

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00850-1 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 2: Poems
John Ruskin
Excerpt
[More information](#)

I
P O E M S

J. R.

COLLECTED

1850

Cambridge University Press
 978-1-108-00850-1 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 2: Poems
 John Ruskin
 Excerpt
[More information](#)

[*Bibliographical Note.*—The poems in the following pages (Part I.) were first collected in 1850, as described above (p. xxix.), in a volume entitled

Poems | J. R. | Collected | 1850.

Post octavo, pp. iv. + 283. A list of contents on pp. iii.–iv. Issued in cloth boards (some green, others purple), lettered across the back, “Poems. J. R.,” and with a gilt lyre stamped upon the side. Printed for private circulation only, and very rare; there is no copy in the Library of the British Museum; a copy in original state was sold at Sotheby’s in 1902 for £48. Fifty copies were printed, and of these several were subsequently destroyed by Ruskin. At the head of each poem is given the author’s age at the time of composition (see above, p. xxxvi.). The text of this edition is that of 1850, except that a few obvious errors in punctuation have been corrected and that the lines are generally indented (see above, p. xxxvi.). Particulars of the earlier or later publication of the several pieces included in the volume of 1850 are given in footnotes to the following pages, where also textual variations are noted. The 1850 volume did not “collect” the following previously published verses: “On Skiddaw and Derwent Water” (see p. 265), “Salzburg” (p. 441), and “Fragments from a Metrical Journal: Andernacht and St. Goar” (p. 353).

An unauthorised American edition, first issued in 1882, has the following title-page:—

Poems | By | John Ruskin. | Collected and edited | By | James
 Osborne Wright. | New York : | John Wiley & Sons. | 1882.

Preface, pp. iii.–iv., pp. 1–234. This edition included “Salzburg” and the “Fragments,” but only a selection of the other poems. It also included a poem, and an illustration, neither of which was by Ruskin (see pp. xxxvii., 191).]

[1833]¹

SONG²

I WEARY for the torrent leaping
 From off the scar's rough crest ;
 My muse is on the mountain sleeping,
 My harp is sunk to rest.

I weary for the fountain foaming,
 For shady holm and hill ;
 My mind is on the mountain roaming,
 My spirit's voice is still.

I weary for the woodland brook
 That wanders through the vale ;
 I weary for the heights that look
 Adown upon the dale.

The crags are lone on Coniston,
 And Loweswater's dell ;³
 And dreary on the mighty one,
 The cloud-enwreathed Scawfell.

¹ [For note on other poems of 1833, see below, p. 338.]

² [This song was No. 1 in the *Poems*, 1850, pp. 3–4, the earliest in date of the pieces there collected. It was reprinted in full in *John Ruskin: a Bibliographical Biography*, by W. E. A. Axon, 1879, pp. 4–5; in *Papers of the Manchester Literary Club*, vol. v., 1879, pp. 156–157; and in the *Poems*, 1891, vol. i. pp. 115–116. It is dated in the *Poems*, 1850, *ætat.* fourteen; “but from the position of the rough draft in Note-book viii., it seems to have been written some time before the author actually reached the age of fourteen, *i.e.* in his fourteenth year. . . . This song was suggested by the fact that the author had not been among mountains that year [1832], but only to Dover and Hastings. It is curious that his mountain-yearning does not carry him back to Snowdon [1831], but to earlier visions of the Lake Country, his first and last mountain-love.”—*Editor's Note*, 1891. The “rough draft” is the only MS.]

³ [For “Loweswater's dell” (in the *Poems*, 1850) the MS. reads “Glamara's dell”; “a reading which I wish I could restore, for the sake both of the sound and of the sense.”—*Editor's Note*, 1891.]

SONG

Oh! what although the crags be stern
Their mighty peaks that sever,
Fresh flies the breeze on mountain fern,
And free on mountain heather.

I long to tread the mountain head
Above the valley swelling;
I long to feel the breezes sped
From grey and gaunt Helvellyn.

I love the eddying, circling sweep,
The mantling and the foam
Of murmuring waters dark and deep,
Amid the valleys lone.

It is a terror, yet 'tis sweet,
Upon some broken brow
To look upon the distant sweep
Of ocean spread below.

There is a thrill of strange delight
That passes quivering o'er me,
When blue hills rise upon the sight
Like summer clouds before me.

[Age 14.]

Cambridge University Press
978-1-108-00850-1 - The Works of John Ruskin, Volume 2: Poems
John Ruskin
Excerpt
[More information](#)



Allen & Co. Sc.

RYDAL - WATER.
August 1838.

[1834]¹

THE MONTHS ²

I

FROM your high dwellings, in the realms of snow
 And cloud, where many an avalanche's fall
 Is heard resounding from the mountain's brow,
 Come, ye cold winds! at January's call,
 On whistling wings; and, with white flakes, bestrew
 The earth, till February's rain restore
 The race of torrents to their wonted flow,
 Whose waves shall stand in silent ice no more;
 But, lashed by March's maddened winds, shall roar
 With voice of ire, and beat the rocks on every shore.

II

Bow down your heads, ye flowers! in gentle guise,
 Before the dewy rain that April sheds,
 Whose sun shines through her clouds with quick surprise,
 Shedding soft influences on your heads;
 And wreathe ye round the rosy month that flies
 To scatter perfumes on the path of June:
 Till July's sun upon the mountains rise
 Triumphant, and the wan and weary moon
 Mingle her cold beams with the burning lume
 That Sirius shoots through all the dreary midnight gloom.

¹ [For note on other poems of 1834, see below, p. 388.]

² [These three stanzas were published in *Friendship's Offering* for 1836, pp. 290-291, signed "J. R." Reprinted in the *Poems*, 1850, pp. 23-24; in the American edition, pp. 7-8; *Poems*, 1891, i. 176-177. There are two MSS. of the piece, a rough copy in MS. Book No. viii.; a fair copy in No. xi. They are three out of the seventeen stanzas of a New Year's (1835) Address to his father. They must have been written before that year, and are accordingly placed here as belonging to 1834; in the ed. of 1850 they were wrongly placed at the end of the verses of 1835.]

THE MONTHS

III

Rejoice, ye fields! rejoice and wave with gold,
When August round her precious gifts is flinging;
Lo! the crushed wain is slowly homeward rolled;
The sun-burnt reapers¹ jocund lays are singing:
September's steps her juicy stores unfold,
If the spring blossoms have not blushed in vain:
October's foliage yellows with his cold:
In rattling showers dark November's rain,
From every stormy cloud, descends amain,
Till keen December's snows close up the year again.

[Age 15.]

¹ [Misprinted "reaper's" in *Friendship's Offering*.]

[1835]¹

THE AVALANCHE²

The accident to which these lines allude occurred in the year 1822. Several guides, with Dr. Hamel, a Russian, and an Englishman, were ascending the Mont Blanc; when they had crossed the plain of ice above the Glacier of Bossons, an avalanche descended from the Calotte of Mont Blanc, which swept away several of the guides, two of whom were irrecoverably lost.³

I

THEY went away at break of day,
 And brave hearts were about them,
 Who led them on, but at the grey
 Of eve returned without them.

II

They're watched from yonder lowly spot
 By many an anxious eye;
 Hearts that forbode they know not what,
 And fear they know not why.

III

“Why left ye, lone upon the steep,
 My child?” the widow said:—
 “We cannot speak to those who sleep;
 We dwell not with the dead.”

¹ [For note on other poems of 1835, see below, p. 395.]

² [*Poems*, 1850, pp. 5–7; *Poems*, 1891, i. 240–242. MS. in Book viii.]

³ [The MS. adds, “The survivors wandered about for two or three hours, and called, but there was no answer, and they were compelled to descend.” The actual date of the accident was August 1820; Dr. Hamel was accompanied by two Englishmen, and by one Swiss gentleman. The party had twelve guides. An account of the catastrophe may be read in *The Annals of Mont Blanc*, by C. E. Mathews, 1898, pp. 224–229. Remains of the dead men were found in 1861, 1863, and 1865.]

THE AVALANCHE

IV

“Why comes not with you from the hill
My husband?” said the bride:—
Alas! his limbs are cold and still
Upon the mountain side.

V

His boy, in undefined fright,
Stood shivering at her knee;
“The wind is cold, the moon is white,
Where can my father be?”

VI

That night, through mourning Chamouni,
Shone many a midnight beam;
And grieving voices wander by
The murmur of the stream.

VII

They come not yet, they come not yet!
The snows are deep above them,
Deep, very deep; they cannot meet
The kiss of those who love them.

VIII

Ye avalanches, roar not loud
Upon the dreary hill:
Ye snows, spread light their mountain shroud;
Ye tempests, peace, be still!

THE AVALANCHE

9

IX

For there are those who cannot weep,
Who cannot smile, who will not sleep,
Lest, through the midnight's lonely gloom,*
The dead should rift their mountain-tomb,
With haggard look and fearful air,
To come and ask a sepulchre.¹

[Age 16.]

* This is a superstition very prevalent among the Swiss.

¹ [In the volume of 1850, "The Avalanche" was followed by lines headed "Ehrenbreitstein: Fragment from a Metrical Journal." These were extracted from the *Journal of a Tour on the Continent*, written in 1835, where they now appear; see below, p. 355.]