

1798

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

JULY 13, 1798

William Wordsworth

Wordsworth, William (1770-1850) - English poet who, along with Samuel Taylor Coleridge, was an early leader of English Romanticism. He is best known for his worship of nature and his humanitarianism. *Lines, Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey* (1798) - One of Wordsworth's best-known poems, first published in his collection, "Lyrical Ballads." Opening lines: Five years have past; five summers, with the length / Of five long winters! and again I hear ...

TINTERN ABBEY

FIVE years have past; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain
springs With a sweet inland murmur.- Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
That on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.

The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-
tufts, Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
These hedgerows, hardly hedgerows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms,
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up in silence, from among the
trees!

With some uncertain notice, as might seem,

Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms, Through a long absence,
have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:

But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in

the blood, and felt along the heart; And passing even into my purer mind, With tranquil restoration:- feelings, too, Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps, As have no slight or trivial influence On that best portion of a good man's life, His little, nameless, unremembered acts Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust, To them I may have owed another gift, Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood, In which the burthen of the mystery, In which the heavy and the weary weight Of all this unintelligible world,

Is lightened:- that serene and blessed mood, In which the affections gently lead us on, Until, the breath of this corporeal frame, And even the motion of our human blood Almost suspended, we are laid asleep In body, and become a living soul:

While with an eye made quiet by the power Of harmony, and the deep power of joy, We see into the life of things.

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

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought, With many recognitions dim and faint, And somewhat of a sad perplexity,

The picture of the mind revives again:

While here I stand, not only with the sense Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts That in this moment there is life and food For future years. And so I dare to hope, Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first I came among these hills; when like a roe I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams, Wherever nature led: more like a man Flying from something that he dreads, than one Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days, And their glad animal movements all gone by) To me was all in all.- I cannot paint What then I was. The sounding cataract Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock, The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood, Their colours and their forms, were then to me An appetite: a feeling and a love, That had no need of a remoter charm, By thought supplied, or any interest

Unborrowed from the eye.- That time is past, And all its aching joys are now no more, And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts Have followed, for such loss, I would believe, Abundant recompense. For I have learned To look

on nature, not as in the hour Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes The still, sad music of humanity, Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power To chasten and subdue. And I have felt A presence that disturbs me with the joy Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime Of something far more deeply interfused, Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, And the round ocean, and the living air, And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:

A motion and a spirit, that impels All thinking things, all objects of all thought, And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still A lover of the meadows and the woods, And mountains; and of all that we behold

From this green earth; of all the mighty world Of eye and ear, both what they half create, And what perceive; well pleased to recognise In nature and the language of the sense, The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse, The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance, If I were not thus taught, should I the more Suffer my genial spirits to decay:

For thou art with me, here upon the banks Of this fair river; thou, my dearest friend, My dear, dear friend; and in thy voice I catch The language of my former heart, and read My former pleasures in the shooting lights Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while May I behold in thee what I was once, My dear, dear sister! and this prayer I make, Knowing that nature never did betray The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege, Through all the years of this our life, to lead From joy to joy: for she can so inform

The mind that is within us, so impress With quietness and beauty, and so feed With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men, Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all The dreary intercourse of daily life, Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb Our cheerful faith that all which we behold Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon Shine on thee in thy solitary walk; And let the misty mountain winds be free To blow against thee: and, in after years, When these wild ecstasies shall be matured Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms, Thy memory be as a dwelling-place For all sweet sounds and harmonies; oh! then, If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief, Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts Of tender joy wilt thou remember me, And these my exhortations! Nor, perchance If I should be where I no more can hear

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

THE END