

Hexameters

Samuel Taylor Coleridge

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William, my teacher, my friend ! dear William and dear Dorothea !
Smooth out the folds of my letter, and place it on desk or on table ;
Place it on table or desk ; and your right hands loosely half-closing,
Gently sustain them in air, and extending the digit didactic,
Rest it a moment on each of the forks of the five-forkéd left hand,
Twice on the breadth of the thumb, and once on the tip of each finger ;
Read with a nod of the head in a humouring recitativo ;
And, as I live, you will see my hexameters hopping before you.
This is a galloping measure ; a hop, and a trot, and a gallop !
All my hexameters fly, like stags pursued by the staghounds,
Breathless and panting, and ready to drop, yet flying still onwards,
I would full fain pull in my hard-mouthed runaway hunter ;
But our English Spondeans are clumsy yet impotent curb-reins ;
And so to make him go slowly, no way left have I but to lame him.

William, my head and my heart ! dear Poet that feelest and thinkest !
Dorothy, eager of soul, my most affectionate sister !
Many a mile, O ! many a wearisome mile are ye distant,
Long, long, comfortless roads, with no one eye that doth know us.
O ! it is all too far to send to you mockeries idle :
Yea, and I feel it not right ! But O ! my friends, my belovéd !
Feverish and wakeful I lie, I am weary of feeling and thinking.
Every thought is worn down, I am weary, yet cannot be vacant.
Five long hours have I tossed, rheumatic heats, dry and flushing,
Gnawing behind in my head, and wandering and throbbing about me,
Busy and tiresome, my friends, as the beat of the boding night-spider.

I forget the beginning of the line :

... my eyes are a burthen,

Now unwillingly closed, now open and aching with darkness.
O ! what a life is the eye ! what a strange and inscrutable essence !
Him that is utterly blind, nor glimpses the fire that warms him ;
Him that never beheld the swelling breast of his mother ;
Him that smiled in his gladness as a babe that smiles in its slumber ;
Even for him it exists, it moves and stirs in its prison ;

Hexameters

Lives with a separate life, and 'Is it a Spirit ?' he murmurs :

'Sure, it has thoughts of its own, and to see is only a language.'

There was a great deal more, which I have forgotten. ... The last line which I wrote, I remember, and write it for the truth of the sentiment, scarcely less true in company than in pain and solitude :

William, my head and my heart ! dear William and dear Dorothea !

You have all in each other ; but I am lonely, and want you !