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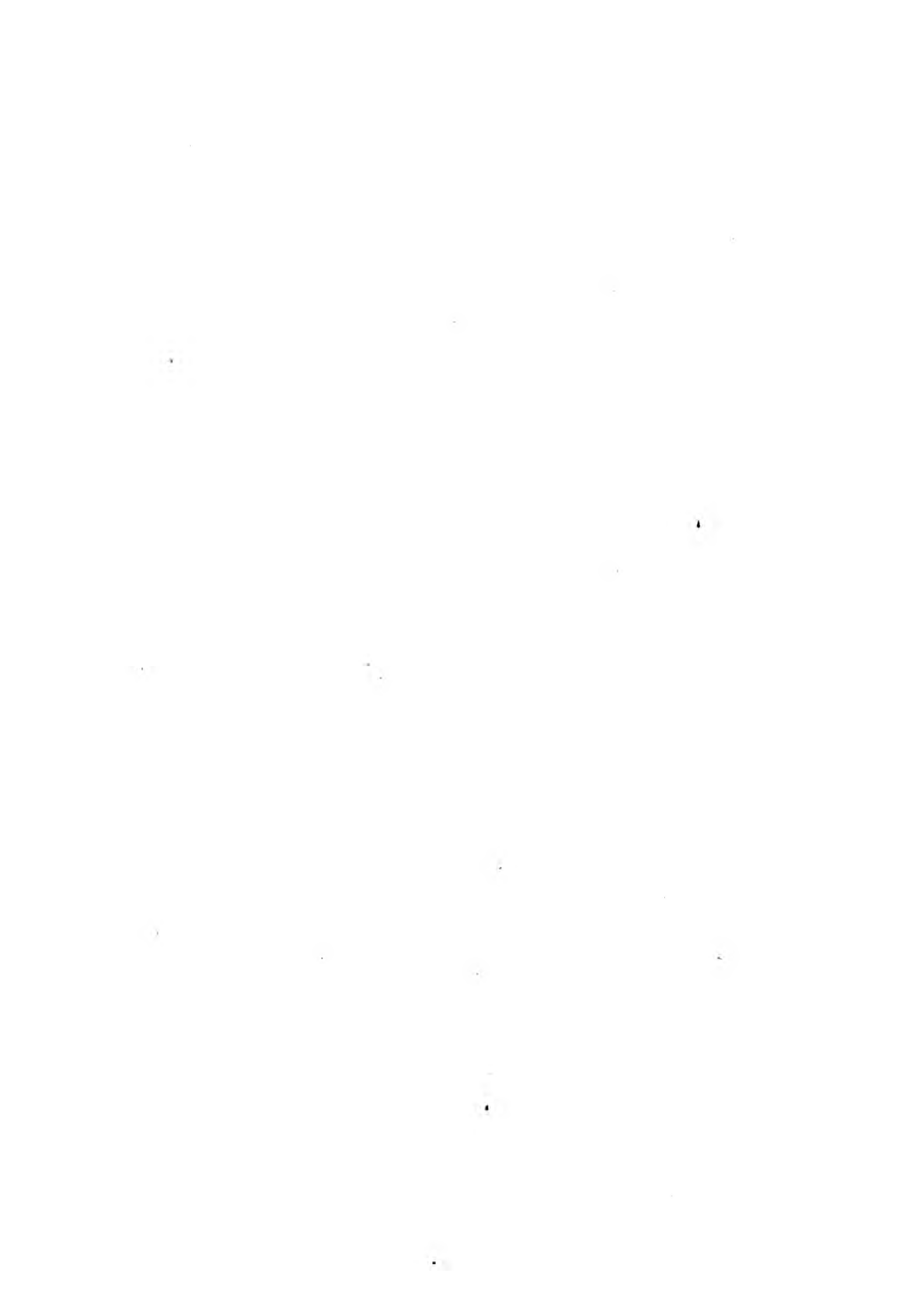




Francis H. Napier

LR





THE
POETICAL WORKS
OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

THE
POETICAL WORKS

OF
WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

A New Edition.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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CONTENTS.

POEMS OF THE FANCY.

	PAGE
A Morning Exercise - - - - -	3
A Flower Garden, at Coleorton Hall, Leicestershire - -	6
A whirl-blast from behind the Hill - - - - -	9
The Waterfall and the Eglantine - - - - -	10
The Oak and the Broom. A Pastoral - - - - -	13
To a Sexton - - - - -	19
To the Daisy - - - - -	21
To the same Flower - - - - -	25
The Green Linnet - - - - -	27
To a Sky-lark - - - - -	29
To the Small Celandine - - - - -	31
To the same Flower - - - - -	34
The Seven Sisters; or, The Solitude of Binnorie - -	37
Who fancied what a pretty sight - - - - -	41
The Redbreast and Butterfly - - - - -	42
Song for the Spinning Wheel. Founded upon a belief pre- valent among the Pastoral vales of Westmoreland -	44
Hint from the Mountains for certain Political Pretenders -	45

	PAGE
On seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp, the work of E. M. S. - - - - -	47
The Contrast, the Parrot and the Wren - - - - -	49
The Danish Boy. A Fragment - - - - -	52
Song for the Wandering Jew - - - - -	55
Stray Pleasures - - - - -	57
The Pilgrim's Dream ; or, The Star and the Glowworm -	59
The Poet and the Caged Turtledove - - - - -	62
A Wren's Nest - - - - -	64
Rural Illusions - - - - -	67
The Kitten and the Falling Leaves - - - - -	69
Address to my Infant Daughter, on being reminded, that she was a month old, on that day - - - - -	74

POEMS OF THE IMAGINATION.

There was a Boy - - - - -	79
To the Cuckoo - - - - -	81
A Night-piece - - - - -	83
Yew-trees - - - - -	84
Nutting - - - - -	86
She was a Phantom of Delight - - - - -	88
O Nightingale ! thou surely art - - - - -	60
Lucy - - - - -	91
A slumber did my spirit seal - - - - -	93
I wandered lonely as a cloud - - - - -	93
The Reverie of Poor Susan - - - - -	95
Power of Music - - - - -	99
Star-gazers - - - - -	99
Written in March, while resting on the Bridge at the foot of Brother's Water - - - - -	100
Beggars - - - - -	101

CONTENTS.

vii

	PAGE
Sequel to the Foregoing, composed many years after - -	103
Gipsies - - - - -	105
Ruth - - - - -	106
Resolution and independence - - - - -	117
The Thorn - - - - -	124
Goody Blake and Harry Gill. A True Story - - -	135
Hart-leap Well.—Part I. - - - - -	141
————— Part II. - - - - -	145
The Horn of Egremont Castle - - - - -	149
Song. - At the Feast of Brougham Castle, upon the Restora- tion of Lord Clifford, the Shepherd, to the estates and honours of his Ancestors - - - - -	154
Lines, composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on re- visiting the Banks of the Wye during a Tour, July 13, 1798 - - - - -	161
It is no Spirit who from heaven hath flown - - - -	167
French Revolution, as it appeared to Enthusiasts at its Commencement. Reprinted from "The Friend." - - -	168
Yes, it was the mountain Echo - - - - -	170
To a Sky-lark - - - - -	171
Laodamia - - - - -	172
To a Young Lady, who had been reproached for taking long Walks in the Country - - - - -	180
The Pass of Kirkstone - - - - -	181
To ———, on her first Ascent to the summit of Helvellyn	185
Water-fowl - - - - -	187
View from the top of Black Comb - - - - -	188
The Haunted Tree - - - - -	190
The Triad - - - - -	192
The Wishing-gate - - - - -	200
The Primrose of the Rock - - - - -	204
Presentiments - - - - -	207

	PAGE
Vernal Ode - - - - -	211
Devotional Incitements - - - - -	217
A Jewish Family. (In a small Valley opposite St. Goar, upon the Rhine.) - - - - -	220
On the Power of Sound - - - - -	223

PETER BELL.—A TALE.

Dedication - - - - -	235
Prologue - - - - -	237
Peter Bell.—Part I. - - - - -	245
———— Part II. - - - - -	259
———— Part III. - - - - -	267

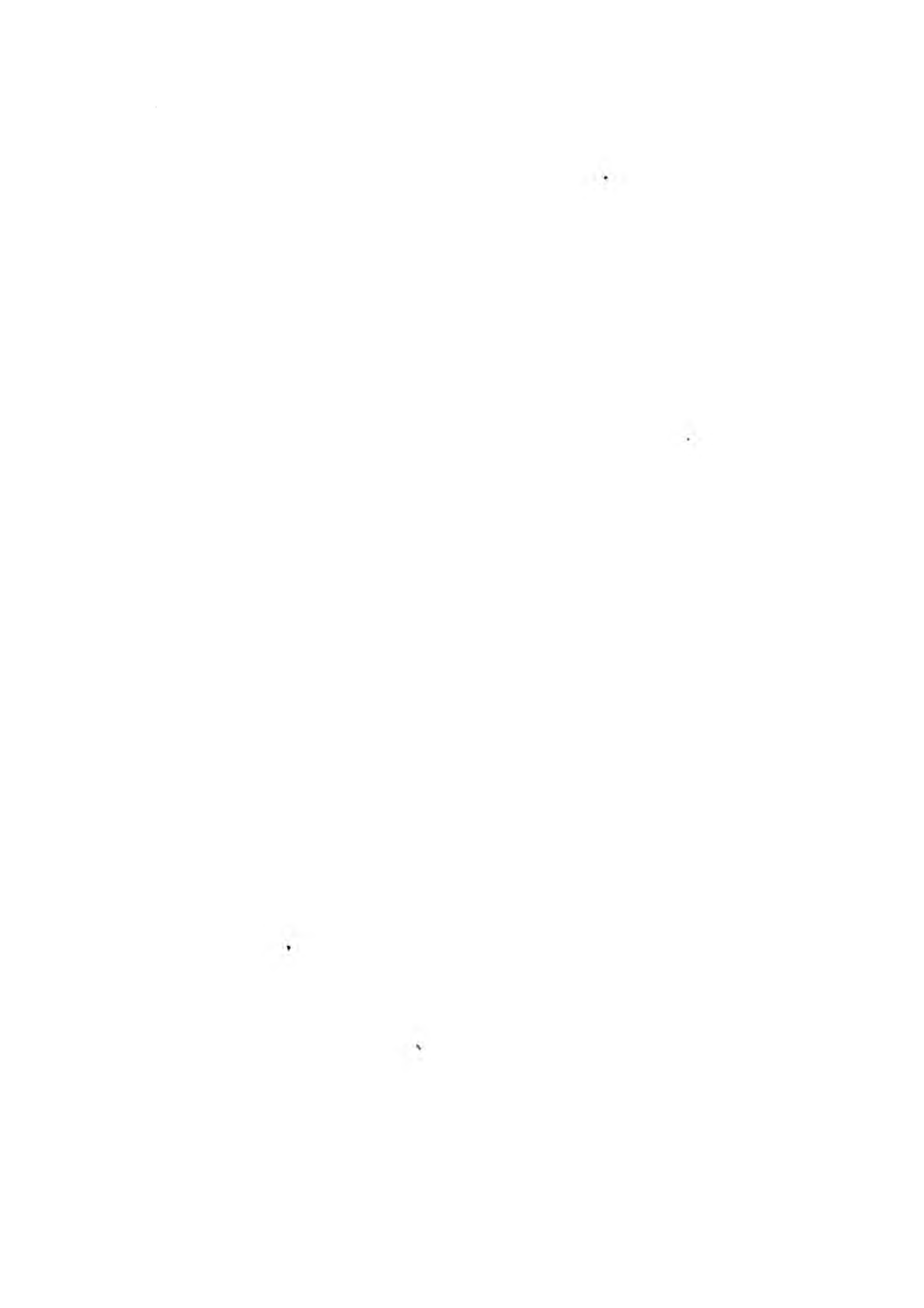
POEMS ON THE NAMING OF PLACES.

It was an April morning - - - - -	287
To Joanna - - - - -	289
There is an Eminence - - - - -	293
A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags - - - - -	294
To M. H. - - - - -	297
When, to the attractions of the busy world - - - - -	298
 Preface to the second edition of the "Lyrical Ballads" - - - - -	 303
Appendix - - - - -	339
Notes - - - - -	347

POEMS OF THE FANCY.

12
VOL. II.

B



I.

A MORNING EXERCISE.

FANCY, who leads the pastimes of the glad,
Full oft is pleased a wayward dart to throw ;
Sending sad shadows after things not sad,
Peopling the harmless fields with signs of woe :
Beneath her sway, a simple forest cry
Becomes an echo of Man's misery.

Blithe ravens croak of death ; and when the owl
Tries his two voices for a favourite strain—
Tu-whit—Tu-who! the unsuspecting fowl
Forebodes mishap or seems but to complain ;
Fancy, intent to harass and annoy,
Can thus pervert the evidence of joy.

Through border wilds where naked Indians stray,
Myriads of notes attest her subtle skill ;
A feathered task-master cries, " WORK AWAY !"
And, in thy iteration, " WHIP POOR WILL *,"
Is heard the spirit of a toil-worn slave,
Lashed out of life, not quiet in the grave !

What wonder ? at her bidding, ancient lays
Steeped in dire grief the voice of Philomel ;
And that fleet messenger of summer days,
The swallow, twittered subject to like spell ;
But ne'er could Fancy bend the buoyant lark
To melancholy service—hark ! O hark !

The daisy sleeps upon the dewy lawn,
Not lifting yet the head that evening bowed ;
But *He* is risen, a later star of dawn,
Glittering and twinkling near yon rosy cloud ;
Bright gem instinct with music, vocal spark ;
The happiest bird that sprang out of the Ark !

Hail, blest above all kinds !—Supremely skilled
Restless with fixed to balance, high with low,
Thou leav'st the halcyon free her hopes to build
On such forbearance as the deep may show ;
Perpetual flight, unchecked by earthly ties,
Leav'st to the wandering bird of paradise.

* See Waterton's Wanderings in South America .

Faithful, though swift as lightning, the meek dove ;
Yet more hath Nature reconciled in thee ;
So constant with thy downward eye of love,
Yet, in aërial singleness, so free ;
So humble, yet so ready to rejoice
In power of wing and never-wearied voice !

How would it please old Ocean to partake,
With sailors longing for a breeze in vain,
The harmony thy notes most gladly make
Where earth resembles most his own domain !
Urania's self might welcome with pleased ear
These matins mounting towards her native sphere.

Chanter by heaven attracted, whom no bars
To day-light known deter from that pursuit,
'Tis well that some sage instinct, when the stars
Come forth at evening, keeps Thee still and mute ;
For not an eyelid could to sleep incline
Wert thou among them, singing as they shine !

II.

A FLOWER GARDEN,
 AT COLEORTON HALL, LEICESTERSHIRE.

TELL me, ye Zephyrs ! that unfold,
 While fluttering o'er this gay Recess,
 Pinions that fanned the teeming mould
 Of Eden's blissful wilderness,
 Did only softly-stealing hours
 There close the peaceful lives of flowers ?

Say, when the *moving* creatures saw
 All kinds commingled without fear,
 Prevailed a like indulgent law
 For the still growths that prosper here ?
 Did wanton fawn and kid forbear
 The half-blown rose, the lily spare ?

Or peeped they often from their beds
 And prematurely disappeared,
 Devoured like pleasure ere it spreads
 A bosom to the sun endeared ?
 If such their harsh untimely doom,
 It falls not *here* on bud or bloom.

All summer-long the happy Eve
Of this fair Spot her flowers may bind,
Nor e'er, with ruffled fancy, grieve,
From the next glance she casts, to find
That love for little things by Fate
Is rendered vain as love for great.

Yet, where the guardian fence is wound,
So subtly are our eyes beguiled
We see not nor suspect a bound,
No more than in some forest wild ;
The sight is free as air—or crost
Only by art in nature lost.

And, though the jealous turf refuse
By random footsteps to be prest,
And feed on never-sullied dews,
Ye, gentle breezes from the west,
With all the ministers of hope
Are tempted to this sunny slope !

And hither throngs of birds resort ;
Some, inmates lodged in shady nests,
Some, perched on stems of stately port
That nod to welcome transient guests ;
While hare and leveret, seen at play,
Appear not more shut out than they.

Apt emblem (for reproof of pride)
This delicate Enclosure shows
Of modest kindness, that would hide
The firm protection she bestows ;
Of manners, like its viewless fence,
Ensuring peace to innocence.

Thus spake the moral Muse—her wing
Abruptly spreading to depart,
She left that farewell offering,
Memento for some docile heart ;
That may respect the good old age
When Fancy was Truth's willing Page ;
And Truth would skim the flowery glade,
Though entering but as Fancy's Shade.

III.

A WHIRL-BLAST from behind the hill
Rushed o'er the wood with startling sound ;
Then—all at once the air was still,
And showers of hailstones pattered round.
Where leafless oaks towered high above,
I sat within an undergrove
Of tallest hollies, tall and green ;
A fairer bower was never seen.
From year to year the spacious floor
With withered leaves is covered o'er,
And all the year the bower is green.
But see ! where'er the hailstones drop
The withered leaves all skip and hop ;
There's not a breeze—no breath of air—
Yet here, and there, and every where
Along the floor, beneath the shade
By those embowering hollies made,
The leaves in myriads jump and spring,
As if with pipes and music rare
Some Robin Good-fellow were there,
And all those leaves, in festive glee,
Were dancing to the minstrelsy.

IV.

THE WATERFALL AND THE EGLANTINE.



I.

“BEGONE, thou fond presumptuous Elf,”
Exclaimed an angry Voice,
“Nor dare to thrust thy foolish self
Between me and my choice !”
A small Cascade fresh swoln with snows
Thus threatened a poor Briar-rose,
That, all bespattered with his foam,
And dancing high and dancing low,
Was living, as a child might know,
In an unhappy home.

ii.

“Dost thou presume my course to block?
Off, off! or, puny Thing!
I'll hurl thee headlong with the rock
To which thy fibres cling.”
The Flood was tyrannous and strong;
The patient Briar suffered long,
Nor did he utter groan or sigh,
Hoping the danger would be past;
But, seeing no relief, at last,
He ventured to reply.

iii.

“Ah!” said the Briar, “blame me not;
Why should we dwell in strife?
We who in this sequestered spot
Once lived a happy life!
You stirred me on my rocky bed—
What pleasure through my veins you spread!
The summer long, from day to day,
My leaves you freshened and bedewed;
Nor was it common gratitude
That did your cares repay.

iv.

When spring came on with bud and bell,
Among these rocks did I
Before you hang my wreaths to tell
That gentle days were nigh !
And in the sultry summer hours,
I sheltered you with leaves and flowers ;
And in my leaves—now shed and gone,
The linnet lodged, and for us two
Chanted his pretty songs, when you
Had little voice or none.

v.

But now proud thoughts are in your breast—
What grief is mine you see,
Ah ! would you think, even yet how blest
Together we might be !
Though of both leaf and flower bereft,
Some ornaments to me are left—
Rich store of scarlet hips is mine,
With which I, in my humble way,
Would deck you many a winter day,
A happy Eglantine !”

VI.

What more he said I cannot tell,
The Stream came thundering down the dell
With aggravated haste ;
I listened, nor aught else could hear ;
The Briar quaked—and much I fear
Those accents were his last.

1800.

V.

THE OAK AND THE BROOM.

A PASTORAL.

I.

His simple truths did Andrew glean
Beside the babbling rills ;
A careful student he had been
Among the woods and hills.
One winter's night, when through the trees
The wind was roaring, on his knees
His youngest born did Andrew hold :
And while the rest, a ruddy quire,
Were seated round their blazing fire,
This Tale the Shepherd told.

II.

“I saw a crag, a lofty stone
As ever tempest beat!
Out of its head an Oak had grown,
A Broom out of its feet.
The time was March, a cheerful noon—
The thaw-wind, with the breath of June,
Breathed gently from the warm south-west:
When, in a voice sedate with age,
This Oak, a giant and a sage,
His neighbour thus addressed:—

III.

Eight weary weeks, through rock and clay,
Along this mountain's edge,
The Frost hath wrought both night and day,
Wedge driving after wedge.
Look up! and think, above your head
What trouble, surely, will be bred;
Last night I heard a crash—'tis true,
The splinters took another road—
I see them yonder—what a load
For such a Thing as you!

iv.

You are preparing as before,
To deck your slender shape;
And yet, just three years back—no more—
You had a strange escape :
Down from yon cliff a fragment broke ;
It thundered down, with fire and smoke,
And hitherward pursued its way ;
This ponderous block was caught by me,
And o'er your head, as you may see,
'Tis hanging to this day !

v.

If breeze or bird to this rough steep
Your kind's first seed did bear ;
The breeze had better been asleep,
The bird caught in a snare :
For you and your green twigs decoy
The little witless shepherd-boy
To come and slumber in your bower ;
And, trust me, on some sultry noon,
Both you and he, Heaven knows how soon !
Will perish in one hour.

VI.

From me this friendly warning take'—
The Broom began to doze,
And thus, to keep herself awake,
Did gently interpose :
' My thanks for your discourse are due ;
That more than what you say is true,
I know, and I have known it long ;
Frail is the bond by which we hold
Our being, whether young or old,
Wise, foolish, weak, or strong.

VII.

Disasters, do the best we can,
Will reach both great and small ;
And he is oft the wisest man,
Who is not wise at all.
For me, why should I wish to roam ?
This spot is my paternal home,
It is my pleasant heritage ;
My father many a happy year,
Spread here his careless blossoms, here
Attained a good old age.

VIII.

Even such as his may be my lot.
What cause have I to haunt
My heart with terrors? Am I not
In truth a favoured plant!
On me such bounty Summer pours,
That I am covered o'er with flowers;
And, when the Frost is in the sky,
My branches are so fresh and gay
That you might look at me and say,
This Plant can never die.

IX.

The butterfly, all green and gold,
To me hath often flown,
Here in my blossoms to behold
Wings lovely as his own.
When grass is chill with rain or dew,
Beneath my shade, the mother-ewe
Lies with her infant lamb; I see
The love they to each other make,
And the sweet joy which they partake,
It is a joy to me.'

x.

Her voice was blithe, her heart was light ;
The Broom might have pursued
Her speech, until the stars of night
Their journey had renewed ;
But in the branches of the oak
Two ravens now began to croak
Their nuptial song, a gladsome air ;
And to her own green bower the breeze
That instant brought two stripling bees
To rest, or murmur there.

xi.

One night, my Children ! from the north
There came a furious blast ;
At break of day I ventured forth,
And near the cliff I passed.
The storm had fallen upon the Oak,
And struck him with a mighty stroke,
And whirled, and whirled him far away ;
And, in one hospitable cleft,
The little careless Broom was left
To live for many a day."

1800.

VI.

TO A SEXTON.

LET thy wheel-barrow alone—
 Wherefore, Sexton, piling still
 In thy bone-house bone on bone ?
 'Tis already like a hill
 In a field of battle made,
 Where three thousand skulls are laid ;
 These died in peace each with the other,—
 Father, sister, friend, and brother.

Mark the spot to which I point !
 From this platform, eight feet square,
 Take not even a finger-joint :
 Andrew's whole fire-side is there.
 Here, alone, before thine eyes,
 Simon's sickly daughter lies,
 From weakness now, and pain defended,
 Whom he twenty winters tended.

Look but at the gardener's pride—
How he glories, when he sees
Roses, lilies, side by side,
Violets in families!
By the heart of Man, his tears,
By his hopes and by his fears,
Thou, old Grey-beard! art the warden
Of a far superior garden.

Thus then, each to other dear,
Let them all in quiet lie,
Andrew there, and Susan here,
Neighbours in mortality.
And, should I live through sun and rain
Seven widowed years without my Jane,
O Sexton, do not then remove her,
Let one grave hold the Loved and Lover!

VII.

TO THE DAISY.

‘Her * divine skill taught me this,
 That from every thing I saw
 I could some instruction draw,
 And raise pleasure to the height
 Through the meanest object’s sight.
 By the murmur of a spring,
 Or the least bough’s rustelling ;
 By a Daisy whose leaves spread
 Shut when Titan goes to bed ;
 Or a shady bush or tree ;
 She could more infuse in me
 Than all Nature’s beauties can
 In some other wiser man.’

G. WITHERS.

IN youth from rock to rock I went,
 From hill to hill in discontent
 Of pleasure high and turbulent,
 Most pleased when most uneasy ;
 But now my own delights I make,—
 My thirst at every rill can slake,
 And Nature’s love of Thee partake,
 Her much-loved Daisy !

* His muse.

Thee Winter in the garland wears
That thinly decks his few grey hairs ;
Spring parts the clouds with softest airs,
 That she may sun thee ;
Whole Summer-fields are thine by right ;
And Autumn, melancholy Wight !
Doth in thy crimson head delight
 When rains are on thee.

In shoals and bands, a morrice train,
Thou greet'st the traveller in the lane ;
Pleased at his greeting thee again ;
 Yet nothing daunted,
Nor grieved if thou be set at nought :
And oft alone in nooks remote
We meet thee, like a pleasant thought,
 When such are wanted.

Be violets in their secret mews
The flowers the wanton Zephyrs choose ;
Proud be the rose, with rains and dews
 Her head impearling ;
Thou liv'st with less ambitious aim,
Yet hast not gone without thy fame ;
Thou art indeed by many a claim
 The Poet's darling.

If to a rock from rains he fly,
Or, some bright day of April sky,
Imprisoned by hot sunshine lie
 Near the green holly,
And wearily at length should fare ;
He needs but look about, and there
Thou art !—a friend at hand, to scare
 His melancholy.

A hundred times, by rock or bower,
Ere thus I have lain couched an hour,
Have I derived from thy sweet power
 Some apprehension ;
Some steady love ; some brief delight ;
Some memory that had taken flight ;
Some chime of fancy wrong or right ;
 Or stray invention.

If stately passions in me burn,
And one chance look to Thee should turn,
I drink out of an humbler urn
 A lowlier pleasure ;
The homely sympathy that heeds
The common life, our nature breeds ;
A wisdom fitted to the needs
 Of hearts at leisure.

Fresh-smitten by the morning ray,
 When thou art up, alert and gay,
 Then, cheerful Flower ! my spirits play
 With kindred gladness :
 And when, at dusk, by dews opprest
 Thou sink'st, the image of thy rest
 Hath often eased my pensive breast
 Of careful sadness.

And all day long I number yet,
 All seasons through, another debt,
 Which I, wherever thou art met,
 To thee am owing ;
 An instinct call it, a blind sense ;
 A happy, genial influence,
 Coming one knows not how, nor whence,
 Nor whither going.

Child of the Year ! that round dost run
 Thy pleasant course,—when day's begun
 As ready to salute the sun
 As lark or leveret,
 Thy long-lost praise * thou shalt regain ;
 Nor be less dear to future men
 Than in old time ;—thou not in vain
 Art Nature's favourite.

1802.

* See, in Chaucer and the elder Poets, the honours formerly paid to this flower.

VIII.

TO THE SAME FLOWER.

WITH little here to do or see
Of things that in the great world be,
Yet once again I talk to thee,
 For thou art worthy,
Thou unassuming Common-place
Of Nature, with that homely face,
And yet with something of a grace,
 Which Love makes for thee!

Oft on the dappled turf at ease
I sit, and play with similies,
Loose types of things through all degrees,
 Thoughts of thy raising :
And many a fond and idle name
I give to thee, for praise or blame,
As is the humour of the game,
 While I am gazing.

A nun demure of lowly port ;
Or sprightly maiden, of Love's court,
In thy simplicity the sport
 Of all temptations ;
A queen in crown of rubies drest ;
A starveling in a scanty vest ;
Are all, as seems to suit thee best,
 Thy appellations.

A little cyclops, with one eye
Staring to threaten and defy,
That thought comes next—and instantly
 The freak is over,
The shape will vanish—and behold
A silver shield with boss of gold,
That spreads itself, some faery bold
 In fight to cover !

I see thee glittering from afar—
And then thou art a pretty star ;
Not quite so fair as many are
 In heaven above thee !
Yet like a star, with glittering crest,
Self-poised in air thou seem'st to rest ;—
May peace come never to his nest,
 Who shall reprove thee !

Bright *Flower!* for by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that cleave fast,
 Sweet silent creature!
That breath'st with me in sun and air,
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
 Of thy meek nature!

1805.

IX.

THE GREEN LINNET.

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
 Of spring's unclouded weather,
In this sequestered nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard-seat!
And birds and flowers once more to greet,
 My last year's friends together.

One have I marked, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest :
Hail to Thee, far above the rest
 In joy of voice and pinion!
Thou, Linnet ! in thy green array,
Presiding Spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May ;
 And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers,
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
 Art sole in thy employment :
A Life, a Presence like the Air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair ;
 Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perched in ecstasies,
 Yet seeming still to hover ;
There ! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
 That cover him all over.

My dazzled sight the Bird deceives,
 A Brother of the dancing leaves ;
 Then flits, and from the cottage-eaves
 Pours forth his song in gushes ;
 As if by that exulting strain
 He mocked and treated with disdain
 The voiceless Form he chose to feign,
 While fluttering in the bushes.

1803.

x.

TO A SKY-LARK.

UP with me ! up with me into the clouds !
 For thy song, Lark, is strong ;
 Up with me, up with me into the clouds !
 Singing, singing,
 With clouds and sky about thee ringing,
 Lift me, guide me till I find
 That spot which seems so to thy mind !

I have walked through wildernesses dreary
And to-day my heart is weary ;
Had I now the wings of a Faery,
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee, and joy divine
In that song of thine ;
Lift me, guide me high and high
To thy banqueting-place in the sky.

Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning ;
Thou hast a nest for thy love and thy rest,
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark ! thou would'st be loth
To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy Liver,
With a soul as strong as a mountain river
Pouring out praise to the almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both !

Alas ! my journey, rugged and uneven,
Through prickly moors or dusty ways must wind ;
But hearing thee, or others of thy kind,
As full of gladness and as free of heaven,
I, with my fate contented, will plod on,
And hope for higher raptures, when Life's day is done.

XI.

TO THE SMALL CELANDINE.*

PANSIES, lilies, kingcups, daisies,
Let them live upon their praises ;
Long as there's a sun that sets,
Primroses will have their glory ;
Long as there are violets,
They will have a place in story :
There's a flower that shall be mine,
'Tis the little Celandine.

Eyes of some men travel far
For the finding of a star ;
Up and down the heavens they go,
Men that keep a mighty rout !
I 'm as great as they, I trow,
Since the day I found thee out,
Little flower !—I 'll make a stir,
Like a sage astronomer.

* Common Pilewort.

Modest, yet withal an Elf
Bold, and lavish of thyself ;
Since we needs must first have met
I have seen thee, high and low,
Thirty years or more, and yet
'Twas a face I did not know ;
Thou hast now, go where I may,
Fifty greetings in a day.

Ere a leaf is on a bush,
In the time before the thrush
Has a thought about her nest,
Thou wilt come with half a call,
Spreading out thy glossy breast
Like a careless Prodigal ;
Telling tales about the sun,
When we've little warmth, or none.

Poets, vain men in their mood !
Travel with the multitude :
Never heed them ; I aver
That they all are wanton wooers ;
But the thrifty cottager,
Who stirs little out of doors,
Joys to spy thee near her home ;
Spring is coming, Thou art come !

Drawn by what peculiar spell,
By what charm for sight or smell,
Do those wingèd dim-eyed creatures,
Labourers sent from waxen cells,
Settle on thy brilliant features,
In neglect of buds and bells
Opening daily at thy side,
By the season multiplied ?

Comfort have thou of thy merit,
Kindly, unassuming Spirit !
Careless of thy neighbourhood,
Thou dost show thy pleasant face
On the moor, and in the wood,
In the lane ;—there's not a place,
Howsoever mean it be,
But 'tis good enough for thee.

Ill befall the yellow flowers,
Children of the flaring hours !
Buttercups, that will be seen,
Whether we will see or no ;
Others, too, of lofty mien ;
They have done as worldlings do,
Taken praise that should be thine,
Little, humble Celandine !

Prophet of delight and mirth,
Ill-requited upon earth ;
Herald of a mighty band,
Of a joyous train ensuing,
Serving at my heart's command,
Tasks that are no tasks renewing,
I will sing, as doth behove,
Hymns in praise of what I love! 1803.

XII.

TO THE SAME FLOWER.

PLEASURES newly found are sweet
When they lie about our feet :
February last, my heart
First at sight of thee was glad ;
All unheard of as thou art,
Thou must needs, I think, have had,
Celandine ! and long ago,
Praise of which I nothing know.

I have not a doubt but he,
Whosoe'er the man might be,
Who the first with pointed rays
(Workman worthy to be sainted)
Set the sign-board in a blaze,
When the rising sun he painted,
Took the fancy from a glance
At thy glittering countenance.

Soon as gentle breezes bring
News of winter's vanishing,
And the children build their bowers,
Sticking 'kerchief-plots of mould
All about with full-blown flowers,
Thick as sheep in shepherd's fold!
With the proudest thou art there,
Mantling in the tiny square.

Often have I sighed to measure
By myself a lonely pleasure,
Sighed to think, I read a book
Only read, perhaps, by me;
Yet I long could overlook
Thy bright coronet and Thee,
And thy arch and wily ways,
And thy store of other praise.

Blithe of heart, from week to week
Thou dost play at hide-and-seek ;
While the patient primrose sits
Like a beggar in the cold,
Thou, a flower of wiser wits,
Slip 'st into thy sheltering hold ;
Bright as any of the train
When ye all are out again.

Thou art not beyond the moon,
But a thing ' beneath our shoon : '
Let the bold Adventurer thrud
In his bark the polar sea ;
Rear who will a pyramid ;
Praise it is enough for me,
If there be but three or four
Who will love my little Flower.

1803.

XIII.

THE SEVEN SISTERS;

OR,

THE SOLITUDE OF BINNORIE.



I.

SEVEN Daughters had Lord Archibald,
All children of one mother :
You could not say in one short day
What love they bore each other.
A garland, of seven lilies, wrought !
Seven Sisters that together dwell ;
But he, bold Knight as ever fought,
Their Father, took of them no thought,
He loved the wars so well.
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The Solitude of Binnorie !

II.

Fresh blows the wind, a western wind,
And from the shores of Erin,
Across the wave, a Rover brave
To Binnorie is steering :
Right onward to the Scottish strand
The gallant ship is borne ;
The warriors leap upon the land,
And hark ! the Leader of the band
Hath blown his bugle horn.
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

III.

Beside a grotto of their own,
With boughs above them closing,
The seven are laid, and in the shade
They lie like fawns reposing.
But now, upstarting with affright
At noise of man and steed,
Away they fly to left, to right—
Of your fair household, Father-knight,
Methinks you take small heed !
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

iv.

Away the seven fair Campbells fly,
And, over hill and hollow,
With menace proud, and insult loud,
The youthful Rovers follow.
Cried they, " Your Father loves to roam :
Enough for him to find
The empty house when he comes home ;
For us your yellow ringlets comb,
For us be fair and kind ! "
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

v.

Some close behind, some side by side,
Like clouds in stormy weather ;
They run, and cry, " Nay, let us die,
And let us die together."
A lake was near ; the shore was steep ;
There never foot had been ;
They ran, and with a desperate leap
Together plunged into the deep,
Nor ever more were seen.
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

VI.

The stream that flows out of the lake,
As through the glen it rambles,
Repeats a moan o'er moss and stone,
For those seven lovely Campbells.
Seven little Islands, green and bare,
Have risen from out the deep :
The fishers say, those sisters fair,
By faeries are all buried there,
And there together sleep.
Sing, mournfully, oh ! mournfully,
The solitude of Binnorie.

1804.

XIV.

Who fancied what a pretty sight
This Rock would be if edged around
With living snow-drops? circlet bright!
How glorious to this orchard-ground!
Who loved the little Rock, and set
Upon its head this coronet?

Was it the humour of a child?
Or rather of some gentle maid,
Whose brows, the day that she was styled
The shepherd-queen, were thus arrayed?
Of man mature, or matron sage?
Or old man toying with his age!

I asked—'twas whispered; The device
To each and all might well belong:
It is the Spirit of Paradise
That prompts such work, a Spirit strong,
That gives to all the self-same bent
Where life is wise and innocent.

XV.

THE REDBREAST AND BUTTERFLY.

ART thou the bird whom Man loves best,
 The pious bird with the scarlet breast,
 Our little English Robin ;
 The bird that comes about our doors
 When Autumn-winds are sobbing ?
 Art thou the Peter of Norway Boors ?
 Their Thomas in Finland,
 And Russia far inland ?
 The bird, who by some name or other
 All men who know thee call their brother,
 The darling of children and men ?
 Could Father Adam * open his eyes
 And see this sight beneath the skies,
 He'd wish to close them again.

* See Paradise Lost, Book XI., where Adam points out to Eve the ominous sign of the Eagle chasing "two Birds of gayest plume," and the gentle Hart and Hind pursued by their enemy.

If the Butterfly knew but his friend,
Hither his flight he would bend ;
And find his way to me,
Under the branches of the tree :
In and out, he darts about ;
Can this be the bird, to man so good,
That, after their bewildering,
Covered with leaves the little children,
So painfully in the wood ?

What ailed thee, Robin, that thou could'st pursue
A beautiful creature,
That is gentle by nature ?
Beneath the summer sky
From flower to flower let him fly ;
'Tis all that he wishes to do.
The cheerer Thou of our in-door sadness,
He is the friend of our summer gladness :
What hinders, then, that ye should be
Playmates in the sunny weather,
And fly about in the air together !
His beautiful wings in crimson are drest,
A crimson as bright as thine own :
Would'st thou be happy in thy nest,
O pious Bird ! whom man loves best,
Love him, or leave him alone !

XVI.

SONG FOR THE SPINNING WHEEL.

FOUNDED UPON A BELIEF PREVALENT AMONG THE PASTORAL VALES
OF WESTMORELAND.

SWIFTLY turn the murmuring wheel !
Night has brought the welcome hour,
When the weary fingers feel
Help, as if from faery power ;
Dewy night o'ershades the ground ;
Turn the swift wheel round and round !

Now, beneath the starry sky,
Couch the widely-scattered sheep ;—
Ply the pleasant labour, ply !
For the spindle, while they sleep,
Runs with speed more smooth and fine,
Gathering up a trustier line.

Short-lived likings may be bred
By a glance from fickle eyes ;
But true love is like the thread
Which the kindly wool supplies,
When the flocks are all at rest
Sleeping on the mountain's breast.

XVII.

HINT FROM THE MOUNTAINS

FOR CERTAIN POLITICAL PRETENDERS.

—♦—

“WHO but hails the sight with pleasure
When the wings of genius rise,
Their ability to measure
 With great enterprise ;
But in man was ne'er such daring
As yon Hawk exhibits, pairing
His brave spirit with the war in
 The stormy skies !

Mark him, how his power he uses,
Lays it by, at will resumes !
Mark, ere for his haunt he chooses
 Clouds and utter glooms !
There, he wheels in downward mazes ;
Sunward now his flight he raises,
Catches fire, as seems, and blazes
 With uninjured plumes !”—

ANSWER.

“ Stranger, ’tis no act of courage
Which aloft thou dost discern ;
No bold *bird* gone forth to forage
 ’Mid the tempest stern ;
But such mockery as the nations
See, when public perturbations
Lift men from their native stations,
 Like yon TUFT OF FERN ;

Such it is ; the aspiring creature
Soaring on undaunted wing,
(So you fancied) is by nature
 A dull helpless thing,
Dry and withered, light and yellow ;—
That to be the tempest’s fellow !
Wait—and you shall see how hollow
 Its endeavouring !”

1817.

XVIII.

ON SEEING A NEEDLECASE IN THE FORM
OF A HARP,

THE WORK OF E.M.S.

FROWNS are on every Muse's face,
Reproaches from their lips are sent,
That mimicry should thus disgrace
The noble Instrument.

A very Harp in all but size !
Needles for strings in apt gradation !
Minerva's self would stigmatize
The unclassic profanation.

Even her *own* needle that subdued
Arachne's rival spirit,
Though wrought in Vulcan's happiest mood,
Like station could not merit.

And this, too, from the Laureate's Child,
A living lord of melody !
How will her Sire be reconciled
To the refined indignity ?

I spake, when whispered a low voice,
 “ Bard ! moderate your ire ;
Spirits of all degrees rejoice
 In presence of the lyre.

The Minstrels of Pygmean bands,
 Dwarf Genii, moonlight-loving Fays,
Have shells to fit their tiny hands
 And suit their slender lays.

Some, still more delicate of ear,
 Have lutes (believe my words)
Whose framework is of gossamer,
 While sunbeams are the chords.

Gay Sylphs this miniature will court,
 Made vocal by their brushing wings,
And sullen Gnomes will learn to sport
 Around its polished strings ;

Whence strains to love-sick maiden dear,
 While in her lonely bower she tries
To cheat the thought she cannot cheer,
 By fanciful embroideries.

Trust, angry Bard ! a knowing Sprite,
 Nor think the Harp her lot deploras ;
Though mid the stars the Lyre shine bright,
 Love *stoops* as fondly as he soars.” 1827 .

XIX.

THE CONTRAST,

THE PARROT AND THE WREN.

I.

WITHIN her gilded cage confined,
 I saw a dazzling Belle,
 A Parrot of that famous kind
 Whose name is NON-PAREIL.

Like beads of glossy jet her eyes ;
 And, smoothed by Nature's skill,
 With pearl or gleaming agate vies
 Her finely-curvèd bill.

Her plummy mantle's living hues
 In mass opposed to mass,
 Outshine the splendour that imbues
 The robes of pictured glass.

And, sooth to say, an apter Mate
Did never tempt the choice
Of feathered Thing most delicate
In figure and in voice.

But, exiled from Australian bowers,
And singleness her lot,
She trills her song with tutored powers,
Or mocks each casual note.

No more of pity for regrets
With which she may have striven !
Now but in wantonness she frets,
Or spite, if cause be given ;

Arch, volatile, a sportive bird
By social glee inspired ;
Ambitious to be seen or heard,
And pleased to be admired !

ii.

THIS MOSS-LINED shed, green, soft, and dry,
Harbours a self-contented Wren,
Not shunning man's abode, though shy,
Almost as thought itself, of human ken.

Strange places, coverts unendeared,
She never tried ; the very nest
In which this Child of Spring was reared,
Is warmed, thro' winter, by her feathery breast.

To the bleak winds she sometimes gives
A slender unexpected strain ;
Proof that the hermitess still lives,
Though she appear not, and be sought in vain.

Say, Dora ! tell me, by yon placid moon,
If called to choose between the favoured pair,
Which would you be,—the bird of the saloon,
By lady-fingers tended with nice care,
Caressed, applauded, upon dainties fed,
Or Nature's DARKLING of this mossy shed ?

1825.

XX.

THE DANISH BOY.

A FRAGMENT.

I.

BETWEEN two sister moorland rills
There is a spot that seems to lie
Sacred to flowerets of the hills,
And sacred to the sky.
And in this smooth and open dell
There is a tempest-stricken tree ;
A corner-stone by lightning cut,
The last stone of a lonely hut ;
And in this dell you see
A thing no storm can e'er destroy,
The Shadow of a Danish Boy .

ii.

In clouds above, the lark is heard,
But drops not here to earth for rest ;
Within this lonesome nook the bird
Did never build her nest.
No beast, no bird hath here his home ;
Bees, wafted on the breezy air,
Pass high above those fragrant bells
To other flowers :—to other dells
Their burthens do they bear ;
The Danish Boy walks here alone :
The lovely dell is all his own.

iii.

A Spirit of noon-day is he ;
Yet seems a form of flesh and blood ;
Nor piping shepherd shall he be,
Nor herd-boy of the wood.
A regal vest of fur he wears,
In colour like a raven's wing ;
It fears not rain, nor wind, nor dew ;
But in the storm 'tis fresh and blue
As budding pines in spring ;
His helmet has a vernal grace,
Fresh as the bloom upon his face.

iv.

A harp is from his shoulder slung ;
Resting the harp upon his knee ;
To words of a forgotten tongue,
He suits its melody.
Of flocks upon the neighbouring hill
He is the darling and the joy ;
And often, when no cause appears,
The mountain-ponies prick their ears,
—They hear the Danish Boy,
While in the dell he sits alone
Beside the tree and corner-stone.

v.

There sits he; in his face you spy
No trace of a ferocious air,
Nor ever was a cloudless sky
So steady or so fair.
The lovely Danish Boy is blest
And happy in his flowery cove :
From bloody deeds his thoughts are far ;
And yet he warbles songs of war,
That seem like songs of love,
For calm and gentle is his mien ;
Like a dead Boy he is serene.

XXI.

SONG

FOR THE WANDERING JEW.

THOUGH the torrents from their fountains
Roar down many a craggy steep,
Yet they find among the mountains
Resting-places calm and deep.

Clouds that love through air to hasten,
Ere the storm its fury stills,
Helmet-like themselves will fasten
On the heads of towering hills.

What, if through the frozen centre
Of the Alps the Chamois bound,
Yet he has a home to enter
In some nook of chosen ground :

And the Sea-horse, though the ocean
Yield him no domestic cave,
Slumbers without sense of motion,
Couched upon the rocking wave.

If on windy days the Raven
Gambol like a dancing skiff,
Not the less she loves her haven
In the bosom of the cliff.

The fleet Ostrich, till day closes,
Vagrant over desert sands,
Brooding on her eggs reposes
When chill night that care demands.

Day and night my toils redouble,
Never nearer to the goal ;
Night and day, I feel the trouble
Of the Wanderer in my soul.

1800.

XXII.

STRAY PLEASURES.



*' — Pleasure is spread through the earth
In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find.'*

By their floating mill,
That lies dead and still,
Behold yon Prisoners three,
The Miller with two Dames, on the breast of the Thames!
The platform is small, but gives room for them all ;
And they're dancing merrily.

From the shore come the notes
To their mill where it floats,
To their house and their mill tethered fast :
To the small wooden isle where, their work to beguile,
They from morning to even take whatever is given ;—
And many a blithe day they have past.

In sight of the spires,
All alive with the fires
Of the sun going down to his rest,
In the broad open eye of the solitary sky,
They dance,—there are three, as jocund as free,
While they dance on the calm river's breast.

Man and Maidens wheel,
They themselves make the reel,
And their music's a prey which they seize ;
It plays not for them,—what matter ? 'tis theirs ;
And if they had care, it has scattered their cares,
While they dance, crying, “ Long as ye please !”

They dance not for me,
Yet mine is their glee !
Thus pleasure is spread through the earth
In stray gifts to be claimed by whoever shall find ;
Thus a rich loving-kindness, redundantly kind,
Moves all nature to gladness and mirth.

The showers of the spring
Rouse the birds, and they sing ;
If the wind do but stir for his proper delight,
Each leaf, that and this, his neighbour will kiss ;
Each wave, one and t'other, speeds after his brother ;
They are happy, for that is their right !

XXIII.

THE PILGRIM'S DREAM ;

OR, THE STAR AND THE GLOW-WORM.

A PILGRIM, when the summer day
Had closed upon his weary way,
A lodging begged beneath a castle's roof ;
But him the haughty Warder spurned ;
And from the gate the Pilgrim turned,
To seek such covert as the field
Or heath-besprinkled copse might yield,
Or lofty wood, shower-proof.

He paced along ; and, pensively,
Halting beneath a shady tree,
Whose moss-grown root might serve for couch or seat,
Fixed on a Star his upward eye ;
Then, from the tenant of the sky
He turned, and watched with kindred look,
A Glow-worm, in a dusky nook,
Apparent at his feet.

The murmur of a neighbouring stream
Induced a soft and slumbrous dream,
A pregnant dream, within whose shadowy bounds
He recognised the earth-born Star,
And *That* which glittered from afar ;
And (strange to witness !) from the frame
Of the ethereal Orb, there came
Intelligible sounds.

Much did it taunt the humbler Light
That now, when day was fled, and night
Hushed the dark earth, fast closing weary eyes,
A very reptile could presume
To show her taper in the gloom,
As if in rivalry with One
Who sate a ruler on his throne
Erected in the skies.

“ Exalted Star ! ” the Worm replied,
“ Abate this unbecoming pride,
Or with a less uneasy lustre shine ;
Thou shrink 'st as momentarily thy rays
Are mastered by the breathing haze ;
While neither mist, nor thickest cloud
That shapes in heaven its murky shroud,
Hath power to injure mine.

But not for this do I aspire
To match the spark of local fire,
That at my will burns on the dewy lawn,
With thy acknowledged glories ;—No !
Yet, thus upbraided, I may show
What favours do attend me here,
Till, like thyself, I disappear
Before the purple dawn.”

When this in modest guise was said,
Across the welkin seemed to spread
A boding sound—for aught but sleep unfit !
Hills quaked, the rivers backward ran ;
That Star, so proud of late, looked wan ;
And reeled with visionary stir
In the blue depth, like Lucifer
Cast headlong to the pit !

Fire raged : and, when the spangled floor
Of ancient ether was no more,
New heavens succeeded, by the dream brought forth :
And all the happy Souls that rode
Transfigured through that fresh abode,
Had heretofore, in humble trust,
Shone meekly mid their native dust,
The Glow-worms of the earth !

This knowledge, from an Angel's voice
 Proceeding, made the heart rejoice
 Of Him who slept upon the open lea :
 Waking at morn he murmured not ;
 And, till life's journey closed, the spot
 Was to the Pilgrim's soul endeared,
 Where by that dream he had been cheered
 Beneath the shady tree.

1818.

 XXIV.

 THE POET AND THE CAGED TURTLEDOVE.

As often as I murmur here
 My half-formed melodies,
 Straight from her osier mansion near,
 The Turtledove replies :
 Though silent as a leaf before,
 The captive promptly coos ;
 Is it to teach her own soft lore,
 Or second my weak Muse ?

I rather think, the gentle Dove
Is murmuring a reproof,
Displeas'd that I from lays of love
Have dared to keep aloof ;
That I, a Bard of hill and dale,
Have caroll'd, fancy free,
As if nor dove nor nightingale,
Had heart or voice for me.

If such thy meaning, O forbear,
Sweet Bird ! to do me wrong ;
Love, blessed Love, is every where
The spirit of my song :
'Mid grove, and by the calm fireside,
Love animates my lyre—
That coo again !—'t is not to chide,
I feel, but to inspire.

1830.

XXV.

A WREN'S NEST.

AMONG the dwellings framed by birds
In field or forest with nice care,
Is none that with the little Wren's
In snugness may compare.

No door the tenement requires,
And seldom needs a laboured roof;
Yet is it to the fiercest sun
Impervious, and storm-proof.

So warm, so beautiful withal,
In perfect fitness for its aim,
That to the Kind by special grace
Their instinct surely came.

And when for their abodes they seek
An opportune recess,
The hermit has no finer eye
For shadowy quietness.

These find, 'mid ivied abbey-walls,
A canopy in some still nook ;
Others are pent-housed by a brae
That overhangs a brook.

There to the brooding bird her mate
Warbles by fits his low clear song ;
And by the busy streamlet both
Are sung to all day long.

Or in sequestered lanes they build,
Where, till the fitting bird's return,
Her eggs within the nest repose,
Like relics in an urn.

But still, where general choice is good,
There is a better and a best ;
And, among fairest objects, some
Are fairer than the rest ;

This, one of those small builders proved
In a green covert, where, from out
The forehead of a pollard oak,
The leafy antlers sprout ;

For She who planned the mossy lodge,
Mistrusting her evasive skill,
Had to a Primrose looked for aid
Her wishes to fulfil.

High on the trunk's projecting brow,
And fixed an infant's span above
The budding flowers, peeped forth the nest
The prettiest of the grove!

The treasure proudly did I show
To some whose minds without disdain
Can turn to little things; but once
Looked up for it in vain:

'T is gone—a ruthless spoiler's prey,
Who heeds not beauty, love, or song,
'T is gone! (so seemed it) and we grieved
Indignant at the wrong.

Just three days after, passing by
In clearer light the moss-built cell
I saw, espied its shaded mouth;
And felt that all was well.

The Primrose for a veil had spread
The largest of her upright leaves;
And thus, for purposes benign,
A simple flower deceives.

Concealed from friends who might disturb
Thy quiet with no ill intent,
Secure from evil eyes and hands
On barbarous plunder bent,

Rest, Mother-bird ! and when thy young
 Take flight, and thou art free to roam,
 When withered is the guardian Flower,
 And empty thy late home,

Think how ye prospered, thou and thine,
 Amid the unviolated grove
 Housed near the growing Primrose-tuft
 In foresight, or in love.

1833.

 XXVI.

RURAL ILLUSIONS.

—◆—

SYLPH was it ? or a Bird more bright
 Than those of fabulous stock ?
 A second darted by ;—and lo !
 Another of the flock,
 Through sunshine flitting from the bough
 To nestle in the rock.
 Transient deception ! a gay freak
 Of April's mimicries !
 Those brilliant strangers, hailed with joy
 Among the budding trees,
 Proved last year's leaves, pushed from the spray
 To frolic on the breeze.

Maternal Flora ! show thy face,
And let thy hand be seen,
Thy hand here sprinkling tiny flowers,
That, as they touch the green,
Take root (so seems it) and look up
In honour of their Queen.
Yet, sooth, those little starry specks,
That not in vain aspired
To be confounded with live growths,
Most dainty, most admired,
Were only blossoms dropped from twigs
Of their own offspring tired.

Not such the World's illusive shows ;
Her wingless flutterings,
Her blossoms which, though shed, outbrave
The floweret as it springs,
For the undeceived, smile as they may,
Are melancholy things :
But gentle Nature plays her part
With ever-varying wiles,
And transient feignings with plain truth
So well she reconciles,
That those fond Idlers most are pleased
Whom oftenest she beguiles.

XXVII.

THE KITTEN AND FALLING LEAVES.

—◆—

THAT way look, my Infant, lo !
What a pretty baby-show !
See the Kitten on the wall,
Sporting with the leaves that fall,
Withered leaves—one—two—and three—
From the lofty elder-tree !
Through the calm and frosty air
Of this morning bright and fair,
Eddying round and round they sink
Softly, slowly : one might think,
From the motions that are made,
Every little leaf conveyed
Sylph or Faery hither tending,—
To this lower world descending,
Each invisible and mute,
In his wavering parachute.
—But the Kitten, how she starts,
Crouches, stretches, paws, and darts !

First at one, and then its fellow
Just as light and just as yellow ;
There are many now—now one—
Now they stop and there are none :
What intensesness of desire
In her upward eye of fire !
With a tiger-leap half way
Now she meets the coming prey,
Lets it go as fast, and then
Has it in her power again :
Now she works with three or four,
Like an Indian conjurer ;
Quick as he in feats of art,
Far beyond in joy of heart.
Were her antics played in the eye
Of a thousand standers-by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare,
What would little Tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd ?
Over happy to be proud,
Over wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure !

'Tis a pretty baby-treat ;
Nor, I deem, for me unmeet ;
Here, for neither Babe nor me,
Other play-mate can I see.
Of the countless living things,
That with stir of feet and wings

(In the sun or under shade,
Upon bough or grassy blade)
And with busy revellings,
Chirp and song, and murmurings,
Made this orchard's narrow space,
And this vale so blithe a place ;
Multitudes are swept away
Never more to breathe the day :
Some are sleeping ; some in bands
Travelled into distant lands ;
Others slunk to moor and wood,
Far from human neighbourhood ;
And, among the Kinds that keep
With us closer fellowship,
With us openly abide,
All have laid their mirth aside.

Where is he that giddy Sprite,
Blue-cap, with his colours bright,
Who was blest as bird could be,
Feeding in the apple-tree ;
Made such wanton spoil and rout,
Turning blossoms inside out ;
Hung—head pointing towards the ground—
Fluttered, perched, into a round
Bound himself, and then unbound ;
Lithest, gaudiest Harlequin !
Prettiest Tumbler ever seen !

Light of heart and light of limb ;
What is now become of Him ?
Lambs, that through the mountains went
Frisking, bleating merriment,
When the year was in its prime,
They are sobered by this time.
If you look to vale or hill,
If you listen, all is still,
Save a little neighbouring rill,
That from out the rocky ground
Strikes a solitary sound.
Vainly glitter hill and plain,
And the air is calm in vain ;
Vainly Morning spreads the lure
Of a sky serene and pure ;
Creature none can she decoy
Into open sign of joy :
Is it that they have a fear
Of the dreary season near ?
Or that other pleasures be
Sweeter even than gaiety ?

Yet, whate'er enjoyments dwell
In the impenetrable cell
Of the silent heart which Nature
Furnishes to every creature ;
Whatsoe'er we feel and know
Too sedate for outward show,

Such a light of gladness breaks,
Pretty Kitten ! from thy freaks,—
Spreads with such a living grace
O'er my little Laura's face ;
Yes, the sight so stirs and charms
Thee, Baby, laughing in my arms,
That almost I could repine
That your transports are not mine,
That I do not wholly fare
Even as ye do, thoughtless pair !
And I will have my careless season
Spite of melancholy reason,
Will walk through life in such a way
That, when time brings on decay,
Now and then I may possess
Hours of perfect gladsomeness.
—Pleased by any random toy ;
By a kitten's busy joy,
Or an infant's laughing eye
Sharing in the ecstasy ;
I would fare like that or this,
Find my wisdom in my bliss ;
Keep the sprightly soul awake,
And have faculties to take,
Even from things by sorrow wrought,
Matter for a jocund thought,
Spite of care, and spite of grief,
To gambol with Life's falling Leaf.

XXVIII.

ADDRESS TO MY INFANT DAUGHTER,
ON BEING REMINDED, THAT SHE WAS A MONTH OLD,
ON THAT DAY.

—————HAST thou then survived—
Mild Offspring of infirm humanity,
Meek Infant! among all forlornest things
The most forlorn—one life of that bright star,
The second glory of the heavens?—Thou hast ;
Already hast survived that great decay,
That transformation through the wide earth felt,
And by all nations. In that Being's sight
From whom the Race of human kind proceed,
A thousand years are but as yesterday ;
And one day's narrow circuit is to Him
Not less capacious than a thousand years.
But what is time? What outward glory? neither
A measure is of Thee, whose claims extend
Through ' heaven's eternal year.'—Yet hail to Thee,
Frail, feeble Monthling!—by that name, methinks,
Thy scanty breathing time is portioned out
Not idly.—Hadst thou been of Indian birth,
Couched on a casual bed of moss and leaves,
And rudely canopied by leafy boughs,
Or to the churlish elements exposed

On the blank plains,—the coldness of the night,
Or the night's darkness, or its cheerful face
Of beauty, by the changing moon adorned,
Would, with imperious admonition, then
Have scored thine age, and punctually timed
Thine infant history, on the minds of those
Who might have wandered with thee.—Mother's love,
Nor less than mother's love in other breasts,
Will, among us warm clad and warmly housed,
Do for thee what the finger of the heavens
Doth all too often harshly execute
For thy unblest coevals, amid wilds
Where fancy hath small liberty to grace
The affections, to exalt them or refine ;
And the maternal sympathy itself,
Though strong, is, in the main, a joyless tie
Of naked instinct, wound about the heart.
Happier, far happier is thy lot and ours !
Even now—to solemnise thy helpless state,
And to enliven in the mind's regard
Thy passive beauty—parallels have risen,
Resemblances, or contrasts, that connect,
Within the region of a father's thoughts,
Thee and thy mate and sister of the sky.
And first ;—thy sinless progress, through a world
By sorrow darkened and by care disturbed,
Apt likeness bears to hers, through gathered clouds,
Moving untouched in silver purity,
And cheering oft-times their reluctant gloom.

Fair are ye both, and both are free from stain :
But thou, how leisurely thou fill'st thy horn
With brightness ! leaving her to post along,
And range about, disquieted in change,
And still impatient of the shape she wears.
Once up, once down the hill, one journey, Babe,
That will suffice thee ; and it seems that now
Thou hast fore-knowledge that such task is thine ;
Thou travellest so contentedly, and sleep'st
In such a heedless peace. Alas ! full soon
Hath this conception, grateful to behold,
Changed countenance, like an object sullied o'er
By breathing mist ; and thine appears to be
A mournful labour, while to her is given
Hope, and a renovation without end.
—That smile forbids the thought ; for on thy face
Smiles are beginning, like the beams of dawn,
To shoot and circulate ; smiles have there been seen ;
Tranquil assurances that Heaven supports
The feeble motions of thy life, and cheers
Thy loneliness : or shall those smiles be called
Feelers of love, put forth as if to explore
This untried world, and to prepare thy way
Through a strait passage intricate and dim ?
Such are they ; and the same are tokens, signs,
Which, when the appointed season hath arrived,
Joy, as her holiest language, shall adopt ;
And Reason's godlike Power be proud to own.

POEMS OF THE IMAGINATION.



THERE WAS A BOY.

—◆—

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

Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
Has carried far into his heart the voice
Of mountain-torrents ; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven received
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
Where he was born : the grassy church-yard hangs
Upon a slope above the village-school ;
And, through that church-yard when my way has led
On summer-evenings, I believe, that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute—looking at the grave in which he lies !

II.

TO THE CUCKOO.



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

While I am lying on the grass
Thy twofold shout I hear,
That seems to fill the whole air's space,
As loud far off as near.

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

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

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

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

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

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

III.

A NIGHT-PIECE.



——— THE sky is overcast
 With a continuous cloud of texture close,
 Heavy and wan, all whitened by the Moon,
 Which through that veil is indistinctly seen,
 A dull, contracted circle, yielding light
 So feebly spread, that not a shadow falls,
 Chequering the ground—from rock, plant, tree, or tower.
 At length a pleasant instantaneous gleam
 Startles the pensive traveller while he treads
 His lonesome path, with unobserving eye
 Bent earthwards ; he looks up—the clouds are split
 Asunder,—and above his head he sees
 The clear Moon, and the glory of the heavens.
 There, in a black-blue vault she sails along,
 Followed by multitudes of stars, that, small
 And sharp, and bright, along the dark abyss
 Drive as she drives : how fast they wheel away,
 Yet vanish not !—the wind is in the tree,
 But they are silent ;—still they roll along

Immeasurably distant ; and the vault,
 Built round by those white clouds, enormous clouds,
 Still deepens its unfathomable depth.
 At length the Vision closes ; and the mind,
 Not undisturbed by the delight it feels,
 Which slowly settles into peaceful calm,
 Is left to muse upon the solemn scene.

1798.

 IV.

 YEW-TREES.

THERE is a Yew-tree, pride of Lorton Vale,
 Which to this day stands single, in the midst
 Of its own darkness, as it stood of yore :
 Not loth to furnish weapons for the bands
 Of Umfraville or Percy ere they marched
 To Scotland's heaths ; or those that crossed the sea
 And drew their sounding bows at Azincour,
 Perhaps at earlier Crecy, or Poictiers.
 Of vast circumference and gloom profound
 This solitary Tree ! a living thing
 Produced too slowly ever to decay ;
 Of form and aspect too magnificent
 To be destroyed. But worthier still of note

Are those fraternal Four of Borrowdale,
Joined in one solemn and capacious grove ;
Huge trunks ! and each particular trunk a growth
Of intertwined fibres serpentine
Up-coiling, and inveterately convolved ;
Nor uninformed with Phantasy, and looks
That threaten the profane ;—a pillared shade,
Upon whose grassless floor of red-brown hue,
By sheddings from the pining umbrage tinged
Perennially—beneath whose sable roof
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes
May meet at noontide ; Fear and trembling Hope,
Silence and Foresight ; Death the Skeleton
And Time the Shadow ;—there to celebrate,
As in a natural temple scattered o'er
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,
United worship ; or in mute repose
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.

v.

NUTTING.

————— It seems a day
 (I speak of one from many singled out)
 One of those heavenly days that cannot die ;
 When, in the eagerness of boyish hope,
 I left our cottage-threshold, sallying forth
 With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
 A nutting-crook in hand ; and turned my steps
 Toward some far-distant wood, a Figure quaint,
 Tricked out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
 Which for that service had been husbanded,
 By exhortation of my frugal Dame—
 Motley accoutrement, of power to smile
 At thorns, and brakes, and brambles,—and, in truth,
 More raggèd than need was ! O'er pathless rocks,
 Through beds of matted fern and tangled thickets,
 Forcing my way, I came to one dear nook
 Unvisited, where not a broken bough
 Drooped with its withered leaves, ungracious sign

Of devastation ; but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene !—A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in ; and, with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet ;—or beneath the trees I sate
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I played ;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been blest
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons re-appear
And fade, unseen by any human eye ;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
For ever ; and I saw the sparkling foam,
And—with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees,
Lay round me, scattered like a flock of sheep—
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease ; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragged to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage : and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deformed and sullied, patiently gave up

Their quiet being : and, unless I now
 Confound my present feelings with the past ;
 Ere from the mutilated bower I turned
 Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
 I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
 The silent trees, and saw the intruding sky.—
 Then, dearest Maiden, move along these shades
 In gentleness of heart ; with gentle hand
 Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

1799.

 VI.

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

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

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

1804.

VII.

O NIGHTINGALE ! thou surely art
 A creature of a fiery heart :—
 These notes of thine—they pierce and pierce ;
 Tumultuous harmony and fierce !
 Thou sing'st as if the God of wine
 Had helped thee to a Valentine ;
 A song in mockery and despite
 Of shades, and dews, and silent night ;
 And steady bliss, and all the loves
 Now sleeping in these peaceful groves.

I heard a Stock-dove sing or say
 His homely tale, this very day ;
 His voice was buried among trees,
 Yet to be come-at by the breeze :
 He did not cease ; but cooed—and cooed ;
 And somewhat pensively he wooed :
 He sang of love with quiet blending,
 Slow to begin, and never ending ;
 Of serious faith, and inward glee ;
 That was the song—the song for me !

1806.

VIII.

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

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

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

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

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

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

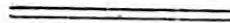
Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
How soon my Lucy's race was run !
She died, and left to me
This heath, this calm, and quiet scene ;
The memory of what has been,
And never more will be.

IX.



A SLUMBER did my spirit seal ;
I had no human fears :
She seemed a thing that could not feel
The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force ;
She neither hears nor sees ;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.



X.



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

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

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

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

1804.

THE REVERIE OF POOR SUSAN.

At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears,
Hangs a Thrush that sings loud, it has sung for three years:
Poor Susan has passed by the spot, and has heard
In the silence of morning the song of the Bird.

'Tis a note of enchantment ; what ails her ? She sees
A mountain ascending, a vision of trees ;
Bright volumes of vapour through Lothbury glide,
And a river flows on through the vale of Cheapside.

Green pastures she views in the midst of the dale,
Down which she so often has tripped with her pail ;
And a single small cottage, a nest like a dove's,
The one only dwelling on earth that she loves.

She looks, and her heart is in heaven : but they fade,
The mist and the river, the hill and the shade :
The stream will not flow, and the hill will not rise,
And the colours have all passed away from her eyes !

XII.

POWER OF MUSIC.



AN Orpheus ! an Orpheus ! yes, Faith may grow bold,
And take to herself all the wonders of old ;—
Near the stately Pantheon you 'll meet with the same
In the street that from Oxford hath borrowed its name.

His station is there ; and he works on the crowd,
He sways them with harmony merry and loud ;
He fills with his power all their hearts to the brim—
Was aught ever heard like his fiddle and him ?

What an eager assembly ! what an empire is this !
The weary have life, and the hungry have bliss ;
The mourner is cheered, and the anxious have rest ;
And the guilt-burthened soul is no longer opprest.

As the Moon brightens round her the clouds of the night,
So He, where he stands, is a centre of light ;
It gleams on the face, there, of dusky-browed Jack,
And the pale-visaged Baker's, with basket on back.

That errand-bound 'Prentice was passing in haste—
What matter! he's caught—and his time runs to waste ;
The Newsman is stopped, though he stops on the fret ;
And the half-breathless Lamplighter—he's in the net !

The Porter sits down on the weight which he bore ;
The Lass with her barrow wheels hither her store ;—
If a thief could be here he might pilfer at ease ;
She sees the Musician, 'tis all that she sees !

He stands, backed by the wall ;—he abates not his din ;
His hat gives him vigour, with boons dropping in,
From the old and the young, from the poorest ; and there!
The one-pennied Boy has his penny to spare.

O blest are the hearers, and proud be the hand
Of the pleasure it spreads through so thankful a band ;
I am glad for him, blind as he is !—all the while
If they speak 'tis to praise, and they praise with a smile.

That tall Man, a giant in bulk and in height,
Not an inch of his body is free from delight ;
Can he keep himself still, if he would ? oh, not he !
The music stirs in him like wind through a tree.

Mark that Cripple who leans on his crutch ; like a tower
That long has leaned forward, leans hour after hour !—
That Mother, whose spirit in fetters is bound,
While she dandles the Babe in her arms to the sound.

Now, coaches and chariots ! roar on like a stream ;
 Here are twenty souls happy as souls in a dream :
 They are deaf to your murmurs—they care not for you,
 Nor what ye are flying, nor what ye pursue !

1806.

 XIII.

STAR-GAZERS.

WHAT crowd is this? what have we here! we must not pass it by;
 A Telescope upon its frame, and pointed to the sky :
 Long is it as a barber's pole, or mast of little boat,
 Some little pleasure-skiff, that doth on Thames's waters float.

The Show-man chooses well his place, 'tis Leicester's busy Square;
 And is as happy in his night, for the heavens are blue and fair;
 Calm, though impatient, is the crowd; each stands ready with
 the fee,
 Impatient till his moment come;—what an insight must it be!

Yet, Showman, where can lie the cause? Shall thy Implement
 have blame,
 A boaster, that when he is tried, fails, and is put to shame?
 Or is it good as others are, and be their eyes in fault?
 Their eyes, or minds? or, finally, is yon resplendent vault?

Is nothing of that radiant pomp so good as we have here?
 Or gives a thing but small delight that never can be dear?
 The silver moon with all her vales, and hills of mightiest fame,
 Doth she betray us when they're seen? or are they but a name?

Or is it rather that Conceit rapacious is and strong,
 And bounty never yields so much but it seems to do her wrong?
 Or is it, that when human Souls a journey long have had
 And are returned into themselves, they cannot but be sad?

Or must we be constrained to think that these Spectators rude,
 Poor in estate, of manners base, men of the multitude,
 Have souls which never yet have risen, and therefore prostrate lie?
 No, no, this cannot be ;—men thirst for power and majesty!

Does, then, a deep and earnest thought the blissful mind employ
 Of him who gazes, or has gazed? a grave and steady joy,
 That doth reject all show of pride, admits no outward sign,
 Because not of this noisy world, but silent and divine!

Whatever be the cause, 'tis sure that they who pry and pore
 Seem to meet with little gain, seem less happy than before:
 One after One they take their turn, nor have I one espied
 That doth not slackly go away, as if dissatisfied.

1806.

XIV.

WRITTEN IN MARCH,
WHILE RESTING ON THE BRIDGE AT THE FOOT OF
BROTHER'S WATER.

THE cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing,
The small birds twitter,
The lake doth glitter,
The green field sleeps in the sun ;
The oldest and youngest
Are at work with the strongest ;
The cattle are grazing,
Their heads never raising ;
There are forty feeding like one !

Like an army defeated
The snow hath retreated,
And now doth fare ill
On the top of the bare hill ;
The Ploughboy is whooping—anon—anon :
There's joy in the mountains ;
There's life in the fountains ;
Small clouds are sailing,
Blue sky prevailing ;
The rain is over and gone !

BEGGARS.

BEFORE my eyes a Wanderer stood.
Her face from summer's noon-day heat
No bonnet shaded, nor the hood
Of the blue cloak which to her feet
Depended with a graceful flow ;
Only she wore a cap as white as new-fallen snow.

Her skin was of Egyptian brown :
Haughty, as if her eye had seen
Its own light to a distance thrown,
She towered—fit person for a Queen,
To lead those ancient Amazonian files ;
Or ruling Bandit's wife among the Grecian isles.

She begged an alms ; no scruple checked
The current of her ready plea,
Words that could challenge no respect
But from a blind credulity ;
And yet a boon I gave her ; for the creature
Was beautiful to see—a weed of glorious feature !

I left her, and pursued my way ;
And soon before me did espy
A pair of little Boys at play,
Chasing a crimson butterfly ;
The taller followed with his hat in hand,
Wreathed round with yellow flowers the gayest of the land.

The other wore a rimless crown
With leaves of laurel stuck about ;
And, while both followed up and down,
Each whooping with a merry shout,
In their fraternal features I could trace
Unquestionable lines of that wild Suppliant's face.

Yet *they*, so blithe of heart, seemed fit
For finest tasks of earth or air :
Wings let them have, and they might flit
Precursors to Aurora's car,
Scattering fresh flowers ; though happier far, I ween,
To hunt their fluttering game o'er rock and level green.

They dart across my path—but lo,
Each ready with a plaintive whine !
Said I, “ not half an hour ago
Your Mother has had alms of mine.”
“ That cannot be,” one answered—“ she is dead :”—
I looked reproof—they saw—but neither hung his head.

“She has been dead, Sir, many a day.”—
 “Sweet boys! you’re telling me a lie;
 It was your Mother, as I say!”
 And, in the twinkling of an eye,
 “Come! come!” cried one, and without more ado,
 Off to some other play the joyous Vagrants flew!

1802.

XVI.

SEQUEL TO THE FOREGOING,

COMPOSED MANY YEARS AFTER.

WHERE are they now, those wanton Boys?
 For whose free range the dædal earth
 Was filled with animated toys,
 And implements of frolic mirth;
 With tools for ready wit to guide;
 And ornaments of seemlier pride,
 More fresh, more bright, than princes wear;
 For what one moment flung aside,
 Another could repair;
 What good or evil have they seen
 Since I their pastime witnessed here,
 Their daring wiles, their sportive cheer?
 I ask—but all is dark between!

They met me in a genial hour,
When universal nature breathed
As with the breath of one sweet flower,—
A time to overrule the power
Of discontent, and check the birth
Of thoughts with better thoughts at strife,
The most familiar bane of life
Since parting Innocence bequeathed
Mortality to Earth !
Soft clouds, the whitest of the year,
Sailed through the sky—the brooks ran clear ;
The lambs from rock to rock were bounding ;
With songs the budded groves resounding ;
And to my heart are still endeared
The thoughts with which it then was cheered ;
The faith which saw that gladsome pair
Walk through the fire with unsinged hair.
Or, if such faith must needs deceive—
Then Spirits of beauty and of grace,
Associates in that eager chase ;
Ye, who within the blameless mind
Your favourite seat of empire find—
Kind Spirits ! may we not believe
That they, so happy and so fair,
Through your sweet influence, and the care
Of pitying Heaven, at least were free
From touch of *deadly* injury ?
Destined, whate'er their earthly doom,
For mercy and immortal bloom !

XVII.

GIPSIES.

YET are they here the same unbroken knot
Of human Beings, in the self-same spot !

Men, women, children, yea the frame
Of the whole spectacle the same !

Only their fire seems bolder, yielding light,
Now deep and red, the colouring of night ;
That on their Gipsy-faces falls,
Their bed of straw and blanket-walls.

—Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours are gone, while I
Have been a traveller under open sky,
Much witnessing of change and cheer,
Yet as I left I find them here !

The weary Sun betook himself to rest ;—
Then issued Vesper from the fulgent west,
Outshining like a visible God
The glorious path in which he trod.

And now, ascending, after one dark hour
And one night's diminution of her power,
Behold the mighty Moon ! this way
She looks as if at them—but they

Regard not her :—oh better wrong and strife
 (By nature transient) than this torpid life ;
 Life which the very stars reprove
 As on their silent tasks they move !
 Yet, witness all that stirs in heaven or earth !
 In scorn I speak not ;—they are what their birth
 And breeding suffer them to be ;
 Wild outcasts of society !

1807.

 XVIII.

RUTH.

WHEN Ruth was left half desolate,
 Her father took another mate ;
 And Ruth, not seven years old,
 A slighted child, at her own will
 Went wandering over dale and hill,
 In thoughtless freedom, bold.

And she had made a pipe of straw,
 And music from that pipe could draw
 Like sounds of winds and floods ;
 Had built a bower upon the green,
 As if she from her birth had been
 An infant of the woods.

Beneath her father's roof, alone
She seemed to live ; her thoughts her own ;
Herself her own delight ;
Pleased with herself, nor sad, nor gay ;
And, passing thus the live-long day,
She grew to woman's height.

There came a Youth from Georgia's shore—
A military casque he wore,
With splendid feathers drest ;
He brought them from the Cherokees ;
The feathers nodded in the breeze,
And made a gallant crest.

From Indian blood you deem him sprung :
But no ! he spake the English tongue,
And bore a soldier's name ;
And, when America was free
From battle and from jeopardy,
He 'cross the ocean came.

With hues of genius on his cheek
In finest tones the Youth could speak :
—While he was yet a boy,
The moon, the glory of the sun,
And streams that murmur as they run,
Had been his dearest joy.

He was a lovely Youth ! I guess
The panther in the wilderness
Was not so fair as he ;
And, when he chose to sport and play,
No dolphin ever was so gay
Upon the tropic sea.

Among the Indians he had fought,
And with him many tales he brought
Of pleasure and of fear ;
Such tales as told to any maid
By such a Youth, in the green shade,
Were perilous to hear.

He told of girls—a happy rout !
Who quit their fold with dance and shout,
Their pleasant Indian town,
To gather strawberries all day long ;
Returning with a choral song
When daylight is gone down.

He spake of plants that hourly change
Their blossoms, through a boundless range
Of intermingling hues ;
With budding, fading, faded flowers
They stand the wonder of the bowers
From morn to evening dews.

He told of the magnolia, spread
High as a cloud, high over head !
The cypress and her spire ;
—Of flowers that with one scarlet gleam
Cover a hundred leagues, and seem
To set the hills on fire.

The Youth of green savannahs spake,
And many an endless, endless lake,
With all its fairy crowds
Of islands, that together lie
As quietly as spots of sky
Among the evening clouds.

“ How pleasant,” then he said, “ it were
A fisher or a hunter there,
In sunshine or through shade
To wander with an easy mind ;
And build a household fire, and find
A home in every glade !

What days and what bright years ! Ah me !
Our life were life indeed, with thee
So passed in quiet bliss,
And all the while,” said he, “ to know
That we were in a world of woe,
On such an earth as this !”

And then he sometimes interwove
Fond thoughts about a father's love :
“ For there,” said he, “ are spun
Around the heart such tender ties,
That our own children to our eyes
Are dearer than the sun.

Sweet Ruth ! and could you go with me
My helpmate in the woods to be,
Our shed at night to rear ;
Or run, my own adopted bride,
A sylvan huntress at my side,
And drive the flying deer !

Beloved Ruth !”—No more he said.
The wakeful Ruth at midnight shed
A solitary tear :
She thought again—and did agree
With him to sail across the sea,
And drive the flying deer.

“ And now, as fitting is and right,
We in the church our faith will plight,
A husband and a wife.”
Even so they did ; and I may say
That to sweet Ruth that happy day
Was more than human life.

Through dream and vision did she sink,
Delighted all the while to think
That on those lonesome floods,
And green savannahs, she should share
His board with lawful joy, and bear
His name in the wild woods.

But, as you have before been told,
This Stripling, sportive, gay, and bold,
And, with his dancing crest,
So beautiful, through savage lands
Had roamed about, with vagrant bands
Of Indians in the West.

The wind, the tempest roaring high,
The tumult of a tropic sky,
Might well be dangerous food
For him, a Youth to whom was given
So much of earth—so much of heaven,
And such impetuous blood.

Whatever in those climes he found
Irregular in sight or sound
Did to his mind impart
A kindred impulse, seemed allied
To his own powers, and justified
The workings of his heart.

Nor less, to feed voluptuous thought,
The beauteous forms of nature wrought,
Fair trees and lovely flowers ;
The breezes their own languor lent ;
The stars had feelings, which they sent
Into those gorgeous bowers.

Yet, in his worst pursuits, I ween
That sometimes there did intervene
Pure hopes of high intent :
For passions linked to forms so fair
And stately, needs must have their share
Of noble sentiment.

But ill he lived, much evil saw,
With men to whom no better law
Nor better life was known ;
Deliberately, and undeceived,
Those wild men's vices he received,
And gave them back his own.

His genius and his moral frame
Were thus impaired, and he became
The slave of low desires :
A Man who without self-control
Would seek what the degraded soul
Unworthily admires.

And yet he with no feigned delight
Had wooed the Maiden, day and night
Had loved her, night and morn :
What could he less than love a Maid
Whose heart with so much nature played ?
So kind and so forlorn !

Sometimes, most earnestly, he said,
“ O Ruth ! I have been worse than dead ;
False thoughts, thoughts bold and vain,
Encompassed me on every side
When first, in confidence and pride,
I crossed the Atlantic Main.

It was a fresh and glorious world—
A banner bright that shone unfurled
Before me suddenly :
I looked upon those hills and plains,
And seemed as if let loose from chains,
To live at liberty.

But wherefore speak of this ? For now,
Dear Ruth ! with thee, I know not how,
I feel my spirit burn ;—
My soul from darkness is released,
Like the whole sky when to the east
The morning doth return.”

Full soon that purer mind was gone ;
No hope, no wish remained, not one,—
They stirred him now no more ;
New objects did new pleasure give,
And once again he wished to live
As lawless as before.

Meanwhile, as thus with him it fared,
They for the voyage were prepared,
And went to the sea-shore ;
But, when they thither came, the Youth
Deserted his poor Bride, and Ruth
Could never find him more.

God help thee, Ruth !—Such pains she had,
That she in a half year was mad,
And in a prison housed ;
And there, with many a doleful song
Made of wild words, her cup of wrong
She fearfully caroused.

Yet sometimes milder hours she knew,
Nor wanted sun, nor rain, nor dew,
Nor pastimes of the May ;
—They all were with her in her cell ;
And a clear brook with cheerful knell
Did o'er the pebbles play.

When Ruth three seasons thus had lain,
There came a respite to her pain ;
She from her prison fled ;
But of the Vagrant none took thought ;
And where it liked her best she sought
Her shelter and her bread.

Among the fields she breathed again :
The master-current of her brain
Ran permanent and free ;
And, coming to the banks of Tone,
There did she rest ; and dwell alone
Under the greenwood tree.

The engines of her pain, the tools
That shaped her sorrow, rocks and pools,
And airs that gently stir
The vernal leaves—she loved them still ;
Nor ever taxed them with the ill
Which had been done to her.

A Barn her *winter* bed supplies ;
But, till the warmth of summer skies
And summer days is gone,
(And all do in this tale agree)
She sleeps beneath the greenwood tree,
And other home hath none.

An innocent life, yet far astray !
And Ruth will, long before her day,
Be broken down and old :
Sore aches she needs must have ! but less
Of mind, than body's wretchedness,
From damp, and rain, and cold.

If she is prest by want of food,
She from her dwelling in the wood
Repairs to a road-side ;
And there she begs at one steep place
Where up and down with easy pace
The horsemen-travellers ride.

That oaten pipe of hers is mute,
Or thrown away ; but with a flute
Her loneliness she cheers :
This flute, made of a hemlock stalk,
At evening in his homeward walk
The Quantock woodman hears.

I, too, have passed her on the hills
Setting her little water-mills
By spouts and fountains wild—
Such small machinery as she turned
Ere she had wept, ere she had mourned,
A young and happy Child !

Farewell ! and when thy days are told,
 Ill-fated Ruth, in hallowed mould
 Thy corpse shall buried be ;
 For thee a funeral bell shall ring,
 And all the congregation sing
 A Christian psalm for thee.

1799.

 XVIII.*

RESOLUTION AND INDEPENDENCE.

 I.

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

II.

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

iii.

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

iv.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joy in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low,
To me that morning did it happen so ;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came ;
Dimsadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

v.

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

VI.

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

VII.

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

VIII.

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

IX.

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

X.

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

XI.

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

XII.

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

XIII.

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

XIV.

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

xv.

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

xvi.

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

xvii.

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

XVIII.

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

XIX.

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

XX.

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

1807.

XIX.

THE THORN.



I.

“ THERE is a Thorn—it looks so old,
In truth, you ’d find it hard to say
How it could ever have been young,
It looks so old and grey.
Not higher than a two years’ child
It stands erect, this aged Thorn ;
No leaves it has, no prickly points ;
It is a mass of knotted joints,
A wretched thing forlorn.
It stands erect, and like a stone
With lichens is it overgrown.

ii.

Like rock or stone, it is o'ergrown,
With lichens to the very top,
And hung with heavy tufts of moss,
A melancholy crop :
Up from the earth these mosses creep,
And this poor Thorn they clasp it round
So close, you 'd say that they are bent
With plain and manifest intent
To drag it to the ground ;
And all have joined in one endeavour
To bury this poor Thorn for ever.

iii.

High on a mountain's highest ridge,
Where oft the stormy winter gale
Cuts like a scythe, while through the clouds
It sweeps from vale to vale ;
Not five yards from the mountain path,
This Thorn you on your left espy ;
And to the left, three yards beyond,
You see a little muddy pond
Of water—never dry
Though but of compass small, and bare
To thirsty suns and parching air.

IV.

And, close beside this aged Thorn,
There is a fresh and lovely sight,
A beauteous heap, a hill of moss,
Just half a foot in height.
All lovely colours there you see,
All colours that were ever seen ;
And mossy network too is there,
As if by hand of lady fair
The work had woven been ;
And cups, the darlings of the eye,
So deep is their vermilion dye.

V.

Ah me ! what lovely tints are there
Of olive green and scarlet bright,
In spikes, in branches, and in stars,
Green, red, and pearly white !
This heap of earth o'ergrown with moss,
Which close beside the Thorn you see,
So fresh in all its beauteous dyes,
Is like an infant's grave in size,
As like as like can be :
But never, never any where,
An infant's grave was half so fair.

VI.

Now would you see this aged Thorn,
This pond, and beauteous hill of moss,
You must take care and choose your time
The mountain when to cross.
For oft there sits between the heap
So like an infant's grave in size,
And that same pond of which I spoke,
A Woman in a scarlet cloak,
And to herself she cries,
' Oh misery ! oh misery !
Oh woe is me ! oh misery !'

VII.

At all times of the day and night
This wretched Woman thither goes ;
And she is known to every star,
And every wind that blows ;
And there, beside the Thorn, she sits
When the blue daylight 's in the skies,
And when the whirlwind 's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And to herself she cries,
' Oh misery ! oh misery !
Oh woe is me ! oh misery !' "

VIII.

“ Now wherefore, thus, by day and night,
In rain, in tempest, and in snow,
Thus to the dreary mountain-top
Does this poor Woman go ?
And why sits she beside the Thorn
When the blue daylight 's in the sky,
Or when the whirlwind 's on the hill,
Or frosty air is keen and still,
And wherefore does she cry ?—
O wherefore ? wherefore ? tell me why
Does she repeat that doleful cry ? ”

IX.

“ I cannot tell ; I wish I could ;
For the true reason no one knows :
But would you gladly view the spot,
The spot to which she goes ;
The hillock like an infant's grave,
The pond—and Thorn, so old and grey ;
Pass by her door—'tis seldom shut—
And, if you see her in her hut—
Then to the spot away !
I never heard of such as dare
Approach the spot when she is there.”

x.

“ But wherefore to the mountain-top
Can this unhappy Woman go,
Whatever star is in the skies,
Whatever wind may blow ?”
“ ’Tis known, that twenty years are past
Since she (her name is Martha Ray)
Gave with a maiden’s true good-will
Her company to Stephen Hill ;
And she was blithe and gay,
While friends and kindred all approved
Of him whom tenderly she loved.

xi.

And they had fixed the wedding day,
The morning that must wed them both ;
But Stephen to another Maid
Had sworn another oath ;
And, with this other Maid, to church
Unthinking Stephen went—
Poor Martha ! on that woeful day
A pang of pitiless dismay
Into her soul was sent ;
A fire was kindled in her breast,
Which might not burn itself to rest.

xii.

They say, full six months after this,
While yet the summer leaves were green,
She to the mountain-top would go,
And there was often seen.
What could she seek ?—or wish to hide ?
Her state to any eye was plain ;
She was with child, and she was mad ;
Yet often was she sober sad
From her exceeding pain.
O guilty Father—would that death
Had saved him from that breach of faith !

xiii.

Sad case for such a brain to hold
Communion with a stirring child !
Sad case, as you may think, for one
Who had a brain so wild !
Last Christmas-eve we talked of this,
And grey-haired Wilfred of the glen
Held that the unborn infant wrought
About its mother's heart, and brought
Her senses back again :
And, when at last her time drew near,
Her looks were calm, her senses clear.

xiv.

More know I not, I wish I did,
And it should all be told to you ;
For what became of this poor child
No mortal ever knew ;
Nay—if a child to her was born
No earthly tongue could ever tell ;
And if 'twas born alive or dead,
Far less could this with proof be said ;
But some remember well,
That Martha Ray about this time
Would up the mountain often climb.

xv.

And all that winter, when at night
The wind blew from the mountain-peak,
'Twas worth your while, though in the dark,
The churchyard path to seek :
For many a time and oft were heard
Cries coming from the mountain-head :
Some plainly living voices were ;
And others, I 've heard many swear,
Were voices of the dead :
I cannot think, whate'er they say,
They had to do with Martha Ray.

xvi.

But that she goes to this old Thorn,
The Thorn which I described to you,
And there sits in a scarlet cloak,
I will be sworn is true.
For one day with my telescope,
To view the ocean wide and bright,
When to this country first I came,
Ere I had heard of Martha's name,
I climbed the mountain's height :—
A storm came on, and I could see
No object higher than my knee.

xvii.

'Twas mist and rain, and storm and rain :
No screen, no fence could I discover ;
And then the wind ! in faith, it was
A wind full ten times over.
I looked around, I thought I saw
A jutting crag,—and off I ran,
Head-foremost, through the driving rain,
The shelter of the crag to gain ;
And, as I am a man,
Instead of jutting crag, I found
A Woman seated on the ground.

XVIII.

I did not speak—I saw her face ;
 Her face !—it was enough for me ;
 I turned about and heard her cry,
 ‘ Oh misery ! oh misery !’
 And there she sits, until the moon
 Through half the clear blue sky will go ;
 And, when the little breezes make
 The waters of the pond to shake,
 As all the country know,
 She shudders, and you hear her cry,
 ‘ Oh misery ! oh misery !’ ”

XIX.

“ But what ’s the Thorn ? and what the pond ?
 And what the hill of moss to her ?
 And what the creeping breeze that comes
 The little pond to stir ?”
 “ I cannot tell ; but some will say
 She hanged her Baby on the tree ;
 Some say she drowned it in the pond,
 Which is a little step beyond :
 But all and each agree,
 The little Babe was buried there,
 Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

xx.

I 've heard; the moss is spotted red
With drops of that poor infant's blood ;
But kill a new-born infant thus,
I do not think she could !
Some say, if to the pond you go,
And fix on it a steady view,
The shadow of a babe you trace,
A baby and a baby's face,
And that it looks at you ;
Whene'er you look on it, 'tis plain
The baby looks at you again.

xxi.

And some had sworn an oath that she
Should be to public justice brought ;
And for the little infant's bones
With spades they would have sought.
But then the speckled hill of moss
Before their eyes began to stir !
And, for full fifty yards around,
The grass—it shook upon the ground !
Yet all do still aver
The little Babe is buried there,
Beneath that hill of moss so fair.

XXII.

I cannot tell how this may be :
 But plain it is, the Thorn is bound
 With heavy tufts of moss that strive
 To drag it to the ground ;
 And this I know, full many a time,
 When she was on the mountain high,
 By day, and in the silent night,
 When all the stars shone clear and bright,
 That I have heard her cry,
 ‘ Oh misery ! oh misery !
 Oh woe is me ! oh misery ! ’ ”

1798.

XX.

GOODY BLAKE AND HARRY GILL.

A TRUE STORY.

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

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

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

All day she spun in her poor dwelling :
And then her three hours' work at night,
Alas ! 'twas hardly worth the telling,
It would not pay for candle-light.
Remote from sheltered village-green,
On a hill's northern side she dwelt,
Where from sea-blasts the hawthorns lean
And hoary dews are slow to melt.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

She prayed, her withered hand uprearing,
While Harry held her by the arm—
" God ! who art never out of hearing,
O may he never more be warm !"
The cold, cold moon above her head,
Thus on her knees did Goody pray ;
Young Harry heard what she had said :
And icy cold he turned away.

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

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

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

1798.

Note from the Edition of 1815.—The above, and one or two other pieces, as they refer rather to the power of the Imagination, than are produced by it, would not have been placed here but to avoid a needless multiplication of the classes.

XXI.

HART-LEAP WELL.

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

THE Knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor
With the slow motion of a summer's cloud ;
And now, as he approached a vassal's door,
“ Bring forth another horse !” he cried aloud.

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

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

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

Sir Walter, restless as a veering wind,
Calls to the few tired dogs that yet remain :
Blanch, Swift, and Music, noblest of their kind,
Follow, and up the weary mountain strain.

The Knight hallooed, he cheered and chid them on
With suppliant gestures and upbraidings stern ;
But breath and eyesight fail ; and, one by one,
The dogs are stretched among the mountain fern.

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

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

Dismounting, then, he leaned against a thorn ;
He had no follower, dog, nor man, nor boy :
He neither cracked his whip, nor blew his horn,
But gazed upon the spoil with silent joy.

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

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

And now, too happy for repose or rest,
(Never had living man such joyful lot !)
Sir Walter walked all round, north, south, and west,
And gazed and gazed upon that darling spot.

And climbing up the hill—(it was at least
Nine roods of sheer ascent) Sir Walter found
Three several hoof-marks which the hunted Beast
Had left imprinted on the grassy ground.

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

I'll build a pleasure-house upon this spot,
And a small arbour, made for rural joy ;
'Twill be the traveller's shed, the pilgrim's cot,
A place of love for damsels that are coy.

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

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

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

Till the foundations of the mountains fail
My mansion with its arbour shall endure ;—
The joy of them who till the fields of Swale,
And them who dwell among the woods of Ure !”

Then home he went, and left the Hart, stone-dead,
With breathless nostrils stretched above the spring.
—Soon did the Knight perform what he had said ;
And far and wide the fame thereof did ring.

Ere thrice the Moon into her port had steered,
A cup of stone received the living well ;
Three pillars of rude stone Sir Walter reared,
And built a house of pleasure in the dell.

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

And thither, when the summer days were long,
 Sir Walter led his wondering Paramour ;
 And with the dancers and the minstrel's song
 Made merriment within that pleasant bower.

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

PART SECOND.

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

As I from Hawes to Richmond did repair,
 It chanced that I saw standing in a dell
 Three aspens at three corners of a square ;
 And, one not four yards distant, near a well.

What this imported I could ill divine :
And, pulling now the rein my horse to stop,
I saw three pillars standing in a line,—
The last stone-pillar on a dark hill-top.

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

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

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

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

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

The arbour does its own condition tell ;
You see the stones, the fountain, and the stream ;
But as to the great Lodge ! you might as well
Hunt half a day for a forgotten dream.

There's neither dog nor heifer, horse nor sheep,
Will wet his lips within that cup of stone ;
And oftentimes, when all are fast asleep,
This water doth send forth a dolorous groan.

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

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

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

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

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

Now, here is neither grass nor pleasant shade ;
The sun on drearier hollow never shone ;
So will it be, as I have often said,
Till trees, and stones, and fountain, all are gone."

' Grey-headed Shepherd, thou hast spoken well ;
Small difference lies between thy creed and mine :
This Beast not unobserved by Nature fell ;
His death was mourned by sympathy divine.

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

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

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

One lesson, Shepherd, let us two divide,
Taught both by what she shows, and what conceals ;
Never to blend our pleasure or our pride
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels." 1800.

XXII

THE HORN OF EGREMONT CASTLE.

WHEN the Brothers reached the gateway,
Eustace pointed with his lance
To the Horn which there was hanging ;
Horn of the inheritance.
Horn it was which none could sound,
No one upon living ground,
Save He who came as rightful Heir
To Egremont's Domains and Castle fair.

Heirs from ages without record
Had the House of Lucie born,
Who of right had claimed the Lordship
By the proof upon the Horn :
Each at the appointed hour
Tried the Horn,—it owned his power ;
He was acknowledged : and the blast,
Which good Sir Eustace sounded, was the last.

With his lance Sir Eustace pointed,
And to Hubert thus said he,
“ What I speak this Horn shall witness
For thy better memory.
Hear, then, and neglect me not !
At this time, and on this spot,
The words are uttered from my heart,
As my last earnest prayer ere we depart.

On good service we are going
Life to risk by sea and land,
In which course if Christ our Saviour
Do my sinful soul demand,
Hither come thou back straightway,
Hubert, if alive that day ;
Return, and sound the Horn, that we
May have a living House still left in thee !”

“ Fear not,” quickly answered Hubert ;
“ As I am thy Father’s son,
What thou askest, noble Brother,
With God’s favour shall be done.”
So were both right well content :
From the Castle forth they went,
And at the head of their Array
To Palestine the Brothers took their way.

Side by side they fought (the Lucies
Were a line for valour famed)
And where'er their strokes alighted,
There the Saracens were tamed.
Whence, then, could it come—the thought—
By what evil spirit brought?
Oh! can a brave Man wish to take
His Brother's life, for Lands' and Castle's sake?

“Sir!” the Ruffians said to Hubert,
“Deep he lies in Jordan flood.”
Stricken by this ill assurance,
Pale and trembling Hubert stood.
“Take your earnings.”—Oh! that I
Could have *seen* my Brother die!
It was a pang that vexed him then;
And oft returned, again, and yet again.

Months passed on, and no Sir Eustace!
Nor of him were tidings heard.
Wherefore, bold as day, the Murderer
Back again to England steered.
To his Castle Hubert sped;
He has nothing now to dread.
But silent and by stealth he came,
And at an hour which nobody could name

None could tell if it were night-time,
Night or day, at even or morn ;
For the sound was heard by no one
Of the proclamation-horn.
But bold Hubert lives in glee :
Months and years went smilingly ;
With plenty was his table spread ;
And bright the Lady is who shares his bed.

Likewise he had sons and daughters ;
And, as good men do, he sate
At his board by these surrounded,
Flourishing in fair estate.
And while thus in open day
Once he sate, as old books say,
A blast was uttered from the Horn,
Where by the Castle-gate it hung forlorn.

'Tis the breath of good Sir Eustace !
He is come to claim his right :
Ancient castle, woods, and mountains
Hear the challenge with delight.
Hubert ! though the blast be blown
He is helpless and alone :
Thou hast a dungeon, speak the word !
And there he may be lodged, and thou be Lord.

Speak !—astounded Hubert cannot ;
And, if power to speak he had,
All are daunted, all the household
Smitten to the heart, and sad.
'Tis Sir Eustace ; if it be
Living man, it must be he !
Thus Hubert thought in his dismay,
And by a postern-gate he slunk away.

Long, and long was he unheard of :
To his Brother then he came,
Made confession, asked forgiveness,
Asked it by a brother's name,
And by all the saints in heaven ;
And of Eustace was forgiven :
Then in a convent went to hide
His melancholy head, and there he died.

But Sir Eustace, whom good angels
Had preserved from murderers' hands,
And from Pagan chains had rescued,
Lived with honour on his lands.
Sons he had, saw sons of theirs :
And through ages, heirs of heirs,
A long posterity renowned,
Sounded the Horn which they alone could sound.

XXIII

SONG.

AT THE FEAST OF BROUGHAM CASTLE,
UPON THE RESTORATION OF LORD CLIFFORD, THE SHEPHERD, TO THE
ESTATES AND HONOURS OF HIS ANCESTORS.

HIGH in the breathless hall the Minstrel sate,
And Emont's murmur mingled with the song.—
The words of ancient time I thus translate,
A festal strain that hath been silent long.

“ From town to town, from tower to tower,
The red rose is a gladsome flower.
Her thirty years of winter past,
The red rose is revived at last ;
She lifts her head for endless spring,
For everlasting blossoming :
Both roses flourish, red and white :
In love and sisterly delight

The two that were at strife are blended,
 And all old troubles now are ended.—
 Joy! joy to both! but most to her
 Who is the flower of Lancaster!
 Behold her how She smiles to-day
 On this great throng, this bright array!
 Fair greeting doth she send to all
 From every corner of the hall;
 But chiefly from above the board
 Where sits in state our rightful Lord,
 A Clifford to his own restored!

They came with banner, spear, and shield;
 And it was proved in Bosworth-field.
 Not long the Avenger was withstood—
 Earth helped him with the cry of blood:
 St. George was for us, and the might
 Of blessed Angels crowned the right.
 Loud voice the Land has uttered forth,
 We loudest in the faithful north:
 Our fields rejoice, our mountains ring,
 Our streams proclaim a welcoming;
 Our strong-abodes and castles see
 The glory of their loyalty.

How glad is Skipton at this hour—
 Though she is but a lonely Tower,
 To vacancy and silence left;
 Of all her guardian sons bereft—

Knight, squire, and yeoman, page and groom :
We have them at the feast of Brough'm.
How glad Pendragon—though the sleep
Of years be on her!—She shall reap
A taste of this great pleasure, viewing
As in a dream her own renewing.
Rejoiced is Brough, right glad I deem
Beside her little humble stream ;
And she that keepeth watch and ward
Her statelier Eden's course to guard ;
They both are happy at this hour,
Though each is but a lonely Tower :—
But here is perfect joy and pride
For one fair House by Emont's side,
This day, distinguished without peer
To see her Master and to cheer—
Him, and his Lady-mother dear !

Oh ! it was a time forlorn
When the fatherless was born—
Give her wings that she may fly,
Or she sees her infant die !
Swords that are with slaughter wild
Hunt the Mother and the Child.
Who will take them from the light ?
—Yonder is a man in sight—
Yonder is a house—but where ?
No, they must not enter there.

To the caves, and to the brooks,
To the clouds of heaven she looks ;
She is speechless, but her eyes
Pray in ghostly agonies.
Blissful Mary, Mother mild,
Maid and Mother undefiled,
Save a Mother and her Child !

Now Who is he that bounds with joy
On Carrock's side, a Shepherd-boy ?
No thoughts hath he but thoughts that pass
Light as the wind along the grass.
Can this be He who hither came
In secret, like a smothered flame ?
O'er whom such thankful tears were shed
For shelter, and a poor man's bread !
God loves the Child ; and God hath willed
That those dear words should be fulfilled,
The Lady's words, when forced away
The last she to her Babe did say :
' My own, my own, thy Fellow-guest
I may not be ; but rest thee, rest,
For lowly shepherd's life is best !'

Alas ! when evil men are strong
No life is good, no pleasure long.
The Boy must part from Mosedale's groves,
And leave Blencathara's rugged coves,

And quit the flowers that summer brings
To Glenderamakin's lofty springs ;
Must vanish, and his careless cheer
Be turned to heaviness and fear.
—Give Sir Lancelot Threlkeld praise !
Hear it, good man, old in days !
Thou tree of covert and of rest
For this young Bird that is distrest ;
Among thy branches safe he lay,
And he was free to sport and play,
When falcons were abroad for prey.

A recreant harp, that sings of fear
And heaviness in Clifford's ear !
I said, when evil men are strong,
No life is good, no pleasure long,
A weak and cowardly untruth !
Our Clifford was a happy Youth,
And thankful through a weary time,
That brought him up to manhood's prime.
—Again he wanders forth at will,
And tends a flock from hill to hill :
His garb is humble ; ne'er was seen
Such garb with such a noble mien ;
Among the shepherd-grooms no mate
Hath he, a Child of strength and state !
Yet lacks not friends for solemn glee—
A spirit-soothing company,

That learned of him submissive ways ;
And comforted his private days.
To his side the fallow-deer
Came, and rested without fear ;
The eagle, lord of land and sea,
Stooped down to pay him fealty ;
And both the undying fish that swim
Through Bowscale-tarn did wait on him ;
The pair were servants of his eye
In their immortality ;
And glancing, gleaming, dark or bright,
Moved to and fro, for his delight.
He knew the rocks which Angels haunt
Upon the mountains visitant ;
He hath kenned them taking wing :
And into caves where Faeries sing
He hath entered ; and been told
By Voices how men lived of old.
Among the heavens his eye can see
The face of thing that is to be ;
And, if that men report him right,
He could whisper words of might.
—Now another day is come,
Fitter hope, and nobler doom ;
He hath thrown aside his crook,
And hath buried deep his book ;
Armour rusting in his halls
On the blood of Clifford calls ;—

‘Quell the Scot,’ exclaims the Lance—
Bear me to the heart of France,
Is the longing of the Shield—
Tell thy name, thou trembling Field ;
Field of death, where’er thou be,
Groan thou with our victory !
Happy day, and mighty hour,
When our Shepherd, in his power,
Mailed and horsed, with lance and sword,
To his ancestors restored
Like a re-appearing Star,
Like a glory from afar,
First shall head the flock of war !”

Alas ! the fervent Harper did not know
That for a tranquil Soul the Lay was framed,
Who, long compelled in humble walks to go,
Was softened into feeling, soothed, and tamed.

Love had he found in huts where poor men lie ;
His daily teachers had been woods and rills,
The silence that is in the starry sky,
The sleep that is among the lonely hills.

In him the savage virtue of the Race,
Revenge, and all ferocious thoughts were dead :
Nor did he change ; but kept in lofty place
The wisdom which adversity had bred.

Glad were the vales, and every cottage-hearth ;
 The Shepherd-lord was honoured more and more ;
 And, ages after he was laid in earth,
 "The good Lord Clifford" was the name he bore.

1807.

 XXIV.

LINES,

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON REVISITING THE
 BANKS OF THE WYE DURING A TOUR.

JULY 13, 1798.

FIVE years have past ; five summers, with the length
 Of five long winters ! and again I hear
 These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs
 With a sweet inland murmur*.—Once again
 Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
 That on a wild secluded scene impress
 Thoughts of more deep seclusion ; and connect
 The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
 The day is come when I again repose
 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,

* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.

Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild : these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door ; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees !
With some uncertain notice, as might seem
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,
Through a long absence, have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart ;
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration :—feelings too
Of unremembered pleasure : such, perhaps,
As have no slight or trivial influence
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremembered acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,

In which the heavy and the weary weight
 Of all this unintelligible world,
 Is lightened :—that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul :
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things.

If this

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

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

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

Of elevated thoughts ; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man :
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains ; and of all that we behold
From this green earth ; of all the mighty world
Of eye, and ear,—both what they half create*,
And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
In nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay :
For thou art with me here upon the banks
Of this fair river ; thou my dearest Friend,
My dear, dear Friend ; and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,

* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young's, the exact expression of which I do not recollect.

My dear, dear Sister ! and this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her ; 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith, that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain-winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure ; when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
And these my exhortations ! Nor, perchance—
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence—wilt thou then forget

That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together ; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service : rather say
With warmer love—oh ! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake !

1798.

XXV.

It is no Spirit who from heaven hath flown,
And is descending on his embassy ;
Nor Traveller gone from earth the heavens to espy !
'Tis Hesperus—there he stands with glittering crown,
First admonition that the sun is down !
For yet it is broad day-light : clouds pass by ;
A few are near him still—and now the sky,
He hath it to himself—'tis all his own.
O most ambitious Star ! an inquest wrought
Within me when I recognised thy light ;
A moment I was startled at the sight :

And, while I gazed, there came to me a thought
 That I might step beyond my natural race
 As thou seem'st now to do ; might one day trace
 Some ground not mine ; and, strong her strength above,
 My Soul, an Apparition in the place,
 Tread there with steps that no one shall reprove !

1803.

 XXVI.

FRENCH REVOLUTION,

AS IT APPEARED TO ENTHUSIASTS AT ITS COMMENCEMENT*.

REPRINTED FROM "THE FRIEND."

OH ! pleasant exercise of hope and joy !
 For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love !
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven !—Oh ! times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance !
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime Enchantress—to assist the work,

* This, and the Extract, Vol. I. page 98, and the first Piece of this Class are from the unpublished Poem of which some account is given in the Preface to the EXCURSION.

Which then was going forward in her name !
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(As at some moment might not be unfelt
Among the bowers of paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away !
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it ;—they, too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves ;—
Now was it that both found, the meek and lofty
Did both find, helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish ;
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, subterranean fields,
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where !
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us,—the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all !

XXVII.

YES, it was the mountain Echo,
Solitary, clear, profound,
Answering to the shouting Cuckoo,
Giving to her sound for sound !

Unsolicited reply
To a babbling wanderer sent ;
Like her ordinary cry,
Like—but oh, how different !

Hears not also mortal Life ?
Hear not we, unthinking Creatures !
Slaves of folly, love, or strife—
Voices of two different natures ?

Have not *we* too ?—yes, we have
Answers, and we know not whence ;
Echoes from beyond the grave,
Recognised intelligence !

Such rebounds our inward ear
Catches sometimes from afar—
Listen, ponder, hold them dear ;
For of God,—of God they are.

XXVIII.

TO A SKY-LARK.

—•—

ETHEREAL minstrel ! pilgrim of the sky !
Dost thou despise the earth where cares abound ?
Or, while the wings aspire, are heart and eye
Both with thy nest upon the dewy ground ?
Thy nest which thou canst drop into at will,
Those quivering wings composed, that music still !

To the last point of vision, and beyond,
Mount, daring warbler !—that love-prompted strain,
(’Twixt thee and thine a never-failing bond)
Thrills not the less the bosom of the plain :
Yet might’st thou seem, proud privilege ! to sing
All independent of the leafy spring.

Leave to the nightingale her shady wood ;
A privacy of glorious light is thine ;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine ;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam ;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home !

XXIX.

LAODAMIA.

“ WITH sacrifice before the rising morn
 Vows have I made by fruitless hope inspired ;
 And from the infernal Gods, 'mid shades forlorn
 Of night, my slaughtered Lord have I required :
 Celestial pity I again implore ;—
 Restore him to my sight—great Jove, restore !”

So speaking, and by fervent love endowed
 With faith, the Suppliant heavenward lifts her hands ;
 While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
 Her countenance brightens—and her eye expands ;
 Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows ;
 And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror ! what hath she perceived ?—O joy !
 What doth she look on ?—whom doth she behold ?
 Her Hero slain upon the beach of Troy ?
 His vital presence ? his corporeal mould ?
 It is—if sense deceive her not—'tis He !
 And a God leads him, winged Mercury !

Mild Hermes spake— and touched her with his wand
 That calms all fear; “Such grace hath crowned thy prayer,
 Laodamía! that at Jove’s command
 Thy Husband walks the paths of upper air :
 He comes to tarry with thee three hours’ space ;
 Accept the gift, behold him face to face !”

Forth sprang the impassioned Queen her Lord to clasp ;
 Again that consummation she essayed ;
 But unsubstantial Form eludes her grasp
 As often as that eager grasp was made.
 The Phantom parts—but parts to re-unite,
 And re-assume his place before her sight.

“ Protesiláus, lo ! thy guide is gone !
 Confirm, I pray, the Vision with thy voice :
 This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne ;
 Speak, and the floor thou tread’st on will rejoice.
 Not to appal me have the Gods bestowed
 This precious boon ; and blest a sad abode.”

“ Great Jove, Laodamía ! doth not leave
 His gifts imperfect :—Spectre though I be,
 I am not sent to scare thee or deceive ;
 But in reward of thy fidelity.
 And something also did my worth obtain ;
 For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

Thou knowest, the Delphic oracle foretold
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
Should die ; but me the threat could not withhold :
A generous cause a victim did demand ;
And forth I leapt upon the sandy plain ;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain.”

“ Supreme of Heroes—bravest, noblest, best !
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
Which then, when tens of thousands were deprest
By doubt, propelled thee to the fatal shore ;
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

But thou, though capable of sternest deed,
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave ;
And he, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
That thou should'st cheat the malice of the grave :
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enriched Thessalian air.

No Spectre greets me,—no vain Shadow this ;
Come, blooming Hero, place thee by my side !
Give, on this well known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day, a second time thy bride !”
Jove frowned in heaven : the conscious Parcæ threw
Upon those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

“ This visage tells thee that my doom is past :
Nor should the change be mourned, even if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. Earth destroys
Those raptures duly—Erebus disdains :
Calm pleasures there abide—majestic pains.

Be taught, O faithful Consort, to control
Rebellious passion : for the Gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult, of the soul ;
A fervent, not ungovernable love.
Thy transports moderate ; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn—”

“ Ah, wherefore ?—Did not Hercules by force
Wrest from the guardian Monster of the tomb
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
Given back to dwell on earth in vernal bloom ?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And Æson stood a Youth 'mid youthful peers.

The Gods to us are merciful—and they
Yet further may relent : for mightier far
Than strength of nerve and sinew, or the sway
Of magic potent over sun and star,
Is love, though oft to agony distrest,
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast.

But if thou goest, I follow—" "Peace!" he said,—
She looked upon him and was calmed and cheered ;
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled ;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appeared
Elysian beauty, melancholy grace,
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as Spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure ;
No fears to beat away—no strife to heal—
The past unsighed for, and the future sure ;
Spake of heroic arts in graver mood
Revived, with finer harmony pursued ;

Of all that is most beauteous—imaged there
In happier beauty ; more pellucid streams,
An ampler ether, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams ;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the Soul shall enter which hath earned
That privilege by virtue.—" Ill," said he,
" The end of man's existence I discerned,
Who from ignoble games and revelry
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, day and night :

And while my youthful peers before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent)
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports,—or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detained ;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchained.

The wished-for wind was given :—I then revolved
The oracle, upon the silent sea ;
And, if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

Yet bitter, oft-times bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, beloved Wife !
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life,—
The paths which we had trod—these fountains, flowers ;
My new-planned cities, and unfinished towers.

But should suspense permit the Foe to cry,
' Behold they tremble !—haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die ?'
In soul I swept the indignity away :
Old frailties then recurred :—but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

And Thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
 In reason, in self-government too slow ;
 I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
 Our blest re-union in the shades below.
 The invisible world with thee hath sympathised ;
 Be thy affections raised and solemnised.

Learn, by a mortal yearning, to ascend—
 Seeking a higher object. Love was given,
 Encouraged, sanctioned, chiefly for that end ;
 For this the passion to excess was driven—
 That self might be annulled : her bondage prove
 The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.”

Aloud she shrieked ! for Hermes re-appears !
 Round the dear Shade she would have clung—’tis vain :
 The hours are past—too brief had they been years ;
 And him no mortal effort can detain :
 Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
 He through the portal takes his silent way,
 And on the palace-floor a lifeless corse She lay.

By no weak pity might the Gods be moved ;
 She who thus perished, not without the crime
 Of lovers that in reason’s spite have loved,
 Was doomed to wear out her appointed time,
 Apart from happy Ghosts—that gather flowers
 Of blissful quiet ’mid unfading bowers.

—Yet tears to human suffering are due ;
 And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown
 Are mourned by man, and not by man alone,
 As fondly he believes.—Upon the side
 Of Hellespont (such faith was entertained)
 A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
 From out the tomb of him for whom she died ;
 And ever, when such stature they had gained
 That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
 The trees' tall summits withered at the sight ;
 A constant interchange of growth and blight !*

1814.

* For the account of these long-lived trees, see Pliny's Natural History, lib. xvi. cap. 44. ; and for the features in the character of Protesilaus (page 177.) see the Iphigenia in Aulis of Euripides. Virgil places the Shade of Laodamia in a mournful region, among unhappy Lovers,

————— His Laodamia

It Comes. —————

XXX.

TO A YOUNG LADY,
 WHO HAD BEEN REPROACHED FOR TAKING LONG WALKS
 IN THE COUNTRY.

DEAR Child of Nature, let them rail !
 —There is a nest in a green dale,
 A harbour and a hold,
 Where thou, a Wife and Friend, shalt see
 Thy own heart-stirring days, and be
 A light to young and old.

There, healthy as a shepherd-boy,
 And treading among flowers of joy
 Which at no season fade,
 Thou, while thy babes around thee cling,
 Shalt show us how divine a thing
 A Woman may be made.

Thy thoughts and feelings shall not die,
 Nor leave thee, when grey-hairs are nigh,
 A melancholy slave ;
 But an old age serene and bright,
 And lovely as a Lapland night,
 Shall lead thee to thy grave.

XXXI.

THE PASS OF KIRKSTONE.

i.

WITHIN the mind strong fancies work,
A deep delight the bosom thrills,
Oft as I pass along the fork
Of these fraternal hills :
Where, save the rugged road, we find
No appanage of human kind,
Nor hint of man ; if stone or rock
Seem not his handy-work to mock
By something cognizably shaped ;
Mockery—or model roughly hewn,
And left as if by earthquake strewn,
Or from the Flood escaped :
Altars for Druid service fit ;
(But where no fire was ever lit,
Unless the glow-worm to the skies
Thence offer nightly sacrifice)
Wrinkled Egyptian monument ;
Green moss-grown tower ; or hoary tent ;
Tents of a camp that never shall be raised—
On which four thousand years have gazed !

II.

Ye plough-shares sparkling on the slopes !
Ye snow-white lambs that trip
Imprisoned 'mid the formal props
Of restless ownership !
Ye trees, that may to-morrow fall
To feed the insatiate Prodigal !
Lawns, houses, chattels, groves, and fields,
All that the fertile valley shields ;
Wages of folly—baits of crime,
Of life's uneasy game the stake,
Playthings that keep the eyes awake
Of drowsy, dotard Time ;—
O care ! O guilt !—O vales and plains,
Here, 'mid his own unvexed domains,
A Genius dwells, that can subdue
At once all memory of You,—
Most potent when mists veil the sky,
Mists that distort and magnify ;
While the coarse rushes, to the sweeping breeze,
Sigh forth their ancient melodies !

III.

List to those shriller notes !—*that* march
Perchance was on the blast,
When, through this Height's inverted arch,
Rome's earliest legion passed !
—They saw, adventurously impelled,
And older eyes than theirs beheld,
This block—and yon, whose church-like frame
Gives to this savage Pass its name.
Aspiring Road ! that lov'st to hide
Thy daring in a vapoury bourn,
Not seldom may the hour return
When thou shalt be my guide:
And I (as all men may find cause,
When life is at a weary pause,
And they have panted up the hill
Of duty with reluctant will)
Be thankful, even though tired and faint,
For the rich bounties of constraint ;
Whence oft invigorating transports flow
That choice lacked courage to bestow !

IV.

My Soul was grateful for delight
That wore a threatening brow ;
A veil is lifted—can she slight
The scene that opens now ?
Though habitation none appear,
The greenness tells, man must be there ;
The shelter—that the perspective
Is of the clime in which we live ;
Where Toil pursues his daily round ;
Where Pity sheds sweet tears—and Love,
In woodbine bower or birchen grove,
Inflicts his tender wound.
—Who comes not hither ne'er shall know
How beautiful the world below ;
Nor can he guess how lightly leaps
The brook adown the rocky steps.
Farewell, thou desolate Domain !
Hope, pointing to the cultured plain,
Carols like a shepherd-boy ;
And who is she ?—Can that be Joy !
Who, with a sunbeam for her guide,
Smoothly skims the meadows wide ;
While Faith, from yonder opening cloud,
To hill and vale proclaims aloud,
“ Whate'er the weak may dread, the wicked dare,
Thy lot, O Man, is good, thy portion fair ! ” 1817.

XXXII.

TO——,

ON HER FIRST ASCENT TO THE SUMMIT OF HELVELLYN.

INMATE of a mountain-dwelling,
Thou hast clomb aloft, and gazed
From the watch-towers of Helvellyn ;
Awed, delighted, and amazed !

Potent was the spell that bound thee
Not unwilling to obey ;
For blue Ether's arms, flung round thee,
Stilled the pantings of dismay.

Lo ! the dwindled woods and meadows ;
What a vast abyss is there !
Lo ! the clouds, the solemn shadows,
And the glistenings—heavenly fair !

And a record of commotion
Which a thousand ridges yield ;
Ridge, and gulf, and distant ocean
Gleaming like a silver shield !

Now—take flight ;—possess, inherit
Alps or Andes—they are thine !
With the morning's roseate Spirit,
Sweep their length of snowy line ;

Or survey their bright dominions
In the gorgeous colours drest
Flung from off the purple pinions,
Evening spreads throughout the west !

Thine are now the coral fountains
Warbling in each sparry vault
Of the untrodden lunar mountains ;
Listen to their songs !—or halt,

To Niphates' top invited,
Whither spiteful Satan steered ;
Or descend where the ark alighted,
When the green earth re-appeared ;

For the power of hills is on thee,
As was witnessed through thine eye
Then, when old Helvellyn won thee
To confess their majesty !

XXXIII.

WATER-FOWL.

' Let me be allowed the aid of verse to describe the evolutions which
 ' these visitants sometimes perform, on a fine day towards the close
 ' of winter.'—*Extract from the Author's Book on the Lakes.*

MARK how the feathered tenants of the flood,
 With grace of motion that might scarcely seem
 Inferior to angelical, prolong
 Their curious pastime ! shaping in mid air
 (And sometimes with ambitious wing that soars
 High as the level of the mountain-tops)
 A circuit ampler than the lake beneath—
 Their own domain ; but ever, while intent
 On tracing and retracing that large round,
 Their jubilant activity evolves
 Hundreds of curves and circlets, to and fro,
 Upward and downward, progress intricate
 Yet unperplexed, as if one spirit swayed
 Their indefatigable flight. 'Tis done—
 Ten times, or more, I fancied it had ceased ;
 But lo ! the vanished company again
 Ascending ; they approach—I hear their wings
 Faint, faint at first ; and then an eager sound
 Past in a moment—and as faint again !

They tempt the sun to sport amid their plumes ;
 They tempt the water, or the gleaming ice,
 To show them a fair image ; 'tis themselves,
 Their own fair forms, upon the glimmering plain,
 Painted more soft and fair as they descend
 Almost to touch ;—then up again aloft,
 Up with a sally and a flash of speed,
 As if they scorned both resting-place and rest !

1812.

 XXXIV.

 VIEW FROM THE TOP OF BLACK COMB.

THIS Height a ministering Angel might select :
 For from the summit of BLACK COMB (dread name
 Derived from clouds and storms !) the amplest range
 Of unobstructed prospect may be seen
 That British ground commands :—low dusky tracts,
 Where Trent is nursed, far southward ! Cambrian hills
 To the south-west, a multitudinous show ;
 And, in a line of eye-sight linked with these,
 The hoary peaks of Scotland that give birth
 To Tiviot's stream, to Annan, Tweed, and Clyde :—
 Crowding the quarter whence the sun comes forth

Gigantic mountains rough with crags ; beneath,
 Right at the imperial station's western base
 Main ocean, breaking audibly, and stretched
 Far into silent regions blue and pale ;—
 And visibly engirding Mona's Isle
 That, as we left the plain, before our sight
 Stood like a lofty mount, uplifting slowly
 (Above the convex of the watery globe)
 Into clear view the cultured fields that streak
 Her habitable shores ; but now appears
 A dwindled object, and submits to lie
 At the spectator's feet.—Yon azure ridge,
 Is it a perishable cloud ? Or there
 Do we behold the line of Erin's coast ?
 Land sometimes by the roving shepherd-swain
 (Like the bright confines of another world)
 Not doubtfully perceived.—Look homeward now !
 In depth, in height, in circuit, how serene
 The spectacle, how pure !—Of Nature's works,
 In earth, and air, and earth-embracing sea,
 A revelation infinite it seems ;
 Display august of man's inheritance,
 Of Britain's calm felicity and power !

1813.

Black Comb stands at the southern extremity of Cumberland : its base covers a much greater extent of ground than any other mountain in those parts ; and, from its situation, the summit commands a more extensive view than any other point in Britain.

XXXV.

THE HAUNTED TREE.

TO ———.



THOSE silver clouds collected round the sun
His mid-day warmth abate not, seeming less
To overshadow than multiply his beams
By soft reflection—grateful to the sky,
To rocks, fields, woods. Nor doth our human sense
Ask, for its pleasure, screen or canopy
More ample than the time-dismantled Oak
Spreads o'er this tuft of heath, which now, attired
In the whole fulness of its bloom, affords
Couch beautiful as e'er for earthly use
Was fashioned; whether by the hand of Art,
That eastern Sultan, amid flowers enwrought
On silken tissue, might diffuse his limbs
In languor; or, by Nature, for repose
Of panting Wood-nymph, wearied with the chase.
O Lady! fairer in thy Poet's sight
Than fairest spiritual creature of the groves,
Approach;—and, thus invited, crown with rest

The noon-tide hour : though truly some there are
Whose footsteps superstitiously avoid
This venerable Tree ; for, when the wind
Blows keenly, it sends forth a creaking sound
(Above the general roar of woods and crags)
Distinctly heard from far—a doleful note !
As if (so Grecian shepherds would have deemed)
The Hamadryad, pent within, bewailed
Some bitter wrong. Nor is it unbeliev'd,
By ruder fancy, that a troubled ghost
Haunts the old trunk ; lamenting deeds of which
The flowery ground is conscious. But no wind
Sweeps now along this elevated ridge ;
Not even a zephyr stirs ;—the obnoxious Tree
Is mute ; and, in his silence, would look down,
O lovely Wanderer of the trackless hills,
On thy reclining form with more delight
Than his coevals in the sheltered vale
Seem to participate, the whilst they view
Their own far-stretching arms and leafy heads
Vividly pictured in some glassy pool,
That, for a brief space, checks the hurrying stream !

XXXVI.

THE TRIAD.

SHOW me the noblest Youth of present time,
 Whose trembling fancy would to love give birth ;
 Some God or Hero, from the Olympian clime
 Returned, to seek a Consort upon earth ;
 Or, in no doubtful prospect, let me see
 The brightest star of ages yet to be,
 And I will mate and match him blissfully.

I will not fetch a Naiad from a flood
 Pure as herself—(song lacks not mightier power)
 Nor leaf-crowned Dryad from a pathless wood,
 Nor Sea-nymph glistening from her coral bower ;
 Mere Mortals bodied forth in vision still,
 Shall with Mount Ida's triple lustre fill
 The chaster coverts of a British hill.

“ Appear !—obey my lyre's command !
 Come, like the Graces, hand in hand !

For ye, though not by birth allied,
 Are Sisters in the bond of love ;
 Nor shall the tongue of envious pride
 Presume those interweavings to reprove
 In you, which that fair progeny of Jove,
 Learned from the tuneful spheres that glide
 In endless union, earth and sea above.”
 —I sing in vain ;—the pines have hushed their waving :
 A peerless Youth expectant at my side,
 Breathless as they, with unabated craving
 Looks to the earth, and to the vacant air ;
 And, with a wandering eye that seems to chide,
 Asks of the clouds what occupants they hide :—
 But why solicit more than sight could bear,
 By casting on a moment all we dare ?
 Invoke we those bright Beings one by one ;
 And what was boldly promised, truly shall be done.

“ Fear not a constraining measure !
 —Yielding to this gentle spell,
 Lucida ! from domes of pleasure,
 Or from cottage-sprinkled dell,
 Come to regions solitary,
 Where the eagle builds her aery,
 Above the hermit’s long-forsaken cell !”
 —She comes !—behold
 That Figure, like a ship with silver sail !
 Nearer she draws ; a breeze uplifts her veil ;
 Upon her coming wait

As pure a sunshine and as soft a gale
 As e'er, on herbage covering earthly mold,
 Tempted the bird of Juno to unfold
 His richest splendour—when his veering gait
 And every motion of his starry train
 Seem governed by a strain
 Of music, audible to him alone.

“ O Lady, worthy of earth's proudest throne !
 Nor less, by excellence of nature, fit
 Beside an unambitious hearth to sit
 Domestic queen, where grandeur is unknown ;
 What living man could fear
 The worst of Fortune's malice, wert Thou near,
 Humbling that lily-stem, thy sceptre meek,
 That its fair flowers may brush from off his cheek
 The too, too happy tear ?
 —Queen, and handmaid lowly !
 Whose skill can speed the day with lively cares,
 And banish melancholy
 By all that mind invents or hand prepares ;
 O Thou, against whose lip, without its smile
 And in its silence even, no heart is proof ;
 Whose goodness, sinking deep, would reconcile
 The softest Nursling of a gorgeous palace
 To the bare life beneath the hawthorn-roof
 Of Sherwood's Archer, or in caves of Wallace—
 Who that hath seen thy beauty could content
 His soul with but a *glimpse* of heavenly day ?
 Who that hath loved thee, but would lay

His strong hand on the wind, if it were bent
 To take thee in thy majesty away ?
 —Pass onward (even the glancing deer
 Till we depart intrude not here ;)
 That mossy slope, o'er which the woodbine throws
 A canopy, is smoothed for thy repose !”

Glad moment is it when the throng
 Of warblers in full concert strong
 Strive, and not vainly strive, to rout
 The lagging shower, and force coy Phœbus out,
 Met by the rainbow's form divine,
 Issuing from her cloudy shrine ;—
 So may the thrillings of the lyre
 Prevail to further our desire,
 While to these shades a sister Nymph I call.

“ Come, if the notes thine ear may pierce,
 Come, youngest of the lovely three,
 Submissive to the might of verse
 And the dear voice of harmony,
 By none more deeply felt than Thee !”
 —I sang ; and lo ! from pastimes virginal
 She hastens to the tents
 Of nature, and the lonely elements.
 Air sparkles round her with a dazzling sheen ;
 But mark her glowing cheek, her vesture green !
 And, as if wishful to disarm
 Or to repay the potent charm,

She bears the stringèd lute of old romance,
 That cheered the trellised arbour's privacy,
 And soothed war-wearied knights in raftered hall.
 How vivid, yet how delicate, her glee !
 So tripped the Muse, inventress of the dance ;
 So, truant in waste woods, the blithe Euphrosyne !

But the ringlets of that head
 Why are they ungarlanded ?
 Why bedeck her temples less
 Than the simplest shepherdess ?
 Is it not a brow inviting
 Choicest flowers that ever breathed,
 Which the myrtle would delight in
 With Idalian rose enwreathed ?
 But her humility is well content
 With *one* wild floweret (call it not forlorn)
 FLOWER OF THE WINDS, beneath her bosom worn—
 Yet more for love than ornament.

Open, ye thickets ! let her fly,
 Swift as a Thracian Nymph o'er field and height !
 For She, to all but those who love her shy,
 Would gladly vanish from a Stranger's sight ;
 Though where she is beloved and loves,
 Light as the wheeling butterfly she moves ;
 Her happy spirit as a bird is free,
 That rifles blossoms on a tree,
 Turning them inside out with arch audacity.

Alas! how little can a moment show
 Of an eye where feeling plays
 In ten thousand dewy rays;
 A face o'er which a thousand shadows go!
 —She stops—is fastened to that rivulet's side;
 And there (while, with sedater mien,
 O'er timid waters that have scarcely left
 Their birth-place in the rocky cleft
 She bends) at leisure may be seen
 Features to old ideal grace allied,
 Amid their smiles and dimples dignified—
 Fit countenance for the soul of primal truth;
 The bland composure of eternal youth!

What more changeful than the sea?
 But over his great tides
 Fidelity presides;
 And this light-hearted Maiden constant is as he.
 High is her aim as heaven above,
 And wide as ether her good-will;
 And, like the lowly reed, her love
 Can drink its nurture from the scantiest rill:
 Insight as keen as frosty star
 Is to *her* charity no bar,
 Nor interrupts her frolic graces
 When she is, far from these wild places,
 Encircled by familiar faces.

O the charm that manners draw,
 Nature, from the genuine law!

If from what her hand would do,
Her voice would utter, there ensue
Aught untoward or unfit ;
She, in benign affections pure,
In self-forgetfulness secure,
Sheds round the transient harm or vague mischance
A light unknown to tutored elegance :
Her's is not a cheek shame-stricken,
But her blushes are joy-flushes ;
And the fault (if fault it be)
Only ministers to quicken
Laughter-loving gaiety,
And kindle sportive wit—
Leaving this Daughter of the mountains free
As if she knew that Oberon king of Faery
Had crossed her purpose with some quaint vagary,
And heard his viewless bands
Over their mirthful triumph clapping hands.

“ Last of the Three, though eldest born,
Reveal thyself, like pensive Morn
Touched by the skylark's earliest note,
Ere humbler gladness be afloat.
But whether in the semblance drest
Of Dawn—or Eve, fair vision of the west,
Come with each anxious hope subdued
By woman's gentle fortitude,
Each grief, through meekness, settling into rest.
—Or I would hail thee when some high-wrought page

Of a closed volume lingering in thy hand
Has raised thy spirit to a peaceful stand
Among the glories of a happier age."

Her brow hath opened on me—see it there,
Brightening the umbrage of her hair ;
So gleams the crescent moon, that loves
To be descried through shady groves.
Tenderest bloom is on her cheek ;
Wish not for a richer streak ;
Nor dread the depth of meditative eye ;
But let thy love, upon that azure field
Of thoughtfulness and beauty, yield
Its homage offered up in purity.
What would'st thou more ? In sunny glade,
Or under leaves of thickest shade,
Was such a stillness e'er diffused
Since earth grew calm while angels mused ?
Softly she treads, as if her foot were loth
To crush the mountain dew-drops—soon to melt
On the flower's breast ; as if she felt
That flowers themselves, whate'er their hue,
With all their fragrance, all their glistening,
Call to the heart for inward listening—
And though for bridal wreaths and tokens true
Welcomed wisely ; though a growth
Which the careless shepherd sleeps on,
As fitly spring from turf the mourner weeps on—
And without wrong are cropped the marble tomb to strew.

The charm is over ; the mute phantom's gone,
 Nor will return—but droop not, favoured Youth ;
 The apparition that before thee shone
 Obeyed a summons covetous of truth.
 From these wild rocks thy footsteps I will guide
 To bowers in which thy fortune may be tried,
 And one of the bright Three become thy happy Bride.

1828.

 XXXVII.

THE WISHING-GATE.

In the vale of Grasmere, by the side of the old high-way leading to Ambleside, is a gate, which, time out of mind, has been called the Wishing-gate, from a belief that wishes formed or indulged there have a favourable issue.

HOPE rules a land for ever green :
 All powers that serve the bright-eyed Queen
 Are confident and gay ;
 Clouds at her bidding disappear ;
 Points she to aught ?—the bliss draws near,
 And Fancy smooths the way.

Not such the land of Wishes—there
Dwell fruitless day-dreams, lawless prayer,
And thoughts with things at strife ;
Yet how forlorn, should *ye* depart
Ye superstitions of the *heart*,
How poor, were human life !

When magic lore abjured its might,
Ye did not forfeit one dear right,
One tender claim abate ;
Witness this symbol of your sway,
Surviving near the public way,
The rustic Wishing-gate !

Inquire not if the faery race
Shed kindly influence on the place,
Ere northward they retired ;
If here a warrior left a spell,
Panting for glory as he fell ;
Or here a saint expired.

Enough that all around is fair,
Composed with Nature's finest care,
And in her fondest love—
Peace to embosom and content—
To overawe the turbulent,
The selfish to reprove.

Yea ! even the stranger from afar,
Reclining on this moss-grown bar,
Unknowing, and unknown,
The infection of the ground partakes,
Longing for his Belov'd—who makes
All happiness her own.

Then why should conscious Spirits fear
The mystic stirrings that are here,
The ancient faith disclaim ?
The local Genius ne'er befriends
Desires whose course in folly ends,
Whose just reward is shame.

Smile if thou wilt, but not in scorn,
If some, by ceaseless pains outworn,
Here crave an easier lot ;
If some have thirsted to renew
A broken vow, or bind a true,
With firmer, holier knot.

And not in vain, when thoughts are cast
Upon the irrevocable past,
Some penitent sincere
May for a worthier future sigh,
While trickles from his downcast eye
No unavailing tear.

The worldling, pining to be freed
From turmoil, who would turn or speed
The current of his fate,
Might stop before this favoured scene,
At Nature's call, nor blush to lean
Upon the Wishing-gate.

The Sage, who feels how blind, how weak
Is man, though loth such help to *seek*,
Yet, passing, here might pause,
And thirst for insight to allay
Misgiving, while the crimson day
In quietness withdraws ;

Or when the church-clock's knell profound
To Time's first step across the bound
Of midnight makes reply ;
Time pressing on with starry crest,
To filial sleep upon the breast
Of dread eternity !

XXXVIII.

THE PRIMROSE OF THE ROCK.



A Rock there is whose lonely front
The passing traveller slights ;
Yet there the glow-worms hang their lamps,
Like stars, at various heights ;
And one coy Primrose to that Rock
The vernal breeze invites.

What hideous warfare hath been waged,
What kingdoms overthrown,
Since first I spied that Primrose-tuft
And marked it for my own ;
A lasting link in Nature's chain
From highest heaven let down !

The flowers, still faithful to the stems,
Their fellowship renew ;
The stems are faithful to the root,
That worketh out of view ;
And to the rock the root adheres
In every fibre true.

Close clings to earth the living rock,
 Though threatening still to fall ;
The earth is constant to her sphere ;
 And God upholds them all :
So blooms this lonely Plant, nor dreads
 Her annual funeral.

* * * * *

Here closed the meditative strain ;
 But air breathed soft that day,
The hoary mountain-heights were cheered,
 The sunny vale looked gay ;
And to the Primrose of the Rock
 I gave this after-lay.

I sang—Let myriads of bright flowers,
 Like Thee, in field and grove
Revive unenvied ;—mightier far,
 Than tremblings that reprove
Our vernal tendencies to hope,
 Is God's redeeming love ;

That love which changed—for wan disease,
 For sorrow that had bent
O'er hopeless dust, for withered age—
 Their moral element,
And turned the thistles of a curse
 To types beneficent.

Sin-blighted though we are, we too,
The reasoning Sons of Men,
From one oblivious winter called
Shall rise, and breathe again ;
And in eternal summer lose
Our threescore years and ten.

To humbleness of heart descends
This prescience from on high,
The faith that elevates the just,
Before and when they die ;
And makes each soul a separate heaven,
A court for Deity.

XXXIX.

PRESENTIMENTS.

PRESENTIMENTS ! they judge not right
Who deem that ye from open light
Retire in fear of shame ;
All *heaven-born* Instincts shun the touch
Of vulgar sense,—and, being such,
Such privilege ye claim.

The tear whose source I could not guess,
The deep sigh that seemed fatherless,
Were mine in early days ;
And now, unforced by time to part
With fancy, I obey my heart,
And venture on your praise.

What though some busy foes to good,
Too potent over nerve and blood,
Lurk near you—and combine
To taint the health which ye infuse ;
This hides not from the moral Muse
Your origin divine.

How oft from you, derided Powers !
Comes Faith that in auspicious hours
 Builds castles, not of air :
Bodings unsanctioned by the will
Flow from your visionary skill,
 And teach us to beware.

The bosom-weight, your stubborn gift,
That no philosophy can lift,
 Shall vanish, if ye please,
Like morning mist: and, where it lay,
The spirits at your bidding play
 In gaiety and ease.

Star-guided contemplations move
Through space, though calm, not raised above
 Prognostics that ye rule ;
The naked Indian of the wild,
And haply, too, the cradled Child,
 Are pupils of your school.

But who can fathom your intents,
Number their signs or instruments ?
 A rainbow, a sunbeam,
A subtle smell that Spring unbinds,
Dead pause abrupt of midnight winds,
 An echo, or a dream.

The laughter of the Christmas hearth
With sighs of self-exhausted mirth
Ye feelingly reprove ;
And daily, in the conscious breast,
Your visitations are a test
And exercise of love.

When some great change gives boundless scope
To an exulting Nation's hope,
Oft, startled and made wise
By your low-breathed interpretations,
The simply-meek foretaste the springs
Of bitter contraries.

Ye daunt the proud array of war,
Pervade the lonely ocean far
As sail hath been unfurled ;
For dancers in the festive hall
What ghastly partners hath your call
Fetched from the shadowy world !

'Tis said, that warnings ye dispense,
Emboldened by a keener sense ;
That men have lived for whom,
With dread precision, ye made clear
The hour that in a distant year
Should knell them to the tomb.

Unwelcome insight ! Yet there are
Blest times when mystery is laid bare,
 Truth shows a glorious face,
While on that isthmus which commands
The councils of both worlds, she stands,
 Sage Spirits ! by your grace.

God, who instructs the brutes to scent
All changes of the element,
 Whose wisdom fixed the scale
Of natures, for our wants provides
By higher, sometimes humbler, guides,
 When lights of reason fail.

XL.

VERNAL ODE.

Rerum Natura tota est nusquam magis quam in minimis.
PLIN. NAT. HIST.

I.

Beneath the concave of an April sky,
 When all the fields with freshest green were dight,
 Appeared, in presence of the spiritual eye
 That aids or supersedes our grosser sight,
 The form and rich habiliments of One
 Whose countenance bore resemblance to the sun,
 When it reveals, in evening majesty,
 Features half lost amid their own pure light.
 Poised like a weary cloud, in middle air
 He hung,—then floated with angelic ease
 (Softening that bright effulgence by degrees)
 Till he had reached a summit sharp and bare,
 Where oft the venturous heifer drinks the noon-tide breeze.
 Upon the apex of that lofty cone
 Alighted, there the Stranger stood alone ;

Fair as a gorgeous Fabric of the east
 Suddenly raised by some enchanter's power,
 Where nothing was ; and firm as some old Tower
 Of Britain's realm, whose leafy crest
 Waves high, embellished by a gleaming shower !

II.

Beneath the shadow of his purple wings
 Rested a golden harp ;—he touched the strings ;
 And, after prelude of unearthly sound
 Poured through the echoing hills around,
 He sang—

“ No wintry desolations,
 Scorching blight or noxious dew,
 Affect my native habitations ;
 Buried in glory, far beyond the scope
 Of man's inquiring gaze, but to his hope
 Imaged, though faintly, in the hue
 Profound of night's ethereal blue ;
 And in the aspect of each radiant orb ;—
 Some fixed, some wandering with no timid curb ;
 But wandering star and fixed, to mortal eye,
 Blended in absolute serenity,
 And free from semblance of decline ;—
 Fresh as if Evening brought their natal hour,
 Her darkness splendour gave, her silence power,
 To testify of Love and Grace divine.—

m.

What if those bright fires
Shine subject to decay,
Sons haply of extinguished sires,
Themselves to lose their light, or pass away
Like clouds before the wind,
Be thanks poured out to Him whose hand bestows,
Nightly, on human kind
That image of endurance and repose.
—And though to every draught of vital breath
Renewed throughout the bounds of earth or ocean,
The melancholy gates of Death
Respond with sympathetic motion ;
Though all that feeds on nether air,
Howe'er magnificent or fair,
Grows but to perish, and entrust
Its ruins to their kindred dust ;
Yet, by the Almighty's ever-during care,
Her procreant vigils Nature keeps
Amid the unfathomable deeps ;
And saves the peopled fields of earth
From dread of emptiness or dearth.
Thus, in their stations, lifting tow'rd the sky
The foliaged head in cloud-like majesty,
The shadow-casting race of trees survive :
Thus, in the train of Spring, arrive
Sweet flowers ;—what living eye hath viewed
Their myriads ?—endlessly renewed,

Wherever strikes the sun's glad ray ;
 Where'er the subtle waters stray ;
 Wherever sportive zephyrs bend
 Their course, or genial showers descend !
 Mortals, rejoice ! the very Angels quit
 Their mansions unsusceptible of change,
 Amid your pleasant bowers to sit,
 And through your sweet vicissitudes to range !”

IV.

O, nursed at happy distance from the cares
 Of a too-anxious world, mild pastoral Muse !
 That, to the sparkling crown Urania wears,
 And to her sister Clio's laurel wreath,
 Prefer'st a garland culled from purple heath,
 Or blooming thicket moist with morning dews ;
 Was such bright Spectacle vouchsafed to me ?
 And was it granted to the simple ear
 Of thy contented Votary
 Such melody to hear !
Him rather suits it, side by side with thee,
 Wrapped in a fit of pleasing indolence,
 While thy tired lute hangs on the hawthorn-tree,
 To lie and listen, till o'er-drowsèd sense
 Sinks, hardly conscious of the influence,
 To the soft murmur of the vagrant Bee.
 —A slender sound ! yet hoary Time
 Doth to the *Soul* exalt it with the chime

Of all his years ;—a company
 Of ages coming, ages gone ;
 (Nations from before them sweeping,
 Regions in destruction steeping,
 But every awful note in unison
 With that faint utterance, which tells
 Of treasure sucked from buds and bells,
 For the pure keeping of those waxen cells ;
 Where She—a statist prudent to confer
 Upon the public weal ; a warrior bold,
 Radiant all over with unburnished gold,
 And armed with living spear for mortal fight ;
 A cunning forager
 That spreads no waste ; a social builder ; one
 In whom all busy offices unite
 With all fine functions that afford delight—
 Safe through the winter storm in quiet dwells !

v.

And is She brought within the power
 Of vision ?—o'er this tempting flower
 Hovering until the petals stay
 Her flight, and take its voice away !—
 Observe each wing !—a tiny van !
 The structure of her laden thigh,
 How fragile ! yet of ancestry
 Mysteriously remote and high ;
 High as the imperial front of man ;

The roseate bloom on woman's cheek ;
The soaring eagle's curvèd beak ;
The white plumes of the floating swan ;
Old as the tiger's paw, the lion's mane
Ere shaken by that mood of stern disdain
At which the desert trembles.—Humming Bee !
Thy sting was needless then, perchance unknown ;
The seeds of malice were not sown ;
All creatures met in peace, from fierceness free,
And no pride blended with their dignity.
—Tears had not broken from their source ;
Nor anguish strayed from her Tartarean den ;
The golden years maintained a course
Not undiversified though smooth and even ;
We were not mocked with glimpse and shadow then,
Bright Seraphs mixed familiarly with men ;
And earth and stars composed a universal heaven !

XLI.

DEVOTIONAL INCITEMENTS.

‘ Not to the earth confined,
Ascend to heaven.’

WHERE will they stop, those breathing Powers,
The Spirits of the new-born flowers?
They wander with the breeze, they wind
Where'er the streams a passage find;
Up from their native ground they rise
In mute aërial harmonies;
From humble violet—modest thyme—
Exhaled, the essential odours climb,
As if no space below the sky
Their subtle flight could satisfy:
Heaven will not tax our thoughts with pride
If like ambition be *their* guide.

Roused by this kindest of May-showers,
The spirit-quickener of the flowers,
That with moist virtue softly cleaves
The buds, and freshens the young leaves,
The birds pour forth their souls in notes
Of rapture from a thousand throats—
Here checked by too impetuous haste,
While there the music runs to waste,

With bounty more and more enlarged,
Till the whole air is overcharged ;
Give ear, O Man ! to their appeal
And thirst for no inferior zeal,
Thou, who canst *think*, as well as feel.

Mount from the earth ; aspire ! aspire !
So pleads the town's cathedral choir,
In strains that from their solemn height
Sink, to attain a loftier flight ;
While incense from the altar breathes
Rich fragrance in embodied wreaths ;
Or, flung from swinging censer, shrouds
The taper-lights, and curls in clouds
Around angelic Forms, the still
Creation of the painter's skill,
That on the service wait concealed
One moment, and the next revealed.
—Cast off your bonds, awake, arise,
And for no transient ecstasies !
What else can mean the visual plea
Of still or moving imagery—
The iterated summons loud,
Not wasted on the attendant crowd,
Nor wholly lost upon the throng
Hurrying the busy streets along ?

Alas ! the sanctities combined
By art to unsensualise the mind,

Decay and languish ; or, as creeds
And humours change, are spurned like weeds :
The priests are from their altars thrust ;
Temples are levelled with the dust ;
And solemn rites and awful forms
Founder amid fanatic storms.
Yet evermore, through years renewed
In undisturbed vicissitude
Of seasons balancing their flight
On the swift wings of day and night,
Kind Nature keeps a heavenly door
Wide open for the scattered Poor.
Where flower-breathed incense to the skies
Is wafted in mute harmonies ;
And ground fresh-cloven by the plough
Is fragrant with a humbler vow ;
Where birds and brooks from leafy dells
Chime forth unwearied canticles,
And vapours magnify and spread
The glory of the sun's bright head—
Still constant in her worship, still
Conforming to the eternal Will,
Whether men sow or reap the fields,
Divine admonishment She yields,
That not by bread alone we live,
Or what a hand of flesh can give ;
That every day should leave some part
Free for a sabbath of the heart :
So shall the seventh be truly blest,
From morn to eve, with hallowed rest.

XLII.

A JEWISH FAMILY.

(IN A SMALL VALLEY OPPOSITE ST. GOAR, UPON THE RHINE.)

GENIUS of Raphael! if thy wings
Might bear thee to this glen,
With faithful memory left of things
To pencil dear and pen,
Thou would'st forego the neighbouring Rhine,
And all his majesty—
A studious forehead to incline
O'er this poor family.

The Mother—her thou must have seen,
In spirit, ere she came
To dwell these rifted rocks between,
Or found on earth a name;
An image, too, of that sweet Boy,
Thy inspirations give—
Of playfulness, and love, and joy,
Predestined here to live.

Downcast, or shooting glances far,
How beautiful his eyes,
That blend the nature of the star
With that of summer skies !
I speak as if of sense beguiled ;
Uncounted months are gone,
Yet am I with the Jewish Child,
That exquisite Saint John.

I see the dark-brown curls, the brow,
The smooth transparent skin,
Refined, as with intent to show
The holiness within ;
The grace of parting Infancy
By blushes yet untamed ;
Age faithful to the mother's knee,
Nor of her arms ashamed.

Two lovely Sisters, still and sweet
As flowers, stand side by side ;
Their soul-subduing looks might cheat
The Christian of his pride :
Such beauty hath the Eternal poured
Upon them not forlorn,
Though of a lineage once abhorred,
Nor yet redeemed from scorn.

Mysterious safeguard, that, in spite
Of poverty and wrong,
Doth here preserve a living light,
From Hebrew fountains sprung ;
That gives this ragged group to cast
Around the dell a gleam
Of Palestine, of glory past,
And proud Jerusalem !

1828.

XLIII.

ON THE POWER OF SOUND.

ARGUMENT.

The Ear addressed, as occupied by a spiritual functionary, in communion with sounds, individual, or combined in studied harmony.—Sources and effects of those sounds (to the close of 6th Stanza).—The power of music, whence proceeding, exemplified in the idiot.—Origin of music, and its effect in early ages—how produced (to the middle of 10th Stanza).—The mind recalled to sounds acting casually and severally.—Wish uttered (11th Stanza) that these could be united into a scheme or system for moral interests and intellectual contemplation.—(Stanza 12th). The Pythagorean theory of numbers and music, with their supposed power over the motions of the universe—imagination consonant with such a theory.—Wish expressed (in 11th Stanza) realised, in some degree, by the representation of all sounds under the form of thanksgiving to the Creator.—(Last Stanza) the destruction of earth and the planetary system—the survival of audible harmony, and its support in the Divine Nature, as revealed in Holy Writ.

I.

THEY functions are ethereal,
 As if within thee dwelt a glancing mind,
 Organ of vision! And a Spirit aërial
 Informs the cell of Hearing, dark and blind;
 Intricate labyrinth, more dread for thought
 To enter than oracular cave;
 Strict passage, through which sighs are brought,
 And whispers for the heart, their slave;

And shrieks, that revel in abuse
Of shivering flesh ; and warbled air,
Whose piercing sweetness can unloose
The chains of frenzy, or entice a smile
Into the ambush of despair ;
Hosannas pealing down the long-drawn aisle,
And requiems answered by the pulse that beats
Devoutly, in life's last retreats !

II.

The headlong streams and fountains
Serve Thee, invisible Spirit, with untired powers ;
Cheering the wakeful tent on Syrian mountains,
They lull perchance ten thousand thousand flowers.
That roar, the prowling lion's *Here I am,*
How fearful to the desert wide !
That bleat, how tender ! of the dam
Calling a straggler to her side.
Shout, cuckoo !—let the vernal soul
Go with thee to the frozen zone ;
Toll from thy loftiest perch, lone bell-bird, toll !
At the still hour to Mercy dear,
Mercy from her twilight throne
Listening to nun's faint throb of holy fear,
To sailor's prayer breathed from a darkening sea,
Or widow's cottage-lullaby.

iii.

Ye Voices, and ye Shadows,
And Images of voice—to hound and horn
From rocky steep and rock-bestudded meadows
Flung back, and, in the sky's blue caves, reborn—
On with your pastime! till the church-tower bells
A greeting give of *measured* glee ;
And milder echoes from their cells
Repeat the bridal symphony.
Then, or far earlier, let us rove
Where mists are breaking up or gone,
And from aloft look down into a cove
Besprinkled with a careless quire,
Happy milk-maids, one by one
Scattering a ditty each to her desire,
A liquid concert matchless by nice Art,
A stream as if from one full heart.

iv.

Blest be the song that brightens
The blind man's gloom, exalts the veteran's mirth ;
Unscorned the peasant's whistling breath, that lightens
His duteous toil of furrowing the green earth.
For the tired slave, Song lifts the languid oar,
And bids it aptly fall, with chime
That beautifies the fairest shore,
And mitigates the harshest clime.

Yon pilgrims see—in lagging file
They move ; but soon the appointed way
A choral *Ave Marie* shall beguile,
And to their hope the distant shrine
Glisten with a livelier ray :
Nor friendless he, the prisoner of the mine,
Who from the well-spring of his own clear breast
Can draw, and sing his griefs to rest.

v.

When civic renovation
Dawns on a kingdom, and for needful haste
Best eloquence avails not, Inspiration
Mounts with a tune, that travels like a blast
Piping through cave and battlemented tower ;
Then starts the sluggard, pleased to meet
That voice of Freedom, in its power
Of promises, shrill, wild, and sweet !
Who, from a martial *pageant*, spreads
Incitements of a battle-day,
Thrilling the unweaponed crowd with plumeless heads?—
Even She whose Lydian airs inspire
Peaceful striving, gentle play
Of timid hope and innocent desire
Shot from the dancing Graces, as they move
Fanned by the plausive wings of Love.

vi.

How oft along thy mazes,
Regent of sound, have dangerous Passions trod !
O Thou, through whom the temple rings with praises,
And blackening clouds in thunder speak of God,
Betray not by the cozenage of sense
Thy votaries, woingly resigned
To a voluptuous influence
That taints the purer, better mind ;
But lead sick Fancy to a harp
That hath in noble tasks been tried ;
And, if the virtuous feel a pang too sharp,
Soothe it into patience,—stay
The uplifted arm of Suicide ;
And let some mood of thine in firm array
Knit every thought the impending issue needs,
Ere martyr burns, or patriot bleeds !

vii.

As Conscience, to the centre
Of being, smites with irresistible pain ;
So shall a solemn cadence, if it enter
The mouldy vaults of the dull idiot's brain,
Transmute him to a wretch from quiet hurled—
Convulsed as by a jarring din ;
And then aghast, as at the world
Of reason partially let in

By concords winding with a sway
Terrible for sense and soul !
Or, awed he weeps, struggling to quell dismay.
Point not these mysteries to an Art
Lodged above the starry pole ;
Pure modulations flowing from the heart
Of divine Love, where Wisdom, Beauty, Truth
With Order dwell, in endless youth ?

VIII.

Oblivion may not cover
All treasures hoarded by the miser, Time.
Orphean Insight ! truth's undaunted lover,
To the first leagues of tutored passion climb,
When Music deigned within this grosser sphere
Her subtle essence to enfold,
And voice and shell drew forth a tear
Softer than Nature's self could mould.
Yet *strenuous* was the infant Age :
Art, daring because souls could feel,
Stirred nowhere but an urgent equipage
Of rapt imagination sped her march
Through the realms of woe and weal :
Hell to the lyre bowed low ; the upper arch
Rejoiced that clamorous spell and magic verse
Her wan disasters could disperse.

ix.

The GIFT to king Amphion
That walled a city with its melody
Was for belief no dream :—thy skill, Arion !
Could humanise the creatures of the sea,
Where men were monsters. A last grace he craves,
Leave for one chant ;—the dulcet sound
Steals from the deck o'er willing waves,
And listening dolphins gather round.
Self-cast, as with a desperate course,
'Mid that strange audience, he bestrides
A proud One docile as a managed horse ;
And singing, while the accordant hand
Sweeps his harp, the Master rides ;
So shall he touch at length a friendly strand,
And he, with his preserver, shine star-bright
In memory, through silent night.

x.

The pipe of Pan, to shepherds
Couched in the shadow of Mænalian pines,
Was passing sweet ; the eyeballs of the leopards,
That in high triumph drew the Lord of vines,
How did they sparkle to the cymbal's clang !
While Fauns and Satyrs beat the ground
In cadence,—and Silenus swang
This way and that, with wild-flowers crowned.

To life, to *life* give back thine ear :
 Ye who are longing to be rid
 Of fable, though to truth subservient, hear
 The little sprinkling of cold earth that fell
 Echoed from the coffin-lid :
 The convict's summons in the steeple's knell.
 'The vain distress-gun,' from a leeward shore,
 Repeated—heard, and heard no more !

xi.

For terror, joy, or pity,
 Vast is the compass and the swell of notes :
 From the babe's first cry to voice of regal city,
 Rolling a solemn sea-like bass, that floats
 Far as the woodlands—with the trill to blend
 Of that shy songstress, whose love-tale
 Might tempt an angel to descend,
 While hovering o'er the moonlight vale.
 Ye wandering Utterances, has earth no scheme,
 No scale of moral music—to unite
 Powers that survive but in the faintest dream
 Of memory ?—O that ye might stoop to bear
 Chains, such precious chains of sight
 As laboured minstrelsies through ages wear !
 O for a balance fit the truth to tell
 Of the Unsubstantial, pondered well !

XII.

By one pervading spirit
Of tones and numbers all things are controlled,
As sages taught, where faith was found to merit
Initiation in that mystery old.
The heavens, whose aspect makes our minds as still
As they themselves *appear* to be,
Innumerable voices fill
With everlasting harmony ;
The towering headlands, crowned with mist,
Their feet among the billows, know
That Ocean is a mighty harmonist ;
Thy pinions, universal Air,
Ever waving to and fro,
Are delegates of harmony, and bear
Strains that support the Seasons in their round ;
Stern Winter loves a dirge-like sound.

XIII.

Break forth into thanksgiving,
Ye banded instruments of wind and chords ;
Unite, to magnify the Ever-living,
Your inarticulate notes with the voice of words !
Nor hushed be service from the lowing mead,
Nor mute the forest hum of noon ;
Thou too be heard, lone eagle ! freed
From snowy peak and cloud, attune

Thy hungry barkings to the hymn
 Of joy, that from her utmost walls
 The six-days' Work, by flaming Seraphim,
 Transmits to Heaven! As Deep to Deep
 Shouting through one valley calls,
 All worlds, all natures, mood and measure keep
 For praise and ceaseless gratulation, poured
 Into the ear of God, their Lord!

xiv.

A Voice to Light gave Being;
 To Time, and Man his earth-born chronicler;
 A Voice shall finish doubt and dim foreseeing,
 And sweep away life's visionary stir;
 The trumpet (we, intoxicate with pride,
 Arm at its blast for deadly wars)
 To archangelic lips applied,
 The grave shall open, quench the stars.
 O Silence! are Man's noisy years
 No more than moments of thy life?
 Is Harmony, blest queen of smiles and tears,
 With her smooth tones and discords just,
 Tempered into rapturous strife,
 Thy destined bond-slave? No! though earth be dust
 And vanish, though the heavens dissolve, her stay
 Is in the WORD, that shall not pass away.

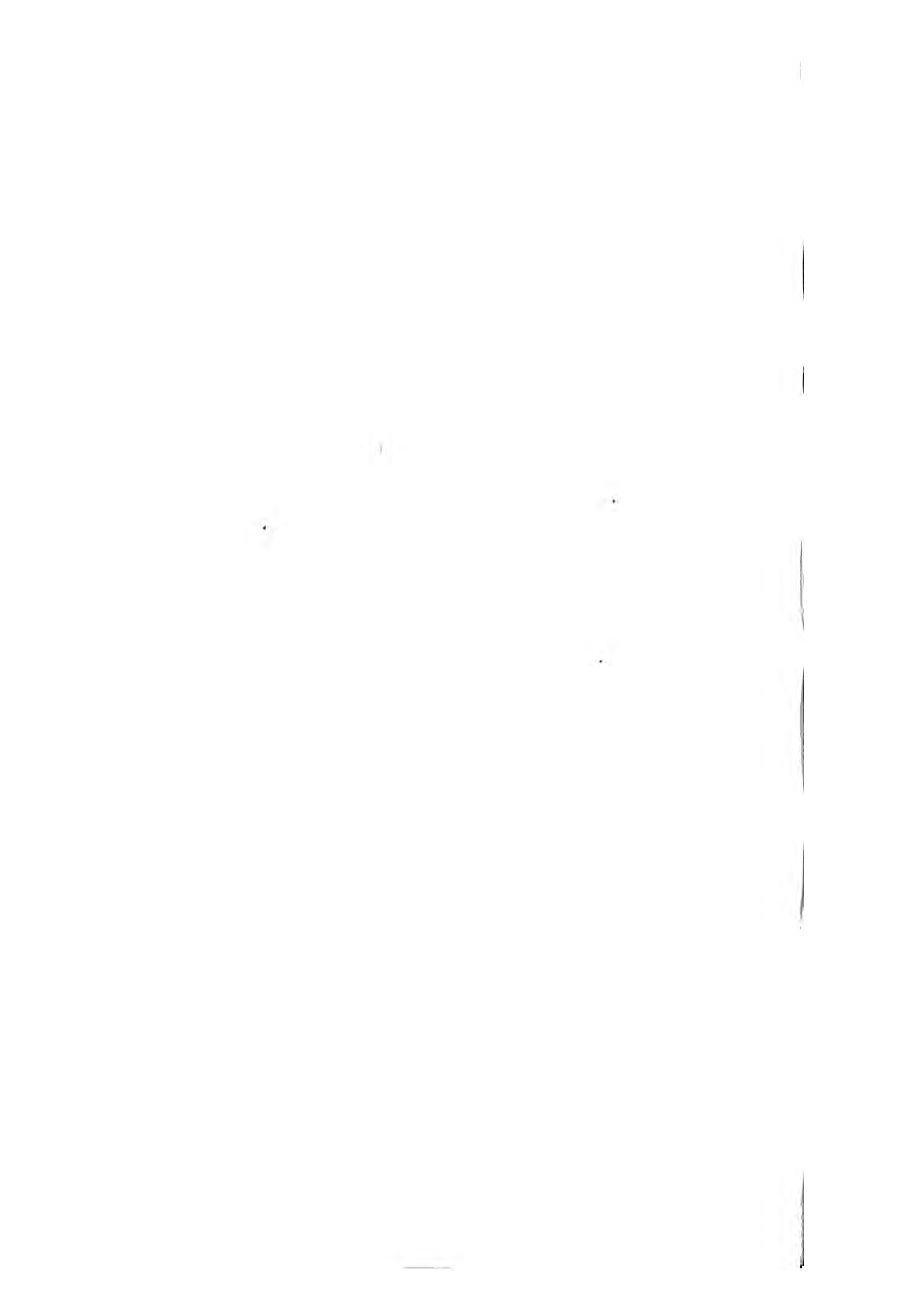
PETER BELL.

A TALE.

What 's in a *Name* ?

* * * * *

Brutus will start a Spirit as soon as Cæsar !



TO
ROBERT SOUTHEY, Esq. P. L.
&c. &c.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE Tale of Peter Bell, which I now introduce to your notice, and to that of the Public, has, in its Manuscript state, nearly survived its *minority* :—for it first saw the light in the summer of 1798. During this long interval, pains have been taken at different times to make the production less unworthy of a favourable reception ; or, rather, to fit it for filling *permanently* a station, however humble, in the Literature of our Country. This has, indeed, been the aim of all my endeavours in Poetry, which, you know, have been sufficiently laborious to prove that I deem the Art not lightly to be approached ; and that the attainment of excellence in it, may laudably be made the principal object of intellectual pursuit by any man, who, with reasonable consideration of circumstances, has faith in his own impulses.

The Poem of Peter Bell, as the Prologue will show, was composed under a belief that the Imagination not only does not require for its exercise the intervention of

supernatural agency, but that, though such agency be excluded, the faculty may be called forth as imperiously, and for kindred results of pleasure, by incidents, within the compass of poetic probability, in the humblest departments of daily life. Since that Prologue was written, *you* have exhibited most splendid effects of judicious daring, in the opposite and usual course. Let this acknowledgment make my peace with the lovers of the supernatural ; and I am persuaded it will be admitted, that to you, as a Master in that province of the art, the following Tale, whether from contrast or congruity, is not an unappropriate offering. Accept it, then, as a public testimony of affectionate admiration from one with whose name yours has been often coupled (to use your own words) for evil and for good ; and believe me to be, with earnest wishes that life and health may be granted you to complete the many important works in which you are engaged, and with high respect,

Most faithfully yours,

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

RYDAL MOUNT, *April 7, 1819.*

PROLOGUE.

—◆—

THERE 's something in a flying horse,
There 's something in a huge balloon ;
But through the clouds I'll never float
Until I have a little Boat,
Whose shape is like the crescent-moon.

And now I *have* a little Boat,
In shape a very crescent-moon :
Fast through the clouds my boat can sail ;
But if perchance your faith should fail,
Look up—and you shall see me soon !

The woods, my Friends, are round you roaring,
Rocking and roaring like a sea ;
The noise of danger fills your ears,
And ye have all a thousand fears
Both for my little Boat and me !

Meanwhile untroubled I admire
The pointed horns of my canoe ;
And, did not pity touch my breast,
To see how ye are all distrest,
Till my ribs ached, I 'd laugh at you !

Away we go, my Boat and I—
Frail man ne'er sate in such another ;
Whether among the winds we strive,
Or deep into the clouds we dive,
Each is contented with the other.

Away we go—and what care we
For treasons, tumults, and for wars ?
We are as calm in our delight .
As is the crescent-moon so bright
Among the scattered stars.

Up goes my Boat among the stars
Through many a breathless field of light,
Through many a long blue field of ether,
Leaving ten thousand stars beneath her :
Up goes my little Boat so bright !

The Crab, the Scorpion, and the Bull—
We pry among them all ; have shot
High o'er the red-haired race of Mars,
Covered from top to toe with scars ;
Such company I like it not !

The towns in Saturn are decayed,
And melancholy Spectres throng them ;—
The Pleiads, that appear to kiss
Each other in the vast abyss,
With joy I sail among them !

Swift Mercury resounds with mirth,
Great Jove is full of stately bowers ;
But these, and all that they contain,
What are they to that tiny grain,
That little Earth of ours ?

Then back to Earth, the dear green Earth :—
Whole ages if I here should roam,
The world for my remarks and me
Would not a whit the better be ;
I 've left my heart at home.

See ! there she is, the matchless Earth !
There spreads the famed Pacific Ocean !
Old Andes thrusts yon craggy spear
Through the grey clouds ; the Alps are here,
Like waters in commotion !

Yon tawny slip is Libya's sands ;
That silver thread the river Dnieper ;
And look, where clothed in brightest green
Is a sweet Isle, of isles the Queen ;
Ye fairies, from all evil keep her !

And see the town where I was born !
Around those happy fields we span
In boyish gambols ;—I was lost
Where I have been, but on this coast
I feel I am a man.

Never did fifty things at once
Appear so lovely, never, never ;—
How tunefully the forests ring !
To hear the earth's soft murmuring
Thus could I hang for ever !

“ Shame on you ! ” cried my little Boat,
“ Was ever such a homesick Loon,
Within a living Boat to sit,
And make no better use of it ;
A Boat twin-sister of the crescent-moon !

Ne'er in the breast of full-grown Poet
Fluttered so faint a heart before ;—
Was it the music of the spheres
That overpowered your mortal ears ?
—Such din shall trouble them no more.

These nether precincts do not lack
Charms of their own ;—then come with me ;
I want a comrade, and for you
There's nothing that I would not do ;
Nought is there that you shall not see.

Haste! and above Siberian snows
We'll sport amid the boreal morning;
Will mingle with her lustres gliding
Among the stars, the stars now hiding,
And now the stars adorning.

I know the secrets of a land
Where human foot did never stray;
Fair is that land as evening skies,
And cool, though in the depth it lies
Of burning Africa.

Or we'll into the realm of Faery,
Among the lovely shades of things;
The shadowy forms of mountains bare,
And streams, and bowers, and ladies fair,
The shades of palaces and kings!

Or, if you thirst with hardy zeal
Less quiet regions to explore,
Prompt voyage shall to you reveal
How earth and heaven are taught to feel
The might of magic lore!"

"My little vagrant Form of light,
My gay and beautiful Canoe,
Well have you played your friendly part;
As kindly take what from my heart
Experience forces—then adieu!

Temptation lurks among your words ;
But, while these pleasures you're pursuing
Without impediment or let,
My radiant Pinnacle! you forget
What on the earth is doing.

There was a time when all mankind
Did listen with a faith sincere
To tuneful tongues in mystery versed ;
Then Poets fearlessly rehearsed
The wonders of a wild career.

Go—(but the world's a sleepy world,
And 'tis, I fear, an age too late)
Take with you some ambitious Youth !
For, restless Wanderer ! I, in truth,
Am all unfit to be your mate.

Long have I loved what I behold,
The night that calms, the day that cheers ;
The common growth of mother-earth
Suffices me—her tears, her mirth,
Her humblest mirth and tears.

The dragon's wing, the magic ring,
I shall not covet for my dower,
If I along that lowly way
With sympathetic heart may stray,
And with a soul of power.

These given, what more need I desire
To stir, to soothe, or elevate ?
What nobler marvels than the mind
May in life's daily prospect find,
May find or there create ?

A potent wand doth Sorrow wield ;
What spell so strong as guilty Fear !
Repentance is a tender Sprite ;
If aught on earth have heavenly might,
'Tis lodged within her silent tear.

But grant my wishes,—let us now
Descend from this ethereal height ;
Then take thy way, adventurous Skiff,
More daring far than Hippogriff,
And be thy own delight !

To the stone-table in my garden,
Loved haunt of many a summer hour,
The Squire is come : his daughter Bess
Beside him in the cool recess
Sits blooming like a flower.

With these are many more convened ;
They know not I have been so far ;—
I see them there, in number nine,
Beneath the spreading Weymouth-pine !
I see them—there they are !

There sits the Vicar and his Dame ;
And there my good friend, Stephen Otter ;
And, ere the light of evening fail,
To them I must relate the Tale
Of Peter Bell the Potter."

Off flew my sparkling Boat in scorn,
Spurning her freight with indignation !
And I, as well as I was able,
On two poor legs, toward my stone-table
Limped on with some vexation.

"O, here he is !" cried little Bess—
She saw me at the garden-door,
" We've waited anxiously and long,"
They cried, and all around me throng,
Full nine of them or more !

" Reproach me not—your fears be still—
Be thankful we again have met ;—
Resume, my Friends ! within the shade
Your seats, and quickly shall be paid
The well-remembered debt."

I spake with faltering voice, like one
Not wholly rescued from the pale
Of a wild dream, or worse illusion ;
But, straight, to cover my confusion,
Began the promised Tale.

PART FIRST.

ALL by the moonlight river side
Groaned the poor Beast—alas! in vain;
The staff was raised to loftier height,
And the blows fell with heavier weight
As Peter struck—and struck again.

“Hold!” cried the Squire, “against the rules
Of common sense you’re surely sinning;
This leap is for us all too bold;
Who Peter was, let that be told,
And start from the beginning.”

——“A Potter*, Sir, he was by trade,”
Said I, becoming quite collected;
“And wheresoever he appeared,
Full twenty times was Peter feared
For once that Peter was respected.

* In the dialect of the North, a hawker of earthenware is thus designated.

He, two-and-thirty years or more,
Had been a wild and woodland rover ;
Had heard the Atlantic surges roar
On farthest Cornwall's rocky shore,
And trod the cliffs of Dover.

And he had seen Caernarvon's towers,
And well he knew the spire of Sarum ;
And he had been where Lincoln bell
Flings o'er the fen his ponderous knell—
A far-renowned alarum !

At Doncaster, at York, and Leeds,
And merry Carlisle had he been ;
And all along the Lowlands fair,
All through the bonny shire of Ayr ;
And far as Aberdeen.

And he had been at Inverness ;
And Peter, by the mountain-rills,
Had danced his round with Highland lasses ;
And he had lain beside his asses
On lofty Cheviot Hills :

And he had trudged through Yorkshire dales,
Among the rocks and winding *scars* ;
Where deep and low the hamlets lie
Beneath their little patch of sky
And little lot of stars :

And all along the indented coast,
Bespattered with the salt-sea foam ;
Where'er a knot of houses lay
On headland, or in hollow bay ;—
Sure never man like him did roam !

As well might Peter, in the Fleet,
Have been fast bound, a begging debtor ;—
He travelled here, he travelled there ;—
But not the value of a hair
Was heart or head the better.

He roved among the vales and streams,
In the green wood and hollow dell ;
They were his dwellings night and day,—
But nature ne'er could find the way
Into the heart of Peter Bell.

In vain, through every changeful year,
Did Nature lead him as before ;
A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more.

Small change it made in Peter's heart
To see his gentle panniered train
With more than vernal pleasure feeding,
Where'er the tender grass was leading
Its earliest green along the lane.

In vain, through water, earth, and air,
The soul of happy sound was spread,
When Peter on some April morn,
Beneath the broom or budding thorn,
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when, by the forest's edge
He lay beneath the branches high,
The soft blue sky did never melt
Into his heart ; he never felt
The witchery of the soft blue sky !

On a fair prospect some have looked
And felt, as I have heard them say,
As if the moving time had been
A thing as steadfast as the scene
On which they gazed themselves away.

Within the breast of Peter Bell
These silent raptures found no place ;
He was a Carl as wild and rude
As ever hue-and-cry pursued,
As ever ran a felon's race.

Of all that lead a lawless life,
Of all that love their lawless lives,
In city or in village small,
He was the wildest far of all ;—
He had a dozen wedded wives.

Nay, start not !—wedded wives—and twelve !
But how one wife could e'er come near him,
In simple truth I cannot tell ;
For, be it said of Peter Bell,
To see him was to fear him.

Though Nature could not touch his heart
By lovely forms, and silent weather,
And tender sounds, yet you might see
At once, that Peter Bell and she
Had often been together.

A savage wildness round him hung
As of a dweller out of doors ;
In his whole figure and his mien
A savage character was seen
Of mountains and of dreary moors.

To all the unshaped half-human thoughts
Which solitary Nature feeds
'Mid summer storms or winter's ice,
Had Peter joined whatever vice
The cruel city breeds.

His face was keen as is the wind
That cuts along the hawthorn-fence ;
Of courage you saw little there,
But, in its stead, a medley air
Of cunning and of impudence.

He had a dark and sidelong walk,
And long and slouching was his gait ;
Beneath his looks so bare and bold,
You might perceive, his spirit cold
Was playing with some inward bait.

His forehead wrinkled was and furred ;
A work, one half of which was done
By thinking of his '*whens*' and '*hows* ;'
And half, by knitting of his brows
Beneath the glaring sun.

There was a hardness in his cheek,
There was a hardness in his eye,
As if the man had fixed his face,
In many a solitary place,
Against the wind and open sky !

ONE NIGHT, (and now my little Bess !
We've reached at last the promised Tale ;))
One beautiful November night,
When the full moon was shining bright
Upon the rapid river Swale,

Along the river's winding banks
Peter was travelling all alone ;—
Whether to buy or sell, or led
By pleasure running in his head,
To me was never known.

He trudged along through copse and brake,
He trudged along o'er hill and dale ;
Nor for the moon cared he a tittle,
And for the stars he cared as little,
And for the murmuring river Swale.

But, chancing to espy a path
That promised to cut short the way ;
As many a wiser man hath done,
He left a trusty guide for one
That might his steps betray.

To a thick wood he soon is brought
Where cheerily his course he weaves,
And whistling loud may yet be heard,
Though often buried, like a bird
Darkling, among the boughs and leaves.

But quickly Peter's mood is changed,
And on he drives with cheeks that burn
In downright fury and in wrath ;—
There's little sign the treacherous path
Will to the road return !

The path grows dim, and dimmer still ;
Now up, now down, the Rover wends,
With all the sail that he can carry,
Till brought to a deserted quarry—
And there the pathway ends.

He paused—for shadows of strange shape,
Massy and black, before him lay ;
But through the dark, and through the cold,
And through the yawning fissures old,
Did Peter boldly press his way

Right through the quarry ;—and behold
A scene of soft and lovely hue !
Where blue and grey, and tender green,
Together make as sweet a scene
As ever human eye did view.

Beneath the clear blue sky he saw
A little field of meadow ground ;
But field or meadow name it not ;
Call it of earth a small green plot,
With rocks encompassed round.

The Swale flowed under the grey rocks,
But he flowed quiet and unseen ;—
You need a strong and stormy gale
To bring the noises of the Swale
To that green spot, so calm and green !

And is there no one dwelling here,
No hermit with his beads and glass ?
And does no little cottage look
Upon this soft and fertile nook ?
Does no one live near this green grass ?

Across the deep and quiet spot
Is Peter driving through the grass—
And now has reached the skirting trees ;
When, turning round his head, he sees
A solitary Ass.

“ A prize ! ” cries Peter—but he first
Must spy about him far and near :
There 's not a single house in sight,
No woodman's hut, no cottage-light—
Peter, you need not fear !

There 's nothing to be seen but woods,
And rocks that spread a hoary gleam,
And this one beast, that from the bed
Of the green meadow hangs his head
Over the silent stream.

His head is with a halter bound ;
The halter seizing, Peter leapt
Upon the Creature's back, and plied
With ready heels his shaggy side ;
But still the Ass his station kept.

Then Peter gave a sudden jerk,
A jerk that from a dungeon-floor
Would have pulled up an iron ring ;
But still the heavy-headed Thing
Stood just as he had stood before !

Quoth Peter, leaping from his seat,
“ There is some plot against me laid ;”
Once more the little meadow-ground
And all the hoary cliffs around
He cautiously surveyed.

All, all is silent—rocks and woods,
All still and silent—far and near !
Only the Ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turns round his long left ear.

Thought Peter, What can mean all this ?
Some ugly witchcraft must be here !
—Once more the Ass, with motion dull,
Upon the pivot of his skull
Turned round his long left ear.

Suspicion ripened into dread ;
Yet with deliberate action slow,
His staff high-raising, in the pride
Of skill, upon the sounding hide,
He dealt a sturdy blow.

The poor Ass staggered with the shock ;
And then, as if to take his ease,
In quiet uncomplaining mood,
Upon the spot where he had stood,
Dropped gently down upon his knees ;

As gently on his side he fell ;
And by the river's brink did lie ;
And, as he lay like one that mourned,
The patient Beast on Peter turned
His shining hazel eye.

'Twas but one mild, reproachful look,
A look more tender than severe ;
And straight in sorrow, not in dread,
He turned the eye-ball in his head
Towards the smooth river deep and clear.

Upon the beast the sapling rings ;
His lank sides heaved, his limbs they stirred ;
He gave a groan, and then another,
Of that which went before the brother,
And then he gave a third.

All by the moonlight river side
He gave three miserable groans ;
And not till now hath Peter seen
How gaunt the Creature is,—how lean
And sharp his staring bones !

With legs stretched out and stiff he lay :—
No word of kind commiseration
Fell at the sight from Peter's tongue ;
With hard contempt his heart was wrung,
With hatred and vexation.

The meagre beast lay still as death ;
And Peter's lips with fury quiver ;
Quoth he, " You little mulish dog,
I'll fling your carcass like a log
Head-foremost down the river !"

An impious oath confirmed the threat—
Whereat from the earth on which he lay
To all the echoes, south and north,
And east and west, the Ass sent forth
A long and clamorous bray !

This outcry, on the heart of Peter,
Seems like a note of joy to strike,—
Joy at the heart of Peter knocks ;
But in the echo of the rocks
Was something Peter did not like.

Whether to cheer his coward breast,
Or that he could not break the chain,
In this serene and solemn hour,
Twined round him by demoniac power,
To the blind work he turned again.

Among the rocks and winding crags ;
Among the mountains far away ;
Once more the Ass did lengthen out
More ruefully a deep-drawn shout,
The hard dry see-saw of his horrible bray !

What is there now in Peter's heart !
Or whence the might of this strange sound ?
The moon uneasy looked and dimmer,
The broad blue heavens appeared to glimmer,
And the rocks staggered all around—

From Peter's hand the sapling dropped !
Threat has he none to execute ;
“ If any one should come and see
That I am here, they'll think,” quoth he,
“ I'm helping this poor dying brute.”

He scans the Ass from limb to limb,
And ventures now to uplift his eyes ;
More steady looks the moon, and clear,
More like themselves the rocks appear
And touch more quiet skies.

His scorn returns—his hate revives ;
He stoops the Ass's neck to seize
With malice—that again takes flight ;
For in the pool a startling sight
Meets him, among the inverted trees.

Is it the moon's distorted face ?
The ghost-like image of a cloud ?
Is it a gallows there portrayed ?
Is Peter of himself afraid ?
Is it a coffin,—or a shroud ?

A grisly idol hewn in stone ?
Or imp from witch's lap let fall ?
Perhaps a ring of shining fairies ?
Such as pursue their feared vagaries
In sylvan bower, or haunted hall ?

Is it a fiend that to a stake
Of fire his desperate self is tethering ?
Or stubborn spirit doomed to yell
In solitary ward or cell,
Ten thousand miles from all his brethren ?

Never did pulse so quickly throb,
And never heart so loudly panted ;
He looks, he cannot choose but look ;
Like some one reading in a book—
A book that is enchanted.

Ah, well-a-day for Peter Bell !
He will be turned to iron soon,
Meet Statue for the court of Fear !
His hat is up—and every hair
Bristles, and whitens in the moon !

He looks, he ponders, looks again ;
He sees a motion—hears a groan ;
His eyes will burst—his heart will break—
He gives a loud and frightful shriek,
And back he falls, as if his life were flown !



PART SECOND.



WE left our Hero in a trance,
Beneath the alders, near the river ;
The Ass is by the river-side,
And, where the feeble breezes glide,
Upon the stream the moonbeams quiver.

A happy respite ! but at length
He feels the glimmering of the moon ;
Wakes with glazed eye, and feebly sighing—
To sink, perhaps, where he is lying,
Into a second swoon !

He lifts his head, he sees his staff ;
He touches—'tis to him a treasure !
Faint recollection seems to tell
That he is yet where mortals dwell—
A thought received with languid pleasure !

His head upon his elbow propped,
Becoming less and less perplexed,
Sky-ward he looks—to rock and wood—
And then—upon the glassy flood
His wandering eye is fixed.

Thought he, that is the face of one
In his last sleep securely bound !
So toward the stream his head he bent,
And downward thrust his staff, intent
The river's depth to sound.

Now—like a tempest-shattered bark,
That overwhelmed and prostrate lies,
And in a moment to the verge
Is lifted of a foaming surge—
Full suddenly the Ass doth rise !

His staring bones all shake with joy,
And close by Peter's side he stands :
While Peter o'er the river bends,
The little Ass his neck extends,
And fondly licks his hands.

Such life is in the Ass's eyes,
Such life is in his limbs and ears ;
That Peter Bell, if he had been
The veriest coward ever seen,
Must now have thrown aside his fears.

The Ass looks on—and to his work
Is Peter quietly resigned ;
He touches here—he touches there—
And now among the dead man's hair
His sapling Peter has entwined.

He pulls—and looks—and pulls again ;
And he whom the poor Ass had lost,
The man who had been four days dead,
Head-foremost from the river's bed
Uprises like a ghost !

And Peter draws him to dry land ;
And through the brain of Peter pass
Some poignant twitches, fast and faster ;
“ No doubt,” quoth he, “ he is the Master
Of this poor miserable Ass ! ”

The meagre Shadow that looks on—
What would he now ? what is he doing ?
His sudden fit of joy is flown,—
He on his knees hath laid him down,
As if he were his grief renewing ;

But no—that Peter on his back
Must mount, he shews well as he can :
Thought Peter then, come weal or woe,
I'll do what he would have me do,
In pity to this poor drowned man.

With that resolve he boldly mounts
Upon the pleased and thankful Ass ;
And then, without a moment's stay,
That earnest Creature turned away,
Leaving the body on the grass.

Intent upon his faithful watch,
The Beast four days and nights had past ;
A sweeter meadow ne'er was seen,
And there the Ass four days had been,
Nor ever once did break his fast :

Yet firm his step, and stout his heart ;
The mead is crossed—the quarry's mouth
Is reached ; but there the trusty guide
Into a thicket turns aside,
And deftly ambles towards the south.

When hark a burst of doleful sound !
And Peter honestly might say,
The like came never to his ears,
Though he has been, full thirty years,
A rover—night and day !

'Tis not a plover of the moors,
'Tis not a bittern of the fen ;
Nor can it be a barking fox,
Nor night-bird chambered in the rocks,
Nor wild-cat in a woody glen !

The Ass is startled—and stops short
Right in the middle of the thicket;
And Peter, wont to whistle loud
Whether alone or in a crowd,
Is silent as a silent cricket.

What ails you now, my little Bess?
Well may you tremble and look grave!
This cry—that rings along the wood,
This cry—that floats adown the flood,
Comes from the entrance of a cave:

I see a blooming Wood-boy there,
And if I had the power to say
How sorrowful the wanderer is,
Your heart would be as sad as his
Till you had kissed his tears away!

Holding a hawthorn branch in hand,
All bright with berries ripe and red,
Into the cavern's mouth he peeps;
Thence back into the moonlight creeps,
Seeking for whom?—the silent dead:

His father!—Him doth he require—
Him hath he sought with fruitless pains,
Among the rocks, behind the trees;
Now creeping on his hands and knees,
Now running o'er the open plains.

And hither is he come at last,
When he through such a day has gone,
By this dark cave to be distress
Like a poor bird—her plundered nest
Hovering around with dolorous moan !

Of that intense and piercing cry
The listening Ass conjectures well ;
Wild as it is, he there can read
Some intermingled notes that plead
With touches irresistible.

But Peter—when he saw the Ass
Not only stop but turn, and change
The cherished tenor of his pace
That lamentable cry to chase—
It wrought in him conviction strange ;

A faith that, for the dead man's sake
And this poor slave who loved him well,
Vengeance upon his head will fall,
Some visitation worse than all
Which ever till this night befel.

Meanwhile the Ass to reach his home,
Is striving stoutly as he may ;
But, while he climbs the woody hill,
The cry grows weak—and weaker still ;
And now at last it dies away.

So with his freight the Creature turns
Into a gloomy grove of beech,
Along the shade with footstep true
Descending slowly, till the two
The open moonlight reach.

And there, along the narrow dell,
A fair smooth pathway you discern,
A length of green and open road—
As if it from a fountain flowed—
Winding away between the fern.

The rocks that tower on either side
Build up a wild fantastic scene ;
Temples like those among the Hindoos,
And mosques, and spires, and abbey windows,
And castles all with ivy green !

And, while the Ass pursues his way,
Along this solitary dell,
As pensively his steps advance,
The mosques and spires change countenance,
And look at Peter Bell !

That unintelligible cry
Hath left him high in preparation,—
Convinced that he, or soon or late,
This very night will meet his fate—
And so he sits in expectation !

The strenuous Animal hath clomb
With the green path ; and now he wends
Where, shining like the smoothest sea,
In undisturbed immensity
A level plain extends.

But whence this faintly-rustling sound
By which the journeying pair are chased ?
—A withered leaf is close behind,
Light plaything for the sportive wind
Upon that solitary waste.

When Peter spied the moving thing,
It only doubled his distress ;
“ Where there is not a bush or tree,
The very leaves they follow me—
So huge hath been my wickedness !”

To a close lane they now are come,
Where, as before, the enduring Ass
Moves on without a moment's stop,
Nor once turns round his head to crop
A bramble-leaf or blade of grass.

Between the hedges as they go,
The white dust sleeps upon the lane ;
And Peter, ever and anon
Back-looking, sees, upon a stone
Or in the dust, a crimson stain.

A stain—as of a drop of blood
By moonlight made more faint and wan ;
Ha ! why these sinkings of despair ?
He knows not how the blood comes there—
And Peter is a wicked man.

At length he spies a bleeding wound,
Where he had struck the creature's head ;
He sees the blood, knows what it is, —
A glimpse of sudden joy was his,
But then it quickly fled ;

Of him whom sudden death had seized
He thought,—of thee, O faithful Ass !
And once again those ghastly pains,
Shoot to and fro through heart and reins,
And through his brain like lightning pass.



PART THIRD.



I 'VE heard of one, a gentle Soul,
Though given to sadness and to gloom,
And for the fact will vouch,—one night
It chanced that by a taper's light
This man was reading in his room ;

Bending, as you or I might bend
At night o'er any pious book,
When sudden blackness overspread
The snow-white page on which he read,
And made the good man round him look.

The chamber walls were dark all round,—
And to his book he turned again ;
—The light had left the lonely taper,
And formed itself upon the paper
Into large letters—bright and plain !

The godly book was in his hand—
And, on the page, more black than coal,
Appeared, set forth in strange array,
A *word*—which to his dying day
Perplexed the good man's gentle soul.

The ghostly word, thus plainly seen,
Did never from his lips depart ;
But he hath said, poor gentle wight !
It brought full many a sin to light
Out of the bottom of his heart.

Dread Spirits ! to confound the meek
Why wander from your course so far,
Disordering colour, form, and stature !
—Let good men feel the soul of nature,
And see things as they are.

Yet, potent Spirits! well I know,
How ye, that play with soul and sense,
Are not unused to trouble friends
Of goodness, for most gracious ends—
And this I speak in reverence!

But might I give advice to you,
Whom in my fear I love so well;
From men of pensive virtue go,
Dread Beings! and your empire show
On hearts like that of Peter Bell.

Your presence often have I felt
In darkness and the stormy night;
And, with like force, if need there be,
Ye can put forth your agency
When earth is calm, and heaven is bright.

Then, coming from the wayward world,
That powerful world in which ye dwell,
Come, Spirits of the Mind! and try
To-night, beneath the moonlight sky,
What may be done with Peter Bell!

—O, would that some more skilful voice
My further labour might prevent!
Kind Listeners, that around me sit,
I feel that I am all unfit
For such high argument.

I 've played, I 've danced, with my narration ;
I loitered long ere I began :
Ye waited then on my good pleasure ;
Pour out indulgence still, in measure
As liberal as ye can !

Our Travellers, ye remember well,
Are thridding a sequestered lane ;
And Peter many tricks is trying,
And many anodynes applying,
To ease his conscience of its pain.

By this his heart is lighter far ;
And, finding that he can account
So snugly for that crimson stain,
His evil spirit up again
Does like an empty bucket mount.

And Peter is a deep logician
Who hath no lack of wit mercurial ;
“ Blood drops—leaves rustle—yet, quoth he,
This poor man never, but for me,
Could have had Christian burial.

And, say the best you can, 'tis plain,
That here has been some wicked dealing ;
No doubt the devil in me wrought ;
I 'm not the man who could have thought
An Ass like this was worth the stealing !”

So from his pocket Peter takes
His shining horn tobacco-box ;
And, in a light and careless way,
As men who with their purpose play,
Upon the lid he knocks.

Let them whose voice can stop the clouds,
Whose cunning eye can see the wind,
Tell to a curious world the cause
Why, making here a sudden pause,
The Ass turned round his head, and *grinned*.

Appalling process ! I have marked
The like on heath, in lonely wood ;
And, verily, have seldom met
A spectacle more hideous—yet
It suited Peter's present mood.

And, grinning in his turn, his teeth
He in jocose defiance showed—
When, to upset his spiteful mirth,
A murmur, pent within the earth,
In the dead earth beneath the road,

Rolled audibly ! it swept along,
A muffled noise—a rumbling sound !—
'Twas by a troop of miners made,
Plying with gunpowder their trade,
Some twenty fathoms underground.

Small cause of dire effect ! for, surely,
If ever mortal, King or Cotter,
Believed that earth was charged to quake
And yawn for his unworthy sake,
'Twas Peter Bell the Potter.

But, as an oak in breathless air
Will stand though to the centre hewn ;
Or as the weakest things, if frost
Have stiffened them, maintain their post ;
So he, beneath the gazing moon !—

The Beast bestriding thus, he reached
A spot where, in a sheltering cove,
A little chapel stands alone,
With greenest ivy overgrown,
And tufted with an ivy grove ;

Dying insensibly away
From human thoughts and purposes,
It seemed—wall, window, roof and tower—
To bow to some transforming power,
And blend with the surrounding trees.

“ As ruinous a place it was,”
Thought Peter, “ in the shire of Fife
That served my turn, when following still
From land to land a reckless will
I married my sixth wife !”

The unheeding Ass moves slowly on,
And now is passing by an inn
Brim-full of a carousing crew,
That make, with curses not a few,
An uproar and a drunken din.

I cannot well express the thoughts
Which Peter in those noises found ;—
A stifling power compressed his frame,
While-as a swimming darkness came
Over that dull and dreary sound.

For well did Peter know the sound ;
The language of those drunken joys
To him, a jovial soul, I ween,
But a few hours ago, had been
A gladsome and a welcome noise.

Now, turned adrift into the past,
He finds no solace in his course ;
Like planet-stricken men of yore,
He trembles, smitten to the core
By strong compunction and remorse.

But, more than all, his heart is stung
To think of one, almost a child ;
A sweet and playful Highland girl,
As light and beauteous as a squirrel,
As beauteous and as wild !

Her dwelling was a lonely house,
A cottage in a heathy dell ;
And she put on her gown of green,
And left her mother at sixteen,
And followed Peter Bell.

But many good and pious thoughts
Had she ; and, in the kirk to pray,
Two long Scotch miles, through rain or snow,
To kirk she had been used to go,
Twice every Sabbath-day.

And, when she followed Peter Bell,
It was to lead an honest life ;
For he, with tongue not used to falter,
Had pledged his troth before the altar
To love her as his wedded wife.

A mother's hope is hers ;—but soon
She drooped and pined like one forlorn ;
From Scripture she a name did borrow ;
Benoni, or the child of sorrow,
She called her babe unborn.

For she had learned how Peter lived,
And took it in most grievous part ;
She to the very bone was worn,
And, ere that little child was born,
Died of a broken heart.

And now the Spirits of the Mind
Are busy with poor Peter Bell ;
Upon the rights of visual sense
Usurping, with a prevalence
More terrible than magic spell.

Close by a brake of flowering furze
(Above it shivering aspens play)
He sees an unsubstantial creature,
His very self in form and feature,
Not four yards from the broad highway :

And stretched beneath the furze he sees
The Highland girl—it is no other ;
And hears her crying as she cried,
The very moment that she died,
“ My mother ! oh my mother ! ”

The sweat pours down from Peter's face,
So grievous is his heart's contrition ;
With agony his eye-balls ache
While he beholds by the furze-brake
This miserable vision !

Calm is the well-deserving brute,
His peace hath no offence betrayed ;
But now, while down that slope he wends,
A voice to Peter's ear ascends,
Resounding from the woody glade :

The voice, though clamorous as a horn
Re-echoed by a naked rock,
Comes from that tabernacle—List !
Within, a fervent Methodist
Is preaching to no heedless flock !

“ Repent ! repent ! ” he cries aloud,
“ While yet ye may find mercy ;—strive
To love the Lord with all your might ;
Turn to him, seek him day and night,
And save your souls alive !

Repent ! repent ! though ye have gone,
Through paths of wickedness and woe,
After the Babylonian harlot ;
And, though your sins be red as scarlet,
They shall be white as snow ! ”

Even as he passed the door, these words
Did plainly come to Peter's ears ;
And they such joyful tidings were,
The joy was more than he could bear !—
He melted into tears.

Sweet tears of hope and tenderness !
And fast they fell, a plenteous shower !
His nerves, his sinews seemed to melt ;
Through all his iron frame was felt
A gentle, a relaxing power !

Each fibre of his frame was weak ;
Weak all the animal within ;
But, in its helplessness, grew mild
And gentle as an infant child,
An infant that has known no sin.

'Tis said, meek Beast! that, through Heaven's grace,
He not unmoved did notice now
The cross upon thy shoulder scored,
For lasting impress, by the Lord
To whom all human-kind shall bow ;

Memorial of his touch—that day
When Jesus humbly deigned to ride,
Entering the proud Jerusalem,
By an immeasurable stream
Of shouting people deified !

Meanwhile the persevering Ass,
Turned towards a gate that hung in view
Across a shady lane ; his chest
Against the yielding gate he pressed,
And quietly passed through.

And up the stony lane he goes ;
No ghost more softly ever trod ;
Among the stones and pebbles, he
Sets down his hoofs inaudibly,
As if with felt his hoofs were shod.

Along the lane the trusty Ass
Went twice two hundred yards or more,
And no one could have guessed his aim,—
Till to a lonely house he came,
And stopped beside the door.

Thought Peter, 'tis the poor man's home !
He listens—not a sound is heard
Save from the trickling household rill ;
But, stepping o'er the cottage-sill,
Forthwith a little Girl appeared.

She to the Meeting-house was bound
In hopes some tidings there to gather :
No glimpse it is, no doubtful gleam ;
She saw—and uttered with a scream,
“ My father ! here 's my father ! ”

The very word was plainly heard,
Heard plainly by the wretched Mother—
Her joy was like a deep affright :
And forth she rushed into the light,
And saw it was another !

And, instantly, upon the earth,
Beneath the full moon shining bright,
Close to the Ass's feet she fell ;
At the same moment Peter Bell
Dismounts in most unhappy plight.

As he beheld the Woman lie
Breathless and motionless, the mind
Of Peter sadly was confused ;
But, though to such demands unused,
And helpless almost as the blind,

He raised her up ; and, while he held
Her body propped against his knee,
The Woman waked—and when she spied
The poor Ass standing by her side,
She moaned most bitterly.

“ Oh ! God be praised—my heart 's at ease—
For he is dead—I know it well !”
—At this she wept a bitter flood ;
And, in the best way that he could,
His tale did Peter tell.

He trembles—he is pale as death ;
His voice is weak with perturbation ;
He turns aside his head, he pauses ;
Poor Peter from a thousand causes,
Is crippled sore in his narration.

At length she learned how he espied
The Ass in that small meadow-ground ;
And that her Husband now lay dead,
Beside that luckless river's bed
In which he had been drowned.

A piercing look the Widow cast
Upon the Beast that near her stands ;
She sees 'tis he, that 'tis the same ;
She calls the poor Ass by his name,
And wrings, and wrings her hands.

“ O wretched loss—untimely stroke !
If he had died upon his bed !
He knew not one forewarning pain ;
He never will come home again—
Is dead, for ever dead !”

Beside the Woman Peter stands ;
His heart is opening more and more ;
A holy sense pervades his mind ;
He feels what he for human kind
Had never felt before.

At length, by Peter's arm sustained,
The Woman rises from the ground—
“ Oh, mercy ! something must be done,
My little Rachel, you must run,—
Some willing neighbour must be found.

Make haste—my little Rachel—do,
The first you meet with—bid him come,
Ask him to lend his horse to-night,
And this good Man, whom Heaven requite,
Will help to bring the body home.”

Away goes Rachel weeping loud ;—
An Infant, waked by her distress,
Makes in the house a piteous cry ;
And Peter hears the Mother sigh,
“ Seven are they, and all fatherless !”

And now is Peter taught to feel
That man's heart is a holy thing ;
And Nature, through a world of death,
Breathes into him a second breath,
More searching than the breath of spring.

Upon a stone the Woman sits
In agony of silent grief—
From his own thoughts did Peter start ;
He longs to press her to his heart,
From love that cannot find relief.

But roused, as if through every limb
Had past a sudden shock of dread,
The Mother o'er the threshold flies,
And up the cottage stairs she hies,
And on the pillow lays her burning head.

And Peter turns his steps aside
Into a shade of darksome trees,
Where he sits down, he knows not how,
With his hands pressed against his brow,
His elbows on his tremulous knees.

There, self-involved, does Peter sit
Until no sign of life he makes,
As if his mind were sinking deep
Through years that have been long asleep!
The trance is passed away—he wakes ;

He lifts his head—and sees the Ass
Yet standing in the clear moonshine ;
“ When shall I be as good as thou ?
Oh ! would, poor beast, that I had now
A heart but half as good as thine !”

But *He*—who deviously hath sought
His Father through the lonesome woods,
Hath sought, proclaiming to the ear
Of night his grief and sorrowful fear—
He comes, escaped from fields and floods ;—

With weary pace is drawing nigh ;
He sees the Ass—and nothing living
Had ever such a fit of joy
As hath this little orphan Boy,
For he has no misgiving !

Forth to the gentle Ass he springs,
And up about his neck he climbs ;
In loving words he talks to him,
He kisses, kisses face and limb,—
He kisses him a thousand times !

This Peter sees, while in the shade
He stood beside the cottage-door ;
And Peter Bell, the ruffian wild,
Sobs loud, he sobs even like a child,
“ Oh ! God, I can endure no more ! ”

—Here ends my Tale : for in a trice
Arrived a neighbour with his horse ;
Peter went forth with him straightway ;
And, with due care, ere break of day,
Together they brought back the Corse.

And many years did this poor Ass,
Whom once it was my luck to see
Cropping the shrubs of Leming-Lane,
Help by his labour to maintain
The Widow and her family.

And Peter Bell, who, till that night,
Had been the wildest of his clan,
Forsook his crimes, renounced his folly,
And, after ten months' melancholy,
Became a good and honest man.

P O E M S
ON THE NAMING OF PLACES.

P O E M S
ON THE NAMING OF PLACES.

ADVERTISEMENT.

By persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little Incidents must have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such Incidents, and renew the gratification of such feelings, Names have been given to Places by the Author and some of his Friends, and the following Poems written in consequence.

POEMS

ON THE NAMING OF PLACES.

I.

It was an April morning : fresh and clear
The Rivulet, delighting in its strength,
Ran with a young man's speed ; and yet the voice
Of waters which the winter had supplied
Was softened down into a vernal tone.
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
And hopes and wishes, from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.
The budding groves appeared as if in haste
To spur the steps of June ; as if their shades
Of *various* green were hindrances that stood
Between them and their object : yet, meanwhile,
There was such deep contentment in the air,
That every naked ash, and tardy tree
Yet leafless, seemed as though the countenance
With which it looked on this delightful day
Were native to the summer.—Up the brook
I roamed in the confusion of my heart,
Alive to all things and forgetting all.

At length I to a sudden turning came
In this continuous glen, where down a rock
The Stream, so ardent in its course before,
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all
Which I till then had heard, appeared the voice
Of common pleasure : beast and bird, the lamb,
The shepherd's dog, the linnet and the thrush
Vied with this waterfall, and made a song
Which, while I listened, seemed like the wild growth
Or like some natural produce of the air,
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here ;
But 'twas the foliage of the rocks—the birch,
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
With hanging islands of resplendent furze :
And, on a summit, distant a short space,
By any who should look beyond the dell,
A single mountain-cottage might be seen.
I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
“ Our thoughts at least are ours ; and this wild nook,
My EMMA, I will dedicate to thee.”
— Soon did the spot become my other home,
My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
And, of the Shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of EMMA'S DELL.

II.

TO JOANNA.



AMID the smoke of cities did you pass
The time of early youth ; and there you learned,
From years of quiet industry, to love
The living Beings by your own fire-side,
With such a strong devotion, that your heart
Is slow to meet the sympathies of them
Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.
Yet we, who are transgressors in this kind,
Dwelling retired in our simplicity
Among the woods and fields, we love you well,
Joanna ! and I guess, since you have been
So distant from us now for two long years,
That you will gladly listen to discourse,
However trivial, if you thence be taught
That they, with whom you once were happy, talk
Familiarly of you and of old times.

While I was seated, now some ten days past,
Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop

Their ancient neighbour, the old steeple-tower,
The Vicar from his gloomy house hard by
Came forth to greet me ; and when he had asked,
“ How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted Maid !
And when will she return to us ? ” he paused ;
And, after short exchange of village news,
He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,
Reviving obsolete idolatry,
I, like a Runic Priest, in characters
Of formidable size had chiselled out
Some uncouth name upon the native rock,
Above the Rotha, by the forest-side.
—Now, by those dear immunities of heart
Engendered between malice and true love,
I was not loth to be so catechised,
And this was my reply :—“ As it befel,
One summer morning we had walked abroad
At break of day, Joanna and myself.
—’Twas that delightful season when the broom,
Full-flowered, and visible on every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold.
Our pathway led us on to Rotha’s banks ;
And when we came in front of that tall rock
That eastward looks, I there stopped short—and stood
Tracing the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit ; such delight I found
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,
That intermixture of delicious hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,

In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart.
—When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laughed aloud.
The Rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the Lady's voice, and laughed again ;
That ancient Woman seated on Helm-crag
Was ready with her cavern ; Hammar-scar,
And the tall Steep of Silver-how, sent forth
A noise of laughter ; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answered with a mountain tone ;
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the Lady's voice,—old Skiddaw blew
His speaking-trumpet ;—back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice ;
And Kirkstone tossed it from his misty head.
—Now whether (said I to our cordial Friend,
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face) this were in simple truth
A work accomplished by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touched
With dreams and visionary impulses
To me alone imparted, sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills :
And, while we both were listening, to my side
The fair Joanna drew, as if she wished
To shelter from some object of her fear.
—And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons

Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
Beneath this rock, at sunrise, on a calm
And silent morning, I sat down, and there,
In memory of affections old and true,
I chiselled out in those rude characters
Joanna's name upon the living stone :—
And I, and all who dwell by my fireside,
Have called the lovely rock, JOANNA'S ROCK.”

1800.

Note.—In Cumberland and Westmoreland are several Inscriptions, upon the native rock, which, from the wasting of time, and the rudeness of the workmanship, have been mistaken for Runic. They are without doubt Roman.

The Rotha, mentioned in this poem, is the River which, flowing through the lakes of Grasmere and Rydale, falls into Wynandermere. On Helm-crag, that impressive single mountain at the head of the Vale of Grasmere, is a rock which from most points of view bears a striking resemblance to an old Woman cowering. Close by this rock is one of those fissures or caverns, which in the language of the country are called dungeons. Most of the mountains here mentioned immediately surround the Vale of Grasmere; of the others, some are at a considerable distance, but they belong to the same cluster.

III.

THERE is an Eminence,—of these our hills
The last that parleys with the setting sun ;
We can behold it from our orchard-seat ;
And, when at evening we pursue our walk
Along the public way, this Cliff, so high
Above us, and so distant in its height,
Is visible ; and often seems to send
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.
The meteors make of it a favourite haunt :
The star of Jove, so beautiful and large
In the mid heavens, is never half so fair
As when he shines above it. 'Tis in truth
The loneliest place we have among the clouds.
And She who dwells with me, whom I have loved
With such communion, that no place on earth
Can ever be a solitude to me,
Hath to this lonely Summit given my Name.

1800.

IV.

A NARROW girdle of rough stones and crags,
A rude and natural causeway, interposed
Between the water and a winding slope
Of copse and thicket, leaves the eastern shore
Of Grasmere safe in its own privacy :
And there myself and two beloved Friends,
One calm September morning, ere the mist
Had altogether yielded to the sun,
Sauntered on this retired and difficult way.
—Ill suits the road with one in haste ; but we
Played with our time ; and, as we strolled along,
It was our occupation to observe
Such objects as the waves had tossed ashore—
Feather, or leaf, or weed, or withered bough,
Each on the other heaped, along the line
Of the dry wreck. And, in our vacant mood,
Not seldom did we stop to watch some tuft
Of dandelion seed or thistle's beard,
That skimmed the surface of the dead calm lake,
Suddenly halting now—a lifeless stand !
And starting off again with freak as sudden ;
In all its sportive wanderings, all the while,

Making report of an invisible breeze
That was its wings, its chariot, and its horse,
Its playmate, rather say its moving soul.
—And often, trifling with a privilege
Alike indulged to all, we paused, one now,
And now the other, to point out, perchance
To pluck, some flower or water-weed, too fair
Either to be divided from the place
On which it grew, or to be left alone
To its own beauty. Many such there are,
Fair ferns and flowers, and chiefly that tall fern,
So stately, of the queen Osmunda named ;
Plant lovelier, in its own retired abode
On Grasmere's beach, than Naiad by the side
Of Grecian brook, or Lady of the Mere,
Sole-sitting by the shores of old romance.
—So fared we that bright morning : from the fields,
Meanwhile, a noise was heard, the busy mirth
Of reapers, men and women, boys and girls.
Delighted much to listen to those sounds,
And feeding thus our fancies, we advanced
Along the indented shore ; when suddenly,
Through a thin veil of glittering haze was seen
Before us, on a point of jutting land,
The tall and upright figure of a Man
Attired in peasant's garb, who stood alone,
Angling beside the margin of the lake.
Improvident and reckless, we exclaimed,
The Man must be, who thus can lose a day

Of the mid harvest, when the labourer's hire
Is ample, and some little might be stored
Wherewith to cheer him in the winter time.
Thus talking of that Peasant, we approached
Close to the spot where with his rod and line
He stood alone; whereat he turned his head
To greet us—and we saw a Man worn down
By sickness, gaunt and lean, with sunken cheeks
And wasted limbs, his legs so long and lean
That for my single self I looked at them,
Forgetful of the body they sustained.—
Too weak to labour in the harvest field,
The Man was using his best skill to gain
A pittance from the dead unfeeling lake
That knew not of his wants. I will not say
What thoughts immediately were ours, nor how
The happy idleness of that sweet morn,
With all its lovely images, was changed
To serious musing and to self-reproach.
Nor did we fail to see within ourselves
What need there is to be reserved in speech,
And temper all our thoughts with charity.
—Therefore, unwilling to forget that day,
My Friend, Myself, and She who then received
The same admonishment, have called the place
By a memorial name, uncouth indeed
As e'er by mariner was given to bay
Or foreland, on a new-discovered coast ;
And POINT RASH-JUDGMENT is the Name it bears.

V.

TO M. H.

OUR walk was far among the ancient trees :
There was no road, nor any woodman's path ;
But a thick umbrage—checking the wild growth
Of weed and sapling, along soft green turf
Beneath the branches—of itself had made
A track, that brought us to a slip of lawn,
And a small bed of water in the woods.
All round this pool both flocks and herds might drink
On its firm margin, even as from a well,
Or some stone-basin which the herdsman's hand
Had shaped for their refreshment ; nor did sun,
Or wind from any quarter, ever come,
But as a blessing to this calm recess,
This glade of water and this one green field.
The spot was made by Nature for herself ;
The travellers know it not, and 'twill remain
Unknown to them ; but it is beautiful ;
And if a man should plant his cottage near,
Should sleep beneath the shelter of its trees,
And blend its waters with his daily meal,
He would so love it, that in his death-hour
Its image would survive among his thoughts :
And therefore, my sweet MARY, this still Nook,
With all its beeches, we have named from You!

VI.

WHEN, to the attractions of the busy world,
Preferring studious leisure, I had chosen
A habitation in this peaceful Vale,
Sharp season followed of continual storm
In deepest winter ; and, from week to week,
Pathway, and lane, and public road, were clogged
With frequent showers of snow. Upon a hill
At a short distance from my cottage, stands
A stately Fir-grove, whither I was wont
To hasten, for I found, beneath the roof
Of that perennial shade, a cloistral place
Of refuge, with an unincumbered floor.
Here, in safe covert, on the shallow snow,
And, sometimes, on a speck of visible earth,
The redbreast near me hopped ; nor was I loth
To sympathise with vulgar coppice birds
That, for protection from the nipping blast,
Hither repaired.—A single beech-tree grew
Within this grove of firs ! and, on the fork
Of that one beech, appeared a thrush's nest ;
A last year's nest, conspicuously built

At such small elevation from the ground
As gave sure sign that they, who in that house
Of nature and of love had made their home
Amid the fir-trees, all the summer long
Dwelt in a tranquil spot. And oftentimes,
A few sheep, stragglers from some mountain-flock,
Would watch my motions with suspicious stare,
From the remotest outskirts of the grove,—
Some nook where they had made their final stand,
Huddling together from two fears—the fear
Of me and of the storm. Full many an hour
Here did I lose. But in this grove the trees
Had been so thickly planted, and had thriven
In such perplexed and intricate array;
That vainly did I seek, beneath their stems
A length of open space, where to and fro
My feet might move without concern or care;
And, baffled thus, though earth from day to day
Was fettered, and the air by storm disturbed,
I ceased the shelter to frequent,—and prized,
Less than I wished to prize, that calm recess.

The snows dissolved, and genial Spring returned
To clothe the fields with verdure. Other haunts
Meanwhile were mine; till, one bright April day,
By chance retiring from the glare of noon
To this forsaken covert, there I found
A hoary pathway traced between the trees,

And winding on with such an easy line
Along a natural opening, that I stood
Much wondering how I could have sought in vain
For what was now so obvious. To abide,
For an allotted interval of ease,
Beneath my cottage-roof, had newly come
From the wild sea a cherished Visitant ;
And with the sight of this same path—begun,
Begun and ended, in the shady grove,
Pleasant conviction flashed upon my mind
That, to this opportune recess allured,
He had surveyed it with a finer eye,
A heart more wakeful ; and had worn the track
By pacing here, unwearied and alone,
In that habitual restlessness of foot
With which the Sailor measures o'er and o'er
His short domain upon the vessel's deck,
While she is travelling through the dreary sea.

When thou hadst quitted Esthwaite's pleasant shore,
And taken thy first leave of those green hills
And rocks that were the play-ground of thy Youth,
Year followed year, my Brother ! and we two,
Conversing not, knew little in what mould
Each other's mind was fashioned ; and at length,
When once again we met in Grasmere Vale,
Between us there was little other bond
Than common feelings of fraternal love.

But thou, a School-boy, to the sea hadst carried
Undying recollections ; Nature there
Was with thee ; she, who loved us both, she still
Was with thee ; and even so didst thou become
A *silent* Poet ; from the solitude
Of the vast sea didst bring a watchful heart
Still couchant, an inevitable ear,
And an eye practised like a blind man's touch.
—Back to the joyless Ocean thou art gone ;
Nor from this vestige of thy musing hours
Could I withhold thy honoured name,—and now
I love the fir-grove with a perfect love.
Thither do I withdraw when cloudless suns
Shine hot, or wind blows troublesome and strong :
And there I sit at evening, when the steep
Of Silver-how, and Grasmere's peaceful lake,
And one green island, gleam between the stems
Of the dark firs, a visionary scene !
And, while I gaze upon the spectacle
Of clouded splendour, on this dream-like sight
Of solemn loveliness, I think on thee,
My Brother, and on all which thou hast lost.
Nor seldom, if I rightly guess, while Thou,
Muttering the verses which I muttered first
Among the mountains, through the midnight watch
Art pacing thoughtfully the vessel's deck
In some far region, here, while o'er my head,
At every impulse of the moving breeze,

The fir-grove murmurs with a sea-like sound,
Alone I tread this path ;—for aught I know,
Timing my steps to thine ; and, with a store
Of undistinguishable sympathies,
Mingling most earnest wishes for the day
When we, and others whom we love, shall meet
A second time, in Grasmere's happy Vale.

1805.

Note.—This wish was not granted ; the lamented Person not long after perished by shipwreck, in discharge of his duty as Commander of the Honourable East India Company's Vessel, the Earl of Abergavenny.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION OF SEVERAL OF THE FOREGOING
POEMS, PUBLISHED, WITH AN ADDITIONAL VOLUME,
UNDER THE TITLE OF "LYRICAL BALLADS."



THE first Volume of these Poems has already been submitted to general perusal. It was published, as an experiment, which, I hoped, might be of some use to ascertain, how far, by fitting to metrical arrangement a selection of the real language of men in a state of vivid sensation, that sort of pleasure and that quantity of pleasure may be imparted, which a Poet may rationally endeavour to impart.

I had formed no very inaccurate estimate of the probable effect of those Poems: I flattered myself that they who should be pleased with them would read them with more than common pleasure: and, on the other hand, I was well aware, that by those who should dislike them, they would be read with more than common

dislike. The result has differed from my expectation in this only, that a greater number have been pleased than I ventured to hope I should please.

* * * * *

Several of my Friends are anxious for the success of these Poems, from a belief, that, if the views with which they were composed were indeed realised, a class of Poetry would be produced, well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and not unimportant in the quality, and in the multiplicity of its moral relations: and on this account they have advised me to prefix a systematic defence of the theory upon which the Poems were written. But I was unwilling to undertake the task, knowing that on this occasion the Reader would look coldly upon my arguments, since I might be suspected of having been principally influenced by the selfish and foolish hope of *reasoning* him into an approbation of these particular Poems: and I was still more unwilling to undertake the task, because, adequately to display the opinions, and fully to enforce the arguments, would require a space wholly disproportionate to a preface. For, to treat the subject with the clearness and coherence of which it is susceptible, it would be necessary to give a full account of the present state of the public taste in this country, and to determine how far this taste is healthy or depraved; which, again, could not be determined, without pointing out in what manner language and the human mind act and re-act on each other, and without retracing the revolutions, not of literature alone, but likewise of society itself. I have therefore altogether declined to enter regularly upon

this defence ; yet I am sensible, that there would be some impropriety in abruptly obtruding upon the Public, without a few words of introduction, Poems so materially different from those upon which general approbation is at present bestowed.

It is supposed, that by the act of writing in verse an Author makes a formal engagement that he will gratify certain known habits of association ; that he not only thus apprises the Reader that certain classes of ideas and expressions will be found in his book, but that others will be carefully excluded. This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations : for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius or Claudian ; and in our own country, in the age of Shakspeare and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope. I will not take upon me to determine the exact import of the promise which, by the act of writing in verse, an Author, in the present day, makes to his reader : but it will undoubtedly appear to many persons that I have not fulfilled the terms of an engagement thus voluntarily contracted. They who have been accustomed to the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers, if they persist in reading this book to its conclusion, will, no doubt, frequently have to struggle with feelings of strangeness and awkwardness : they will look round for poetry, and will be induced to inquire by what species of courtesy these attempts can be permitted to assume that title. I hope therefore the reader will not censure me for attempting to state what I have pro-

posed to myself to perform ; and also (as far as the limits of a preface will permit) to explain some of the chief reasons which have determined me in the choice of my purpose : that at least he may be spared any unpleasant feeling of disappointment, and that I myself may be protected from one of the most dishonourable accusations which can be brought against an Author ; namely, that of an indolence which prevents him from endeavouring to ascertain what is his duty, or, when his duty is ascertained, prevents him from performing it.

The principal object, then, proposed in these Poems was to choose incidents and situations from common life, and to relate or describe them, throughout, as far as was possible in a selection of language really used by men, and, at the same time, to throw over them a certain colouring of imagination, whereby ordinary things should be presented to the mind in an unusual aspect ; and, further, and above all, to make these incidents and situations interesting by tracing in them, truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature : chiefly, as far as regards the manner in which we associate ideas in a state of excitement. Humble and rustic life was generally chosen, because, in that condition, the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language ; because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity, and, consequently, may be more accurately contemplated, and more forcibly communicated ; because the manners of rural life germinate from those ele-

mentary feelings, and, from the necessary character of rural occupations, are more easily comprehended, and are more durable ; and, lastly, because in that condition the passions of men are incorporated with the beautiful and permanent forms of nature. The language, too, of these men has been adopted (purified indeed from what appear to be its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust) because such men hourly communicate with the best objects from which the best part of language is originally derived ; and because, from their rank in society and the sameness and narrow circle of their intercourse, being less under the influence of social vanity, they convey their feelings and notions in simple and unelaborated expressions. Accordingly, such a language, arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets, who think that they are conferring honour upon themselves and their art, in proportion as they separate themselves from the sympathies of men, and indulge in arbitrary and capricious habits of expression, in order to furnish food for fickle tastes, and fickle appetites, of their own creation*.

I cannot, however, be insensible to the present outcry against the triviality and meanness, both of thought and language, which some of my contemporaries have occasionally introduced into their metrical compositions ; and I acknowledge that this defect, where it exists, is more

* It is worth while here to observe, that the affecting parts of Chaucer are almost always expressed in language pure and universally intelligible even to this day.

dishonourable to the Writer's own character than false refinement or arbitrary innovation, though I should contend at the same time, that it is far less pernicious in the sum of its consequences. From such verses the Poems in these volumes will be found distinguished at least by one mark of difference, that each of them has a worthy *purpose*. Not that I always began to write with a distinct purpose formally conceived; but habits of meditation have, I trust, so prompted and regulated my feelings, that my descriptions of such objects as strongly excite those feelings, will be found to carry along with them a *purpose*. If this opinion be erroneous, I can have little right to the name of a Poet. For all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. For our continued influxes of feeling are modified and directed by our thoughts, which are indeed the representatives of all our past feelings; and, as by contemplating the relation of these general representatives to each other, we discover what is really important to men, so, by the repetition and continuance of this act, our feelings will be connected with important subjects, till at length, if we be originally possessed of much sensibility, such habits of mind will be produced, that, by obeying blindly and mechanically the impulses of those habits, we shall describe objects, and utter sentiments, of such a nature, and in such connection with each other, that the under-

standing of the Reader must necessarily be in some degree enlightened, and his affections strengthened and purified.

It has been said that each of these poems has a purpose. The Reader has also been informed what this purpose will be found principally to be: namely, to illustrate the manner in which our feelings and ideas are associated in a state of excitement. But, speaking in language somewhat more appropriate, it is to follow the fluxes and refluxes of the mind when agitated by the great and simple affections of our nature. This object I have endeavoured in these short essays to attain by various means; by tracing the maternal passion through many of its more subtile windings, as in the poems of the *IDIOT BOY* and the one beginning, "Her eyes are wild," &c.; by accompanying the last struggles of a human being, at the approach of death, cleaving in solitude to life and society, as in the Poem of the *FORSAKEN INDIAN*; by showing, as in the Stanzas entitled *WE ARE SEVEN*, the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion; by displaying the strength of fraternal, or, to speak more philosophically, of moral attachment when early associated with the great and beautiful objects of nature, as in *THE BROTHERS*; or, as in the Incident of *SIMON LEE*, by placing my Reader in the way of receiving from ordinary moral sensations another and more salutary impression than we are accustomed to receive from them. It has also been part of my general purpose to attempt to sketch characters under the influence of less

impassioned feelings, as in the *TWO APRIL MORNINGS*, *THE FOUNTAIN*, *THE OLD MAN TRAVELLING*, *THE TWO THIEVES*, &c., characters of which the elements are simple, belonging rather to nature than to manners, such as exist now, and will probably always exist, and which from their constitution may be distinctly and profitably contemplated. I will not abuse the indulgence of my Reader by dwelling longer upon this subject; but it is proper to mention one other circumstance which distinguishes these Poems from the popular Poetry of the day; it is this, that the feeling therein developed gives importance to the action and situation, and not the action and situation to the feeling. My meaning will be rendered perfectly intelligible by referring the Reader to the Poems entitled *POOR SUSAN* and the *CHILDLESS FATHER*, particularly to the last Stanza of the latter Poem.

A sense of false modesty shall not prevent me from asserting, that the Reader's attention is pointed to this mark of distinction, far less for the sake of these particular Poems than from the general importance of the subject. The subject is indeed important! For the human mind is capable of being excited without the application of gross and violent stimulants; and he must have a very faint perception of its beauty and dignity who does not know this, and who does not further know, that one being is elevated above another, in proportion as he possesses this capability. It has therefore appeared to me, that to endeavour to produce or enlarge this capability is one of the best services in which, at any period, a Writer can be engaged; but this service, excellent at all times,

is especially so at the present day. For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakspeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse.—When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble endeavour made in these volumes to counteract it; and, reflecting upon the magnitude of the general evil, I should be oppressed with no dishonourable melancholy, had I not a deep impression of certain inherent and indestructible qualities of the human mind, and likewise of certain powers in the great and permanent objects that act upon it, which are equally inherent and indestructible; and were there not added to this impression a belief, that the time is approaching when the evil will be systematically opposed, by men of greater powers, and with far more distinguished success.

Having dwelt thus long on the subjects and aim of

these Poems, I shall request the Reader's permission to apprise him of a few circumstances relating to their *style*; in order, among other reasons, that he may not censure me for not having performed what I never attempted. The Reader will find that personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes; and are utterly rejected, as an ordinary device to elevate the style, and raise it above prose. My purpose was to imitate, and, as far as is possible, to adopt the very language of men; and assuredly such personifications do not make any natural or regular part of that language. They are, indeed, a figure of speech occasionally prompted by passion, and I have made use of them as such; but have endeavoured utterly to reject them as a mechanical device of style, or as a family language which Writers in metre seem to lay claim to by prescription. I have wished to keep the Reader in the company of flesh and blood, persuaded that by so doing I shall interest him. Others who pursue a different track will interest him likewise; I do not interfere with their claim, but wish to prefer a claim of my own. There will also be found in these volumes little of what is usually called poetic diction; as much pains has been taken to avoid it as is ordinarily taken to produce it; this has been done for the reason already alleged, to bring my language near to the language of men; and further, because the pleasure which I have proposed to myself to impart, is of a kind very different from that which is supposed by many persons to be the proper object of poetry. Without being culpably particular, I do not know how to give my Reader a more exact notion of the style in which

these Poems were intended to be written, than by informing him that I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject ; consequently, there is I hope in these Poems little falsehood of description, and my ideas are expressed in language fitted to their respective importance. Something must have been gained by this practice, as it is friendly to one property of all good poetry, namely, good sense : but it has necessarily cut me off from a large portion of phrases and figures of speech which from father to son have long been regarded as the common inheritance of Poets. I have also thought it expedient to restrict myself still further, having abstained from the use of many expressions, in themselves proper and beautiful, but which have been foolishly repeated by bad Poets, till such feelings of disgust are connected with them as it is scarcely possible by any art of association to overpower.

If in a poem there should be found a series of lines, or even a single line, in which the language, though naturally arranged, and according to the strict laws of metre, does not differ from that of prose, there is a numerous class of critics, who, when they stumble upon these prosaisms, as they call them, imagine that they have made a notable discovery, and exult over the Poet as over a man ignorant of his own profession. Now these men would establish a canon of criticism which the Reader will conclude he must utterly reject, if he wishes to be pleased with these volumes. And it would be a most easy task to prove to him, that not only the language of a large portion of every good poem, even of

the most elevated character, must necessarily, except with reference to the metre, in no respect differ from that of good prose, but likewise that some of the most interesting parts of the best poems will be found to be strictly the language of prose when prose is well written. The truth of this assertion might be demonstrated by innumerable passages from almost all the poetical writings, even of Milton himself. To illustrate the subject in a general manner, I will here adduce a short composition of Gray, who was at the head of those who, by their reasonings, have attempted to widen the space of separation betwixt Prose and Metrical composition, and was more than any other man curiously elaborate in the structure of his own poetic diction.

‘ In vain to me the smiling mornings shine,
 And reddening Phœbus lifts his golden fire :
 The birds in vain their amorous descant join,
 Or cheerful fields resume their green attire.
 These ears, alas ! for other notes repine ;
A different object do these eyes require ;
My lonely anguish melts no heart but mine ;
And in my breast the imperfect joys expire ;
 Yet morning smiles the busy race to cheer,
 And new-born pleasure brings to happier men ;
 The fields to all their wonted tribute bear ;
 To warm their little loves the birds complain.
I fruitless mourn to him that cannot hear,
And weep the more because I weep in vain.’

It will easily be perceived, that the only part of this Sonnet which is of any value is the lines printed in Italics ; it is equally obvious, that, except in the rhyme,

and in the use of the single word 'fruitless' for fruitlessly, which is so far a defect, the language of these lines does in no respect differ from that of prose.

By the foregoing quotation it has been shown that the language of Prose may yet be well adapted to Poetry; and it was previously asserted, that a large portion of the language of every good poem can in no respect differ from that of good Prose. We will go further. It may be safely affirmed, that there neither is, nor can be, any *essential* difference between the language of prose and metrical composition. We are fond of tracing the resemblance between Poetry and Painting, and, accordingly, we call them Sisters: but where shall we find bonds of connection sufficiently strict to typify the affinity betwixt metrical and prose composition? They both speak by and to the same organs; the bodies in which both of them are clothed may be said to be of the same substance, their affections are kindred, and almost identical, not necessarily differing even in degree; Poetry * sheds no tears 'such as Angels weep,' but natural and human tears; she can boast of no celestial ichor that distinguishes her vital juices from those of prose; the same human blood circulates through the veins of them both.

If it be affirmed that rhyme and metrical arrangement of themselves constitute a distinction which over-

* I here use the word 'Poetry' (though against my own judgment) as opposed to the word Prose, and synonymous with metrical composition. But much confusion has been introduced into criticism by this contradistinction of Poetry and Prose, instead of the more philosophical one of Poetry and Matter of Fact, or Science. The only strict antithesis to Prose is Metre; nor is this, in truth, a *strict* antithesis, because lines and passages of metre so naturally occur in writing prose, that it would be scarcely possible to avoid them, even were it desirable.

turns what has just been said on the strict affinity of metrical language with that of prose, and paves the way for other artificial distinctions which the mind voluntarily admits, I answer that the language of such Poetry as is here recommended is, as far as is possible, a selection of the language really spoken by men ; that this selection, wherever it is made with true taste and feeling, will of itself form a distinction far greater than would at first be imagined, and will entirely separate the composition from the vulgarity and meanness of ordinary life ; and, if metre be superadded thereto, I believe that a dissimilitude will be produced altogether sufficient for the gratification of a rational mind. What other distinction would we have ? Whence is it to come ? And where is it to exist ? Not, surely, where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters : it cannot be necessary here, either for elevation of style, or any of its supposed ornaments : for, if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures. I forbear to speak of an incongruity which would shock the intelligent Reader, should the Poet interweave any foreign splendour of his own with that which the passion naturally suggests : it is sufficient to say that such addition is unnecessary. And, surely, it is more probable that those passages, which with propriety abound with metaphors and figures, will have their due effect, if, upon other occasions where the passions are of a milder character, the style also be subdued and temperate.

But, as the pleasure which I hope to give by the Poems now presented to the Reader must depend entirely on just notions upon this subject, and, as it is in itself of high importance to our taste and moral feelings, I cannot content myself with these detached remarks. And if, in what I am about to say, it shall appear to some that my labour is unnecessary, and that I am like a man fighting a battle without enemies, such persons may be reminded, that, whatever be the language outwardly holden by men, a practical faith in the opinions which I am wishing to establish is almost unknown. If my conclusions are admitted, and carried as far as they must be carried if admitted at all, our judgments concerning the works of the greatest Poets both ancient and modern will be far different from what they are at present, both when we praise, and when we censure : and our moral feelings influencing and influenced by these judgments will, I believe, be corrected and purified.

Taking up the subject, then, upon general grounds, let me ask, what is meant by the word Poet? What is a Poet? To whom does he address himself? And what language is to be expected from him?—He is a man speaking to men : a man, it is true, endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness, who has a greater knowledge of human nature, and a more comprehensive soul, than are supposed to be common among mankind ; a man pleased with his own passions and volitions, and who rejoices more than other men in the spirit of life that is in him ; delighting to contemplate similar volitions and passions as manifested in

the goings-on of the Universe, and habitually impelled to create them where he does not find them. To these qualities he has added a disposition to be affected more than other men by absent things as if they were present ; an ability of conjuring up in himself passions, which are indeed far from being the same as those produced by real events, yet (especially in those parts of the general sympathy which are pleasing and delightful) do more nearly resemble the passions produced by real events, than any thing which, from the motions of their own minds merely, other men are accustomed to feel in themselves :—whence, and from practice, he has acquired a greater readiness and power in expressing what he thinks and feels, and especially those thoughts and feelings which, by his own choice, or from the structure of his own mind, arise in him without immediate external excitement.

But whatever portion of this faculty we may suppose even the greatest Poet to possess, there cannot be a doubt that the language which it will suggest to him, must, in liveliness and truth, fall far short of that which is uttered by men in real life, under the actual pressure of those passions, certain shadows of which the Poet thus produces, or feels to be produced, in himself.

However exalted a notion we would wish to cherish of the character of a Poet, it is obvious, that while he describes and imitates passions, his situation is slavish and mechanical, compared with the freedom and power of real and substantial action and suffering. So that it will be the wish of the Poet to bring his feelings near to those of the persons whose feelings he describes, nay,

for short spaces of time, perhaps, to let himself slip into an entire delusion, and even confound and identify his own feelings with theirs; modifying only the language which is thus suggested to him by a consideration that he describes for a particular purpose, that of giving pleasure. Here, then, he will apply the principle of selection which has been already insisted upon. He will depend upon this for removing what would otherwise be painful or disgusting in the passion; he will feel that there is no necessity to trick out or to elevate nature: and, the more industriously he applies this principle, the deeper will be his faith that no words, which *his* fancy or imagination can suggest, will be to be compared with those which are the emanations of reality and truth.

But it may be said by those who do not object to the general spirit of these remarks, that, as it is impossible for the Poet to produce upon all occasions language as exquisitely fitted for the passion as that which the real passion itself suggests, it is proper that he should consider himself as in the situation of a translator, who does not scruple to substitute excellencies of another kind for those which are unattainable by him; and endeavours occasionally to surpass his original, in order to make some amends for the general inferiority to which he feels that he must submit. But this would be to encourage idleness and unmanly despair. Further, it is the language of men who speak of what they do not understand; who talk of Poetry as of a matter of amusement and idle pleasure; who will converse with us as gravely about a *taste* for Poetry, as they express it, as if it were a thing

as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontinac or Sherry. Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. The obstacles which stand in the way of the fidelity of the Biographer and Historian, and of their consequent utility, are incalculably greater than those which are to be encountered by the Poet who comprehends the dignity of his art. The Poet writes under one restriction only, namely, the necessity of giving immediate pleasure to a human Being possessed of that information which may be expected from him, not as a lawyer, a physician, a mariner, an astronomer, or a natural philosopher, but as a Man. Except this one restriction, there is no object standing between the Poet and the image of things; between this, and the Biographer and Historian, there are a thousand.

Nor let this necessity of producing immediate pleasure be considered as a degradation of the Poet's art. It is far otherwise. It is an acknowledgment of the beauty of the universe, an acknowledgment the more sincere, because not formal, but indirect; it is a task light and easy to him who looks at the world in the spirit of love: further, it is a homage paid to the native and naked dignity of man, to the grand elementary principle of pleasure, by which he knows, and feels, and lives, and

moves. We have no sympathy but what is propagated by pleasure : I would not be misunderstood ; but wherever we sympathise with pain, it will be found that the sympathy is produced and carried on by subtle combinations with pleasure. We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone. The Man of science, the Chemist and Mathematician, whatever difficulties and disgusts they may have had to struggle with, know and feel this. However painful may be the objects with which the Anatomist's knowledge is connected, he feels that his knowledge is pleasure ; and where he has no pleasure he has no knowledge. What then does the Poet ? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure ; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions, which from habit acquire the quality of intuitions ; he considers him as looking upon this complex scene of ideas and sensations, and finding every where objects that immediately excite in him sympathies which, from the necessities of his nature, are accompanied by an overbalance of enjoyment.

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to

each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure ; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance ; the other is a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The Man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor ; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude : the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakspeare hath said of man, ‘ that he looks before and after.’ He is the rock of defence for human nature ; an upholder and preserver, carrying every where with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs : in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed ; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and

over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are every where ; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow where-soever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge—it is as immortal as the heart of man. If the labours of Men of science should ever create any material revolution, direct or indirect, in our condition, and in the impressions which we habitually receive, the Poet will sleep then no more than at present ; he will be ready to follow the steps of the Man of science, not only in those general indirect effects, but he will be at his side, carrying sensation into the midst of the objects of the science itself. The remotest discoveries of the Chemist, the Botanist, or Mineralogist, will be as proper objects of the Poet's art as any upon which it can be employed, if the time should ever come when these things shall be familiar to us, and the relations under which they are contemplated by the followers of these respective sciences shall be manifestly and palpably material to us as enjoying and suffering beings. If the time should ever come when what is now called science, thus familiarised to men, shall be ready to put on, as it were, a form of flesh and blood, the Poet will lend his divine spirit to aid the transfiguration, and will welcome the Being thus produced, as a dear and genuine inmate of the household of man.—It is not, then, to be supposed that any one, who holds that sublime notion of Poetry which I have attempted to convey, will break in upon the sanctity and truth of his pictures by transitory and accidental ornaments, and endeavour to excite admiration

of himself by arts, the necessity of which must manifestly depend upon the assumed meanness of his subject.

What has been thus far said applies to Poetry in general ; but especially to those parts of composition where the Poet speaks through the mouths of his characters ; and upon this point it appears to authorise the conclusion that there are few persons of good sense, who would not allow that the dramatic parts of composition are defective, in proportion as they deviate from the real language of nature, and are coloured by a diction of the Poet's own, either peculiar to him as an individual Poet or belonging simply to Poets in general ; to a body of men who, from the circumstance of their compositions being in metre, it is expected will employ a particular language.

It is not, then, in the dramatic parts of composition that we look for this distinction of language ; but still it may be proper and necessary where the Poet speaks to us in his own person and character. To this I answer by referring the Reader to the description before given of a Poet. Among the qualities there enumerated as principally conducing to form a Poet, is implied nothing differing in kind from other men, but only in degree. The sum of what was said is, that the Poet is chiefly distinguished from other men by a greater promptness to think and feel without immediate external excitement, and a greater power in expressing such thoughts and feelings as are produced in him in that manner. But these passions and thoughts and feelings are the general passions and thoughts and feelings of men. And with what are they connected ? Undoubtedly with our moral sentiments and animal sensations, and with the causes

which excite these ; with the operations of the elements, and the appearances of the visible universe ; with storm and sunshine, with the revolutions of the seasons, with cold and heat, with loss of friends and kindred, with injuries and resentments, gratitude and hope, with fear and sorrow. These, and the like, are the sensations and objects which the Poet describes, as they are the sensations of other men, and the objects which interest them. The Poet thinks and feels in the spirit of human passions. How, then, can his language differ in any material degree from that of all other men who feel vividly and see clearly ? It might be *proved* that it is impossible. But supposing that this were not the case, the Poet might then be allowed to use a peculiar language when expressing his feelings for his own gratification, or that of men like himself. But Poets do not write for Poets alone, but for men. Unless therefore we are advocates for that admiration which subsists upon ignorance, and that pleasure which arises from hearing what we do not understand, the Poet must descend from this supposed height ; and, in order to excite rational sympathy, he must express himself as other men express themselves. To this it may be added, that while he is only selecting from the real language of men, or, which amounts to the same thing, composing accurately in the spirit of such selection, he is treading upon safe ground, and we know what we are to expect from him. Our feelings are the same with respect to metre ; for, as it may be proper to remind the Reader, the distinction of metre is regular and uniform, and not, like that which is produced by what is usually called poetic diction, arbitrary, and sub-

ject to infinite caprices upon which no calculation whatever can be made. In the one case, the Reader is utterly at the mercy of the Poet, respecting what imagery or diction he may choose to connect with the passion; whereas, in the other, the metre obeys certain laws, to which the Poet and Reader both willingly submit because they are certain, and because no interference is made by them with the passion but such as the concurring testimony of ages has shown to heighten and improve the pleasure which co-exists with it.

It will now be proper to answer an obvious question, namely, Why, professing these opinions, have I written in verse? To this, in addition to such answer as is included in what has been already said, I reply, in the first place, Because, however I may have restricted myself, there is still left open to me what confessedly constitutes the most valuable object of all writing, whether in prose or verse; the great and universal passions of men, the most general and interesting of their occupations, and the entire world of nature before me—to supply endless combinations of forms and imagery. Now, supposing for a moment that whatever is interesting in these objects may be as vividly described in prose, why should I be condemned for attempting to superadd to such description, the charm which, by the consent of all nations, is acknowledged to exist in metrical language? To this, by such as are yet unconvinced, it may be answered that a very small part of the pleasure given by Poetry depends upon the metre, and that it is injudicious to write in metre, unless it be accompanied with the other artificial distinctions of style with which metre

is usually accompanied, and that, by such deviation, more will be lost from the shock which will thereby be given to the Reader's associations than will be counter-balanced by any pleasure which he can derive from the general power of numbers. In answer to those who still contend for the necessity of accompanying metre with certain appropriate colours of style in order to the accomplishment of its appropriate end, and who also, in my opinion, greatly under-rate the power of metre in itself, it might, perhaps, as far as relates to these Volumes, have been almost sufficient to observe, that poems are extant, written upon more humble subjects, and in a still more naked and simple style, which have continued to give pleasure from generation to generation. Now, if nakedness and simplicity be a defect, the fact here mentioned affords a strong presumption that poems somewhat less naked and simple are capable of affording pleasure at the present day ; and, what I wished *chiefly* to attempt, at present, was to justify myself for having written under the impression of this belief.

But various causes might be pointed out why, when the style is manly, and the subject of some importance, words metrically arranged will long continue to impart such a pleasure to mankind as he who proves the extent of that pleasure will be desirous to impart. The end of Poetry is to produce excitement in co-existence with an overbalance of pleasure ; but, by the supposition, excitement is an unusual and irregular state of the mind ; ideas and feelings do not, in that state, succeed each other in accustomed order. If the words, however, by which this excitement is produced be in themselves powerful, or the

images and feelings have an undue proportion of pain connected with them, there is some danger that the excitement may be carried beyond its proper bounds. Now the co-presence of something regular, something to which the mind has been accustomed in various moods and in a less excited state, cannot but have great efficacy in tempering and restraining the passion by an intertexture of ordinary feeling, and of feeling not strictly and necessarily connected with the passion. This is unquestionably true ; and hence, though the opinion will at first appear paradoxical, from the tendency of metre to divest language, in a certain degree, of its reality, and thus to throw a sort of half-consciousness of unsubstantial existence over the whole composition, there can be little doubt but that more pathetic situations and sentiments, that is, those which have a greater proportion of pain connected with them, may be endured in metrical composition, especially in rhyme, than in prose. The metre of the old ballads is very artless ; yet they contain many passages which would illustrate this opinion ; and, I hope, if the following Poems be attentively perused, similar instances will be found in them. This opinion may be further illustrated by appealing to the Reader's own experience of the reluctance with which he comes to the re-perusal of the distressful parts of *Clarissa Harlowe*, or the *Gamester* ; while Shakspeare's writings, in the most pathetic scenes, never act upon us, as pathetic, beyond the bounds of pleasure—an effect which, in a much greater degree than might at first be imagined, is to be ascribed to small, but continual and regular impulses of pleasurable surprise from the metrical arrange-

ment.—On the other hand (what it must be allowed will much more frequently happen) if the Poet's words should be incommensurate with the passion, and inadequate to raise the Reader to a height of desirable excitement, then, (unless the Poet's choice of his metre has been grossly injudicious) in the feelings of pleasure which the Reader has been accustomed to connect with metre in general, and in the feeling, whether cheerful or melancholy, which he has been accustomed to connect with that particular movement of metre, there will be found something which will greatly contribute to impart passion to the words, and to effect the complex end which the Poet proposes to himself.

If I had undertaken a **SYSTEMATIC** defence of the theory here maintained, it would have been my duty to develop the various causes upon which the pleasure received from metrical language depends. Among the chief of these causes is to be reckoned a principle which must be well known to those who have made any of the Arts the object of accurate reflection ; namely, the pleasure which the mind derives from the perception of similitude in dissimilitude. This principle is the great spring of the activity of our minds, and their chief feeder. From this principle the direction of the sexual appetite, and all the passions connected with it, take their origin : it is the life of our ordinary conversation ; and upon the accuracy with which similitude in dissimilitude, and dissimilitude in similitude are perceived, depend our taste and our moral feelings. It would not be a useless employment to apply this principle to the consideration of metre, and to show that metre is hence enabled to afford much

pleasure, and to point out in what manner that pleasure is produced. But my limits will not permit me to enter upon this subject, and I must content myself with a general summary.

I have said that poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings : it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity : the emotion is contemplated till, by a species of re-action, the tranquillity gradually disappears, and an emotion, kindred to that which was before the subject of contemplation, is gradually produced, and does itself actually exist in the mind. In this mood successful composition generally begins, and in a mood similar to this it is carried on ; but the emotion, of whatever kind, and in whatever degree, from various causes, is qualified by various pleasures, so that in describing any passions whatsoever, which are voluntarily described, the mind will, upon the whole, be in a state of enjoyment. If Nature be thus cautious to preserve in a state of enjoyment a being so employed, the Poet ought to profit by the lesson held forth to him, and ought especially to take care, that, whatever passions he communicates to his Reader, those passions, if his Reader's mind be sound and vigorous, should always be accompanied with an overbalance of pleasure. Now the music of harmonious metrical language, the sense of difficulty overcome, and the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or metre of the same or similar construction, an indistinct perception perpetually renewed of language closely resembling that of real life, and yet, in the circumstance of metre, differing from it so widely—all

these imperceptibly make up a complex feeling of delight, which is of the most important use in tempering the painful feeling which will always be found intermingled with powerful descriptions of the deeper passions. This effect is always produced in pathetic and impassioned poetry ; while, in lighter compositions, the ease and gracefulness with which the Poet manages his numbers are themselves confessedly a principal source of the gratification of the Reader. All that it is *necessary* to say, however, upon this subject, may be effected by affirming, what few persons will deny, that, of two descriptions, either of passions, manners, or characters, each of them equally well executed, the one in prose and the other in verse, the verse will be read a hundred times where the prose is read once. We see that Pope, by the power of verse alone, has contrived to render the plainest common sense interesting, and even frequently to invest it with the appearance of passion. In consequence of these convictions I related in metre the Tale of GOODY BLAKE and HARRY GILL, which is one of the rudest of this collection. My wish was to draw attention to the truth, that the power of the human imagination is sufficient to produce such changes even in our physical nature as might almost appear miraculous. The truth is an important one ; the fact (for it is a *fact*) is a valuable illustration of it : and I have the satisfaction of knowing that it has been communicated to many hundreds of people who would never have heard of it, had it not been narrated as a Ballad, and in a more impressive metre than is usual in Ballads.

Having thus explained a few of my reasons for writing in verse, and why I have chosen subjects from common life, and endeavoured to bring my language near to the real language of men, if I have been too minute in pleading my own cause, I have at the same time been treating a subject of general interest ; and for this reason a few words shall be added with reference solely to these particular poems, and to some defects which will probably be found in them. I am sensible that my associations must have sometimes been particular instead of general, and that, consequently, giving to things a false importance, I may have sometimes written upon unworthy subjects ; but I am less apprehensive on this account, than that my language may frequently have suffered from those arbitrary connections of feelings and ideas with particular words and phrases, from which no man can altogether protect himself. Hence I have no doubt, that, in some instances, feelings, even of the ludicrous, may be given to my Readers by expressions which appeared to me tender and pathetic. Such faulty expressions, were I convinced they were faulty at present, and that they must necessarily continue to be so, I would willingly take all reasonable pains to correct. But it is dangerous to make these alterations on the simple authority of a few individuals, or even of certain classes of men ; for where the understanding of an Author is not convinced, or his feelings altered, this cannot be done without great injury to himself : for his own feelings are his stay and support ; and, if he set them aside in one instance, he may be induced to repeat

this act till his mind shall lose all confidence in itself, and become utterly debilitated. To this it may be added, that the critic ought never to forget that he is himself exposed to the same errors as the Poet, and, perhaps, in a much greater degree : for there can be no presumption in saying of most readers, that it is not probable they will be so well acquainted with the various stages of meaning through which words have passed, or with the fickleness or stability of the relations of particular ideas to each other ; and, above all, since they are so much less interested in the subject, they may decide lightly and carelessly.

Long as the Reader has been detained, I hope he will permit me to caution him against a mode of false criticism which has been applied to Poetry, in which the language closely resembles that of life and nature. Such verses have been triumphed over in parodies, of which Dr. Johnson's stanza is a fair specimen :—

‘ I put my hat upon my head
And walked into the Strand,
And there I met another man
Whose hat was in his hand.’

Immediately under these lines let us place one of the most justly-admired stanzas of the “ *Babes in the Wood.*”

‘ These pretty Babes with hand in hand
Went wandering up and down ;
But never more they saw the Man
Approaching from the Town.’

In both these stanzas the words, and the order of the

words, in no respect differ from the most unimpassioned conversation. There are words in both, for example, 'the Strand,' and 'the Town,' connected with none but the most familiar ideas ; yet the one stanza we admit as admirable, and the other as a fair example of the superlatively contemptible. Whence arises this difference? Not from the metre, not from the language, not from the order of the words ; but the *matter* expressed in Dr. Johnson's stanza is contemptible. The proper method of treating trivial and simple verses, to which Dr. Johnson's stanza would be a fair parallelism, is not to say, this is a bad kind of poetry, or, this is not poetry ; but, this wants sense ; it is neither interesting in itself, nor can *lead* to any thing interesting ; the images neither originate in that sane state of feeling which arises out of thought, nor can excite thought or feeling in the Reader. This is the only sensible manner of dealing with such verses. Why trouble yourself about the species till you have previously decided upon the genus? Why take pains to prove that an ape is not a Newton, when it is self-evident that he is not a man?

One request I must make of my reader, which is, that in judging these Poems he would decide by his own feelings genuinely, and not by reflection upon what will probably be the judgment of others. How common is it to hear a person say, I myself do not object to this style of composition, or this or that expression, but, to such and such classes of people, it will appear mean or ludicrous ! This mode of criticism, so destructive of all sound unadulterated judgment, is almost universal : let the Reader then abide, independently, by his own feelings,

and, if he finds himself affected, let him not suffer such conjectures to interfere with his pleasure.

If an Author, by any single composition, has impressed us with respect for his talents, it is useful to consider this as affording a presumption, that on other occasions where we have been displeased, he, nevertheless, may not have written ill or absurdly; and further, to give him so much credit for this one composition as may induce us to review what has displeased us, with more care than we should otherwise have bestowed upon it. This is not only an act of justice, but, in our decisions upon poetry especially, may conduce, in a high degree, to the improvement of our own taste: for an *accurate* taste in poetry, and in all the other arts, as Sir Joshua Reynolds has observed, is an *acquired* talent, which can only be produced by thought and a long-continued intercourse with the best models of composition. This is mentioned, not with so ridiculous a purpose as to prevent the most inexperienced Reader from judging for himself, (I have already said that I wish him to judge for himself;) but merely to temper the rashness of decision, and to suggest, that, if Poetry be a subject on which much time has not been bestowed, the judgment may be erroneous; and that, in many cases, it necessarily will be so.

Nothing would, I know, have so effectually contributed to further the end which I have in view, as to have shown of what kind the pleasure is, and how that pleasure is produced, which is confessedly produced by metrical composition essentially different from that which I have here endeavoured to recommend: for the Reader will say that he has been pleased by such com-

position ; and what more can be done for him ? The power of any art is limited ; and he will suspect, that, if it be proposed to furnish him with new friends, that can be only upon condition of his abandoning his old friends. Besides, as I have said, the Reader is himself conscious of the pleasure which he has received from such composition, composition to which he has peculiarly attached the endearing name of Poetry ; and all men feel an habitual gratitude, and something of an honourable bigotry, for the objects which have long continued to please them : we not only wish to be pleased, but to be pleased in that particular way in which we have been accustomed to be pleased. There is in these feelings enough to outweigh a host of arguments ; and I should be the less able to combat them successfully, as I am willing to allow, that, in order entirely to enjoy the Poetry which I am recommending, it would be necessary to give up much of what is ordinarily enjoyed. But, would my limits have permitted me to point out how this pleasure is produced, many obstacles might have been removed, and the Reader assisted in perceiving that the powers of language are not so limited as he may suppose ; and that it is possible for poetry to give other enjoyments, of a purer, more lasting, and more exquisite nature. This part of the subject has not been altogether neglected ; but it has not been so much my present aim to prove, that the interest excited by some other kinds of poetry is less vivid, and less worthy of the nobler powers of the mind, as to offer reasons for presuming, that if my purpose were fulfilled, a species of poetry would be produced, which is genuine poetry ; in

its nature well adapted to interest mankind permanently, and likewise important in the multiplicity and quality of its moral relations.

From what has been said, and from a perusal of the Poems, the Reader will be able clearly to perceive the object which I had in view: he will determine how far it has been attained; and, what is a much more important question, whether it be worth attaining: and upon the decision of these two questions will rest my claim to the approbation of the Public.

APPENDIX.

See page 325.—‘ by what is usually called
POETIC DICTION.’

PERHAPS, as I have no right to expect that attentive perusal, without which, confined, as I have been, to the narrow limits of a preface, my meaning cannot be thoroughly understood, I am anxious to give an exact notion of the sense in which the phrase poetic diction has been used ; and for this purpose, a few words shall here be added, concerning the origin and characteristics of the phraseology, which I have condemned under that name.

The earliest poets of all nations generally wrote from passion excited by real events ; they wrote naturally, and as men : feeling powerfully as they did, their language was daring, and figurative. In succeeding times, Poets, and Men ambitious of the fame of Poets, perceiving the influence of such language, and desirous of producing the same effect without being animated by the

same passion, set themselves to a mechanical adoption of these figures of speech, and made use of them, sometimes with propriety, but much more frequently applied them to feelings and thoughts with which they had no natural connection whatsoever. A language was thus insensibly produced, differing materially from the real language of men in *any situation*. The Reader or Hearer of this distorted language found himself in a perturbed and unusual state of mind : when affected by the genuine language of passion he had been in a perturbed and unusual state of mind also : in both cases he was willing that his common judgment and understanding should be laid asleep, and he had no instinctive and infallible perception of the true to make him reject the false ; the one served as a passport for the other. The emotion was in both cases delightful, and no wonder if he confounded the one with the other, and believed them both to be produced by the same, or similar causes. Besides, the Poet spake to him in the character of a man to be looked up to, a man of genius and authority. Thus, and from a variety of other causes, this distorted language was received with admiration ; and Poets, it is probable, who had before contented themselves for the most part with misapplying only expressions which at first had been dictated by real passion, carried the abuse still further, and introduced phrases composed apparently in the spirit of the original figurative language of passion, yet altogether of their own invention, and characterised by various degrees of wanton deviation from good sense and nature.

It is indeed true, that the language of the earliest Poets was felt to differ materially from ordinary language, because it was the language of extraordinary occasions ; but it was really spoken by men, language which the Poet himself had uttered when he had been affected by the events which he described, or which he had heard uttered by those around him. To this language it is probable that metre of some sort or other was early superadded. This separated the genuine language of Poetry still further from common life, so that whoever read or heard the poems of these earliest Poets felt himself moved in a way in which he had not been accustomed to be moved in real life, and by causes manifestly different from those which acted upon him in real life. This was the great temptation to all the corruptions which have followed : under the protection of this feeling succeeding Poets constructed a phraseology which had one thing, it is true, in common with the genuine language of poetry, namely, that it was not heard in ordinary conversation ; that it was unusual. But the first Poets, as I have said, spake a language which, though unusual, was still the language of men. This circumstance, however, was disregarded by their successors ; they found that they could please by easier means : they became proud of modes of expression which they themselves had invented, and which were uttered only by themselves. In process of time metre became a symbol or promise of this unusual language, and whoever took upon him to write in metre, according as he possessed more or less of true poetic genius, introduced less or more of this

adulterated phraseology into his compositions, and the true and the false became so inseparably interwoven that the taste of men was gradually perverted ; and this language was received as a natural language : and at length, by the influence of books upon men, did to a certain degree really become so. Abuses of this kind were imported from one nation to another, and with the progress of refinement this diction became daily more and more corrupt, thrusting out of sight the plain humanities of nature by a motley masquerade of tricks, quaintnesses, hieroglyphics, and enigmas.

It would not be uninteresting to point out the causes of the pleasure given by this extravagant and absurd diction. It depends upon a great variety of causes, but upon none, perhaps, more than its influence in impressing a notion of the peculiarity and exaltation of the Poet's character, and in flattering the Reader's self-love by bringing him nearer to a sympathy with that character ; an effect which is accomplished by unsettling ordinary habits of thinking, and thus assisting the Reader to approach to that perturbed and dizzy state of mind in which if he does not find himself, he imagines that he is *balked* of a peculiar enjoyment which poetry can and ought to bestow.

The sonnet quoted from Gray, in the Preface, except the lines printed in Italics, consists of little else but this diction, though not of the worst kind ; and indeed, if one may be permitted to say so, it is far too common in the best writers both ancient and modern. Perhaps in no way, by positive example, could more easily be given a

notion of what I mean by the phrase *poetic diction* than by referring to a comparison between the metrical paraphrase which we have of passages in the Old and New Testament, and those passages as they exist in our common Translation. See Pope's "Messiah" throughout; Prior's 'Did sweeter sounds adorn my flowing tongue,' &c. &c. 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels,' &c. &c. 1st Corinthians, chap. xiii. By way of immediate example, take the following of Dr. Johnson:

' Turn on the prudent Ant thy heedless eyes,
 Observe her labours, Sluggard, and be wise;
 No stern command, no monitory voice,
 Prescribes her duties, or directs her choice;
 Yet, timely provident, she hastes away
 To snatch the blessings of a plenteous day;
 When fruitful Summer loads the teeming plain,
 She crops the harvest, and she stores the grain.
 How long shall sloth usurp thy useless hours,
 Unnerve thy vigour, and enchain thy powers?
 While artful shades thy downy couch enclose,
 And soft solicitation courts repose,
 Amidst the drowsy charms of dull delight,
 Year chases year with unremitting flight,
 Till Want now following, fraudulent and slow,
 Shall spring to seize thee, like an ambush'd foe.'

From this hubbub of words pass to the original. 'Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O Sluggard?

when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep. So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.' Proverbs, chap. vi.

One more quotation, and I have done. It is from Cowper's Verses supposed to be written by Alexander Selkirk:—

'Religion! what treasure untold
Resides in that heavenly word!
More precious than silver and gold,
Or all that this earth can afford.
But the sound of the church-going bell
These valleys and rocks never heard,
Ne'er sighed at the sound of a knell,
Or smiled when a sabbath appeared.

Ye winds, that have made me your sport,
Convey to this desolate shore
Some cordial endearing report
Of a land I must visit no more.
My Friends, do they now and then send
A wish or a thought after me?
O tell me I yet have a friend,
Though a friend I am never to see.'

This passage is quoted as an instance of three different styles of composition. The first four lines are poorly expressed; some Critics would call the language prosaic; the fact is, it would be bad prose, so bad, that it is scarcely worse in metre. The epithet 'church-going' applied to a bell, and that by so chaste a writer as Cowper, is an instance of the strange abuses which Poets have introduced into their language, till they and their

Readers take them as matters of course, if they do not single them out expressly as objects of admiration. The two lines 'Ne'er sighed at the sound,' &c., are, in my opinion, an instance of the language of passion wrested from its proper use, and, from the mere circumstance of the composition being in metre, applied upon an occasion that does not justify such violent expressions; and I should condemn the passage, though perhaps few Readers will agree with me, as vicious poetic diction. The last stanza is throughout admirably expressed: it would be equally good whether in prose or verse, except that the Reader has an exquisite pleasure in seeing such natural language so naturally connected with metre. The beauty of this stanza tempts me to conclude with a principle which ought never to be lost sight of,—namely, that in works of *imagination and sentiment*, for of these only have I been treating, in proportion as ideas and feelings are valuable, whether the composition be in prose or in verse, they require and exact one and the same language. Metre is but adventitious to composition, and the phraseology for which that passport is necessary, even where it may be graceful at all, will be little valued by the judicious.

11

NOTES.

Page 21.

To the Daisy.

THIS Poem, and two others to the same Flower, were written in the year 1802; which is mentioned, because in some of the ideas, though not in the manner in which those ideas are connected, and likewise even in some of the expressions, there is a resemblance to passages in a Poem (lately published) of Mr. Montgomery's, entitled, a Field Flower. This being said, Mr. Montgomery will not think any apology due to him; I cannot, however, help addressing him in the words of the Father of English Poets.

' Though it happe me to rehersin—
' That ye han in your freshe songis saied,
' Forberith me, and beth not ill apaied,
' Sith that ye se I doe it in the honour
' Of Love, and eke in service of the Flour.'

1807.

Page 37.

The Seven Sisters.

The Story of this Poem is from the German of FREDERICA BRUN.

Page 149.

The Horn of Egremont Castle.

This Story is a Cumberland tradition; I have heard it also related of the Hall of Hutton John, an ancient residence of the Hudlestons, in a sequestered Valley upon the River Dacor.

Page 154.

Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle.

Henry Lord Clifford, &c. &c., who is the subject of this Poem, was the son of John Lord Clifford, who was slain at Towton Field, which John Lord Clifford, as is known to the reader of English History, was the person who after the battle of Wakefield slew, in the pursuit, the young Earl of Rutland, son of the Duke of York, who had fallen in the battle, "in part of revenge" (say the Authors of the History of Cumberland and Westmoreland); "for the Earl's Father had slain his." A deed which worthily blemished the author (saith Speed); but who, as he adds, "dare promise any thing temperate of himself in the heat of martial fury? chiefly, when it was resolved not to leave any branch of the York line standing; for so one maketh this Lord to speak." This, no doubt, I would observe by the by, was an action sufficiently in the vindictive spirit of the times, and yet not altogether so bad as represented; "for the Earl was no child, as some writers would have him, but able to bear arms, being sixteen or seventeen years of age, as is evident from this, (say the Memoirs of the Countess of Pembroke, who was laudably anxious to wipe away, as far as could be, this stigma from the illustrious

name to which she was born,) that he was the next Child to King Edward the Fourth, which his mother had by Richard Duke of York, and that King was then eighteen years of age : and for the small distance betwixt her children, see Austin Vincent, in his Book of Nobility, p. 622, where he writes of them all. It may further be observed, that Lord Clifford, who was then himself only twenty-five years of age, had been a leading man and commander, two or three years together in the army of Lancaster, before this time ; and, therefore, would be less likely to think that the Earl of Rutland might be entitled to mercy from his youth.—But, independent of this act, at best a cruel and savage one, the Family of Clifford had done enough to draw upon them the vehement hatred of the House of York : so that after the Battle of Towton there was no hope for them but in flight and concealment. Henry, the subject of the Poem, was deprived of his estate and honours during the space of twenty-four years ; all which time he lived as a shepherd in Yorkshire, or in Cumberland, where the estate of his Father-in-law (Sir Lancelot Threlkeld) lay. He was restored to his estate and honours in the first year of Henry the Seventh. It is recorded that, “ when called to Parliament, he behaved nobly and wisely ; but otherwise came seldom to London or the Court ; and rather delighted to live in the country, where he repaired several of his Castles, which had gone to decay during the late troubles.” Thus far is chiefly collected from Nicholson and Burn ; and I can add, from my own knowledge, that there is a tradition current in the village of Threlkeld and its neighbourhood, his principal retreat, that, in the course of his shepherd-life, he had acquired great astronomical knowledge. I cannot conclude this note without adding a word upon the subject of those numerous and noble feudal Edifices, spoken of in the Poem, the ruins of some of which are, at this day, so great an ornament to that interesting country. The Cliffords had always been distinguished for an honourable pride in these Castles ; and we have seen that, after the wars of York and Lancaster, they were rebuilt ; in the civil wars of Charles the First they were again laid waste, and again restored almost to their former magnificence by the

celebrated Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Pembroke, &c. &c. Not more than twenty-five years after this was done, when the estates of Clifford had passed into the Family of Tufton, three of these Castles, namely, Brough, Brougham, and Pendragon, were demolished, and the timber and other materials sold by Thomas Earl of Thanet. We will hope that, when this order was issued, the Earl had not consulted the text of Isaiah, 58th chap. 12th verse, to which the inscription placed over the gate of Pendragon Castle, by the Countess of Pembroke (I believe his Grandmother), at the time she repaired that structure, refers the reader :—“ *And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places : thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations ; and thou shalt be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of paths to dwell in.*” The Earl of Thanet, the present possessor of the Estates, with a due respect for the memory of his ancestors, and a proper sense of the value and beauty of these remains of antiquity, has (I am told) given orders that they shall be preserved from all depredations.

Page 155. Line 15.

“ *Earth helped him with the cry of blood.*”

This line is from “ The Battle of Bosworth Field,” by Sir John Beaumont (brother to the Dramatist), whose poems are written with much spirit, elegance, and harmony ; and have deservedly been reprinted lately in Chalmers’ Collection of English Poets.

Page 159. Line 7.

“ *And both the undying Fish that swim
Though Bowscale-Tarn,*” &c.

It is imagined by the people of the country that there are two immortal Fish, inhabitants of this Tarn, which lies in the mountains not far from Threlkeld.—Blencathara, mentioned before, is the old and proper name of the mountain vulgarly called Saddle-back.

Page 159. Line 27.

*“ Armour resting in his Halls
On the blood of Clifford calls.”*

The martial character of the Cliffords is well known to the readers of English history ; but it may not be improper here to say, by way of comment on these lines and what follows, that besides several others who perished in the same manner, the four immediate Progenitors of the Person in whose hearing this is supposed to be spoken, all died in the Field.

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