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The Poems

VOLUME ONE

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522 'MY HEART LEAPS UP WHEN I BEHOLD'

And thou wert still a hope, a love;
Still longed for, never seen.

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

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

'My heart leaps up when I behold'

My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky:
So was it when my life began;
So is it now I am a man;
So be it when I shall grow old,
Or let me die!
The Child is father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

To H.C., Six Years Old

O thou! whose fancies from afar are brought;
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol;
Thou faery voyager! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem
To brood on air than on an earthly stream;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,

523 ODE: INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

10 Where earth and heaven do make one imagery;
O blessèd vision! happy child!
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

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

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

Ode:

*Intimations of Immortality from
Recollections of Early Childhood*

The Child is Father of the Man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

I

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparelled in celestial light,

524 ODE: INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it hath been of yore; -
 Turn wheresoe'er I may,
 By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more.

II

10 The Rainbow comes and goes,
 And lovely is the Rose;
 The Moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
 Waters on a starry night
 Are beautiful and fair;
 The sunshine is a glorious birth;
 But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath past away a glory from the earth.

III

20 Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
 And while the young lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief:
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
 And I again am strong:
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep;
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong;
I hear the Echoes through the mountains throng,
The Winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
 And all the earth is gay;
30 Land and sea
 Give themselves up to jollity,
 And with the heart of May
 Doth every Beast keep holiday; -
 Thou Child of Joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy
 Shepherd-boy!

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IV

Ye blessèd 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,
40 My head hath its coronal,
The fulness of your bliss, I feel - I feel it all.
 Oh evil day! if I were sullen
 While Earth herself is adorning,
 This sweet May-morning,
 And the Children are culling
 On every side,
 In a thousand valleys far and wide,
 Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm,
And the Babe leaps up on his Mother's arm: -
50 I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
 - But there's a Tree, of many, one,
A single Field which I have looked upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
 The Pansy at my feet
 Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
60 Hath had elsewhere its setting,
 And cometh from afar:
 Not in entire forgetfulness,
 And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
 From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
 Upon the growing Boy,
 But He
70 Beholds the light, and whence it flows,

He sees it in his joy;
 The Youth, who daily farther from the east
 Must travel, still is Nature's Priest,
 And by the vision splendid
 Is on his way attended;
 At length the Man perceives it die away,
 And fade into the light of common day.

VI

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

VII

Behold the Child among his new-born blisses,
 A six years' Darling of a pigmy size!
 See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
 Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
 90 With light upon him from his father's eyes!
 See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
 Some fragment from his dream of human life,
 Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art;
 A wedding or a festival,
 A mourning or a funeral;
 And this hath now his heart,
 And unto this he frames his song:
 Then will he fit his tongue
 To dialogues of business, love, or strife;
 100 But it will not be long
 Ere this be thrown aside,
 And with new joy and pride
 The little Actor cons another part;
 Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
 With all the Persons, down to palsied Age,

That Life brings with her in her equipage;
 As if his whole vocation
 Were endless imitation.

VIII

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
 110 Thy Soul's immensity;
 Thou best Philosopher, who yet dost keep
 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,
 Which we are toiling all our lives to find,
 In darkness lost, the darkness of the grave;
 Thou, over whom thy Immortality
 120 Broods like the Day, a Master o'er a Slave,
 A Presence which is not to be put by;
 Thou little Child, yet glorious in the might
 Of heaven-born freedom on thy being's height,
 Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
 The years to bring the inevitable yoke,
 Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife?
 Full soon thy Soul shall have her earthly freight,
 And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
 Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life!

IX

130 O joy! that in our embers
 Is something that doth live,
 That nature yet remembers
 What was so fugitive!
 The thought of our past years in me doth breed
 Perpetual benediction: not indeed
 For that which is most worthy to be blest;
 Delight and liberty, the simple creed
 Of Childhood, whether busy or at rest,
 With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast: -

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140 Not for these I raise
 The song of thanks and praise;
 But for those obstinate questionings
 Of sense and outward things,
 Fallings from us, vanishings;
 Blank misgivings of a Creature
 Moving about in worlds not realized,
 High instincts before which our mortal Nature
 Did tremble like a guilty Thing surprised:
 But for those first affections,
 150 Those shadowy recollections,
 Which, be they what they may,
 Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
 Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
 Uphold us, cherish, and have power to make
 Our noisy years seem moments in the being
 Of the eternal Silence: truths that wake,
 To perish never;
 Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
 Nor Man nor Boy,
 160 Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
 Can utterly abolish or destroy!
 Hence in a season of calm weather
 Though inland far we be,
 Our Souls have sight of that immortal sea
 Which brought us hither,
 Can in a moment travel thither,
 And see the Children sport upon the shore,
 And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

x
 Then sing, ye Birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
 170 And let the young Lambs bound
 As to the tabor's sound!
 We in thought will join your throng,
 Ye that pipe and ye that play,
 Ye that through your hearts today
 Feel the gladness of the May!

529 THE SPARROW'S NEST

What though the radiance which was once so bright
 Be now for ever taken from my sight,
 Though nothing can bring back the hour
 Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
 180 We will grieve not, rather find
 Strength in what remains behind;
 In the primal sympathy
 Which having been must ever be;
 In the soothing thoughts that spring
 Out of human suffering;
 In the faith that looks through death,
 In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI

And O, ye Fountains, Meadows, Hills, and Groves,
 Forebode not any severing of our loves!
 190 Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
 I only have relinquished one delight
 To live beneath your more habitual sway.
 I love the Brooks which down their channels fret,
 Even more than when I tripped lightly as they;
 The innocent brightness of a new-born Day
 Is lovely yet;
 The Clouds that gather round the setting sun
 Do take a sober colouring from an eye
 That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
 200 Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
 Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys, and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

The Sparrow's Nest

Behold, within the leafy shade,
 Those bright blue eggs together laid!
 On me the chance-discovered sight

America.' - W. (1807). Jonathan Carver, *Travels Through the Interior Parts of North America* (1778), p. 133: 'The water at this time was as pure and transparent as air; and my canoe seemed as if it hung suspended in that element.'

ODE: INTIMATIONS OF IMMORTALITY

Composed probably between 27 March 1802 and probably early 1804 (by 6 March); first published in 1807; placed last and not included among any classification from 1815 on. In 1807 the poem was entitled simply *Ode* and the motto was 'Paulo majora canamus' ('Let us sing a little higher'); from 1815 the poem carried the present title and motto poem.

I. F. note:

This was composed during my residence at Town-End, Grasmere; two years at least passed between the writing of the four first stanzas and the remaining part. To the attentive and competent reader the whole sufficiently explains itself; but there may be no harm in adverting here to particular feelings or *experiences* of my own mind on which the structure of the poem partly rests. Nothing was more difficult for me in childhood than to admit the notion of death as a state applicable to my own being. I have said elsewhere -

'A simple child,
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death!' -

But it was not so much from [feelings] of animal vivacity that *my* difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever might become of others, I should be translated, in something of the same way, to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over the remembrances, as is expressed in the lines -

'Obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;' etc.

To that dream-like vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here: but having in the Poem

regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion, which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith, as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it, and the fall of Man presents an analogy in its favor. Accordingly, a pre-existent state has entered into the popular creeds of many nations; and, among all persons acquainted with classic literature, is known as an ingredient in Platonic philosophy. Archimedes said that he could move the world if he had a point whereon to rest his machine. Who has not felt the same aspirations as regards the world of his own mind? Having to wield some of its elements when I was impelled to write this Poem on the 'Immortality of the Soul', I took hold of the notion of pre-existence as having sufficient foundation in humanity for authorizing me to make for my purpose the best use of it I could as a Poet.

In Christopher Wordsworth, *Memoirs* II, 476, Wordsworth observed further:

In my Ode on the *Intimations of Immortality in Childhood*, I do not profess to give a literal representation of the state of the affections and of the moral being in childhood. I record my own feelings at that time - my absolute spirituality, my 'all-soulness,' if I may so speak. At that time I could not believe that I should lie down quietly in the grave, and that my body would moulder into dust.

In the same *Memoirs* (II, 480), R. P. Graves is quoted as reporting:

I remember Mr Wordsworth saying that, at a particular stage of his mental progress, he used to be frequently so rapt into an unreal transcendental world of ideas that the external world seemed no longer to exist in relation to him, and he had to reconvince himself of its existence by *claspng a tree*, or something that happened to be near him.

In a letter to Mrs Clarkson (January 1815), Wordsworth further observed of the ode:

This poem rests entirely upon two recollections of childhood, one that of a splendour in the objects of sense which is passed away, and the other an indisposition to bend to the law of death, as applying to our particular case. A Reader who has not a vivid recollection of these feelings having existed in his mind cannot understand that poem.

1-9 Compare *The Voice from the Side of Etna* (possibly by Wordsworth) 9-16: 'There was a time when earth, and sea, and skies, / The bright green vale and forest's dark recess, / When all things lay before my eyes / In steady loveliness. / But now I feel on earth's uneasy scene / Such motions as will never cease! / I only ask for peace - / Then wherefore must I know that such a time has been?'

23 *A timely utterance* usually considered to be a reference to 'My Heart Leaps Up', composed the day before Wordsworth began the Ode - see the motto poem.

28 *the fields of sleep* Thomas Hutchinson suggests: 'the west, those on which the sun has not yet risen'.

36-40 Compare Wordsworth's *The Idle Shepherd-Boys* 27-30.

74-5 Compare Wordsworth's *The Barberry-Tree* 63-4.

86 *the Child* usually considered a reference to Hartley Coleridge, eldest son of Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

103 *cons* commits to memory.

104 '*humorous stage*' Daniel's dedicatory sonnet (line 1) to Fulke Greville in *Musophilus*. *Humorous* means 'fanciful'.

105 *Persons* dramatis personae.

109-21 Coleridge (*Biographia Literaria*, Chapter XXII) objected to this passage as '*mental bombast*'.

119-20 *thy Immortality Broods like the Day* Compare Wordsworth's *Essay upon Epitaphs* (fifth paragraph): 'If we look back upon the days of childhood, we shall find that the time is not in remembrance when, with respect to our own individual Being, the mind was without this assurance [of immortality].'

121 Following this line, Wordsworth after 1815 deleted the following passage to which Coleridge objected in the *Biographia Literaria* (Chapter XXII): 'To whom the grave / 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.' Coleridge disliked the 'frightful notion of lying *awake* in the grave', but a passage in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* (29 April 1802) evinces a quite different attitude: 'We then went to John's Grove, sate a while at first. Afterwards William lay, and I lay, in the trench under the fence . . . He thought that it would be as sweet thus to lie so in the grave, to hear the *peaceful* sounds of the earth, and just to know that our dear friends were near.'

127-8 Compare *The Prelude* XIV, 157-9: 'The tendency, too potent in itself, / Of use and custom to bow down the soul / Under a growing weight of vulgar sense . . .'

155-6 *Our noisy years . . . Silence* Compare *Address to Silence* (probably by Wordsworth) 50: 'Our little years are moments of thy [Silence's] life', and Wordsworth's *On the Power of Sound* 217-18: 'O Silence! are Man's noisy years / No more than moments of thy life?'

161 *abolish or destroy* Compare *Paradise Lost* II, 92-3: 'More destroyed than thus / We should be quite abolisht and expire'.

182 *primal sympathy* Compare *The Prelude* I, 555-8: 'To those first-born affinities that fit / Our new existence to existing things, / And, in our dawn of being, constitute / The bond of union between life and joy'.

190 *in my heart of hearts* *Hamlet* III, ii, 78.

203 *the meanest flower* Compare Gray's *Ode on the Pleasure Arising from Vicissitude* (1754), 49: 'The meanest floweret of the vale'.

THE SPARROW'S NEST

Composed probably about March-April 1802 (certainly by 7 May); first published in 1807; in 1807 included in a group of poems entitled 'Moods of My Own Mind'; from 1815 to 1843 it was included among 'Poems Founded on the Affections', and thereafter among 'Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood'.

I. F. note:

The Orchard, Grasmere Town-End, 1801. At the end of the garden at my Father's house at Cockermouth was a high terrace . . . The terrace-wall, a low one, was covered with closely clipped privet and roses, which gave an almost impervious shelter to birds that built their nests there. The latter of these stanzas alludes to one of these nests.

9 *Emmeline* 'Dorothy' in the MS sent to the printer.

15-17 Compare Charles Churchill's *Independence* (1764) 42-3: 'The blessing she [Nature] bestow'd - she gave them eyes, / And they could see; she gave them ears - they heard . . .'

18 Compare *The Prelude* XIV, 230: 'Of humble cares and delicate desires'.

TO A SKY-LARK ('Up with me')

Composed probably between about March and 29 July 1802; first published in 1807; included from 1815 among 'Poems of the Fancy'.

In a letter to Barron Field (October 1828), Wordsworth explained his considerable revisions:

After having succeeded in the second *Skylark* ['Ethereal Minstrel . . .'] and in the conclusion of the poem entitled *A Morning Exercise*, in my notice of this bird, I became indifferent to this poem, which Coleridge used severely to condemn and to treat contemptuously. I like, however, the beginning of it [lines 1-7] so well that, for the sake of that, I tacked to it the respectably-tame conclusion [lines 26-31].

The intervening lines (8-25), dropped in 1827, were restored in 1832.

'AMONG ALL LOVELY THINGS' [THE GLOW-WORM]

Composed 12 April 1802; first published in 1807 and never reprinted by Wordsworth.

In a letter to Coleridge (16 April 1802), Wordsworth commented on the poem: 'The incident . . . took place about seven years ago between Dorothy and me.' The poem had no title when first published, but in Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal* it is referred to as *The Glow-Worm*.