

**QUEST AND VISION:
ESSAYS IN LIFE
AND LITERATURE**

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Quest and vision: essays in life and literature by W. J. Dawson

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W. J. DAWSON

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Quest and Vision:

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BY
W. J. DAWSON,

AUTHOR OF

'A VISION OF SOULS, WITH OTHER BALLADS AND POEMS.'

'This music crept by me upon the waters,
Allaying both their fury and my passion
With its sweet air; thence I have followed it,
Or it hath drawn me rather:—but 'tis gone.
No, it begins again!'

TRIPTEST, Act 1, Sc. 2.

LONDON:

ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.4

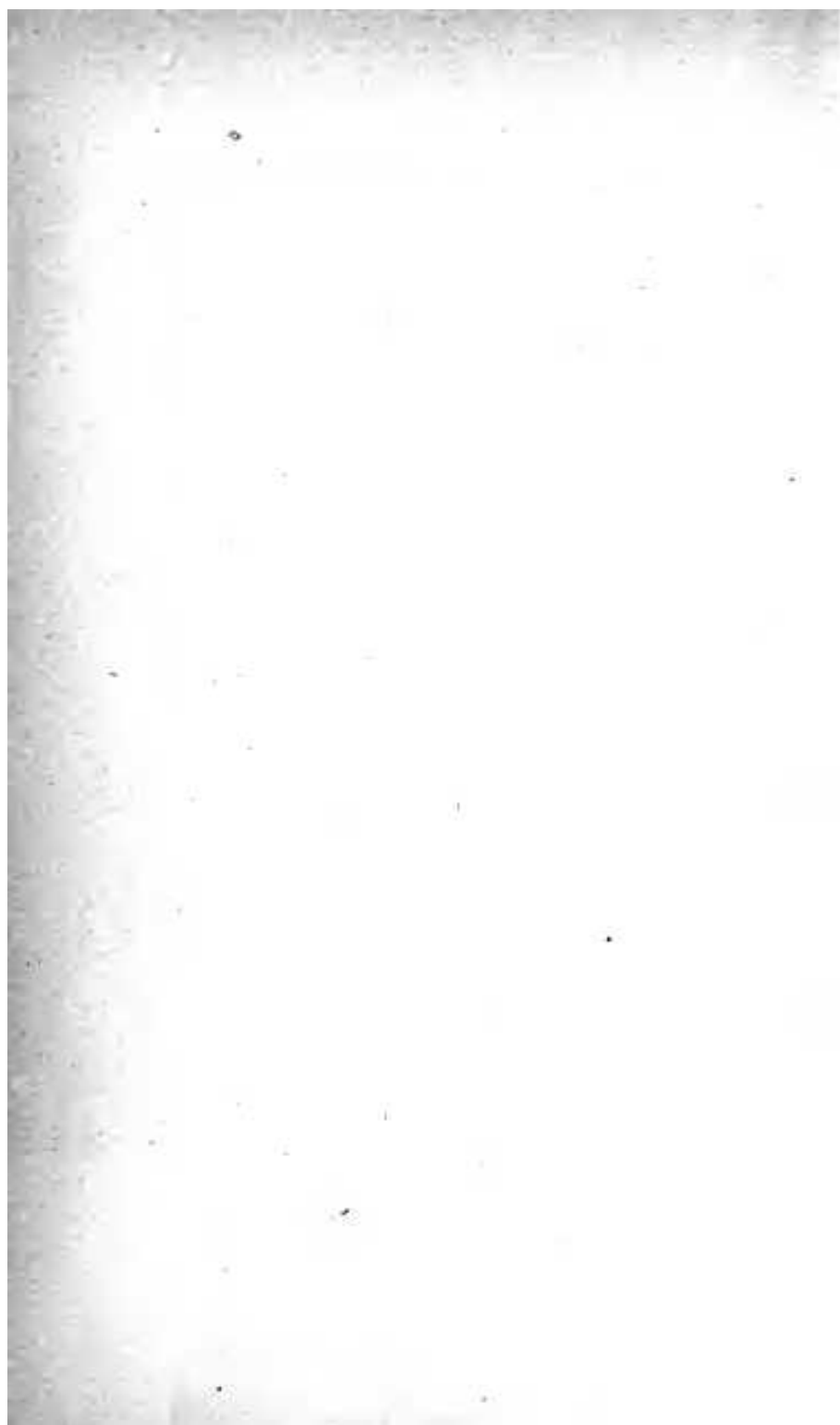
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ART AND TRUTH.

THE weary years, the summer's gold,
Man's feverish joy and pain,
Pass like a dream, and all grows old :
Tell me, what things remain ?

Two names alone, and Truth is one :
A face inscrutable,
With lips that neither laugh nor moan,
Yet all things have to tell.

And Art the other : at the gate
Of her old Paradise,
Whoe'er shall come, or soon or late,
She opens to the wise.

We fade and pass : we fret our days
In barren love and strife ;
But happier he who only prays
Beneath the Tree of Life.

SHELLEY.

MR. RUSSELL LOWELL has used an admirable phrase about Wordsworth which is worthy of reproduction; he has spoken of his 'almost irritating respectability.' Why respectability on the part of a poet should be irritating, it is difficult to say, unless it be that the conventional tradition of poets is precisely the reverse of respectable. Poets, from Homer downward, have been more or less at variance with average society. They have not belonged to the sober, tax-paying, owe-no-man-anything type of humanity. Respectable citizens have

habitually held them in suspicion, as persons of uncertain character, and presenting to the common eye no visible means of support. The Act of Parliament which reckoned the actor a vagabond, marked the apotheosis of respectability, its concrete utterance, its definite and unalterable verdict upon all classes of men who live by the exercise or cultivation of the imaginative powers. One of the facts which philosophic moralists have to deal with is, that more often than not, men of imaginative genius have been open transgressors of the received laws and traditions of society. One has but to mention Burns, Byron, and Shelley—the three most commanding influences in the poetry of the century—in order to realize how grave a problem this presents. In each case we have the spectacle of immense genius allied to imperfect morals, and in the latter in-