

Two Sonnets

By William Watson

I—The Frontier

AT the hushed brink of twilight,—when, as though
Some solemn journeying phantom paused to lay
An ominous finger on the awestruck day,
Earth holds her breath till that great presence go,—
A moment comes of visionary glow,
Pendulous 'twixt the gold hour and the grey,
Lovelier than these, more eloquent than they
Of memory, foresight, and life's ebb and flow.

So have I known, in some fair woman's face,
While viewless yet was Time's more gross imprint,
The first, faint, hesitant, elusive hint
Of that invasion of the vandal years
Seem deeper beauty than youth's cloudless grace,
Wake subtler dreams, and touch me nigh to tears.

II—Night on Curbar Edge, Derbyshire

No echo of man's life pursues my ears ;
Nothing disputes this Desolation's reign ;
Change comes not, this dread temple to profane,
Where time by æons reckons, not by years.
Its patient form one crag, sole-stranded, rears,
Type of whate'er is destined to remain
While yon still host encamped on Night's waste plain
Keeps armed watch, a million quivering spears.

Hushed are the wild and wing'd lives of the moor ;
The sleeping sheep nestle 'neath ruined wall,
Or unhewn stones in random concourse hurled :
Solitude, sleepless, listens at Fate's door ;
And there is built and 'stablish't over all
Tremendous Silence, older than the world.