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Poetry

A detailed pencil sketch of William Wordsworth's face, shown in profile, looking down. The sketch is rendered in a light, sketchy style with visible pencil lines and shading, particularly around the eyes, nose, and mouth. The background is a light, textured beige color.


WILLIAM

WORDSWORTH

Poems selected by **Seamus Heaney**

*Wordsworth*

*For Emily with  
1820*



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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH Poems selected by SEAMUS HEANEY

William Wordsworth (1770-1850) was born in Cockermouth, Cumberland. In 1798 he published the *Lyrical Ballads* with Coleridge, settling shortly after in Dove Cottage, Grasmere with his sister, Dorothy. He died at Rydal Mount in 1850, shortly before the posthumous publication of that landmark of English Romanticism, *The Prelude*.

Seamus Heaney was born in 1939 in County Derry in Northern Ireland. *Death of a Naturalist*, his first book, appeared in 1966. Since then he has published poetry, criticism and translations for which he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1995. He received the Whitbread Book of the Year for *The Spirit Level* (1996) and *Beowulf* (1999). *Electric Light*, his most recent collection of poems, appeared in 2001 and *Finders Keepers*, his selected prose, in 2002.

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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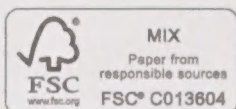
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## Introduction

As a child, William Wordsworth imagined he heard the moorlands breathing down his neck; he rowed in panic when he thought a cliff was pursuing him across moonlit water; and once, when he found himself on the hills east of Penrith Beacon, beside a gibbet where a murderer had been executed, the place and its associations were enough to send him fleeing in terror to the beacon summit.

Every childhood has its share of such uncanny moments. Nowadays, however, it is easy to underestimate the originality and confidence of a writer who came to consciousness in the far from child-centred eighteenth century and then managed to force a way through its literary conventions and its established modes of understanding: by intuition and introspection he recognized that such moments were not only the foundation of his sensibility, but the clue to his fulfilled identity.

By his late twenties, Wordsworth knew this one big truth, and during the next ten years he kept developing its implications with intense excitement, industry and purpose. During this period, he also elaborated a personal idiom: 'nature' and 'imagination' are not words that belong exclusively to Wordsworth, yet they keep coming up when we consider his achievement, which is the largest and most securely founded in the canon of native English poetry since Milton. He is an indispensable figure in the evolution of modern writing, a finder and keeper of the self-as-subject, a theorist and apologist whose Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (1802) remains definitive.

Wordsworth's power over his reader stems from his success in integrating several potentially contradictory efforts. More than a century before Yeats imposed on himself the task of hammering his thoughts into unity, Wordsworth was fulfilling it with deliberate intent. Indeed, it is not

until Yeats that we encounter another poet in whom emotional susceptibility, intellectual force, psychological acuteness, political awareness, artistic self-knowledge, and bardic representativeness are so truly and resolutely combined. (William Blake also comes to mind, but he does not possess – indeed he would have disdained – the ‘representativeness.’)

Take, for example, a poem like ‘Resolution and Independence’. Democratic, even republican, in its characteristic eye-level encounter with the outcast, and in its curiosity about his economic survival. Visionary in its presentation of the old man transfigured by the moment of epiphany. Philosophic in its retrieval of the stance of wisdom out of the experience of wonder. Cathartic in the forthrightness of its self-analysis. Masterful in its handling the stanza form. Salutory – not just picturesque – in its evocation of landscape and weather, inciting us to perceive connections between the leech-gatherer’s ascetic majesty and the austere setting of moorland, cloud, and pool. In a word, Wordsworthian.

Furthermore, ‘Resolution and Independence’ exemplifies the kind of revolutionary poem Wordsworth envisaged in the Preface. It takes its origin from ‘emotion recollected in tranquillity’; that emotion is contemplated until ‘by a species of reaction the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced and does actually exist in the mind.’ What happens also in the new poetry (again, these are the terms of the Preface) is that a common incident is viewed under a certain ‘colouring of imagination’; ordinary things are presented to the mind in an unusual way and made interesting by the poet’s capacity to trace in them, ‘truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature’.

Faced with the almost geological sobriety of works like ‘Tintern Abbey’, ‘Michael’, ‘The Ruined Cottage’, and the celebrated ‘spots of time’ in *The Prelude*, it is easy to forget that they are the work of a young man. These poems, which

enabled Wordsworth to speak with such authority – not just about the creative process but about the attributes of ■ poetry adequate to contemporary conditions – were written while he was still in his twenties. Yet the note is sure, the desire to impress absent, and the poems thoroughly absorbed in their own unglamorous necessities.

One of the reasons why Wordsworth's poems communicate such an impression of wholeness and depth is that they arrived as the hard-earned reward of resolved crisis. The steady emotional keel beneath them has known tempestuous conditions. They are songs of a man who has come through, one in whom William Hazlitt noted 'a worn pressure of thought about his temples, a fire in the eye . . . an intense, high narrow forehead, ■ Roman nose, cheeks furrowed with deep purpose and feelings'. That was in 1795, when the poet had almost weathered the storm and was lingering in the south of England, in the vernal clearings of Racedown in Dorset.

Behind him lay ■ childhood and schooltime full of luminous and enlarging experiences around Hawkshead, in the mountains of his native Cumberland. He had grown up visited by sensations of immensity, communing with a reality he apprehended beyond the world of the senses, and he was therefore naturally inclined to accept the universe as ■ mansion of spirit rather than ■ congeries of matter. He had also grown up in ■ rural society where the egalitarian spirit prevailed and people behaved with reticence and fortitude in a setting that was both awesome and elemental. All of which predisposed him to greet the outbreak of the French Revolution with hope and to espouse its ideals:

If at the first outbreak I rejoiced  
Less than might well befit my youth, the cause  
In part lay here, that unto me the events  
Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,  
A gift that rather was come late than soon.

The natural goodness of man he inclined to take for granted, so it did indeed seem possible that the removal of repressive forms of government and the establishment of unmediated relations between nature and human nature could lead to a regeneration of the world. Certainly when Wordsworth and his friend Robert Jones went on a walking tour through France in 1790, the summer after the fall of the Bastille, they could not miss the atmosphere of festival and the feeling that the country had awakened.

Jones! as from Calais southward you and I  
Went pacing side by side, this public Way  
Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day,  
When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty:  
A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:  
From hour to hour the antiquated Earth  
Beat like the heart of Man: songs, garlands, mirth,  
Banners, and happy faces, far and nigh!

When he wrote this sonnet, twelve years after the events it describes, Wordsworth was only thirty-two, but he had already completed the Dantesque journey into and out of the dark wood. Having come near to breakdown in the early 1790s because of emotional crises (the outbreak of war between England and France separated him from his French lover and mother of his child) and political confusions (the Reign of Terror had dismayed supporters of the Revolution), he was helped back towards his characteristic mental 'cheerfulness' by two indispensable soul-guides. His Beatrice was now his volatile and highly intelligent sister Dorothy, his Virgil the ardent philosophic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and it was in order to be near Coleridge that the Wordsworths eventually moved to Alfoxden in Somerset. They were in residence there for *annus mirabilis*, composing the poems that would make up the 1798 edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, the epoch-making volume that initiates modern poetry. A trip to Germany followed, during which William



wrote several of the 'Lucy' poems, and the first draft of his autobiographical masterpiece, *The Prelude* (i.e., 'The Two-Part Prelude', printed in this selection). Finally, the Wordsworth country as we know it came into being when the poet and his sister settled in the English Lake District, at Dove Cottage in Grasmere, at the end of 1799.

When they moved out in 1808, *The Prelude* existed as a major poem in thirteen books, William had married Mary Hutchinson and was already the father of four children, the *Lyrical Ballads* had reached a fourth edition, a two-volume collected edition of his poems had appeared in 1807, and, all in all, the work of 'the essential Wordsworth' was mostly completed.

In 1813 he would move to the stateliest of his addresses, Rydal Mount, an imposing house between Grasmere and Ambleside, where he and his family (still accompanied by Dorothy) lived until his death in 1850. The poet suffered personal losses in his prime – a son and a daughter, Thomas and Catharine, died in 1812 – and his final years were darkened by Dorothy's mental breakdown and the death of another daughter, Dora, in 1847; but this has had little effect in lessening the general impression that as the years proceeded Wordsworth became more an institution than an individual. It is an impression reinforced by the sonorous expatiation of his later poetry and the roll call of his offices and associations – friend of the aristocracy, Distributor of Stamps for Westmoreland, Poet Laureate. He had lost the path that should have kept leading more confidently and deeply inward; still vivid as an intelligence, nationally celebrated, domestically fortified, he ended up industriously but for the most part unrewardingly marking time as a poet.

It was Wordsworth's destiny to have to endure and try to make sense of the ebb of his powers and the flight of his vision. Yet he had schooled himself in the discipline of maintaining equanimity in the face of loss, and the ultimate rewards of his habit of patience are to be found in

masterpieces of disappointment like the 'Immortality Ode' and 'Elegiac Stanzas'. But equally the reader rejoices in the occasional unapologetic cry of hurt, so immediate and so powerful – as in 'Extempore Effusion' – that it overwhelms his customary resignation. As a poet, he was always at his best while struggling to become a whole person, to reconcile the sense of incoherence and disappointment forced upon him by time and circumstance with those intimations of harmonious communion promised by his childhood visions, and seemingly ratified by his glimpse of a society atremble at the moment of revolution.

Seamus Heaney



WILLIAM WORDSWORTH



## Animal Tranquillity and Decay

The little hedgerow birds,  
That peck along the road, regard him not.  
He travels on, and in his face, his step,  
His gait, is one expression: every limb,  
His look and bending figure, all bespeak  
A man who does not move with pain, but moves  
With thought. – He is insensibly subdued  
To settled quiet: he is one by whom  
All effort seems forgotten; one to whom  
Long patience hath such mild composure given,  
That patience now doth seem a thing of which  
He hath no need. He is by nature led  
To peace so perfect that the young behold  
With envy, what the Old Man hardly feels.

Fragment: Yet once again

Yet once again do I behold the forms  
Of these huge mountains, and yet once again,  
Standing beneath these elms, I hear thy voice,  
Beloved Derwent, that peculiar voice  
Heard in the stillness of the evening air,  
Half-heard and half-created.

## Fragments from the Alfoxden Notebook (I)

### I

there would he stand  
In the still covert of some [lonesome?] rock,  
Or gaze upon the moon until its light  
Fell like a strain of music on his soul  
And seemed to sink into his very heart.

### II

Why is it we feel  
So little for each other, but for this,  
That we with nature have no sympathy,  
Or with such things as have no power to hold  
Articulate language?

---

And never for each other shall we feel  
As we may feel, till we have sympathy  
With nature in her forms inanimate,  
With objects such as have no power to hold  
Articulate language. In all forms of things  
There is ■ mind

### III

Of unknown modes of being which on earth,  
Or in the heavens, or in the heavens and earth  
Exist by mighty combinations, bound  
Together by a link, and with a soul  
Which makes all one.

To gaze  
On that green hill and on those scattered trees

And feel a pleasant consciousness of life  
Until the sweet sensation called the mind  
Into itself, by image from without  
Unvisited, and all her reflex powers  
Wrapped in a still dream [?of] forgetfulness.

I lived without the knowledge that I lived  
Then by those beauteous forms brought back again  
To lose myself again as if my life  
Did ebb and flow with a strange mystery.



## The Ruined Cottage

### FIRST PART

'Twas Summer and the sun was mounted high;  
Along the south the uplands feebly glared  
Through a pale steam, and all the northern downs,  
In clearer air ascending, shewed far off  
Their surfaces with shadows dappled o'er  
Of deep embattled clouds. Far as the sight  
Could reach those many shadows lay in spots  
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
Of clear and pleasant sunshine interposed –  
Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss  
Extends his careless limbs beside the root  
Of some huge oak whose aged branches make  
A twilight of their own, a dewy shade  
Where the wren warbles while the dreaming man,  
Half-conscious of that soothing melody,  
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,  
By those impending branches made more soft,  
More soft and distant.

Other lot was mine.

Across ■ bare wide common I had toiled  
With languid feet which by the slippery ground  
Were baffled still; and when I stretched myself  
On the brown earth my limbs from very heat  
Could find no rest, nor my weak arm disperse  
The insect host which gathered round my face  
And joined their murmurs to the tedious noise  
Of seeds of bursting gorse that crackled round.  
I rose and turned towards a group of trees  
Which midway in that level stood alone;  
And thither come at length, beneath a shade  
Of clustering elms that sprang from the same root

I found a ruined house, four naked walls  
That stared upon each other. I looked round,  
And near the door I saw an aged man  
Alone and stretched upon the cottage bench;  
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.  
With instantanious joy I recognized  
That pride of Nature and of lowly life,  
The venerable Armytage, a friend  
As dear to me as is the setting sun.

Two days before  
We had been fellow-travellers. I knew  
That he was in this neighbourhood, and now  
Delighted found him here in the cool shade.  
He lay, his pack of rustic merchandize  
Pillowing his head. I guess he had no thought  
Of his way-wandering life. His eyes were shut,  
The shadows of the breezy elms above  
Dappled his face. With thirsty heat oppressed  
At length I hailed him, glad to see his hat  
Bedewed with water-drops, as if the brim  
Had newly scooped a running stream. He rose  
And pointing to a sun-flower, bade me climb  
The [ ] wall where that same gaudy flower  
Looked out upon the road.

It was a plot  
Of garden-ground now wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those whom as they passed,  
The gooseberry-trees that shot in long lank slips,  
Or currants hanging from their leafless stems  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. Within that cheerless spot,  
Where two tall hedgerows of thick alder boughs  
Joined in a damp cold nook, I found a well  
Half covered up with willow-flowers and grass.  
I slaked my thirst and to the shady bench  
Returned, and while I stood unbonneted

To catch the motion of the cooler air  
The old man said, 'I see around me here  
Things which you cannot see. We die, my friend,  
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
Dies with him, or is changed, and very soon  
Even of the good is no memorial left.  
The poets, in their elegies and songs  
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn,  
And senseless rocks – nor idly, for they speak  
In these their invocations with a voice  
Obedient to the strong creative power  
Of human passion. Sympathies there are  
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
That steal upon the meditative mind  
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,  
And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel  
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond  
Of brotherhood is broken: time has been  
When every day the touch of human hand  
Disturbed their stillness, and they ministered  
To human comfort. When I stooped to drink  
A spider's web hung to the water's edge,  
And on the wet and slimy foot-stone lay  
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl.  
It moved my very heart.

The day has been

When I could never pass this road but she  
Who lived within these walls, when I appeared,  
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her  
As my own child. Oh sir, the good die first,  
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger  
Has blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks  
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn

From that forsaken spring, and no one came  
But he was welcome, no one went away  
But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,  
The worm is on her cheek, and this poor hut,  
Stripped of its outward garb of household flowers,  
Of rose and sweetbriar, offers to the wind  
A cold bare wall whose earthy top is tricked  
With weeds and the rank speargrass. She is dead,  
And nettles rot and adders sun themselves  
Where we have sate together while she nursed  
Her infant at her breast. The unshod colt,  
The wandering heifer and the potter's ass,  
Find shelter now within the chimney-wall  
Where I have seen her evening hearthstone blaze  
And through the window spread upon the road  
Its chearful light. You will forgive me, sir,  
But often on this cottage do I muse  
As on a picture, till my wiser mind  
Sinks, yielding to the foolishness of grief.

She had a husband, an industrious man,  
Sober and steady. I have heard her say  
That he was up and busy at his loom  
In summer ere the mower's scythe had swept  
The dewy grass, and in the early spring  
Ere the last star had vanished. They who passed  
At evening, from behind the garden-fence  
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply  
After his daily work till the daylight  
Was gone, and every leaf and flower were lost  
In the dark hedges. So they passed their days  
In peace and comfort, and two pretty babes  
Were their best hope next to the God in heaven.

You may remember, now some ten years gone,  
Two blighting seasons when the fields were left  
With half a harvest. It pleased heaven to add  
A worse affliction in the plague of war;

A happy land was stricken to the heart –  
'Twas a sad time of sorrow and distress.  
A wanderer among the cottages,  
I with my pack of winter raiment saw  
The hardships of that season. Many rich  
Sunk down as in a dream among the poor.  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled  
To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With chearful hope. But ere the second autumn,  
A fever seized her husband. In disease  
He lingered long, and when his strength returned  
He found the little he had stored to meet  
The hour of accident, or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. As I have said, 'twas now  
A time of trouble: shoals of artisans  
Were from their daily labour turned away  
To hang for bread on parish charity,  
They and their wives and children – happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedges, or the kite  
That makes her dwelling in the mountain rocks.

Ill fared it now with Robert, he who dwelt  
In this poor cottage. At his door he stood  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them, or with his knife  
Carved uncouth figures on the heads of sticks;  
Then idly sought about through every nook  
Of house or garden any casual task  
Of use or ornament, and with a strange  
Amusing but uneasy novelty  
He blended where he might the various tasks  
Of summer, autumn, winter, and of spring.  
But this endured not, his good humour soon

Became a weight in which no pleasure was,  
And poverty brought on ■ petted mood  
And a sore temper. Day by day he drooped,  
And he would leave his home, and to the town  
Without an errand would he turn his steps,  
Or wander here and there among the fields.  
One while he would speak lightly of his babes  
And with ■ cruel tongue; at other times  
He played with them wild freaks of merriment,  
And 'twas ■ piteous thing to see the looks  
Of the poor innocent children. 'Every smile',  
Said Margaret to me here beneath these trees,  
'Made my heart bleed.'

At this the old man paused,  
And looking up to those enormous elms  
He said, ' 'Tis now the hour of deepest noon.  
At this still season of repose and peace,  
This hour when all things which are not at rest  
Are chearful, while this multitude of flies  
Fills all the air with happy melody,  
Why should a tear be in an old man's eye?  
Why should we thus with an untoward mind,  
And in the weakness of humanity,  
From natural wisdom turn our hearts away,  
To natural comfort shut our eyes and ears,  
And feeding on disquiet, thus disturb  
The calm of Nature with our restless thoughts?'

## SECOND PART

He spake with somewhat of a solemn tone,  
But when he ended there was in his face  
Such easy chearfulness, a look so mild,  
That for a little time it stole away  
All recollection, and that simple tale  
Passed from my mind like a forgotten sound.



A while on trivial things we held discourse,  
To me soon tasteless. In my own despite  
I thought of that poor woman as of one  
Whom I had known and loved. He had rehearsed  
Her homely tale with such familiar power,  
With such an active countenance, an eye  
So busy, that the things of which he spake  
Seemed present, and, attention now relaxed,  
There was a heartfelt chillness in my veins.  
I rose, and turning from that breezy shade  
Went out into the open air, and stood  
To drink the comfort of the warmer sun.  
Long time I had not stayed ere, looking round  
Upon that tranquil ruin, I returned  
And begged of the old man that for my sake  
He would resume his story.

He replied,

‘It were a wantonness, and would demand  
Severe reproof, if we were men whose hearts  
Could hold vain dalliance with the misery  
Even of the dead, contented thence to draw  
A momentary pleasure, never marked  
By reason, barren of all future good.  
But we have known that there is often found  
In mournful thoughts, and always might be found,  
A power to virtue friendly; were’t not so  
I am ■ dreamer among men, indeed  
An idle dreamer. ’Tis a common tale  
By moving accidents uncharactered,  
A tale of silent suffering, hardly clothed  
In bodily form, and to the grosser sense  
But ill adapted – scarcely palpable  
To him who does not think. But at your bidding  
I will proceed.

While thus it fared with them  
To whom this cottage till that hapless year

Had been a blessed home, it was my chance  
To travel in a country far remote;  
And glad I was when, halting by yon gate  
That leads from the green lane, again I saw  
These lofty elm-trees. Long I did not rest –  
With many pleasant thoughts I cheered my way  
O'er the flat common. At the door arrived,  
I knocked, and when I entered, with the hope  
Of usual greeting, Margaret looked at me  
A little while, then turned her head away  
Speechless, and sitting down upon a chair  
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,  
Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch, at last  
She rose from off her seat, and then, oh sir,  
I cannot tell how she pronounced my name.  
With fervent love, and with a face of grief  
Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappeared – just two months gone  
He left his house: two wretched days had passed,  
And on the third by the first break of light,  
Within her casement full in view she saw  
A purse of gold. 'I trembled at the sight,'  
Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand  
That placed it there. And on that very day  
By one, a stranger, from my husband sent,  
The tidings came that he had joined a troop  
Of soldiers going to a distant land.  
He left me thus. Poor man, he had not heart  
To take a farewell of me, and he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of a soldier's life.'

This tale did Margaret tell with many tears,

And when she ended I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both. But long we had not talked  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she looked around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted. It was then the early spring;  
I left her busy with her garden tools,  
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,  
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,  
Called out and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness, and with a voice  
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale  
With this my weary load, in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood and many an open ground,  
In sunshine or in shade, in wet or fair,  
Now blithe, now drooping, as it might befall;  
My best companions now the driving winds  
And now the 'trotting brooks' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps,  
With many a short-lived thought that passed between  
And disappeared.

I came this way again  
Towards the wane of summer, when the wheat  
Was yellow, and the soft and bladed grass  
Sprang up afresh and o'er the hayfield spread  
Its tender green. When I had reached the door  
I found that she was absent. In the shade,  
Where we now sit, I waited her return.  
Her cottage in its outward look appeared  
As cheerful as before, in any shew  
Of neatness little changed – but that I thought  
The honeysuckle crowded round the door  
And from the wall hung down in heavier tufts,

And knots of worthless stonecrop started out  
Along the window's edge, and grew like weeds  
Against the lower panes. I turned aside  
And strolled into her garden. It was changed.  
The unprofitable bindweed spread his bells  
From side to side, and with unwieldy wreaths  
Had dragged the rose from its sustaining wall  
And bent it down to earth. The border tufts,  
Daisy, and thrift, and lowly camomile,  
And thyme, had straggled out into the paths  
Which they were used to deck.

Ere this an hour  
Was wasted. Back I turned my restless steps,  
And as I walked before the door it chanced  
A stranger passed, and guessing whom I sought,  
He said that she was used to ramble far.  
The sun was sinking in the west, and now  
I sate with sad impatience. From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud.  
The spot though fair seemed very desolate –  
The longer I remained more desolate –  
And looking round I saw the corner-stones,  
Till then unmarked, on either side the door  
With dull red stains discoloured, and stuck o'er  
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep  
That feed upon the commons thither came  
Familiarly, and found a couching-place  
Even at her threshold.

The house-clock struck eight:  
I turned and saw her distant a few steps.  
Her face was pale and thin, her figure too  
Was changed. As she unlocked the door she said,  
'It grieves me you have waited here so long,  
But in good truth I've wandered much of late,  
And sometimes – to my shame I speak – have need  
Of my best prayers to bring me back again.'

While on the board she spread our evening meal  
She told me she had lost her elder child,  
That he for months had been a serving-boy,  
Apprenticed by the parish. 'I perceive  
You look at me, and you have cause. Today  
I have been travelling far, and many days  
About the fields I wander, knowing this  
Only, that what I seek I cannot find.  
And so I waste my time: for I am changed,  
And to myself', said she, 'have done much wrong,  
And to this helpless infant. I have slept  
Weeping, and weeping I have waked. My tears  
Have flowed as if my body were not such  
As others are, and I could never die.  
But I am now in mind and in my heart  
More easy, and I hope', said she, 'that heaven  
Will give me patience to endure the things  
Which I behold at home.'

It would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her. Sir, I feel  
The story linger in my heart. I fear  
'Tis long and tedious, but my spirit clings  
To that poor woman. So familiarly  
Do I perceive her manner and her look  
And presence, and so deeply do I feel  
Her goodness, that not seldom in my walks  
A momentary trance comes over me  
And to myself I seem to muse on one  
By sorrow laid asleep or borne away,  
A human being destined to awake  
To human life, or something very near  
To human life, when he shall come again  
For whom she suffered. Sir, it would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her: evermore  
Her eyelids drooped, her eyes were downward cast,  
And when she at her table gave me food

She did not look at me. Her voice was low,  
Her body was subdued. In every act  
Pertaining to her house-affairs appeared  
The careless stillness which a thinking mind  
Gives to an idle matter. Still she sighed,  
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire  
We sate together, sighs came on my ear –  
I knew not how, and hardly whence, they came.  
I took my staff, and when I kissed her babe  
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
With the best hope and comfort I could give:  
She thanked me for my will, but for my hope  
It seemed she did not thank me.

I returned

And took my rounds along this road again  
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
Had chronicled the earliest day of spring.  
I found her sad and drooping. She had learned  
No tidings of her husband. If he lived,  
She knew not that he lived: if he were dead,  
She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same  
In person or appearance, but her house  
Bespoke a sleepy hand of negligence.  
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
Was comfortless,  
The windows too were dim, and her few books,  
Which one upon the other heretofore  
Had been piled up against the corner-panes  
In seemly order, now with straggling leaves  
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,  
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe  
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief,  
And sighed among its playthings. Once again  
I turned towards the garden-gate, and saw  
More plainly still that poverty and grief



Were now come nearer to her. The earth was hard  
With weeds defaced and knots of withered grass;  
No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,  
No winter greenness. Of her herbs and flowers  
It seemed the better part were gnawed away  
Or trampled on the earth. A chain of straw,  
Which had been twisted round the tender stem  
Of a young appletree, lay at its root;  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.  
Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, seeing that my eye was on the tree,  
She said, 'I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again.'

Towards the house

Together we returned, and she inquired  
If I had any hope. But for her babe,  
And for her little friendless boy, she said,  
She had no wish to live – that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom  
Still in its place. His Sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail, his very staff  
Stood undisturbed behind the door. And when  
I passed this way beaten by autumn winds,  
She told me that her little babe was dead  
And she was left alone. That very time,  
I yet remember, through the miry lane  
She walked with me a mile, when the bare trees  
Trickled with foggy damps, and in such sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her, begged  
That wheresoe'er I went I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then,  
Our final parting; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I returned  
Into this tract again.

Five tedious years

She lingered in unquiet widowhood,

A wife and widow. Needs must it have been  
A sore heart-wasting. I have heard, my friend,  
That in that broken arbour she would sit  
The idle length of half a sabbath day –  
There, where you see the toadstool's lazy head –  
And when a dog passed by she still would quit  
The shade and look abroad. On this old bench  
For hours she sate, and evermore her eye  
Was busy in the distance, shaping things  
Which made her heart beat quick. Seest thou that path? –  
The green-sward now has broken its grey line –  
There to and fro she paced through many a day  
Of the warm summer, from a belt of flax  
That girt her waist, spinning the long-drawn thread  
With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed  
A man whose garments shewed the soldier's red,  
Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
Ceased from his toil, and she, with faltering voice,  
Expecting still to learn her husband's fate,  
Made many a fond inquiry; and when they  
Whose presence gave no comfort were gone by,  
Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
Which bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
Would lift, and in his face look wistfully,  
Most happy if from aught discovered there  
Of tender feeling she might dare repeat  
The same sad question.

Meanwhile her poor hut  
Sunk to decay; for he was gone, whose hand  
At the first nippings of October frost  
Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived  
Through the long winter, reckless and alone,  
Till this reft house, by frost, and thaw, and rain,

Was sapped; and when she slept, the nightly damps  
Did chill her breast, and in the stormy day  
Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind  
Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still  
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds  
Have parted hence; and still that length of road,  
And this rude bench, one torturing hope endeared,  
Fast rooted at her heart. And here, my friend,  
In sickness she remained; and here she died,  
Last human tenant of these ruined walls.'

The old man ceased; he saw that I was moved.  
From that low Bench rising instinctively  
I turned aside in weakness, nor had power  
To thank him for the tale which he had told.  
I stood, and leaning o'er the garden gate  
Reviewed that woman's sufferings; and it seemed  
To comfort me while with a brother's love  
I blessed her in the impotence of grief.  
At length towards the cottage I returned  
Fondly, and traced with milder interest  
That secret spirit of humanity  
Which, mid the calm oblivious tendencies  
Of Nature, mid her plants, her weeds and flowers,  
And silent overgrowings, still survived.  
The old man seeing this resumed, and said,  
'My friend, enough to sorrow have you given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more:  
Be wise and chearful, and no longer read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye:  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high speargrass on that wall,  
By mist and silent raindrops silvered o'er,  
As once I passed did to my mind convey  
So still an image of tranquility,  
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful

Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,  
That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
The passing shews of being leave behind,  
Appeared an idle dream that could not live  
Where meditation was. I turned away,  
And walked along my road in happiness.'

He ceased. By this the sun declining shot  
A slant and mellow radiance, which began  
To fall upon us where beneath the trees  
We sate on that low bench. And now we felt,  
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on:  
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,  
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies  
At distance heard people the milder air.  
The old man rose and hoisted up his load;  
Together casting then a farewell look  
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade,  
And ere the stars were visible attained  
A rustic inn, our evening resting-place.

## To My Sister

It is the first mild day of March:  
Each minute sweeter than before,  
The redbreast sings from the tall larch  
That stands beside our door.

There is a blessing in the air,  
Which seems a sense of joy to yield  
To the bare trees, and mountains bare,  
And grass in the green field.

My sister! ('tis a wish of mine)  
Now that our morning meal is done,  
Make haste, your morning task resign;  
Come forth and feel the sun.

Edward will come with you; – and, pray,  
Put on with speed your woodland dress;  
And bring no book: for this one day  
We'll give to idleness.

No joyless forms shall regulate  
Our living calendar:  
We from today, my Friend, will date  
The opening of the year.

Love, now a universal birth,  
From heart to heart is stealing,  
From earth to man, from man to earth:  
– It is the hour of feeling.

One moment now may give us more  
Than years of toiling reason:  
Our minds shall drink at every pore  
The spirit of the season.

Some silent laws our hearts will make,  
Which they shall long obey:  
We for the year to come may take  
Our temper from today.

And from the blessed power that rolls  
About, below, above,  
We'll frame the measure of our souls:  
They shall be turned to love.

Then come, my Sister! come, I pray,  
With speed put on your woodland dress;  
And bring no book: for this one day  
We'll give to idleness.

## Goody Blake and Harry Gill

### *A True Story*

Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?  
What is't that ails young Harry Gill?  
That evermore his teeth they chatter,  
Chatter, chatter, chatter still!  
Of waistcoats Harry has no lack,  
Good duffle grey, and flannel fine;  
He has a blanket on his back,  
And coats enough to smother nine.

In March, December, and in July,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;  
The neighbours tell, and tell you truly,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
At night, at morning, and at noon,  
'Tis all the same with Harry Gill;  
Beneath the sun, beneath the moon,  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still!

Young Harry was a lusty drover,  
And who so stout of limb as he?  
His cheeks were red as ruddy clover;  
His voice was like the voice of three.  
Old Goody Blake was old and poor;  
Ill fed she was, and thinly clad;  
And any man who passed her door  
Might see how poor a hut she had.

All day she spun in her poor dwelling;  
And then her three hours' work at night,  
Alas! 'twas hardly worth the telling,  
It would not pay for candle-light.  
Remote from sheltered village-green,  
On a hill's northern side she dwelt,

Where from sea-blasts the hawthorn lean,  
And hoary dews are slow to melt.

By the same fire to boil their pottage,  
Two poor old Dames, as I have known,  
Will often live in one small cottage;  
But she, poor Woman! housed alone.  
'Twas well enough, when summer came,  
The long, warm, lightsome summer-day,  
Then at her door the *canty* Dame  
Would sit, as any linnet, gay.

But when the ice our streams did fether,  
Oh then how her old bones would shake!  
You would have said, if you had met her,  
'Twas a hard time for Goody Blake.  
Her evenings then were dull and dead:  
Sad case it was, as you may think,  
For very cold to go to bed;  
And then for cold not sleep ■ wink.

O joy for her! whene'er in winter  
The winds at night had made ■ rout;  
And scattered many a lusty splinter  
And many a rotten bough about.  
Yet never had she, well or sick,  
As every man who knew her says,  
A pile beforehand, turf or stick,  
Enough to warm her for three days.

Now, when the frost was past enduring,  
And made her poor old bones to ache,  
Could any thing be more alluring  
Than an old hedge to Goody Blake?  
And, now and then, it must be said,  
When her old bones were cold and chill,  
She left her fire, or left her bed,  
To seek the hedge of Harry Gill.



Now Harry he had long suspected  
This trespass of old Goody Blake;  
And vowed that she should be detected –  
That he on her would vengeance take.  
And oft from his warm fire he'd go,  
And to the fields his road would take;  
And there, at night, in frost and snow,  
He watched to seize old Goody Blake.

And once, behind a rick of barley,  
Thus looking out did Harry stand:  
The moon was full and shining clearly,  
And crisp with frost the stubble land.  
– He hears a noise – he's all awake –  
Again? – on tip-toe down the hill  
He softly creeps – 'tis Goody Blake;  
She's at the hedge of Harry Gill!

Right glad was he when he beheld her:  
Stick after stick did Goody pull:  
He stood behind a bush of elder,  
Till she had filled her apron full.  
When with her load she turned about,  
The by-way back again to take;  
He started forward, with a shout,  
And sprang upon poor Goody Blake.

And fiercely by the arm he took her,  
And by the arm he held her fast,  
And fiercely by the arm he shook her,  
And cried, 'I've caught you then at last!'  
Then Goody, who had nothing said,  
Her bundle from her lap let fall;  
And, kneeling on the sticks, she prayed  
To God that is the judge of all.

She prayed, her withered hand uprearing,  
While Harry held her by the arm –

'God! who are never out of hearing,  
O may he never more be warm!  
The cold, cold moon above her head,  
Thus on her knees did Goody pray;  
Young Harry heard what she had said:  
And icy cold he turned away.

He went complaining all the morrow  
That he was cold and very chill:  
His face was gloom, his heart was sorrow,  
Alas! that day for Harry Gill!  
That day he wore a riding-coat,  
But not a whit the warmer he:  
Another was on Thursday brought,  
And ere the Sabbath he had three.

'Twas all in vain, a useless matter,  
And blankets were about him pinned;  
Yet still his jaws and teeth they clatter,  
Like a loose casement in the wind.  
And Harry's flesh it fell away;  
And all who see him say, 'tis plain,  
That, live as long as live he may,  
He never will be warm again.

No word to any man he utters,  
A-bed or up, to young or old;  
But ever to himself he mutters,  
'Poor Harry Gill is very cold.'  
A-bed or up, by night or day;  
His teeth they chatter, chatter still.  
Now think, ye farmers all, I pray,  
Of Goody Blake and Harry Gill!

## Lines Written in Early Spring

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

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

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

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

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

If this belief from heaven be sent,  
If such be Nature's holy plan,  
Have I not reason to lament  
What man has made of man?

## Expostulation and Reply

'Why, William, on that old grey stone,  
Thus for the length of half a day,  
Why, William, sit you thus alone,  
And dream your time away?

'Where are your books? – that light bequeathed  
To Beings else forlorn and blind!  
Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed  
From dead men to their kind.

'You look round on your Mother Earth,  
As if she for no purpose bore you;  
As if you were her first-born birth,  
And none had lived before you!'

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,  
When life was sweet, I knew not why,  
To me my good friend Matthew spake,  
And thus I made reply:

'The eye – it cannot choose but see;  
We cannot bid the ear be still;  
Our bodies feel, where'er they be,  
Against or with our will.

'Nor less I deem that there are Powers  
Which of themselves our minds impress;  
That we can feed this mind of ours  
In a wise passiveness.

'Think you, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things for ever speaking,  
That nothing of itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking?

‘ – Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,  
Conversing as I may,  
I sit upon this old grey stone,  
And dream my time away.’

The Tables Turned  
*An Evening Scene on the Same Subject*

Up! up! my Friend and quit your books;  
Or surely you'll grow double:  
Up! up! my Friend, and clear your looks;  
Why all this toil and trouble?

The sun above the mountain's head,  
A freshening lustre mellow  
Through all the long green fields has spread,  
His first evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife:  
Come, hear the woodland linnet,  
How sweet his music! on my life,  
There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throstle sings!  
He, too, is no mean preacher:  
Come forth into the light of things,  
Let Nature be your Teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,  
Our minds and hearts to bless –  
Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,  
Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

One impulse from a vernal wood  
May teach you more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good,  
Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;  
Our meddling intellect  
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: –  
We murder to dissect.



Enough of Science and of Art;  
Close up those barren leaves;  
Come forth, and bring with you a heart  
That watches and receives.

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,  
on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour.  
July 13, 1798

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur. – Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration: – feelings too

Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burden of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened: – that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on, –  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

If this

Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft –  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart –  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer through the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food

For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all. – I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye. – That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a spirit, that impels

All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear, – both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognize  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,  
Rash judgements, nor the sneers of selfish men,  
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all  
The dreary intercourse of daily life,  
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb  
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold  
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon  
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;

And let the misty mountain-winds be free  
To blow against thee: and, in after years,  
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured  
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind  
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,  
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place  
For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then,  
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts  
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,  
And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance –  
If I should be where I no more can hear  
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams  
Of past existence – wilt thou then forget  
That on the banks of this delightful stream  
We stood together; and that I, so long  
A worshipper of Nature, hither came  
Unwearied in that service: rather say  
With warmer love – oh! with far deeper zeal  
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,  
That after many wanderings, many years  
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,  
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me  
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake!



## There Was a Boy

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
And islands of Winander! – many a time  
At evening, when the earliest stars began  
To move along the edges of the hills,  
Rising or setting, would he stand alone,  
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;  
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands  
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
That they might answer him. – And they would shout  
Across the watery vale, and shout again,  
Responsive to his call, – with quivering peals,  
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud  
Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild  
Of jocund din! And, when there came a pause  
Of silence such as 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.

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

A slumber did my spirit seal

A slumber did my spirit seal;

I had no human fears:

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,

With rocks, and stones, and trees.

She dwelt among the untrodden ways

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

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

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

Strange fits of passion have I known

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Nutting

It seems a day

(I speak of one from many singled out)

One of those heavenly days that cannot die;

When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,

I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth

With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,

A nutting-crook in hand; and turned my steps

Toward some far-distant wood, ■ Figure quaint,

Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds

Which for that service had been husbanded,

By exhortation of my frugal Dame –

Motley accoutrement, of power to smile

At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, – and, in truth,

More ragged than need was! O'er pathless rocks,

Through beds of matted fern, and tangled thickets,

Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook

Unvisited, where not a broken bough

Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign

Of devastation; but the hazels rose

Tall and erect, with tempting clusters hung,

A virgin scene! – A little while I stood,

Breathing with such suppression of the heart

As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint

Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed

The banquet; – or beneath the trees I sate

Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played;

A temper known to those who, after long

And weary expectation, have been blest

With sudden happiness beyond all hope.

Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves

The violets of five seasons re-appear

And fade, unseen by any human eye;

Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on

For ever; and I saw the sparkling foam,  
And – with my cheek on one of those green stones  
That, fleeced with moss, under the shady trees,  
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep –  
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,  
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay  
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,  
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,  
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,  
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,  
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash  
And merciless ravage: and the shady nook  
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,  
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up  
Their quiet being: and, unless I now  
Confound my present feelings with the past,  
Ere from the mutilated bower I turned  
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,  
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld  
The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky. –  
Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades  
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand  
Touch – for there is a spirit in the woods.



## Lucy Gray; or, Solitude

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

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

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

‘Tonight will be a stormy night –  
You to the town must go;  
And take a lantern, Child, to light  
Your mother through the snow.’

‘That, Father! will I gladly do:  
’Tis scarcely afternoon –  
The minister-clock has just struck two,  
And yonder is the moon!’

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

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

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

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

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

They wept – and, turning homeward, cried,  
‘In heaven we all shall meet’;  
– When in the snow the mother spied  
The print of Lucy’s feet.

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

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

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

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

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

## Fragment: Redundance

Not the more  
Failed I to lengthen out my watch. I stood  
Within the area of the frozen vale,  
Mine eye subdued and quiet as the ear  
Of one that listens, for even yet the scene,  
Its fluctuating hues and surfaces,  
And the decaying vestiges of forms,  
Did to the dispossessing power of night  
Impart ■ feeble visionary sense  
Of movement and creation doubly felt.

Three years she grew in sun and shower

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags

A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags,  
A rude and natural causeway, interposed  
Between the water and a winding slope  
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore  
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy:  
And there myself and two beloved Friends,  
One calm September morning, ere the mist  
Had altogether yielded to the sun,  
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.  
— Ill suits the road with one in haste; but we  
Played with our time; and, as we strolled along,  
It was our occupation to observe  
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore –  
Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough,  
Each on the other heaped, along the line  
Of the dry wreck. And, in our vacant mood,  
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft  
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,  
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,  
Suddenly halting now – a lifeless stand!  
And starting off again with freak as sudden;  
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while,  
Making report of an invisible breeze  
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,  
Its playmate, rather say, its moving soul.  
— And often, trifling with a privilege  
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,  
And now the other, to point out, perchance  
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair  
Either to be divided from the place  
On which it grew, or to be left alone  
To its own beauty. Many such there are,  
Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern,



So stately, of the Queen Osmunda named;  
 Plant lovelier, in its own retired abode  
 On Grasmere's beach, than Naiad by the side  
 Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere,  
 Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.  
 – So fared we that bright morning: from the fields,  
 Meanwhile, a noise was heard, the busy mirth  
 Of reapers, men and women, boys and girls.  
 Delighted much to listen to those sounds,  
 And feeding thus our fancies, we advanced  
 Along the indented shore; when suddenly,  
 Through a thin veil of glittering haze was seen  
 Before us, on a point of jutting land,  
 The tall and upright figure of a Man  
 Attired in peasant's garb, who stood alone,  
 Angling beside the margin of the lake.  
 'Improvident and reckless,' we exclaimed,  
 'The Man must be, who thus can lose a day  
 Of the mid harvest, when the labourer's hire  
 Is ample, and some little might be stored  
 Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time.'  
 Thus talking of that Peasant, we approached  
 Close to the spot where with his rod and line  
 He stood alone; whereat he turned his head  
 To greet us – and we saw a Man worn down  
 By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks  
 And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean  
 That for my single self I looked at them,  
 Forgetful of the body they sustained. –  
 Too weak to labour in the harvest field,  
 The Man was using his best skill to gain  
 A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake  
 That knew not of his wants. I will not say  
 What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how  
 The happy idleness of that sweet morn,  
 With all its lovely images, was changed

To serious musing and to self-reproach.  
Nor did we fail to see within ourselves  
What need there is to be reserved in speech,  
And temper all our thoughts with charity.  
– Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,  
My Friend, Myself, and She who then received  
The same admonishment, have called the place  
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed  
As e'er by mariner was given to bay  
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast;  
And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT is the name it bears.

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  
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites  
That overhead are sailing in the sky.  
It is in truth an utter solitude;  
Nor should I have made mention of this Dell  
But for one object which you might pass by,  
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook  
Appears a straggling heap of unhewn stones!  
And to that simple object appertains  
A story – unenriched with strange events,  
Yet not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,  
Or for the summer shade. It was the first  
Of those domestic tales that spake to me  
Of Shepherds, dwellers in the valleys, men  
Whom I already loved; – not verily  
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills  
Where was their occupation and abode.  
And hence this Tale, while I was yet a Boy  
Careless of books, yet having felt the power  
Of Nature, by the gentle agency  
Of natural objects, led me on to feel  
For passions that were not my own, and think  
(At random and imperfectly indeed)

On man, the heart of man, and human life.  
Therefore, although it be a history  
Homely and rude, I will relate the same  
For the delight of a few natural hearts;  
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake  
Of youthful Poets, who among these hills  
Will be my second self when I am gone.

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

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

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,  
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  
Service beyond all others of its kind.  
Early at evening did it burn – and late,  
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,  
Which, going by from year to year, had found,  
And left the couple neither gay perhaps  
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,  
Living a life of eager industry.  
And now, when Luke had reached his eighteenth year,  
There by the light of this old lamp they sate,  
Father and Son, while far into the night  
The Housewife plied her own peculiar work,  
Making the cottage through the silent hours  
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.  
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,  
And was a public symbol of the life  
That thrifty Pair had lived. For, as it chanced,  
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground  
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,  
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise,  
And westward to the village near the lake;  
And from this constant light, so regular  
And so far seen, the House itself, by all

Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,  
Both old and young, was named THE EVENING STAR.

Thus living on through such a length of years,  
The Shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs  
Have loved his Helpmate; but to Michael's heart  
This son of his old age was yet more dear –  
Less from instinctive tenderness, the same  
Fond spirit that blindly works in the blood of all –  
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.  
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,  
His heart and his heart's joy! For often-times  
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,  
Had done him female service, not alone  
For pastime and delight, as is the use  
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced  
To acts of tenderness; and he had rocked  
His cradle, 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,  
Albeit of a stern unbending mind,  
To have the Young-one in his sight, when he  
Wrought in the field, or on his shepherd's stool  
Sate with a fettered sheep before him stretched  
Under the large old oak, that near his door  
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,  
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,  
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks



Of fond correction and reproof bestowed  
Upon the Child, if he disturbed the sheep  
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts  
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up  
A healthy Lad, and carried in his cheek  
Two steady roses that were five years old;  
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut  
With his own hand a sapling, which he hooped  
With iron, making it throughout in all  
Due requisites a perfect shepherd's staff,  
And gave it to the Boy; wherewith equipt  
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed  
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock;  
And, to his office prematurely called,  
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,  
Something between a hindrance and a help;  
And for this cause not always, I believe,  
Receiving from his Father hire of praise;  
Though 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,  
Not fearing toil, nor length of weary ways,  
He with his Father daily went, and they  
Were as companions, why should I relate  
That objects which the Shepherd loved before  
Were dearer now? that from the Boy there came  
Feelings and emanations – things which were  
Light to the sun and music to the wind;  
And that the old Man's heart seemed born again?

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

While in this sort the simple household lived  
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came  
Distressful tidings. Long before the time  
Of which I speak, the Shepherd had been bound  
In surety for his brother's son, a man  
Of an industrious life, and ample means;  
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly  
Had prest upon him; and old Michael now  
Was summoned to discharge the forfeiture,  
A grievous penalty, but little less  
Than half his substance. This unlooked-for claim,  
At the first hearing, for a moment took  
More hope out of his life than he supposed  
That any old man ever could have lost.  
As soon as he had armed himself with strength  
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,  
And his heart failed him. 'Isabel,' said he,  
Two evenings after he had heard the news,  
'I have been toiling more than seventy years,  
And in the open sunshine of God's love  
Have we all lived; yet if these fields of ours  
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think  
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.  
Our lot is a hard lot; the sun himself  
Has scarcely been more diligent than I;  
And I have lived to be a fool at last  
To my own family. An evil man  
That was, and made an evil choice, if he  
Were false to us; and if he were not false,  
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this  
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him; – but  
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.

‘When I began, my purpose was to speak  
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.  
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel; the land  
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free;  
He shall possess it, free as is the wind  
That passes over it. We have, thou know’st,  
Another kinsman – he will be our friend  
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,  
Thriving in trade – and Luke to him shall go,  
And with his kinsman’s help and his own thrift  
He quickly will repair this loss, and then  
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,  
And Isabel sat silent, for her mind  
Was busy, looking back into past times.  
There’s Richard Bateman, thought she to herself,  
He was a parish-boy – at the church-door  
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,  
And halfpennies, wherewith the neighbours bought  
A basket, which they filled with pedlar’s wares;  
And, with this basket on his arm, the lad  
Went up to London, found a master there,  
Who, out of many, chose the trusty boy  
To go and overlook his merchandise  
Beyond the seas; where he grew wondrous rich,  
And left estates and monies to the poor,  
And, at his birth-place, built a chapel floored  
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.  
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,  
Passed quickly through the mind of Isabel,  
And her face brightened. The old Man was glad,  
And thus resumed: – ‘Well, Isabel! this scheme  
These two days, has been meat and drink to me.  
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.

– We have enough – I wish indeed that I  
Were younger; – but this hope is a good hope.  
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best  
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth  
Tomorrow, or the next day, or tonight:  
– If he *could* go, the Boy should go tonight.'

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

With daylight Isabel resumed her work;  
And all the ensuing week the house appeared  
As cheerful as a grove in Spring: at length  
The expected letter from their kinsman came,  
With kind assurances that he would do  
His utmost for the welfare of the Boy;  
To which, requests were added, that forthwith  
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more

The letter was read over; Isabel  
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;  
Nor was there at that time on English land  
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel  
Had to her house returned, the old Man said,  
'He shall depart tomorrow.' To this word  
The Housewife answered, talking much of things  
Which, if at such short notice he should go,  
Would surely be forgotten. But at length  
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Green-head Ghyll,  
In that deep valley, Michael had designed  
To build a Sheep-fold; and, before he heard  
The tidings of his melancholy loss,  
For this same purpose he had gathered up  
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge  
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.  
With Luke that evening thitherward he walked:  
And soon as they had reached the place he stopped,  
And thus the old Man spake to him: – 'My Son,  
Tomorrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart  
I look upon thee, for thou art the same  
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,  
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.  
I will relate to thee some little part  
Of our two histories; 'twill do thee good  
When thou art from me, even if I should touch  
On things thou canst not know of. – After thou  
First cam'st into the world – as oft befalls  
To new-born infants – thou didst sleep away  
Two days, and blessings from thy Father's tongue  
Then fell upon thee. Day by day passed on,  
And still I loved thee with increasing love.  
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds  
Than when I heard thee by our own fire-side

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  
 And on the mountains; else I think that thou  
 Hadst been brought up upon thy Father's knees.  
 But we were playmates, Luke: among these hills,  
 As well thou knowest, in us the old and young  
 Have played together, nor with me didst thou  
 Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.'  
 Luke had a manly heart; but at these words  
 He sobbed aloud. The old Man grasped his hand,  
 And said, 'Nay, do not take it so – I see  
 That these are things of which I need not speak.  
 – Even to the utmost I have been to thee  
 A kind and a good Father: and herein  
 I but repay a gift which I myself  
 Received at others' hands; for, though now old  
 Beyond the common life of man, I still  
 Remember them who loved me in my youth.  
 Both of them sleep together: here they lived,  
 As all their Forefathers had done; and when  
 At length their time was come, they were not loth  
 To give their bodies to the family mould.  
 I wished that thou 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 burdened when they came to me;  
 Till I was forty years of age, not more  
 Than half of my inheritance was mine.  
 I toiled and toiled; God blessed me in my work,  
 And till these three weeks past the land was free.  
 – It looks as if it never could endure  
 Another Master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,  
 If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good  
 That thou shouldst go.'



At this the old Man paused;  
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,  
Thus, after a short silence, he resumed:  
'This was a work for us; and now, my Son,  
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone –  
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.  
Nay, Boy, be of good hope; – we both may live  
To see a better day. At eight-four  
I still am strong and hale; – do thou thy part;  
I will do mine. – I will begin again  
With many tasks that were resigned to thee:  
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,  
Will I without thee go again, and do  
All works which I was wont to do alone,  
Before I knew thy face. – Heaven bless thee, Boy!  
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast  
With many hopes; it should be so – yes – yes –  
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish  
To leave me, Luke: thou hast been bound to me  
Only by links of love: when thou art gone,  
What will be left to us! – But, I forget  
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,  
As I requested; and hereafter, Luke,  
When thou art gone away, should evil men  
Be thy companions, think of me, my Son,  
And of this moment; hither turn thy thoughts,  
And God will strengthen thee: amid all fear  
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou  
May'st bear in mind the life thy Fathers lived,  
Who, being innocent, did for that cause  
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well –  
When thou return'st thou in this place wilt see  
A work which is not here: a covenant  
'Twill be between us; but, whatever fate  
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,  
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.'



The Shepherd ended here; and Luke stooped down,  
And, as his Father had requested, laid  
The first stone of the Sheep-fold. At the sight  
The old Man's grief broke from him; to his heart  
He pressed his Son, he 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  
Began his journey, and when he had reached  
The public way, he put on a bold face;  
And all the neighbours, as he passed their doors,  
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,  
That followed him till he was out of sight.

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

There is a comfort in the strength of love;  
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else  
Would overset the brain, or break the heart:  
I have conversed with more than one who well  
Remember the old Man, and what he was

Years after he had heard this heavy news.  
His bodily frame had been from youth to age  
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks  
He went, and still looked up to sun and cloud,  
And listened to the wind; and, as before,  
Performed all kinds of labour for his sheep,  
And for the land, his small inheritance.  
And to that hollow dell from time to time  
Did he repair, to build the Fold of which  
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet  
The pity which was then in every heart  
For the old Man – and 'tis believed by all  
That many and many a day he thither went,  
And never lifted up a single stone.

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

## The Two-Part Prelude

### FIRST PART

Was it for this  
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved  
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,  
And from his alder shades and rocky falls,  
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
That flowed along my dreams? For this didst thou,  
O Derwent, travelling over the green plains  
Near my 'sweet birthplace', didst thou, beauteous stream,  
Make ceaseless music through the night and day,  
Which with its steady cadence tempering  
Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts  
To more than infant softness, giving me  
Among the fretful dwelling of mankind  
A knowledge, a dim earnest, of the calm  
Which Nature breathes among the fields and groves?  
Beloved Derwent, fairest of all streams,  
Was it for this that I, a four years' child,  
A naked boy, among thy silent pools  
Made one long bathing of a summer's day,  
Basked in the sun, or plunged into thy streams,  
Alternate, all a summer's day, or coursed  
Over the sandy fields, and dashed the flowers  
Of yellow grunsel; or, when crag and hill,  
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,  
Were bronzed with a deep radiance, stood alone  
A naked savage in the thunder-shower?

And afterwards ('twas in a later day,  
Though early), when upon the mountain slope  
The frost and breath of frosty wind had snapped  
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy  
To wander half the night among the cliffs

And the smooth hollows where the woodcocks ran  
Along the moonlight turf. In thought and wish  
That time, my shoulder all with springes hung,  
I was a fell destroyer. Gentle powers,  
Who give us happiness and call it peace,  
When scudding on from snare to snare I plied  
My anxious visitation, hurrying on,  
Still hurrying, hurrying onward, how my heart  
Panted! – among the scattered yew-trees and the crags  
That looked upon me, how my bosom beat  
With expectation! Sometimes strong desire  
Resistless overpowered me, and the bird  
Which was the captive of another's toils  
Became my prey; and when the deed was done  
I heard among the solitary hills  
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
Of undistinguishable motion, steps  
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less in springtime, when on southern banks  
The shining sun had from his knot of leaves  
Decoyed the primrose flower, and when the vales  
And woods were warm, was I a rover then  
In the high places, on the lonesome peaks,  
Among the mountains and the winds. Though mean  
And though inglorious were my views, the end  
Was not ignoble. Oh, when I have hung  
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass  
Or half-inch fissures in the slippery rock  
But ill sustained, and almost, as it seemed,  
Suspended by the blast which blew amain,  
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time,  
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ears; the sky seemed not a sky  
Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds!

The mind of man is fashioned and built up

Even as a strain of music. I believe  
That there are spirits which, when they would form  
A favoured being, from his very dawn  
Of infancy do open out the clouds  
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him  
With gentle visitation – quiet powers,  
Retired, and seldom recognized, yet kind,  
And to the very meanest not unknown –  
With me, though rarely, in my boyish days  
They communed. Others too there are, who use,  
Yet haply aiming at the self-same end,  
Severer interventions, ministry  
More palpable – and of their school was I.

They guided me: one evening led by them  
I went alone into a shepherd's boat,  
A skiff, that to a willow-tree was tied  
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
The moon was up, the lake was shining clear  
Among the hoary mountains; from the shore  
I pushed, and struck the oars, and struck again  
In cadence, and my little boat moved on  
Just like a man who walks with stately step  
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure. Not without the voice  
Of mountain echoes did my boat move on,  
Leaving behind her still on either side  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. A rocky steep uprose  
Above the cavern of the willow-tree,  
And now, as suited one who proudly rowed  
With his best skill, I fixed a steady view  
Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,  
The bound of the horizon – for behind  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; twenty times

I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And as I rose upon the stroke my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan –  
When from behind that rocky steep, till then  
The bound of the horizon, a huge cliff,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck, and struck again,  
And, growing still in stature, the huge cliff  
Rose up between me and the stars, and still,  
With measured motion, like a living thing  
Strode after me. With trembling hands I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the cavern of the willow-tree.  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,  
And through the meadows homeward went with grave  
And serious thoughts; and after I had seen  
That spectacle, for many days my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being. In my thoughts  
There was a darkness – call it solitude,  
Or blank desertion – no familiar shapes  
Of hourly objects, images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields,  
But huge and mighty forms that do not live  
Like living men moved slowly through my mind  
By day, and were the trouble of my dreams.

Ah, not in vain ye beings of the hills,  
And ye that walk the woods and open heaths  
By moon or star-light, thus, from my first dawn  
Of childhood, did ye love to intertwine  
The passions that build up our human soul  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,  
But with high objects, with eternal things,  
With life and Nature, purifying thus  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying by such discipline



Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.  
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me  
With stinted kindness. In November days,  
When vapours rolling down the valleys made  
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods  
At noon, and mid the calm of summer nights  
When by the margin of the trembling lake  
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went  
In solitude, such intercourse was mine.

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
Was set, and visible for many a mile  
The cottage windows through the twilight blazed,  
I heeded not the summons. Clear and loud  
The village clock tolled six; I wheeled about  
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse  
That cares not for its home. All shod with steel  
We hissed along the polished ice in games  
Confederate, imitative of the chace  
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,  
The pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.  
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
And not a voice was idle. With the din,  
Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud;  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron; while the distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy, not unnoticed; while the stars,  
Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west  
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
Into a silent bay, or sportively  
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
To cut across the shadow of a star  
That gleamed upon the ice. And oftentimes  
When we had given our bodies to the wind,



And all the shadowy banks on either side  
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still  
The rapid line of motion, then at once  
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
Stopped short – yet still the solitary cliffs  
Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round.  
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
Till all was tranquil as a summer sea.

Ye powers of earth, ye genii of the springs,  
And ye that have your voices in the clouds,  
And ye that are familiars of the lakes  
And of the standing pools, I may not think  
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed  
Such ministry – when ye through many a year  
Thus by the agency of boyish sports,  
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,  
Impressed upon all forms the characters  
Of danger or desire, and thus did make  
The surface of the universal earth  
With meanings of delight, of hope and fear,  
Work like a sea.

Not uselessly employed,  
I might pursue this theme through every change  
Of exercise and sport to which the year  
Did summon us in its delightful round.  
We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven  
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours,  
Nor saw a race in happiness and joy  
More worthy of the fields where they were sown.  
I would record with no reluctant voice  
Our home amusements by the warm peat fire  
At evening, when with pencil and with slate,  
In square divisions parcelled out, and all  
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,

We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head,  
In strife too humble to be named in verse;  
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,  
Cherry, or maple, sate in close array,  
And to the combat – lu or whist – led on  
A thick-ribbed army, not as in the world  
Discarded and ungratefully thrown by  
Even for the very service they had wrought,  
But husbanded through many a long campaign.  
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell –  
Ironic diamonds, hearts of sable hue,  
Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,  
Knives wrapt in one assimilating gloom,  
And kings indignant at the shame incurred  
By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad  
The heavy rain was falling, or the frost  
Raged bitterly with keen and silent tooth,  
And, interrupting the impassioned game,  
Oft from the neighbouring lake the splitting ice,  
While it sank down towards the water, sent  
Among the meadows and the hills its long  
And frequent yellings, imitative some  
Of wolves that howl along the Bothnic main.

Nor with less willing heart would I rehearse  
The woods of autumn, and their hidden bowers  
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line –  
True symbol of the foolishness of hope –  
Which with its strong enchantment led me on  
By rocks and pools, where never summer star  
Impressed its shadow, to forlorn cascades  
Among the windings of the mountain-brooks;  
The kite in sultry calms from some high hill  
Sent up, ascending thence till it was lost  
Among the fleecy clouds – in gusty days  
Launched from the lower grounds, and suddenly  
Dashed headlong and rejected by the storm.

All these, and more, with rival claims demand  
Grateful acknowledgement. It were ■ song  
Venial, and such as – if I rightly judge –  
I might protract unblamed, but I perceive  
That much is overlooked, and we should ill  
Attain our object if, from delicate fears  
Of breaking in upon the unity  
Of this my argument, I should omit  
To speak of such effects as cannot here  
Be regularly classed, yet tend no less  
To the same point, the growth of mental power  
And love of Nature's works.

Ere I had seen  
Eight summers – and 'twas in the very week  
When I was first transplanted to thy vale,  
Beloved Hawkshead; when thy paths, thy shores  
And brooks, were like a dream of novelty  
To my half-infant mind – I chanced to cross  
One of those open fields which, shaped like ears,  
Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's lake.  
Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom  
I saw distinctly on the opposite shore,  
Beneath a tree and close by the lake side,  
A heap of garments, as if left by one  
Who there was bathing. Half an hour I watched  
And no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake  
Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,  
And now and then a leaping fish disturbed  
The breathless stillness. The succeeding day  
There came ■ company, and in their boat  
Sounded with iron hooks and with long poles.  
At length the dead man, mid that beauteous scene  
Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright  
Rose with his ghastly face. I might advert  
To numerous accidents in flood or field,  
Quarry or moor, or mid the winter snows,

Distresses and disasters, tragic facts  
Of rural history that impressed my mind  
With images to which in following years  
Far other feelings were attached – with forms  
That yet exist with independent life,  
And, like their archetypes, know no decay.

There are in our existence spots of time  
Which with distinct preeminence retain  
A fructifying virtue, whence, depressed  
By trivial occupations and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds –  
Especially the imaginative power –  
Are nourished and invisibly repaired.  
Such moments chiefly seem to have their date  
In our first childhood. I remember well  
(’Tis of an early season that I speak,  
The twilight of rememberable life),  
While I was yet an urchin, one who scarce  
Could hold a bridle, with ambitious hopes  
I mounted, and we rode towards the hills.  
We were ■ pair of horsemen: honest James  
Was with me, my encourager and guide.  
We had not travelled long ere some mischance  
Disjoined me from my comrade, and, through fear  
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
I led my horse, and stumbling on, at length  
Came to a bottom where in former times  
A man, the murderer of his wife, was hung  
In irons. Mouldered was the gibbet-mast;  
The bones were gone, the iron and the wood;  
Only ■ long green ridge of turf remained  
Whose shape was like a grave. I left the spot,  
And reascending the bare slope I saw  
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,  
The beacon on the summit, and more near  
A girl who bore ■ pitcher on her head

And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
Against the blowing wind. It was in truth  
An ordinary sight, but I should need  
Colours and words that are unknown to man  
To paint the visionary dreariness  
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
Did at that time invest the naked pool,  
The beacon on the lonely eminence,  
The woman and her garments vexed and tossed  
By the strong wind.

Nor less I recollect –

Long after, though my childhood had not ceased –  
Another scene which left a kindred power  
Implanted in my mind. One Christmas time,  
The day before the holidays began,  
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth  
Into the fields, impatient for the sight  
Of those three horses which should bear us home,  
My brothers and myself. There was a crag,  
An eminence, which from the meeting-point  
Of two highways ascending overlooked  
At least a long half-mile of those two roads,  
By each of which the expected steeds might come –  
The choice uncertain. Thither I repaired  
Up to the highest summit. 'Twas a day  
Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass  
I sate half sheltered by a naked wall.  
Upon my right hand was a single sheep,  
A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,  
Those two companions at my side, I watched  
With eyes intensely straining, as the mist  
Gave intermitting prospects of the wood  
And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned  
That dreary time, ere I had been ten days  
A dweller in my father's house, he died,  
And I and my two brothers, orphans then,

Followed his body to the grave. The event,  
With all the sorrow which it brought, appeared  
A chastisement; and when I called to mind  
That day so lately passed, when from the crag  
I looked in such anxiety of hope,  
With trite reflections of morality,  
Yet with the deepest passion, I bowed low  
To God who thus corrected my desires.  
And afterwards the wind and sleety rain,  
And all the business of the elements,  
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
And the bleak music of that old stone wall,  
The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
Which on the line of each of those two roads  
Advanced in such indisputable shapes –  
All these were spectacles and sounds to which  
I often would repair, and thence would drink  
As at a fountain. And I do not doubt  
That in this later time, when storm and rain  
Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day  
When I am in the woods, unknown to me  
The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace  
How Nature by collateral interest,  
And by extrinsic passion, peopled first  
My mind with forms or beautiful or grand  
And made me love them, may I well forget  
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys  
Of subtler origin – how I have felt  
Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,  
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense  
Which seem in their simplicity to own  
An intellectual charm, that calm delight  
Which, if I err not, surely must belong  
To those first-born affinities that fit  
Our new existence to existing things,



And, in our dawn of being, constitute  
The bond of union betwixt life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth  
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamped  
The faces of the moving year, even then,  
A child, I held unconscious intercourse  
With the eternal beauty, drinking in  
A pure organic pleasure from the lines  
Of curling mist, or from the level plain  
Of waters coloured by the steady clouds.  
The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays  
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell  
How when the sea threw off his evening shade  
And to the shepherd's hut beneath the crags  
Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,  
How I have stood, to images like these  
A stranger, linking with the spectacle  
No body of associated forms,  
And bringing with me no peculiar sense  
Of quietness or peace – yet I have stood  
Even while my eye has moved o'er three long leagues  
Of shining water, gathering, as it seemed,  
Through the wide surface of that field of light  
New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.

Thus often in those fits of vulgar joy  
Which through all seasons on a child's pursuits  
Are prompt attendants, mid that giddy bliss  
Which like a tempest works along the blood  
And is forgotten, even then I felt  
Gleams like the flashing of a shield. The earth  
And common face of Nature spake to me  
Rememberable things – sometimes, 'tis true,  
By quaint associations, yet not vain  
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed  
Collateral objects and appearances,  
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep



Until maturer seasons called them forth  
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.  
And if the vulgar joy by its own weight  
Wearied itself out of the memory,  
The scenes which were a witness of that joy  
Remained, in their substantial lineaments  
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye  
Were visible, a daily sight. And thus  
By the impressive agency of fear,  
By pleasure and repeated happiness –  
So frequently repeated – and by force  
Of obscure feelings representative  
Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes,  
So beauteous and majestic in themselves,  
Though yet the day was distant, did at length  
Become habitually dear, and all  
Their hues and forms were by invisible links  
Allied to the affections.

I began

My story early, feeling, as I fear,  
The weakness of a human love for days  
Disowned by memory – ere the birth of spring  
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows.  
Nor will it seem to thee, my friend, so prompt  
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out  
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.  
Meanwhile my hope has been that I might fetch  
Reproaches from my former years, whose power  
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,  
To honourable toil. Yet should it be  
That this is but an impotent desire –  
That I by such inquiry am not taught  
To understand myself, nor thou to know  
With better knowledge how the heart was framed  
Of him thou lovest – need I dread from thee  
Harsh judgements if I am so loth to quit

Those recollected hours that have the charm  
Of visionary things, and lovely forms  
And sweet sensations, that throw back our life  
And make our infancy a visible scene  
On which the sun is shining?

## SECOND PART

Thus far, my friend, have we retraced the way  
Through which I travelled when I first began  
To love the woods and fields. The passion yet  
Was in its birth, sustained, as might befall,  
By nourishment that came unsought – for still  
From week to week, from month to month, we lived  
A round of tumult. Duly were our games  
Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed:  
No chair remained before the doors, the bench  
And threshold steps were empty, fast asleep  
The labourer and the old man who had sate  
A later lingerer, yet the revelry  
Continued and the loud uproar. At last,  
When all the ground was dark and the huge clouds  
Were edged with twinkling stars, to bed we went  
With weary joints and with a beating mind.  
Ah, is there one who ever has been young  
And needs a monitory voice to tame  
The pride of virtue and of intellect?  
And is there one, the wisest and the best  
Of all mankind, who does not sometimes wish  
For things which cannot be, who would not give,  
If so he might, to duty and to truth  
The eagerness of infantine desire?  
A tranquillizing spirit presses now  
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears  
The vacancy between me and those days,  
Which yet have such self-presence in my heart

That sometimes when I think of them I seem  
Two consciousnesses – conscious of myself,  
And of some other being.

A grey stone  
Of native rock, left midway in the square  
Of our small market-village, was the home  
And centre of these joys; and when, returned  
After long absence thither I repaired,  
I found that it was split and gone to build  
A smart assembly-room that perked and flared  
With wash and rough-cast, elbowing the ground  
Which had been ours. But let the fiddle scream,  
And be ye happy! Yet I know, my friends,  
That more than one of you will think with me  
Of those soft starry nights, and that old dame  
From whom the stone was named, who there had sate  
And watched her table with its huckster's wares,  
Assiduous, for the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous race, the year span round  
With giddy motion; but the time approached  
That brought with it ■ regular desire  
For calmer pleasures – when the beauteous scenes  
Of Nature were collaterally attached  
To every scheme of holiday delight,  
And every boyish sport, less grateful else  
And languidly pursued. When summer came  
It was the pastime of our afternoons  
To beat along the plain of Windermere  
With rival oars; and the selected bourn  
Was now an island musical with birds  
That sang for ever, now a sister isle  
Beneath the oak's umbrageous covert, sown  
With lilies-of-the-valley like a field,  
And now a third small island where remained  
An old stone table and one mouldered cave –  
A hermit's history. In such a race,

So ended, disappointment could be none,  
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy;  
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,  
Conquered or conqueror. Thus our selfishness  
Was mellowed down, and thus the pride of strength  
And the vainglory of superior skill  
Were interfused with objects which subdued  
And tempered them, and gradually produced  
A quiet independence of the heart.  
And to my friend who knows me I may add,  
Unapprehensive of reproof, that hence  
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,  
And I was taught to feel – perhaps too much –  
The self-sufficing power of solitude.

No delicate viands sapped our bodily strength:  
More than we wished we knew the blessing then  
Of vigorous hunger, for our daily meals  
Were frugal, Sabine fare – and then, exclude  
A little weekly stipend, and we lived  
Through three divisions of the quartered year  
In pennyless poverty. But now, to school  
Returned from the half-yearly holidays,  
We came with purses more profusely filled,  
Allowance which abundantly sufficed  
To gratify the palate with repasts  
More costly than the dame of whom I spake,  
That ancient woman, and her board, supplied.  
Hence inroads into distant vales, and long  
Excursions far away among the hills,  
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground –  
Or in the woods, or by a river-side  
Or fountain – festive banquets, that provoked  
The languid action of a natural scene  
By pleasure of corporeal appetite.

Nor is my aim neglected if I tell  
How twice in the long length of those half-years

We from our funds perhaps with bolder hand  
Drew largely, anxious for one day at least  
To feel the motion of the galloping steed;  
And with the good old inkeeper, in truth  
I needs must say, that sometimes we have used  
Sly subterfuge, for the intended bound  
Of the day's journey was too distant far  
For any cautious man: a structure famed  
Beyond its neighbourhood, the antique walls  
Of a large abbey, with its fractured arch,  
Belfry, and images, and living trees –  
A holy scene. Along the smooth green turf  
Our horses grazed. In more than inland peace,  
Left by the winds that overpass the vale,  
In that sequestered ruin trees and towers –  
Both silent and both motionless alike –  
Hear all day long the murmuring sea that beats  
Incessantly upon a craggy shore.

Our steeds remounted, and the summons given,  
With whip and spur we by the chantry flew  
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight  
And the stone abbot, and that single wren  
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
Of the old church that, though from recent showers  
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint  
Internal breezes, from the roofless walls  
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still  
So sweetly mid the gloom the invisible bird  
Sang to itself that there I could have made  
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there,  
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew  
And down the valley, and, a circuit made  
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth  
We scampered homeward. O, ye rocks and streams,  
And that still spirit of the evening air,  
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt

Your presence, when, with slackened step, we breathed  
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when,  
Lightened by gleams of moonlight from the sea,  
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

There was a row of ancient trees, since fallen,  
That on the margin of a jutting land  
Stood near the lake of Coniston, and made,  
With its long boughs above the water stretched,  
A gloom through which a boat might sail along  
As in a cloister. An old hall was near,  
Grotesque and beautiful, its gavel-end  
And huge round chimneys to the top o'ergrown  
With fields of ivy. Thither we repaired –  
'Twas even a custom with us – to the shore,  
And to that cool piazza. They who dwelt  
In the neglected mansion-house supplied  
Fresh butter, tea-kettle and earthenware,  
And chafing-dish with smoking coals; and so  
Beneath the trees we sate in our small boat,  
And in the covert eat our delicate meal  
Upon the calm smooth lake. It was a joy  
Worthy the heart of one who is full grown  
To rest beneath those horizontal boughs  
And mark the radiance of the setting sun,  
Himself unseen, reposing on the top  
Of the high eastern hills. And there I said,  
That beauteous sight before me, there I said  
(Then first beginning in my thoughts to mark  
That sense of dim similitude which links  
Our moral feelings with external forms)  
That in whatever region I should close  
My mortal life I would remember you,  
Fair scenes – that dying I would think on you,  
My soul would send a longing look to you,  
Even as that setting sun, while all the vale  
Could nowhere catch one faint memorial gleam,



Yet with the last remains of his last light  
Still lingered, and a farewell lustre threw  
On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.  
'Twas then my fourteenth summer, and these words  
Were uttered in a casual access  
Of sentiment, a momentary trance  
That far outran the habit of my mind.

Upon the eastern shore of Windermere  
Above the crescent of a pleasant bay  
There was an inn, no homely-featured shed,  
Brother of the surrounding cottages,  
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset  
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within  
Decanters, glasses and the blood-red wine.  
In ancient times, or ere the hall was built  
On the large island, had the dwelling been  
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut  
Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade;  
But though the rhymes were gone which once inscribed  
The threshold, and large golden characters  
On the blue-frosted signboard had usurped  
The place of the old lion, in contempt  
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand,  
Yet to this hour the spot to me is dear  
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay  
Upon a slope surmounted by the plain  
Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood  
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees  
And over the tree-tops – nor did we want  
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream –  
And there through half an afternoon we played  
On the smooth platform, and the shouts we sent  
Made all the mountains ring. But ere the fall  
Of night, when in our pinnace we returned  
Over the dusky lake, and to the beach  
Of some small island steered our course, with one,



The minstrel of our troop, and left him there,  
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute  
Alone upon the rock, oh, then the calm  
And dead still water lay upon my mind  
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,  
Never before so beautiful, sank down  
Into my heart and held me like a dream.

Thus day by day my sympathies increased,  
And thus the common range of visible things  
Grew dear to me. Already I began  
To love the sun – a boy I loved the sun  
Not as I since have loved him (as a pledge  
And surety of my earthly life, a light  
Which while I view I feel I am alive),  
But for this cause, that I had seen him lay  
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen  
The western mountain touch his setting orb  
In many a thoughtless hour, when from excess  
Of happiness my blood appeared to flow  
With its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.  
And from like feelings, humble though intense,  
To patriotic and domestic love  
Analogous, the moon to me was dear:  
For I would dream away my purposes  
Standing to look upon her, while she hung  
Midway between the hills as if she knew  
No other region but belonged to thee,  
Yea appertained by a peculiar right  
To thee and thy grey huts, my native vale.

Those incidental charms which first attached  
My heart to rural objects, day by day  
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell  
How Nature, intervenient till this time  
And secondary, now at length was sought  
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out  
His intellect by geometric rules

Split like ■ province into round and square?  
Who knows the individual hour in which  
His habits were first sown even as a seed?  
Who that shall point as with ■ wand, and say  
‘This portion of the river of my mind  
Came from yon fountain’? Thou, my friend, art one  
More deeply read in thy own thoughts, no slave  
Of that false secondary power by which  
In weakness we create distinctions, then  
Believe our puny boundaries are things  
Which we perceive, and not which we have made.  
To thee, unblinded by these outward shews,  
The unity of all has been revealed;  
And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled  
Than many are to class the cabinet  
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase  
Run through the history and birth of each  
As of ■ single independent thing.  
Hard task to analyse a soul, in which  
Not only general habits and desires,  
But each most obvious and particular thought –  
Not in a mystical and idle sense,  
But in the words of reason deeply weighed –  
Hath no beginning.

Blessed the infant babe –  
For with my best conjectures I would trace  
The progress of our being – blest the babe  
Nursed in his mother’s arms, the babe who sleeps  
Upon his mother’s breast, who, when his soul  
Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,  
Doth gather passion from his mother’s eye.  
Such feelings pass into his torpid life  
Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind,  
Even in the first trial of its powers,  
Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine  
In one appearance all the elements

And parts of the same object, else detached  
And loth to coalesce. Thus day by day,  
Subjected to the discipline of love,  
His organs and recipient faculties  
Are quickened, are more vigorous; his mind spreads,  
Tenacious of the forms which it receives.  
In one beloved presence – nay and more,  
In that most apprehensive habitude  
And those sensations which have been derived  
From this beloved presence – there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
All objects through all intercourse of sense.  
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;  
Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of Nature that connect him with the world.  
Emphatically such a being lives,  
An inmate of this *active* universe.  
From Nature largely he receives, nor so  
Is satisfied, but largely gives again;  
For feeling has to him imparted strength,  
And – powerful in all sentiments of grief,  
Of exultation, fear and joy – his mind,  
Even as an agent of the one great mind,  
Creates, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds. Such, verily, is the first  
Poetic spirit of our human life –  
By uniform control of after years  
In most abated and suppressed, in some  
Through every change of growth or of decay  
Preeminent till death.

From early days,  
Beginning not long after that first time  
In which, a babe, by intercourse of touch  
I held mute dialogues with my mother's heart,

I have endeavoured to display the means  
Whereby this infant sensibility,  
Great birthright of our being, was in me  
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path  
More difficult before me, and I fear  
That in its broken windings we shall need  
The chamois' sinews and the eagle's wing.  
For now a trouble came into my mind  
From obscure causes. I was left alone  
Seeking this visible world, nor knowing why.  
The props of my affections were removed,  
And yet the building stood, as if sustained  
By its own spirit. All that I beheld  
Was dear to me, and from this cause it came  
That now to Nature's finer influxes  
My mind lay open – to that more exact  
And intimate communion which our hearts  
Maintain with the minuter properties  
Of objects which already are beloved,  
And of those only.

Many are the joys  
Of youth, but oh, what happiness to live  
When every hour brings palpable access  
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,  
And sorrow is not there. The seasons came,  
And every season brought a countless store  
Of modes and temporary qualities  
Which but for this most watchful power of love  
Had been neglected, left a register  
Of permanent relations else unknown.  
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude  
More active even than 'best society',  
Society made sweet as solitude  
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,  
And gentle agitations of the mind  
From manifold distinctions – difference

Perceived in things where to the common eye  
No difference is – and hence, from the same source,  
Sublimity joy. For I would walk alone  
In storm and tempest, or in starlight nights  
Beneath the quiet heavens, and at that time  
Would feel whate'er there is of power in sound  
To breathe an elevated mood, by form  
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand  
Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are  
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,  
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.  
Thence did I drink the visionary power.  
I deem not profitless these fleeting moods  
Of shadowy exaltation; not for this,  
That they are kindred to our purer mind  
And intellectual life, but that the soul –  
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt  
Remembering not – retains an obscure sense  
Of possible sublimity, to which  
With growing faculties she doth aspire,  
With faculties still growing, feeling still  
That whatsoever point they gain they still  
Have something to pursue.

And not alone  
In grandeur and in tumult, but no less  
In tranquil scenes, that universal power  
And fitness in the latent qualities  
And essences of things, by which the mind  
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me  
Came strengthened with a superadded soul,  
A virtue not its own. My morning walks  
Were early: oft before the hours of school  
I travelled round our little lake, five miles  
Of pleasant wandering – happy time, more dear  
For this, that one was by my side, a friend  
Then passionately loved. With heart how full

Will he peruse these lines, this page – perhaps  
A blank to other men – for many years  
Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds  
Both silent to each other, at this time  
We live as if those hours had never been  
Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch  
Far earlier, and before the vernal thrush  
Was audible, among the hills I sate  
Alone upon some jutting eminence  
At the first hour of morning, when the vale  
Lay quiet in an utter solitude.  
How shall I trace the history, where seek  
The origin of what I then have felt?  
Oft in those moments such a holy calm  
Did overspread my soul that I forgot  
The agency of sight, and what I saw  
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,  
A prospect in my mind.

’Twere long to tell  
What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,  
And what the summer shade, what day and night,  
The evening and the morning, what my dreams  
And what my waking thoughts, supplied to nurse  
That spirit of religious love in which  
I walked with Nature. But let this at least  
Be not forgotten, that I still retained  
My first creative sensibility,  
That by the regular action of the world  
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power  
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times  
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,  
A local spirit of its own, at war  
With general tendency, but for the most  
Subservient strictly to the external things  
With which it communed. An auxiliar light  
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun



Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds,  
The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on  
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed  
A like dominion, and the midnight storm  
Grew darker in the presence of my eye.  
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,  
And *hence* my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,  
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved  
The exercise and produce of a toil  
Than analytic industry to me  
More pleasing, and whose character I deem  
Is more poetic, as resembling more  
Creative agency – I mean to speak  
Of that interminable building reared  
By observation of affinities  
In objects where no brotherhood exists  
To common minds. My seventeenth year was come,  
And, whether from this habit rooted now  
So deeply in my mind, or from excess  
Of the great social principle of life  
Coercing all things into sympathy,  
To unorganic natures I transferred  
My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth  
Coming in revelation, I conversed  
With things that really are, I at this time  
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.  
Thus did my days pass on, and now at length  
From Nature and her overflowing soul  
I had received so much that all my thoughts  
Were steeped in feeling. I was only then  
Contented when with bliss ineffable  
I felt the sentiment of being spread  
O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still,  
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought  
And human knowledge, to the human eye



Invisible, yet liveth to the heart,  
O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,  
Or beats the gladsome air, o'er all that glides  
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself  
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not  
If such my transports were, for in all things  
I saw one life, and felt that it was joy;  
One song they sang and it was audible –  
Most audible then when the fleshly ear,  
O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,  
Forgot its functions and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith  
Find easier access to the pious mind,  
Yet were I grossly destitute of all  
Those human sentiments which make this earth  
So dear if I should fail with grateful voice  
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes  
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds  
That dwell among the hills where I was born.  
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,  
If, mingling with the world, I am content  
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived  
With God and Nature communing, removed  
From little enmities and low desires,  
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,  
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,  
If, mid indifference and apathy  
And wicked exultation, when good men  
On every side fall off we know not how  
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names  
Of peace and quiet and domestic love –  
Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers  
On visionary minds – if, in this time  
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet  
Despair not of our nature, but retain  
A more than Roman confidence, a faith

That fails not, in all sorrow my support,  
The blessing of my life, the gift is yours  
Ye mountains, thine O Nature. Thou hast fed  
My lofty speculations, and in thee  
For this uneasy heart of ours I find  
A never-failing principle of joy  
And purest passion.

Thou, my friend, wast reared  
In the great city, mid far other scenes,  
But we by different roads at length have gained  
The self-same bourne. And from this cause to thee  
I speak unapprehensive of contempt,  
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,  
And all that silent language which so oft  
In conversation betwixt man and man  
Blots from the human countenance all trace  
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought  
The truth in solitude, and thou art one  
The most intense of Nature's worshippers,  
In many things my brother, chiefly here  
In this my deep devotion. Fare thee well:  
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind  
Attend thee, seeking oft the haunts of men –  
But yet more often living with thyself,  
And for thyself – so haply shall thy days  
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

## To the Cuckoo

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My heart leaps up when I behold

My heart leaps up when I behold

A rainbow in the sky:

So was it when my life began;

So is it now I am a man;

So be it when I shall grow old,

Or let me die!

The Child is father of the Man;

And I could wish my days to be

Bound each to each by natural piety.

## Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

*The Child is Father of the Man;  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.*

### I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
    To me did seem  
    Apparelled in celestial light,  
The glory and the freshness of a dream.  
It is not now as it hath been of yore; –  
    Turn whereso'er I may,  
    By night or day,  
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

### II

    The Rainbow comes and goes,  
    And lovely is the Rose;  
    The Moon doth with delight  
Look round her when the heavens are bare;  
    Waters on a starry night  
    Are beautiful and fair;  
    The sunshine is a glorious birth;  
    But yet I know, where'er I go,  
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

### III

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,  
And while the young lambs bound  
    As to the tabor's sound,  
To me alone there came a thought of grief:

A timely utterance gave that thought relief,  
And I again am strong:  
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;  
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;  
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,  
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,  
And all the earth is gay;  
Land and sea  
Give themselves up to jollity,  
And with the heart of May  
Doth every Beast keep holiday; –  
Thou Child of Joy,  
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy  
Shepherd-boy!

IV

Ye blessèd Creatures, I have heard the call  
Ye to each other make; I see  
The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;  
My heart is at your festival,  
My head hath its coronal,  
The fulness of your bliss, I feel – I feel it all.  
Oh evil day! if I were sullen  
While Earth herself is adorning,  
This sweet May-morning,  
And the Children are culling  
On every side,  
In a thousand valleys far and wide,  
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,  
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: –  
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!  
– But there's a Tree, of many, one,  
A single Field which I have looked upon,  
Both of them speak of something that is gone:  
The Pansy at my feet



Doth the same tale repeat:  
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

v

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:  
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,  
Hath had elsewhere its setting,  
And cometh from afar:  
Not in entire forgetfulness,  
And not in utter nakedness,  
But trailing clouds of glory do we come  
From God, who is our home:  
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!  
Shades of the prison-house begin to close  
Upon the growing Boy,  
But He  
Beholds the light, and whence it flows,  
He sees it in his joy;  
The Youth, who daily farther from the east  
Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,  
And by the vision splendid  
Is on his way attended;  
At length the Man perceives it die away,  
And fade into the light of common day.

vi

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;  
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,  
And, even with something of a Mother's mind,  
And no unworthy aim,  
The homely Nurse doth all she can  
To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,  
Forget the glories he hath known,  
And that imperial palace whence he came.

## VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,  
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!  
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,  
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,  
 With light upon him from his father's eyes!  
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,  
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,  
 Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;  
     A wedding or a festival,  
     A mourning or a funeral;  
     And this hath now his heart,  
 And unto this he frames his song:  
     Then will he fit his tongue  
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;  
     But it will not be long  
     Ere this be thrown aside,  
     And with new joy and pride  
 The little Actor cons another part;  
 Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'  
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,  
 That Life brings with her in her equipage;  
     As if his whole vocation  
     Were endless imitation.

## VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie  
     Thy Soul's immensity;  
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep  
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,  
 That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,  
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind, –  
     Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!  
     On whom those truths do rest,  
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,

In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;  
Thou, over whom thy Immortality  
Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,  
A Presence which is not to be put by;  
Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might  
Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,  
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke  
The years to bring the inevitable yoke,  
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?  
Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,  
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,  
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

O joy! that in our embers  
Is something that doth live,  
That nature yet remembers  
What was so fugitive!

The thought of our past years in me doth breed  
Perpetual benediction: not indeed  
For that which is most worthy to be blest;  
Delight and liberty, the simple creed  
Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,  
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: —

Not for these I raise

The song of thanks and praise;  
But for those obstinate questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishings;  
Blank misgivings of a Creature  
Moving about in worlds not realized,  
High instincts before which our mortal Nature  
Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:  
But for those first affections,  
Those shadowy recollections,

Which, be they what they may,  
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,  
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;  
Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make  
Our noisy years seem moments in the being  
Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,  
To perish never;  
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,  
Nor Man nor Boy,  
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,  
Can utterly abolish or destroy!  
Hence in a season of calm weather  
Though inland far we be,  
Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea  
Which brought us hither,  
Can in a moment travel thither,  
And see the Children sport upon the shore,  
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

x

Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!  
And let the young Lambs bound  
As to the tabor's sound!  
We in thought will join your throng,  
Ye that pipe and ye that play,  
Ye that through your hearts today  
Feel the gladness of the May!  
What though the radiance which was once so bright  
Be now for ever taken from my sight,  
Though nothing can bring back the hour  
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;  
We will grieve not, rather find  
Strength in what remains behind;  
In the primal sympathy  
Which having been must ever be;

In the soothing thoughts that spring  
    Out of human suffering;  
    In the faith that looks through death,  
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,  
Forebode not any severing of our loves!  
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;  
I only have relinquished one delight  
To live beneath your more habitual sway.  
I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,  
Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;  
The innocent brightness of a new-born Day  
    Is lovely yet;  
The Clouds that gather round the setting sun  
Do take a sober colouring from an eye  
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;  
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.  
Thanks to the human heart by which we live,  
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,  
To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

## Resolution and Independence

### I

There was a roaring in the wind all night;  
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;  
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;  
The birds are singing in the distant woods;  
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;  
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;  
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

### II

All things that love the sun are out of doors;  
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;  
The grass is bright with rain-drops; – on the moors  
The hare is running races in her mirth;  
And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
Raises a mist; that, glittering in the sun,  
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

### III

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;  
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;  
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;  
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:  
The pleasant season did my heart employ:  
My old remembrances went from me wholly;  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

### IV

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight

In our dejection do we sink as low;  
To me that morning did it happen so;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;  
Dim sadness – and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could  
name.

v

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;  
And I bethought me of the playful hare:  
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;  
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;  
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;  
But there may come another day to me –  
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

vi

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,  
As if life's business were a summer mood;  
As if all needful things would come unsought  
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;  
But how can He expect that others should  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

vii

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,  
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;  
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy  
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:  
By our own spirits are we deified:  
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;  
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.



VIII

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,  
 A leading from above, ■ something given,  
 Yet it befell, that, in this lonely place,  
 When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,  
 Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven  
 I saw a Man before me unawares:  
 The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

IX

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie  
 Couched on the bald top of an eminence;  
 Wonder to all who do the same espy,  
 By what means it could thither come, and whence;  
 So that it seems a thing endued with sense:  
 Like ■ sea-beast crawled forth, that on ■ shelf  
 Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun itself;

X

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,  
 Nor all asleep – in his extreme old age:  
 His body was bent double, feet and head  
 Coming together in life's pilgrimage;  
 As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage  
 Of sickness felt by him in times long past,  
 A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

XI

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,  
 Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:  
 And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,  
 Upon the margin of that moorish flood  
 Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,  
 That heareth not the loud winds when they call;  
 And moveth all together, if it move at all.

## XII

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond  
 Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look  
 Upon the muddy water, which he conned,  
 As if he had been reading in a book:  
 And now a stranger's privilege I took;  
 And, drawing to his side, to him did say,  
 'This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.'

## XIII

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

## XIV

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,  
 But each in solemn order followed each,  
 With something of a lofty utterance drest –  
 Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach  
 Of ordinary men; a stately speech;  
 Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,  
 Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

## XV

He told, that to these waters he had come  
 To gather leeches, being old and poor:  
 Employment hazardous and wearisome!  
 And he had many hardships to endure:  
 From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;  
 Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;  
 And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

XVII

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

XVII

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;  
 And hope that is unwilling to be fed;  
 Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;  
 And mighty Poets in their misery dead.  
 – Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,  
 My question eagerly did I renew,  
 ‘How is it that you live, and what is it you do?’

XVIII

He with a smile did then his words repeat;  
 And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide  
 He travelled; stirring thus about his feet  
 The waters of the pools where they abide.  
 ‘Once I could meet with them on every side;  
 But they have dwindled long by slow decay;  
 Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.’

XIX

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,  
 The old Man’s shape, and speech – all troubled me:  
 In my mind’s eye I seemed to see him pace  
 About the weary moors continually,  
 Wandering about alone and silently.  
 While I these thoughts within myself pursued,  
 He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,  
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,  
But stately in the main; and when he ended,  
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find  
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.  
'God,' said I, 'be my help and stay secure;  
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!'

## Travelling

This is the spot: – how mildly does the sun  
Shine in between the fading leaves! the air  
In the habitual silence of this wood  
Is more than silent; and this bed of heath –  
Where shall we find so sweet a resting-place?  
Come, let me see thee sink into a dream  
Of quiet thoughts, protracted till thine eye  
Be calm as water when the winds are gone  
And no one can tell whither. My sweet Friend,  
We two have had such happy hours together  
That my heart melts in me to think of it.

I grieved for Buonaparté, with a vain  
And an unthinking grief! The tenderest mood  
Of that Man's mind – what can it be? what food  
Fed his first hopes? what knowledge could *he* gain?  
'Tis not in battles that from youth we train  
The Governor who must be wise and good,  
And temper with the sternness of the brain  
Thoughts motherly, and meek as womanhood.  
Wisdom doth live with children round her knees:  
Books, leisure, perfect freedom, and the talk  
Man holds with week-day man in the hourly walk  
Of the mind's business: these are the degrees  
By which true Sway doth mount; this is the stalk  
True Power doth grow on; and her rights are these.

The world is too much with us; late and soon

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon;  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers;  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not. – Great God! I'd rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;  
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,  
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;  
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;  
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.



With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh

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

Composed Upon Westminster Bridge,  
September 3, 1802

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

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

Jones! ■ from Calais southward you and I  
Went pacing side by side, this public Way  
Streamed with the pomp of ■ too-credulous day,  
When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty:  
A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:  
From hour to hour the antiquated Earth  
Beat like the heart of Man: songs, garlands, mirth,  
Banners, and happy faces, far and nigh!  
And now, sole register that these things were,  
Two solitary greetings have I heard,  
'*Good morrow, Citizen!*' a hollow word,  
As if a dead man spake it! Yet despair  
Touches me not, though pensive as ■ bird  
Whose vernal coverts winter hath laid bare.

It is ■ beauteous evening, calm and free

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free,  
The holy time is quiet as ■ Nun  
Breathless with adoration; the broad sun  
Is sinking down in its tranquillity;  
The gentleness of heaven broods o'er the Sea:  
Listen! the mighty Being is awake,  
And doth with his eternal motion make  
A sound like thunder – everlastingly.  
Dear Child! dear Girl! that walkest with me here,  
If thou appear untouched by solemn thought,  
Thy nature is not therefore less divine:  
Thou liest in Abraham's bosom all the year;  
And worshipp'st at the Temple's inner shrine,  
God being with thee when we know it not.

## To Toussaint l'Ouverture

Toussaint, the most unhappy man of men!  
Whether the whistling Rustic tend his plough  
Within thy hearing, or thy head be now  
Pillowed in some deep dungeon's earless den; –  
O miserable Chieftain! where and when  
Wilt thou find patience! Yet die not; do thou  
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow:  
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,  
Live, and take comfort. Thou has left behind  
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;  
There's not a breathing of the common wind  
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;  
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

London, 1802

Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour:  
England hath need of thee: she is a fen  
Of stagnant waters: altar, sword, and pen,  
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,  
Have forfeited their ancient English dower  
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men;  
Oh! raise us up, return to us again;  
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.  
Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:  
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:  
Pure as the naked 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.

Written in London, September, 1802

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



## Yarrow Unvisited

*See the various Poems the scene of which is laid upon the banks of the Yarrow; in particular, the exquisite Ballad of Hamilton beginning*

*'Busk ye, busk ye, my bonny, bonny Bride,  
Busk ye, busk ye, my winsome Marrow!' –*

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

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

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

'What's Yarrow but a river bare,  
That glides the dark hills under?  
There are ■ thousand such elsewhere

As worthy of your wonder.'

– Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;  
My True-love sighed for sorrow;  
And looked me in the face, to think  
I thus could speak of Yarrow!

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

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

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

'If Care with freezing years should come,  
And wandering seem but folly, –  
Should we be loth to stir from home,  
And yet be melancholy;  
Should life be dull, and spirits low,

'Twill soothe us in our sorrow,  
That earth hath something yet to show,  
The bonny holms of Yarrow!

## The Small Celandine

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

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

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

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

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

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

I wandered lonely as a cloud

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

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

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

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

## French Revolution As It Appeared to Enthusiasts at Its Commencement

*Reprinted from 'The Friend'*

Oh! pleasant exercise of hope and joy!  
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood  
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!  
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very heaven! – Oh! times,  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance!  
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,  
When most intent on making of herself  
A prime Enchantress – to assist the work,  
Which then was going forward in her name!  
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,  
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets  
(As at some moment might not be unfelt  
Among the bowers of paradise itself)  
The budding rose above the rose full blown.  
What temper at the prospect did not wake  
To happiness unthought of? The inert  
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!  
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,  
The playfellows of fancy, who had made  
All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength  
Their ministers, – who in lordly wise had stirred  
Among the grandest objects of the sense,  
And dealt with whatsoever they found there  
As if they had within some lurking right  
To wield it; – they, too, who, of gentle mood,  
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these  
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,  
And in the region of their peaceful selves; –

Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty  
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,  
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish;  
Were called upon to exercise their skill,  
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,  
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!  
But in the very world, which is the world  
Of all of us, – the place where in the end  
We find our happiness, or not at all!



## The Simplon Pass

— Brook and road

Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy Pass,  
And with them did we journey several hours  
At a slow step. The immeasurable height  
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,  
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,  
And in the narrow rent, at every turn,  
Winds thwarting winds bewildered and forlorn,  
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,  
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,  
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside  
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight  
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,  
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light –  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,  
Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle,  
in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont

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

So pure the sky, so quiet was the air!  
So like, so very like, was day to day!  
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:  
I could have fancied that the mighty Deep  
Was even the gentlest of all gentle Things.

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

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

Thou 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,  
Elysian quiet, without toil or strife;  
No motion but the moving tide, a breeze,  
Or merely silent Nature's breathing life.

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

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

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,  
Well chosen is the spirit that is here;  
That Hulk which labours in the deadly swell,  
This rueful sky, this pageantry of fear!

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

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

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

## Stepping Westward

*While my Fellow-traveller and I ~~were~~ walking by the side of Loch Ketterine, one fine evening after sunset, in our road to a Hut where, in the course of our Tour, ~~we~~ had been hospitably entertained some weeks before, we met, in one of the loneliest parts of that solitary region, two well-dressed Women, one of whom said to us, by way of greeting, 'What, you are stepping westward?'*

*'What, you are stepping westward?' – 'Yea.'*

*– 'Twould be a wildish destiny,  
If we, who thus together roam  
In a strange Land, and far from home,  
Were in this place the guests of Chance:  
Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,  
Though home or shelter he had none,  
With such a sky to lead him on?*

*The dewy ground was dark and cold;  
Behind, all gloomy to behold;  
And stepping westward seemed to be  
A kind of heavenly destiny:  
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound  
Of something without place or bound;  
And seemed to give me spiritual right  
To travel through that region bright.*

*The voice was soft, and she who spake  
Was walking by her native lake:  
The salutation had to me  
The very sound of courtesy:  
Its power was felt; and while my eye  
Was fixed upon the glowing Sky,  
The echo of the voice enwrought  
A human sweetness with the thought  
Of travelling through the world that lay  
Before ~~me~~ in my endless way.*

## The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,  
Yon solitary Highland Lass!  
Reaping and singing by herself;  
Stop here, or gently pass!  
Alone she cuts and binds the grain,  
And sings a melancholy strain;  
O listen! for the Vale profound  
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chaunt  
More welcome notes to weary bands  
Of travellers in some shady haunt,  
Among Arabian sands:  
A voice so thrilling ne'er was heard  
In spring-time from the Cuckoo-bird,  
Breaking the silence of the seas  
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings? –  
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow  
For old, unhappy, far-off things,  
And battles long ago:  
Or is it some more humble lay,  
Familiar matter of today?  
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,  
That has been, and may be again?

Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang  
As if her song could have no ending;  
I saw her singing at her work,  
And o'er the sickle bending; –  
I listened, motionless and still;  
And, as I mounted up the hill,  
The music in my heart I bore,  
Long after it was heard no more.

## Thought of ■ Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea,  
One of the mountains; each a mighty Voice:  
In both from age to age thou didst rejoice,  
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!  
There came a Tyrant, and with holy glee  
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven:  
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,  
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.  
Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft:  
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left;  
For, high-souled Maid, what sorrow would it be  
That Mountain floods should thunder as before,  
And Ocean bellow from his rocky shore,  
And neither awful Voice be heard by thee!

Though narrow be that old Man's cares, and near

– 'gives to airy nothing

*A local habitation and a name.'*

Though narrow be that old Man's cares, and near,

The poor old Man is greater than he seems:

For he hath waking empire, wide as dreams;

An ample sovereignty of eye and ear.

Rich are his walks with supernatural cheer;

The region of his inner spirit teems

With vital sounds and monitory gleams

Of high astonishment and pleasing fear.

He the seven birds hath seen, that never part,

Seen the SEVEN WHISTLERS in their nightly rounds,

And counted them: and oftentimes will start –

For overhead are sweeping GABRIEL'S HOUNDS,

Doomed, with their impious Lord, the flying Hart

To chase for ever, on aërial grounds!

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 –  
But how could I forget thee? Through what power,  
Even for the least division of an hour,  
Have I been so beguiled as to be blind  
To my most grievous loss! – That thought's return  
Was the worst pang that sorrow ever bore,  
Save one, one only, when I stood forlorn,  
Knowing my heart's best treasure was no more;  
That neither present time, nor years unborn  
Could to my sight that heavenly face restore.



## Lines

*Composed at Grasmere, during a walk one Evening, after a stormy day, the Author having just read in a Newspaper that the dissolution of Mr Fox was hourly expected.*

Loud is the Vale! the Voice is up  
With which she speaks when storms are gone,  
A mighty unison of streams!  
Of all her Voices, One!

Loud is the Vale; – this inland Depth  
In peace is roaring like the Sea;  
Yon star upon the mountain-top  
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain deprest,  
Importunate and heavy load!  
The Comforter hath found me here,  
Upon this lonely road;

And many thousands now are sad –  
Wait the fulfilment of their fear;  
For he must die who is their stay,  
Their glory disappear.

A Power is passing from the earth  
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;  
But when the great and good depart  
What is it more than this –

That Man, who is from God sent forth,  
Doth yet again to God return? –  
Such ebb and flow must ever be,  
Then wherefore should we mourn?

from The River Duddon

XXXIV AFTER-THOUGHT

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

## Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg

When first, descending from the moorlands,  
I saw the Stream of Yarrow glide  
Along a bare and open valley,  
The Ettrick Shepherd was my guide.

When last along its banks I wandered,  
Through groves that had begun to shed  
Their golden leaves upon the pathways,  
My steps the Border-minstrel led.

The mighty Minstrel breathes no longer,  
'Mid mouldering ruins low he lies;  
And death upon the braes of Yarrow,  
Has closed the Shepherd-poet's eyes:

Nor has the rolling year twice measured,  
From sign to sign, its stedfast course,  
Since every mortal power of Coleridge  
Was frozen at its marvellous source;

The rapt One, of the godlike forehead,  
The heaven-eyed creature sleeps in earth:  
And Lamb, the frolic and the gentle,  
Has vanished from his lonely hearth.

Like clouds that rake the mountain-summits,  
Or waves that own no curbing hand,  
How fast has brother followed brother,  
From sunshine to the sunless land!

Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber  
Were earlier raised, remain to hear  
A timid voice, that asks in whispers,  
'Who next will drop and disappear?'

Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,  
Like London with its own black wreath,  
On which with thee, O Crabbe! forth-looking,  
I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath.

As if but yesterday departed,  
Thou too art gone before; but why,  
O'er ripe fruit, seasonably gathered,  
Should frail survivors heave a sigh?

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,  
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;  
For Her who, ere her summer faded,  
Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

No more of old romantic sorrows,  
For slaughtered Youth or love-lorn Maid!  
With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,  
And Ettrick mourns with her their Poet dead.

















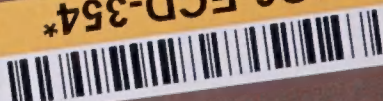




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