Then here contented will I lie!
Alone, I cannot fear to die.

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

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

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

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

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

Her Eyes Are Wild
Her eyes are wild, her head is bare,
The sun has burnt her coal-black hair;
Her eyebrows have a rusty stain,
And she came far from over the main.
She has a baby on her arm,
Or else she were alone:
And underneath the hay-stack warm,
And on the greenwood stone,
She talked and sung the woods among,
And it was in the English tongue.
II
'Sweet babe! they say that I am mad,
But 'tis, my heart is far too glad;
And I am happy when I sing
Full many a sad and doleful thing:
Then, lovely baby, do not fear!
I pray thee have no fear of me;
But safe as in a cradle, here
My lovely baby! thou shalt be:
To thee I know too much I owe;
I cannot work thee any woe.

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

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

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

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

VII
'Thy father cares not for my breast,
'Tis thine, sweet baby, there to rest;
'Tis all thine own! - and, if its hue
Be changed, that was so fair to view,
'Tis fair enough for thee, my dove!
My beauty, little child, is flown,
But thou wilt live with me in love;
And what if my poor cheek be brown?
'Tis well for me, thou canst not see
How pale and wan it else would be.
VIII
'Dread not their taunts, my little Life;
I am thy father's wedded wife;
And underneath the spreading tree
We two will live in honesty.
If his sweet boy he could forsake,
With me he never would have stayed;
From him no harm my babe can take;
But he, poor man! is wretched made;
And every day we two will pray
For him that's gone and far away.

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

X
'Oh! smile on me, my little lamb!
For I thy own dear mother am:
My love for thee has well been tried:
I've sought thy father far and wide.
I know the poisons of the shade;
I know the earth-nuts fit for food;
Then, pretty dear, be not afraid:
We'll find thy father in the wood.
Now laugh and be gay, to the woods away!
And there, my babe, we'll live for aye.'
NOTES FOR PP. 267–74


For the reader's enjoyment of.

FRAGMENTS FROM THE ALFORDEN NOTE-BOOK (3)

Composed probably between 7 March and 11 May 1798; first published in 1815. Possibly intended for The Rambler Cottage, the first version of Book I of The Excursion.

TO MY SISTER

Composed probably between 1 and 9 March 1798; first published in Lyrical Ballads (1798); from 1815 included among 'Poems Founded on the Affections'.

1. F. note: 'Lines Written at a Small Distance from My House, and Sent, by My Little Boy to the Person to Whom They Are Addressed.'

2. 'Composed in front of Alfoxden House. My little boy-messenger on this occasion was the son of Basil Montagu. The larch mentioned in the first stanza was standing when I revisited the place in May, 1841, more than forty years after.'

3. Compare The Prelude (1805) I, 1–4: 'O there is blessing in this gentle breeze / That blows from the green fields and from the clouds / And from the sky: it bears against my cheek, / And seems half-conscious of the joy it gives.'

3a. Compare Lines Written... above Tintern Abbey 100–102: 'A motion and a spirit, that... rolls through all things.'

GOODBYE BLAKE AND HARRY GILL

Composed probably between 1 and 9 March 1798; first published in Lyrical Ballads (1798); from 1815 included among 'Poems of the Imagination' because, although it and The Horn of Eghram Castle (as Wordsworth pointed out in a footnote to the latter poem in the edition of 1815) 'rather refer to the imagination than are produced by it', he wished 'to avoid a needless multiplication of the Classes'. In 1815, the poem was finally moved to 'Miscellaneous Poems'.

In the Advertisement to the 1798 edition, Wordsworth claimed the poem was 'founded on a well-authenticated fact which happened in Warwickshire', and in the F. note we learn the source: 'Written at Alfoxden. The incident from Dr Darwin's Zoology (1794–6). Wordsworth's version of the story differs very little from his source. In the Preface to the 1802 edition, Wordsworth made further comments on the poem (see Appendix A, p. 887).

Jolly rhymes in North-country dialect with truly (line 11), canty cheerful (North-country dialect).

NOTES FOR PP. 275–8

THE COMPLAINT OF A FORSAKEN INDIAN WOMAN

Composed probably between early March and about 16 May 1798; first published in Lyrical Ballads (1798); from 1815 included among 'Poems Founded on the Affections'.

1. F. note: 'Written at Alfoxden in 1798, where I read Hare's Journey with deep interest. It was composed for the volume of Lyrical Ballads.' From Samuel Hare's A Journey from Prince of Wales's Fort in Hudson Bay to the Northern Ocean (London 1795). Wordsworth got the information and even some of the wording for the note he prefixed to the poem.

Wordsworth refers to the poem in the Preface of 1802 (see Appendix A, p. 871).

HER EYES ARE WILD

Composed probably between early March and about 16 May 1798; first published in Lyrical Ballads (1798); from 1815 to 1820 included among 'Poems Founded on the Affections', then transferred to 'Poems of the Imagination' from 1827 to 1832, and finally returned to 'Poems Founded on the Affections' in subsequent editions. Originally entitled The Mad Mother (1798–1805).

1. F. note: 'Alfoxden, 1798. The subject was reported to me by a Lady of Bristol who had seen the poor creature.' There are, nevertheless, some sources for the poem in Bishop Percy's Reliques (1765), as indicated in the note below. Much the most considerable of the sources was Lady Anne Bostell's Lament, also a monologue, which has a similar theme and stanza form, as well as verbal echoes.

Wordsworth refers to the poem in the Preface of 1802 (see Appendix A, p. 871).

10 English tongue Wordsworth explained this detail in a letter to John Kenyon (late autumn, 1836):

... Though she came from far, English was her native tongue — which shows her either to be of these Islands, or a North American. On the latter supposition, while the distance removes her from us, the fact of her speaking our language brings us at once into close sympathy with her.

11 Compare the opening line of The Frantic Lady: 'I burn, my brain consumes to ashes'. See also The Throstle 120–21.

30–49 Coleridge in his Notebook, ed. K. Coburn (1962) II, 2112, selected these lines as demonstrating imagination, and in his Biographia Literaria (Chapter XXII) he praised them as so expressive of that deranged state, in which from the increased sensibility the sufferer's attention is abruptly drawn off by every trifles, and in the same instant plucked back again by the one desolate thought, and bringing home with him, by the blinding, fascinating power of Imagination and Passion, the alien object to which it had been so abruptly diverted, no longer an alien but an ally and an inmate.
NOTES FOR PP. 295–9

other day in the Streets of Kendal . . . But for my own part, notwithstanding what has here been said in verse, I never in my whole life saw a man weep alone in the roads; but a friend of mine did see this poor man weeping alone, with the Lamb, the last of his flock, in his arms (Wordsworth to John Kenyon, late autumn, 1836).

WE ARE SEVEN

Composed probably between early March and about 16 May 1798; first published in Lyrical Ballads (1798); from 1815 included among 'Poems Referring to the Period of Childhood'.

I. F. note:

Written at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, under circumstances somewhat remarkable. The little girl who is the heroine I met within the area of Goodrich Castle in the year 1793 . . . . I composed it while walking in the grove at Alfoxden. My friends will not deem it too trifling to relate that while walking to and fro I composed the last stanza first having begun with the last line. When it was all but finished, I came in and recited to Mr Coleridge and my Sister, and said, 'A prelatory stanza must be added, and I should sit down to our little tea-meal with greater pleasure if my task were finished.' I mentioned in substance what I wished to be expressed, and Coleridge immediately threw off the stanza thus:

'A little child, dear brother Jen,' —

I objected to the rhyme, 'dear brother Jen,' as being ludicrous, but we all enjoyed the joke of hitchings-in our friend, James Tobin's name, who was familiarly called Jen.

On revisiting Goodrich Castle in 1841, Wordsworth could not find traces of the girl, as he 'did not even know her name'. In 1815 the opening line was shortened to its present form.

In the Preface to Lyrical Ballads (1802) Wordsworth described the poem as dealing with 'the perplexity and obscurity which in childhood attend our notion of death, or rather our utter inability to admit that notion'. As a child, Wordsworth himself had such perplexity, as we are informed in the I. F. note to the Ode: Intimations:

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 — [first stanza of We Are Seven is quoted]. But it was not so much from [feelings] of animal vivacity that my difficulty came as from a sense of the indomitable spirit within me.

29 Conway a seaport in North Wales.