

Well pleased that future Bards should chant
 For simple hearts thy beauty;
 To dream-light dear while yet unseen,
 Dear to the common sunshine,
 And dearer still, as now I feel,
 To memory's shadowy moonshine!

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ODE TO DUTY¹

STERN Daughter of the Voice of God!²
 O Duty! if that name thou love
 Who art a light to guide, a red
 To check the erring, and reprove;
 Thou, who art victory and law
 When empty terrors overawe;³
 From vain temptations dost set free;
 And calm'st the weary strife of frail humanity!

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There are⁴ who ask not if thine eye
 Be on them; who, in love and truth,
 Where no misgiving is, rely
 Upon the genial sense of youth:
 Glad Hearts! without reproach or blot
 Who do thy work, and know it not:
 Oh! if through confidence misplaced
 They fail, thy saving arms, dread Power!
 around them cast.

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¹ Composed 1805, published 1807. "This poem has a vigour, a sincerity of feeling, and above all an elevation of thought that combine to give it very high rank among the poems of its kind." The ode deservedly ranks among the best in the language. The poet takes a commonplace feeling—that of duty, that something *ought* to be done—and by the exercise of his imagination produces a poem that is among his very best. Duty is made to appear beautiful and desirable, and a source of happiness and strength.

² Duty is of divine origin.

³ When in doubt duty makes clear our course.

⁴ **There are**—Youths, who do right from natural impulse.