

Higher in the scale of poetic merit than these isolated images, and related to them as a cluster of jewels to a single diamond, is that subtle fancy which transforms everything it touches, even the homely things, with a poetic beauty, like the wonderful stone which turns the baser metals into gold. It is most strikingly exhibited in sections XVII, XVIII and XXII of the first part, in which the ideas are conceived and wrought out in a very high poetic vein.

In order to enter into the spirit of the poem we must try to understand the very peculiar character who gives color to the whole. He is a young man whose traits of character are rather the outcome of the circumstances in which he is placed than marks of his natural disposition. He has grown up in a cave by himself and is strongly prejudiced against the world. All he has known of man has been, in his eyes, evil, and by a most unjustifiable inference he concludes, because his father has been wronged by a treacherous friend, that every hand is "lusting for all that is not its own;" because his servants are dishonest that all are villains; and because "the little village below him bubbles over with gossip and spite," that every man "walks with his head in a cloud of poisonous flies."

Naturally enough from the solitary condition in which he has been placed his passions have developed extravagantly. He makes himself the world: everything partakes of his own mood. Nature itself is overcast in his sadness and glows with a new brightness when he is happy.

"It seems that I am happy, and to me
A livelier emerald twinkles in the grass,
A purer sapphire melts into the sea."

This trait is strikingly seen in his use of the same images in different moods. When his thoughts are steeped in melancholy during his solitary walk he finds

"The shining daffodil dead and Orion low in his grave,"

and the flowers and stars are tinged with his own mournfulness. When his mood is changed, the same image is transformed to describe the beauty of a summer evening:

"When the face of night is fair on the dewy downs,
And the shining daffodil dies, and the Charioteer
And starry Gemini hang like golden crowns
Over Orion's grave low down in the West."