

A Selection of Poems

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH





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 island 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

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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 burthen 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— 50 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 thro' 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, 60 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 70 Flying from something that he dreads, than one Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,

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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, 80 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 recompence. For I have learned To look on nature, not as in the hour Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes 90 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 100 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 recognise 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.

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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 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, 140 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 150 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!

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.

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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!"

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!

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 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 way-lay.

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.

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And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,
A Traveller 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 angelic light.

