



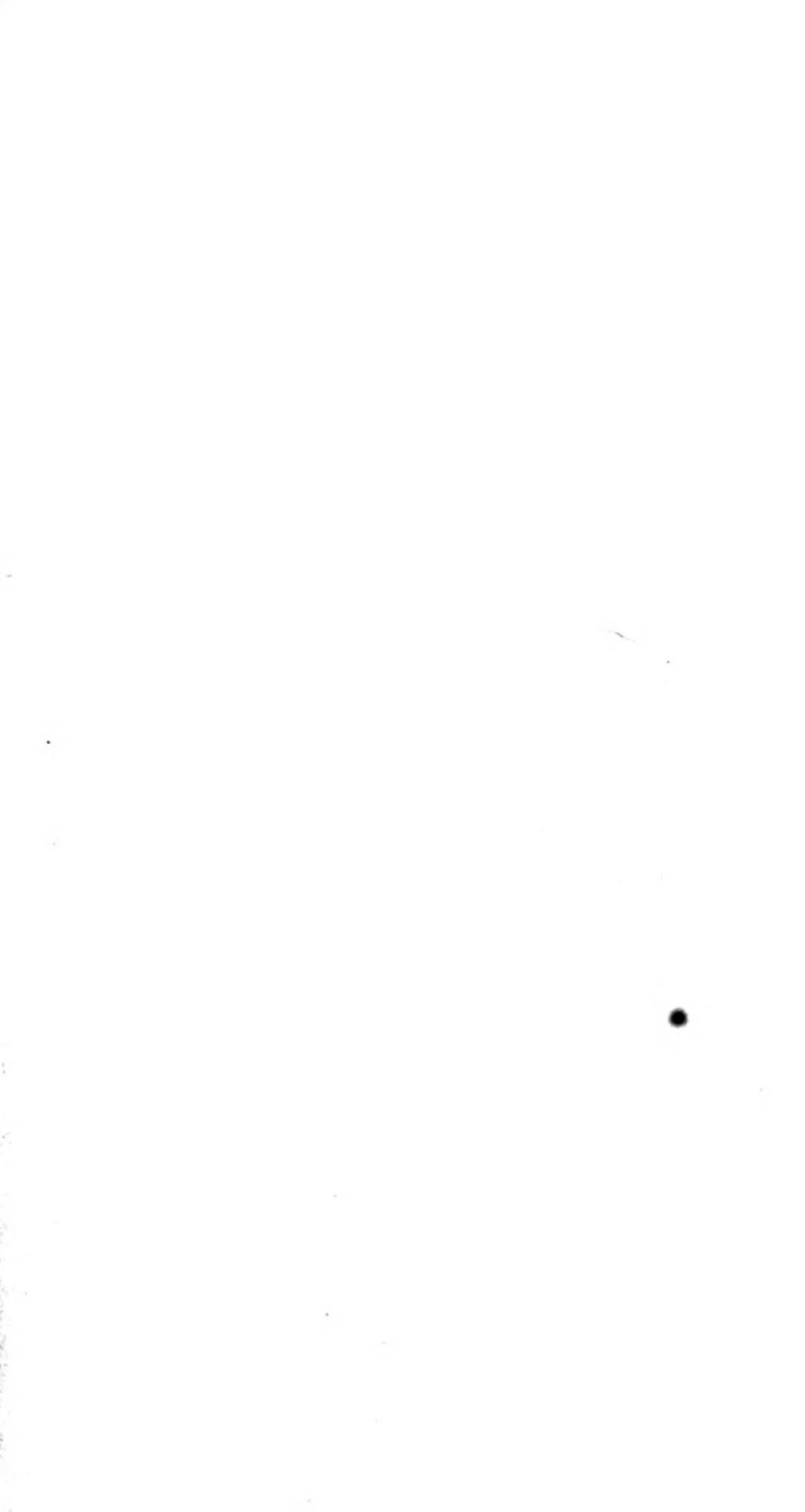
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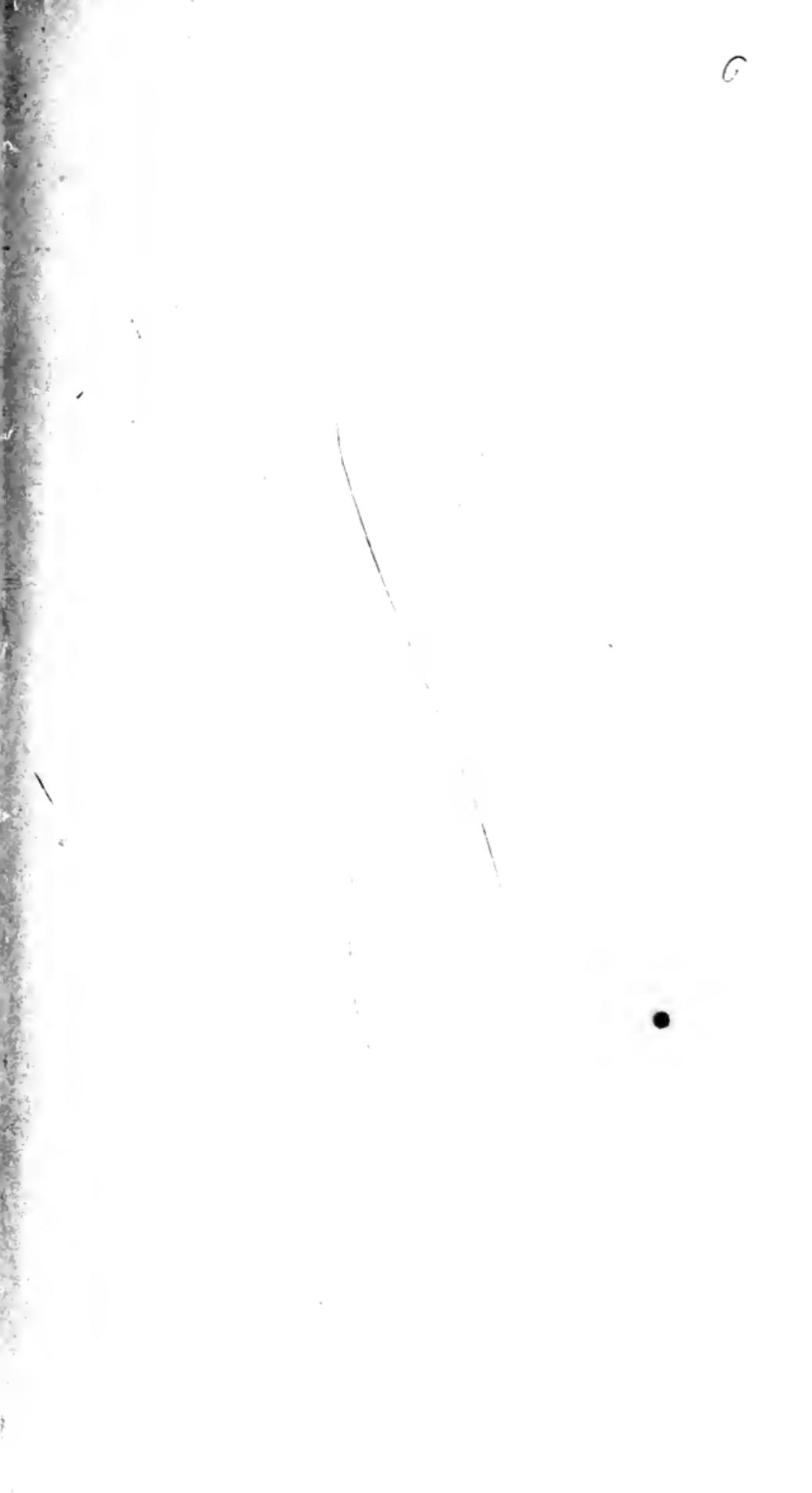
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PREFIXED TO THE EDITION OF 1815.

TO

SIR GEORGE HOWLAND BEAUMONT,
BART.

MY DEAR SIR GEORGE,

ACCEPT my thanks for the permission given me to dedicate these Volumes to you. In addition to a lively pleasure derived from general considerations, I feel a particular satisfaction; for, by inscribing these Poems with your Name, I seem to myself in some degree to repay, by an appropriate honour, the great

obligation which I owe to one part of the Collection—as having been the means of first making us personally known to each other. Upon much of the remainder, also, you have a peculiar claim,—for some of the best pieces were composed under the shade of your own groves, upon the classic ground of Coleorton; where I was animated by the recollection of those illustrious Poets of your name and family, who were born in that neighbourhood; and, we may be assured, did not wander with indifference by the dashing stream of Grace Dieu, and among the rocks that diversify the forest of Charnwood.—Nor is there any one to whom such parts of this Collection as have been inspired or coloured by the beautiful Country from which I now address you, could be presented with more propriety than to yourself—to whom it has suggested so many admirable pictures. Early in life, the sublimity and beauty of this region excited your admiration; and I know that you are bound to it in mind by a still-strengthening attachment.

Wishing and hoping that this Work, with the

embellishments it has received from your pencil *,
may survive as a lasting memorial of a friendship,
which I reckon among the blessings of my life,

I have the honour to be,

My dear Sir George,

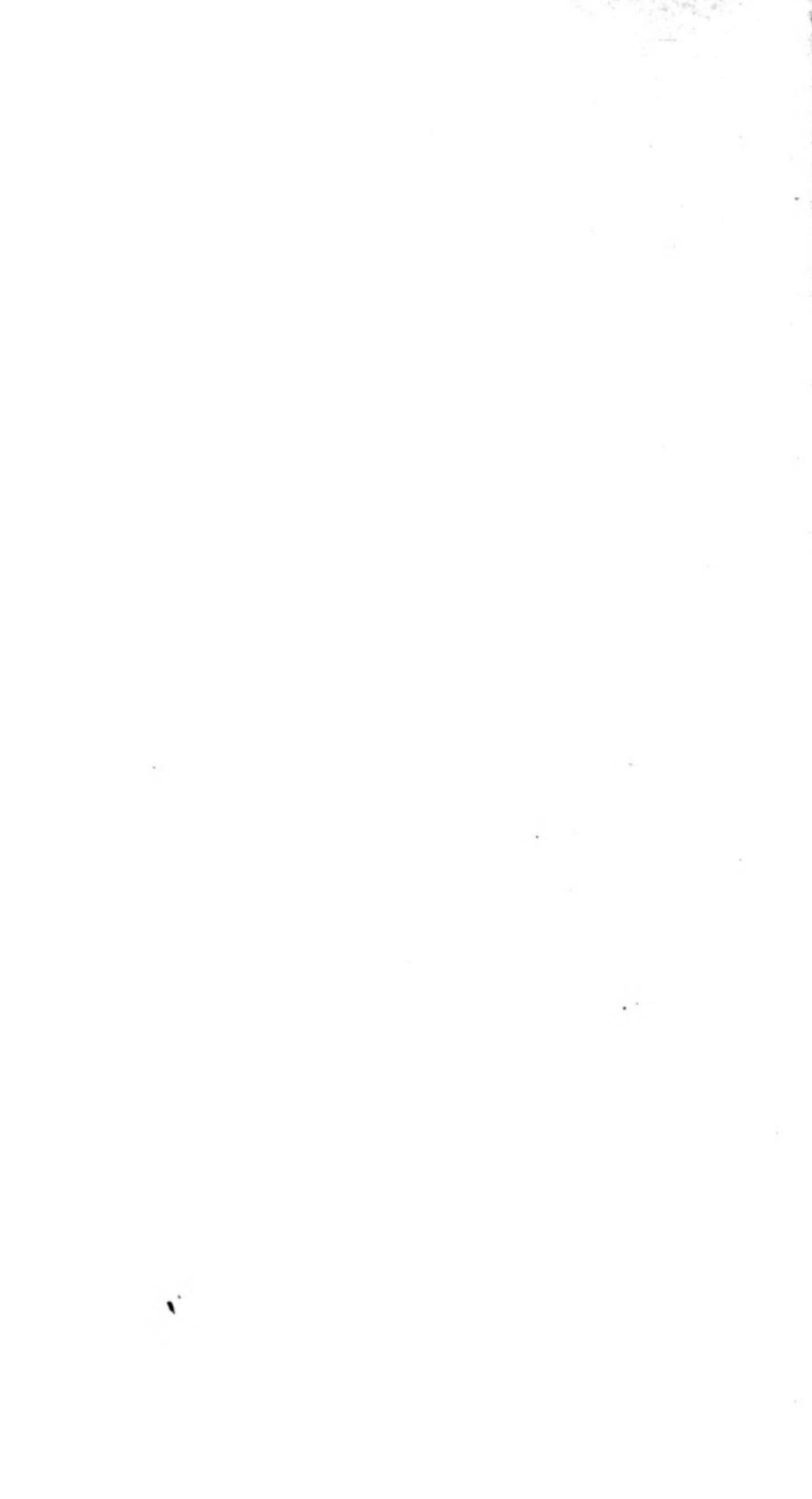
Yours most affectionately and faithfully,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

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FEBRUARY 1, 1815.

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PREFACE

TO THE EDITION OF 1815.



THE observations prefixed to that portion of these Volumes which was published many years ago, under the title of "Lyrical Ballads," have so little of a special application to the greater part of the present enlarged and diversified collection, that they could not with propriety stand as an Introduction to it. Not deeming it, however, expedient to suppress that exposition, slight and imperfect as it is, of the feelings which had determined the choice of the subjects, and the principles which had regulated the composition of those Pieces, I have transferred it to the end

of the Second Volume*, to be attended to, or not, at the pleasure of the Reader.

In the Preface to that part of "The Recluse," lately published under the title of "The Excursion," I have alluded to a meditated arrangement of my minor Poems, which should assist the attentive Reader in perceiving their connection with each other, and also their subordination to that Work. I shall here say a few words explanatory of this arrangement, as carried into effect in the present Volumes.

The powers requisite for the production of poetry are, first, those of observation and description, *i. e.*, the ability to observe with accuracy things as they are in themselves, and with fidelity to describe them, unmodified by any passion or feeling existing in the mind of the describer: whether the things depicted be actually present to the senses, or have a place only in the memory. This power, though indispensable to a Poet, is

* In *this* Edition placed also at the end of the Second Volume.

one which he employs only in submission to necessity, and never for a continuance of time: as its exercise supposes all the higher qualities of the mind to be passive, and in a state of subjection to external objects, much in the same way as a translator or engraver ought to be to his original. 2ndly, Sensibility,—which, the more exquisite it is, the wider will be the range of a poet's perceptions; and the more will he be incited to observe objects, both as they exist in themselves and as re-acted upon by his own mind. (The distinction between poetic and human sensibility has been marked in the character of the Poet delineated in the original preface, before mentioned.) 3dly, Reflection,—which makes the Poet acquainted with the value of actions, images, thoughts, and feelings; and assists the sensibility in perceiving their connection with each other. 4thly, Imagination and Fancy,—to modify, to create, and to associate. 5thly, Invention,—by which characters are composed out of materials supplied by observation;

whether of the Poet's own heart and mind, or of external life and nature ; and such incidents and situations produced as are most impressive to the imagination, and most fitted to do justice to the characters, sentiments, and passions, which the Poet undertakes to illustrate. And, lastly, Judgment,—to decide how and where, and in what degree, each of these faculties ought to be exerted ; so that the less shall not be sacrificed to the greater ; nor the greater, slighting the less, arrogant, to its own injury, more than its due. By judgment, also, is determined what are the laws and appropriate graces of every species of composition*.

The materials of Poetry, by these powers collected and produced, are cast, by means of various moulds, into divers forms. The moulds may be enumerated, and the forms specified, in the following order. 1st, the Narrative, —including the

* As sensibility to harmony of numbers, and the power of producing it, are invariably attendants upon the faculties above specified, nothing has been said upon those requisites.

Epopœia, the Historic Poem, the Tale, the Romance, the Mock-heroic, and, if the spirit of Homer will tolerate such neighbourhood, that dear production of our days, the metrical Novel. Of this Class, the distinguishing mark is, that the Narrator, however liberally his speaking agents be introduced, is himself the source from which every thing primarily flows. Epic Poets, in order that their mode of composition may accord with the elevation of their subject, represent themselves as *singing* from the inspiration of the Muse, ‘*Arma virumque cano* ;’ but this is a fiction, in modern times, of slight value : the Iliad or the Paradise Lost would gain little in our estimation by being chanted. The other poets who belong to this class are commonly content to *tell* their tale ;—so that of the whole it may be affirmed that they neither require nor reject the accompaniment of music.

2ndly, The Dramatic,—consisting of Tragedy, Historic Drama, Comedy, and Masque, in which the poet does not appear at all in his own person, and where the whole action is carried on by speech

and dialogue of the agents; music being admitted only incidentally and rarely. The Opera may be placed here, inasmuch as it proceeds by dialogue; though depending, to the degree that it does, upon music, it has a strong claim to be ranked with the lyrical. The characteristic and impassioned Epistle, of which Ovid and Pope have given examples, considered as a species of monodrama, may, without impropriety, be placed in this class.

3rdly, The lyrical,—containing the Hymn, the Ode, the Elegy, the Song, and the Ballad; in all which, for the production of their *full* effect, an accompaniment of music is indispensable.

4thly, The Idyllium,—descriptive chiefly either of the processes and appearances of external nature, as the Seasons of Thomson; or of characters, manners, and sentiments, as are Shenstone's Schoolmistress, The Cotter's Saturday Night of Burns, The Twa Dogs of the same Author; or of these in conjunction with the appearances of Nature, as most of the pieces of Theocritus, the Allegro and Penseroso of Milton,

Beattie's *Minstrel*, Goldsmith's *Deserted Village*. The Epitaph, the Inscription, the Sonnet, most of the epistles of poets writing in their own persons, and all loco-descriptive poetry, belong to this class.

5thly, Didactic,—the principal object of which is direct instruction; as the Poem of Lucretius, the *Georgics* of Virgil, *The Fleece* of Dyer, *Mason's English Garden*, &c.

And, lastly, philosophical Satire, like that of Horace and Juvenal; personal and occasional Satire rarely comprehending sufficient of the general in the individual to be dignified with the name of poetry.

Out of the three last has been constructed a composite order, of which Young's *Night Thoughts*, and Cowper's *Task*, are excellent examples.

It is deducible from the above, that poems, apparently miscellaneous, may with propriety be arranged either with reference to the powers of mind *predominant* in the production of them; or to the mould in which they are cast; or, lastly,

to the subjects to which they relate. From each of these considerations, the following Poems have been divided into classes; which, that the work may more obviously correspond with the course of human life, and for the sake of exhibiting in it the three requisites of a legitimate whole, a beginning, a middle, and an end, have been also arranged, as far as it was possible, according to an order of time, commencing with Childhood, and terminating with Old Age, Death, and Immortality. My guiding wish was, that the small pieces of which these volumes consist, thus discriminated, might be regarded under a two-fold view; as composing an entire work within themselves, and as adjuncts to the philosophical Poem, "The Recluse." This arrangement has long presented itself habitually to my own mind. Nevertheless, I should have preferred to scatter the contents of these volumes at random, if I had been persuaded that, by the plan adopted, any thing material would be taken from the natural effect of the pieces, individually, on the mind of the unreflecting Reader. I trust

there is a sufficient variety in each class to prevent this; while, for him who reads with reflection, the arrangement will serve as a commentary unostentatiously directing his attention to my purposes, both particular and general. But, as I wish to guard against the possibility of misleading by this classification, it is proper first to remind the Reader, that certain poems are placed according to the powers of mind, in the Author's conception, predominant in the production of them; *predominant*, which implies the exertion of other faculties in less degree. Where there is more imagination than fancy in a poem, it is placed under the head of imagination, and *vice versa*. Both the above classes might without impropriety have been enlarged from that consisting of "Poems founded on the Affections;" as might this latter from those, and from the class "proceeding from Sentiment and Reflection." The most striking characteristics of each piece, mutual illustration, variety, and proportion, have governed me throughout.

It may be proper in this place to state, that the Extracts in the second Class, entitled “*Juvenile Pieces,*” are in many places altered from the printed copy, chiefly by omission and compression. The slight alterations of another kind were for the most part made not long after the publication of the Poems from which the Extracts are taken*. These Extracts seem to have a title to be placed here, as they were the productions of youth, and represent implicitly some of the features of a youthful mind, at a time when images of nature supplied to it the place of thought, sentiment, and almost of action; or, as it will be found expressed, of a state of mind when

—— ——— ‘ 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, or any interest
 Unborrowed from the eye.’—

I will own that I was much at a loss what to

* These Poems are now printed entire.

select of these descriptions ; and perhaps it would have been better either to have reprinted the whole, or suppressed what I have given.

None of the other Classes, except those of Fancy and Imagination, require any particular notice. But a remark of general application may be made. All Poets, except the dramatic, have been in the practice of feigning that their works were composed to the music of the harp or lyre : with what degree of affectation this has been done in modern times, I leave to the judicious to determine. For my own part, I have not been disposed to violate probability so far, or to make such a large demand upon the Reader's charity. Some of these pieces are essentially lyrical ; and, therefore, cannot have their due force without a supposed musical accompaniment ; but, in much the greatest part, as a substitute for the classic lyre or romantic harp, I require nothing more than an animated or impassioned recitation, adapted to the subject. Poems, however humble in their kind, if they be good in that kind, cannot read

themselves; the law of long syllable and short must not be so inflexible,—the letter of metre must not be so impassive to the spirit of versification,—as to deprive the Reader of all voluntary power to modulate, in subordination to the sense, the music of the poem;—in the same manner as his mind is left at liberty, and even summoned, to act upon its thoughts and images. But, though the accompaniment of a musical instrument be frequently dispensed with, the true Poet does not therefore abandon his privilege distinct from that of the mere Proseman;

‘He murmurs near the running brooks
A music sweeter than their own.’

I come now to the consideration of the words Fancy and Imagination, as employed in the classification of the following Poems. ‘A man,’ says an intelligent author, ‘has imagination in proportion as he can distinctly copy in idea the impressions of sense: it is the faculty which *images* within the mind the phenomena of sensation. A man has fancy in proportion as he can call up, connect, or asso-

ciate, at pleasure, those internal images (*φαντάζειν* is to cause to appear) so as to complete ideal representations of absent objects. Imagination is the power of depicting, and fancy of evoking and combining. The imagination is formed by patient observation; the fancy by a voluntary activity in shifting the scenery of the mind. The more accurate the imagination, the more safely may a painter, or a poet, undertake a delineation, or a description, without the presence of the objects to be characterized. The more versatile the fancy, the more original and striking will be the decorations produced.'—*British Synonyms discriminated, by W. Taylor.*

Is not this as if a man should undertake to supply an account of a building, and be so intent upon what he had discovered of the foundation, as to conclude his task without once looking up at the superstructure? Here, as in other instances throughout the volume, the judicious Author's mind is enthralled by Etymology; he

takes up the original word as his guide and escort, and too often does not perceive how soon he becomes its prisoner, without liberty to tread in any path but that to which it confines him. It is not easy to find out how imagination, thus explained, differs from distinct remembrance of images ; or fancy from quick and vivid recollection of them : each is nothing more than a mode of memory. If the two words bear the above meaning, and no other, what term is left to designate that faculty of which the Poet is ‘ all compact ;’ he whose eye glances from earth to heaven, whose spiritual attributes body forth what his pen is prompt in turning to shape ; or what is left to characterise Fancy, as insinuating herself into the heart of objects with creative activity ? —Imagination, in the sense of the word as giving title to a class of the following Poems, has no reference to images that are merely a faithful copy, existing in the mind, of absent external objects ; but is a word of higher import, denoting

operations of the mind upon those objects, and processes of creation or of composition, governed by certain fixed laws. I proceed to illustrate my meaning by instances. A parrot *hangs* from the wires of his cage by his beak or by his claws; or a monkey from the bough of a tree by his paws or his tail. Each creature does so literally and actually. In the first Eclogue of Virgil, the shepherd, thinking of the time when he is to take leave of his farm, thus addresses his goats:—

‘ Non ego vos posthac viridi projectus in antro
 Dumosa *pendere* procul de rupe videbo.’

———— ‘ half way down
Hangs one who gathers samphire,’

is the well-known expression of Shakspeare, delineating an ordinary image upon the cliffs of Dover. In these two instances is a slight exertion of the faculty which I denominate imagination, in the use of one word: neither the goats nor the samphire-gatherer do literally hang, as does the parrot or the monkey; but, presenting

to the senses something of such an appearance, the mind in its activity, for its own gratification, contemplates them as hanging.

As when far off at sea a fleet descried
Hangs in the clouds, by equinoctial winds
 Close sailing from Bengala, or the isles
 Of Ternate or Tidore, whence merchants bring
 Their spicy drugs; they on the trading flood
 Through the wide Ethiopian to the Cape
 Ply, stemming nightly toward the Pole: so seemed
 Far off the flying Fiend.'

Here is the full strength of the imagination involved in the word *hangs*, and exerted upon the whole image: First, the fleet, an aggregate of many ships, is represented as one mighty person, whose track, we know and feel, is upon the waters; but, taking advantage of its appearance to the senses, the Poet dares to represent it as *hanging in the clouds*, both for the gratification of the mind in contemplating the image itself, and in reference to the motion and appearance of the sublime objects to which it is compared.

From impressions of sight we will pass to those of sound; which, as they must necessarily be of a

less definite character, shall be selected from these volumes :

‘Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove *broods* ;’

of the same bird,

‘His voice was *buried* among trees,
Yet to be come at by the breeze ;’

‘O, Cuckoo! shall I call thee *Bird*,
Or but a wandering *Voice* ?’

The stock-dove is said to *coo*, a sound well imitating the note of the bird ; but, by the intervention of the metaphor *broods*, the affections are called in by the imagination to assist in marking the manner in which the bird reiterates and prolongs her soft note, as if herself delighting to listen to it, and participating of a still and quiet satisfaction, like that which may be supposed inseparable from the continuous process of incubation. ‘His voice was buried among trees,’ a metaphor expressing the love of *seclusion* by which this Bird is marked ; and characterising its note as not partaking of the shrill and the piercing, and therefore more easily deadened by

the intervening shade ; yet a note so peculiar and withal so pleasing, that the breeze, gifted with that love of the sound which the Poet feels, penetrates the shades in which it is entombed, and conveys it to the ear of the listener.

‘ Shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice ? ’

This concise interrogation characterises the seeming ubiquity of the voice of the cuckoo, and dispossesses the creature almost of a corporeal existence ; the Imagination being tempted to this exertion of her power by a consciousness in the memory that the cuckoo is almost perpetually heard throughout the season of spring, but seldom becomes an object of sight.

Thus far of images independent of each other, and immediately endowed by the mind with properties that do not inhere in them, upon an incitement from properties and qualities the existence of which is inherent and obvious. These processes of imagination are carried on either by conferring additional properties upon an object, or

abstracting from it some of those which it actually possesses, and thus enabling it to re-act upon the mind which hath performed the process, like a new existence.

I pass from the Imagination acting upon an individual image to a consideration of the same faculty employed upon images in a conjunction by which they modify each other. The Reader has already had a fine instance before him in the passage quoted from Virgil, where the apparently perilous situation of the goat, hanging upon the shaggy precipice, is contrasted with that of the shepherd contemplating it from the seclusion of the cavern in which he lies stretched at ease and in security. Take these images separately, and how unaffecting the picture compared with that produced by their being thus connected with, and opposed to, each other!

‘ 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 a sea-beast crawled forth, which on a shelf
Of rock or sand reposes, there to sun himself.

Such seemed this Man ; not all alive or dead,
Nor all asleep, in his extreme old age.

* * * * *

Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth altogether if it move at all.'

In these images, the conferring, the abstracting, and the modifying powers of the Imagination, immediately and mediately acting, are all brought into conjunction. The stone is endowed with something of the power of life to approximate it to the sea-beast ; and the sea-beast stripped of some of its vital qualities to assimilate it to the stone ; which intermediate image is thus treated for the purpose of bringing the original image, that of the stone, to a nearer resemblance to the figure and condition of the aged Man ; who is divested of so much of the indications of life and motion as to bring him to the point where the two objects unite and coalesce in just comparison. After what has been said, the image of the cloud need not be commented upon.

Thus far of an endowing or modifying power : but the Imagination also shapes and *creates* ; and how ? By innumerable processes ; and in none does it more delight than in that of consolidating numbers into unity, and dissolving and separating unity into number,—alternations proceeding from, and governed by, a sublime consciousness of the soul in her own mighty and almost divine powers. Recur to the passage already cited from Milton. When the compact Fleet, as one Person, has been introduced ‘ Sailing from Bengala.’ ‘ They,’ *i. e.* the ‘ merchants,’ representing the fleet resolved into a multitude of ships, ‘ ply ’ their voyage towards the extremities of the earth : ‘ So ’ (referring to the word ‘ As ’ in the commencement) ‘ seemed the flying Fiend ;’ the image of his Person acting to recombine the multitude of ships into one body,—the point from which the comparison set out. ‘ So seemed,’ and to whom seemed ? To the heavenly Muse who dictates the poem, to the eye of the Poet’s mind, and to that of the Reader, present at one moment in the

wide Ethiopian, and the next in the solitudes, then first broken in upon, of the infernal regions !

‘ *Modo me Thebis, modo ponit Athenis.*’

Hear again this mighty Poet, — speaking of the Messiah going forth to expel from heaven the rebellious Angels,

‘ *Attended by ten thousand thousand Saints*

He onward came : far off his coming shone,’—

the retinue of Saints, and the Person of the Messiah himself, lost almost and merged in the splendour of that indefinite abstraction ‘ *His coming !*’

As I do not mean here to treat this subject further than to throw some light upon the present Volumes, and especially upon one division of them, I shall spare myself and the Reader the trouble of considering the Imagination as it deals with thoughts and sentiments, as it regulates the composition of characters, and determines the course of actions : I will not consider it (more than I have already done by implication) as that power which, in the language of one of my

most esteemed Friends, 'draws all things to one; which makes things animate or inanimate, beings with their attributes, subjects with their accessories, take one colour and serve to one effect *.' The grand store-houses of enthusiastic and meditative Imagination, of poetical, as contradistinguished from human and dramatic Imagination, are the prophetic and lyrical parts of the Holy Scriptures, and the works of Milton; to which I cannot forbear to add those of Spenser. I select these writers in preference to those of ancient Greece and Rome, because the anthropomorphism of the Pagan religion subjected the minds of the greatest poets in those countries too much to the bondage of definite form; from which the Hebrews were preserved by their abhorrence of idolatry. This abhorrence was almost as strong in our great epic Poet, both from circumstances of his life, and from the constitution of his mind. However imbued the surface might be with classical literature, he was a Hebrew in

* Charles Lamb upon the genius of Hogarth.

soul; and all things tended in him towards the sublime. Spenser, of a gentler nature, maintained his freedom by aid of his allegorical spirit, at one time inciting him to create persons out of abstractions; and, at another, by a superior effort of genius, to give the universality and permanence of abstractions to his human beings, by means of attributes and emblems that belong to the highest moral truths and the purest sensations,—of which his character of *Una* is a glorious example. Of the human and dramatic *Imagination* the works of Shakspeare are an inexhaustible source.

‘ I tax not you, ye Elements, with unkindness,
I never gave you kingdoms, called you Daughters!’

And if, bearing in mind the many Poets distinguished by this prime quality, whose names I omit to mention; yet justified by recollection of the insults which the ignorant, the incapable, and the presumptuous, have heaped upon these and my other writings, I may be permitted to anticipate the judgment of posterity upon myself, I shall

declare (censurable, I grant, if the notoriety of the fact above stated does not justify me) that I have given in these unfavourable times, evidence of exertions of this faculty upon its worthiest objects, the external universe, the moral and religious sentiments of Man, his natural affections, and his acquired passions; which have the same ennobling tendency as the productions of men, in this kind, worthy to be holden in undying remembrance.

This subject may be dismissed with observing—that, in the series of Poems placed under the head of Imagination, I have begun with one of the earliest processes of Nature in the development of this faculty. Guided by one of my own primary consciousnesses, I have represented a commutation and transfer of internal feelings, co-operating with external accidents, to plant, for immortality, conjoined impressions of sound and sight, in the celestial soil of the Imagination. The Boy, there introduced, is listening, with something of a feverish and restless anxiety, for the recurrence of the riotous sounds which he had previously excited :

and, at the moment when the intenseness of his mind is beginning to remit, he is surprised into a perception of the solemn and tranquillizing images which the Poem describes.—The Poems next in succession exhibit the faculty exerting itself upon various objects of the external universe; then follow others, where it is employed upon feelings, characters, and actions*; and the Class is concluded with imaginative pictures of moral, political, and religious sentiments.

To the mode in which Fancy has already been characterised as the power of evoking and combining, or, as my friend Mr. Coleridge has styled it, 'the aggregative and associative power,' my objection is only that the definition is too general. To aggregate and to associate, to evoke and to combine, belong as well to the Imagination as to the Fancy; but either the materials evoked and combined are different; or they are brought to-

* Such of these as were furnished by Scottish subjects have been since arranged in a class, entitled, *Memorials of Tours in Scotland*.

gether under a different law, and for a different purpose. Fancy does not require that the materials which she makes use of should be susceptible of change in their constitution, from her touch; and, where they admit of modification, it is enough for her purpose if it be slight, limited, and evanescent. Directly the reverse of these, are the desires and demands of the Imagination. She recoils from every thing but the plastic, the pliant, and the indefinite. She leaves it to Fancy to describe Queen Mab as coming,

‘In shape no bigger than an agate-stone
On the fore-finger of an alderman.’

Having to speak of stature, she does not tell you that her gigantic Angel was as tall as Pompey’s Pillar; much less that he was twelve cubits, or twelve hundred cubits high; or that his dimensions equalled those of Teneriffe or Atlas;—because these, and if they were a million times as high it would be the same, are bounded: The expression is, ‘His stature reached the sky!’

the illimitable firmament! — When the Imagination frames a comparison, if it does not strike on the first presentation, a sense of the truth of the likeness, from the moment that it is perceived, grows—and continues to grow—upon the mind; the resemblance depending less upon outline of form and feature, than upon expression and effect; less upon casual and outstanding, than upon inherent and internal, properties: moreover, the images invariably modify each other. — The law under which the processes of Fancy are carried on is as capricious as the accidents of things, and the effects are surprising, playful, ludicrous, amusing, tender, or pathetic, as the objects happen to be appositely produced or fortunately combined. Fancy depends upon the rapidity and profusion with which she scatters her thoughts and images; trusting that their number, and the felicity with which they are linked together, will make amends for the want of individual value: or she prides herself upon the curious subtilty and the successful elaboration with which she can detect

their lurking affinities. If she can win you over to her purpose, and impart to you her feelings, she cares not how unstable or transitory may be her influence, knowing that it will not be out of her power to resume it upon an apt occasion. But the Imagination is conscious of an indestructible dominion;—the Soul may fall away from it, not being able to sustain its grandeur; but, if once felt and acknowledged, by no act of any other faculty of the mind can it be relaxed, impaired, or diminished.—Fancy is given to quicken and to beguile the temporal part of our nature, Imagination to incite and to support the eternal.—Yet is it not the less true that Fancy, as she is an active, is also, under her own laws and in her own spirit, a creative faculty. In what manner Fancy ambitiously aims at a rivalship with Imagination, and Imagination stoops to work with the materials of Fancy, might be illustrated from the compositions of all eloquent writers, whether in prose or verse; and chiefly from those of our own Country. Scarcely a page of the impassioned

parts of Bishop Taylor's Works can be opened that shall not afford examples. — Referring the Reader to those inestimable volumes, I will content myself with placing a conceit (ascribed to Lord Chesterfield) in contrast with a passage from the Paradise Lost :—

'The dews of the evening most carefully shun,
They are the tears of the sky for the loss of the sun.'

After the transgression of Adam, Milton, with other appearances of sympathising Nature, thus marks the immediate consequence,

'Sky lowered, and muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completion of the mortal sin.'

The associating link is the same in each instance : Dew and rain, not distinguishable from the liquid substance of tears, are employed as indications of sorrow. A flash of surprise is the effect in the former case ; a flash of surprise, and nothing more ; for the nature of things does not sustain the combination. In the latter, the effects from the act, of which there is this immediate consequence and

visible sign, are so momentous, that the mind acknowledges the justice and reasonableness of the sympathy in nature so manifested; and the sky weeps drops of water as if with human eyes, as 'Earth had before trembled from her entrails, and Nature given a second groan.'

Awe-stricken as I am by contemplating the operations of the mind of this truly divine Poet, I scarcely dare venture to add that "An Address to an Infant," which the reader will find under the Class of Fancy in the present Volumes, exhibits something of this communion and interchange of instruments and functions between the two powers; and is, accordingly, placed last in the class, as a preparation for that of Imagination which follows.

Finally, I will refer to Cotton's "Ode upon Winter," an admirable composition, though stained with some peculiarities of the age in which he lived, for a general illustration of the characteristics of Fancy. The middle part of this ode contains a most lively description of the entrance of Winter, with his retinue, as 'A palsied king,'

and yet a military monarch,—advancing for conquest with his army; the several bodies of which, and their arms and equipments, are described with a rapidity of detail, and a profusion of *fanciful* comparisons, which indicate on the part of the poet extreme activity of intellect, and a correspondent hurry of delightful feeling. Winter retires from the foe into his fortress, where

———— ‘a magazine
Of sovereign juice is cellared in;
Liquor that will the siege maintain
Should Phœbus ne'er return again.’

Though myself a water-drinker, I cannot resist the pleasure of transcribing what follows, as an instance still more happy of Fancy employed in the treatment of feeling than, in its preceding passages, the Poem supplies of her management of forms.

’Tis that, that gives the poet rage,
And thaws the gelly’d blood of age;
Matures the young, restores the old,
And makes the fainting coward bold.

It lays the careful head to rest,
 Calms palpitations in the breast,
 Renders our lives' misfortune sweet ;

* * * * *

Then let the chill Sirocco blow,
 And gird us round with hills of snow,
 Or else go whistle to the shore,
 And make the hollow mountains roar,

Whilst we together jovial sit
 Careless, and crowned with mirth and wit,
 Where, though bleak winds confine us home,
 Our fancies round the world shall roam.

We 'll think of all the Friends we know,
 And drink to all worth drinking to ;
 When having drunk all thine and mine,
 We rather shall want healths than wine.

But where Friends fail us, we 'll supply
 Our friendships with our charity ;
 Men that remote in sorrows live,
 Shall by our lusty brimmers thrive.

We 'll drink the wanting into wealth,
 And those that languish into health,
 The afflicted into joy ; th' opprest
 Into security and rest.

The worthy in disgrace shall find
 Favour return again more kind,
 And in restraint who stifled lie,
 Shall taste the air of liberty.

The brave shall triumph in success,
The lovers shall have mistresses,
Poor unregarded Virtue, praise,
And the neglected Poet, bays.

Thus shall our healths do others good,
Whilst we ourselves do all we would ;
For, freed from envy and from care,
What would we be but what we are ?

It remains that I should express my regret at the necessity of separating my compositions from some beautiful Poems of Mr. Coleridge, with which they have been long associated in publication. The feelings with which that joint publication was made, have been gratified; its end is answered; and the time is come when considerations of general propriety dictate the separation. Three short pieces (now first published) are the work of a female Friend; and the Reader, to whom they may be acceptable, is indebted to me for his pleasure; if any one regard them with dislike, or be disposed to condemn them, let the censure fall upon him, who trusting in his own sense of their merit and their

fitness for the place which they occupy, *extorted* them from the Authoress.

When I sate down to write this preface, it was my intention to have made it more comprehensive ; but as all that I deem necessary is expressed, I will here detain the reader no longer :—what I have further to remark shall be introduced by way of interlude, in some other part of these Volumes.

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POEMS

REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF CHILDHOOD.

POEMS

REFERRING TO THE PERIOD OF CHILDHOOD.

I.

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.

1804.

II.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

STAY near me—do not take thy flight !
 A little longer stay in sight !
 Much converse do I find in thee,
 Historian of my infancy !
 Float near me ; do not yet depart !
 Dead times revive in thee
 Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art !
 A solemn image to my heart,
 My father's family !

Oh ! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
 The time, when, in our childish plays,
 My sister Emmeline and I
 Together chased the butterfly !
 A very hunter did I rush
 Upon the prey :—with leaps and springs
 I followed on from brake to bush ;
 But she, God love her ! feared to brush
 The dust from off its wings.

III.

FORESIGHT.

THAT is work of waste and ruin—
Do as Charles and I are doing !
Strawberry-blossoms, one and all,
We must spare them—here are many :
Look at it—the flower is small,
Small and low, though fair as any :
Do not touch it ! summers two
I am older, Anne, than you.

Pull the primrose, sister Anne !
Pull as many as you can.
—Here are daisies, take your fill ;
Pansies, and the cuckoo-flower :
Of the lofty daffodil
Make your bed, or make your bower ;
Fill your lap, and fill your bosom ;
Only spare the strawberry-blossom !

Primroses, the Spring may love them—
Summer knows but little of them :
Violets, a barren kind,
Withered on the ground must lie ;
Daisies leave no fruit behind
When the pretty flowerets die ;
Pluck them, and another year
As many will be blowing here.

God has given a kindlier power
To the favoured strawberry-flower.
Hither soon as spring is fled
You and Charles and I will walk ;
Lurking berries, ripe and red,
Then will hang on every stalk,
Each within its leafy bower ;
And for that promise spare the flower !

IV.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A CHILD THREE
YEARS OLD.

LOVING she is, and tractable, though wild ;
 And Innocence hath privilege in her
 To dignify arch looks and laughing eyes ;
 And feats of cunning ; and the pretty round
 Of trespasses, affected to provoke
 Mock-chastisement and partnership in play.
 And, as a faggot sparkles on the hearth,
 Not less if unattended and alone
 Than when both young and old sit gathered round
 And take delight in its activity ;
 Even so this happy Creature of herself
 Is all-sufficient ; solitude to her
 Is blithe society, who fills the air
 With gladness and involuntary songs.
 Light are her sallies as the tripping fawn's
 Forth-startled from the fern where she lay couched ;
 Unthought-of, unexpected, as the stir
 Of the soft breeze ruffling the meadow-flowers ;
 Or from before it chasing wantonly
 The many-coloured images imprest
 Upon the bosom of a placid lake.

V.

ADDRESS TO A CHILD,

DURING A BOISTEROUS WINTER EVENING.

BY A FEMALE FRIEND OF THE AUTHOR.

WHAT way does the Wind come? What way does he go?
 He rides over the water, and over the snow,
 Through wood, and through vale; and o'er rocky height,
 Which the goat cannot climb, takes his sounding flight;
 He tosses about in every bare tree,
 As, if you look up, you plainly may see;
 But how he will come, and whither he goes,
 There's never a scholar in England knows.

He will suddenly stop in a cunning nook,
 And rings a sharp 'larum;—but, if you should look,
 There's nothing to see but a cushion of snow
 Round as a pillow, and whiter than milk,
 And softer than if it were covered with silk.
 Sometimes he'll hide in the cave of a rock,
 Then whistle as shrill as the buzzard cock;
 —Yet seek him,—and what shall you find in the place?
 Nothing but silence and empty space;

Save, in a corner, a heap of dry leaves,
That he's left, for a bed, to beggars or thieves !

As soon as 'tis daylight, to-morrow, with me
You shall go to the orchard, and then you will see
That he has been there, and made a great rout,
And cracked the branches, and strewn them about ;
Heaven grant that he spare but that one upright twig
That looked up at the sky so proud and big
All last summer, as well you know,
Studded with apples, a beautiful show !

Hark ! over the roof he makes a pause,
And growls as if he would fix his claws
Right in the slates, and with a huge rattle
Drive them down, like men in a battle :
—But let him range round ; he does us no harm,
We build up the fire, we're snug and warm ;
Untouched by his breath see the candle shines bright,
And burns with a clear and steady light ;
Books have we to read,—but that half-stifled knell,
Alas ! 'tis the sound of the eight o'clock bell.
—Come now we'll to bed ! and when we are there
He may work his own will, and what shall we care ?
He may knock at the door,—we'll not let him in ;
May drive at the windows,—we'll laugh at his din ;
Let him seek his own home wherever it be ;
Here's a *cozie* warm house for Edward and me.

VI.

THE MOTHER'S RETURN.

BY THE SAME.



A MONTH, sweet Little-ones, is past
 Since your dear Mother went away,—
 And she to-morrow will return ;
 To-morrow is the happy day.

O blessed tidings ! thought of joy !
 The eldest heard with steady glee ;
 Silent he stood ; then laughed amain,—
 And shouted, “ Mother, come to me ! ”

Louder and louder did he shout,
 With witless hope to bring her near ;
 “ Nay, patience ! patience, little boy !
 Your tender mother cannot hear.”

I told of hills, and far-off towns,
 And long, long vales to travel through ;—
 He listens, puzzled, sore perplexed,
 But he submits ; what can he do ?

No strife disturbs his sister's breast ;
She wars not with the mystery
Of time and distance, night and day ;
The bonds of our humanity.

Her joy is like an instinct, joy
Of kitten, bird, or summer fly ;
She dances, runs without an aim,
She chatters in her ecstasy.

Her brother now takes up the note,
And echoes back his sister's glee ;
They hug the infant in my arms,
As if to force his sympathy.

Then, settling into fond discourse,
We rested in the garden bower ;
While sweetly shone the evening sun
In his departing hour.

We told o'er all that we had done,—
Our rambles by the swift brook's side
Far as the willow-skirted pool,
Where two fair swans together glide.

We talked of change, of winter gone,
Of green leaves on the hawthorn spray,
Of birds that build their nests and sing,
And " all since Mother went away ! "

To her these tales they will repeat,
To her our new-born tribes will show,
The goslings green, the ass's colt,
The lambs that in the meadow go.

—But, see, the evening star comes forth !
To bed the children must depart ;
A moment's heaviness they feel,
A sadness at the heart :

'Tis gone—and in a merry fit
They run up stairs in gamesome race ;
I, too, infected by their mood,
I could have joined the wanton chase.

Five minutes past—and, O the change !
Asleep upon their beds they lie ;
Their busy limbs in perfect rest,
And closed the sparkling eye.

VII.

ALICE FELL;

OR, POVERTY.



THE post-boy drove with fierce career,
 For threatening clouds the moon had drowned ;
 When suddenly I seemed to hear
 A moan, a lamentable sound.

As if the wind blew many ways,
 I heard the sound,—and more and more ;
 It seemed to follow with the chaise,
 And still I heard it as before.

At length I to the boy called out ;
 He stopped his horses at the word,
 But neither cry, nor voice, nor shout,
 Nor aught else like it, could be heard.

The boy then smacked his whip, and fast
 The horses scampered through the rain ;
 And soon I heard upon the blast
 The voice, and bade him halt again.

Said I, alighting on the ground,
“What can it be, this piteous moan?”
And there a little girl I found,
Sitting behind the chaise, alone.

“My cloak!” no other word she spake,
But loud and bitterly she wept,
As if her innocent heart would break;
And down from off her seat she leapt.

“What ails you, child?”—she sobbed “Look here!”
I saw it in the wheel entangled,
A weather-beaten rag as e'er
From any garden scare-crow dangled.

'Twas twisted between nave and spoke;
Her help she lent, and with good heed
Together we released the cloak,
A miserable rag indeed!

“And whither are you going, child,
To night along these lonesome ways?”
“To Durham,” answered she, half wild—
“Then come with me into the chaise.”

She sate like one past all relief;
Sob after sob she forth did send
In wretchedness, as if her grief
Could never, never have an end.

“ My child, in Durham do you dwell ? ”
She checked herself in her distress,
And said, “ My name is Alice Fell ;
I’m fatherless and motherless.

And I to Durham, Sir, belong.”
Again, as if the thought would choke
Her very heart, her grief grew strong ;
And all was for her tattered cloak !

The chaise drove on ; our journey’s end
Was nigh ; and, sitting by my side,
As if she had lost her only friend
She wept, nor would be pacified.

Up to the tavern-door we post ;
Of Alice and her grief I told ;
And I gave money to the host,
To buy a new cloak for the old.

“ And let it be of duffil grey,
As warm a cloak as man can sell ! ”
Proud creature was she the next day,
The little orphan, Alice Fell !

VIII.

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.

“ To-night 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 minster-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

IX.

WE ARE SEVEN.

——— A simple Child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage Girl :
She was eight years old, she said ;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That clustered round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad :
Her eyes were fair, and very fair ;
—Her beauty made me glad.

“ Sisters and brothers, little Maid,
How many may you be ? ”
“ How many ? Seven in all,” she said,
And wondering looked at me.

“ And where are they ? I pray you tell.”

She answered, “ Seven are we ;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

Two of us in the church-yard lie,
My sister and my brother ;
And, in the church-yard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.”

“ You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven !—I pray you tell,
Sweet Maid, how this may be.”

Then did the little Maid reply,
“ Seven boys and girls are we ;
Two of us in the church-yard lie,
Beneath the church-yard tree.”

“ You run about, my little Maid,
Your limbs they are alive ;
If two are in the church-yard laid,
Then ye are only five.”

“ Their graves are green, they may be seen,”
The little Maid replied,
“ Twelve steps or more from my mother’s door,
And they are side by side.

My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem ;
And there upon the ground I sit,
And sing a song to them.

And often after sun-set, Sir,
When it is light and fair,
I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

The first that died was sister Jane ;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain ;
And then she went away.

So in the church-yard she was laid ;
And, when the grass was dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side."

" How many are you, then," said I,
" If they two are in heaven ?"
Quick was the little Maid's reply,
" O Master ! we are seven."

“ But they are dead ; those two are dead !
 Their spirits are in heaven !”
 ’Twas throwing words away ; for still
 The little Maid would have her will,
 And said, “ Nay, we are seven !”

1798.

 X.

ANECDOTE FOR FATHERS,

SHOWING HOW THE PRACTICE OF LYING MAY BE TAUGHT.

I HAVE a boy of five years old ;
 His face is fair and fresh to see ;
 His limbs are cast in beauty’s mould.
 And dearly he loves me.

One morn we strolled on our dry walk,
 Our quiet home all full in view,
 And held such intermitted talk
 As we are wont to do.

My thoughts on former pleasures ran ;
 I thought of Kilve’s delightful shore,
 Our pleasant home when spring began,
 A long, long year before.

A day it was when I could bear
Some fond regrets to entertain ;
With so much happiness to spare,
I could not feel a pain.

The green earth echoed to the feet
Of lambs that bounded through the glade,
From shade to sunshine, and as fleet
From sunshine back to shade.

Birds warbled round me—and each trace
Of inward sadness had its charm ;
Kilve, thought I, was a favoured place,
And so is Liswyn farm.

My boy beside me tripped, so slim
And graceful in his rustic dress !
And, as we talked, I questioned him,
In very idleness.

“ Now tell me, had you rather be,”
I said, and took him by the arm,
“ On Kilve’s smooth shore, by the green sea,
Or here at Liswyn farm ?”

In careless mood he looked at me,
While still I held him by the arm,
And said, “ At Kilve I’d rather be
Than here at Liswyn farm.”

“ Now, little Edward, say why so :
My little Edward, tell me why.”—
“ I cannot tell, I do not know.”—
“ Why, this is strange,” said I ;

“ For, here are woods, hills smooth and warm :
There surely must some reason be
Why you would change sweet Liswyn farm
For Kilve by the green sea.”

At this, my boy hung down his head,
He blushed with shame, nor made reply ;
And five times to the child I said,
“ Why, Edward, tell me why ?”

His head he raised—there was in sight,
It caught his eye, he saw it plain—
Upon the house-top, glittering bright,
A broad and gilded vane.

Then did the boy his tongue unlock,
And eased his mind with this reply :
“ At Kilve there was no weather-cock ;
And that 's the reason why.”

O dearest, dearest boy ! my heart
For better lore would seldom yearn,
Could I but teach the hundredth part
Of what from thee I learn.

XI.

RURAL ARCHITECTURE.



THERE'S George Fisher, Charles Fleming, and Reginald Shore,
 Three rosy-cheeked school-boys, the highest not more
 Than the height of a counsellor's bag ;
 To the top of GREAT HOW* did it please them to climb :
 And there they built up, without mortar or lime,
 A Man on the peak of the crag.

They built him of stones gathered up as they lay :
 They built him and christened him all in one day,
 An urchin both vigorous and hale ;
 And so without scruple they called him Ralph Jones.
 Now Ralph is renowned for the length of his bones ;
 The Magog of Legberthwaite dale.

* GREAT HOW is a single and conspicuous hill, which rises towards the foot of Thirlmere, on the western side of the beautiful dale of Legberthwaite, along the high road between Keswick and Ambleside.

Just half a week after, the wind sallied forth,
And, in anger or merriment, out of the north,
Coming on with a terrible pother,
From the peak of the crag blew the giant away.
And what did these school-boys?—The very next day
They went and they built up another.

—Some little I've seen of blind boisterous works
By Christian disturbers more savage than Turks,
Spirits busy to do and undo :
At remembrance whereof my blood sometimes will flag ;
Then, light-hearted Boys, to the top of the crag ;
And I'll build up a giant with you.

1801.

XII.

THE PET-LAMB.

A PASTORAL.



THE dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink ;
 I heard a voice ; it said, " Drink, pretty creature, drink !"
 And, looking o'er the hedge, before me I espied
 A snow-white mountain-lamb with a Maiden at its side.

Nor sheep nor kine were near ; the lamb was all alone,
 And by a slender cord was tethered to a stone ;
 With one knee on the grass did the little Maiden kneel,
 While to that mountain-lamb she gave its evening meal.

The lamb, while from her hand he thus his supper took,
 Seemed to feast with head and ears ; and his tail with pleasure
 shook.

" Drink, pretty creature, drink," she said in such a tone
 That I almost received her heart into my own.

'Twas little Barbara Lewthwaite, a child of beauty rare !
I watched them with delight, they were a lovely pair.
Now with her empty can the maiden turned away :
But ere ten yards were gone her footsteps did she stay.

Right towards the lamb she looked ; and from a shady place
I unobserved could see the workings of her face :
If Nature to her tongue could measured numbers bring,
Thus, thought I, to her lamb that little Maid might sing :

“What ails thee, young One? what? Why pull so at thy cord?
Is it not well with thee? well both for bed and board?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be ;
Rest, little young One, rest ; what is't that aileth thee ?

What is it thou wouldst seek? What is wanting to thy heart?
Thy limbs are they not strong? And beautiful thou art :
This grass is tender grass ; these flowers they have no peers ;
And that green corn all day is rustling in thy ears !

If the sun be shining hot, do but stretch thy woollen chain,
This beech is standing by, its covert thou canst gain ;
For rain and mountain-storms! the like thou need'st not fear,
The rain and storm are things that scarcely can come here.

Rest, little young One, rest ; thou hast forgot the day
When my father found thee first in places far away ;
Many flocks were on the hills, but thou wert owned by none,
And thy mother from thy side for evermore was gone.

He took thee in his arms, and in pity brought thee home :
A blessed day for thee ! then whither wouldst thou roam ?
A faithful nurse thou hast ; the dam that did thee year
Upon the mountain tops no kinder could have been.

Thou know'st that twice a day I have brought thee in this can
Fresh water from the brook, as clear as ever ran ;
And twice in the day, when the ground is wet with dew,
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is and new.

Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now,
Then I'll yoke thee to my cart like a pony in the plough ;
My playmate thou shalt be ; and when the wind is cold
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.

It will not, will not rest !—Poor creature, can it be
That 'tis thy mother's heart which is working so in thee ?
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,
And dreams of things which thou canst neither see nor hear.

Alas, the mountain-tops that look so green and fair !
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there ;
The little brooks that seem all pastime and all play,
When they are angry, roar like lions for their prey.

Here thou need'st not dread the raven in the sky ;
Night and day thou art safe,—our cottage is hard by.
Why bleat so after me ? Why pull so at thy chain ?
Sleep—and at break of day I will come to thee again !”

—As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat ;
And it seemed, as I retraced the ballad line by line,
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was *mine*.

Again, and once again, did I repeat the song ;
“Nay,” said I, “more than half to the damsel must belong,
For she looked with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own.”

XIII.

THE IDLE SHEPHERD BOYS ;

OR, DUNGEON-GHYLL FORCE *.

A PASTORAL.



THE valley rings with mirth and joy ;
 And, pleased to welcome in the May,
 From hill to hill the echoes fling
 Their liveliest roundelay.
 The magpie chatters with delight ;
 The mountain raven's youngling brood
 Have left the mother and the nest ;
 And they go rambling east and west
 In search of their own food ;
 Or through the glittering vapours dart
 In very wantonness of heart.

* *Ghyll*, in the dialect of Cumberland and Westmoreland, is a short and, for the most part, a steep narrow valley, with a stream running through it. *Force* is the word universally employed in these dialects for waterfall.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun ;
Their work, if any work they have,
Is out of mind—or done.
On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn ;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim :
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those Shepherds wear the time away.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song ;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born ! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee, and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal ;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry ! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

Said Walter, leaping from the ground,
“Down to the stump of yon old yew
We’ll for our whistles run a race.”
—Away the shepherds flew ;
They leapt—they ran—and when they came
Right opposite to Dungeon-Ghyll,
Seeing that he should lose the prize,
“Stop!” to his comrade Walter cries—
James stopped with no good will :
Said Walter then, exulting ; “Here
You’ll find a task for half a year.

“Cross, if you dare, where I shall cross—
Come on, and tread where I shall tread.”
The other took him at his word,
And followed as he led.
It was a spot which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go ;
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock :
The gulf is deep below ;
And, in a basin black and small,
Receives a lofty waterfall.

With staff in hand across the cleft
The challenger pursued his march ;
And now, all eyes and feet, hath gained
The middle of the arch.

When list ! he hears a piteous moan—
Again !—his heart within him dies—
His pulse is stopped, his breath is lost,
He totters, pallid as a ghost,
And, looking down, espies
A lamb, that in the pool is pent
Within that black and frightful rent.

The lamb had slipped into the stream,
And safe without a bruise or wound
The cataract had borne him down
Into the gulf profound.
His dam had seen him when he fell,
She saw him down the torrent borne ;
And, while with all a mother's love
She from the lofty rocks above
Sent forth a cry forlorn,
The lamb, still swimming round and round,
Made answer to that plaintive sound.

When he had learnt what thing it was,
That sent this rueful cry ; I ween
The Boy recovered heart, and told
The sight which he had seen.
Both gladly now deferred their task ;
Nor was there wanting other aid—
A Poet, one who loves the brooks
Far better than the sages' books,
By chance had thither strayed ;
And there the helpless lamb he found
By those huge rocks encompassed round.

He drew it from the troubled pool,
And brought it forth into the light :
The Shepherds met him with his charge,
An unexpected sight !
Into their arms the lamb they took,
Whose life and limbs the flood had spared ;
Then up the steep ascent they hied,
And placed him at his mother's side ;
And gently did the Bard
Those idle Shepherd-boys upbraid,
And bade them better mind their trade.

1800.

XIV.

TO H. C.

SIX YEARS OLD.

O THOU ! whose fancies from afar are brought ;
 Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
 And fittest to unutterable thought
 The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol ;
 Thou faery voyager ! that dost float
 In such clear water, that thy boat
 May rather seem
 To brood on air than on an earthly stream ;
 Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
 Where earth and heaven do make one imagery ;
 O blessed vision ! happy child !
 That art so exquisitely wild,
 I think of thee with many fears
 For what may be thy lot in future years.

I thought of times when Pain might be thy guest,
 Lord of thy house and hospitality ;
 And Grief, uneasy lover ! never rest
 But when she sate within the touch of thee.

O too industrious folly !
O vain and causeless melancholy !
Nature will either end thee quite ;
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.
What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of to-morrow ?
Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
Ill fitted to sustain unkindly shocks,
Or to be trailed along the soiling earth ;
A gem that glitters while it lives,
And no forewarning gives ;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

1802.

XV.

INFLUENCE OF NATURAL OBJECTS

IN CALLING FORTH AND STRENGTHENING THE IMAGINATION
IN BOYHOOD AND EARLY YOUTH.

FROM AN UNPUBLISHED POEM.

[This extract is reprinted from "THE FRIEND."]

WISDOM and Spirit of the universe !
 Thou Soul, that art the eternity of thought !
 And giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting motion ! not in vain,
 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul ;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of Man ;
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature ; purifying thus
 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, homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine :
'Twas mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
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 : happy time
It was indeed for all of us ; for me
It was a time of rapture ! Clear and loud
The village-clock tolled six—I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home.—All shod with steel
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
The pack loud-chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle : with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud ;
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 reflex of a star;
Image, that, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain : and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
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.

XVI.

THE LONGEST DAY.

ADDRESSED TO ———.

LET us quit the leafy arbour,
And the torrent murmuring by ;
Sol has dropped into his harbour,
Weary of the open sky.

Evening now unbinds the fetters
Fashioned by the glowing light ;
All that breathe are thankful debtors
To the harbinger of night.

Yet by some grave thoughts attended
Eve renews her calm career ;
For the day that now is ended,
Is the longest of the year.

Laura ! sport, as now thou sportest,
On this platform, light and free ;
Take thy bliss, while longest, shortest,
Are indifferent to thee !

Who would check the happy feeling
That inspires the linnet's song ?
Who would stop the swallow, wheeling
On her pinions swift and strong ?

Yet at this impressive season,
Words which tenderness can speak
From the truths of homely reason,
Might exalt the loveliest cheek ;

And, while shades to shades succeeding
Steal the landscape from the sight,
I would urge this moral pleading,
Last forerunner of " Good night !"

SUMMER ebbs ;—each day that follows
Is a reflux from on high,
Tending to the darksome hollows
Where the frosts of winter lie.

He who governs the creation,
In his providence, assigned
Such a gradual declination
To the life of human kind.

Yet we mark it not ;—fruits redden,
Fresh flowers blow, as flowers have blown,
And the heart is loth to deaden
Hopes that she so long hath known.

Be thou wiser, youthful Maiden !
And when thy decline shall come,
Let not flowers, or boughs fruit-laden,
Hide the knowledge of thy doom.

Now, even now, ere wrapped in slumber,
Fix thine eyes upon the sea
That absorbs time, space, and number ;
Look thou to Eternity !

Follow thou the flowing river
On whose breast are thither borne
All deceived, and each deceiver,
Through the gates of night and morn ;

Through the year's successive portals ;
Through the bounds which many a star
Marks, not mindless of frail mortals,
When his light returns from far.

Thus when thou with Time hast travelled
Toward the mighty gulf of things,
And the mazy stream unravelled
With thy best imaginings ;

Think, if thou on beauty leanest,
Think how pitiful that stay,
Did not virtue give the meanest
Charms superior to decay.

Duty, like a strict preceptor,
Sometimes frowns, or seems to frown ;
Choose her thistle for thy sceptre,
While thy brow youth's roses crown.

Grasp it,—if thou shrink and tremble,
Fairest damsel of the green,
Thou wilt lack the only symbol
That proclaims a genuine queen ;

And ensures those palms of honour
Which selected Spirits wear,
Bending low before the Donor,
Lord of heaven's unchanging year !

JUVENILE PIECES.

Of the Poems in this class, "THE EVENING WALK" and "DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES" were first published in 1793. They are reprinted with some alterations that were chiefly made very soon after their publication. It would have been easy to amend them, in many passages, both as to sentiment and expression, and I have not been altogether able to resist the temptation; as will be obvious to the attentive reader, in some instances: these are few, for I am aware that attempts of this kind are made at the risk of injuring those characteristic features, which, after all, will be regarded as the principal recommendation of juvenile poems.

* * * * *

The above, which was written some time ago, scarcely applies to the Poem, "Descriptive Sketches," as it now stands. The corrections, though numerous, are not, however, such as to prevent its retaining with propriety a place in the class of Juvenile Pieces.

I.

EXTRACT

FROM THE CONCLUSION OF A POEM, COMPOSED IN
ANTICIPATION OF LEAVING SCHOOL.

DEAR native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That, wheresoe'er my steps may tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look alone on you.

Thus, from the precincts of the west,
The Sun, while sinking down to rest,
Though his departing radiance fail
To illuminate the hollow vale,
A lingering lustre fondly throws
On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

1786.

II,

AN EVENING WALK,

ADDRESSED TO A YOUNG LADY.



General Sketch of the Lakes—Author's regret of his youth which was passed amongst them—Short description of Noon—Cascade—Noon-tide Retreat—Precipice and sloping Lights—Face of Nature as the Sun declines—Mountain-farm, and the Cock—Slate-quarry—Sunset—Superstition of the Country connected with that moment—Swans—Female Beggar—Twilight-sounds—Western Lights—Spirits—Night—Moonlight—Hope—Night-sounds—Conclusion.

FAR from my dearest Friend, 'tis mine to rove
 Through bare grey dell, high wood, and pastoral cove ;
 Where Derwent rests, and listens to the roar
 That stuns the tremulous cliffs of high Lodore ;
 Where peace to Grasmere's lonely island leads,
 To willowy hedge-rows, and to emerald meads ;
 Leads to her bridge, rude church, and cottaged grounds,
 Her rocky sheepwalks, and her woodland bounds ;
 Where, undisturbed by winds, Winander* sleeps
 'Mid clustering isles, and holly-sprinkled steeps ;
 Where twilight glens endear my Esthwaite's shore,
 And memory of departed pleasures, more.

* These lines are only applicable to the middle part of that lake.

Fair scenes, erewhile, I taught, a happy child,
 The echoes of your rocks my carols wild :
 The spirit sought not then, in cherished sadness,
 A cloudy substitute for failing gladness.
 In youth's keen eye the livelong day was bright,
 The sun at morning, and the stars at night,
 Alike, when first the bittern's hollow bill
 Was heard, or woodcocks* roamed the moonlight hill.

In thoughtless gaiety I coursed the plain,
 And hope itself was all I knew of pain.
 For then, the inexperienced heart would beat
 At times, while young Content forsook her seat,
 And wild Impatience, pointing upward, showed,
 Through passes yet unreached, a brighter road.
 Alas ! the idle tale of man is found
 Depicted in the dial's moral round ;
 Hope with reflection blends her social rays
 To gild the total tablet of his days ;
 Yet still, the sport of some malignant power,
 He knows but from its shade the present hour.

But why, ungrateful, dwell on idle pain ?
 To show what pleasures yet to me remain,
 Say, will my Friend, with unreluctant ear,
 The history of a poet's evening hear ?

* In the beginning of winter, these mountains are frequented by woodcocks, which in dark nights retire into the woods.

When, in the south, the wan noon, brooding still,
Breathèd a pale steam around the glaring hill,
And shades of deep-embattled clouds were seen,
Spotting the northern cliffs with lights between ;
When crowding cattle, checked by rails that make
A fence far stretched into the shallow lake,
Lashed the cool water with their restless tails,
Or from high points of rock looked out for fanning gales ;
When school-boys stretched their length upon the green ;
And round the broad-spread oak, a glimmering scene,
In the rough fern-clad park, the herded deer
Shook the still-twinkling tail and glancing ear ;
When horses in the sunburnt intake* stood,
And vainly eyed below the tempting flood,
Or tracked the passenger, in mute distress,
With forward neck the closing gate to press—
Then, while I wandered where the huddling rill
Brightens with water-breaks the sombrous ghyll †,
As by enchantment, an obscure retreat
Opened at once, and stayed my devious feet.
While thick above the rill the branches close,
In rocky basin its wild waves repose,
Inverted shrubs, and moss of gloomy green,
Cling from the rocks, with pale wood-weeds between ;
Save that aloft the subtle sunbeams shine
On withered briars that o'er the crags recline,

* The word *intake* is local, and signifies a mountain-inclosure.

† Ghyll is also, I believe, a term confined to this country : ghyll, and dingle, have the same meaning.

Sole light admitted here, a small cascade,
 Illumes with sparkling foam the impervious shade ;
 Beyond, along the vista of the brook,
 Where antique roots its bustling course o'erlook,
 The eye reposes on a secret bridge*
 Half grey, half shagged with ivy to its ridge ;
 Whence hangs, in the cool shade, the listless swain
 Lingering behind his disappearing wain.
 —Did Sabine grace adorn my living line,
 Blandusia's praise, wild stream, should yield to thine !
 Never shall ruthless minister of death
 'Mid thy soft glooms the glittering steel unsheath ;
 No goblets shall, for thee, be crowned with flowers,
 No kid with piteous outcry thrill thy bowers ;
 The mystic shapes that by thy margin rove
 A more benignant sacrifice approve ;
 A mind, that, in a calm angelic mood
 Of happy wisdom, meditating good,
 Beholds, of all from her high powers required,
 Much done, and much designed, and more desired,—
 Harmonious thoughts, a soul by truth refined,
 Entire affection for all human kind.

Sweet rill, farewell ! To-morrow's noon again
 Shall hide me, wooing long thy wildwood strain ;

* The reader who has made the tour of this country, will recognise, in this description, the features which characterise the lower waterfall in the grounds of Rydal.

But now the sun has gained his western road,
And eve's mild hour invites my steps abroad.

While, near the midway cliff, the silvered kite
In many a whistling circle wheels her flight ;
Slant watery lights, from parting clouds, apace
Travel along the precipice's base ;
Cheering its naked waste of scattered stone,
By lichens grey, and scanty moss, o'ergrown ;
Where scarce the foxglove peeps, or thistle's beard :
And desert stone-chat, all day long, is heard.

How pleasant, as the sun declines, to view
The spacious landscape change in form and hue !
Here, vanish, as in mist, before a flood
Of bright obscurity, hill, lawn, and wood ;
There, objects, by the searching beams betrayed,
Come forth, and here retire in purple shade ;
Even the white stems of birch, the cottage white,
Soften their glare before the mellow light ;
The skiffs, at anchor where with umbrage wide
Yon chestnuts half the latticed boat-house hide,
Shed from their sides, that face the sun's slant beam,
Strong flakes of radiance on the tremulous stream :
Raised by yon travelling flock, a dusty cloud
Mounts from the road, and spreads its moving shroud ;
The shepherd, all involved in wreaths of fire,
Now shows a shadowy speck, and now is lost entire.

Into a gradual calm the zephyrs sink,
A blue rim borders all the lake's still brink :
And now, on every side, the surface breaks
Into blue spots, and slowly lengthening streaks ;
Here, plots of sparkling water tremble bright
With thousand thousand twinkling points of light ;
There, waves that, hardly weltering, die away,
Tip their smooth ridges with a softer ray ;
And now the universal tides repose,
And, brightly blue, the burnished mirror glows ;
Save where, along the shady western marge,
Coasts, with industrious oar, the charcoal barge ;
The sails are dropped, the poplar's foliage sleeps,
And insects clothe, like dust, the glassy deeps.

Their panniered train a group of potters goad,
Winding from side to side up the steep road ;
The peasant, from yon cliff of fearful edge
Shot, down the headlong path darts with his sledge ;
Bright beams the lonely mountain-horse illumine
Feeding 'mid purple heath, "green rings*," and broom ;
While the sharp slope the slackened team confounds,
Downward the ponderous timber-wain resounds ;
In foamy breaks the rill, with merry song,
Dashed o'er the rough rock, lightly leaps along ;
From lonesome chapel at the mountain's feet,
Three humble bells their rustic chime repeat ;

* "Vivid rings of green."—GREENWOOD'S POEM ON SHOOTING.

Sounds from the water-side the hammered boat ;
And *blasted* quarry thunders, heard remote !

Even here, amid the sweep of endless woods,
Blue pomp of lakes, high cliffs, and falling floods,
Not undelightful are the simplest charms,
Found by the grassy door of mountain-farms.

Sweetly ferocious *, round his native walks,
Pride of his sister-wives, the monarch stalks ;
Spur-clad his nervous feet, and firm his tread ;
A crest of purple tops the warrior's head.
Bright sparks his black and rolling eye-ball hurls
Afar, his tail he closes and unfurls ;
On tiptoe reared, he strains his clarion throat,
Threatened by faintly-answering farms remote :
Again with his shrill voice the mountain rings,
While, flapped with conscious pride, resound his wings !

Where, mixed with graceful birch, the sombrous pine
And yew-tree o'er the silver rocks recline ;
I love to mark the quarry's moving trains,
Dwarf panniered steeds, and men, and numerous wains :
How busy all the enormous hive within,
While Echo dallies with its various din !

* "Dolcemente feroce."—TASSO.—In this description of the cock, I remembered a spirited one of the same animal in *L'Agriculture, ou Les Géorgiques Françaises*, of M. Rossuet.

Some (hear you not their chisels' clinking sound ?)
Toil, small as pigmies in the gulf profound ;
Some, dim between the lofty cliffs descried,
O'erwalk the slender plank from side to side ;
These, by the pale-blue rocks that ceaseless ring,
In airy baskets hanging, work and sing.

Just where a cloud above the mountain rears
An edge all flame, the broadening sun appears ;
A long blue bar its ægis orb divides,
And breaks the spreading of its golden tides ;
And now the sun has touched the purple steep
Whose softened image penetrates the deep.
Cross the calm lake's blue shades the cliffs aspire,
With towers and woods, a " prospect all on fire ;"
While coves and secret hollows, through a ray
Of fainter gold, a purple gleam betray.
Each slip of lawn the broken rocks between
Shines in the light with more than earthly green.
Deep yellow beams the scattered stems illumine,
Far in the level forest's central gloom ;
Waving his hat, the shepherd, from the vale,
Directs his winding dog the cliffs to scale,—
The dog, loud barking, 'mid the glittering rocks,
Hunts, where his master points, the intercepted flocks.
Where oaks o'erhang the road the radiance shoots
On tawny earth, wild weeds, and twisted roots ;
The druid-stones a burnished ring unfold ;
And all the babbling brooks are liquid gold ;

Sunk to a curve, the day-star lessens still,
Gives one bright glance, and drops behind the hill *.

In these secluded vales, if village fame,
Confirmed by silver hairs, belief may claim ;
When up the hills, as now, retired the light,
Strange apparitions mocked the shepherd's sight.

The form appears of one that spurs his steed
Midway along the hill with desperate speed ;
Unhurt pursues his lengthened flight, while all
Attend, at every stretch, his headlong fall.
Anon, appears a brave, a gorgeous show
Of horsemen-shadows moving to and fro ;
At intervals imperial banners stream,
And now the van reflects the solar beam ;
The rear through iron brown betrays a sullen gleam.
While silent stands the admiring crowd below,
Silent the visionary warriors go,
Winding in ordered pomp their upward way †
Till the last banner of the long array
Has disappeared, and every trace is fled
Of splendor—save the beacon's spiry head
Tipt with eve's latest gleam of burning red.

Now, while the solemn evening shadows sail,
On slowly-waving pinions, down the vale ;

* From Thomson.

† See a description of an appearance of this kind in Clark's Survey of the Lakes, accompanied by vouchers of its veracity, that may amuse the reader.

And, fronting the bright west, yon oak entwines,
Its darkening boughs and leaves, in stronger lines;
'Tis pleasant near the tranquil lake to stray
Where, winding on along some secret bay,
The swan uplifts his chest, and backward flings
His neck, a varying arch, between his towering wings :
The eye that marks the gliding creature sees
How graceful, pride can be, and how majestic, ease.
While tender cares and mild domestic loves,
With furtive watch pursue her as she moves,
The female with a meeker charm succeeds,
And her brown little-ones around her leads,
Nibbling the water lilies as they pass,
Or playing wanton with the floating grass.
She, in a mother's care, her beauty's pride
Forgets, unwearied watching every side ;
She calls them near, and with affection sweet
Alternately relieves their weary feet ;
Alternately they mount her back, and rest
Close by her mantling wings' embraces prest.

Long may they float upon this flood serene ;
Theirs be these holms untrodden, still, and green,
Where leafy shades fence off the blustering gale,
And breathes in peace the lily of the vale !
Yon isle, which feels not even the milk-maid's feet,
Yet hears her song, "by distance made more sweet,"
Yon isle conceals their home, their hut-like bower ;
Green water-rushes overspread the floor ;

Long grass and willows form the woven wall,
And swings above the roof the poplar tall.
Thence issuing often with unwieldy stalk,
They crush with broad black feet their flowery walk ;
Or, from the neighbouring water, hear at morn
The hound, the horse's tread, and mellow horn ;
Involve their serpent-necks in changeful rings,
Rolled wantonly between their slippery wings,
Or, starting up with noise and rude delight,
Force half upon the wave their cumbrous flight.

Fair Swan ! by all a mother's joys caressed,
Haply some wretch has eyed, and called thee blessed ;
When with her infants, from some shady seat
By the lake's edge, she rose—to face the noontide heat ;
Or taught their limbs along the dusty road
A few short steps to totter with their load.

I see her now, denied to lay her head,
On cold blue nights, in hut or straw-built shed,
Turn to a silent smile their sleepy cry,
By pointing to a shooting star on high :
I hear, while in the forest depth, he sees
The moon's fixed gaze between the opening trees,
In broken sounds her elder child demand,
While toward the sky he lifts his pale bright hand,
If, in that country, where he dwells afar,
His father views that good, that kindly star ;

—Alas! all light is mute amid the gloom,
The interlunar cavern, of the tomb.
—When low-hung clouds each star of summer hide,
And fireless are the vallies far and wide,
Where the brook brawls along the public road
Dark with bat-haunted ashes stretching broad,
Oft has she taught them on her lap to lay
The shining glow-worm; or, in heedless play,
Toss it from hand to hand, disquieted;
While others, not unseen, are free to shed
Green unmolested light upon their mossy bed.

Oh! when the sleety showers her path assail,
And like a torrent roars the headstrong gale;
No more her breath can thaw their fingers cold,
Their frozen arms her neck no more can fold;
Weak roof a cowering form two babes to shield,
And faint the fire a dying heart can yield!
Press the sad kiss, fond mother! vainly fears
Thy flooded cheek to wet them with its tears;
No tears can chill them, and no bosom warms,
Thy breast their death-bed, confined in thine arms!

Sweet are the sounds that mingle from afar,
Heard by calm lakes, as peeps the folding star,
Where the duck dabbles 'mid the rustling sedge,
And feeding pike starts from the water's edge,
Or the swan stirs the reeds, his neck and bill
Wetting, that drip upon the water still;

And heron, as resounds the trodden shore,
Shoots upward, darting his long neck before.

Now, with religious awe, the farewell light
Blends with the solemn colouring of the night ;
'Mid groves of clouds that crest the mountain's brow,
And round the west's proud lodge their shadows throw,
Like Una shining on her gloomy way,
The half-seen form of Twilight roams astray ;
Shedding, through paly loop-holes mild and small,
Gleams that upon the lake's still bosom fall ;
Soft o'er the surface creep those lustres pale
Tracking the motions of the fitful gale.
With restless interchange at once the bright
Wins on the shade, the shade upon the light.
No favoured eye was e'er allowed to gaze
On lovelier spectacle in faery days ;
When gentle Spirits urged a sportive chase,
Brushing with lucid wands the water's face ;
While music, stealing round the glimmering deeps,
Charmed the tall circle of the enchanted steeps.
—The lights are vanished from the watery plains :
No wreck of all the pageantry remains.
Unheeded night has overcome the vales :
On the dark earth the wearied vision fails ;
The latest lingerer of the forest train,
The lone black fir, forsakes the faded plain ;
Last evening sight, the cottage smoke, no more,
Lost in the thickened darkness, glimmers hoar ;

And, towering from the sullen dark-brown mere,
Like a black wall, the mountain-steeps appear.
—Now o'er the soothed accordant heart we feel
A sympathetic twilight slowly steal,
And ever, as we fondly muse, we find
The soft gloom deepening on the tranquil mind.
Stay! pensive, sadly-pleasing visions, stay!
Ah no! as fades the vale, they fade away:
Yet still the tender, vacant gloom remains;
Still the cold cheek its shuddering tear retains.

The bird, who ceased, with fading light, to thread
Silent the hedge or steamy rivulet's bed,
From his grey re-appearing tower shall soon
Salute with gladsome note the rising moon,
While with a hoary light she frosts the ground,
And pours a deeper blue to Æther's bound;
Pleased, as she moves, her pomp of clouds to fold
In robes of azure, fleecy-white, and gold.

Above yon eastern hill, where darkness broods
O'er all its vanished dells, and lawns, and woods;
Where but a mass of shade the sight can trace,
Even now she shews, half-veiled, her lovely face:
Across the gloomy valley flings her light,
Far to the western slopes with hamlets white;
And gives, where woods the chequered upland strew,
To the green corn of summer autumn's hue.

Thus Hope, first pouring from her blessed horn
Her dawn, far lovelier than the moon's own morn ;
'Till higher mounted, strives in vain to cheer
The weary hills, impervious, blackening near ;
—Yet does she still, undaunted, throw the while
On darling spots remote her tempting smile.

Even now she decks for me a distant scene,
(For dark and broad the gulf of time between)
Gilding that cottage with her fondest ray,
(Sole bourn, sole wish, sole object of my way ;
How fair its lawns and sheltering woods appear !
How sweet its streamlet murmurs in mine ear !)
Where we, my Friend, to happy days shall rise,
'Till our small share of hardly-paining sighs
(For sighs will ever trouble human breath)
Creep hushed into the tranquil breast of death.

But now the clear bright Moon her zenith gains,
And, rimy without speck, extend the plains :
The deepest cleft the mountain's front displays
Scarce hides a shadow from her searching rays ;
From the dark-blue faint silvery threads divide
The hills, while gleams below the azure tide ;
Time softly treads ; throughout the landscape breathes
A peace enlivened, not disturbed, by wreaths
Of charcoal-smoke, that o'er the fallen wood,
Steal down the hill, and spread along the flood.

The song of mountain-streams, unheard by day,
Now hardly heard, beguiles my homeward way.
Air listens, like the sleeping water, still,
To catch the spiritual music of the hill,
Broke only by the slow clock tolling deep,
Or shout that wakes the ferry-man from sleep,
The echoed hoof nearing the distant shore,
The boat's first motion—made with dashing oar ;
Sound of closed gate; across the water borne,
Hurrying the timid hare through rustling corn ;
The sportive outcry of the mocking owl ;
And at long intervals the mill-dog's howl ;
The distant forge's swinging thump profound ;
Or yell, in the deep woods, of lonely hound.

1787, 8. & 9.

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES

TAREN

DURING A PEDESTRIAN TOUR AMONG THE ALPS.

TO
THE REV. ROBERT JONES,

FELLOW OF ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

DEAR SIR,

HOWEVER desirous I might have been of giving you proofs of the high place you hold in my esteem, I should have been cautious of wounding your delicacy by thus publicly addressing you, had not the circumstance of my having accompanied you among the Alps, seemed to give this dedication a propriety sufficient to do away any scruples which your modesty might otherwise have suggested.

In inscribing this little work to you, I consult my heart. You know well how great is the difference between two companions lolling in a post-chaise, and two travellers plodding slowly along the road, side by side, each with his little knapsack of necessaries upon his shoulders. How much more of heart between the two latter !

I am happy in being conscious that I shall have one reader who will approach the conclusion of these few pages with regret. You they must certainly interest, in reminding you of moments to which you can hardly look back without a pleasure not the less dear from a shade of melancholy. You

will meet with few images without recollecting the spot where we observed them together ; consequently, whatever is feeble in my design, or spiritless in my colouring, will be amply supplied by your own memory.

With still greater propriety I might have inscribed to you a description of some of the features of your native mountains, through which we have wandered together, in the same manner, with so much pleasure. But the sea-sunsets, which give such splendour to the vale of Clwyd, Snowdon, the chair of Idris, the quiet village of Bethgelert, Menai and her Druids, the Alpine steeps of the Conway, and the still more interesting windings of the wizard stream of the Dee, remain yet untouched. Apprehensive that my pencil may never be exercised on these subjects, I cannot let slip this opportunity of thus publicly assuring you with how much affection and esteem

I am, dear Sir,

Most sincerely yours,

W. WORDSWORTH.

London, 1793.

III.

DESCRIPTIVE SKETCHES, &c.

Happiness (if she had been to be found on earth) among the charms of Nature—Pleasures of the pedestrian Traveller—Author crosses France to the Alps—Present state of the Grande Chartreuse—Lake of Como—Time, Sunset—Same Scene, Twilight—Same Scene, Morning, its voluptuous Character; Old man and forest-cottage music—River Tusa—Via Mala and Grison Gipsy—Skellenen-thal—Lake of Uri—Stormy sunset—Chapel of William Tell—Force of local emotion—Chamois-chaser—View of the higher Alps—Manner of life of a Swiss mountaineer, interspersed with views of the higher Alps—Golden age of the Alps—Life and views continued—Ranz des Vaches, famous Swiss Air—Abbey of Einsiedlen and its pilgrims—Valley of Chamouny—Mont Blanc—Slavery of Savoy—Influence of liberty on cottage-happiness—France—Wish for the Extirpation of slavery—Conclusion.

WERE there, below, a spot of holy ground
Where from distress a refuge might be found,
And solitude prepare the soul for heaven ;
Sure, nature's God that spot to man had given
Where falls the purple morning far and wide
In flakes of light upon the mountain side ;
Where with loud voice the power of water shakes
The leafy wood, or sleeps in quiet lakes.

Yet not unrecompensed the man shall roam,
Who at the call of summer quits his home,

And plods through some wide realm o'er vale and height,
Though seeking only holiday delight ;
At least, not owning to himself an aim
To which the sage would give a prouder name.
No gains too cheaply earned his fancy cloy,
Though every passing zephyr whispers joy ;
Brisk toil, alternating with ready ease,
Feeds the clear current of his sympathies.
For him sod-seats the cottage-door adorn ;
And peeps the far-off spire, his evening bourn !
Dear is the forest frowning o'er his head,
And dear the velvet green-sward to his tread :
Moves there a cloud o'er mid-day's flaming eye ?
Upward he looks—"and calls it luxury :"
Kind Nature's charities his steps attend ;
In every babbling brook he finds a friend ;
While chastening thoughts of sweetest use, bestowed
By wisdom, moralise his pensive road.
Host of his welcome inn, the noon-tide bower,
To his spare meal he calls the passing poor ;
He views the sun uplift his golden fire,
Or sink, with heart alive like Memnon's lyre* ;
Blesses the moon that comes with kindly ray,
To light him shaken by his rugged way.
Back from his sight no bashful children steal ;
He sits a brother at the cottage-meal ;

* The lyre of Memnon is reported to have emitted melancholy or cheerful tones, as it was touched by the sun's evening or morning rays.

His humble looks no shy restraint impart;
Around him plays at will the virgin heart.
While unsuspected wheels the village dance,
The maidens eye him with enquiring glance,
Much wondering in what fit of crazing care,
Or desperate love, a wanderer came there.

A hope, that prudence could not then approve,
That clung to Nature with a truant's love,
O'er Gallia's wastes of corn my footsteps led;
Her files of road-elms, high above my head
In long-drawn vista, rustling in the breeze;
Or where her pathways straggle as they please
By lonely farms and secret villages.
But lo! the Alps ascending white in air,
Toy with the sun and glitter from afar.

And now, emerging from the forest's gloom,
I greet thee, Chartreuse, while I mourn thy doom.
Whither is fled that Power whose frown severe
Awd sober Reason till she crouched in fear?
That Silence, once in deathlike fetters bound,
Chains that were loosened only by the sound
Of holy rites chanted in measured round?
—The voice of blasphemy the fane alarms,
The cloister startles at the gleam of arms.
The thundering tube the aged angler hears,
Bent o'er the groaning flood that sweeps away his tears.

Cloud-piercing pine-trees nod their troubled heads,
 Spires, rocks, and lawns a browner night o'erspreads ;
 Strong terror checks the female peasant's sighs,
 And start the astonished shades at female eyes.
 From Bruno's forest screams the affrighted jay,
 And slow the insulted eagle wheels away.
 A viewless flight of laughing Demons mock
 The Cross, by angels planted * on the aërial rock.
 The "parting Genius" sighs with hollow breath
 Along the mystic streams of Life and Death †.
 Swelling the outcry dull, that long resounds
 Portentous through her old woods' trackless bounds,
 Vallombre ‡, 'mid her falling fanes, deplores,
 For ever broke, the sabbath of her bowers.

More pleased, my foot the hidden margin roves
 Of Como, bosomed deep in chestnut groves.
 No meadows thrown between, the giddy steeps
 Tower, bare or sylvan, from the narrow deeps.
 —To towns, whose shades of no rude noise complain,
 From ringing team apart and grating wain—
 To flat-roofed towns, that touch the water's bound,
 Or lurk in woody sunless glens profound,
 Or, from the bending rocks, obtrusive cling,
 And o'er the whitened wave their shadows fling—

* Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible.

† Names of rivers at the Chartreuse.

Name of one of the valleys of the Chartreuse.

The pathway leads, as round the steeps it twines ;
And Silence loves its purple roof of vines.
The loitering traveller hence, at evening, sees
From rock-hewn steps the sail between the trees ;
Or marks, 'mid opening cliffs, fair dark-eyed maids
Tend the small harvest of their garden glades ;
Or stops the solemn mountain-shades to view
Stretch o'er the pictured mirror broad and blue,
And track the yellow light from steep to steep,
As up the opposing hills with tortoise-foot they creep.
Here, half a village shines, in gold arrayed,
Bright as the moon ; half hides itself in shade :
While, from amid the darkened roofs, the spire,
Restlessly flashing, seems to mount like fire :
There, all unshaded, blazing forests throw
Rich golden verdure on the lake below.
Slow glides the sail along the illumined shore,
And steals into the shade the lazy oar ;
Soft bosoms breathe around contagious sighs,
And amorous music on the water dies.

How blest, delicious scene ! the eye that greets
Thy open beauties, or thy lone retreats ;
Beholds the unwearied sweep of wood that scales
Thy cliffs ; the endless waters of thy vales ;
Thy lowly cots that sprinkle all the shore,
Each with its household boat beside the door ;
Thy torrents shooting from the clear-blue sky ;
Thy towns, that cleave, like swallows' nests, on high ;

That glimmer hoar in eve's last light, descried
 Dim from the twilight water's shaggy side,
 Whence lutes and voices down the enchanted woods
 Steal, and compose the oar-forgotten floods ;
 —Thy lake, that, streaked or dappled, blue or grey,
 'Mid smoking woods gleams hid from morning's ray
 Slow-travelling down the western hills, to' enfold
 Its green-tinged margin in a blaze of gold ;
 Thy glittering steeples, whence the matin bell
 Calls forth the woodman from his desert cell,
 And quickens the blithe sound of oars that pass
 Along the steaming lake, to early mass.
 Farewell those forms that in thy noon-tide shade
 Rest near their little plots of wheaten glade ;
 Those charms that bind the soul in powerless trance,
 Lip-dewing song, and ringlet-tossing dance.
 Where sparkling eyes and breaking smiles illumine
 The sylvan cabin's lute-enlivened gloom.
 —Alas ! the very murmur of the streams
 Breathes o'er the failing soul voluptuous dreams,
 While Slavery, forcing the sunk mind to dwell
 On joys that might disgrace the captive's cell,
 Her shameless timbrel shakes on Como's marge,
 And lures from bay to bay the vocal barge.

Yet are thy softer arts with power indued
 To soothe and cheer the poor man's solitude.
 By silent cottage-doors, the peasant's home
 Left vacant for the day, I loved to roam.

But once I pierced the mazes of a wood
In which a cabin undeserted stood ;
There an old man an olden measure scanned
On a rude viol touched with withered hand.
As lambs or fawns in April clustering lie
Under a hoary oak's thin canopy,
Stretched at his feet, with steadfast, upward eye
His children's children listened to the sound ;
—A Hermit with his family around !

But let us hence ; for fair Locarno smiles
Embowered in walnut slopes and citron isles :
Or seek at eve the banks of Tusa's stream,
Where, 'mid dim towers and woods, her * waters gleam.
From the bright wave, in solemn gloom, retire
The dull-red steeps, and, darkening still, aspire
To where afar rich orange lustres glow
Round undistinguished clouds, and rocks, and snow :
Or, led where Via Mala's chasms confine
The indignant waters of the infant Rhine,
Hang o'er the abyss :—the else impervious gloom
His burning eyes with fearful light illumine.

The mind condemned, without reprieve, to go
O'er life's long deserts with its charge of woe,
With sad congratulation joins the train
Where beasts and men together o'er the plain
Move on—a mighty caravan of pain :

* The river along whose banks you descend in crossing the Alps by the Simplon Pass.

Hope, strength, and courage, social suffering brings,
Freshening the wilderness with shades and springs.
—There be whose lot far otherwise is cast :
Sole human tenant of the piny waste,
By choice or doom a gipsy wanders here,
A nursling babe her only comforter ;
Lo, where she sits beneath yon shaggy rock,
A cowering shape half hid in curling smoke !

When rueful moans along the forest swell
Protracted, and the twilight storm foretel,
And, headlong from the cliffs, a deafening load
Tumbles,—and wildering thunder slips abroad ;
When on the summits Darkness comes and goes,
Hiding their fiery clouds, their rocks, and snows ;
And the fierce torrent, from the lustre broad,
Starts, like a horse, beside the flashing road—
She seeks a covert from the battering shower
In the roofed bridge * ; the bridge, in that dread hour,
Itself all quaking at the torrent's power.

Heavy, and dull, and cloudy is the night ;
No star supplies the comfort of its light ;
A single taper in the vale profound
Shifts, while the Alps dilated glimmer round ;
And, opposite, the waning moon hangs still
And red, above yon melancholy hill.

* Most of the bridges among the Alps are of wood, and covered: these bridges have a heavy appearance, and rather injure the effect of the scenery in some places.

By the deep gloom appalled, the Vagrant sighs,
Stoops her sick head, and shuts her weary eyes.
She hears, upon the mountain forest's brow,
The death-dog, howling loud and long below ;
Or on her fingers counts the valley clock,
Followed by drowsy crow of midnight cock.
The dry leaves stir as with a serpent's walk,
And, far beneath, banditti voices talk ;
Behind the hill the moon, all crimson, rides,
And its red eyes the slinking water hides :
Near and yet nearer, from the piny gulf
Howls, by the darkness vexed, the famished wolf,
While thro' the stillness scatters wild dismay
Her babe's small cry that leads him to his prey.

From the green vale of Urseren smooth and wide
Descend we now, the maddened Reuss our guide ;
By rocks that, shutting out the blessed day,
Cling tremblingly to rocks as loose as they ;
By cells* upon whose image, while he prays,
The kneeling peasant scarcely dares to gaze ;
By many a votive death-cross † planted near,
And watered duly with the pious tear,
That faded silent from the upward eye
Unmoved with each rude form of peril nigh ;

* The Catholic religion prevails here : these cells are, as is well known, very common in the Catholic countries, planted, like the Roman tombs, along the road side.

† Crosses commemorative of the deaths of travellers by the fall of snow, and other accidents, are very common along this dreadful road.

Fixed on the anchor left by Him who saves
Alike in whelming snows, and roaring waves.

But soon a peopled region on the sight
Opens—a little world of calm delight ;
Where mists, suspended on the expiring gale,
Moveless o'erhang the deep secluded vale,
And beams of evening slipping in between,
Gently illuminate a sober scene:—
Here, on the brown wood-cottages * they sleep,
There, over lawns and sloping woodlands creep.
Winding its darksome wood and emerald glade,
The still vale lengthens underneath the shade
Of low-hung vapour : on the freshened mead
The green light sparkles ;—the dim bowers recede.
While pastoral pipes and streams the landscape lull,
And bells of passing mules that tinkle dull,
In solemn shapes before the admiring eye
Dilated hang the misty pines on high,
Huge convent domes with pinnacles and towers,
And antique castles seen through gleamy showers.

From such romantic dreams, my soul, awake !
Lo ! Fear looks silent down on Uri's lake,
Where, by the unpathwayed margin, still and dread,
Was never heard the plodding peasant's tread.

* The houses in the more retired Swiss valleys are all built of wood.

Tower-like rise up the naked rocks, or stretch
Far o'er the secret water dark with beech ;
Shade above shade, the aërial pines ascend,
Nor stop but where creation seems to end.
Yet, wheresoe'er amid the savage scene
Peeps out a little spot of smiling green,
Man with his babes undaunted thither creeps,
And hangs his small wood-hut upon the steeps.
A garden-plot the desert air perfumes ;
'Mid the dark pines a little orchard blooms ;
A zig-zag path from the domestic skiff,
Thridding the painful crag, surmounts the cliff.
—Before those lonesome doors, that never know
The face of traveller passing to and fro,
No peasant leans upon his pole, to tell
For whom at morning tolled the funeral bell ;
Their watch-dog ne'er his angry bark foregoes,
Touched by the beggar's moan of human woes ;
The shady porch ne'er offered a cool seat
To pilgrims overpowered by summer's heat.
—There, did the iron Genius not disdain
The gentle Power that haunts the myrtle plain,
There, might the maiden chide, in love-sick mood,
The insuperable rocks and severing flood ;
There, watch at eve her lover's sun-gilt sail
Approaching, and upbraid the tardy gale ;
At midnight listen till his parting oar,
And its last echo, can be heard no more.

Where ospreys, cormorants, and herons cry,
'Mid stormy vapours ever driving by,
Or hovering over wastes too bleak to rear
That common growth of earth, the foodful ear ;
Where the green apple shrivels on the spray,
And pines the unripened pear in summer's kindest ray ;
Even here Content has fixed her smiling reign
With Independence, child of high Disdain.
Exulting 'mid the winter of the skies,
Shy as the jealous chamois, Freedom flies,
And often grasps her sword, and often eyes ;
Her crest a bough of winter's bleakest pine,
Flowers of the loftiest Alps her helm entwine ;
And, wildly pausing, oft she hangs aghast,
As thrills the "Spartan fife" between the blast.

'Tis storm ; and, hid in mist from hour to hour,
All day the floods a deepening murmur pour :
The sky is veiled, and every cheerful sight :
Dark is the region as with coming night ;
But what a sudden burst of overpowering light !
Triumphant on the bosom of the storm,
Glances the fire-clad eagle's glorious form ;
Eastward, in long perspective glittering, shine
The wood-crowned cliffs that o'er the lake recline ;
Those eastern cliffs a hundred streams unfold,
At once to pillars turned that flame with gold :

Behind his sail the peasant tries to shun
 The *west*, that burns like one dilated sun,
 Where in a mighty crucible expire
 The mountains, glowing hot, like coals of fire.

But, lo ! the boatman, overawed, before
 The pictured fane of Tell suspends his oar ;
 Confused the Marathonian tale appears,
 While his eyes sparkle with heroic tears.
 And who, that walks where men of ancient days
 Have wrought with godlike arm the deeds of praise,
 Feels not the spirit of the place control,
 Or rouse and agitate his labouring soul ?
 Say, who, by thinking on Canadian hills,
 Or wild Aosta lulled by Alpine rills,
 On Zutphen's plain ; or on that highland dell,
 Through which rough Garry cleaves his way, can tell
 What high resolves exalt the tenderest thought
 Of him whom passion rivets to the spot,
 Where breathed the gale that caught Wolfe's happiest sigh,
 And the last sunbeam fell on Bayard's eye ;
 Where bleeding Sidney from the cup retired,
 And glad Dundee in " faint huzzas " expired ?

But now with other mind I stand alone
 Upon the summit of this naked cone,
 And watch the fearless chamois-hunter chase
 His prey, through tracts abrupt of desolate space,

*Through vacant worlds where Nature never gave
A brook to murmur or a bough to wave,
Which unsubstantial Phantoms sacred keep ;
Thro' worlds where Life, and Voice, and Motion sleep ;
Where silent Hours their death-like sway extend,
Save when the avalanche breaks loose, to rend
Its way with uproar, till the ruin, drowned
In some dense wood or gulf of snow profound,
Mocks the dull ear of Time with deaf abortive sound.
—'Tis his, while wandering on from height to height,
To see a planet's pomp and steady light
In the least star of scarce-appearing night ;
While the pale moon moves near him, on the bound
Of ether, shining with diminished round,
And far and wide the icy summits blaze,
Rejoicing in the glory of her rays :
To him the day-star glitters small and bright,
Shorn of its beams, insufferably white,
And he can look beyond the sun, and view
Those fast-receding depths of sable blue
Flying till vision can no more pursue !
—At once bewildering mists around him close,
And cold and hunger are his least of woes ;
The Demon of the snow, with angry roar
Descending, shuts for aye his prison door.
Soon with despair's whole weight his spirits sink ;
Bread has he none, the snow must be his drink ;

* For most of the images in the next sixteen verses, I am indebted to M. Raymond's interesting observations annexed to his translation of Coxe's Tour in Switzerland.

And, ere his eyes can close upon the day,
The eagle of the Alps o'ershades her prey.

Now couch thyself where, heard with fear afar,
Thunders through echoing pines the headlong Aar;
Or rather stay to taste the mild delights
Of pensive Underwalden's* pastoral heights.
—Is there who 'mid these awful wilds has seen
The native Genii walk the mountain green?
Or heard, while other worlds their charms reveal,
Soft music o'er the aërial summit steal?
While o'er the desert, answering every close,
Rich steam of sweetest perfume comes and goes.
—And sure there is a secret Power that reigns
Here, where no trace of man the spot profanes,
Nought but the *chalets* †, flat and bare, on high
Suspended 'mid the quiet of the sky;
Or distant herds that pasturing upward creep,
And, not untended, climb the dangerous steep.
How still! no irreligious sound or sight
Rouses the soul from her severe delight.
An idle voice the sabbath region fills
Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills,
And with that voice accords the soothing sound
Of drowsy bells, for ever tinkling round;

* The people of this Canton are supposed to be of a more melancholy disposition than the other inhabitants of the Alps; this, if true, may proceed from their living more secluded.

† This picture is from the middle region of the Alps. *Chalets* are summer huts for the Swiss herdsmen.

Faint wail of eagle melting into blue
Beneath the cliffs, and pine-woods' steady *sugh** ;
The solitary heifer's deepened low ;
Or rumbling, heard remote, of falling snow.
All motions, sounds, and voices, far and nigh,
Blend in a music of tranquillity ;
Save when, a stranger seen below, the boy
Shouts from the echoing hills with savage joy.

When, from the sunny breast of open seas,
And bays with myrtle fringed, the southern breeze
Comes on to gladden April with the sight
Of green isles widening on each snow-clad height ;
When shouts and lowing herds the valley fill,
And louder torrents stun the noon-tide hill,
The pastoral Swiss begin the cliffs to scale,
Leaving to silence the deserted vale ;
And like the Patriarchs in their simple age
Move, as the verdure leads, from stage to stage ;
High and more high in summer's heat they go,
And hear the rattling thunder far below ;
Or steal beneath the mountains, half-deterred,
Where huge rocks tremble to the bellowing herd.

One I behold who, 'cross the foaming flood,
Leaps with a bound of graceful hardihood ;

* *Sugh*, a Scotch word expressive of the sound of the wind through the trees.

Another high on that green ledge ;—he gained
The tempting spot with every sinew strained ;
And downward thence a knot of grass he throws,
Food for his beasts in time of winter snows.
—Far different life from what Tradition hoar
Transmits of happier lot in times of yore !
Then Summer lingered long ; and honey flowed
Out of the rocks, the wild bees' safe abode :
Continual waters welling cheered the waste,
And plants were wholesome, now of deadly taste :
Nor Winter yet his frozen stores had piled,
Usurping where the fairest herbage smiled :
Nor Hunger driven the herds from pastures bare,
To climb the treacherous cliffs for scanty fare.
Then the milk-thistle flourished through the land,
And forced the full-swoln udder to demand,
Thrice every day, the pail and welcome hand.
Thus does the father to his children tell
Of banished bliss, by fancy loved too well.
Alas ! that human guilt provoked the rod
Of angry Nature to avenge her God.
Still, Nature, ever just, to him imparts
Joys only given to uncorrupted hearts.

'Tis morn : with gold the verdant mountain glows ;
More high, the snowy peaks with hues of rose.
Far-stretched beneath the many-tinted hills,
A mighty waste of mist the valley fills,

A solemn sea! whose billows wide around
Stand motionless, to awful silence bound :
Pines, on the coast, through mist their tops uprear,
That like to leaning masts of stranded ships appear.
A single chasm, a gulf of gloomy blue,
Gapes in the centre of the sea—and through
That dark mysterious gulf ascending, sound
Innumerable streams with roar profound.
Mount through the nearer vapours notes of birds,
And merry flageolet ; the low of herds,
The bark of dogs, the heifer's tinkling bell,
Talk, laughter, and perchance a church-tower knell :
Think not, the peasant from aloft has gazed
And heard with heart unmoved, with soul unraised :
Nor is his spirit less enrapt, nor less
Alive to independent happiness,
Then, when he lies out-stretched, at even-tide
Upon the fragrant mountain's purple side :
For as the pleasures of his simple day
Beyond his native valley seldom stray,
Nought round its darling precincts can he find
But brings some past enjoyment to his mind ;
While Hope, reclining upon Pleasure's urn,
Binds her wild wreaths, and whispers his return.

Once Man entirely free, alone and wild,
Was blest as free—for he was Nature's child.
He, all superior but his God disdained,
Walked none restraining, and by none restrained :

Confessed no law but what his reason taught,
 Did all he wished, and wished but what he ought.
 As Man in his primeval dower arrayed
 The image of his glorious Sire displayed,
 Even so, by faithful Nature guarded, here
 The traces of primeval Man appear ;
 The simple dignity, no forms debase ;
 The eye sublime, and surly lion-grace :
 The slave of none, of beasts alone the lord,
 His book he prizes, nor neglects his sword ;
 —Well taught by that to feel his rights, prepared
 With this “ the blessings he enjoys to guard.”

And, as his native hills encircle ground
 For many a wondrous victory renowned,
 The work of Freedom daring to oppose,
 With few in arms *, innumerable foes,
 When to those famous fields his steps are led,
 An unknown power connects him with the dead :
 For images of other worlds are there ;
 Awful the light, and holy is the air.
 Fitfully, and in flashes, through his soul,
 Like sun-lit tempests, troubled transports roll ;

* Alluding to several battles which the Swiss in very small numbers have gained over their oppressors, the house of Austria; and, in particular, to one fought at Næffels near Glarus, where three hundred and thirty men are said to have defeated an army of between fifteen and twenty thousand Austrians. Scattered over the valley are to be found eleven stones, with this inscription, 1388, the year the battle was fought, marking out, as I was told upon the spot, the several places where the Austrians, attempting to make a stand, were repulsed anew.

His bosom heaves, his Spirit towers amain,
Beyond the senses and their little reign.

And oft, when that dread vision hath past by,
He holds with God himself communion high,
There where the peal of swelling torrents fills
The sky-roofed temple of the eternal hills ;
Or, when upon the mountain's silent brow
Reclined, he sees, above him and below,
Bright stars of ice and azure fields of snow ;
While needle peaks of granite shooting bare
Tremble in ever-varying tints of air.
And when a gathering weight of shadows brown
Falls on the valleys as the sun goes down ;
And Pikes, of darkness named and fear and storms *,
Uplift in quiet their illumined forms,
In sea-like reach of prospect round him spread,
Tinged like an angel's smile all rosy red—
Fear in his breast with holy love unites,
And the near heavens impart their own delights.

When downward to his winter hut he goes,
Dear and more dear the lessening circle grows ;
That hut which on the hills so oft employs
His thoughts, the central point of all his joys.
And as a swallow, at the hour of rest,
Peeps often ere she darts into her nest,

* As Schreck-Horn, the pike of terror; Wetter-Horn, the pike of storms, &c. &c.

So to the homestead, where the grandsire tends
A little prattling child, he oft descends,
To glance a look upon the well-matched pair ;
Till storm and driving ice blockade him there.
There, safely guarded by the woods behind,
He hears the chiding of the baffled wind,
Hears Winter calling all his terrors round,
And, blest within himself, he shrinks not from the sound.

Through Nature's vale his homely pleasures glide,
Unstained by envy, discontent, and pride ;
The bound of all his vanity, to deck,
With one bright bell, a favourite heifer's neck ;
Well pleased upon some simple annual feast,
Remembered half the year and hoped the rest,
If dairy-produce, from his inner hoard,
Of thrice ten summers dignify the board.
—Alas ! in every clime a flying ray
Is all we have to cheer our wintry way ;
And here the unwilling mind may more than trace
The general sorrows of the human race :
The churlish gales of penury that blow
Cold as the north-wind o'er a waste of snow,
To them the gentle groups of bliss deny
That on the noon-day bank of leisure lie.
Yet more ;—compelled by Powers which only deign
That *solitary* man disturb their reign,
Powers that support an unremitting strife
With all the tender charities of life,

Full oft the father, when his sons have grown
To manhood, seems their title to disown ;
And from his nest amid the storms of heaven
Drives, eagle-like, those sons as he was driven ,
With stern composure watches to the plain—
And never, eagle-like, beholds again !

When long-familiar joys are all resigned,
Why does their sad remembrance haunt the mind ?
Lo ! where through flat Batavia's willowy groves,
Or by the lazy Seine, the exile roves ;
O'er the curled waters Alpine measures swell,
And search the affections to their inmost cell ;
Sweet poison spreads along the listener's veins,
Turning past pleasures into mortal pains ;
Poison, which not a frame of steel can brave,
Bows his young head with sorrow to the grave.*

Gay lark of hope, thy silent song resume !
Ye flattering eastern lights, once more the hills illumo !
Fresh gales and dews of life's delicious morn,
And thou, lost fragrance of the heart, return !
Alas ! the little joy to man allowed,
Fades like the lustre of an evening cloud ;
Or like the beauty in a flower installed,
Whose season was, and cannot be recalled.

* The well-known effect of the famous air, called in French *Ranz des Vaches*, upon the Swiss troops.

Yet, when opprest by sickness, grief, or care,
And taught that pain is pleasure's natural heir,
We still confide in more than we can know ;
Death would be else the favourite friend of woe.

'Mid savage rocks, and seas of snow that shine,
Between interminable tracts of pine,
Within a temple stands an awful shrine,
By an uncertain light revealed, that falls
On the mute Image and the troubled walls.

Oh! give not me that eye of hard disdain
That views, undimmed, Ensiedlen's * wretched fane.
While ghastly faces through the gloom appear,
Abortive joy, and hope that works in fear ;
While prayer contends with silenced agony,
Surely in other thoughts contempt may die.
If the sad grave of human ignorance bear
One flower of hope—oh, pass and leave it there !
—The tall sun, pausing on an Alpine spire,
Flings o'er the wilderness a stream of fire :
Now meet we other pilgrims ere the day
Close on the remnant of their weary way ;
While they are drawing toward the sacred floor
Where, so they fondly think, the worm shall gnaw no more.

* This shrine is resorted to, from a hope of relief, by multitudes, from every corner of the Catholic world, labouring under mental or bodily afflictions.

How gaily murmur and how sweetly taste
The fountains * reared for them amid the waste !
Their thirst they slake:—they wash their toil-worn feet,
And some with tears of joy each other greet.
Yes, I must see you when ye first behold
Those holy turrets tipped with evening gold,
In that glad moment will for you a sigh
Be heaved, of charitable sympathy ;
In that glad moment when your hands are prest
In mute devotion on the thankful breast !

Last, let us turn to Chamouny that shields
With rocks and gloomy woods her fertile fields :
Five streams of ice amid her cots descend,
And with wild flowers and blooming orchards blend ;—
A scene more fair than what the Grecian feigns
Of purple lights and ever-vernal plains ;
Here all the seasons revel hand in hand :
'Mid lawns and shades by breezy rivulets fanned,
They sport beneath that mountain's matchless height
That holds no commerce with the summer night.
From age to age, throughout his lonely bounds
The crash of ruin fitfully resounds ;
Appalling havoc ! but serene his brow,
Where daylight lingers on perpetual snow ;
Glitter the stars above, and all is black below.

* Rude fountains built and covered with sheds for the accommodation of the Pilgrims, in their ascent of the mountain.

What marvel then if many a Wanderer sigh,
While roars the sullen Arve in anger by,
That not for thy reward, unrivalled Vale!
Waves the ripe harvest in the autumnal gale;
That thou, the slave of slaves, art doomed to pine
And droop, while no Italian arts are thine,
To soothe or cheer, to soften or refine.

Hail Freedom! whether it was mine to stray,
With shrill winds whistling round my lonely way,
On the bleak sides of Cumbria's heath-clad moors,
Or where dank sea-weed lashes Scotland's shores;
To scent the sweets of Piedmont's breathing rose,
And orange gale that o'er Lugano blows;
Still have I found, where Tyranny prevails,
That virtæ languishes and pleasure fails,
While the remotest hamlets blessings share
In thy loved presence known, and only there;
Heart-blessings—outward treasures too which the eye
Of the sun peeping through the clouds can spy,
And every passing breeze will testify.
There, to the porch, belike with jasmine bound
Or woodbine wreaths, a smoother path is wound;
The housewife there a brighter garden sees,
Where hum on busier wing her happy bees;
On infant cheeks there fresher roses blow;
And grey-haired men look up with livelier brow,—
To greet the traveller needing food and rest;
Housed for the night, or but a half-hour's guest.

And oh, fair France ! though in the rural shade
 Where at his will, so late, the grey-clad peasant strayed,
 Now, clothed in war's discordant garb, he sees
 The three-striped banner fluctuate on the breeze ;
 Though martial songs have banished songs of love,
 And nightingales desert the village grove,
 Scared by the fife and rumbling drum's alarms,
 And the short thunder, and the flash of arms ;
 That cease not till night falls, when far and nigh,
 Sole sound, the Sourd * prolongs his mournful cry !
 — Yet, hast thou found that Freedom spreads her power
 Beyond the cottage-hearth, the cottage-door :
 All nature smiles, and owns beneath her eyes
 Her fields peculiar, and peculiar skies.
 Yes, as I roamed where Loiret's waters glide
 Through rustling aspens heard from side to side,
 When from October clouds a milder light
 Fell where the blue flood rippled into white ;
 Methought from every cot the watchful bird
 Crowed with ear-piercing power till then unheard ;
 Each clacking mill, that broke the murmuring streams,
 Rocked the charmed thought in more delightful dreams ;
 Chasing those pleasant dreams, the falling leaf
 Awoke a fainter pang of moral grief ;
 The measured echo of the distant flail
 Wound in more welcome cadence down the vale ;

* An insect so called, which emits a short, melancholy cry, heard at the close of the summer evenings, on the banks of the Loire.

With more majestic course * the water rolled,
 And ripening foliage shone with richer gold.
 —But foes are gathering—Liberty must raise
 Red on the hills her beacon's far-seen blaze ;
 Must bid the tocsin ring from tower to tower !—
 Nearer and nearer comes the trying hour !
 Rejoice, brave Land, though pride's perverted ire
 Rouse hell's own aid, and wrap thy fields in fire :
 Lo, from the flames a great and glorious birth ;
 As if a new-made heaven were hailing a new earth !
 —All cannot be : the promise is too fair
 For creatures doomed to breathe terrestrial air :
 Yet not for this will sober reason frown
 Upon that promise, nor the hope disown ;
 She knows that only from high aims ensue
 Rich guerdons, and to them alone are due.

Great God! by whom the strifes of men are weighed
 In an impartial balance, give thine aid
 To the just cause ; and, oh ! do thou preside
 Over the mighty stream now spreading wide :
 So shall its waters, from the heavens supplied •
 In copious showers, from earth by wholesome springs,
 Brood o'er the long-parched lands with Nile-like wings!
 And grant that every sceptred child of clay
 Who cries presumptuous, “ Here the flood shall stay,”

* The duties upon many parts of the French rivers were so exorbitant, that the poorer people, deprived of the benefit of water carriage, were obliged to transport their goods by land.

May in its progress see thy guiding hand,
And cease the acknowledged purpose to withstand ;
Or, swept in anger from the insulted shore,
Sink with his servile bands, to rise no more !

To night, my Friend, within this humble cot
Be fear and joyful hope alike forgot
In timely sleep ; and when, at break of day,
On the tall peaks the glistening sunbeams play,
With a light heart our course we may renew,
The first whose footsteps print the mountain dew.

1791 & 1792.

IV.

THE FEMALE VAGRANT.



MY Father was a good and pious man,
 An honest man by honest parents bred ;
 And I believe that, soon as I began
 To lisp, he made me kneel beside my bed,
 And in his hearing there my prayers I said :
 And afterwards, by my good father taught,
 I read, and loved the books in which I read ;
 For books in every neighbouring house I sought,
 And nothing to my mind a sweeter pleasure brought.

Can I forget our croft and plot of corn ;
 Our garden, stored with peas, and mint, and thyme ;
 And rose, and lily—for the sabbath morn ?
 The sabbath bells, and their delightful chime ;
 The gambols and wild freaks at shearing-time ;
 My hen's rich nest through long grass scarce espied ;
 The cowslip-gathering in June's dewy prime ;
 The swans that, with white chests upheaved in pride,
 Rushing and racing came to meet me at the waterside ?

The staff I yet remember which upbore
The bending body of my active Sire ;
His seat beneath the honied sycamore
Where the bees hummed, and chair by winter fire ;
When market-morning came, the neat attire
With which, though bent on haste, myself I decked ;
Our watchful house-dog, that would tease and tire
The stranger, till its barking-fit I checked ;
The red-breast, known for years, which at my casement pecked.

The suns of twenty summers danced along,—
Ah ! little marked how fast they rolled away :
But, through severe mischance, and cruel wrong,
My father's substance fell into decay :
We toiled, and struggled, hoping for a day
When Fortune should put on a kinder look ;
But vain were wishes, efforts vain as they ;
He from his old hereditary nook
Must part ; the summons came,—our final leave we took.

It was indeed a miserable hour
When, from the last hill-top, my sire surveyed,
Peering above the trees, the steeple tower
That on his marriage-day sweet music made !
Till then, he hoped his bones might there be laid,
Close by my mother in their native bowers :
Bidding me trust in God, he stood and prayed,—
I could not pray :—through tears that fell in showers,
Glimmered our dear-loved home, alas ! no longer ours !

There was a Youth whom I had loved so long,
 That when I loved him not I cannot say :
 'Mid the green mountains many a thoughtless song
 We two had sung, like gladsome birds in May ;
 When we began to tire of childish play,
 We seemed still more and more to prize each other ;
 We talked of marriage and our marriage-day ;
 And I in truth did love him like a brother,
 For never could I hope to meet with such another.

Two years were passed since to a distant town
 He had repaired to ply a gainful trade :
 What tears of bitter grief, till then unknown !
 What tender vows our last sad kiss delayed !
 To him we turned :—we had no other aid :
 Like one revived, upon his neck I wept,
 And her whom he had loved in joy, he said,
 He well could love in grief ; his faith he kept ;
 And in a quiet home once more my father slept.

We lived in peace and comfort ; and were blest
 With daily bread, by constant toil supplied.
 Three lovely babes had lain upon my breast ;
 And often, viewing their sweet smiles, I sighed,
 And knew not why. My happy father died,
 When sad distress reduced the children's meal :
 Thrice happy ! that for him the grave could hide
 The empty loom, cold hearth, and silent wheel,
 And tears that flowed for ills which patience might not heal.

'Twas a hard change, an evil time was come ;
We had no hope, and no relief could gain.
But soon, with proud parade, the noisy drum
Beat round, to clear the streets of want and pain.
My husband's arms now only served to strain
Me and his children hungering in his view ;
In such dismay my prayers and tears were vain :
To join those miserable men he flew ;
And now to the sea-coast, with numbers more, we drew.

There were we long neglected, and we bore
Much sorrow, ere the fleet its anchor weighed ;
Green fields before us, and our native shore,
We breathed a pestilential air, that made
Ravage for which no knell was heard. We prayed
For our departure ; wished and wished—nor knew
'Mid that long sickness, and those hopes delayed,
That happier days we never more must view :
The parting signal streamed ; at last the land withdrew.

But the calm summer season now was past.
On as we drove, the equinoctial deep
Ran mountains-high before the howling blast ;
And many perished in the whirlwind's sweep.
We gazed with terror on their gloomy sleep,
Untaught that soon such anguish must ensue,
Our hopes such harvest of affliction reap,
That we the mercy of the waves should rue :
We reached the western world, a poor, devoted crew.

The pains and plagues that on our heads came down,
Disease and famine, agony and fear,
In wood or wilderness, in camp or town,
It would thy brain unsettle even to hear.
All perished—all, in one remorseless year,
Husband and children! one by one, by sword
And ravenous plague, all perished: every tear
Dried up, despairing, desolate, on board
A British ship I waked, as from a trance restored.

Peaceful as some immeasurable plain
By the first beams of dawning light imprest,
In the calm sunshine slept the glittering main.
The very ocean hath its hour of rest.
I too forgot the heavings of my breast.
Oh me, how quiet sky and ocean were!
As quiet all within me. I was blest!
And looked, and looked along the silent air
Until it seemed to bring a joy to my despair.

Ah! how unlike those late terrific sleeps,
And groans, that rage of racking famine spoke!
The unburied dead that lay in festering heaps!
The breathing pestilence that rose like smoke!
The shriek that from the distant battle broke!
The mine's dire earthquake, and the pallid host
Driven by the bomb's incessant thunder-stroke
To loathsome vaults, where heart-sick anguish tossed,
Hope died, and fear itself in agony was lost!

Some mighty gulf of separation past,
I seemed transported to another world :
A thought resigned with pain, when from the mast
The impatient mariner the sail unfurled,
And, whistling, called the wind that hardly curled
The silent sea. From the sweet thoughts of home
And from all hope I was for ever hurled.
For me—farthest from earthly port to roam
Was best, could I but shun the spot where man might come.

And oft I thought (my fancy was so strong)
That I, at last, a resting-place had found ;
“ Here will I dwell,” said I, “ my whole life long,
Roaming the illimitable waters round :
Here will I live, of every friend disowned,
And end my days upon the ocean flood.”—
To break my dream the vessel reached its bound :
And homeless near a thousand homes I stood,
And near a thousand tables pined and wanted food.

By grief enfeebled was I turned adrift,
Helpless as sailor cast on some bare rock ;
Nor morsel to my mouth that day did lift,
Nor dared my hand at any door to knock.
I lay where, with his drowsy mates, the cock
From the cross-timber of an out-house hung :
Dismally tolled, that night, the city clock !
At morn my sick heart hunger scarcely stung,
Nor to the beggar’s language could I fit my tongue.

So passed a second day, and when the third
Was come, I tried in vain the crowd's resort.
—In deep despair, by frightful wishes stirred,
Near the sea-side I reached a ruined fort ;
There, pains which nature could no more support,
With blindness linked, did on my vitals fall,
And after many interruptions short
Of hideous sense, I sank, nor step could crawl :
Unsought for was the help that did my life recal.

Borne to an hospital, I lay with brain
Drowsy and weak, and shattered memory ;
I heard my neighbours, in their beds, complain
Of many things which never troubled me ;
Of feet still bustling round with busy glee ;
Of looks where common kindness had no part ;
Of service done with careless cruelty,
Fretting the fever round the languid heart ;
And groans which, as they said, might make a dead man start.

These things just served to stir the slumbering sense,
Nor pain nor pity in my bosom raised.
With strength did memory return ; and, thence
Dismissed, again on open day I gazed,
At houses, men, and common light amazed.
The lanes I sought, and, as the sun retired,
Came where beneath the trees a faggot blazed ;
The travellers saw me weep, my fate inquired,
And gave me food,—and rest, more welcome, more desired.

Rough potters seemed they, trading soberly
With panniered asses driven from door to door ;
But life of happier sort set forth to me,
And other joys my fancy to allure ;
The bag-pipe, dinning on the midnight moor.
In barn uplighted ; and companions boon
Well met from far with revelry secure,
Among the forest glades, while jocund June
Rolled fast along the sky his warm and genial moon.

But ill they suited me—those journeys dark
O'er moor and mountain, midnight theft to hatch !
To charm the surly house-dog's faithful bark,
Or hang on tiptoe at the lifted latch.
The gloomy lantern, and the dim blue match,
The black disguise, the warning whistle shrill,
And ear still busy on its nightly watch,
Were not for me, brought up in nothing ill :
Besides, on griefs so fresh my thoughts were brooding still.

What could I do, unaided and unblest ?
My Father ! gone was every friend of thine :
And kindred of dead husband are at best
Small help ; and, after marriage such as mine,
With little kindness would to me incline.
Ill was I then for toil or service fit :
My deep-drawn sighs no effort could confine ;
In the open air forgetful would I sit
Whole hours, with idle arms in moping sorrow knit.

The roads I paced, I loitered through the fields ;
Contentedly, yet sometimes self-accused,
Trusted my life to what chance-bounty yields,
Now coldly given, now utterly refused.
The ground I for my bed have often used :
But, what afflicts my peace with keenest ruth
Is, that I have my inner self abused,
Foregone the home delight of constant truth,
And clear and open soul, so prized in fearless youth.

Through tears the rising sun I oft have viewed ;
Through tears have seen him towards that world descend
Where my poor heart lost all its fortitude :
Three years a wanderer now my course I bend—
Oh ! tell me whither—for no earthly friend
Have I.—She ceased, and weeping turned away ;—
As if because her tale was at an end
She wept ;—because she had no more to say
Of that perpetual weight which on her spirit lay.



P O E M S

FOUNDED ON THE AFFECTIONS.



I.

THE BROTHERS.



"THESE Tourists, Heaven preserve us! needs must live
 A profitable life : some glance along,
 Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,
 And they were butterflies to wheel about
 Long as the summer lasted : some, as wise,
 Perched on the forehead of a jutting crag,
 Pencil in hand and book upon the knee,
 Will look and scribble, scribble on and look,
 Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,
 Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.
 But, for that moping Son of Idleness,
 Why can he tarry *yonder*?—In our church-yard
 Is neither epitaph nor monument,
 Tombstone nor name—only the turf we tread
 And a few natural graves."

To Jane, his wife,

Thus spake the homely Priest of Ennerdale.

It was a July evening ; and he sate
Upon the long stone-seat beneath the eaves
Of his old cottage,—as it chanced, that day,
Employed in winter's work. Upon the stone
His wife sate near him, teasing matted wool,
While, from the twin cards toothed with glittering wire,
He fed the spindle of his youngest child,
Who, in the open air, with due accord
Of busy hands and back and forward steps,
Her large round wheel was turning. Towards the field
In which the Parish Chapel stood alone,
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent
Many a long look of wonder : and at last,
Risen from his seat, beside the snow-white ridge
Of carded wool which the old man had piled
He laid his implements with gentle care,
Each in the other locked ; and, down the path
That from his cottage to the church-yard led,
He took his way, impatient to accost
The Stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,
A Shepherd-lad ; who ere his sixteenth year
Had left that calling, tempted to entrust
His expectations to the fickle winds
And perilous waters ; with the mariners
A fellow-mariner ;—and so had fared

Through twenty seasons ; but he had been reared
Among the mountains, and he in his heart
Was half a shepherd on the stormy seas.
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds
Of caves and trees :—and, when the regular wind
Between the tropics filled the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless Main, he, in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze ;
And, while the broad blue wave and sparkling foam
Flashed round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him, in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains ; saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills—with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country grey
Which he himself had worn*.

And now, at last,
From perils manifold, with some small wealth
Acquired by traffic 'mid the Indian Isles,

* This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, author of *The Hurricane*.

To his paternal home he is returned,
With a determined purpose to resume
The life he had lived there; both for the sake
Of many darling pleasures, and the love
Which to an only brother he has borne
In all his hardships, since that happy time
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two
Were brother-shepherds on their native hills.
—They were the last of all their race: and now,
When Leonard had approached his home, his heart
Failed in him; and, not venturing to enquire
Tidings of one so long and dearly loved,
He to the solitary church-yard turned;
That, as he knew in what particular spot
His family were laid, he thence might learn
If still his Brother lived, or to the file
Another grave was added.—He had found
Another grave,—near which a full half-hour
He had remained; but, as he gazed, there grew
Such a confusion in his memory,
That he began to doubt; and even to hope
That he had seen this heap of turf before,—
That it was not another grave; but one
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walked
Through fields which once had been well known to him:
And oh what joy this recollection now
Sent to his heart! He lifted up his eyes,

And, looking round, imagined that he saw
Strange alteration wrought on every side
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,
And everlasting hills themselves were changed.

By this the Priest, who down the field had come,
Unseen by Leonard, at the church-yard gate
Stopped short,—and thence, at leisure, limb by limb
Perused him with a gay complacency.

Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,
'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path
Of the world's business to go wild alone :
His arms have a perpetual holiday ;
The happy man will creep about the fields,
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
Tears down his cheek, or solitary smiles
Into his face, until the setting sun
Write fool upon his forehead.—Planted thus
Beneath a shed that over-arched the gate
Of this rude church-yard, till the stars appeared
The good Man might have communed with himself,
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,
Approached ; he recognised the Priest at once,
And, after greetings interchanged, and given
By Leonard to the Vicar as to one
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

LEONARD.

You live, Sir, in these dales, a quiet life :

Your years make up one peaceful family ;
 And who would grieve and fret, if, welcome come
 And welcome gone, they are so like each other,
 They cannot be remembered ? Scarce a funeral
 Comes to this church-yard once in eighteen months ;
 And yet, some changes must take place among you :
 And you, who dwell here, even among these rocks,
 Can trace the finger of mortality,
 And see, that with our threescore years and ten
 We are not all that perish.—I remember,
 (For many years ago I passed this road)
 There was a foot-way all along the fields
 By the brook-side—'tis gone—and that dark cleft !
 To me it does not seem to wear the face
 Which then it had !

PRIEST.

Nay, Sir, for aught I know,
 That chasm is much the same—

LEONARD.

But, surely, yonder—

PRIEST.

Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend
 That does not play you false.—On that tall pike
 (It is the loneliest place of all these hills)
 There were two springs which bubbled side by side,
 As if they had been made that they might be
 Companions for each other : the huge crag
 Was rent with lightning—one hath disappeared :

The other, left behind, is flowing still*.
 For accidents and changes such as these,
 We want not store of them ;—a water-spout
 Will bring down half a mountain ; what a feast
 For folks that wander up and down like you,
 To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff
 One roaring cataract ! a sharp May-storm
 Will come with loads of January snow,
 And in one night send twenty score of sheep
 To feed the ravens ; or a shepherd dies
 By some untoward death among the rocks :
 The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge ;
 A wood is felled :—and then for our own homes !
 A child is born or christened, a field ploughed,
 A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
 The old house-clock is decked with a new face ;
 And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates
 To chronicle the time, we all have here
 A pair of diaries,—one serving, Sir,
 For the whole dale, and one for each fire-side—
 Yours was a stranger's judgment : for historians,
 Commend me to these valleys !

LEONARD.

Yet your Church-yard
 Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,
 To say that you are heedless of the past :

* This actually took place upon Kidstow Pike at the head of Hawes-water.

An orphan could not find his mother's grave :
 Here's neither head nor foot-stone, plate of brass,
 Cross-bones nor skull,—type of our earthly state
 Nor emblem of our hopes : the dead man's home
 Is but a fellow to that pasture-field.

PRIEST.

Why, there, Sir, is a thought that's new to me !
 The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread
 If every English church-yard were like ours ;
 Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth :
 We have no need of names and epitaphs ;
 We talk about the dead by our fire-sides.
 And then, for our immortal part ! *we* want
 No symbols, Sir, to tell us that plain tale :
 The thought of death sits easy on the man
 Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

LEONARD.

Your Dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts
 Possess a kind of second life : no doubt
 You, Sir, could help me to the history
 Of half these graves ?

PRIEST.

For eight-score winters past,
 With what I've witnessed, and with what I've heard,
 Perhaps I might ; and, on a winter-evening,
 If you were seated at my chimney's nook,
 By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,
 We two could travel, Sir, through a strange round ;

Yet all in the broad highway of the world.
 Now there's a grave—your foot is half upon it,—
 It looks just like the rest ; and yet that man
 Died broken-hearted.

LEONARD.

'Tis a common case.

We'll take another : who is he that lies
 Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves ?
 It touches on that piece of native rock
 Left in the church-yard wall.

PRIEST.

That's Walter Ewbank.

He had as white a head and fresh a cheek
 As ever were produced by youth and age
 Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore.
 Through five long generations had the heart
 Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds
 Of their inheritance, that single cottage—
 You see it yonder ! and those few green fields.
 They toiled and wrought, and still, from sire to son,
 Each struggled, and each yielded as before
 A little—yet a little,—and old Walter,
 They left to him the family heart, and land
 With other burthens than the crop it bore.
 Year after year the old man still kept up
 A cheerful mind,—and buffeted with bond,
 Interest, and mortgages ; at last he sank,
 And went into his grave before his time.

Poor Walter! whether it was care that spurred him
 God only knows, but to the very last
 He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale :
 His pace was never that of an old man :
 I almost see him tripping down the path
 With his two grandsons after him :—but you,
 Unless our Landlord be your host to-night,
 Have far to travel,—and on these rough paths
 Even in the longest day of midsummer—

LEONARD.

But those two Orphans !

PRIEST.

Orphans !—Such they were—
 Yet not while Walter lived :—for, though their parents
 Lay buried side by side as now they lie,
 The old man was a father to the boys,
 Two fathers in one father : and if tears,
 Shed when he talked of them where they were not,
 And hauntings from the infirmity of love,
 Are aught of what makes up a mother's heart,
 This old Man, in the day of his old age,
 Was half a mother to them.—If you weep, Sir,
 To hear a stranger talking about strangers,
 Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred !
 Ay—you may turn that way—it is a grave
 Which will bear looking at.

LEONARD.

These boys—I hope
 They loved this good old Man ?—

PRIEST.

They did—and truly :

But that was what we almost overlooked,
They were such darlings of each other. Yes,
Though from the cradle they had lived with Walter,
The only kinsman near them, and though he
Inclined to both by reason of his age,
With a more fond, familiar tenderness ;
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare,
And it all went into each other's hearts.
Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,
Was two years taller : 'twas a joy to see,
To hear, to meet them !—From their house the school
Is distant three short miles, and in the time
Of storm and thaw, when every water-course
And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed
Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,
Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,
Would Leonard then, when elder boys remained
At home, go staggering through the slippery fords,
Bearing his Brother on his back. I have seen him,
On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,
Ay, more than once I have seen him, mid-leg deep,
Their two books lying both on a dry stone,
Upon the hither side : and once I said,
As I remember, looking round these rocks
And hills on which we all of us were born,
That God who made the great book of the world
Would bless such piety—

LEONARD.

It may be then—

PRIEST.

Never did worthier lads break English bread ;
 The very brightest Sunday Autumn saw
 With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,
 Could never keep those boys away from church,
 Or tempt them to an hour of sabbath breach.
 Leonard and James ! I warrant, every corner
 Among these rocks, and every hollow place
 That venturous foot could reach, to one or both
 Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there.
 Like roe-bucks they went bounding o'er the hills ;
 They played like two young ravens on the crags :
 Then they could write, ay and speak too, as well
 As many of their betters—and for Leonard !
 The very night before he went away,
 In my own house I put into his hand
 A bible, and I'd wager house and field
 That, if he be alive, he has it yet.

LEONARD.

It seems, these Brothers have not lived to be
 A comfort to each other—

PRIEST.

That they might
 Live to such end is what both old and young
 In this our valley all of us have wished,
 And what, for my part, I have often prayed :
 But Leonard—

LEONARD.

Then James still is left among you !

PRIEST.

'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking :
 They had an uncle ;—he was at that time
 A thriving man, and trafficked on the seas :
 And, but for that same uncle, to this hour
 Leonard had never handled rope or shroud :
 For the boy loved the life which we lead here ;
 And though of unripe years, a stripling only,
 His soul was knit to this his native soil.
 But, as I said, old Walter was too weak
 To strive with such a torrent ; when he died,
 The estate and house were sold ; and all their sheep,
 A pretty flock, and which, for aught I know,
 Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years :—
 Well—all was gone, and they were destitute ,
 And Leonard, chiefly for his Brother's sake,
 Resolved to try his fortune on the seas.
 Twelve years are past since we had tidings from him.
 If there were one among us who had heard
 That Leonard Ewbank was come home again,
 From the great Gavel *, down by Leeza's banks,

* The Great Gavel, so called, I imagine, from its resemblance to the gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale.

The Leeza is a river which flows into the Lake of Ennerdale : on issuing from the Lake, it changes its name, and is called the End, Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont.

And down the Enna, far as Egremont,
 The day would be a joyous festival ;
 And those two bells of ours, which there you see—
 Hanging in the open air—but, O good Sir !
 This is sad talk—they'll never sound for him—
 Living or dead.—When last we heard of him,
 He was in slavery among the Moors
 Upon the Barbary coast.—'Twas not a little
 That would bring down his spirit ; and no doubt,
 Before it ended in his death, the Youth
 Was sadly crossed.—Poor Leonard ! when we parted,
 He took me by the hand, and said to me,
 If e'er he should grow rich, he would return,
 To live in peace upon his father's land,
 And lay his bones among us.

LEONARD.

If that day
 Should come, 't would needs be a glad day for him ;
 He would himself, no doubt, be happy then
 As any that should meet him—

PRIEST.

Happy ! Sir—

LEONARD.

You said his kindred all were in their graves,
 And that he had one Brother—

PRIEST.

That is but
 A fellow-tale of sorrow. From his youth

James, though not sickly, yet was delicate ;
 And Leonard being always by his side
 Had done so many offices about him,
 That, though he was not of a timid nature,
 Yet still the spirit of a mountain-boy
 In him was somewhat checked ; and, when his Brother
 Was gone to sea, and he was left alone,
 The little colour that he had was soon
 Stolen from his cheek ; he drooped, and pined, and pined—

LEONARD.

But these are all the graves of full-grown men !

PRIEST.

Ay, Sir, that passed away : we took him to us ;
 He was the child of all the dale—he lived
 Three months with one, and six months with another ;
 And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love :
 And many, many happy days were his.
 But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief
 His absent Brother still was at his heart.
 And, when he dwelt beneath our roof, we found
 (A practice till this time unknown to him)
 That often, rising from his bed at night,
 He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping
 He sought his brother Leonard.—You are moved !
 Forgive me, Sir : before I spoke to you,
 I judged you most unkindly.

LEONARD.

But this Youth,

How did he die at last ?

PRIEST.

One sweet May-morning.

(It will be twelve years since when Spring returns)
He had gone forth among the new-dropped lambs,
With two or three companions, whom their course
Of occupation led from height to height
Under a cloudless sun—till he, at length,
Through weariness, or, haply, to indulge
The humour of the moment, lagged behind.
You see yon precipice ;—it wears the shape
Of a vast building made of many crags ;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is called, **THE PILLAR.**
Upon its aëry summit crowned with heath,
The loiterer, not unnoticed by his comrades,
Lay stretched at ease ; but, passing by the place
On their return, they found that he was gone.
No ill was feared ; till one of them by chance
Entering, when evening was far spent, the house
Which at that time was James's home, there learned
That nobody had seen him all that day :
The morning came, and still he was unheard of :
The neighbours were alarmed, and to the brook
Some hastened ; some ran to the lake : ere noon
They found him at the foot of that same rock
Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after
I buried him, poor Youth, and there he lies !

LEONARD.

And that then is his grave!—Before his death
You say that he saw many happy years?

PRIEST.

Ay, that he did—

LEONARD.

And all went well with him?—

PRIEST.

If he had one, the youth had twenty homes.

LEONARD.

And you believe, then, that his mind was easy?—

PRIEST.

Yes, long before he died, he found that time
Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless
His thoughts were turned on Leonard's luckless fortune,
He talked about him with a cheerful love.

LEONARD.

He could not come to an unhallowed end!

PRIEST.

Nay, God forbid!—You recollect I mentioned
A habit which disquietude and grief
Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down
On the soft heath,—and waiting for his comrades,
He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep
He to the margin of the precipice
Had walked, and from the summit had fallen headlong:
And so no doubt he perished. When the Youth

Fell, in his hand he must have grasp'd, we think,
 His shepherd's staff; for on that Pillar of rock
 It had been caught mid way; and there for years
 It hung;—and mouldered there.

The Priest here ended—

The Stranger would have thanked him, but he felt
 A gushing from his heart, that took away
 The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence;
 And Leonard, when they reached the church-yard gate,
 As the Priest lifted up the latch, turned round,—
 And, looking at the grave, he said, “My Brother!”
 The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,
 He pointed towards his dwelling-place, entreating
 That Leonard would partake his homely fare:
 The other thanked him with an earnest voice;
 But added, that, the evening being calm,
 He would pursue his journey. So they parted.

It was not long ere Leonard reached a grove
 That overhung the road: he there stopped short,
 And, sitting down beneath the trees, reviewed
 All that the Priest had said: his early years
 Were with him:—his long absence, cherished hopes,
 And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
 All pressed on him with such a weight, that now,
 This vale, where he had been so happy, seemed
 A place in which he could not bear to live:

So he relinquished all his purposes.
He travelled back to Egremont : and thence,
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,
Reminding him of what had passed between them ;
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,
That it was from the weakness of his heart
He had not dared to tell him who he was.
This done, he went on shipboard, and is now
A Seaman, a grey-headed Mariner.

1800.

II.

ARTEGAL AND ELIDURE.

(SEE THE CHRONICLE OF GEOFFREY OF MONMOUTH, AND MILTON'S
HISTORY OF ENGLAND.)

WHERE be the temples which, in Britain's Isle,
For his paternal Gods, the Trojan raised ?
Gone like a morning dream, or like a pile
Of clouds that in cerulean ether blazed !
Ere Julius landed on her white-cliffed shore,
 They sank, delivered o'er
To fatal dissolution ; and, I ween,
No vestige then was left that such had ever been.

Nathless, a British record (long concealed
In old Armorica, whose secret springs
No Gothic conqueror ever drank) revealed
The marvellous current of forgotten things ;
How Brutus came, by oracles impelled,
 And Albion's giants quelled,
A brood whom no civility could melt,
" Who never tasted grace, and goodness ne'er had felt."

By brave Corineus aided, he subdued,
And rooted out the intolerable kind ;
And this too-long-polluted land imbued
With goodly arts and usages refined ;
Whence golden harvests, cities, warlike towers,
 And pleasure's sumptuous bowers ;
Whence all the fixed delights of house and home,
Friendships that will not break, and love that cannot roam.

O, happy Britain ! region all too fair
For self-delighting fancy to endure
That silence only should inhabit there,
Wild beasts, or uncouth savages impure !
But, intermingled with the generous seed,
 Grew many a poisonous weed ;
Thus fares it still with all that takes its birth
From human care, or grows upon the breast of earth.

Hence, and how soon ! that war of vengeance waged
By Guendolen against her faithless lord ;
Till she, in jealous fury unassuaged,
Had slain his paramour with ruthless sword :
Then, into Severn hideously defiled,
 She flung her blameless child,
Sabrina,—yowing that the stream should bear
That name through every age, her hatred to declare.

So speaks the Chronicle, and tells of Lear
By his ungrateful daughters turned adrift.
Ye lightnings, hear his voice!—they cannot hear,
Nor can the winds restore his simple gift.
But One there is, a Child of nature meek,
 Who comes her Sire to seek ;
And he, recovering sense, upon her breast
Leans smilingly, and sinks into a perfect rest.

There too we read of Spenser's fairy themes,
And those that Milton loved in youthful years ;
The sage enchanter Merlin's subtle schemes ;
The feats of Arthur and his knightly peers ;
Of Arthur,—who, to upper light restored,
 With that terrific sword
Which yet he brandishes for future war,
Shall lift his country's fame above the polar star !

What wonder, then, if in such ample field
Of old tradition, one particular flower
Doth seemingly in vain its fragrance yield,
And bloom unnoticed even to this late hour ?
Now, gentle Muses, your assistance grant,
 While I this flower transplant
Into a garden stored with Poesy ;
Where flowers and herbs unite, and haply some weeds be,
That, wanting not wild grace, are from all mischief free !

A KING more worthy of respect and love
Than wise Gorbonian ruled not in his day ;
And grateful Britain prospered far above
All neighbouring countries through his righteous sway ;
He poured rewards and honours on the good ;
 The oppressor he withstood ;
And while he served the Gods with reverence due
Fields smiled, and temples rose, and towns and cities
 grew.

He died, whom Artegal succeeds—his son ;
But how unworthy of that sire was he !
A hopeful reign, auspiciously begun,
Was darkened soon by foul iniquity.
From crime to crime he mounted, till at length
 The nobles leagued their strength
With a vexed people, and the tyrant chased ;
And, on the vacant throne, his worthier Brother placed.

From realm to realm the humbled Exile went,
Suppliant for aid his kingdom to regain ;
In many a court, and many a warrior's tent,
He urged his persevering suit in vain.
Him, in whose wretched heart ambition failed,
 Dire poverty assailed ;
And, tired with slights his pride no more could brook,
He towards his native country cast a longing look.

Fair blew the wished-for wind—the voyage sped ;
He landed ; and, by many dangers scared,
‘ Poorly provided, poorly followèd,’
To Calaterium’s forest he repaired.
How changed from him who, born to highest place,
Had swayed the royal mace,
Flattered and feared, despised yet deified,
In Troynovant, his seat by silver Thames’s side !

From that wild region where the crownless King
Lay in concealment with his scanty train,
Supporting life by water from the spring,
And such chance food as outlaws can obtain,
Unto the few whom he esteems his friends
A messenger he sends ;
And from their secret loyalty requires
Shelter and daily bread,—the sum of his desires.

While he the issue waits, at early morn
Wandering by stealth abroad, he chanced to hear
A startling outcry made by hound and horn,
From which the tusky boar hath fled in fear ;
And, scouring toward him o’er the grassy plain,
Behold the hunter train !
He bids his little company advance
With seeming unconcern and steady countenance.

The royal Elidure, who leads the chase,
Hath checked his foaming courser :—Can it be !
Methinks that I should recognise that face,
Though much disguised by long adversity !
He gazed rejoicing, and again he gazed,

Confounded and amazed—

“ It is the king, my brother ! ” and, by sound
Of his own voice confirmed, he leaps upon the ground.

Long, strict, and tender was the embrace he gave,
Feebly returned by daunted Artegal ;
Whose natural affection doubts enslave,
And apprehensions dark and criminal.
Loth to restrain the moving interview,
The attendant lords withdrew ;
And, while they stood upon the plain apart,
Thus Elidure, by words, relieved his struggling heart.

“ By heavenly Powers conducted, we have met ;
—O Brother ! to my knowledge lost so long,
But neither lost to love, nor to regret,
Nor to my wishes lost ;—forgive the wrong,
(Such it may seem) if I thy crown have borne,
Thy royal mantle worn :
I was their natural guardian ; and 'tis just
That now I should restore what hath been held in trust.”

A while the astonished Artegal stood mute,
 Then thus exclaimed : "To me, of titles shorn,
 And stripped of power ! me, feeble, destitute,
 To me a kingdom ! spare the bitter scorn :
 If justice ruled the breast of foreign kings,
 Then, on the wide-spread wings
 Of war, had I returned to claim my right ;
 This will I here avow, not dreading thy despite."

"I do not blame thee," Elidure replied ;
 "But, if my looks did with my words agree,
 I should at once be trusted, not defied,
 And thou from all disquietude be free.
 May the unsullied Goddess of the chase,
 Who to this blessed place
 At this blest moment led me, if I speak
 With insincere intent, on me her vengeance wreak ?

Were this same spear, which in my hand I grasp,
 The British sceptre, here would I to thee
 The symbol yield ; and would undo this clasp,
 If it confined the robe of sovereignty.
 Odious to me the pomp of regal court,
 And joyless sylvan sport,
 While thou art roving, wretched and forlorn,
 Thy couch the dewy earth, thy roof the forest thorn !"

Then Artegal thus spake : “ I only sought,
Within this realm a place of safe retreat ;
Beware of rousing an ambitious thought ;
Beware of kindling hopes, for me unmeet !
Thou art reputed wise, but in my mind
 Art pitiably blind :
Full soon this generous purpose thou may'st rue,
When that which has been done no wishes can undo.

Who, when a crown is fixed upon his head,
Would balance claim with claim, and right with right ?
But thou—I know not how inspired, how led—
Wouldst change the course of things in all men's sight !
And this for one who cannot imitate
 Thy virtue, who may hate :
For, if, by such strange sacrifice restored,
He reign, thou still must be his king, and sovereign lord ;

Lifted in magnanimity above
Aught that my feeble nature could perform,
Or even conceive ; surpassing me in love
Far as in power the eagle doth the worm :
I, Brother ! only should be king in name,
 And govern to my shame ;
A shadow in a hated land, while all
Of glad or willing service to thy share would fall.”

“ Believe it not,” said Elidure ; “ respect
Awaits on virtuous life, and ever most
Attends on goodness with dominion decked,
Which stands the universal empire’s boast ;
This can thy own experience testify :
 Nor shall thy foes deny
That, in the gracious opening of thy reign,
Our Father’s spirit seemed in thee to breathe again.

And what if o’er that bright unbosoming
Clouds of disgrace and envious fortune past!
Have we not seen the glories of the spring
By veil of noontide darkness overcast ?
The frith that glittered like a warrior’s shield,
 The sky, the gay green field,
Are vanished ; gladness ceases in the groves,
And trepidation strikes the blackened mountain coves.

But is that gloom dissolved ? how passing clear
Seems the wide world, far brighter than before !
Even so thy latent worth will re-appear,
Gladdening the people’s heart from shore to shore ;
For youthful faults ripe virtues shall atone ;
 Re-seated on thy throne,
Proof shalt thou furnish that misfortune, pain,
And sorrow, have confirmed thy native right to reign.

But, not to overlook what thou may'st know,
Thy enemies are neither weak nor few ;
And circumspect must be our course, and slow,
Or from my purpose ruin may ensue.
Dismiss thy followers ;—let them calmly wait
 Such change in thy estate
As I already have in thought devised ;
And which, with caution due, may soon be realised.”

The Story tells what courses were pursued,
Until king Elidure, with full consent
Of all his peers, before the multitude,
Rose,—and, to consummate this just intent,
Did place upon his Brother's head the crown,
 Relinquished by his own ;
Then to his people cried, “ Receive your lord,
Gorbonian's first-born son, your rightful king restored ! ”

The people answered with a loud acclaim :
Yet more ;—heart-smitten by the heroic deed,
The reinstated Artegal became
Earth's noblest penitent ; from bondage freed
Of vice—thenceforth unable to subvert
 Or shake his high desert.
Long did he reign ; and, when he died, the tear
Of universal grief bedewed his honoured bier.

Thus was a Brother by a Brother saved ;
With whom a crown (temptation that hath set
Discord in hearts of men till they have braved
Their nearest kin with deadly purpose met)
'Gainst duty weighed, and faithful love, did seem
 A thing of no esteem ;
And, from this triumph of affection pure,
He bore the lasting name of " pious Elidure ! "

III.

THE SPARROW'S NEST.

BEHOLD, within the leafy shade,
 Those bright blue eggs together laid !
 On me the chance-discovered sight
 Gleamed like a vision of delight.
 I started—seeming to espy
 The home and sheltered bed,
 The Sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
 My Father's house, in wet or dry,
 My Sister Emmeline and I
 Together visited.
 She looked at it as if she feared it ;
 Still wishing, dreading, to be near it :
 Such heart was in her, being then
 A little Prattler among men.
 The Blessing of my later years
 Was with me when a boy :
 She gave me eyes, she gave me ears ;
 And humble cares, and delicate fears ;
 A heart, the fountain of sweet tears ;
 And love, and thought, and joy.

IV.

TO A BUTTERFLY.



I'VE watched you now a short half-hour,
Self-poised upon that yellow flower ;
And, little Butterfly ! indeed
I know not if you sleep or feed.
How motionless !—not frozen seas
More motionless ! and then
What joy awaits you, when the breeze
Hath found you out among the trees,
And calls you forth again !

This plot of orchard-ground is ours ;
My trees they are, my Sister's flowers ;
Here rest your wings when they are weary ;
Here lodge as in a sanctuary !
Come often to us, fear no wrong ;
Sit near us on the bough !
We'll talk of sunshine and of song ;
And summer days, when we were young ;
Sweet childish days, that were as long
As twenty days are now.

v.

A FAREWELL.



FAREWELL, thou little Nook of mountain-ground,
 Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
 Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
 One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare ;
 Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,
 The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
 Farewell !—we leave thee to Heaven's peaceful care,
 Thee, and the Cottage which thou dost surround.

Our boat is safely anchored by the shore,
 And there will safely ride when we are gone ;
 The flowering shrubs that deck our humble door
 Will prosper, though untended and alone :
 Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none :
 These narrow bounds contain our private store
 Of things earth makes, and sun doth shine upon ;
 Here are they in our sight—we have no more.

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
For two months now in vain we shall be sought ;
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;
Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat,
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the Lake we brought,
And placed together near our rocky Well.

We go for One to whom ye will be dear ;
And she will prize this Bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, Building without peer !
—A gentle Maid, whose heart is lowly-bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gatherèd,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer,
Will come to you ; to you herself will wed ;
And love the blessed life that we lead here.

Dear Spot ! which we have watched with tender heed,
Bringing thee chosen plants and blossoms blown
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed,
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own,
Making all kindness registered and known ;
Thou for our sakes, though Nature's child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.

And O most constant, yet most fickle Place,
That hast thy wayward moods, as thou dost show
To them who look not daily on thy face ;
Who, being loved, in love no bounds dost know,
And say'st, when we forsake thee, " Let them go !"
Thou easy-hearted Thing, with thy wild race
Of weeds and flowers, till we return be slow,
And travel with the year at a soft pace.

Help us to tell Her tales of years gone by,
And this sweet spring, the best beloved and best ;
Joy will be flown in its mortality ;
Something must stay to tell us of the rest.
Here, thronged with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glittered at evening like a starry sky ;
And in this bush our Sparrow built her nest,
Of which I sang one song that will not die.

O happy Garden ! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours ;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers,
And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers ;
Two burning months let summer overleap,
And, coming back with Her who will be ours,
Into thy bosom we again shall creep.

VI.

STANZAS

WRITTEN IN MY POCKET-COPY OF THOMSON'S CASTLE OF
INDOLENCE.

WITHIN our happy Castle there dwelt One
Whom without blame I may not overlook ;
For never sun on living creature shone
Who more devout enjoyment with us took :
Here on his hours he hung as on a book,
On his own time here would he float away,
As doth a fly upon a summer brook ;
But go to-morrow, or belike to-day,
Seek for him,—he is fled ; and whither none can say.

Thus often would he leave our peaceful home,
And find elsewhere his business or delight ;
Out of our Valley's limits did he roam :
Full many a time, upon a stormy night,
His voice came to us from the neighbouring height :
Oft could we see him driving full in view
At mid-day when the sun was shining bright ;
What ill was on him, what he had to do,
A mighty wonder bred among our quiet crew.

Ah ! piteous sight it was to see this Man
When he came back to us, a withered flower,—
Or like a sinful creature, pale and wan.
Down would he sit ; and without strength or power
Look at the common grass from hour to hour :
And oftentimes, how long I fear to say,
Where apple-trees in blossom made a bower,
Retired in that sunshiny shade he lay ;
And, like a naked Indian, slept himself away.

Great wonder to our gentle tribe it was
Whenever from our Valley he withdrew ;
For happier soul no living creature has
Than he had, being here the long day through.
Some thought he was a lover, and did woo :
Some thought far worse of him, and judged him wrong ;
But verse was what he had been wedded to ;
And his own mind did like a tempest strong
Come to him thus, and drove the weary Wight along.

With him there often walked in friendly guise,
Or lay upon the moss by brook or tree,
A noticeable Man with large grey eyes,
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly
As if a blooming face it ought to be ;
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear,
Deprest by weight of musing Phantasy ;
Profound his forehead was, though not severe ;
Yet some did think that he had little business here :

Sweet heaven forefend ! his was a lawful right ;
 Noisy he was, and gamesome as a boy ;
 His limbs would toss about him with delight
 Like branches when strong winds the trees annoy.
 Nor lacked his calmer hours device or toy
 To banish listlessness and irksome care ;
 He would have taught you how you might employ
 Yourself ; and many did to him repair,—
 And certes not in vain ; he had inventions rare.

Expedients, too, of simplest sort he tried :
 Long blades of grass, plucked round him as he lay,
 Made, to his ear attentively applied,
 A pipe on which the wind would deftly play ;
 Glasses he had, that little things display,
 The beetle panoplied in gems and gold,
 A mailèd angel on a battle-day ;
 The mysteries that cups of flowers enfold,
 And all the gorgeous sights which fairies do behold.

He would entice that other Man to hear
 His music, and to view his imagery :
 And, sooth, these two were each to the other dear :
 No livelier love in such a place could be :
 There did they dwell—from earthly labour free,
 As happy spirits as were ever seen ;
 If but a bird, to keep them company,
 Or butterfly sate down, they were, I ween,
 As pleased as if the same had been a Maiden-queen.

VII.

LOUISA.

AFTER ACCOMPANYING HER ON A MOUNTAIN
EXCURSION.

THOUGH, by a sickly taste betrayed,
Some will dispraise the lovely Maid,
With fearless pride I say
That she is healthful, fleet, and strong ;
And down the rocks can leap along,
Like rivulets in May.

And she hath smiles to earth unknown ;
Smiles, that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise ;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes.

She loves her fire, her cottage-home ;
 Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
 In weather rough and bleak ;
 And, when against the wind she strains.
 Oh ! might I kiss the mountain rains
 That sparkle on her cheek.

Take all that's mine 'beneath the moon,'
 If I with her but half a noon
 May sit beneath the walls
 Of some old cave, or mossy nook,
 When up she winds along the brook
 To hunt the waterfalls.

1805.

 VIII.

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

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 ! ”

IX.

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 !

x.

I TRAVELLED among unknown men,
 In lands beyond the sea ;
 Nor, England ! did I know till then
 What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream !
 Nor will I quit thy shore
 A second time ; for still I seem
 To love thee more and more.

Among thy mountains did I feel
 The joy of my desire ;
 And she I cherished turned her wheel
 Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings showed, thy nights concealed
 The bowers where Lucy played ;
 And thine too is the last green field
 That Lucy's eyes surveyed.

1799.

XI.

ERE with cold beads of midnight dew
 Had mingled tears of thine,
 I grieved, fond Youth ! that thou shouldst sue
 To haughty Geraldine.

Immoveable by generous sighs,
 She glories in a train
 Who drag, beneath our native skies,
 An oriental chain.

Pine not like them with arms across,
 Forgetting in thy care
 How the fast-rooted trees can toss
 Their branches in mid air.

The humblest rivulet will take
 Its own wild liberties ;
 And, every day, the imprisoned lake
 Is flowing in the breeze.

Then, crouch no more on suppliant knee,
 But scorn with scorn outbrave ;
 A Briton, even in love, should be
 A subject, not a slave !

XII.

TO ———



LOOK at the fate of summer flowers,
 Which blow at daybreak, droop ere even-song ;
 And, grieved for their brief date, confess that ours,
 Measured by what we are and ought to be,
 Measured by all that, trembling, we foresee,
 Is not so long !

If human Life do pass away,
 Perishing yet more swiftly than the flower,
 If we are creatures of a *winter's* day ;
 What space hath Virgin's beauty to disclose
 Her sweets, and triumph o'er the breathing rose ?
 Not even an hour !

The deepest grove whose foliage hid
 The happiest lovers Arcady might boast,
 Could not the entrance of this thought forbid :
 O be thou wise as they, soul-gifted Maid !
 Nor rate too high what must so quickly fade,
 So soon be lost.

Then shall love teach some virtuous Youth
 ‘ To draw, out of the object of his eyes,’
 The while on thee they gaze in simple truth,
 Hues more exalted, ‘ a refinèd Form,’
 That dreads not age, nor suffers from the worm,
 And never dies. 1824.

XIII.

’Tis said, that some have died for love :
 And here and there a church-yard grave is found
 In the cold north’s unhallowed ground,
 Because the wretched man himself had slain,
 His love was such a grievous pain.
 And there is one whom I five years have known ;
 He dwells alone
 Upon Helvellyn’s side :
 He loved—the pretty Barbara died ;
 And thus he makes his moan :
 Three years had Barbara in her grave been laid
 When thus his moan he made :

" Oh, move, thou Cottage, from behind that oak !
 Or let the aged tree uprooted lie,
 That in some other way yon smoke
 May mount into the sky !
 The clouds pass on ; they from the heavens depart :
 I look—the sky is empty space ;
 I know not what I trace ;
 But when I cease to look, my hand is on my heart.

O ! what a weight is in these shades ! Ye leaves,
 That murmur once so dear, when will it cease ?
 Your sound my heart of rest bereaves,
 It robs my heart of peace.
 Thou Thrush, that singest loud—and loud and free,
 Into yon row of willows flit,
 Upon that alder sit ;
 Or sing another song, or choose another tree.

Roll back, sweet Rill ! back to thy mountain-bounds,
 And there for ever be thy waters chained !
 For thou dost haunt the air with sounds
 That cannot be sustained ;
 If still beneath that pine-tree's ragged bough
 Headlong yon waterfall must come,
 Oh let it then be dumb !
 Be any thing, sweet Rill, but that which thou art now !

Thou Eglantine, so bright with sunny showers,
 Proud as a rainbow spanning half the vale,
 Thou one fair shrub, oh! shed thy flowers,
 And stir not in the gale.
 For thus to see thee nodding in the air,
 To see thy arch thus stretch and bend,
 Thus rise and thus descend,—
 Disturbs me till the sight is more than I can bear.”

The Man who makes this feverish complaint
 Is one of giant stature, who could dance
 Equipped from head to foot in iron mail.
 Ah gentle Love! if ever thought was thine
 To store up kindred hours for me, thy face
 Turn from me, gentle Love! nor let me walk
 Within the sound of Emma's voice, nor know
 Such happiness as I have known to-day.

1800.

XIV.

A COMPLAINT.

—•—

THERE is a change—and I am poor ;
 YOUR love hath been, nor long ago,
 A fountain at my fond heart's door,
 Whose only business was to flow ;
 And flow it did ; not taking heed
 Of its own bounty, or my need.

What happy moments did I count !
 Blest was I then all bliss above !
 Now, for that consecrated fount
 Of murmuring, sparkling, living love,
 What have I ? shall I dare to tell ?
 A comfortless and hidden well.

A well of love—it may be deep—
 I trust it is,—and never dry :
 What matter ? if the waters sleep
 In silence and obscurity.
 —Such change, and at the very door
 Of my fond heart, hath made me poor.

xv.

TO ———



LET other bards of angels sing,
 Bright suns without a spot ;
 But thou art no such perfect thing :
 Rejoice that thou art not !

Such if thou wert in all men's view,
 A universal show,
 What would my fancy have to do ?
 My feelings to bestow ?

Heed not tho' none should call thee fair ;
 So, Mary, let it be
 If nought in loveliness compare
 With what thou art to me.

True beauty dwells in deep retreats,
 Whose veil is unremoved
 Till heart with heart in concord beats,
 And the lover is beloved.

XVI.

How rich that forehead's calm expanse !
 How bright that heaven-directed glance !
 —Waft her to glory, wingèd Powers,
 Ere sorrow be renewed,
 And intercourse with mortal hours
 Bring back a humbler mood !
 So looked Cecilia when she drew
 An Angel from his station ;
 So looked ; not ceasing to pursue
 Her tuneful adoration !

But hand and voice alike are still ;
 No sound *here* sweeps away the will
 That gave it birth : in service meek
 One upright arm sustains the cheek,
 And one across the bosom lies—
 That rose, and now forgets to rise,
 Subdued by breathless harmonies
 Of meditative feeling ;
 Mute strains from worlds beyond the skies,
 Through the pure light of female eyes,
 Their sanctity revealing !

XVII.

TO ———.

—•—

O DEARER far than light and life are dear,
 Full oft our human foresight I deplore ;
 Trembling, through my unworthiness, with fear
 That friends, by death disjoined, may meet no more !

Misgivings, hard to vanquish or control,
 Mix with the day, and cross the hour of rest ;
 While all the future, for thy purer soul,
 With 'sober certainties' of love is blest.

That sigh of thine, not meant for human ear,
 Tells that these words thy humbleness offend ;
 Yet bear me up—else faltering in the rear
 Of a steep march : support me to the end.

Peace settles where the intellect is meek,
 And Love is dutiful in thought and deed ;
 Through Thee communion with that Love I seek :
 The faith Heaven strengthens where *he* moulds the creed.

XVIII.

LAMENT OF MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS.

ON THE EVE OF A NEW YEAR.

I.

SMILE of the Moon!—for so I name
 That silent greeting from above ;
 A gentle flash of light that came
 From her whom drooping captives love ;
 Or art thou of still higher birth ?
 Thou that didst part the clouds of earth,
 My torpor to reprove !

II.

Bright boon of pitying Heaven!—alas,
 I may not trust thy placid cheer !
 Pondering that Time to-night will pass
 The threshold of another year ;
 For years to me are sad and dull ;
 My very moments are too full
 Of hopelessness and fear.

III.

And yet, the soul-awakening gleam,
That struck perchance the farthest cone
Of Scotland's rocky wilds, did seem
To visit me, and me alone ;
Me, unapproached by any friend,
Save those who to my sorrows lend
Tears due unto their own.

IV.

To-night the church-tower bells will ring
Through these wide realms a festive peal ;
To the new year a welcoming ;
A tuneful offering for the weal
Of happy millions lulled in sleep ;
While I am forced to watch and weep,
By wounds that may not heal.

V.

Born all too high, by wedlock raised
Still higher—to be cast thus low !
Would that mine eyes had never gazed
On aught of more ambitious show
Than the sweet flowerets of the fields !
—It is my royal state that yields
This bitterness of woe.

VI.

Yet how?—for I, if there be truth
In the world's voice, was passing fair ;
And beauty, for confiding youth,
Those shocks of passion can prepare
That kill the bloom before its time ;
And blanch, without the owner's crime,
The most resplendent hair.

VII.

Unblest distinction ! showered on me
To bind a lingering life in chains :
All that could quit my grasp, or flee,
Is gone ;—but not the subtle stains
Fixed in the spirit ; for even here
Can I be proud that jealous fear
Of what I was remains.

VIII.

A Woman rules my prison's key ;
A sister Queen, against the bent
Of law and holiest sympathy,
Detains me, doubtful of the event ;
Great God, who feel'st for my distress,
My thoughts are all that I possess,
O keep them innocent !

IX.

Farewell desire of human aid,
Which abject mortals vainly court !
By friends deceived, by foes betrayed,
Of fears the prey, of hopes the sport ;
Nought but the world-redeeming Cross
Is able to supply my loss,
My burthen to support.

X.

Hark ! the death-note of the year
Sounded by the castle-clock !
From her sunk eyes a stagnant tear
Stole forth, unsettled by the shock ;
But oft the woods renewed their green,
Ere the tired head of Scotland's Queen
Reposed upon the block !

1817.

XIX.

THE COMPLAINT

OF A FORSAKEN INDIAN WOMAN.

[When a Northern Indian, from sickness, is unable to continue his journey with his companions, he is left behind, covered over with deer-skins, and is supplied with water, food, and fuel, if the situation of the place will afford it. He is informed of the track which his companions intend to pursue, and if he be unable to follow, or overtake them, he perishes alone in the desert; unless he should have the good fortune to fall in with some other tribes of Indians. The females are equally, or still more, exposed to the same fate. See that very interesting work, HEARNE'S JOURNEY from HUDSON'S BAY to the NORTHERN OCEAN. In the high northern latitudes, as the same writer informs us, when the northern lights vary their position in the air, they make a rustling and a crackling noise, as alluded to in the following poem.]

I.

BEFORE I see another day,
 Oh let my body die away!
 In sleep I heard the northern gleams;
 The stars, they were among my dreams;
 In rustling conflict through the skies,
 I heard, I saw the flashes drive,
 And yet they are upon my eyes,
 And yet I am alive;
 Before I see another day,
 Oh let my body die away!

ii.

My fire is dead : it knew no pain ;
Yet is it dead, and I remain :
All stiff with ice the ashes lie ;
And they are dead, and I will die.
When I was well, I wished to live,
For clothes, for warmth, for food, and fire ;
But they to me no joy can give,
No pleasure now, and no desire.
Then here contented will I lie !
Alone, I cannot fear to die.

iii.

Alas ! ye might have dragged me on
Another day, a single one !
Too soon I yielded to despair ;
Why did ye listen to my prayer ?
When ye were gone my limbs were stronger ;
And oh, how grievously I rue,
That, afterwards, a little longer,
My friends, I did not follow you !
For strong and without pain I lay,
My friends, when ye were gone away.

IV.

My Child! they gave thee to another,
A woman who was not thy mother.
When from my arms my Babe they took,
On me how strangely did he look!
Through his whole body something ran,
A most strange working did I see;
—As if he strove to be a man,
That he might pull the sledge for me:
And then he stretched his arms, how wild!
Oh mercy! like a helpless child.

V.

My little joy! my little pride!
In two days more I must have died.
Then do not weep and grieve for me;
I feel I must have died with thee.
O wind, that o'er my head art flying
The way my friends their course did bend,
I should not feel the pain of dying,
Could I with thee a message send;
Too soon, my friends, ye went away;
For I had many things to say.

VI.

I'll follow you across the snow ;
Ye travel heavily and slow ;
In spite of all my weary pain
I'll look upon your tents again.
—My fire is dead, and snowy white
The water which beside it stood :
The wolf has come to me to-night,
And he has stolen away my food.
For ever left alone am I ;
Then wherefore should I fear to die ?

VII.

Young as I am, my course is run,
I shall not see another sun ;
I cannot lift my limbs to know
If they have any life or no.
My poor forsaken Child, if I
For once could have thee close to me,
With happy heart I then would die,
And my last thought would happy be ;
But thou, dear Babe, art far away,
Nor shall I see another day.

XX.

THE LAST OF THE FLOCK.



I.

IN distant countries have I been,
And yet I have not often seen
A healthy man, a man full grown,
Weep in the public roads, alone.
But such a one, on English ground,
And in the broad highway, I met ;
Along the broad highway he came,
His cheeks with tears were wet :
Sturdy he seemed, though he was sad ;
And in his arms a Lamb he had.

II.

He saw me, and he turned aside,
As if he wished himself to hide :
And with his coat did then essay
To wipe those briny tears away.
I followed him, and said, " My friend,
What ails you ? wherefore weep you so ?"
—" Shame on me, Sir ! this lusty Lamb,
He makes my tears to flow.
To-day I fetched him from the rock ;
He is the last of all my flock.

III.

When I was young, a single man,
And after youthful follies ran,
Though little given to care and thought,
Yet, so it was, an ewe I bought ;
And other sheep from her I raised,
As healthy sheep as you might see ;
And then I married, and was rich
As I could wish to be ;
Of sheep I numbered a full score,
And every year increased my store.

IV.

Year after year my stock it grew ;
And from this one, this single ewe,
Full fifty comely sheep I raised,
As fine a flock as ever grazed !
Upon the Quantock hills they fed ;
They throve, and we at home did thrive :
—This lusty Lamb of all my store
Is all that is alive ;
And now I care not if we die,
And perish all of poverty.

V.

Six Children, Sir ! had I to feed ;
Hard labour in a time of need !
My pride was tamed, and in our grief
I of the Parish asked relief.
They said, I was a wealthy man ;
My sheep upon the uplands fed,
And it was fit that thence I took
Whereof to buy us bread.
' Do this : how can we give to you,'
They cried, ' what to the poor is due ?'

VI.

I sold a sheep, as they had said,
And bought my little children bread,
And they were healthy with their food ;
For me—it never did me good.
A woeful time it was for me,
To see the end of all my gains,
The pretty flock which I had reared
With all my care and pains,
To see it melt like snow away—
For me it was a woeful day.

VII.

Another still ! and still another !
A little lamb, and then its mother !
It was a vein that never stopped—
Like blood-drops from my heart they dropped.
Till thirty were not left alive
They dwindled, dwindled, one by one ;
And I may say, that many a time
I wished they all were gone—
Reckless of what might come at last
Were but the bitter struggle past.

VIII.

To wicked deeds I was inclined,
And wicked fancies crossed my mind ;
And every man I chanced to see,
I thought he knew some ill of me :
No peace, no comfort could I find,
No ease, within doors or without ;
And, crazily and wearily
I went my work about ;
And oft was moved to flee from home,
And hide my head where wild beasts roam.

IX.

Sir ! 'twas a precious flock to me,
As dear as my own children be ;
For daily with my growing store
I loved my children more and more.
Alas ! it was an evil time ;
God cursed me in my sore distress ;
I prayed, yet every day I thought
I loved my children less ;
And every week, and every day,
My flock it seemed to melt away.

x.

They dwindled, Sir, sad sight to see!
From ten to five, from five to three,
A lamb, a wether, and a ewe ;—
And then at last from three to two ;
And, of my fifty, yesterday
I had but only one :
And here it lies upon my arm,
Alas! and I have none ;—
To-day I fetched it from the rock ;
It is the last of all my flock.”

1798.

XXI.

REPENTANCE.

A PASTORAL BALLAD.



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

When the troublesome Tempter beset us, said I,
 'Let him come, with his purse proudly grasped in his hand ;
 But, Allan, be true to me, Allan,—we'll die
 Before he shall go with an inch of the land !'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XXII.

THE AFFLICTION OF MARGARET.

I.

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

II.

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

III.

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

IV.

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

V.

Neglect me ! no, I suffered long
From that ill thought ; and, being blind,
Said, ' Pride shall help me in my wrong :
Kind mother have I been, as kind
As ever breathed : ' and that is true ;
I've wet my path with tears like dew,
Weeping for him when no one knew.

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XXIII.

THE COTTAGER TO HER INFANT.

BY A FEMALE FRIEND.

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

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

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

1805.

XXIV.

THE SAILOR'S MOTHER.

ONE morning (raw it was and wet
 A foggy day in winter time)
 A Woman on the road I met,
 Not old, though something past her prime :
 Majestic in her person, tall and straight ;
 And like a Roman matron's was her mien and gait.

The ancient spirit is not dead ;
 Old times, thought I, are breathing there ;
 Proud was I that my country bred
 Such strength, a dignity so fair :
 She begged an alms, like one in poor estate ;
 I looked at her again, nor did my pride abate.

When from these lofty thoughts I woke,
 " What is it," said I, " that you bear,
 Beneath the covert of your Cloak,
 Protected from this cold damp air ?"
 She answered, soon as she the question heard,
 " A simple burthen, Sir, a little Singing-bird."

And, thus continuing, she said,
“I had a Son, who many a day
Sailed on the seas, but he is dead ;
In Denmark he was cast away :
And I have travelled weary miles to see
If aught which he had owned might still remain for me.

The bird and cage they both were his :
’Twas my Son’s bird ; and neat and trim
He kept it : many voyages
This singing-bird had gone with him ;
When last he sailed, he left the bird behind ;
From bodings, as might be, that hung upon his mind.

He to a fellow-lodger’s care
Had left it, to be watched and fed,
And pipe its song in safety ;—there
I found it when my Son was dead ;
And now, God help me for my little wit !
I bear it with me, Sir ;—he took so much delight in it.”

XXV.

THE CHILDLESS FATHER.

—“ UP, Timothy, up with your staff and away!
 Not a soul in the village this morning will stay;
 The hare has just started from Hamilton’s grounds,
 And Skiddaw is glad with the cry of the hounds.”

—Of coats and of jackets grey, scarlet, and green,
 On the slopes of the pastures all colours were seen;
 With their comely blue aprons, and caps white as snow,
 The girls on the hills made a holiday show.

Fresh sprigs of green box-wood, not six months before,
 Filled the funeral basin * at Timothy’s door;
 A coffin through Timothy’s threshold had past;
 One Child did it bear, and that Child was his last.

* In several parts of the North of England when a funeral takes place, a basin full of sprigs of box-wood is placed at the door of the house from which the coffin is taken up, and each person who attends the funeral ordinarily takes a sprig of this box-wood, and throws it into the grave of the deceased.

Now fast up the dell came the noise and the fray,
The horse and the horn, and the hark ! hark away !
Old Timothy took up his staff, and he shut
With a leisurely motion the door of his hut.

Perhaps to himself at that moment he said ;
' The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead.'
But of this in my ears not a word did he speak ;
And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek.

1800.

XXVI.

THE EMIGRANT MOTHER.

ONCE in a lonely hamlet I sojourned
 In which a Lady driven from France did dwell ;
 The big and lesser griefs with which she mourned,
 In friendship she to me would often tell.

This Lady, dwelling upon English ground,
 Where she was childless, daily would repair
 To a poor neighbouring cottage ; as I found,
 For sake of a young Child whose home was there.

Once having seen her take with fond embrace
 This Infant to herself, I framed a lay,
 Endeavouring, in my native tongue, to trace
 Such things as she unto the Child might say :
 And thus, from what I knew, had heard, and guessed,
 My song the workings of her heart expressed.

I.

“ Dear Babe, thou daughter of another,
One moment let me be thy mother !
An infant’s face and looks are thine
And sure a mother’s heart is mine :
Thy own dear mother ’s far away,
At labour in the harvest field :
Thy little sister is at play ;—
What warmth, what comfort would it yield
To my poor heart, if thou would’st be
One little hour a child to me !

II.

Across the waters I am come,
And I have left a babe at home :
A long, long way of land and sea !
Come to me—I ’m no enemy :
I am the same who at thy side
Sate yesterday, and made a nest
For thee, sweet Baby !—thou hast tried.
Thou know’st the pillow of my breast ;
Good, good art thou :—alas ! to me
Far more than I can be to thee.

III.

Here, little Darling, dost thou lie ;
An infant thou, a mother I !
Mine wilt thou be, thou hast no fears ;
Mine art thou—spite of these my tears.
Alas ! before I left the spot,
My baby and its dwelling-place ;
The nurse said to me, ‘ Tears should not
Be shed upon an infant’s face,
It was unlucky ’—no, no, no ;
No truth is in them who say so !

IV.

My own dear Little-one will sigh,
Sweet Babe ! and they will let him die.
‘ He pines,’ they’ll say, ‘ it is his doom,
And you may see his hour is come.’
Oh ! had he but thy cheerful smiles,
Limbs stout as thine, and lips as gay,
Thy looks, thy cunning, and thy wiles,
And countenance like a summer’s day,
They would have hopes of him ;—and then
I should behold his face again !

v.

'Tis gone—like dreams that we forget ;
There was a smile or two—yet—yet
I can remember them, I see
The smiles, worth all the world to me.
Dear Baby ! I must lay thee down ;
Thou troublest me with strange alarms ;
Smiles hast thou, bright ones of thy own ;
I cannot keep thee in my arms ;
For they confound me ;—where—where is
That last, that sweetest smile of his ?

vi.

Oh ! how I love thee !—we will stay
Together here this one half day.
My sister's child, who bears my name,
From France to sheltering England came ;
She with her mother crossed the sea ;
The babe and mother near me dwell :
But to my heart she cannot be
What thou art, though I love her well :
Rest, little Stranger, rest thee here !
Never was any child more dear !

VII.

—I cannot help it ; ill intent
I've none, my pretty Innocent !
I weep—I know they do thee wrong,
These tears—and my poor idle tongue.
Oh, what a kiss was that ! my cheek
How cold it is ! but thou art good ;
Thine eyes are on me—they would speak,
I think, to help me if they could.
Blessings upon that soft, warm face,
My heart again is in its place !

VIII.

While thou art mine, my little Love,
This cannot be a sorrowful grove ;
Contentment, hope, and mother's glee,
I seem to find them all in thee :
Here 's grass to play with, here are flowers ;
I'll call thee by my darling's name ;
Thou hast, I think, a look of ours,
Thy features seem to me the same ;
His little sister thou shalt be ;
And, when once more my home I see,
I'll tell him many tales of Thee."

XXVII.

VAUDRACOUR AND JULIA.

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



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

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

Thus, not without concurrence of an age
Unknown to memory, was an earnest given
By ready nature for a life of love,
For endless constancy, and placid truth ;
But whatsoever of such rare treasure lay
Reserved, had fate permitted, for support
Of their maturer years, his present mind
Was under fascination ;—he beheld
A vision, and adored the thing he saw.
Arabian fiction never filled the world
With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
Earth breathed in one great presence of the spring ;
Life turned the meanest of her implements,
Before his eyes, to price above all gold ;
The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine ;

Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
 The portals of the dawn ; all paradise
 Could, by the simple opening of a door,
 Let itself in upon him :—pathways, walks,
 Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank,
 Surcharged, within him, overblest to move
 Beneath a sun that wakes a weary world
 To its dull round of ordinary cares ;
 A man too happy for mortality !

So passed the time, till whether through effect
 Of some unguarded moment that dissolved
 Virtuous restraint—ah, speak it, think it, not !
 Deem rather that the fervent Youth, who saw
 So many bars between his present state
 And the dear haven where he wished to be
 In honourable wedlock with his Love,
 Was in his judgment tempted to decline
 To perilous weakness, and entrust his cause
 To nature for a happy end of all ;
 Deem that by such fond hope the Youth was swayed,
 And bear with their transgression, when I add
 That Julia, wanting yet the name of wife,
 Carried about her for a secret grief
 The promise of a mother.

To conceal
 The threatened shame, the parents of the Maid
 Found means to hurry her away by night,

And unforewarned, that in some distant spot
She might remain shrouded in privacy,
Until the babe was born. When morning came,
The Lover, thus bereft, stung with his loss,
And all uncertain whither he should turn,
Chafed like a wild beast in the toils ; but soon
Discovering traces of the fugitives,
Their steps he followed to the Maid's retreat.
Easily may the sequel be divined—
Walks to and fro—watchings at every hour ;
And the fair Captive, who, whene'er she may,
Is busy at her casement as the swallow
Fluttering its pinions, almost within reach,
About the pendent nest, did thus espy
Her Lover !—thence a stolen interview,
Accomplished under friendly shade of night.

I pass the raptures of the pair ;—such theme
Is, by innumerable poets, touched
In more delightful verse than skill of mine
Could fashion ; chiefly by that darling bard
Who told of Juliet and her Romeo,
And of the lark's note heard before its time,
And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds
In the unrelenting east.—Through all her courts
The vacant city slept ; the busy winds,
That keep no certain intervals of rest,
Moved not ; meanwhile the galaxy displayed
Her fires, that like mysterious pulses beat

Aloft ;—momentous but uneasy bliss !
To their full hearts the universe seemed hung
On that brief meeting's slender filament !

They parted ; and the generous Vaudracour
Reached speedily the native threshold, bent
On making (so the Lovers had agreed)
A sacrifice of birthright to attain
A final portion from his father's hand ;
Which granted, Bride and Bridegroom then would flee
To some remote and solitary place,
Shady as night, and beautiful as heaven,
Where they may live, with no one to behold
Their happiness, or to disturb their love.
But *now* of this no whisper ; not the less,
If ever an obtrusive word were dropped
Touching the matter of his passion, still,
In his stern father's hearing, Vaudracour
Persisted openly that death alone
Should abrogate his human privilege
Divine, of swearing everlasting truth,
Upon the altar, to the Maid he loved.

“ You shall be baffled in your mad intent
If there be justice in the court of France,”
Muttered the Father.—From these words the Youth
Conceived a terror ; and, by night or day,
Stirred nowhere without weapons, that full soon
Found dreadful provocation : for at night

When to his chamber he retired, attempt
Was made to seize him by three armèd men,
Acting, in furtherance of the father's will,
Under a private signet of the State.
One the rash Youth's ungovernable hand
Slew, and as quickly to a second gave
A perilous wound—he shuddered to behold
The breathless corse ; then peacefully resigned
His person to the law, was lodged in prison,
And wore the fetters of a criminal.

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

For him, by private influence with the Court,
Was pardon gained, and liberty procured ;
But not without exaction of a pledge,

Which liberty and love dispersed in air.
He flew to her from whom they would divide him—
He clove to her who could not give him peace—
Yea, his first word of greeting was,—“ All right
Is gone from me ; my lately-towering hopes,
To the least fibre of their lowest root,
Are withered ; thou no longer canst be mine,
I thine—the conscience-stricken must not woo
The unruffled Innocent,—I see thy face,
Behold thee, and my misery is complete ! ”

“ One, are we not ? ” exclaimed the Maiden—“ One,
For innocence and youth, for weal and woe ? ”
Then with the father’s name she coupled words
Of vehement indignation ; but the Youth
Checked her with filial meekness ; for no thought
Uncharitable, no presumptuous rising
Of hasty censure, modelled in the eclipse
Of true domestic loyalty, did e’er
Find place within his bosom.—Once again
The persevering wedge of tyranny
Achieved their separation : and once more
Were they united,—to be yet again
Disparted, pitiable lot ! But here
A portion of the tale may well be left
In silence, though my memory could add
Much how the Youth, in scanty space of time,
Was traversed from without ; much, too, of thoughts
That occupied his days in solitude

Under privation and restraint ; and what,
Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,
And what, through strong compunction for the past,
He suffered—breaking down in heart and mind !

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

Shall by his beauty win his grandsire's heart
So that it shall be softened, and our loves
End happily, as they began !”

These gleams

Appeared but seldom ; oftener was he seen
Propping a pale and melancholy face
Upon the Mother's bosom ; resting thus
His head upon one breast, while from the other
The Babe was drawing in its quiet food.
—That pillow is no longer to be thine,
Fond Youth ! that mournful solace now must pass
Into the list of things that cannot be !
Unwedded Julia, terror-smitten, hears
The sentence, by her mother's lip pronounced,
That dooms her to a convent.—Who shall tell,
Who dares report, the tidings to the lord
Of her affections ? So they blindly asked
Who knew not to what quiet depths a weight
Of agony had pressed the Sufferer down :
The word, by others dreaded, he can hear
Composed and silent, without visible sign
Of even the least emotion. Noting this,
When the impatient Object of his love
Upbraided him with slackness, he returned
No answer, only took the mother's hand
And kissed it ; seemingly devoid of pain,
Or care, that what so tenderly he pressed,
Was a dependant on the obdurate heart
Of one who came to disunite their lives

For ever—sad alternative! preferred,
By the unbending Parents of the Maid,
To secret 'spousals meanly disavowed.
—So be it!

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

This was the manner in which Vaudracour
Departed with his infant; and thus reached

His father's house, where to the innocent child
Admittance was denied. The young man spake
No word of indignation or reproof,
But of his father begged, a last request,
That a retreat might be assigned to him
Where in forgotten quiet he might dwell,
With such allowance as his wants required ;
For wishes he had none. To a lodge that stood
Deep in a forest, with leave given, at the age
Of four-and-twenty summers he withdrew ;
And thither took with him his motherless Babe,
And one domestic for their common needs,
An aged woman. It consoled him here
To attend upon the orphan, and perform
Obsequious service to the precious child,
Which, after a short time, by some mistake
Or indiscretion of the Father, died.—
The Tale I follow to its last recess
Of suffering or of peace, I know not which :
Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine !

From this time forth he never shared a smile
With mortal creature. An Inhabitant
Of that same town, in which the pair had left
So lively a remembrance of their griefs,
By chance of business, coming within reach
Of his retirement, to the forest lodge
Repaired, but only found the matron there,
Who told him that his pains were thrown away,

For that her Master never uttered word
To living thing—not even to her.—Behold !
While they were speaking, Vaudracour approached ;
But, seeing some one near, as on the latch
Of the garden-gate his hand was laid, he shrunk—
And, like a shadow, glided out of view.
Shocked at his savage aspect, from the place
The visiter retired.

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

1805.

XXVIII.

THE IDIOT BOY.



'Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night,
 The moon is up,—the sky is blue,
 The owlet, in the moonlight air,
 Shouts, from nobody knows where ;
 He lengthens out his lonely shout,
 Halloo ! halloo ! a long halloo !

—Why bustle thus about your door,
 What means this bustle, Betty Foy ?
 Why are you in this mighty fret ?
 And why on horseback have you set
 Him whom you love, your Idiot Boy ?

Scarcely a soul is out of bed ;
 Good Betty, put him down again ;
 His lips with joy they burr at you ;
 But, Betty ! what has he to do
 With stirrup, saddle, or with rein ?

But Betty's bent on her intent ;
For her good neighbour, Susan Gale,
Old Susan, she who dwells alone,
Is sick, and makes a piteous moan,
As if her very life would fail.

There's not a house within a mile,
No hand to help them in distress ;
Old Susan lies a-bed in pain,
And sorely puzzled are the twain,
For what she ails they cannot guess.

And Betty's husband's at the wood,
Where by the week he doth abide,
A woodman in the distant vale ;
There's none to help poor Susan Gale ;
What must be done ? what will betide ?

And Betty from the lane has fetched
Her Pony, that is mild and good ;
Whether he be in joy or pain,
Feeding at will along the lane,
Or bringing faggots from the wood.

And he is all in travelling trim,—
And, by the moonlight, Betty Foy
Has on the well-girt saddle set
(The like was never heard of yet)
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And he must post without delay
Across the bridge and through the dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a Doctor from the town,
Or she will die, old Susan Gale.

There is no need of boot or spur,
There is no need of whip or wand ;
For Johnny has his holly-bough,
And with a *hurly-burly* now
He shakes the green bough in his hand.

And Betty o'er and o'er has told
The Boy, who is her best delight,
Both what to follow, what to shun,
What do, and what to leave undone,
How turn to left, and how to right.

And Betty's most especial charge,
Was, " Johnny ! Johnny ! mind that you
Come home again, nor stop at all,—
Come home again, whate'er befall,
My Johnny, do, I pray you do."

To this did Johnny answer make,
Both with his head and with his hand,
And proudly shook the bridle too ;
And then ! his words were not a few,
Which Betty well could understand.

And now that Johnny is just going,
Though Betty's in a mighty flurry,
She gently pats the Pony's side,
On which her Idiot Boy must ride,
And seems no longer in a hurry.

But when the Pony moved his legs,
Oh ! then for the poor Idiot Boy !
For joy he cannot hold the bridle,
For joy his head and heels are idle,
He's idle all for very joy.

And while the Pony moves his legs,
In Johnny's left hand you may see
The green bough motionless and dead :
The Moon that shines above his head
Is not more still and mute than he.

His heart it was so full of glee,
That till full fifty yards were gone,
He quite forgot his holly whip,
And all his skill in horsemanship,
Oh ! happy, happy, happy John.

And while the Mother, at the door,
Stands fixed, her face with joy o'erflows,
Proud of herself, and proud of him,
She sees him in his travelling trim,
How quietly her Johnny goes.

The silence of her Idiot Boy,
What hopes it sends to Betty's heart !
He's at the guide-post—he turns right ;
She watches till he's out of sight,
And Betty will not then depart.

Burr, burr—now Johnny's lips they burr,
As loud as any mill, or near it ;
Meek as a lamb the Pony moves,
And Johnny makes the noise he loves,
And Betty listens, glad to hear it.

Away she hies to Susan Gale :
Her Messenger's in merry tune ;
The owlets hoot, the owlets curr,
And Johnny's lips they burr, burr, burr,
As on he goes beneath the moon.

His steed and he right well agree ;
For of this Pony there's a rumour,
That, should he lose his eyes and ears,
And should he live a thousand years,
He never will be out of humour.

But then he is a horse that thinks !
And when he thinks, his pace is slack ;
Now, though he knows poor Johnny well,
Yet, for his life, he cannot tell
What he has got upon his back.

So through the moonlight lanes they go,
And far into the moonlight dale,
And by the church, and o'er the down,
To bring a Doctor from the town,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And Betty, now at Susan's side,
Is in the middle of her story,
What speedy help her Boy will bring,
With many a most diverting thing,
Of Johnny's wit, and Johnny's glory.

And Betty, still at Susan's side,
By this time is not quite so flurried :
Demure with porringer and plate
She sits, as if in Susan's fate
Her life and soul were buried.

But Betty, poor good woman ! she,
You plainly in her face may read it,
Could lend out of that moment's store
Five years of happiness or more
To any that might need it.

But yet I guess that now and then
With Betty all was not so well ;
And to the road she turns her ears,
And thence full many a sound she hears,
Which she to Susan will not tell.

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;
“ As sure as there’s a moon in heaven,”
Cries Betty, “ he ’ll be back again ;
They ’ll both be here—’tis almost ten—
Both will be here before eleven.”

Poor Susan moans, poor Susan groans ;
The clock gives warning for eleven ;
’Tis on the stroke—“ He must be near,”
Quoth Betty, “ and will soon be here,
As sure as there ’s a moon in heaven.”

The clock is on the stroke of twelve,
And Johnny is not yet in sight :
—The Moon’s in heaven, as Betty sees,
But Betty is not quite at ease ;
And Susan has a dreadful night.

And Betty, half an hour ago,
On Johnny vile reflections cast :
“ A little idle sauntering Thing ! ”
With other names, an endless string ;
But now that time is gone and past.

And Betty ’s drooping at the heart,
That happy time all past and gone,
“ How can it be he is so late ?
The Doctor, he has made him wait ;
Susan ! they ’ll both be here anon.”

And Susan's growing worse and worse,
And Betty's in a sad *quandary*;
And then there's nobody to say
If she must go, or she must stay!
—She's in a sad *quandary*.

The clock is on the stroke of one ;
But neither Doctor nor his Guide
Appears along the moonlight road ;
There's neither horse nor man abroad,
And Betty's still at Susan's side.

And Susan now begins to fear
Of sad mischances not a few,
That Johnny may perhaps be drowned ;
Or lost, perhaps, and never found ;
Which they must both for ever rue.

She prefaced half a hint of this
With, " God forbid it should be true ! "
At the first word that Susan said
Cried Betty, rising from the bed,
" Susan, I'd gladly stay with you.

I must be gone, I must away :
Consider, Johnny's but half-wise ;
Susan, we must take care of him,
If he is hurt in life or limb"—
" Oh God forbid ! " poor Susan cries.

“What can I do?” says Betty, going,
“What can I do to ease your pain?
Good Susan tell me, and I ’ll stay;
I fear you ’re in a dreadful way,
But I shall soon be back again.”

“Nay, Betty, go! good Betty, go!
There ’s nothing that can ease my pain.”
Then off she hies; but with a prayer
That God poor Susan’s life would spare,
Till she comes back again.

So, through the moonlight lane she goes,
And far into the moonlight dale;
And how she ran, and how she walked,
And all that to herself she talked,
Would surely be a tedious tale.

In high and low, above, below,
In great and small, in round and square,
In tree and tower was Johnny seen,
In bush and brake, in black and green;
’Twas Johnny, Johnny, every where.

And while she crossed the bridge, there came
A thought with which her heart is sore—
Johnny perhaps his horse forsook,
To hunt the moon within the brook,
And never will be heard of more.

Now is she high upon the down,
Alone amid a prospect wide ;
There 's neither Johnny nor his Horse
Among the fern or in the gorse ;
There 's neither Doctor nor his Guide.

“ Oh saints ! what is become of him ?
Perhaps he 's climbed into an oak,
Where he will stay till he is dead ;
Or, sadly he has been misled,
•And joined the wandering gipsy-folk.

Or him that wicked Pony 's carried
To the dark cave, the goblin's hall ;
Or in the castle he 's pursuing
Among the ghosts his own undoing ;
Or playing with the waterfall.”

At poor old Susan then she railed,
While to the town she posts away ;
“ If Susan had not been so ill,
Alas ! I should have had him still,
My Johnny, till my dying day.”

Poor Betty, in this sad distemper,
The Doctor's self could hardly spare :
Unworthy things she talked, and wild ;
Even he, of cattle the most mild,
The Pony had his share.

But now she's fairly in the town,
And to the Doctor's door she hies ;
'Tis silence all on every side ;
The town so long, the town so wide,
Is silent as the skies.

And now she's at the Doctor's door,
She lifts the knocker, rap, rap, rap ;
The Doctor at the casement shows
His glimmering eyes that peep and doze !
And one hand rubs his old night-cap.

“ Oh Doctor ! Doctor ! where's my Johnny ? ”

“ I'm here, what is 't you want with me ? ”

“ Oh Sir ! you know I 'm Betty Foy,
And I have lost my poor dear Boy,
You know him—him you often see ;

He's not so wise as some folks be : ”

“ The devil take his wisdom ! ” said

The Doctor, looking somewhat grim,

“ What, Woman ! should I know of him ? ”

And, grumbling, he went back to bed !

“ O woe is me ! O woe is me !

Here will I die ; here will I die ;

I thought to find my lost one here,

But he is neither far nor near,

Oh ! what a wretched Mother I ! ”

She stops, she stands, she looks about :
Which way to turn she cannot tell.
Poor Betty ! it would ease her pain
If she had heart to knock again ;
—The clock strikes three—a dismal knell !

Then up along the town she hies,
No wonder if her senses fail ;
This piteous news so much it shocked her,
She quite forgot to send the Doctor,
To comfort poor old Susan Gale.

And now she's high upon the down,
And she can see a mile of road :
“ O cruel ! I'm almost threescore ;
Such night as this was ne'er before,
There's not a single soul abroad.”

She listens, but she cannot hear
The foot of horse, the voice of man ;
The streams with softest sound are flowing,
The grass you almost hear it growing,
You hear it now, if e'er you can.

The owlets through the long blue night
Are shouting to each other still :
Fond lovers ! yet not quite hob nob,
They lengthen out the tremulous sob,
That echoes far from hill to hill.

Poor Betty now has lost all hope,
Her thoughts are bent on deadly sin,
A green-grown pond she just has past,
And from the brink she hurries fast,
Lest she should drown herself therein.

And now she sits her down and weeps ;
Such tears she never shed before ;
“ Oh dear, dear Pony ! my sweet joy !
Oh carry back my Idiot Boy !
And we will ne'er o'erload thee more.”

A thought is come into her head :
The Pony he is mild and good,
And we have always used him well ;
Perhaps he 's gone along the dell,
And carried Johnny to the wood.

Then up she springs as if on wings ;
She thinks no more of deadly sin ;
If Betty fifty ponds should see,
The last of all her thoughts would be
To drown herself therein.

O Reader ! now that I might tell
What Johnny and his Horse are doing !
What they 've been doing all this time,
Oh could I put it into rhyme,
A most delightful tale pursuing !

Perhaps, and no unlikely thought !
He with his Pony now doth roam
The cliffs and peaks so high that are,
To lay his hands upon a star,
And in his pocket bring it home.

Perhaps he 's turned himself about,
His face unto his horse's tail,
And, still and mute, in wonder lost,
All silent as a horseman-ghost,
He travels slowly down the vale.

And now, perhaps, is hunting sheep,
A fierce and dreadful hunter he ;
Yon valley, now so trim and green,
In five months' time, should he be seen,
A desert wilderness will be !

Perhaps, with head and heels on fire,
And like the very soul of evil,
He 's galloping away, away,
And so will gallop on for aye,
The bane of all that dread the devil !

I to the Muses have been bound
These fourteen years, by strong indentures :
O gentle Muses ! let me tell
But half of what to him befel ;
He surely met with strange adventures.

O gentle Muses ! is this kind ?
Why will ye thus my suit repel ?
Why of your further aid bereave me ?
And can ye thus unfriended leave me ;
Ye Muses ! whom I love so well ?

Who's yon, that, near the waterfall,
Which thunders down with headlong force,
Beneath the moon, yet shining fair,
As careless as if nothing were,
Sits upright on a feeding horse ?

Unto his horse—there feeding free,
He seems, I think, the rein to give ;
Of moon or stars he takes no heed ;
Of such we in romances read :
—'Tis Johnny ! Johnny ! as I live.

And that's the very Pony, too !
Where is she, where is Betty Foy ?
She hardly can sustain her fears ;
The roaring waterfall she hears,
And cannot find her Idiot Boy.

Your Pony's worth his weight in gold :
Then calm your terrors, Betty Foy !
She's coming from among the trees,
And now all full in view she sees
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy.

And Betty sees the Pony too :
Why stand you thus, good Betty Foy ?
It is no goblin, 'tis no ghost,
'Tis he whom you so long have lost,
He whom you love, your Idiot Boy.

She looks again—her arms are up—
She screams—she cannot move for joy ;
She darts, as with a torrent's force,
She almost has o'erturned the Horse,
And fast she holds her Idiot Boy.

And Johnny burrs, and laughs aloud ;
Whether in cunning or in joy
I cannot tell ; but while he laughs,
Betty a drunken pleasure quaffs
To hear again her Idiot Boy.

And now she 's at the Pony's tail,
And now is at the Pony's head,—
On that side now, and now on this ;
And, almost stifled with her bliss,
A few sad tears does Betty shed.

She kisses o'er and o'er again
Him whom she loves, her Idiot Boy ;
She's happy here, is happy there,
She is uneasy every where ;
Her limbs are all alive with joy.

She pats the Pony, where or when
She knows not, happy Betty Foy !
The little Pony glad may be,
But he is milder far than she,
You hardly can perceive his joy.

“ Oh ! Johnny, never mind the Doctor ;
You 've done your best, and that is all : ”
She took the reins, when this was said,
And gently turned the Pony's head
From the loud waterfall.

By this the stars were almost gone,
The moon was setting on the hill,
So pale you scarcely looked at her :
The little birds began to stir,
Though yet their tongues were still.

The Pony, Betty, and her Boy,
Wind slowly through the woody dale ;
And who is she, betimes abroad,
That hobbles up the steep rough road ?
Who is it, but old Susan Gale ?

Long time lay Susan lost in thought ;
And many dreadful fears beset her,
Both for her Messenger and Nurse ;
And, as her mind grew worse and worse,
Her body—it grew better.

She turned, she tossed herself in bed,
On all sides doubts and terrors met her ;
Point after point did she discuss ;
And, while her mind was fighting thus,
Her body still grew better.

“ Alas ! what is become of them ?
These fears can never be endured,
I'll to the wood.”—The word scarce said,
Did Susan rise up from her bed,
As if by magic cured.

Away she goes up hill and down,
And to the wood at length is come ;
She spies her Friends, she shouts a greeting ;
Oh me ! it is a merry meeting
As ever was in Christendom.

The owls have hardly sung their last,
While our four Travellers homeward wend ;
The owls have hooted all night long,
And with the owls began my song,
And with the owls must end.

For while they all were travelling home,
Cried Betty, “ Tell us, Johnny, do,
Where all this long night you have been,
What you have heard, what you have seen :
And, Johnny, mind you tell us true.”

Now Johnny all night long had heard
The owls in tuneful concert strive ;
No doubt too he the moon had seen ;
For in the moonlight he had been
From eight o'clock till five.

And thus, to Betty's question, he
Made answer, like a traveller bold,
(His very words I give to you,)
“ The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo,
And the sun did shine so cold ! ”
—Thus answered Johnny in his glory,
And that was all his travel's story.

1798.

XXIX.

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 oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone

For pastime and delight, as is the use
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 ;

* Clipping is the word used in the North of England for shearing.

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 hinderance and a help ;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his Father hire of praise ;
Though nought 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
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night :
—If he *could* go, the Boy should go to-night."

Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The Housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
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 to-morrow." To this word
The Housewife answered, talking much of things

Which, if at such short notice he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
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,
To-morrow thou wilt leave me : with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same
That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
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 shouldst live the life they lived :
But, 'tis a long time to look back, my Son,
And see so little gain from threescore years.
These fields were burthened when they came to me ;
Till I was forty years of age, not more

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 should'st 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 eighty-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 could'st 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
Befal 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 kissèd 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.

XXX.

THE ARMENIAN LADY'S LOVE.

[The subject of the following poem is from the *Orlandus* of the author's friend, Kenelm Henry Digby: and the liberty is taken of inscribing it to him as an acknowledgment, however unworthy, of pleasure and instruction derived from his numerous and valuable writings, illustrative of the piety and chivalry of the olden time.]

I.

You have heard 'a Spanish Lady
 How she wooed an English man* ;'
 Hear now of a fair Armenian,
 Daughter of the proud Soldàn ;
 How she loved a Christian Slave, and told her pain
 By word, look, deed, with hope that he might love again.

II.

" Pluck that rose, it moves my liking,"
 Said she, lifting up her veil ;
 " Pluck it for me, gentle gardener,
 Ere it wither and grow pale."
 " Princess fair, I till the ground, but may not take
 From twig or bed an humbler flower, even for your sake!"

* See, in Percy's *Reliques*, that fine old ballad, "The Spanish Lady's Love;" from which Poem the form of stanza, as suitable to dialogue, is adopted.

III.

“ Grieved am I, submissive Christian !
To behold thy captive state ;
Women, in your land, may pity
(May they not ?) the unfortunate.”

“ Yes, kind Lady ! otherwise man could not bear
Life, which to every one that breathes is full of care.”

IV.

“ Worse than idle is compassion
If it end in tears and sighs ;
Thee from bondage would I rescue
And from vile indignities ;

Nurtured, as thy mien bespeaks, in high degree,
Look up—and help a hand that longs to set thee free.”

V.

“ Lady ! dread the wish, nor venture
In such peril to engage ;
Think how it would stir against you
Your most loving father's rage :

Sad deliverance would it be, and yoked with shame,
Should troubles overflow on her from whom it came.”

VI.

"Generous Frank! the just in effort
 Are of inward peace secure :
 Hardships for the brave encountered,
 Even the feeblest may endure :
 If almighty grace through me thy chains unbind
 My father for slave's work may seek a slave in mind."

VII.

"Princess, at this burst of goodness,
 My long-frozen heart grows warm!"
 "Yet you make all courage fruitless,
 Me to save from chance of harm :
 Leading such companion I that gilded dome,
 Yon minarets, would gladly leave for his worst home."

VIII.

"Feeling tunes your voice, fair Princess!
 And your brow is free from scorn,
 Else these words would come like mockery,
 Sharper than the pointed thorn."
 "Whence the undeserved mistrust? Too wide apart—
 Our faith hath been,—O would that eyes could see the heart!"

IX.

“Tempt me not, I pray ; my doom is

These base implements to wield ;

Rusty lance, I ne'er shall grasp thee,

Ne'er assoil my cobwebb'd shield !

Never see my native land, nor castle towers,

Nor Her who thinking of me there counts widowed hours.”

X.

“Prisoner ! pardon youthful fancies ;

Wedded ? If you *can*, say no !

Blessed is and be your consort ;

Hopes I cherished—let them go !

Handmaid's privilege would leave my purpose free,

Without another link to my felicity.”

XI.

“Wedded love with loyal Christians,

Lady, is a mystery rare ;

Body, heart, and soul in union,

Make one being of a pair.”

“Humble love in me would look for no return,

Soft as a guiding star that cheers, but cannot burn.”

XII.

" Gracious Allah ! by such title
 Do I dare to thank the God,
 Him who thus exalts thy spirit,
 Flower of an unchristian sod !
 Or hast thou put off wings which thou in heaven dost wear
 What have I seen, and heard, or dreamt ? where am I ? where ?

XIII.

Here broke off the dangerous converse :
 Less impassioned words might tell
 How the pair escaped together,
 Tears not wanting, nor a knell
 Of sorrow in her heart while through her father's door,
 And from her narrow world, she passed for evermore.

XIV.

But affections higher, holier,
 Urged her steps ; she shrunk from trust
 In a sensual creed that trampled
 Woman's birthright into dust.
 Little be the wonder then, the blame be none,
 If she, a timid Maid, hath put such boldness on.

xv.

Judge both Fugitives with knowledge :
In those old romantic days
Mighty were the soul's commandments
To support, restrain, or raise.
Foes might hang upon their path, snakes rustle near,
But nothing from their inward selves had they to fear.

xvi.

Thought infirm ne'er came between them,
Whether printing desert sands
With accordant steps, or gathering
Forest-fruit with social hands ;
Or whispering like two reeds that in the cold moonbeam
Bend with the breeze their heads, beside a crystal stream.

xvii.

On a friendly deck reposing
They at length for Venice steer ;
There, when they had closed their voyage,
One, who daily on the pier
Watched for tidings from the East, beheld his Lord,
Fell down and clasped his knees for joy, not uttering word.

XVIII.

Mutual was the sudden transport ;
Breathless questions followed fast,
Years contracting to a moment,
Each word greedier than the last ;
“Hie thee to the Countess, friend! return with speed,
And of this Stranger speak by whom her lord was freed.

XIX.

Say that I, who might have languished,
Drooped and pined till life was spent,
Now before the gates of Stolberg
My Deliverer would present
For a crowning recompense, the precious grace
Of her who in my heart still holds her ancient place.

XX.

Make it known that my Companion
Is of royal eastern blood,
Thirsting after all perfection,
Innocent, and meek, and good,
Though with misbelievers bred ; but that dark night
Will holy Church disperse by beams of gospel-light.”

XXI.

Swiftly went that grey-haired Servant,
Soon returned a trusty Page
Charged with greetings, benedictions,
Thanks and praises, each a gage
For a sunny thought to cheer the Stranger's way,
Her virtuous scruples to remove, her fears allay.

XXII.

And how blest the Reunited,
While beneath their castle-walls,
Runs a deafening noise of welcome!—
Blest, though every tear that falls
Doth in its silence of past sorrow tell,
And makes a meeting seem most like a dear farewell.

XXIII.

Through a haze of human nature,
Glorified by heavenly light,
Looked the beautiful Deliverer
On that overpowering sight,
While across her virgin cheek pure blushes strayed,
For every tender sacrifice her heart had made.

XXIV.

On the ground the weeping Countess
 Knelt, and kissed the Stranger's hand ;
 Act of soul-devoted homage,
 Pledge of an eternal band :
 Nor did aught of future days that kiss belie,
 Which, with a generous shout, the crowd did ratify.

XXV.

Constant to the fair Armenian,
 Gentle pleasures round her moved,
 Like a tutelary spirit
 Reverenced, like a sister, loved.
 Christian meekness smoothed for all the path of life,
 Who, loving most, should wiseliest love, their only strife.

XXVI.

Mute memento of that union
 In a Saxon church survives,
 Where a cross-legged Knight lies sculptured
 As between two wedded Wives—
 Figures with armorial signs of race and birth,
 And the vain rank the pilgrims bore while yet on earth.

XXXI.

LOVING AND LIKING :

IRREGULAR VERSES,

ADDRESSED TO A CHILD.

(By the Author of the Poem, page 8.)

THERE'S more in words than I can teach:
Yet listen, Child!—I would not preach;
But only give some plain directions
To guide your speech and your affections.
Say not you *love* a roasted fowl,
But you may love a screaming owl,
And, if you can, the unwieldy toad
That crawls from his secure abode
Within the mossy garden wall
When evening dews begin to fall.
Oh mark the beauty of his eye:
What wonders in that circle lie!
So clear, so bright, our fathers said
He wears a jewel in his head!

And when, upon some showery day,
Into a path or public way
A frog leaps out from bordering grass,
Startling the timid as they pass,
Do you observe him, and endeavour
To take the intruder into favour ;
Learning from him to find a reason
For a light heart in a dull season.
And you may love him in the pool,
That is for him a happy school,
In which he swims as taught by nature,
A pattern for a human creature,
Glancing amid the water bright,
And sending upward sparkling light.

Nor blush if o'er your heart be stealing
A love for things that have no feeling :
The spring's first rose by you espied,
May fill your breast with joyful pride ;
And you may love the strawberry-flower,
And love the strawberry in its bower ;
But when the fruit, so often praised
For beauty, to your lip is raised,
Say not you *love* the delicate treat,
But *like* it, enjoy it, and thankfully eat.

Long may you love your pensioner mouse,
Though one of a tribe that torment the house :

Nor dislike for her cruel sport the cat,
That deadly foe both of mouse and rat ;
Remember she follows the law of her kind,
And Instinct is neither wayward nor blind.
Then think of her beautiful gliding form,
Her tread that would scarcely crush a worm,
And her soothing song by the winter fire,
Soft as the dying throb of the lyre.

I would not circumscribe your love :
It may soar with the eagle and brood with the dove,
May pierce the earth with the patient mole,
Or track the hedgehog to his hole.
Loving and liking are the solace of life,
Rock the cradle of joy, smooth the death-bed of strife.
You love your father and your mother,
Your grown-up and your baby brother ;
You love your sister, and your friends,
And countless blessings which God sends :
And while these right affections play,
You *live* each moment of your day ;
They lead you on to full content,
And likings fresh and innocent,
That store the mind, the memory feed,
And prompt to many a gentle deed :
But *likings* come, and pass away ;
'Tis *love* that remains till our latest day :
Our heavenward guide is holy love,
And it will be our bliss with saints above.

XXXII.

THE REDBREAST.

(SUGGESTED IN A WESTMORELAND COTTAGE.)

DRIVEN in by Autumn's sharpening air,
From half-stripped woods and pastures bare,
Brisk Robin seeks a kindlier home :
Not like a beggar is he come,
But enters as a looked-for guest,
Confiding in his ruddy breast,
As if it were a natural shield
Charged with a blazon on the field,
Due to that good and pious deed
Of which we in the Ballad read.
But pensive fancies putting by,
And wild-wood sorrows, speedily
He plays the expert ventriloquist ;
And, caught by glimpses now—now missed,
Puzzles the listener with a doubt
If the soft voice he throws about
Comes from within doors or without !

Was ever such a sweet confusion,
Sustained by delicate illusion ?
He's at your elbow—to your feeling
The notes are from the floor or ceiling ;
And there's a riddle to be guessed,
'Till you have marked his heaving chest,
And busy throat whose sink and swell,
Betray the Elf that loves to dwell
In Robin's bosom, as a chosen cell.

Heart-pleased we smile upon the Bird
If seen, and with like pleasure stirred
Commend him, when he's only heard.
But small and fugitive our gain
Compared with *his* who long hath lain,
With languid limbs and patient head
Reposing on a lone sick-bed ;
Where now he daily hears a strain
That cheats him of too busy cares,
Eases his pain, and helps his prayers.
And who but this dear Bird beguiled
The fever of that pale-faced Child ;
Now cooling, with his passing wing,
Her forehead, like a breeze of Spring :
Recalling now, with descant soft
Shed round her pillow from aloft,
Sweet thoughts of angels hovering nigh,
And the invisible sympathy

Of 'Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John,
 Blessing the bed she lies upon *;'

And sometimes, just as listening ends

In slumber, with the cadence blends

A dream of that low-warbled hymn

Which old folk, fondly pleased to trim

Lamps of faith, now burning dim,

Say that the Cherubs carved in stone,

When clouds gave way at dead of night

And the ancient church was filled with light,

Used to sing in heavenly tone,

Above and round the sacred places

They guard, with winged baby-faces.

Thrice happy Creature ! in all lands
 Nurtured by hospitable hands :
 Free entrance to this cot has he,
 Entrance and exit both *yet* free ;
 And, when the keen unruffled weather
 That thus brings man and bird together,
 Shall with its pleasantness be past,
 And casement closed and door made fast,
 To keep at bay the howling blast,
He needs not fear the season's rage,
 For the whole house is Robin's cage.

* The words—

'Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John,
 Bless the bed that I lie on,'

are part of a child's prayer, still in general use through the northern counties.

Whether the bird flit here or there,
O'er table *lilt*, or perch on chair,
Though some may frown and make a stir,
To scare him as a trespasser,
And he belike will flinch or start,
Good friends he has to take his part ;
One chiefly, who with voice and look
Pleads for him from the chimney-nook,
Where sits the Dame, and wears away
Her long and vacant holiday ;
With images about her heart,
Reflected from the years gone by,
On human nature's second infancy.

1834.

XXXIII.

HER EYES ARE WILD.

I.

HER eyes are wild, her head is bare,
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair ;
Her eyebrows have a rusty stain,
And she came far from over the main.
She has a baby on her arm,
Or else she were alone :
And underneath the hay-stack warm,
And on the greenwood stone,
She talked and sung the woods among,
And it was in the English tongue.

II.

“ Sweet babe ! they say that I am mad,
But nay, my heart is far too glad ;
And I am happy when I sing
Full many a sad and doleful thing :
Then, lovely baby, do not fear !
I pray thee have no fear of me ;
But safe as in a cradle, here
My lovely baby ! thou shalt be :
To thee I know too much I owe ;
I cannot work thee any woe.

III.

A fire was once within my brain ;
And in my head a dull, dull pain ;
And fiendish faces, one, two, three,
Hung at my breast, and pulled at me ;
But then there came a sight of joy ;
It came at once to do me good ;
I waked, and saw my little boy,
My little boy of flesh and blood ;
Oh joy for me that sight to see !
For he was here, and only he.

IV.

Suck, little babe, oh suck again !
It cools my blood ; it cools my brain ;
Thy lips I feel them, baby ! they
Draw from my heart the pain away.
Oh ! press me with thy little hand ;
It loosens something at my chest ;
About that tight and deadly band
I feel thy little fingers prest.
The breeze I see is in the tree :
It comes to cool my babe and me.

V.

Oh ! love me, love me, little boy !
Thou art thy mother's only joy ;
And do not dread the waves below,
When o'er the sea-rock's edge we go ;
The high crag cannot work me harm,
Nor leaping torrents when they howl ;
The babe I carry on my arm,
He saves for me my precious soul ;
Then happy lie ; for blest am I ;
Without me my sweet babe would die,

VI.

Then do not fear, my boy! for thee
Bold as a lion will I be;
And I will always be thy guide,
Through hollow snows and rivers wide.
I'll build an Indian bower; I know
The leaves that make the softest bed:
And, if from me thou wilt not go,
But still be true till I am dead,
My pretty thing! then thou shalt sing
As merry as the birds in spring.

VII.

Thy father cares not for my breast,
'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest;
'Tis all thine own!—and, if its hue
Be changed, that was so fair to view,
'Tis fair enough for thee, my dove!
My beauty, little child, is flown,
But thou wilt live with me in love;
And what if my poor cheek be brown?
'Tis well for me, thou canst not see
How pale and wan it else would be.

VIII.

Dread not their taunts, my little Life ;
I am thy father's wedded wife ;
And underneath the spreading tree
We two will live in honesty.
If his sweet boy he could forsake,
With me he never would have stayed :
From him no harm my babe can take ;
But he, poor man ! is wretched made ;
And every day we two will pray
For him that 's gone and far away.

IX.

I'll teach my boy the sweetest things
I'll teach him how the owlet sings.
My little babe ! thy lips are still,
And thou hast almost sucked thy fill.
—Where art thou gone, my own dear child ?
What wicked looks are those I see ?
Alas ! alas ! that look so wild,
It never, never came from me :
If thou art mad, my pretty lad,
Then I must be for ever sad.

x.

Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!
For I thy own dear mother am.
My love for thee has well been tried:
I've sought thy father far and wide.
I know the poisons of the shade,
I know the earth-nuts fit for food:
Then, pretty dear, be not afraid:
We'll find thy father in the wood.
Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away!
And there, my babe, we'll live for aye."

1798.

XXXIV.

THE PRIORESS' TALE.

(FROM CHAUCER.)

“ Call up him who left half told
The story of Cambusean bold.”

In the following Poem no further deviation from the original has been made than was necessary for the fluent reading and instant understanding of the Author : so much, however, is the language altered since Chaucer's time, especially in pronunciation, that much was to be removed, and its place supplied with as little incongruity as possible. The ancient accent has been retained in a few conjunctions, as *alsò* and *alway*, from a conviction that such sprinklings of antiquity would be admitted, by persons of taste, to have a graceful accordance with the subject. The fierce bigotry of the Prioress forms a fine back-ground for the tender-hearted sympathies with the Mother and Child; and the mode in which the story is told amply atones for the extravagance of the miracle.

I.

“ O LORD, our Lord ! how wondrously,” (quoth she)
 “ Thy name in this large world is spread abroad !
 For not alone by men of dignity
 Thy worship is performed and precious laud ;
 But by the mouths of children, gracious God !
 Thy goodness is set forth ; they when they lie
 Upon the breast thy name do glorify.

ii.

Wherefore in praise, the worthiest that I may,
Jesu ! of thee, and the white Lily-flower
Which did thee bear, and is a Maid for aye,
To tell a story I will use my power ;
Not that I may increase her honour's dower,
For she herself is honour, and the root
Of goodness, next her Son, our soul's best boot.

iii.

O Mother Maid ! O Maid and Mother free !
O bush unburnt ! burning in Moses' sight !
That down didst ravish from the Deity,
Through humbleness, the spirit that did alight
Upon thy heart, whence, through that glory's might,
Conceivèd was the Father's sapience,
Help me to tell it in thy reverence !

iv.

Lady ! thy goodness, thy magnificence,
Thy virtue, and thy great humility,
Surpass all science and all utterance ;
For sometimes, Lady ! ere men pray to thee
Thou goest before in thy benignity,
The light to us vouchsafing of thy prayer,
To be our guide unto thy Son so dear.

v.

My knowledge is so weak, O blissful Queen !
To tell abroad thy mighty worthiness,
That I the weight of it may not sustain ;
But as a child of twelvemonths old or less,
That laboureth his language to express,
Even so fare I; and therefore, I thee pray,
Guide thou my song which I of thee shall say.

vi.

There was in Asia, in a mighty town,
'Mong Christian folk, a street where Jews might be,
Assigned to them and given them for their own
By a great Lord, for gain and usury,
Hateful to Christ and to his company;
And through this street who list might ride and wend;
Free was it, and unbarred at either end.

vii.

A little school of Christian people stood
Down at the farther end, in which there were
A nest of children come of Christian blood,
That learnèd in that school from year to year
Such sort of doctrine as men usèd there,
That is to say, to sing and read alsò,
As little children in their childhood do.

VIII.

Among these children was a Widow's son,
A little scholar, scarcely seven years old,
Who day by day unto this school hath gone,
And eke, when he the image did behold
Of Jesu's Mother, as he had been told,
This Child was wont to kneel adown and say
Ave Marie, as he goeth by the way.

IX.

This Widow thus her little Son hath taught
Our blissful Lady, Jesu's Mother dear,
To worship aye, and he forgat it not ;
For simple infant hath a ready ear.
Sweet is the holiness of youth : and hence,
Calling to mind this matter when I may,
Saint Nicholas in my presence standeth aye,
For he so young to Christ did reverence.

X.

This little Child, while in the school he sate
His primer conning with an earnest cheer,
The whilst the rest their anthem-book repeat
The *Alma Redemptoris* did he hear ;
And as he durst he drew him near and near,
And hearkened to the words and to the note,
Till the first verse he learned it all by rote.

xi.

This Latin knew he nothing what it said,
For he too tender was of age to know ;
But to his comrade he repaired, and prayed
That he the meaning of this song would show,
And unto him declare why men sing so ;
This oftentimes, that he might be at ease,
This child did him beseech on his bare knees.

xii.

His Schoolfellow, who elder was than he,
Answered him thus :—‘ This song, I have heard say,
Was fashioned for our blissful Lady free ;
Her to salute, and also her to pray
To be our help upon our dying day :
If there is more in this, I know it not ;
Song do I learn,—small grammar I have got.’

xiii.

‘ And is this song fashioned in reverence
Of Jesu’s Mother?’ said this Innocent ;
‘ Now, certès, I will use my diligence
To con it all ere Christmas-tide be spent ;
Although I for my Primer shall be shent,
And shall be beaten three times in an hour,
Our Lady I will praise with all my power.’

xiv.

His Schoolfellow, whom he had so besought,
As they went homeward taught him privily ;
And then he sang it well and fearlessly,
From word to word according to the note :
Twice in a day it passèd through his throat ;
Homeward and schoolward whensoever he went,
On Jesu's Mother fixed was his intent.

xv.

Through all the Jewry (this before said I)
This little Child, as he came to and fro,
Full merrily then would he sing and cry,
O Alma Redemptoris! high and low :
The sweetness of Christ's Mother piercèd so
His heart, that her to praise, to her to pray,
He cannot stop his singing by the way.

xvi.

The Serpent, Satan, our first foe, that hath
His wasp's nest in Jew's heart, upswelled—' O woe,
O Hebrew people !' said he in his wrath,
' Is it an honest thing ? Shall this be so ?
That such a Boy where'er he lists shall go
In your despite, and sing his hymns and saws,
Which is against the reverence of our laws !

XVII.

From that day forward have the Jews conspired
Out of the world this Innocent to chase ;
And to this end a Homicide they hired,
That in an alley had a privy place,
And, as the Child 'gan to the school to pace,
This cruel Jew him seized, and held him fast
And cut his throat, and in a pit him cast.

XVIII.

I say that him into a pit they threw,
A loathsome pit, whence noisome scents exhale ;
O cursed folk ! away, ye Herods new !
What may your ill intentions you avail ?
Murder will out ; certès it will not fail ;
Know, that the honour of high God may spread,
The blood cries out on your accursèd deed.

XIX.

O Martyr 'stablished in virginity !
Now may'st thou sing for aye before the throne,
Following the Lamb celestial," quoth she,
" Of which the great Evangelist, Saint John,
In Patmos wrote, who saith of them that go
Before the Lamb singing continually,
That never fleshly woman they did know.

xx.

Now this poor widow waiteth all that night
After her little Child, and he came not ;
For which, by earliest glimpse of morning light,
With face all pale with dread and busy thought,
She at the School and elsewhere him hath sought,
Until thus far she learned, that he had been
In the Jews' street, and there he last was seen.

xxi.

With Mother's pity in her breast enclosed
She goeth, as she were half out of her mind,
To every place wherein she hath supposed
By likelihood her little Son to find ;
And ever on Christ's Mother meek and kind
She cried, till to the Jewry she was brought,
And him among the accursèd Jews she sought.

xxii.

She asketh, and she piteously doth pray
To every Jew that dwelleth in that place
To tell her if her child had passed that way ;
They all said—Nay ; but Jesu of his grace
Gave to her thought, that in a little space
She for her Son in that same spot did cry
Where he was cast into a pit hard by.

XXIII.

O thou great God that dost perform thy laud
By mouths of Innocents, lo ! here thy might ;
This gem of chastity, this emerald,
And eke of martyrdom this ruby bright,
There, where with mangled throat he lay upright,
The *Alma Redemptoris* 'gan to sing
So loud, that with his voice the place did ring.

XXIV.

The Christian folk that through the Jewry went
Come to the spot in wonder at the thing ;
And hastily they for the Provost sent ;
Immediately he came, not tarrying,
And praiseth Christ that is our heavenly King,
And eke his Mother, honour of Mankind :
Which done, he bade that they the Jews should bind.

XXV.

This Child with piteous lamentation then
Was taken up, singing his song alway ;
And with procession great and pomp of men
To the next Abbey him they bare away ;
His Mother swooning by the bier lay :
And scarcely could the people that were near
Remove this second Rachel from the bier.

XXVI.

Torment and shameful death to every one
This Provost doth for those bad Jews prepare
That of this murder wist, and that anon :
Such wickedness his judgments cannot spare ;
Who will do evil, evil shall he bear ;
Them therefore with wild horses did he draw,
And after that he hung them by the law.

XXVII.

Upon his bier this Innocent doth lie
Before the altar while the Mass doth last :
The Abbot with his convent's company
Then sped themselves to bury him full fast ;
And, when they holy water on him cast,
Yet spake this Child when sprinkled was the water,
And sang, O *Alma Redemptoris Mater* !

XXVIII.

This Abbot, for he was a holy man,
As all Monks are, or surely ought to be,
In supplication to the Child began
Thus saying, ' O dear Child ! I summon thee
In virtue of the holy Trinity
Tell me the cause why thou dost sing this hymn,
Since that thy throat is cut, as it doth seem.

XXIX.

'My throat is cut unto the bone, I trow,'
Said this young Child, 'and by the law of kind
I should have died, yea many hours ago ;
But Jesus Christ, as in the books ye find,
Will that his glory last, and be in mind ;
And, for the worship of his Mother dear,
Yet may I sing, O *Alma* ! loud and clear.

XXX.

'This well of mercy, Jesu's Mother sweet,
After my knowledge I have loved alway ;
And in the hour when I my death did meet
To me she came, and thus to me did say,
'Thou in thy dying sing this holy lay,'
As ye have heard ; and soon as I had sung
Methought she laid a grain upon my tongue.

XXXI.

'Wherefore I sing, nor can from song refrain,
In honour of that blissful Maiden free,
Till from my tongue off-taken is the grain ;
And after that thus said she unto me ;
'My little Child, then will I come for thee
Soon as the grain from off thy tongue they take :
Be not dismayed, I will not thee forsake !'

XXXII.

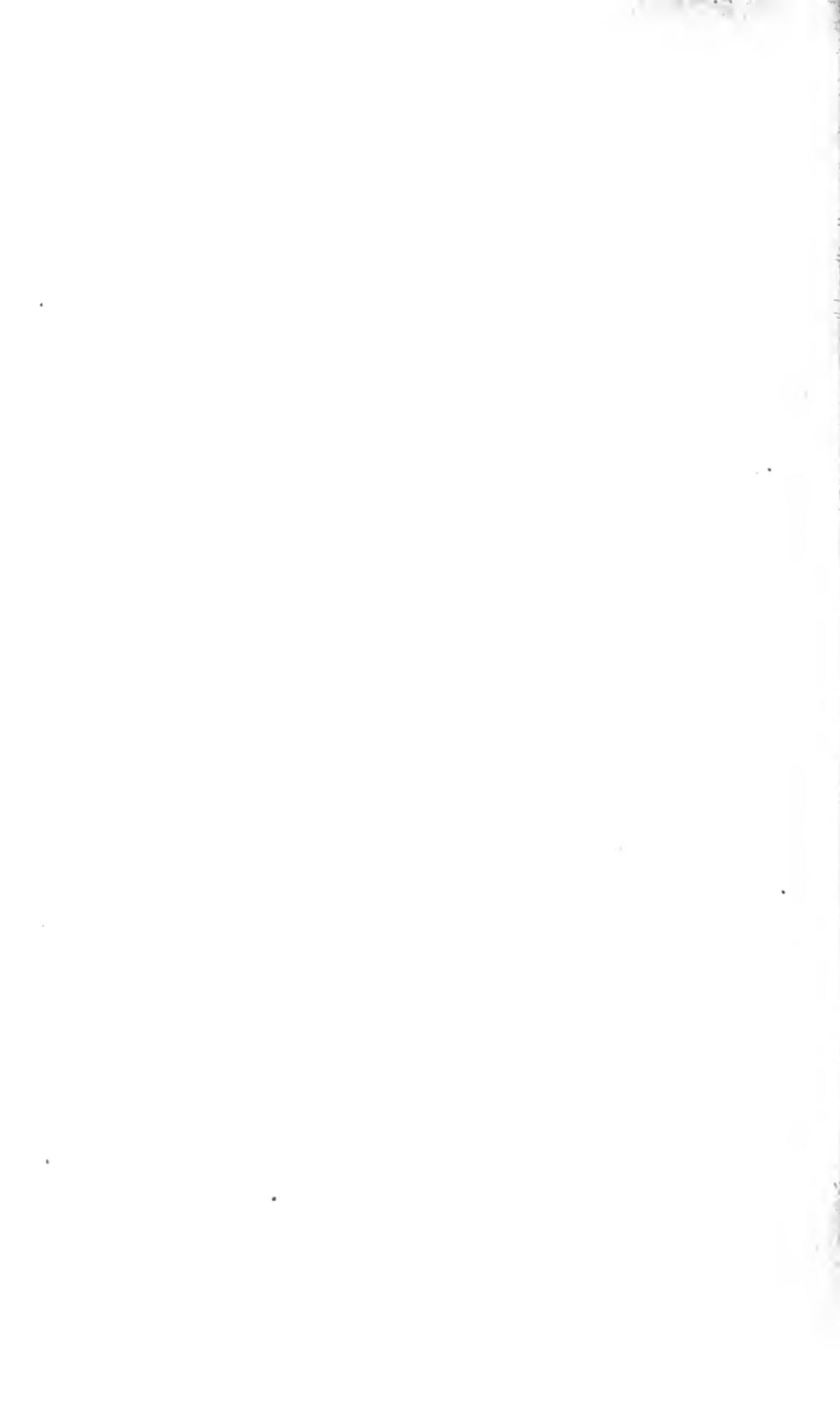
This holy Monk, this Abbot—him mean I,
Touched then his tongue, and took away the grain ;
And he gave up the ghost full peacefully ;
And, when the Abbot had this wonder seen,
His salt tears trickled down like showers of rain ;
And on his face he dropped upon the ground,
And still he lay as if he had been bound.

XXXIII.

Eke the whole Convent on the pavement lay,
Weeping and praising Jesu's Mother dear ;
And after that they rose, and took their way,
And lifted up this Martyr from the bier,
And in a tomb of precious marble clear
Enclosed his uncorrupted body sweet.—
Where'er he be, God grant us him to meet !

XXXIV.

Young Hew of Lincoln ! in like sort laid low
By cursed Jews—thing well and widely known,
For it was done a little while ago—
Pray also thou for us, while here we tarry
Weak sinful folk, that God, with pitying eye,
In mercy would his mercy multiply
On us, for reverence of his Mother Mary !”



THE WAGGONER.

TO
CHARLES LAMB, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

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

I am

Very truly yours,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

Rydal Mount, May 20, 1819.

THE WAGGONER.

CANTO FIRST.

'Tis spent—this burning day of June !
 Soft darkness o'er its latest gleams is stealing ;
 The dor-hawk, solitary bird,
 Round the dim crags on heavy pinions wheeling,
 With untired voice sings an unvaried tune ;
 Those burring notes are all that can be heard
 In silence deeper far than that of deepest noon :

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

Some thinly-sprinkled stars are seen,
Each changed into a pallid spot.
The mountains against heaven's grave weight
Rise up, and grow to wondrous height.
The air, as in a lion's den,
Is close and hot ;—and now and then
Comes a faint and sultry breeze
With a haunting and a panting,
Like the stifling of disease ;
But welcome dew's allay the heat,
And the silence makes it sweet.

Hush, there is some one on the stir !
'Tis Benjamin the Waggoner ;
Who long hath trod this toilsome way,
Companion of the night or day.
That far-off tinkling's drowsy cheer,
Mixed with a faint yet grating sound
In a moment lost and found,
The Wain announces—by whose side,
Along the banks of Rydal Mere,
He paces on, a trusty Guide,—
Listen ! you can hardly hear !
Now he has left the lower ground,
And up the hill his course is bending,
With many a stop and stay ascending ;—
Steep the way and wearisome,
Yet all the while his whip is dumb !

The Horses have worked with right good-will,
And so have gained the top of the hill ;
He was patient, they were strong,
And now they smoothly glide along,
Recovering breath, and pleased to win
The praises of mild Benjamin.
Heaven shield him from mishap and snare !
But why so early with this prayer ?—
Is it for threatenings in the sky ?
Or for some other danger nigh ?
No ;—him infirmities beset,
But danger is not near him yet ;
For at the bottom of the brow,
Where once the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Offered a greeting of good ale
To all who entered Grasmere Vale ;
And called on him who must depart
To leave it with a jovial heart ;
There, where the DOVE and OLIVE-BOUGH
Once hung, a Poet harbours now,
A simple water-drinking Bard ;
Why need our Hero then (though frail
His best resolves) be on his guard ?
He marches by, secure and bold ;
Yet while he thinks on times of old,
It seems that all looks wondrous cold ;
He shrugs his shoulders, shakes his head,
And, for the honest folk within,
It is a doubt with Benjamin
Whether they be alive or dead !

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

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

* This rude piece of self-taught art (such is the progress of refinement) has been supplanted by a professional production.

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

Now am I fairly safe to-night—
And with proud cause my heart is light :
I trespassed lately worse than ever—
But Heaven has blest a good endeavour ;
And, to my soul's content, I find
The evil One is left behind.
Yes, let my master fume and fret,
Here am I—with my horses yet !
My jolly team, he finds that ye
Will work for nobody but me !
Full proof of this the Country gained ;
It knows how ye were vexed and strained,
And forced unworthy stripes to bear,
When trusted to another's care.
Here was it—on this rugged slope,
Which now ye climb with heart and hope,

I saw you, between rage and fear,
Plunge, and fling back a spiteful ear,
And ever more and more confused,
As ye were more and more abused :
As chance would have it, passing by
I saw you in that jeopardy :
A word from me was like a charm ;
Ye pulled together with one mind ;
And your huge burthen, safe from harm,
Moved like a vessel in the wind !
—Yes, without me, up hills so high
'Tis vain to strive for mastery.
Then grieve not, jolly team ! though tough
Our road be, narrow, steep, and rough ;
Though Rydal-heights and Dunmail-raise,
And all their fellow banks and braes,
Full often make you stretch and strain,
And halt for breath and halt again,
Yet to their sturdiness 'tis owing
That side by side we still are going !

While Benjamin in earnest mood
His meditations thus pursued,
A storm, which had been smothered long,
Was growing inwardly more strong ;
And, in its struggles to get free,
Was busily employed as he.
The thunder had begun to growl—
He heard not, too intent of soul ;

The air was now without a breath—
He marked not that 'twas still as death.
But soon large rain-drops on his head
Fell with the weight of drops of lead ;—
He starts—and takes, at the admonition,
A sage survey of his condition.
The road is black before his eyes,
Glimmering faintly where it lies ;
Black is the sky—and every hill,
Up to the sky, is blacker still—
Sky, hill, and dale, one dismal room,
Hung round and overhung with gloom ;
Save that above a single height
Is to be seen a lurid light,
Above Helm-crag *—a streak half dead,
A burning of portentous red ;
And near that lurid light, full well
The ASTROLOGER, sage Sidrophel,
Where at his desk and book he sits,
Puzzling aloft his curious wits ;
He whose domain is held in common
With no one but the ANCIENT WOMAN, ●
Cowering beside her rifted cell,
As if intent on magic spell ;—
Dread pair, that, spite of wind and weather,
Still sit upon Helm-crag together !

* A mountain of Grasmere, the broken summit of which presents two figures, full as distinctly shaped as that of the famous Cobbler near Arroquhar in Scotland.

The ASTROLOGER was not unseen
By solitary Benjamin ;
But total darkness came anon,
And he and every thing was gone :
And suddenly a ruffling breeze,
(That would have rocked the sounding trees
Had aught of sylvan growth been there)
Swept through the Hollow long and bare :
The rain rushed down—the road was battered,
As with the force of billows shattered ;
The horses are dismayed, nor know
Whether they should stand or go ;
And Benjamin is groping near them,
Sees nothing, and can scarcely hear them.
He is astounded,—wonder not,—
With such a charge in such a spot ;
Astounded in the mountain gap
With thunder-peals, clap after clap,
Close-treading on the silent flashes—
And somewhere, as he thinks, by crashes
Among the rocks ; with weight of rain,
And sullen motions long and slow,
That to a dreary distance go—
Till, breaking in upon the dying strain,
A rending o'er his head begins the fray again.

Meanwhile, uncertain what to do,
And oftentimes compelled to halt,
The horses cautiously pursue
Their way, without mishap or fault ;

And now have reached that pile of stones,
Heaped over brave King Dunmail's bones ;
He who had once supreme command,
Last king of rocky Cumberland ;
His bones, and those of all his Power,
Slain here in a disastrous hour !

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

While, with increasing agitation,
The Woman urged her supplication,
In rueful words, with sobs between—
The voice of tears that fell unseen :
There came a flash—a startling glare,
And all Seat-Sandal was laid bare !
'Tis not a time for nice suggestion,
And, kind to every way-worn rover,
Benjamin, without a question,
Said, " Mount, and get you under cover ! "

Another voice, in tone as hoarse
As a swoln brook with rugged course,
Cried out, "Good brother, why so fast?
I've had a glimpse of you—*arast!*
Or, since it suits you to be civil,
Take her at once—for good and evil!"

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

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

The Waggon moves—and with its load
Descends along the sloping road ;
And to his tent-like domicile,
Built in a nook with cautious skill,
The Sailor turns, well pleased to spy
His shaggy friend, who stood hard by
Drenched—and, more fast than with a tether,
Bound to the nook by that fierce weather,
Which caught the vagrants unaware :
For, when, ere closing-in of day,
The family had come that way,
Green pasture and the soft warm air
Tempted them to settle there.—
Green is the grass for beast to graze,
Around the stones of Dunmail-raise !

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

CANTO SECOND.

IF Wytheburn's modest House of prayer,
 As lowly as the lowliest dwelling,
 Had, with its belfry's humble stock,
 A little pair that hang in air,
 Been mistress also of a clock,
 (And one, too, not in crazy plight)
 Twelve strokes that clock would have been telling
 Under the brow of old Helvellyn—
 Its bead-roll of midnight,
 Then, when the Hero of my tale
 Was passing by, and, down the vale
 (The vale now silent, hushed I ween
 As if a storm had never been)
 Proceeding with a mind at ease;
 While the old Familiar of the seas
 Intent to use his utmost haste,
 Gained ground upon the Waggon fast,
 And gives another lusty cheer;
 For spite of rumbling of the wheels,
 A welcome greeting he can hear;—
 It is a fiddle in its glee
 Dinning from the CHERRY TREE!

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

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

Nor has thought time to come and go,
To vibrate between yes and no ;
For, cries the Sailor, "Glorious chance
That blew us hither! dance, boys, dance!
Rare luck for us! my honest soul,
I'll treat thee to a friendly bowl!"

* A term well known in the North of England, and applied to rural Festivals where young persons meet in the evening for the purpose of dancing.

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

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

A steaming bowl, a blazing fire,
What greater good can heart desire?
’Twere worth a wise man’s while to try
The utmost anger of the sky:

To *seek* for thoughts of a gloomy cast,
 If such the bright amends at last.
 Now should you say I judge amiss,
 The CHERRY TREE shows proof of this
 For soon among the happy there,
 Our Travellers are the happiest pair;
 And happiest far is he, the One
 No longer with himself at strife,
 A Cæsar past the Rubicon !
 The Sailor, Man by nature gay,
 Found not a scruple in *his* way ;
 And he hath now forgot his Wife,
 Hath quite forgotten her—or may be
 Thinks her the luckiest soul on earth,
 Within that warm and peaceful berth,
 Under cover,
 Terror over,
 Sleeping by her sleeping Baby.

With bowl that sped from hand to hand,
 Refreshed, brimful of hearty fun,
 The gladdest of the gladsome band,
 They hear—when every dance is done,
 When every whirling bout is o'er—
 The fiddle's *squeak**—that call to bliss,
 Ever followed by a kiss ;

* At the close of each strathspey, or jig, a particular note from the fiddle summons the Rustic to the agreeable duty of saluting his partner.

They envy not the happy lot,
But enjoy their own the more !

While thus our jocund Travellers fare,
Up springs the Sailor from his chair—
Limps (for I might have told before
That he was lame) across the floor—
Is gone—returns—and with a prize ;
With what ?—a Ship of lusty size ;
A gallant stately Man-of-war,
Fixed on a smoothly-sliding car.
Surprise to all, but most surprise
To Benjamin, who rubs his eyes,
Not knowing that he had befriended
A Man so gloriously attended !

“ This,” cries the Sailor, “ a Third-rate is—
Stand back, and you shall see her gratis !
This was the Flag-ship at the Nile,
The Vanguard—you may smirk and smile,
But, pretty Maid, if you look near,
You ’ll find you ’ve much in little here !
A nobler ship did never swim,
And you shall see her in full trim :
I’ll set, my friends, to do you honour,
Set every inch of sail upon her.”
So said, so done ; and masts, sails, yards,
He names them all ; and interlards
His speech with uncouth terms of art,
Accomplished in the showman’s part ;

And then, as from a sudden check,
Cries out—" 'Tis there, the quarter-deck
On which brave Admiral Nelson stood—
A sight that would have roused your blood !
One eye he had, which, bright as ten,
Burned like a fire among his men ;
Let this be land, and that be sea,
Here lay the French—and *thus* came we ! ”

Hushed was by this the fiddle's sound,
The dancers all were gathered round,
And, such the stillness of the house,
You might have heard a nibbling mouse ;
While, borrowing helps where'er he may,
The Sailor through the story runs
Of ships to ships and guns to guns ;
And does his utmost to display
The dismal conflict, and the might
And terror of that marvellous night !
“ A bowl, a bowl of double measure,”
Cries Benjamin, “ a draught of length,
To Nelson, England's pride and treasure,
Her bulwark and her tower of strength ! ”
When Benjamin had seized the bowl,
The mastiff, from beneath the waggon,
Where he lay, watchful as a dragon,
Rattled his chain ;—'twas all in vain,
For Benjamin, triumphant soul !
He heard the monitory growl ;

Heard—and in opposition quaffed
A deep, determined, desperate draught !
Nor did the battered Tar forget,
Or flinch from what he deemed his debt :
Then, like a hero crowned with laurel,
Back to her place the ship he led ;
Wheeled her back in full apparel ;
And so, flag flying at mast head,
Re-yoked her to the Ass :—anon,
Cries Benjamin, “ We must be gone.”
Thus, after two hours’ hearty stay,
Again behold them on their way !

CANTO THIRD.

RIGHT gladly had the horses stirred,
When they the wished-for greeting heard,
The whip's loud notice from the door,
That they were free to move once more.
You think, those doings must have bred
In them disheartening doubts and dread ;
No, not a horse of all the eight,
Although it be a moonless night,
Fears either for himself or freight ;
For this they know (and let it hide,
In part, the offences of their guide)
That Benjamin, with clouded brains,
Is worth the best with all their pains ;
And, if they had a prayer to make,
The prayer would be that they may take
With him whatever comes in course,
The better fortune or the worse ;
That no one else may have business near them,
And, drunk or sober, he may steer them.

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

Now, heroes, for the true commotion,
The triumph of your late devotion !
Can aught on earth impede delight,
Still mounting to a higher height ;
And higher still—a greedy flight !
Can any low-born care pursue her,
Can any mortal clog come to her ?
No notion have they—not a thought,
That is from joyless regions brought !
And, while they coast the silent lake,
Their inspiration I partake ;
Share their empyreal spirits—yea,
With their enraptured vision, see—
O fancy—what a jubilee !
What shifting pictures—clad in gleams
Of colour bright as feverish dreams !
Earth, spangled sky, and lake serene,
Involved and restless all—a scene
Pregnant with mutual exaltation,
Rich change, and multiplied creation !
This sight to me the Muse imparts ;—
And then, what kindness in their hearts !
What tears of rapture, what vow-making,
Profound entreaties, and hand-shaking !
What solemn, vacant, interlacing,
As if they 'd fall asleep embracing !
Then, in the turbulence of glee,
And in the excess of amity,
Says Benjamin, “ That ass of thine,
He spoils thy sport, and hinders mine :

If he were tethered to the waggon,
He'd drag as well what he is dragging ;
And we, as brother should with brother
Might trudge it alongside each other !”

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

This new arrangement made, the Wain
Through the still night proceeds again ;
No Moon hath risen her light to lend ;
But indistinctly may be kened
The VANGUARD, following close behind,
Sails spread, as if to catch the wind !

“Thy wife and child are snug and warm,
Thy ship will travel without harm ;
I like,” said Benjamin, “her shape and stature :
And this of mine—this bulky creature
Of which I have the steering—this,
Seen fairly, is not much amiss !
We want your streamers, friend, you know ;
But, altogether as we go,
We make a kind of handsome show !

Among these hills, from first to last,
We've weathered many a furious blast ;
Hard passage forcing on, with head
Against the storm, and canvass spread.
I hate a boaster ; but to thee
Will say 't, who know'st both land and sea,
The unluckiest hulk that stems the brine
Is hardly worse beset than mine,
When cross-winds on her quarter beat ;
And, fairly lifted from my feet,
I stagger onward—heaven knows how ;
But not so pleasantly as now :
Poor pilot I, by snows confounded,
And many a foundrous pit surrounded !
Yet here we are, by night and day
Grinding through rough and smooth our way ;
Through foul and fair our task fulfilling ;
And long shall be so yet—God willing !”

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

And so were better manners bred,
And all was calmed and quieted.

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

This explanation stilled the alarm,
Cured the foreboder like a charm;
This, and the manner, and the voice,
Summoned the Sailor to rejoice;
His heart is up—he fears no evil
From life or death, from man or devil;

He wheels—and, making many stops,
Brandished his crutch against the mountain tops ;
And, while he talked of blows and scars,
Benjamin, among the stars,
Beheld a dancing—and a glancing ;
Such retreating and advancing
As, I ween, was never seen
In bloodiest battle since the days of Mars !

CANTO FOURTH.

THUS they, with freaks of proud delight,
 Beguile the remnant of the night ;
 And many a snatch of jovial song
 Regales them as they wind along ;
 While to the music, from on high,
 The echoes make a glad reply.—
 But the sage Muse the revel heeds
 No farther than her story needs ;
 Nor will she servilely attend
 The loitering journey to its end.
 —Blithe spirits of her own impel
 The Muse, who scents the morning air,
 To take of this transported pair
 A brief and unreprieved farewell ;
 To quit the slow-paced waggon's side,
 And wander down yon hawthorn dell,
 With murmuring Greta for her guide.
 —There doth she ken the awful form
 Of Raven-crag—black as a storm—
 Glimmering through the twilight pale ;
 And Ghimmer-crag*, his tall twin brother,

* The crag of the ewe lamb.

Each peering forth to meet the other :—
And, while she roves through St. John's Vale,
Along the smooth unpathwayed plain,
By sheep-track or through cottage lane,
Where no disturbance comes to intrude
Upon the pensive solitude,
Her unsuspecting eye, perchance,
With the rude shepherd's favoured glance,
Beholds the faeries in array,
Whose party-coloured garments gay
The silent company betray :
Red, green, and blue ; a moment's sight !
For Skiddaw-top with rosy light
Is touched—and all the band take flight.
—Fly also, Muse ! and from the dell
Mount to the ridge of Nathdale Fell ;
Thence, look thou forth o'er wood and lawn
Hoar with the frost-like dews of dawn ;
Across yon meadowy bottom look,
Where close fogs hide their parent brook ;
And see, beyond that hamlet small,
The ruined towers of Threlkeld-hall,
Lurking in a double shade,
By trees and lingering twilight made !
There, at Blencathara's rugged feet,
Sir Lancelot gave a safe retreat
To noble Clifford ; from annoy
Concealed the persecuted boy,
Well pleased in rustic garb to feed
His flock, and pipe on shepherd's reed

Among this multitude of hills,
Craggs, woodlands, waterfalls, and rills ;
Which soon the morning shall enfold,
From east to west, in ample vest
Of massy gloom and radiance bold.

The mists, that o'er the streamlet's bed
Hung low, begin to rise and spread ;
Even while I speak, their skirts of grey
Are smitten by a silver ray ;
And lo!—up Castrigg's naked steep
(Where, smoothly urged, the vapours sweep
Along—and scatter and divide,
Like fleecy clouds self-multiplied)
The stately waggon is ascending,
With faithful Benjamin attending,
Apparent now beside his team—
Now hidden by the glittering steam :
And with him goes his Sailor-friend,
By this time near their journey's end ;
And, after their high-minded riot,
Sickening into thoughtful quiet ;
As if the morning's pleasant hour,
Had for their joys a killing power.
Say more : for by that power a vein
Seems opened of brow-saddening pain :
As if their hearts by notes were stung
From out the lowly hedge-rows flung ;
As if the warbler lost in light
Reproved their soarings of the night ;

In strains of rapture pure and holy
Upbraided their distempered folly.

Drooping are they, and weak and dull ;—
But the horses stretch and pull ;
With increasing vigour climb,
Eager to repair lost time ;
Whether, by their own desert,
Knowing what cause there is for shame,
They now are labouring to avert
(Kind creatures !) something of the blame,
Which, they foresee, must soon alight
Upon *his* head, whom, in despite
Of all his failings, they love best ;
Whether for him they are distress ;
Or, by length of fasting roused,
Are impatient to be housed :
Up against the hill they strain
Tugging at the iron chain,
Tugging all with might and main,
Last and foremost, every horse
To the utmost of his force !
And the smoke and respiration,
Rising like an exhalation,
Blend with the mist—a moving shroud
To form, an undissolving cloud ;
Which, with slant ray, the merry sun
Takes delight to play upon.
Never golden-haired Apollo,
Nor blue-eyed Pallas, nor the Idalian Queen,

When each was pleased some favourite chief to follow
Through accidents of peace or war
In a perilous moment threw
Around the object of celestial care
A veil so rich to mortal view,
Interposed so bright a screen—
Him and his enemies between !

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

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

Not to speak of babe and mother ;
Who, contented with each other,
And snug as birds in leafy arbour,
Find, within, a blessed harbour !

With eager eyes the Master pries ;
Looks in and out, and through and through ;
Says nothing—till at last he spies
A wound upon the Mastiff's head,
A wound, where plainly might be read
What feats an Ass's hoof can do !
But drop the rest :—this aggravation,
This complicated provocation,
A hoard of grievances unsealed ;
All past forgiveness it repealed ;
And thus, and through distempered blood
On both sides, Benjamin the good,
The patient, and the tender-hearted,
Was from his team and waggon parted ;
When duty of that day was o'er,
Laid down his whip—and served no more.—
Nor could the waggon long survive,
Which Benjamin had ceased to drive :
It lingered on ;—guide after guide
Ambitiously the office tried ;
But each unmanageable hill.
Called for *his* patience and *his* skill ;—
And sure it is, that through this night,
And what the morning brought to light,

Two losses had we to sustain,
We lost both WAGGONER and WAIN !

Accept, O Friend, for praise or blame,
The gift of this adventurous song ;
A record which I dared to frame,
Though timid scruples checked me long ;
They checked me—and I left the theme
Untouched ;—in spite of many a gleam
Of fancy which thereon was shed,
Like pleasant sunbeams shifting still
Upon the side of a distant hill :
But Nature might not be gainsaid ;
For what I have and what I miss
I sing of these ;—it makes my bliss !
Nor is it I who play the part,
But a shy spirit in my heart,
That comes and goes—will sometimes leap
From hiding-places ten years' deep ;
Or haunts me with familiar face,
Returning, like a ghost unlaid,
Until the debt I owe be paid.
Forgive me, then ; for I had been
On friendly terms with this Machine :
In him, while he was wont to trace
Our roads, through many a long year's space,
A living almanack had we ;
We had a speaking diary,
That in this uneventful place,

Gave to the days a mark and name
By which we knew them when they came.
—Yes, I, and all about me here,
Through all the changes of the year,
Had seen him through the mountains go,
In pomp of mist or pomp of snow,
Majestically huge and slow :
Or, with milder grace adorning
The landscape of a summer's morning ;
While Grasmere smoothed her liquid plain
The moving image to detain ;
And mighty Fairfield, with a chime
Of echoes, to his march kept time ;
When little other business stirred,
And little other sound was heard ;
In that delicious hour of balm,
Stillness, solitude, and calm,
While yet the valley is arrayed,
On this side with a sober shade ;
On that is prodigally bright—
Crag, lawn, and wood—with rosy light.
—But most of all, thou lordly Wain !
I wish to have thee here again,
When windows flap and chimney roars,
And all is dismal out of doors ;
And, sitting by my fire, I see
Eight sorry carts, no less a train !
Unworthy successors of thee,
Come straggling through the wind and rain :

And oft, as they pass slowly on,
Beneath my windows, one by one,
See, perched upon the naked height
The summit of a cumbrous freight,
A single traveller—and there
Another ; then perhaps a pair—
The lame, the sickly, and the old ;
Men, women, heartless with the cold ;
And babes in wet and starveling plight ;
Which once, be weather as it might,
Had still a nest within a nest,
Thy shelter—and their mother's breast !
Then most of all, then far the most,
Do I regret what we have lost ;
Am grieved for that unhappy sin
Which robbed us of good Benjamin ;—
And of his stately Charge, which none
Could keep alive when he was gone !

NOTES.

1.

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

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

2.

The Dor-hawk, solitary bird.

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

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

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

3.

After the line, Page 296, *Can any mortal clog come to her*, followed in the MS. an incident which has been kept back. Part of the suppressed verses shall here be given as a gratification of private feeling, which the well-disposed reader will find no difficulty in excusing. They are now printed for the first time.

Can any mortal clog come to her ?

It can : * * *
* * * * *

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

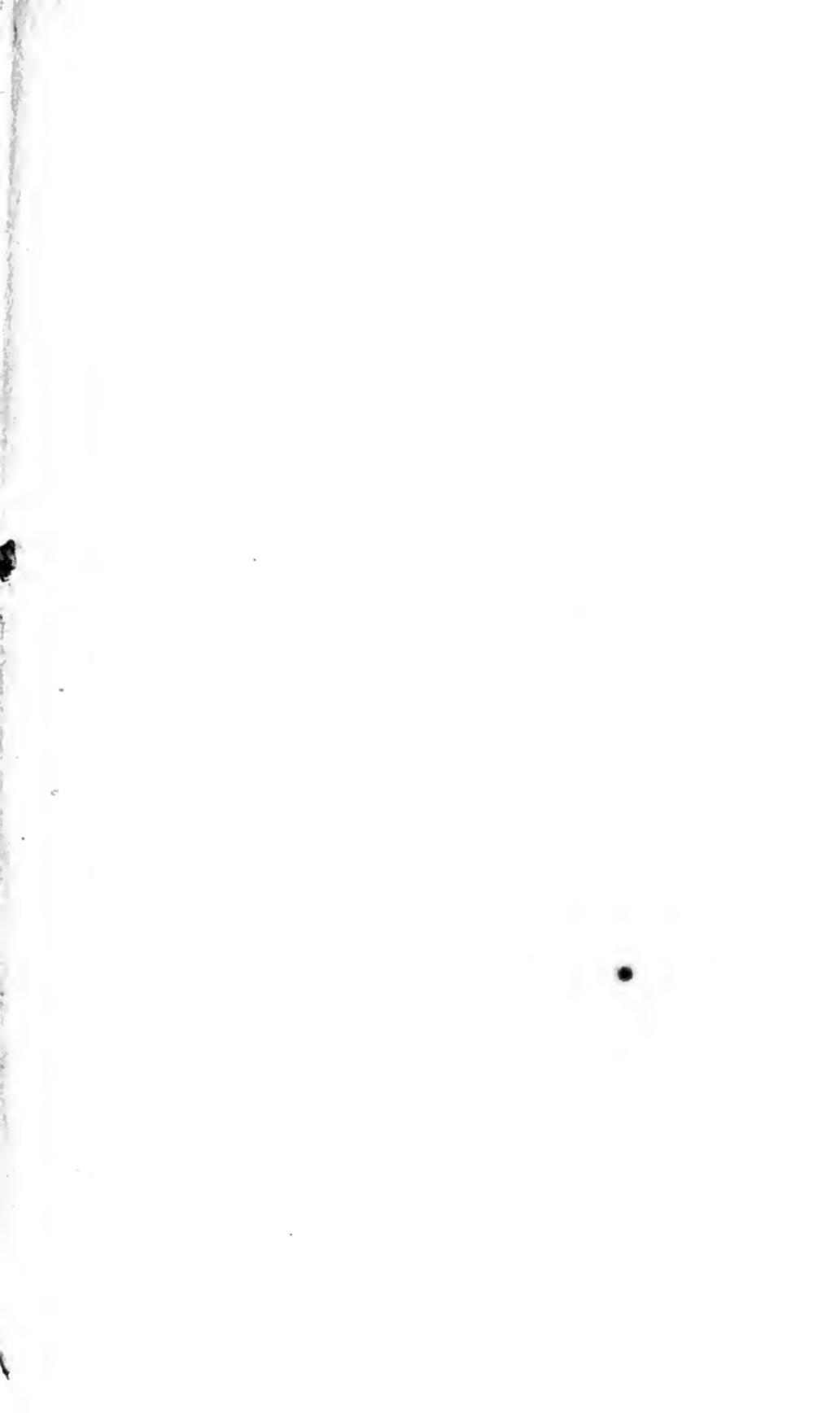
Cries Benjamin, " Where is it, where ?
Voice it hath none, but must be near."
—A star, declining towards the west,
Upon the watery surface threw
Its image tremulously imprest,
That just marked out the object and withdrew :
Right welcome service ! * *
* * * * *

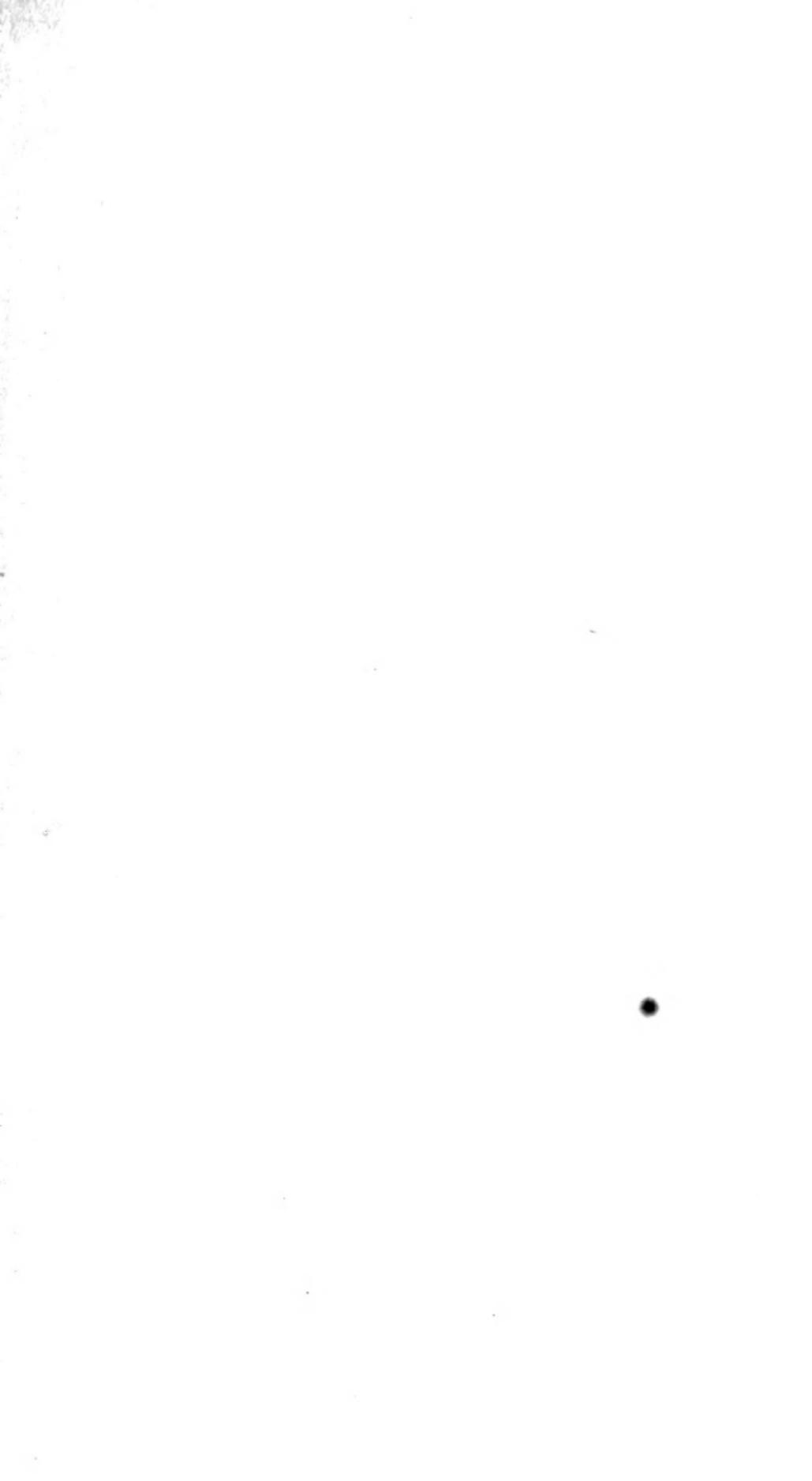
ROCK OF NAMES!

Light is the strain, but not unjust
To Thee, and thy memorial-trust
That once seemed only to express
Love that was love in idleness ;
Tokens, as year hath followed year
How changed, alas, in character !
For they were graven on thy smooth breast
By hands of those my soul loved best ;
Meek women, men as true and brave
As ever went to a hopeful grave :
Their hands and mine, when side by side
With kindred zeal and mutual pride,
We worked until the Initials took
Shapes that defied a scornful look.—
Long as for us a genial feeling
Survives, or one in need of healing,
The power, dear Rock, around thee cast,
Thy monumental power, shall last
For me and mine ! O thought of pain,
That would impair it or profane !
Take all in kindness then, as said
With a staid heart but playful head ;
And fail not Thou, loved Rock ! to keep
Thy charge when we are laid asleep.

END OF VOL. I.

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Wordsworth, William
Poetical works

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