

*The Excursion* we find an entirely different slant given to Margaret's sorrow. She is there

One

Who, in her worst distress, had ofttimes felt  
The unbounded might of prayer.

Wordsworth made that emendation only in 1845. But long before that — as early as the spring of 1802 — he had begun to spoil the original simplicity and restraint of the poem by introducing elaborations and explanations. There were times when Wordsworth suffered from an excessive desire to make his meaning clearer at the expense both of his finer feelings and of his poetic ear.

## *Landscape and Unseen Rider*

Where a cartwheel props a listing gate  
I pause to listen, but little moves.  
Am I the only expectant watcher?  
By coppice backing chock-a-block cottages  
fretful shadows are tethered in clumps.  
Inopportune thoughts engage my gaze  
like straw caught in grinning sprockets.  
Not a lot of smoking chimney-pots.  
The clock spire topping a corner shop  
seems forgotten, or never looked at.  
What's to occupy a sleepy populace?  
No exotic rider appears. Copybook  
sheep keep cropping clover. Cocked ears  
detect inconstant echoes. I ought  
to get back, but pick up and pocket  
a worn chunk of mock luck as I walk on.

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