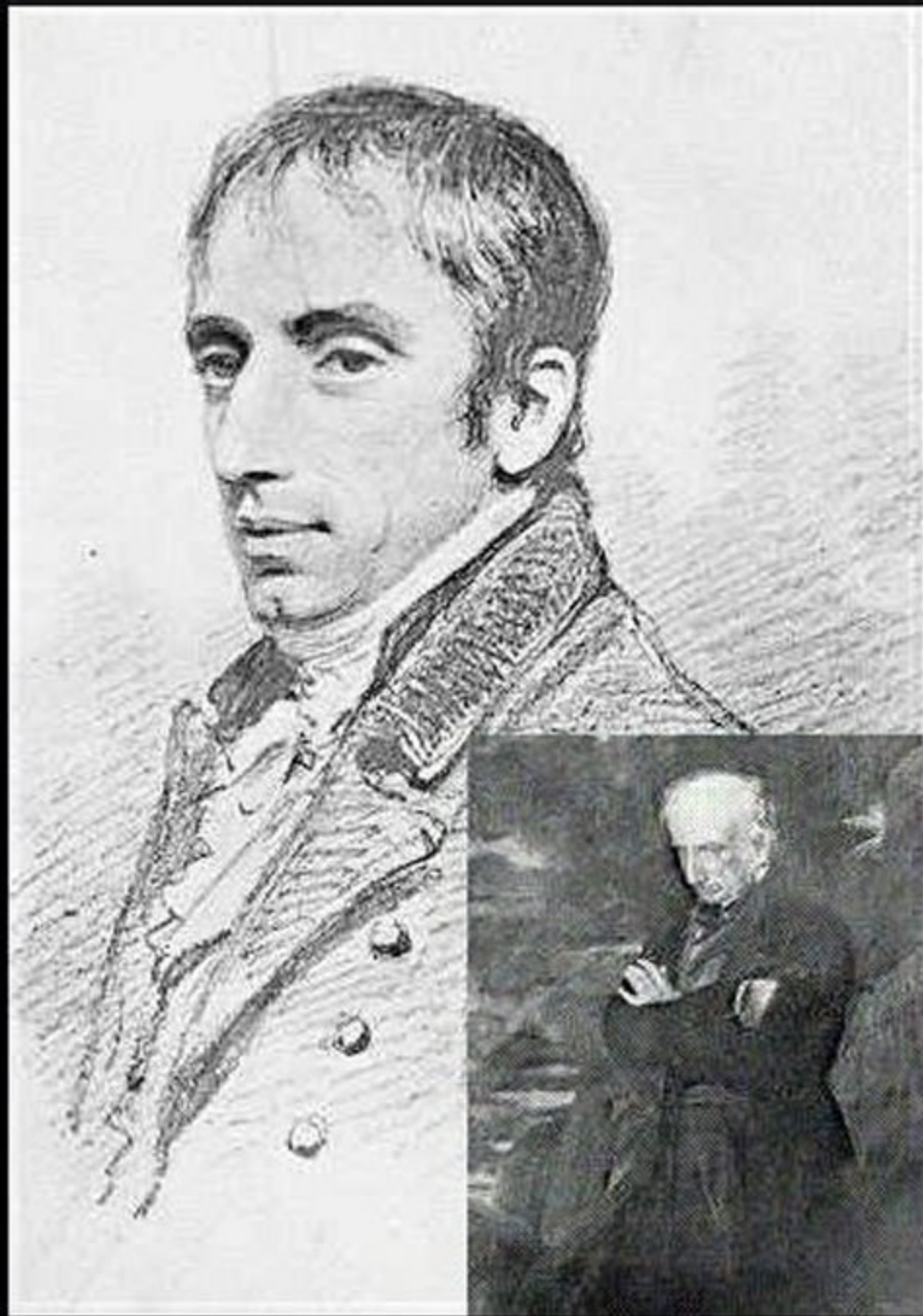


William Wordsworth *The Prelude*



1805, 1850

The Prelude
or, Growth of a Poet's Mind;
an Autobiographical Poem

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1805, 1850

DjVu Editions



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ADVERTISEMENT

The following Poem was commenced in the beginning of the year 1799, and completed in the summer of 1805.

The design and occasion of the work are described by the Author in his Preface to the *Excursion*, first published in 1814, where he thus speaks:—

“Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment.

“As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them.

“That work, addressed to a dear friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author’s intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it, was a determination to compose a philosophical Poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society, and to be entitled the ‘Recluse’; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.

“The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author’s mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the Ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.”

Such was the Author’s language in the year 1814.

It will thence be seen, that the present Poem was intended to be introductory

to the *Recluse*, and that the *Recluse*, if completed, would have consisted of Three Parts. Of these, the Second Part alone, viz. the *Excursion*, was finished, and given to the world by the Author.

The First Book of the First Part of the *Recluse* still remains in manuscript [now in print]; but the Third Part was only planned. The materials of which it would have been formed have, however, been incorporated, for the most part, in the Author's other Publications, written subsequently to the *Excursion*.

The Friend, to whom the present Poem is addressed, was the late SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE, who was resident in Malta, for the restoration of his health, when the greater part of it was composed.

Mr. Coleridge read a considerable portion of the Poem while he was abroad; and his feelings, on hearing it recited by the Author (after his return to his own country), are recorded in his Verses, addressed to Mr. Wordsworth, which will be found in the "Sibylline Leaves," p. 197, ed. 1817, or "Poetical Works," by S. T. Coleridge, vol. i. p. 206.

RYDAL MOUNT July 13th, 1850.

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION—CHILDHOOD AND SCHOOL-TIME

OH there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate'er its mission, the soft breeze can come 5
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.
What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale 10
Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
The earth is all before me. With a heart
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty, 15
I look about; and should the chosen guide
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, 20
That burthen of my own unnatural self,
The heavy weight of many a weary day
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord

With any promises of human life), 25
 Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
 Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
 By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
 Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
 Upon the river point me out my course? 30

Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail
 But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
 For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
 Was blowing on my body, felt within
 A correspondent breeze, that gently moved 35
 With quickening virtue, but is now become
 A tempest, a redundant energy,
 Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
 And their congenial powers, that, while they join
 In breaking up a long-continued frost, 40
 Bring with them vernal promises, the hope
 Of active days urged on by flying hours,—
 Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought
 Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
 Matins and vespers of harmonious verse! 45

Thus far, O Friend! did I, not used to make
 A present joy the matter of a song,
 Pour forth that day my soul in measured strains
 That would not be forgotten, and are here
 Recorded: to the open fields I told 50
 A prophecy: poetic numbers came
 Spontaneously to clothe in priestly robe
 A renovated spirit singled out,
 Such hope was mine, for holy services.
 My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's 55
 Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
 To both I listened, drawing from them both
 A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Content and not unwilling now to give

A respite to this passion, I paced on 60
With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,
To a green shady place, where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice
And settling into gentler happiness.
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day, 65
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west; a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts 70
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one cottage which methought I saw.
No picture of mere memory ever looked 75
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, 80
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound. 85
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive, 90
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.
It was a splendid evening, and my soul
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked 95
Aeolian visitations; but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host

Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
 And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
 Why think of anything but present good?" 100
 So, like a home-bound labourer, I pursued
 My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
 Mild influence; nor left in me one wish
 Again to bend the Sabbath of that time
 To a servile yoke. What need of many words? 105
 A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
 I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
 In common things—the endless store of things,
 Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 110
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood—
 The self-congratulation, and, from morn
 To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.
 But speedily an earnest longing rose
 To brace myself to some determined aim, 115
 Reading or thinking; either to lay up
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference: and therewith
 Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
 I might endue some airy phantasies 120
 That had been floating loose about for years,
 And to such beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
 That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
 Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear 125
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not
 Into a steady morning: if my mind,
 Remembering the bold promise of the past,
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
 Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds 130
 Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up
 Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts
 Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!

The Poet, gentle creature as he is,	135
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;	
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,	
Though no distress be near him but his own	
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased	
While she as duteous as the mother dove	140
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,	
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on	
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;	
With me is now such passion, to be blamed	
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.	145
When, as becomes a man who would prepare	
For such an arduous work, I through myself	
Make rigorous inquisition, the report	
Is often cheering; for I neither seem	
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,	150
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort	
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,	
Subordinate helpers of the living mind:	
Nor am I naked of external things,	
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids	155
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil	
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.	
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these	
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such	
As may be singled out with steady choice;	160
No little band of yet remembered names	
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope	
To summon back from lonesome banishment,	
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men	
Now living, or to live in future years.	165
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking	
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,	
Will settle on some British theme, some old	
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;	
More often turning to some gentle place	170
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe	

To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,
 Amid reposing knights by a river side
 Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
 Of dire enchantments faced and overcome 175
 By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,
 Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
 Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
 That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
 Whence inspiration for a song that winds 180
 Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest
 Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
 To patient courage and unblemished truth,
 To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
 And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves. 185
 Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
 How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
 And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
 Odin, the Father of a race by whom
 Perished the Roman Empire: how the friends 190
 And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
 Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,
 And left their usages, their arts and laws,
 To disappear by a slow gradual death,
 To dwindle and to perish one by one, 195
 Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
 Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
 Survived, and, when the European came
 With skill and power that might not be withstood,
 Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold 200
 And wasted down by glorious death that race
 Of natural heroes: or I would record
 How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,
 Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,
 Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell, 205
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force
 Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,
 Went single in his ministry across

The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed, But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus sought Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines: How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name	210
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower, All over his dear Country; left the deeds Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts, To people the steep rocks and river banks, Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul Of independence and stern liberty.	215
Sometimes it suits me better to invent A tale from my own heart, more near akin To my own passions and habitual thoughts; Some variegated story, in the main Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts Before the very sun that brightens it, Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish, My last and favourite aspiration, mounts With yearning toward some philosophic song Of Truth that cherishes our daily life;	220
With meditations passionate from deep Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre; But from this awful burthen I full soon Take refuge and beguile myself with trust That mellow years will bring a riper mind And clearer insight. Thus my days are past In contradiction; with no skill to part Vague longing, haply bred by want of power, From paramount impulse not to be withstood, A timorous capacity, from prudence, From circumspection, infinite delay. Humility and modest awe, themselves Betray me, serving often for a cloak To a more subtle selfishness; that now Locks every function up in blank reserve, Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye	225
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That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.
Ah! better far than this, to stray about 250
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
Far better never to have heard the name 255
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes. 260
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose 265
In listlessness from vain perplexity,
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false steward who hath much received
And renders nothing back.
Was it for this 270
That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou, 275
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind 280
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

When he had left the mountains and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers

That yet survive, a shattered monument	285
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed Along the margin of our terrace walk; A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved. Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,	
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,	290
Made one long bathing of a summer's day; Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill,	295
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height, Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone Beneath the sky, as if I had been born On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport	300
A naked savage, in the thunder shower.	
 Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up Fostered alike by beauty and by fear: Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less In that beloved Vale to which erelong	305
We were transplanted;—there were we let loose For sports of wider range. Ere I had told Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy	310
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung To range the open heights where woodcocks run Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night, Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied That anxious visitation;—moon and stars	315
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone, And seemed to be a trouble to the peace That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell In these night wanderings, that a strong desire O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird	320
Which was the captive of another's toil	

Became my prey; and when the deed was done
 I heard among the solitary hills
 Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
 Of undistinguishable motion, steps 325
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less, when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
 Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
 Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
 Our object and inglorious, yet the end 330
 Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung

Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
 Suspended by the blast that blew amain, 335
 Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time

While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
 Of earth—and with what motion moved the clouds! 340

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
 Like harmony in music; there is a dark
 Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, makes them cling together
 In one society. How strange, that all 345
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,

Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
 Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
 And that a needful part, in making up
 The calm existence that is mine when I 350
 Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!

Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
 Whether her fearless visitings, or those
 That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
 Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use 355
 Severer interventions, ministry
 More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home. 360
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side, 365
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view 370
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnacle; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake, 375
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct, 380
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing, 385
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,—
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave 390
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude 395

Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
 Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
 But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
 Like living men, moved slowly through the mind 400
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought
 That givest to forms and images a breath 405
 And everlasting motion, not in vain
 By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
 Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human soul;
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things— 410
 With life and nature—purifying thus
 The elements of feeling and of thought,
 And sanctifying, by such discipline,
 Both pain and fear, until we recognise 415
 A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
 Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
 With stinted kindness. In November days,
 When vapours rolling down the valley made
 A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
 At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights, 420
 When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
 Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
 In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
 Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
 And by the waters, all the summer long. 425

And in the frosty season, when the sun
 Was set, and visible for many a mile
 The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
 I heeded not their summons: happy time
 It was indeed for all of us—for me 430
 It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud

The village clock tolled six,—I wheeled about,
 Proud and exulting like an untired horse
 That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
 We hissed along the polished ice in games 435
 Confederate, imitative of the chase
 And woodland pleasures,—the resounding horn,
 The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
 So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
 And not a voice was idle; with the din 440
 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
 The leafless trees and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars 445
 Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
 The orange sky of evening died away.
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay, or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng, 450
 To cut across the reflex of a star
 That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
 Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks on either side 455
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
 The rapid line of motion, then at once
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
 Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled 460
 With visible motion her diurnal round!
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky 465
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places! can I think
 A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed

Such ministry, when ye, through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports, 470
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impressed, upon all forms, the characters
 Of danger or desire; and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth,
 With triumph and delight, with hope and fear, 475
 Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employed,
 Might I pursue this theme through every change
 Of exercise and play, to which the year
 Did summon us in his delightful round. 480

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
 Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours;
 Nor saw a band in happiness and joy
 Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
 I could record with no reluctant voice 485
 The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers
 With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line,
 True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
 And unreproved enchantment led us on
 By rocks and pools shut out from every star, 490
 All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
 Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
 —Unfading recollections! at this hour
 The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
 From some hill-top on sunny afternoons, 495
 The paper kite high among fleecy clouds
 Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser;
 Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
 Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
 Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm. 500

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,
 A ministration of your own was yours;
 Can I forget you, being as you were
 So beautiful among the pleasant fields

In which ye stood? or can I here forget 505
 The plain and seemly countenance with which
 Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye
 Delights and exultations of your own.
 Eager and never weary we pursued
 Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire 510
 At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
 In square divisions parcelled out and all
 With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
 We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head
 In strife too humble to be named in verse: 515
 Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
 Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
 And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on
 A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,
 Neglected and ungratefully thrown by 520
 Even for the very service they had wrought,
 But husbanded through many a long campaign.
 Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
 Had changed their functions: some, plebeian cards
 Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth, 525
 Had dignified, and called to represent
 The persons of departed potentates.
 Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
 Ironic diamonds,—clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,
 A congregation piteously akin! 530
 Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
 Those sooty knaves, precipitated down
 With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven:
 The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,
 Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay, 535
 And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
 By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad
 Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
 Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
 And, interrupting oft that eager game, 540
 From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
 The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,

Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud
 Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
 Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main. 545

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
 How Nature by extrinsic passion first
 Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,
 And made me love them, may I here omit
 How other pleasures have been mine, and joys 550
 Of subtler origin; how I have felt,

Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
 Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
 An intellectual charm; that calm delight 555
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong

To those first-born affinities that fit
 Our new existence to existing things,
 And, in our dawn of being, constitute
 The bond of union between life and joy. 560

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,
 And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
 The faces of the moving year, even then
 I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
 Old as creation, drinking in a pure 565
 Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
 Of curling mist, or from the level plain
 Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays
 Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell 570
 How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,

And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills
 Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
 How I have stood, to fancies such as these
 A stranger, linking with the spectacle 575
 No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
 And bringing with me no peculiar sense

Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,
 Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league
 Of shining water, gathering as it seemed, 580
 Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,
 New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy
 Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
 Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss 585
 Which, like a tempest, works along the blood
 And is forgotten; even then I felt
 Gleams like the flashing of a shield;—the earth
 And common face of Nature spake to me
 Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true, 590
 By chance collisions and quaint accidents
 (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
 Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
 Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
 Collateral objects and appearances, 595
 Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
 Until maturer seasons called them forth
 To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
 —And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearied itself out of the memory, 600
 The scenes which were a witness of that joy
 Remained in their substantial lineaments
 Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
 Were visible, a daily sight; and thus
 By the impressive discipline of fear, 605
 By pleasure and repeated happiness,
 So frequently repeated, and by force
 Of obscure feelings representative
 Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,
 So beautiful, so majestic in themselves, 610
 Though yet the day was distant, did become
 Habitually dear, and all their forms
 And changeful colours by invisible links
 Were fastened to the affections.

I began 615

My story early—not misled, I trust,
 By an infirmity of love for days
 Disowned by memory—ere the breath of spring
 Planting my snowdrops among winter snows:
 Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt 620
 In sympathy, that I have lengthened out
 With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.
 Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
 Invigorating thoughts from former years;
 Might fix the wavering balance of my mind, 625
 And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
 May spur me on, in manhood now mature
 To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes
 Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
 To understand myself, nor thou to know 630
 With better knowledge how the heart was framed
 Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee
 Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit
 Those recollected hours that have the charm
 Of visionary things, those lovely forms 635
 And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
 And almost make remotest infancy
 A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind
 Hath been revived, and if this genial mood 640
 Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
 Through later years the story of my life.
 The road lies plain before me;—’tis a theme
 Single and of determined bounds; and hence
 I choose it rather at this time, than work 645
 Of ampler or more varied argument,
 Where I might be discomfited and lost:
 And certain hopes are with me, that to thee
 This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

BOOK SECOND SCHOOL-TIME (continued)

THUS far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked;
Those chiefly that first led me to the love
Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet 5
Was in its birth, sustained as might befall
By nourishment that came unsought; for still
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly were our games
Prolonged in summer till the daylight failed: 10
No chair remained before the doors; the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The labourer, and the old man who had sate
A later lingerer; yet the revelry
Continued and the loud uproar: at last, 15
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride 20
Of intellect and virtue's self-esteem?
One is there, though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be;—who would not give
If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
The eagerness of infantine desire?

A tranquillising spirit presses now
 On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
 The vacancy between me and those days
 Which yet have such self-presence in my mind, 30
 That, musing on them, often do I seem
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
 And of some other Being. A rude mass
 Of native rock, left midway in the square
 Of our small market village, was the goal 35
 Or centre of these sports; and when, returned
 After long absence, thither I repaired,
 Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
 A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
 That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream, 40
 And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends! I know
 That more than one of you will think with me
 Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
 From whom the stone was named, who there had sate,
 And watched her table with its huckster's wares 45
 Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round
 With giddy motion. But the time approached
 That brought with it a regular desire
 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms 50
 Of Nature were collaterally attached
 To every scheme of holiday delight
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else
 And languidly pursued.

When summer came, 55
 Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
 To sweep along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars; and the selected bourne
 Was now an Island musical with birds
 That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle 60
 Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown
 With lilies of the valley like a field;
 And now a third small Island, where survived

In solitude the ruins of a shrine
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served 65
Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength, 70
And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered; thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart;
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days 75
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!
More than we wished we knew the blessing then 80
Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength
Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude
A little weekly stipend, and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year
In penniless poverty. But now to school 85
From the half-yearly holidays returned,
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground, 90
Or in the woods, or by a river side
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell 95
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years,
We from our funds drew largely;—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed;
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud
Supplied our want, we haply might employ 100

Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound
 Were distant: some famed temple where of yore
 The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls
 Of that large abbey, where within the Vale
 Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built, 105
 Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,
 Belfry, and images, and living trees;
 A holy scene!—Along the smooth green turf
 Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace,
 Left by the west wind sweeping overhead 110
 From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers
 In that sequestered valley may be seen,
 Both silent and both motionless alike;
 Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
 The safeguard for repose and quietness. 115

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,
 With whip and spur we through the chantry flew
 In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,
 And the stone-abbot, and that single wren
 Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave 120
 Of the old church, that—though from recent showers
 The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
 Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
 And respirations, from the roofless walls
 The shuddering ivy dripped large drops—yet still 125
 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird
 Sang to herself, that there I could have made
 My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
 To hear such music. Through the walls we flew
 And down the valley, and, a circuit made 130
 In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
 We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
 And that still spirit shed from evening air!
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
 Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed 135
 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when
 Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea

We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,
 Within the crescent of pleasant bay, 140
 A tavern stood; no homely-featured house,
 Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,
 But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
 With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within
 Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine. 145
 In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built
 On the large island, had this dwelling been
 More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,
 Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.
 But—though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed 150
 The threshold, and large golden characters,
 Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged
 The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight
 And mockery of the rustic painter's hand—
 Yet, to this hour, the spot to me is dear 155
 With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
 Upon a slope surmounted by a plain
 Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood
 A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
 And over the tree-tops; nor did we want 160
 Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream.
 There, while through half an afternoon we played
 On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
 Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
 Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall, 165
 When in our pinnace we returned at leisure
 Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach
 Of some small island steered our course with one,
 The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,
 And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute 170
 Alone upon the rock—oh, then, the calm
 And dead still water lay upon my mind
 Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
 Never before so beautiful, sank down

Into my heart, and held me like a dream!	175
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus Daily the common range of visible things Grew dear to me: already I began To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun, Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge	180
And surety of our earthly life, a light Which we behold and feel we are alive; Nor for his bounty to so many worlds— But for this cause, that I had seen him lay His beauty on the morning hills, had seen	185
The western mountain touch his setting orb, In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy. And, from like feelings, humble though intense,	190
To patriotic and domestic love Analogous, the moon to me was dear; For I could dream away my purposes, Standing to gaze upon her while she hung Midway between the hills, as if she knew	195
No other region, but belonged to thee, Yea, appertained by a peculiar right To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!	
Those incidental charms which first attached My heart to rural objects, day by day	200
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell How Nature, intervenient till this time And secondary, now at length was sought For her own sake. But who shall parcel out His intellect by geometric rules,	205
Split like a province into round and square? Who knows the individual hour in which His habits were first sown, even as a seed? Who that shall point as with a wand and say “This portion of the river of my mind	210
Came from yon fountain?” Thou, my Friend! art one	

More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
 Science appears but what in truth she is,
 Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
 But as a succedaneum, and a prop 215
 To our infirmity. No officious slave
 Art thou of that false secondary power
 By which we multiply distinctions, then
 Deem that our puny boundaries are things
 That we perceive, and not that we have made. 220
 To thee, unblinded by these formal arts,
 The unity of all hath been revealed,
 And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled
 Than many are to range the faculties
 In scale and order, class the cabinet 225
 Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase
 Run through the history and birth of each
 As of a single independent thing.
 Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
 If each most obvious and particular thought, 230
 Not in a mystical and idle sense,
 But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,
 Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe,

(For with my best conjecture I would trace 235
 Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,
 Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
 Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul
 Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists 240
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond 245
 Of nature that connect him with the world.
 Is there a flower, to which he points with hand
 Too weak to gather it, already love
 Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him

Hath beautified that flower; already shades 250
 Of pity cast from inward tenderness
 Do fall around him upon aught that bears
 Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
 Emphatically such a Being lives,
 Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail, 255
 An inmate of this active universe:
 For, feeling has to him imparted power
 That through the growing faculties of sense
 Doth like an agent of the one great Mind
 Create, creator and receiver both, 260
 Working but in alliance with the works
 Which it beholds.—Such, verily, is the first
 Poetic spirit of our human life,
 By uniform control of after years,
 In most, abated or suppressed; in some, 265
 Through every change of growth and of decay,
 Pre-eminent till death.

From early days,
 Beginning not long after that first time
 In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch 270
 I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,
 I have endeavoured to display the means
 Whereby this infant sensibility,
 Great birthright of our being, was in me
 Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path 275
 More difficult before me; and I fear
 That in its broken windings we shall need
 The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing:
 For now a trouble came into my mind
 From unknown causes. I was left alone 280
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
 The props of my affections were removed,
 And yet the building stood, as if sustained
 By its own spirit! All that I beheld
 Was dear, and hence to finer influxes 285
 The mind lay open to a more exact
 And close communion. Many are our joys

In youth, but oh! what happiness to live
 When every hour brings palpable access
 Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight, 290
 And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,
 And every season wheresoe'er I moved
 Unfolded transitory qualities,
 Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
 Had been neglected; left a register 295
 Of permanent relations, else unknown.
 Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
 More active ever than "best society"—
 Society made sweet as solitude
 By silent inobtrusive sympathies, 300
 And gentle agitations of the mind
 From manifold distinctions, difference
 Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye,
 No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
 Sublimier joy; for I would walk alone, 305
 Under the quiet stars, and at that time
 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
 To breathe an elevated mood, by form
 Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,
 If the night blackened with a coming storm, 310
 Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
 Thence did I drink the visionary power;
 And deem not profitless those fleeting moods 315
 Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
 That they are kindred to our purer mind
 And intellectual life; but that the soul,
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
 Remembering not, retains an obscure sense 320
 Of possible sublimity, whereto
 With growing faculties she doth aspire,
 With faculties still growing, feeling still
 That whatsoever point they gain, they yet
 Have something to pursue. 325

And not alone,
 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power
 And fitness in the latent qualities
 And essences of things, by which the mind 330
 Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
 Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
 A virtue not its own. My morning walks
 Were early;—oft before the hours of school
 I travelled round our little lake, five miles 335
 Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear
 For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,
 Then passionately loved; with heart how full
 Would he peruse these lines! For many years
 Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds 340
 Both silent to each other, at this time
 We live as if those hours had never been.
 Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch
 Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen
 From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush 345
 Was audible; and sate among the woods
 Alone upon some jutting eminence,
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
 Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
 How shall I seek the origin? where find 350
 Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
 Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream, 355
 A prospect in the mind.

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,
 Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought 360
 From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
 To feed the spirit of religious love
 In which I walked with Nature. But let this

Be not forgotten, that I still retained
 My first creative sensibility; 365
 That by the regular action of the world
 My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
 Abode with me; a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;
 A local spirit of his own, at war 370
 With general tendency, but, for the most,
 Subservient strictly to external things
 With which it communed. An auxiliar light
 Came from my mind, which on the setting sun
 Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds, 375
 The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on
 Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
 A like dominion, and the midnight storm
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye:
 Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence, 380
 And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,
 Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
 The exercise and produce of a toil,
 Than analytic industry to me 385
 More pleasing, and whose character I deem
 Is more poetic as resembling more
 Creative agency. The song would speak
 Of that interminable building reared
 By observation of affinities 390
 In objects where no brotherhood exists
 To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come
 And, whether from this habit rooted now
 So deeply in my mind, or from excess
 In the great social principle of life 395
 Coercing all things into sympathy,
 To unorganic natures were transferred
 My own enjoyments; or the power of truth
 Coming in revelation, did converse
 With things that really are; I, at this time, 400
 Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.

Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,
 From Nature and her overflowing soul,
 I had received so much, that all my thoughts
 Were steeped in feeling; I was only then 405
 Contented, when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;
 O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye 410
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
 O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not 415
 If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
 Communing in this sort through earth and heaven
 With every form of creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love. 420
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain
 Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith 425
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments that make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes 430
 And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds
 That dwell among the hills where I was born.
 If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived 435
 With God and Nature communing, removed
 From little enmities and low desires—
 The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,

This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy, 440
 And wicked exultation when good men
 On every side fall off, we know not how,
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love
 Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers 445
 On visionary minds; if, in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support, 450
 The blessing of my life—the gift is yours,
 Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find 455
 A never-failing principle of joy
 And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared

In the great city, 'mid far other scenes;
 But we, by different roads, at length have gained 460
 The selfsame bourne. And for this cause to thee
 I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,
 The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
 And all that silent language which so oft
 In conversation between man and man 465
 Blots from the human countenance all trace
 Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought
 The truth in solitude, and, since the days
 That gave thee liberty, full long desired,
 To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been 470
 The most assiduous of her ministers;
 In many things my brother, chiefly here
 In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!

Health and the quiet of a healthful mind 475
 Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,

And yet more often living with thyself,
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

BOOK THIRD RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the wheels
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files, 5
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,
Or covetous of exercise and air; 10
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught, 15
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;
And at the "Hoop" alighted, famous Inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
Seemed friends, poor simple schoolboys, now hung round 20
With honour and importance: in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings and advice,
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed 25

A man of business and expense, and went
 From shop to shop about my own affairs,
 To Tutor or to Tailor, as befell,
 From street to street with loose and careless mind.

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed 30
 Delighted through the motley spectacle;
 Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
 Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:
 Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,
 A northern villager. 35

As if the change
 Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
 Behold me rich in monies, and attired
 In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair
 Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen. 40
 My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
 With other signs of manhood that supplied
 The lack of beard.—The weeks went roundly on,
 With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,
 Smooth housekeeping within, and all without 45
 Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was:
 Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first
 Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure;
 Right underneath, the College kitchens made 50
 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,
 But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
 Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
 Who never let the quarters, night or day, 55
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
 Twice over with a male and female voice.
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;
 And from my pillow, looking forth by light
 Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold 60
 The antechapel where the statue stood

Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
 The marble index of a mind for ever
 Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room 65
 All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
 With loyal students, faithful to their books,
 Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
 And honest dunces—of important days,
 Examinations, when the man was weighed 70
 As in a balance! of excessive hopes,
 Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
 Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad—
 Let others that know more speak as they know.
 Such glory was but little sought by me, 75
 And little won. Yet from the first crude days
 Of settling time in this untried abode,
 I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
 Wishing to hope without a hope, some fears
 About my future worldly maintenance, 80
 And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,
 A feeling that I was not for that hour,
 Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
 For (not to speak of Reason and her pure
 Reflective acts to fix the moral law 85
 Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope,
 Bowing her head before her sister Faith
 As one far mightier), hither I had come,
 Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers
 And faculties, whether to work or feel. 90
 Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
 Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit
 My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,
 And as I paced alone the level fields
 Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime 95
 With which I had been conversant, the mind
 Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
 With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.

At least I more distinctly recognised
 Her native instincts: let me dare to speak 100
 A higher language, say that now I felt
 What independent solaces were mine,
 To mitigate the injurious sway of place
 Or circumstance, how far soever changed
 In youth, or 'to' be changed in after years. 105
 As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
 I looked for universal things; perused
 The common countenance of earth and sky:
 Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
 Of that first Paradise whence man was driven; 110
 And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
 By the proud name she bears—the name of Heaven.
 I called on both to teach me what they might;
 Or, turning the mind in upon herself,
 Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts 115
 And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
 Incumbencies more awful, visitings
 Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
 That tolerates the indignities of Time,
 And, from the centre of Eternity 120
 All finite motions overruling, lives
 In glory immutable. But peace! enough
 Here to record that I was mounting now
 To such community with highest truth—
 A track pursuing, not untrod before, 125
 From strict analogies by thought supplied
 Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.
 To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
 I gave a moral life: I saw them feel, 130
 Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
 Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
 Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love
 Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on 135
 From transitory passion, unto this

I was as sensitive as waters are
 To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
 Of passion; was obedient as a lute
 That waits upon the touches of the wind. 140
 Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich—
 I had a world about me—'twas my own;
 I made it, for it only lived to me,
 And to the God who sees into the heart.
 Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed 145
 By outward gestures and by visible looks:
 Some called it madness—so indeed it was,
 If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,
 If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
 To inspiration, sort with such a name; 150
 If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
 By poets in old time, and higher up
 By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
 May in these tutored days no more be seen
 With undisordered sight. But leaving this, 155
 It was no madness, for the bodily eye
 Amid my strongest workings evermore
 Was searching out the lines of difference
 As they lie hid in all external forms,
 Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye 160
 Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
 To the broad ocean and the azure heavens
 Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
 Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
 Which spake perpetual logic to my soul, 165
 And by an unrelenting agency
 Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life
 Up to an eminence, and told a tale 170
 Of matters which not falsely may be called
 The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,
 Creation and divinity itself
 I have been speaking, for my theme has been

What passed within me. Not of outward things
 Done visibly for other minds, words, signs, 175
 Symbols or actions, but of my own heart
 Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
 O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls,
 And what they do within themselves while yet
 The yoke of earth is new to them, the world 180
 Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
 This is, in truth, heroic argument,
 This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
 With hand however weak, but in the main
 It lies far hidden from the reach of words. 185
 Points have we all of us within our souls
 Where all stand single; this I feel, and make
 Breathings for incommunicable powers;
 But is not each a memory to himself,
 And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme, 190
 I am not heartless, for there's not a man
 That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
 And feels not what an empire we inherit
 As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

No more: for now into a populous plain 195
 We must descend. A Traveller I am,
 Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
 So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt
 To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend!
 Who in these thoughts art ever at my side, 200
 Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.

It hath been told, that when the first delight
 That flashed upon me from this novel show
 Had failed, the mind returned into herself;
 Yet true it is, that I had made a change 205
 In climate, and my nature's outward coat
 Changed also slowly and insensibly.
 Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts
 Of loneliness gave way to empty noise

And superficial pastimes; now and then 210
 Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes;
 And, worst of all, a treasonable growth
 Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
 And shook the mind's simplicity.—And yet
 This was a gladsome time. Could I behold— 215
 Who, less insensible than sodden clay
 In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
 Could have beheld,—with undelighted heart,
 So many happy youths, so wide and fair
 A congregation in its budding-time 220
 Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once
 So many divers samples from the growth
 Of life's sweet season—could have seen unmoved
 That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
 Decking the matron temples of a place 225
 So famous through the world? To me, at least,
 It was a goodly prospect: for, in sooth,
 Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped,
 And independent musings pleased me so
 That spells seemed on me when I was alone, 230
 Yet could I only cleave to solitude
 In lonely places; if a throng was near
 That way I leaned by nature; for my heart
 Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate 235
 My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,
 Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
 Even with myself divided such delight,
 Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
 In human language), easily I passed 240
 From the remembrances of better things,
 And slipped into the ordinary works
 Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed.
 'Caverns' there were within my mind which sun
 Could never penetrate, yet did there not 245
 Want store of leafy 'arbours' where the light

Might enter in at will. Companionships,
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
 We sauntered, played, or rioted; we talked
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours; 250
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,
 Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
 To gallop through the country in blind zeal
 Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
 Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars 255
 Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act
 In this new life. Imagination slept,
 And yet not utterly. I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps 260
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
 Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed. 265
 Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
 Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
 Seemed humbled in these precincts thence to be
 The more endeared. Their several memories here 270
 (Even like their persons in their portraits clothed
 With the accustomed garb of daily life)
 Put on a lowly and a touching grace
 Of more distinct humanity, that left
 All genuine admiration unimpaired. 275

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington
 I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;
 Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
 Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State— 280
 Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
 With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace,

I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend!
Yea, our blind Poet, who in his later day,
Stood almost single; uttering odious truth— 285
Darkness before, and danger's voice behind,
Soul awful—if the earth has ever lodged
An awful soul—I seemed to see him here
Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth— 290
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride.
Among the band of my compeers was one
Whom chance had stationed in the very room 295
Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard!
Be it confest that, for the first time, seated
Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,
One of a festive circle, I poured out
Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride 300
And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
Never excited by the fumes of wine
Before that hour, or since. Then, forth I ran
From the assembly; through a length of streets,
Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door 305
In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
Albeit long after the importunate bell
Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice
No longer haunting the dark winter night.
Call back, O Friend! a moment to thy mind, 310
The place itself and fashion of the rites.
With careless ostentation shouldering up
My surplice, through the inferior throng I clove
Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood
On the last skirts of their permitted ground, 315
Under the pealing organ. Empty thoughts!
I am ashamed of them: and that great Bard,
And thou, O Friend! who in thy ample mind
Hast placed me high above my best deserts,
Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour, 320

In some of its unworthy vanities,
 Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort

The months passed on, remissly, not given up
 To wilful alienation from the right, 325

Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
 And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
 Of a low pitch—duty and zeal dismissed,
 Yet Nature, or a happy course of things
 Not doing in their stead the needful work. 330

The memory languidly revolved, the heart
 Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
 Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
 Such life might not inaptly be compared
 To a floating island, an amphibious spot 335

Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal
 Not wanting a fair face of water weeds
 And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise,
 Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight
 Of those long vistas, sacred catacombs, 340

Where mighty 'minds' lie visibly entombed,
 Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
 A fervent love of rigorous discipline.—
 Alas! such high emotion touched not me.
 Look was there none within these walls to shame 345

My easy spirits, and discountenance
 Their light composure, far less to instil
 A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed
 To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame
 Of others but my own; I should, in truth, 350

As far as doth concern my single self,
 Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere:
 For I, bred up, 'mid Nature's luxuries,
 Was a spoiled child, and, rumbling like the wind,
 As I had done in daily intercourse 355

With those crystalline rivers, solemn heights,
 And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
 I was ill-tutored for captivity;

To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month,
Take up a station calmly on the perch 360
Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
Had also left less space within my mind,
Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
A freshness in those objects of her love,
A winning power, beyond all other power. 365
Not that I slighted books,—that were to lack
All sense,—but other passions in me ruled,
Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
To in-door study than was wise or well,
Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used 370
In magisterial liberty to rove,
Culling such flowers of learning as might tempt
A random choice, could shadow forth a place
(If now I yield not to a flattering dream)
Whose studious aspect should have bent me down 375
To instantaneous service; should at once
Have made me pay to science and to arts
And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
A homage frankly offered up, like that
Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains 380
In this recess, by thoughtful Fancy built,
Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
Majestic edifices, should not want
A corresponding dignity within.
The congregating temper that pervades 385
Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught
To minister to works of high attempt—
Works which the enthusiast would perform with love.
Youth should be awed, religiously possessed
With a conviction of the power that waits 390
On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized
For its own sake, on glory and on praise
If but by labour won, and fit to endure
The passing day; should learn to put aside
Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed 395
Before antiquity and stedfast truth

And strong book-mindedness; and over all
 A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
 A seemly plainness, name it what you will,
 Republican or pious. 400

If these thoughts

Are a gratuitous emblazonry
 That mocks the recreant age 'we' live in, then
 Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect
 Whatever formal gait of discipline 405
 Shall raise them highest in their own esteem—
 Let them parade among the Schools at will,
 But spare the House of God. Was ever known
 The witless shepherd who persists to drive
 A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked? 410
 A weight must surely hang on days begun
 And ended with such mockery. Be wise,
 Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
 Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
 At home in pious service, to your bells 415
 Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
 Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
 And your officious doings bring disgrace
 On the plain steeples of our English Church,
 Whose worship, 'mid remotest village trees, 420
 Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand
 In daily sight of this irreverence,
 Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
 Loses her just authority, falls beneath
 Collateral suspicion, else unknown. 425
 This truth escaped me not, and I confess,
 That having 'mid my native hills given loose
 To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile
 Upon the basis of the coming time,
 That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy 430
 To see a sanctuary for our country's youth
 Informed with such a spirit as might be
 Its own protection; a primeval grove,
 Where, though the shades with cheerfulness were filled,

Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds 435
 In under-coverts, yet the countenance
 Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe;
 A habitation sober and demure
 For ruminating creatures; a domain
 For quiet things to wander in; a haunt 440
 In which the heron should delight to feed
 By the shy rivers, and the pelican
 Upon the cypress spire in lonely thought
 Might sit and sun himself.—Alas! Alas!
 In vain for such solemnity I looked; 445
 Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed
 By chattering popinjays; the inner heart
 Seemed trivial, and the impresses without
 Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight 450
 Those venerable Doctors saw of old,
 When all who dwelt within these famous walls
 Led in abstemiousness a studious life;
 When, in forlorn and naked chambers cooped
 And crowded, o'er the ponderous books they hung 455
 Like caterpillars eating out their way
 In silence, or with keen devouring noise
 Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then
 At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,
 Trained up through piety and zeal to prize 460
 Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.
 O seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world!
 Far different service in those homely days
 The Muses' modest nurslings underwent
 From their first childhood: in that glorious time 465
 When Learning, like a stranger come from far,
 Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
 Peasant and king; when boys and youths, the growth
 Of ragged villages and crazy huts,
 Forsook their homes, and, errant in the quest 470
 Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook,
 Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,

From town to town and through wide scattered realms
 Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands;
 And often, starting from some covert place, 475
 Saluted the chance comer on the road,
 Crying, "An obolus, a penny give
 To a poor scholar!"—when illustrious men,
 Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
 Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read 480
 Before the doors or windows of their cells
 By moonshine through mere lack of taper light.

But peace to vain regrets! We see but darkly
 Even when we look behind us, and best things
 Are not so pure by nature that they needs 485
 Must keep to all, as fondly all believe,
 Their highest promise. If the mariner,
 When at reluctant distance he hath passed
 Some tempting island, could but know the ills
 That must have fallen upon him had he brought 490
 His bark to land upon the wished-for shore,
 Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf
 Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew
 Inexorably adverse: for myself
 I grieve not; happy is the gowned youth, 495
 Who only misses what I missed, who falls
 No lower than I fell.

I did not love,
 Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course
 Of our scholastic studies; could have wished 500
 To see the river flow with ampler range
 And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved
 To see displayed among an eager few,
 Who in the field of contest persevered,
 Passions unworthy of youth's generous heart 505
 And mounting spirit, pitiably repaid,
 When so disturbed, whatever palms are won.
 From these I turned to travel with the shoal
 Of more unthinking natures, easy minds

And pillowy; yet not wanting love that makes 510
The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
And wisdom and the pledges interchanged
With our own inner being are forgot.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up
To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood 515
In my own mind remote from social life,
(At least from what we commonly so name,)
Like a lone shepherd on a promontory
Who lacking occupation looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes 520
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,
That this first transit from the smooth delights
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
To something that resembles an approach
Towards human business, to a privileged world 525
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery,
Did better suit my visionary mind,
Far better, than to have been bolted forth,
Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way 530
Among the conflicts of substantial life;
By a more just gradation did lead on
To higher things; more naturally matured,
For permanent possession, better fruits,
Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue. 535
In serious mood, but oftener, I confess,
With playful zest of fancy, did we note
(How could we less?) the manners and the ways
Of those who lived distinguished by the badge
Of good or ill report; or those with whom 540
By frame of Academic discipline
We were perforce connected, men whose sway
And known authority of office served
To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind, 545
Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring

Of the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque
 In character, tricked out like aged trees
 Which through the lapse of their infirmity
 Give ready place to any random seed 550
 That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here on my view, confronting vividly
 Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left
 Appeared a different aspect of old age;
 How different! yet both distinctly marked, 555
 Objects embossed to catch the general eye,
 Or portraitures for special use designed,
 As some might seem, so aptly do they serve
 To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments—
 That book upheld as with maternal care 560
 When she would enter on her tender scheme
 Of teaching comprehension with delight,
 And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life
 And manners finely wrought, the delicate race 565
 Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
 Through that state arras woven with silk and gold;
 This wily interchange of snaky hues,
 Willingly or unwillingly revealed,
 I neither knew nor cared for; and as such 570
 Were wanting here, I took what might be found
 Of less elaborate fabric. At this day
 I smile, in many a mountain solitude
 Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks
 Of character, in points of wit as broad, 575
 As aught by wooden images performed
 For entertainment of the gaping crowd
 At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
 Remembrances before me of old men—
 Old humourists, who have been long in their graves, 580
 And having almost in my mind put off
 Their human names, have into phantoms passed

Of texture midway between life and books.

I play the loiterer: 'tis enough to note
 That here in dwarf proportions were expressed 585
 The limbs of the great world; its eager strifes
 Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight,
 A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
 Though short of mortal combat; and whate'er
 Might in this pageant be supposed to hit 590
 An artless rustic's notice, this way less,
 More that way, was not wasted upon me—
 And yet the spectacle may well demand
 A more substantial name, no mimic show,
 Itself a living part of a live whole, 595
 A creek in the vast sea; for, all degrees
 And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise
 Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
 Retainers won away from solid good;
 And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope, 600
 That never set the pains against the prize;
 Idleness halting with his weary clog,
 And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
 And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
 Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray; 605
 Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile,
 Murmuring submission, and bald government,
 (The idol weak as the idolater),
 And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
 And blind Authority beating with his staff 610
 The child that might have led him; Emptiness
 Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth
 Left to herself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
 I cannot say what portion is in truth 615
 The naked recollection of that time,
 And what may rather have been called to life
 By after-meditation. But delight

That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,
Is still with Innocence its own reward, 620
This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed
As through a wide museum from whose stores
A casual rarity is singled out
And has its brief perusal, then gives way
To others, all supplanted in their turn; 625
Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things
That are by nature most unneighbourly,
The head turns round and cannot right itself;
And though an aching and a barren sense
Of gay confusion still be uppermost, 630
With few wise longings and but little love,
Yet to the memory something cleaves at last,
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend!
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring, 635
Eight months! rolled pleasingly away; the ninth
Came and returned me to my native hills.

BOOK FOURTH SUMMER VACATION

BRIGHT was the summer's noon when quickening steps
Followed each other till a dreary moor
Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top
Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,
I overlooked the bed of Windermere, 5
Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.
With exultation, at my feet I saw
Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,
A universe of Nature's fairest forms
Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst, 10
Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.
I bounded down the hill shouting amain
For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks
Replied, and when the Charon of the flood
Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier, 15
I did not step into the well-known boat
Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed
Up the familiar hill I took my way
Towards that sweet Valley where I had been reared;
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round 20
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill
Sit like a throned Lady, sending out
A gracious look all over her domain.
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;
With eager footsteps I advance and reach 25
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.

Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,
 From my old Dame, so kind and motherly,
 While she perused me with a parent's pride.

The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew 30
 Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart
 Can beat never will I forget thy name.
 Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
 After thy innocent and busy stir

In narrow cares, thy little daily growth 35
 Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
 And more than eighty, of untroubled life;
 Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
 Honoured with little less than filial love.

What joy was mine to see thee once again, 40
 Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things
 About its narrow precincts all beloved,
 And many of them seeming yet my own!
 Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts

Have felt, and every man alive can guess? 45
 The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
 Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat
 Round the stone table under the dark pine,
 Friendly to studious or to festive hours;

Nor that unruly child of mountain birth, 50
 The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed
 Within our garden, found himself at once,
 As if by trick insidious and unkind,
 Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down

(Without an effort and without a will) 55
 A channel paved by man's officious care.
 I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,
 And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,
 "Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"

Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, 60
 "An emblem here behold of thy own life;
 In its late course of even days with all
 Their smooth enthrallment;" but the heart was full,
 Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame

Walked proudly at my side: she guided me; 65
I willing, nay—nay, wishing to be led.
—The face of every neighbour whom I met
Was like a volume to me; some were hailed
Upon the road, some busy at their work,
Unceremonious greetings interchanged 70
With half the length of a long field between.
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
Like recognitions, but with some constraint
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,
But with more shame, for my habiliments, 75
The transformation wrought by gay attire.
Not less delighted did I take my place
At our domestic table: and, dear Friend!
In this endeavour simply to relate
A Poet's history, may I leave untold 80
The thankfulness with which I laid me down
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now
Perhaps than if it had been more desired
Or been more often thought of with regret;
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind 85
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro 90
In the dark summit of the waving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well
To see again, was one by ancient right
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills; 95
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
Among the impervious crags, but having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed
Into a gentler service. And when first 100
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day

Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
 The fermentation, and the vernal heat
 Of poesy, affecting private shades
 Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used 105
 To watch me, an attendant and a friend,
 Obsequious to my steps early and late,
 Though often of such dilatory walk
 Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.
 A hundred times when, roving high and low, 110
 I have been harassed with the toil of verse,
 Much pains and little progress, and at once
 Some lovely Image in the song rose up
 Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;
 Then have I darted forwards to let loose 115
 My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
 Caressing him again and yet again.
 And when at evening on the public way
 I sauntered, like a river murmuring
 And talking to itself when all things else 120
 Are still, the creature trotted on before;
 Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
 A passenger approaching, he would turn
 To give me timely notice, and straightway,
 Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed 125
 My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air
 And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
 To give and take a greeting that might save
 My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
 On men suspected to be crazed in brain. 130

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved—
 Regretted!—that word, too, was on my tongue,
 But they were richly laden with all good,
 And cannot be remembered but with thanks
 And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart— 135
 Those walks in all their freshness now came back
 Like a returning Spring. When first I made
 Once more the circuit of our little lake,

If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
That day consummate happiness was mine, 140
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, not winning or serene,
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned: 145
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in herself; even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul 150
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate:
Strength came where weakness was not known to be, 155
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
—Of that external scene which round me lay, 160
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind; 165
How the immortal soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad 170
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end 175
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.

Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
 Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes
 And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
 With darkness, and before a rippling breeze 180
 The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,
 And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,
 Around me from among the hazel leaves,
 Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
 Came ever and anon a breath-like sound, 185
 Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
 The off and on companion of my walk;
 And such, at times, believing them to be,
 I turned my head to look if he were there;
 Then into solemn thought I passed once more. 190

A freshness also found I at this time
 In human Life, the daily life of those
 Whose occupations really I loved;
 The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise
 Changed like a garden in the heat of spring 195
 After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit
 The things which were the same and yet appeared
 Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,
 A narrow Vale where each was known to all,
 'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind 200
 To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook
 Where an old man had used to sit alone,
 Now vacant; pale-faced babes whom I had left
 In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet
 Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down; 205
 And growing girls whose beauty, filched away
 With all its pleasant promises, was gone
 To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,
 And often looking round was moved to smiles 210
 Such as a delicate work of humour breeds;
 I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,

Of those plain-living people now observed
With clearer knowledge; with another eye
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods, 215
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;
Saw her go forth to church or other work
Of state equipped in monumental trim;
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like), 220
A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers
Wore in old times. Her smooth domestic life,
Affectionate without disquietude,
Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less
Her clear though shallow stream of piety 225
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course;
With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep
And made of it a pillow for her head. 230

Nor less do I remember to have felt,
Distinctly manifested at this time,
A human-heartedness about my love
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth
Of my own private being and no more; 235
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
Might love in individual happiness.
But now there opened on me other thoughts
Of change, congratulation or regret, 240
A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;
The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks,
The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts—
White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven, 245
Acquaintances of every little child,
And Jupiter, my own beloved star!
Whatever shadings of mortality,
Whatever imports from the world of death

Had come among these objects heretofore, 250
 Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings
 Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way
 In later youth to yearnings of a love
 Enthusiastic, to delight and hope. 255

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
 Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
 Of a still water, solacing himself
 With such discoveries as his eye can make
 Beneath him in the bottom of the deep, 260
 Sees many beauteous sights—weeds, fishes, flowers,
 Grotts, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
 Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part
 The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
 Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth 265
 Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
 In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
 Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
 And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,
 Impediments that make his task more sweet; 270
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
 With like success, nor often have appeared
 Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned
 Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend! 275
 Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite
 Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,
 There was an inner falling off—I loved,
 Loved deeply all that had been loved before,
 More deeply even than ever: but a swarm 280
 Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds
 And feast and dance, and public revelry,
 And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,
 Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,
 Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh 285
 Of manliness and freedom) all conspired

To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal
And damp those yearnings which had once been mine—
A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up 290
To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
Some skill, and longer time than may be spared
To paint these vanities, and how they wrought
In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
It seemed the very garments that I wore 295
Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase
Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
For books and nature at that early age. 300
'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained
Of character or life; but at that time,
Of manners put to school I took small note,
And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
Far better had it been to exalt the mind 305
By solitary study, to uphold
Intense desire through meditative peace;
And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
The memory of one particular hour
Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng 310
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers, I had passed
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering, 315
And unaimed prattle flying up and down;
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired, 320
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
And open field, through which the pathway wound,
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent

The morning rose, in memorable pomp,	325
Glorious as e'er I had beheld—in front,	
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,	
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,	
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;	
And in the meadows and the lower grounds	330
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—	
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,	
And labourers going forth to till the fields.	
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim	
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows	335
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me	
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,	
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked	
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.	
Strange rendezvous! My mind was at that time	340
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,	
Solid and light, short-sighted and profound;	
Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,	
Consorting in one mansion unreprieved.	
The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,	345
Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides,	
That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts	
Transient and idle, lacked not intervals	
When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time	
Shrunk, and the mind experienced in herself	350
Conformity as just as that of old	
To the end and written spirit of God's works,	
Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,	
Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.	
When from our better selves we have too long	355
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,	
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,	
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;	
How potent a mere image of her sway;	
Most potent when impressed upon the mind	360

With an appropriate human centre—hermit,
 Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
 Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
 Is treading, where no other face is seen)
 Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top 365
 Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;
 Or as the soul of that great Power is met
 Sometimes embodied on a public road,
 When, for the night deserted, it assumes
 A character of quiet more profound 370
 Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months

Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
 Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
 Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced 375
 That—after I had left a flower-decked room
 (Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived
 To a late hour), and spirits overwrought
 Were making night do penance for a day
 Spent in a round of strenuous idleness— 380
 My homeward course led up a long ascent,
 Where the road's watery surface, to the top
 Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
 And bore the semblance of another stream
 Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook 385
 That murmured in the vale. All else was still;
 No living thing appeared in earth or air,
 And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
 Sound there was none—but, lo! an uncouth shape,
 Shown by a sudden turning of the road, 390
 So near that, slipping back into the shade
 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
 Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
 A span above man's common measure, tall,
 Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man 395
 Was never seen before by night or day.
 Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth
 Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,

A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken
 That he was clothed in military garb, 400
 Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
 No dog attending, by no staff sustained,
 He stood, and in his very dress appeared
 A desolation, a simplicity,
 To which the trappings of a gaudy world 405
 Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,
 Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain
 Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form
 Kept the same awful steadiness—at his feet
 His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame 410
 Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length
 Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,
 I left the shady nook where I had stood
 And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place
 He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm 415
 In measured gesture lifted to his head
 Returned my salutation; then resumed
 His station as before; and when I asked
 His history, the veteran, in reply,
 Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved, 420
 And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
 A stately air of mild indifference,
 He told in few plain words a soldier's tale—
 That in the Tropic Islands he had served,
 Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past; 425
 That on his landing he had been dismissed,
 And now was travelling towards his native home.
 This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."
 He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up
 An oaken staff by me yet unobserved— 430
 A staff which must have dropped from his slack hand
 And lay till now neglected in the grass.
 Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
 To travel without pain, and I beheld,
 With an astonishment but ill suppressed, 435
 His ghostly figure moving at my side;

Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear
To turn from present hardships to the past,
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared, 440
On what he might himself have seen or felt.
He all the while was in demeanour calm,
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said
There was a strange half-absence, as of one 445
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse
Soon ended, and together on we passed
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.
Up-turning, then, along an open field, 450
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,
And earnestly to charitable care
Commended him as a poor friendless man,
Belated and by sickness overcome.
Assured that now the traveller would repose 455
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth
He would not linger in the public ways,
But ask for timely furtherance and help
Such as his state required. At this reproof,
With the same ghastly mildness in his look, 460
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,
And in the eye of him who passes me!"

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,
And now the soldier touched his hat once more
With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice, 465
Whose tone bespoke reviving interests
Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
The farewell blessing of the patient man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space, 470
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

BOOK FIFTH BOOKS

WHEN Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
Into the soul its tranquillising power,
Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes 5
That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be,
Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine
Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved
Through length of time, by patient exercise 10
Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is
That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign Intellect, 15
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with herself, 20
Things that aspire to unconquerable life;
And yet we feel—we cannot choose but feel—
That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives, to think that our immortal being
No more shall need such garments; and yet man, 25
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost “weep to have” what he may lose,
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive,
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.

A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,—	
Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes	30
Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch	
Her pleasant habitations, and dry up	
Old Ocean, in his bed left singed and bare,	
Yet would the living Presence still subsist	
Victorious, and composure would ensue,	35
And kindlings like the morning—presage sure	
Of day returning and of life revived.	
But all the meditations of mankind,	
Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth	
By reason built, or passion, which itself	40
Is highest reason in a soul sublime;	
The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,	
Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,	
Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes;	
Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind	45
Some element to stamp her image on	
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?	
Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad	
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?	
One day, when from my lips a like complaint	50
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,	
He with a smile made answer, that in truth	
'Twas going far to seek disquietude;	
But on the front of his reproof confessed	
That he himself had oftentimes given way	55
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,	
That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,	
While I was seated in a rocky cave	
By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,	
The famous history of the errant knight	60
Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts	
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,	
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed	
The book, had turned my eyes toward the wide sea.	
On poetry and geometric truth,	65

And their high privilege of lasting life,
 From all internal injury exempt,
 I mused; upon these chiefly: and at length,
 My senses yielding to the sultry air,
 Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream. 70
 I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
 Of sandy wilderness, all black and void,
 And as I looked around, distress and fear
 Came creeping over me, when at my side,
 Close at my side, an uncouth shape appeared 75
 Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
 He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:
 A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
 Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight 80
 Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
 Was present, one who with unerring skill
 Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
 I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
 Which the new-comer carried through the waste 85
 Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
 (To give it in the language of the dream)
 Was "Euclid's Elements," and "This," said he,
 "Is something of more worth;" and at the word
 Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape, 90
 In colour so resplendent, with command
 That I should hold it to my ear. I did so,
 And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
 A loud prophetic blast of harmony; 95
 An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
 Destruction to the children of the earth
 By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
 The song, than the Arab with calm look declared
 That all would come to pass of which the voice 100
 Had given forewarning, and that he himself
 Was going then to bury those two books:
 The one that held acquaintance with the stars,

And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time; 105
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem, 110
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The one to be a stone, the other a shell;
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt 115
To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
To share his enterprise, he hurried on
Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen,
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his twofold treasure.—Lance in rest, 120
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the knight,
But was an Arab of the desert too;
Of these was neither, and was both at once. 125
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed;
And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause:
“It is,” said he, “the waters of the deep 130
Gathering upon us;” quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldy creature he bestrode,
He left me: I called after him aloud;
He heeded not; but, with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view, 135
Went hurrying o’er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book,
In which I had been reading, at my side. 140

Full often, taking from the world of sleep
 This Arab phantom, which I thus beheld,
 This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
 A substance, fancied him a living man,
 A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed 145
 By love and feeling, and internal thought
 Protracted among endless solitudes;
 Have shaped him wandering upon this quest!
 Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
 Reverence was due to a being thus employed; 150
 And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
 Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.
 Enow there are on earth to take in charge
 Their wives, their children, and their virgin loves,
 Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear; 155
 Enow to stir for these; yea, will I say,
 Contemplating in soberness the approach
 Of an event so dire, by signs in earth
 Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
 That maniac's fond anxiety, and go 160
 Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
 Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
 When I have held a volume in my hand,
 Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
 Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine! 165

Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
 Of living nature, which could thus so long
 Detain me from the best of other guides
 And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,
 Even in the time of lisping infancy; 170
 And later down, in prattling childhood even,
 While I was travelling back among those days,
 How could I ever play an ingrate's part?
 Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
 By intermingling strains of thankfulness 175
 With their own thoughtless melodies; at least
 It might have well beseemed me to repeat

Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
 In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
 That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now. 180
 O Friend! O Poet! brother of my soul,
 Think not that I could pass along untouched
 By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak?
 Why call upon a few weak words to say
 What is already written in the hearts 185
 Of all that breathe?—what in the path of all
 Drops daily from the tongue of every child,
 Wherever man is found? The trickling tear
 Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
 Proclaims it, and the insuperable look 190
 That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave
 There registered: whatever else of power
 Or pleasure sown, or fostered thus, may be
 Peculiar to myself, let that remain 195
 Where still it works, though hidden from all search
 Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
 That here, in memory of all books which lay
 Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
 Whether by native prose, or numerous verse, 200
 That in the name of all inspired souls—
 From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice
 That roars along the bed of Jewish song,
 And that more varied and elaborate,
 Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake 205
 Our shores in England,—from those loftiest notes
 Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made
 For cottagers and spinners at the wheel,
 And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,
 Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes, 210
 Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
 And of old men who have survived their joys—
 'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,
 And of the men that framed them, whether known

Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves, 215
 That I should here assert their rights, attest
 Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
 Their benediction; speak of them as Powers
 For ever to be hallowed; only less,
 For what we are and what we may become, 220
 Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
 Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
 To transitory themes; yet I rejoice,
 And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out 225
 Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
 Safe from an evil which these days have laid
 Upon the children of the land, a pest
 That might have dried me up, body and soul.
 This verse is dedicate to Nature's self, 230
 And things that teach as Nature teaches: then,
 Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
 Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend!
 If in the season of unperilous choice,
 In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales 235
 Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
 Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
 We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
 Each in his several melancholy walk
 Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed, 240
 Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
 Or rather like a stalled ox debarred
 From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
 A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
 A prelibation to the mower's scythe. 245

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
 Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
 And she herself from the maternal bond
 Still undischarged; yet doth she little more 250

Than move with them in tenderness and love,
 A centre to the circle which they make;
 And now and then, alike from need of theirs
 And call of her own natural appetites,
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food, 255
 Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
 My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves:
 She left us destitute, and, as we might,
 Trooping together. Little suits it me 260
 To break upon the sabbath of her rest
 With any thought that looks at others' blame;
 Nor would I praise her but in perfect love.
 Hence am I checked: but let me boldly say,
 In gratitude, and for the sake of truth, 265
 Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
 Fetching her goodness rather from times past,
 Than shaping novelties for times to come,
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
 Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust 270
 Our nature, but had virtual faith that He
 Who fills the mother's breast with innocent milk,
 Doth also for our nobler part provide,
 Under His great correction and control,
 As innocent instincts, and as innocent food; 275
 Or draws, for minds that are left free to trust
 In the simplicities of opening life,
 Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds.
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From anxious fear of error or mishap, 280
 And evil, overweeningly so called;
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce; rather loved 285
 The hours for what they are, than from regard
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she—not from faculties more strong

Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
 And spot in which she lived, and through a grace 290
 Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
 A heart that found benignity and hope,
 Being itself benign.

My drift I fear

Is scarcely obvious; but, that common sense 295
 May try this modern system by its fruits,
 Leave let me take to place before her sight
 A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
 Full early trained to worship seemliness,
 This model of a child is never known 300
 To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
 Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain; selfishness
 May not come near him, nor the little throng
 Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path; 305
 The wandering beggars propagate his name,
 Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun,
 And natural or supernatural fear,
 Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
 Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see 310
 How arch his notices, how nice his sense
 Of the ridiculous; not blind is he
 To the broad follies of the licensed world,
 Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,
 And can read lectures upon innocence; 315
 A miracle of scientific lore,
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
 And tell you all their cunning; he can read
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;
 He knows the policies of foreign lands; 320
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
 Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
 All things are put to question; he must live
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day 325
 Or else not live at all, and seeing too

Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
Into the dimpling cistern of his heart:
For this unnatural growth the trainer blame,
Pity the tree.—Poor human vanity, 330
Wert thou extinguished, little would be left
Which he could truly love; but how escape?
For, ever as a thought of purer birth
Rises to lead him toward a better clime,
Some intermeddler still is on the watch 335
To drive him back, and pound him, like a stray,
Within the pinfold of his own conceit.
Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
The playthings, which her love designed for him,
Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers 340
Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.
Oh! give us once again the wishing-cap
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George! 345
The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
The froward chaos of futurity, 350
Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill
To manage books, and things, and make them act
On infant minds as surely as the sun
Deals with a flower; the keepers of our time,
The guides and wardens of our faculties, 355
Sages who in their prescience would control
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down,
Like engines; when will their presumption learn,
That in the unreasoning progress of the world 360
A wiser spirit is at work for us,
A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
Of blessings, and most studious of our good,

Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs 365
 And islands of Winander!—many a time
 At evening, when the earliest stars began
 To move along the edges of the hills,
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake, 370

And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
 Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
 Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
 That they might answer him; and they would shout 375
 Across the watery vale, and shout again,
 Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,
 And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,
 Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild
 Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause 380
 Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
 Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene 385
 Would enter unawares into his mind,
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died 390
 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
 Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village school,
 And through that churchyard when my way has led 395
 On summer evenings, I believe that there
 A long half hour together I have stood
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!

- Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
 That self-same village church; I see her sit 400
 (The throned Lady whom erewhile we hailed)
 On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy
 Who slumbers at her feet,—forgetful, too,
 Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
 And listening only to the gladsome sounds 405
 That, from the rural school ascending, play
 Beneath her and about her. May she long
 Behold a race of young ones like to those
 With whom I herded!—(easily, indeed,
 We might have fed upon a fatter soil 410
 Of arts and letters—but be that forgiven)—
 A race of real children; not too wise,
 Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,
 And bandied up and down by love and hate;
 Not unresentful where self-justified; 415
 Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
 Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
 Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
 Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
 Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not 420
 In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
 Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
 Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
 May books and Nature be their early joy!
 And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name— 425
 Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!
- Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first intrusted to the care
 Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
 And brooks were like a dream of novelty 430
 To my half-infant thoughts; that very week,
 While I was roving up and down alone,
 Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
 One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears,
 Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake: 435

Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom
 Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore
 A heap of garments, as if left by one
 Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched,
 But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake 440
 Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,
 And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale
 Drew to the spot an anxious crowd; some looked 445
 In passive expectation from the shore,
 While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,
 Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.
 At last, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright 450
 Rose, with his ghastly face, a spectre shape
 Of terror; yet no soul-debasing fear,
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old,
 Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
 Such sights before, among the shining streams 455
 Of faery land, the forest of romance.
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
 With decoration of ideal grace;
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
 Of Grecian art, and purest poesy. 460

A precious treasure had I long possessed,
 A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
 A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
 And, from companions in a new abode,
 When first I learnt, that this dear prize of mine 465
 Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—
 That there were four large volumes, laden all
 With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
 A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly,
 With one not richer than myself, I made 470
 A covenant that each should lay aside
 The moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,

Till our joint savings had amassed enough
 To make this book our own. Through several months,
 In spite of all temptation, we preserved 475
 Religiously that vow; but firmness failed,
 Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And when thereafter to my father's house
 The holidays returned me, there to find
 That golden store of books which I had left, 480
 What joy was mine! How often in the course
 Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind
 Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,
 For a whole day together, have I lain
 Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream, 485
 On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
 And there have read, devouring as I read,
 Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!
 Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,
 Such as an idler deals with in his shame, 490
 I to the sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man; invisibly
 It comes, to works of unreprieved delight,
 And tendency benign, directing those 495
 Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.
 The tales that charm away the wakeful night
 In Araby, romances; legends penned
 For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised 500
 By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled warrior in old age,
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes
 In which his youth did first extravagatate;
 These spread like day, and something in the shape 505
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
 And 'they must' have their food. Our childhood sits,

Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
 That hath more power than all the elements. 510
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come;
 But so it is; and, in that dubious hour—
 That twilight—when we first begin to see
 This dawning earth, to recognise, expect, 515
 And, in the long probation that ensues,
 The time of trial, ere we learn to live
 In reconcilment with our stinted powers;
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit, 520
 Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows
 To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed
 And humbled down—oh! then we feel, we feel,
 We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,
 Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then, 525
 Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
 Philosophy will call you: ‘then’ we feel
 With what, and how great might ye are in league,
 Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,
 An empire, a possession,—ye whom time 530
 And seasons serve; all Faculties to whom
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter’s clay,
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
 Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Relinquishing this lofty eminence 535
 For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
 Of the same isthmus, which our spirits cross
 In progress from their native continent
 To earth and human life, the Song might dwell
 On that delightful time of growing youth, 540
 When craving for the marvellous gives way
 To strengthening love for things that we have seen;
 When sober truth and steady sympathies,
 Offered to notice by less daring pens,
 Take firmer hold of us, and words themselves 545

Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad

At thought of rapture now for ever flown;
 Almost to tears I sometimes could be sad
 To think of, to read over, many a page, 550
 Poems withal of name, which at that time
 Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
 Dead in my eyes, dead as a theatre
 Fresh emptied of spectators. Twice five years
 Or less I might have seen, when first my mind 555
 With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
 Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
 For their own 'sakes', a passion, and a power;
 And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
 For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads 560
 Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
 Was yellowing the hill tops, I went abroad
 With a dear friend, and for the better part
 Of two delightful hours we strolled along
 By the still borders of the misty lake, 565
 Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
 Or conning more, as happy as the birds
 That round us chaunted. Well might we be glad,
 Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,
 More bright than madness or the dreams of wine; 570
 And, though full oft the objects of our love
 Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
 Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
 Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,
 Than that most noble attribute of man, 575
 Though yet untutored and inordinate,
 That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
 Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
 Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds
 Of exultation echoed through the groves! 580
 For, images, and sentiments, and words,
 And everything encountered or pursued
 In that delicious world of poesy,

Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
 With music, incense, festival, and flowers! 585

Here must we pause: this only let me add,
 From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
 Of modesty, that he, who in his youth
 A daily wanderer among woods and fields
 With living Nature hath been intimate, 590
 Not only in that raw unpractised time

Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
 By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,
 In measure only dealt out to himself,
 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy 595

From the great Nature that exists in works
 Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
 Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
 Embodied in the mystery of words:

There, darkness makes abode, and all the host 600
 Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,

As in a mansion like their proper home,
 Even forms and substances are circumfused
 By that transparent veil with light divine,
 And, through the turnings intricate of verse, 605

Present themselves as objects recognised,
 In flashes, and with glory not their own.

BOOK SIXTH CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

THE leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks
And the simplicities of cottage life
I bade farewell; and, one among the youth
Who, summoned by that season, reunite
As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure, 5
Went back to Granta's cloisters, not so prompt
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In mind, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
Without repining from the coves and heights 10
Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern;
Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence
Of calmer lakes and louder streams; and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth, 15
Relinquished, and your nights of revelry,
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

The bonds of indolent society 20
Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
More to myself. Two winters may be passed
Without a separate notice: many books
Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,
But with no settled plan. I was detached 25
Internally from academic cares;

Yet independent study seemed a course
 Of hardy disobedience toward friends
 And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.
 This spurious virtue, rather let it bear 30
 A name it now deserves, this cowardice,
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom which encouraged me to turn
 From regulations even of my own
 As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell— 35
 Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
 And at a later season, or preserved;
 What love of nature, what original strength
 Of contemplation, what intuitive truths
 The deepest and the best, what keen research, 40
 Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time;
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of present happiness, while future years
 Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams, 45
 No few of which have since been realised;
 And some remain, hopes for my future life.
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
 By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me 50
 Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
 Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days
 Which also first emboldened me to trust
 With firmness, hitherto but slightly touched
 By such a daring thought, that I might leave 55
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Maintained even by the very name and thought
 Of printed books and authorship, began
 To melt away; and further, the dread awe 60
 Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
 Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,

Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy. 65

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
Did I by night frequent the College grove
And tributary walks; the last, and oft
The only one, who had been lingering there
Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell, 70

A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice;
Inexorable summons! Lofty elms,
Inviting shades of opportune recess,
Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood 75

Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,
Grew there; an ash which Winter for himself
Decked out with pride, and with outlandish grace:
Up from the ground, and almost to the top, 80

The trunk and every master branch were green
With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs
And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
That hung in yellow tassels, while the air
Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood 85

Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
May never tread; but scarcely Spenser's self
Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, 90

Or could more bright appearances create
Of human forms with superhuman powers,
Than I beheld, loitering on calm clear nights
Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

On the vague reading of a truant youth 95
'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment
Not seldom differed from my taste in books,
As if it appertained to another mind,
And yet the books which then I valued most

Are dearest to me 'now'; for, having scanned, Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed A standard, often usefully applied, Even when unconsciously, to things removed From a familiar sympathy.—In fine,	100
I was a better judge of thoughts than words, Mised in estimating words, not only By common inexperience of youth, But by the trade in classic niceties, The dangerous craft, of culling term and phrase From languages that want the living voice To carry meaning to the natural heart; To tell us what is passion, what is truth, What reason, what simplicity and sense.	105
Yet may we not entirely overlook The pleasure gathered from the rudiments Of geometric science. Though advanced In these enquiries, with regret I speak, No farther than the threshold, there I found Both elevation and composed delight:	110
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance pleased With its own struggles, did I meditate On the relation those abstractions bear To Nature's laws, and by what process led, Those immaterial agents bowed their heads Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man; From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere, From system on to system without end.	115
More frequently from the same source I drew A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense Of permanent and universal sway, And paramount belief; there, recognised A type, for finite natures, of the one Supreme Existence, the surpassing life Which—to the boundaries of space and time,	120
	125
	130
	135

Of melancholy space and doleful time,
 Superior and incapable of change,
 Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
 And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
 And silence did await upon these thoughts 140
 That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'Tis told by one whom stormy waters threw,
 With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared,
 Upon a desert coast, that having brought
 To land a single volume, saved by chance, 145
 A treatise of Geometry, he wont,
 Although of food and clothing destitute,
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from company and take this book
 (Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths) 150
 To spots remote, and draw his diagrams
 With a long staff upon the sand, and thus
 Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
 Forget his feeling: so (if like effect
 From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things 155
 So different, may rightly be compared),
 So was it then with me, and so will be
 With Poets ever. Mighty is the charm
 Of those abstractions to a mind beset
 With images and haunted by herself, 160
 And specially delightful unto me
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
 So gracefully; even then when it appeared
 Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
 To sense embodied: not the thing it is 165
 In verity, an independent world,
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned
 By aught, I fear, of genuine desert—
 Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes. 170
 And not to leave the story of that time

Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,
 Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
 The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring; 175
 A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
 And inclination mainly, and the mere
 Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
 —To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
 Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang 180
 Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called
 "Good-natured lounging," and behold a map
 Of my collegiate life—far less intense
 Than duty called for, or, without regard
 To duty, 'might' have sprung up of itself 185
 By change of accidents, or even, to speak
 Without unkindness, in another place.
 Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,
 This I repeat, was mine; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art, 190
 Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
 That streamlet whose blue current works its way
 Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
 Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
 Of my own native region, and was blest 195
 Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
 Above all joys, that seemed another morn
 Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence, Friend
 Of that sole Sister, her who hath been long
 Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine, 200
 Now, after separation desolate,
 Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed. The varied banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
 And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees, 205
 Low standing by the margin of the stream,
 A mansion visited (as fame reports)
 By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,

Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen
Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love 210
Inspired;—that river and those mouldering towers
Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb
The darksome windings of a broken stair,
And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,
Not without trembling, we in safety looked 215
Forth, through some Gothic window's open space,
And gathered with one mind a rich reward
From the far-stretching landscape, by the light
Of morning beautified, or purple eve;
Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head, 220
Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.

Another maid there was, who also shed
A gladness o'er that season, then to me, 225
By her exulting outside look of youth
And placid under-countenance, first endeared;
That other spirit, Coleridge! who is now
So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields 230
In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,
And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste
Of naked pools, and common crags that lay
Exposed on the bare fell, were scattered love, 235
The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.
O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time,
And yet a power is on me, and a strong
Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.
Far art thou wandered now in search of health 240
And milder breezes,—melancholy lot!
But thou art with us, with us in the past,
The present, with us in the times to come.
There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
No languor, no dejection, no dismay, 245

For utterance, to think what easy change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes, 285
 For ever withered. Through this retrospect
 Of my collegiate life I still have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes, have played with times
 And accidents as children do with cards, 290
 Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
 As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,
 Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
 Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence, 295
 And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
 Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms
 Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
 From things well-matched or ill, and words for things, 300
 The self-created sustenance of a mind
 Debarred from Nature's living images,
 Compelled to be a life unto herself,
 And unrelentingly possessed by thirst
 Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone, 305
 Ah! surely not in singleness of heart
 Should I have seen the light of evening fade
 From smooth Cam's silent waters: had we met,
 Even at that early time, needs must I trust
 In the belief, that my maturer age, 310
 My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed,
 Or chased away, the airy wretchedness
 That battered on thy youth. But thou hast trod
 A march of glory, which doth put to shame 315
 These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
 Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
 That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch

On wanderings of my own, that now embraced 320
 With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
 A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
 Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
 And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side, 325

Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight,
 Did this unprecedented course imply,
 Of college studies and their set rewards;
 Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
 Without uneasy forethought of the pain, 330

The censures, and ill-omening, of those
 To whom my worldly interests were dear.
 But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
 And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
 Had given a charter to irregular hopes. 335

In any age of uneventful calm
 Among the nations, surely would my heart
 Have been possessed by similar desire;
 But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
 France standing on the top of golden hours, 340
 And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
 Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
 From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
 To land at Calais on the very eve 345

Of that great federal day; and there we saw,
 In a mean city, and among a few,
 How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
 We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns, 350

Gaudy with reliques of that festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
 And window-garlands. On the public roads,
 And, once, three days successively, through paths
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged, 355

Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
 Hath left no corner of the land untouched;
 Where elms for many and many a league in files 360
 With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads
 Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,
 For ever near us as we paced along:
 How sweet at such a time, with such delight
 On every side, in prime of youthful strength, 365
 To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
 Of undulations varying as might please
 The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once,
 Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 370
 Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
 Of darkness, dances in the open air
 Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
 Might waste their breath in chiding.
 Under hills— 375
 The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,
 Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone
 We glided forward with the flowing stream.
 Swift Rhone! thou wert the 'wings' on which we cut
 A winding passage with majestic ease 380
 Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show
 Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
 And single cottages and lurking towns,
 Reach after reach, succession without end
 Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair 385
 Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along
 Clustered together with a merry crowd
 Of those emancipated, a blithe host
 Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning
 From the great spousals newly solemnised 390
 At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.
 Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;
 Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,

And with their swords flourished as if to fight
 The saucy air. In this proud company 395
 We landed—took with them our evening meal,
 Guests welcome almost as the angels were
 To Abraham of old. The supper done,
 With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts
 We rose at signal given, and formed a ring 400
 And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board;
 All hearts were open, every tongue was loud
 With amity and glee; we bore a name
 Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
 And hospitably did they give us hail, 405
 As their forerunners in a glorious course;
 And round and round the board we danced again.
 With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed
 At early dawn. The monastery bells
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears; 410
 The rapid river flowing without noise,
 And each uprising or receding spire
 Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
 Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew
 By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave 415
 Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side,
 Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued
 Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set
 Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there
 Rested within an awful 'solitude': 420
 Yes, for even then no other than a place
 Of soul-affecting 'solitude' appeared
 That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,
 As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,
 Arms flashing, and a military glare 425
 Of riotous men commissioned to expel
 The blameless inmates, and belike subvert
 That frame of social being, which so long
 Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
 In silence visible and perpetual calm. 430
 —“Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!”—The voice

Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne;
 I heard it then and seem to hear it now—
 "Your impious work forbear, perish what may,
 Let this one temple last, be this one spot 435
 Of earth devoted to eternity!"
 She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno's pines
 Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,
 And while below, along their several beds,
 Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death, 440
 Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart
 Responded; "Honour to the patriot's zeal!
 Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
 Hail to the mighty projects of the time!
 Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou 445
 Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires,
 Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
 Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.
 But oh! if Past and Future be the wings
 On whose support harmoniously conjoined 450
 Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare
 These courts of mystery, where a step advanced
 Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
 Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
 For penitential tears and trembling hopes 455
 Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight
 Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed
 With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
 Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved
 Through faith and meditative reason, resting 460
 Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth,
 Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim
 Of that imaginative impulse sent
 From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
 The untransmuted shapes of many worlds, 465
 Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,
 These forests unapproachable by death,
 That shall endure as long as man endures,
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,

To struggle, to be lost within himself 470
 In trepidation, from the blank abyss
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled.”
 Not seldom since that moment have I wished
 That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm
 Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart, 475
 In sympathetic reverence we trod
 The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
 From their foundation, strangers to the presence
 Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
 Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay 480
 Upon the open lawns! Vallombre’s groves
 Entering, we fed the soul with darkness; thence
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
 In different quarters of the bending sky,
 The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if 485
 Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,
 Memorial revered by a thousand storms;
 Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep
 And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

’Tis not my present purpose to retrace 490
 That variegated journey step by step.
 A march it was of military speed,
 And Earth did change her images and forms
 Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
 Day after day, up early and down late, 495
 From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill
 Mounted—from province on to province swept,
 Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,
 Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
 Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair: 500
 Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
 Enticing valleys, greeted them and left
 Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
 Of salutation were not passed away.
 Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen, 505
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised

To patriarchal dignity of mind,
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,
 Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,
 Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round 510
 With danger, varying as the seasons change),
 Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,
 Contented, from the moment that the dawn
 (Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
 Of soul-illumination) calls him forth 515
 To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,
 Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart
 Down on a green recess, the first I saw
 Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale, 520
 Quiet and lorded over and possessed
 By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
 Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
 And by the river side.

That very day, 525
 From a bare ridge we also first beheld
 Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
 To have a soulless image on the eye
 That had usurped upon a living thought
 That never more could be. The wondrous Vale 530
 Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon
 With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,
 And reconciled us to realities; 535
 There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
 The eagle soars high in the element,
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
 While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks, 540
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,

Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
 Of intellect and heart. With such a book 545
 Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
 Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
 And universal reason of mankind,
 The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side
 Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone 550
 Each with his humour, could we fail to abound
 In dreams and fictions, pensively composed:
 Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
 And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
 And sober posies of funereal flowers, 555
 Gathered among those solitudes sublime
 From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
 Mixed something of stern mood, an underthirst 560
 Of vigour seldom utterly allayed:
 And from that source how different a sadness
 Would issue, let one incident make known.
 When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb
 Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road, 565
 Following a band of muleteers, we reached
 A halting-place, where all together took
 Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,
 Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered,
 Then paced the beaten downward way that led 570
 Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;
 The only track now visible was one
 That from the torrent's further brink held forth
 Conspicuous invitation to ascend
 A lofty mountain. After brief delay 575
 Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,
 And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears
 Intruded, for we failed to overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment added doubt to doubt, 580

A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
 That to the spot which had perplexed us first
 We must descend, and there should find the road,
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks; 585
 And, that our future course, all plain to sight,
 Was downwards, with the current of that stream.
 Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
 For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
 We questioned him again, and yet again; 590
 But every word that from the peasant's lips
 Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
 Ended in this,—'that we had crossed the Alps'.

Imagination—here the Power so called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech, 595
 That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
 Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
 At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
 Halted without an effort to break through;
 But to my conscious soul I now can say— 600
 "I recognise thy glory:" in such strength
 Of usurpation, when the light of sense
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
 There harbours; whether we be young or old, 605
 Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
 Is with infinitude, and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be. 610
 Under such banners militant, the soul
 Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils
 That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward,
 Strong in herself and in beatitude 615
 That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
 Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds

To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given 620
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
 And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed,
 Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,
 And with them did we journey several hours 625
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And in the narrow rent at every turn
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn, 630
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream, 635
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
 Characters of the great Apocalypse, 640
 The types and symbols of Eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

That night our lodging was a house that stood
 Alone within the valley, at a point
 Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled 645
 The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;
 A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,
 With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
 By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
 Lie melancholy among weary bones. 650

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,
 Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified

Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
 Dimpling along in silent majesty,
 With mountains for its neighbours, and in view 655
 Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
 And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake,
 Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
 Locarno! spreading out in width like Heaven,
 How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart, 660
 Bask in the sunshine of the memory;
 And Como! thou, a treasure whom the earth
 Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth
 Of Abyssinian privacy. I spake
 Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots 665
 Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids;
 Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines,
 Winding from house to house, from town to town,
 Sole link that binds them to each other; walks,
 League after league, and cloistral avenues, 670
 Where silence dwells if music be not there:
 While yet a youth undisciplined in verse,
 Through fond ambition of that hour I strove
 To chant your praise; nor can approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious Song, 675
 Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art
 May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze
 Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause; but ye have left
 Your beauty with me, a serene accord 680
 Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
 In their submissiveness with power as sweet
 And gracious, almost, might I dare to say,
 As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love,
 Or the remembrance of a generous deed, 685
 Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
 When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
 Religiously, in silent blessedness;
 Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.

With those delightful pathways we advanced, 690
 For two days' space, in presence of the Lake,
 That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed
 A character more stern. The second night,
 From sleep awakened, and misled by sound
 Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes 695
 Whose import then we had not learned, we rose
 By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh,
 And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,
 Along the winding margin of the lake,
 Led, as before, we should behold the scene 700
 Hushed in profound repose. We left the town
 Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.
 An open place it was, and overlooked, 705
 From high, the sullen water far beneath,
 On which a dull red image of the moon
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
 Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour
 We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night 710
 Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock
 At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep,
 But 'could not' sleep, tormented by the stings
 Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon,
 Filled all the woods: the cry of unknown birds; 715
 The mountains more by blackness visible
 And their own size, than any outward light;
 The breathless wilderness of clouds; the clock
 That told, with unintelligible voice,
 The widely parted hours; the noise of streams, 720
 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand,
 That did not leave us free from personal fear;
 And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set
 Before us, while she still was high in heaven;—
 These were our food; and such a summer's night 725
 Followed that pair of golden days that shed
 On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay,

Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell
 To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught 730
 With some untried adventure, in a course
 Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow
 Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not
 In hollow exultation, dealing out 735
 Hyperboles of praise comparative,
 Not rich one moment to be poor for ever;
 Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
 Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner
 On outward forms—did we in presence stand 740
 Of that magnificent region. On the front
 Of this whole Song is written that my heart
 Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up
 A different worship. Finally, whate'er
 I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream 745
 That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,
 Confederate with the current of the soul,
 To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
 In its degree of power, administered
 To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one 750
 Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
 Less often instantaneous in effect;
 Led me to these by paths that, in the main,
 Were more circuitous, but not less sure
 Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven. 755

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,
 A happy time that was; triumphant looks
 Were then the common language of all eyes;
 As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
 Their great expectancy: the fife of war 760
 Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
 A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove.
 We left the Swiss exulting in the fate

Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home, 765
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
For battle in the cause of Liberty.
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt, 770
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
I seemed to move along them, as a bird
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;
I wanted not that joy, I did not need 775
Such help; the ever-living universe,
Turn where I might, was opening out its glories,
And the independent spirit of pure youth
Called forth, at every season, new delights,
Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields. 780

BOOK SEVENTH RESIDENCE IN LONDON

SIX changeful years have vanished since I first
Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
Which met me issuing from the City's walls)
A glad preamble to this Verse: I sang
Aloud, with fervour irresistible 5
Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting,
From a black thunder-cloud, down Scafell's side
To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth
(So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream,
That flowed awhile with unabating strength, 10
Then stopped for years; not audible again
Before last primrose-time. Beloved Friend!
The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts
On thy departure to a foreign land
Has failed; too slowly moves the promised work. 15
Through the whole summer have I been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday,
And part through outward hindrance. But I heard,
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors between light and dark, 20
A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold,—minstrels from the distant woods
Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,
With preparation artful and benign,
That the rough lord had left the surly North 25
On his accustomed journey. The delight,

Due to this timely notice, unawares
 Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,
 "Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
 Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds, 30
 Will chant together." Thereafter, as the shades
 Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied
 A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
 Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,
 Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen 35
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before; the child
 Of Summer, lingering, shining, by herself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
 Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir 40
 Of Winter that had warbled at my door,
 And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

The last night's genial feeling overflowed
 Upon this morning, and my favourite grove,
 Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft, 45
 As if to make the strong wind visible,
 Wakes in me agitations like its own,
 A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,
 Which we will now resume with lively hope,
 Nor checked by aught of tamer argument 50
 That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
 Farewell for ever to the sheltered seats
 Of gowned students, quitted hall and bower,
 And every comfort of that privileged ground, 55
 Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
 The unfenced regions of society.

Yet, undetermined to what course of life
 I should adhere, and seeming to possess
 A little space of intermediate time 60
 At full command, to London first I turned,

In no disturbance of excessive hope,
 By personal ambition unenslaved,
 Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
 From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown 65
 Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock
 Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced
 Her endless streets, a transient visitant:
 Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind
 Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly, 70
 And life and labour seem but one, I filled
 An idler's place; an idler well content
 To have a house (what matter for a home?)
 That owned him; living cheerfully abroad
 With unchecked fancy ever on the stir, 75
 And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatsoe'er is feigned
 Of airy palaces, and gardens built
 By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
 Authentic history been set forth of Rome, 80
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis;
 Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,
 Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
 Among Tartarian wilds—fell short, far short,
 Of what my fond simplicity believed 85
 And thought of London—held me by a chain
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
 Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot
 For me beyond its ordinary mark,
 'Twere vain to ask; but in our flock of boys 90
 Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance
 Summoned from school to London; fortunate
 And envied traveller! When the Boy returned,
 After short absence, curiously I scanned
 His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth, 95
 From disappointment, not to find some change
 In look and air, from that new region brought,
 As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned him;

And every word he uttered, on my ears
 Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note, 100
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things
 Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears
 Almost as deeply seated and as strong
 In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived 105
 For my enjoyment. Would that I could now
 Recall what then I pictured to myself,
 Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,
 The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last,
 Nor least, Heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor. 110
 Dreams not unlike to those which once begat
 A change of purpose in young Whittington,
 When he, a friendless and a drooping boy,
 Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out
 Articulate music. Above all, one thought 115
 Baffled my understanding: how men lived
 Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
 Strangers, not knowing each the other's name.

Oh, wondrous power of words, by simple faith
 Licensed to take the meaning that we love! 120
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh! I then had heard
 Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
 Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
 And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
 Floating in dance, or warbling high in air 125
 The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
 With less delight upon that other class
 Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent:
 The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top
 And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's; the tombs 130
 Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
 Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates,
 Perpetually recumbent; Statues—man,
 And the horse under him—in gilded pomp
 Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares; 135

The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower
Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
Their steeds bestriding,—every mimic shape
Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,
Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed, 140
Or life or death upon the battle-field.
Those bold imaginations in due time
Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
And now I looked upon the living scene;
Familiarly perused it; oftentimes, 145
In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
Of a too busy world! Before me flow, 150
Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—
With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe—
On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din; 155
The comers and the goers face to face,
Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
And all the tradesman's honours overhead:
Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page, 160
With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
Stationed above the door, like guardian saints;
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
Or physiognomies of real men,
Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea, 165
Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head
Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
Abruptly into some sequestered nook, 170
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!

At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,
 And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
 We take our way. A raree-show is here,
 With children gathered round; another street 175
 Presents a company of dancing dogs,
 Or dromedary, with an antic pair
 Of monkeys on his back; a minstrel band
 Of Savoyards; or, single and alone,
 An English ballad-singer. Private courts, 180
 Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
 Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
 The very shrillest of all London cries,
 May then entangle our impatient steps;
 Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares, 185
 To privileged regions and inviolate,
 Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
 Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees, 190
 Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.
 Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;
 Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
 Press forward, in all colours, on the sight; 195
 These, bold in conscious merit, lower down;
 'That', fronted with a most imposing word,
 Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.
 As on the broadening causeway we advance,
 Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong 200
 In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
 'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;
 A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
 And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
 Another lies at length, beside a range 205
 Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
 Upon the smooth flint stones: the Nurse is here,
 The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,

The military Idler, and the Dame,
That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps. 210

Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where
See, among less distinguishable shapes,
The begging scavenger, with hat in hand;
The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images 215
Upon his head; with basket at his breast
The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm!

Enough;—the mighty concourse I surveyed
With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note 220
Among the crowd all specimens of man,
Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
And every character of form and face:
The Swede, the Russian; from the genial south,
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote 225
America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
Malays, Lascars, the Tartar, the Chinese,
And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,
The spectacles within doors,—birds and beasts 230
Of every nature, and strange plants convened
From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape
The absolute presence of reality,
Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
And what earth is, and what she has to show. 235

I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
By means refined attaining purest ends,
But imitations, fondly made in plain
Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill 240
Submits to nothing less than taking in
A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,

Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
 Or in a ship on waters, with a world 245
 Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
 Above, behind, far stretching and before;
 Or more mechanic artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 From blended colours also borrowing help, 250
 Some miniature of famous spots or things,—
 St. Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision, Rome herself;
 Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,—the Falls
 Of Tivoli; and, high upon that steep, 255
 The Sibyl's mouldering Temple! every tree,
 Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
 Throughout the landscape; tuft, stone scratch minute—
 All that the traveller sees when he is there.

Add to these exhibitions, mute and still, 260
 Others of wider scope, where living men,
 Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
 Diversified the allurements. Need I fear
 To mention by its name, as in degree,
 Lowest of these and humblest in attempt, 265
 Yet richly graced with honours of her own,
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of youth
 Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
 Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add, 270
 With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,
 Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds; 275
 To note the laws and progress of belief;
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
 How willingly we travel, and how far!
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo! 280

He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage
 Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
 Of living Mortal covert, "as the moon
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave."
 Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought? 285
 The garb he wears is black as death, the word
 "Invisible" flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were "forms and pressures of the time,"
 Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed 290
 When Art was young; dramas of living men,
 And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
 Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
 Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame;
 Such as the daring brotherhood of late
 Set forth, too serious theme for that light place— 295
 I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
 From our own ground,—the Maid of Buttermere,—
 And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife
 Deserted and deceived, the Spoiler came
 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills, 300
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee
 Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
 Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
 Beheld her serving at the cottage inn; 305
 Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,
 With admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
 We since that time not unfamiliarly
 Have seen her,—her discretion have observed, 310
 Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
 Her patience, and humility of mind
 Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
 Of public notice—an offensive light
 To a meek spirit suffering inwardly. 315

From this memorial tribute to my theme

I was returning, when, with sundry forms
 Commingled—shapes which met me in the way
 That we must tread—thy image rose again,
 Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace 320
 Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination doth she live
 In quietness, without anxiety:
 Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth
 Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb 325
 That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,
 Rests underneath the little rock-like pile
 When storms are raging. Happy are they both—
 Mother and child!—These feelings, in themselves
 Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think 330
 On those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
 Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,
 Which yet survive in memory, appears 335
 One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,
 A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,
 Not more, had been of age to deal about
 Articulate prattle—Child as beautiful
 As ever clung around a mother's neck, 340
 Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.
 There, too, conspicuous for stature tall
 And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
 The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,
 False tints too well accorded with the glare 345
 From play-house lustres thrown without reserve
 On every object near. The Boy had been
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
 A sort of alien scattered from the clouds. 350
 Of lusty vigour, more than infantine
 He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
 Just three parts blown—a cottage-child—if e'er,
 By cottage-door on breezy mountain-side,

Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe 355
By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board
Decked with refreshments had this child been placed
'His' little stage in the vast theatre,
And there he sate, surrounded with a throng
Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men 360
And shameless women, treated and caressed;
Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
Were rife about him as the songs of birds
Contending after showers. The mother now 365
Is fading out of memory, but I see
The lovely Boy as I beheld him then
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells 370
Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths.
Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked
By special privilege of Nature's love, 375
Should in his childhood be detained for ever!
But with its universal freight the tide
Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,
Mary! may now have lived till he could look
With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps, 380
Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told
Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,
I heard, and for the first time in my life,
The voice of woman utter blasphemy— 385
Saw woman as she is, to open shame
Abandoned, and the pride of public vice;
I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
Thrown in that from humanity divorced
Humanity, splitting the race of man 390
In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.

Distress of mind ensued upon the sight,
 And ardent meditation. Later years
 Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness,
 Feelings of pure commiseration, grief 395
 For the individual and the overthrow
 Of her soul's beauty; farther I was then
 But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
 The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take 400
 Our argument. Enough is said to show
 How casual incidents of real life,
 Observed where pastime only had been sought,
 Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
 And measured passions of the stage, albeit 405
 By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.
 Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
 The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
 And all the mean upholstery of the place,
 Wanted not animation, when the tide 410
 Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
 With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
 Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
 Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
 Of thick entangled forest, like the moon 415
 Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
 With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
 Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
 Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
 Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling 420
 His slender manacles; or romping girl
 Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
 A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
 In all the tatters of infirmity
 All loosely put together, hobbled in, 425
 Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
 From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
 Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts

Of one so overloaded with his years.
But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace, 430
The antics striving to outstrip each other,
Were all received, the least of them not lost,
With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
Between the show, and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each several nook 435
Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly
And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
Turned this way—that way! sportive and alert
And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
While winds are eddying round her, among straws 440
And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
Romantic almost, looked at through a space,
How small, of intervening years! For then,
Though surely no mean progress had been made
In meditations holy and sublime, 445
Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
Enjoyment haply handed down from times
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn
Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance 450
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
Gladdened me more than if I had been led
Into a dazzling cavern of romance, 455
Crowded with Genii busy among works
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,
To many, neither dignified enough
Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them, 460
Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
That bind the perishable hours of life
Each to the other, and the curious props
By which the world of memory and thought
Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes, 465

Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
 Solicit our regard; but when I think
 Of these, I feel the imaginative power
 Languish within me; even then it slept,
 When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart 470
 Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
 It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
 For though I was most passionately moved
 And yielded to all changes of the scene
 With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm 475
 Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;
 Save when realities of act and mien,
 The incarnation of the spirits that move
 In harmony amid the Poet's world,
 Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth 480
 By power of contrast, made me recognise,
 As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
 And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
 When, having closed the mighty Shakspeare's page,
 I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude. 485

Pass we from entertainments, that are such
 Professedly, to others titled higher,
 Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
 More near akin to those than names imply,—
 I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts 490
 Before the ermined judge, or that great stage
 Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform,
 Admired and envied. Oh! the beating heart,
 When one among the prime of these rose up,—
 One, of whose name from childhood we had heard 495
 Familiarly, a household term, like those,
 The Bedfords, Glosters, Salsburys, of old,
 Whom the fifth Harry talks of. Silence! hush!
 This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit,
 No stammerer of a minute, painfully 500
 Delivered, No! the Orator hath yoked
 The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car:

Thrice welcome Presence! how can patience e'er
 Grow weary of attending on a track
 That kindles with such glory! All are charmed, 505
 Astonished; like a hero in romance,
 He winds away his never-ending horn;
 Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:
 What memory and what logic! till the strain
 Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed, 510
 Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced
 By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
 Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men,
 Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides, 515
 And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
 Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—
 Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.
 I see him,—old, but vigorous in age,—
 Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start 520
 Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
 The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
 While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
 Against all systems built on abstract rights,
 Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims 525
 Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
 Declares the vital power of social ties
 Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
 Exploding upstart Theory, insists
 Upon the allegiance to which men are born— 530
 Some—say at once a froward multitude—
 Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
 As the winds fret within the Aeolian cave,
 Galled by their monarch's chain. The times were big
 With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked 535
 Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
 But memorable moments intervened,
 When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
 Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,

Startling the Synod. Could a youth, and one 540
 In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
 Under the weight of classic eloquence,
 Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
 To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt 545
 Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
 The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
 Endowed with various power to search the soul;
 Yet ostentation, domineering, oft

Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!— 550

There have I seen a comely bachelor,
 Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
 His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
 And, in a tone elaborately low

Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze 555

A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
 From time to time, into an orifice
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
 And only not invisible, again
 Open it out, diffusing thence a smile 560
 Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.

Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
 Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
 The Death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard

Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme 565

With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
 And Ossian (doubt not—'tis the naked truth)
 Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all
 Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers

To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped 570

This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,
 Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop, 575

In public room or private, park or street,
Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,
Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
And all the strife of singularity, 580
Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense—
Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
Although well pleased to be where they were found,
I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize, 585
Nor made unto myself a secret boast
Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
But, as a common produce, things that are
To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them
Such willing note, as, on some errand bound 590
That asks not speed, a traveller might bestow
On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
Though most at home in this their dear domain, 595
Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
Me, rather, it employed, to note, and keep
In memory, those individual sights
Of courage, or integrity, or truth, 600
Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,
Appeared more touching. One will I select—
A Father—for he bore that sacred name;—
Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
Upon a corner-stone of that low wall, 605
Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air. 610
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
He took no heed; but in his brawny arms

(The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)
 He held the child, and, bending over it, 615
 As if he were afraid both of the sun
 And of the air, which he had come to seek,
 Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top
 Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so 620
 That huge fermenting mass of human-kind
 Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief,
 To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
 For feeling and contemplative regard,
 More than inherent liveliness and power. 625

How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
 Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, "The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery!"
 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed 630
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;

And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond 635
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest 640
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 His story, whence he came, and who he was.

Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; and apt type
 This label seemed of the utmost we can know, 645
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
 His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
 As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things, 650
 Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
 Builds for herself; scenes different there are,
 Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties,—the peace
 That comes with night; the deep solemnity 655
 Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
 When the great tide of human life stands still:
 The business of the day to come, unborn,
 Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;
 The blended calmness of the heavens and earth, 660
 Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds
 Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
 The feeble salutation from the voice 665
 Of some unhappy woman, now and then
 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
 Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,
 As the mind answers to them, or the heart 670
 Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,
 To times, when half the city shall break out
 Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
 To executions, to a street on fire,
 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights 675
 Take one,—that ancient festival, the Fair,
 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St. Bartholomew; there, see
 A work completed to our hands, that lays,
 If any spectacle on earth can do, 680
 The whole creative powers of man asleep!—
 For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,
 Upon some showman's platform. What a shock 685
 For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
 Barbarian and infernal,—a phantasma,

Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
 Below, the open space, through every nook
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive 690
 With heads; the midway region, and above,
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;
 With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
 And children whirling in their roundabouts; 695
 With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
 And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd
 Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves, 700
 Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
 The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.— 705
 All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
 Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
 The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,
 The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl, 710
 The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
 The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
 All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts 715
 Of man, his dulness, madness, and their feats
 All jumbled up together, to compose
 A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths
 Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
 Are vomiting, receiving on all sides, 720
 Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
 Of what the mighty City is herself,
 To thousands upon thousands of her sons,

Living amid the same perpetual whirl 725
Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
To one identity, by differences
That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
Oppression, under which even highest minds
Must labour, whence the strongest are not free. 730
But though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts 735
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
This, of all acquisitions, first awaits
On sundry and most widely different modes
Of education, nor with least delight
On that through which I passed. Attention springs, 740
And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
From early converse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power.
Think, how the everlasting streams and woods, 745
Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
The roving Indian, on his desert sands:
What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone, 750
Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life
Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft
Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects
Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul 755
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
However multitudinous, to move 760
With order and relation. This, if still,
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,

Not violating any just restraint,
As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
This did I feel, in London's vast domain. 765
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things, 770
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

BOOK EIGHTH

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

WHAT sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green? 5
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed. 10
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean 15
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon, 20
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.

The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
 Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
 Booths are there none; a stall or two is here; 25
 A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
 The other to make music; hither, too,
 From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,
 Of hawkker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
 Some aged woman finds her way again, 30
 Year after year, a punctual visitant!
 There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
 Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;
 And in the lapse of many years may come
 Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he 35
 Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
 But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
 Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
 For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
 Fruits of her father's orchard are her wares, 40
 And with the ruddy produce she walks round
 Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
 Of, her new office, blushing restlessly.
 The children now are rich, for the old to-day
 Are generous as the young; and, if content 45
 With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
 Sit in the shade together; while they gaze,
 "A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
 The days departed start again to life,
 And all the scenes of childhood reappear, 50
 Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
 To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve."
 Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
 Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
 And no one seems to want his share.—Immense 55
 Is the recess, the circumambient world
 Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
 They move about upon the soft green turf:
 How little they, they and their doings, seem,
 And all that they can further or obstruct! 60

Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
As tender infants are: and yet how great!
For all things serve them: them the morning light
Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
And them the silent rocks, which now from high 65
Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;
The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
Which animates this day their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel, 70
In that enormous City's turbulent world
Of men and things, what benefit I owed
To thee, and those domains of rural peace,
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair 75
Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees,
Or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
(Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous, 80
China's stupendous mound) by patient toil
Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help;
There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes 85
Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells
For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious hues,
Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase, 90
Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
In no discordant opposition, strong
And gorgeous as the colours side by side
Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds;
And mountains over all, embracing all; 95
And all the landscape, endlessly enriched
With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
 Where I was reared; in Nature's primitive gifts
 Favoured no less, and more to every sense 100
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
 The elements, and seasons as they change,
 Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants, 105
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,
 Cheerfully led to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train
 Unwooded, unthought-of even—simplicity,
 And beauty, and inevitable grace. 110

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images,
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks; 115
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
 And ordinary interests of man,
 Which they embosom, all without regard
 As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
 Insensibly, each with the other's help. 120
 For me, when my affections first were led
 From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake
 Love for the human creature's absolute self,
 That noticeable kindness of heart
 Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most, 125
 Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
 And occupations which her beauty adorned,
 And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first;
 Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,
 With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives 130
 Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
 A bright tradition of the golden age;
 Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequestered, handed down among themselves

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN 129

Felicity, in Grecian song renowned; 135
Nor such as—when an adverse fate had driven,
From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes
Entered, with Shakspeare’s genius, the wild woods
Of Arden—amid sunshine or in shade
Culled the best fruits of Time’s uncounted hours, 140
Ere Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede;
Or there where Perdita and Florizel
Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King;
Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is,
That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen) 145
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
Their May-bush, and along the streets in flocks
Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,
Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
Had also heard, from those who yet remembered, 150
Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar; and of youths,
Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
By annual custom, issuing forth in troops,
To drink the waters of some sainted well, 155
And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;
But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:
The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
These lighter graces; and the rural ways
And manners which my childhood looked upon 160
Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
Intent on little but substantial needs,
Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
But images of danger and distress,
Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms; 165
Of this I heard, and saw enough to make
Imagination restless; nor was free
Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
Wanting,—the tragedies of former times,
Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks 170
Immutable, and everflowing streams,
Where’er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus; and no less 175
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores:
 Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd
 To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable stream
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goat-herd lived 180
 As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The fold protecting, I myself, mature 185
 In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
 Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous, less serene:
 There, for her own delight had Nature framed
 A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse 190
 Of level pasture, islanded with groves
 And banked with woody risings; but the Plain
 Endless, here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 And intricate recesses, creek or bay 195
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
 The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
 Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
 All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 His flageolet to liquid notes of love 200
 Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
 Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space
 Where passage opens, but the same shall have
 In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
 In unlaborious pleasure, with no task 205
 More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
 For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds,
 When through the region he pursues at will
 His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life
 I saw when, from the melancholy walls 210

Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
My daily walk along that wide champaign,
That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you 215
Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds, 220
That howl so dismally for him who treads
Companionless your awful solitudes!
There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
To wait upon the storms: of their approach
Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives 225
His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
And deals it out, their regular nourishment
Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs, 230
And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
Higher and higher, him his office leads
To watch their goings, whatsoever track
The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun 235
Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
For rest not needed or exchange of love, 240
Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies, 245
His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.

Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
 Might deign to follow him through what he does 250
 Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
 In those vast regions where his service lies,
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
 With that majestic indolence so dear 255
 To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus,
 I felt his presence in his own domain,
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,
 Presiding; and severest solitude 260
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.
 When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
 Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
 By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps, 265
 In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
 His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
 Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
 His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun: 270
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,
 A solitary object and sublime,
 Above all height! like an aerial cross
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man 275
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
 And thus my heart was early introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 To me became an index of delight, 280
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
 As those of books, but more exalted far;
 Far more of an imaginative form
 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives 285
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,

In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest 290
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances—
Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth, 295

This sanctity of Nature given to man—
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a block 300

Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
And ye adore! But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified, 305

Removed, and to a distance that was fit:
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good 310

In our first years, or think that it is found,
How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
Alone, that something of a better life
Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege 315

Of most to move in, but that first I looked
At Man through objects that were great or fair;
First communed with him by their help. And thus
Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares, 320

Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
On all sides from the ordinary world
In which we traffic. Starting from this point
I had my face turned toward the truth, began

With an advantage furnished by that kind 325
 Of prepossession, without which the soul
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
 No genuine insight ever comes to her.
 From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
 Preserved, I moved about, year after year, 330
 Happy, and now most thankful that my walk
 Was guarded from too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life,
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts,
 Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think 335
 With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,
 Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
 Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
 That to devotion willingly would rise,
 Into the temple and the temple's heart. 340

Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me
 Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
 Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all 345
 Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped
 And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then—
 And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than two-and-twenty summers had been told— 350
 Was Man in my affections and regards
 Subordinate to her, her visible forms
 And viewless agencies: a passion, she,
 A rapture often, and immediate love
 Ever at hand; he, only a delight 355
 Occasional, an accidental grace,
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 My spirit to that gentleness of love,
 (Though they had long been carefully observed), 360
 Won from me those minute obeisances

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN 135

Of tenderness, which I may number now
With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end. 365

But when that first poetic faculty
Of plain Imagination and severe,
No longer a mute influence of the soul,
Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
To try her strength among harmonious words; 370

And to book-notions and the rules of art
Did knowingly conform itself; there came
Among the simple shapes of human life
A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;
And Nature and her objects beautified 375

These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn,
They burnished her. From touch of this new power
Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
Beside the well-known charnel-house had then
A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost, 380

That took his station there for ornament:
The dignities of plain occurrence then
Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow 385

Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps
To the cold grave in which her husband slept,
One night, or haply more than one, through pain
Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
The fact was caught at greedily, and there 390

She must be visitant the whole year through,
Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue
These cravings; when the foxglove, one by one,
Upwards through every stage of the tall stem, 395
Had shed beside the public way its bells,
And stood of all dismantled, save the last

Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed
 To bend as doth a slender blade of grass
 Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat, 400
 Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still
 With this last relic, soon itself to fall,
 Some vagrant mother, whose arch little ones,
 All unconcerned by her dejected plight,
 Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands 405
 Gathered the purple cups that round them lay,
 Strewing the turfs green slope.

A diamond light

(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
 A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen 410
 Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose
 Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth
 Seated, with open door, often and long
 Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,
 That made my fancy restless as itself. 415
 'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
 Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
 Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
 An entrance now into some magic cave
 Or palace built by fairies of the rock; 420
 Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
 The spectacle, by visiting the spot.
 Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
 Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
 By pure Imagination: busy Power 425
 She was, and with her ready pupil turned
 Instinctively to human passions, then
 Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine was through the bounty of a grand 430
 And lovely region, I had forms distinct
 To steady me: each airy thought revolved
 Round a substantial centre, which at once
 Incited it to motion, and controlled.
 I did not pine like one in cities bred, 435

As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend!
Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams
Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things
Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm,
If, when the woodman languished with disease 440
Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground
Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,
I called the pangs of disappointed love,
And all the sad etcetera of the wrong,
To help him to his grave? Meanwhile the man, 445
If not already from the woods retired
To die at home, was haply, as I knew,
Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,
Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile 450
Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
Or spirit that full soon must take her flight.
Nor shall we not be tending towards that point
Of sound humanity to which our Tale
Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I show 455
How Fancy, in a season when she wove
Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy
For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call
Some pensive musings which might well beseem
Maturer years. 460

A grove there is whose boughs
Stretch from the western marge of Thurstonmere
With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides
Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade 465
Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
In silent beauty on the naked ridge
Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts
In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart: 470
Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
My mortal course, there will I think on you;
Dying, will cast on you a backward look;

Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
 Is no where touched by one memorial gleam) 475
 Doth with the fond remains of his last power
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds,
 On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

Enough of humble arguments; recall,
 My Song! those high emotions which thy voice 480
 Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth
 Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,
 When everywhere a vital pulse was felt,
 And all the several frames of things, like stars,
 Through every magnitude distinguishable, 485
 Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
 Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
 Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man,
 Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
 As, of all visible natures, crown, though born 490
 Of dust, and kindred to the worm; a Being,
 Both in perception and discernment, first
 In every capability of rapture,
 Through the divine effect of power and love;
 As, more than anything we know, instinct 495
 With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
 Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved,
 Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes
 Of vice and folly thrust upon my view, 500
 Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
 Manners and characters discriminate,
 And little bustling passions that eclipse,
 As well they might, the impersonated thought,
 The idea, or abstraction of the kind. 505

An idler among academic bowers,
 Such was my new condition, as at large
 Has been set forth; yet here the vulgar light

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN 139

Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times, 510
Old usages and local privilege,
Was welcomed, softened, if not solemnised.
This notwithstanding, being brought more near
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life 515
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity. 520

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led
Gravely to ponder—judging between good
And evil, not as for the mind's delight
But for her guidance—one who was to 'act', 525
As sometimes to the best of feeble means
I did, by human sympathy impelled:
And, through dislike and most offensive pain,
Was to the truth conducted; of this faith
Never forsaken, that, by acting well, 530
And understanding, I should learn to love
The end of life, and everything we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times
Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
London, to thee I willingly return. 535
Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
Enwrought upon thy mantle; satisfied
With that amusement, and a simple look
Of child-like inquisition now and then
Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect 540
Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
But how could I in mood so light indulge,
Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day,
When, having thriddled the long labyrinth

Of the suburban villages, I first 545
 Entered thy vast dominion? On the roof
 Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
 With vulgar men about me, trivial forms
 Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,—
 Mean shapes on every side: but, at the instant, 550
 When to myself it fairly might be said,
 The threshold now is overpast, (how strange
 That aught external to the living mind
 Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was),
 A weight of ages did at once descend 555
 Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
 Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,—
 Power growing under weight: alas! I feel
 That I am trifling: 'twas a moment's pause,—
 All that took place within me came and went 560
 As in a moment; yet with Time it dwells,
 And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day,
 Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
 The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den 565
 In old time haunted by that Danish Witch,
 Yordas; he looks around and sees the vault
 Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees,
 Erelong, the massy roof above his head,
 That instantly unsettles and recedes,— 570
 Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
 Commingled, making up a canopy
 Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape
 That shift and vanish, change and interchange
 Like spectres,—ferment silent and sublime! 575
 That after a short space works less and less,
 Till, every effort, every motion gone,
 The scene before him stands in perfect view
 Exposed, and lifeless as a written book!—
 But let him pause awhile, and look again, 580
 And a new quickening shall succeed, at first

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN 141

Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass,
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth 585
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape,—there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail,
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff: 590
Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved,
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,
As I explored the vast metropolis, 595
Fount of my country's destiny and the world's;
That great emporium, chronicle at once
And burial-place of passions, and their home
Imperial, their chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did 600
Of past and present, such a place must needs
Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time
Far less than craving power; yet knowledge came,
Sought or unsought, and influxes of power
Came, of themselves, or at her call derived 605
In fits of kindest apprehensiveness,
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me
A correspondent amplitude of mind;
Such is the strength and glory of our youth! 610
The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and revered with love,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
Of evidence from monuments, erect, 615
Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime

Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn
From books and what they picture and record.

'Tis true, the history of our native land— 620
With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
And in our high-wrought modern narratives
Stript of their harmonising soul, the life
Of manners and familiar incidents—
Had never much delighted me. And less 625
Than other intellects had mine been used
To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
Of record or tradition; but a sense
Of what in the Great City had been done
And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still, 630
Weighed with me, could support the test of thought;
And, in despite of all that had gone by,
Or was departing never to return,
There I conversed with majesty and power
Like independent natures. Hence the place 635
Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed—
Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks,
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags 640
That into music touch the passing wind.
Here then my young imagination found
No uncongenial element; could here
Among new objects serve or give command,
Even as the heart's occasions might require, 645
To forward reason's else too-scrupulous march.
The effect was, still more elevated views
Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt,
Debasement undergone by body or mind,
Nor all the misery forced upon my sight, 650
Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
In what we 'may' become; induce belief
That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,

RETROSPECT—LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN 143

A solitary, who with vain conceits 655
Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
Lo! everything that was indeed divine
Retained its purity inviolate,
Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom 660
Set off; such opposition as aroused
The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
More orient in the western cloud, that drew 665
O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.

 Add also, that among the multitudes
Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere 670
Is possible, the unity of man,
One spirit over ignorance and vice
Predominant, in good and evil hearts;
One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus 675
By a sublime 'idea', whencesoe'er
Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God.

 Thus from a very early age, O Friend!
My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn 680
To human-kind, and to the good and ill
Of human life: Nature had led me on;
And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her; but no, 685
The world of human-kind outweighed not hers
In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
Though filling daily, still was light, compared
With that in which 'her' mighty objects lay.

BOOK NINTH RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

EVEN as a river,—partly (it might seem)
Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed
In part by fear to shape a way direct,
That would engulf him soon in the ravenous sea—
Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, 5
Seeking the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset; so have we, my Friend!
Turned and returned with intricate delay.
Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts 10
For breathing-time, is tempted to review
The region left behind him; and, if aught
Deserving notice have escaped regard,
Or been regarded with too careless eye,
Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more 15
Last look, to make the best amends he may:
So have we lingered. Now we start afresh
With courage, and new hope risen on our toil.
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes! needful in work so long, 20
Thrice needful to the argument which now
Awaits us! Oh, how much unlike the past!

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
Month after month. Obscurely did I live, 25
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,

By literature, or elegance, or rank,
Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
With less regret for its luxurious pomp, 30
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps. 35
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
And all enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
With motion constant as his own, I went
Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town, 40
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
Sojourning a few days, I visited
In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
The latter chiefly, from the field of Mars 45
Down to the suburbs of St. Antony,
And from Mont Martre southward to the Dome
Of Genevieve. In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,
I saw the Revolutionary Power 50
Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
Of Orleans; coasted round and round the line
Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk 55
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!
And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,
In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look 60
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear is forced to wear,
But seemed there present; and I scanned them all,

Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
 Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
 All side by side, and struggling face to face, 65
 With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
 Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
 And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
 And pocketed the relic, in the guise 70
 Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 I looked for something that I could not find,
 Affecting more emotion than I felt;
 For 'tis most certain, that these various sights,
 However potent their first shock, with me 75
 Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains
 Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
 A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
 Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
 Pale and bedropped with overflowing tears. 80

But hence to my more permanent abode
 I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused, 85
 I stood 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub
 That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
 While every bush and tree, the country through, 90
 Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
 Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared
 With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
 Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
 And busy with an action far advanced. 95
 Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
 With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
 Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild

Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
And public news; but having never seen 100
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me 105
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear 110
Now, in connection with so great a theme,
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth 115
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon 120
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers, 125
Then stationed in the city, were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords
That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.
In age and temper differing, they had yet 130
One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
(Save only one, hereafter to be named)
Were bent upon undoing what was done:
This was their rest and only hope; therewith
No fear had they of bad becoming worse, 135

For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
 Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
 In anything, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile 140
 He had sate lord in many tender hearts;
 Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:
 His temper was quite mastered by the times,
 And they had blighted him, had eaten away
 The beauty of his person, doing wrong 145
 Alike to body and to mind: his port,
 Which once had been erect and open, now
 Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
 Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
 Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed, 150
 As much as any that was ever seen,
 A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
 Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
 That from the press of Paris duly brought
 Its freight of public news, the fever came, 155
 A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
 Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
 Into a thousand colours; while he read,
 Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
 Continually, like an uneasy place 160
 In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
 Of universal ferment; mildest men
 Were agitated, and commotions, strife
 Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
 Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds. 165
 The soil of common life was, at that time,
 Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
 And not then only, "What a mockery this
 Of history, the past and that to come!
 Now do I feel how all men are deceived, 170
 Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
 Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
 Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect

To future times the face of what now is!"
 The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain 175
 Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorsas,—add
 A hundred other names, forgotten now,
 Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
 Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
 And felt through every nook of town and field. 180

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
 Of my associates stood prepared for flight
 To augment the band of emigrants in arms
 Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
 With foreign foes mustered for instant war. 185
 This was their undisguised intent, and they
 Were waiting with the whole of their desires
 The moment to depart.

An Englishman,

Born in a land whose very name appeared 190
 To license some unruliness of mind;
 A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
 And the indulgence that a half-learnt speech
 Wins from the courteous; I, who had been else
 Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived 195
 With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
 And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
 The wish to bring me over to their cause.

But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity or law, 200
 And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
 Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
 Of nations and their passing interests,
 (If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
 Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale 205
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
 Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
 Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
 Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;

Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp 210
 Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
 Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
 That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
 And ill could brook, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule. 215

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
 Than any other nook of English ground,
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
 Through the whole tenor of my school-day time, 220
 The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
 Was vested with attention or respect
 Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
 Of many benefits, in later years
 Derived from academic institutes 225
 And rules, that they held something up to view
 Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
 In honour, as in one community,
 Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore, 230
 Distinction open lay to all that came,
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry,
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To presences of God's mysterious power 235
 Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
 And fellowship with venerable books,
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus should look with awe 240
 Upon the faculties of man, receive
 Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
 As best, the government of equal rights
 And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
 If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced 245
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause

In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
 A gift that was come rather late than soon.
 No wonder, then, if advocates like these, 250
 Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
 And stung with injury, at this riper day,
 Were impotent to make my hopes put on
 The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
 In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet 255
 Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
 Forth like a Polar summer: every word
 They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
 Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
 Confusion-stricken by a higher power 260
 Than human understanding, their discourse
 Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France, 265
 And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
 In gallant soldiership, and posting on
 To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep— 270
 I wept not then,—but tears have dimmed my sight,
 In memory of the farewells of that time,
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope, 275
 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;
 Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
 And for a moment, men from far with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city, here and there a face, 280
 Or person, singled out among the rest,
 Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed

Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause Good, pure, which no one could stand up against, Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud, Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved, Hater perverse of equity and truth.	285
Among that band of Officers was one, Already hinted at, of other mould— A patriot, thence rejected by the rest, And with an oriental loathing spurned, As of a different caste. A meeker man Than this lived never, nor a more benign, Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries Made ‘him’ more gracious, and his nature then Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly, As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf, When foot hath crushed them. He through the events Of that great change wandered in perfect faith, As through a book, an old romance, or tale Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked With the most noble, but unto the poor Among mankind he was in service bound, As by some tie invisible, oaths professed To a religious order. Man he loved As man; and, to the mean and the obscure, And all the homely in their homely works, Transferred a courtesy which had no air Of condescension; but did rather seem A passion and a gallantry, like that Which he, a soldier, in his idler day Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was, Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity, But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy Diffused around him, while he was intent On works of love or freedom, or revolved Complacently the progress of a cause, Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek	290 295 300 305 310 315 320

And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms; 325
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude. 330
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me, 335
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled 340
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed, 345
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not; 350
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
Where good and evil interchange their names,
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired 355
With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
Man and his noble nature, as it is
The gift which God has placed within his power,

His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break 360
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 On firm foundations, making social life,
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure
 As individual in the wise and good. 365

We summoned up the honourable deeds
 Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
 That would be found in all recorded time,
 Of truth preserved and error passed away;
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven, 370
 And how the multitudes of men will feed
 And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, country, love, or hate, 375
 And what they do and suffer for their creed;
 How far they travel, and how long endure;
 How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
 From least beginnings; how, together locked
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made 380
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
 To aspirations then of our own minds
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us, in a people from the depth 385
 Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
 Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
 Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
 And continence of mind, and sense of right, 390
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,
 Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
 In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,

Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill, 395
 To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
 On rational liberty, and hope in man,
 Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil—
 Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
 If nature then be standing on the brink 400
 Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
 Of one devoted,—one whom circumstance
 Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
 In action, give it outwardly a shape,
 And that of benediction, to the world. 405
 Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—
 A hope it is, and a desire; a creed
 Of zeal, by an authority Divine
 Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
 Such conversation, under Attic shades, 410
 Did Dion hold with Plato; ripened thus
 For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such
 He, on that ministry already bound,
 Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
 Surrounded by adventurers in arms, 415
 When those two vessels with their daring freight,
 For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow,
 Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,
 Led by Philosophers. With harder fate,
 Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend! 420
 Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis (let the name
 Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)
 Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse,
 With like persuasion honoured, we maintained:
 He, on his part, accoutred for the worst, 425
 He perished fighting, in supreme command,
 Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
 For liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow-countrymen; and yet most blessed
 In this, that he the fate of later times 430
 Lived not to see, nor what we now behold,
 Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
 Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
 Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk; 435
 Or in wide forests of continuous shade,
 Lofty and over-arched, with open space
 Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—
 A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,
 From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought, 440
 And let remembrance steal to other times,
 When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad,
 And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,
 Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace
 In sylvan meditation undisturbed; 445
 As on the pavement of a Gothic church
 Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,
 In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,—
 Heard, though unseen,—a devious traveller,
 Retiring or approaching from afar 450
 With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
 From the hard floor reverberated, then
 It was Angelica thundering through the woods
 Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid
 Erminia, fugitive as fair as she. 455
 Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights
 Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
 Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din
 Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
 In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt 460
 Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
 Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,
 A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.
 The width of those huge forests, unto me
 A novel scene, did often in this way 465
 Master my fancy while I wandered on
 With that revered companion. And sometimes—
 When to a convent in a meadow green,
 By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,
 And not by reverential touch of Time 470

Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—
 In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,
 In spite of real fervour, and of that
 Less genuine and wrought up within myself—
 I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh, 475
 And for the *Matin*-bell to sound no more
 Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 (How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)
 Of hospitality and peaceful rest. 480
 And when the partner of those varied walks
 Pointed upon occasion to the site
 Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings,
 To the imperial edifice of Blois,
 Or to that rural castle, name now slipped 485
 From my remembrance, where a lady lodged,
 By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him
 In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,
 As a tradition of the country tells,
 Practised to commune with her royal knight 490
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his
 Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath;
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
 Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments 495
 Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,
 Imagination, potent to inflame
 At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry, 500
 So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind;
 And on these spots with many gleams I looked
 Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
 Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride 505
 In them who, by immunities unjust,
 Between the sovereign and the people stand,
 His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold

Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
 And love; for where hope is, there love will be 510
 For the abject multitude, And when we chanced
 One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane 515
 Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, "'Tis against 'that'
 That we are fighting," I with him believed 520
 That a benignant spirit was abroad
 Which might not be withstood, that poverty
 Abject as this would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense 525
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
 All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power
 Whether by edict of the one or few; 530
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In framing their own laws; whence better days
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
 Was not this single confidence enough 535
 To animate the mind that ever turned
 A thought to human welfare? That henceforth
 Captivity by mandate without law
 Should cease; and open accusation lead
 To sentence in the hearing of the world, 540
 And open punishment, if not the air
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
 Dread nothing. From this height I shall not stoop
 To humbler matter that detained us oft
 In thought or conversation, public acts, 545
 And public persons, and emotions wrought

Within the breast, as ever-varying winds
 Of record or report swept over us;
 But I might here, instead, repeat a tale,
 Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events, 550
 That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
 How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
 Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
 And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus 555
 The story might begin,) oh, balmy time,
 In which a love-knot, on a lady's brow,
 Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven!
 So might—and with that prelude 'did' begin
 The record; and, in faithful verse, was given 560
 The doleful sequel.

But our little bark
 On a strong river boldly hath been launched;
 And from the driving current should we turn
 To loiter wilfully within a creek, 565
 Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
 Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost:
 For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named
 The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
 Tears from the hearts of others, when their own 570
 Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there may'st read,
 At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
 By public power abased, to fatal crime,
 Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
 How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust 575
 Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
 Harassing both; until he sank and pressed
 The couch his fate had made for him; supine,
 Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
 Trying their strength, enforced him to start up, 580
 Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
 He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind;
 There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more;

Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope, 585
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
Rouse him; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
His days he wasted,—an imbecile mind.

BOOK TENTH RESIDENCE IN FRANCE (continued)

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness,—
A day as beautiful as e'er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed, 5
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on, 10
Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne
The King had fallen, and that invading host—
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty 15
Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
They—who had come elate as eastern hunters
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
Rajahs and Omrahs in his train, intent 20
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,
Before the point of the life-threatening spear
Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned 25
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled

In terror. Disappointment and dismay
 Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
 With evil expectations; confidence
 And perfect triumph for the better cause. 30

The State—as if to stamp the final seal
 On her security, and to the world
 Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,
 Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
 By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt 35
 With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,
 That had stirred up her slackening faculties
 To a new transition—when the King was crushed,
 Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste
 Assumed the body and venerable name 40
 Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,
 'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
 Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
 Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
 Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,— 45
 Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!
 Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
 And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
 The spacious city, and in progress passed 50
 The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
 Associate with his children and his wife
 In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
 With roar of cannon by a furious host.
 I crossed the square (an empty area then!) 55
 Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
 The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed
 On this and other spots, as doth a man
 Upon a volume whose contents he knows
 Are memorable, but from him locked up, 60
 Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
 So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,

And half upbraids their silence. But that night
 I felt most deeply in what world I was,
 What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed. 65
 High was my room and lonely, near the roof
 Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge
 That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
 Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
 With unextinguished taper I kept watch, 70
 Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
 Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
 I thought of those September massacres,
 Divided from me by one little month,
 Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up 75
 From tragic fictions or true history,
 Remembrances and dim admonishments.
 The horse is taught his manage, and no star
 Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
 For the spent hurricane the air provides 80
 As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
 But to return out of its hiding-place
 In the great deep; all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
 And in this way I wrought upon myself, 85
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
 To the whole city, "Sleep no more." The trance
 Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
 But vainly comments of a calmer mind
 Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness. 90
 The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
 Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
 Of Orleans eagerly I turned: as yet 95
 The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
 There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
 That greeted me on entering, I could hear
 Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,

Bawling, "Denunciation of the Crimes
 Of Maximilian Robespierre;" the hand,
 Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech,
 The same that had been recently pronounced,
 When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been 105
 Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
 The man who had an ill surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
 When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,
 In silence of all present, from his seat 110
 Louvet walked single through the avenue,
 And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
 "I, Robespierre, accuse thee!" Well is known
 The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
 He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt, 115
 The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,
 Was left without a follower to discharge
 His perilous duty, and retire lamenting
 That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men
 Who to themselves are false. 120

But these are things

Of which I speak, only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind,
 No further. Let me then relate that now—
 In some sort seeing with my proper eyes 125
 That Liberty, and Life, and Death, would soon
 To the remotest corners of the land
 Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
 The capital City; what was struggled for,
 And by what combatants victory must be won; 130
 The indecision on their part whose aim
 Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
 Who in attack or in defence were strong
 Through their impiety—my inmost soul
 Was agitated; yea, I could almost 135
 Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,
 By patient exercise of reason made

Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled
 With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
 The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive 140
 From the four quarters of the winds to do
 For France, what without help she could not do,
 A work of honour; think not that to this
 I added, work of safety: from all doubt
 Or trepidation for the end of things 145
 Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
 Of opposition and of remedies:
 An insignificant stranger and obscure,
 And one, moreover, little graced with power 150
 Of eloquence even in my native speech,
 And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
 Yet would I at this time with willing heart
 Have undertaken for a cause so great
 Service however dangerous. I revolved, 155
 How much the destiny of Man had still
 Hung upon single persons; that there was,
 Transcendent to all local patrimony,
 One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
 That objects, even as they are great, thereby 160
 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
 That Man is only weak through his mistrust
 And want of hope where evidence divine
 Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
 Nor did the inexperience of my youth 165
 Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong
 In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Is for Society's unreasoning herd
 A domineering instinct, serves at once 170
 For way and guide, a fluent receptacle
 That gathers up each petty straggling rill
 And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest

Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint, 175
 In circumspection and simplicity,
 Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
 Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
 A treachery that foils it or defeats;
 And, lastly, if the means on human will, 180
 Frail human will, dependent should betray
 Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
 That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
 A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
 Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong, 185
 Of life and death, in majesty severe
 Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
 Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
 From whatsoever region of our cares
 Or our infirm affections Nature pleads, 190
 Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 That are the commonplaces of the schools—
 (A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,) 195
 Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
 In all their comprehensive bearings known
 And visible to philosophers of old,
 Men who, to business of the world untrained,
 Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
 And his compeer Aristogiton, known 200
 To Brutus—that tyrannic power is weak,
 Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
 Can never utterly be charmed or stilled; 205
 That nothing hath a natural right to last
 But equity and reason; that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
 Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts 210

Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time
 But that the virtue of one paramount mind
 Would have abashed those impious crests—have quelled
 Outrage and bloody power, and—in despite
 Of what the People long had been and were 215
 Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof
 Of immaturity, and—in the teeth
 Of desperate opposition from without—
 Have cleared a passage for just government,
 And left a solid birthright to the State, 220
 Redeemed, according to example given
 By ancient lawgivers.

In this frame of mind,

Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
 So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge, 225
 Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,—
 To England I returned, else (though assured
 That I both was and must be of small weight,
 No better than a landsman on the deck
 Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm) 230
 Doubtless, I should have then made common cause
 With some who perished; haply perished too,
 A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,—
 Should to the breast of Nature have gone back,
 With all my resolutions, all my hopes, 235
 A Poet only to myself, to men
 Useless, and even, beloved Friend! a soul
 To thee unknown!

Twice had the trees let fall

Their leaves, as often Winter had put on 240
 His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
 Had caught the accents of my native speech
 Upon our native country's sacred ground.
 A patriot of the world, how could I glide 245
 Into communion with her sylvan shades,
 Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
 To abide in the great City, where I found

The general air still busy with the stir
 Of that first memorable onset made 250
 By a strong levy of humanity
 Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;
 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled
 To notice old forgotten principles,
 And through the nation spread a novel heat 255
 Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
 That this particular strife had wanted power
 To rivet my affections; nor did now
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith 260
 That, if France prospered, good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 And this most rotten branch of human shame,
 Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains
 Would fall together with its parent tree. 265
 What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
 Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
 Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth, 270
 Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
 Down to that very moment; neither lapse
 Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time; 275
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which, with a diversity of pace,
 I had been travelling: this a stride at once
 Into another region. As a light
 And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze 280
 On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I
 Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
 Of my beloved country, wishing not
 A happier fortune than to wither there:
 Now was I from that pleasant station torn 285
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,

Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—
 Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven, 290
 Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
 Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
 A conflict of sensations without name,
 Of which 'he' only, who may love the sight
 Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge, 295
 When, in the congregation bending all
 To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
 Or praises for our country's victories;
 And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
 I only, like an uninvited guest 300
 Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear,
 By violence, at one decisive rent,
 From the best youth in England their dear pride, 305
 Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time
 In which worst losses easily might wean
 The best of names, when patriotic love
 Did of itself in modesty give way,
 Like the Precursor when the Deity 310
 Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time
 In which apostasy from ancient faith
 Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;
 Withal a season dangerous and wild,
 A time when sage Experience would have snatched 315
 Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
 A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
 In that unworthy service was prepared
 To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie, 320
 A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
 I saw them in their rest, a sojourner

Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
 In that delightful island which protects
 Their place of convocation—there I heard, 325
 Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
 A monitory sound that never failed,—
 The sunset cannon. While the orb went down
 In the tranquillity of nature, came
 That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me 330
 Without a spirit overcast by dark
 Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
 Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad 335
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
 And thus, on every side beset with foes,
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts 340
 From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
 The sternness of the just, the faith of those
 Who doubted not that Providence had times
 Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned
 The human Understanding paramount 345
 And made of that their God, the hopes of men
 Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
 For a paradise of ages, the blind rage
 Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
 Of intermeddlers, steady purposes 350
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life—were pressed
 Into one service, busy with one work.
 The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
 Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared, 355
 Her frenzy only active to extol
 Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
 Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year

With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook, 360
 The maiden from the bosom of her love,
 The mother from the cradle of her babe,
 The warrior from the field—all perished, all—
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough 365
 For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it proudly, eager as a child,
 (If like desires of innocent little ones
 May with such heinous appetites be compared),
 Pleased in some open field to exercise 370
 A toy that mimics with revolving wings
 The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes
 Spin in his eyesight, ‘that’ contents him not,
 But with the plaything at arm’s length, he sets 375
 His front against the blast, and runs amain,
 That it may whirl the faster.
 Amid the depth
 Of those enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being 380
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,
 Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour 385
 Of her composure, felt that agony,
 And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!
 It was a lamentable time for man,
 Whether a hope had e’er been his or not:
 A woful time for them whose hopes survived 390
 The shock; most woful for those few who still
 Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
 Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved:
 The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms, 395
 And throttled with an infant godhead’s might
 The snakes about her cradle; that was well,

And as it should be; yet no cure for them
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind. 400
 Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
 Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
 To me came rarely charged with natural gifts, 405
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair
 And tyranny, and implements of death;
 And innocent victims sinking under fear,
 And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,
 Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds 410
 For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth
 And levity in dungeons, where the dust
 Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
 In long orations, which I strove to plead 415
 Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
 Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
 In the last place of refuge—my own soul.

When I began in youth's delightful prime 420
 To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first,
 Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free
 From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme!
 Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe 425
 Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
 The veins that branch through every frame of life,
 Making man what he is, creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence,
 Above the rest raised infinite ascents 430
 When reason that enables him to be
 Is not sequestered—what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship,
 What countenance to promote this second love!

The first was service paid to things which lie 435
 Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
 Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
 Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,
 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams. 440

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
 In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
 With them to take a troubled human heart,
 Wanted not consolations, nor a creed
 Of reconciliation, then when they denounced, 445
 On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
 Of their offences, punishment to come;
 Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
 Before them, in some desolated place,
 The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled; 450
 So, with devout humility be it said,
 So, did a portion of that spirit fall
 On me uplifted from the vantage-ground
 Of pity and sorrow to a state of being
 That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw 455
 Glimpses of retribution, terrible,
 And in the order of sublime behests:
 But, even if that were not, amid the awe
 Of unintelligible chastisement,
 Not only acquiescences of faith 460
 Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
 Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
 Within the folds of no ungentle breast
 Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged?
 Wild blasts of music thus could find their way 465
 Into the midst of turbulent events;
 So that worst tempests might be listened to.
 Then was the truth received into my heart,
 That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
 If from the affliction somewhere do not grow 470
 Honour which could not else have been, a faith,

An elevation, and a sanctity,
 If new strength be not given nor old restored,
 The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
 Was taken up by scoffers in their pride, 475
 Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
 From popular government and equality,"
 I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names
 By false philosophy had caused the woe, 480
 But a terrific reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance filled up from age to age,
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea 485
 Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
 So 'that' disastrous period did not want
 Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
 To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven
 Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less, 490
 For those examples, in no age surpassed,
 Of fortitude and energy and love,
 And human nature faithful to herself
 Under worst trials, was I driven to think
 Of the glad times when first I traversed France 495
 A youthful pilgrim; above all reviewed
 That eventide, when under windows bright
 With happy faces and with garlands hung,
 And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street,
 Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed, 500
 I paced, a dear companion at my side,
 The town of Arras, whence with promise high
 Issued, on delegation to sustain
 Humanity and right, 'that' Robespierre,
 He who thereafter, and in how short time! 505
 Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
 When the calamity spread far and wide—
 And this same city, that did then appear

To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
 Under the vengeance of her cruel son, 510
 As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost
 Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
 For lingering yet an image in my mind
 To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine 515
 Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
 So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
 A separate record. Over the smooth sands
 Of Leven's ample estuary lay
 My journey, and beneath a genial sun, 520
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky
 And clouds and intermingling mountain tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad,
 Creatures of one ethereal substance met
 In consistory, like a diadem 525
 Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
 In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
 Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
 Among whose happy fields I had grown up
 From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle, 530
 That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
 Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
 Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
 As even their pensive influence drew from mine.
 How could it otherwise? for not in vain 535
 That very morning had I turned aside
 To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
 An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
 And on the stone were graven by his desire
 Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray. 540
 This faithful guide, speaking from his deathbed,
 Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
 But said to me, "My head will soon lie low;"
 And when I saw the turf that covered him,
 After the lapse of full eight years, those words, 545

With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
 Came back upon me, so that some few tears
 Fell from me in my own despite. But now
 I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
 With tender pleasure of the verses graven 550
 Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:
 He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 That he had formed, when I, at his command, 555
 Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood,
 (Itself like a sea rock) the low remains 560
 (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
 Of a dilapidated structure, once
 A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
 Said matins at the hour that suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide. 565
 Not far from that still ruin all the plain
 Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
 Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
 In loose procession through the shallow stream 570
 Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
 And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
 As he approached, no salutation given 575
 In the familiar language of the day,
 Cried, "Robespierre is dead!" nor was a doubt,
 After strict question, left within my mind
 That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude 580
 To everlasting Justice, by this fiat

Made manifest. "Come now, ye golden times,"
Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
A hymn of triumph: "as the morning comes
From out the bosom of the night, come ye: 585
Thus far our trust is verified; behold!
They who with clumsy desperation brought
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
Of their own helper have been swept away; 590
Their madness stands declared and visible;
Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace."—
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
The madding factions might be tranquillised, 595
And how through hardships manifold and long
The glorious renovation would proceed.
Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way
Along that very shore which I had skimmed 600
In former days, when—spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
And the stone abbot, after circuit made
In wantonness of heart, a joyous band
Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home 605
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

BOOK ELEVENTH FRANCE (concluded)

FROM that time forth, Authority in France
Put on a milder face; Terror had ceased,
Yet everything was wanting that might give
Courage to them who looked for good by light
Of rational Experience, for the shoots 5
And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:
Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;
The Senate's language, and the public acts
And measures of the Government, though both
Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power 10
To daunt me; in the People was my trust:
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
I knew that wound external could not take
Life from the young Republic; that new foes
Would only follow, in the path of shame, 15
Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
Great, universal, irresistible.
This intuition led me to confound
One victory with another, higher far,—
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home, 20
And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still
Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
That what was in degree the same was likewise
The same in quality,—that, as the worse
Of the two spirits then at strife remained 25
Untired, the better, surely, would preserve

The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,
 In all conditions of society,
 Communion more direct and intimate
 With Nature,—hence, ofttimes, with reason too— 30
 Than age or manhood, even. To Nature, then,
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For 'her' to move about in, uncontrolled.
 Hence could I see how Babel-like their task, 35
 Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day
 Its petty promises, to build a tower
 For their own safety; laughed with my compeers
 At gravest heads, by enmity to France 40
 Distempered, till they found, in every blast
 Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn,
 For her great cause record or prophecy
 Of utter ruin. How might we believe
 That wisdom could, in any shape, come near 45
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few
 Of our opinions had been just, we took
 Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
 And thought that other notions were as sound 50
 Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
 That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme, 55
 What in those days, through Britain, was performed
 To turn 'all' judgments out of their right course;
 But this is passion over-near ourselves,
 Reality too close and too intense,
 And intermixed with something, in my mind, 60
 Of scorn and condemnation personal,
 That would profane the sanctity of verse.
 Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
 Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men

Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law 65
 A tool of murder; they who ruled the State—
 Though with such awful proof before their eyes
 That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
 And can reap nothing better—child-like longed
 To imitate, not wise enough to avoid; 70
 Or left (by mere timidity betrayed)
 The plain straight road, for one no better chosen
 Than if their wish had been to undermine
 Justice, and make an end of Liberty.

But from these bitter truths I must return 75
 To my own history. It hath been told
 That I was led to take an eager part
 In arguments of civil polity,
 Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
 I had approached, like other youths, the shield 80
 Of human nature from the golden side,
 And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
 The quality of the metal which I saw.
 What there is best in individual man,
 Of wise in passion, and sublime in power, 85
 Benevolent in small societies,
 And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
 Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
 By reason: nay, far from it; they were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn, 90
 Not proof against the injuries of the day;
 Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,
 And of the bounds which sever it from good, 95
 As books and common intercourse with life
 Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,
 When the world travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed—I began
 To meditate with ardour on the rule 100
 And management of nations; what it is

And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
 Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
 Their happiness or misery, depends
 Upon their laws, and fashion of the State. 105

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
 For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very Heaven! O times, 110
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance!

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself 115
 A prime enchantress—to assist the work,
 Which then was going forward in her name!
 Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
 The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
 (As at some moments might not be unfelt 120
 Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
 The budding rose above the rose full blown.

What temper at the prospect did not wake
 To happiness unthought of? The inert
 Were roused, and lively natures rapt away! 125

They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
 The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
 Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
 Among the grandest objects of the sense, 130

And dealt with whatsoever they found there
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
 Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild, 135
 And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
 Now was it that ‘both’ found, the meek and lofty
 Did both find, helpers to their hearts’ desire,

And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—
 Were called upon to exercise their skill, 140
 Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,—
 Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
 But in the very world, which is the world
 Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
 We find our happiness, or not at all! 145

Why should I not confess that Earth was then
 To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,
 Seems, when the first time visited, to one
 Who thither comes to find in it his home?
 He walks about and looks upon the spot 150
 With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
 And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,
 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance 155
 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still predominant;
 When erring, erring on the better part,
 And in the kinder spirit; placable,
 Indulgent, as not uninformed that men 160
 See as they have been taught—Antiquity
 Gives rights to error; and aware, no less
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of License as of Liberty;
 And above all—for this was more than all— 165
 Not caring if the wind did now and then
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity;
 In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider 170
 That from the cradle had grown up with me,
 And losing, in no other way than light
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline, such it might be said

Was my condition, till with open war 175
 Britain opposed the liberties of France.
 This threw me first out of the pale of love;
 Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
 My sentiments; was not, as hitherto,
 A swallowing up of lesser things in great, 180
 But change of them into their contraries;
 And thus a way was opened for mistakes
 And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
 In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
 Was now a shame; my likings and my loves 185
 Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry;
 And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
 Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
 Into sensations near the heart: meantime,
 As from the first, wild theories were afloat, 190
 To whose pretensions, sedulously urged,
 I had but lent a careless ear, assured
 That time was ready to set all things right,
 And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
 Would be oppressed no more. 195

But when events

Brought less encouragement, and unto these
 The immediate proof of principles no more
 Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
 Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty, 200
 Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
 Could through my understanding's natural growth
 No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
 Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
 Her hand upon her object—evidence 205
 Safer, of universal application, such
 As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
 For one of conquest, losing sight of all 210
 Which they had struggled for: up mounted now,

Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame 215
 Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat 220
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
 The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast 225
 To depravation, speculative schemes—
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element—
 Found ready welcome. Tempting region ‘that’ 230
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work,
 And never hear the sound of their own names.
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least 235
 With that which makes our Reason’s naked self
 The object of its fervour. What delight!
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off 240
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
 Build social upon personal Liberty,
 Which, to the blind restraints of general laws,
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed 245
 Upon an independent intellect.
 Thus expectation rose again; thus hope,
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.

Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
 I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst 250
 Of a secure intelligence, and sick
 Of other longing, I pursued what seemed
 A more exalted nature; wished that Man
 Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty, 255
 Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight—
 A noble aspiration! 'yet' I feel
 (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
 The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
 To feel it;—but return we to our course. 260

Enough, 'tis true—could such a plea excuse
 Those aberrations—had the clamorous friends
 Of ancient Institutions said and done
 To bring disgrace upon their very names;
 Disgrace, of which, custom and written law, 265
 And sundry moral sentiments as props
 Or emanations of those institutes,
 Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
 Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
 'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man 270
 Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
 Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock
 Was given to old opinions; all men's minds
 Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded. After what hath been 275
 Already said of patriotic love,
 Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
 In temperament, withal a happy man,
 And therefore bold to look on painful things,
 Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold, 280
 I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
 To anatomise the frame of social life;
 Yea, the whole body of society
 Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
 That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes 285

Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
 Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
 What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
 And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false 290
 From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
 Out of a heart that had been turned aside
 From Nature's way by outward accidents,
 And which was thus confounded, more and more
 Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared, 295
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed 300
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal 'proof',
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine, 305
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

This was the crisis of that strong disease,
 This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
 Deeming our blessed reason of least use 310
 Where wanted most: "The lordly attributes
 Of will and choice," I bitterly exclaimed
 "What are they but a mockery of a Being
 Who hath in no concerns of his a test
 Of good and evil; knows not what to fear 315
 Or hope for, what to covet or to shun;
 And who, if those could be discerned, would yet
 Be little profited, would see, and ask
 Where is the obligation to enforce?
 And, to acknowledged law rebellious, still, 320
 As selfish passion urged, would act amiss;
 The dupe of folly, or the slave of crime."

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
 With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
 From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down 325
 In reconciliation with an utter waste
 Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,
 (Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
 Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)
 But turned to abstract science, and there sought 330
 Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
 Where the disturbances of space and time—
 Whether in matters various, properties
 Inherent, or from human will and power
 Derived—find no admission. Then it was— 335
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!—
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight
 Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
 Of sudden admonition—like a brook
 That did but ‘cross’ a lonely road, and now 340
 Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
 Companion never lost through many a league—
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
 Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed 345
 Than as a clouded and a waning moon:
 She whispered still that brightness would return;
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth; 350
 And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
 If willing audience fail not, Nature’s self,
 By all varieties of human love
 Assisted, led me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart 355
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
 Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less), when, finally to close 360

And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope
 Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—
 This last opprobrium, when we see a people,
 That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
 For manna, take a lesson from the dog 365
 Returning to his vomit; when the sun
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation with a living pomp
 Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
 Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed, 370
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
 Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend!

Through times of honour and through times of shame
 Descending, have I faithfully retraced 375
 The perturbations of a youthful mind
 Under a long-lived storm of great events—
 A story destined for thy ear, who now,
 Among the fallen of nations, dost abide
 Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts 380
 His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,
 The city of Timoleon! Righteous Heaven!
 How are the mighty prostrated! They first,
 They first of all that breathe should have awaked
 When the great voice was heard from out the tombs 385
 Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
 For ill-requited France, by many deemed
 A trifler only in her proudest day;
 Have been distressed to think of what she once
 Promised, now is; a far more sober cause 390
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land,
 To the reanimating influence lost
 Of memory, to virtue lost and hope,
 Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn.

But indignation works where hope is not, 395
 And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
 One great society alone on earth:

The noble Living and the noble Dead.

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
 A ladder for thy spirit to reascend 400
 To health and joy and pure contentedness;
 To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
 From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now
 Stands single in her only sanctuary;
 A lonely wanderer, art gone, by pain 405
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
 The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again: 410
 My own delights do scarcely seem to me
 My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
 Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks
 Abroad on many nations, are no more
 For me that image of pure gladsomeness 415
 Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,
 For purpose, at a time, how different!
 Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
 That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
 Matured, and in the summer of their strength. 420
 Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
 On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
 Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine,
 From the first play-time of the infant world
 Kept sacred to restorative delight, 425
 When from afar invoked by anxious love?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Ere yet familiar with the classic page,
 I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo,
 The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened 430
 At thy command, at her command gives way;
 A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,
 Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold

Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales;
 Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name 435
 Of note belonging to that honoured isle,
 Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes, pure abstracted soul!
 That doth not yield a solace to my grief:
 And, O Theocritus, so far have some 440
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,
 By their endowments, good or great, that they
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
 Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved,
 When thinking on my own beloved friend, 445
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his impious lord
 Within a chest imprisoned; how they came
 Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,
 And fed him there, alive, month after month, 450
 Because the goatherd, blessed man! had lips
 Wet with the Muses' nectar.

Thus I soothe

The pensive moments by this calm fire-side,
 And find a thousand bounteous images 455
 To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
 Our prayers have been accepted; thou wilt stand
 On Etna's summit, above earth and sea,
 Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens
 Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs, 460
 Worthy of poets who attuned their harps
 In wood or echoing cave, for discipline
 Of heroes; or, in reverence to the gods,
 'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs
 Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain 465
 Those temples, where they in their ruins yet
 Survive for inspiration, shall attract
 Thy solitary steps: and on the brink
 Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse;
 Or, if that fountain be in truth no more, 470
 Then, near some other spring—which, by the name

Thou gratest, willingly deceived—
I see thee linger a glad votary,
And not a captive pining for his home.

BOOK TWELFTH IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

LONG time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed, 5
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs, 10
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without Injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used, 15
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night; 20
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is

To interpose the covert of your shades, 25
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell 30
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,
In common with the children of her love,
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields, 35
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
So neither were complacency, nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through these distracted times; in Nature still 40
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told 45
Of intellectual power, fostering love,
Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,
Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing
Prophetic sympathies of genial faith:
So was I favoured—such my happy lot—
Until that natural graciousness of mind 50
Gave way to overpressure from the times
And their disastrous issues. What availed,
When spells forbade the voyager to land,
That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore
Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower 55
Of blissful gratitude and fearless love?
Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,
And hope that future times 'would' surely see,
The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,
From him who had been; that I could no more 60
Trust the elevation which had made me one

With the great family that still survives
 To illuminate the abyss of ages past,
 Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed
 That their best virtues were not free from taint 65
 Of something false and weak, that could not stand
 The open eye of Reason. Then I said,
 "Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee
 More perfectly of purer creatures;—yet
 If reason be nobility in man, 70
 Can aught be more ignoble than the man
 Whom they delight in, blinded as he is
 By prejudice, the miserable slave
 Of low ambition or distempered love?"

In such strange passion, if I may once more 75
 Review the past, I warred against myself—
 A bigot to a new idolatry—
 Like a cowled monk who hath forsworn the world,
 Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
 From all the sources of her former strength; 80
 And as, by simple waving of a wand,
 The wizard instantaneously dissolves
 Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 Those mysteries of being which have made, 85
 And shall continue evermore to make,
 Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far
 Perverted, even the visible Universe
 Fell under the dominion of a taste 90
 Less spiritual, with microscopic view
 Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
 That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
 Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds 95
 And roaring waters, and in lights and shades

That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart 100
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been 105
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there 110
Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art; but more,—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene, 115
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place, 120
Insensible. Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature, 125
A twofold frame of body and of mind.
I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in 'me' as often held my mind 130
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Could I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart

This tyranny, summons all the senses each 135
 To counteract the other, and themselves,
 And makes them all, and the objects with which all
 Are conversant, subservient in their turn
 To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
 But leave we this: enough that my delights 140
 (Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
 Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound;
 I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
 Still craving combinations of new forms,
 New pleasure, wider empire for the sight, 145
 Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
 To lay the inner faculties asleep.
 Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
 And various trials of our complex being,
 As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense 150
 Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
 A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
 Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
 Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties, 155
 Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
 When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
 She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
 Whate'er the scene presented to her view
 That was the best, to that she was attuned 160
 By her benign simplicity of life,
 And through a perfect happiness of soul,
 Whose variegated feelings were in this
 Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
 Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field, 165
 Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
 Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
 That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
 And everything she looked on, should have had
 An intimation how she bore herself 170
 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
 In such a being; for, her common thoughts

Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills, 175
I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time 180
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping them among the depth of things,
As piety ordained, could I submit 185
To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied. 190
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart:
In truth, the degradation—howsoe'er
Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,
Of custom that prepares a partial scale 195
In which the little oft outweighs the great;
Or any other cause that hath been named;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes 200
Inaudible—was transient; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again 205
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a 'creative' soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,

That with distinct pre-eminence retain
 A renovating virtue, whence—depressed 210
 By false opinion and contentious thought,
 Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
 In trivial occupations, and the round
 Of ordinary intercourse—our minds
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired; 215
 A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
 That penetrates, enables us to mount,
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
 This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
 Among those passages of life that give 220
 Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
 The mind is lord and master—outward sense
 The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
 From our first childhood. I remember well, 225
 That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
 Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
 I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:
 An ancient servant of my father's house
 Was with me, my encourager and guide: 230
 We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
 Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear
 Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
 I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
 Came to a bottom, where in former times 235
 A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
 The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
 And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
 Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
 Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name. 240
 The monumental letters were inscribed
 In times long past; but still, from year to year
 By superstition of the neighbourhood,
 The grass is cleared away, and to this hour
 The characters are fresh and visible: 245
 A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,

Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit, and, more near, 250
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man, 255
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed 260
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side,
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell 265
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength 270
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel, 275
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
Open; I would approach them, but they close. 280
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,

Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past 285
 For future restoration.—Yet another
 Of these memorials:—

One Christmas-time,
 On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth 290
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight
 Of those led palfreys that should bear us home;
 My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,
 That, from the meeting-point of two highways
 Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched; 295
 Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
 My expectation, thither I repaired,
 Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day
 Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
 I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall; 300
 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
 Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;
 With those companions at my side, I watched
 Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
 Gave intermitting prospect of the copse 305
 And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
 That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
 Sojourners in my father's house, he died;
 And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
 Followed his body to the grave. The event, 310
 With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
 A chastisement; and when I called to mind
 That day so lately past, when from the crag
 I looked in such anxiety of hope;
 With trite reflections of morality, 315
 Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
 To God, Who thus corrected my desires;
 And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
 And all the business of the elements,
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree, 320
 And the bleak music from that old stone wall,
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist

BOOK THIRTEENTH IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED (concluded)

FROM Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange 5
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought. 10

Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude, and confidence in truth. 15
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To re-appear, 'twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power 20
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason; that matures

Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal, 25
No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect; but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance 30
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure; and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set
On throwing off incumbrances, to seek
In man, and in the frame of social life, 35
Whate'er there is desirable and good
Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
And function, or, through strict vicissitude
Of life and death, revolving. Above all
Were re-established now those watchful thoughts 40
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon—power and energy detached
From moral purpose—early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love 45
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love; 50
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust 55
Became more firm in feelings that had stood
The test of such a trial; clearer far
My sense of excellence—of right and wrong:
The promise of the present time retired

Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes, 60
 Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
 For present good in life's familiar face,
 And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last
 And what would disappear; prepared to find 65
 Presumption, folly, madness, in the men
 Who thrust themselves upon the passive world
 As Rulers of the world; to see in these,
 Even when the public welfare is their aim,
 Plans without thought, or built on theories 70
 Vague and unsound; and having brought the books
 Of modern statists to their proper test,
 Life, human life, with all its sacred claims
 Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,
 Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death; 75
 And having thus discerned how dire a thing
 Is worshipped in that idol proudly named
 "The Wealth of Nations," 'where' alone that wealth
 Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained
 A more judicious knowledge of the worth 80
 And dignity of individual man,
 No composition of the brain, but man
 Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
 With our own eyes—I could not but inquire—
 Not with less interest than heretofore, 85
 But greater, though in spirit more subdued—
 Why is this glorious creature to be found
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,
 Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown
 By Nature in the way of such a hope? 90
 Our animal appetites and daily wants,
 Are these obstructions insurmountable?
 If not, then others vanish into air.
 "Inspect the basis of the social pile:
 Inquire," said I, "how much of mental power 95
 And genuine virtue they possess who live

By bodily toil, labour exceeding far
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
Ourselves entail." Such estimate to frame 100
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind
My earliest notices; with these compared
The observations made in later youth, 105
And to that day continued.—For, the time
Had never been when throes of mighty Nations
And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
How far soe'er transported and possessed,
Full measure of content; but still I craved 110
An intermingling of distinct regards
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned
From the great City, else it must have proved
To me a heart-depressing wilderness; 115
But much was wanting: therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed, 120
Alas! to few in this untoward world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook, 125
Deep vale, or anywhere, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir:
Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,
In my esteem, next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day 130
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird

Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
 Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves, 135
 Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:
 And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,
 Converse with men, where if we meet a face
 We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths
 With long long ways before, by cottage bench, 140
 Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
 The windings of a public way? the sight,
 Familiar object as it is, hath wrought
 On my imagination since the morn 145
 Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
 One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
 The naked summit of a far-off hill
 Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
 Was like an invitation into space 150
 Boundless, or guide into eternity.
 Yes, something of the grandeur which invests
 The mariner, who sails the roaring sea
 Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
 Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth; 155
 Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
 Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;
 From many other uncouth vagrants (passed
 In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why
 Take note of this? When I began to enquire, 160
 To watch and question those I met, and speak
 Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
 Were open schools in which I daily read
 With most delight the passions of mankind,
 Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed; 165
 There saw into the depth of human souls,
 Souls that appear to have no depth at all
 To careless eyes. And—now convinced at heart
 How little those formalities, to which
 With overweening trust alone we give 170

The name of Education, have to do
With real feeling and just sense; how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most; and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked 175
With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace 180
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair. 185

There are who think that strong affection, love
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
A gift, to use a term which they would use,
Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires
Retirement, leisure, language purified 190
By manners studied and elaborate;
That whoso feels such passion in its strength
Must live within the very light and air
Of courteous usages refined by art.
True is it, where oppression worse than death 195
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And poverty and labour in excess
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature's self 200
Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed,
Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,
And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed. 205
—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,

How books mislead us, seeking their reward
 From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
 By artificial lights; how they debase 210
 The Many for the pleasure of those Few;
 Effeminately level down the truth
 To certain general notions, for the sake
 Of being understood at once, or else
 Through want of better knowledge in the heads 215
 That framed them; flattering self-conceit with words,
 That, while they most ambitiously set forth
 Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
 Whereby society has parted man
 From man, neglect the universal heart. 220

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
 A youthful traveller, and see daily now
 In the familiar circuit of my home,
 Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
 To Nature, and the power of human minds, 225
 To men as they are men within themselves.
 How oft high service is performed within,
 When all the external man is rude in show,—
 Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
 But a mere mountain chapel, that protects 230
 Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
 Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these,
 If future years mature me for the task,
 Will I record the praises, making verse
 Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth 235
 And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
 That justice may be done, obeisance paid
 Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
 Inspire; through unadulterated ears
 Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme 240
 No other than the very heart of man,
 As found among the best of those who live—
 Not unexalted by religious faith,
 Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few—

In Nature's presence: thence may I select 245
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
And miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.
Be mine to follow with no timid step 250
Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
Speaking no dream, but things oracular;
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise 255
Do read the invisible soul; by men adroit
In speech, and for communion with the world
Accomplished; minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,
And elevated most when most admired. 260
Men may be found of other mould than these,
Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and will,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates. Others, too, 265
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse: 270
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them: this I speak 275
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive
Convictions still more strong than heretofore, 280
Not only that the inner frame is good,

And graciously composed, but that, no less,
 Nature for all conditions wants not power
 To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
 The outside of her creatures, and to breathe 285
 Grandeur upon the very humblest face
 Of human life. I felt that the array
 Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
 Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
 What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms 290
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
 That intermingles with those works of man
 To which she summons him; although the works
 Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
 And that the Genius of the Poet hence 295
 May boldly take his way among mankind
 Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood
 By Nature's side among the men of old,
 And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend!
 If thou partake the animating faith 300
 That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
 Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
 Have each his own peculiar faculty,
 Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
 Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame 305
 The humblest of this band who dares to hope
 That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
 An insight that in some sort he possesses,
 A privilege whereby a work of his,
 Proceeding from a source of untaught things, 310
 Creative and enduring, may become
 A power like one of Nature's. To a hope
 Not less ambitious once among the wilds
 Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised;
 There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs 315
 Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
 Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
 Time with his retinue of ages fled
 Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw

Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear; 320
Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,
A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength, 325
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
I called on Darkness—but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames; 330
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men—how deep the groans! the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead. 335
At other moments—(for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent 340
Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
The constellations—gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands 345
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath
Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed 350
Or fancied in the obscurity of years
From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!
Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said
That then and there my mind had exercised 355
Upon the vulgar forms of present things,

The actual world of our familiar days,
Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
Not hitherto reflected. Call we this 360
A partial judgment—and yet why? for ‘then’
We were as strangers; and I may not speak
Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,
Which on thy young imagination, trained
In the great City, broke like light from far. 365
Moreover, each man’s Mind is to herself
Witness and judge; and I remember well
That in life’s every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit 370
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange 375
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the objects seen, and eye that sees.

BOOK FOURTEENTH

CONCLUSION

IN one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun 5
Rise, from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth. 10

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round, 15
And, after ordinary travellers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked 20
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed 25
In that wild place and at the dead of night,

Being over and forgotten, on we wound
 In silence as before. With forehead bent
 Earthward, as if in opposition set
 Against an enemy, I panted up 30
 With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
 Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
 Ascending at loose distance each from each,
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten, 35
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
 Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
 For instantly a light upon the turf
 Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament 40
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
 All over this still ocean; and beyond,
 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched, 45
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
 Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
 To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
 Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
 Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none 50
 Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
 Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
 In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
 Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
 Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay 55
 All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
 Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
 A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
 Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
 Innumerable, roaring with one voice! 60
 Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
 For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

When into air had partially dissolved

That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought 65
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind 70
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power, 75
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime, 80
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive, 85
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own. 90
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns 95
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both 100
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things

From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
 They need not extraordinary calls
 To rouse them; in a world of life they live, 105
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,
 But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
 To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
 And with the generations of mankind
 Spread over time, past, present, and to come, 110
 Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
 Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
 Of Whom they are, habitually infused 115
 Through every image and through every thought,
 And all affections by communion raised
 From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
 Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
 Whether discursive or intuitive; 120
 Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
 Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
 Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
 Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
 Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ 125
 May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
 Which passeth understanding, that repose
 In moral judgments which from this pure source
 Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long 130
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
 For this alone is genuine liberty:
 Where is the favoured being who hath held
 That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
 In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?— 135
 A humbler destiny have we retraced,
 And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
 And backward wanderings along thorny ways:

Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
 Within whose solemn temple I received 140
 My earliest visitations, careless then
 Of what was given me; and which now I range,
 A meditative, oft a suffering, man—
 Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
 Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend 145
 Their modulation with these vocal streams—
 That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
 Revolving with the accidents of life,
 May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
 Never did I, in quest of right and wrong, 150
 Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
 Nor was in any public hope the dupe
 Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
 Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
 But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy 155
 From every combination which might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,
 Of use and custom to bow down the soul
 Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
 And substitute a universe of death 160
 For that which moves with light and life informed,
 Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
 To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
 Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
 In presence of sublime or beautiful forms, 165
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
 Evil as one is rashly named by men
 Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
 All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
 That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields 170
 In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
 And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
 And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
 Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
 And not inaptly so, for love it is, 175
 Far as it carries thee. In some green bower

Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
 The One who is thy choice of all the world:
 There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
 Impassioned, but delight how pitiable! 180
 Unless this love by a still higher love
 Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
 Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
 By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
 Lifted, in union with the purest, best, 185
 Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
 Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
 Without Imagination, which, in truth,
 Is but another name for absolute power 190
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
 And Reason in her most exalted mood.
 This faculty hath been the feeding source
 Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
 From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard 195
 Its natal murmur; followed it to light
 And open day; accompanied its course
 Among the ways of Nature, for a time
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed;
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more 200
 In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
 The works of man and face of human life;
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
 Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
 Of human Being, Eternity, and God. 205

Imagination having been our theme,
 So also hath that intellectual Love,
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand
 Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man!
 Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here; 210
 Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:
 No other can divide with thee this work:

No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
The prime and vital principle is thine 215
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
Here, the foundation of his future years! 220
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen 225
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,
Of humble cares and delicate desires, 230
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis most true 235
That later seasons owed to thee no less;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that unassisted I had marked 240
In life or nature of those charms minute
That win their way into the heart by stealth
(Still to the very going-out of youth)
I too exclusively esteemed 'that' love,
And sought 'that' beauty, which, as Milton sings, 245
Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
In her original self too confident,

Of life and death, time and eternity,
 Admitted more habitually a mild
 Interposition—a serene delight 290
 In closelier gathering cares, such as become
 A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
 Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
 And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
 The rapture of the hallelujah sent 295
 From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed
 And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
 In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
 Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
 Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there 300
 Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
 At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought
 To its appointed close: the discipline
 And consummation of a Poet's mind, 305
 In everything that stood most prominent,
 Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached
 The time (our guiding object from the first)
 When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,
 Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such 310
 My knowledge, as to make me capable
 Of building up a Work that shall endure.
 Yet much hath been omitted, as need was;
 Of books how much! and even of the other wealth
 That is collected among woods and fields, 315
 Far more: for Nature's secondary grace
 Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,
 The charm more superficial that attends
 Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice
 Apt illustrations of the moral world, 320
 Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.

Finally, and above all, O Friend! (I speak
 With due regret) how much is overlooked

In human nature and her subtle ways,
 As studied first in our own hearts, and then 325
 In life among the passions of mankind,
 Varying their composition and their hue,
 Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes
 That individual character presents
 To an attentive eye. For progress meet, 330
 Along this intricate and difficult path,
 Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained,
 As one of many schoolfellows compelled,
 In hardy independence, to stand up
 Amid conflicting interests, and the shock 335
 Of various tempers; to endure and note
 What was not understood, though known to be;
 Among the mysteries of love and hate,
 Honour and shame, looking to right and left,
 Unchecked by innocence too delicate, 340
 And moral notions too intolerant,
 Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called
 To take a station among men, the step
 Was easier, the transition more secure,
 More profitable also; for, the mind 345
 Learns from such timely exercise to keep
 In wholesome separation the two natures,
 The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern;—
 Since I withdrew unwillingly from France, 350
 I led an undomestic wanderer's life,
 In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,
 Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
 Of rural England's cultivated vales
 Or Cambrian solitudes. A youth—(he bore 355
 The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words
 Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief
 That by endowments not from me withheld
 Good might be furthered—in his last decay
 By a bequest sufficient for my needs 360

Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
 At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
 By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
 Far less a common follower of the world,
 He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay 365
 Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
 A necessary maintenance insures,
 Without some hazard to the finer sense;
 He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
 Flowed in the bent of Nature. 370

Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains
 Our present purpose seems not to require,
 And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
 The mood in which this labour was begun, 375
 O Friend! The termination of my course
 Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then,
 In that distraction and intense desire,
 I said unto the life which I had lived,
 Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee 380
 Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose
 As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
 Vast prospect of the world which I had been
 And was; and hence this Song, which, like a lark,
 I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens 385
 Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
 To earth attempered and her deep-drawn sighs,
 Yet centring all in love, and in the end
 All gratulant, if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life, 390

And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
 That will be deemed no insufficient plea
 For having given the story of myself,
 Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!
 When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view 395
 Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
 That summer, under whose indulgent skies,

Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
 Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,
 Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart, 400
 Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
 Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
 And I, associate with such labour, steeped
 In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours, 405
 Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
 After the perils of his moonlight ride,
 Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
 In misery near the miserable Thorn—
 When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts, 410
 And hast before thee all which then we were,
 To thee, in memory of that happiness,
 It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!
 Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
 Is labour not unworthy of regard; 415
 To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
 Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
 That were our daily portion when we first
 Together wantoned in wild Poesy, 420
 But, under pressure of a private grief,
 Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,
 That in this meditative history
 Have been laid open, needs must make me feel
 More deeply, yet enable me to bear 425
 More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
 From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon
 Restored to us in renovated health;
 When, after the first mingling of our tears,
 'Mong other consolations, we may draw 430
 Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
 And all will be complete, thy race be run,

Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth) 435
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame,
By nations, sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know, 440
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come. 445
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes 450
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself 455
Of quality and fabric more divine.

1799-1805.