



*The Poems of
William Wordsworth*

COLLECTED READING TEXTS
FROM
THE CORNELL WORDSWORTH

COMPLETE INDEX

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*The Poems of
William Wordsworth*

COLLECTED READING TEXTS
FROM
THE CORNELL WORDSWORTH SERIES

INDEX

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Contents of Volume III

Preface	7
Acknowledgments	9
Note on the Text	9
Shorter Poems (1807–1820)	11
<i>The Prelude</i> (1824–1839)	144
Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, (1820–1845)	
<i>The River Duddon. A Series of Sonnets, 1820</i>	349
<i>Ecclesiastical Sketches, 1822</i>	368
<i>Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820</i>	427
<i>Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems, Composed (two excepted) during a Tour in Scotland, and on the English Border, in the Autumn of 1831</i>	469
<i>Sonnets Composed or Suggested during a tour in Scotland, in the Summer of 1833</i>	488
<i>Memorials of a Tour in Italy. 1837</i>	524
<i>Sonnets upon the Punishment of Death. In Series</i>	555
<i>Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order</i>	561
Last Poems (1821–1850)	568
Notes	780
Index to Poems in Volume III	798
Index to Poems in Volumes I to III	828

***For a complete list of contents in each section,
please expand the bookmarks panel.***

Contents of volumes I and II

Volume I

Early Poems and Fragments, 1785–1797	11
<i>An Evening Walk</i> (1793)	82
<i>Descriptive Sketches</i> (1793)	97

<i>Adventures on Salisbury Plain</i> (1795–1799)	123
<i>The Borderers</i> (1797)	151
<i>The Ruined Cottage</i> and <i>The Pedlar</i> (1798, 1803–1804)	
<i>The Ruined Cottage</i> (1798)	270
<i>The Pedlar</i> (1803–1804)	286
<i>Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems, 1797–1800</i>	
<i>Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems</i> (1798)	312
<i>Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, in Two Volumes</i> (1800)	377
Other Poems, 1798–1800	476
<i>Peter Bell, a Tale</i> (1799)	487
<i>The Prelude</i> (1798–1799)	530
<i>Home at Grasmere</i> (1800–1806)	558
<i>Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800–1807</i>	
<i>Poems, in Two Volumes</i> (1807)	587
Other Poems, 1798–1800	718

Volume II

<i>The Prelude</i> (1805–1806)	11
<i>Benjamin the Waggoner &c</i> (1806)	250
<i>The Tuft of Primroses, with Other Late Poems for The Recluse</i> (1808–1828)	
<i>The Tuft of Primroses</i>	274
<i>To the Clouds</i>	291
<i>St. Paul's</i>	292
<i>Composed when a probability existed of our being obliged to quit Rydal</i>	
<i>Mount as a Residence</i>	294
<i>The Excursion</i> (1808–1814)	
<i>The Excursion</i> (1814)	298
<i>The Peasant's Life</i>	568
<i>The Shepherd of Bield Crag</i>	570
<i>The White Doe of Rylstone; Or the Fate of the Nortons. A Poem</i> (1808)	572
Translations of Chaucer and Virgil (1801–1831)	
<i>Chaucer: The Prioress's Tale</i>	635
<i>Chaucer: The Cuckoo and the Nightingale</i>	643
<i>Chaucer: Troilus and Cressida</i>	654
<i>Chaucer: The Manciple (from the Prologue) and his Tale</i>	659
<i>Virgil: Aeneid</i>	667
<i>Virgil: Georgics</i>	751

Preface

The Cornell Wordsworth series, under the general editorship of Stephen Parrish, began appearing in 1975. Through controversy and acclaim, the editions have steadily appeared over three decades, coming to completion in 2007 with the publication of the twenty-first volume—an edition of *The Excursion*—and a supplementary volume of indexes and guides for the series. The purpose of this edition is to collect all of the earliest complete reading texts garnered from the twenty-one volumes in the series.

The earliest records of Wordsworth’s poetic composition date from 1785, when he was fifteen years old, and the latest date from 1847, when he was seventy-seven. In the interim he composed hundreds of poems, thousands of verses, not all of which reached—or survived in—a “completed” state. All of those that did are included here. If William Butler Yeats was remarkable for reinventing his poetic self, Wordsworth might be said to have constantly “revisited” his. Three of his lyrics bear the revealing sequential titles, “Yarrow Unvisited” (1803), “Yarrow Visited” (1814), and “Yarrow Revisited” (1831). In the first, the poet-traveler prefers his imagined Yarrow—the Yarrow of Scots balladeers Nicol Burne, John Logan, and William Hamilton—to the physical one. In the second, the “genuine” Yarrow engenders an image that

Will dwell with me—to heighten joy,
And cheer my mind in sorrow.

And the third pays tribute to his friend and fellow poet, Walter Scott, with whom he toured the Yarrow valley before the ailing Scott departed for Italy: in this time of “change and changing,” he prays that the valley maintain its power to restore “brightness” to “the soul’s deep valley.” Significant threads of Wordsworth’s development as a poet are embodied in these three elegiac tributes. They are all written in a ballad stanza that Wordsworth borrowed and adapted from the older Scots poets. A glance through the pages of this volume will illustrate the varied verse forms the poet adopted and transformed over his long career. Obvious favorites were his own meditative style of blank verse and the sonnet in its various guises. But he employed a variety of meters, stanzaic patterns, and rhyme schemes in producing poems ranging from ballads to autobiography, satirical squibs to verse romance, from epitaphs to royal tributes. The methods, too, of the three “Yarrows” are instructive. The primacy of the imagination is sug-

gested in the poet's reluctance to visit the famed valley; upon visiting the place, the poet's response is to preserve it in memory as a "spot of time" to bind his days, "each to each" as a remedy for future sorrow; and on revisiting the valley he acknowledges that sorrow and attempts to recharge the healing power of memory.

Another example of "revisiting" can be found in the restless energy that Wordsworth displayed over his entire writing life in composing sonnets, both singly, as apparently instant responses to present scene, public event, or personal history, and in series, building both narrative and argument through this highly adaptive form. And, occupying the center of this metaphor are the several attempts to write the story of his inner life as a poet, here represented in the three versions of *The Prelude*.

Annotation is confined largely to reproducing the notes Wordsworth published with his poems. Editorial commentary has been kept to a minimum, given the rich resource in each of the Cornell Wordsworth volumes, leaving room instead for the poetry. For information about the source of the text, its compositional history, its textual and interpretive annotation, and its social and historical context, the reader is referred to the appropriate volumes in the series, cited in the editor's notes at the end of each volume.

Acknowledgments

For the impetus to prepare such an edition and for his continuing and enthusiastic support for its completion I owe thanks to Stephen Parrish. I have gained from fruitful discussions with James Butler, Stephen Gill, and Mark Reed from the beginning stages, and for making my task easier by helping with proofreading and other tasks, I especially thank James and Mark. I owe thanks, too, to the editors who prepared each of the editions from which the reading texts making up this edition were drawn. All of them are acknowledged by name, and their work cited, in the editor's notes. None of these generous scholars can be held responsible for any flaws in detail or judgment. I am pleased to acknowledge the Wordsworth Trust for graciously permitting the use of materials from their collections and Cornell University Press for both the permission and the assistance needed to prepare this gathering of reading texts from their landmark series of Wordsworth editions. And for wise counsel and technical assistance in the enterprize of producing an electronic text of these volumes, I am grateful to Richard Gravil of Humanities-Ebooks.

Note on the Text

The source for each poem is the earliest and most complete reading text presented in the volume in the Cornell Wordsworth series that contains that poem. With the few exceptions noted below, no attempt has been made to include the many alternate readings and revisions that these volumes provide. Early evidence of Wordsworth revisiting his own work is found in the two versions of *Pity* ("Now too while o'er the heart we feel") and in the "extracts" from *The Vale of Esthwaite*; both the original poems and their later development are included. In the case of *The Prelude*, each of the three versions that stood as complete is represented. In 1799 Wordsworth revised the ending to *The Ruined Cottage*, within a year of composing the first ending, and in 1803–1804 incorporated much of the earlier poem in an expanded portrait of the Pedlar in *The Pedlar*. Wordsworth then incorporated large parts of both poems into *The Excursion* in 1814. These three distinct poems are included. Wordsworth occasionally folded a free-standing sonnet into a subsequent sonnet series or sequence, in which case the

free-standing sonnet is repeated in its later context.

The aim throughout has been to present clean reading texts of Wordsworth's poems. In most cases the poet's and his earliest printers' orthography has not been altered, though some exceptions have been made for consistency. To distinguish a poem originally published without a title from poems that immediately precede or follow it, I have used the familiar anthologist's convention of quoting the first line of the poem as its "title," even though neither Wordsworth nor his publishers did so.

A few editorial devices have proven necessary, especially where the source for the reading text is a manuscript. For further comment on the gaps and irregularities in the manuscript sources, see the original Cornell editions.

- [] A gap in the source, either left by the poet, or caused by a damaged manuscript.
- [word] Within the brackets are missing letters or words, supplied from a different authorial source, or by the editor; in a few instances, brackets enclose lines that Wordsworth apparently canceled, but without indicating a substitute.
- ** — Asterisks and solid lines, employed by Wordsworth to indicate omissions or breaks in the text.
- == A double solid line, used by the editor to indicate an interruption in the text.

Wordsworth's long notes, prose dedications, and other prose writings connected to the poems, are gathered in the "Notes" section at the end of the volume, and their presence is indicated in the on-page notes.

Jared Curtis
Seattle, Washington

Land and sea 30
 Give themselves up to jollity,
 And with the heart of May
 Doth every Beast keep holiday,
 Thou Child of Joy,
 Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
 Shepherd Boy! 35

Ye blessed Creatures, I have heard the call
 Ye to each other make; I see
 The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
 My heart is at your festival,
 My head hath it's coronal, 40
 The fullness of your bliss, I feel—I feel it all.
 Oh evil day! if I were sullen
 While the Earth herself is adorning,
 This sweet May-morning,
 And the Children are pulling, 45
 On every side,
 In a thousand vallies far and wide.
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
 And the Babe leaps up on his mother's arm:—
 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear! 50
 —But there's a Tree, of many one,
 A single Field which I have look'd upon,
 Both of them speak of something that is gone:
 The Pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat: 55
 Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
 Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
 The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
 Hath had elsewhere it's setting, 60
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness.
 But trailing clouds of glory do we come

From God, who is our home: 65
 Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
 Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
 But He beholds the light, and whence it flows,
 He sees it in his joy; 70
 The Youth, who daily farther from the East
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the Man perceives it die away, 75
 And fade into the light of common day.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own;
 Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
 And, even with something of a Mother's mind,
 And no unworthy aim, 80
 The homely Nurse doth all she can
 To make her Foster-child, her Inmate Man,
 Forget the glories he hath known,
 And that imperial palace whence he came.

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses, 85
 A four year's Darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where mid work of his own hand he lies,
 Fretted by sallies of his Mother's kisses,
 With light upon him from his Father's eyes!
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart, 90
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,
 Shap'd by himself with newly-learned art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart, 95
 And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 But it will not be long

Ere this be thrown aside, 100
 And with new joy and pride
 The little Actor cons another part,
 Filling from time to time his “humorous stage”
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,
 That Life brings with her in her Equipage; 105
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 Thy Soul’s immensity;
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep 110
 Thy heritage, thou Eye among the blind,
 That, deaf and silent, read’st the eternal deep,
 Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
 Mighty Prophet! Seer blest!

On whom those truths do rest, 115
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find;
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality
 Broods like the Day, a Master o’er a Slave,
 A Presence which is not to be put by;

To whom the grave 120
 Is but a lonely bed without the sense or sight
 Of day or the warm light,

A place of thought where we in waiting lie;
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
 Of untam’d pleasures, on thy Being’s height, 125

Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
 The Years to bring the inevitable yoke,
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight, 130
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

O joy! that in our embers
 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive! 135

The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benedictions: not indeed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest;
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed
 Of Childhood, whether fluttering or at rest, 140
 With new-born hope for ever in his breast:—

Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things, 145
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a Creature
 Moving about in worlds not realiz'd,
 High instincts, before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surpriz'd: 150

But for those first affections,
 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing; 155

Uphold us, cherish us, and make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
 To perish never;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour, 160

Nor Man nor Boy,
 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!

Hence, in a season of calm weather,
 Though inland far we be, 165
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea

Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither.
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore. 170

Then, sing ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!

- And let the young Lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound!
 We in thought will join your throng,
 Ye that pipe and ye that play, 175
 Ye that through your hearts to day
 Feel the gladness of the May!
 What though the radiance which was once so bright
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour 180
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
 We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind,
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be, 185
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering,
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.
- And oh ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves, 190
 Think not of any severing of our loves!
 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
 I only have relinquish'd one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret, 195
 Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
 Is lovely yet;
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye 200
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give 205
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The Prelude (1805–1806)¹

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION, CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL TIME

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze
 That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
 And from the sky: it beats against my cheek
 And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.
 O welcome Messenger! O welcome Friend! 5
 A Captive greets thee, coming from a house
 Of bondage, from yon City's walls set free,
 A prison where he hath been long immured.
 Now I am free, enfranchis'd and at large,
 May fix my habitation where I will. 10
 What dwelling shall receive me? In what Vale
 Shall be my harbour? Underneath what grove
 Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
 Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
 The earth is all before me: with a heart 15
 Joyous, nor scar'd at its own liberty
 I look about, and should the guide I chuse
 Be nothing better than a wandering cloud
 I cannot miss my way. I breathe again;
 Trances of thought and mountings of the mind 20
 Come fast upon me: it is shaken off,
 As by miraculous gift 'tis shaken off,
 That burthen of my own unnatural self,
 The heavy weight of many a weary day
 Not mine, and such as were not made for me. 25
 Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
 With any promises of human life)
 Long months of ease and undisturb'd delight

1 For the source of the reading text and the editor's commentary see *The Thirteen-Book "Prelude,"* ed. Mark L. Reed, 2 vols. (1999).

Are mine in prospect: whither shall I turn
 By road or pathway or through open field, 30
 Or shall a twig or any floating thing
 Upon the river, point me out my course?
 Enough that I am free; for months to come
 May dedicate myself to chosen tasks;
 May quit the tiresome sea, and dwell on shore, 35
 If not a settler on the soil, at least
 To drink wild water, and to pluck green herbs,
 And gather fruits fresh from their native bough.
 Nay more, if I may trust myself, this hour
 Hath brought a gift that consecrates my joy; 40
 For I, methought, while the sweet breath of Heaven
 Was blowing on my body, felt within
 A corresponding mild creative breeze,
 A vital breeze which travell'd gently on
 O'er things which it had made, and is become 45
 A tempest, a redundant energy
 Vexing its own creation. 'Tis a power
 That does not come unrecognis'd, a storm,
 Which, breaking up a long continued frost
 Brings with it vernal promises, the hope 50
 Of active days, of dignity and thought,
 Of prowess in an honorable field,
 Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight,
 The holy life of music and of verse.
 Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make 55
 A present joy the matter of my Song,
 Pour out, that day, my soul in measur'd strains,
 Even in the very words which I have here
 Recorded: to the open fields I told
 A prophecy: poetic numbers came 60
 Spontaneously, and cloth'd in priestly robe
 My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,
 For holy services: great hopes were mine;
 My own voice chear'd me, and, far more, the mind's

Internal echo of the imperfect sound: 65

To both I listen'd, drawing from them both
A chearful confidence in things to come.

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
Gently, with careless steps, and came erelong 70

To a green shady place where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And settling into gentler happiness.

'Twas Autumn, and a calm and placid day,
With warmth as much as needed from a sun 75

Two hours declin'd towards the west, a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass
And, in the shelter'd grove where I was couch'd,

A perfect stillness. On the ground I lay
Passing through many thoughts, yet mainly such 80

As to myself pertain'd. I made a choice
Of one sweet Vale whither my steps should turn

And saw, methought, the very house and fields
Present before my eyes: nor did I fail
To add, meanwhile, assurance of some work 85

Of glory, there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps, too, there perform'd. Thus, long I lay

Chear'd by the genial pillow of the earth
Beneath my head, sooth'd by a sense of touch
From the warm ground, that balanced me[, though lost]¹ 90

Entirely, seeing nought, nought hearing, save
When here and there, about the grove of Oaks

Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees
Fell audibly, and with a startling sound.

Thus occupied in mind, I linger'd here 95
Contented, nor rose up until the sun

1 Here and elsewhere, gaps reflect the state of the text in the AB manuscripts. While most are filled in—or the surrounding revised—in the later texts, WW's intention at the time that the AB manuscripts were written remains unclear. For an explanation of each gap, see the notes at the appropriate point in Reed's edition of *The Thirteen-Book "Prelude,"*.

Had almost touch'd the horizon; bidding then
 A farewell to the City left behind,
 Even on the strong temptation of that hour
 And with its chance equipment, I resolved 100
 To journey towards the Vale which I had chosen.
 It was a splendid evening: and my soul
 Did once again make trial of her strength
 Restored to her afresh; nor did she want
 Eolian visitations; but the harp 105
 Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
 Of harmony dispers'd in straggling sounds
 And, lastly, utter silence. "Be it so,
 It is an injury," said I, "to this day
 To think of any thing but present joy." 110
 So like a Peasant I pursued my road
 Beneath the evening sun; nor had one wish
 Again to bend the sabbath of that time
 To a servile yoke. What need of many words?
 A pleasant loitering journey, through two days 115
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage.

I spare to speak, my Friend, of what ensued,
 The admiration and the love, the life
 In common things; the endless store of things
 Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 120
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood,
 The self-congratulation, the complete
 Composure, and the happiness entire.
 But speedily a longing in me rose
 To brace myself to some determin'd aim, 125
 Reading or thinking, either to lay up
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference, I had hopes
 Still higher, that with a frame of outward life,
 I might endue, might fix in a visible home 130
 Some portion of those phantoms of conceit
 That had been floating loose about so long,

And to such Beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppress'd my heart.
 But I have been discouraged: gleams of light 135
 Flash often from the East, then disappear
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not
 Into a steady morning: if my mind,
 Remembering the sweet promise of the past,
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme, 140
 Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds
 Impediments from day to day renew'd.

And now it would content me to yield up
 Those lofty hopes a while for present gifts
 Of humbler industry. But, O dear Friend! 145
 The Poet, gentle creature as he is,
 Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;
 His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
 Though no distress be near him but his own
 Unmanageable thoughts. The mind itself, 150
 The meditative mind, best pleased, perhaps,
 While she, as duteous as the Mother Dove,
 Sits brooding, lives not always to that end
 But hath less quiet instincts, goadings-on
 That drive her, as in trouble, through the groves. 155
 With me is now such passion, which I blame
 No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
 For such a glorious work, I through myself
 Make rigorous inquisition, the report 160
 Is often chearing; for I neither seem
 To lack, that first great gift! the vital soul,
 Nor general truths which are themselves a sort
 Of Elements and Agents, Under-Powers,
 Subordinate helpers of the living mind. 165
 Nor am I naked in external things,
 Forms, images; nor numerous other aids
 Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,

And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
 Time, place, and manners; these I seek, and these 170
 I find in plenteous store; but nowhere such
 As may be singled out with steady choice;
 No little Band of yet remember'd names
 Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
 To summon back from lonesome banishment 175
 And make them inmates in the hearts of men
 Now living, or to live in times to come.
 Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear,
 Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea
 I settle on some British theme, some old 180
 Romantic tale, by Milton left unsung:
 More often, resting at some gentle place
 Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
 Among the Shepherds, with reposing Knights
 Sit by a Fountain-side, and hear their tales. 185
 Sometimes, more sternly mov'd, I would relate
 How vanquish'd Mithridates northward pass'd,
 And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
 That Odin, Father of a Race by whom
 Perish'd the Roman Empire: how the Friends 190
 And Followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
 Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles;
 And left their usages, their arts, and laws
 To disappear by a slow gradual death;
 To dwindle and to perish one by one 195
 Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the Soul
 Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
 Surviv'd, and when the European came
 With skill and power that could not be withstood,
 Did like a pestilence maintain its hold, 200
 And wasted down by glorious death that Race
 Of natural Heroes: or I would record
 How in tyrannic times some unknown Man,
 Unheard of in the Chronicles of Kings,

Suffer'd in silence for the love of truth: 205
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force
 Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of the first Conquerors of the Indian Isles,
 Went single in his ministry across
 The Ocean, not to comfort the Oppress'd, 210
 But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about,
 Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus found
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's Mines;
 How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
 Of Wallace to be found like a wild flower, 215
 All over his dear Country, left the deeds
 Of Wallace, like a Family of Ghosts,
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
 Of independence and stern liberty. 220
 Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
 Some Tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
 Some variegated story, in the main
 Lofty, with interchange of gentler things; 225
 But deadening admonitions will succeed,
 And the whole beauteous Fabric seems to lack
 Foundation, and, withal, appears throughout
 Shadowy and unsubstantial. Then, last wish,
 My last and favorite aspiration! then 230
 I yearn towards some philosophic Song
 Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;
 With meditations passionate from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre; 235
 But from this awful burthen I full soon
 Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
 That mellow years will bring a riper mind
 And clearer insight. Thus from day to day
 I live, a mockery of the brotherhood 240

Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part
 Vague longing that is bred by want of power
 From paramount impulse not to be withstood,
 A timorous capacity from prudence;
 From circumspection infinite delay. 245
 Humility and modest awe themselves
 Betray me, serving often for a cloak
 To a more subtle selfishness, that now
 Doth lock my functions up in blank reserve,
 Now dupes me by an over anxious eye 250
 That with a false activity beats off
 Simplicity and self-presented truth.
 —Ah! better far than this, to stray about
 Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
 And ask no record of the hours, given up 255
 To vacant musing, unprov'd neglect
 Of all things, and deliberate holiday:
 Far better never to have heard the name
 Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
 Thus baffled by a mind that every hour 260
 Turns recreant to her task, takes heart again
 Then feels immediately some hollow thought
 Hang like an interdict upon her hopes.
 This is my lot; for either still I find
 Some imperfection in the chosen theme; 265
 Or see of absolute accomplishment
 Much wanting, so much wanting in myself,
 That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
 In indolence from vain perplexity,
 Unprofitably travelling towards the grave, 270
 Like a false Steward who hath much receiv'd
 And renders nothing back.—Was it for this
 That one, the fairest of all Rivers, lov'd
 To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song
 And from his alder shades and rocky falls, 275
 And from his fords and shallows sent a voice

That flow'd along my dreams? For this didst Thou,
 O Derwent! travelling over the green Plains
 Near my sweet birth-place, didst thou, beauteous Stream,
 Make ceaseless music through the night and day 280
 Which with its steady cadence tempering
 Our human waywardness, composed my thoughts
 To more than infant softness, giving me,
 Among the fretful dwellings of mankind,
 A knowledge, a dim earnest of the calm 285
 Which Nature breathes among the hills and groves.
 When, having left his Mountains, to the Towers
 Of Cockermouth that beauteous River came,
 Behind my Father's House he pass'd, close by,
 Along the margin of our Terrace Walk. 290
 He was a Playmate whom we dearly lov'd.
 Oh! many a time have I, a five years' Child,
 A naked Boy, in one delightful Rill,
 A little Mill-race sever'd from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day, 295
 Bask'd in the sun, and plunged, and bask'd again,
 Alternate all a summer's day, or cours'd
 Over the sandy fields, leaping through groves
 Of yellow grunsel, or when crag and hill,
 The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height, 300
 Were bronzed with a deep radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian Plains, and from my Mother's hut
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
 A naked Savage, in the thunder shower. 305
 Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
 Foster'd alike by beauty and by fear;
 Much favor'd in my birth-place, and no less
 In that beloved Vale to which, erelong,
 I was transplanted. Well I call to mind, 310
 ('Twas at an early age, ere I had seen
 Nine summers) when upon the mountain slope

Shorter Poems (1807–1820)¹

“Mark the concentrated Hazels that enclose”

Mark the concentrated Hazels that enclose
 Yon old grey Stone, protected from the ray
 Of noontide suns:—and even the beams that play
 And glance, while wantonly the rough wind blows,
 Are seldom free to touch the moss that grows 5
 Upon that roof—amid embowering gloom
 The very image framing of a Tomb,
 In which some ancient Chieftain finds repose
 Among the lonely mountains.—Live, ye Trees!
 And Thou, grey Stone, the pensive likeness keep 10
 Of a dark chamber where the Mighty sleep:
 For more than Fancy to the influence bends
 When solitary Nature condescends
 To mimic Time’s forlorn humanities.

“The Shepherd, looking eastward, softly said”

The Shepherd, looking eastward, softly said,
 “Bright is thy veil, O Moon, as thou art bright!”
 Forthwith, that little Cloud, in ether spread,
 And penetrated all with tender light,
 She cast away, and shewed her fulgent head 5
 Uncover’d;—dazzling the Beholder’s sight
 As if to vindicate her beauty’s right,
 Her beauty thoughtlessly disparaged.
 Meanwhile that Veil, removed or thrown aside,
 Went, floating from her, darkening as it went; 10
 And a huge Mass, to bury or to hide,
 Approached this glory of the firmament;
 Who meekly yields, and is obscur’d;—content
 With one calm triumph of a modest pride.

¹ For the sources of the reading texts and the editor’s commentary see *Shorter Poems, 1807–1820*, ed. Carl H. Ketcham (1989).

Ecclesiastical Sketches (1822)¹

Ecclesiastical Sketches *Part I*

FROM THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO BRITAIN,
TO THE CONSUMMATION OF THE PAPAL DOMINION

I. Introduction

I, who descended with glad step to chase
Cerulean Duddon from his cloud-fed spring,
And of my wild Companion dared to sing,
In verse that moved with strictly-measured pace;
I, who essayed the nobler Stream to trace 5
Of Liberty, and smote the plausive string
Till the checked Torrent, fiercely combating,
In victory found her natural resting-place;
Now seek upon the heights of Time the source
Of a holy River, on whose banks are found 10
Sweet pastoral flowers, and laurels that have crowned
Full oft the unworthy brow of lawless force;
Where, for delight of him who tracks its course,
Immortal amaranth and palms abound.

II. Conjectures

If there be Prophets on whose spirits rest
Past things, revealed like future, they can tell
What Powers, presiding o'er the sacred Well
Of Christian Faith, this savage Island bless'd
With its first bounty. Wandering through the West, 5
Did holy Paul a while in Britain dwell,²

1 WW's notes all appeared in the first edition of the poem in 1822. For the sources of the reading text and the editor's commentary, see *Sonnet Series and Itinerary Poems, 1820–1845*, ed. Geoffrey Jackson (2004), pp. 127–136, and 235–282. For WW's "Advertisement" see the notes at the end of this volume.

2 "Stillingfleet adduces many arguments in support of this opinion, but they are unconvincing. The latter part of this Sonnet alludes to a favourite notion of Catholic Writers, that Joseph of Arimathea and his Companions brought Christianity into Britain, and built a rude Church at Glastonbury alluded to hereafter in the passage upon the dissolution of Monasteries." WW's many references to the works of historians, naturalists, and other

And call the Fountain forth by miracle,
 And with dread signs the nascent Stream invest?
 Or He, whose bonds dropp'd off, whose prison doors
 Flew open, by an Angel's voice unbarred? 10
 Or some, of humbler name, to these wild shores
 Storm-driven, who having seen the cup of woe
 Pass from their Master, sojourned here to guard
 The precious current they had taught to flow?

III. Trepidation of the Druids

Screams round the Arch-druid's brow the Seamew¹—white
 As Menai's foam; and towards the mystic ring
 Where Augurs stand, the future questioning,
 Slowly the Cormorant aims her heavy flight,
 Portending ruin to each baleful rite, 5
 That, in the lapse of seasons, hath crept o'er
 Diluvian truths, and patriarchal lore:
 Haughty the Bard;—can these meek doctrines blight
 His transports? wither his heroic strains?
 But all shall be fulfilled;—the Julian spear 10
 A way first open'd; and, with Roman chains,
 The tidings come of Jesus crucified;
 They come—they spread—the weak, the suffering, hear;
 Receive the faith, and in the hope abide.

IV. Druidical Excommunication

Mercy and Love have met thee on thy road,
 Thou wretched Outcast, from the gift of fire
 And food cut off by sacerdotal ire,
 From every sympathy that Man bestowed!
 Yet shall it claim our reverence, that to God, 5
 Ancient of days! that to the eternal Sire
 These jealous Ministers of Law aspire,
 As to the one sole fount whence Wisdom flowed,

scholars throughout *Ecclesiastical Sketches* reflect his wide reading in preparation for composing it, as he himself explains in his note to *Saxon Conquest* (l.i.), below. For information on these sources, consult the edition by Geoffrey Jackson cited above.

1 "This water-fowl was, among the Druids, an emblem of those traditions connected with the deluge that made an important part of their mysteries. The Cormorant was a bird of bad omen." WW

Justice, and Order. Tremblingly escaped,
 As if with prescience of the coming storm, 10
That intimation when the stars were shaped;
 And yon thick woods maintain the primal truth,
 Debased by many a superstitious form,
 That fills the Soul with unavailing ruth.

V. Uncertainty

Darkness surrounds us; seeking, we are lost
 On Snowdon's wilds, amid Brigantian coves,
 Or where the solitary Shepherd roves
 Along the Plain of Sarum, by the Ghost
 Of silently departed ages crossed; 5
 And where the boatman of the Western Isles
 Slackens his course—to mark those holy piles
 Which yet survive on bleak Iona's coast.
 Nor these, nor monuments of eldest name,
 Nor Taliesin's unforgotten lays, 10
 Nor Characters of Greek or Roman fame,
 To an unquestionable Source have led;
 Enough—if eyes that sought the fountain-head,
 In vain, upon the growing Rill may gaze.

VI. Persecution

Lament! for Dioclesian's fiery sword
 Works busy as the lightning; but instinct
 With malice ne'er to deadliest weapon linked,
 Which God's ethereal storehouses afford:
 Against the Followers of the incarnate Lord 5
 It rages;—some are smitten in the field—
 Some pierced beneath the unavailing shield
 Of sacred home;—with pomp are others gor'd
 And dreadful respite. Thus was Alban tried,
 England's first Martyr! whom no threats could shake; 10
 Self-offered Victim, for his friend he died,
 And for the faith—nor shall his name forsake
 That Hill,¹ whose flowery platform seems to rise

1 “This hill at St. Alban's must have been an object of great interest to the imagination of the venerable Bede, who thus describes it with a delicate feeling delightful to meet with in

By Nature decked for holiest sacrifice.

VII. Recovery

As, when a storm hath ceased, the birds regain
 Their cheerfulness, and busily retrim
 Their nests, or chaunt a gratulating hymn
 To the blue ether and bespangled plain;
 Even so, in many a re-constructed fane, 5
 Have the Survivors of this Storm renewed
 Their holy rites with vocal gratitude;
 And solemn ceremonials they ordain
 To celebrate their great deliverance;
 Most feelingly instructed 'mid their fear, 10
 That persecution, blind with rage extreme,
 May not the less, thro' Heaven's mild countenance,
 Even in her own despite, both feed and cheer;
 For all things are less dreadful than they seem.

VIII. Temptations from Roman Refinements

Watch, and be firm! for soul-subduing vice,
 Heart-killing luxury, on your steps await.
 Fair houses, baths, and banquets delicate,
 And temples flashing, bright as polar ice,
 Their radiance through the woods, may yet suffice 5
 To sap your hardy virtue, and abate
 Your love of him upon whose forehead sate
 The crown of thorns; whose life-blood flowed, the price
 Of your redemption. Shun the insidious arts
 That Rome provides, less dreading from her frown 10
 Than from her wily praise, her peaceful gown,
 Language, and letters;—these, tho' fondly viewed
 As humanizing graces, are but parts
 And instruments of deadliest servitude!

that rude age, traces of which are frequent in his works: "Variis herbarum floribus depictus imò usquequaque vestitus in quo nihil repentè arduum nihil præceps, nihil abruptum, quem lateribus longè latèque deductum in modum æquoris natura complanat, dignum videlicet eum pro insita sibi specie venustatis jam olim reddens, qui beati martyris cruore dicaretur." WW

IX. Dissensions

That heresies should strike (if truth be scanned
 Presumptuously) their roots both wide and deep,
 Is natural as dreams to feverish sleep.
 Lo! Discord at the Altar dares to stand, 5
 Lifting towards high Heaven her fiery brand,
 A cherished Priestess of the new baptized!
 But chastisement shall follow peace despised.
 The Pictish cloud darkens the enervate land
 By Rome abandoned; vain are suppliant cries,
 And prayers that would undo her forced farewell, 10
 For she returns not.—Awed by her own knell,
 She casts the Britons upon strange Allies,
 Soon to become more dreaded enemies,
 Than heartless misery called them to repel.

X. Struggle of the Britons against the Barbarians

Rise!—they *have* risen: of brave Aneurin ask
 How they have scourged old foes, perfidious friends:
 The spirit of Caractacus defends
 The Patriots, animates their glorious task:— 5
 Amazement runs before the towering casque
 Of Arthur, bearing thro' the stormy field
 The Virgin sculptured on his Christian shield:—
 Stretched in the sunny light of victory bask
 The Host that followed Urien as he strode
 O'er heaps of slain;—from Cambrian wood and moss 10
 Druids descend, auxiliars of the Cross;
 Bards, nursed on blue Plinlimmon's still abode,
 Rush on the fight, to harps preferring swords,
 And everlasting deeds to burning words!

XI. Saxon Conquest

Nor wants the cause the panic-striking aid
 Of hallelujahs¹ tossed from hill to hill—
 For instant victory. But Heaven's high will
 Permits a second and a darker shade

1 "Alluding to the victory gained under Germanus.—See Bede." WW

Of Pagan night. Afflicted and dismayed, 5
 The Relics of the sword flee to the mountains:
 O wretched Land, whose tears have flowed like fountains!
 Whose arts and honours in the dust are laid,
 By men yet scarcely conscious of a care
 For other monuments than those of Earth;¹ 10
 Intent, as fields and woods have given them birth,
 To build their savage fortunes only there;
 Witness the foss, the barrow, and the girth
 Of many a long-drawn rampart, green and bare!

XII. Monastery of Old Bangor²

*The oppression of the tumult—wrath and scorn—
 The tribulation—and the gleaming blades—*
 Such is the impetuous spirit that pervades
 The song of Taliesin³;—Ours shall mourn
 The *unarmed* Host who by their prayers would turn 5
 The sword from Bangor's walls, and guard the store
 Of Aboriginal and Roman lore,
 And Christian monuments, that now must burn
 To senseless ashes. Mark! how all things swerve
 From their known course, or pass away like steam; 10
 Another language spreads from coast to coast;

1 "The last six lines of this Sonnet are chiefly from the prose of Daniel; and here I will state (though to the Readers whom this Poem will chiefly interest it is unnecessary), that my obligations to other Prose Writers are frequent,—obligations, which even if I had not a pleasure in courting, it would have been presumptuous to shun, in treating an historical subject. I must, however, particularize Fuller, to whom I am indebted in the Sonnet upon Wicliffe and in other instances. And upon the Acquittal of the Seven Bishops I have done little more than versify a lively description of that Event in the Memoirs of the first Lord Lonsdale." WW

2 "Ethelforth reached the Convent of Bangor, he perceived the Monks, twelve hundred in number, offering prayers for the success of their Countrymen: 'if they are praying against us,' he exclaimed, 'they are fighting against us,' and he ordered them to be first attacked: they were destroyed; and appalled by their fate, the courage of Brocmail wavered, and he fled from the field in dismay. Thus abandoned by their leader, his army soon gave way, and Ethelforth obtained a decisive conquest. Ancient Bangor itself soon fell into his hands and was demolished; the noble monastery was levelled to the ground; its library, which is mentioned as a large one, the collection of ages, the repository of the most precious monuments of the ancient Britons, was consumed; half-ruined walls, gates, and rubbish, were all that remained of the magnificent edifice.'—See Turner's valuable History of the Anglo-Saxons.

The account Bede gives of this remarkable event, suggests a most striking warning against National and Religious prejudices." WW

3 "Taliesin was present at the battle which preceded this desolation." WW

Only perchance some melancholy Stream
 And some indignant Hills old names preserve,
 When laws, and creeds, and people, all are lost!

XIII. Casual Incitement

A bright-haired company of youthful Slaves,
 Beautiful Strangers, stand within the pale
 Of a sad market, ranged for public sale,
 Where Tiber's stream the glorious City laves:
 Angli by name; and not an Angel waves 5
 His wing who seemeth lovelier in Heaven's eye
 Than they appear to holy Gregory,
 Who, having learnt that name, salvation craves
 For Them, and for their Land. The earnest Sire,
 His questions urging, feels in slender ties 10
 Of chiming sound commanding sympathies;
 De-irians—he would save them from God's ire;
 Subjects of Saxon Ælla—they shall sing
 Sweet Hallelujahs to the eternal King!

XIV. Glad Tidings

For ever hallowed be this morning fair,
 Blest be the unconscious shore on which ye tread,
 And blest the silver Cross, which ye, instead
 Of martial banner, in procession bear;
 The Cross preceding Him who floats in air, 5
 The pictured Saviour!—By Augustin led
 They come—and onward travel without dread,
 Chaunting in barbarous ears a tuneful prayer,
 Sung for themselves, and those whom they would free!
 Rich conquest waits them:—the tempestuous sea 10
 Of Ignorance, that ran so rough and high,
 And heeded not the voice of clashing swords,
 These good men humble by a few bare words,
 And calm with fear of God's divinity.

XV. Paulinus

But, to remote Northumbria's royal Hall,
 Where thoughtful Edwin, tutored in the School

Of Sorrow, still maintains a Heathen rule,
 Who comes with functions Apostolical?
 Mark him, of shoulders curved, and stature tall,¹ 5
 Black hair, and vivid eye, and meagre cheek,
 His prominent feature like an eagle's beak;
 A Man whose aspect doth at once appal,
 And strike with reverence. The Monarch leans
 Towards the Truths this Delegate propounds,— 10
 Repeatedly his own deep mind he sounds
 With careful hesitation,—then convenes
 A synod of his Counsellors,—give ear,
 And what a pensive Sage doth utter, hear!

*XVI. Persuasion*²

“Man’s life is like a Sparrow, mighty King!
 “That, stealing in while by the fire you sit
 “Housed with rejoicing Friends, is seen to flit
 “Safe from the storm, in comfort tarrying.
 “Here did it enter—there, on hasty wing 5
 “Flies out, and passes on from cold to cold;
 “But whence it came we know not, nor behold
 “Whither it goes. Even such that transient Thing,
 “The Human Soul; not utterly unknown
 “While in the Body lodged, her warm abode; 10

1 “The person of Paulinus is thus described by Bede, from the memory of an eye-witness: ‘Longæ staturæ, paululum incurvus, nigro capillo, facie macilentâ, naso adunco, pertenui, venerabilis simul et terribilis aspectu.’” WW; “Of tall stature, slightly stooping, with black hair, a lean face, a nose hooked and slender; and in his appearance both venerable and awe-inspiring.” (See Bede, II.xvi.)

2 “See the original of this speech in Bede.—The Conversion of Edwin as related by him is highly interesting—and the breaking up of this Council accompanied with an event so striking and characteristic, that I am tempted to give it at length in a translation. ‘Who, exclaimed the King, when the Council was ended, shall first desecrate the Altars and the Temples? I, answered the Chief Priest, for who more fit than myself, through the wisdom which the true God hath given me to destroy, for the good example of others, what in foolishness I worshipped. Immediately, casting away vain superstition, he besought the King to grant him, what the laws did not allow to a priest, arms and a courser; which mounting, and furnished with a sword and lance, he proceeded to destroy the Idols. The crowd, seeing this, thought him mad—he however halted not, but, approaching, he profaned the Temple, casting against it the lance which he had held in his hand, and, exulting in acknowledgment of the worship of the true God, he ordered his companions to pull down the Temple, with all its enclosures. The place is shown where those idols formerly stood, not far from York, at the source of the river Derwent, and is at this day called Gormund Gaham.’” WW

“But from what world She came, what woe or weal
 “On her departure waits, no tongue hath shewn;
 “This mystery if the Stranger can reveal,
 “His be a welcome cordially bestowed!”

XVII. Conversion

Prompt transformation works the novel lore;
 The Council closed, the Priest in full career
 Rides forth, an armed Man, and hurls a spear
 To desecrate the Fane which heretofore
 He served in folly.—Woden falls—and Thor 5
 Is overturned; the Mace, in battle heaved
 (So might they dream) till Victory was achieved,
 Drops—and the God himself is seen no more.
 Temple and Altar sink—to hide their shame
 Amid oblivious weeds. “O come to me 10
 Ye heavy laden!” such the inviting voice
 Heard near fresh streams,—and thousands, who rejoice¹
 In the new Rite—the pledge of sanctity,
 Shall, by regenerate life, the promise claim.

XVIII. Apology

Nor scorn the aid which Fancy oft doth lend
 The soul’s eternal interests to promote:
 Death, darkness, danger, are our natural lot;
 And evil Spirits *may* our walk attend
 For aught the wisest know or comprehend; 5
 Then let the *good* be free to breathe a note
 Of elevation—let their odours float
 Around these Converts, and their glories blend,
 Outshining nightly tapers, or the blaze
 Of the noon-day. Nor doubt that golden cords 10
 Of good works, mingling with the visions, raise
 The soul to purer worlds: and *who* the line
 Shall draw, the limits of the power define,
 That even imperfect faith to Man affords?

¹ “The early propagators of Christianity were accustomed to preach near rivers for the convenience of baptism.” WW.

Index of titles, first lines and series titles

Volumes I, II, III

A barking sound the Shepherd hears	I.591
A Book came forth of late called, "Peter Bell;"	III.138
A bright-haired company of youthful Slaves	III.374
A dark plume fetch me from yon blasted Yew	III.356
A famous Man is Robin Hood	I.652
A few bold Patriots, Reliques of the Fight	III.15
A fig for your languages, German and Norse	I.440
A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by	I.631
A genial hearth, a hospitable board	III.405
A German Haggis—from Receipt	III.571
A little onward lend thy guiding hand	III.107
A love-lorn Maid, at some far-distant time	III.358
A Manciple there was, one of a Temple	II.659
A narrow girdle of rough stones and crags	I.458
A pen—to register; a key—	III.577
A Pilgrim, when the summer day	III.132
A plain Youth, Lady, and a simple Lover	I.736
A pleasant music floats along the Mere	III.381
A Poet!—He hath put his heart to school	III.755
A point of life between my Parents' dust	III.490
A prized memorial this slight work may prove	III.737
A Rock there is whose homely front	III.656
A Roman Master stands on Grecian ground	III.34
A sad and lovely face, with upturn'd eyes	III.737
A simple child, dear brother Jim	I.332
A slumber did my spirit seal	I.401
A Stream, to mingle with your favourite Dee	III.582
A sudden conflict rises from the swell	III.415
A Traveller on the skirt of Sarum's Plain	I.123
A trouble, not of clouds, or weeping rain	III.473
A voice, from long-expectant thousands sent	III.403
A volant Tribe of Bards on earth are found	III.570
A weight of awe not easy to be borne	III.510
A whirl-blast from behind the hill	I.420
A winged Goddess, clothed in vesture wrought	III.429
A Winter's Evening— Fragment of an Ode to winter	I.21
A youth too certain of his power to wade	III.495
Abruptly paused the Strife;—the field throughout	III.433
Abuse of Monastic Power	III.390

Acquittal of the Bishops	III.403
Address from the Spirit of Cockermonth Castle	III.491
Address to Kilchurn Castle upon Loch Awe	III.604
Address to my Infant Daughter, On being reminded, that she was a month old, on that day	I.744
Address to the Ocean	I.70
Address to the Sons of Burns after visiting their Father's Grave. (August 14th, 1803.)	I.664
Addressed to ——, on the longest day	III.117
Adieu ye lays that fancy's flow'rs adorn	I.35
Adieu, Rydalian Laurels! that have grown	III.488
Admonition ("Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye!")	I.693
Advance—come forth from thy Tyrolean ground	III.22
Adventures on Salisbury Plain	I.123
Aeneid, Book I	II.667
Aeneid, Book II	II.696
Aeneid, Book III	II.726
Aeneid, Book IV, Lines 688–692	II.749
Aeneid, Book VIII, Lines 337–366	II.750
Aerial Rock—whose solitary brow	III.82
Affections lose their objects; Time brings forth	III.771
Affliction of Margaret —— of ——, The	I.606
Afflictions of England	III.400
After Landing—the Valley of Dover. Nov. 1820.	III.457
After Leaving Italy	III.550
After reading a luscious scene of the above—The Wonder explained	III.571
After Visiting the Field of Waterloo	III.429
After-thought	III.466
AGE! twine thy brows with fresh spring flowers!	I.659
Ah! have you seen a bird of sweetest tone	I.20
Ah me! the lowliest children of the spring	I.50
Ah, think how one compelled for life to abide	III.559
Ah, when the Frame, round which in love we clung	III. 377
Ah! where is Palafox? Nor tongue nor pen	III.18
Ah why deceive ourselves! by no mere fit	III.549, 565
Aid, glorious Martyrs, from your fields of light	III.396
Airey-force Valley	III.715
Aix-la-Chapelle	III.430
Alas! what boots the long, laborious quest	III.21
Alcæus to Sappho	I.479
Alfred	III.380
Alice Fell	I.622
All breathed in silence, and intensely gaz'd	II.696

All by the moonlight river side	I.492
All praise the Likeness by thy skill portrayed	III.738
Along the mazes of this song I go	I.746
Ambition, following down this far-famed slope	III.449
American Tradition	III.355
Amid a fertile region green with wood	III.480
Amid the dark control of lawless sway	III.12
Amid the smoke of cities did you pass	I.455
Amid this dance of objects sadness steals	III.431
Among a grave fraternity of Monks	III.708
Among all lovely things my Love had been	I.616
Among the dwellers in the silent fields	III.760
Among the dwellings framed by birds	III.684
Among the mountains were we nursed, loved stream!	III.490
Among the Ruins of a Convent in the Apennines	III.548
An age hath been when Earth was proud	III.116
An Orpheus! An Orpheus!—yes, Faith may grow bold	I.687
Anacreon Imitated	I.14
And has the Sun his flaming Chariot driv'n	I.11
And I will bear my vengeful blade	I.50
And is it among rude untutored Dales	III.21
And is this—Yarrow?—This the Stream	III.62
And not in vain embodied to the sight	III.386
And shall," the Pontiff asks, "profaneness flow	III.382
And sweet it is to see in summer time	I.749
And thus a Structure potent to enchain	III.413
And what is Penance with her knotted thong	III.390
And what melodious sounds at times prevail!	III.387
And will you leave me thus alone	I.18
Andrew Jones	I.417
Anecdote for Fathers, shewing how the art of lying may be taught	I.330
Animal Tranquillity and Decay (see Old Man Travelling)	
Another year!—another deadly blow!	I.651
Anticipation. October, 1803	I.651
Apology ("No more: the end is sudden and abrupt")	III.483
Apology ("Nor scorn the aid which Fancy oft doth lend")	III.376
Apology ("Not utterly unworthy to endure")	III.393
Apology ("The formal World relaxes her cold chain")	III.560
Archbishop Chicheley to Henry V	III.389
Are souls then nothing? Must at length the die	I.735
Are States oppress'd afflicted and degraded	III.595
Armenian Lady's Love, The	III.657
Arms, and the Man I sing, the first who bore	II.667

Army of clouds, what would ye? Flight of Clouds	II.292
Around a wild and woody hill	III.434
Arran! a single-crested Teneriffe	III.499
Art, Nature, Love here claim united praise	III.739
Art thou a Statesman, in the van	I.448
Art thou the Bird whom Man loves best	I.594
Artegal and Elidure—	III.71
As faith thus sanctified the warrior's crest	III.422
As indignation mastered grief, my tongue	III.551
As leaves are to the tree whereon they grow	III.550
As leaves are to the tree whereon they grow	III.566
As often as I murmur here	III.642
As star that shines dependent upon star	III.405
As the cold aspect of a sunless way	III.111
As the fresh wine the poet pours	I.49
As, when a storm hath ceased, the birds regain	III.371
As with the stream our voyage we pursue	III.384
Aspects of Christianity in America	III.420
At Albano	III.538
At Bala-Sala, Isle of Man. (Supposed to be Written by a Friend of the Author.)	III.497
At Bologna, in Remembrance of the Late Insurrections	III.549, 565
At Dover	III.468
At early dawn,—or rather when the air	III.135
At Florence	III.546
At Florence.—From M. Angelo (“Eternal Lord! eased of a cumbrous load”)	III.548
At Florence.—From Michael Angelo (“Rapt above earth by power of one fair face”)	III.547
At Furness Abbey (“Here, where, of havoc tired and rash undoing”)	III.746
At Furness Abbey (“Well have yon Railway Labourers to this ground”)	III.769
At last this loitering day of June	II.250
At Rome (“Is this, ye Gods, the Capitolian Hill?”)	III.535
At Rome (“They—who have seen the noble Roman's scorn”)	III.537
At Rome.—Regrets.—In Allusion to Niebuhr and other Modern Historians	III.536
At Sea off the Isle of Man	III.493
At the Convent of Camaldoli	III.543
At the corner of Wood Street, when daylight appears	I.414
At the Eremite or Upper Convent of Camaldoli	III.544
At the Grave of Burns. 1803	III.724
At Tyndrum	III.477
At Vallombrosa	III.545
Author's Voyage down the Rhine (Thirty Years Ago)	III.431

Avaunt all specious pliancy of mind	III.32
Avaunt this oeconomic rage!	III.701
avaunt! with tenfold pleasure	I.23
Avon (A Feeder of the Annan), The	III.481
Avon—a precious, an immortal name!	III.481
Baptism	III.416
Barberry-Tree, The	I.728
Bard of the Fleece, whose skilful Genius made	III.41
Be this the chosen site—the virgin sod	III.409
Beaumont! it was thy wish that I should rear	I.720
Beauty and Moonlight. An Ode Fragment	I.17
Before I see another day	I.368
Before the Picture of the Baptist, by Raphael, in the Gallery at Florence	III.547
Before the world had past her time of youth	III.557
Beggars	I.619
Begone, thou fond presumptuous Elf	I.402
Beguiled into forgetfulness of care	III.704
Behold a Pupil of the Monkish gown	III.380
Behold her, single in the field	I.656
Beloved Vale!” I said, “when I shall con	I.636
Beneath this thorn when I was young	I.74
Beneath yon eastern Ridge, the craggy Bound	III.45
Benjamin the Waggoner	II.250
Between two sister moorland rills	I.451
Bishops and Priests, blessèd are ye, if deep	III.423
Black Demons hovering o’er his mitred head	III.384
Black Stones of Iona, The	III.503
Blandusian spring than glass more brightly clear	I.60
Blest be the Church, that, watching o’er the needs	III.416
Blest is this Isle—our native Land	III.573
Blest Statesman He, whose Mind’s unselfish will	III.562
Blind Highland Boy, The. (A Tale told by the Fire-side.)	I.676
Bold words affirmed, in days when faith was strong	III.493
Borderers, The	I.151
Bothwell Castle	III.480
Brave Schill! by death delivered, take thy flight	III.20
Bright Flower, whose home is every where!	I.690
Broken in fortune, but in mind entire	III.497
Brook, that hast been my solace days and weeks	I.721
Brothers, The	I.384
Brownie, The	III.479
Bruges (“Bruges I saw attired with golden light”)	III.428
Bruges (“The Spirit of Antiquity, enshrined”)	III.428

Bruges I saw attired with golden light	III.428
But cease my Soul ah! cease to pry	I.38
But hark! the Curfew tolls! and lo! the night	I.21
But here no cannon thunders to the gale	III.362
But liberty, and triumphs on the Main	III.409
But, to outweigh all harm, the sacred Book	III.394
But, to remote Northumbria's royal Hall	III.374
But what if One, thro' grove or flowery mead	III.378
But whence came they who for the Saviour Lord	III.419
By a blest Husband guided, Mary came	III.679
By a Retired Mariner. (A Friend of the Author.)	III.496
By antique Fancy trimmed—tho' lowly, bred	III.438
By Art's bold privilege Warrior and War-horse stand	III.746
By chain yet stronger must the Soul be tied	III.417
By Derwent's side my Father's cottage stood	I.314
By Moscow self-devoted to a blaze	III.571
By playful smiles, (alas too oft	III.747
By such examples moved to unbought pains	III.379
By the Sea-Shore, Isle of Man	III.495
By the Sea-Side	III.691
By the Side of Rydal Mere	III.688
By their floating Mill	I.684
By vain affections unenthralled	III.586
Calais, August 15th, 1802	I.641
Calais, August, 1802	I.639
Call not the royal Swede unfortunate	III.19
Calm as an under current—strong to draw	III.404
Calm is all nature as a resting wheel	I.635
Calm is the fragrant air, and loth to lose	III.686
Calvert! it must not be unheard by them	I.638
Camoëns, he the accomplished and the good	III.569
Can aught survive to linger in the veins	III.380
Can Lubbock fail to make a good M.P.	III.683
Cantata del Metastasio	I.740
Cantata, From Metastasio	I.738
Canute	III.381
Captivity	III.111
Carved, Mathew, with a master's skill	I.483
Casual Incitement	III.374
Catechizing	III.406
Cathedrals, &c.	III.410
Cave of Staffa ("Thanks for the lessons of this Spot—fit school")	III.501
Cave of Staffa ("We saw, but surely, in the motley crowd")	III.500

Cave of Staffa (“Ye shadowy Beings, that have rights and claims”)	III.501
Cenotaph	III.586
Change me, some God, into that breathing rose!	III.352
Character, In the Antithetical Manner, A	I.450
Character of the Happy Warrior	I.600
Characteristics of a Child three Years old	III.49
Charles the Second	III.402
Chatsworth! thy stately mansion, and the pride	III.678
Child of loud-throated War! the mountain Stream	III.604
Child of the clouds! remote from every taint	III.349
Childless Father, The	I.441
Church of San Salvador, seen from the Lake of Lugano, The	III.439
Church to be Erected	III.409
Cistercian Monastery	III.385
Clarkson! it was an obstinate Hill to climb	I.694
Clerical Integrity	III.403
Coldly we spake. The Saxons, overpowered	III.419
Column Intended by Buonaparte for a Triumphal Edifice in Milan, The	III.449
Come gentle Sleep, Death’s image tho’ thou art	III.736
Come thou in robe of darkest blue” [To Melpomene]	I.41
Come ye—who, if (which Heaven avert!) the Land	I.743
Commination Service, The	III.425
Companion! by whose buoyant Spirit cheered	III.524
Companion to the Foregoing [Love Lies Bleeding]	III.703
Complacent Fictions were they, yet the same	III.536
Complaint, A	I.699
Complaint of a Forsaken Indian Woman, The	I.368
Composed after a Journey across the Hamilton Hills, Yorkshire	I.630
Composed after Reading a Newspaper of the Day	III.475
Composed after Reading a Newspaper of the Day	III.561
Composed among the Ruins of a Castle in North Wales	III.582
Composed at Cora Linn, in sight of Wallace’s tower	III.54
Composed at the Same Time, and on the Same Occasion [Cintra]	III.18
Composed by the Sea-shore	III.693
Composed by the Sea-side, near Calais, August, 1802	I.639
Composed during one of the most awful of the late Storms, Feb. 1819	III.136
Composed in one of the Catholic Cantons of Switzerland	III.466
Composed in one of the Valleys of Westmoreland, on Easter Sunday	III.53
Composed in Recollection of the Expedition of the French into Russia, February 1816	III.97
Composed in Roslin Chapel, During a Storm	III.473
Composed in the Glen of Loch Etive	III.475
Composed in the Valley, Near Dover, On the Day of landing	I.644

Composed on May-morning, 1838	III.554
Composed on the Banks of a Rocky Stream	III.135
Composed on the Eve of the Marriage of a Friend, in the Vale of Grasmere	III.48
Composed on the same Morning ("Life with yon Lambs, like day, is just begun")	III.735
Composed upon Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3, 1803 ("Earth has not any thing to shew more fair")	I.635
Composed when a probability existed of our being obliged to quit Rydal Mount as a Residence	II.294
Composed while the Author was Engaged in Writing a Tract, Occasioned by the Convention of Cintra, 1808	III.17
Concluded ("As leaves are to the tree whereon they grow")	III.550
Concluded ("Long-favoured England! be not thou misled")	III.564, 566
Conclusion ("I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide")	III.363
Conclusion ("If these brief Records, by the Muses' art")	III.603
Conclusion ("Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes")	III.509
Conclusion ("Why sleeps the future, as a snake enrolled")	III.412
Conclusion ("Yes, though He well may tremble at the sound")	III.560
Concluded.—American Episcopacy	III.421
Conclusion. 1811	III.34
Confirmation	III.416
Confirmation Continued	III.416
Congratulation	III.408
Conjectures	III.368
Continued ("And what melodious sounds at times prevail!")	III.387
Continued ("As indignation mastered grief, my tongue")	III.551
Continued ("Complacent Fictions were they, yet the same")	III.536
Continued ("From Rite and Ordinance abused they fled")	III.420
Continued ("Hard task! exclaim the undisciplined, to lean")	III.549, 566
Continued ("Methinks that to some vacant Hermitage")	III.378
Continued ("Mine ear has rung, my spirits sunk subdued")	III.409
Continued ("The world forsaken, all its busy cares")	III.544
Continued ("They dreamt not of a perishable home")	III.411
Continued ("Who ponders National events shall find")	III.563
Continued ("Yet some, Noviciates of the cloistral shade")	III.392
Contrast, The	III.584
Conversion	III.376
Convict, The	I.370
Corruptions of the Higher Clergy	III.390
Could I the priest's consent have gained	I.480
Council of Clermont, The	III.382
Countess's Pillar	III.482

Cranmer	III.396
Critics, right honourable Bard! decree	III.571
Crusaders	III.387
Crusades	III.383
Cuckoo and the Nightingale, The; Translation of Chaucer's	II.642
Cuckoo at Laverna. may 25th, 1837, The	III.540
Cuckoo-clock, The	III.741
Danish Conquests	III.381
Darkness surrounds us; seeking, we are lost	III.370
Days passed—and Monte Calvo would not clear	III.538
Days undefiled by luxury or sloth	III.565
Dear Child of Nature, let them rail!	I.684
Dear fellow—Traveller! here we are once more	I.644
Dear Fellow-Travellers! think not that the Muse	III.427
Dear Native Brooks your ways have I pursu'd	I.735
Dear native Regions, I foretell	III.65
Dear Reliques! from a pit of vilest mold	III.101
Dear to the Loves, and to the Graces vowed	III.492
Death a Dirge	I.45
Death of the Starling, The	I.16
Decay of Piety	III.568
Dedication ("Dear Fellow-Travellers! think not that the Muse")	III.427
Deep is the lamentation! Not alone	III.394
Degenerate Douglas! oh, the unworthy Lord!	I.664
Deign Sovereign Mistress! to accept a Lay	III.772
Departed Child! I could forget thee once	III.49
Departing Summer hath assumed	III.139
Departure from the Vale of Grasmere. August 1803	III.36
Deplorable his lot who tills the ground	III.418
Description of a dying storm	I.39
Descriptive Sketches	I.97
Desire we past illusions to recall?	III.494
Despond who will—I heard a voice exclaim	III.498
Desponding Father! mark this altered bough	III.709
Destined to war from very infancy	III.26
Desultory Stanzas	III.462
Devotional Incitements	III.680
Dion	III.102
Dirge	I.483
Dirge Sung by a Minstrel	I.45
Discourse was deemed Man's noblest attribute	III.774
Dishonoured Rock and Ruin! that, by law	III.476
Dissensions.	III.372

Dissolution of the Monasteries	III.391
Distractions	III.398
Distressful gift! this Book receives	I.757
Dog—An Idyllium, The	I.22
Dogmatic Teachers, of the snow-white fur!	III.135
Dont wake little Enoch	III.571
Doomed as we are our native dust	III.466
Doubling and doubling with laborious walk	III.478
Down a swift Stream, thus far, a bold design	III.415
Dread hour! when upheaved by war's sulphurous blast	III.441
Driven in by Autumn's sharpening air	III.712
Druid Temple	III.413
Druidical Excommunication	III.369
Dunolly Eagle, The	III.500
Eagle and the Dove, The	III.759
Eagles, Composed at Dunollie Castle in the Bay of Oban	III.476
Earl of Breadalbane's Ruined Mansion, and Family Burial-Place, near Killin, The	III.477
Earth has not any thing to shew more fair	I.635
Ecclesiastical Sketches	III.368
Echo, upon the Gemmi	III.451
Eclipse of the Sun, 1820, The	III.445
Eden! till now thy beauty had I viewed	III.505
Edward Signing the Warrant for the Execution of Joan of Kent	III.395
Edward VI	III.395
Effusion in Presence of the Painted Tower of Tell, at Altorf	III.465
Effusion, in the pleasure-ground on the banks of the Bran, near Dunkeld	III.58
Egyptian Maid, The; or, the romance of the water lily.	III.630
Ejaculation	III.412
Ejaculation at the Grave of Burns	I.721
Elegiac Musings in the Grounds of Coleorton Hall, the Seat of the Late Sir George Beaumont, Bart.	III.677
Elegiac Stanzas ("Lulled by the sound of pastoral bells")	III.454
Elegiac Stanzas. 1824	III.586
Elegiac Stanzas, composed in the churchyard of Grasmere	III.13
Elegiac Stanzas, Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle, in a Storm, Painted by Sir George Beaumont	I.709
Elegiac Verses, February 1816	III.92
Elegiac Verses in Memory of my Brother, John Wordsworth	I.755
Elegies Written for John Wordsworth	I.750
Elegy written in the same place upon the same occasion	I.480
Elizabeth	III.397
Ellen Irwin, Or the Braes of Kirtle	I.398

Emigrant French Clergy	III.417
Eminent Reformers	III.397
Emperors and Kings, how oft have Temples rung	III.70
Engelberg	III.437
England! the time is come when thou shouldst wean	I.649
English Reformers in Exile	III.397
Enlightened Teacher, gladly from thy hand	III.763
Enough! for see, with dim association	III.388
Enough of climbing toil!—Ambition treads	III.123
Enough of garlands, of the Arcadian crook	III.477
Enough of rose-bud lips, and eyes	III.643
Epigrams on Byron's Cain	III.571
Epistle to Sir George Howland Beaumont, Bart. From the South-west Coast of Cumberland,—1811	III.37
Epitaph ("By a blest Husband guided, Mary came")	III.679
Epitaph in the Chapel-yard of Langdale, Westmoreland	III.747
Epitaphs Translated from Chiabrera	III.23
Ere we had reach'd the wish'd-for place, night fell	I.630
Ere with cold beads of midnight dew	III.591
Ere yet our course was graced with social trees	III.351
Eternal Lord! eased of a cumbrous load	III.548
Ethereal Minstrel! Pilgrim of the sky!	III.590
Eve's lingering clouds extend in solid bars	III.12
Even as a dragon's eye that feels the stress	III.48
Even so for me a Vision sanctified	III.729
Even while I speak, the sacred roofs of France	III.417
Evening Sonnets	I.48
Evening Sounds	I.39
Evening Voluntaries	III.686
Evening Walk, An	I.82
Ewtrees	I.748
Excursion, The; being a Portion of The Recluse, a Poem	II.298
Excuse is needless when with love sincere	III.602
Expostulation and Reply	I.365
Extempore Effusion upon the Death of James Hogg	III.723
Extract from the conclusion of a poem, composed upon leaving school	III.65
Extract from the Strangers bookStation Winandermere	III.609
Extracts from The Vale of Esthwaite	I.35
Fact, and an Imagination, A; Or, Canute and Alfred	III.100
Faëry Chasm, The	III.353
Failing impartial measure to dispense	III.734
Fair Ellen Irwin, when she sate	I.398
Fair is the Swan, whose majesty—prevailing	III.102

Fair Lady! can I sing of flowers	III.758
Fair Land! Thee all men greet with joy; how few	III.550
Fair Prime of life! were it enough to gild	III.594
Fair Star of Evening, Splendor of the West	I.639
Fairy skill	III.712
Fall of the Aar—Handec, The	III.435
Fallen, and diffus'd into a shapeless heap	III.366
Fame tells of Groves—from England far away—	III.143
Fancy and Tradition	III.505
Fancy, who leads the pastimes of the glad	III.588
Far from [] Grasmere's lake serene	III.37
Far from my dearest friend, 'tis mine to rove	I.82
Farewell Lines ("High bliss is only for a higher state")	III.609
Farewell, thou little Nook of mountain ground	I.736
Farmer of Tilsbury Vale, The. A Character	I.476
Father! to God himself we cannot give	III.418
Fear hath a hundred eyes that all agree	III.399
February 1816	III.80
Feel for the wrongs to universal ken	III.567
Feelings of a Noble Biscayan at one of these funerals 1810	III.31
Feelings of the Tyrolese	III.20
Female Vagrant The	I.314
Festivals have I seen that were not names	I.641
Fidelity	I.591
Filial Piety	III.612
First Floweret of the year is that which shows	III.577
Fish-women	III.427
Fit retribution, by the moral code	III.558
Five years have passed; five summers, with the length	I.372
Flattered with promise of escape	III.683
Flower Garden, A	III.579
Flowers	III.351
Flowers on the Top of the Pillars at the Entrance of the Cave	III.502
Fly, some kind Spirit, fly to Grasmere Vale!	I.743
Fond words have oft been spoken to thee, Sleep!	I.632
For action born, existing to be tried	III.540
For ever hallowed be this morning fair	III.374
For gentlest uses, oft-times Nature takes	III.437
For Lubbock vote—no legislative Hack	III.682
For thirst of power that Heaven disowns	III.775
For what contend the wise? for nothing less	III.413
Forbear to deem the Chronicler unwise	III.537
Force of Prayer, The; Or the Founding of Bolton Priory. A Tradition.	II.632

Foregoing Subject Resumed, The [Lines Suggested by a Portrait]	III.708
Foresight, Or the Charge of a Child to his younger Companion	I.698
Forgive, illustrious Country! these deep sighs	III.539
Forms of Prayer at Sea	III.425
Forsake me not, Urania, but when Ev'n	III.113
Forsaken, The	I.726
Fort Fuentes—at the Head of the Lake of Como	III.441
Forth from a jutting ridge, around whose base	III.769
Forth rushed, from Envy sprung and Self-conceit	III.735
Fountain, The. A Conversation	I.432
Four fiery steeds impatient of the rein	III.610
Fragment, A (“Between two sister moorland rills”)	I.451
French, and the Spanish Guerillas, The	III.32
From Bolton's old monastic tower	II.574
From early youth I ploughed the restless Main	III.496
From false assumption rose, and fondly hail'd	III.422
From little down to least—in due degree	III.406
From low to high doth dissolution climb	III.407
From Rite and Ordinance abused they fled	III.420
From Stirling Castle we had seen	I.665
From the Alban Hills, looking towards Rome	III.539
From the Baptismal hour, thro' weal and woe	III.425
From the dark chambers of dejection freed	III.64
From the fierce aspect of this River throwing	III.436
From the Greek	I.50
From the Italian of Michael Angelo (“Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace”)	I.633
From the Pier's head, musing—and with increase	III.468
From the Same (“No mortal object did these eyes behold”)	I.634
From the Same. To the Supreme Being (“The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed”)	I.634
From this deep chasm—where quivering sun-beams play	III.355
Funeral Service	III.425
General View of the Troubles of the Reformation	III.396
Genius of Raphael! if thy wings	III.641
Gentle Zephyr	I.739
Georgics, Book IV, Lines 511–515	II.751
Giordano, verily thy Pencil's skill	III.774
Gipsies	I.672
Glad sight wherever new with old	III.760
Glad Tidings	III.374
Gleaner, The. (Suggested by a Picture.)	III.616
Glen-almain, or the Narrow Glen	I.658

Glory to God! and to the Power who came	III.412
Go back to antique Ages, if thine eyes	III.594
Go, faithful Portrait! and where long hath knelt	III.682
Gold and Silver Fishes, in a Vase	III.667
Goody Blake, and Harry Gill, A True Story	I.322
Gordale	III.135
Grace Darling	III.760
Grant, that by this unsparing Hurricane	III.394
Grateful is Sleep, my life in stone bound fast	III.737
Grateful is Sleep; more grateful still to be	III.736
Grave-stone upon the Floor in the Cloisters of Worcester Cathedral, A	III.613
Great Men have been among us; hands that penn'd	I.646
Green Linnet, The	I.682
Greenock	III.504
Greta, what fearful listening! when huge stones	III.489
Greyhound Ballad	I.72
Grief, thou hast lost an ever ready Friend	III.47
Grieve for the Man who hither came bereft	III.543
Gunpowder Plot	III.399
Had this effulgence disappeared	III.124
Hail to the fields—with Dwellings sprinkled o'er	III.354
Hail Twilight,—sovereign of one peaceful hour!	III.48
Hail, universal Source of pure delight!	III.82
Hail, Virgin Queen! o'er many an envious bar	III.397
Hail, Zaragoza! If with unwet eye	III.18
Happy the feeling from the bosom thrown	III.602
Hard task! exclaim the undisciplined, to lean	III.549, 566
Hark! 'tis the Thrush, undaunted, undeprest	III.733
Harp! couldst thou venture, on thy boldest string	III.400
Hart's-Horn Tree, near Penrith	III.482
Hart-leap Well	I.377
Hast thou seen, with train incessant	III.127
Hast thou then survived	I.744
Haydon! let worthier judges praise the skill	III.679
He who defers his work from day to day	III.701
Her eyes are wild, her head is bare	I.346
Her only Pilot the soft breeze the Boat	III.608
Here let us rest—here, where the gentle beams	III.122
Here M. —————sleep[s] who liv'd a patriarch's days	I.23
Here Man more purely lives, less oft doth fall	III.385
Here on their knees men swore: the stones were black	III.503
Here pause: the Poet claims at least this praise	III.34
Here stood an Oak, that long had borne affixed	III.482

Here, where, of havoc tired and rash undoing	III.746
High bliss is only for a higher state	III.609
High deeds, O Germans, are to come from you!	I.694
High in the breathless Hall the Minstrel sate	I.703
High is our calling, Friend!—Creative Art	III.80
High o'er the silver Rocks I rov'd	I.17
High on a broad unfertile tract of forest-skirted Down	III.743
High on her speculative Tower	III.445
Highland Broach, The	III.484
Highland Hut	III.478
Hint from the Mountains for Certain Political Aspirants	III.126
Hints for the Fancy	III.354
His Descendants	III.380
His simple truths did Andrew glean	I.403
Hoarse sound the swoln and angry floods	I.42
Hôffer	III.23
Holy and heavenly Spirits as they were	III.398
Home at Grasmere	I.558
Homeward we turn. Isle of Columba's Cell	III.504
Hope	I.41
Hope rules a land for ever green	III.613
Hope smiled when your nativity was cast	III.502
Hopes what are they?—Beads of morning	III.128
Horace To Apollo	I.49
Horn of Egremont Castle, The	I.603
How art thou named? In search of what strange land	III.583
How beautiful the Queen of Night, on high	III.773
How beautiful your presence, how benign	III.377
How beautiful, when up a lofty height	III.730
How blest the Maid whose heart—yet free	III.447
How clear, how keen, how marvellously bright	III.81
How disappeared he?" Ask the newt and toad	III.479
How fast the Marian death-list is unrolled!	III.414
How long will ye round me be roaring	I.70
How profitless the relics that we cull	III.483
How rich that forehead's calm expanse!	III.578
How rich the wave, in front, imprest	I.363
How shall I paint thee?—Be this naked stone	III.350
How soon—alas! did Man, created pure—	III.421
How sweet at Eve's still hour the song	I.37
How sweet in Life's tear-glistening morn	I.40
How sweet it is, when mother Fancy rocks	I.629
How sweet, when crimson colors dart	I.479

Humanity, delighting to behold	III.97
Humanity. (Written in the Year 1829.)	III.673
Hunger, and sultry heat, and nipping blast	III.32
Hymn for the Boatmen, as they Approach the Rapids, under the Castle of Heidelberg	III.432
I am not One who much or oft delight	I.699
I bring, ye little noisy crew!	I.483
I dropped my pen;—and listened to the wind	III.18
I find it written of Simonides	I.734
I griev'd for Buonaparte, with a vain	I.640
I hate that Andrew Jones: he'll breed	I.417
I have a boy of five years old	I.330
I have been here in the Moon-light	I.727
I heard (alas, 'twas only in a dream)	III.108
I heard a thousand blended notes	I.334
I know an aged Man constrained to dwell	III.770
I listen—but no faculty of mine	III.439
I marvel how Nature could ever find space	I.450
I met Louisa in the shade	I.590
I only look'd for pain and grief	I.752
I rose while yet the cattle, heat-oppress	III.360
I saw a Mother's eye intensely bent	III.416
I saw an aged Beggar in my walk	I.442
I saw far off the dark top of a Pine	III.535
I saw the figure of a lovely Maid	III.401
I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold	III.724
I shiver, Spirit fierce and bold	I.721
I the while	I.42
I thought of Thee, my partner and my guide	III.363
I travell'd among unknown Men	I.616
I wandered lonely as a Cloud	I.670
I was thy Neighbour once, thou rugged Pile!	I.709
I watch, and long have watch'd, with calm regret	III.82
I, who descended with glad step to chase	III.368
I will be that fond Mother	I.740
I've watch'd you now a full half hour	I.675
Idiot Boy, The	I.349
Idle Shepherd-boys, Or Dungeon-gill Force, A Pastoral, The	I.409
If from the public way you turn your steps	I.461
If grief dismiss me not to them that rest	I.52
If Life were slumber on a bed of down	III.519
If money I lack	III.130
If Nature, for a favorite Child	I.429

If the whole weight of what we think and feel	III.593
If there be Prophets on whose spirits rest	III.368
If these brief Records, by the Muses' art	III.603
If this great world of joy and pain	III.683
If thou in the dear love of some one friend	I.414
If Thou indeed derive thy light from Heaven	III.52
If to Tradition faith be due	III.484
If with old love of you, dear Hills! I share	III.553
Illustrated Books and Newspapers	III.774
Illustration	III.399
Imaginative Regrets	III.394
Imitation of Juvenal, Satire VIII	I.60
Immured in Bothwell's Towers, at times the Brave	III.480
In a Carriage, upon the Banks of the Rhine	III.431
In a Garden of the same	III.45
In a smooth croft of Lorton's pleasant Vale	I.748
In Allusion to Various Recent Histories and Notices of the French Revolution	III.563
In Brugès town is many a street	III.467
In desultory walk through orchard grounds	III.752
In distant countries I have been	I.343
In due observance of an ancient rite	III.30
In Evening tints of joy [array'd]	I.37
In Lombardy	III.550
In my mind's eye a Temple, like a cloud	III.606
In Sight of the Town of Cockermouth	III.490
In the Cathedral at Cologne	III.430
In the Channel, between the Coast of Cumberland and the Isle of Man	III.493
In the Frith of Clyde, Ailsa Crag. (July 17, 1833.)	III.498
In the Grounds of Coleorton, the Seat of Sir George Beaumont, Bart. Leicestershire	III.43
In the Sound of Mull	III.476
In the sweet shire of Cardigan	I.327
In these fair Vales hath many a Tree	III.676
In this still place, remote from men	I.658
In trellis'd shed with clustering roses gay	II.572
In youth from rock to rock I went	I.588
Incident at Brugès	III.467
Incident, Characteristic of a favourite Dog, which belonged to a Friend of the Author	I.690
Indignation of a High-minded Spaniard. 1810	III.32
Indulgent Muse, if Thou the labour share	III.126
Infant M——— M———, The	III.585

Influence Abused	III.381
Inland, within a hollow Vale, I stood	I.644
Inmate of a mountain Dwelling	III.106
Inscribed upon a rock	III.127
Inscription (“The massy Ways, carried across these Heights”)	III.592
Inscription for a Monument in Crosthwaite Church, in the Vale of Keswick	III.763
Inscription for a National Monument in Commemoration of the Battle of Waterloo	III.79
Inscription for a seat by the pathway side ascending to Windy Brow	I.55
Inscription for a Seat in the Groves of Coleorton	III.45
Inscription for the House (an Outhouse) on the Island at Grasmere	I.415
Inscription for the Spot where the Hermitage stood on St. Herbert’s Island, Derwent-water	I.414
Inscription Intended for a Stone in the Grounds of Rydal Mount	III.676
Inscriptions, supposed to be found in, and near, a hermit’s cell	III.127
Inside of King’s College Chapel, Cambridge	III.411
Intent on gathering wool from hedge and brake	III.758
Interdict, An	III.384
Intrepid sons of Albion!—not by you	III.79
Introduction (“I, who descended with glad step to chase”)	III.368
Iona. (Upon Landing.)	III.503
Is Death, when evil against good has fought	III.556
Is it a Reed that’s shaken by the wind	I.639
Is then no nook of English ground secure	III.764
Is then the final page before me spread	III.462
Is there a Power that can sustain and cheer	III.20
Is this, ye Gods, the Capitolian Hill?	III.535
Isle of Man	III.495
It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free	I.637
It is no Spirit who from Heaven hath flown	I.675
It is not to be thought of that the Flood	I.646
It is the first mild day of March	I.326
It seems a day, / One of those heavenly days which cannot die	I.435
It was a moral end for which they fought	III.23
It was an April morning: fresh and clear	I.454
Italian Itinerant, and the Swiss Goatherd, The	III.442
Jesu! bless our slender Boat	III.432
Jewish Family, A	III.641
Jones! when from Calais southward you and I	I.640
Journey Renewed	III.360
June, 1820 (“Fame tells of Groves—from England far away—”)	III.143
Jung-Frau—and the Rhine at Shauffhausen, The	III.434

Just as the blowing thorn began	I.480
Just as those final words were penned, the sun broke out in power	III.743
Keep for the Young the impassioned smile	III.457
King of Sweden, The	I.642
Kitten and the Falling Leaves, The	I.609
Labourer's Noon-day Hymn, The	III.702
Lady! a Pen, perhaps, with thy regard	III.709
Lady! I rifled a Parnassian Cave	III.141
Lady! the songs of Spring were in the grove	I.636
Lament for Bion (from Moschus)	I.50
Lament of Mary Queen of Scots, on the Eve of a New Year	III.109
Lament! for Dioclesian's fiery sword	III.370
Lance, shield, and sword relinquished—at his side	III.378
Laodamia	III.66
Last night, without a voice, this Vision spake	III.401
Last of the Flock, The	I.343
Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci, in the Refectory of the Convent of Maria Della Grazia—Milan, The	III.445
Late on a breezy vernal eve	I.728
Latimer and Ridley	III.414
Latitudinarianism	III.402
Laud	III.400
Laura, farewell my Laura!	I.738
Let more ambitious Poets take the heart	III.747
Let other Bards of Angels sing	III.580
Let thy wheelbarrow alone	I.416
Let us quit the leafy Arbour	III.117
Liberty (Sequel to the Above [Gold and Silver Fishes].)	III.669
Lie here sequester'd:—be this little mound	I.692
Life with yon Lambs, like day, is just begun	III.735
Like a shipwreck'd Sailor tost	III.694
Lines Composed at Grasmere	I.708
Lines left upon a seat in a Yew-tree which Stands near the Lake of Esthwaite, on a desolate part of the shore, yet commanding a beautiful prospect.	I.312
Lines on Milton	I.52
Lines on the Bicentenary of Hawkshead School	I.11
Lines on the Expected Invasion. 1803	I.743
Lines Suggested by a Portrait from the Pencil of F. Stone	III.704
Lines written a few miles above Tintern Abbey, On revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour, July 13, 1798	I.372
Lines written at a small distance from my house, and sent by my little boy to the person to whom they are addressed	I.326
Lines written in early spring	I.334

Lines Written in the Album of the Countess of ———. Nov. 5, 1834	III.709
Lines written near Richmond, upon the Thames, at Evening	I.363
Lines Written with a Slate pencil upon a Stone, the largest of a heap lying near a deserted Quarry upon one of the Islands at Rydale	I.428
List! the bell-Sprite stuns my ears	I.45
List! the death-bell stuns mine ears	I.45
List, the winds of March are blowing	III.697
List—'twas the Cuckoo.—O with what delight	III.540
List, ye who pass by Lyulph's Tower	III.513
Liturgy, The	III.406
Lo! in the burning West, the craggy nape	III.456
Lo! where she stands fixed in a saint-like trance	III.737
Lo! where the Moon along the sky	III.729
Local Recollection on the Heights near Hockheim	III.432
London, 1802	I.646
Lone Flower, hemmed in with snows and white as they	III.135
Long-favoured England! be not thou misled	III.564
Long has the dew been dried on tree and lawn	III.538
Lonsdale! it were unworthy of a Guest	III.508
Look, five blue eggs are gleaming there!	I.673
Look now on that Adventurer who hath paid	III.19
Lord of the Vale! astounding Flood!	III.54
Loud is the Vale! the Voice is up	I.708
Louisa	I.590
Love Lies Bleeding	III.703
Loving she is, and tractable, though wild	III.49
Lowther! in thy majestic Pile are seen	III.508
Lucy Gray	I.407
Lulled by the sound of pastoral bells	III.454
Lyre! though such power do in thy magic live	III.751
Lyrical Ballads, and Other Poems	I.312
Mad Mother, The	I.346
Malham Cove	III.134
Man's life is like a Sparrow, mighty King!	III.375
Manciple, The (from the Prologue) and his Tale; Translation of Chaucer's	II.659
Manciple's Tale, The	II.659
Mark the concentred Hazels that enclose	III.11
Marriage Ceremony, The	III.423
Mary Queen of Scots (Landing at the Mouth of the Derwent, Workington)	III.492
Maternal Grief	III.49
Mathew Elegies	I.480
Matron of Jedborough and Her Husband, The	I.659
Meek Virgin Mother, more benign	III.437

Melancholy joy	I.35
Melts into silent shades the Youth, discrowned	III.413
Memorial,	III.434
Memorials of a Tour in Italy	III.524
Memorials of a Tour on the Continent, 1820	III.427
Memory	III.577
Men of the Western World! in Fate's dark book	III.564
Men, who have ceased to reverence, soon defy	III.398
Mercy and Love have met thee on thy road	III.369
Methinks that I could trip o'er heaviest soil	III.397
Methinks that to some vacant Hermitage	III.378
Methinks 'twere no unprecedented feat	III.359
Methought I saw the footsteps of a throne	I.636
Michael Angelo in reply to the passage upon his statue of Night sleeping	III.737
Michael, A Pastoral Poem	I.461
Mid-noon is past;—upon the sultry mead	III.359
Milton! thou should'st be living at this hour	I.646
Mine ear has rung, my spirits sunk subdued	III.409
Miserrimus!" and neither name nor date	III.613
Missions and Travels	III.379
Modern Athens, The	III.487
Monastery of Old Bangor	III.373
Monastic Domes! following my downward way	III.408
Monastic Voluptuousness	III.391
Monks, and Schoolmen	III.386
Monument Commonly Called Long Meg and Her Daughters, near the River Eden, The	III.510
Monument of Mrs. Howard, (By Nollekins,) in Wetheral Church, near Corby, on the Banks of the Eden	III.506
Moods of My Own Mind	I.667
More may not be by human Art exprest	III.739
Morning Exercise, A	III.588
Most sweet it is with unuplifted eyes	III.509
Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrost	III.393
Motions and Means, on land and sea at war	III.507
Motto intended for Poems on the naming of Places	I.726
Musings Near Aquapendente	III.524
Mutability	III.407
My frame hath often trembled with delight	III.357
My heart leaps up when I behold	I.669
My Lesbia let us love and live	I.16
My Lord and Lady Darlington	III.610
Nay, Traveller! rest. This lonely yew-tree stands	I.312

Near Anio's stream, I spied a gentle Dove	III.538
Near Rome, in Sight of St. Peter's	III.538
Near the Lake of Thrasymene	III.539
Near the Same Lake	III.540
Near the spring of the hermitage	III.129
Never enlivened with the liveliest ray	III.703
New Church Yard	III.410
New Churches	III.409
Next morning Troilus began to clear	II.654
Night Thought, A	III.729
No fiction was it of the antique age	III.353
No more: the end is sudden and abrupt	III.483
No mortal object did these eyes behold	I.634
No record tells of lance opposed to lance	III.361
No whimsy of the purse is here	I.749
Nor can Imagination quit the shores	III.387
Nor scorn the aid which Fancy oft doth lend	III.376
Nor shall the eternal roll of praise reject	III.403
Nor unregarded may I pass thee by	II.568
Nor wants the cause the panic-striking aid	III.372
Norman Boy, The	III.743
Norman Conquest, The	III.382
Not a breath of air / Ruffles the bosom of this leafy glen	III.715
Not envying shades which haply yet may throw	III.349
Not hurled precipitous from steep to steep	III.362
Not in the lucid intervals of life	III.687
Not in the mines beyond the western main	III.509
Not (like his great compeers) indignantly	III.433
Not Love, nor War, nor the tumultuous swell	III.568
Not 'mid the World's vain objects that enslave	III.17
Not pangs of grief for lenient time too keen	III.496
Not sedentary all: there are who roam	III.379
Not seldom, clad in radiant vest	III.130
Not so that Pair whose youthful spirits dance	III.353
Not the whole warbling grove in concert heard	III.606
Not to the clouds, not to the cliff, he flew	III.500
Not to the object specially designed	III.556
Not utterly unworthy to endure	III.393
Not without heavy grief of heart did He	III.24
November 1, 1815	III.81
November, 1806	I.651
November, 1813	III.52
November, 1836	III.729

Now hollow sounding all around I hear	I.39
Now that a Parthenon ascends, to crown	III.487
Now that all hearts are glad, all faces bright	III.52
Now that Astrology is out of date	III.683
Now that the farewell tear is dried	III.442
Now we are tired of boisterous joy	I.676
Now when the Gods had crush'd the Asian State	II.726
Now when the primrose makes a splendid show	III.740
Nun's Well, Brigham	III.491
Nunnery	III.507
Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room	I.628
Nutting	I.435
O blithe New-comer! I have heard	I.674
O dearer far than light and life are dear	III.583
O flower of all that springs from gentle blood	III.29
O Fools that we were, we had land which we sold	I.727
O for a dirge! But why complain?	III.586
O, for a kindling touch of that pure flame	III.80
O for the help of Angels to complete	III.430
O Friend! I know not which way I must look	I.645
O gentle Sleep! do they belong to thee	I.631
O Lelius, beauteous flower of gentleness	III.28
O Lord, our Lord! how wonderously (quoth she)	II.635
O mountain Stream! the Shepherd and his Cot	I.633
O Mountain Stream! the Shepherd and his Cot	III.355
O Nightingale! thou surely art	I.668
O there is blessing in this gentle Breeze	III.144
O Thou who movest onward with a mind	III.28
O Thou! whose fancies from afar are brought	I.614
O'er the wide earth, on mountain and on plain	III.22
O'erweening Statesmen have full long relied	III.31
Oak and the Broom, A Pastoral, The	I.403
Oak of Guernica! Tree of holier power	III.30
Oak of Guernica, The	III.30
Obligations of Civil to Religious Liberty	III.404
Occasioned by the Same Battle. February 1816	III.79
October, 1803 ("Six thousand Veterans practis'd in War's game")	I.650
October, 1803 ("These times touch money'd Worldlings with dismay")	I.648
October, 1803 ("When, looking on the present face of things")	I.649
October, 1803	I.647
ODE ("There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream")	I.712
Ode ("Who rises on the banks of Seine")	III.98
Ode.—1817	III.113

852 The Poems of William Wordsworth

Ode (from Horace)	I.60
Ode to Duty	I.617
Ode, composed in January 1816	III.93
Ode, Composed on May Morning	III.595
Ode, Composed upon an Evening of Extraordinary Splendor and Beauty	III.124
Ode, Performed in the Senate-house, Cambridge, on the Sixth of July, M.DCCC.XLVII. At the first Commencement after the Installation of His Royal Highness The Prince Albert, Chancellor of the University. Installation Ode.	III.775
Ode. The morning of the day appointed for a general thanksgiving. January 18, 1816	III.82
Ode. The Pass of Kirkstone	III.120
Ode, to Lycoris, May, 1817	III.116
Of mortal Parents is the Hero born	III.23
Oft had I heard of Lucy Gray	I.407
Oft have I caught from fitful breeze	III.510
Oft have I seen, ere Time had ploughed my cheek	III.568
Oft is the Medal faithful to its trust	III.45
Oft, through thy fair domains, illustrious Peer!	II.298
Oh! bless'd all bliss above	I.740
Oh Life! without thy chequered scene	III.466
Oh now that the genius of Bewick were mine	I.418
Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze	II.11
Oh thou whose fixed, bewildered eye	I.57
Oh what a Wreck! how changed in mien and speech!	III.732
Oh! what's the matter? what's the matter?	I.322
Old Abbeys	III.408
Old Cumberland Beggar, A Description, The	I.442
Old Man Travelling	I.367
On a Celebrated Event in Ancient History	III.34
On a Nursery piece of the same, by a Scottish Bard—	III.571
On a Portrait of the Duke of Wellington, upon the Field of Waterloo, by Haydon	III.746
On an Event in Col: Evans's redoubted performances in Spain	III.729
On Approaching the Staub-Bach, Lauterbrunnen	III.435
On Being Stranded near the Harbour of Boulogne	III.456
On Cain a Mystery dedicated to Sir Walter Scott	III.571
On Entering Douglas Bay, Isle of Man	III.494
On Hearing the "Ranz Des Vaches" on the Top of the Pass of St. Gothard	III.439
On his morning rounds the Master	I.690
On, loitering Muse!—The swift Stream chides us—on!	III.354
On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life	II.300
On Religion's holy hill	I.52

On Revisiting Dunolly Castle	III.499
On Seeing a Needlecase in the Form of a Harp, the Work of E. M. S.	III.607
On seeing some Tourists of the Lakes pass by reading; a practise very common.	I.722
On the Banks of a Rocky Stream	III.776
On the death of an unfortunate Lady.	I.20
On the Death of His Late Majesty	III.141
On the Departure of Sir Walter Scott from Abbotsford, for Naples	III.472
On the Disinterment of the Remains of the Duke D'enghien	III.101
On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic	I.641
On the Final Submission of the Tyrolese	III.23
On the Frith of Clyde. (In a Steam-Boat.)	III.499
On the Lake of Brientz	III.436
On the Power of Sound	III.623
On the Same Occasion ("When in the antique age of bow and spear")	III.575
On the same Subject ("Though I beheld at first with blank surprise")	III.738
On the Sight of a Manse in the South of Scotland	III.473
On tiptoe forward as I lean'd aghast	I.44
On to Iona!—What can she afford	III.502
Once did She hold the gorgeous East in fee	I.641
Once I could hail (howe'er serene the sky)	III.600
Once in a lonely Hamlet I sojourn'd	I.695
Once more I welcome Thee, and Thou, fair Plant	II.274
Once more the Church is seized with sudden fear	III.389
Once on the brow of yonder Hill I stopped	I.558
Once on the top of Tynwald's formal mound	III.497
One might believe that natural miseries	I.647
One morning (raw it was and wet)	I.595
One who was suffering tumult in his soul	III.136
Open Prospect	III.354
Open your Gates ye everlasting Piles!	III.410
Orchard Pathway, The	I.587
Orchard Pathway, to and fro	I.587
Orlando, who great length of time had been	I.740
Other Benefits	III.386
Other Influences	III.377
Our bodily life, some plead, that life the shrine	III.558
Our Lady of the Snow	III.437
Our walk was far among the antient trees	I.461
Outstretching flame-ward his upbraided hand	III.396
Oxford, May 30, 1820 ("Shame on this faithless heart! that could allow")	III.142
Oxford, May 30, 1820 ("Ye sacred Nurseries of blooming Youth!")	III.142
Pansies, Lilies, Kingcups, Daisies	I.597
Papal Abuses	III.384

Papal Dominion	III.385
Parsonage in Oxfordshire, A	III.569
Part fenced by man, part by a rugged steep	III.473
Pastor and Patriot! at whose bidding rise	III.492
Pastoral Character	III.405
Patriotic Sympathies	III.401
Patriots informed with Apostolic light	III.421
Paulinus	III.374
Pause, courteous Spirit!—Balbi supplicates	III.25
Pause, Traveller! whosoe'er thou be	III.127
Peasant's Life, The	II.566
Pedlar, The	I.286
Pelion and Ossa flourish side by side	I.720
Pellucid Spring! unknown beyond the verge	II.294
People! your chains are severing link by link	III.475
People! your chains are severing link by link	III.561
Perhaps some needful service of the State	III.27
Persecution of the Scottish Covenanters	III.414
Persecution	III.370
Persuasion	III.375
Peter Bell, a Tale	I.487
Pet-lamb, A Pastoral, The	I.438
Picture of Daniel in the Lion's Den, at Hamilton Palace	III.480
Pilgrim Fathers, The	III.420
Pilgrim's Dream, or, the Star and the Glow-worm, The	III.132
Pillar of Trajan, The	III.552
Pine of Monte Mario at Rome, The	III.535
Pity ("Now too while o'er the heart we feel")	I.36
Pity ("What tho' my griefs must never flow")	I.35
Pity mourn in plaintive tone	I.16
Placard for a Poll bearing an Old Shirt	III.130
Place of Burial in the South of Scotland, A	III.473
Places of Worship	III.405
Plain of Donnerdale, The	III.357
Plea for Authors, A. May, 1838	III.734
Plea for the Historian	III.537
Pleasures newly found are sweet	I.599
Poems Composed during a Tour, Chiefly on Foot	I.619
Poems, in Two Volumes	I.587
Poems on the Naming of Places	I.453
Poems Written During a Tour in Scotland	I.652
Poet and the Caged Turtledove, The	III.642
Poet to his Grandchild, A. (Sequel to the Foregoing.)	III.736

Poet's Epitaph, A	I.448
Point at Issue, The	III.413
Poor Robin	III.740
Poor Susan	I.414
Portentous change when History can appear	III.563
Power of Music	I.687
Praised be the Art whose subtle power could stay	III.35
Praised be the Rivers, from their mountain-springs	III.419
Preface [to The Excursion]	II.298
Prefatory Sonnet ("Nuns fret not at their Convent's narrow room")	I.628
Prelude ("In desultory walk through orchard grounds")	III.752
Prelude, The (1798–1799)	I.530
Prelude, The (1805–1806)	II.11
Prelude, The (1824–1839)	III.144
Presentiments	III.665
Presentiments! they judge not right	III.665
Press'd with conflicting thoughts of love and fear	II.291
Primitive Saxon Clergy	III.377
Primrose of the Rock, The	III.656
Prioress's Tale, The; Translation of Chaucer's	II.635
Prithee gentle Lady list	III.602
Processions, Suggested on a Sabbath Morning in the Vale of Chamouny	III.451
Prologue to The Affliction of Mary — of — (written for the Lyrical Ballads)	I.718
Prompt transformation works the novel lore	III.376
Protest against the Ballot. 1838	III.735
Proud were ye, Mountains, when, in times of old	III.765
Pure element of waters! wheresoe'er	III.134
Pursued by Hate, debarred from friendly care	III.400
Queen and Negress chaste and fair!	III.570
Queen of the stars!—so gentle, so benign	III.718
Question and Answer	III.683
Ranging the Heights of Scawfell or Black-coom	III.493
Rapt above earth by power of one fair face	III.547
Realms quake by turns: proud Arbitress of grace	III.384
Recollection of the Portrait of King Henry Eighth, Trinity Lodge, Cambridge	III.569
Record we too, with just and faithful pen	III.386
Recovery	III.371
Redbreast and the Butterfly, The	I.594
Redbreast, The. (Suggested in a Westmoreland Cottage.)	III.712
Redoubted King, of courage leonine	III.383
Reflections	III.394

Regrets	III.407
Reluctant call it was; the rite delayed	III.561
Remembering how thou didst beguile	I.481
Reproof	III.378
Resolution and Independence	I.624
Rest and Be Thankful, at the Head of Glencoe	III.478
Rest, rest, perturbed Earth!	III.92
Resting-place, The	III.359
Retired Marine Officer, Isle of Man, The	III.496
Retirement	III.593
Return (“A dark plume fetch me from yon blasted Yew”)	III.356
Return, Content! for fondly I pursued	III.360
Revival of Popery	III.413
Reynolds come thy pencil prove	I.14
Richard I	III.383
Rid of a vexing and a heavy load	I.722
Rise!—they have risen: of brave Aneurin ask	III.372
River Duddon, a series of Sonnets, The	III.349
River Eden, Cumberland, The	III.505
Rob Roy’s Grave	I.652
Roman Antiquities Discovered, at Bishopstone, Herefordshire	III.611
Roman Antiquities. (From the Roman Station at Old Penrith.)	III.483
Rotha, my Spiritual Child! this head was grey	III.581
Rude is this Edifice, and Thou hast seen	I.415
Ruined Cottage, The. A Poem	I.270
Rural Architecture	I.448
Rural Ceremony	III.406
Rural Illusions	III.663
Russian Fugitive, The	III.643
Ruth	I.421
Sacheverell	III.415
Sacrament	III.417
Sacred Religion, “mother of form and fear,”	III.356
Sad thoughts, avaunt!—the fervour of the year	III.359
Said red-ribbon’d Evans	III.733
Said Secrecy to Cowardice and Fraud	III.562
Sailor’s Mother, The	I.595
Saints	III.392
Same Subject, The (“Not so that Pair whose youthful spirits dance”)	III.353
Same Subject, The [“The lovely Nun (submissive but more meek”)]	III.392
Same, The (“Holy and heavenly Spirits as they were”)	III.398
Same, The (“What awful perspective! while from our sight”)	III.411
Saxon Conquest	III.372

Saxon Monasteries, and Lights and Shades of the Religion	III.379
Say, what is Honour?—Tis the finest sense	III.17
Say, ye far-travelled clouds, far-seeing hills	III.473
Scattering, like Birds escaped the Fowler's net	III.397
Scene in Venice	III.384
Scene	III.436
Scenery Between Namur and Liege	III.429
Scenes	I.39
Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned	III.605
Screams round the Arch-druid's brow the Seamew—white	III.369
Seathwaite Chapel	III.356
Seclusion	III.378
See the Condemned alone within his cell	III.559
See what gay wild flowers deck this earth-built Cot	III.478
See, where his difficult way that Old Man wins	III.550
Seek who will delight in fable	III.765
Sentiments of Affection for inanimate Nature	I.37
September 1st, 1802	I.643
September, 1802	I.644
September 1815	III.81
September, 1819	III.138
Septimi, Gades	I.57
Septimius and Acme	I.51
Septimius thus his [] love addressed	I.51
Sequel to the Foregoing [Beggars] composed many years after	III.111
Sequel to the Norman Boy	III.744
Serving no haughty Muse, my hands have here	III.732
Seven Daughters had Lord Archibald	I.612
Seven Sisters, Or the Solitude of Binnorie, The	I.612
Shame on this faithless heart! that could allow	III.142
She dwelt among th' untrodden ways	I.401
She had a tall Man's height, or more	I.619
She was a Phantom of delight	I.593
She wept.—Life's purple tide began to flow	I.21
Sheep-washing	III.359
Shepherd of Bield Crag, The	II.568
Shipwreck of the Soul	I.47
Shout, for a mighty Victory is won!	I.651
Show me the noblest Youth of present time	III.617
Shun not this Rite, neglected, yea abhorred	III.425
Sigh no more Ladies, sigh no more	III.747
Simon Lee, The Old Huntsman, with an incident in which he was concerned	I.327

Since risen from ocean, ocean to defy	III.498
Six months to six years added, He remain'd	III.52
Six thousand Veterans practis'd in War's game	I.650
Sky-Prospect—From the Plain of France	III.456
Small Celandine, The (“There is a Flower, the Lesser Celandine”)	I.671
Small service is true service while it lasts	III.704
Smile of the Moon—for so I name	III.109
So fair, so sweet, withal so sensitive	III.764
Soft as a cloud is yon blue Ridge—the Mere	III.689
Sole listener, Duddon! to the breeze that play'd	III.351
Solitary Reaper, The	I.656
Some minds have room alone for pageant stories	I.726
Somnambulist, The	III.513
Son of my buried Son, while thus thy hand	III.736
Song (“She dwelt among th' untrodden ways”)	I.401
Song, at the Feast of Brougham Castle	I.703
Song for the Spinning Wheel Founded upon a Belief Prevalent among the Pastoral Vales of Westmorland	III.46
Song for the Wandering Jew	I.420
Sonnet (“The Stars are Mansions built by Nature's hand”)	III.115
Sonnet. (Composed at —— Castle.)	I.664
Sonnet. A Prophecy. Feb. 1807	I.694
Sonnet. September 25th, 1803	I.743
Sonnet on Milton	III.12
Sonnet, on seeing a tuft of snowdrops in a storm	III.136
Sonnet, on seeing Miss Helen Maria Williams weep at a Tale of Distress	I.21
Sonnet, on the detraction which followed the publication of a certain poem	III.138
Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway	III.764
Sonnet, on the same occasion. February 1816	III.98
Sonnet, To Thomas Clarkson, On the final passing of the Bill for the Abolition of the Slave Trade, March, 1807	I.694
Sonnet written by Mr —— immediately after the death of his Wife	I.21
Sonnets Composed or Suggested during a tour in Scotland, in the Summer of 1833.	III.488
Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty and Order	III.561
Sonnets Dedicated to Liberty	I.639
Sonnets, suggested by Mr. W. Westall's views of the caves, &c. in Yorkshire	III.134
Sonnets upon the Punishment of Death. In Series	III.555
Soon did the Almighty Giver of all rest	III.754
Source of the Danube, The	III.433
Spade! with which Wilkinson hath till'd his Lands	I.702

Spanish Guerillas. 1811	III.33
Sparrow's Nest, The	I.673
Sponsors	III.418
St. Catherine of Ledbury	III.611
St. Paul's	II.291
Stanzas, Composed in the Semplon Pass	III.450
Stanzas on the Power of Sound	III.623
Stanzas Suggested in a Steam-Boat off St. Bees' Heads, on the Coast of Cumberland	III.518
Stanzas written in my Pocket copy of the Castle of Indolence	I.732
Star Gazers	I.686
Stay, bold Adventurer; rest awhile thy limbs	III.42
Stay, little cheerful Robin! stay	III.755
Stay near me—do not take thy flight!	I.667
Steamboats, Viaducts, and Railways	III.507
Stepping Westward	I.657
Stepping-stones, The	III.352
Stern Daughter of the Voice of God!	I.617
Strange fits of passion I have known	I.400
Strange visitation! at Jemima's lip	III.592
Stranger, 'tis a sight of pleasure	III.126
Stranger, this hillock of mishapen stones	I.428
Stretched on the dying Mother's lap, lies dead	III.506
Struggle of the Britons against the Barbarians	III.372
Such age how beautiful! O Lady bright	III.591
Such contrast, in whatever track we move	III.400
Such fruitless questions may not long beguile	III.355
Suggested by a beautiful ruin upon one of the islands of Loch Lomond, a place chosen for the retreat of a solitary individual, from whom this habitation acquired the name of The Brownie's Cell	III.55
Suggested by a Picture of the Bird of Paradise	III.750
Suggested by a View from an Eminence in Inglewood Forest	III.481
Suggested by the View of Lancaster Castle (On the Road from the South)	III.555
Supposed Address to the Same, 1810	III.30
Surprized by joy—impatient as the Wind	III.49
Sweet Flower! belike one day to have	I.750
Sweet Highland Girl, a very shower	I.662
Sweet is the holiness of Youth"—so felt	III.395
Sweet was the Walk along the narrow Lane	I.48
Swiftly turn the murmuring wheel!	III.46
Sylph was it? or a Bird more bright	III.663
Tables Turned, The	I.366
Take, cradled Nursling of the mountain, take	III.350

Tale of Peter Bell	I.492
Tax not the royal Saint with vain expense	III.411
Tell me, ye Zephyrs! that unfold	III.578
Temptations from Roman Refinements	III.371
Tenderly do we feel by Nature's law	III.555
Thanks for the lessons of this Spot—fit school	III.501
Thanksgiving after Childbirth	III.424
That gloomy cave, that gothic nich	III.643
That happy gleam of vernal eyes	III.616
That heresies should strike (if truth be scanned	III.372
That is work which I am rueing—	I.698
That vast eugh-tree, pride of Lorton Vale	I.747
That way look, my Infant, lo!	I.609
The Ball whizzed by—it grazed his ear	III.729
The Baptist might have been ordain'd to cry	III.547
The Bard, whose soul is meek as dawning day	III.79
The barren wife all sad in mind	I.72
The captive Bird was gone;—to cliff or moor	III.499
The cattle crowding round this beverage clear	III.491
The cock is crowing	I.669
The confidence of Youth our only Art	III.431
The Crescent-moon, the Star of Love	III.747
The Danish Conqueror, on his royal chair	III.100
The dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink	I.438
The embowering Rose, the Acacia, and the Pine	III.43
The encircling ground, in native turf array'd	III.410
The fairest, brightest hues of ether fade	III.47
The feudal Keep, the bastions of Cohorn	III.494
The floods are roused, and will not soon be weary	III.507
The forest huge of ancient Caledon	III.481
The formal World relaxes her cold chain	III.560
The gallant Youth, who may have gained	III.469
The gentlest Poet, with free thoughts endowed	III.750
The gentlest Shade that walked Elysian Plains	III.36
The glory of evening was spread through the west	I.370
The God of Love—ah benedicite!	II.642
The hour-bell sounds and I must go	I.70
The Imperial Consort of the Fairy King	III.366
The imperial Stature, the colossal stride	III.569
The Kirk of Ulpha to the Pilgrim's eye	III.362
The Knight had ridden down from Wensley Moor	I.377
The Lady whom you here behold	III.601
The Land we from our Fathers had in trust	III.20

The leaves that rustled on this oak-crowned hill	III.690
The Linnet's warble, sinking towards a close	III.688
The little hedge-row birds	I.367
The lovely Nun (submissive but more meek)	III.392
The Lovers took within this ancient grove	III.505
The martial courage of a day is vain—	III.33
The massy Ways, carried across these Heights	III.592
The May is come again:—how sweet	I.682
The Minstrels played their Christmas tune	III.363
The moaning owl shall soon	I.42
The most alluring clouds that mount the sky	III.758
The old inventive Poets, had they seen	III.357
The oppression of the tumult—wrath and scorn—	III.373
The peace which Others seek they find	I.726
The Pibroch's note, discountenanced or mute	III.474
The Pillar of Trajan	III.552
The ploughboy by his gingling wane	I.39
The Post-boy drove with fierce career	I.622
The power of Armies is a visible thing	III.34
The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed	I.634
The rains at length have ceas'd, the winds are still'd	I.759
The Roman Consul doomed his sons to die	III.556
The Sabbath bells renew the inviting peal	III.424
The Scottish Broom on Bird-nest brae	III.131
The Sheep-boy whistled loud, and lo!	I.755
The Shepherd, looking eastward, softly said	III.11
The soaring Lark is blest as proud	III.667
The Spirit of Antiquity, enshrined	III.428
The Star that comes at close of day to shine	III.740
The Stars are Mansions built by Nature's hand	III.115
The struggling Rill insensibly is grown	III.352
The Sun has long been set	I.668, III.692
The sun is couched, the sea-fowl gone to rest	III.691
The sun is dead—ye heard the curfew toll	I.21
The Sun, that seemed so mildly to retire	III.691
The Swallow, that hath lost	I.739
The sylvan slopes with corn-clad fields	III.138
The taper turn'd from blue to red	I.39
The tears of man in various measure gush	III.395
The torrent's yelling Spectre, seen	I.41
The Turban'd Race are poured in thickening swarms	III.383
The unremitting voice of nightly streams	III.616
The valley rings with mirth and joy	I.409

The Vested Priest before the Altar stands	III.423
The Virgin Mountain, wearing like a Queen	
The Virgin Mountain, wearing like a Queen	III.399
The Voice of Song from distant lands shall call	I.642
The western clouds a deepening gloom display	I.54
The wind is now thy organist;—a clank	III.473
The woman-hearted Confessor prepares	III.382
The world forsaken, all its busy cares	III.544
The world is too much with us; late and soon	I.637
The Young-ones gathered in from hill and dale	III.416
Then did dire forms and ghastly faces float	I.47
There are no colours in the fairest sky	III.403
There is a bondage which is worse to bear	I.648
There is a change—and I am poor	I.699
There is a Flower, the Lesser Celandine	I.671
There is a law severe of penury	I.485
There is a pleasure in poetic pains	III.606
There is a thorn; it looks so old	I.335
There is a trickling water, neither rill	I.720
There is an Eminence,—of these our hills	I.458
There never breathed a man who when his life	III.25
There!” said a Stripling, pointing with meet pride	III.504
There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs	I.383
There was a roaring in the wind all night	I.624
There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream	I.712
There’s an old man in London, the prime of old men	I.476
There’s George Fisher, Charles Fleming, and Reginald Shore	I.448
There’s not a nook within this solemn Pass	III.474
There’s something in a flying horse	I.487
These chairs they have no words to utter	I.731
These times touch money’d Worldlings with dismay	I.648
These Tourists, Heaven preserve us! needs must live	I.384
These Vales were saddened with no common gloom	III.573
These who gave earliest notice, as the Lark	III.388
These words were utter’d in a pensive mood	I.630
They called Thee merry England, in old time	III.489
They dreamt not of a perishable home	III.411
They seek, are sought; to daily battle led	III.33
They—who have seen the noble Roman’s scorn	III.537
This Book, which strives to express in tuneful sound	I.718
This Height a ministering Angel might select	III.42
This is the spot:—how mildly does the Sun	I.485
This Land of Rainbows, spanning glens whose walls	III.475

This Lawn, &c.	III.664
This Lawn, a carpet all alive	III.664
Tho' searching damp and many an envious flaw	III.445
Thorn, The	I.335
Those breathing Tokens of your kind regard	III.669
Those old credulities, to nature dear	III.536
Those silver clouds collected round the sun	III.137
Thou look'st upon me, and dost fondly think	III.491
Thou sacred Pile! whose turrets rise	III.439
Thou who with youthful vigour rich, and light	I.56
Though I beheld at first with blank surprise	III.738
Though joy attend thee orient at the birth	III.479
Though many suns have risen and set	III.597
Though narrow be that Old Man's cares, and near	I.693
Though Pulpits and the Desk may fail	III.748
Though the bold wings of Poesy affect	III.750
Though the torrents from their fountains	I.420
Though to give timely warning and deter	III.558
Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland	I.645
Thought on the Seasons	III.683
Thoughts Suggested the Day Following on the Banks of Nith, near the Poet's Residence	III.727
Threats come which no submission may assuage	III.391
Three Cottage Girls, The	III.447
Three Graves, The	I.74
Three years she grew in sun and shower	I.436
Throned in the Sun's descending car	III.693
Through Cumbrian wilds, in many a mountain cove	III.70
Through shattered galleries, 'mid roofless halls	III.582
Thus far I write to please my Friend	III.571
Thus is the storm abated by the craft	III.389
Thy functions are ethereal	III.623
Tinker, The	I.718
Tis eight o'clock,—a clear March night	I.349
Tis gone—with old belief and dream	III.748
Tis He whose yester-evening's high disdain	III.734
Tis said that to the brow of yon fair hill	III.615
Tis said, fantastic Ocean doth enfold	III.427
Tis said, that some have died for love	I.412
To —— (“From the dark chambers of dejection freed”)	III.64
To —— (“Happy the feeling from the bosom thrown”)	III.602
To —— (“If these brief Records, by the Muses' art”)	III.603
To —— (“Let other Bards of Angels sing”)	III.580

To —— (“Look at the fate of summer Flowers”)	III.581
To —— (“O dearer far than light and life are dear”)	III.583
To —— (“Such age how beautiful! O Lady bright”)	III.591
To —— (“Those silver clouds collected round the sun”)	III.137
To —— (“Wait, prithee, wait!” this answer Lesbia threw)	III.612
To ——, on her first ascent to the summit of Helvellyn	III.106
To ——, upon the birth of her first-born child, march, 1833	III.694
To —— . With a selection from the poems of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea; and extracts of similar character from other writers; the whole transcribed by a female friend	III.141
To a Butterfly (“I’ve watch’d you now a full half hour”)	I.675
To a Butterfly (“Stay near me—do not take thy flight!”)	I.667
To a Friend, Composed near Calais, on the Road leading to Ardres, August 7th, 1802	I.640
To a Friend (On the Banks of the Derwent)	III.492
To a good Man of most dear memory	III.719
To a Highland Girl. (At Inversneyde, upon Loch Lomond.)	I.662
To a Lady, in Answer to a Request that I would write her a Poem upon Some Drawings that she had made of Flowers in the Island of Madeira	III.758
To a Painter	III.738
To a Redbreast—(In Sickness)	III.755
To a Sexton	I.416
To a Sky-lark (“Ethereal Minstrel! Pilgrim of the sky!”)	III.590
To a Sky-lark (“Up with me! up with me into the clouds!”)	I.620
To a Snow-drop, appearing very early in the Season	III.135
To a Young Lady, Who had been reproached for taking long Walks in the Country	I.684
To an Octogenarian	III.771
To appease the Gods; or public thanks to yield	III.451
To B. R. Haydon, Esq. On Seeing his Picture of Napoleon Buonaparte on the Island of St. Helena	III.679
To barren heath, and quaking fen	III.55
To Cordelia M——, Hallsteads, Ullswater	III.509
To Enterprize	III.457
To H. C., Six Years Old	I.615
To Henry Crabb Robinson	III.524
To Joanna	I.455
To kneeling Worshipers no earthly floor	III.425
To Lucca Giordano	III.774
To M. H. (“Our walk was far among the antient trees”)	I.461
To mark the white smoke rising slow	I.37
To May	III.597
To Melpomene	I.41

To public notice, with reluctance strong	III.71
To R. B. Haydon, Esq.	III.80
To Rotha Q ———	III.581
To S. H.	III.602
To Sleep (“A flock of sheep that leisurely pass by”)	I.631
To Sleep (“Fond words have oft been spoken to thee, Sleep!”)	I.632
To Sleep (“O gentle Sleep! do they belong to thee”)	I.631
To the—— (“Lady! the songs of Spring were in the grove”)	I.636
To the Author’s Portrait	III.682
To the Clouds	II.292
To the Cuckoo (“Not the whole warbling grove in concert heard”)	III.606
To the Cuckoo (“O blithe New-comer! I have heard”)	I.674
To the Daisy (“In youth from rock to rock I went”)	I.588
To the Daisy (“Sweet Flower! belike one day to have”)	I.750
To the Daisy (“With little here to do or see”)	I.688
To the Earl of Lonsdale	III.508
To the grove, the meadow, the well	I.739
To the Lady ——, On Seeing the Foundation Preparing for the Erection of —— Chapel, Westmoreland	III.573
To the Lady E. B. and the Hon. Miss P.	III.582
To the Memory of Raisley Calvert	I.638
To the Men of Kent. October, 1803	I.650
To the Moon. (Composed by the Sea-Side,—on the Coast of Cumberland.)	III.716
To the Moon. (Rydal.)	III.718
To the Pennsylvanians	III.565
To the Planet Venus, an Evening Star. Composed at Loch Lomond	III.479
To the Planet Venus, upon its Approximation (as an Evening Star) to the Earth, January 1838	III.731
To the Poet, Dyer	III.41
To the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth, D.D., Master of Harrow School, after the Perusal of his Theophilus Anglicanus, recently published	III.763
To the Rev. Dr. W——	III.363
To the Right Honorable William, Earl of Lonsdale, K. G. &c. &c.	II.298
To the River Derwent	III.490
To the River Duddon (“O mountain Stream! the Shepherd and his Cot”)	I.633
To the River Greta, near Keswick	III.489
To the Same (“Enough of climbing toil!—Ambition treads”)	III.123
To the Same (“Here let us rest—here, where the gentle beams”)	III.122
To the Same Flower (“Bright Flower, whose home is every where!”)	I.690
To the Same Flower (“Pleasures newly found are sweet”)	I.599
To the Small Celandine (“Pansies, Lilies, Kingcups, Daisies”)	I.597
To the Spade of a Friend	I.702
To the Torrent at the Devil’s Bridge, North Wales	III.583

To the Utilitarians	III.701
To the Yoke he bends, / Receives the chain from Nature's conquering hand	II.566
To Toussaint L'Ouverture	I.643
Too frail to keep the lofty vow	III.727
Torquato Tasso rests within this Tomb	III.29
Torrent	I.41
Toussaint, the most unhappy Man of Men!	I.643
Town of Schwytz, The	III.438
Tracks let me follow far from human-kind	III.435
Tradition of Darley Dale, Derbyshire, A	III.615
Tradition	III.358
Tradition, be thou mute! Oblivion, throw	III.476
Tranquillity! the sovereign aim wert thou	III.506
Translation ("When Love was born of race divine")	I.53
Translation from Ariosto, Orlando Furioso	I.740
Translation from Michelangelo. Fragment	I.749
Translation of the Bible	III.394
Translation of the Sestet of a Sonnet by Tasso	III.569
Translations from Metastasio	I.738
Translations of Chaucer and Virgil	II.635
Transubstantiation	III.388
Travelling	I.485
Trepidation of the Druids	III.369
Triad, The	III.617
Tributary Stream	III.357
Tribute to the Memory of the Same Dog	I.692
Troilus and Cresida, Translation of Chaucer's	II.654
Trosachs, The	III.474
Troubled long with warring notions	III.129
Troubles of Charles the First	III.400
True is it that Ambrosio Salinero	III.23
Tuft of Primroses, The	II.274
Twas summer—and the sun was mounted high	I.286, 270; II.308
Two April Mornings, The	I.430
Two Thieves, Or the last Stage of Avarice, The	I.418
Two Voices are there; one is of the Sea	I.645
Tynwald Hill	III.497
Uncertainty	III.370
Under the shadow of a stately Pile	III.546
Ungrateful Country, if thou e'er forget	III.404
Unless to Peter's Chair the viewless wind	III.385
Unquiet Childhood here by special grace	III.585

Untouched through all severity of cold	III.612
Up, Timothy, up with your Staff and away!	I.441
Up to the throne of God is borne	III.702
Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks	I.366
Up with me! up with me into the clouds!	I.620
Upon a Portrait	III.740
Upon Perusing the Foregoing Epistle Thirty Years after its Composition	III.754
Upon Seeing a Coloured Drawing of the Bird of Paradise in an Album	III.714
Upon the Late General Fast. March, 1832	III.561
Upon the Same Event	III.35
Upon the Same Occasion	III.139
Upon the Sight of a Beautiful Picture	III.35
Upon the sight of the Portrait of a female Friend.—	III.739
Upon those lips, those placid lips, I look	III.739
Urged by Ambition, who with subtlest skill	III.381
Vale of Esthwaite, The	I.23
Valedictory Sonnet	III.732
Vallombrosa! I longed in thy shadiest wood	III.450
Vallombrosa—I longed in thy shadiest wood	III.545
Vanguard of Liberty, ye Men of Kent	I.650
Various Extracts from The vale of Esthwaite A Poem. Written at Hawkshead in the Spring and Summer 1787	I.35
Vaudois, The	III.419
[Vernal Ode]	III..113 n
View from the Top of Black Comb	III.42
Virgil's Aeneid, Translation of	II.667
Virgin, The	III.393
Visitation of the Sick	III.424
Wait, prithee, wait!" this answer Lesbia threw	III.612
Waldenses	III.388
Walton's Book of "Lives"	III.403
Wanderer! that stoop'st so low, and com'st so near	III.716
Wansfell! this Household has a favoured lot	III.759
Ward of the Law!—dread Shadow of a King!	III.141
Warning, a Sequel to the Foregoing, The. March, 1833	III.697
Wars of York and Lancaster	III.389
Was it for this / That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved	I.530
Was it to disenchant, and to undo	III.430
Was the aim frustrated by force or guile	III.134
Watch, and be firm! for soul-subduing vice	III.371
Waterfall and the Eglantine, The	I.402
We Are Seven	I.332
We can endure that He should waste our lands	III.32

We gaze, not sad to think that we must die	III.740
We had a fellow-Passenger who came	I.643
We have not passed into a doleful City	III.504
We saw, but surely, in the motley crowd	III.500
We talk'd with open heart, and tongue	I.432
We walk'd along, while bright and red	I.430
Weak is the will of Man, his judgement blind	II.571; III.53
Weep not, beloved Friends! nor let the air	III.27
We'll have yon Railway Labourers to this ground	III.769
We'll sang the bard who called the Grave, in strains	III.477
We'll worthy to be magnified are they	III.420
Were there, below, a spot of holy ground	I.97
Westmoreland Girl, The	III.765
What! Adam's eldest Son in this sweet strain!	III.571
What aim had they, the Pair of Monks, in size	III.544
What aspect bore the Man who roved or fled	III.352
What awful perspective! while from our sight	III.411
What Beast in wilderness or cultured field	III.389
What Beast of Chase hath broken from the cover?	III.451
What boots it, * *, that thy princely blood	I.60
What crowd is this? what have we here! we must not pass it by	I.686
What from the social chain can tear	I.40
What! He—who, mid the kindred throng	III.58
What heavenly smiles! O Lady mine"	III.759
What is good for a bootless bene?	II.632
What know we of the Blest above	III.436
What lovelier home could gentle Fancy chuse?	III.429
What mischief cleaves to unsubdued regret	III.693
What need of clamorous bells, or ribbands gay	III.48
What strong allurements draws, what spirit guides	III.731
What though the Accused, upon his own appeal	III.673
What though the Italian pencil wrought not here	III.465
What waste in the labour of Chariot and Steed!	I.722
What you are stepping westward?" — "Yea."	I.657
When Alpine Vales threw forth a suppliant cry	III.414
When, far and wide, swift as the beams of morn	III.35
When first, descending from the moorlands	III.723
When first I journey'd hither, to a home	I.723
When haughty expectations prostrate lie	III.136
When here with Carthage Rome to conflict came	III.539
When human touch, as monkish books attest	III.611
When I have borne in memory what has tamed	I.647
When in the antique age of bow and spear	III.576

When, looking on the present face of things	I.649
When Love was born of race divine	I.53
When Philoctetes in the Lemnian Isle	III.593
When Phoebus took delight on earth to dwell	II.658
When Ruth was left half desolate	I.421
When Severn's sweeping Flood had overthrown	III.754
When slow from pensive twilight's latest gleams	I.48
When the Brothers reach'd the gateway	I.603
When the soft hand of sleep had closed the latch	III.93
Whence that low voice?—A whisper from the heart	III.358
Where are they now, those wanton Boys?	III.111
Where art thou, my beloved Son	I.606
Where be the noisy followers of the game	III.457
Where be the Temples which in Britain's Isle	III.71
Where holy ground begins—unhallowed ends	III.569
Where lies the Land to which yon Ship must go	I.629
Where lies the truth? has Man, in wisdom's creed	III.773
Where long and deeply hath been fixed the root	III.423
Where Towers are crushed, and unforbidden weeds	III.552
Where were ye nymphs when the remorseless deep	I.22
Where will they stop, those breathing Powers	III.680
While beams of orient light shoot wide and high	III.759
While flowing Rivers yield a blameless sport	III.366
While from the purpling east departs	III.595
While Merlin paced the Cornish sands	III.630
While not a leaf seems faded,—while the fields	III.81
While poring Antiquarians search the ground	III.611
While the Poor gather round, till the end of time	III.482
While they, her Playmates once, light-hearted tread	III.590
White Doe of Rylstone, The; Or the Fate of the Nortons	II.571
Who but is pleased to watch the moon on high	III.773
Who comes with rapture greeted, and caress'd	III.402
Who fancied what a pretty sight	I.671
Who is the happy Warrior? Who is he	I.600
Who leads a happy life	I.718
Who ponders National events shall find	III.563
Who rashly strove thy Image to portray?	III.714
Who rises on the banks of Seine	III.98
Who swerves from innocence, who makes divorce	III.361
Who weeps for Strangers?—Many wept	III.13
Why art thou silent! Is thy love a plant	III.676
Why cast ye back upon the Gallic shore	III.456
Why, Minstrel, these untuneful murmurings—	III.588

Why should the Enthusiast, journeying through this Isle	III.489
Why should we weep or mourn, Angelic boy	III.770
Why sleeps the future, as a snake enrolled	III.412
Why stand we gazing on the sparkling Brine	III.495
Why, William, on that old grey stone	I.365
Wicliffe	III.389
Widow on Windermere Side, The	III.730
Wild Duck's Nest, The	III.366
William the Third	III.404
Wishing-gate, The	III.613
Wishing-gate Destroyed, The	III.748
With a Small Present	III.737
With copious eulogy in prose or rhyme	III.677
With each recurrence of this glorious morn	III.53
With earnest look, to every voyager	III.503
With how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky	I.621
With little here to do or see	I.688
With sacrifice, before the rising morn	III.66
With Ships the sea was sprinkled far and nigh	I.632
With smiles each happy face was overspread	III.406
Within her gilded cage confined	III.584
Within the mind strong fancies work	III.120
Woe to the Crown that doth the Cowl obey!	III.381
Woe to you, Prelates! rioting in ease	III.390
Woman! the Power who left his throne on high	III.424
Would that our scrupulous Sires had dared to leave	III.407
Wouldst Thou be gathered to Christ's chosen flock	III.731
Wouldst thou be taught, when sleep has taken flight	III.741
Wren's Nest, A	III.684
Written at the Request of Sir George Beaumont, Bart. and in his Name, for an Urn, placed by him at the Termination of a newly-planted Avenue, in the same Grounds	III.44
Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian	III.510
Written in an Album	III.704
Written in Germany, On one of the coldest days of the Century	I.440
Written in London, September, 1802	I.645
Written in March, While resting on the Bridge at the Foot of Brother's Water	I.669
Written in Mrs. Field's Album Opposite a Pen-and-ink Sketch in the Manner of a Rembrandt Etching done by Edmund Field	III.643
Written in very early Youth ("Calm is all nature as a resting wheel")	I.635
Written, November 13, 1814, on a blank leaf in a Copy of the Author's Poem THE EXCURSION, upon hearing of the death of the late Vicar of Kendal	III.71

Written upon a Blank Leaf in "The Complete Angler"	III.366
Written upon a fly leaf in the Copy of the Author's Poems which was sent to her Majesty Queen Victoria	III.772
Written with a Slate-pencil, on a Stone, on the Side of the Mountain of Black Comb	III.42
Yarrow Revisited	III.469
Yarrow Revisited, and Other Poems . . . 1831	III.469
Yarrow Unvisited	I.665
Yarrow Visited, September, 1814	III.62
Ye Apennines! with all your fertile vales	III.524
Ye brood of conscience—Spectres! that frequent	III.557
Ye Lime-trees, ranged before this hallowed Urn	III.44
Ye now are panting up life's hill!	I.664
Ye sacred Nurseries of blooming Youth!	III.142
Ye shadowy Beings, that have rights and claims	III.501
Ye Storms, resound the praises of your King!	III.98
Ye, too, must fly before a chasing hand	III.392
Ye trees! whose slender roots entwine	III.548
Ye vales and hills whose beauty hither drew	III.763
Ye who with buoyant spirits blessed	I.55
Yes! full surely 'twas the Echo	I.701
Yes, if the intensities of hope and fear	III.406
Yes! hope may with my strong desire keep pace	I.633
Yes, there is holy pleasure in thine eye!	I.693
Yes! thou art fair, yet be not moved	III.768
Yes, though He well may tremble at the sound	III.560
Yet are they here?—the same unbroken knot	I.672
Yet more,—round many a Convent's blazing fire	III.391
Yet some, Noviciates of the cloistral shade	III.392
Yet Truth is keenly sought for, and the wind	III.402
Yet, yet, Biscayans, we must meet our Foes	III.31
[Yew Trees]	I.748
Yon hamlet far across the vale	I.41
You call it, "Love lies bleeding,"—so you may	III.703
You have heard "a Spanish Lady	III.658
Young England—what is then become of Old	III.567
1810 ("Ah! where is Palafox? Nor tongue nor pen")	III.18
1810 ("O'erweening Statesmen have full long relied")	III.31
1811 ("They seek, are sought; to daily battle led")	III.34