

**THE GENIUS OF WORDSWORTH  
HARMONIZED WITH THE  
WISDOM AND INTEGRITY OF  
HIS REVIEWERS; PP. 1-127**

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The Genius of Wordsworth Harmonized with the Wisdom and Integrity of His Reviewers; pp. 1-127 by John Wright

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**JOHN WRIGHT**

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THE  
GENIUS OF WORDSWORTH

HARMONIZED WITH

THE WISDOM AND INTEGRITY  
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HIS REVIEWERS.

BY THE LATE JOHN WRIGHT,

AUTHOR OF  
"POETRY SACRED AND PROFANE."

LONDON:  
LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.  
1853.

## PREFACE.

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FEW people read a Preface; and still fewer, if it be long. Not caring to offend such prejudice, this shall be short. But I would respectfully intimate that, to understand the design of the following pages, it will be necessary to peruse it. In a volume I published a year ago, entitled "Poetry Sacred and Profane," were included some imitations of Wordsworth, together with a satire, called "Pastimes with the late Poet Laureate." As an apology for the latter, I prefixed to the verse an "Introduction," containing a summary of *the Poet's* character. This gave serious offence to that inflated tribe of public censors, termed reviewers; and they castigated me unmercifully,—one craving a "stone-bow," to hit me in the eye, or, in the event of failure, a scaffold—on which I might expiate my crime. The "Morning Post" led the van; then followed "Tait," "Fraser," "The Literary Gazette," "The Critic," and a host of servile imitators—amongst which appeared the "Nottinghamshire Guardian," whose exploits on the occasion afforded no little amusement in this neighbourhood. Its proprietor aspired but to an echo of the "Morning Post;" but none of the literary junto connected with the journal could furnish even that. He heard of a disciple of the Lake school, who, with a

creditable amount of scholarship, could swallow as much laudanum with impunity as did Coleridge. This man was invited to the task; and he achieved it as might have been expected of one under the habitual influence of a deadly narcotic. Confiding in the integrity of my own cause, I replied to the local critic, when the proprietor of the "Nottinghamshire Guardian," seeing the hopelessness of his position, dismissed his new ally.

Here Mr. Wright's engagement on his own little work closed from fast increasing bodily necessities; and the explanation which he was unable to complete must be thus shortly supplied. Soon after the appearance of a Reply to the article contained in the "Nottinghamshire Guardian," Mr. Wright proposed to enter upon a yet more elaborate consideration of Wordsworth's character as a Poet, with a view to justify the course he had already adopted. His design was accomplished in the Essay concluding this work. Declining health, however, for some time prevented Mr. Wright from making a fair transcript of what he had written; nor was this effected until a few days before his death, which occurred on the seventeenth of February, 1853. Regarding his last treatise as a continuation of the subject occupying the earlier publications, it was Mr. Wright's intention to print it, accompanied, in the order of their composition, by the "Introduction" to his poems, and the "Reply." This arrangement it has been thought right still to observe; and there only remains to regret that it was not permitted him to fulfil a task which no other hand can perform as well.

E.

NOTTINGHAM,  
April 19. 1853.

## INTRODUCTION

TO

THE VOLUME ENTITLED "POETRY, SACRED  
AND PROFANE."

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IT cannot be pleaded, in extenuation of the faults that criticism may discover in the following poems, that they were written in the days of my youth, while yet reflection had curbed not the intemperance of passion; for not one of them was constructed before I had entered on my fortieth year. And as it seldom happens that a man *begins* to exercise the faculty of imagination at that period of his life, the reader may be curious to know why the usual course of things has been reversed in me. The story is simple, and may be soon told. Until then excessive irritability, combined with constitutional powers of endurance that few enjoy, prompted me daily to physical pursuits very far exceeding the demands of a laborious profession. A seeming superfluity of nervous impulse was my inheritance; and preferring the pure atmosphere of the fields to that artificial mode of existence which the usages of society impose, my delight was to expend it



in walks which, were I circumstantially to record them, might be thought by many to exceed the bounds of credibility. As time, however, progressed, though as yet sensible of no diminution of nervous activity, a growing inaptitude for vigorous exercise was discoverable, and I sought, in retirement, to profit by a long train of previous observation. In spite of a prejudice imbibed, on reaching manhood, against poetry, for reasons that involve some little reflection on lovely woman—a prejudice so strong that, for nearly twenty years, I would neither read, nor suffer to be read to me, any production of the Divine Art, I now began to meditate in verse. Progressively my evenings became more and more devoted to this amusement; and when those who feared that the pursuit might endanger my health enjoined rest, the only reply I could offer was that of the Roman Poet, *verum nequeo dormire; aut dreading a worse imputation, aut insanit homo, aut versus facit*, I have occupied my leisure in the cultivation of elegant literature, with such intervals of relaxation as the kindred pursuit of gardening has required, throughout the last ten years. For a long time the fruit of my labour was distributed amongst personal friends, and entertaining not then the remotest idea of its publication, I cared not even to transcribe for my own use much that was so disposed of. At length my applicants became too numerous and pressing in their demands upon me to admit of like respect being paid to all; and to avoid their importunities, I promised in due time to supply them, in a more convenient form, with a copy of such pieces as should be thought worthy of preservation. My design was to defer

this intention for two years longer,—until, indeed, I should have written something more truly entitled to public notice: but disease occurring upon what had now become a severe study, and that, too, of a character from which danger was to be apprehended, I resolved thus prematurely to select from amongst my papers such poems as should, for the most part, contribute to the moral and intellectual benefit of my readers. To attempt an apology for their defects would be affectation: for though they are not all what I could have wished them to be, the chief of them have been written with much care; and they do but occasionally fall short of that standard which I have prescribed to myself, by reason of my inability at all times to attain to it.

An inquiry into the relative merit of our most esteemed modern Poets soon led to my conviction that, whilst in the legitimate exercise of the imagination, in strength and dignity of expression, and depth of feeling, Byron surpasses all others, so too is he the best artist. And since my predilection for subjects in which Nature exhibits her fairest aspect, will serve to protect me from the charge of having appropriated his ideas, I may with less hesitation declare that, in the general structure of my verse, I have taken him as affording the best model. Of this privilege I have sportively availed myself as well, occasionally, at the cost of both Shelley and Wordsworth, than whom, perhaps, no two authors can be found more unlike:—the one luxuriating in a redundancy of imagination,—the other driven to all manner of pitiful expedients to identify himself with its possession. Let those who shall object to the boldness

of this assertion, in respect of the late Poet Laureate, turn to some stanzas headed "Resolution and Independence," upon which he bestowed *many careful revisions*. And were it needed, I might further justify an allusion to this piece, by reference to the declaration of Wordsworth's great expositor, Coleridge, that "this fine poem is especially characteristic of the author." Not to enter upon an elaborate critique, which would carry me beyond the limits necessarily assigned to this Introduction, I would remark that the Poet opens his subject by the somewhat startling assurance that "there was a roaring in the wind all night," and "the rain fell in floods:" "but now the sun is rising," "the birds are singing," "the sky rejoices," "the grass is bright with rain-drops," and "the hare is running races in her mirth." Then immediately changing his tense, he writes —

"I was a Traveller then upon the moor,  
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;  
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;  
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:  
The pleasant season did my heart employ:  
My old remembrances went from me wholly;  
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

"But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might  
Of joy in minds that can no further go,  
As high as we have mounted in delight  
In our dejection do we sink as low;  
To me that morning did it happen so;  
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;  
Dim sadness — and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor  
could name."