

POETIC YARROW.

All we have yet said of Yarrow and its poetic surroundings may perhaps be traced to the fact that though almost treeless now, originally it was heavily wooded and was known as the "Royal Forest Of Ettrick." Its shady woods were the haunts of the outlaw and the footpad, and to an imaginative people it was the abode of sprites, hobgoblins, dwarfs, and fairies. The ballad was the first form of its poetic sense, and the readings of even the same ballad are multifarious. There is "the ballad a constant struggle between the sunshine and the shadow" Natural beauty seems in conflict with the tragedies of Yarrow. No it is the "bonny banks of Yarrow, then the "dowie (dolefull) banks of Yarrow"

The best known ballad is that written by William Hamilton, of Bangour, who died in 1754. Its lines are magnetic:

Busk ye, busk ye, my bonnie, honnie bride
 Busk ye my winsome marrow (mate)
 Busk ye, husk ye, my bonnie, bonnie bride
 And think nae mair of the Braes of Yarrow!

The ballad closes:

Return! return! mournful, mournful bride
 Return and dry thy useless sorrow
 The lover heeds none of thy sighs
 He lyes a corps on the Braes of Yarrow!

And thus the tragedy of life is swallowed up in the greedy maw of the practical.

Three separate poems represent Wordsworth's relation to Yarrow.

1. Yarrow Unvisited.

Wordsworth and his sister Dorothy were touring through Scotland in 1803. She says:

"Whate'er betide, we'll turn aside
 And see the Braes of Yarrow: "

Fearing that his vision of Yarrow may be destroyed and he be disillusionized, he says:

"O'er hilly paths and open strath
 We'll wander Scotland through
 But though so near, we will not turn
 Into the Vale of Yarrow:
 Thus Yarrow was then unvisited:

2. Yarrow visited:

Eleven years had passed (1814) and now Wordsworth, in company with Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, visits Yarrow:

"And is this Yarrow? This the stream
 Of which my fancy cherished
 So faithfully, a waking dream? "

He proceeds:

"Where was it that the famous flower
 Of Yarrow Vale lay bleeding? "

Proceeding:

"Delicious is the lay that sings
 The haunts of happy lovers."

He closes:

"Thy ever youthful waters keep
 A course of lively pleasures."

3. Yarrow revisited: