

Expostulation and Reply

"Why William, on that old grey stone,
 "Thus for the length of half a day,
 "Why William, sit you thus alone,
 "And dream your time away?"

"Where are your books? that light bequeath'd
 "To beings else forlorn and blind!
 "Up! Up! and drink the spirit breath'd
 "From dead men to their kind.

"You look round on your mother earth,
 "As if she for no purpose bore you;
 "As if you were her first-born birth,
 "And none had lived before you!"

One morning thus, by Esthwaite lake,
 When life was sweet I knew not why,
 To me my good friend Matthew spake,
 And thus I made reply.

"The eye it cannot chuse but see,
 "We cannot bid the ear be still;
 "Our bodies feel, where'er they be,
 "Against, or with our will.

"Nor less I deem that there are powers,
 "Which of themselves our minds impress,
 "That we can feed this mind of ours,
 "In a wise Passiveness.

THE TABLES TURNED

"Think you, mid all this mighty sum
 "Of things for ever speaking,
 "That nothing of itself will come,
 "But we must still be seeking?"

" — Then ask not wherefore, here, alone,
 "Conversing as I may,
 "I sit upon this old grey stone,
 "And dream my time away."

The Tables Turned;

AN EVENING SCENE, ON THE SAME SUBJECT

Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks,
 Why all this toil and trouble?
 Up! up! my friend, and quit your books,
 Or surely you'll grow double.

The sun above the mountain's head,
 A freshening lustre mellow,
 Through all the long green fields has spread,
 His first sweet evening yellow.

Books! 'tis a dull and endless strife,
 Come, hear the woodland linnet,
 How sweet his music; on my life
 There's more of wisdom in it.

And hark! how blithe the throats sing!
 And he is no mean preacher:
 Come forth into the light of things,
 Let Nature be your teacher.

She has a world of ready wealth,
 Our minds and hearts to bless –
 Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
 Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

20

One impulse from a vernal wood
 May teach you more of man;
 Of moral evil and of good,
 Than all the sages can.

Sweet is the lore which nature brings;
 Our meddling intellect
 Missshapes the beauteous forms of things;
 – We murder to dissect.

Enough of science and of art;
 Close up these barren leaves;
 Come forth, and bring with you a heart
 That watches and receives.

30

Old Man Travelling;

ANIMAL TRANQUILLITY AND DECAY,

A SKETCH

The little hedge-row birds,
 That peck along the road, regard him not.
 He travels on, and in his face, his step,
 His gait, is one expression; every limb,
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves
 With thought – He is insensibly subdued

Title: In 1800 the sub-title was made the title and the words "Old Man Travelling" discarded.

To settled quiet: he is one by whom
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
 Long patience has such mild composure given,
 That patience now doth seem a thing of which
 He hath no need. He is by nature led
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.
 – I asked him whither he was bound, and what
 The object of his journey; he replied
 "Sir! I am going many miles to take
 "A last leave of my son, a mariner,
 "Who from a sea-fight has been brought to
 Falmouth,
 And there is dying in an hospital."'

20

17-20. That he was going many miles to take
 A last leave of his son, a mariner,
 Who from a sea-fight had been brought to Falmouth,
 And there was lying in an hospital. [1800].
 (20). lying] dying [1802].
 15-20. om. [1815].