

Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey, on Revisiting the Banks of the Wye During a Tour.

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 soft 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 hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
 Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
 Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
 Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
 With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
 Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
 The Hermit sits alone.  
     These beauteous forms,  
 Through a long absence, have not been to me  
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
 But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
 Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
 In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
 Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
 And passing even into my purer mind,  
 With tranquil restoration :--feelings too  
 Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,  
 As have no slight or trivial influence  
 On that best portion of a good man's life,  
 His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
 Of kindness and of love . Nor less, I trust,  
 To them I may have owed another gift,  
 Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
 In which the burthen of the mystery,  
 In which the heavy and the weary weight  
 Of all this unintelligible world,  
 Is lightened:--that serene and blessed mood,  
 In which the affections gently lead us on,--  
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
 And even the motion of our human blood  
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
 In body, and become a living soul:  
 While with an eye made quiet by the power  
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
 We see into the life of things.  
     If this  
 Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft--  
 In darkness and amid the many shapes  
 Of joyless daylight: when the fretful stir  
 Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
 Have hung upon the beatings of my heart--  
 How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
 O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
 How often has my spirit turned to thee!  
     And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
 With many recognitions dim and faint,  
 And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
 The picture of the mind revives again:  
 While here I stand, not only with the sense  
 Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
 That in this moment there is life and food  
 For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
 Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
 I came among these hills: when like a roe  
 I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
 Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
 Wherever nature led: more like a man  
 Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
 Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
 (The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
 And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
 To me was all in all.--I cannot paint  
 What then I was. The sounding cataract  
 Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
 The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
 Their colours and their forms, were then to me  
 An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
 That had no need of a remoter charm,  
 By thought supplied, nor any interest  
 Unborrowed from the eye.--That time is past,  
 And all its aching joys are now no more,  
 And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
 Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur, other gifts  
 Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
 Abundant recompence. For I have learned  
 To look on nature, not as in the hour  
 Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
 The still, sad music of humanity,  
 Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
 To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
 A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
 Of elevated thoughts: a sense sublime  
 Of something far more deeply interfused,  
 Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
 And the round ocean and the living air,  
 And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
 A motion and a spirit, that impels  
 All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
 And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
 A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
 And mountains; and of all that we behold  
 From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
 Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,  
 And what perceive: well pleased to recognise  
 In nature and the language of the sense,  
 The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
 The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
 Of all my moral being.  
     Nor perchance,  
 If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
 Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
 For thou art with me here upon the banks  
 Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
 My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
 The language of my former heart, and read  
 My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
 Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
 May I behold in thee what I was once,  
 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,

145 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,  
150 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  
155 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,  
160 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!

Questions:

1. Why is the pleasure unremembered? Is there a difference between the conscious and unconscious act of remembering? What point does the speaker of the poem make here about memories?
2. What is the extent of the power the speaker ascribes to nature? Do you agree that being in "harmony" with the natural world can have such an impact on someone's life? Why or why not?
3. How would you characterize the speaker's boyhood relationship with nature? Would it be fair to say it is less intellectual? Why or why not?
4. It is sometime assumed that the speaker is addressing Wordsworth's sister, Dorothy? What other possibilities can you think of? How might the identity of the friend influence our reading of the poem?
5. The speaker directly addresses his sister, sharing the lessons he has learned from nature. How would you respond to someone who suggested the speaker is patronizing his sister?
6. Here the speaker assumes that, like the memories he has of his boyhood experiences of nature and like his mature relationship with nature, his sister too will look back and find comfort. Why do you suppose he adds himself to the equation? How has the poem prepared the reader for this assertion? Does suggesting that memories of people will also provide comfort undercut the speaker's points about finding comfort in nature? Why or why not?