

Resolution and Independence

BY WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:

The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joys in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me—
Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,

As if life's business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can He expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a Man before me unawares:

The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie
Couched on the bald top of an eminence;
Wonder to all who do the same espy,
By what means it could thither come, and whence;
So that it seems a thing endued with sense:
Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf
Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself;

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:
His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,
Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:
And, still as I drew near with gentle pace,

Upon the margin of that moorish flood
Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,
That heareth not the loud winds when they call,
And moveth all together, if it move at all.

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he conned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
"This morning gives us promise of a glorious day."

A gentle answer did the old Man make,
In courteous speech which forth he slowly drew:
And him with further words I thus bespake,
"What occupation do you there pursue?
This is a lonesome place for one like you."
Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise
Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem
Like one whom I had met with in a dream;

Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
"How is it that you live, and what is it you do?"

He with a smile did then his words repeat;
And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide
He travelled; stirring thus about his feet
The waters of the pools where they abide.
"Once I could meet with them on every side;
But they have dwindled long by slow decay;
Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may."

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:

In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made a pause, the same discourse renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,
Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,
But stately in the main; and, when he ended,
I could have laughed myself to scorn to find
In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.
"God," said I, "be my help and stay secure;
I'll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!"

Stanza One

There was a roaring in the wind all night;
The rain came heavily and fell in floods;
But now the sun is rising calm and bright;
The birds are singing in the distant woods;
Over his own sweet voice the Stock-dove broods;
The Jay makes answer as the Magpie chatters;
And all the air is filled with pleasant noise of waters.

Wordsworth begins the poem with the description of the joyous [atmosphere](#) of Nature. The poet [contrasts](#) the roaring wind and rain with the sunrise that is calm and bright. As the day breaks calmly, the birds, Stock-dove, Jay, and Magpie express their joy with the happy chatter. Alongside, he also hears the pleasant noise of waters filled in the air. Altogether, the poet too feels excited along with the blissful nature.

Stanza Two

All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;—on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,

Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.

In the second stanza too, the poet continues with the description of nature. He sees all things out of doors being in full spirit, and describes hare in the moor running and rejoices the morning's birth. He beautifully captures how the hare raises a mist as it runs. According to him, it is not the first time it does that, but every other time it runs. This stanza presents the morning as a time of promise that gives joy to every living creature.

Stanza Three

I was a Traveller then upon the moor;
I saw the hare that raced about with joy;
I heard the woods and distant waters roar;
Or heard them not, as happy as a boy:
The pleasant season did my heart employ:
My old remembrances went from me wholly;
And all the ways of men, so vain and melancholy.

Wordsworth uses the [first person](#) 'I' in this stanza to give a personal feel to the poem. Into the description of nature, Wordsworth brings himself for he is witnessing the scene so far. He is a traveler who wandered listlessly in the moor and sees the hare running. He was so happy to be out in the pleasant weather, for he forgot all his gloomy thoughts and vain manners of people while engrossed in the scenes around him.

Stanza Four

But, as it sometimes chanceth, from the might
Of joys in minds that can no further go,
As high as we have mounted in delight
In our dejection do we sink as low;
To me that morning did it happen so;
And fears and fancies thick upon me came;
Dim sadness—and blind thoughts, I knew not, nor could name.

In stanza five, the poet speaks of his fear of depression and sorrow that he feels to await him at the end of his happiness. As it often happens, excess of happiness is followed by sad and gloomy thoughts; here the poet experiences the same. Happiness has its own limitations, so does the morning. So it turns out that he has experienced an imaginary fear, and unexplained sadness overpowering him. This sadness, that sank him low, in contrast to the happiness that made him feel high.

Stanza Five

I heard the sky-lark warbling in the sky;
And I bethought me of the playful hare:
Even such a happy Child of earth am I;
Even as these blissful creatures do I fare;
Far from the world I walk, and from all care;
But there may come another day to me—

Solitude, pain of heart, distress, and poverty.

In the fifth stanza, the poet, amidst “the sky-lark warbling in the sky,” compares himself to “the playful hare.” He also compares himself to a happy child of earth, to project how happy he is at the moment. As he enjoys the blissful morning he feels far from the world, also “from all care.’ While he is thinking of the joyous side of his life, he is reminded of that other kind of day that might come to him: A day of ‘solitude, the pain of heart, distress, and poverty.’”

Stanza Six

My whole life I have lived in pleasant thought,
As if life’s business were a summer mood;
As if all needful things would come unsought
To genial faith, still rich in genial good;
But how can He expect that others should
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at all?

The poet now recalls how his life has been in perfect happiness like that of “a summer, mood.” He thinks of life and how gratuitously it has come to him as if he is on a holiday, which is meant only to be enjoyed and he would get everything without making any attempt to get it. Then he thinks of the possibility of God’s infinite goodwill, and of how long it could last if he fails to take care of himself and expects others to take care of himself.

Stanza Seven

I thought of Chatterton, the marvellous Boy,
The sleepless Soul that perished in his pride;
Of Him who walked in glory and in joy
Following his plough, along the mountain-side:
By our own spirits are we deified:
We Poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

As Wordsworth thinks of himself as a poet, one endowed with his own privileged, joyous place in life. Simultaneously, his mind waver backs to Thomas Chatterton and Robert Burns, the poets enjoyed glory and happiness in the English tradition and admired by Wordsworth. But, the fame they enjoyed at youth turned out to be the reason for their fall leading them to hopelessness and madness.

Stanzas Eight and Nine

Now, whether it were by peculiar grace,
A leading from above, a something given,
Yet it befell that, in this lonely place,
When I with these untoward thoughts had striven,
Beside a pool bare to the eye of heaven
I saw a Man before me unawares:
The oldest man he seemed that ever wore grey hairs.

As a huge stone is sometimes seen to lie

Couched on the bald top of an eminence;

Wonder to all who do the same espy,

By what means it could thither come, and whence;

So that it seems a thing endued with sense:

Like a sea-beast crawled forth, that on a shelf

Of rock or sand repositeth, there to sun itself;

Stanza eight marks a turning point in the poem as the poet introduces a new character into the poem. He wonders how he by special favour of God or divine influence saw a man in day-light when he was engrossed in his perverse and melancholy thoughts. They seemed the oldest among the grey-haired old men. The old man looked like a huge stone on top of the mountain. Those who behold the stone may wonder about how it has come to occupy this position and where it came from. This motionless rock appeared to be full of life and looked like a sea-beast that had come out of the water to take rest on a reef or sandbank in the warmth of the sun.

Stanzas Ten and Eleven

Such seemed this Man, not all alive nor dead,
Nor all asleep—in his extreme old age:

His body was bent double, feet and head
Coming together in life's pilgrimage;
As if some dire constraint of pain, or rage
Of sickness felt by him in times long past,
A more than human weight upon his frame had cast.

Himself he propped, limbs, body, and pale face,

Upon a long grey staff of shaven wood:

And, still as I drew near with gentle [pace](#),

Upon the margin of that moorish flood

Motionless as a cloud the old Man stood,

That heareth not the loud winds when they call,

And moveth all together, if it move at all.

In stanzas, ten and eleven, the poet continues with his description of the old man who seems virtually one with the scene. He seemed neither completely alive nor dead or inactive due to his extreme old age. His body was so bent that his feet and head were very close together as if this condition could have been caused due to his intense suffering or physical strain or some terrible disease. A great weight of his past suffering, rage, or sickness had taken a toll and bowed him down. He was carrying a weight too heavy for his old age. His weak limbs, his

body with a pale face, were resting on the staff made of wood. The poet moves with gentle steps towards the old man, who stands beside the bank of the river. When the old man moves, his whole body moves similar to how he stays motionless.

Stanzas Twelve and Thirteen

At length, himself unsettling, he the pond
Stirred with his staff, and fixedly did look
Upon the muddy water, which he coned,
As if he had been reading in a book:
And now a stranger's privilege I took;
And, drawing to his side, to him did say,
“This morning gives us promise of a glorious day.”

A gentle answer did the old Man make,

In courteous [speech](#) which forth he slowly drew:

And him with further words I thus bespake,

“What occupation do you there pursue?

This is a lonesome place for one like you.”

Ere he replied, a flash of mild surprise

Broke from the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes.

At last in stanza twelve the old man moving disturbs the calm water of the lake with his staff. His eyes are fixed on the water as if he is deeply involved in reading a book. The poet moved towards him and starts a conversation like a usual stranger does. The old man answers back in a feeble voice using polite words. Further, he enquires after the old man and the work he is doing. When the poet says that it is dangerous for an old man like him to be alone at such a deserted place, the first reaction he sees is a sense of surprise from "*the sable orbs of his yet-vivid eyes*".

Stanza Fourteen

His words came feebly, from a feeble chest,
But each in solemn order followed each,
With something of a lofty utterance drest—
Choice word and measured phrase, above the reach
Of ordinary men; a stately speech;
Such as grave Livers do in Scotland use,
Religious men, who give to God and man their dues.

In stanza fourteen of '*Resolution and Independence*', Wordsworth describes the old man's speech as "lofty utterance," "stately speech." Despite the feeble voice as a result of his old age and weakness, the old man uses a distinct and dignified accent. His words are well-chosen and balanced beyond the power of an ordinary man. The speech is dignified like that of a Presbyterians of Scotland perform their duty towards God and man.

Stanza Fifteen

He told, that to these waters he had come
To gather leeches, being old and poor:
Employment hazardous and wearisome!
And he had many hardships to endure:
From pond to pond he roamed, from moor to moor;
Housing, with God's good help, by choice or chance;
And in this way he gained an honest maintenance.

In stanza fifteen, the poet continues with his interaction with the old man. The old man identifies that his work is leech-gathering and that is the reason he lives in such a lonely place. He, "being old and poor," finds his subsistence here, though the work may be "hazardous and wearisome," for he is helpless. He roamed from pond to pond, from moor to moor, sometimes taking shelter by his choice, depending on God's Providence to help him find lodging. But in all, he gains "an honest maintenance," for a decent living.

Stanza Sixteen

The old Man still stood talking by my side;
But now his voice to me was like a stream
Scarce heard; nor word from word could I divide;
And the whole body of the Man did seem

Like one whom I had met with in a dream;
Or like a man from some far region sent,
To give me human strength, by apt admonishment.

The conversation between the poet and the old man continues in this passage too. Yet, now the voice of the old man seems to grow gradually indistinct as the sound of a distant stream. For the poet could not clearly understand what the old man is speaking. Now, the poet recollects his dream where he has met a man who looked similar to the leech-gatherer. Further, he says that his meeting with the leech-gatherer is not unexpected but a meeting planned for him to give *“human strength by apt admonishment.”*

Stanzas Seventeen and Eighteen

My former thoughts returned: the fear that kills;
And hope that is unwilling to be fed;
Cold, pain, and labour, and all fleshly ills;
And mighty Poets in their misery dead.
—Perplexed, and longing to be comforted,
My question eagerly did I renew,
“How is it that you live, and what is it you do?”

He with a smile did then his words [repeat](#);

And said that, gathering leeches, far and wide

He travelled; stirring thus about his feet

The waters of the pools where they abide.

“Once I could meet with them on every side;

But they have dwindled long by slow decay;

Yet still I persevere, and find them where I may.”

In stanza seventeen of '*Resolution and Independence*' the poet once again begins to feel oppressed. Fear of future misery and helplessness and hope that cannot be fulfilled began to occupy his mind. He also thought of cold sufferings, labour, and mental worries on account of which many poets in the past have died. The poet greatly perplexed and with a desire to get some comfort and consolation, he again asked the Old man what he was doing and how he managed to live. For that the old man responds with a smile on his face, explains how he travels far to gather leeches. Now, since the leeches have become scarce it has become difficult for him to gather leeches, yet, he continues with perseverance.

Stanzas Nineteen and Twenty

While he was talking thus, the lonely place,
The old Man's shape, and speech—all troubled me:
In my mind's eye I seemed to see him pace
About the weary moors continually,
Wandering about alone and silently.
While I these thoughts within myself pursued,
He, having made [a pause](#), the same [discourse](#) renewed.

And soon with this he other matter blended,

Cheerfully uttered, with demeanour kind,

But stately in the main; and, when he ended,

I could have laughed myself to scorn to find

In that decrepit Man so firm a mind.

“God,” said I, “be my help and stay secure;

I’ll think of the Leech-gatherer on the lonely moor!”

The concluding stanzas of the poem deliberate the conversation between the old man and the poet. The gloomy and lonely place, the weary and pitiable condition of the old man troubled the mind of Wordsworth. In his imagination, he conjured up the vision of the old man walking silently with weary steps on the moors all alone. The old man resumes his conversation and adds other details of his life to his conversation. But, the poet could feel dignity in his manner of speaking. The poet is impressed by this **resolution and independence** that he began to scorn himself for being gloomy. He started to realize how God had been his support in the dire situations of his life. As he concludes the poem, Wordsworth calls upon God to be his guiding force and he also takes a resolution to think of the leech gatherer.

“The Leech Gatherer” by William Wordsworth is a poem, also called “Resolution and Independence.” This poem has 140 lines, which are divided into twenty stanzas. The title of the poem mainly draws from the content in the poem. The author narrates his experience when he meets with a leech gatherer. Therefore, this poem is written in the first person form. The speaker in the poem is the author himself. In the poem, the author narrates about his walk in the moor one spring morning. He experiences a strange phenomenon when he meets an old man, who was a leech gatherer, wandering in the moor, in search of leeches. At this point, the element of nature is already manifesting in the poem. This is through the use of seasons such as spring morning, and the use of landscape such as the moor, as well as the presence of leeches, which are part of nature. Many other elements of nature occur in this poem, even though they have been used to portray different meanings.

In this poem, the leech gatherer had spent most of his past many days looking for leeches up and down in the moor. Although leeches are scarce in this season, the leech gatherer does not give up searching for them, as his life depends on them. In this scenario, William Wordsworth presents a deeper meaning of what the leeches are, and what the old man’s struggle represents. Therefore, although the leeches are part of nature, William Wordsworth looks beyond their physical presentation and thinks of them in a deeper view, thus, giving them a different meaning, which is more deep and spiritual. The scene of a person hunting is quite fascinating, and is a representation of nature. Therefore, in William Wordsworth’s poem, the old man searching for leeches is an act that considerably reflects on nature. This is mainly through the interdependence between human beings and other elements in nature. Therefore, this scene creates a natural relationship. However, William Wordsworth does not just look at this as plainly as it appears. William Wordsworth compares this relationship between the leech gatherer and his leech searching to a determined and perseverant poet. Although the season was not favorable for leeches, the leech gatherer did not give up hope but went ahead to search for leeches, hoping that he would gather some. Therefore, this has a deeper meaning of a poet, who is faced with adversity and solitude, but he is strong-hearted enough to endure the adversities before him.

At the beginning of the poem, William Wordsworth the author employs a variety of expressions symbolizing nature. As a wanderer, he experiences happy emotions and is in high spirits while travelling the moor. He delights in the beautiful nature surrounding him. However, he thinks to himself that happiness and despair are closely linked. When he encounters the old man, the leech gatherer and interacts with him, he learns that the old man's work of gathering leeches has many things in common with poetry writing. Therefore, like a leech gatherer, the speaker in the poem, who is William Wordsworth, compares the art of poetry writing to the practice of leech gathering. While the leech gatherer searches for leeches in the moor, the poet searches his or her mind for poems. The moor is the natural environment where the leech gatherer finds the leeches, thus is home to leeches. On the other hand, the mind of a poet is where the poet searches through for poems. For the poet, the mind is therefore, the home to ideas. The leeches are not always available for the leech gatherer to collect, even though he shows up to search for them. This is the same way a poet might lack inspiration, which sometimes is hard to find. Therefore, by comparing the leech gatherer with a poet, the speaker in the poem is of the opinion that, a poet, no matter how discouraged he or she is, or how much inspiration they lose, they must learn from the leech gatherer. The leech gatherer goes ahead to search for leeches, even when the season is not favorable for leeches, and they are scarce because of dryness. The same, a poet should go ahead, even when they lack inspiration; they ought to look for it and continue with their art of poetry.