceedingly inappropriate here.

115. Scan this line.

121. *Nor cheerful*. The epithet seems not well chosen in view of the fact that all the circumstances of their life breathe a spirit of quiet cheerfulness. Surely the light (129-131) was a symbol of cheer.

126. *Peculiar work*. Bring out the force of the epithet.

134. *Easedale*. Near Grasmere. *Dunmail-raise*. The pass leading from Grasmere to Keswick. *Raise*. A provincial word meaning "an ascent."

139. *The evening star*. This name was actually given to a neighboring house.

143-152. The love of Michael for Luke is inwrought with his love for his home and for the land which surrounds it. These he desires at his death to hand down unencumbered to his son. "I have attempted," Wordsworth wrote to Poole, "to give a picture of a man of strong mind and lively sensibility, agitated by two of the most powerful affections of the human heart—the parental affection and the love of property, *landed* property, including the feelings of inheritance, home and personal and family independence."

145. Scan this line.

169. *The clipping tree*. Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing. (Wordsworth's note, 1800).



182. Notice the entire absence of pause at the end of the line. Point out other instances of run-on lines (*enjambement*).

259. *Parish-boy*. Depending on charity.

268-270. Wordsworth added the following note on these lines: "The story alluded to here is well known in the country. The chapel is called Ing's Chapel; and is on the right hand side of the road leading from Kendal to Ambleside."



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283. *And to the fields went forth* Observe the inconsistency. The conversation took place in the evening. See l. 327.

284f. *With A light heart.* Michael's growing misgivings are subtly represented in the following lines, and the renewal of his hopes.

367-368. These lines forcibly show how tenaciously Michael's feelings were rooted in the soil of his home. Hence the extreme pathos of the situation.

388. Observe the dramatic force of this line.

393-396. What unconscious poetry there is in the old man's words!

420. Scan this line.

445. Scan this line.

466. Matthew Arnold commenting on this line says; "The right sort of verse to choose from Wordsworth, if we are to seize his true and most characteristic form of expression, is a line like this from Michael: 'And never lifted up a single stone.' There is nothing subtle in it, no heightening, no study of poetic style strictly so called, at all; yet it is an expression of the highest and most truly expressive kind."

467f. Note the noble simplicity and pathos of these closing lines. There is a reserved force of pent-up pathos here, which without effort reaches the height of dramatic effectiveness.

TO THE DAISY

Bright Flower! whose home is everywhere,
Bold in maternal Nature's care,
And all the long year through the heir
Of joy and sorrow,
Methinks that there abides in thee 5
Some concord with humanity,
Given to no other flower I see
The forest thorough!

Is it that Man is soon deprest?
A thoughtless Thing! who, once unblest, 10
Does little on his memory rest,
Or on his reason,
And Thou would'st teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,



A hope for times that are unkind, 15
And every season?

Thou wander'st the wide world about,
Uncheck'd by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
Yet pleased and wilting; 20
Meek, yielding to the occasion's call,
And all things suffering from all,
Thy function apostolical
In peace fulfilling.

8. Thorough. This is by derivation the correct form of the modern word "through." A.S. *thurh*, M.E. *thuruh*. The use of "thorough" is now purely adjectival, except in archaic or poetic speech.

24. APOSTOLICAL. The stanza in which this word occurs was omitted in 1827 and 1832, because the expression was censured as almost profane. Wordsworth in his dictated note to Miss Fenwick has the following: "The word [apostolical] is adopted with reference to its derivation, implying something sent out on a mission; and assuredly this little flower, especially when the subject of verse, may be regarded, in its humble degree, as administering both to moral and spiritual purposes."



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TO THE CUCKOO

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice?

While I am lying on the grass, 5
Thy twofold shout I hear;
From hill to hill it seems to pass,
At once far off, and near.

Though babbling only to the Vale
Of sunshine and of flowers, 10
Thou bringest unto me a tale
Of visionary hours.

Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing, 15
A voice, a mystery;

The same whom in my schoolboy days
I listened to; that Cry
Which made me look a thousand ways
In bush, and tree, and sky. 20

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

And I can listen to thee yet; 25
Can lie upon the plain
And listen, till I do beget
That golden time again.

O blessed Bird! the earth we pace
Again appears to be 30
An unsubstantial, faery place;
That is fit home for Thee!

1. O blithe new-comer. The Cuckoo is migratory, and appears in England in the early spring. Compare *Solitary Reaper*, l. 16.



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By exhortation of my frugal Dame,—
Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, and, in truth,
More ragged than need was! O'er pathless rocks,
Through beds of matted fern and tangled thickets, 15
Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung, 20
A virgin scene! A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet; or beneath the trees I sate 25
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves 30
The violets of five seasons reappear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
Forever; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And, with my cheek on one of those green stones 35
That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep,
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and of its joy secure, 40
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage: and the shady nook 45
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned 50
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,



I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.—
Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand 55
Touch,—for there is a spirit in the woods.

5. OUR COTTAGE THRESHOLD. “The house at which I was boarded during the time I was at school.” (Wordsworth’s note, 1800). The school was the Hawkshead School.

9. TRICKED OUT=_dressed_. The verb “to trick”=“to dress” is derived probably from the noun, “trick” in the sense of ‘a dexterous artifice,’ ‘a touch.’ See “Century Dictionary.”

CAST-OFF WEEDS=_cast-off clothes_. Wordsworth originally wrote ‘of Beggar’s weeds.’ What prompted him to change the expression?

10. FOR THAT SERVICE. *i.e.*, for nutting.

12-13. OF POWER TO SMILE AT THORNS=_able to defy_, *etc.* Not because of their strength, but because so ragged that additional rents were of small account.

21. VIRGIN=_unmarred, undevastated_.

31. Explain the line. Notice the poetical way in which the poet conveys the idea of solitude, (l. 30-32).



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33. FAIRY WATER-BREAKS=_wavelets, ripples_. Cf.:—

Many a silvery *water-break*
Above the golden gravel.
Tennyson, *The Brook*.

36. FLEECE WITH MOSS. Suggest a reason why the term “fleece” has peculiar appropriateness here.

39-40. Paraphrase these lines to bring out their meaning.

43-48. THEN UP I ROSE. Contrast this active exuberant pleasure not unmixed with pain with the passive meditative joy that the preceding lines express.

47-48. PATIENTLY GAVE UP THEIR QUIET BEING. Notice the attribution of life to inanimate nature. Wordsworth constantly held that there was a mind and all the attributes of mind in nature. Cf. l. 56, “for there is a spirit in the woods.”

53. AND SAW THE INTRUDING SKY. Bring out the force of this passage.

54. THEN, DEAREST MAIDEN. This is a reference to the poet’s Sister, Dorothy Wordsworth.

56. FOR THERE IS A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS. Cf. *Tintern Abbey*, 101 f.

A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul, that art the Eternity of thought!
And giv’st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain,
By day or starlight, thus from my first dawn 5
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 10
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying by such discipline



Both pain and fear,—until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 15
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapors rolling down the valleys made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon; and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 20
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 25
Was set, and, visible for many a mile,
The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,
I heeded not the summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 30
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

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We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase 35
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; 40
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; 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 45
The orange sky of evening died away.

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

1-14. In what other poems does Wordsworth describe “the education of nature?”

8. Nature’s teaching is never sordid nor mercenary, but always purifying and ennobling.

10. PURIFYING, also SANCTIFYING (l. 12), refer to “Soul” (l. 2).

12-14. Human cares are lightened in proportion to our power of sympathising with nature. The very beatings of our heart acquire a certain grandeur from the fact that they



are a process of nature and linked thus to the general life of things. It is possible that “beatings of the heart” may figuratively represent the mere play of the emotions, and thus have a bearing upon the words “pain and fear” in line 13.

15. FELLOWSHIP. Communion with nature in her varying aspects as described in the following lines.

31. VILLAGE CLOCK. The village was Hawkshead.

35. CONFEDERATE. Qualifies “we,” or “games.” Point out the different shades of meaning for each agreement.

42. TINKLED LIKE IRON. “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*.” S. T. Coleridge in *The Friend*, ii, 325 (1818).

42-44. The keenness of Wordsworth’s sense perceptions was very remarkable. His susceptibility to impressions of sound is well illustrated in this passage, which closes (l. 43-46) with a color picture of striking beauty and appropriateness.



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50. REFLEX=_reflection_. Cf.:

Like the *reflex* of the moon
Seen in a wave under green leaves.
Shelley, *Prometheus Unbound*, iii, 4.

In later editions Wordsworth altered these lines as follows:

To cut across the image. 1809. To cross the bright reflection. 1820.

54-60. The effect of rapid motion is admirably described. The spinning effect which Wordsworth evidently has in mind we have all noticed in the fields which seem to revolve when viewed from a swiftly moving: train. However, a skater from the low level of a stream would see only the fringe of trees sweep past him. The darkness and the height of the banks would not permit him to see the relatively motionless objects in the distance in either hand.

57-58. This method of stopping short upon one's heels might prove disastrous.

58-60. The effect of motion persists after the motion has ceased.

62 63. The apparent motion of the cliffs grows feebler by degrees until "all was tranquil as a summer sea." In *The* [Transcriber's note: the rest of this footnote is missing from the original book because of a printing error.]

TO THE REV. DR. WORDSWORTH

(WITH THE SONNETS TO THE RIVER DUDDON, AND OTHER
POEMS IN THIS COLLECTION, 1820).

The minstrels played their Christmas tune
To-night beneath my cottage-eaves;
While, smitten by a lofty moon,
The encircling laurels, thick with leaves,
Gave back a rich and dazzling sheen, 5
That overpowered their natural green.

Through hill and valley every breeze
Had sunk to rest with folded wings;
Keen was the air, but could not freeze,
Nor check, the music of the strings; 10
So stout and hardy were the band
That scraped the chords with strenuous hand:



And who but listened?—till was paid
Respect to every Inmate's claim:
The greeting given, the music played, 15
In honor of each household name,
Duly pronounced with lusty call,
And "Merry Christmas" wished to all!

O Brother! I revere the choice
That took thee from thy native hills; 20
And it is given thee to rejoice:
Though public care full often tills
(Heaven only witness of the toil)
A barren and ungrateful soil.

Yet, would that Thou, with me and mine, 25
Hadst heard this never-failing rite;
And seen on other faces shine
A true revival of the light
Which Nature and these rustic Powers,
In simple childhood, spread through ours! 30

For pleasure hath not ceased to wait
On these expected annual rounds;
Whether the rich man's sumptuous gate
Call forth the unelaborate sounds,
Or they are offered at the door 35
That guards the lowliest of the poor.



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How touching, when, at midnight, sweep
Snow-muffled winds, and all is dark
To hear—and sink again-to sleep
Or, at an earlier call, to mark, 40
By blazing fire, the still suspense
Of self-complacent innocence;

The mutual nod,—the grave disguise
Of hearts with gladness brimming o'er;
And some unbidden tears that rise 45
For names once heard, and heard no more;
Tears brightened by the serenade
For infant in the cradle laid.

Ah! not for emerald fields alone,
With ambient streams more pure and bright 50
Than fabled Cytherea's zone
Glittering before the Thunderer's sight,
Is to my heart of hearts endeared
The ground where we were born and reared!

Hail, ancient Manners! sure defence, 55
Where they survive, of wholesome laws;
Remnants of love whose modest sense
Thus into narrow room withdraws;
Hail, Usages of pristine mould,
And ye that guard them, Mountains old! 60

Bear with me, Brother! quench the thought
That slights this passion, or condemns;
If thee fond Fancy ever brought
From the proud margin of the Thames,
And Lambeth's venerable towers, 65
To humbler streams, and greener bowers.

Yes, they can make, who fail to fill
Short leisure even in busiest days;
Moments, to cast a look behind,
And profit by those kindly rays 70
That through the clouds do sometimes steal,
And all the far-off past reveal.

Hence, while the imperial City's din
Beats frequent on thy satiate ear,



A pleased attention I may win 75
To agitations less severe,
That neither overwhelm nor cloy,
But fill the hollow vale with joy!

Christopher Wordsworth was born at Cockerthorpe in Cumberland on June 9th, 1774. He received his early education at Hawkshead Grammar School and in 1792 entered Trinity College, Cambridge, as a pensioner. He graduated in 1796 with high honours in mathematics, and in 1798 was elected a fellow of his college. He took his M.A. degree in 1799 and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1810. While at Cambridge Christopher had been tutor to Viscount Canterbury, who introduced him to his father, at that time Bishop of Norwich. Through the good offices of the Bishop he was appointed to the rectory of Ashby, Norfolk, and thus, with prospects settled, he was enabled to marry. On the appointment of the Bishop of Norwich to the Archbishopric of Canterbury he was appointed domestic chaplain to the Archbishop. Subsequently in 1816 he was appointed rector of St. Mary's, Lambeth, the living he held at the time the poem in the text was written.

In 1820 Christopher was made Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, a position he held until his resignation in 1841. He died at Buxted on February 2nd, 1846. "He was an earnest and deeply religious man; in some respects a high churchman of the old school, but with sympathy for whatever was good and noble in others. In politics he was a staunch Conservative."



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15. THE GREETING GIVEN, THE MUSIC PLAYED. Till the greeting had been given and the music played.

17. Attributive to "name" (l. 16.)

18. Explain the construction of "wished."

50. AMBIENT=_winding_.

51. CYTHEREA'S ZONE. The goddess Venus was named Cytherea because she was supposed to have been born of the foam of the sea near Cythera, an island off the coast of the Peloponnesus. Venus was the goddess of love, and her power over the heart was strengthened by the marvellous zone or girdle she wore.

52. THE THUNDERER. The reference is to Jupiter, who is generally represented as seated upon a golden or ivory throne holding in one hand the thunderbolts, and in the other a sceptre of cypress.

55-60. Suggest how this stanza is characteristic of Wordsworth.

65. LAMBETH'S VENERABLE TOWERS. Lambeth Palace, the official residence of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is on the Thames. Wordsworth's brother Christopher, afterwards Master of Trinity College, was then (1820) Rector of Lambeth.

ELEGIAC STANZAS

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

I was thy neighbor 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;

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
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 of my heart,
Such Picture would I at that time have made: 30
And seen the soul of truth in every part,
A steadfast peace that might not be betrayed.



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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 humanized my Soul.

Not for a moment could I now behold
A smiling sea, and be what I have been:
The feeling of my loss will ne'er be old;
This, which I know, I speak with mind serene. 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 labors in the deadly swell,
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

And this huge Castle, standing here sublime,
I love to see the look with which it braves, 50
Cased in the unfeeling armor 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

2. FOUR SUMMER WEEKS. In 1794 Wordsworth spent part of a summer vacation at the house of his cousin, Mr. Barker, at Rampside, a village near Peele Castle.

6-7. Shelley has twice imitated these lines. Compare:—

Within the surface of Time's fleeting river
Its wrinkled Image lies, as then it lay
Immovably unquiet, and for ever



It trembles, but it cannot pass away.
Ode to Liberty, vi.

also the following:

Within the surface of the fleeting river
The wrinkled image of the city lay,
Immovably unquiet, and for ever
It trembles, but it never fades away.
Evening.

9-10. The calm was so complete that it did not seem a transient mood of the sea, a passing sleep.

13-16. Compare with the above original reading of 1807 (restored after 1827) the lines which Wordsworth substituted in 1820 and 1827.

Ah! THEN, if mine had been the Painter's hand,
To express what then I saw; and add a gleam,
The lustre, known to neither sea nor land,
But borrowed from the youthful Poet's dream.

35-36. A POWER IS GONE—SOUL. The reference is to the death at sea of his brother Captain John Wordsworth. The poet can no longer see things wholly idealized. His brother's death has revealed to him, however, the ennobling virtue of grief. Thus a personal loss is converted into human gain. Note especially in this connection l. 35 and ll. 53-60.



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54. FROM THE KIND. From our fellow-beings.

“IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF”

It is not to be thought of that the Flood
 Of British freedom, which to the open sea
 Of the world's praise from dark antiquity
 Hath flowed, 'with pomp of waters, unwithstood,'
 Roused though it be full often to a mood 5
 Which spurns the check of salutary bands,
 That this most famous Stream in bogs and sands
 Should perish, and to evil and to good
 Be lost forever. In our halls is hung
 Armoury of the invincible Knights of old: 10
 We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
 That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals hold
 Which Milton held.—In everything we are sprung
 Of Earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

4. 'WITH POMP OF WATERS, UNWITHSTOOD.' This is quoted from Daniel's *Civil War*, Bk. ii, stanza 7.

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802

O Friend! I know not which way I must look
 For comfort, being, as I am, oppressed,
 To think that now our life is only dressed
 For show; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
 Or groom!—We must run glittering like a brook 5
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblessed:
 The wealthiest man among us is the best:
 No grandeur now in nature or in book
 Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry; and these we adore: 10
 Plain living and high thinking are no more:
 The homely beauty of the good old cause
 Is gone; our peace, our fearful innocence,
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

LONDON, 1802

Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour:
 England hath need of thee: she is a fen



Of stagnant waters; altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea: 10
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

“DARK AND MORE DARK THE SHADES OF EVENING FELL”

Dark and more dark the shades of evening fell;
The wished-for point was reached—but at an hour
When little could be gained from that rich dower
Of Prospect, whereof many thousands tell.
Yet did the glowing west with marvellous power 5
Salute us; there stood Indian citadel,
Temple of Greece, and minster with its tower
Substantially expressed—a place



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for bell

Or clock to toll from! Many a tempting isle,
With groves that never were imagined, lay 10
'Mid seas how steadfast! objects all for the eye
Of silent rapture, but we felt the while
We should forget them; they are of the sky
And from our earthly memory fade away.

“SURPRISED BY JOY—IMPATIENT AS THE WIND”

Surprised by joy—impatient as the wind
I turned to share the transport—Oh! with whom
But Thee, deep buried in the silent tomb,
That spot which no vicissitude can find?
Love, faithful love, recalled thee to my mind— 5
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,
Even for the least division of an hour,
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind
To my most grievous loss?—That thought's return
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore, 10
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;
That neither present time, nor years unborn
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.

“HAIL, TWILIGHT, SOVEREIGN OF ONE PEACEFUL HOUR”

Hail, Twilight, sovereign of one peaceful hour!
Not dull art Thou as undiscerning Night;
But studious only to remove from sight
Day's mutable distinctions.—Ancient Power!
Thus did the waters gleam, the mountains lower, 5
To the rude Briton, when, in wolf-skin vest
Here roving wild, he laid him down to rest
On the bare rock, or through a leafy bower
Looked ere his eyes were closed. By him was seen
The self-same Vision which we now behold, 10
At thy meek bidding, shadowy Power! brought forth
These mighty barriers, and the gulf between;
The flood, the stars,—a spectacle as old
As the beginning of the heavens and earth!



“I THOUGHT OF THEE, MY PARTNER AND MY GUIDE”

I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide,
As being past away.—Vain sympathies!
For, backward, Duddon, as I cast my eyes,
I see what was, and is, and will abide;
Still glides the Stream, and shall for ever glide; 5
The Form remains, the Function never dies,
While we, the brave, the mighty, and the wise,
We Men, who in our morn of youth defied
The elements, must vanish;—be it so!
Enough, if something from our hands have power 10
To live, and act, and serve the future hour;
And if, as toward the silent tomb we go,
Through love, through hope, and faith’s transcendent dower,
We feel that we are greater than we know.

“SUCH AGE, HOW BEAUTIFUL!”



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Such age, how beautiful! O Lady bright,
Whose mortal lineaments seem all refined
By favouring Nature and a saintly Mind
To something purer and more exquisite
Than flesh and blood; whene'er thou meet'est my sight, 5
When I behold thy blanched unwithered cheek,
Thy temples fringed with locks of gleaming white,
And head that droops because the soul is meek,
Thee with the welcome Snowdrop I compare;
That child of winter, prompting thoughts that climb 10
From desolation toward the genial prime;
Or with the Moon conquering earth's misty air,
And filling more and more with crystal light
As pensive Evening deepens into night.

TENNYSON

OENONE

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapour slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand 5
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the clov'n ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.
Behind the valley topmost Gargarus 10
Stands up and takes the morning: but in front
The gorges, opening wide apart, reveal
Troas and Ilion's column'd citadel,
The crown of Troas.

Hither came at noon
Mournful Oenone, wandering forlorn 15
Of Paris, once her playmate on the hills.
Her cheek had lost the rose, and round her neck
Floated her hair or seem'd to float in rest.
She, leaning on a fragment twined with vine,
Sang to the stillness, till the mountain-shade 20
Sloped downward to her seat from the upper cliff



“O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
For now the noonday quiet holds the hill:
The grasshopper is silent in the grass: 25
The lizard, with his shadow on the stone,
Rests like a shadow, and the winds are dead
The purple flower droops: the golden bee
Is lily-cradled: I alone awake.
My eyes are full of tears, my heart of love, 30
My heart is breaking, and my eyes are dim,
And I am all aweary of my life.

“O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Hear me, O Earth; hear me, O Hills, O Caves 35
That house the cold crowned snake! O mountain brooks,
I am the daughter of a River-God,
Hear me, for I will speak, and build up all
My sorrow with my song, as yonder walls
Rose slowly to a music slowly breathed, 40
A cloud that gather’d shape: for it may be
That, while I speak of it, a little while
My heart may wander from its deeper woe.



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“O mother Ida, many-fountain’d Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die. 45
I waited underneath the dawning hills,
Aloft the mountain lawn was dewy-dark,
And dewy-dark aloft the mountain pine:
Beautiful Paris, evil-hearted Paris,
Leading a jet-black goat white-horn’d, white-hooved, 50
Came up from reedy Simols all alone.

“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Far-off the torrent call’d me from the cleft:
Far up the solitary morning smote
The streaks of virgin snow. With down-dropt eyes 55
I sat alone: white-breasted like a star
Fronting the dawn he moved; a leopard skin
Droop’d from his shoulder, but his sunny hair
Cluster’d about his temples like a God’s;
And his cheek brighten’d as the foam-bow brightens 60
When the wind blows the foam, and all my heart
Went forth to embrace him coming ere he came.

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
He smiled, and opening out his milk-white palm
Disclosed a fruit of pure Hesperian gold, 65
That smelt ambrosially, and while I look’d
And listen’d, the full-flowing river of speech
Came down upon my heart.

“My own Oenone,
Beautiful-brow’d Oenone, my own soul,
Behold this fruit, whose gleaming rind ingrav’n 70
“For the most fair,” would seem to award it thine
As lovelier than whatever Oread haunt
The knolls of Ida, loveliest in all grace
Of movement, and the charm of married brows.

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die. 75
He prest the blossom of his lips to mine,
And added ‘This was cast upon the board,
When all the full-faced presence of the Gods
Ranged in the halls of Peleus; whereupon
Rose feud, with question unto whom ‘twere due: 80
But light-foot Iris brought it yester-eve,
Delivering that to me, by common voice
Elected umpire, Here comes to-day,



Pallas and Aphrodite, claiming each
This meed of fairest. Thou, within the cave 85
Behind yon whispering tuft of oldest pine,
Mayst well behold them unbeheld, unheard
Hear all, and see thy Paris judge of Gods.'

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
It was the deep mid-noon: one silvery cloud 90
Had lost his way between the piney sides
Of this long glen. Then to the bower they came,
Naked they came to that smooth-swarded bower,
And at their feet the crocus brake like fire,
Violet, amaracus, and asphodel, 95
Lotos and lilies: and a wind arose,
And overhead the wandering ivy and vine,
This way and that, in many a wild festoon
Ran riot, garlanding the gnarled boughs
With bunch and berry and flower thro' and thro'. 100



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“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
On the tree-tops a crested peacock lit,
And o'er him flow'd a golden cloud, and lean'd
Upon him, slowly dropping fragrant dew.
Then first I heard the voice other, to whom 105
Coming thro' Heaven, like a light that grows
Larger and clearer, with one mind the Gods
Rise up for reverence. She to Paris made
Proffer of royal power, ample rule
Unquestion'd, overflowing revenue 110
Wherewith to embellish state, 'from many a vale
And river-sunder'd champaign cloth'd with corn,
Or labour'd mines undrainable of ore.
Honour,' she said, 'and homage, tax and toll,
From many an inland town and haven large, 115
Mast-throng'd beneath her shadowing citadel
In glassy bays among her tallest towers.'

“O mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Still she spake on and still she spake of power,
'Which in all action is the end of all; 120
Power fitted to the season; wisdom-bred
And throned of wisdom—from all neighbour crowns
Alliance and allegiance, till thy hand
Fail from the sceptre-staff. Such boon from me,
From me, Heaven's Queen, Paris, to thee king-born, 125
A shepherd all thy life but yet king-born,
Should come most welcome, seeing men, in power
Only, are likest gods, who have attain'd
Rest in a happy place and quiet seats
Above the thunder, with undying bliss 130
In knowledge of their own supremacy.'

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She ceased, and Paris held the costly fruit
Out at arm's-length, so much the thought of power
Flatter'd his spirit; but Pallas where she stood 135
Somewhat apart, her clear and bared limbs
O'erthwarted with the brazen-headed spear
Upon her pearly shoulder leaning cold,
The while, above, her full and earnest eye
Over her snow-cold breast and angry cheek 140
Kept watch, waiting decision, made reply.



“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control;
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.
Yet not for power, (power of herself
Would come uncall'd for) but to live by law, 145
Acting the law we live by without fear;
And, because right is right, to follow right
Were wisdom in the scorn of consequence.’

“Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Again she said: 'I woo thee not with gifts. 150
Sequel of guerdon could not alter me
To fairer. Judge thou me by what I am,
So shalt thou find me fairest.
Yet, indeed,
If gazing on divinity disrobed
Thy mortal eyes are frail to judge of fair, 155
Unbias'd by self-profit, oh! rest thee sure
That I shall love thee well and cleave to thee,



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So that my vigour, wedded to thy blood,
Shall strike within thy pulses, like a God's,
To push thee forward thro' a life of shocks, 160
Dangers, and deeds, until endurance grow
Sinew'd with action, and the full-grown will,
Circed thro' all experiences, pure law,
Commeasure perfect freedom.'

"Here she ceas'd,
And Paris ponder'd, and I cried, 'O Paris, 165
Give it to Pallas!' but he heard me not,
Or hearing would not hear me, woe is me!

"O mother Ida, many-fountain'd Ida,
Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Idalian Aphrodite beautiful, 170
Fresh as the foam, new-bathed in Paphian wells,
With rosy slender fingers backward drew
From her warm brows and bosom her deep hair
Ambrosial, golden round her lucid throat
And shoulder: from the violets her light foot 175
Shone rosy-white, and o'er her rounded form
Between the shadows of the vine-bunches
Floated the glowing sunlights, as she moved.

"Dear mother Ida, harken ere I die.
She with a subtle smile in her mild eyes, 180
The herald of her triumph, drawing nigh
Half-whisper'd in his ear, 'I promise thee
The fairest and most loving wife in Greece.'
She spoke and laugh'd: I shut my sight for fear:
But when I look'd, Paris had raised his arm, 185
And I beheld great Here's angry eyes,
As she withdrew into the golden cloud,
And I was left alone within the bower;
And from that time to this I am alone,
And I shall be alone until I die. 190

"Yet, mother Ida, harken ere I die.
Fairest—why fairest wife? am I not fair?



My love hath told me so a thousand times;
Methinks I must be fair, for yesterday,
When I past by, a wild and wanton pard, 195
Eyed like the evening star, with playful tail
Crouch'd fawning in the weed. Most loving is she?
Ah me, my mountain shepherd, that my arms
Were wound about thee, and my hot lips prest
Close, close to thine in that quick-falling dew 200
Of fruitful kisses, thick as Autumn rains
Flash in the pools of whirling Simois.

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
They came, they cut away my tallest pines,
My dark tall pines, that plumed the craggy ledge 205
High over the blue gorge, and all between
The snowy peak and snow-white cataract
Foster'd the callow eaglet—from beneath
Whose thick mysterious boughs in the dark morn
The panther's roar came muffled, while I sat 210
Low in the valley. Never, never more
Shall lone Oenone see the morning mist
Sweep thro' them; never see them overlaid
With narrow moon-lit slips of silver cloud,
Between the loud stream and the trembling stars. 215



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“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I wish that somewhere in the ruin’d folds,
Among the fragments tumbled from the glens,
Or the dry thickets, I could meet with her,
The Abominable, that uninvited came 220
Into the fair Peleian banquet-hall,
And cast the golden fruit upon the board,
And bred this change; that I might speak my mind,
And tell her to her face how much I hate
Her presence, hated both of Gods and men. 225

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hath he not sworn his love a thousand times,
In this green valley, under this green hill,
Ev’n on this hand, and sitting on this stone?
Seal’d it with kisses? water’d it with tears? 230
O happy tears, and how unlike to these!
O happy Heaven, how canst thou see my face?
O happy earth, how canst thou bear my weight?
O death, death, death, thou ever-floating cloud,
There are enough unhappy on this earth, 235
Pass by the happy souls, that love to live:
I pray thee, pass before my light of life,
And shadow all my soul, that I may die.
Thou weighest heavy on the heart within,
Weigh heavy on my eyelids: let me die. 240

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
I will not die alone, for fiery thoughts
Do shape themselves within me, more and more,
Whereof I catch the issue, as I hear
Dead sounds at night come from the inmost hills, 245
Like footsteps upon wool. I dimly see
My far-off doubtful purpose, as a mother
Conjectures of the features of her child
Ere it is born: her child!—a shudder comes
Across me: never child be born of me, 250
Unblest, to vex me with his father’s eyes!

“O mother, hear me yet before I die.
Hear me, O earth. I will not die alone,
Lest their shrill happy laughter come to me
Walking the cold and starless road of Death 255
Uncomforted, leaving my ancient love



With the Greek woman. I will rise and go
Down into Troy, and ere the stars come forth
Talk with the wild Cassandra, for she says
A fire dances before her, and a sound 260
Rings ever in her ears of armed men.
What this may be I know not, but I know
That, wheresoe'er I am by night and day,
All earth and air seem only burning fire."

THE EPIC

At Francis Allen's on the Christmas-eve,—
The game of forfeits done—the girls all kiss'd
Beneath the sacred bush and past away—
The parson Holmes, the poet Everard Hall,
The host, and I sat round the wassail-bowl, 5
Then half-way ebb'd: and there we held a talk,
How all the old honour had from Christmas



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gone,

Or gone, or dwindled down to some odd games
In some odd nooks like this; till I, tired out
With cutting eights that day upon the pond, 10
Where, three times slipping from the outer edge,
I bump'd the ice into three several stars,
Fell in a doze; and half-awake I heard
The parson taking wide and wider sweeps,
New harping on the church-commissioners, 15
Now hawking at Geology and schism,
Until I woke, and found him settled down
Upon the general decay of faith
Right thro' the world, 'at home was little left,
And none abroad: there was no anchor, none; 20
To hold by.' Francis, laughing, clapt his hand
On Everard's shoulder, with 'I hold by him.'
'And I,' quoth Everard, 'by the wassail-bowl.'
'Why yes,' I said, 'we knew your gift that way
At college: but another which you had, 25
I mean of verse (for so we held it then),
What came of that?' 'You know,' said Frank, 'he burnt
His epic, his King Arthur, some twelve books'—
And then to me demanding why? 'Oh, sir,
He thought that nothing new was said, or else 30
Something so said 'twas nothing—that a truth
Looks freshest in the fashion of the day:
God knows: he has a mint of reasons: ask.
It pleased *me* well enough,' 'Nay, nay,' said Hall,
'Why take the style of those heroic times? 35
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times; and why should any man
Remodel models? these twelve books of mine
Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,
Mere chaff and draff, much better burnt.' 'But I,' 40
Said Francis, 'pick'd the eleventh from this hearth'
And have it: keep a thing, its use will come.
I hoard it as a sugar-plum for Holmes.'
He laugh'd, and I, tho' sleepy, like a horse
That hears the corn-bin open, prick'd my ears; 45
For I remember'd Everard's college fame
When we were Freshmen: then at my request
He brought it; and the poet little urged,



But with some prelude of disparagement,
Read, mouthing out his hollow oes and aes, 50
Deep-chested music, and to this result.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's table, man by man,
Had fallen in Lyonesse about their Lord,
King Arthur: then, because his wound was deep, 5
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
Sir Bedivere, the last of all his knights,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land. 10
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.



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Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights 15
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls 20
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more—but let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm 25
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake, 30
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword—and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king:
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known: 35
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seest, and lightly being me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus, 40
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm.
A little thing may harm a wounded man.
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept 45
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zig-zag paths and juts of pointed rock, 50
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,



Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt: 55
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled, as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind, 60
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King 65

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou performed my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds, 70
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'



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To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name,
Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight: 75
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing 80
I bad thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt, 85
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud,

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth, 90
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand 95
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumours of a doubt? but were this kept, 100
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps 105
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the after-time
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honour and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit, 110
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.



Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere: 115
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me! 120
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all, 125
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence: 130
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'



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Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged
Among the bulrush-beds, and clutch'd the sword, 135
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock 140
By night, with noises of the northern sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 145
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King-Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou has heard, or seen?' 150

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men, 155
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him 160
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 'tis time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,
And bear me to the margin; yet I fear 165
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.'

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere 170
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words,



Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs. 175

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.' 180

But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad. 185
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and



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right

The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels— 190
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware 195
That all the decks were dense with stately forms
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream—by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold—and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice an agony 200
Of lamentation, like a wind, that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world,
Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
And to the barge they came. There those three Queens 205
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud, 210
And dropping bitter tears against his brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops 215
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dais-throne—were parch'd with dust;
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips. 220
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings. 225



Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere,
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance, 230
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole ROUND TABLE is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world; 235
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'



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And slowly answered Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new, 240
And God fulfils Himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within Himself make pure! but thou, 245
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats 250
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God. 255
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go—
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt)
To the island-valley of Avilion;
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow, 260
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard-lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail 265
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull 270
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

* * * * *

Here ended Hall, and our last light, that long
Had wink'd and threatened darkness, flared and fell:
At which the Parson, sent to sleep with sound,
And waked with silence, grunted 'Good!' but we 55
Sat rapt: it was the tone with which he read—
Perhaps some modern touches here and there



Redeem'd it from the charge of nothingness—
Or else we loved the man, and prized his work;
I know not: but we sitting, as I said, 60
The cock crew loud; as at that time of year
The lusty bird takes every hour for dawn:
Then Francis, muttering, like a man ill-used,
'There now—that's nothing!' drew a little back,
And drove his heel into the smoulder'd log, 65
That sent a blast of sparkles up the flue:
And so to bed; where yet in sleep I seem'd
To sail with Arthur under looming shores,
Point after point; till on to dawn, when dreams
Begin to feel the truth and stir of day, 70
To me, methought, who waited with a crowd,



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There came a bark that, blowing forward, bore
King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port; and all the people cried,
'Arthur is come again: he cannot die.' 75
Then those that stood upon the hills behind
Repeated—'Come again, and thrice as fair;'
And, further inland, voices echo'd—'Come
With all good things, and war shall be no more.'
At this a hundred bells began to peal, 80
That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed
The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.

THE BROOK

Here, by this brook, we parted; I to the East
And he for Italy—too late—too late;
One whom the strong sons of the world despise;
For lucky rhymes to him were scrip and share,
And mellow metres more than cent for cent; 5
Nor could he understand how money breeds;
Thought it a dead thing; yet himself could make
The thing that is not as the thing that is.
O had he lived! In our schoolbooks we say,
Of those that held their heads above the crowd, 10
They flourish'd then or then; but life in him
Could scarce be said to flourish, only touch'd
On such a time as goes before the leaf,
When all the wood stands in a mist of green,
And nothing perfect: yet the brook he loved, 15
For which, in branding summers of Bengal,
Or ev'n the sweet half-English Neilgherry air
I panted, seems; as I re-listen to it,
Prattling the primrose fancies of the boy,
To me that loved him; for 'O brook,' he says, 20
'O babbling brook,' says Edmund in his rhyme,
'Whence come you?' and the brook, why not? replies:

I come from haunts of coot and hern,
I make a sudden sally,



And sparkle out among the fern, 25
To bicker down a valley.

By thirty hills I hurry down,
Or slip between the ridges,
By twenty thorps, a little town,
And half a hundred bridges. 30

Till last by Philip's farm I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

'Poor lad, he died at Florence, quite worn out, 35
Travelling to Naples. There is Darnley bridge,
It has more ivy; there the river; and there
Stands Philip's farm where brook and river meet.

I chatter over stony ways,
In little sharps and trebles, 40
I bubble into eddying bays,
I babble on the pebbles.

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set 45
With willow-weed and mallow.



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I chatter, chatter, as I flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever. 50

'But Philip chattered more than brook or bird;
Old Philip; all about the fields you caught
His weary daylong chirping, like the dry
High-elbow'd grigs that leap in summer grass.

I wind about, and in and out, 55
With here a blossom sailing,
And here and there a lusty trout,
And here and there a grayling,

And here and there a foamy flake
Upon me, as I travel 60
With many a silvery waterbreak
Above the golden gravel,

And draw them all along, and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

'O darling Katie Willows, his one child!
A maiden of our century, yet most meek;
A daughter of our meadows, yet not coarse;
Straight, but as lissome as a hazel wand; 70
Her eyes a bashful azure, and her hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within.

Sweet Katie, once I did her a good turn,
Her and her far-off cousin and betrothed, 75
James Willows, of one name and heart with her.
For here I came, twenty years back—the week
Before I parted with poor Edmund; crost
By that old bridge which, half in ruins then,
Still makes a hoary eyebrow for the gleam 80
Beyond it, where the waters marry—crost,
Whistling a random bar of Bonny Doon,
And push'd at Philip's garden-gate. The gate,
Half-parted from a weak and scolding hinge,



Stuck; and he clamour'd from a casement, "Run" 85
To Katie somewhere in the walks below,
"Run, Katie!" Katie never ran: she moved
To meet me, winding under woodbine bowers,
A little flutter'd, with her eyelids down,
Fresh apple-blossom, blushing for a boon. 90

'What was it? less of sentiment than sense
Had Katie; not illiterate; nor of those
Who dabbling in the fount of fictive tears,
And nursed by mealy-mouth'd philanthropies,
Divorce the Feeling from her mate the Deed. 95
'She told me. She and James had quarrell'd. Why?
What cause of quarrel? None, she said, no cause;
James had no cause: but when I prest the cause,
I learnt that James had flickering jealousies
Which anger'd her. Who anger'd James? I said. 100
But Katie snatch'd her eyes at once from mine,
And sketching with her slender pointed foot
Some figure like a wizard pentagram
On garden gravel, let my query pass
Unclaimed, in flushing silence, till I



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ask'd 105

If James were coming. "Coming every day,"
She answer'd, "ever longing to explain,
But evermore her father came across
With some long-winded tale, and broke him short;
And James departed vext with him and her." 110
How could I help her? "Would I—was it wrong?"
(Claspt hands and that petitionary grace
Of sweet seventeen subdued me ere she spoke)
"O would I take her father for one hour,
For one half-hour, and let him talk to me!" 115
And even while she spoke, I saw where James
Made toward us, like a wader in the surf,
Beyond the brook, waist-deep in meadow-sweet.

'O Katie, what I suffer'd for your sake!
For in I went, and call'd old Philip out 120
To show the farm: full willingly he rose:
He led me thro' the short sweet-smelling lanes
Of his wheat-suburb, babbling as he went,
He praised his land, his horses, his machines;
He praised his ploughs, his cows, his hogs, his dogs; 125
He praised his hens, his geese, his guinea-hens,
His pigeons, who in session on their roofs
Approved him, bowing at their own deserts:
Then from the plaintive mother's teat he took
Her blind and shuddering puppies, naming each, 130
And naming those, his friends, for whom they were:
Then crost the common into Darnley chase
To show Sir Arthur's deer. In copse and fern
Twinkled the innumerable ear and tail.
Then, seated on a serpent-rooted beech, 135
He pointed out a pasturing colt, and said:
"That was the four-year-old I sold the Squire."
And there he told a long long-winded tale
Of how the Squire had seen the colt at grass,
And how it was the thing his daughter wish'd, 140
And how he sent the bailiff to the farm
To learn the price, and what the price he ask'd,
And how the bailiff swore that he was mad,
But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;
He gave them line; and five days after that 145



He met the bailiff at the Golden Fleece,
Who then and there had offer'd something more,
But he stood firm; and so the matter hung;
He knew the man; the colt would fetch its price;
He gave them line: and how by chance at last 150
(It might be May or April, he forgot,
The last of April or the first of May)
He found the bailiff riding by the farm,
And, talking from the point, he drew him in,
And there he mellow'd all his heart with ale, 155
Until they closed a bargain, hand in hand.



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'Then, while I breathed in sight of haven, he,
Poor fellow, could he help it? recommenced,
And ran thro' all the coltish chronicle,
Wild Will, Black Bess, Tantivy, Tallyho, 160
Reform, White Rose, Bellerophon, the Jilt,
Arbaces, and Phenomenon, and the rest,
Tilt, not to die a listener, I arose,
And with me Philip, talking still; and so
We turn'd our foreheads from the falling sun, 165
And following our own shadows thrice as long
As when they follow'd us from Philip's door,
Arrived, and found the sun of sweet content
Re-risen in Katie's eyes, and all thing's well.

I steal by lawns and grassy plots, 170
I slide by hazel covers;
I move the sweet forget-me-nots
That grow for happy lovers.

I slip, I slide, I gloom, I glance,
Among my skimming swallows; 175
I make the netted sunbeam dance
Against my sandy shallows.

I murmur under moon and stars
In brambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars; 180
I loiter round my cresses;

And out again I curve and flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever. 185

Yes, men may come and go; and these are gone,
All gone. My dearest brother, Edmund, sleeps,
Not by the well-known stream and rustic spire,
But unfamiliar Arno, and the dome
Of Brunelleschi; sleeps in peace: and he, 190
Poor Philip, of all his lavish waste of words
Remains the lean P. W. on his tomb:
I scraped the lichen from it: Katie walks
By the long wash of Australasian seas



Far off, and holds her head to other stars, 195
And breathes in April autumns. All are gone.'

So Lawrence Aylmer, seated on a stile
In the long hedge, and rolling in his mind
Old waifs of rhyme, and bowing o'er the brook
A tonsured head in middle age forlorn, 200
Mused and was mute. On a sudden a low breath
Offender air made tremble in the hedge
The fragile bindweed-bells and briony rings;
And he look'd up. There stood a maiden near,
Waiting to pass. In much amaze he stared 205
On eyes a bashful azure, and on hair
In gloss and hue the chestnut, when the shell
Divides threefold to show the fruit within:
Then, wondering, ask'd her 'Are you from the farm?'
'Yes' answer'd she. 'Pray stay a little: pardon me; 210
What do they call you?' 'Katie.' 'That were strange.
What surname?' 'Willows.' 'No!' 'That is my name.'
'Indeed!' and here he look'd so self-perplext,
That Katie laugh'd, and laughing



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blush'd, till he

Laugh'd also, but as one before he wakes, 215
Who feels a glimmering strangeness in his dream;
Then looking at her; 'Too happy, fresh and fair,
Too fresh and fair in our sad world's best bloom,
To be the ghost of one who bore your name
About these meadows, twenty years ago. 220

'Have you not heard?' said Katie, 'we came back.
We bought the farm we tenanted before.
Am I so like her? so they said on board.
Sir, if you knew her in her English days,
My mother, as it seems you did, the days 225
That most she loves to talk of, come with me.
My brother James is in the harvest-field:
But she—you will be welcome—O, come in!'

IN MEMORIAM

XXVII

I envy not in any moods
The captive void of noble rage,
The linnet born within the cage,
That never knew the summer woods:

I envy not the beast that takes 5
His license in the field of time,
Unfetter'd by the sense of crime,
To whom a conscience never wakes;

Nor, what may count itself as blest,
The heart that never plighted troth 10
But stagnates in the weeds of sloth;
Nor any want-begotten rest.

I hold it true, whate'er befall;
I feel it, when I sorrow most;
'Tis better to have loved and lost 15
Than never to have lov'd at all.

LXIV



Dost thou look back on what hath been,
As some divinely gifted man,
Whose life in low estate began
And on a simple village green;

Who breaks his birth's invidious bar, 5
And grasps the skirts of happy chance,
And breasts the blows of circumstance,
And grapples with his evil star;

Who makes by force his merit known
And lives to clutch the golden keys, 10
To mould a mighty state's decrees,
And shape the whisper of the throne;

And moving up from high to higher,
Becomes on Fortune's crowning slope
The pillar of a people's hope, 15
The centre of a world's desire;

Yet feels, as in a pensive dream,
When all his active powers are still,
A distant dearness in the hill,
A secret sweetness in the stream, 20

The limit of his narrower fate,
While yet beside its vocal springs
He play'd at counsellors and kings,
With one that was his earliest mate;

Who ploughs with pain his native lea 25
And reaps the labour of his hands,
Or in the furrow musing stands;
"Does my old friend remember me?"

LXXXIII

Dip down upon the northern shore,
O sweet new-year delaying long;
Thou doest expectant nature wrong;
Delaying long, delay no more.



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What stays thee from the clouded noons, 5
Thy sweetness from its proper place?
Can trouble live with April days,
Or sadness in the summer moons?

Bring orchis, bring the foxglove spire,
The little speedwell's darling blue, 10
Deep tulips dash'd with fiery dew,
Laburnums, dropping-wells of fire.

O thou, new-year, delaying long,
Delayest the sorrow in my blood,
That longs to burst a frozen bud 15
And flood a fresher throat with song.

LXXXVI

Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below 5
Thro' all the dewy-tassell'd wood,
And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brows and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
The full new life that feeds thy breath 10
Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brethren, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas
On leagues of odour streaming far,
To where in yonder orient star 15
A hundred spirits whisper "Peace."

CI

Unwatch'd, the garden bough shall sway,
The tender blossom flutter down,
Unloved, that beech will gather brown,
This maple burn itself away;



Unloved, the sun-flower, shining fair, 5
Ray round with flames her disk of seed,
And many a rose-carnation feed
With summer spice the humming air;

Unloved, by many a sandy bar,
The brook shall babble down the plain, 10
At noon or when the lesser wain
Is twisting round the polar star;

Uncared for, gird the windy grove,
And flood the haunts of hern and crake;
Or into silver arrows break 15
The sailing moon in creek and cove;

Till from the garden and the wild
A fresh association blow,
And year by year the landscape grow
Familiar to the stranger's child; 20

As year by year the labourer tills
His wonted glebe, or lops the glades;
And year by year our memory fades
From all the circle of the hills.

CXIV

Who loves not Knowledge? Who shall rail
Against her beauty? May she mix
With men and prosper! Who shall fix
Her pillars? Let her work prevail.

But on her forehead sits a fire: 5
She sets her forward countenance
And leaps into the future chance,
Submitting all things to desire.

Half-grown as yet, a child, and vain—
She cannot fight the fear of death. 10
What is she, cut from love and faith,
But some wild Pallas from the brain



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Of Demons? fiery-hot to burst
All barriers in her onward race
For power. Let her know her place; 15
She is the second, not the first.

A higher hand must make her mild,
If all be not in vain; and guide
Her footsteps, moving side by side
With wisdom, like the younger child: 20

For she is earthly of the mind,
But Wisdom heavenly of the soul.
O friend, who earnest to thy goal
So early, leaving me behind

I would the great world grew like thee, 25
Who grewest not alone in power
And knowledge, but by year and hour
In reverence and in charity.

CXV

Now fades the last long streak of snow,
Now burgeons every maze of quick
About the flowering squares, and thick
By ashen roots the violets blow,

Now rings the woodland loud and long, 5
The distance takes a lovelier hue,
And drown'd in yonder living blue
The lark becomes a sightless song.

Now dance the lights on lawn and lea,
The flocks are whiter down the vale, 10
And milkier every milky sail
On winding stream or distant sea;

Where now the seamew pipes, or dives
In yonder greening gleam, and fly
The happy birds, that change their sky 15
To build and brood, that live their lives

From land to land; and in my breast
Spring wakens too; and my regret



Becomes an April violet,
And buds and blossoms like the rest. 20

CXVIII

Contemplate all this work of Time,
The giant labouring in his youth;
Nor dream of human love and truth,
As dying Nature's earth and lime;

But trust that those we call the dead 5
Are breathers of an ampler day
For ever nobler ends. They say,
The solid earth whereon we tread

In tracts of fluent heat began,
And grew to seeming-random forms, 10
The seeming prey of cyclic storms,
Till at the last arose the man;

Who throve and branch'd from clime to clime,
The herald of a higher race,
And of himself in higher place, 15
If so he type this work of time

Within himself, from more to more;
Or, crown'd with attributes of woe
Like glories, move his course, and show
That life is not as idle ore, 20

But iron dug from central gloom,
And heated hot with burning fears,
And dipt in baths of hissing tears,
And batter'd with the shocks of doom

To shape and use. Arise and fly 25
The reeling Faun, the sensual feast;
Move upward, working out the beast
And let the ape and tiger die.



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CXXIII

There rolls the deep where grew the tree.
O earth, what changes hast thou seen!
There where the long street roars hath been
The stillness of the central sea.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true; 10
For tho' my lips may breathe adieu,
I cannot think the thine farewell.

WORDSWORTH

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, on April 7th, 1770. His father, John Wordsworth, was the agent of Sir J. Lowther, who later became the first Earl of Lonsdale. At the age of eight the boy was sent to school at Hawkshead. The impressions of his boyhood period are related in the autobiographical poem, *The Prelude*, (written 1805, published 1850), and from this poetical record we discern how strong the influences of Nature were to shape and develop his imagination. Wordsworth's father died in 1783, leaving the family poorly provided for. The main asset was a considerable claim upon the Earl of Lonsdale, which that individual refused to pay. On his death, in 1802, the successor to the title and estates paid the amount of the claim in full with accumulated interest. In the interval, however, the Wordsworth family remained in very straitened circumstances. Enough money was provided by Wordsworth's guardians to send him to Cambridge University in 1787. He entered St. John's College, and after an undistinguished course graduated without honors in January, 1791. His vacations were spent chiefly in Hawkshead and Wales, but one memorable vacation was marked by a walking excursion with a friend through France and Switzerland, the former country then being on the verge of revolution.

Shortly after leaving the University, in November, 1791, Wordsworth returned to France, remaining there until December of the following year. During this period he was



completely won over to the principles of the revolution. The later reaction from these principles constituted the one moral struggle of his life.

In 1793 his first work appeared before the public—two poems, entitled *The Evening Walk* and *Descriptive Sketches*. Coleridge, who read these pieces at Cambridge, divined that they announced the emergence of an original poetical genius above the horizon. Readers of the poems to-day, who are wise after the event, could scarcely divine as much. At about this period Wordsworth received a bequest of 900 pounds from Raisley Calvert, which enabled him and his sister Dorothy to take a small cottage at Racedown in Dorsetshire. Here he wrote a number of poems in which he worked off the ferment of his revolutionary ideas. These ideas can scarcely be said to have troubled him much in later years.



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An important incident in his life, hardly second in importance to the stimulating companionship of his sister, was his meeting with Coleridge, which occurred probably towards the close of 1795. Coleridge, who was but little younger than Wordsworth, had the more richly equipped, if not the more richly endowed, mind. He was living at Nether Stowey, and in order to benefit by the stimulus which such a friendship offered, the Wordsworths moved to Alfoxden, three miles away from Stowey (July, 1797). It was during a walking expedition to the Quantock Hills in November of that year that the poem of *The Ancient Mariner* was planned. It was intended that the poem should be a joint production, but Wordsworth's contribution was confined to the suggestion of a few details merely, and some scattered lines which are indicated in the notes to that poem. Their poetic theories were soon to take definite shape in the publication of the famous *Lyrical Ballads* (September, 1798), to which Coleridge contributed *The Ancient Mariner*, and Wordsworth some characteristic lyrical, reflective, and narrative poems. The excessive simplicity and alleged triviality of some of these poems long continued to give offence to the conservative lovers of poetry. Even to-day we feel that Wordsworth was sometimes the victim of his own theories.

In June of this same year (1798) Wordsworth and his sister accompanied Coleridge to Germany. They soon parted company, the Wordsworths settling at Goslar, while Coleridge, intent upon study, went in search of German metaphysics at Gottingen. Wordsworth did not come into any contact with German life or thought, but sat through the winter by a stove writing poems for a second edition of the *Lyrical Ballads*. April, 1799, found the brother and sister again in England. In December they settled down at Dove Cottage, Town End, Grasmere, and never, save for brief intervals, abandoned the Lake Country. In 1802, as has been said, a slight accession of fortune fell to Wordsworth by the settlement of the Lonsdale claim. The share of each of the family was 1,800 pounds. On the strength of this wind-fall the poet felt that he might marry, and accordingly brought home Mary Hutchinson as his wife.

The subsequent career of Wordsworth belongs to the history of poetry. Of events in the ordinary sense there are few to record. He successively occupies three houses in the Lake Country after abandoning Dove Cottage. We find him at Allan Bank in 1808, in the Parsonage at Grasmere in 1810, and at Rydal Mount from 1813 to his death in 1850. He makes occasional excursions to Scotland or the Continent, and at long intervals visits London, where Carlyle sees him and records his vivid impressions. For many years Wordsworth enjoys the sinecure of Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland (400 pounds a year), and on his resignation of that office in his son's favor, he is placed on the Civil List for a well deserved pension of 300 pounds. On Southey's death, in 1843, he is appointed Poet Laureate. He died at Grasmere on April 23rd, 1850.



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Wordsworth's principal long poems are: *The Prelude* (1805 published 1850); *The Excursion* (1814); *The White Doe of Rylstone* (1815) and *Peter Bell The Waggoner* (1819). His fame rests principally on his shorter narrative poems, his meditative lyrics, including his two great odes, *To Duty* and *On the Intimations of Immortality*, and on the sonnets, which rank with the finest in the language. The longer poems have many fine passages exhibiting his powers of graphic description, and illustrating his mystical philosophy of nature.

Thomas Carlyle's description of Wordsworth is of interest: "For the rest, he talked well in his way; with veracity, easy brevity, and force, as a wise tradesman would of his tools and workshop, and as no unwise one could. His voice was good, frank, and sonorous, though practically clear, distinct, and forcible, rather than melodious; the tone of him, businesslike, sedately confident; no discourtesy, yet no anxiety about being courteous. A fine wholesome rusticity, fresh as his mountain breezes, sat well on the stalwart veteran, and on all he said and did. You would have said that he was a usually taciturn man, glad to unlock himself to audience sympathetic and intelligent, when such offered itself. His face bore marks of much, not always peaceful, meditation; the look of it not bland or benevolent so much as close, impregnable, and hard; a man *multa tacere loquive paratus*, in a world where he had experienced no lack of contradictions as he strode along. The eyes were not very brilliant, but they had a quiet clearness; there was enough of brow, and well-shaped; rather too much cheek ('horse face' I have heard satirists say); face of squarish shape, and decidedly longish, as I think the head itself was (its length going horizontal); he was large-boned, lean, but still firm-knit, tall, and strong-looking when he stood, a right good old steel-gray figure, with rustic simplicity and dignity about him, and a vivacious strength looking through him, which might have suited one of those old steel-gray markgrafs whom Henry the Fowler set up towards the 'marches' and do battle with the intrusive heathen in a stalwart and judicious manner."

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born, April 7, 1770, at Cockermouth, Cumberland.

Goes to Hawkshead Grammar School, 1778.

Sent by guardians to St. John's College, Cambridge, October, 1787.

Foreign tour with Jones, 1790.

Graduates as B.A. without honors, January, 1791.

Residence in France, November, 1791, to December, 1792.

Publication of *The Evening Walk*, and *Descriptive Sketches*, 1793.



Legacy from Raisley Calvert of 900 pounds, 1794.

Lives at Racedown, Dorsetshire, autumn of 1795 to summer of 1797.

Composes *The Borderers*, a tragedy, 1795-1796.



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Close friendship with Coleridge begins in 1797.

Rents a house at Alfoxden, 1797.

Genesis of the *Lyrical Ballads*, 1797.

Lyrical Ballads published September, 1798.

German visit, September, 1798, to April, 1799.

Lives at Dove Cottage, Grasmere, December 21, 1799 to 1806, 1807-1808.

The Lonsdale debt of 8,500 pounds repaid, 1802.

Marries Mary Hutchinson, October, 1802.

Death by drowning of his brother, Captain John Wordsworth, 1805.

Lives at Coleorton, Leicestershire, 1806 to 1807.

Collected Edition of poems, 1807.

Lives at Allan Bank, Easedale, 1808 to 1810.

Lives at the Parsonage, Grasmere, 1810 to 1812.

Loss of two children and removal to Rydal Mount, Grasmere, 1813 to 1850.

Appointed distributor of stamps for Westmoreland (400 pounds a year), 1813.

The Excursion appears, July, 1814.

Honorary degree of D.C.L. from Oxford, 1839.

Resigns his office as distributor of stamps, 1842.

Receives a pension from Sir R. Peel of 300 pounds, 1842.

Appointed Poet Laureate, 1843.

Dies at Grasmere, April 23, 1850.



APPRECIATIONS

Coleridge, with rare insight, summarized Wordsworth's characteristic defects and merits as follows;

"The first characteristic, though only occasional defect, which I appear to myself to find in these poems is the inconstancy of the style. Under this name I refer to the sudden and unprepared transitions from lines or sentences of peculiar felicity (at all events striking and original) to a style, not only unimpassioned but undistinguished.

"The second defect I can generalize with tolerable accuracy, if the reader will pardon an uncouth and newly-coined word. There is, I should say, not seldom a *matter-of-factness* in certain poems. This may be divided into, first, a laborious minuteness and fidelity in the representation of objects, and their positions, as they appeared to the poet himself; secondly, the insertion of accidental circumstances, in order to the full explanation of his living characters, their dispositions and actions; which circumstances might be necessary to establish the probability of a statement in real life, when nothing is taken for granted by the hearer; but appear superfluous in poetry, where the reader is willing to believe for his own sake. . .

"Third; an undue predilection for the *dramatic* form in certain poems, from which one or other of two evils result. Either the thoughts and diction are different from that of the poet, and then there arises an incongruity of style; or they are the same and indistinguishable, where two are represented as talking, while in truth one man only speaks. . .



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“The fourth class of defects is closely connected with the former; but yet are such as arise likewise from an intensity of feeling disproportionate to such knowledge and value of the objects described, as can be fairly anticipated of men in general, even of the most cultivated classes; and with which therefore few only, and those few particularly circumstanced, can be supposed to sympathize: in this class, I comprise occasional prolixity, repetition, and an eddying, instead of progression, of thought. . .

“Fifth and last; thoughts and images too great for the subject. This is an approximation to what might be called mental bombast, as distinguished from verbal: for, as in the latter there is a disproportion of the expressions to the thoughts, so in this there is a disproportion of thought to the circumstance and occasion. . .

“To these defects, which . . . are only occasional, I may oppose . . . the following (for the most part correspondent) excellencies:

“First; an austere purity of language both grammatically and logically; in short a perfect appropriateness of the words to the meaning. . .

“The second characteristic excellence of Mr. Wordsworth’s works is—a correspondent weight and sanity of the thoughts and sentiments, won not from books, but from the poet’s own meditative observations. They are fresh and have the dew upon them. . .

“Third; . . . the sinewy strength and originality of single lines and paragraphs; the frequent *curiosa felicitas* of his diction. . .

“Fourth; the perfect truth of nature in his images and descriptions as taken immediately from nature, and proving a long and genial intimacy with the very spirit which gives the physiognomic expressions to all the works of nature. Like a green field reflected in a calm and perfectly transparent lake, the image is distinguished from the reality only by its greater softness and lustre. Like the moisture or the polish on a pebble, genius neither distorts nor false-colors its objects; but on the contrary, brings out many a vein and many a tint, which escape the eye of common observation, thus raising to the rank of gems what had been often kicked away by the hurrying foot of the traveller on the dusty high-road of custom. . .

“Fifth; a meditative pathos, a union of deep and subtle thought with sensibility; a sympathy with man as man; the sympathy indeed of a contemplator, rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator, from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of the nature; no injuries of wind or weather, of toil, or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine. The superscription and the image of the Creator still remains legible to *him* under the dark lines, with which guilt or calamity had cancelled or cross-barred it. Here the Man and the Poet lose and find themselves in each other, the one as glorified, the latter as substantiated. In this mild and

philosophic pathos, Wordsworth appears to me without a compeer. Such as he is; so he writes.



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“Last and pre-eminently, I challenge for this poet the gift of imagination in the highest and strictest sense of the word. In the play of fancy, Wordsworth, to my feelings, is not always graceful, and sometimes recondite. . . . But in imaginative power, he stands nearest of all writers to Shakespeare and Milton; and yet in a kind perfectly unborrowed and his own.”

These are the grounds upon which Coleridge bases the poetic claims of Wordsworth.

Matthew Arnold, in the preface to his well-known collection of Wordsworth’s poems, accords to the poet a rank no less exalted. “I firmly believe that the poetical performance of Wordsworth is, after that of Shakespeare and Milton, of which all the world now recognizes the worth, undoubtedly the most considerable in our language from the Elizabethan age to the present time.” His essential greatness is to be found in his shorter pieces, despite the frequent intrusion of much that is very inferior. Still it is “by the great body of powerful and significant work which remains to him after every reduction and deduction has been made, that Wordsworth’s superiority is proved.”

Coleridge had not dwelt sufficiently, perhaps, upon the joyousness which results from Wordsworth’s philosophy of human life and external nature. This Matthew Arnold considers to be the prime source of his greatness. “Wordsworth’s poetry is great because of the extraordinary power with which Wordsworth feels the joy offered to us in the simple primary affections and duties; and because of the extraordinary power with which, in case after case, he shows us this joy, and renders it so as to make us share it.” Goethe’s poetry, as Wordsworth once said, is not inevitable enough, is too consciously moulded by the supreme will of the artist. “But Wordsworth’s poetry,” writes Arnold, “when he is at his best, is inevitable, as inevitable as Nature herself. It might seem that Nature not only gave him the matter for his poem, but wrote his poem for him.” The set poetic style of *The Excursion* is a failure, but there is something unique and unmatched in the simple grace of his narrative poems and lyrics. “Nature herself seems, I say, to take the pen out of his hand, and to write for him with her own bare, sheer, penetrating power. This arises from two causes: from the profound sincerity with which Wordsworth feels his subject, and also from the profoundly sincere and natural character of his subject itself. He can and will treat such a subject with nothing but the most plain, first hand, almost austere naturalness. His expression may often be called bald, as, for instance, in the poem of *Resolution and Independence*; but it is bald as the bare mountain tops are bald, with a baldness which is full of grandeur. . . . Wherever we meet with the successful balance, in Wordsworth, of profound truth of subject with profound truth of execution, he is unique.”



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Professor Dowden has also laid stress upon the harmonious balance of Wordsworth's nature, his different faculties seeming to interpenetrate one another, and yield mutual support. He has likewise called attention to the austere naturalism of which Arnold speaks. "Wordsworth was a great naturalist in literature, but he was also a great Idealist; and between the naturalist and the idealist in Wordsworth no opposition existed: each worked with the other, each served the other. While Scott, by allying romance with reality, saved romantic fiction from the extravagances and follies into which it had fallen, Wordsworth's special work was to open a higher way for naturalism in art by its union with ideal truth."

Criticism has long since ceased to ridicule his *Betty Foy*, and his *Harry Gill*, whose "teeth, they chatter, chatter still." Such malicious sport proved only too easy for Wordsworth's contemporaries, and still the essential value of his poetry was unimpaired.

The range of poetry is indeed inexhaustible, and even the greatest poets must suffer some subtraction from universal pre-eminence. Therefore we may frankly admit the deficiencies of Wordsworth,—that he was lacking in dramatic force and in the power of characterization; that he was singularly deficient in humor, and therefore in the saving grace of self-criticism in the capacity to see himself occasionally in a ridiculous light; that he has little of the romantic glamor and none of the narrative energy of Scott; that Shelley's lyrical flights leave him plodding along the dusty highway; and that Byron's preternatural force makes his passion seen by contrast pale and ineffectual. All this and more may freely be granted, and yet for his influence upon English thought, and especially upon the poetic thought of his country, he must be named after Shakespeare and Milton. The intellectual value of his work will endure; for leaving aside much valuable doctrine, which from didactic excess fails as poetry, he has brought into the world a new philosophy of Nature and has emphasised in a manner distinctively his own the dignity of simple manhood.—*Pelham Edgar*.

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NOTES

MICHAEL

The poem was composed in 1800, and published in the second volume of the *Lyrical Ballads* in the same year. “Written at the Town-end, Grasmere, about the same time as *The Brothers*. The Sheep-fold, on which so much of the poem turns, remains, or rather the ruins of it. The character and circumstances of Luke were taken from a family to whom had belonged, many years before, the house we lived in at Town-end, along with some fields and woodlands on the eastern shore of Grasmere. The name of the Evening Star was not in fact given to this house, but to another on the same side of the valley, more to the north.”



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In a letter to Charles James Fox the poet says: "In the two poems, *The Brothers* and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent *proprietors* of land, here called 'statesmen' [i.e., estates-men], men of respectable education, who daily labor on their little properties. . . Their little tract of land serves as a kind of rallying point for their domestic feelings, as a tablet upon which they are written, which makes them objects of memory in a thousand instances, when they would otherwise be forgotten. The two poems that I have mentioned were written to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply."

Edward Fulton in a *A Selection of the Shorter Poems of Wordsworth* (Macmillan) says: "The reason Wordsworth succeeds best in describing the type of character portrayed in *Michael* and *The Brothers* is, of course, chiefly because he knew that type best; but the fact that it was the type for which he himself might have stood as the representative was not without its effect upon him. His ideal man is but a variation of himself. As Dean Church puts it: 'The ideal man with Wordsworth is the hard-headed, frugal, unambitious dalesman of his own hills, with his strong affections, his simple tastes, and his quiet and beautiful home; and this dalesman, built up by communion with nature and by meditation into the poet-philosopher, with his serious faith and his never-failing spring of enjoyment, is himself.' Types of character wholly alien to his own have little attraction for him. He is content to look into the depths of his own heart and to represent what he sees there. His field of vision, therefore, is a very limited one: it takes in only a few types. It is *man*, in fact, rather than men, that interests him."

The poem *Michael* is well adapted to show Wordsworth's powers of realism. He describes the poem as "a pastoral," which at once induces a comparison, greatly to Wordsworth's advantage, with the pseudo-pastorals of the age of Pope. There the shepherds and shepherdesses were scarcely the pale shadows of reality, while Wordsworth's poem never swerves from the line of truth. "The poet," as Sir Henry Taylor says with reference to *Michael*, "writes in his confidence to impart interest to the realities of life, deriving both the confidence and the power from the deep interest which he feels in them. It is an attribute of unusual susceptibility of imagination to need no extraordinary provocatives; and when this is combined with intensity of observation and peculiarity of language, it is the high privilege of the poet so endowed to rest upon the common realities of life and to dispense with its anomalies." The student should therefore be careful to observe (1) the truth of description, and the appropriateness of the description to the



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characters; (2) the strong and accurate delineation of the characters themselves. Not only is this to be noted in the passages where the poet has taken pains openly to portray their various characteristics, but there are many passages, or single lines perhaps, which serve more subtly to delineate them. What proud reserve, what sorrow painfully restrained, the following line, for example, contains: "Two evenings after he had heard the news."

TO THE DAISY

COMPOSED 1802: PUBLISHED 1807

"This and the other poems addressed to the same flower were composed at Town-end, Grasmere, during the earlier part of my residence there." The three poems on the Daisy were the outpourings of one mood, and were prompted by the same spirit which moved him to write his poems of humble life. The sheltered garden flowers have less attraction for him than the common blossoms by the wayside. In their unobtrusive humility these "unassuming Common-places of Nature" might be regarded, as the poet says, "as administering both to moral and spiritual purposes." The "Lesser Celandine," buffeted by the storm, affords him, on another occasion, a symbol of meek endurance.

Shelley and Keats have many beautiful references to flowers in their poetry. Keats has merely a sensuous delight in their beauty, while Shelley both revels in their hues and fragrance, and sees in them a symbol of transitory loveliness. His *Sensitive Plant* shows his exquisite sympathy for flower life.

TO THE CUCKOO

COMPOSED IN THE ORCHARD AT TOWN-END 1802: PUBLISHED 1807

Wordsworth, in his Preface to the 1815 edition, has the following note on ll. 3, 4 of the poem:—"This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of corporeal existence; the Imagination being tempted to this exertion of her power, by a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight." The cuckoo is the bird we associate with the name of the vale of sunshine and of flowers, and yet its wandering voice brings back to him the thought of his vanished childhood. We have already noticed the almost sacred value which Wordsworth attaches to the impressions of his youth, and even to the memory of these impressions which remains with him to console his maturer life. The bird is a link which binds him to his childhood:



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

In other poems, especially in the *Intimaticns of Immortality*, he speaks of “the glory and the freshness of a dream,” which hallowed nature for him as a child, and which grew fainter as the “shades of the prison-house began to close upon the growing Boy”.



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NUTTING

COMPOSED 1799; PUBLISHED 1800.

“Written in Germany; intended as a part of a poem on my own life, but struck out as not being wanted there. Like most of my schoolfellows, I was an impassioned Nutter. For this pleasure, the Vale of Esthwaite, abounding in coppice wood, furnished a very wide range. These verses arose out of the remembrance of feelings I had often had when a boy, and particularly in the extensive woods that still stretch from the side of Esthwaite Lake towards Graythwaite.”

Wordsworth possessed in an unusual degree the power of reviving the impressions of his youth. Few autobiographical records are so vivid in this respect as his *Prelude*. In his famous ode on the *Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood*, he dwells upon the unreflective exultation which in the child responds to the joyousness of nature, and with a profound intuition that may not be justified in the facts, he sees in this heedless delight a mystical intimation of immortality.

In the poem *Nutting* the animal exhilaration of boyhood is finely blended with this deeper feeling of mystery. The boy exultingly penetrates into one of those woodland retreats where nature seems to be holding communion with herself. For some moments he is subdued by the beauty of the place, and lying among the flowers he hears with ecstasy the murmur of the stream. Then the spirit of ravage peculiar to boyhood comes over him, and he rudely mars the beauty of the spot:

“And the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being:”

Such wantonness seems to his maturer reflection a sacrilege, and even the boy was not insensible to the silent reproach of the “intruding sky.”

TOUCH,—FOR THERE IS A SPIRIT IN THE WOODS. Many lines might be quoted from Wordsworth to illustrate his theory of the personal attributes of nature. In some of his more elevated passages nature in all her processes is regarded as the intimate revelation of the Godhead, the radiant garment in which the Deity clothes Himself that our senses may apprehend Him. Thus, when we touch a tree or a flower we may be said to touch God himself. In this way the beauty and power of nature become sacred for Wordsworth, and inspired his verse at times with a solemn dignity to which other poets have rarely attained.

The immanence of God in nature, and yet His superiority to His own revelation of Himself is beautifully expressed in some of the later verses of *Hart Leap Well*:



“The Being, that is in the clouds and air,
That is in the green leaves among the groves,
Maintains a deep and reverential care
For the unoffending creatures whom he loves.”

Yet the life in nature is capable of multiplying itself infinitely, and each of her manifold divisions possesses a distinctive mood; one might almost say a separate life of its own. It is, in his ability to capture the true emotional mood which clings to some beautiful object or scene in nature, and which that object or scene may truly be said to inspire, that Wordsworth’s power lies.



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Wordsworth possessed every attribute necessary to the descriptive poet,—subtle powers of observation, ears delicately tuned to seize the very shadow of sound, and a diction of copious strength suggestive beyond the limits of ordinary expression. Yet purely descriptive poetry he scorned. “He expatiated much to me one day,” writes Mr. Aubrey de Vere, “as we walked among the hills above Grasmere, on the mode in which Nature had been described by one of the most justly popular of England’s modern poets—one for whom he preserved a high and affectionate respect [evidently Sir Walter Scott]. ‘He took pains,’ Wordsworth said; ‘he went out with his pencil and note-book, and jotted down whatever struck him most—a river rippling over the sands, a ruined tower on a rock above it, a promontory, and a mountain-ash waving its red berries. He went home and wove the whole together into a poetical description.’ After a pause, Wordsworth resumed, with a flashing eye and impassioned voice; ‘But Nature does not permit an inventory to be made of her charms! He should have left his pencil and note-book at home, fixed his eye as he walked with a reverent attention on all that surrounded him, and taken all into a heart that could understand and enjoy. Then, after several days had passed by, he should have interrogated his memory as to the scene. He would have discovered that while much of what he had admired was preserved to him, much was also most wisely obliterated; that which remained—the picture surviving in his mind—would have presented the ideal and essential truth of the scene, and done so in a large part by discarding much which, though in itself striking, was not characteristic. In every scene many of the most brilliant details are but accidental; a true eye for Nature does not note them, or at least does not dwell on them.’”

The student should learn to compare the descriptive methods of Coleridge and Wordsworth. See especially Lowell’s note quoted on pp. 197-198; also see pp. 47 f.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

This poem was composed at Goslar in 1799 as part of the first book of *The Prelude* (published in 1850). It was first printed in Coleridge’s periodical *The Friend*, in December, 1809, with the instructive though pedantic title, “Growth of Genius from the Influences of Natural Objects on the Imagination, in Boyhood and Early Youth.” It appeared in Wordsworth’s poems of 1815 with the following title:—“Influence of Natural Objects in calling forth and strengthening the Imagination in Boyhood and Early Youth.”

The opening verses of this poem are still another instance of the identification of God with nature. As Mr. Stopford Brooke writes, “we are here in contact with a Person, not with a thought. But who is this person? Is she only the creation of imagination, having no substantive reality beyond the mind of Wordsworth? No, she is the poetic impersonation of an actual Being, the form which the poet gives to the living Spirit of God in the outward world, in order that he may possess a metaphysical thought as a subject for his work as an artist.”



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The Lines Composed above Tintern Abbey contain the highest expression which Wordsworth has given to this thought, To the heedless animal delight in nature had succeeded a season in his youth when the beauty and power of nature “haunted him like a passion,” though he knew not why. The “dizzy rapture” of those moods he can no longer feel. Yet,

“Not for this
Faint I nor murmur; other gifts
Have followed, for such loss, I would believe
Abundant recompense. For I have learned
To look on nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. *And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.*”

In ll. 42-46, of *The Influence of Natural Objects*, we have an inimitable Wordsworthian effect. Into the midst of his wild sport the voice of Nature steals, and subdues his mind to receive the impulses of peace and beauty from without. We involuntarily think of the boy he has celebrated, his playmate upon Windermere, who loved to rouse the owls with mimic hootings, but

“When a lengthened pause
Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind,
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.”

The Prelude, v. 379 f.



ELEGIAC STANZAS

COMPOSED 1805: PUBLISHED 1807.

Further references to John Wordsworth will be found in the following poems:—*To the Daisy* ("Sweet Flower"), *Elegiac Verses in Memory of My Brother*, *When to the Attractions of the Busy World*, *The Brothers*, and *The Happy Warrior*.

With lines 33-40, and 57-60, compare the *Intimations of Immortality*, ll. 176-187:—

“What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.”



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A BRIEF HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE SONNET

The sonnet form was introduced into English poetry by Sir Thomas Wyatt and the Earl of Surrey. Their experiments in the sonnet were published in *Tottel's Miscellany* in 1557, and were prompted by an admiration of Petrarch and other Italian models. Italy was almost certainly the original home of the sonnet (sonnet=Ital. *sonetto*, a little sound, or *short strain*, from *suono*, sound), and there it has been assiduously cultivated since the thirteenth century. In the fourteenth century Dante and Petrarch gave the form a European celebrity.

The Structure of the Sonnet.

Before saying anything of its development in English poetry, it is advisable to examine an admittedly perfect sonnet, so that we may gain an idea of the nature of this type of poem, both as to form and substance. Wordsworth's sonnet upon Milton (*London*, 1802) will serve our purpose (see page 187). By reference to it you will observe:—

(1) That the sonnet is written in iambic pentameter, and consists of fourteen lines—that number by repeated experimentation having been found the most appropriate for the expression of a single emotional mood.

(2) As an examination of the rimes will show (a b b a a b b a: c d d e c e), there is a natural metrical division at the end of the eighth line. The first eight lines in technical language are called the "octave," the last six lines are called the "sestet." The octave is sometimes said to consist of two quatrains, and the sestet of two tercets.

(3) There is not only a metrical division between the octave and the sestet, but the character of the thought also undergoes a subtle change at that point. It is to be understood, of course, that in the whole poem there must be both unity of thought and mood. Yet, at the ninth line, the thought which is introduced in the octave is elaborated, and presented as it were under another aspect. As Mr. Mark Pattison has admirably expressed it: "This thought or mood should be led up to, and opened in the early lines of the sonnet; strictly, in the first quatrain; in the second quatrain the hearer should be placed in full possession of it. After the second quatrain there should be a pause—not full, nor producing the effect of a break—as of one who had finished what he had got to say, and not preparing a transition to a new subject, but as of one who is turning over what has been said in the mind to enforce it further. The opening of the second system, strictly the first tercet, should turn back upon the thought or sentiment, take it up and carry it forward to the conclusion. The conclusion should be a resultant summing the total of the suggestion in the preceding lines. . . . While the conclusion should leave a sense of finish and completeness, it is necessary to avoid anything like epigrammatic point."



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(4) An examination of the rimes again will show that greater strictness prevails in the octave than in the sestet. The most regular type of the octave may be represented by a b b a a b b a, turning therefore upon two rimes only. The sestet, though it contains but six lines, is more liberal in the disposition of its rimes. In the sonnet which we are examining, the rime system of the sestet in c d d e c e—containing, as we see, three separate rimes. In the sestet this is permissible, provided that there is not a riming couplet at the close.

(5) Again, with reference to the rime, it will be observed that the vowel terminals of the octave and the sestet are differentiated. Anything approaching assonance between the two divisions is to be counted as a defect.

(6) It is evident that there is unity both of thought and mood in this sonnet, the sestet being differentiated from the octave, only as above described.

(7) It is almost unnecessary to add that there is no slovenly diction, that the language is dignified in proportion to the theme, and that there is no obscurity or repetition in thought or phraseology.

These rules will appear to the young reader of poetry as almost unnecessarily severe. But it must be remembered that the sonnet is avowedly a conventional form (though in it much of the finest poetry in our language is contained), and as such the conventional laws attaching to all prescribed forms must be observed to win complete success.

Spenser, Shakespeare, and Milton have lent the authority of their great names to certain distinct variations from the rigid Petrarchan type. The peculiarity of Spenser's sonnets is that the rime of the octave overflows into the sestet, thus marring the exquisite balance which should subsist between the two parts, and yielding an effect of cloying sweetness. Although the famous stanza-form which he invented in his "Faerie Queene" has found many imitators, his sonnet innovations are practically unimportant.

The Shakespearean sonnet, on the contrary, must be regarded as a well-established variant from the stricter Italian form. Though Shakespeare's name has made it famous, it did not originate with him. Surrey and Daniel had habitually employed it, and in fact it had come to be recognized as the accepted English form. Its characteristic feature, as the following sonnet from Shakespeare will show, was a division into three distinct quatrains, each with alternating rimes, and closed by a couplet. The transition of thought at the ninth line is usually observed:—

"When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweepe my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself, and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope,

Featured like him, like him with friends possess'd,
Desiring this man's art and that man's scope,

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With what I most enjoy contented least;
Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising,
Haply I think on thee—and then my state,
Like to the lark at break of day arising
From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate;
For thy sweet love remember'd such wealth brings,
That then I scorn to change my state with kings."

It is Milton's merit that he rescued the sonnet from the snare of verbal wit in which the Elizabethans had involved it, and made it respond to other passions than that of love. His sonnets, as imitations of the Italian form, are more successful than the scattered efforts in that direction of Wyatt and Surrey. They are indeed regular in all respects, save that he is not always careful to observe the pause in the thought, and the subtle change which should divide the octave from the sestet.

After Milton there is a pause in sonnet-writing for a hundred years. William Lisle Bowles (1762-1850), memorable for his influence upon Coleridge, was among the first again to cultivate the form. Coleridge and Shelley gave the sonnet scant attention, and were careless as to its structural qualities. Keats, apart from Wordsworth, was the only poet of the early years of the century who realized its capabilities. He has written a few of our memorable sonnets, but he was not entirely satisfied with the accepted form, and experimented upon variations that cannot be regarded as successful.

There is no doubt that the stimulus to sonnet-writing in the nineteenth century came from Wordsworth, and he, as all his recent biographers admit, received his inspiration from Milton. Wordsworth's sonnets, less remarkable certainly than a supreme few of Shakespeare's, have still imposed themselves as models upon all later writers, while the Shakespearean form has fallen into disuse. A word here, therefore, as to their form.

The strict rime movement of the octave a b b a a b b a is observed in seven only of the present collection of twelve, namely, in the first sonnet, the second, the third, the fifth, the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth. The rime formula of the octave with which Wordsworth's name is chiefly associated is a b b a a c c a. The sonnets in which this additional rime is introduced are the fourth, the ninth, the tenth, the eleventh and the twelfth.

As regards the transition from octave to sestet the following sonnets observe the prescribed law, namely, the second, third, sixth, seventh, and ninth. The seven remaining sonnets all show some irregularity in this respect. The first sonnet (*Fair Star*) with its abrupt *enjambement* at the close of the octave, and the thought pause in the



body of the first line of the sestet, is a form much employed by Mrs. Browning, but rigorously avoided by Dante Gabriel Rossetti with his more scrupulous ideal of sonnet construction. This imperfect transition is seen again in the fourth, fifth, eighth, tenth, eleventh, and twelfth sonnets. Its boldness certainly amounts to a technical fault in the two sonnets on *King's College Chapel*.



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In the sestet we naturally expect and find much variety in the disposition of the rimes. The conclusion of the last sonnet by a couplet is most unusual in Wordsworth.

“IT IS NOT TO BE THOUGHT OF”

This sonnet was composed in September, 1802, first published in the Morning Post in 1803, and subsequently in 1807.

WRITTEN IN LONDON, SEPTEMBER, 1802:

PUBLISHED 1807

“This was written immediately after my return from France to London, when I could not but be struck, as here described, with the vanity and parade of our own country, especially in great towns and cities, as contrasted with the quiet, I may say the desolation, that the Revolution had produced in France. This must be borne in mind, or else the Reader may think that in this and the succeeding Sonnets I have exaggerated the mischief engendered and fostered among us by undisturbed wealth.”

LONDON, 1802

This sonnet was written in 1803 and published in 1807.

“DARK AND MORE DARK THE SHADES OF EVENING FELL”

This sonnet was written after a journey across the Hambleton Hills, Yorkshire. Wordsworth says: “It was composed October 4th, 1802, after a journey on a day memorable to me—the day of my marriage. The horizon commanded by those hills is most magnificent.” Dorothy Wordsworth, describing the sky-prospect, says: “Far off from us in the western sky we saw the shapes of castles, ruins among groves, a great spreading wood, rocks and single trees, a minster with its tower unusually distinct, minarets in another quarter, and a round Grecian temple also; the colours of the sky of a bright gray, and the forms of a sober gray, with dome.”

“SURPRISED BY JOY—IMPATIENT AS THE WIND”

This sonnet was suggested by the poet’s daughter Catherine long after her death. She died in her fourth year, on June 4, 1812. Wordsworth was absent from home at the time of her death. The sonnet was published in 1815.

“HAIL, TWILIGHT SOVEREIGN OF A PEACEFUL HOUR”

This sonnet was published in 1815.



“I THOUGHT OF THEE, MY PARTNER AND MY GUIDE”

This sonnet, which concludes “The River Duddon” series, is usually entitled “After-Thought”. The series was written at intervals, and was finally published in 1820. “The Duddon rises on Wrynose Fell, near to ‘Three Shire Stone,’ where Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire meet.”

“SUCH AGE, HOW BEAUTIFUL!”

This sonnet, published in 1827, was inscribed to Lady Fitzgerald at the time in her seventieth year.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH



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Alfred Tennyson was born at Somersby, a small hamlet among the Lincolnshire wolds, on August 6th, 1809. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, the vicar of Somersby, was a man of large and cultivated intellect, interested in poetry, mathematics, painting, music, and architecture, but somewhat harsh and austere in manner, and subject to fits of gloomy depression, during which his presence was avoided by his family; he was sincerely devoted to them, however, and himself supervised their education. His mother, Elizabeth Fytche, the daughter of the Rev Stephen Fytche of Louth, was a kind-hearted, gentle, refined woman, beloved by her family and friends. Her influence over her sons and daughters was unbounded, and over none more so than Alfred, who in after life recognized to the full what he owed to his mother.

The family was large, consisting of twelve sons and daughters, of whom the eldest died in infancy. Alfred was the fourth child, his brothers Frederick and Charles being older than he. The home life was a very happy one. The boys and girls were all fond of books, and their games partook of the nature of the books they had been reading. They were given to writing, and in this they were encouraged by their father, who proved himself a wise and discriminating critic. Alfred early showed signs of his poetic bent; at the age of twelve he had written an epic of four thousand lines, and even before this a tragedy and innumerable poems in blank verse. He was not encouraged, however, to preserve these specimens of his early powers, and they are now lost.

Alfred attended for a time a small school near his home, but at the age of seven he was sent to the Grammar School at Louth. While at Louth he lived with his grandmother, but his days at school were not happy, and he afterwards looked back over them with almost a shudder. Before he was twelve he returned home, and began his preparation for the university under his father's care. His time was not all devoted to serious study, but was spent in roaming through his father's library, devouring the great classics of ancient and modern times, and in writing his own poems. The family each summer removed to Mablethorpe on the Lincolnshire coast. Here Alfred learned to love the sea in all its moods, a love which lasted through his life.

In 1827, after Frederick had entered Cambridge, the two brothers, Charles and Alfred, being in want of pocket money, resolved to publish a volume of poems. They made a selection from their numerous poems, and offered the book to a bookseller in Louth, For some unknown reason he accepted the book, and soon after, it was published under the title, *Poems by Two Brothers*. There were in reality three brothers, as some of Frederick's poems were included in the volume. The brothers were promised 20 pounds, but more than one half of this sum they had to take out in books. With the balance they went on a triumphal expedition to the sea, rejoicing in the successful launching of their first literary effort.

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In 1828 Charles and Alfred Tennyson matriculated at Trinity College, Cambridge, where their elder brother Frederick had already been for some time. Alfred was a somewhat shy lad, and did not at once take kindly to the life of his college. He soon, however, found himself one of a famous society known as “The Apostles,” to which belonged some of the best men in the University. Not one member of the “Apostles” at this time, but afterwards made a name for himself, and made his influence felt in the world of politics or letters. The society met at regular intervals, but Alfred did not take much part in the debates, preferring to sit silent and listen to what was said. All his friends had unbounded admiration for his poetry and unlimited faith in his poetic powers. This faith was strengthened by the award of the University Prize for English Verse to Alfred in June, 1829. He did not wish to compete, but on being pressed, polished up an old poem that he had written some years before, and presented it for competition, the subject being *Timbuctoo*. The poem was in blank verse and really showed considerable power; in fact it was a remarkable poem for one so young.

Perhaps the most powerful influence on the life of Tennyson was the friendship he formed while at Cambridge with Arthur Henry Hallam, the son of the historian, Henry Hallam. The two became inseparable friends, a friendship strengthened by the engagement of Hallam to the poet’s sister. The two friends agreed to publish a volume of poems as a joint-production, but Henry Hallam, the elder, did not encourage the project, and it was dropped. The result was that in 1830, *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, was published with the name of Alfred Tennyson alone on the title page. The volume was reviewed enthusiastically by Hallam, but was more or less slated by Christopher North in the columns of *Blackwoods’ Magazine*. Tennyson was very angry about the latter review and replied to the reviewer in some caustic, but entirely unnecessary, verses.

In the same year Hallam and Tennyson made an expedition into Spain to carry aid to the rebel leader against the king of Spain. The expedition was not by any means a success. In 1831 Tennyson left Cambridge, without taking his degree, and shortly after his return home his father died. The family, however, did not remove from Somersby, but remained there until 1837. Late in 1832 appeared another volume entitled *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*. This drew upon the unfortunate author a bitterly sarcastic article in the *Quarterly*, written probably by its brilliant editor, John Gibson Lockhart. The result of this article was that Tennyson was silent for almost ten years, a period spent in ridding himself of the weaknesses so brutally pointed out by the reviewer.

In 1833, Arthur Henry Hallam died, and for a time the light of life seemed to have gone out for Alfred Tennyson. The effect of the death of Hallam upon the poet was extraordinary. It seemed to have changed the whole current of his life; indeed he is said, under the strain of the awful suddenness and unexpectedness of the event, to have contemplated suicide. But saner thoughts intervened, and he again took up the burden of life, with the determination to do what he could in helping others. From this time of storm and stress came *In Memoriam*.

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From 1832 to 1842 Tennyson spent a roving life. Now at home, now in London, now with his friends in various parts of England. He was spending his time in finishing his poems, so that when he again came before the world with a volume, he would be a master. The circle of his friends was widening, and now included the greater number of the master-minds of England. He was poor, so poor in fact that he was reduced to the necessity of borrowing the books he wished to read from his friends. But during all this time he never wavered in his allegiance to poetry; he had determined to be a poet, and to devote his life to poetry. At last in 1842 he published his *Poems* in two volumes, and the world was conquered. From this time onwards he was recognized as the leading poet of his century.

In 1845, Tennyson, poor still, was granted a pension of 200 pounds, chiefly through the influence of his friend Richard Monckton Milnes, and Thomas Carlyle. There was a great deal of criticism regarding this pension from sources that should have been favorable, but the general verdict approved the grant. In 1847 appeared *The Princess*, a poem, which, at that time, did not materially add to his fame; but the poet was now hailed as one of the great ones of his time, and much was expected of him.

In 1850 three most important events in the life of Tennyson happened. He published *In Memoriam*, in memory of his friend, Arthur Henry Hallam; he was appointed Poet Laureate, in succession to Wordsworth; and he married Emily Selwood, a lady to whom he had been engaged for seventeen years, but whom his poverty had prevented him from leading to the altar. From this time onwards the life of the poet flowed smoothly. He was happily married, his fame was established, his books brought him sufficient income on which to live comfortable and well. From this point there is little to relate in his career, except the publication of his various volumes.

After his marriage Tennyson lived for some time at Twickenham, where in 1852 Hallam Tennyson was born. In 1851 he and his wife visited Italy, a visit commemorated in *The Daisy*. In 1853 they removed to Farringford at Freshwater in the Isle of Wight, a residence subsequently purchased with the proceeds of *Maud*, published in 1855. The poem had a somewhat mixed reception, being received in some quarters with unstinted abuse and in others with the warmest praise. In the year that *Maud* was published Tennyson received the honorary degree of D.C.L., from Oxford. In 1859 was published the first four of the *Idylls of the King*, followed in 1864 by *Enoch Arden and Other Poems*. In 1865 his mother died. In 1869 he occupied Aldworth, an almost inaccessible residence in Surrey, near London, in order to escape the annoyance of summer visitors to the Isle of Wight, who insisted on invading his privacy, which, perhaps, more than any other he especially valued.



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From 1870 to 1880 Tennyson was engaged principally on his dramas—*Queen Mary*, *Harold*, and *Becket*,—but, with the exception of the last, these did not prove particularly successful on the stage. In 1880 *Ballads and Poems* was published, an astonishing volume from one so advanced in years. In 1882 the *Promise of May* was produced in public, but was soon withdrawn. In 1884 Tennyson was raised to the peerage as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford, after having on two previous occasions refused a baronetcy. In 1885 *Tiresias and Other Poems* was published. In this volume was published *Balin and Balan*, thus completing the *Idylls of the King*, which now assumed their permanent order and form. *Demeter and Other Poems* followed in 1889, including *Crossing the Bar*. In 1892, on October 6th, the poet died at Aldworth, “with the moonlight upon his bed and an open Shakespeare by his side.” A few days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey, by the side of Robert Browning, his friend and contemporary, who had preceded him by only a few years.

Carlyle has left us a graphic description of Tennyson as he was in middle life: “One of the finest—looking men in the world. A great shock of rough, dusky dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face—most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic—fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous; I do not meet in these late decades such company over a pipe! We shall see what he will grow to.” To this may be added a paragraph from Caroline Fox: “Tennyson is a grand specimen of a man, with a magnificent head set on his shoulders like the capital of a mighty pillar. His hair is long and wavy and covers a massive head. He wears a beard and mustache, which one begrudges as hiding so much of that firm, powerful, but finely-chiselled mouth. His eyes are large and gray, and open wide when a subject interests him; they are well shaded by the noble brow, with its strong lines of thought and suffering. I can quite understand Samuel Lawrence calling it the best balance of head he had ever seen.”

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

Born, August 6, 1809, at Somersby, Lincolnshire.

Goes to Louth Grammar School, 1816.

Publishes, along with his brother Charles, *Poems by Two Brothers*, 1827.

Goes to Trinity College, Cambridge, 1828.

Forms friendship with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1828.

Wins Vice-Chancellor’s Gold Medal for his poem *Timbuctoo*, 1829.

Publishes *Poems, Chiefly Lyrical*, 1830.

Makes an expedition to the Pyrenees with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1830.



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Leaves Cambridge, owing to the illness of his father, 1831.

Visits the Rhine with Arthur Henry Hallam, 1832.

Publishes *Poems by Alfred Tennyson*, 1832.

Arthur Henry Hallam dies, 1833.

Removes from Somersby to High Beech in Epping Forest, 1837.

Publishes *Poems* in two volumes, 1842.

Granted a pension of 200 pounds from the Civil List, 1845.

Publishes *The Princess*, 1847.

Publishes *In Memoriam*, 1850.

Appointed Poet Laureate, 1850.

Marries Miss Emily Selwood, 1850.

Tours southern Europe with his wife, 1851.

Hallam Tennyson born, 1852.

Writes *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, 1852.

Takes up his residence at Farringford in the Isle of Wight, 1853.

Lionel Tennyson born, 1854.

Writes *The Charge of the Light Brigade*, 1855.

The University of Oxford confers on him the degree of D.C.L., 1855.

Publishes *Maud and Other Poems*, 1855.

Purchases Farringford, 1856.

Publishes *Idylls of the King*, 1859.

Writes his *Welcome to Alexandra*, 1863.

Publishes *Enoch Arden*, 1864; *The Holy Grail*, 1869.



His mother dies, 1865.

Purchases land at Haslemere, Surrey, 1868, and begins erection of Aldworth.

Publishes *Queen Mary*, 1875; the drama successfully performed by Henry Irving, 1876.

Publishes *Harold*, 1876.

His drama *The Falcon* produced, 1869.

Seeks better health by a tour on the Continent with his son Hallam, 1880.

Publishes *Ballads and Other Poems*, 1880.

His drama *The Cup* successfully performed, 1881.

His drama *The Promise of May* proves a failure, 1882.

Raised to the peerage as Baron Tennyson of Aldworth and Farringford, 1884.

Publishes *Becket*, 1884.

His son Lionel dies, 1885.

Publishes *Tiresias and Other Poems*, 1885. This volume contains *Balin and Balan*, thus completing his *Idylls of the King*.

Publishes *Demeter and Other Poems*, 1889.

Dies at Aldworth, October 6, 1892, and is buried in Westminster Abbey.

The *Death of Oenone* is published, 1892.

APPRECIATIONS

“Since the days when Dryden held office no Laureate has been appointed so distinctly pre-eminent above all his contemporaries, so truly the king of the poets, as he upon whose brows now rests the Laureate crown. Dryden’s grandeur was sullied, his muse was venal, and his life was vicious; still in his keeping the office acquired a certain dignity; after his death it declined into the depths of depredation, and each succeeding dullard dimmed its failing lustre.



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The first ray of hope for its revival sprang into life with the appointment of Southey, to whom succeeded Wordsworth, a poet of worth and genius, whose name certainly assisted in resuscitating the ancient dignity of the appointment. Alfred Tennyson derives less honor from the title than he confers upon it; to him we owe a debt of gratitude that he has redeemed the laurels with his poetry, noble, pure, and undefiled as ever poet sung.”—*Walter Hamilton*.

“Tennyson is many sided; he has a great variety of subjects. He has treated of the classical and the romantic life of the world; he has been keenly alive to the beauties of nature; and he has tried to sympathize with the social problems that confront mankind. In this respect he is a representative poet of the age, for this very diversity of natural gifts has made him popular with all classes. Perhaps he has not been perfectly cosmopolitan, and sometimes the theme in his poetry has received a slight treatment compared to what might have been given it by deeper thinking and more philosophical poets, but he has caught the spirit of the age and has expressed its thought, if not always forcibly, at least more beautifully than any other poet,”—*Charles Read Nutter*.

“In technical elegance, as an artist in verse, Tennyson is the greatest of modern poets. Other masters, old and new, have surpassed him in special instances; but he is the only one who rarely nods, and who always finishes his verse to the extreme. Here is the absolute sway of metre, compelling every rhyme and measure needful to the thought; here are sinuous alliterations, unique and varying breaks and pauses, winged flights and falls, the glory of sound and color everywhere present, or, if missing, absent of the poet’s free will. The fullness of his art evades the charm of spontaneity. His original and fastidious art is of itself a theme for an essay. The poet who studies it may well despair, he can never excel it; its strength is that of perfection; its weakness, the ever-perfection which marks a still-life painter.”—*Edmund Clarence Stedman*.

“A striking quality of Tennyson’s poetry is its simplicity, both in thought and expression. This trait was characteristic of his life, and so we naturally expect to find it in his verse. Tennyson was too sincere by nature, and too strongly averse to experimenting in new fields of poetry, to attempt the affected or unique. He purposely avoided all subjects which he feared he could not treat with simplicity and clearness. So, in his shorter poems, there are few obscure or ambiguous passages, little that is not easy of comprehension. His subjects themselves tend to prevent ambiguity or obscurity. For he wrote of men and women as he saw them about him, of their joys and sorrows, their trials, their ideals,—and in this was nothing complex. Thus there is a homely quality to his poems, but they are kept from the commonplace



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by the great tenderness of his feeling. Had Tennyson been primarily of a metaphysical or philosophical mind all this might have been different. True, he was somewhat of a student of philosophy and religion, and some of his poems are of these subjects, but his thought even here is always simple and plain, and he never attempted the deep study that was not characteristic of his nature. No less successful is he in avoiding obscurity in expression. There are few passages that need much explanation. In this he offers a striking contrast to Browning, who often painfully hid his meaning under complex phraseology. His vocabulary is remarkably large, and when we study his use of words, we find that in many cases they are from the two-syllabled class. This matter of choice of clear, simple words and phrases is very important. For, just so much as our attention is drawn from what a poet says to the medium, the language in which he says it, so much is its clearness injured. Vividly to see pictures in our imagination or to be affected by our emotions, we must not, as we read, experience any jar. In Tennyson we never have to think of his expressions—except to admire their simple beauty. Simplicity and beauty, then, are two noticeable qualities of his poetry.”—*Charles Read Nutter*.

“An idyllic or picturesque mode of conveying his sentiments is the one natural to Tennyson, if not the only one permitted by his limitations. He is a born observer of physical nature, and, whenever he applies an adjective to some object or passingly alludes to some phenomenon which others have but noted, is almost infallibly correct. He has the unerring first touch which in a single line proves the artist; and it justly has been remarked that there is more true English landscape in many an isolated stanza of *In Memoriam* than in the whole of *The Seasons*, that vaunted descriptive poem of a former century.”—*Edmund Clarence Stedman*.

“In describing scenery, his microscopic eye and marvellously delicate ear are exercised to the utmost in detecting the minutest relations and most evanescent melodies of the objects before him, in order that his representation shall include everything which is important to their full perfection. His pictures of rural English scenery give the inner spirit as well as the outward form of the objects, and represent them, also, in their relation to the mind which is gazing on them. The picture in his mind is spread out before his detecting and dissecting intellect, to be transformed to words only when it can be done with the most refined exactness, both as regards color and form and melody.”—*E.P. Whipple*.

“For the most part he wrote of the every day loves and duties of men and women; of the primal pains and joys of humanity; of the aspirations and trials which are common to all ages and all classes and independent even of the diseases of civilization, but he made them new and surprising by the art which he added to them, by beauty of thought, tenderness of feeling, and exquisiteness of shaping.”—*Stopford A. Brooke*.



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“The tenderness of Tennyson is one of his remarkable qualities—not so much in itself, for other poets have been more tender—but in combination with his rough powers. We are not surprised that his rugged strength is capable of the mighty and tragic tenderness of *Rispah*, but we could not think at first that he could feel and realize the exquisite tenderness of *Elaine*. It is a wonderful thing to have so wide a tenderness, and only a great poet can possess it and use it well.”—*Stopford A. Brooke*.

“Tennyson is a great master of pathos; knows the very tones that go to the heart; can arrest every one of these looks of upbraiding or appeal by which human woe brings the tear into the human eye. The pathos is deep; but it is the majesty not the prostration of grief.”—*Peter Bayne*.

“Indeed the truth must be strongly borne in upon even the warmest admirers of Tennyson that his recluse manner of life closed to him many avenues of communication with the men and women of his day, and that, whether as a result or cause of his exclusiveness, he had but little of that restless, intellectual curiosity which constantly whets itself upon new experiences, finds significance where others see confusion, and beneath the apparently commonplace in human character reaches some harmonizing truth. *Rizpah* and *The Grandmother* show what a rich harvest he would have reaped had he cared more frequently to walk the thoroughfares of life. His finely wrought character studies are very few in number, and even the range of his types is disappointingly narrow.”—*Pelham Edgar*.

“No reader of Tennyson can miss the note of patriotism which he perpetually sounds. He has a deep and genuine love of country, a pride in the achievements of the past, a confidence in the greatness of the future. And this sense of patriotism almost reaches insularity of view. He looks out upon the larger world with a gentle commiseration, and surveys its un-English habits and constitution with sympathetic contempt. The patriotism of Tennyson is sober rather than glowing; it is meditative rather than enthusiastic. Occasionally indeed, his words catch fire, and the verse leaps onward with a sound of triumph, as in such a poem as *The Charge of the Light Brigade* or in such a glorious ballad as *The Revenge*. Neither of these poems is likely to perish until the glory of the nation perishes, and her deeds of a splendid chivalrous past sink into oblivion, which only shameful cowardice can bring upon her. But as a rule Tennyson’s patriotism is not a contagious and inspiring patriotism. It is meditative, philosophic, self-complacent. It rejoices in the infallibility of the English judgment, the eternal security of English institutions, the perfection of English forms of government.”—*W. J. Dawson*.



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“Tennyson always speaks from the side of virtue; and not of that new and strange virtue which some of our later poets have exalted, and which, when it is stripped of its fine garments, turns out to be nothing else than the unrestrained indulgence of every natural impulse; but rather of that old fashioned virtue whose laws are 'self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,' and which finds its highest embodiment in the morality of the *New Testament*. There is a spiritual courage in his work, a force of fate which conquers doubt and darkness, a light of inward hope which burns dauntless under the shadow of death. Tennyson is the poet of faith; faith as distinguished from cold dogmatism and the acceptance of traditional creeds; faith which does not ignore doubt and mystery, but triumphs over them and faces the unknown with fearless heart. The effect of Christianity upon the poetry of Tennyson may be felt in its general moral quality. By this it is not meant that he is always preaching. But at the same time the poet can hardly help revealing, more by tone and accent than by definite words, his moral sympathies. He is essentially and characteristically a poet with a message. His poetry does not exist merely for the sake of its own perfection of form. It is something more than the sound of one who has a lovely voice and can play skilfully upon an instrument. It is a poetry with a meaning and a purpose. It is a voice that has something to say to us about life. When we read his poems we feel our hearts uplifted, we feel that, after all it is worth while to struggle towards the light, it is worth while to try to be upright and generous and true and loyal and pure, for virtue is victory and goodness is the only fadeless and immortal crown. The secret of the poet's influence must lie in his spontaneous witness to the reality and supremacy of the moral life. His music must thrill us with the conviction that the humblest child of man has a duty, an ideal, a destiny. He must sing of justice and of love as a sure reward, a steadfast law, the safe port and haven of the soul.”—*Henry Van Dyke*.

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OENONE



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“The poem of *Oenone* is the first of Tennyson's elaborate essays in a metre over which he afterwards obtained an eminent command. It is also the first of his idylls and of his classical studies, with their melodious rendering of the Homeric epithets and the composite words, which Tennyson had the art of coining after the Greek manner ('lily-cradled,' 'river-sundered,' 'dewy-dashed') for compact description or ornament. Several additions were made in a later edition; and the corrections then made show with what sedulous care the poet diversified the structure of his lines, changing the pauses that break the monotonous run of blank verse, and avoiding the use of weak terminals when the line ends in the middle of a sentence. The opening of the poem was in this manner decidedly improved; yet one may judge that the finest passages are still to be found almost as they stood in the original version; and the concluding lines, in which the note of anguish culminates, are left untouched.”

“Nevertheless the blank verse of *Oenone* lacks the even flow and harmonious balance of entire sections in the *Morte d'Arthur* or *Ulysses*, where the lines are swift or slow, rise to a point and fall gradually, in cadences arranged to correspond with the dramatic movement, showing that the poet has extended and perfected his metrical resources. The later style is simplified; he has rejected cumbrous metaphor; he is less sententious; he has pruned away the flowery exuberance and lightened the sensuous colour of his earlier composition.”—*Sir Alfred Lyall*.

First published in 1832-3. It received its present improved form in the edition of 1842. The story of Paris and Oenone may be read in Lempriere, or in any good classical dictionary. Briefly it is as follows:—Paris was the son of Priam, King of Troy, and Hecuba. It was foretold that he would bring great ruin on Troy, so his father ordered him to be slain at birth. The slave, however, did not destroy him, but exposed him upon Mount Ida, where shepherds found him and, brought him up as one of themselves. “He gained the esteem of all the shepherds, and his graceful countenance and manly development recommended him to the favour of Oenone, a nymph of Ida, whom he married, and with whom he lived in the most perfect tenderness. Their conjugal bliss was soon disturbed. At the marriage of Peleus and Thetis, Eris, the goddess of discord, who had not been invited to partake of the entertainment, showed her displeasure by throwing into the assembly of gods, who were at the celebration of the nuptials, a golden apple on which were written the words *Detur pulchriori*. All the goddesses claimed it as their own: the contention at first became general, but at last only three, Juno (Here), Venus (Aphrodite), and Minerva (Pallas), wished to dispute their respective right to beauty. The gods, unwilling to become arbiters in an affair of so tender and delicate a nature, appointed Paris to adjudge the



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prize of beauty to the fairest of the goddesses, and indeed the shepherd seemed properly qualified to decide so great a contest, as his wisdom was so well established, and his prudence and sagacity so well known. The goddesses appeared before their judge without any covering or ornament, and each tried by promises and entreaties to gain the attention of Paris, and to influence his judgment. Juno promised him a kingdom; Minerva, military glory; and Venus, the fairest woman in the world for his wife." (Lempriere.) Paris accorded the apple to Aphrodite, abandoned Oenone, and after he had been acknowledged the son of Priam went to Sparta, where he persuaded Helen, the wife of Menelaus, to flee with him to Troy. The ten years' siege, and the destruction of Troy, resulted from this rash act. Oenone's significant words at the close of the poem foreshadow this disaster. Tennyson, in his old age concluded the narrative in the poem called *The Death of Oenone*. According to the legend Paris, mortally wounded by one of the arrows of Philoctetes, sought out the abandoned Oenone that she might heal him of his wound. But he died before he reached her, "and the nymph, still mindful of their former loves, threw herself upon his body, and stabbed herself to the heart, after she had plentifully bathed it with her tears." Tennyson follows another tradition in which Paris reaches Oenone, who scornfully repels him. He passed onward through the mist, and dropped dead upon the mountain side. His old shepherd playmates built his funeral pyre. Oenone follows the yearning in her heart to where her husband lies, and dies in the flames that consume him.

In Chapter IV of Mr. Stopford Brooke's *Tennyson*, there is a valuable commentary upon *Oenone*. He deals first with the imaginative treatment of the landscape, which is characteristic of all Tennyson's classical poems, and instances the remarkable improvement effected in the descriptive passages in the volume of 1842. "But fine landscape and fine figure re-drawing are not enough to make a fine poem. Human interest, human passion, must be greater than Nature, and dominate the subject. Indeed, all this lovely scenery is nothing in comparison with the sorrow and love of Oenone, recalling her lost love in the places where once she lived in joy. This is the main humanity of the poem. But there is more. Her common sorrow is lifted almost into the proportions of Greek tragedy by its cause and by its results. It is caused by a quarrel in Olympus, and the mountain nymph is sacrificed without a thought to the vanity of the careless gods. That is an ever-recurring tragedy in human history. Moreover, the personal tragedy deepens when we see the fateful dread in Oenone's heart that she will, far away, in time hold her lover's life in her hands, and refuse to give it back to him—a fatality that Tennyson treated before he died. And, secondly, Oenone's sorrow is lifted into dignity by the vast results which flowed from its cause. Behind it were the mighty fates of Troy, the ten years' battle, the anger of Achilles, the wanderings of Ulysses, the tragedy of Agamemnon, the founding of Rome, and the three great epics of the ancient world."

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Another point of general interest is to be noted in the poem. Despite the classical theme the tone is consistently modern, as may be gathered from the philosophy of the speech of Pallas, and from the tender yielding nature of Oenone. There is no hint here of the vindictive resentment which the old classical writers, would have associated with her grief. Similarly Tennyson has systematically modernised the Arthurian legend in the *Idylls of the King*, giving us nineteenth century thoughts in a conventional mediaeval setting.

A passage from Bayne, puts this question clearly: "Oenone wails melodiously for Paris without the remotest suggestion of fierceness or revengeful wrath. She does not upbraid him for having preferred to her the fairest and most loving wife in Greece, but wonders how any one could love him better than she does. A Greek poet would have used his whole power of expression to instil bitterness into her resentful words. The classic legend, instead of representing Oenone as forgiving Paris, makes her nurse her wrath throughout all the anguish and terror of the Trojan War. At its end, her Paris comes back to her. Deprived of Helen, a broken and baffled man, he returns from the ruins of his native Troy, and entreats Oenone to heal him of a wound, which, unless she lends her aid, must be mortal. Oenone gnashes her teeth at him, refuses him the remedy, and lets him die. In the end, no doubt, she falls into remorse, and kills herself—this is quite in the spirit of classic legend; implacable vengeance, soul-sickened with its own victory, dies in despair. That forgiveness of injuries could be anything but weakness—that it could be honourable, beautiful, brave—is an entirely Christian idea; and it is because this idea, although it has not yet practically conquered the world, although it has indeed but slightly modified the conduct of nations, has nevertheless secured recognition as ethically and socially right, that Tennyson could not hope to enlist the sympathy and admiration of his readers for his Oenone, if he had cast her image in the tearless bronze of Pagan obduracy."

1. IDA. A mountain range in Mysia, near Troy. The scenery is, in part, idealised, and partly inspired by the valley of Caeteretz. See *Introduction*, p. xvi.

2. IONIAN. Ionia was the district adjacent to Mysia. 'Ionian,' therefore, is equivalent to 'neighbouring.'

10. TOPMOST GARGARUS. A Latinism, cf. *summus mons*.

12. TROAS. The Troad (Troas) was the district surrounding Troy.

ILION=Ilium, another name for Troy.

14. CROWN=chief ornament.

22-23. O MOTHER IDA—DIE. Mr. Stedman, in his *Victorian Poets*, devotes a valuable chapter to the discussion of Tennyson's relation to Theocritus, both in sentiment and

form. “It is in the *Oenone* that we discover Tennyson’s earliest adaptation of that refrain, which was a striking beauty of the pastoral elegiac verse;



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“O mother Ida, hearken ere I die,’

“is the analogue of (Theocr. II).

“See thou; whence came my love, O lady Moon,’ *etc.*

“Throughout the poem the Syracusan manner and feeling are strictly and nobly maintained.” Note, however, the modernisation already referred to.

MOTHER IDA. The Greeks constantly personified Nature, and attributed a separate individual life to rivers, mountains, *etc.* Wordsworth’s *Excursion*, Book IV., might be read in illustration, especially from the line beginning—

“Once more to distant ages of the world.”

MANY-FOUNTAIN’D IDA. Many streams took their source in Ida. Homer applies the same epithet to this mountain.

24-32. These lines are in imitation of certain passages from Theocritus. See Stedman, *Victorian Poets*, pp. 213 f. They illustrate Tennyson’s skill in mosaic work.

30. MY EYES—LOVE. Cf. Shakespeare, 2 Henry VI. ii. 3. 17:

“Mine eyes are full of tears, my heart of grief.”

36. COLD CROWN’D SNAKE. “Cold crown’d” is not a compound epithet, meaning “with a cold head.” Each adjective marks a particular quality. *Crown’d* has reference to the semblance of a coronet that the hoods of certain snakes, such as cobras, possess.

37. THE DAUGHTER OF A RIVER-GOD. Oenone was the daughter of the river Cebrenus in Phrygia.

39-40. AS YONDER WALLS—BREATHED. The walls of Troy were built by Poseidon (Neptune) and Apollo, whom Jupiter had condemned to serve King Laomedon of Troas for a year. The stones were charmed into their places by the breathing of Apollo’s flute, as the walls of Thebes are said to have risen to the strain of Amphion’s lyre. Compare *Tithonus*, 62-63:

“Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
When Ilion, like a mist, rose into towers.”

And cf. also *The Princess*, iii. 326.

42-43. THAT—WOE. Compare *In Memoriam*, V.



50. WHITE HOOVED. Cf. “hooves” for hoofs, in the *Lady of Shalott*, l. 101.

51. SIMOIS. One of the many streams flowing from Mount Ida.

65. HESPERIAN GOLD. The fruit was in colour like the golden apples in the garden of the Hesperides. The Hesperides were three (or four) nymphs, the daughters of Hesperus. They dwelt in the remotest west, near Mount Atlas in Africa, and were appointed to guard the golden apples which Here gave to Zeus on the day of their marriage. One of Hercules' twelve labours was to procure some of these apples. See the articles *Hesperides* and *Hercules* in Lempriere.

66. SMELT AMBROSIAALLY. Ambrosia was the food of the gods. Their drink was nectar. The food was sweeter than honey, and of most fragrant odour.

72. WHATEVER OREAD. A classical construction. The Oreads were mountain nymphs.

78. FULL-FACED—GODS. This means either that not a face was missing, or refers to the impressive countenances of the gods. Another possible interpretation is that all their faces were turned full towards the board on which the apple was cast. Compare for this epithet *Lotos Eaters*, 7; and *Princess*, ii. 166.



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79. PELEUS. All the gods, save Eris, were present at the marriage between Peleus and Thetis, a sea-deity. In her anger Eris threw upon the banquet-table the apple which Paris now holds in his hand. Peleus and Thetis were the parents of the famous Achilles.

81. IRIS. The messenger of the gods. The rainbow is her symbol.

83. DELIVERING=announcing.

89-100. These lines, and the opening lines of the poem are among the best of Tennyson's blank verse lines, and therefore among the best that English poetry contains. The description owes some of its beauty to Homer. In its earlier form, in the volume of 1832-3, it is much less perfect.

132. A CRESTED PEACOCK. The peacock was sacred to Here (Juno).

103. A GOLDEN CLOUD. The gods were wont to recline upon Olympus beneath a canopy of golden clouds.

104. DROPPING FRAGRANT DEW. Drops of glittering dew fell from the golden cloud which shrouded Here and Zeus. See *Iliad*, XIV, 341 f.

105 f. Here was the queen of Heaven. Power was therefore the gift which she naturally proffered.

114. Supply the ellipsis.

121-122. POWER FITTED—WISDOM. Power that adapts itself to every crisis; power which is born of wisdom and enthroned by wisdom (i.e. does not owe its supremacy to brute strength).

121-122. FROM ALL-ALLEGIANCE. Note the ellipsis and the inversion.

128-131. WHO HAVE ATTAINED—SUPREMACY. Cf. *Lotos Eaters*, l. 155 f, and *Lucretius*, 104-108.

The gods, who haunt
The lucid interspace of world and world
Where never creeps a cloud, or moves a wind,
Nor ever falls the least white star of snow,
Nor ever lowest roll of thunder moans.

137. O'ERTHWARTED WITH=crossed by.



142 f. Compare the tone of Pallas' speech with what has been said in the introduction, p. liv f., concerning Tennyson's love of moderation and restraint, and his belief in the efficacy of law.

Compare also the general temper of the *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington*, and especially ll. 201-205.

144—148. Yet these qualities are not bestowed with power as the end in view. Power will come without seeking when these great principles of conduct are observed. The main thing is to live and act by the law of the higher Life,—and it is the part of wisdom to follow right for its own sake, whatever the consequences may be.

151. SEQUEL OF GUERDON. To follow up my words with rewards (such as Here proffers) would not make me fairer.

153-164. Pallas reads the weakness of Paris's character, but disdains to offer him a more worldly reward. An access of moral courage will be her sole gift to him, so that he shall front danger and disaster until his powers of endurance grow strong with action, and his full-grown will having passed through all experiences, and having become a pure law unto itself, shall be commensurate with perfect freedom, *i.e.*, shall not know that it is circumscribed by law.



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This is the philosophy that we find in Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty*.

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

165-167. Note how dramatic this interruption is.

170. IDALIAN APHRODITE. Idalium was a town in Cyprus; an island where the goddess was especially worshipped. She was frequently called Cypria or the Cyprian.

171. FRESH AS THE FOAM. Aphrodite was born from the waves of the sea, near the Island of Cyprus.

NEW-BATHED IN PAPHIAN WELLS. Paphos was a town in Cyprus. Aphrodite was said to have landed at Paphos after her birth from the sea-foam. She is sometimes called the Paphian or Paphia on this account.

184. SHE SPOKE AND LAUGH'D. Homer calls her "the laughter-loving Aphrodite."

195-197. A WILD—WEED. The influence of beauty upon the beasts is a common theme with poets. Cf. Una and the lion in Spenser's *Faery Queen*.

204. THEY CUT AWAY MY TALLEST PINES. Evidently to make ships for Paris's expedition to Greece.

235-240. THERE ARE—DIE. Lamartine in *Le Lac* (written before 1820) has a very similar passage.

250. CASSANDRA. The daughter of King Priam, and therefore the sister of Paris. She had the gift of prophecy.

260. A FIRE DANCES. Signifying the burning of Troy.



THE EPIC AND MORTE D'ARTHUR

First published, with the epilogue as here printed, in 1842. The *Morte d'Arthur* was subsequently taken out of the present setting, and with substantial expansion appeared as the final poem of the *Idylls of the King*, with the new title, *The Passing of Arthur*.

Walter Savage Landor doubtless refers to the *Morte d'Arthur* as early as 1837, when writing to a friend, as follows:—"Yesterday a Mr. Moreton, a young man of rare judgment, read to me a manuscript by Mr. Tennyson, being different in style from his printed poems. The subject is the Death of Arthur. It is more Homeric than any poem of our time, and rivals some of the noblest parts of the *Odyssea*." A still earlier composition is assured by the correspondence of Edward Fitzgerald who writes that, in 1835, while staying at the Speddings in the Lake Country, he met Tennyson and heard the poet read the *Morte d'Arthur* and other poems of the 1842 volume. They were read out of a MS., "in a little red book to him and Spedding of a night 'when all the house was mute.'"

In *The Epic* we have specific reference to the Homeric influence in these lines:



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“Nay, nay,” said Hall,
“Why take the style of those heroic times?
For nature brings not back the Mastodon,
Nor we those times; and why should any man
Remodel models? these twelve books of mine
Were faint Homeric echoes, nothing-worth,” . . .

Critics have agreed for the most part in considering the *Morte d'Arthur* as the most Homeric of Tennyson's poems. Bayne writes: “Not only in the language is it Homeric, but in the design and manner of treatment. The concentration of interest on the hero, the absence of all modernism in the way of love, story or passion painting, the martial clearness, terseness, brevity of the narrative, with definite specification, at the same time, are exquisitely true to the Homeric pattern.” Brimley notes, with probably greater precision, that: “They are rather Virgilian than Homeric echoes; elaborate and stately, not naive and eager to tell their story; rich in pictorial detail; carefully studied; conscious of their own art; more anxious for beauty of workmanship than interest of action.”

It has frequently been pointed out in this book how prone Tennyson is to regard all his subjects from the modern point of view:

a truth
Looks freshest in the fashion of the day.

The Epic and the epilogue strongly emphasize this modernity in the varied modern types of character which they represent, with their diverse opinions upon contemporary topics. “As to the epilogue,” writes Mr. Brooke (p. 130), “it illustrates all I have been saying about Tennyson's method with subjects drawn from Greek or romantic times. He filled and sustained those subjects with thoughts which were as modern as they were ancient. While he placed his readers in Camelot, Ithaca, or Ida, he made them feel also that they were standing in London, Oxford, or an English woodland. When the *Morte d'Arthur* is finished, the hearer of it sits rapt. There were ‘modern touches here and there,’ he says, and when he sleeps he dreams of

“King Arthur, like a modern gentleman
Of stateliest port; and all the people cried,
‘Arthur is come again, he cannot die.’
Then those that stood upon the hills behind
Repeated—‘Come again, and thrice as fair:’
And, further inland, voices echoed—‘Come
With all good things and war shall be no more.

“The old tale, thus modernised in an epilogue, does not lose its dignity, for now the recoming of Arthur is the recoming of Christ in a wider and fairer Christianity. We feel here how the new movement of religion and theology had sent its full and exciting wave

into Tennyson. Arthur's death in the battle and the mist is the death of a form of Christianity which, exhausted, died in doubt and darkness. His advent as a modern gentleman is the coming of a brighter and more loving Christ into the hearts of men. For so ends the epilogue. When the voices cry, 'Come again, with all good things,'

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“At this a hundred bells began to peal,
That with the sound I woke, and heard indeed,
The clear church-bells ring in the Christmas-morn.”

THE ALLEGORICAL ELEMENT.—The statement is made on p. xxxv of this book that in *The Idylls of the King* “the effort is made to reconcile the human story with the allegory, and in consequence the issues are confusedly presented to our mind.” It is characteristic of the *Morte d’Arthur* fragment that it is apparently free from all allegorical intention. It is merely a moving human story with a fascinating element of mystery inspired by the original Celtic legend. An element of allegory lies in the epilogue, and *The Passing of Arthur* still further enforces the allegorical purpose. But here, as Mr. Brooke again writes (p. 371), “we are close throughout to the ancient tale. No allegory, no ethics, no rational soul, no preaching symbolism, enter here, to dim, confuse, or spoil the story. Nothing is added which does not justly exalt the tale, and what is added is chiefly a greater fulness and breadth of humanity, a more lovely and supreme Nature, arranged at every point to enhance into keener life the human feelings of Arthur and his knight, to lift the ultimate hour of sorrow and of death into nobility. Arthur is borne to a chapel nigh the field—

“A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land;
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

“What a noble framework—and with what noble consciousness it is drawn! . . . All the landscape—than which nothing better has been invented by any English poet—lives from point to point as if Nature herself had created it; but even more alive than the landscape are the two human figures in it—Sir Bedivere standing by the great water, and Arthur lying wounded near the chapel, waiting for his knight. Take one passage, which to hear is to see the thing:

“So saying, from the ruin’d shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

“Twice he hides the sword, and when Arthur asks: ‘What hast thou seen, what heard?’ Bedivere answers:

“‘I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag,’



“—lines so steeped in the loneliness of mountain tarns that I never stand in solitude beside their waters but I hear the verses in my heart. At the last he throws it.

“The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the northern sea.



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“So flashed and fell the brand Excalibur,’ and never yet in poetry did any sword, flung in the air, flash so superbly.

“The rest of the natural description is equally alive, and the passage where the sound echoes the sense, and Bedivere, carrying Arthur, clangs as he moves among the icy rocks, is as clear a piece of ringing, smiting, clashing sound as any to be found in Tennyson:

“Dry clashed his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang’d round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rung
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels.

“We hear all the changes on the vowel *a*—every sound of it used to give the impression—and then, in a moment, the verse runs into breadth, smoothness and vastness: for Bedivere comes to the shore and sees the great water;

“And on a sudden lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon,

“in which the vowel *o*, in its changes is used, as the vowel *a* has been used before.

“The questions and replies of Arthur and Bedivere, the reproaches of the King, the excuses of the Knight, the sorrow and the final wrath of Arthur, are worthy of the landscape, as they ought to be; and the dominance of the human element in the scene is a piece of noble artist-work. Arthur is royal to the close, and when he passes away with the weeping Queens across the mere, unlike the star of the tournament he was of old, he is still the King. Sir Bedivere, left alone on the freezing shore, hears the King give his last message to the world. It is a modern Christian who speaks, but the phrases do not sound out of harmony with that which might be in Romance. Moreover, the end of the saying is of Avilion or Avalon—of the old heathen Celtic place where the wounded are healed and the old made young.”

In the final analysis, therefore, the significance of the *Morte d’Arthur* is a significance of beauty rather than moralistic purpose. It has been said that the reading of Milton’s *Lycidas* is the surest test of one’s powers of poetical appreciation. I fear that the test is too severe for many readers who can still enjoy a simpler style of poetry. But any person who can read the *Morte d’Arthur*, and fail to be impressed by its splendid pictures, and subdued to admiration by the dignity of its language, need scarcely hope for pleasure from any poetry.

THE EPIC

3. SACRED BUSH. The mistletoe. This plant was sacred to the Celtic tribes, and was an object of particular veneration with the Druids, especially when associated with the oak-tree.

8. OR GONE=either gone.

18. THE GENERAL DECAY OF FAITH. The story of Arthur is intended to show how faith survives, although the form be changed. See esp. *Morte d'Arthur*, ll. 240-242.



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27-28. 'HE BURNT—SOME TWELVE BOOKS.' This must not be taken literally. See, however, p. xxxiii. of the Biographical Sketch, as to Tennyson's hesitation in treating the subject.

48-51. This is self-portraiture. Lord Tennyson's method of reading was impressive though peculiar.

MORTE D'ARTHUR

THE ARTHURIAN LEGEND. Throughout the mediaeval period three great cycles of stories commanded the imagination of the poets. Of these cycles one, the tale of Troy in its curious mediaeval guise, attested the potent spell of antique legend.[1] The two other great cycles were of later origin, and centred around the commanding historical figures of Charlemagne, and the phantom glory of the legendary Arthur.

[1]The extraordinary interest in the half legendary career of Alexander the Great must be noticed here, as also the profound respect amounting to veneration for the Roman poet, Vergil.

The origin of the Arthurian story is involved in obscurity. The crudest form of the myth has doubtless a core of historic truth, and represents him as a mighty Celtic warrior, who works havoc among the heathen Saxon invaders. Accretions naturally are added, and a miraculous origin and a mysterious death throw a superstitious halo around the hero. When the brilliant personality of Lancelot breaks into the tale, and the legend of the Holy Grail is superadded, the theme exercised an irresistible fascination upon the imagination of mediaeval Europe.

The vicissitudes of the Celtic inhabitants of Britain are as romantic as any of which history holds record. After the departure of the Roman invaders from the island, the native population swiftly reasserted itself. The Picts of Caledonia and the Scots of Ireland were their natural foes, but conflict with these enemies served only to stimulate the national life. But actual disaster threatened them when in the fifth and sixth centuries the heathen Angles and Saxons bore down in devastating hordes upon the land. It is at this critical period in the national history that Arthur must have lived. How long or how valiant the resistance was we cannot know. That it was vain is certain. A large body of Britons fled from annihilation across the channel, and founded in the region of Armorica in France, a new Brittany. Meanwhile, in the older Britain, the foe pressed hard upon their fellow-countrymen, and drove them into the western limits of the island, into the fastnesses of Wales, and the rocky parts of Cornwall. Here, and in Northern France, proud in their defeat and tenacious of the instincts of their race, they lived and still live, in the imaginative memories of the past. For them the future held little store of earthly gain, and yet they made the whole world their debtor.

Even in the courts of the conqueror Saxon their strange and beautiful poetry won favour, and in a later century the Norman kings and barons welcomed eagerly the wandering minstrels from Brittany and Wales. But it was not from these scattered sources that Celtic traditions became a European possession, as a brief statement of literary history will clearly show.



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The first recorded mention of Arthur's name occurs in a brief and anonymous *History of the Britons*, written in Latin in the tenth century, and attributed to Nennius. This history is curiously amplified in the twelfth century by Geoffrey of Monmouth, first in a story dealing with the prophecies of Merlin, and later in a *History of the Kings of Britain*. This book, with its brilliant description of the court of Arthur, gave the legend a widespread popularity. It was four times within the same century translated into French verse, the most famous of these renderings being the version of Wace, called *Le Brut*, which makes some addition to Geoffrey's original, gathered from Breton sources. In the same century, too, Chretien de Troyes, the foremost of Arthurian poets, composed his famous cycle of poems.

Of all these manifold sources Tennyson was confessedly ignorant. Where the details are not of his own invention, his *Idylls of the King* rest entirely upon Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, which Caxton printed in 1485, supplemented in the case of *Enid and Geraint*, and *The Marriage of Geraint* by a translation of the Welsh *Mabinogion* by Lady Charlotte Guest.

THE STORY OF THE IDYLLS.—It is well to remember the events that led up to Arthur's death. Guinevere's guilty love for Lancelot had been discovered and revealed by Arthur's nephew, the traitor Modred. The Queen fled the court and sought refuge with the nuns of Almesbury. Lancelot fled to his castle in the north, where the King in vain besieged him. Meanwhile Modred had stirred up a revolt, and leaguings himself with the Saxon invaders, had usurped Arthur's throne. On his march southward to resist his nephew, Arthur halts at the nunnery of Almesbury, and in the Guinevere idyll the moving story of their last farewell is told. Then the King advanced to meet Modred. The description of that "last weird battle in the west" is given in *The Passing of Arthur*, and leads up to the impressive line with which our present poem opens. Towards the close of that fateful day, there came—

A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Broke in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

The King speaks despairingly to Bedivere, who answering, swears to him undying allegiance, and points to the traitor, Modred, who still stands unharmed:



Thereupon:—

the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on the helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.



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4. LYONNESSE. The geography of the *Idylls of the King* is designedly vague. The region of Lyonesse was supposed to be adjacent to Cornwall, and the sea now covers it. The Scilly Islands are held to have been the western limit of this fabulous country.

6. THE BOLD SIR BEDIVERE. The epithet "bold" is used repeatedly in this vaguely descriptive fashion with Sir Bedivere's name. Cf. lines 39, 69, 115, 151, 226. The use of "permanent epithets" in narrative poetry has been consecrated by the example of Homer, who constantly employs such expressions as "the swift-footed Achilles," "wide-ruling Agamemnon," etc.

Bedivere is described in *The Coming of Arthur* as follows:—

For bold in heart and act and word was he
Whenever slander breathed against the King.

12. A GREAT WATER. This expression has occasioned much unnecessary comment on the score of its alleged artificiality. There might be a gain in definiteness in substituting "lake," or "river," as the case might be, but there would be a corresponding loss in poetry and in meaning at this particular place. "Had 'a great lake' been substituted for it, the phrase would have needed to be translated by the mind into water of a certain shape and size, before the picture was realized by the imagination." (Brimley.) It would have, consequently, been more precise, but "less poetic and pictorial."

If further justification for the expression were needed it might be stated that "water" stands for lake in certain parts of England, e.g. "Dewentwater," etc.; and, what is of more importance, that Malory uses "water" in the same sense: "The king . . . saw afore him in a great water a little ship." *Morte d'Arthur* iv. 6.

21. OF CAMELOT. Arthur's capital, as noted in *The Lady of Shalott*. In speaking of the allegorical meaning of *The Idylls of the King*, Tennyson states that "Camelot, for instance, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolical of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man." Always bear in mind that Tennyson has also said: "There is no single fact or incident in the *Idylls*, however seemingly mystical, which cannot be explained without any mystery or allegory whatever."

22. I PERISH—MADE. In *The Coming of Arthur* this thought is amplified:

For first Aurelius lived and fought and died, And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either failed to make the kingdom one. And after these King Arthur for a space, And
thro the puissance of his Table Round Drew all their petty princedoms under him, Their
king and head, and made a realm, and reigned.

And in *The Passing of Arthur* we read:

Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.



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23. THO' MERLINE SWARE—AGAIN. Merlin was the great wizard of Arthur's court. In the allegorical view of the poem he typifies the intellect, or, in Tennyson's words: "the sceptical understanding."

This prophecy concerning Arthur is again referred to in *The Coming of Arthur*:

And Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn,
Though men may wound him, that he will not die,
But pass and come again.

This belief is common to all the Arthurian sources. Compare, for example, Wace's *Brut*: "Arthur, if the story lies not, was mortally wounded in the body: he had himself borne to Avalon to heal his wounds. There he is still; the Britons await him, as they say and understand . . . The prophet spoke truth, and one can doubt, and always will doubt whether he is dead or living." Dr. Sykes writes that, "The sleep of Arthur associates the British story with the similar stories of Charlemagne and Frederick Barbarossa of Germany, Brian in Ireland, Boabdil el Chico in Spain, etc."

27. EXCALIBUR. Arthur's magical sword. It is described in *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 295 f., as:

the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur rowed across and took it—rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye—the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it—on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,
"Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
"Cast me away."

It has been variously held that Excalibur typifies temporal authority, or spiritual power. The casting away of the sword, therefore, represents the inevitable change in which human things are involved, and even faith itself. Compare *Morte d'Arthur*, ll. 240-241.

Magical weapons and enchanted armour are a portion of the equipment of almost all the great legendary heroes. Their swords and their horses usually bear distinctive names. Roland's sword was *Durandal*, and Charlemagne's was *Joyeuse*.

37. FLING HIM. The sword is viewed as possessing life.



THE MIDDLE MERE. Compare a similar classical construction in Oenone, l. 10, topmost Gargarus.

53-55. THE WINTER MOON—HILT. The frosty air made the moonlight more than usually brilliant.

60. THIS WAY—MIND. An echo of Vergil's line, Aeneid, VIII. 20. *Atque animum nunc huc celerem, nunc dividit illuc.* "And he divides his swift mind now this way, now that."

63. MANY-KNOTTED WATER FLAGS. Dr. Sykes has a careful note on this expression (*Select Poems of Tennyson*; Gage & Co.). "The epithet many-knotted is difficult to explain. The possible explanations would refer the description to (1) the root-stock of the flag, which shows additional bulbs from year to year; (2) the joints in the flower stalks, of which some half-dozen may be found on each stalk; (3) the large seed-pods that terminate in stalks, a very noticeable feature when the plant is sere; (4) the various bunches or knots of iris in a bed of the plants, so that the whole phrase suggests a thickly matted bed of flags. I favour the last interpretation, though Tennyson's fondness of technical accuracy in his references makes the second more than possible."



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70-71. I HEARD—CRAG. It is interesting to read Chapter V., Book XXI. of Malory in connection with Tennyson's version of the story. He is throughout true to the spirit of the original. *A propos* of lines 70-71, we find in Malory: "What saw thou, there?" said the King. "Sir," he said, "I saw nothing but the waters wap and the waves wan." Tennyson, in these two lines, gives us a consummate example of creative imitation.

84. COUNTING THE DEWY PEBBLES. This aptly describes the absorption of his mind.

85 f. and 56-58 supra. Compare the description of Excalibur, and of Bedivere's hesitancy, in Malory's book. "So Sir Bedivere departed, and by the way he beheld that noble sword, that the pommel and haft were all of precious stones, and then he said to himself, 'If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss.' And then Sir Bedivere hid Excalibur under a tree."

104. THE LONELY MAIDEN OF THE LAKE. The "Lady of the Lake" was present at the crowning of Arthur. In the *Coming of Arthur* she is described as dwelling—

Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

Arthur's first meeting with her is described in Malory:—"So they rode till they came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. 'Lo,' said Merlin, 'yonder is that sword that I spake of.' With that they saw a damsel going upon the lake; 'What damsel is that?' said Arthur. 'That is the Lady of the Lake,' said Merlin; 'and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any upon earth, and richly beseen.'"

In *Gareth and Lynette* the Lady of the Lake is mystically figured forth upon the great gate of Camelot.

105-106. NINE YEARS—HILLS. Hallam, Lord Tennyson, in the Memoir, quotes Fitzgerald's short account of a row on Lake Windermere with the poet; "Resting on our oars one calm day on Windermere, whither we had gone for a week from dear Spedding's (Mirehouse), at the end of May, 1835; resting on our oars, and looking into the lake quite unruffled and clear, Alfred quoted from the lines he had lately read us from the MS. of *Morte d'Arthur* about the lonely lady of the lake and Excalibur:

"Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps,
Under the hidden bases of the hills.

"—Not bad, that. Fitz, is it?"



“This kind of remark he would make when rendering his own or others’ poetry when he came to lines that he particularly admired from no vanity but from a pure feeling of artistic pleasure.” (Vol. I. pp. 152-153).

112. Note the slowness of the movement expressed in the rhythm of this line, and compare with it line 168. Contrast the swiftness and energy expressed in ll. 133-136.



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121. AUTHORITY—KING. This line has been described as Shakespearian. Its strength is derived from the force of the metaphorical personification. The boldness of the poetical construction is carried into the metaphor in the next line.

129. FOR A MAN. Because a man.

132. AND SLAY THEE WITH MY HANDS. Compare Malory: "And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee with mine own hands, for thou wouldest for my rich sword see me dead." In Rowe and Webb's edition it is suggested that 'with my hands' is added for one of two reasons,—either "because he had now no sword; or more probably, these words are introduced in imitation of Homer's habit of mentioning specific details: cf. 'he went taking long steps with his feet.'" This explanation is ingenious, but unnecessary in view of the quotation from Malory. The note proceeds: "Notice the touch of human personality in the king's sharp anger; otherwise Arthur is generally represented by Tennyson as a rather colourless being, and as almost 'too good for human nature's daily food.'"

133-142. Brimley in his valuable essay on Tennyson, analyses this poem in some detail. Of this passage he writes: "A series of brilliant effects is hit off in these two words, 'made lightnings.' 'Whirl'd in an arch,' is a splendid instance of sound answering to sense, which the older critics made so much of; the additional syllable which breaks the measure, and necessitates an increased rapidity of utterance, seeming to express to the ear the rush of the sword up its parabolic curve. And with what lavish richness of presentative power is the boreal aurora, the collision, the crash, and the thunder of the meeting icebergs, brought before the eye. An inferior artist would have shouted through a page, and emptied a whole pallet of colour, without any result but interrupting his narrative, where Tennyson in three lines strikingly illustrates the fact he has to tell,—associates it impressively with one of Nature's grandest phenomena, and gives a complete picture of this phenomenon besides." The whole essay deserves to be carefully read.

143. DIPT THE SURFACE. A poetical construction.

157. Note the personification of the sword.

182-183. CLOTHED—HILLS. His breath made a vapour in the frosty air through which his figure loomed of more than human size. Tennyson gives us the same effect in *Guinevere*, 597:

The moving vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold.



But the classical example is found in Wordsworth's description of the mountain shepherd in *The Prelude*, Book VIII.

When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
His sheep like Greenland bears, or as he stepped
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun,



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191-192. AND ON A SUDDEN—MOON. “Do we not,” writes Brimley, “seem to burst from the narrow steep path down the ravine, whose tall precipitous sides hide the sky and the broad landscape from sight, and come out in a moment upon—

“the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon!”

193. HOVE=hove in sight.

The closing scene in this drama is impressively described by Malory. “So Sir Bedivere came again to the King, and told him what he saw. ‘Alas,’ said the King, ‘help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long.’ Then Sir Bedivere took the King upon his back, and so went with him to that water side. And when they were at the water side, even fast by the bank hove a little barge, with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods, and all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur. ‘Now, put me into the barge,’ said the King: and so they did softly. And there received him three queens with great mourning, and so they set him down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head; and then that queen said; ‘Ah, dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught overmuch cold.’ And so then they rowed from the land; and Sir Bedivere beheld ail those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried; ‘Ah, my Lord Arthur, what shall become of me now ye so from me, and leave me here alone among mine enemies?’ ‘Comfort thyself,’ said the King; ‘and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I will into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul.’ But ever the queens and the ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And, as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest, and so he went all that night.”

It is interesting to note how the poet suggests here and there the phrasing of his original, but even more interesting to note his amplifications. It may be doubted whether Tennyson has here surpassed his original. For its touching simplicity he has substituted a dignified grandeur, and has involved plain statements in gorgeous rhetoric, as in his passage upon the efficacy of prayer. The unadorned original had said only “pray for my soul.”

198. THREE QUEENS WITH CROWNS OF GOLD. “That one was King Arthur’s sister, Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgales (Wales); the third was the Lady of the lake.” *Malory*.

215-216. DASH’D WITH DROPS—OF ONSET. Words are sometimes poetical from their precision, and sometimes, as here, they suggest without definite reference. The meaning is “dashed with drops of blood” from the onset or encounter.



2t6-220. Arthur is again described in *The Last Tournament*.

That victor of the Pagan throned in hall,
His hair, a sun that rayed from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
The golden beard that cloth'd his lips with light.



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228. MY FOREHEAD AND MY EYES. Compare the note to line 132. Here the specific terms are used according to the epical manner instead of the general term “face.”

232-233. Compare the Gospel of *Matthew* ii. 11.

240-242. These often-quoted lines have been already referred to above. Their very intellectuality is alien to the spirit of the original. In Tennyson’s conception they afford the central meaning of the poem, and also of the completed *Idylls*. We must bow to the will of God who brings all things in their due season. Good customs too deeply rooted are like clear waters grown stagnant.

254-255. FOR SO—GOD. The idea that the earth is bound by a gold chain to heaven is comparatively common in literature from Homer downwards. Archdeacon Hare has a passage in his sermon on *Self-Sacrifice* which doubtless was familiar to Tennyson: “This is the golden chain of love, whereby the whole creation is bound to the throne of the Creator.”

257-258. IF INDEED I GO—DOUBT. There is no reason to suppose that these lines indicate Tennyson’s personal misgivings on the subject of immortality.

259. THE ISLAND VALLEY OF AVILION. Mr. Rhys in his *Studies in the Arthurian Legend* combats the old idea that Avalon (Avilion) meant the “Island of Apples” (Welsh *aval*, apple). The name implies the Island of King Avalon, a Celtic divinity, who presided among the dead.

The valley of Avalon was supposed to be near Glastonbury, in Somersetshire, where Joseph of Arimathea first landed with the Holy Grail.

67 ff. There is an evident symbolical meaning in this dream. Indeed Tennyson always appears to use dreams for purposes of symbol. The lines are an application of the expression; “The old order changeth,” *etc.* The parson’s lamentation expressed in line 18, “Upon the general decay of faith,” is also directly answered by the assertion that the modern Arthur will arise in modern times. There is a certain grotesqueness in the likening of King Arthur to “a modern gentleman of stateliest port.” But Tennyson never wanders far from conditions of his own time. As Mr. Stopford Brooke writes; “Arthur, as the modern gentleman, as the modern ruler of men, such a ruler as one of our Indian heroes on the frontier, is the main thing in Tennyson’s mind, and his conception of such a man contains his ethical lesson to his countrymen.”

THE BROOK

Published in 1855 in the volume, *Maud and other Poems*. *The Brook* is one of the most successful of Tennyson’s idylls, and is in no degree, as the earlier poem *Dora* was, a Wordsworthian imitation. The brook itself, which bickers in and out of the story as in its

native valley, was not the Somersby brook, which does not now “to join the brimming river,” but pours into the sea. The graylings and other details are imaginary. A literary source has been suggested (see Dr. Sykes’ note) in Goethe’s poem, *Das Baechlein*, which begins:



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klar, and clear,
sinn; and think;
du hin? goest thou?

Du Bachlein, silberhell und Thou little brook, silver bright Du eilst vorueber immerdar,
Thou hastenest ever onward, Am Ufer steh' ich, sinn' und I stand on the brink, think Wo
kommst du her? Wo gehst Whence comest thou? Where

The Brook replies:

Schoss, dark rocks,
Moss'. and moss.

Ich komm' aus dunkler Felsen I come from the bosom of the Mein Lauf geht ueber
Blum' und My course goes over flowers

The charm of the poem lies in its delicate characterization, in its tone of pensive memory suffused with cheerfulness, and especially in the song of the brook, about which the action revolves. Twenty years have wrought many changes in the human lives of the story, but the brook flows on forever, and Darnley bridge still spans the brimming river, and shows for only change a richer growth of ivy.

6. HOW MONEY BREEDS, *i.e.* by producing interest at loan.

8. THE THING THAT—IS. The poet's function is thus described by Shakespeare:

As imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

—*Midsummer Night's Dream*, V., 1.

17. HALF-ENGLISH NEILGHERRY AIR. The Neilgherry Hills are in Madras. The climate resembles somewhat that of England.

37. MORE IVY, *i.e.* than twenty years ago.

46. WILLOW WEED AND MALLOW. These are marsh plants.

93-95. NOT ILLITERATE—DEED. Katie was not without reading; but she was not of those who dabble in sentimental novels (the source of imaginary tears), and saturate themselves with unctuous charities; and whose powers to act are sapped by their excess of feeling.

105. UNCLAIM'D. As having nothing to do with her. Katie resented the implication in the question of line 100. She therefore disdained to answer it. Messrs. Rowe and



Webb hold that line 100 is a hint that the speaker, Lawrence Aylmer, was responsible for James's fit of jealousy.

125f. Note the art with which the old man's garrulousness is expressed. The cautious precision of lines 151-152 is particularly apt.

176. NETTED SUNBEAM. The sunlight reflected like a net-work on the bottom. The ripples on the surface would have this effect.

189. ARNO. A river in Italy which flows past Florence.

189-190. DOME OF BRUNELLESCHI. Brunelleschi (Broo-nei-les'-ke) was an Italian architect (1377-1444), who completed the cathedral of Santa Maria in Florence. Its dome is of great size and impressiveness.

194. BY—SEAS. Tennyson was fond of quoting this line as one of his most successful individual lines. Its rhythm is indeed sonorous.



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195-196. AND HOLD—APRIL AUTUMNS. Objection has been taken to the somewhat pedantic precision of these lines. See, however, the reference on pp. lxxii.-lxxvii. to Tennyson's employment of science in poetry.

The fact is familiar, of course, that in the Antipodes the seasons are the reverse of ours.

203. BRIONY RINGS. Formed by the tendrils of the plant.

IN MEMORIAM

The poem, *In Memoriam*, in memory of Arthur Henry Hallam, was published in 1850, at first anonymously, but the authorship was not long in doubt.

Arthur Henry Hallam, the son of Henry Hallam, the historian, was born in 1811. He entered Eton in 1822, and remained there until 1827, when he went to Cambridge. There he met Alfred Tennyson, and the two young men formed a friendship for one another, broken only by Hallam's early death. In 1832, he graduated from Cambridge, became engaged to Emily Tennyson, the sister of Alfred, and entered on the study of law. In 1833, he had a severe illness and after his recovery was taken by his father for a tour on the Continent, in the hope of restoring his health. Sir Francis Hastings Doyle tells the story of his death: "A severe bout of influenza weakened him, and whilst he was travelling abroad for change of air, and to recover his strength, one of his usual attacks apparently returned upon him without warning, whilst he was still unfitted to resist it; so that when his poor father came back from a walk through the streets of Vienna, he was lying dead on the sofa where he had been left to take a short rest. Mr. Hallam sat down to write his letters, and it was only by slow and imperceptible degrees that a certain anxiety, in consequence of Arthur's stillness and silence, dawned upon his mind; he drew near to ascertain why he had not moved nor spoken, and found that all was over." The body was brought back to England and buried in Clevedon Church, on the banks of the Severn.

The effect upon Tennyson of the death of Arthur Hallam was overwhelming. For a time it "blotted out all joy from his life and made him long for death, in spite of his feeling that he was in some measure a help and comfort to his sister." Under the influence of this great sorrow he wrote *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses*, "*Break, Break, Break*," and began that exquisite series of lyric poems, afterwards joined together in the *In Memoriam*. His friendship for Hallam remained throughout life with him as one of his most precious possessions.

The poems in the text are selected from the *In Memoriam*, and have a more or less close connection with each other. It is better, however, to regard each poem as a separate poem, without any attempt to place it in its relation to the *In Memoriam* as a whole.

The best annotated edition of *In Memoriam* is that by A. C. Bradley (Macmillan). Other useful editions are edited by Wallace (Macmillan), and by Robinson (Cambridge Press). Elizabeth B. Chapman's *Companion to In Memoriam* (Macmillan), contains the best analysis of the poem.



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XXVII

“The very memory of such an affection as he had cherished for Hallam is an inspiration. Keen and acute as the sense of loss may be, it purifies rather than destroys the influence of a hallowed love—its effect is to idealize and sanctify. This general truth is enforced by several illustrations.”—*Henry E. Shepherd*.

2. NOBLE RAGE. Fierce love of freedom.

6. HIS LICENSE. “Lives without law, because untroubled by the promptings of a higher nature.”

6. FIELD OF TIME. The term of his natural life.

12. WANT-BEGOTTEN REST. Hallam, Lord Tennyson interprets: “Rest—the result of some deficiency or narrowness.”

16. NEVER TO HAVE LOVED. Life is enriched by the mere act of having loved.

LXIV

“Still brooding on all the possible relations of his old friend to the life and the love that he has left, the poet now compares him to some genius of lowly birth, who should leave his obscure home to rise to the highest office of state, and should sometimes in the midst of his greatness, remember, as in a dream, the dear scenes of old, and it may be, the humble villager who was his chosen playmate.”—*Elizabeth R. Chapman*.

1. DOST THOU, ETC. This section was composed by Tennyson when he was walking up and down the Strand and Fleet Street in London.

5. INVIDIOUS BAR. Obstacle to success. Invidious is used in the sense of “offensive.”

7. CIRCUMSTANCE. Adverse circumstances.

9. BY FORCE. Strength of character and will.

10. GOLDEN KEYS. Keys of office of state.

11. MOULD. As a minister of the Crown.

14. CROWNING SLOPE. A felicitous phrase. If it were a precipice it could not be climbed.

15. PILLAR. That on which they build, and which supports them.



21. NARROWER. When he was still in his “low estate.”

28. REMEMBER ME. Bradley notes that “the pathetic effect is increased by the fact that in the two preceding stanzas we are not told that his old friend does remember him.”

LXXXIII

“With the dawning of the New Year, fresh hope quickens in the poet’s breast. He would fain hasten its laggard footsteps, longing for the flowers of spring and for the glory of summer. Can trouble live in the spring—the season of life and love and music? Let the spring come, and he will sing ‘for Arthur a sweeter, richer requiem.’”—*Elizabeth R. Chapman*.

1. NORTHERN SHORE. Robertson explains: “The north being the last to be included in the widening circle of lengthening daylight as it readies further and further down from the equator.”

2. NEW-YEAR. The natural, not the calendar year. The re-awakening of life in nature.



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5. CLOUDED NOONS. From the noons, which are still clouded.

6. PROPER. Own.

9. SPIRE. Flowering spikes.

10. SPEEDWELL. "The Germander Speedwell is a slender, wiry plant, whose stem sometimes creeps along the surface of the ground before it grows upwards. The flowers have four small petals of the brightest blue, and within the flower at the foot of the petals is a small white circle, with a little white eye looking up. Two stamens with crimson heads rise from this white circle, and in the very centre of the flower there is a tiny green seed-vessel, with a spike coming out of the top."—*C. B. Smith.*

12. LABURNUMS.

"And all the gold from each laburnum chain
Drops to the grass." —*To Mary Boyle.*

LXXXVI

"I can open my being also to the reviving influences of Nature—as on a certain evening, balmy and glorious after the rain, when the breeze seemed as if it might breathe new life, and waft me across the seas away from the land of doubt and death to some far off sphere of more than earthly peace,"—*Arthur W. Robinson.*

1. SWEET AFTER SHOWERS, ETC. This poem was written at Barmouth.

1. AMBROSIAL. Ambrosia was the food of the immortal gods. The wind was from the west and was "divinely reviving."

4. BREATHING BARE. Making the horizon bare of clouds.

5. RAPT. Violent motion is not implied.

6. DEWY-TASSEL'D. From the showers.

7. HORNED FLOOD. Between two promontaries.

9. SIGH. "Impart as by a breath or sigh."

10. NEW LIFE. Due to the new friendship.

11. DOUBT AND DEATH. These have up to this time haunted him.



13. FROM BELT, ETC. Tennyson explains: “The west wind rolling to the Eastern seas till it meets the evening star.”

16. WHISPER “PEACE.” Stopford Brooke says of this poem: “Each verse is linked like bell to bell in a chime to the verse before it, swelling as they go from thought to thought, and finally rising from the landscape of earth to the landscape of infinite space. Can anything be more impassioned and yet more solemn? It has the swiftness of youth and the nobleness of manhood’s sacred joy.”

CI

“In the garden, looking round on tree and shrub and flower and brook—all the friends of many years—a fresh pang comes with the sight of each. All these will be unwatched, unloved, uncared for; till, perhaps, they find a home in a stranger’s heart, growing dear to him and his, while the memory fades of those who love them now.”—*Elizabeth R. Chapman*.

10. THE BROOK. The brook at Somersby flowed past the bottom of the parsonage grounds. It is constantly mentioned in Tennyson’s poems. Hallam Tennyson says that the charm and beauty of the brook haunted his father through life.



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11. LESSER WAIN. Ursa Minor, or the Little Bear; a small constellation containing the pole star. Wain means "wagon," another name for the constellation.
14. HERN AND CRAKE. Heron and corn-crake.
21. LABOURER. He does not move away, but stays always there.
22. GLEBE. Soil.

CXIV

"The world now is all for the spread of knowledge: and I should be the last to demur. But knowledge has an ardent impetuosity, which in its present immature condition may be fraught with many perils. Knowledge by itself, so far from being of necessity heavenly, may even become devilish in its selfish violence. Everything depends upon its being held in due subordination to those higher elements in our nature which go to make wisdom. Would that the ideal aim of our education were to produce such as he was, in whom every increase in intellectual ability was accompanied by the growth of some finer grace of the spirit."—*Arthur W. Robinson*.

4. HER PILLARS. "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."—*Proverbs 9: 1*.
5. A FIRE. The fire of inspiration.
6. SETS. Hard, like a flint.
6. FORWARD. Bold, without reverence.
7. CHANCE. Of success.
8. TO DESIRE. Governed by passion, without restraint or self-control.
10. FEAR OF DEATH. Knowledge does not know what is beyond the grave and therefore fears death.
11. CUT FROM LOVE, ETC. Wallace says: "Knowledge, in its own nature, can have no love, for love is not of the intellect, and knowledge is all of the intellect: so, too, she can have no faith, for faith in its nature is a confession of ignorance, since she believes what she cannot know."
12. PALLAS. Pallas Athene, the goddess of wisdom among the Greeks, was fabled to have sprung, fully grown and fully armed, from the brain of Zeus. Wild Pallas means "false wisdom."



- 17. A HIGHER HAND. Wisdom.
- 23. THY GOAL. The goal of wisdom.
- 28. REVERENCE, ETC. In faith and love.

CXV

“Another spring has come, and all its lovely sights and sounds wake answering chords in the poet’s breast. The life within him stirs and quickens in responsive harmony with the world without. But his regret, too, blossoms like a flower,”—*Elizabeth R. Chapman*.

- 2. BURGEONS. Buds.
- 2. MAZE OF QUICK. Quick-set tangle.
- 3. SQUARES. Fields.
- 8. SIGHTLESS. Invisible.
- 14. GREENING. Shining out on the sea.

CXVIII

“Do not believe that man’s soul is like mere matter, or has been produced, like lower forms in the earlier ages of the earth, only to perish. Believe that he is destined both to advance to something higher on the earth, and also to develop in some higher place elsewhere, if he repeats the process of evolution by subduing the lower within him to the uses of the higher, whether in peaceful growth or through painful struggle.”—*A. C. Bradley*.



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2. HIS YOUTH. "Limited time, however old or long, must be always young, compared with the hoary age of eternity."
4. EARTH AND LIME. Flesh and bone.
10. SEEMING-RANDOM. But in reality shaped and guided.
11. CYCLIC STORMS. "Periodic cataclysms," or "storms lasting for whole ages."
16. TYPE. Exemplify.
18. ATTRIBUTES OF WOE. Trial and suffering are the crown of man in this world.
20. IDLE. Useless.
22. HEATED HOT. A reference to the tempering of steel.
26. REELING FAUN. Human beings with horns, a tail, and goats' feet. They were more than half-brutish in their nature.
28. THE APE AND THE TIGER. A reference to the theory of evolution, although Darwin's *Origin of Species* did not appear until 1859.

CXXIII

"Again the mysterious play of mighty cosmic forces arrests his thought. Everything in the material universe is changing, transient; all is in a state of flux, of motion, of perpetual disintegration or re-integration. But there is one thing fixed and abiding—that which we call spirit—and amid all uncertainty, one truth is certain—that to a loving human soul a parting which shall be eternal is unthinkable."—*Elizabeth R. Chapman*.

4. STILLNESS. Hallam Tennyson remarks that balloonists say that even in a storm the middle sea is noiseless. It is the ship that is the cause of the howling of the wind and the lashing of the storm.
4. CENTRAL SEA. Far from land.
8. LIKE CLOUDS, ETC. A reference to geological changes.