

THE RECLUSE

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The recluse by William Wordsworth

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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BY

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

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1888

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IN the prefatory advertisement to the First Edition of the Prelude, 1850, it is stated that that poem was designed to be introductory to the Recluse, and that the Recluse, if completed, would have consisted of three parts. The second part is the Excursion. The third part was only planned. The first book of the first part was left in manuscript by Wordsworth. It is now (1888) published for the first time *in extenso*.

THE RECLUSE

PART FIRST

BOOK FIRST—HOME AT GRASMERE

ONCE to the verge of yon steep barrier came
A roving school-boy ; what the adventurer's age
Hath now escaped his memory—but the hour,
One of a golden summer holiday,
He well remembers, though the year be gone—
Alone and devious from afar he came ;
And, with a sudden influx overpowered
At sight of this seclusion, he forgot

8

His haste, for hasty had his footsteps been
10 As boyish his pursuits ; and sighing said,
“ What happy fortune were it here to live !
And, if a thought of dying, if a thought
Of mortal separation, could intrude
With paradise before him, here to die ! ”
No Prophet was he, had not even a hope,
Scarcely a wish, but one bright pleasing thought,
A fancy in the heart of what might be
The lot of others, never could be his.

The station whence he looked was soft and green,
20 Not giddy yet aerial, with a depth
Of vale below, a height of hills above.
For rest of body perfect was the spot,
All that luxurious nature could desire ;
But stirring to the spirit ; who could gaze

And not feel motions there? He thought of clouds
That sail on winds: of breezes that delight
To play on water, or in endless chase
Pursue each other through the yielding plain
Of grass or corn, over and through and through,
In billow after billow, evermore 30
Disporting—nor unmindful was the boy
Of sunbeams, shadows, butterflies and birds;
Of fluttering sylphs and softly-gliding Fays,
Genii, and winged angels that are Lords
Without restraint of all which they behold.
The illusion strengthening as he gazed, he felt
That such unfettered liberty was his,
Such power and joy; but only for this end,
To flit from field to rock, from rock to field,
From shore to island, and from isle to shore, 40

From open ground to covert, from a bed
Of meadow-flowers into a tuft of wood ;
From high to low, from low to high, yet still
Within the bound of this huge concave ; here
Must be his home, this valley be his world.

Since that day forth the Place to him—*to me*
(For I who live to register the truth
Was that same young and happy Being) became
As beautiful to thought, as it had been
50 When present, to the bodily sense ; a haunt
Of pure affections, shedding upon joy
A brighter joy ; and through such damp and gloom
Of the gay mind, as oftentimes splenetic youth
Mistakes for sorrow, darting beams of light
That no self-cherished sadness could withstand ;
And now 'tis mine, perchance for life, dear Vale,

Beloved Grasmere (let the wandering streams
Take up, the cloud-capt hills repeat, the Name)
One of thy lowly Dwellings is my Home.

And was the cost so great? and could it seem 60
An act of courage, and the thing itself
A conquest? who must bear the blame? Sage
man,

Thy prudence, thy experience, thy desires,
Thy apprehensions—blush thou for them all.

Yes the realities of life so cold,
So cowardly, so ready to betray,
So stinted in the measure of their grace
As we pronounce them, doing them much wrong,
Have been to me more bountiful than hope,
Less timid than desire—but that is passed. 70

On Nature's invitation do I come,