**Simon Lee: The Old Huntsman**

By [William Wordsworth](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/bio/william-wordsworth)

In the sweet shire of Cardigan,

Not far from pleasant Ivor-hall,

An old Man dwells, a little man,—

'Tis said he once was tall.

For five-and-thirty years he lived

A running huntsman merry;

And still the centre of his cheek

Is red as a ripe cherry.

No man like him the horn could sound,

And hill and valley rang with glee

When Echo bandied, round and round

The halloo of Simon Lee.

In those proud days, he little cared

For husbandry or tillage;

To blither tasks did Simon rouse

The sleepers of the village.

He all the country could outrun,

Could leave both man and horse behind;

And often, ere the chase was done,

He reeled, and was stone-blind.

And still there's something in the world

At which his heart rejoices;

For when the chiming hounds are out,

He dearly loves their voices!

But, oh the heavy change!—bereft

Of health, strength, friends, and kindred, see!

Old Simon to the world is left

In liveried poverty.

His Master's dead—and no one now

Dwells in the Hall of Ivor;

Men, dogs, and horses, all are dead;

He is the sole survivor.

And he is lean and he is sick;

His body, dwindled and awry,

Rests upon ankles swoln and thick;

His legs are thin and dry.

One prop he has, and only one,

His wife, an aged woman,

Lives with him, near the waterfall,

Upon the village Common.

Beside their moss-grown hut of clay,

Not twenty paces from the door,

A scrap of land they have, but they

Are poorest of the poor.

This scrap of land he from the heath

Enclosed when he was stronger;

But what to them avails the land

Which he can till no longer?

Oft, working by her Husband's side,

Ruth does what Simon cannot do;

For she, with scanty cause for pride,

Is stouter of the two.

And, though you with your utmost skill

From labour could not wean them,

'Tis little, very little—all

That they can do between them.

Few months of life has he in store

As he to you will tell,

For still, the more he works, the more

Do his weak ankles swell.

My gentle Reader, I perceive,

How patiently you've waited,

And now I fear that you expect

Some tale will be related.

O Reader! had you in your mind

Such stores as silent thought can bring,

O gentle Reader! you would find

A tale in every thing.

What more I have to say is short,

And you must kindly take it:

It is no tale; but, should you think,

Perhaps a tale you'll make it.

One summer-day I chanced to see

This old Man doing all he could

To unearth the root of an old tree,

A stump of rotten wood.

The mattock tottered in his hand;

So vain was his endeavour,

That at the root of the old tree

He might have worked for ever.

"You're overtasked, good Simon Lee,

Give me your tool," to him I said;

And at the word right gladly he

Received my proffered aid.

I struck, and with a single blow

The tangled root I severed,

At which the poor old Man so long

And vainly had endeavoured.

The tears into his eyes were brought,

And thanks and praises seemed to run

So fast out of his heart, I thought

They never would have done.

—I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds

With coldness still returning;

Alas! the gratitude of men

Hath oftener left me mourning.