Selections
From
Wordsworth
With a
Brief Sketch of His Life

Cincinnati
Robert Clarke & Co
1886
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SELECTIONS
FROM

WORDSWORTH

WITH A

BRIEF SKETCH OF HIS LIFE

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

No course of reading for teachers would be complete from which has been omitted the greatest name in English literature since Milton.

William Wordsworth was born in Cockermouth, a town among the Cumberland hills, April 7, 1770. His father was an attorney, and was agent for the estate of the first Earl of Lonsdale. His mother died when he was in his eighth year, and his father five years afterward. He first attended school at Penrith, whither his parents had gone to reside, and after his mother's death he was transferred to the public school at Hawkshead; he remained in this school until 1787, when, under the guardianship of his uncles, he entered St. John's College, Cambridge. Neither at Hawkshead nor Cambridge did he exhibit the traits of the student. He disliked both discipline and systematic study, but read a good deal, after a desultory fashion, particularly of the English classics. He took his bachelor's degree in 1791, but without distinction. After taking this degree, he resided in France for more than a year. This brought him into immediate contact with the French revolution, which filled him with enthusiasm. He became intimate with the party of the Gironde, but whilst he was meditating the taking of an active part in the direction of the revolution, circumstances compelled his return to England. This was just before his Girondist friends were sent in a body to the scaffold. If it had not been for this timely return, possibly he might have shared their fate. Years after he
abjured his radical principles for a liberal and humane conservatism.

It was designed that Wordsworth should enter the church, but he turned from both the profession of the pulpit and of the bar with the determination of devoting himself entirely to poetry. His first public utterance in verse was made in 1793. He published two poems that year, *Descriptive Sketches* and an *Evening Walk*. They attracted no attention, and brought him no money.

He was now reduced to great pecuniary straits. His funds were about exhausted, but he was resolved to adhere to the poet's work. But as poetry did not pay, how was he to obtain a subsistence? At this dark moment (1795), a young friend and admirer, Raisley Calvert, dying, left him the sum of £900. On this sum, he and his sister Dorothy, who were most tenderly attached to each other, managed to live for nearly eight years, illustrating in a most striking way his own motto of "plain living and high thinking."

In 1797, the brother and sister were visited by Coleridge, when began that intimate and noble friendship which was only ended by death.

The *Lyrical Ballads*, including Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, were published in 1798. They met with no popular success, and were assailed with ridicule by the critics. In them, however, might have been discovered, had these critics been wise, veins of a new and precious kind of poetry.

In 1802, the sum of about £8,000, a long contested claim against the estate of Lord Lonsdale for services rendered by the father of the Wordsworths as agent, was paid over to the family. The poet and his sister received one-half of it, this sum assuring them a modest competence. In the course of this year, Wordsworth married his cousin, Mary Hutchinson, to whom, after three years of married life, he addressed the charming lines, "She was a phantom of delight."
This estimable lady survived her husband nine years, dying in 1859 at an advanced age.

The *Lyrical Ballads* were reprinted in 1802, and again in 1805. By this time they began to attract something of public favor, and were received with enthusiasm by Wilson, DeQuincy, Leigh Hunt, and other rising young men of literary ability.

In 1813, Lord Lonsdale procured Wordsworth the office of distributor of stamps for the county of Westmoreland, with a salary of £500. This office was almost a sinecure, and in no way interfered with his literary pursuits. This year he removed to Rydal Mount, which commands a beautiful view of Rydal lake and a part of Windermere. This delightful spot, so fully adapted to poetic musings, continued to be his home the remainder of his life.

In 1814 was published *The Excursion*, the greatest of his extended poems, and the one on which his fame largely rests. But the critics had not yet been entirely won over, and at this production, Jeffrey, of the *Edinburgh Review*, flung the contemptuous remark, "this will never do." *The Excursion* is but one of the parts of a vast philosophical poem Wordsworth contemplated writing, and which was to embody views of men, nature, and society. The main poem was to be entitled *The Recluse*. *The Prelude*, the opening to *The Recluse*, although written in 1805, was not published until after the poet's death.

Wordsworth is a most voluminous writer, his sonnets alone numbering up among the hundreds. It is, therefore, impossible in a short sketch like this to name even his leading poems.

In the decade between 1830 and 1840, his reputation arose with immense rapidity, and it now is so firmly established as never likely to be shaken. He visited Oxford in 1839, and was received with the utmost enthusiasm, the university conferring on him the degree of D. C. L. In 1842, he was permitted to resign his office of distributor of
stamps in favor of his son, and received a pension of £300. In 1843, he succeeded Southey as Poet Laureate. After a short illness, on the anniversary of the birth and death of Shakspere, in the year 1850, was closed the pure and serene life of this great poet.

Wordsworth composed his poems mostly as he walked in his garden, or in some spot where he was not liable to interruption. His mind worked best with the open world, which he loved so well, spread around him.

Wordsworth's self-confidence and his frank expression of it have scarcely had their parallel. He believed in himself and his theories so thoroughly that no amount of neglect or severity of criticism seemed to disturb him. He bided his time with an unaffected serenity and confidence. It is true he was not reluctant to enter the arena in support of his views, but he never seemed to entertain for a moment the thought that his was not to be a winning fight. Indeed, he assumed it as a great credit to himself, and as among the most striking proofs of his genius, that he was thus neglected by the public and condemned by the critics; and he entered into a lengthy argument to prove that all the great creative intellects of the world had lacked the appreciation of their contemporaries, and that from the very nature of things this must always be so.

Wordsworth had a theory of poetry peculiarly his own—and on the whole a noble theory it is. And from the application of this theory have sprung, in a measure, his strength and his weakness. In pursuance of this theory he rejected with an intense scorn what he considered the stage machinery and the swelling and unnatural diction in such familiar use by the poets, and for the subjects of his verse chose the commonest incidents of life and the most ordinary manifestations of nature. He recognized no difference between the proper language of verse and of prose. The language of the common people he deemed best fitted for the purposes of the real poet. He says,
"poetry sheds no tears 'such as angels weep,' but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of both." It is to be feared, however, that he too often mistook "a commonplace realism for simplicity."

This theory naturally led to a distinguishing originality. The artificialities that had from the time of the Restoration entered so largely into the thought and structure of English verse were swept aside, and verse that strove to penetrate to the core of things by the simplest means was substituted. And never has nature and naked humanity (to use Wordsworth's own word), been handled with more consummate power by any English poet. By adopting the language of common prose as that best fitted for poetry, Wordsworth did not mean to underestimate the value of style; for this he has somewhere defined as the incarnation of thoughts. But while this theory looks in the right direction, it is too narrow, and its author himself, in his more elevated compositions, is often found transcending its limits. Of this we have marked examples in the Ode on Immortality and in parts of The Excursion, "which bristle with dictionary words." As DeQuincy well says: "The gamut of ideas needs a corresponding gamut of expressions; the scale of the thinking, which ranges through every key, exacts for the artist an unlimited command over the entire scale of the instrument which he employs." But wherein this theory of poetic style most proves a source of weakness is that the author seems often to have it obtruded on his attention in the highest flights of his muse; and, seemingly, to maintain his consistency, he weaves into a texture of marvelous grandeur and beauty conceits and language of the most puerile character.

It is to be suspected that Wordsworth had not the organizing power to construct a great, continuous and sym-
metrical work of art. But after all deductions have been made, it is believed Matthew Arnold's estimate will be found in strict accordance with the truth: "On the whole, not only is Wordsworth eminent by reason of the goodness of his best work, but he is eminent by reason of the great body of the good work he has left us." It is also safe to say, as Emerson has done, that in his best work, Wordsworth has touched the high-water mark of poetry. Whosoever, therefore, shall become acquainted with this master will be brought into communion with a genius calm, and at the same time inspiring, a genius who recognized the loftiness of his art, and consecrated it to the interests of humanity.

In the selections here given no attempt has been made farther than to present such examples of the different kinds of Wordsworth's verse as will convey to the student some notion of the scope of the author's powers, and will prove an inducement to a larger reading.
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 wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The thing 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 passed 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 came 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 blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see
The heavens laugh with you in the Jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss I feel—I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While the Earth itself is adorning
This sweet May morning,
And the Children are pulling,
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 has fled the visionary gleam?  
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?  

vi.

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 night of common day.  

vii.

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-learned 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 be 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 doth keep
Thy heritage; thou Eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted forever 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 night
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 thee 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 endeavor,
   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 to-day
   Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now forever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendor in the grass, of glory in the flower;
   We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind;
   In the primal sympathy
Which having been must ever be;
   In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

xi.
And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
Forbode 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 loved 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 coloring 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 too often lie too deep for tears.

TINTERN ABBEY.

Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798.

Five years have passed, 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 has 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; the 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,
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 can not 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 colors and their forms, were then to me
An appetite; a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm
By thoughts 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 oftentime
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 impuls
All thinking things, all objects of all thoughts,
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
Of 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 mortal 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. O, 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; 't is her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy, for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore, let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee; and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies. O, 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 worshiper of Nature, hither came
Unweari'd 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.

I WANDERED LONELY AS A CLOUD.

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden 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 a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
    Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;  
A poet could not but be gay  
    In such a 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.

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 willows 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.
SHE WAS A PHANTOM OF DELIGHT.

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

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

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveler between life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill:
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light.

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STEPPING WESTWARD.

While my fellow-traveler 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."  
'T would 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; 't was 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 inwrought
A human sweetness with the thought
Of traveling through the world that lay
Before me in my endless way.

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 unraveled;
Had trod the banks of Clyde, and Tay,
And with the Tweed had traveled;
And when we came to Clovenford,
Then said my "winsome Marrow,"
"What'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—'t is 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 the chiming Tweed
The lintwhites sing in chorus:
There's pleasant Tiviot-dale, a land
Made blithe with plough and harrow:
Why throw away a needful day
To go in search of Yarrow?

"What's Yarrow but a river bare,
That glides the dark hills under?
There are a thousand such elsewhere
As worthy of your wonder."
Strange words they seemed of slight and scorn;
My True-love sighed for sorrow;
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 La
Float double, swan and shadow!
We will not see them—will not go,  
To-day, nor yet to-morrow;  
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 has something yet to show,  
The bonny holms of Yarrow!"

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

Behold her, single in the field,  
You 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 chant
More welcome note to weary bands
Of travelers 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 to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

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

Hart-Leap Well is a small stream of water, about five miles from Richmond in Yorkshire, and near the side of the road that leads from Richmond to Askrigg. Its name is derived from a remarkable Chase, the memory of which is preserved by the monuments spoken of in the second Part of the following Poem, which monuments do now exist as I have there described them.

PART FIRST

The Knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor
With the slow motion of a summer's cloud!
He turned aside toward a Vassal's door,
And "Bring another horse!" he cried cloud.

"Another horse!"—That shout the Vassal heard
And saddled his best Steed, a comely gray;
Sir Walter mounted him; he was the third
Which he had mounted on that glorious day.

Joy sparkled in the prancing Courser's eyes;
The Horse and Horseman are a happy pair;
But, though Sir Walter like a falcon flies,
There is a doleful silence in the air.

A rout this morning left Sir Walter's Hall,
That as they galloped made the echoes roar;
But Horse and Man are vanished, one and all;
Such race, I think, was never seen before.

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,
Calls to the few tired Dogs that yet remain;
Blanch, Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain.
The Knight hallowed, he cheered and chid them on
With suppliant gestures and upbraiding stern;
But breath and eye-sight fail: and, one by one,
The Dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

Where is the throng, the tumult of the race?
The bugles that so joyfully were blown?
This Chase it looks not like an earthly Chase;
Sir Walter and the Hart are left alone.

The poor Hart toils along the mountain side;
I will not stop to tell how far he fled,
Nor will I mention by what death he died:
But now the Knight beholds him lying dead.

Dismounting, then, he leaned against a thorn;
He had no follower, Dog, nor Man, nor Boy:
He neither cracked his whip, nor blew his corn,
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

Close to the thorn on which Sir Walter leaned,
Stood his dumb partner in this glorious feat;
Weak as a lamb the hour that it is yeaned,
And white with foam as if with cleaving sleet.

Upon his side the Hart was lying stretched;
His nostril touched a spring beneath a hill;
And with the last deep groan his breath had fetched
The waters of the spring were trembling still.

And now, too happy for repose or rest,
(Never had living man such joyful lot!)
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,
And gazed and gazed upon that darling spot.
And climbing up the hill—(it was at least
Nine roods of sheer ascent)—Sir Walter found
Three several hoof-marks with the hunted Beast
Had left imprinted on the grassy ground.

Sir Walter wiped his face, and cried, "Till now
Such sight was never seen by living eyes:
Three leaps have borne him from this lofty brow,
Down to the very fountain where he lies.

I'll build a Pleasure-house upon this spot,
And a small Arbor, made for rural joy;
'T will be the Traveler's shed, the Pilgrim's cot,
A place of love for Damsels that are coy.

A cunning Artist will I have to frame
A basin for that fountain in the dell!
And they who do make mention of the same
From this day forth, shall call it Hart-leap Well.

And, gallant Stag! to make thy praises known,
Another monument shall here be raised;
Three several Pillars, each a rough-hewn Stone,
And planted where thy hoofs the turf have grazed.

And, in the summer-time, when days are long,
I will come hither with my Paramour;
And with the Dancers and the Minstrel's song
We will make merry in that pleasant Bower.

Till the foundations of the mountains fail
My Mansion with its Arbor shall endure;—
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure!"
Then home he went, and left the Hart, stone-dead,
With breathless nostrils stretched among the spring,
—Soon did the Knight perform what he had said,
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring.

Ere thrice the Moon into her port had steered,
A Cup of stone received the living Well; 
Three Pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,
And built a house of Pleasure in the dell.

And near the fountain, flowers of stature tall
With trailing plants and trees were intertwined,—
Which soon composed a little sylvan Hall,
A leafy shelter from the sun and wind.

And thither, when the summer-days were long,
Sir Walter led his wondering Paramour;
And with the Dancers and the Minstrel's song,
Made merriment within that pleasant Bower.

The Knight, Sir Walter, died in course of time,
And his bones lie in his paternal vale.—
And there is matter for a second rhyme
And I to do this would add another tale.

PART SECOND.

The moving accident is not my trade:
To freeze the blood I have no ready arts:
'T is my delight, alone in summer shade,
To pipe a simple song for thinking hearts.

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,
It chanced that I saw, standing in a dell
Three Aspens at three corners of a square;
And one, not four yards distant from a Well.
What this imported I could ill divine:  
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,  
I saw three Pillars standing in a line,  
The last Stone Pillar on a dark hill-top.

The trees were gray with neither arms nor head  
Half-wasted the square Mound of tawny green;  
So that you just might say, as then I said,  
"Here in old time the hand of man hath been."

I looked upon the hill both far and near,  
More doleful place did never eye survey;  
It seemed as if the spring-time came not here,  
And Nature here were willing to decay.

I stood in various thoughts and fancies lost,  
When one, who was in Shepherd's garb attired,  
Came up the Hollow:—Him did I accost,  
And what this place might be I then inquired.

The Shepherd stopped, and that same story told  
Which in my former rhyme I have rehearsed.  
"A jolly place," said he, "in times of old!  
But something ails it now; the spot is curst.

You see these lifeless Stumps of aspen wood—  
Some say that they are beeches, others elms—  
These here the Bower; and here a Mansion stood,  
The finest palace of a hundred realms!

The Arbor does its own condition tell;  
You see the Stones, the Fountain, and the Stream;  
But as to the great Lodge! you might as well  
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.
There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,  
Will wet his lips within that Cup of stone;  
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,  
This water doth set forth a dolorous groan.

Some say that here a murder has been done,  
And blood cries out for blood; but, for my part,  
I've guessed, when I've been sitting in the sun,  
That it was all for that unhappy Hart.

What thoughts must through the Creature's brain have passed!  
Even from the topmost Stone, upon the Steep,  
Are but three bounds—and look, Sir, at this last—  
—O Master! it has been a cruel leap.

For thirteen hours he ran a desperate race;  
And in my simple mind we can not tell  
What cause the Hart might have to love this place,  
And come and make his death-bed near the Well.

Here on the grass perhaps asleep he sank,  
Lulled by the Fountain in the summer-tide;  
This water was perhaps the first he drank  
When he had wandered from his mother's side.

In April here beneath the scented thorn  
He heard the birds their morning carols sing;  
And he, perhaps, for aught we know, was born  
Not half a furlong from that self-same spring.

Now, here is neither grass nor pleasant shade;  
The sun on drearier Hollow never shone;  
So will it be, as I have often said,  
Till Trees, and Stones, and Fountain, all are gone."
"Gray-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well; Small difference lies between thy creed and mine This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell; His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

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

The Pleasure-house is dust:—behind, before, This is no common waste, no common gloom; But Nature, in course of time, once more Shall here put on her beauty and her bloom.

She leaves these objects to a slow decay, That what we are, and have been, may be known; But, at the coming of the milder day, These monuments shall be all overgrown.

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide, Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals Never to blend our pleasure or our pride With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels."

**LINES WRITTEN IN EARLY SPRING.**

I heard a thousand blended notes, While in a grove I sat 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?

ODE TO DUTY.

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

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

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

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

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

Through no disturbance of my soul,
Or strong compunction in me wrought,
I supplicate for thy control;
But in the quietness of thought;
Me this unchartered freedom tires;
I feel the weight of chance-desires:
My hopes no more must change their name,
I long for a repose that ever is the same.

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

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

THE SEA SHELL.

I have seen
A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silenced hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon
Brightened with joy; far from within were heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;
Devout above the meaning of your will.
—Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn,
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.
Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,
To rest upon their circumambient walls;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems,—choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here,—if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers,—Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;  
The little rills, and waters numberless,  
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes  
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour  
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,  
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,  
One voice,—the solitary raven flying  
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,  
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight,—  
An iron knell! with echoes from afar  
Faint,—and still fainter,—as the cry with which  
The wanderer accompanies her flight  
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,  
Diminishing by distance till it seemed  
To expire; yet from the abyss is caught again  
And yet again, recovered (The Excursion.)

SONNET ON MILTON.

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;  
O, 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.
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