Nuns Fret Not at Their Convent's Narrow Room

Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room;  
And hermits are contented with their cells;  
And students with their pensive citadels;  
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,  
Sit blithe and happy, bees that soar for bloom,  
High as the highest Peak of Furness-fells,¹  
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells:  
In truth the prison, into which we doom  
Ourselves, no prison is: and hence for me,  

In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound  
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground;  
Pleased if some Souls (for such there needs must be)  
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,  
Should find brief solace there, as I have found.

My Heart Leaps Up

My heart leaps up when I behold  
    A rainbow in the sky:  
    So was it when my life began;  
    So is it now I am a man;  
    So be it when I shall grow old,  
    Or let me die!  
    The Child is father of the Man;  
    And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.

Ode

Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood

The Child is father of the Man:  
And I could wish my days to be  
Bound each to each by natural piety.²

There was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,  
The earth, and every common sight,  
To me did seem  
Apparelled in celestial light,

¹ Mountains in the English Lake District.  
² Final lines of Wordsworth's "My Heart Leaps Up" (above).
She Was a Phantom of Delight

She was a Phantom\(^\circ\) of delight  
When first she gleamed upon my sight;  
A lovely Apparition, sent  
To be a moment\'s ornament;  
Her eyes as stars of Twilight fair;  
Like Twilight\'s, too, her dusky hair;  
But all things else about her drawn  
From May-time and the cheerful Dawn;  
A dancing Shape, an Image gay,  
To haunt, to startle, and way-lay.

I saw her upon nearer view,  
A Spirit, yet a Woman too!  
Her household motions light and free,  
And steps of virgin-liberty;  
A countenance in which did meet  
Sweet records, promises as sweet;  
A Creature not too bright or good  
For human nature\'s daily food,  
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,  
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene  
The very pulse of the machine;\(^8\)  
A Being breathing thoughtful breath,  
A Traveler between life and death;  
The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a Spirit still, and bright  
With something of angelic light.

The World Is Too Much with Us

The world is too much with us; late and soon,  
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers;  
Little we see in Nature that is ours;  
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!\(^5\)  
This Sea that bares her bosom to the moon,  
The winds that will be howling at all hours,  
And are up-gathered now like sleeping flowers,  
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;  
It moves us not.—Great God! I\'d rather be  
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

The Solitary Reaper

Behold her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland Lass!
Reaping and singing by herself;
Stop here, or gently pass!

5

Alone she cuts and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain;
O listen! for the Vale’s profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No Nightingale did ever chant
More welcome notes to weary bands
Of travelers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands;

10

A voice so thrilling never was heard
In springtime from the Cuckoo bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?—
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,

15

And battles long ago;
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of today?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again?

20

Whate’er the theme, the Maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o’er the sickle bending—

25

I listened, motionless and still;
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

1802–04

4. In Greek mythology, Proteus, the "Old Man of the Sea," rises from the sea at midday and can be forced to read the future by anyone who holds him while he takes many frightening shapes. Triton is the son of the sea god, Neptune, the sound of his conch-shell horn calms the waves.