

Mr. Simckell's Recollections
of the Lake Poets

Seen Mr. Wordsworth? Ay, and knowen him too for over thirty five year and more, knew him well for fifteen. Driven him to picnics times out of number, always sat on the seat along with me. "Did he talk?" Talk! yes and smoke too. Give me a whiff of your pipe, post boy, he'd say, and that then he'd be content. I never saw him proud or fine but once, and that was when the Dowager Duchess you mind her — "Oh yes, of Kent?" Yes, that's her, the Queen's mother, you know, she came to see him once. Didn't he strut and walk then with her on his arm — a showing the place off. "He wasn't smoking then, I suppose?" No, no, (with a laugh) not that time. "Have you read any of his poems?" Oh yes, since I came out to New Zealand and heard people talking about them, but we thought nothing on him at home, no more than a stone in the back.

"Have you seen Rydal Hall?" Yes ma'am, and seen the old Lady Le Fleming he wrote the poem too. "Did you ever see his sister?" Oh, yes, she wrote his poetry for him, she helped him a lot she did — they were ugly, you couldn't see two people uglier to be human and made in God's image like. "But their minds — they were beautiful". Oh, mind was all right, and vice kind ways, both on 'em, but such ugly faces. The sister never went out, "made deformed like somebod", "His daughter, was she nice looking?" Well, I don't remember her much, she went away young, but the sons, three fine young fellows, never 'ud think they'd such ugly parents. Wordsworth was poor, the nobility kept him up, but there was something noble in him, he didn't like it. "Wordsworth's best friend, Southey — did you ever hear of him?"