

## ELEGY

*Sylvia Townsend Warner*

(first appeared in *The Countryman Book*, 1948)

Here, where the ale and pewter stream  
Pours its strong limbs along the rock  
And dives into the pool,  
To bask beneath the netted gleam  
Of airy woodland breathing cool,  
The charabangers flock.

They lay themselves about the sward  
In a constraint of ease, unpack  
Face-powder, food and drink.  
Some read, some stare, some smoke to ward  
The flies away, some from the brink  
Call the charmed children back.

Small peace of mind is theirs, and when  
The given hour has gone they climb  
Meek on their monstrous coach;  
For the spirits of mechanic men  
Feel inwardly as a reproach  
Weight of unmoving time.

Yet as the wheels devour the road,  
Out of their cloister-cage of speed  
Already they look back:  
It seems there was unloosed a load,  
Released a dream, made good a lack,  
Souls with free water freed,

Where, when the sensitive resort  
With chiding foot they thrust away  
Torn flowers from field and moor,  
Crumbs, paper, orange-peel, the short  
And simple annals of the poor  
Who've spent their holiday.



Watercolour of Sylvia by Stephen Tomlin. Reproduced on the cover of *Sylvia & David: The Warner/Garnett Letters*, 1999, and in *Chaldon Herring* by Judith Stinton, 2004, (see Reviews, p.53).