

“ An Orphic song indeed,  
A song divine, of high and passionate thoughts,  
To their own music chanted ! ”

Coleridge may possibly have been right and the Public wrong ; but this poem can hardly be said to have added to its writer's reputation in any way.

The nine books of the “Excursion” have many fine passages, but their general effect is heavy and prosaic. The principal personage introduced is The Wanderer, described as a Scotch Pedlar, but really representing Wordsworth himself. The other principal characters are The Solitary and The Pastor. There are many passages of great poetic beauty, of subtle thought, of deep spiritual insight in this poem ; but the reader is provoked by the air of superiority with which the tamest and the dullest work is forced on his attention. As Mr. Matthew Arnold remarks : “ Work altogether inferior, work quite uninspired, flat, and dull, is produced by him with evident unconsciousness of its defects, and he presents it to us with the same faith and seriousness as his best work.”

After 1818 Wordsworth published a good deal, perhaps a full third of the whole of his literary work, and there are some charming odes, which may be culled from his various collections, but the old level is not maintained. In 1820 he visited the Continent again, and two years later he published a series of Odes commemorating the localities visited. In the same year (1820) he wrote and published his Sonnets on the River Duddon. In 1821 he wrote the long series of Ecclesiastical Sonnets, following the course of British and English Church history. They were published in the following year. One poem