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English Honours

Semester - II

Topic - 'Tintern Abbey'

by

William Wordsworth

P.T.O

to
(Tintern Abbey)

1) Date and Occasion : The poem was composed in July 1798 and included, rather at the last moment, in Lyrical Ballads. Of the poem Wordsworth's note to Miss Fenwick deserves mention: "No poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this. I began it upon leaving Tintern, after crossing the Wye and concluded it just as I was entering Bristol in the evening after a ramble of four or five days, with my sister. Not a line of it was altered and not any part of it written down till I reached Bristol."

2) The Wye and Tintern Abbey :

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The Wye flows through Wales and England and joins the Severn flowing into the Bristol Channel. Tintern Abbey is situated some ten miles above the point where the ~~the~~ Wye joins the Severn. This is one of the most famous ecclesiastical ruins in England. It is situated on the right bank of the river. Wordsworth's second visit in 1798 was the occasion of the poem.

P.T.O

LINES

COMPOSED A FEW MILES ABOVE TINTERN ABBEY, ON
 REVISITING THE BANKS OF THE WYE DURING
 A TOUR. JULY 13, 1798

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

5 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.

[Composed July 13 ; 1798.—Published 1798]

* Winkler

The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.

P.T

The day is come when I again repose
 10 Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
 These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,
 Which at this season, with their untipe fruits,
 Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
 'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see
 15 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
 20 Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
 Or of some Hermit's cave where by his fire
 The Hermit sits alone.

These beautiful forms,
 Through a long absence, have not been to me
 As is a landscape to a blind man's eye :
 25 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,
 30 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
 35 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
 40 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

- 45 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
- 50 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—
- 55 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,
- 60 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
- 65 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,
- 70 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)
- 75 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
- 80 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,
 85 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 recompense. For I have learned
 To look on nature, not as in the hour
 90 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
 95 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 the man:
 100 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
 105 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,
 110 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

* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young's, the exact expression of which I do not recollect.

- 115 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
- 120 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
- 125 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,
130 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
- 135 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
- 140 Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
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
- 145 Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,
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
- 150 That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together ; and that I, so long

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A worshipper of Nature, hither came
Unwearied in that service ; rather say
With warmer love—oh ! with far deeper zeal
155 Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget
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 !

To
be
Continued