

William Wordsworth *The Prelude*



1805

The Prelude of 1805,
in Thirteen Books

WILLIAM WORDSWORTH

1805

DjVu Editions



Copyright © 2001 by Global Language Resources, Inc.
All rights reserved.

Contents

Book First <i>Introduction: Childhood and School-time</i>	1
Book Second <i>Childhood and School-time (Continued)</i>	20
Book Third <i>Residence at Cambridge</i>	34
Book Fourth <i>Summer Vacation</i>	53
Book Fifth <i>Books</i>	67
Book Sixth <i>Cambridge and the Alps</i>	85
Book Seventh <i>Residence in London</i>	105
Book Eighth <i>Retrospect: Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind</i> .	126
Book Ninth <i>Residence in France</i>	150
Book Tenth <i>Residence in France and French Revolution</i>	176
Book Eleventh <i>Imagination, How Impaired and Restored</i>	205
Book Twelfth <i>Same Subject (Continued)</i>	217
Book Thirteenth <i>Conclusion</i>	228

Book First *Introduction:* ***Childhood and School-time***

OH, there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
That blows from the green fields and from the clouds
And from the sky; it beats against my cheek,
And seems half conscious of the joy it gives.
O welcome messenger! O welcome friend! 5
A captive greets thee, coming from a house
Of bondage, from yon city's walls set free,
A prison where he hath been long immured.
Now I am free, enfranchised and at large,
May fix my habitation where I will. 10
What dwelling shall receive me, in what vale
Shall be my harbour, underneath what grove
Shall I take up my home, and what sweet stream
Shall with its murmurs lull me to my rest?
The earth is all before me—with a heart 15
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,
I look about, and should the guide I chuse
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again—
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind 20
Come fast upon me. It is shaken off,
As by miraculous gift 'tis shaken off,
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. 25
Long months of peace—if such bold word accord

With any promises of human life—
 Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
 Are mine in prospect. Whither shall I turn,
 By road or pathway, or through open field, 30
 Or shall a twig or any floating thing
 Upon the river point me out my course?

Enough that I am free, for months to come
 May dedicate myself to chosen tasks,
 May quit the tiresome sea and dwell on shore— 35
 If not a settler on the soil, at least
 To drink wild water, and to pluck green herbs,
 And gather fruits fresh from their native bough.
 Nay more, if I may trust myself, this hour
 Hath brought a gift that consecrates my joy; 40
 For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
 Was blowing on my body, felt within
 A corresponding mild creative breeze,
 A vital breeze which travelled gently on
 O'er things which it had made, and is become 45
 A tempest, a redundant energy,
 Vexing its own creation. 'Tis a power
 That does not come unrecognised, a storm
 Which, breaking up a long-continued frost,
 Brings with it vernal promises, the hope 50
 Of active days, of dignity and thought,
 Of prowess in an honorable field,
 Pure passions, virtue, knowledge, and delight,
 The holy life of music and of verse.

Thus far, O friend, did I, not used to make 55
 A present joy the matter of my song,
 Pour out that day my soul in measured strains,
 Even in the very words which I have here
 Recorded. To the open fields I told
 A prophesy; poetic numbers came 60
 Spontaneously, and clothed in priestly robe
 My spirit, thus singled out, as it might seem,

For holy services. Great hopes were mine:
My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound— 65
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A cheerful confidence in things to come.

Whereat, being not unwilling now to give
A respite to this passion, I paced on
Gently, with careless steps, and came erelong 70
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 calm and placid day
With warmth as much as needed from a sun 75

Two hours declined towards the west, a day
With silver clouds and sunshine on the grass,
And, in the sheltered grove where I was couched,
A perfect stillness. On the ground I lay
Passing through many thoughts, yet mainly such 80

As to myself pertained. I made a choice
Of one sweet vale whither my steps should turn,
And saw, methought, the very house and fields
Present before my eyes; nor did I fail

To add meanwhile assurance of some work 85
Of glory there forthwith to be begun—

Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I lay
Cheered by the genial pillow of the earth
Beneath my head, soothed by a sense of touch

From the warm ground, that balanced me, else lost 90
Entirely, seeing nought, nought hearing, save
When here and there about the grove of oaks
Where was my bed, an acorn from the trees
Fell audibly, and with a startling sound.

Thus occupied in mind I lingered here 95
Contented, nor rose up until the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; bidding then
A farewell to the city left behind,

Even with the chance equipment of that hour
 I journeyed towards the vale which I had chosen. 100
 It was a splendid evening, and my soul
 Did once again make trial of the strength
 Restored to her afresh; nor did she want
 Eolian visitations—but the harp
 Was soon defrauded, and the banded host 105
 Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,
 And lastly utter silence. ‘Be it so,
 It is an injury’, said I, ‘to this day
 To think of any thing but present joy.’
 So, like a peasant, I pursued my road 110
 Beneath the evening sun, nor had one wish
 Again to bend the sabbath of that time
 To a servile yoke. What need of many words?—
 A pleasant loitering journey, through two days
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage. 115

I spare to speak, my friend, of what ensued—
 The admiration and the love, the life
 In common things, the endless store of things
 Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood, 120
 The self-congratulations, the complete
 Composure, and the happiness entire.
 But speedily a longing in me rose
 To brace myself to some determined aim,
 Reading or thinking, either to lay up 125
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference. I had hopes
 Still higher, that with a frame of outward life
 I might endue, might fix in a visible home,
 Some portion of those phantoms of conceit, 130
 That had been floating loose about so long,
 And to such beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
 But I have been discouraged: gleams of light
 Flash often from the east, then disappear, 135

And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning. If my mind,
Remembering the sweet promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
Vain is her wish—where'er she turns she finds 140
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, O dear friend,
The poet, gentle creature as he is, 145
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. The mind itself,
The meditative mind, best pleased perhaps 150
While she as duteous as the mother dove
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
But hath less quiet instincts—goadings on
That drive her as in trouble through the groves.
With me is now such passion, which I blame 155
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare
For such a glorious work, I through myself 160
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often chearing; for I neither seem
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul,
Nor general truths which are themselves a sort
Of elements and agents, under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living mind. 165
Nor am I naked in external things,
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,
And needful to build up a poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners, these I seek, and these 170
I find in plenteous store, but nowhere such
As may be singled out with steady choice—

No little band of yet remembered names
 Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope
 To summon back from lonesome banishment 175
 And make them inmates in the hearts of men
 Now living, or to live in times to come.
 Sometimes, mistaking vainly, as I fear,
 Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
 I settle on some British theme, some old 180
 Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;
 More often resting at some gentle place
 Within the groves of chivalry I pipe
 Among the shepherds, with reposing knights
 Sit by a fountain-side and hear their tales. 185
 Sometimes, more sternly move, I would relate
 How vanquished Mithridates northward passed
 And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
 That Odin, 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 could 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 unknown man,
 Unheard of in the chronicles of kings,
 Suffered in silence for the love of truth; 205
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force
 Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of the first conquerors of the Indian Isles,
 Went single in his ministry across
 The ocean, not to comfort the oppressed, 210

But like a thirsty wind to roam about
 Withering the oppressor; how Gustavus found
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines;
 How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
 Of Wallace to be found like a wild flower 215
 All over his dear county, 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. 220
 Sometimes it suits me better to shape out
 Some tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions and habitual thoughts,
 Some variegated story, in the main
 Lofty, with interchange of gentler things. 225
 But deadening admonitions will succeed,
 And the whole beauteous fabric seems to lack
 Foundation, and withal appears throughout
 Shadowy and unsubstantial.

Then, last wish— 230
 My last and favorite aspiration—then
 I yearn towards some philosophic song
 Of truth that cherishes our daily life,
 With meditations passionate from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse 235
 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 from day to day 240
 I live a mockery of the brotherhood
 Of vice and virtue, with no skill to part
 Vague longing that is bred by want of power,
 From paramount impulse not to be withstood;
 A timorous capacity, from prudence; 245
 From circumspection, infinite delay.
 Humility and modest awe themselves

Betray me, serving often for a cloak
 To a more subtle selfishness, that now
 Doth lock my functions up in blank reserve, 250
 Now dupes me by an over-anxious eye
 That with a false activity beats off
 Simplicity and self-presented truth.
 Ah, better far than this to stray about
 Voluptuously through fields and rural walks 255
 And ask no record of the hours given up
 To vacant musing, unreproved neglect
 Of all things, and deliberate holiday.
 Far better never to have heard the name
 Of zeal and just ambition than to live 260
 Thus baffled 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.
 This is my lot; for either still I find 265
 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
 In indolence from vain perplexity, 270
 Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
 Like a false steward who hath much received
 And renders nothing back.

—Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all Rivers, lov'd 275
 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 flow'd along my dreams? For this, didst Thou,
 O Derwent! travelling over the green Plains 280
 Near my 'sweet Birthplace', didst thou, beauteous Stream
 Make ceaseless music through the night and day
 Which with its steady cadence, tempering
 Our human waywardness, compos'd my thoughts

Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
 My anxious visitation, hurrying on,
 Still hurrying, hurrying onward; moon and stars
 Were shining o'er my head; I was alone, 325
 And seem'd to be a trouble to the peace
 That was among them. Sometimes it befel
 In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
 O'erpower'd my better reason, and the bird
 Which was the captive of another's toils 330
 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
 Almost as silent as the turf they trod. 335
 Nor less in springtime when on southern banks
 The shining sun had from his knot of leaves
 Decoy'd the primrose flower, and when the Vales
 And woods were warm, was I a plunderer then
 In the high places, on the lonesome peaks 340
 Where'er, among the mountains and the winds,
 The Mother Bird had built her lodge. Though mean
 My object, and inglorious, yet the end
 Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
 Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass 345
 And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
 But ill sustain'd, and almost, as it seem'd,
 Suspended by the blast which blew amain,
 Shouldering the naked crag; Oh! at that time,
 While on the perilous ridge I hung alone, 350
 With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
 Blow through my ears! the sky seem'd not a sky
 Of earth, and with what motion mov'd the clouds!

The mind of Man is fram'd even like the breath
 And harmony of music. There is a dark 355
 Invisible workmanship that reconciles
 Discordant elements, and makes them move
 In one society. Ah me! that all

The terrors, all the early miseries	
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, that all	360
The thoughts and feelings which have been infus'd	
Into my mind, should ever have made up	
The calm existence that is mine when I	
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!	
Thanks likewise for the means! But I believe	365
That Nature, oftentimes, when she would frame	
A favor'd Being, from his earliest dawn	
Of infancy doth open out the clouds,	
As at the touch of lightning, seeking him	
With gentlest visitation; not the less,	370
Though haply aiming at the self-same end,	
Does it delight her sometimes to employ	
Severer interventions, ministry	
More palpable, and so she dealt with me.	
One evening (surely I was led by her)	375
I went alone into a Shepherd's Boat,	
A Skiff that to a Willow tree was tied	
Within a rocky Cave, its usual home.	
'Twas by the shores of Patterdale, a Vale	
Wherein I was a Stranger, thither come	380
A School-boy Traveller, at the Holidays.	
Forth rambled from the Village Inn alone	
No sooner had I sight of this small Skiff,	
Discover'd thus by unexpected chance,	
Than I unloos'd her tether and embark'd.	385
The moon was up, the Lake was shining clear	
Among the hoary mountains; from the Shore	
I push'd, and struck the oars and struck again	
In cadence, and my little Boat mov'd on	
Even like a Man who walks with stately step	390
Though bent on speed. It was an act of stealth	
And troubled pleasure; not without the voice	
Of mountain-echoes did my Boat move on,	
Leaving behind her still on either side	
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,	395

Until they melted all into one track
 Of sparkling light. A rocky Steep uprose
 Above the Cavern of the Willow tree
 And now, as suited one who proudly row'd
 With his best skill, I fix'd a steady view 400
 Upon the top of that same craggy ridge,
 The bound of the horizon, for behind
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
 She was an elfin Pinnacle; lustily
 I dipp'd my oars into the silent Lake, 405
 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 bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,
 As if with voluntary power instinct, 410
 Uprear'd its head. I struck, and struck again
 And, growing still in stature, the huge Cliff
 Rose up between me and the stars, and still,
 With measur'd motion, like a living thing,
 Strode after me. With trembling hands I turn'd, 415
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the Cavern of the Willow tree.
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark,
 And, through the meadows homeward went, with grave
 And serious thoughts; and after I had seen 420
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Work'd with a dim and undetermin'd sense
 Of unknown modes of being; in my thoughts
 There was a darkness, call it solitude,
 Or blank desertion, no familiar shapes 425
 Of hourly objects, images of trees,
 Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
 But huge and mighty Forms that do not live
 Like living men mov'd slowly through the mind
 By day and were the trouble of my dreams. 430

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought!

That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion! not in vain,
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn 435
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,
With life and nature, purifying thus 440
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.

Nor was this fellowship vouchsaf'd to me 445
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours, rolling down the valleys, made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling Lake, 450
Beneath the gloomy hills I homeward went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
'Twas mine among the fields both day and night,
And by the waters all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun 455
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows through the twilight blaz'd,
I heeded not the summons:—happy time
It was, indeed, for all of us; to me
It was a time of rapture: clear and loud 460
The village clock toll'd six; I wheel'd about,
Proud and exulting, like an untired horse,
That cares not for its home.—All shod with steel,
We hiss'd along the polish'd ice, in games
Confederate, imitative of the chace 465
And woodland pleasures, the resounding horn,
The Pack loud bellowing, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,

And not a voice was idle; with the din,
 Meanwhile, the precipices rang aloud, 470
 The leafless trees, and every icy crag
 Tinkled like iron, while the distant hills
 Into the tumult sent an alien sound
 Of melancholy, not unnoticed, while the stars,
 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west 475
 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,
 To cut across the image of a star 480
 That gleam'd upon the ice: and oftentimes
 When we had given our bodies to the wind,
 And all the shadowy banks, on either side,
 Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
 The rapid line of motion; then at once 485
 Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
 Stopp'd short, yet still the solitary Cliffs
 Wheeled by me, even as if the earth had roll'd
 With visible motion her diurnal round;
 Behind me did they stretch in solemn train 490
 Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watch'd
 Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature, in the sky
 And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
 And Souls of lonely places! can I think 495
 A vulgar hope was yours when Ye employ'd
 Such ministry, when Ye through many a year
 Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
 On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
 Impress'd upon all forms the characters 500
 Of danger or desire, and thus did make
 The surface of the universal earth
 With triumph, and delight, and hope, and fear,
 Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employ'd, 505
I might pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in its delightful round.

We were a noisy crew, the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours, 510
Nor saw a race in happiness and joy
More worthy of the ground where they were sown.

I would record with no reluctant voice
The woods of autumn and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line, 515
True symbol of the foolishness of hope,

Which with its strong enchantment led us on
By rocks and pools, shut out from every star
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings of the mountain brooks. 520

—Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt
From some hill-top, on sunny afternoons
The Kite high up among the fleecy clouds

Pull at its rein, like an impatient Courser, 525
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dash'd headlong; and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly Cottages in which we dwelt,
A ministration of your own was yours, 530
A sanctity, a safeguard, and a love!
Can I forget you, being as ye were

So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? Or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which 535
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
At evening; when with pencil and with slate, 540

In square divisions parcell'd 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.
 Or round the naked table, snow-white deal, 545
 Cherry or maple, sate in close array,
 And to the combat, Lu or Whist, led on
 thick-ribbed Army; not as in the world
 Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
 Even for the very service they had wrought, 550
 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
 Had glorified, and call'd to represent 555
 The persons of departed Potentates.
 Oh! with what echoes on the Board they fell!
 Ironic Diamonds, Clubs, Hearts, Diamonds, Spades,
 A congregation piteously akin.
 Cheap matter did they give to boyish wit, 560
 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,
 And Monarchs, surly at the wrongs sustain'd 565
 By royal visages. Meanwhile, abroad
 The heavy rain was falling, or the frost
 Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth,
 And, interrupting oft the impassion'd game,
 From Esthwaite's neighbouring Lake the splitting ice, 570
 While it sank down towards the water, sent,
 Among the meadows and the hills, its long
 And dismal yellings, like the noise of wolves
 When they are howling round the Bothnic Main.

 Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace 575
 How Nature by extrinsic passion first
 Peopled my mind with beauteous forms or grand,

And made me love them, may I well forget
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt, 580
Not seldom, even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallow'd and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual charm, that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong 585
To those first-born affinities that fit
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union betwixt life and joy.

Yes, I remember, when the changeful earth, 590
And twice five seasons on my mind had stamp'd
The faces of the moving year, even then,
A Child, I held unconscious intercourse
With the eternal Beauty, drinking in
A pure organic pleasure from the lines 595
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters colour'd by the steady clouds.

The Sands of Westmoreland, the Creeks and Bays
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
How when the Sea threw off his evening shade 600
And to the Shepherd's huts beneath the crags
Did send sweet notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these,
Engrafted in the tenderness of thought,
A stranger, linking with the spectacle 605
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace, yet I have stood,
Even while mine eye has mov'd o'er three long leagues
Of shining water, gathering, as it seem'd, 610
Through every hair-breadth of that field of light,
New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.

Thus, often in those fits of vulgar joy

Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits
 Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss 615
 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, 620
 By chance collisions and quaint accidents
 Like those ill-sorted unions, work suppos'd
 Of evil-minded fairies, yet not vain
 Nor profitless, if haply they impress'd
 Collateral objects and appearances, 625
 Albeit lifeless then, and doom'd to sleep
 Until maturer seasons call'd them forth
 To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
 —And if the vulgar joy by its own weight
 Wearied itself out of the memory, 630
 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, 635
 By pleasure and repeated happiness,
 So frequently repeated, and by force
 Of obscure feelings representative
 Of joys that were forgotten, these same scenes,
 So beauteous and majestic in themselves, 640
 Though yet the day was distant, did at length
 Become habitually dear, and all
 Their hues and forms were by invisible links
 Allied to the affections.

I began 645
 My story early, feeling as I fear,
 The weakness of a human love, for days
 Disown'd by memory, ere the birth of spring
 Planting my snowdrops among winter snows.
 Nor will it seem to thee, my Friend! so prompt 650

In sympathy, that I have lengthen'd 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 wind, 655
And haply meet reproaches, too, whose power
May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honorable toil. Yet should these hopes
Be vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know 660
With better knowledge how the heart was fram'd
Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if I am so loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, and lovely forms 665
And sweet sensations that throw back our life
And almost make our Infancy itself
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end hereby at least hath been attain'd,
My mind hath been revived, and if this mood 670
Desert me not, I will forthwith bring 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 chuse it rather at this time, than work 675
Of ampler or more varied argument.

Book Second *Childhood and School-time* (Continued)

THUS far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavour'd to retrace
My life through its first years, and measured back
The way I travell'd when I first began
To love the woods and fields; the passion yet 5
Was in its birth, sustain'd, as might befall,
By nourishment that came unsought, for still,
From week to week, from month to month, we liv'd
A round of tumult: duly were our games
Prolong'd in summer till the day-light fail'd; 10
No chair remain'd 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 the huge clouds
Were edged with twinkling stars, to bed we went,
With weary joints, and with a beating mind.
Ah! is there one who ever has been young,
Nor needs a monitory voice to tame 20
The pride of virtue, and of intellect?
And is there one, the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who does not sometimes wish
For things which cannot be, who would not give,
If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
The eagerness of infantine desire?

A tranquillizing 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, sometimes, when I think of them, I seem
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
 And of some other Being. A grey Stone
 Of native rock, left midway in the Square
 Of our small market Village, was the home 35
 And centre of these joys, and when, return'd
 After long absence, thither I repair'd,
 I found that it was split, and gone to build
 A smart Assembly-room that perk'd and flar'd
 With wash and rough-cast elbowing the ground 40
 Which had been ours. But let the fiddle scream,
 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 nam'd who there had sate 45
 And watch'd her Table with its huckster's wares
 Assiduous, thro' the length of sixty years.

We ran a boisterous race; the year span round
 With giddy motion. But the time approach'd
 That brought with it a regular desire 50
 For calmer pleasures, when the beauteous forms
 Of Nature were collaterally attach'd
 To every scheme of holiday delight,
 And every boyish sport, less grateful else,
 And languidly pursued. 55

When summer came
 It was the pastime of our afternoons
 To beat along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars, and the selected bourne
 Was now an Island musical with birds 60
 That sang for ever; now a Sister Isle
 Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown

With lillies of the valley, like a field;
 And now a third small Island where remain'd
 An old stone Table, and a moulder'd Cave, 65
 A Hermit's history. In such a race,
 So ended, disappointment could be none,
 Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:
 We rested in the shade, all pleas'd alike,
 Conquer'd and Conqueror. Thus the pride of strength, 70
 And the vain-glory of superior skill
 Were interfus'd with objects which subdu'd
 And temper'd them, and gradually produc'd
 A quiet independence of the heart.
 And to my Friend, who knows me, I may add, 75
 Unapprehensive of reproof, that hence
 Ensu'd a diffidence and modesty,
 And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
 The self-sufficing power of solitude.

No delicate viands sapp'd our bodily strength; 80
 More than we wish'd we knew the blessing then
 Of vigorous hunger, for our daily meals
 Were frugal, Sabine fare! and then, exclude
 A little weekly stipend, and we lived
 Through three divisions of the quarter'd year 85
 In penniless poverty. But now, to School
 Return'd, from the half-yearly holidays,
 We came with purses more profusely fill'd,
 Allowance which abundantly suffic'd
 To gratify the palate with repasts 90
 More costly than the Dame of whom I spake,
 That ancient Woman, and her board supplied.
 Hence inroads into distant Vales, and long
 Excursions far away among the hills,
 Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground, 95
 Or in the woods, or near a river side,
 Or by some shady fountain, while soft airs
 Among the leaves were stirring, and the sun
 Unfelt, shone sweetly round us in our joy.

Nor is my aim neglected, if I tell 100
How twice in the long length of those half-years
We from our funds, perhaps, with bolder hand
Drew largely, anxious for one day, at least,
To feel the motion of the galloping Steed;
And with the good old Inn-keeper, in truth, 105
On such occasion sometimes we employ'd
Sly subterfuge; for the intended bound
Of the day's journey was too distant far
For any cautious man, a Structure famed
Beyond its neighbourhood, the antique Walls 110
Of that large Abbey which within the vale
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,
Stands yet, a mouldering Pile, with fractured Arch,
Belfry, and Images, and living Trees,
A holy Scene! along the smooth green turf 115
Our Horses grazed: to more than inland peace
Left by the sea wind passing overhead
(Though wind of roughest temper) trees and towers
May in that Valley oftentimes be seen,
Both silent and both motionless alike; 120
Such is the shelter that is there, and such
The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted, and the summons given,
With whip and spur we by the Chantry flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legg'd Knight, 125
And the stone-Abbot, and that single Wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the Nave
Of the old Church, that, though from recent showers
The earth was comfortless, and, touch'd by faint
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place, 130
And respirations, from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripp'd large drops, yet still,
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible Bird
Sang to itself, that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and liv'd for ever there 135
To hear such music. Through the Walls we flew

And down the valley, and a circuit made
 In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth
 We scamper'd homeward. Oh! ye Rocks and Streams,
 And that still Spirit of the evening air! 140
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
 Your presence, when with slacken'd step we breath'd
 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. 145

Upon the Eastern Shore of Windermere,
 Above the crescent of a pleasant Bay,
 There stood an Inn, no homely-featured Shed,
 Brother of the surrounding Cottages,
 But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset 150
 With Chaises, Grooms, and Liveries, and within
 Decanters, Glasses, and the blood-red Wine.
 In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built
 On the large Island, had this Dwelling been
 More worthy of a Poet's love, a Hut, 155
 Proud of its one bright fire, and sycamore shade.
 But though the rhymes were gone which once inscribed
 The threshold, and large golden characters
 On the blue-frosted Signboard had usurp'd
 The place of the old Lion, in contempt 160
 And mockery of the rustic painter's hand,
 Yet to this hour the spot to me is dear
 With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
 Upon a slope surmounted by the plain
 Of a small Bowling-green; beneath us stood 165
 A grove; with gleams of water through the trees
 And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
 Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream.
 And there, through half an afternoon, we play'd
 On the smooth platform, and the shouts we sent 170
 Made all the mountains ring. But ere the fall
 Of night, when in our pinnace we return'd
 Over the dusky Lake, and to the beach

Of some small Island steer'd our course with one,
The Minstrel of our troop, and left him there, 175
And row'd off gently, while he blew his flute
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 180
Into my heart, and held me like a dream.

Thus daily were my sympathies enlarged,
And thus the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun, a Boy I lov'd the sun, 185
Not as I since have lov'd him, as a pledge
And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which while we view we feel we are alive;
But, for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen 190
The western mountain touch his setting orb,
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appear'd to flow
With its own pleasure, and I breath'd with joy.
And from like feelings, humble though intense, 195
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I would dream away my purposes,
Standing to look upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew 200
No other region; but belong'd to thee,
Yea, appertain'd by a peculiar right
To thee and thy grey huts, my darling Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attach'd
My heart to rural objects, day by day 205
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, 210
 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 215
 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 220
 To our infirmity. Thou art no slave
 Of that false secondary power, by which,
 In weakness, we create distinctions, then
 Deem that our puny boundaries are things
 Which we perceive, and not which we have made. 225
 To thee, unblinded by these outward shows,
 The unity of all has been reveal'd
 And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skill'd
 Than many are to class the cabinet
 Of their sensations, and, in voluble phrase, 230
 Run through the history and birth of each,
 As of a single independent thing.
 Hard task to analyse a soul, in which,
 Not only general habits and desires,
 But each most obvious and particular thought, 235
 Not in a mystical and idle sense,
 But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd,
 Hath no beginning.

Bless'd the infant Babe,
 (For with my best conjectures I would trace 240
 The progress of our Being) blest the Babe,
 Nurs'd in his Mother's arms, the Babe who sleeps
 Upon his Mother's breast, who, when his soul
 Claims manifest kindred with an earthly soul,
 Doth gather passion from his Mother's eye! 245
 Such feelings pass into his torpid life

Like an awakening breeze, and hence his mind
 Even [in the first trial of its powers]
 Is prompt and watchful, eager to combine
 In one appearance, all the elements 250
 And parts of the same object, else detach'd
 And loth to coalesce. Thus, day by day,
 Subjected to the discipline of love,
 His organs and recipient faculties
 Are quicken'd, are more vigorous, his mind spreads, 255
 Tenacious of the forms which it receives.
 In one beloved presence, nay and more,
 In that most apprehensive habitude
 And those sensations which have been deriv'd
 From this beloved Presence, there exists 260
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
 All objects through all intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewilder'd and depress'd;
 Along his infant veins are interfus'd
 The gravitation and the filial bond 265
 Of nature, that connect him with the world.
 Emphatically such a Being lives,
 An inmate of this *active* universe;
 From nature largely he receives; nor so
 Is satisfied, but largely gives again, 270
 For feeling has to him imparted strength,
 And powerful in all sentiments of grief,
 Of exultation, fear, and joy, his mind,
 Even as an agent of the one great mind,
 Creates, creator and receiver both, 275
 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 suppress'd, in some, 280
 Through every change of growth or of decay,
 Pre-eminent till death.

From early days,

Beginning not long after that first time
 In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch, 285
 I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart
 I have endeavour'd to display the means
 Whereby this infant sensibility,
 Great birthright of our Being, was in me
 Augmented and sustain'd. Yet is a path 290
 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, 295
 Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
 The props of my affections were remov'd,
 And yet the building stood, as if sustain'd
 By its own spirit! All that I beheld
 Was dear to me, and from this cause it came, 300
 That now to Nature's finer influxes
 My mind lay open, to that more exact
 And intimate communion which our hearts
 Maintain with the minuter properties
 Of objects which already are belov'd, 305
 And of those only. Many are the joys
 Of youth; but oh! what happiness to live
 When every hour brings palpable access
 Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
 And sorrow is not there. The seasons came, 310
 And every season to my notice brought
 A store of transitory qualities
 Which, but for this most watchful power of love
 Had been neglected, left a register
 Of permanent relations, else unknown, 315
 Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude
 More active, even, than 'best society',
 Society made sweet as solitude
 By silent inobtrusive sympathies,
 And gentle agitations of the mind 320
 From manifold distinctions, difference

Perceived in things, where to the common eye,
 No difference is; and hence, from the same source
 Sublimer joy; for I would walk alone,
 In storm and tempest, or in starlight nights 325
 Beneath the quiet Heavens; 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,
 Beneath some rock, listening to sounds that are 330
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
 Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
 Thence did I drink the visionary power.
 I deem not profitless those fleeting moods
 Of shadowy exultation: not for this, 335
 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
 Of possible sublimity, to which, 340
 With growing faculties she doth aspire,
 With faculties still growing, feeling still
 That whatsoever point they gain, they still
 Have something to pursue.

And not alone, 345
 In grandeur and in tumult, but no less
 In tranquil scenes, that universal power
 And fitness in the latent qualities
 And essences of things, by which the mind
 Is mov'd by feelings of delight, to me 350
 Came strengthen'd with a superadded soul,
 A virtue not its own. My morning walks
 Were early; oft, before the hours of School
 I travell'd round our little Lake, five miles
 Of pleasant wandering, happy time! more dear 355
 For this, that one was by my side, a Friend
 Then passionately lov'd; with heart how full
 Will he peruse these lines, this page, perhaps

A blank to other men! for many years
 Have since flow'd in between us; and our minds, 360
 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, and before the vernal thrush
 Was audible, among the hills I sate 365
 Alone, upon some jutting eminence
 At the first hour of morning, when the Vale
 Lay quiet in an utter solitude.
 How shall I trace the history, where seek
 The origin of what I then have felt? 370
 Oft in these moments such a holy calm
 Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
 That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
 Appear'd like something in myself, a dream,
 A prospect in my mind. 375

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
 And what the summer shade, what day and night,
 The evening and the morning, what my dreams
 And what my waking thoughts supplied, to nurse 380
 That spirit of religious love in which
 I walked with Nature. But let this, at least
 Be not forgotten, that I still retain'd
 My first creative sensibility,
 That by the regular action of the world 385
 My soul was unsubdu'd. A plastic power
 Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
 A local spirit of its own, at war
 With general tendency, but for the most 390
 Subservient strictly to the external things
 With which it commun'd. An auxiliar light
 Came from my mind which on the setting sun
 Bestow'd new splendor, the melodious birds,
 The gentle breezes, fountains that ran on, 395

Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obey'd
 A like dominion; and the midnight storm
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye.
 Hence by obeisance, my devotion hence,
 And hence my transport. 400

Nor should this, perchance,
 Pass unrecorded, that I still have lov'd
 The exercise and produce of a toil
 Than analytic industry to me
 More pleasing, and whose character I deem 405

Is more poetic as resembling more
 Creative agency. I mean to speak
 Of that interminable building rear'd
 By observation of affinities
 In objects where no brotherhood exists 410

To common minds. My seventeenth year was come
 And, whether from this habit, rooted now
 So deeply in my mind, or from excess
 Of the great social principle of life,
 Coercing all things into sympathy, 415

To unorganic natures I transferr'd
 My own enjoyments, or, the power of truth
 Coming in revelation, I convers'd
 With things that really are, I, at this time
 Saw blessings spread around me like a sea. 420

Thus did my days pass on, and now at length
 From Nature and her overflowing soul
 I had receiv'd so much that all my thoughts
 Were steep'd in feeling; I was only then
 Contented when with bliss ineffable 425

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
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart, 430

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
 If such my transports were; for in all things 435
 I saw one life, and felt that it was joy.
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible then when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by grosser prelude of that strain,
 Forgot its functions, and slept undisturb'd. 440

If this be error, and another faith
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments which make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail, with grateful voice 445
 To speak of you, Ye Mountains and Ye Lakes,
 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 450
 With my own modest pleasures, and have liv'd,
 With God and Nature communing, remov'd
 From little enmities and low desires,
 The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown, 455
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy
 And wicked exultation, when good men,
 On every side fall off we know not how,
 To selfishness, disguis'd in gentle names
 Of peace, and quiet, and domestic love, 460
 Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers
 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 465
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
 The blessing of my life, the gift is yours,
 Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,

For this uneasy heart of ours I find 470
A never-failing principle of joy,
And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert rear'd
In the great City, 'mid far other scenes;
But we, by different roads at length have gain'd 475
The self-same 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 betwixt man and man 480
Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For Thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and Thou art one,
The most intense of Nature's worshippers
In many things my Brother, chiefly here 485
In this my deep devotion.

Fare Thee well!
Health, and the quiet of a healthful mind
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,
And yet more often living with Thyself, 490
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 chaise
Rolled over the flat plains of Huntingdon
And through the open windows first I saw
The long-backed chapel of King's College rear
His pinnacles above the dusky groves. 5
Soon afterwards we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap;
He passed—nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left a hundred yards behind.
The place as we approached seemed more and more 10
To have an eddy's force, and sucked us in
More eagerly at every step we took.
Onward we drove beneath the castle, down
By Magdalene Bridge we went and crossed the Cam,
And at the Hoop we landed, famous inn. 15

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
With honour and importance. In a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved— 20
Questions, directions, counsel and advice
Flowed in upon me from all sides. Fresh day
Of pride and pleasure: to myself I seemed
A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs, 25
To tutors or to tailors as befel,
From street to street with loose and careless heart.
I was the dreamer, they the dream; I roamed

- Delighted through the motley spectacle:
 Gowns grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets, 30
 Lamps, gateways, flocks of churches, courts and towers—
 Strange transformation for a mountain youth,
 A northern villager. As if by word
 Of magic or some fairy's power, at once
 Behold me rich in monies and attired 35
 In splendid clothes, with hose of silk, and hair
 Glittering like rimy trees when frost is keen—
 My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
 With other signs of manhood which supplied
 The lack of beard. The weeks went roundly on, 40
 With invitations, suppers, wine, and fruit,
 Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
 Liberal and suiting gentleman's array.
- The Evangelist St. John my patron was;
 Three gloomy courts are his, and in the first 45
 Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure.
 Right underneath, the college kitchens made
 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees
 But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed. 50
 Near me was Trinity's loquacious clock
 Who never let the quarters, night or day,
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
 Twice over with a male and female voice.
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too; 55
 And from my bedroom I in moonlight nights
 Could see right opposite, a few yards off,
 The antechapel, where the statue stood
 Of Newton with his prism and silent face.
- Of college labours, of the lecturer's room 60
 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 65
 As in the balance of excessive hopes,
 Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
 Small jealousies and triumphs good or bad—
 I make short mention. Things they were which then
 I did not love, nor do I love them now: 70
 Such glory was but little sought by me,
 And little won. But it is right to say
 That even so early, from the first crude days
 Of settling-time in this my new abode,
 Not seldom I had melancholy thoughts 75
 From personal and family regards,
 Wishing to hope without a hope—some fears
 About my future worldly maintenance,
 And, more than all, a strangeness in my mind,
 A feeling that I was not for that hour 80
 Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down,
 Why should I grieve?—I was a chosen son.
 For hither I had come with holy powers
 And faculties, whether to work or feel:
 To apprehend all passions and all moods 85
 Which time, and place, and season do impress
 Upon the visible universe, and work
 Like changes there by force of my own mind.
 I was a freeman, in the purest sense
 Was free, and to majestic ends was strong— 90
 I do not speak of learning, moral truth,
 Or understanding—'twas enough for me
 To know that I was otherwise endowed.
 When the first glitter of the show was passed,
 And the first dazzle of the taper-light, 95
 As if with a rebound my mind returned
 Into its former self. Oft did I leave
 My comrades, and the crowd, buildings and groves,
 And walked along the fields, the level fields,
 With heaven's blue concave reared above my head. 100
 And now it was that through such change entire,
 And this first absence from those shapes sublime

Wherewith I had been conversant, my mind
 Seemed busier in itself than heretofore—
 At least I more directly recognised 105
 My powers and habits. Let me dare to speak
 A higher language, say that now I felt
 The strength and consolation which were mine.
 As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
 I looked for universal things, perused 110
 The common countenance of earth and heaven,
 And, turning the mind in upon itself,
 Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts,
 And spread them with a wider creeping, felt
 Incumbencies more awful, visitings 115
 Of the upholder, of the tranquil soul,
 Which underneath all passion lives secure
 A steadfast life. But peace, it is enough
 To notice that I was ascending now
 To such community with highest truth. 120

A track pursuing not untrod before,
 From deep analogies by thought supplied,
 Or consciousnesses not to be subdued,
 To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
 Even the loose stones that cover the highway, 125
 I gave a moral life—I saw them feel,
 Or linked them to some feeling. The great mass
 Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
 Thus much for the one presence, and the life 130
 Of the great whole; suffice it here to add
 That whatsoever of terror, or of love,
 Or beauty, Nature's daily face put on
 From transitory passion, unto this
 I was as wakeful even as waters are 135
 To the sky's motion, in a kindred sense
 Of passion was obedient as a lute
 That waits upon the touches of the wind.
 So it was with me in my solitude:

So often among multitudes of men. 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 looked into my mind.
 Such sympathies would sometimes shew themselves 145
 By outward gestures and by visible looks—
 Some called it madness; such indeed it was,
 If childlike fruitfulness in passing joy,
 If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
 To inspiration, sort with such a name; 150
 If prophesy be madness, if things viewed
 By poets of 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 I had an eye
 Which in my strongest workings evermore
 Was looking for the shades of difference
 As they lie hid in all exterior forms,
 Near or remote, minute or vast—an eye 160
 Which from a stone, a tree, 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
 Of matters which not falsely I may call 170
 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,
 And 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.
 Yet each man is a memory to himself,
 And, therefore, now that I must quit this theme, 190
 I am not heartless; for there's not a man
 That lives who hath not had his god-like hours,
 And knows not what majestic sway we have
 As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

Enough, for now into a populous plain 195
 We must descend. A traveller I am,
 And all my tale is of myself—even so—
 So be it, if the pure in heart delight
 To follow me, and thou, O honoured friend,
 Who in my thoughts art ever at my side, 200
 Uphold as heretofore my fainting steps.
 It hath been told already how my sight
 Was dazzled by the novel show, and how
 Erelong I did into myself return.
 So did it seem, and so in truth it was— 205
 Yet this was but short-lived. Thereafter came
 Observance less devout: I had made a change
 In climate, and my nature's outward coat
 Changed also, slowly and insensibly.
 To the deep quiet and majestic thoughts 210
 Of loneliness succeeded empty noise
 And superficial pastimes, now and then
 Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes,

And, worse than all, a treasonable growth
 Of indecisive judgements that impaired 215
 And shook the mind's simplicity. And yet
 This was a gladsome time. Could I behold—
 Who less insensible than sodden clay
 On a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide
 Could have beheld—with undelighted heart 220
 so many happy youths, so wide and fair
 A congregation in its budding-time
 Of health, and hope, and beauty, all at once
 So many divers samples of the growth
 Of life's sweet season, could have seen unmoved 225
 That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
 Upon the matron temples of a place
 So famous through the world? To me at least
 It was a goodly prospect; for, through youth,
 Though I had been trained up to stand unpropped, 230
 And independent musings pleased me so
 That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
 Yet could I only cleave to solitude
 In lonesome places—if a throng was near
 That way I leaned by nature, for my heart 235
 Was social and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate
 My deeper pleasures—nay, I had not once,
 Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs, 240
 Even with myself divided such delight,
 Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
 In human language—easily I passed
 From the remembrances of better things,
 And slipped into the weekday works of youth, 245
 Unburthened, unalarmed, and unprofaned.
 Caverns there were within my mind which sun
 Could never penetrate, yet did there not
 Want store of leafy arbours where the light
 Might enter in at will. Companionships, 250
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all;

We sauntered, played, we rioted, we talked
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours,
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,
 Read lazily in lazy books, went forth 255
 To gallop through the country in blind zeal
 Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
 Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
 Come out, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the opening act 260
 In this new life. Imagination slept,
 And yet not utterly: I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved; I could not always lightly pass 265
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
 Wake where they waked, range that enclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.

Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of nobler feeling, that those spiritual men, 270
 Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
 Seemed humbled in these precincts, thence to be
 The more beloved, invested here with tasks
 Of life's plain business, as a daily garb—
 Dictators at the plough—a change that left 275
 All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant mills 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 280
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State,
 Sweet Spencer, 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 285
 Stood almost single, uttering odious truth,
 Darkness before, and danger's voice behind—

Soul awful, if the earth hath ever lodged
 An awful soul— I seemed to see him here
 Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress 290
 Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth,
 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, 295
 My class-fellow at school, whose chance it was
 To lodge in the apartments which had been
 Time out of mind honored by Milton's name—
 The very shell reputed of the abode
 Which he had tenanted. O Temperate bard! 300

One afternoon, the first time I set foot
 In this they innocent nest and oratory,
 Seated with others in a festive ring
 Of commonplace convention, I to thee
 Poured out libations, to thy memory drank 305

Within my private thoughts, till my brain reeled,
 Never so clouded by the fumes of wine
 Before that hour, or since. Thence, forth I ran
 From that assembly, through a length of streets
 Ran ostrich-like to reach our chapel door 310

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 315
 The place itself and fashion of the rites.

Upshouldering in a dislocated lump
 With shallow ostentatious carelessness
 My surplice, gloried in and yet despised,
 I clove in pride through the inferior throng 320
 Of the plain burghers, who in audience stood
 On the last skirts of their permitted ground,
 Beneath the pealing organ. Empty thoughts,
 I am ashamed of them; and that great bard,

And thou, O friend, who in thy ample mind 325
Hast stationed me for reverence and love,
Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
In some of its unworthy vanities
Brother of many more.

In this mixed sort 330

The months passed on, remissly, not giving up
To wilful alienation from the right,
Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
Of a low pitch—duty and zeal dismissed, 335
Yet Nature, or a happy course of things,
Not doing in their stead the needful work.
The memory languidly revolved, the heart
Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
Of contemplation almost failed to beat. 340
Rotted as by a charm, my life became
A floating island, an amphibious thing,
Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal
Not wanting a fair face of water-weeds
And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise, 345
A reverence for the glorious dead, the sight
Of those long vistas, catacombs in which
Perennial minds lie visibly entombed,
Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
A fervent love of rigorous discipline. 350
Alas, such high commotion touched not me;
No look was in these walls to put to shame
My easy spirits, and discountenance
Their light composure—far less to instil
A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed 355
To pleasant efforts. Nor was this the blame
Of others, but my own; I should in truth,
As far as doth concern my single self,
Misdemean most widely, lodging it elsewhere.
For I, bred in Nature's lap, was even 360
As a spoiled child; and, rambling like the wind

As I had done in daily intercourse
 With those delicious rivers, solemn heights,
 And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air,
 I was ill-tutored for captivity— 365
 To quit my pleasure, and from month to month
 Take up a station calmly on the perch
 Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
 Had also left less space within my mind,
 Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found 370
 A freshness in those objects of its love,
 A winning power beyond all other power.
 Not that I slighted books—that were to lack
 All sense—but other passions had been mine,
 More fervent, making me less prompt perhaps 375
 To indoor study than was wise or well,
 Or suited to my years. Yet I could shape
 The image of a place which—soothed and lulled
 As I had been, trained up in paradise
 Among sweet garlands and delightful sounds, 380
 Accustomed in my loneliness to walk
 With Nature magisterially—yet I
 Methinks could shape the image of a place
 Which with its aspect should have bent me down
 To instantaneous service, should at once 385
 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
 In this recess which I have bodied forth 390
 Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
 Majestic edifices, should not want
 A corresponding dignity within.
 The congregating temper which pervades
 Our unripe years, not wasted, should be made 395
 To minister to works of high attempt,
 Which the enthusiast would perform with love.
 Youth should be awed, possessed, as with a sense
 Religious, of what holy joy there is

In knowledge if it be sincerely sought 400
 For its own sake—in glory, and in praise,
 If but by labour won, and to endure.
 The passing day should learn to put aside
 Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed
 Before antiquity and stedfast truth, 405
 And strong book-mindedness; and over all
 Should be a healthy sound simplicity,
 A seemly plainness—name it as you will,
 Republican or pious.

If these thoughts 410
 Be a gratuitous emblazonry
 That does but mock this recreant age, at least
 Let Folly and False-seeming (we might say)
 Be free to affect whatever formal gait
 Of moral or scholastic discipline 415
 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 would drive his flock
 With serious repetition to a pool 420
 Of which 'tis plain to sight they never taste?
 A weight must surely hang on days begun
 And ended with worst mockery. Be wise,
 Ye Presidents and Deans, and to your bells
 Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound 425
 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,
 Suffers for this. Even science too, at hand 430
 In daily sight of such irreverence,
 Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
 Loses her just authority, falls beneath
 Collateral suspicion, else unknown.
 This obvious truth did not escape me then, 435
 Unthinking as I was, and I confess

That—having in my native hills given loose
 To a schoolboy's dreaming—I had raised a pile
 Upon the basis of the coming time
 Which now before me melted fast away, 440
 Which could not live, scarcely had life enough
 To mock the builder. Oh, what joy it were
 To see a sanctuary for our country's youth
 With such a spirit in it as might be
 Protection for itself, a virgin grove, 445
 Primaeval in its purity and depth—
 Where, though the shades were filled with cheerfulness,
 Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds
 In under-coverts, yet the countenance
 Of the whole place should wear a stamp of awe— 450
 A habitation sober and demure
 For ruminating creatures, a domain
 For quiet things to wander in, a haunt
 In which the heron might delight to feed
 By the shy rivers, and the pelican 455
 Upon the cypress-spire in lonely thought
 Might sit and sun himself. Alas, alas,
 In vain for such solemnity we look;
 Our eyes are crossed by butterflies, our ears
 Hear chattering popinjays—the inner heart 460
 Is trivial, and the impresses without
 Are of a gaudy region.

Different sight

Those venerable doctors saw of old 465
 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 their ponderous books they sate
 Like caterpillars eating out their way 470
 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

Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds. 475
 O seat of Arts, renowned throughout the world,
 Far different service in those homely days
 The nurslings of the Muses underwent
 From their first childhood. In that glorious time
 When Learning, like a stranger come from far, 480
 Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
 The peasant and the king; when boys and youths,
 The growth of ragged villages and huts,
 Forsook their homes and—errant in the quest
 Of patron, famous school or friendly nook, 485
 Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down—
 From town to town and through wide scattered realms
 Journeyed with their huge folios in their hands,
 And often, starting from some covert place,
 Saluted the chance comer on the road, 490
 Crying, ‘An obolus, a penny give
 To a poor scholar’; when illustrious men,
 Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
 Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
 Before the doors or windows of their cells 495
 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
 Must keep to all—as fondly all believe— 500
 Their highest promise. If the mariner,
 When at reluctant distance he hath passed
 Some fair enticing island, did but know
 What fate might have been his, could he have brought
 His bark to land upon the wished-for spot, 505
 Good cause full often would he have to bless
 The belt of churlish surf that scared him thence,
 Or haste of the inexorable wind.
 For me, I grieve not; happy is the man
 Who only misses what I missed, who falls 510
 No lower than I fell. I did not love,

As hath been notice heretofore, the guise
 Of our scholastic studies—could have wished
 The river to have had an ampler range
 And freer pace. But this I tax not; far, 515
 Far more I grieved to see among the band
 Of those who in the field of contest stood
 As combatants, passions that did to me
 Seem low and mean—from ignorance of mine,
 In part, and want of just forbearance; yet 520
 My wiser mind grieves now for what I saw.
 Willingly did I part from these, and turn
 Out of their track to travel with the shoal
 Of more unthinking natures, easy minds
 And pillowy, and not wanting love that makes 525
 The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
 And wisdom and the pledges interchanged
 With our own inner being, are forgot.

To books, our daily fare prescribed, I turned
 With sickly appetite; and when I went, 530
 At other times, in quest of my own food,
 I chaced not steadily the manly deer,
 But laid me down to any casual feast
 Of wild wood-honey; or with truant eyes
 Unruly, peeped about for vagrant fruit. 535
 And as for what pertains to human life,
 The deeper passions working round me here—
 Whether of envy, jealousy, pride, shame,
 Ambition, emulation, fear, or hope,
 Or those of dissolute pleasure—were by me 540
 Unshared, and only now and then observed,
 So little was their hold upon my being,
 As outward things that might administer
 To knowledge or instruction. Hushed meanwhile
 Was the under-soul, locked up in such a calm, 545
 That not a leaf of the great nature stirred.
 Yet was this deep vacation not given up
 To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood

In my own mind remote from human life,
At least from what we commonly so name, 550
Even as a shepherd on a promontory,
Who, lacking occupation, looks far forth
Into the endless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is,
That this first transit from the smooth delights 555
And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
To something that resembled an approach
Towards mortal business, to a privileged world
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery, 560
Did better suit my visionary mind—
Far better, than to have been bolted forth,
Thrust out abruptly into fortune's way
Among the conflicts of substantial life—
By a more just gradation did lead on 565
To higher things, more naturally matured
For permanent possession, better fruits,
Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.

In playful zest of fancy did we note—
How could we less?—the manners and the ways 570
Of those who in the livery were arrayed
Of good or evil fame, of those with whom
By frame of academic discipline
Perforce we were connected, men whose sway,
And whose authority of office, served 575
To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind—
Found everywhere, but chiefly in the ring
Of the grave elders, men unscoured, grotesque
In character, tricked out like aged trees 580
Which through the lapse of their infirmity
Give ready place to any random seed
That chuses to be reared upon their trunks.
Here on my view, confronting as it were
Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left, 585

Did flash a different image of old age—
 How different—yet both withal alike
 A book of rudiments for the unpractised sight,
 Objects embossed, and which with sedulous care
 Nature holds up before the eye of youth 590
 In her great school—with further view, perhaps,
 To enter early on her tender scheme
 Of teaching comprehension with delight
 And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life 595
 And manners finely spun, the delicate race
 Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
 Through that state arras woven with silk and gold:
 This wily interchange of snaky hues,
 Willingly and unwillingly revealed, 600
 I had not learned to watch, and at this time
 Perhaps, had such been in my daily sight,
 I might have been indifferent thereto
 As hermits are to tales of distant things.

Hence, for these rarities elaborate 605
 Having no relish yet, I was content
 With the more homely produce rudely piled
 In this our coarser warehouse. At this day
 I smile in many a mountain solitude
 At passages and fragments that remain 610
 Of that inferior exhibition, played
 By wooden images, a theatre
 For wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
 Remembrances before me of old men,
 Old humourists, who have been long in their graves, 615
 And, having almost in my mind put off
 Their human names, have into phantoms passed
 Of texture midway betwixt life and books.

I play the loiterer, 'tis enough to note 620
 That here in dwarf proportions were expressed
 The limbs of the great world—its goings-on

Collaterally pourtrayed as in mock fight,
 A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
 Though short of mortal combat—and whate'er
 Might of this pageant be supposed to hit 625
 A simple rustic's notice, this way less,
 More that way, was not wasted upon me.
 And yet this spectacle may well demand
 A more substantial name, no mimic show,
 Itself a living part of a live whole, 630
 A creek of 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 635
 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; 640
 Feuds, factions, flatteries, Enmity and Guile,
 Murmuring Submission and bald Government
 (The idol weak as the idolator)
 And Decency and Custom starving Truth,
 And blind Authority beating with his staff 645
 The child that might have led him; Emptiness
 Followed as of good omen, and meek Worth
 Left to itself unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
 I cannot say what portion is in truth 650
 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, 655
 This surely was not wanting. Carelessly
 I gazed, roving as through a cabinet
 Or wide museum, thronged with fishes, gems,

Birds, crocodiles, shells, where little can be seen,
Well understood, or naturally endeared, 660
Yet still does every step bring something forth
That quickens, pleases, stings—and here and there
A casual rarity is singled out
And has its brief perusal, then gives way
To others, all supplanted in their turn. 665
Meanwhile, amid this gaudy congress framed
Of things 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, 670
With few wise longings and but little love,
Yet something to the memory sticks at last
Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.

Thus in submissive idleness, my friend,
The labouring time of autumn, winter, spring— 675
Nine months—rolled pleasingly away, the tenth
Returned me to my native hills again.

Book Fourth *Summer Vacation*

A PLEASANT sight it was when, having clomb
The Heights of Kendal, and that dreary moor
Was crossed, at length as from a rampart's edge
I overlooked the bed of Windermere.
I bounded down the hill, shouting amain 5
A lusty summons to the farther shore
For the old ferryman; and when he came
I did not step into the well-known boat
Without a cordial welcome. Thence right forth
I took my way, now drawing towards home, 10
To that sweet valley where I had been reared;
'Twas but a short hour's walk ere, veering round,
I saw the snow-white church upon its hill
Sit like a thronèd lady, sending out
A gracious look all over its domain. 15
Glad greetings had I, and some tears perhaps,
From my old dame, so motherly and good,
While she perused me with a parent's pride.
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew
Upon thy grave, good creature: while my heart 20
Can beat I never will 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
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years, 25
And more than eighty, of untroubled life—
Childless, yet by the strangers to they blood
Honoured with little less than filial love.

Great joy was mine to see thee once again,
 Thee and thy dwelling, and a throng of things 30
 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?
 The rooms, the court, the garden were not left 35
 Long unsaluted, and the spreading pine
 And broad stone table underneath its boughs—
 Our summer seat in many a festive hour—
 And that unruly child of mountain birth,
 The froward brook, which, soon as he was boxed 40
 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
 A channel paved by the hand of man. 45
 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!’
 —And now, reviewing soberly that hour,
 I marvel that a fancy did not flash 50
 Upon me, and a strong desire, straitway,
 At sight of such an emblem that shewed forth
 So aptly my late course of even days
 And all their smooth enthrallment, to pen down
 A satire on myself. My aged dame 55
 Was with me, at my side; she guided me,
 I willing, nay—nay, wishing to be led.
 The face of every neighbour whom I met
 Was as a volume to me; some I hailed
 Far off, upon the road, or at their work— 60
 Unceremonious greetings, interchanged
 With half the length of a long field between.
 Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
 A salutation that was more constrained
 Though earnest—doubtless with a little pride, 65

But with more shame, for my habiliments,
The transformation and the gay attire.

Delighted did I take my place again
At our domestic table; and, dear friend,
Relating simply as my wish hath been 70
A poet's history, can I leave untold
The joy with which I laid me down at night
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now
Perhaps than if it had been more desired,
Or been more often thought of with regret— 75
That bed whence I had heard the roaring wind
And clamorous rain, that bed where I so oft
Had lain awake on breezy nights to watch
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
Of a tall ash that near our cottage stood, 80
Had watched her with fixed eyes, while to and fro
In the dark summit of the moving tree
She rocked with every impulse of the wind.

Among the faces which it pleased me well
To see again was one by ancient right 85
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills,
By birth and call of nature preordained
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
Among the impervious crags. But having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed 90
Into a gentler service; and when first
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 95
Like a sick lover, then this dog was used
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. 100
A hundred times when in these wanderings

I have been busy with the toil of verse—
 Great pains and little progress—and at once
 Some fair enchanting image in my mind
 Rose up, full-formed like Venus from the sea, 105
 Have I sprung forth towards him and let loose
 My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
 Caressing him again and yet again.
 And when in the public roads at eventide
 I sauntered, like a river murmuring 110
 And talking to itself, at such a season
 It was his custom to jog on before;
 But, duly whensoever he had met
 A passenger approaching, would he turn
 To give me timely notice, and straitway, 115
 Punctual to such admonishment, I hushed
 My voice, composed my gait, and shaped myself
 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. 120

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— 125
 Those walks did now like a returning spring
 Come back on me again. 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— 130
 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; 135
 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 itself, even so with me
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul 140
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked as in the presence of her God.
As on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
A heart that had not been disconsolate,
Strength came where weakness was not known to be, 145
At least not felt; and restoration came
Like an intruder knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance in my hand and weighed myself:
I saw but little, and thereat was pleased; 150
Little did I remember, and even this
Still pleased me more—but I had hopes and peace
And swellings of the spirits, was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
How life pervades the undecaying mind, 155
How the immortal soul with godlike 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 160
His being with a strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
Of innocence, and holiday repose,
And more than pastoral quiet in the heart
Of amplest projects, and a peaceful end 165
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
Alone, continuing there to muse. Meanwhile
The mountain heights were slowly overspread
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze 170
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, stirred by the straggling wind—
Came intermittingly a breath-like sound, 175
A respiration short and quick, which oft,

Yea, might I say, again and yet again,
 Mistaking for the panting of my dog,
 The off-and-on companion of my walk,
 I turned my head to look if he were there. 180

A freshness also found I at this time
 In human life, the life I mean of those
 Whose occupations really I loved.
 The prospect often touched me with surprize:
 Crowded and full, and changed, as seemed to me, 185

Even as a garden in the heat of spring
 After an eight-days' absence. For—to omit
 The things which were the same and yet appeared
 So different—amid this solitude,

The little vale where was my chief abode, 190

'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind
 To note, perhaps some sheltered seat in which
 An old man had been used to sun himself,
 Now empty; pale-faced babes whom I had left

In arms, known children of the neighbourhood, 195

Now rosy prattlers, tottering up and down;
 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 another eye, 200

And often looking round was moved to smiles
 Such as a delicate work of humour breeds.

I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
 Of those plain-living people, in a sense
 Of love and knowledge: with another eye 205

I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,

The shepherd on the hills. With new delight,

This chiefly, did I view my grey-haired dame,

Saw her go forth to church, or other work

Of state, equipped in monumental trim— 210

Short velvet cloak, her bonnet of the like,

A mantle such as Spanish cavaliers

Wore in old time. Her smooth domestic life—
 Affectionate without uneasiness—
 Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less 215
 Her clear though shallow stream of piety,
 That ran on sabbath days a fresher course.
 With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
 Her bible on the Sunday afternoons,
 And loved the book when she had dropped asleep 220
 And made of it a pillow for her head.

Nor less do I remember to have felt
 Distinctly manifested at this time,
 A dawning, even as of another sense,
 A human-heartedness about my love 225
 For objects hitherto the gladsome air
 Of my own private being, and no more—
 Which I had loved, even as a blessèd spirit
 Or angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
 Might love in individual happiness. 230
 But now there opened on me other thoughts,
 Of change, congratulation and regret,
 A new-born 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— 235
 White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
 Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven,
 Acquaintances of every little child,
 And Jupiter, my own beloved star.
 Whatever shadings of mortality 240
 Had fallen upon these objects heretofore
 Were different in kind: not tender—strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they, and severe, the scatterings
 Of childhood, and moreover, had given way
 In later youth to beauty and to love 245
 Enthusiastic, to delight and joy.

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 250
 Beneath him in the bottom of the deeps,
 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, 255
 Mountains and clouds, from that which is indeed
 The region, and the things which there abide
 In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam
 Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
 And motions that are sent he knows not whence, 260
 Impediments that make his task more sweet;
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time—
 With like success. Nor have we often looked
 On more alluring shows—to me at least— 265
 More soft, or less ambiguously descried,
 Than those which now we have been passing by,
 And where we still are lingering. Yet in spite
 Of all these new employments of the mind
 There was an inner falling off. I loved, 270
 Loved deeply, all that I had loved before,
 More deeply even than ever; but a swarm
 Of heady thoughts jostling each other, gawds
 And feast and dance and public revelry
 And sports and games—less pleasing in themselves 275
 Than as they were a badge, glossy and fresh,
 Of manliness and freedom—these did now
 Seduce me from the firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures, from that eager zeal,
 Those yearnings which had every day been mine, 280
 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
 To Nature and to books, or, at the most,
 From time to time by inclination shipped
 One among many, in societies
 That were, or seemed, as simple as myself. 285
 But now was come a change—it would demand

Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
 To paint even to myself these vanities,
 And how they wrought—but sure it is that now
 Contagious air did oft environ me, 290
 Unknown among these haunts in former days.
 The very garments that I wore appeared
 To prey upon my strength, and stopped the course
 And quiet stream of self-forgetfulness.
 Something there was about me that perplexed 295
 Th' authentic sight of reason, pressed too closely
 On that religious dignity of mind
 That is the very faculty of truth,
 Which wanting—either, from the very first
 A function never lighted up, or else 300
 Extinguished—man, a creature great and good,
 Seems but a pageant plaything with vile claws,
 And this great frame of breathing elements
 A senseless idol.

This vague heartless chace 305
 Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
 For books and Nature at that early age.
 '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, 310
 And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere—
 Far better had it been to exalt the mind
 By solitary study, to uphold
 Intense desire by thought and quietness.
 And yet, in chastisement of these regrets, 315
 The memory of one particular hour
 Doth here rise up against me. In a throng,
 A festal company of maids and youths,
 Old men and matrons, staid, promiscuous rout,
 A medley of all tempers, I had passed 320
 The night in dancing, gaiety and mirth—
 With din of instruments, and shuffling feet,
 And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,

And unaimed prattle flying up and down,
 Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there 325
 Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed
 That mounted up like joy into the head,
 And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired
 The cock had crowed, the sky was bright with day;
 Two miles I had to walk along the fields 330
 Before I reached my home. Magnificent
 The morning was, a memorable pomp,
 More glorious than I ever had beheld.
 The sea was laughing at a distance; all
 The solid montains were as bright as clouds, 335
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
 And in the meadows and the lower grounds
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn—
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
 And labourers going forth into the fields. 340
 Ah, need I say, dear friend, that to the brim
 My heart was full? I made no vows, but vows
 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
 Was given, that I should be—else sinning greatly—
 A dedicated spirit. On I walked 345
 In blessedness, which even yet remains.

Strange rendezvous my mind was at that time,
 A party-coloured shew of grave and gay,
 Solid and light, short-sighted and profound,
 Of considerate habits and sedate, 350
 Consorting in one mansion unreprieved.
 I knew the worth of that which I possessed,
 Though slighted and misused. Besides in truth
 That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
 Transient and loose, yet wanted not a store 355
 Of primitive hours, when—by these hindrances
 Unthwarted—I experienced in myself
 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. 360

From many wanderings that have left behind
 Remembrances not lifeless, I will here
 Single out one, then pass to other themes.
 A favorite pleasure hath it been with me
 From time of earliest youth to walk alone 365
 Along the public way, when, for the night
 Deserted, in its silence it assumes
 A character of deeper quietness
 Than pathless solitudes. At such an hour
 Once, ere these summer months were passed away, 370
 I slowly mounted up a steep ascent
 Where the road's wat'ry surface, to the ridge
 Of that sharp rising, glittered in the moon
 And seemed before my eyes another stream
 Creeping with silent lapse to join the brook 375
 That murmured in the valley. On I went
 Tranquil, receiving in my own despite
 Amusement, as I slowly passed along,
 From such near objects as from time to time
 Perforce intruded on the listless sense, 380
 Quiescent and disposed to sympathy,
 With an exhausted mind worn out by toil
 And all unworthy of the deeper joy
 Which waits on distant prospect—cliff or sea,
 The dark blue vault and universe of stars. 385
 Thus did I steal along that silent road,
 My body from the stillness drinking in
 A restoration like the calm of sleep,
 But sweeter far. Above, before, behind,
 Around me, all was peace and solitude; 390
 I looked not round, nor did the solitude
 Speak to my eye, but it was heard and felt,
 O happy state! what beauteous pictures now
 Rose in harmonious imagery; they rose
 As from some distant region of my soul 395
 And came along like dreams—yet such as left
 Obscurely mingled with their passing forms
 A consciousness of animal delight,

A self-possession felt in every pause
And every gentle movement of my frame. 400

While thus I wandered, step by step led on,
It chanced a sudden turning of the road
Presented to my view an uncouth shape,
So near that, slipping back into the shade
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, 405

Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A foot above man's common measure tall,
Stiff in his form, and upright, lank and lean—
A man more meagre, as it seemed to me,
Was never seen abroad by night or day. 410

His arms were long, and bare his hands; his mouth
Shewed ghastly in the moonlight; from behind,
A milestone propped him, and his figure seemed
Half sitting, and half standing. I could mark
That he was clad in military garb, 415

Though faded yet entire. He was alone,
Had no attendant, neither dog, nor staff,
Nor knapsack; in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity
That seemed akin to solitude. Long time 420

Did I peruse him with a mingled sense
Of fear and sorrow. From his lips meanwhile
There issued murmuring sounds, as if of pain
Or of uneasy thought; yet still his form
Kept the same steadiness, and at his feet 425

His shadow lay, and moved not. In a glen
Hard by, a village stood, whose roofs and doors
Were visible among the scattered trees,
Scarce distant from the spot an arrow's flight.
I wished to see him move, but he remained 430

Fixed to his place, and still from time to time
Sent forth a murmuring voice of dead complaint,
Groans scarcely audible. Without self-blame
I had not thus prolonged my watch; and now,
Subduing my heart's specious cowardise, 435

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
In measured gesture lifted to his head
Returned my salutation, then resumed 440
His station as before. And when ere long
I asked his history, he in reply
Was neither slow nor eager, but, unmoved,
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
A stately air of mild indifference, 445
He told in simple words a soldier's tale:
That in the tropic islands he had served,
Whence he had landed scarcely ten days past—
That on his landing he had been dismissed,
And now was travelling to his native home. 450
At this I turned and looked towards the village,
But all were gone to rest, the fires all out,
And every silent window to the moon
Shone with a yellow glitter. 'No one there',
Said I, 'is waking; we must measure back 455
The way which we have come. Behind yon wood
A labourer dwells, and, take it on my word,
He will not murmur should we break his rest,
And with a ready heart will give you food
And lodging for the night.' At this he stooped, 460
And from the ground took up an oaken staff
By me yet unobserved, a traveller's staff
Which I suppose from his slack hand had dropped,
And lain till now neglected in the grass.

Towards the cottage without more delay 465
We shaped our course. As it appeared to me
He travelled without pain, and I beheld
With ill-suppressed astonishment his tall
And ghastly figure moving at my side;
Nor while we journeyed thus could I forbear 470
To question him of what he had endured
From hardship, battle, or the pestilence.

He all the while was in demeanor calm,
Concise in answer. Solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said 475
There was a strange half-absence, and a tone
Of weakness and indifference, as of one
Remembering the importance of his theme
But feeling it no longer. We advanced
Slowly, and ere we to the wood were come 480
Discourse had ceased. Together on we passed
In silence through the shades, gloomy and dark;
Then, turning up along an open field,
We gained the cottage. At the door I knocked,
Calling aloud, 'My friend, here is a man 485
By sickness overcome. Beneath your roof
This night let him find rest, and give him food
If food he need, for he is faint and tired.'
Assured that now my comrade would repose
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth 490
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,
He said, 'My trust is in the God of Heaven, 495
And in the eye of him that passes me.'
The cottage door was speedily unlocked,
And now the soldier touched his hat again
With his lean hand, and in a voice that seemed
To speak with a reviving interest, 500
'Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
The blessing of the poor unhappy man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space,
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home. 505

Book Fifth *Books*

EVEN in the steadiest mood of reason, when
All sorrow for thy transitory pains
Goes out, it grieves me for thy state, O man,
Thou paramount creature, and thy race, while ye
Shall sojourn on this planet, not for woes 5
Which thou endur'st—that weight, albeit huge,
I charm away—but for those palms atchieved
Through length of time, by study and hard thought,
The honours of thy high endowments; there
My sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto 10
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,
Who through that bodily image hath diffused 15
A soul divine which we participate,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man, hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with itself,
Things worthy of unconquerable life;
And yet we feel—we cannot chuse but feel— 20
That these must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives, to think that the immortal being
No more shall need such garments; and yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost 'weep to have' what he may lose— 25
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say,

‘Should earth by inward throes be wrenched throughout,
 Or fire be sent from far to wither all 30
 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,
 And kindlings like the morning—presage sure, 35
 Though slow perhaps, of a returning day.’
 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
 Some element to stamp her image on 45
 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 in the hearing of a friend
 I had given utterance to thoughts like these, 50
 He answered with a smile that in plain truth
 ’Twas going far to seek disquietude—
 But on the front of his reproof confessed
 That he at sundry seasons had himself
 Yielded to kindred hauntings, and, forthwith, 55
 Added that once upon a summer’s noon
 While he was sitting in a rocky cave
 By the seaside, perusing as it chanced,
 The famous history of the errant knight
 Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts 60
 Came to him, and to height unusual rose
 While listlessly he sate, and, having closed
 The book, had turned his eyes towards the sea.
 On poetry and geometric truth
 (The knowledge that endures) upon these two, 65

And their high privilege of lasting life
Exempt from all internal injury,
He mused—upon these chiefly—and at length,
His senses yielding to the sultry air,
Sleep seized him and he passed into a dream. 70
He saw before him an Arabian waste,
A desert, and he fancied that himself
Was sitting there in the wide wilderness
Alone upon the sands. Distress of mind
Was growing in him when, behold, at once 75
To his great joy a man was at his side,
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 80
Of a surpassing brightness. Much rejoiced
The dreaming man that he should have a guide
To lead him through the desert; and he thought,
While questioning himself what this strange freight
Which the newcomer carried through the waste 85
Could mean, the arab told him that the stone—
To give it in the language of the dream—
Was *Euclid's Elements*. 'And this', said he,
'This other', pointing to the shell, 'this book
Is something of more worth.' 'And, at the word, 90
The stranger', said my friend continuing,
'Stretched forth the shell towards me, 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, 95
A loud prophetic blast of harmony,
And ode in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, but with calm look the arab said 100
That all was true, that it was even so
As had been spoken, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books—

The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
 And wedded man to man by purest bond 105
 Of nature, undisturbed by space or time;
 Th' other that was a god, yea many gods,
 Had voices more than all the winds, and was
 A joy, a consolation, and a hope.'
 My friend continued, 'Strange as it may seem 110
 I wondered not, although I plainly saw
 The one to be a stone, th' other a shell,
 Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
 Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
 A wish was now engendered in my fear 115
 To cleave unto this man, and I begged leave
 To share his errand with him. On he passed
 Not heeding me; I followed, and took note
 That he looked often backward with wild look,
 Grasping his twofold treasure to his side. 120
 Upon a dromedary, lance in rest,
 He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
 I fancied that he was the very knight
 Whose tale Cervantes tells, yet not the knight,
 But was an arab of the desert too, 125
 Of these was neither, and was both at once.
 His countenance meanwhile grew more disturbed,
 And looking backwards when he looked I saw
 A glittering light, and asked him whence it came.
 "It is", said he, "The waters of the deep 130
 Gathering upon us." Quickening then his pace
 He left me; I called after him aloud;
 He heeded not, but with his twofold charge
 Beneath his arm—before me full in view—
 I saw him riding o'er the desert sands 135
 With the fleet waters of the drowning world
 In chace 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.'

 Full often, taking from the world of sleep 140

This arab phantom which my friend beheld,
 This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
 A substance, fancied him a living man—
 A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed
 By love, and feeling, and internal thought 145
 Protracted among endless solitudes—
 Have shaped him, in the oppression of his brain,
 Wandering upon this quest and thus equipped.
 And I have scarcely pitied him, have felt
 A reverence for 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 think of these—yea, will I say,
 In sober contemplation of the approach
 Of such great overthrow, made manifest
 By certain evidence, that I methinks
 Could share that maniac's anxiousness, could go 160
 Upon like errand. Oftentimes at least
 Me hath such deep entrancement half-possessed
 When I have held a volume in my hand—
 Poor earthly casket of immortal verse—
 Shakespeare or Milton, labourers divine. 165

Mighty, indeed supreme, must be the power
 Of living Nature which could thus so long
 Detain me from the best of other thoughts.
 Even in the lispings time of infancy
 And, later down, in prattling childhood—even 170
 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,
 And intermingled strains of thankfulness
 With their own thoughtless melodies. At least 175
 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.
 O friend, O poet, brother of my soul, 180
 Think not that I could ever pass along
 Untouched by these remembrances; no, no,
 But I was hurried forward by a stream
 And could not stop. Yet wherefore should I speak,
 Why call upon a few weak words to say 185
 What is already written in the hearts
 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 190
 Tells it, and the insuperable look
 That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave
 There registered. Whatever else there be
 Of power or pleasure, sown or fostered thus— 195
 Peculiar to myself—let that remain
 Where it lies hidden in its endless home
 Among the depths of time. And yet it seems
 That here, in memory of all books which lay
 Their sure foundations in the heart of man, 200
 Whether by native prose, or numerous verse,
 That in the name of all inspirèd souls—
 From Homer the great thunderer, from the voice
 Which roars along the bed of Jewish song,
 And that, more varied and elaborate, 205
 Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake
 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 weary travellers when they rest themselves 210
 By the highways and hedges: ballad-tunes,
 Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
 And of old men who have survived their joy—
 It seemeth in behalf of these, the works,

- And of the men who framed them, whether known, 215
 Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,
 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 220
 For what we may become, and what we need,
 Than Nature's self which is the breath of God.
- Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
 To transitory themes, yet I rejoice,
 And, by these thoughts admonished, must speak out 225
 Thanksgivings from my 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 we, in lieu of wandering as we did
 Through heights and hollows and bye-spots of tales 235
 Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
 Of fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
 Had been attended, followed, 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 stallèd ox shut out
 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 of 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 I will 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 from those 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 breasts with innocent milk
 Doth also for our nobler part provide,
 Under His great correction and controul,
 As innocent instincts, and as innocent food. 275
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From feverish dread of error and mishap
 And evil, overweeningly so called,
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares, 280
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce—rather loved
 The hours for what they are, than from regards
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she: not from faculties more strong 285
 Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
 And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
 Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,

A heart that found benignity and hope,
Being itself benign. 290

My drift hath scarcely
I fear been obvious, for I have recoiled
From showing as it is the monster birth
Engendered by these too industrious times.
Let few words paint it: 'tis a child, no child, 295
But a dwarf man; in knowledge, virtue, skill,
In what he is not, and in what he is,
The noontide shadow of a man complete;
A worshipper of worldly seemliness—
Not quarrelsome, for that were far beneath 300
His dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
As generous as a fountain; selfishness
May not come near him, gluttony or pride;
The wandering beggars propagate his name,
Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun. 305

Yet deem him not for this a naked dish
Of goodness merely—he is garnished out.
Arch are his notices, and nice his sense
Of the ridiculous; deceit and guile,
Meanness and falsehood, he detects, can treat 310
With apt and graceful laughter; nor is blind
To the broad follies of the licensed world;
Though shrewd, yet innocent himself withal,
And can read lectures upon innocence.

He is fenced round, nay armed, for ought we know, 315
In panoply complete; and fear itself,
Natural or supernatural alike,
Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
Touches him not. Briefly, the moral part
Is perfect, and in learning and in books 320

He is a prodigy. His discourse moves slow,
Massy and ponderous as a prison door,
Tremendously embossed with terms of art.
Rank growth of propositions overruns
The stripling's brain; the path in which he treads 325

Is choked with grammars. Cushion of divine
 Was never such a type of thought profound
 As is the pillow where he rests his head.
 The ensigns of the empire which he holds—
 The globe and sceptre of his royalties— 330
 Are telescopes, and crucibles, and maps.
 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, 335
 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,
 Takes nothing upon trust. His teachers stare,
 The country people pray for God's good grace, 340
 And tremble at his deep experiments.
 All things are put to question: he must live
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day,
 Or else not live at all, and seeing too
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls 345
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart.
 Meanwhile old Grandame Earth is grieved to find
 The playthings which her love designed for him
 Unthought of—in their woodland beds the flowers
 Weep, and the river-sides are all forlorn. 350

Now this is hollow, 'tis a life of lies
 From the beginning, and in lies must end.
 Forth bring him to the air of common sense
 And, fresh and shewy as it is, the corps
 Slips from us into powder. Vanity, 355
 That is his soul: there lives he, and there moves—
 It is the soul of every thing he seeks—
 That gone, nothing is left which he can love.
 Nay, if a thought of purer birth should rise
 To carry him towards a better clime, 360
 Some busy helper still is on the watch
 To drive him back, and pound him like a stray

With the pinfold of his own conceit,
Which is his home, his natural dwelling-place.
Oh, give us once again the wishing-cap 365
Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
The child whose love is here, at least doth reap
One precious gain—that he forgets himself. 370

These mighty workmen of our later age
Who with a broad highway have overbridged
The froward chaos of futurity,
Tamed to their bidding—they who have the art
To manage books, and things, and make them work 375
Gently on infant minds as does the sun
Upon a flower—the tutors of our youth,
The guides, the wardens of our faculties
And stewards of our labour, watchful men
And skilful in the usury of time, 380
Sages, who in their prescience would controul
All accidents, and to the very road
Which they have fashioned would confine us down
Like engines—when will they be taught
That in the unreasoning progress of the world 385
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 390
And islands of Winander—many a time
At evening, when the stars had just begun
To move along the edges of the hills,
Rising or setting, would he stand alone
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake, 395
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 400
 Across the wat'ry 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 mirth and jocund din. And when it chanced 405
 That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
 Then sometimes in that silence, while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene 410
 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 415
 In childhood ere he was full ten years old.
 Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
 The vale where he was born; the churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village school,
 And there, along that bank, when I have passed 420
 At evening, I believe that oftentimes
 A full half-hour together I have stood
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies.
 Even now methinks I have before my sight
 That self-same village church: I see her sit— 425
 The thronèd lady spoken of erewhile—
 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 430
 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 435

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;
 Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy, 440
 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 fear, yet still in happiness
 Not yielding to the happiest upon earth. 445
 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 honored with that name—
 Knowledge not purchased with the loss of power! 450

Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first entrusted to the care
 Of that sweet valley—when its paths, its shores
 And brooks, were like a dream of novelty
 To my half-infant thoughts—that very week, 455
 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.
 Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom 460
 I saw distinctly on the opposite shore
 A heap of garments, left as I supposed
 By one who there was bathing. Long I watched,
 But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
 Grew dark, with all the shadows on its breast, 465
 And now and then a fish up-leaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day—
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale—
 Went there a company, and in their boat
 Sounded with grappling-irons and long poles: 470
 At length, the dead man, 'mid that beauteous scene
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright

Rose with his ghastly face, a spectre shape—
 Of terror even. And yet no vulgar fear,
 Young as I was, a child not nine years old, 475
 Possessed me, for my inner eye had seen
 Such sights before among the shining streams
 Of fairyland, the forests of romance—
 Thence came a spirit hallowing what I saw
 With decoration and ideal grace, 480
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the words
 Of Grecian art and purest Poesy.

I had a precious treasure at that time,
 A little yellow canvass-covered book,
 A slender abstract of the *Arabian Tales*; 485
 And when I learned, as now I first did learn
 From my companions in this new abode,
 That this dear prize of mine was but a block
 Hewn from a mighty quarry—in a word,
 That there were four large volumes, laden all 490
 With kindred matter—'twas in truth to me
 A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly
 I made a league, a covenant with a friend
 Of my own age, that we should lay aside
 The monies we possessed, and hoard up more, 495
 Till our joint savings had amassed enough
 To make this book our own. Through several months
 Religiously did we preserve that vow,
 And spite of all temptation hoarded up,
 And hoarded up; but firmness failed at length, 500
 Nor were we ever masters of our wish.

And afterwards, when, to my father's house
 Returning at the holidays, I found
 That golden store of books which I had left
 Open to my enjoyment once again, 505
 What heart was mine! Full often through the course
 Of those glad respites in the summertime
 When armed with rod and line we went abroad

For a whole day together, I have lain
 Down by thy side, O Derwent, murmuring stream, 510
 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, 515
 I to my sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
 It comes, directing those to works of love 520
 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 the light of monkish lamps;
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised 525
 By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled warrior in old age
 Out of the bowels of those very thoughts
 In which his youth did first extravagate—
 These spread like day, and something in the shape 530
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
 And they must have their foot. Our childhood sits,
 Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne
 That hath more power than all the elements. 535
 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— 540
 And in the long probation that ensues,
 The time of trial ere we learn to live
 In reconciliation with our stinted powers,
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit, 545
 Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows

To custom, mettlesome and not yet tamed
 And humbled down—oh, then we feel, we feel,
 We know, when we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,
 Forgers of lawless tales, we bless you then— 550
 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 555
 And seasons serve—all faculties—to whom
 Earth crouches, th' elements are potter's clay,
 Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,
 Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

It might demand a more impassioned strain 560
 To tell of later pleasures linked to these,
 A tract of the same isthmus which we cross
 In progress from our native continent
 To earth and human life—I mean to speak
 Of that delightful time of growing youth 565
 When cravings for the marvellous relent,
 And we begin to love what we have seen;
 And sober truth, experience, sympathy,
 Take stronger hold of us; and words themselves
 Move us with conscious pleasure. 570

I am sad

At thought of raptures now for ever flown,
 Even unto tears I sometimes could be sad
 To think of, to read over, many a page—
 Poems withal of name—which at that time 575
 Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
 Dead in my eyes as is a theatre
 Fresh emptied of spectators. Thirteen years,
 Or haply less, I might have seen when first
 My ears began to open to the charm 580
 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,
Yet unfrequented, while the morning light 585
Was yellowing the hilltops, with that dear friend
(The same whom I have mentioned heretofore)
I went abroad, and for the better part
Of two delightful hours we strolled along
By the still borders of the misty lake 590
Repeating favorite 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. 595
And though full oft the objects of our love
Were false and in their splendour overwrought,
Yet surely at such time no vulgar power
Was working in us, nothing less in truth
Than that most noble attribute of man— 600
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— 605
For images, and sentiments, and words,
And every thing with which we had to do
In that delicious world of poesy,
Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
With music, incense, festival, and flowers! 610

Here must I pause: This only will I add
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
Of modesty, that he who in his youth
A wanderer among the woods and fields 615
With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
By glittering verse, but he doth furthermore,
In measure only dealt out to himself, 620

Receive enduring touches of deep joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty poets. Visionary power
Attends upon the motions of the winds
Embodied in the mystery of words; 625
There darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things do work their changes there
As in a mansion like their proper home.
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine, 630
And through the turnings intricate of verse
Present themselves as objects recognised
In flashes, and with a glory scare their own.

Thus far a scanty record is deduced
Of what I owed to books in early life; 635
Their later influence yet remains untold,
But as this work was taking in my thoughts
Proportions that seemed larger than had first
Been meditated, I was indisposed
To any further progress at a time 640
When these acknowledgements were left unpaid.

Book Sixth *Cambridge and the Alps*

THE leaves were yellow when to Furness Fells,
The haunt of shepherds, and to cottage life
I bade adieu, and, one among the flock
Who by that season are convened, like birds
Trooping together at the fowler's lure, 5
Went back to Granta's cloisters—not so fond
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In spirit, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
Without repining from the mountain pomp 10
Of autumn and its beauty (entered in
With calmer lakes and louder streams); and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth
I quitted, and your nights of revelry, 15
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth,
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

We need not linger o'er the ensuing time,
But let me add at once that now, the bonds 20
Of indolent and vague society
Relaxing in their hold, I lived henceforth
More to myself, read more, reflected more,
Felt more, and settled daily into habits
More promising. Two winters may be passed 25
Without a separate notice; many books
Were read in process of this time—devoured,
Tasted or skimmed, or studiously perused—

Yet with no settled plan. I was detached
 Internally from academic cares, 30
 From every hope of prowess and reward,
 And wished to be a lodger in that house
 Of letters, and no more—and should have been
 Even such, but for some personal concerns
 That hung about me in my own despite 35
 Perpetually, no heavy weight, but still
 A baffling and a hindrance, a controul
 Which made the thought of planning for myself
 A course of independent study seem
 An act of disobedience towards them 40
 Who loved me, proud rebellion and unkind.
 This bastard virtue—rather let it have
 A name it more deserves, this cowardise—
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom planted in me from the very first, 45
 And indolence, by force of which I turned
 From regulations even of my own
 As from restraints and bonds. And who can tell,
 Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
 And at a later season, or preserved— 50
 What love of Nature, what original strength
 Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,
 The deepest and the best, and what research
 Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed?

The poet's soul was with me at that time, 55
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of happiness and truth. A thousand hopes
 Were mine, a thousand tender dreams, of which
 No few have since been realized, and some
 Do yet remain, hopes for my future life. 60
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
 And yet the morning gladness is not gone
 Which then was in my mind. Those were the days
 Which also first encouraged me to trust 65

With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
 With such a daring thought, that I might leave
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Uphelp even by the very name and thought 70
 Of printed books and authorship, began
 To melt away; and further, the dread awe
 Of mighty names was softened down, and seemed
 Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now, 75
 Though not familiarly, my mind put on;
 I loved and I enjoyed—that was my chief
 And ruling business, happy in the strength
 And loveliness of imagery and thought.

All winter long, whenever free to take 80
 My choice, did I at nights frequent our groves
 And tributary walks—the last, and oft
 The only one, who had been lingering there
 Through hours of silence till the porter's bell,
 A punctual follower on the stroke of nine, 85
 Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
 Inexorable summons. Lofty elms,
 Inviting shades of opportune recess,
 Did give composure to a neighbourhood
 Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree 90
 There was, no doubt yet standing there, an ash,
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed:
 Up from the ground and almost to the top
 The trunk and master branches everywhere
 Were green with ivy, and the lightsome twigs 95
 And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
 That hung in yellow tassels and festoons,
 Moving or still—a favorite trimmed out
 By Winter for himself, as if in pride,
 And with outlandish grace. Oft have I stood 100
 Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere

Of magic fiction, verse of mine perhaps
 May never tread, but scarcely Spenser's self
 Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, 105
 More bright appearances could scarcely see
 Of human forms and superhuman powers,
 Than I beheld standing on winter nights
 Alone beneath this fairy work of earth.

'Twould be a waste of labour to detail 110
 The rambling studies of a truant youth—
 Which further may be easily divined,
 What, and what kind they were. My inner knowledge
 (This barely will I note) was oft in depth
 And delicacy like another mind, 115

Sequestered from my outward taste in books—
 And yet the books which then I loved the most
 Are dearest to me now; for, being versed
 In living Nature, I had there a guide
 Which opened frequently my eyes, else shut, 120

A standard which was usefully applied,
 Even when unconsciously, to other things
 Which less I understood. In general terms,
 I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Mised as to these latter not alone 125

By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 Delusion to young scholars incident—
 And old ones also—by that overprized
 And dangerous craft of picking phrases out 130
 From languages that want the living voice
 To make of them a nature to the heart,
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Yet must I not entirely overlook 135
 The pleasure gathered from the elements
 Of geometric science. I had stepped
 In these inquiries but a little way,

No farther than the threshold—with regret
Sincere I mention this—but there I found 140
Enough to exalt, to cheer me and compose.
With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance
Which even was cherished, did I meditate
Upon the alliance of those simple, pure
Proportions and relations, with the frame 145
And laws of Nature—how they could become
Herein a leader to the human mind—
And made endeavours frequent to detect
The process by dark guesses of my own.
Yet from this source more frequently I drew 150
A pleasure calm and deeper, a still sense
Of permanent and universal sway
And paramount endowment in the mind,
An image not unworthy of the one
Surpassing life, which—out of space and time, 155
Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
And silence did await upon these thoughts
That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

And as I have read of one by shipwreck thrown 160
With fellow sufferers whom the waves had spared
Upon a region uninhabited,
An island of the deep, who having brought
To land a single volume and no more—
A treatise of geometry—was used, 165
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 those truths,
To spots remote and corners of the isle 170
By the seaside, and draw his diagrams
With a long stick upon the sand, and thus
Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
Forget his feeling: even so—if things
Producing like effect from outward cause 175

So different may rightly be compared—
 So was it with me then, and so will be
 With poets ever. Mighty is the charm
 Of those abstractions to a mind beset
 With images, and haunted by itself, 180
 And specially delightful unto me
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
 So gracefully, even then when it appeared
 No more than as a plaything, or a toy
 Embodied to the sense—not what it is 185
 In verity, an independent world
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine, almost
 Through grace of heaven and inborn tenderness. 190
 And not to leave the picture of that time
 Imperfect, with these habits I must rank
 A melancholy, from humours of the blood
 In part, and partly taken up, that loved
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
 The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring— 195
 A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice
 And inclination mainly, and the mere
 Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
 Add unto this a multitude of hours
 Pilfered away by what the bard who sang 200
 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 205
 By change of accidents; or even—to speak
 Without unkindness—in another place.

In summer among distant nooks I roved—
 Dovedale, or Yorkshire dales, or through bye-tracts
 Of my own native region—and was blest 210
 Between those sundry wanderings with a joy

Above all joys, that seemed another morn
 Risen on mid-noon: the presence, friend, I mean
 Of that sole sister, she who hath been long
 Thy treasure also, thy true friend and mine, 215
 Now after separation desolate
 Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed. The gentle banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
 And that monastic castle, on a flat, 220
 Low-standing by the margin of the stream,
 A mansion not unvisited of old
 By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
 Some snatches he might pen for aught we know
 Of his *Arcadia*, by fraternal love 225
 Inspired—that river and that mouldering dome
 Have seen us sit in many a summer hour,
 My sister and myself, when, having climbed
 In danger through some window's open space,
 We looked abroad, or on the turret's head 230
 Lay listening to the wild-flowers and the grass
 As they gave out their whispers to the wind.
 Another maid there was, who also breathed
 A gladness o'er that season, then to me
 By her exulting outside look of youth 235
 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
 In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes 240
 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, was scattered love—
 A spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam. 245
 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,

And milder breezes—melancholy lot— 250
 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,
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those 255
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
 Thy pleasure with us; thy returning strength,
 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
 Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift
 Of gales Etesian or of loving thoughts. 260

I too have been a wanderer, but, alas,
 How different is the fate of different men,
 Though twins almost in genius and in mind.
 Unknown unto each other, yea, and breathing 265
 As if in different elements, we were framed
 To bend at last to the same discipline,
 Predestined, if two beings ever were,
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
 Else sooner ended, I have known full well 270
 For whom I thus record the birth and growth
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
 And groves, I speak to thee, my friend—to thee 275
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy in the depths
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide edifice, thy home and school,
 Wast used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
 Moving in heaven, or haply, tired of this, 280
 To shut thine eyes and by internal light
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream
 Far distant—thus beheld from year to year
 Of thy long exile. Nor could I forget
 In this late portion of my argument 285
 That scarcely had I finally resigned

My rights among those academic bowers
 When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou cam'st
 And didst sit down in temperance and peace, 290
 A rigorous student. What a stormy course
 Then followed—oh, it is a pang that calls
 For utterance, to think how small a change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 A world of pain, ripened ten thousand hopes 295
 For ever withered. Through this retrospect
 Of my own college life I still have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes, have played with times
 (I speak of private business of the thought) 300
 And accidents as children do with cards,
 Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still
 In impotence of mind by his fireside
 Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought 305
 Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
 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 310
 From things well-matched, or ill, and words for things—
 The self-created sustenance of a mind
 Debarred from Nature's living images,
 Compelled to be a life unto itself,
 And unrelentingly possessed by thirst 315
 Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone,
 Ah, surely not in singleness of heart
 Should I have seen the light of evening fade
 Upon the silent Cam, if we had met,
 Even at that early time: I needs must hope, 320
 Must feel, must trust, that my maturer age
 And temperature less willing to be moved,
 My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed

Or chased away the airy wretchedness 325
 That batted on thy youth. But thou hast trod,
 In watchful meditation thou hast trod,
 A march of glory, which doth put to shame
 These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
 Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought 330
 That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
 On wanderings of my own, and now to these
 My poem leads me with an easier mind.
 The employments of three winters when I wore 335
 A student's gown have been already told,
 Or shadowed forth as far as there is need—
 When the third summer brought its liberty
 A fellow student and myself, he too
 A mountaineer, together sallied forth, 340
 And, staff in hand on foot pursued our way
 Towards the distant Alps. An open slight
 Of college cares and study was the scheme,
 Nor entertained without concern for those
 To whom my worldly interests were dear, 345
 But Nature then was sovereign in my heart,
 And mighty forms seizing a youthful fancy
 Had given a charter to irregular hopes.
 In any age, without an impulse sent
 From work of nations and their goings-on, 350
 I should have been possessed by like desire;
 But 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
 France standing on the top of golden hours,
 And human nature seeming born again.
 Bound, as I said, to the Alps, it was our lot 355
 To land at Calais on the very eve
 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 of tens of millions. Southward thence 360
 We took our way, direct through hamlets, towns,

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 365
By which our toilsome journey was abridged—
Among sequestered villages we walked
And found benevolence and blessedness
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, like spring
That leaves no corner of the land untouched. 370
Where elms for many and many a league in files,
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,
'Twas sweet at such a time—with such delights 375
On every side, in prime of youthful strength—
To feed a poet's tender melancholy
And fond conceit of sadness, to the noise
And gentle undulation which they made.
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 380
Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
Of darkness, dances in the open air.
Among the vine-clad hills of Burgundy,
Upon the bosom of the gentle Soane
We glided forward with the flowing stream: 385
Swift Rhone, thou wert the wings on which we cut
Between they lofty rocks. Enchanting show
Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
And single cottages and lurking towns—
Reach after reach, procession without end, 390
Of deep and stately vales. A lonely pair
Of Englishmen we were, and sailed along
Clustered together with a merry crowd
Of those emancipated, with a host
Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning 395
From the great spousals newly solemnized
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 flourished with their swords as if to fight 400
 The saucy air. In this blithe company
 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 405
 We rose at signal given, and formed a ring,
 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, 410
 And hospitably did they give us hail
 As their forerunners in a glorious course;
 And round and round the board they danced again.
 With this same throng our voyage we pursued
 At early dawn; the monastery bells 415
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears—
 The rapid river flowing without noise—
 And every spire we saw among the rocks
 Spoke with a sense of peace, at intervals
 Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew 420
 With which we were environed. Having parted
 From this glad rout, the convent of Chartreuse
 Received us two days afterwards, and there
 We rested in an awful solitude—
 Thence onward to the country of the Swiss. 425

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
 That variegated journey step by step;
 A march it was of military speed,
 And earth did change her images and forms 430
 Before us fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
 Day after day, up early and down late,
 From vale to vale, from hill to hill we went,
 From province on to province did we pass,
 Keen hunters in a chace of fourteen weeks— 435
 Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
 Upon the stretch when winds are blowing fair.

Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
 Enticing vallies—greeted them, and left
 Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam 440
 Of salutation were not passed away.
 Oh, sorrow for the youth who could have seen
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
 To patriarchal dignity of mind
 And pure simplicity of wish and will, 445
 Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man.
 My heart leaped up when first I did look down
 On that which was first seen of those deep haunts,
 A green recess, an aboriginal vale,
 Quiet, and lorded over and possessed 450
 By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
 Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
 And by the river-side.

That day we first
 Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved 455
 To have a soulless image on the eye
 Which had usurped upon a living thought
 That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
 Of Chamouny did, on the following dawn,
 With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice— 460
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 Five rivers broad and vast—make rich amends,
 And reconciled us to realities.
 There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
 The eagle soareth in the element, 465
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
 While Winter like a tamèd lion walks,
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 Among the cottages by beds of flowers. 470

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld
 Or heard was fitted to our unripe state
 Of intellect and heart. By simple strains

Of feeling, the pure breath of real life, 475
 We were not left untouched. With such a book
 Before our eyes we could not chuse but read
 A frequent lesson of sound tenderness,
 The universal reason of mankind,
 The truth of young and old. Nor, side by side 480
 Pacing, two brother pilgrims, or alone
 Each with his humour, could we fail to abound—
 Craft this which hath been hinted at before—
 In dreams and fictions pensively composed:
 Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake, 485
 And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,
 Even among those solitudes sublime,
 And sober posies of funereal flowers,
 Culled from the gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour. 490

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
 Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
 Of vigor, never utterly asleep.
 Far different dejection once was mine—
 A deep and genuine sadness then I felt— 495
 The circumstances I will here relate
 Even as they were. Upturning with a band
 Of travellers, from the Valais we had clomb
 Along the road that leads to Italy;
 A length of hours, making of these our guides, 500
 Did we advance, and, having reached an inn
 Among the mountains, we together ate
 Our noon's repast, from which the travellers rose
 Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
 Descending by the beaten road that led 505
 Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off;
 The only track now visible was one
 Upon the further side, right opposite,
 And up a lofty mountain. This we took,
 After a little scruple and short pause, 510
 And climbed with eagerness—though not, at length,

Without surprize and some anxiety
 On finding that we did not overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment now encreased our doubts, 515
 A peasant met us, and from him we learned
 That to the place 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— 520
 And further, that thenceforward all our course
 Was downwards with the current of that stream.
 Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
 And all the answers which the man returned
 To our inquiries, in their sense and substance 525
 Translated by the feelings which we had,
 Ended in this—that we had crossed the Alps.

Imagination!—lifting up itself
 Before the eye and progress of my song
 Like an unfathered vapour, here that power, 530
 In all the might of its endowments, came
 Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
 Halted without a struggle to break through,
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say
 ‘I recognise thy glory’. In such strength 535
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 Of awful promise, when the light of sense
 Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
 There harbours whether we be young or old. 540
 Our destiny, our nature, and our 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. 545
 The mind beneath such banners militant
 Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught
 That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts

That are their own perfection and reward—
 Strong in itself, and in the access of joy 550
 Which hides in like the overflowing Nile.

The dull and heavy slackening which ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast,
 And entered with the road which we had missed 555
 Into a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow step. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed, 560
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And everywhere along the hollow rent
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears— 565
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
 As if a voice were in them—the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light, 570
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 Characters of the great apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end. 575

That night our lodging was an alpine house,
 An inn, or hospital (as they are named),
 Standing in that same valley by itself,
 And close upon the confluence of two streams—
 A dreary mansion, large beyond all need, 580
 With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
 By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
 Lie melancholy among weary bones.
 Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,

Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified 585
Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
Dimpling along in silent majesty
With mountains for its neighbours, and in view
Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
And thus proceeding to Locarno's lake, 590
Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
Locarno, spreading out in width like heaven,
And Como thou—a treasure by the earth
Kept to itself, a darling bosomed up
In Abyssinian privacy—I spake 595
Of thee, thy chestnut woods and garden plots
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 600
League after league, and cloistral avenues
Where silence is if music be not there:
While yet a youth undisciplined in verse,
Through fond ambition of my heart I told
Your praises, nor can I approach you now 605
Ungreeted by a more melodious song,
Where tones of learned art and Nature mixed
May frame enduring language. Like a breeze
Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
In motion without pause; but ye have left 610
Your beauty with me, an impassioned sight
Of colours and of forms, whose power is sweet
And gracious, almost, might I dare to say,
As virtue is, or goodness—sweet as love,
Or the remembrance of a noble deed, 615
Or gentlest visitations of pure thought
When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
Religiously in silent blessedness—
Sweet as this last itself, for such it is.

Through those delightful pathways we advanced 620
Two days, and still in presence of the lake,

Which winding up among the Alps now changed
 Slowly its lovely countenance and put on
 A sterner character. The second night,
 In eagerness, and by report misled 625
 Of those Italian clocks that speak the time
 In fashion different from ours, we rose
 By moonshine, doubting not that day was near,
 And that, meanwhile, coasting the water's edge
 As hitherto, and with as plain a track 630
 To be our guide, we might behold the scene
 In its most deep repose. We left the town
 Of Gravedona with this hope, but soon
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 Where, having wandered for a while, we stopped 635
 And on a rock sate down to wait for day.
 An open place it was and overlooked
 From high the sullen water underneath,
 On which a dull red image of the moon
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form 640
 Like an uneasy snake. Long time we sate,
 For scarcely more than one hour of the night—
 Such was our error—had been gone when we
 Renewed our journey. On the rock we lay
 And wished to sleep, but could not for the stings 645
 Of insects, which with noise like that of noon
 Filled all the woods. The cry of unknown birds,
 the mountains—more by darkness visible
 And their own size, than any outward light—
 The breathless wilderness of clouds, the clock 650
 That told with unintelligible voice
 The widely parted hours, the noise of streams,
 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand
 Which did not leave us free from personal fear,
 And lastly, the withdrawing moon that set 655
 Before us while she still was high in heaven—
 These were our food, and such a summer night
 Did to that pair of golden days succeed,
 With now and then a doze and snatch of sleep,

On Como's banks, the same delicious lake. 660

But here I must break off, and quit at once,
 Though loth, the record of these wanderings,
 A theme which may seduce me else beyond
 All reasonable bounds. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not 665

In hollow exultation, dealing forth
 Hyperboles of praise comparative;
 Not rich one moment to be poor for ever;
 Not prostrate, overborne—as if the mind
 Itself were nothing, a mean pensioner 670

On outward forms—did we in presence stand
 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 675

I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
 That flowed into a kindred stream, a gale
 That helped me forwards, did administer
 To grandeur and to tenderness—to the one
 Directly, but to tender thoughts by means 680

Less often instantaneous in effect—
 Conducted me to these along a path
 Which, in the main, was more circuitous.

Oh most beloved friend, a glorious time,
 A happy time that was. Triumphant looks 685
 Were then the common language of all eyes:
 As if awakened from sleep, the nations hailed
 Their great expectancy; the fife of war

Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
 A blackbird's whistle in a vernal grove. 690
 We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
 Of their neighbours, and, when shortening fast
 Our pilgrimage—nor distant far from home—

We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
 For battle in the cause of Liberty. 695

A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life, I looked upon these things
As from a distance—heard, and saw, and felt,
Was touched but with no intimate concern—
I seemed to move among them as a bird 700
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its business in its proper element.
I needed not that joy, I did not need
Such help: the ever-living universe
And independent spirit of pure youth 705
Were with me at that season, and delight
Was in all places spread around my steps
As constant as the grass upon the fields.

Book Seventh *Residence in London*

FIVE years are vanished since I first poured out,
Saluted by that animating breeze
Which met me issuing from the city's walls,
A glad preamble to this verse. I sang
Aloud in dithyrambic fervour, deep 5
But short-lived uproar, like a torrent sent
Out of the bowels of a bursting cloud
Down Scawfell or Blencathara's rugged sides,
A waterspout from heaven. But 'twas not long
Ere the interrupted strain broke forth once more, 10
And flowed awhile in strength; then stopped for years—
Not heard again until a little space
Before last primrose-time. Belovèd friend,
The assurances then given unto myself,
Which did beguile me of some heavy thoughts 15
At thy departure to a foreign land,
Have failed; for slowly doth this work advance.
Through the whole summer I have been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday
And part through outward hindrance. But I heard 20
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors betwixt light and dark,
A voice that stirred me. 'Twas a little band,
A quire of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold, minstrels from the distant woods 25
And dells, sent in by Winter to bespeak
For the old man a welcome, to announce
With preparation artful and benign—

Yea, the most gentle music of the year—
 That their rough lord had left the surly north, 30
 And hath begun his journey. A delight
 At this unthought-of-greeting unawares
 Smote me, a sweetness of the coming time,
 And, listening, I half whispered, 'We will be,
 Ye heartsome choristers, ye and I will be 35
 Brethren, and in the hearing of bleak winds
 Will chaunt together.' And, thereafter, walking
 By later twilight on the hills I saw
 A glow-worm, from beneath a dusky shade
 Or canopy of the yet unwithered fern 40
 Clear shining, like a hermit's taper seen
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before; the child
 Of summer, lingering, shining by itself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills, 45
 Seemed sent on the same errand with the quire
 Of winter that had warbled at my door,
 And the whole year seemed tenderness and love.
 The last night's genial feeling overflowed
 Upon this morning, and my favorite grove— 50
 Now tossing its dark boughs in sun and wind—
 Spreads through me a commotion like its own,
 Something that fits me for the poet's task,
 Which we will now resume with chearful hope,
 Nor checked by aught of tamer argument 55
 That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
 Farewell for ever to the private bowers
 Of gowned students—quitted these, no more 60
 To enter them, and pitched my vagrant tent,
 A casual dweller and at large, among
 The unfenced regions of society.
 Yet undetermined to what plan of life
 I should adhere, and seeming thence to have 65
 A little space of intermediate time

Loose and at full command, to London first
 I turned, if not in calmness, nevertheless
 In no disturbance of excessive hope—
 At ease from all ambition personal, 70
 Frugal as there was need, and though self-willed,
 Yet temperate and reserved, and wholly free
 From dangerous passions. 'Twas at least two years
 Before this season when I first beheld
 That mighty place, a transient visitant; 75
 And now it pleased me my abode to fix
 Single in the wide waste. To have a house,
 It was enough—what matter for a home?—
 That owned me, living chearfully abroad
 With fancy on the stir from day to day, 80
 And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatso'er is feigned
 Of airy palaces and gardens built
 By genii of romance, or hath in grave
 Authentic history been set forth of Rome, 85
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis,
 Or given upon report by pilgrim friars
 Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
 Among Tartarean wilds, fell short, far short,
 Of that which I in simpleness believed 90
 And thought of London—held me by a chain
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
 I know not that herein I shot beyond
 The common mark of childhood, but I well
 Remember that among our flock of boys 95
 Was one, a cripple from the birth, whom chance
 Summoned from school to London—fortunate
 And envied traveller—and when he returned,
 After short absence, and I first set eyes
 Upon his person, verily, though strange 100
 The thing may seem, I was not wholly free
 From disappointment to behold the same
 Appearance, the same body, not to find

Some change, some beams of glory brought away
 From that new region, Much I questioned him, 105
 And every word he uttered, on my ears
 Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note,
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things
 My fancy had shaped forth of sights and shows, 110
 Processions, equipages, lords and dukes,
 The King and the King's palace, and not last
 Or least, heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor—
 Dreams hardly less intense than those which wrought
 A change of purpose in young Whittington 115
 When he in fiendlessness, a drooping boy,
 Sate on a stone and heard the bells speak out
 Articulate music. Above all, one thought
 Baffled my understanding, how men lived
 Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still 120
 Strangers, and knowing not each other's names.

Oh wondrous power of words, how sweet they are
 According to the meaning which they bring—
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh, I then had heard
 Of your green groves and wilderness of lamps, 125
 Your gorgeous ladies, fairy cataracts,
 And pageant fireworks. Nor must we forget
 Those other wonders, different in kind
 Though scarcely less illustrious in degree,
 The river proudly bridged, the giddy top 130
 And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's, the tombs
 Of Westminster, the Giants of Guildhall,
 Bedlam and the two figures at its gates,
 Streets without end and churches numberless,
 Statues with flowery gardens in vast squares, 135
 The Monument, and Armoury of the Tower.
 These fond imaginations, of themselves,
 Had long before given way in season due,
 Leaving a throng of others in their stead;
 And now I looked upon the real scene, 140

Familiarly perused it day by day,
 With keen and lively pleasure even there
 Where disappointment was the strongest, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right, 145
 A thing that ought to be. Shall I give way,
 Copying the impression of the memory—
 Though things remembered idly do half seem
 The work of fancy—shall I, as the mood
 Inclines me, here describe for pastime's sake, 150
 Some portion of that motley imagery,
 A vivid pleasure of my youth, and now,
 Among the lonely places that I love,
 A frequent daydream for my riper mind?
 And first, the look and aspect of the place— 155
 The broad highway appearance, as it strikes
 On strangers of all ages, the quick dance
 Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din,
 The endless stream of men and moving things,
 From hour to hour the illimitable walk 160
 Still among streets, with clouds and sky above,
 The wealth, the bustle and the eagerness,
 The glittering chariots with their pampered steeds,
 Stalls, barrows, porters, midway in the street
 The scavenger that begs with hat in hand, 165
 The labouring hackney-coaches, the rash speed
 Of coaches travelling far, whirled on with horn
 Loud blowing, and the sturdy drayman's team
 Ascending from some alley of the Thames
 And striking right across the crowded Strand 170
 Till the fore-horse veer round with punctual skill;
 Here, there, and everywhere, a weary throng,
 That comers and the goers face to face—
 Face after face—the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names, 175
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead:
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;

Stationed above the door like guardian saints,
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male, 180
 Or physiognomies of real men,
 Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
 Boyle, Shakespear, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length, 185
 Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
 Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
 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, 190

We take our way—a raree-show is here
 With children gathered round, another street
 Presents a company of dancing dogs,
 Or dromedary with an antic pair
 Of monkeys on his back, a minstrel-band 195

Of Savoyards, single and alone,
 An English ballad-singer. Private courts,
 Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
 Thrilled by some female vendor's scream—belike
 The very shrillest of all London cries— 200

May then entangle us awhile,
 Conducted through those labyrinths unawares
 To privileged regions and inviolate,
 Where from their aery lodges studious lawyers
 Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green. 205

Thence back into the throng, until we reach—
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees—
 Some half-frequented scene where wider streets
 Bring stragglng breezes of suburban air.

Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls, 210
 Advertisements of giant size, from high
 Press forward in all colours on the sight—
 These, bold in conscious merit—lower down,
 That, fronted with a most imposing word,

Is peradventure one in masquerade.	215
As on the broadening causeway we advance, Behold a face turned up towards us, strong In lineaments, and red with over-toil: 'Tis one perhaps already met elsewhere,	
A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,	220
And stumping with his arms. In sailor's garb Another lies at length beside a range Of written characters, with chalk inscribed Upon the smooth flat stones. The nurse is here, The bachelor that loves to sun himself,	225
The military idler, and the dame That field-ward takes her walk in decency.	
Now homeward through the thickening hubbub, where See—among less distinguishable shapes— The Italian, with his frame of images	230
Upon his head; with basket at his waist, The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk, With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm. Briefly, we find (if tired of random sights, And haply to that search our thoughts should turn)	235
Among the crowd, conspicuous less or more As we proceed, 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,	240
The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote America, the hunter Indian; Moors, Malays, Lascars, the Tartar and Chinese, And Negro ladies in white muslin gowns.	
At leisure let us view from day to day,	245
As they present themselves, the spectacles Within doors: troops of wild beasts, birds and beasts Of every nature from all climes convened, And, next to these, those mimic sights that ape The absolute presence of reality,	250

Expressing as in mirror sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she hath to shew—
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
 By means refined attaining purest ends, 255
 But imitations fondly made in plain
 Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
 Whether the painter—fashioning a work
 To Nature's circumambient scenery,
 And with his greedy pencil taking in
 A whole horizon on all sides—with power 260
 Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
 Plant us upon some lofty pinnacle
 Or in a ship on waters, with a world
 Of life and lifelike mockery to east,
 To west, beneath, behind us, and before, 265
 Or more mechanic artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 From shading colours also borrowing help,
 Some miniature of famous spots and things,
 Domestic, or the boast of foreign realms: 270
 The Firth of Forth, and Edinburgh, throned
 On crags, fit empress of that mountain land;
 St Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision, Rome itself;
 Or else, perhaps, some rural haunt, the Falls 275
 Of Tivoli, and dim Frescati's bowers,
 And high upon the steep that mouldering fane,
 The Temple of the Sibyl—every tree
 Through all the landscape, tuft, stone, scratch minute,
 And every cottage, lurking in the rocks— 280
 All that the traveller sees when he is there.

And to these exhibitions mute and still
 Others of wider scope, where living men,
 Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes, 285
 Together joined their multifarious aid
 To heighten the allurements. Need I fear
 To mention by its name, as in degree

Lowest of these, and humblest in attempt—	
Yet richly graced with honours of its own—	290
Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time	
Intolerant, as is the way of youth	
Unless itself be pleased, I more than once	
Here took my seat, and, maugre frequent fits	
Of irksomeness, with ample recompense	295
Saw singes, rope-dancers, 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,	300
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,	305
He dons his coat of darkness, on the stage	
Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye	
Of living mortal safe as is the moon	
'Hid in her vacant interlunar cave'.	
Delusion bold (and faith must needs be coy)	310
How is it wrought?—his garb is black, the word	
INVISIBLE flames forth upon his chest.	
Nor was it unamusing here to view	
Those samples, as of the ancient comedy	
And Thespian times, dramas of living men	315
And recent things yet warm with life: a sea-fight,	
Shipwreck, or some domestic incident	
The fame of which is scattered through the land,	
Such as this daring brotherhood of late	
Set forth—too holy theme for such a place,	320
And doubtless treated with irreverence,	
Albeit with their very best of skill—	
I mean, O distant friend, a story drawn	
From our own ground, the Maid of Buttermere,	
And how the spoiler came, 'a bold bad man'	325

To God unfaithful, children, wife, and home,
 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. O friend, I speak
 With tender recollection of that time 330
 When first we saw the maiden, then a name
 By us unheard of—in her cottage-inn
 Were welcomed, and attended on by her,
 Both stricken with one feeling of delight,
 An admiration of her modest mien 335
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
 Not unfamiliarly we since that time
 Have seen her, her discretion have observed,
 Her just opinions, female modesty,
 Her patience, and retiredness of mind 340
 Unspoiled by commendation and excess
 Of public notice. This memorial verse
 Comes from the poet's heart, and is her due;
 For we were nursed—as almost might be said—
 On the same mountains, children at one time, 345
 Must haply often on the self-same day
 Have from our several dwellings gone abroad
 To gather daffodils on Coker's stream.

These last words uttered, to my argument
 I was returning, when—with sundry forms 350
 Mingled, that in the way which I must tread
 Before me stand—thy image rose again,
 Mary of Buttermere! She lives in peace
 Upon the spot where she as born and reared;
 Without contamination does she live 355
 In quietness, without anxiety.
 Beside the mountain chapel sleeps in earth
 Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb
 That thither comes from some unsheltered place
 To rest beneath the little rock-like pile 360
 When storms are blowing. Happy are they both,
 Mother and child! These feelings, in themselves

Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think
Of those ingenuous moments of our youth
Ere yet by use we have learnt to slight the crimes 365
And sorrows of the world. Those days are now
My theme, and, 'mid the numerous scenes which they
Have left behind them, foremost I am crossed
Here by remembrance of two figures: one
A rosy babe, who for a twelvemonth's space 370
Perhaps had been of age to deal about
Articulate prattle, child as beautiful
As ever sate upon a mother's knee;
The other was the parent of that babe—
But on the mother's cheek the tints were false, 375
A painted bloom. 'Twas at a theatre
That I beheld this pair; 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. 380
Of lusty vigour, more than infantine,
He was in limbs, in face a cottage rose
Just three part blown—a cottage-child, but ne'er
Saw I by cottage or elsewhere a babe
By Nature's gifts so honored. Upon a board, 385
Whence an attendant of the theatre
Served out refreshments, had this child been placed,
And there he sate environed with a ring
Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men
And shameless women—treated and caressed— 390
Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
While oaths, indecent speech, and ribaldry
Were rife about him as are songs of birds
In springtime after showers. The mother, too,
Was present, but of her I know no more 395
Than hath been said, and scarcely at this time
Do I remember her; but I behold
The lovely boy as I beheld him then,
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged 400

Amid the fiery furnace. He hath since
 Appeared to me oftentimes as if embalmed
 By Nature—through some special privilege
 Stopped at the growth he had—destined to live,
 To be, to have been, come, and go, a child 405
 And nothing more, no partner in the years
 That bear us forward to distress and guilt,
 Pain and abasement; beauty in such excess
 Adorned him in that miserable place.
 So have I thought of him a thousand times— 410
 And seldom otherwise—but he perhaps,
 Mary, may now have lived till he could look
 With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps
 Beside the mountain chapel undisturbed.

It was but little more than three short years 415
 Before the season which I speak of now
 When first, a traveller from our pastoral hills,
 Southward two hundred miles I had advanced,
 And for the first time in my life did hear
 The voice of woman utter blasphemy— 420
 Saw woman as she is to open shame
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice.
 Full surely from the bottom of my heart
 I shuddered; but the pain was almost lost,
 Absorbed and buried in the immensity 425
 Of the effect: a barrier seemed at once
 Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
 The human form, splitting the race of man
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward shape.
 Distress of mind ensued upon this sight, 430
 And ardent meditation—afterwards
 A milder sadness on such spectacles
 Attended: thought, commiseration, grief,
 For the individual and the overthrow
 Of her soul's beauty—farther at that time 435
 Than this I was but seldom led; in truth
 The sorrow of the passion stopped me here.

I quit this painful theme, enough is said
To shew what thoughts must often have been mine
At theatres, which then were my delight— 440
A yearning made more strong by obstacles
Which slender funds imposed. Life then was new,
The senses easily pleased; the lustres, lights,
The carving and the gilding, paint and glare,
And all the mean upholstery of the place, 445
Wanted not animation in my sight,
Far less the living figures on the stage,
Solemn or gay—whether some beauteous dame
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
Of thick-entangled forest, like the moon 450
Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
With flourishing trumpets, 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 455
His slender manacles; or romping girl
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
A scarecrow pattern of old age, patched up
Of all the tatters of infirmity,
All loosely put together, hobbled in 460
Stumping upon a cane, with which he smites
From time to time the solid boards and makes them
Prat somewhat loudly of the whereabouts
Of one so overloaded with his years.
But what of this?—the laugh, the grin, grimace, 465
And all the antics and buffoonery,
The least of them not lost, were all received
With charitable pleasure. Through the night,
Between the show, and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each little nook 470
That had 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 blowing round her, among grass 475

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, 480
 Yet something of a girlish childlike gloss
 Of novelty survived for scenes like these—
 Pleasure that had been handed down from times
 When at a country playhouse, having caught
 In summer through the fractured wall a glimpse 485
 Of daylight, at the thought of where I was
 I gladdened more than if I had beheld
 Before me some bright cavern of romance,
 Or than we do when on our beds we lie
 At night, in warmth, when rains are beating hard. 490

The matter which detains me now will seem
 To many neither dignified enough
 Nor arduous, and is doubtless in itself
 Humble and low—yet not to be despised
 By those who have observed the curious props 495
 By which the perishable hours of life
 Rest on each other, and the world of thought
 Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes,
 Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
 Might here be spoken of; but when I think 500
 Of these I feel the imaginative power
 Languish within me. Even then it slept,
 When, wrought upon by tragic sufferings,
 The heart was full—amid my sobs and tears
 It slept, even in the season of my youth. 505
 For though I was most passionately moved,
 And yielded to the changes of the scene
 With most obsequious feeling, yet all this
 Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind.
 If aught there were of real grandeur here 510
 'Twas only then when gross realities,
 The incarnation of the spirits that moved

Amid the poet's beauteous world—called forth
 With that distinctness which a contrast gives,
 Or opposition—made me recognise 515
 As by a glimpse, the things which I had shaped
 And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
 Had felt, and thought of in my solitude.

Pass we from entertainments that are such
 Professedly, to others titled higher, 520
 Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
 More near akin to these than names imply—

I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts
 Before the ermined judge, or that great stage
 Where senators, tongue-favored men, perform, 525

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
 Familiarly, a household term, like those—
 The Bedfords, Glocesters, Salisburys of old— 530

Which the fifth Harry talks of. Silence, hush,
 This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit,
 No stammerer of a minute, painfully
 Delivered. No, the orator hath yoked
 The hours, like young Aurora, to his car— 535

O presence of delight, can patience e'er
 Grow weary of attending on a track
 That kindles with such glory? Marvellous,
 The enchantment spreads and rises—all are rapt
 Astonished—like a hero in romance 540

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 is,
 Grows tedious even in a young man's ear. 545

These are grave follies; other public shows
 The capital city teems with of a kind
 More light—and where but in the holy church?

There have I seen a comely bachelor,
 fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend 550
 The pulpit, with seraphic glance look up,
 and in a tone elaborately low
 Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
 A minuet course, and, winding up his mouth
 From time to time into an orifice 555
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small
 And only not invisible, again
 Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
 Of rapt irradiation exquisite.
 Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job, 560
 Moses, and he who penned the other day
The Death of Abel, Shakespear, Doctor Young,
 And Ossian—doubt not, 'tis the naked truth—
 Summoned from streamy Morven, each and all
 Must in their turn lend ornament and flowers 565
 To entwine the crook of eloquence with which
 This pretty shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 Leads up and down his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving ten thousand others that do each— 570
 In hall or court, conventicle, or shop,
 In public room or private, park or street—
 With fondness reared on his own pedestal,
 Look out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien and dress, 575
 And all the strife of singularity—
 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, 580
 I did not hunt after or greatly prize,
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast
 Of reading them with quick and curious eye,
 But as a common produce—things that are
 Today, tomorrow will be—took of them 585

Such willing note as, on some errand bound
 Of pleasure or of love, some traveller might,
 Among a thousand other images,
 Of sea-shells that bestud the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields in June. 590

But foolishness, and madness in parade,
 Though most at home in this their dear domain,
 Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
 Even to the rudest novice of the schools. 595
 O friend, one feeling was there which belonged

To this great city by exclusive right:
 How often in the overflowing streets
 Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, 'The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery.' 600

Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
 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 montains, or appears in dreams, 605
 And all the ballast of familiar life—

The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays,
 All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man—
 Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
 And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond 610
 The reach of common indications, lost

Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance
 Abruptly to be smitten with the view
 Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood propped against a wall, upon his chest 615
 Wearing a written paper, to explain

The story of the man, and who he was.
 My mind did at this spectacle turn round
 As with the might of waters, and it seemed
 To me that in this label was a type 620
 Or emblem of the utmost that we know

Both of ourselves and of the universe,

And on the shape of this unmoving man,
 His fixèd face and sightless eyes, I looked,
 As if admonished from another world. 625

Though reared upon the base of outward things,
 These chiefly are such structures as the mind
 Builds for itself. Scenes different there are—
 Full-formed—which take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties: the peace 630

Of night, for instance, the solemnity
 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; 635

The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle,
 Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds
 Unfrequent as in desarts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir, 640

The feeble salutation from the voice
 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, 645

Even as we give them welcome, or assist—
 Are prompt, or are remiss. 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, 650

Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From those sights
 Take one, an annual festival, the fair
 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St. Bartholomew, there see
 A work that's finished to our hands, that lays, 655

If any spectacle on earth can do,
 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— 660
 Upon some showman's platform. What a hell
 For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din
 Barbarian and infernal—'tis a dream
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound.
 Below, the open space, through every nook 665
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
 With heads; the midway region and above
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the prodigies;
 And chattering monkeys dangling from their poles, 670
 And children whirling in their roundabouts;
 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 675
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
 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, 680
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, and with towering plumes.
 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, 685
 Giants, ventriloquists, the invisible girl,
 The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
 The waxwork, clockwork, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, wild beasts, puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things, 690
 All freaks of Nature, all Promethean thoughts
 Of man—his dulness, madness, and other feats,
 All jumbled up together to make up
 This parliament of monsters. Tents and booths
 Meanwhile—as if the whole were one vast mill— 695
 Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
 Men, women, three-years' children, babes in arms.

O, blank confusion, and a type not false
 Of what the mighty city is itself
 To all, except a straggler here and there— 700
 To the whole swarm of its inhabitants—
 An undistinguishable world to men,
 The slaves unrespited of low pursuits,
 Living amid the same perpetual flow
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced 705
 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.
 But though the picture weary out the eye, 710
 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
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole. 715
 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 comes,
 And comprehensiveness and memory, 720
 From early converse with the works of God
 Among all regions, chiefly where appear
 Most obviously simplicity and power.
 By influence habitual to the mind
 The mountain's outline and its steady form 725
 Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
 The measure and the prospect of the soul
 To majesty: such virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills—nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances 730
 Gives movement of the thoughts, and multitude,
 With order and relation. This (if still,
 As hitherto, with freedom I may speak,
 And the same perfect openness of mind,
 Not violating any just restraint, 735

As I would hope, of real modesty),
This did I feel in that vast receptacle.
The spirit of Nature was upon me here,
The soul of beauty and enduring life
Was present as a habit, and diffused—
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things—
Composure and ennobling harmony.

740

Book Eighth *Retrospect: Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind*

WHAT sounds are those, Helvellyn, which 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
Is yon, assembled in the gay green field? 5
Crowd seems it, solitary hill, to thee,
Though but a little family of men—
Twice twenty—with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed.
It is a summer festival, a fair, 10
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 storms be not abroad
And mists have left him an unshrouded head. 15
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon,
Behold the cattle are driven down; the sheep
That have for traffic been culled out are penned 20
In cotes that stand together on the plain
Ranged side by side; 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 hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
Some aged woman finds her way again, 30
Year after year a punctual visitant;
The showman with his freight upon his back,
And once perchance in lapse of many years,
Prouder itinerant—mountebank, or he
Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid. 35
But one is here, 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, apples, pears
(On that day only to such office stooping), 40
She carries in her basket, and walks round
Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
Of her new calling, blushing restlessly.
The children now are rich, the old man now
Is generous, so gaiety prevails 45
Which all partake of, young and old.

Immense

Is the recess, the circumambient world
Magnificent, by which they are embraced.
They move about upon the soft green field; 50
How little they, they and their doings, seem,
Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves,
And all which they can further or obstruct—
Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
As tender infants are—and yet how great, 55
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
Look down upon them, the reposing clouds,
The lurking brooks from their invisible haunts, 60
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir,
And the blue sky that roofs their calm abode.

With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel

In that great city what I owed to thee:
 High thoughts of God and man, and love of man, 65
 Triumphant over all those loathsome sights
 Of wretchedness and vice, a watchful eye,
 Which, with the outside of our human life
 Not satisfied, must read the inner mind.
 For I already had been taught to love 70
 My fellow-beings, to such habits trained
 Among the woods and mountains, where I found
 In thee a gracious guide to lead me forth
 Beyond the bosom of my family,
 My friends and youthful playmates. 'Twas thy power 75
 That raised the first complacency in me,
 And noticeable kindness of heart,
 Love human to the creature in himself
 As he appeared, a stranger in my path,
 Before my eyes a brother of this world— 80
 Thou first didst with those motions of delight
 Inspire me. I remember, far from home
 Once having strayed while yet a very child,
 I saw a sight—and with what joy and love!
 It was a day of exhalations spread 85
 Upon the mountains, mists and steam-like fogs
 Redounding everywhere, not vehement,
 But calm and mild, gentle and beautiful,
 With gleams of sunshine on the eyelet spots
 And loopholes of the hills, wherever seen, 90
 Hidden by quiet process, and as soon
 Unfolded, to be huddled up again—
 Along a narrow valley and profound
 I journeyed, when aloft above my head,
 Emerging from the silvery vapours, lo, 95
 A shepherd and his dog, in open day.
 Girt round with mists they stood, and looked about
 From that enclosure small, inhabitants
 Of an aërial island floating on,
 As seemed, with that abode in which they were, 100
 A little pendant area of grey rocks,

By the soft wind breathed forward. With delight
As bland almost, one evening I beheld—
And at as early age (the spectacle
Is common, but by me was then first seen)— 105
A shepherd in the bottom of a vale,
Towards the centre standing, who with voice,
And hand waved to and fro as need required,
Gave signal to his dog, thus teaching him
To chace along the mazes of steep crags 110
The flock he could not see. And so the brute—
Dear creature—with a man's intelligence,
Advancing, or retreating on his steps,
Through every pervious strait, to right or left,
Thridded a way unbaffled, while the flock 115
Fled upwards from the terror of his bark
Through rocks and seams of turf with liquid gold
Irradiate—that deep farewell light by which
The setting sun proclaims the love he bears
To mountain regions. 120

Beauteous the domain
Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
Was opened—tract more exquisitely fair
Than in that paradise of ten thousand trees,
Or Gehol's famous gardens, in a clime 125
Chosen

from widest empire, for delight
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous
(China's stupendous mound!) by patient skill 130
Of myriads, and boon Nature's lavish help:
Scene linked to scene, and ever-growing change,
Soft, grand, or gay, with palaces and domes
Of pleasure spangled over, shady dells
For eastern monasteries, sunny mounds
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas, 135
Rocks, dens and groves of foliage, taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious hues—

Going and gone again, in subtile chace,
 Too fine to be pursued—or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong 140
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side
 Bedded among the plumes of tropic birds;
 And mountains over all, embracing all,
 And all the landscape endlessly enriched
 With waters running, falling, or asleep. 145
 But lovelier far than this the paradise
 Where I was reared, in Nature's primitive gifts
 Favored no less, and more to every sense
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
 The elements, and seasons in their change, 150
 Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
 The heart of man—a district on all sides
 The fragrance breathing of humanity,
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants, 155
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,
 Conducted on to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train,
 Unwooded, unthought-of even: simplicity,
 And beauty, and inevitable grace. 160

Yea, doubtless, at any age when but a glimpse
 Of those resplendent gardens, with their frame
 Imperial, and elaborate ornaments,
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place 165
 Would leave behind a dance of images
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks,
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth
 With the ordinary human interests
 Which they embosom—all without regard 170
 As both may seem—are fastening on the heart
 Insensibly, each with the other's help,
 So that we love, not knowing that we love,
 And feel, not knowing whence our feeling comes.

Such league have these two principles of joy 175
In our affections. I have singled out
Some moments, the earliest that I could, in which
Their several currents, blended into one—
Weak yet, and gathering imperceptibly—
Flowed in by gushes. My first human love, 180
As hath been mentioned, did incline to those
Whose occupations and concerns were most
Illustrated by Nature, and adorned,
And shepherds were the men who pleased me first:
Not such as, in Arcadian fastnesses 185
Sequestered, handed down among themselves,
So ancient poets sing, the golden age;
Nor such—a second race, allied to these—
As Shakespeare in the wood of Arden placed,
Where Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede, 190
Or there where Florizel and Perdita
Together dance, Queen of the feast and King;
Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is
That I had heard, what he perhaps had seen,
Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far 195
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,
Tales of the maypole dance, and flowers that decked 200
The posts and the kirk-pillars, and of youths,
That each one with his maid at break of day,
By annual custom, issued forth in troops
To drink the waters of some favorite well,
And hang it round with garlands. This, alas, 205
Was but a dream: the times had scattered all
These lighter graces, and the rural ways
And manners which it was my chance to see
In childhood were severe and unadorned,
The unluxuriant produce of a life 210
Intent on little but substantial needs,
Yet beautiful—and beauty that was felt.

But images of danger and distress
 And suffering, these took deepest hold of me,
 Man suffering among awful powers and forms: 215
 Of this I heard and saw enough to make
 The imagination restless—nor was free
 Myself from frequent perils. Nor were tales
 Wanting, the tragedies of former times,
 Or hazards and escapes, which in my walks 220
 I carried with me among crags and woods
 And mountains; and of these may here be told
 One as recorded by my household dame.

‘At the first falling of autumnal snows
 A shepherd and his son one day went forth’, 225
 Thus did the matron’s tale begin, ‘to seek
 A straggler of their flock. They both had ranged
 Upon this service the preceding day
 All over their own pastures and beyond,
 And now, at sunrise sallying out again, 230
 Renewed their search, begun where from Dove Crag—
 Ill home for bird so gentle—they looked down
 On Deepdale Head, and Brothers Water (named
 From those two brothers that were drowned therein)
 Thence, northward, having passed by Arthur’s Seat, 235
 To Fairfield’s highest summit. On the right
 Leaving St Sunday’s Pike, to Grisedale Tarn
 They shot, and over that cloud-loving hill,
 Seat Sandal—a fond lover of the clouds—
 Thence up Helvellyn, a superior mount 240
 With prospect underneath of Striding Edge
 And Grisedale’s houseless vale, along the brink
 Of Russet Cove, and those two other coves,
 Huge skeletons of crags, which from the trunk
 Of old Helvellyn spread their arms abroad 245
 And make a stormy harbour for the winds.
 Far went those shepherds in their devious quest,
 From mountain ridges peeping as they passed
 Down into every glen; at length the boy

Said, "Father, with your leave I will go back, 250
And range the ground which we have searched before."
So speaking, southward down the hill the lad
Sprang like a gust of wind, crying aloud,
"I know where I shall find him." 'For take note',
Said here my grey-haired dame, 'that though the storm 255
Drive one of these poor creatures miles and miles,
If he can crawl he will return again
To his own hills, the spots where when a lamb
He learnt to pasture at his mother's side.
After so long a labour suddenly 260
Bethinking him of this, the boy
Pursued his way towards a brook whose course
Was through that unfenced tract of mountain ground
Which to his father's little farm belonged,
The home and ancient birthright of their flock. 265
Down the deep channel of the stream he went,
Prying through every nook. Meanwhile the rain
Began to fall upon the mountain tops,
Thick storm and heavy which for three hours' space
Abated not, and all that time the boy 270
Was busy in his search, until at length
He spied the sheep upon a plot of grass,
An island in the brook. It was a place
Remote and deep, piled round with rocks, where foot
Of man or beast was seldom used to tread; 275
But now, when everywhere the summer grass
Had failed, this one adventurer, hunger-pressed,
Had left his fellows, and made his way alone
To the green plot of pasture in the brook.
Before the boy knew well what he had seen, 280
He leapt upon the island with proud heart
And with a prophet's joy. Immediately
The sheep sprang forward to the further shore
And was borne headlong by the roaring flood—
At this the boy looked round him, and his heart 285
Fainted with fear. Thrice did he turn his face
To either brink, nor could he summon up

The courage that was needful to leap back
 Cross the tempestuous torrent: so he stood,
 A prisoner on the island, not without 290
 More than one thought of death and his last hour.
 Meanwhile the father had returned alone
 To his own house; and now at the approach
 Of evening he went forth to meet his son,
 Conjecturing vainly for what cause the boy 295
 Had stayed so long. The shepherd took his way
 Up his own mountain grounds, where, as he walked
 Along the steep that overhung the brook
 He seemed to hear a voice, which was again
 Repeated, like the whistling of a kite. 300
 At this, now knowing why, as oftentimes
 Long afterwards he has been heard to say,
 Down to the brook he went, and tracked its course
 Upwards among the o'erhanging rocks—nor thus
 Had he gone far, ere he espied the boy, 305
 Where on that little plot of ground he stood
 Right in the middle of the roaring stream,
 Now stronger every moment and more fierce.
 The sight was such as no one could have seen
 Without distress and fear. The shepherd heard 310
 The outcry of his son, he stretched his staff
 Towards him, bade him leap—which word scarce said,
 The boy was safe within his father's arms.'

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters on the banks 315
 Of delicate Galesus—and no less
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores—
 Smooth life the herdman and his snow-white herd,
 To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable stream 320
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goatherd lived
 As sweetly underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, the invisible God, thrilling the rocks

With tutelary music, from all harm 325
The fold protecting. I myself, mature
In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
Like one of these, where fancy might run wild,
Though under skies less generous and serene;
Yet there, as for herself, had Nature framed 330
A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse
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 335
And intricate recesses, creek or bay
Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home:
Thither he comes with springtime, there abides
All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear 340
His flute or flagelet resounding far.
There's not a nook or hold of that vast space,
Nor strait where passage is, but it shall have
In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
In unlaborious pleasure, with no task 345
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 350
I saw when, from the melancholy walls
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
My daily walk along that chearful plain,
Which, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge 355
Of the Hercynian forest. Yet hail to you,
Your rocks and precipices, ye that seize
The heart with firmer grasp, your snows and streams
Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
That howled so dismally when I have been 360
Companionless among your solitudes!

There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, from the height he drives his flock
 Down into sheltering coves, and feeds them there 365
 Through the hard time, long as the storm is 'locked'
 (So do they phrase it), bearing from the stalls
 A toilsome burthen up the craggy ways
 To strew it on the snow. And when the spring
 Looks out, and all the mountains dance with lambs, 370
 He through the enclosures won from the steep waste,
 And through the lower heights hath gone his rounds;
 And when the flock with warmer weather climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To range among them through the hills dispersed, 375
 And watch their goings, whatsoever track
 Each wanderer chuses for itself—a work
 That lasts the summer through. He quits his home
 At dayspring, and no sooner doth the sun
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat, 380
 Than he lies down upon some shining place,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When he hath stayed—
 As for the most he doth—beyond this time,
 He springs up with a bound, and then away!
 Ascending fast with his long pole in hand, 385
 Or winding in and out among the crags.
 What need to follow him through what he does
 Or sees in his day's march? He feels himself
 In those vast regions where his service is
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope 390
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
 With that majestic indolence so dear
 To native man.

A rambling schoolboy, thus
 Have I beheld him; without knowing why, 395
 Have 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
Seemed more commanding oft when he was there. 400
Seeking the raven's nest and suddenly
Surprized with vapours, or on rainy days
When I have angled up the lonely brooks,
Mine eyes have glanced upon him, few steps off,
In size a giant, stalking through the fog, 405
His sheep like Greenland bears. At other times,
When round some shady promontory turning,
His form hath flashed upon me glorified
By the deep radiance of the setting sun;
Or him have I descried in distant sky, 410
A solitary object and sublime,
Above all height, like an aërial cross,
As it is stationed on some spiry rock
Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
Ennobled outwardly before mine eyes, 415
And thus my heart at first was introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human form
To me was like an index of delight,
Of grace and honour, power and worthiness. 420
Meanwhile, this creature—spiritual almost
As those of books, but more exalted far,
Far more of an imaginative form—
Was not a Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour 425
In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst,
But, for the purpose of kind, a man
With the most common—husband, father—learned,
Could teach, admonish, suffered with the rest
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear. 430
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,
This sanctity of Nature given to man, 435

A shadow, a delusion?—ye who are fed
 By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 Or waxen image which yourselves have made, 440
 And ye adore. But blessèd be the God
 Of Nature and of man that this was so,
 That men did at the first present themselves
 Before my untaught eyes thus purified,
 Removed, and at a distance that was fit. 445
 And so we all of us in some degree
 Are led to knowledge, whencesoever led,
 And howsoever—were it otherwise,
 And we found evil fast as we find good
 In our first years, or think that it is found, 450
 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
 Of most to move in, but that first I looked 455
 At man through objects that were great and fair,
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
 Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in 460
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point,
 I had my face towards the truth, began
 With an advantage, furnished with that kind
 Of prepossession without which the soul 465
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good—
 No genuine insight ever comes to her—
 Happy in this, that I with Nature walked,
 Not having a too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life, 470
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts
 Self-pleasing, which if we would wish to think
 With admiration and respect of man

Will not permit us, but pursue the mind
That to devotion willingly would be raised, 475
Into the temple of the temple's heart.

Yet do not deem, my friend, though thus I speak
Of man as having taken in my mind
A place thus early which might almost seem
Preeminent, that this was really so. 480

Nature herself was at this unripe time
But secondary to my own pursuits
And animal activities, and all
Their trivial pleasures. And long afterwards
When those had died away, and Nature did 485

For her own sake become my joy, even then,
And upwards through late youth until not less
Than three-and-twenty summers had been told,
Was man in my affections and regards
Subordinate to her, her awful forms 490

And viewless agencies—a passion, she,
A rapture often, and immediate joy
Ever at hand; he distant, but a grace
Occasional, and accidental thought,
His hour being not yet come. Far less had then 495

The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
My spirit to that gentleness of love,
Won from me those minute obeisances
Of tenderness which I may number now
With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these 500
The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

Why should I speak of tillers of the soil?—
The ploughman and his team; or men and boys
In festive summer busy with the rake, 505
Old men and ruddy maids, and little ones
All out together, and in sun and shade
Dispersed among the hay-grounds alder-fringed;
The quarryman, far heard, that blasts the rock;

The fishermen in pairs, the one to row, 510
 And one to drop the net, plying their trade
 ‘Mid tossing lakes and tumbling boats’ and winds
 Whistling; the miner, melancholy man,
 That works by taper-light, while all the hills
 Are shining with the glory of the day. 515

But when that first poetic faculty
 Of plain imagination and severe—
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,
 An element of the nature’s inner self—
 Began to have some promptings to put on 520
 A visible shape, and to the works of art,
 The notions and the images of books,
 Did knowingly conform itself (by these
 Enflamed, and proud of that her new delight),
 There came among these shapes of human life 525
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit
 Which gave them new importance to the mind—
 And Nature and her objects beautified
 These fictions, as, in some sort, in their turn
 They banished her. From touch of this new power 530
 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
 That took its station there for ornament.
 Then common death was none, common mishap, 535
 But matter for this humour everywhere,
 The tragic super-tragic, else left short.
 Then, if a widow staggering with the blow
 Of her distress was known to have made her way
 To the cold grave in which her husband slept, 540
 One night, or haply more than one—through pain
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind—
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 She was a visitant the whole year through,
 Wetting the turf with never-ending tears, 545
 And all the storms of heaven must beat on her.

Through wild obliquities could I pursue
Among all objects of the fields and groves
These cravings: when the foxglove, one by one,
Upwards through every stage of its tall stem 550
Had shed its bells, and stood by the wayside
Dismantled, with a single one perhaps
Left at the ladder's top, with which the plant
Appeared to stoop, as slender blades of grass
Tipped with a bead of rain or dew, behold, 555
If such a sight were seen, would fancy bring
Some vagrant thither with her babes and seat her
Upon the turf beneath the stately flower,
Drooping in sympathy and making so
A melancholy crest above the head 560
Of the lorn creature, while her little ones,
All unconcerned with her unhappy plight,
Were sporting with the purple cups that lay
Scattered upon the ground. There was a copse,
An upright bank of wood and woody rock 565
That opposite our rural dwelling stood,
In which a sparkling patch of diamond light
Was in bright weather duly to be seen
On summer afternoons, within the wood
At the same place. 'Twas doubtless nothing more 570
Than a black rock, which, wet with constant springs,
Glistered far seen from out its lurking-place
As soon as ever the declining sun
Had smitten it. Beside our cottage hearth
Sitting with open door, a hundred times 575
Upon this lustre have I gazed, that seemed
To have some meaning which I could not find—
And now it was a burnished shield, I fancied,
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood; 580
An entrance now into some magic cave,
Or palace for a fairy of the rock.
Nor would I, though not certain whence the cause
Of the effulgence, thither have repaired

Without a precious bribe, and day by day 585
 And month by month I saw the spectacle,
 Nor ever once have visited the spot
 Unto this hour. Thus sometimes were the shapes
 Of wilful fancy grafted upon feelings
 Of the imagination, and they rose 590
 In worth accordingly.

My present theme
 Is to retrace the way that led me on
 Through Nature to the love of human-kind;
 Nor could I with such object overlook 595
 The influence of this power which turned itself
 Instinctively to human passions, things
 Least understood—,of this adulterate power,
 For so it may be called, and without wrong,
 When with that first compared. Yet in the midst 600
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine was—through the chance, on me not wasted,
 Of having been brought up in such a grand
 And lovely region—I had forms distinct
 To steady me. These thoughts did oft revolve 605
 About some centre palpable, which at once
 Incited them to motion, and controlled,
 And whatsoever shape the fit might take,
 And whencesoever it might come, I still
 At all times had a real solid world 610
 Of images about me, did not pine
 As one in cities bred might do—as thou,
 Beloved friend, hast told me that thou didst,
 Great spirit as thou art—in endless dreams
 Of sickness, disjoining, joining things, 615
 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm
 If when the woodman languished with disease
 From sleeping night by night among the woods
 Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,
 I called the pangs of disappointed love 620
 And all the long etcetera of such thought

To help him to his grave?—meanwhile the man,
If not already from the woods retired
To die at home, was haply, as I knew,
Pining alone among the gentle airs, 625
Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
On golden evenings, while the charcoal-pile
Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
Or spirit that was soon to take its flight.

There came a time of greater dignity, 630
Which had been gradually prepared, and now
Rushed in as if on wings—the time in which
The pulse of being everywhere was felt,
When all the several frames of things, like stars
Through every magnitude distinguishable, 635
Were half confounded in each other's blaze,
One galaxy of life and joy. Then rose
Man, inwardly contemplated, and present
In my own being, to a loftier height—
As of all visible natures crown, and first 640
In capability of feeling what
Was to be felt, in being rapt away
By the divine effect of power and love—
As, more than any thing we know, instinct
With godhead, and by reason and by will 645
Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Erelong, transported hence as in a dream,
I found myself begirt with temporal shapes
Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
Objects of sport and ridicule and scorn, 650
Manners and characters discriminate,
And little busy passions that eclipsed,
As well they might, the impersonated thought,
The idea or abstraction of the kind.
An idler among academic bowers, 655
Such was my new condition—as at large
Hath been set forth—yet here the vulgar light

Of present, actual, superficial life,
 Gleaming through colouring of other times,
 Old usages and local privilege, 660
 Thereby was softened, almost solemnized,
 And rendered apt and pleasing to the view.
 This notwithstanding, being brought more near
 As I was now to guilt and wretchedness,
 I trembled, thought of human life at times 665
 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. 670

It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
 Common to all?) that, seeing, I essayed
 To give relief, began to deem myself
 A moral agent, judging between good
 And evil not as for the mind's delight 675
 But for her safety, one who was to *act*—
 As sometimes to the best of my weak means
 I did, by human sympathy impelled,
 And through dislike and most offensive pain
 Was to the truth conducted—of this faith 680
 Never forsaken, that by acting well,
 And understanding, I should learn to love
 The end of life and every thing we know.

Preceptress stern, that didst instruct me next,
 London, to thee I willingly return. 685
 Erewhile my verse played only with the flowers
 Enwrought upon the mantle, satisfied
 With this amusement, and a simple look
 Of childlike inquisition now and then
 Cast upwards on thine eye to puzzle out 690
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
 Yet did I not give way to this light mood
 Wholly beguiled, as one incapable

Of higher things, and ignorant that high things
Were round me. Never shall I forget the hour, 695
The moment rather say, when, having thridded
The labyrinth of suburban villages,
At length I did unto myself first seem
To enter the great city. On the roof
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate, 700
With vulgar men about me, vulgar forms
Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,
Mean shapes on every side; but, at the time,
When to myself it fairly might be said
(The very moment that I seemed to know) 705
'The threshold now is *overpast*', great God!
That aught *external* to the living mind
Should have such mighty sway, yet so it was:
A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart—no thought embodied, no 710
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,
Power growing with the weight. Alas, I feel
That I am trifling. 'Twas a moment's pause:
All that took place within me came and went
As in a moment, and I only now 715
Remember that it was a thing divine.

As when a traveller hath from open day
With torches passed into some vault of earth,
The grotto of Antiparos, or the den
Of Yordas among Craven's mountain tracts, 720
He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow,
Widening itself on all sides, sees, or thinks
He sees, erelong, the roof above his head,
Which instantly unsettles and recedes—
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all 725
Commingled, making up a canopy
Of shapes, and forms, and tendencies to shape,
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like spectres—ferment quiet and sublime,
Which, after a short space, works less and less 730

Till, every effort, every motion gone,
 The scene before him lies in perfect view
 Exposed, and lifeless as a written book.
 But let him pause awhile and look again,
 And a new quickening shall succeed, at first 735
 Beginning timidly, then creeping fast
 Through all which he beholds: the senseless mass,
 In its projections, wrinkles, cavities,
 Through all its surface, with all colours streaming,
 Like a magician's airy pageant, parts, 740
 Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure
 Or image, recognised or new, some type
 Or picture of the world—forests and lakes,
 Ships, rivers, towers, the warrior clad in mail,
 The prancing steed, the pilgrim with his staff, 745
 A mitred bishop and the thronèd king—
 A spectacle to which there is no end.

No otherwise had I at first been moved—
 With such a swell of feeling, followed soon
 By a blank sense of greatness passed away— 750
 And afterwards continued to be moved,
 In presence of that vast metropolis,
 The fountain of my country's destiny
 And of the destiny of earth itself,
 That great emporium, chronicle at once 755
 And burial-place of passions, and their home
 Imperial, and chief living residence.
 With strong sensations teeming as it did
 Of past and present, such a place must needs
 Have pleased me in those times. I sought not then 760
 Knowledge, but craved for power—and power I found
 In all things. Nothing had a circumscribed
 And narrow influence; but all objects, being
 Themselves capacious, also found in me
 Capaciousness and amplitude of mind— 765
 Such is the strength and glory of our youth.
 The human nature unto which I felt

That I belonged, and which I loved and revered,
Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit
Living in time and space, and far diffused. 770

In this my joy, in this my dignity
Consisted: the external universe,
By striking upon what is found within,
Had given me this conception, with the help
Of books and what they picture and record. 775

'Tis true the history of my native land,
With those of Greece compared and popular Rome—
Events not lovely nor magnanimous,
But harsh and unaffecting in themselves;
And in our high-wrought modern narratives 780

Stript of their humanizing soul, the life
Of manners and familiar incidents—
Had never much delighted me. And less
Than other minds I had been used to owe
The pleasure which I found in place or thing 785

To extrinsic transitory accidents,
To records or traditions; but a sense
Of what had been here done, and suffered here
Through ages, and was doing, suffering, still,
Weighed with me, could support the test of thought— 790

Was like the enduring majesty and power
Of independent nature. And not seldom
Even individual remembrances,
By working on the shapes before my eyes,
Became like vital functions of the soul; 795

And out of what had been, what was, the place
Was thronged with impregnations, like those wilds
In which my early feelings had been nursed,
And naked valleys full of caverns, rocks,
And audible seclusions, dashing lakes, 800

Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
That into music touch the passing wind.

Thus here imagination also found

An element that pleased her, tried her strength
 Among new objects, simplified, arranged, 805
 Impregnated my knowledge, made it live—
 And the result was elevating thoughts
 Of human nature. Neither guilt nor vice,
 Debasement of the body or the mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight, 810
 Which was not lightly passed, but often scanned
 Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
 In what we may become, induce belief
 that I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A solitary, who with vain conceits 815
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
 When from that rueful prospect, overcast
 And in eclipse, my meditations turned,
 Lo, every thing that was indeed divine
 Retained its purity inviolate 820
 And unencroached upon, nay, seemed brighter far
 For this deep shade in counterview, the gloom
 Of opposition, such as shewed itself
 To the eyes of Adam, yet in Paradise
 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw 825
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 'O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.'

Add also, that among the multitudes 830
 Of that great city oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
 Is possible, the unity of man,
 One spirit over ignorance and vice
 Predominant, in good and evil hearts 835
 One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
 For the sun's light. When strongly breathed upon
 By this sensation—whencesoe'er it comes,
 Of union or communion—doth the soul
 Rejoice as in her highest joy; for there, 840

There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is,
And passing through all Nature rests with God.

And is not, too, that vast abiding-place
Of human creatures, turn where'er we may,
Profusely sown with individual sights 845
Of courage, and integrity, and truth,
And tenderness, which, here set off by foil,
Appears more touching? In the tender scenes
Chiefly was my delight, and one of these
Never will be forgotten. 'Twas a man, 850
Whom I saw sitting in an open square
Close to the iron paling that fenced in
The spacious grass-plot: on the corner-stone
Of the low wall in which the pales were fixed
Sate this one man, and with a sickly babe 855
Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
He took no note; but in his brawny arms
(The artificer was to the elbow bare, 860
And from his work this moment had been stolen)
He held the child, and, bending over it
As if he were afraid both of the sun
And of the air which he had come to seek,
He eyed it with unutterable love. 865

Thus from a very early age, O friend,
My thoughts had been attracted more and more
By slow gradations towards human-kind,
And to the good and ill of human life.
Nature had led me on, and now I seemed 870
To travel independent of her help,
As if I had forgotten her—but no,
My fellow-beings still were unto me
Far less than she was: though the scale of love
Were filling fast, 'twas light as yet compared 875
With that in which her mighty objects lay.

Book Ninth *Residence in France*

AS oftentimes a river, it might seem,
Yielding in part to old remembrances,
Part swayed by fear to tread an onward road
That leads direct to the devouring sea,
Turns and will measure back his course—far back, 5
Towards the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset—so have we long time
Made motions retrograde, in like pursuit
Detained. But now we start afresh: I feel
An impulse to precipitate my verse. 10
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes, needful in work so long,
Trice needful to the argument which now
Awaits us—oh, how much unlike the past—
One which though bright the promise, will be found 15
Ere far we shall advance, ungenial, hard
To treat of, and forbidding in itself.

Free as a colt at pasture on the hills
I ranged at large through the metropolis
Month after month. Obscurely did I live, 20
Not courting the society of men,
By literature, or elegance, or rank,
Distinguished—in the midst of things, it seemed,
Looking as from a distance on the world
That moved about me. Yet insensibly 25
False preconceptions were corrected thus,
And errors of the fancy rectified
(Alike with reference to men and things),

And sometimes from each quarter were poured in
 Novel imaginations and profound. 30
 A year thus spent, this field, with small regret—
 Save only for the bookstalls in the streets
 (Wild produce, hedgerow fruit, on all sides hung
 To lure the sauntering traveller from his track)—
 I quitted, and betook myself to France, 35
 Let thither chiefly by a personal wish
 To speak the language more familiarly,
 With which intent I chose for my abode
 A city on the borders of the Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest path, and there 40
 I sojourned a few days, and visited
 In haste each spot of old and recent fame—
 The latter chiefly—from the field of Mars
 Down to the suburbs of St. Anthony,
 And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome 45
 Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous halls,
 The National Synod and the Jacobins,
 I saw the revolutionary power
 Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms,
 The Arcades I traversed in the Palace huge 50
 Of Orleans, coasted round and round the line
 Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house, and shop,
 Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
 Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
 I stared and listened with a stranger's ears, 55
 To hawkers and haranguers, hubbub wild,
 And hissing factionists with ardent eyes,
 In knots, or pairs, or single, ant-like swarms
 Of builders and subverters, every face
 That hope or apprehension could put on— 60
 Joy, anger, and vexation, in the midst
 Of gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
 Of the Bastile I sate in the open sun

And from the rubbish gathered up a stone, 65
 And pocketed the relick in the guise
 Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 Though not without some strong incumbencies,
 And glad—could living man be otherwise?—
 I looked for something which I could not find, 70
 Affecting more emotion than I felt.
 For 'tis most certain that the utmost force
 Of all these various objects which may shew
 The temper of my mind as then it was
 Seemed less to recompense the traveller's pains, 75
 Less moved me, gave me less delight, than did
 A single picture merely, hunted out
 Among other sights, the Magdalene of le Brun,
 A beauty exquisitely wrought—fair face
 And rueful, with its ever-flowing tears. 80

But hence to my more permanent residence
 I hasten: there, by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was at first engrossed; and thus 85
 Amused and satisfied, I scarcely felt
 The shock of these concussions, unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a greenhouse, or a parlour-shrub,
 When 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 of which the stage
 Was busy with an action far advanced. 95
 Like others I had read, and eagerly
 Sometimes, 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 chanced 100
 To see a regular chronicle which might shew—

If any such indeed existed then—
 Whence the main organs of the public power
 Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
 Accomplished (giving thus unto events 105
 A form and body), all things were to me
 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 110
 Locked up in quiet. For myself—I fear
 Now in connection with so great a theme
 To speak, as I must be compelled to do,
 Of one so unimportant—a short time
 I loitered, and frequented night by night 115
 Routs, card-tables, the formal haunts of men
 Whom in the city privilege of birth
 Sequestered from the rest, societies
 Where, through punctilios of elegance
 And deeper causes, all discourse, alike 120
 Of good and evil, in the time, was shunned
 With studious care. But 'twas not long ere this
 Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
 Into a noisier world, and thus did soon
 Become a patriot—and my heart was all 125
 Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A knot of military officers
 That to a regiment appertained which then
 Was stationed in the city were the chief 130
 Of my associates; some of these wore swords
 Which had been seasoned in the wars, and all
 Were men well-born, at least laid claim to such
 Distinction, as the chivalry of France.
 In age and temper differing, they had yet
 One spirit ruling in them all—alike 135
 (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,
 For worst to them was come—nor would have stirred, 140
 Or deemed it worth a moment's while to stir,
 In any thing, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
 He had sate lord in many tender hearts, 145
 Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:
 His temper was quite mastered by the times,
 And they had blighted him, had eat away
 The beauty of his person, doing wrong
 Alike to body and to mind. His port, 150
 Which once had been erect and open, now
 Was stooping and contracted, and a face
 By nature lovely in itself, expressed,
 As much as any that was ever seen,
 A ravage out of season. made by thoughts 155
 Unhealthy and vexatious. At the hour,
 The most important of each day, in which
 The public news was read, the fever came,
 A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
 Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek 160
 Into a thousand colours. While he read,
 Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
 Continually, like an uneasy place
 In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
 Of universal ferment—mildest men 165
 Were agitated, and commotions, strife
 Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
 Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
 The soil of common life was at that time
 Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then, 170
 And not then only, 'What a mockery this
 Of history, the past and that to come!
 Now do I feel how I have been deceived,
 Reading of nations and their works in faith—
 Faith given to vanity and emptiness— 175
 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
 Devoured by locusts—Carra, Gorsas—add
 A hundred other names, forgotten now, 180
 Nor to be heard of more; yet were they powers,
 Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
 And felt through every nook of town and field.

The men already spoken of as chief
 Of my associates were prepared for flight 185
 To augment the band of emigrants in arms
 Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
 With foreign foes mustered for instant war.
 This was their undisguised intent, and they
 Were waiting with the whole of their desires 190
 The moment to depart. An Englishman,
 Born in a land the name of which appeared
 To licence some unruliness of mind,
 A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
 And that indulgence which a half-learned speech 195
 Wins from the courteous, I—who had been else
 Shunned and not tolerated—freely lived
 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. 200
 But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity or law,
 And nice distinctions—then on every tongue—
 Of natural rights and civil, and to acts
 Of nations, and their passing interests 205
 (I speak comparing these with other things)
 Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
 Tales of poets—as it made my heart
 Beat high and filled my fancy with fair forms, 210
 Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds—
 Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
 Of orders and degrees, I nothing found

Then, or had ever even in crudest youth,
 That dazzled me, but rather what my soul 215
 Mourned for, or loathed, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
 Manners erect, and frank simplicity, 220
 Than any other nook of English land,
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen
 Through the whole tenor of my schoolday time
 The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
 Was vested with attention or respect 225
 Through claims of wealth or blood. Nor was it least
 Of many debts which afterwards I owed
 To Cambridge and an academic life,
 That something there was holden up to view
 Of a republic, where all stood thus far 230
 Upon equal ground, that they were brothers all
 In honour, as of one community—
 Scholars and gentlemen—where, furthermore,
 Distinction lay open to all that came,
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem 235
 Than talents and successful industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To God and Nature's single sovereignty
 (Familiar presences of awful power),
 And fellowship with venerable books 240
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus, who had been formed
 To thought and moral feeling in the way
 This story hath described, should look with awe 245
 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 250

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 rather was come late than soon.
 No wonder then if advocates like these 255
 Whom I have mentioned, 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
 Had slumbered, now in opposition burst 260
 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
 Than human understanding, their discourse 265
 Maimed, spiritless—and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

Meantime day by day the roads,
 While I consorted with these royalists, 270
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France
 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 275
 Into mine eyes—I do not say I weep,
 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 280
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope
 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, 285
 Entering the city, here and there a face
 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 290
 Like arguments from Heaven that 'twas a cause
 Good, and which no one could stand up against
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth. 295

Among that band of officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mold—
 A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
 And with an oriental loathing spurned
 As of a different cast. A meeker man 300
 Than this lived never, or a more benign—
 Meek, though enthusiastic to the height
 Of highest expectation. Injuries
 Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly, 305
 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 310
 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 315
 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 320
 Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
 Had payed to woman. Somewhat vain he was,
 Or seemed so—yet it was not vanity,
 But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
 That covered him about when he was bent 325

On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause
Whereof he was a part—yet this was meek
And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude 330
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms,
Of ancient prejudice and chartered rights,
Allegiance, faith, and laws by time matured,
Custom and habit, novelty and change, 335
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
For he, an upright man and tolerant,
Balanced these contemplations in his mind, 340
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, had a sounder judgement
Than afterwards, carried about me yet
With less alloy to its integrity
The experience of past ages, as through help 345
Of books and common life it finds its way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf and obstinate to find 350
Error without apology on the side
Of those who were against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life 355
Unfeeling where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most, where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not—
A light and cruel world, cut off from all
The natural inlets of just sentiment, 360
From lowly sympathy, and chastening truth,
When good and evil never have the name,

That which they ought to have, but wrong prevails,
 And vice at home. We added dearest themes,
 Man and his noble nature, as it is 365
 The gift of God and lies in his own power,
 His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 On firm foundations, making social life, 370
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure,
 As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honorable deeds
 Of ancient story, thought of each bright spot 375
 That could be found in all recorded time,
 Of truth preserved and error passed away,
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from heaven,
 And how the multitude of men will feed
 And fan each other—thought of sects, how keen 380
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, country, love and hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed,
 How far they travel, and how long endure— 385
 How quickly mighty nations have been formed
 From least beginnings, how, together locked
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
 To aspirations then of our own minds 390
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us in a people risen up
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
 Upon their virtues, saw in rudest men 395
 Self-sacrifice the firmest, generous love
 And continence of mind, and sense of right
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is in academic groves— 400
 Or such retirement, friend, as we have known
 Among the mountains by our Rotha's stream,
 Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill—
 To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
 On rational liberty and hope in man, 405
 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
 Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
 Of one devoted, one whom circumstance 410
 Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
 In action, give it outwardly a shape,
 And that of benediction to the world.
 Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth—
 A hope it is and a desire, a creed 415
 Of zeal by an authority divine
 Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
 Such conversation under Attic shades
 Did Dion hold with Plato, ripened thus
 For a deliverer's glorious task, and such 420
 He, on that ministry already bound,
 Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
 Surrounded by adventurers in arms,
 When those two vessels with their daring freight
 For the Sicilian tyrant's overthrow 425
 Sailed from Zacynthus—philosophic war
 Led by philosophers. With harder fate,
 Though like ambition, such was he, O friend,
 Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis—let the name
 Stand near the worthiest of antiquity— 430
 Fashioned his life, and many a long discourse
 With like persuasion honored we maintained,
 He on his part accoutred for the worst.
 He perished fighting, in supreme command,
 Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire, 435
 For liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow countrymen; and yet most blessed

In this, that he the fate of later times
 Lived not to see, nor what we now behold
 Who have as ardent hearts as he had then. 440

Along that very Loire, with festivals
 Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
 Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk,
 Or in wide forests of the neighbourhood,
 High woods and over-arched, with open space 445
 On every side, and footing many a mile,
 Inwoven roots, and moss smooth as the sea—

A solemn region. Often in such place
 From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
 And let remembrance steal to other times 450

When hermits, from their sheds and caves forth strayed,
 Walked by themselves, so met in shades like these,
 And if a devious traveller was heard
 Approaching from a distance, as might chance,
 With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs 455

From the hard floor reverberated, then
 It was Angelica thundering through the woods
 Upon her palfrey, or that gentler maid
 Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.

Sometimes I saw methought a pair of knights 460
 Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
 Did rock above their heads, anon the din
 Of boisterous merriment and music's roar,

With sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
 Of satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance 465
 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
 Master my fancy while I wandered on 470

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

Dismantled, but by violence abrupt— 475
 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,
 And for the matin-bell—to sound no more— 480
 Grieved, and the evening taper, and the cross
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 Admonitory to the traveller,
 First seen above the woods.

And when my friend 485
 Pointed upon occasion to the site
 Of Romarentin, home of ancient kings,
 To the imperial edifice of Blois,
 Or to that rural castle, name now slipped
 From my remembrance, where a lady lodged 490
 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
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse 495
 '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 these frequent monuments
 Of kings, their vices and their better deeds, 500
 Imagination, potent to enflame
 At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
 So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind, 505
 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
 In those who by immunities unjust 510
 Betwixt the sovereign and the people stand,

His helpers and not theirs, laid stronger hold
 Daily upon me—mixed with pity too,
 And love, for where hope is, there love will be
 For the abject multitude. And when we chanced 515
 One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl
 Who crept along fitting her languid self
 Unto a heifer's motion—by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the girl with her two hands 520
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude—and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, 'Tis against that
 Which we are fighting', I with him believed
 Devoutly that a spirit was abroad 525
 Which could not be withstood, that poverty,
 At least like this, would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The industrious, and the lowly child of toil, 530
 All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
 Whether by edict of the one or few—
 And finally, as sum and crown of all, 535
 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In making their own laws, whence better days
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
 Was not the single confidence enough
 To animate the mind that ever turned 540
 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,
 And open punishment, if not the air 545
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
 Dread nothing. Having touched this argument
 I shall not, as my purpose was, take note
 Of other matters which detained us oft

In thought or conversation—public acts, 550
And public persons, and the emotions wrought
Within our minds by the ever-varying wind
Of record and report which day by day
Swept over us—but I will here instead
Draw from obscurity a tragic tale, 555
Not in its spirit singular, indeed,
But haply worth memorial, as I heard
The events related by my patriot friend
And others who had borne a part therein.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers—thus 560
My story may begin—oh, balmy time
In which a love-knot on a lady's brow
Is fairer than the fairest star in heaven!
To such inheritance of blessedness
Young Vaudracour was brought by years that had 565
A little overstepped his stripling prime.
A town of small repute in the heart of France
Was the youth's birthplace; there he vowed his love
To Julia, a bright maid from parents sprung
Not mean in their condition, but with rights 570
Unhonoured of nobility—and hence
The father of the young man, who had place
Among that order, spurned the very thought
Of such alliance. From their cradles up,
With but a step between their several homes, 575
Th pair had thriven together year by year,
Friends, playmates, twins in pleasure, after strife
And petty quarrels had grown fond again,
Each other's advocate, each other's help,
Nor ever happy if they were apart. 580
A basis this for deep and solid love,
And endless constancy, and placid truth—
But whatsoever of such treasures might,
Beneath the outside of their youth, have lain
Reserved for mellow years, his present mind 585
Was under fascination—he beheld

A vision, and he loved the thing he saw.
 Arabian fiction never filled the world
 With half the wonders that were wrought for him:
 Earth lived in one great presence of the spring, 590
 Life turned the meanest of her implements
 Before his eyes to price above all gold,
 The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine,
 Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
 The portals of the east, all paradise 595
 Could by the simple opening of a door
 Let itself in upon him—pathways, walks,
 Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirits sunk
 Beneath the burthen, overblessed for life.
 This state was theirs, till—whether through effect 600
 Of some delirious hour, or that the youth,
 Seeing so many bars betwixt himself
 And the dear haven where he wished to be
 In honorable wedlock with his love,
 Without a certain knowledge of his own 605
 Was inwardly prepared to turn aside
 From law and custom and entrust himself
 To Nature for a happy end of all,
 And thus abated of that pure reserve
 Congenial to his loyal heart, with which 610
 It would have pleased him to attend the steps
 Of maiden so divinely beautiful,
 I know not—but reluctantly must add
 That Julia, yet without the name of wife,
 Carried about her for a secret grief 615
 The promise of a mother.

To conceal

The threatened shame the parents of the maid
 Found means to hurry her away, by night
 And unforewarned, that in a distant town 620
 She might remain shrouded in privacy
 Until the babe was born. When morning came
 The lover, thus bereft, stung with his loss

And all uncertain whither he should turn,
 Chafed like a wild beast in the toils. At length, 625
 Following as his suspicions led, he found—
 O joy!—sure traces of the fugitives,
 Pursued them to the town where they had stopped,
 And lastly to the very house itself
 Which had been chosen for the maid's retreat. 630
 The sequel may be easily divined:
 Walks backwards, forwards, morning, noon, and night
 (When decency and caution would allow),
 And Julia, who, whenever to herself
 She happened to be left a moment's space, 635
 Was busy at her casement as a swallow
 About its nest, ere long did thus espy
 Her lover; thence a stolen interview
 By night accomplished, with a ladder's help.
 640

I pass the raptures of the pair, such theme
 Hath by a hundred poets been set forth
 In more delightful verse than skill of mine
 Could fashion—chiefly by that darling bard
 Who told of Juliet and her Romeo, 645
 And of the lark's note heard before its time,
 And of the streaks that laced the evening clouds
 In the unrelenting east. 'Tis mine to tread
 The humbler province of plain history,
 And, without choice of circumstance, submissively 650
 Relate what I have heard. The lovers came
 To this resolve—with which they parted, pleased
 And confident—that Vaudracour should hie
 Back to his father's house, and there employ
 Means aptest to obtain a sum of gold, 655
 A final portion even, if that might be;
 Which done, together they could then take flight
 To some remote and solitary place
 Where they might live with no one to behold
 Their happiness, or to disturb their love. 660
 Immediately, and with this mission charged,

Home to his father's house did he return,
 And there remained a time without hint given
 Of his design. But if a word were dropped
 Touching the matter of his passion, still, 665
 In hearing of his father, Vaudracour
 Persisted openly that nothing less
 Than death should make him yield up hope to be
 A blessèd husband of the maid he loved.

Incensed at such obduracy, and slight 670
 Of exhortations and remonstrances,
 The father threw out threats that by a mandate
 Bearing the private signet of the state
 He should be baffled of his mad intent—

And that should cure him. From this time the youth 675
 Conceived a terror, and by night or day
 Stirred nowhere without arms. Soon afterwards
 His parents to their country seat withdrew

Upon some feigned occasion, and the son 680
 Was left with one attendant in the house.
 Retiring to his chamber for the night,

While he was entering at the door, attempts
 Were made to seize him by three armèd men,
 The instruments of ruffian power. The youth
 In the first impulse of his rage laid one 685
 Dead at his feet, and to the second gave

A perilous wound—which done, at sight
 Of the dead man, he peacefully resigned
 His person to the law, was lodged in prison,
 And wore the fetters of a criminal. 690

Through three weeks' space, by means which love devised,
 The maid in her seclusion had received
 Tidings of Vaudracour, and how he sped
 Upon his enterprize. Thereafter came
 A silence; half a circle did the moon 695
 Complete, and then a whole, and still the same
 Silence; a thousand thousand fears and hopes

Stirred in her mind—thoughts waking, thoughts of sleep,
 Entangled in each other—and at last
 Self-slaughter seemed her only resting-place: 700
 So did she fare in her uncertainty.

At length, by interference of a friend,
 One who had sway at court, the youth regained
 His liberty, on promise to sit down
 Quietly in his father's house, nor take 705
 One step to reunite himself with her

Of whom his parents disapproved—hard law,
 To which he gave consent only because
 His freedom else could nowise by procured.
 Back to his father's house he went, remained 710
 Eight days, and then his resolution failed—

He fled to Julia, and the words with which
 He greeted her were these: 'All right is gone,
 Gone from me. Thou no longer now art mine,
 I thine. A murderer, Julia, cannot love 715
 An innocent woman. I behold thy face,

I see thee, and my misery is complete.'
 She could not give him answer; afterwards
 She coupled with his father's name some words
 Of vehement indignation, but the youth 720
 Checked her, nor would he hear of this, for thought

Unfilial, or unkind, had never once
 Found harbour in his breast. The lovers, thus
 United once again, together lived
 For a few days, which were to Vaudracour 725
 Days of dejection, sorrow and remorse

For that ill deed of violence which his hand
 Had hastily committed—for the youth
 Was of a loyal spirit, a conscience nice,
 And over tender for the trial which 730
 His fate had called him to. The father's mind

Meanwhile remained unchanged, and Vaudracour
 Learned that a mandate had been newly issued
 To arrest him on the spot. Oh pain it was

To part!—he could not, and he lingered still 735
 To the last moment of his time, and then,
 At dead of night, with snow upon the ground,
 He left the city, and in villages,
 The most sequestered of the neighbourhood,
 Lay hidden for the space of several days, 740
 Until, the horseman bringing back report
 That he was nowhere to be found, the search
 Was ended. Back returned the ill-fated youth,
 And from the house where Julia lodged—to which
 He now found open ingress, having gained 745
 The affection of the family, who loved him
 Both for his own, and for the maiden's sake—
 One night retiring, he was seized.

But here

A portion of the tale may well be left 750
 In silence, though my memory could add
 Much how the youth, and in short space of time,
 Was traversed from without—much, too, of thoughts
 By which he was employed in solitude
 Under privation and restraint, and what 755
 Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,
 And what through strong compunction for the past,
 He suffered, breaking down in heart and mind.
 Such grace, if grace it were, had been vouchsafed—
 Or such effect had through the father's want 760
 Of power, or through his negligence, ensued—
 That Vaudracour was suffered to remain,
 Though under guard and without liberty,
 In the same city with the unhappy maid
 From whom he was divided. So they fared, 765
 Objects of general concern, till, moved
 With pity for their wrongs, the magistrate
 (The same who had placed the youth in custody)
 By application to the minister
 Obtained his liberty upon condition 770
 That to his father's house he should return.

He left his prison almost on the eve
Of Julia's travail. She had likewise been,
As from the time, indeed, when she had first
Been brought for secrecy to this abode, 775
Though treated with consoling tenderness,
Herself a prisoner—a dejected one,
Filled with a lover's and a woman's fears—
And whensoever the mistress of the house
Entered the room for the last time at night, 780
And Julia with a low and plaintive voice
Said, 'You are coming then to lock me up',
The housewife when these words—always the same—
Were by her captive languidly pronounced,
Could never hear them uttered without tears. 785
A day or two before her childbed time
Was Vaudracour restored to her, and, soon
As he might be permitted to return
Into her chamber after the child's birth,
The master of the family begged that all 790
The household might be summoned, doubting not
But that they might receive impressions then
Friendly to human kindness. Vaudracour
(This heard I from one present at the time)
Held up the new-born infant in his arms 795
And kissed, and blessed, and covered it with tears,
Uttering a prayer that he might never be
As wretched as his father. Then he gave
The child to her who bare it, and she too
Repeated the same prayer—took it again, 800
And, muttering something faintly afterwards,
He gave the infant to the standers-by,
And wept in silence upon Julia's neck.

Two months did he continue in the house,
And often yielded up himself to plans 805
Of future happiness. 'You shall return,
Julia', said he, 'and to your father's house
Go with your child; you have been wretched, yet

It is a town where both of us were born—
 None will reproach you, for our loves are known. 810
 With ornaments the prettiest you shall dress
 Your boy, as soon as he can run about,
 And when he thus is at his play my father
 Will see him from the window, and the child
 Will by his beauty move his grandsire's heart, 815
 So that it shall be softened, and our loves
 End happily, as they began.' These gleams
 Appeared but seldom; oftener he was seen
 Propping a pale and melancholy face
 Upon the mother's bosom, resting thus 820
 His head upon one breast, while from the other
 The babe was drawing in its quiet food.
 At other times, when he in silence long
 And fixedly had looked upon her face,
 He would exclaim, 'Julia, how much thine eyes 825
 Have cost me! During daytime, when the child
 Lay in its cradle, by its side he sate,
 Not quitting it an instant. The whole town
 In his unmerited misfortunes now
 Took part, and if he either at the door 830
 Or window for a moment with his child
 Appeared, immediately the street was thronged;
 While others, frequently, without reserve,
 Passed and repassed before the house to steal
 A look at him. Oft at this time he wrote 835
 Requesting, since he knew that the consent
 Of Julia's parents never could be gained
 To a clandestine marriage, that his father
 Would from the birthright of an eldest son
 Exclude him, giving but, when this was done, 840
 A sanction to his nuptials. Vain request,
 To which no answer was returned.

And now

From her own home the mother of his love
 Arrived to apprise the daughter of her fixed 845

and last resolve, that, since all hope to move
The old man's heart proved vain, she must retire
Into a convent and be there immured.
Julia was thunderstricken by these words,
And she insisted on a mother's rights 850
To take her child along with her—a grant
Impossible, as she at last perceived.
The persons of the house no sooner heard
Of this decision upon Julia's fate
Than everyone was overwhelmed with grief, 855
Nor could they frame a manner soft enough
To impart the tidings to the youth. But great
Was their astonishment when they beheld him
Receive the news in calm despondency,
Composed and silent, without outward sign 860
Of even the least emotion. Seeing this,
When Julia scattered some upbraiding words
Upon his slackness, he thereto returned
No answer, only took the mother's hand
(Who loved him scarcely less than her own child) 865
And kissed it, without seeming to be pressed
By any pain that 'twas the hand of one
Whose errand was to part him from his love
For ever. In the city he remained
A season after Julia had retired 870
And in the convent taken up her home,
To the end that he might place his infant babe
With a fit nurse; which done, beneath the roof
Where now his little one was lodged he passed
The day entire, and scarcely could at length 875
Tear himself from the cradle to return
Home to his father's house—in which he dwelt
Awhile, and then came back that he might see
Whether the babe had gained sufficient strength
To bear removal. He quitted this same town 880
For the last time, attendant by the side
Of a close chair, a litter or sedan,
In which the child was carried. To a hill

Which rose at a league's distance from the town
 The family of the house where he had lodged 885
 Attended him, and parted from him there,
 Watching below until he disappeared
 On the hill-top. His eyes he scarcely took
 Through all that journey from the chair in which
 The babe was carried, and at every inn 890
 Or place at which they halted or reposed
 Laid him upon his knees, nor would permit
 The hands of any but himself to dress
 The infant, or undress. By one of those
 Who bore the chair these facts, at his return, 895
 Were told, and in relating them he wept.

This was the manner in which Vaudracour
 Departed with his infant, and thus reached
 His father's house, where to the innocent child
 Admittance was denied. The young man spake 900
 No words of indignation or reproof,
 But of his father begged, a last request,
 That a retreat might be assigned to him—
 A house where in the country he might dwell
 With such allowance as his wants required— 905
 And the more lonely that the mansion was
 'Twould be more welcome. To a lodge that stood
 Deep in a forest, with leave given, at the age
 Of four and twenty summers he retired,
 And thither took with him his infant babe 910
 And one domestic for their common needs,
 An aged woman. It consoled him here
 To attend upon the orphan and perform
 The office of a nurse to his young child,
 Which, after a short time, by some mistake 915
 Or indiscretion of the father, died.
 The tale I follow to its recess
 Of suffering or of peace, I know not which—
 Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine.

From that time forth he never uttered word 920

To any living. An inhabitant
Of that same town in which the pair had left
So lively a remembrance of their griefs,
By chance of business coming within reach
Of his retirement, to the spot repaired 925
With the intent to visit him; he reached
The house and only found the matron there,
Who told him that his pains were thrown away,
For that her master never uttered word
To living soul—not even to her. Behold, 930
While they were speaking Vaudracour approached,
But, seeing some one there, just as his hand
Was stretched towards the garden-gate, he shrunk
And like a shadow glided out of view.
Shocked at his savage outside, from the place 935
The visitor retired.

Thus lived the youth,
Cut off from all intelligence with man,
And shunning even the light of common day.
Nor could the voice of freedom, which through France 940
Soon afterwards resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own deep wrongs,
Rouze him, but in those solitary shades
His days he wasted, an imbecile mind.

Book Tenth *Residence in France and French Revolution*

IT was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading, with unusual quietness,
When from the Loire I parted, and through scenes
Of vineyard, orchard, meadow-ground and tilth, 5
Calm waters, gleams of sun, and breathless trees,
Towards the fierce metropolis turned my steps
Their homeward way to England. From his throne
The King had fallen; the congregated host—
Dire cloud, upon the front of which was written 10
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty
Had burst innocuously. Say more, the swarm
That came elate and jocund, like a band
Of eastern hunters, to enfold in ring 15
Narrowing itself by moments, and reduce
To the last punctual spot of their despair,
A race of victims—so they seemed—themselves
Had shrunk from sight of their own task, and fled
In terror. Desolation and dismay 20
Remained for them whose fancies had grown rank
With evil expectations: confidence
And perfect triumph to the better cause.
The state, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world 25
Shew what she was, a high and fearless soul—

Or rather in a spirit of thanks to those
Who had stirred up her slackening faculties
To a new transition—had assumed with joy
The body and the venerable name 30
Of a republic. Lamentable crimes,
'Tis true, had gone before this hour—the 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), 35
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once,
Things that could only shew themselves and die.

This was the time in which, enflamed with hope,
To Paris I returned. Again I ranged,
More eagerly than I had done before, 40
Through the wide city, and in progress passed
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 and a numerous host. 45
I crossed—a black and empty area then—
The square of the Carousel, a few weeks back
Heaped up with dead and dying, upon these
And other sights looking as doth a man
Upon a volume whose contents he knows 50
Are memorable but from him locked up,
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
When on my bed I lay, I was most moved 55
And felt most deeply in what world I was;
My room was high and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a spot
That would have pleased me in more quiet times—
Nor was it wholly without pleasure then. 60
With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
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 a little month, 65
 And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
 (The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,
 And mournful calendars of true history,
 Remembrances and dim admonishments):
 ‘The horse is taught his manage, and the wind 70
 Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps;
 Year follows year, the tide returns again,
 Day follows day, all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once’—
 And in such way I wrought upon myself, 75
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
 To the whole city, ‘Sleep no more!’ To this
 Add comments of a calmer mind—from which
 I could not gather full security—
 But at the best it seemed a place of fear, 80
 Unfit for the repose of night,
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

Betimes next morning to the Palace-walk
 Of Orleans I repaired, and entering there
 Was greeted, among divers other notes, 85
 By voices of the hawkers in the crowd
 Brawling, *Denunciation of the crimes*
Of Maximilian Robespierre. The speech
 Which in their hands they carried was the same
 Which had been recently pronounced—the day 90
 When Robespierre, well known for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been
 Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
 The man who had ill surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness. Whereat, 95
 When a dead pause ensued and no one stirred,
 In silence of all present, from his seat
 Louvet walked singly through the avenue
 And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
 ‘I, Robespierre, accuse thee!’ ’Tis well known 100

What was the issue of that charge, and how
 Louvet was left alone without support
 Of his irresolute friends, but these are things
 Of which I speak only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind, 105
 No further. Let me than relate that now—
 In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
 That liberty, and life, and death, would soon
 To the remotest corners of the land
 Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled 110
 The capital city; what was struggled for,
 And by what combatants victory must be won;
 The indecision on their part whose aim
 Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
 Who in attack or in defence alike 115
 Were strong through their impiety—greatly I
 Was agitated. Yea, I could almost
 Have prayed that throughout earth upon all souls
 Worthy of liberty, upon every soul
 Matured to live in plainness and in truth, 120
 The gift of tongues might fall, and men arrive
 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 such thought, 125
 And the least fear about the end of things,
 I was as 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, 130
 Mean as I was, and little graced with powers
 Of eloquence even in my native speech,
 And all unfit for tumult and intrigue,
 Yet would I willingly have taken up
 A service at this time for cause so great, 135
 However dangerous. Inly I revolved
 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; 140
 That objects, even as they are great, thereby
 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
 That man was only weak through his mistrust
 And want of hope, where evidence divine
 Proclaimed to him that hope should be most sure; 145
 That, with desires heroic and firm sense,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Unquenchable, unsleeping, undismayed,
 Was as an instinct among men, a stream
 That gathered up each petty straggling rill 150
 And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind whose rest
 Was where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
 In circumspection and simplicity,
 Fell rarely in entire discomfiture 155
 Below its aim, or met with from without
 A treachery that defeated it or foiled.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 Which are the commonplaces of the schools,
 A theme for boys, too trite even to be felt, 160
 Yet with 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, 165
 And his compeer Aristogiton; known
 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 170
 Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
 That nothing hath a natural right to last
 But equity and reason; that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best

Doth live but by variety of disease. 175

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time—
Creed which ten shameful years have not annulled—
But that the virtue of one paramount mind 180

Would have abashed those impious crests, have quelled
Outrage and bloody power, and in despite
Of what the people were through ignorance
And immaturity, and in the teeth
Of desperate opposition from without, 185

Have cleared a passage for just government,
And left a solid birthright to the state,
Redeemed according to example given
By ancient lawgivers. In this frame of mind
Reluctantly to England I returned, 190

Compelled by nothing less than absolute want
Of funds for my support; else, well assured
That I both was and must be of small worth,
No better than an alien in the land,
I doubtless should have made a common cause 195

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,
A poet only to myself, to men 200
Useless, and even, beloved friend, a soul
To thee unknown.

When to my native land,
After a whole year's absence, I returned,
I found the air yet busy with the stir 205

Of a contention which had been raised up
Against the traffickers in Negro blood,
An effort which, though baffled, nevertheless
Had called back old forgotten principles
Dismissed from service, had diffused some truths, 210
And more of virtuous feeling, through the heart

Of the English people. And no few of those,
 So numerous—little less in verity
 Than a whole nation crying with one voice—
 Who had been crossed in this their just intent 215
 And righteous hope, thereby were well prepared
 To let that journey sleep awhile, and join
 Whatever other caravan appeared
 To travel forward towards Liberty
 With more success. For me that strife had ne'er 220
 Fastened on my affections, nor did now
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow, having laid this faith to heart,
 That if France prospered good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity, 225
 And this most rotten branch of human shame
 (Object, as seemed, of superfluous pains)
 Would fall together with its parent tree.

Such was my then belief—that there was one,
 And only one, solicitude for all. 230
 And now the strength of Britain was put forth
 In league with the confederated host;
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
 Change and subversion from this hour. No shock 235
 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:
 All else was progress on the self-same path 240
 On which with a diversity of pace
 I had been travelling; this, a stride at once
 Into another region. True it is,
 'Twas not concealed with what ungracious eyes
 Our native rulers from the very first 245
 Had looked upon regenerated France;
 Nor had I doubted that this day would come—
 But in such contemplation I had thought

Of general interests only, beyond this
Had never once foretasted the event. 250
Now had I other business, for I felt
The ravage of this most unnatural strife
In my own heart; there lay it like a weight,
At enmity with all the tenderest springs
Of my enjoyments. I, who with the breeze 255
Had played, a green leaf on the blessed tree
Of my beloved country—nor had wished
For happier fortune than to wither there—
Now from my pleasant station was cut off,
And tossed about in whirlwinds. I rejoiced, 260
Yes, afterwards, truth 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,
Brave hearts, to shameful flight. It was a grief— 265
Grief call it not, 'twas any thing 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,
When in the congregation, bending all 270
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
Whom no one owned, sate silent—shall I add, 275
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,
Their joy, in England. This, too, at a time 280
In which worst losses easily might wear
The best of names; when patriotic love
Did of itself in modesty give way
Like the precursor when the deity
Is come, whose harbinger he is—a time 285

In which apostacy from ancient faith
 Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;
 Withal a season dangerous and wild—
 A time in which Experience would have plucked
 Flowers out of any hedge to make thereof 290
 A chaplet, in contempt of his grey locks.

Ere yet the fleet of Britain had gone forth
 On this unworthy service, whereunto
 The unhappy counsel of a few weak men
 Had doomed it, I beheld the vessels lie— 295
 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 300
 Each evening, walking by the still sea-shore,

A monitory sound which never failed—
 The sunset cannon. When the orb went down
 In the tranquillity of Nature, came
 That voice—ill requiem—seldom heard by me 305
 Without a spirit overcast, a deep
 Imagination, thought of woes to come,
 And sorrow for mankind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men who for their desperate ends
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots were glad 310
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before

In devilish pleas, were ten times stronger now,
 And thus beset with foes on every side,
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts 315
 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 anger and of vengeance, theirs who throned
 The human understanding paramount 320
 And made of that their god, the hopes of those

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 325
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life, were pressed
 Into one service, busy with one work.
 The Senate was heart-stricken, not a voice
 Uplifted, none to oppose or mitigate. 330
 Domestic carnage now filled all the year
 With feast-days: the old man from the chimney-nook,
 The maiden from the bosom of her love,
 The mother from the cradle of her babe,
 The warrior from the field—all perished, all— 335
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those who bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it, ever thirsty, as a child—
 If light desires of innocent little ones 340
 May with such heinous appetites be matched—
 Having a toy, a windmill, though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh and makes the vane
 Spin in his eyesight, he is not content,
 But with the plaything at arm's length he sets 345
 His front against the blast, and runs amain
 To make it whirl the faster.

In the depth

Of these enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot at seasons whence they had their being— 350
 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 355
 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 woeful time for them whose hopes did still 360
 Outlast the shock; most woeful for those few—
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief—
 Who still were flattered, and had trust in man.
 Meanwhile the invaders fared as they deserved:
 The herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms, 365
 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 those
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind. 370
 Most melancholy at that time, O friend,
 Were my day-thoughts, my dreams were miserable;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
 As if to thee alone in private talk) 375
 I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
 And tyranny, and implements of death,
 And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
 Before unjust tribunals, with a voice 380
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
 Of treachery and desertion in the place
 The holiest that I knew of—my own soul.

When I began at first, in early youth,
 To yield myself to Nature—when that strong 385
 And holy passion overcame me first—
 Neither day nor night, evening or morn,
 Were free from the oppression, but, great God,
 Who send'st thyself into this breathing world
 Through Nature and through every kind of life, 390
 And mak'st man what he is, creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence,
 Above all these raised infinite ascents
 When reason, which enables him to be,
 Is not sequestered—what a change is here! 395

How different ritual for this after-worship,
What countenance to promote this second love!
That first was service but to things which lie
At rest, within the bosom of thy will:
Therefore to serve was high beatitude; 400
The tumult was a gladness, and the fear
Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.
But as the ancient prophets were enflamed,
Nor wanted consolations of their own 405
And majesty of mind, when they denounced
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 410
The consummation of the wrath of Heaven;
So did some portion of that spirit fall
On me to uphold me through those evil times,
And in their rage and dog-day heat I found
Something to glory in, as just and fit, 415
And in the order of sublimest laws.
And even if that were not, amid the awe
Of unintelligible chastisement
I felt a kind of sympathy with power—
Motions raised up within me, nevertheless, 420
Which had relationship to highest things.
Wild blasts of music thus did find their way
Into the midst of terrible events,
So that worst tempests might be listened to:
Then was the truth received into my heart 425
That under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
Griefs bitterest of ourselves or of our kind,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
Honour which could not else have been—a faith,
An elevation, and a sanctity— 430
If new strength be not given, or old restored,
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,

Saying, 'Behold the harvest which we reap
 From popular government and equality', 435
 I saw that it was neither these nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names
 By false philosophy, that caused the woe,
 But that it was a reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance, filled up from age to age, 440
 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
 Small islands in the midst of stormy waves,
 So that disastrous period did not want 445
 Such sprinklings of all human excellence
 As were a joy to hear of. Yet—nor less
 For those bright spots, those fair examples given
 Of fortitude, and energy, and love,
 And human nature faithful to itself 450
 Under worst trials—was I impelled to think
 Of the glad time when first I traversed France,
 A youthful pilgrim; above all remembered
 That day when through an arch that spanned the street,
 A rainbow made of garish ornaments 455
 (Triumphal pomp for Liberty confirmed)
 We walked, a pair of weary travellers,
 Along the town of Arras—place from which
 Issued that Robespierre, who afterwards
 Wielded the sceptre of the atheist crew. 460
 When the calamity spread far and wide,
 And this same city, which had even appeared
 To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
 Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
 As Lear reproached the winds, I could almost 465
 Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
 For being yet an image in my mind
 To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O friend, few happier moments have been mine

Through my whole life than that when first I heard 470
 That this foul tribe of Moloch was o'erthrown,
 And their chief regent levelled with the dust.
 The day was one which haply may deserve
 A separate chronicle. Having gone abroad
 From a small village where I tarried then, 475
 To the same far-secluded privacy
 I was returning. Over the smooth sands
 Of Leven's ample estuary lay
 My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky 480
 And clouds, and intermingled mountain-tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad—
 Creatures of one ethereal substance, met
 In consistory, like a diadem
 Or crown of burning seraphs, as they sit 485
 In the empyrean. Underneath this show
 Lay, as I knew, the nest of pastoral vales
 Among whose happy fields I had grown up
 From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
 Which neither changed, nor stirred, nor passed away, 490
 I gazed, and with a fancy more alive
 On this account—that I had chanced to find
 That morning, ranging through the churchyard graves
 Of Cartmell's rural town, the place in which
 An honored teacher of my youth was laid. 495
 While we were schoolboys he had died among us,
 And was born hither, as I knew, to rest
 With his own family. A plain stone, inscribed
 With name, date, office, pointed out the spot,
 To which a slip of verses was subjoined— 500
 By his desire, as afterwards I learned—
 A fragment from the *Elegy* of Gray.
 A week, or little less, before his death
 He had said to me, 'My head will soon lie low';
 And when I saw the turf that covered him, 505
 After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
 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. And now,
 Thus travelling smoothly o'er the level sands, 510
 I thought with pleasure of the verses graven
 Upon his tombstone, saying 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 515
 Which he had formed when I at his command
 Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs.'

Without me and within as I advanced
 All that I saw, or felt, or communed with,
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small 520
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood—
 Itself like a sea rock—of what had been
 A Romish chapel, where in ancient times
 Masses were said at the hour which suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide. 525
 Not far from this still ruin all the plain
 Was spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of coaches, wains, and travellers, horse and foot,
 Wading, beneath the conduct of their guide,
 In loose procession through the shallow stream 530
 Of inland water; the great sea meanwhile
 Was at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 Unwilling to proceed, the scene appeared
 So gay and cheerful—when a traveller
 Chancing to pass, I carelessly inquired 535
 If any news were stirring, he replied
 In the familiar language of the day
 That, *Robespierre was dead*. Nor was a doubt,
 On further question, left within my mind
 But that the tidings were substantial truth— 540
 That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy
 In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus

Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times',
 Said I, forth-breathing on those open sands 545
 A hymn of triumph, 'as the morning comes
 Out of the bosom of the night, come ye.
 Thus far our trust is verified: behold,
 They who with clumsy desperation brought
 Rivers of blood, and preached that nothing else 550
 Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
 Of their own helper have been swept away.
 Their madness is declared and visible;
 Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
 March firmly towards righteousness and peace.' 555
 Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
 The madding factions might be tranquillized,
 And—though through hardships manifold and long—
 The mighty renovation would proceed.
 Thus, interrupted by uneasy bursts 560
 Of exultation, I pursued my way
 Along that very shore which I had skimmed
 In former times, when, spurring from the Vale
 Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
 And the stone abbot, after circuit made 565
 In wantonness of heart, a joyous crew
 Of schoolboys, hastening to their distant home,
 Along the margin of the moonlight sea,
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

From this time forth in France, as is well known,¹ 570
 Authority put on a milder face,
 Yet every thing was wanting that might give
 Courage to those who looked for good by light
 Of rational experience—good I mean
 At hand, and in the spirit of past aims. 575
 The same belief I nevertheless retained:
 The language of the Senate, and the acts
 And public measures of the Government,
 Though both of heartless omen, had not power

¹Chapter Eleventh begins here in 1850 Version.

To daunt me. In the people was my trust, 580
 And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
 And to the ultimate repose of things
 I looked with unabated confidence.
 I knew that wound external could not take
 Life from the young Republic, that new foes 585
 Would only follow in the path of shame
 Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
 Great, universal, irresistible.
 This faith, which was an object in my mind
 Of passionate intuition, had effect 590
 Not small in dazzling me; for thus, through zeal,
 Such victory I confounded in my thoughts
 With one far higher and more difficult:
 Triumphs of unambitious peace at home,
 And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still 595
 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
 Untired, the better surely would preserve 600
 The heart that first had roused him—never dreamt
 That transmigration could be undergone,
 A fall of being suffered, and of hope,
 By creature that appeared to have received
 Entire conviction what a great ascent 605
 Had been accomplished, what high faculties
 It had been called to. Youth maintains, I knew,
 In all conditions of society
 Communion more direct and intimate
 With Nature, and the inner strength she has— 610
 And hence, oftentimes, no less with reason too—
 Than age, or manhood even. To Nature then,
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For her to stir about in, uncontrolled. 615
 The warmest judgments, and the most untaught,
 Found in events which every day brought forth

Enough to sanction them—and far, far more
 To shake the authority of canons drawn
 From ordinary practice. I could see 620
 How Babel-like the employment was of those
 Who, by the recent deluge stupefied,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day
 Its petty promises to build a tower
 For their own safety—laughed at gravest heads, 625
 Who, watching in their hate of France for signs
 Of her disasters, if the stream of rumour
 Brought with it one green branch, conceited thence
 That not a single tree was left alive
 In all her forests. How could I believe 630
 That wisdom could in any shape come near
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few
 Of my opinions had been just, I took
 Like credit to myself where less was due, 635
 And thought that other notions were as sound—
 Yea, could not but be right—because I saw
 That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain
 More animated I might here give way, 640
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
 What in those days through Britain was performed
 To turn *all* judgements out of their right course;
 But this is passion over near ourselves,
 Reality too close and too intense, 645
 And mingled up with something, in my mind,
 Of scorn and condemnation personal
 That would profane the sanctity of verse.
 Our shepherds (this say merely) at that time
 Thirsted to make the guardian crook of law 650
 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, childlike longed

To imitate—not wise enough to avoid. 655
 Giants in their impiety alone,
 But in their weapons and their warfare base
 As vermin working out of reach, they leagued
 Their strength perfidiously to undermine
 Justice, and make an end of liberty. 660

But from these bitter truths I must return
 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: 665
 I had approached, like other youth, the shield
 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, 670
 Of wise in passion and sublime in power,
 What there is strong and pure in household love,
 Benevolent in small societies,
 And great in large ones also, when called forth
 By great occasions—these were things of which 675
 I something knew; yet even these themselves,
 Felt deeply, were not thoroughly understood
 By reason. Nay, far from it; they were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 Not proof against the injuries of the day— 680
 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,
 As books and common intercourse with life 685
 Must needs have given (to the noviciate mind,
 When the world travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed), I began
 To think with fervour upon management
 Of nations—what it is and ought to be, 690
 And how their worth depended on their laws,

And on the constitution of the state.

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy,
 For great were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love. 695
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven! O times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance— 700
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime enchanter to assist the work
 Which then was going forwards in her name.
 Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth, 705
 The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
 (To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
 Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
 The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
 What temper at the prospect did not wake 710
 To happiness unthought of? The inert
 Were roused, and lively natures rapt away.
 They who had fed their childhood upon dreams—
 The playfellows of fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength 715
 Their ministers, used to stir in lordly wise
 Among the grandest objects of the sense,
 And deal with whatsoever they found there
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it—they too, who, of gentle mood, 720
 Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts (schemers more mild,
 And in the region of their peaceful selves),
 Did now find helpers to their hearts' desire
 And stuff at hand plastic as they could wish, 725
 Were called upon to exercise their skill
 Not in Utopia—subterraneous fields,
 Or some secreted island, heaven knows where—

But in the very world which is the world
Of all of us, the place in which, in the end, 730
We find our happiness, or not at all.

Why should I not confess that earth was then
To me what an inheritance new-fallen
Seems, when the first time visited, to one 735
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the place
With cordial transport—moulds it and remoulds—
And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
'Twill be such joy to see them disappear. 740

An active partisan, I thus convoked
From every object pleasant circumstance
To suit my ends. I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still predominant,
When erring, erring on the better side, 745
And in the kinder spirit—placable,
Indulgent oftentimes to the worst desires,
As, on one side, not uninformed that men
See as it hath been taught them, and that time
Gives rights to error; on the other hand 750
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of licence as of liberty;
And above all (for this was more than all),
Not caring if the wind did now and then
Blow keen upon an eminence that gave 755
Prospect so large into futurity—
In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light 760
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
Britain opposed the liberties of France.

This threw me first out of the pale of love, 765
Soured and corrupted upwards to the source,
My sentiments; was not, as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
But change of them into their opposites,
And thus a way was opened for mistakes 770
And false conclusions of the intellect,
As gross in their degree, and in their kind
Far, far more dangerous. What had been a pride
Was now a shame, my likings and my loves
Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry; 775
And thus a blow, which in maturer age
Would but have touched the judgement, struck more deep
Into sensations near the heart. Meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
Unto the subtleties of which at least, 780
I had but lent a careless ear—assured
Of this, that time would soon set all things right,
Prove that the multitude had been oppressed,
And would be so no more. But when events
Brought less encouragement, and unto these 785
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted—while the events themselves,
Worn out in greatness, and in novelty,
Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
Could through my understanding's natural growth 790
No longer justify themselves through faith
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
Its hand upon its object—evidence
Safer, of universal application, such
As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere. 795

And now, become oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for, and mounted up,
Openly in the view of earth and heaven, 800
The scale of Liberty. I read her doom,

Vexed inly somewhat, it is true, and sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false prophet. But, roused up, I stuck
 More Firmly to old tenets, and, to prove 805
 Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
 They clung as if they were the life of it.

This was the time when, all things tending fast 810
 To depravation, the philosophy
 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 815
 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
 Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind 820

Pleased with extremes, and not the least with that
 Which makes the human 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, 825

And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 The accidents of nature, time, and place,
 That make up the weak being of the past,
 Build social freedom on its only basis:
 The freedom of the individual mind, 830

Which, to the blind restraint of general laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide—the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.

For howsoe'er unsettled, never once 835
 Had I thought ill of human-kind, or been
 Indifferent to its welfare, but, enflamed

With thirst of a secure intelligence,
 And sick of other passion, I pursued
 A higher nature—wished that man should start 840
 Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
 Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight.
 A noble aspiration!—yet I feel
 The aspiration—but with other thoughts 845
 And happier: for I was perplexed and sought
 To accomplish the transition by such means
 As did not lie in nature, sacrificed
 The exactness of a comprehensive mind
 To scrupulous and microscopic views 850
 That furnished out materials for a work
 Of false imagination, placed beyond
 The limits of experience and of truth.

Enough, no doubt, the advocates themselves
 Of ancient institutions had performed 855
 To bring disgrace upon their very names;
 Disgrace of which custom, and written law,
 And sundry moral sentiments, as props
 And emanations of these institutes,
 Too justly bore a part. A veil had been 860
 Uplifted. Why deceive ourselves?—’twas so,
 ’Twas even so—and sorrow for the man
 Who either had no eyes wherewith to see,
 Or seeing hath forgotten. Let this pass,
 Suffice it that a shock had then been given 865
 To old opinions, and the minds of all men
 Had felt it—that my mind was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
 Already said of patriotic love,
 And hinted at in other sentiments, 870
 We need not linger long upon this theme,
 This only may be said, that from the first
 Having two natures in me (joy the one,
 The other melancholy), and withal

A happy man, and therefore bold to look 875
 On painful things—slow, somewhat, too, and stern
 In temperament—I took the knife in hand,
 And, stopping not at parts less sensitive,
 Endeavoured with my best of skill to probe
 The living body of society 880
 Even to the heart. I pushed without remorse
 My speculations forward, yea, set foot
 On Nature's holiest places.

Time may come

When some dramatic story may afford 885
 Shapes livelier to convey to thee, my friend,
 What then I learned—or think I learned—of truth,
 And the errors into which I was betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn 890
 Out of a heart which had been turned aside
 From Nature by external accidents,
 And which was thus confounded more and more,
 Misguiding and misguided. Thus I fared,
 Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith, 895
 Like culprits of the bar, suspiciously
 Calling the mind to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours, now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground 900
 Of moral obligation—what the rule,
 And what the sanction—till, demanding proof,
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties, 905
 Yielded up moral questions in despair,
 And for my future studies, as the sole
 Employment of the inquiring faculty,
 Turned towards mathematics, and their clear
 And solid evidence. 910

Ah, then it was

That thou, most precious friend, about this time
 First known to me, didst lend a living help
 To regulate my soul. And then it was
 That the belovèd woman in whose sight 915
 Those days were passed—now speaking in a voice
 Of sudden admonition like a brook
 That does but cross a lonely road; and now
 Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
 Companion never lost through many a league— 920
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self (for, though impaired, and changed
 Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
 Than as a clouded, not a waning moon);
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still 925
 A poet, made me seek beneath that name
 My office upon earth, and nowhere else.
 And lastly, Nature's self, by human love
 Assisted, through the weary labyrinth
 Conducted me again to open day, 930
 Revived the feelings of my earlier life,
 Gave me that strength and knowledge full of peace,
 Enlarged, and never more to be disturbed,
 Which through the steps of our degeneracy,
 All degradation of this age, hath still 935
 Upheld me, and upholds me at this day
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less), when, finally to close
 And rivet up the gains of France, a Pope
 Is summoned in to crown an Emperor— 940
 This last opprobrium, when we see the dog
 Returning to his vomit, when the sun
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation among living clouds,
 Hath put his function and his glory off, 945
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
 sets like an opera phantom.

Thus, O friend,

Through times of honour, and through times of shame,
 Have I descended, tracing faithfully 950
 The workings of a youthful mind, beneath
 The breath of great events—its hopes no less
 Than universal, and its boundless love—
 A story destined for thy ear, who now,
 Among the basest and the lowest fallen 955
 Of all the race of men, dost make abode
 Where Etna looketh down on Syracuse,
 The city of Timoleon. Living God,
 How are the mighty prostrated!—they first,
 They first of all that breathe, should have awaked 960
 When the great voice was heard out of the tombs
 Of ancient heroes. If for France I have grieved,
 Who in the judgement of no few hath been
 A trifler only, in her proudest day—
 Have been distressed to think of what she once 965
 Promised, now is—a far more sober cause
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land
 Strewed with the wreck of loftiest years, a land
 Glorious indeed, substantially renowned
 Of simple virtue once, and manly praise, 970
 Now without one memorial hope, not even
 A hope to be deferred—for that would serve
 To cheer the heart in such entire decay.

But indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, O friend, wilt be refreshed. There is 975
 One great society alone on earth:
 The noble living and the noble dead.
 Thy consolation shall be there, and time
 And Nature shall before thee spread in store
 Imperishable thoughts, the place itself 980
 Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
 Sirocco air of its degeneracy
 Turn as thou mov'st into a healthful breeze
 To cherish and invigorate thy frame.

Thine be those motions strong and sanative, 985

A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
 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— 990
 A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This heavy time of change for all mankind.
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel;
 The sympathies, erewhile in part discharged, 995
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again.
 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 not now 1000
 Since thy migration and departure, friend,
 The gladsome image in my memory
 Which they were used to be. To kindred scenes,
 On errand—at a time how different—
 Thou tak'st thy way, carrying a heart more ripe 1005
 For all divine enjoyment, with the soul
 Which Nature gives to poets, now by thought
 Matured, and in the summer of its strength.
 Oh, wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
 On Etna's side, and thou, O flowery vale 1010
 Of Enna, is there not some nook of thine
 From the first playtime of the infant earth
 Kept sacred to restorative delight?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Even from my earliest schoolday time, I loved 1015
 To dream of Sicily; and now a sweet
 And gladsome promise wafted from that land
 Comes o'er my heart. There's not a single name
 Of note belonging to that honored isle,
 Philosopher or bard, Empedocles, 1020
 Or Archimedes—deep and tranquil soul—
 That is not like a comfort to my grief.

And, O Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth
 By force of graces which were theirs, that they 1025
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
 Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved,
 When thinking on my own belovèd friend,
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his tyrant lord 1030
 Within a chest imprisoned impiously—
 How with their honey from the fields they came
 And fed him there, alive, from month to month,
 Because the goatherd, blessèd man, had lips
 Wet with the Muse's nectar. 1035

Thus I soothe
 The pensive moments by this calm fireside,
 And find a thousand fancied images
 That cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
 Our prayers have been accepted: thou wilt stand 1040
 Not as an exile but a visitant
 On Etna's top; by pastoral Arethuse—
 Or if that fountain be indeed no more,
 Then near some other spring which by the name
 Thou gratelest, willingly deceived— 1045
 Shalt linger as a gladsome votary,
 And not a captive pining for his home.

Book Eleventh *Imagination, How Impaired and Restored*

LONG time hath man's unhappiness and guilt²
Detained us: with what dismal sights beset
For the outward view, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgement, 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 through the fields
Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe 10
The breath of paradise, and find your way
To the recesses of the soul; ye brooks
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet one in silent night;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is 15
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, betwixt the heart of man
And the uneasy world—'twixt man himself,
Not seldom, and his own unquiet heart—
Oh, that I had a music and a voice 20
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth man's perverseness; spring returns—
I saw the spring return, when I was dead
To deeper hope, yet had I joy for her 25

²Book Twelfth begins here in 1850 version.

And welcomed her benevolence, rejoiced
 In common with the children of her love,
 Plants, insects, beasts in field, and birds in bower.
 So neither were complacency, nor peace,
 Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good 30
 Through those distracted times: in Nature still
 Glorifying, I found a counterpoise to her,
 Which, when the spirit of evil was at height,
 Maintained for me a secret happiness.
 Her I resorted to, and loved so much 35
 I seemed to love as much as heretofore—
 And yet this passion, fervent as it was,
 Had suffered change; how could there fail to be
 Some change, if merely hence, that years of life
 Were going on, and with them loss or gain 40
 Inevitable, sure alternative?

This history, my friend, hath chiefly told
 Of intellectual power from stage to stage
 Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
 And of imagination teaching truth 45
 Until that natural graciousness of mind
 Gave way to over-pressure of the times
 And their disastrous issues. What availed,
 When spells forbade the voyager to land,
 The fragrance which did ever and anon 50
 Give notice of the shore, from arbours breathed
 Of blessèd sentiment and fearless love?
 What did such sweet remembrances avail—
 Perfidious then, as seemed—what served they then?
 My business was upon the barren seas, 55
 My errand was to sail to other coasts.
 Shall I avow that I had hope to see
 (I mean 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 here and there

Is scattered through the abyss of ages past,
 Sage, patriot, lover, hero; for it seemed
 That their best virtues were not free from taint 65
 Of something false and weak, which 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 describe, would fasten if they may
 Upon our love by sympathies of truth?’

Thus strangely did I war against myself;
 A bigot to a new idolatry, 75
 Did like a monk who hath forsworn the world
 Zealously labour to cut off my heart
 From all the sources of her former strength;
 And, as by simple waving of a wand,
 The wizard instantaneously dissolves 80
 Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 (Some charm of logic, ever within reach)
 Those mysteries of passion which have made,
 And shall continue evermore to make— 85
 In spite of all that reason hath performed,
 And shall perform, to exalt and to refine—
 One brotherhood of all the human race,
 Through all the habitations of past years,
 And those to come: and hence an emptiness 90
 Fell on the historian’s page, and even on that
 Of poets, pregnant with more absolute truth.
 The works of both withered in my esteem,
 Their sentence was, I thought, pronounced—their rights
 Seemed mortal, and their empire passed away. 95

What then remained in such eclipse, what light
 To guide or cheer? The laws of things which lie
 Beyond the reach of human will or power,

The life of Nature, by the God of love
 Inspired—celestial presence ever pure— 100
 These left, the soul of youth must needs be rich
 Whatever else be lost; and these were mine,
 Not a deaf echo merely of the thought
 (Bewildered recollections, solitary),
 But living sounds. Yet in despite of this— 105
 This feeling, which howe'er impaired or damped,
 Yet having been once born can never die—
 'Tis true that earth with all her appanage
 Of elements and organs, storm and sunshine,
 With its pure forms and colours, pomp of clouds, 110
 Rivers, and mountains, objects among which
 It might be thought that no dislike or blame,
 No sense of weakness or infirmity
 Or aught amiss, could possibly have come,
 Yea, even the visible universe was scanned 115
 With something of a kindred spirit, fell
 Beneath the domination of a taste
 Less elevated, which did in my mind
 With its more noble influence interfere,
 Its animation and its deeper sway. 120

There comes (if need be now to speak of this
 After such long detail of our mistakes),
 There comes a time when reason—not the grand
 And simple reason, but that humbler power
 Which carries on its no inglorious work 125
 By logic and minute analysis—
 Is of all idols that which pleases most
 The growing mind. A trifler would he be
 Who on the obvious benefits should dwell
 That rise out of this process; but to speak 130
 Of all the narrow estimates of things
 Which hence originate were a worthy theme
 For philosophic verse. Suffice it here
 To hint that danger cannot but attend
 Upon a function rather proud to be 135

The enemy of falsehood, than the friend
Of truth—to sit in judgement than to feel.

Oh soul of Nature, excellent and fair,
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too
Rejoiced, through early youth, before the winds 140
And powerful waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, now all eye
And now all ear, but ever with the heart
Employed, and the majestic intellect! 145
O soul of Nature, that dost overflow
With passion and with life, what feeble men
Walk on this earth, how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies 150
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption, even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there
Liking, by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art. But more—for this, 155
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties 160
Of colour and proportion, to the moods
Of nature, and the spirit of the place,
Less sensible. Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause, 165
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature,
Sensuous and intellectual as he is,
A twofold frame of body and of mind:
The state to which I now allude was one 170
In which the eye was master of the heart,
When that which is in every stage of life

The most despotic of our senses gained
 Such strength in me as often held my mind
 In absolute dominion. Gladly here, 175
 Entering upon abstruser argument,
 Would I endeavour to unfold the means
 Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
 This tyranny, summons all the senses each
 To counteract the other and themselves, 180
 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 this is matter for another song;
 Here only let me add that my delights, 185
 Such as they were, were sought insatiably.
 Though 'twas a transport of the outward sense,
 Not of the mind—vivid but not profound—
 Yet was I often greedy in the chace,
 And roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock, 190
 Still craving combinations of new forms,
 New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
 Proud of its own endowments, and rejoiced
 To lay the inner faculties asleep.

Amid the turns and counter-turns, the strife 195
 And various trials of our complex being
 As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense
 Seems hard to shun; and yet I knew a maid,
 Who, young as I was then, conversed with things
 In higher style. From appetites like these 200
 She, gentle visitant, as well she might,
 Was wholly free. Far less did critic rules
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties
 Perplex her mind, but, wise as women are
 When genial circumstance hath favored them, 205
 She welcomed what was given, and craved no more.
 Whatever scene was present to her eyes,
 That was the best, to that she was attuned
 Through her humility and lowliness,

And through a perfect happiness of soul 210
 Whose variegated feelings were in this
 Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
 For she was Nature's inmate: her the birds
 And every flower she met with, could they but
 Have known her, would have loved. Methought such charm 215
 Of sweetness did her presence breathe around
 That all the trees, and all the silent hills,
 And every thing she looked on, should have had
 An intimation how she bore herself
 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights 220
 In such a being, for her common thoughts
 Are piety, her life is blessedness.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
 From the retirement of my native hills 225
 I loved whate'er I saw, nor lightly loved,
 But fervently—did never dream 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 230
 Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
 The first diviner influence of this world
 As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
 I worshipped then among the depths of things
 As my soul bade me; could I then take part 235
 In aught but admiration, or be pleased
 With any thing but humbleness and love?
 I felt, and nothing else; I did not judge,
 I never thought of judging, with the gift
 Of all this glory filled and satisfied— 240
 And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
 Roaming, I carried with me the same heart.
 In truth, this degradation—howsoe'er
 Induced, effect in whatsoe'er degree
 Of custom that prepares such wantonness 245
 As makes the greatest things give way to least,
 Or any other cause that hath been named,

Or, lastly, aggravated by the times,
 Which with their passionate sounds might often make
 The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes 250
 Inaudible—was transient. I had felt
 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 255
 In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now,
 A sensitive, and a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,
 Which with distinct preeminence retain
 A renovating virtue, whence, depressed 260
 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— 265
 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 in which 270
 We have had deepest feeling that the mind
 Is lord and master, and that outward sense
 Is but the obedient servant of her will.
 Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date 275
 From our first childhood—in our childhood even
 Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
 As far as memory can look back, is full
 Of this beneficent influence.

At a time 280
 When scarcely (I was then not six years old)
 My hand could hold a bridle, with proud hopes
 I mounted, and we rode towards the hills:

We were a pair of horsemen—honest James
Was with me, my encourager and guide. 285
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 290
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast was mouldered down, the bones
And iron case was gone, but on the turf
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name. 295
The monumental writing was engraven
In times long past, and still from year to year
By superstition of the neighbourhood
The grass is cleared away; and to this hour
The letters are all fresh and visible. 300
Faltering, and ignorant where I was, at length
I chanced to espy those characters inscribed
On the green sod: forthwith I left the spot,
And, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills, 305
The beacon on the summit, and more near,
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 310
Colours and words that are unknown to man
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Did at that time invest the naked pool,
The beacon on the lonely eminence, 315
The woman, and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in blessèd season,
With those two dear ones—to my heart so dear—
When, in the blessèd time of early love,
Long afterwards I roamed about 320
In daily presence of this very scene,

Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
 And on the melancholy beacon, fell
 The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam—
 And think ye not with radiance more divine 325
 From these remembrances, and from the power
 They left behind? So feeling comes in aid
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong.

Oh mystery of man, from what a depth 330
 Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see
 In simple childhood something of the base
 On which thy greatness stands—but this I feel,
 That from thyself it is that thou must give,
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by 335
 Come back upon me from the dawn almost
 Of life; the hiding-places of my power
 Seem open, I approach, and then they close;
 I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
 May scarcely see at all; and I would give 340
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,
 A substance and a life to what I feel:
 I would enshrine the spirit of the past
 For future restoration. Yet another
 Of these to me affecting incidents, 345
 With which we will conclude.

One Christmas-time,
 The day before the holidays began,
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight 350
 Of those two horses which should bear us home,
 My brothers and myself. There was a crag,
 An eminence, which from the meeting-point
 Of two highways ascending overlooked
 At least a long half-mile of those two roads, 355
 By each of which the expected steeds might come—
 The choice uncertain. Thither I repaired

Up to the highest summit. 'Twas a day
Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half sheltered by a naked wall. 360
Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the wood 365
And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned
That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
A dweller in my father's house, he died,
And I and my two brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave. The event, 370
With all the sorrow which 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, 375
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, 380
And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
Which on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes—
All these were spectacles and sounds to which 385
I often would repair, and thence would drink
As at a fountain. And I do not doubt
That in this later time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
When I am in the woods, unknown to me 390
The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

Thou wilt not languish here, O friend, for whom
I travel in these dim uncertain ways—
Thou wilt assist me, as a pilgrim gone

In quest of highest truth. Behold me then
Once more in Nature's presence, thus restored,
Or otherwise, and strengthened once again
(With memory left of what had been escaped)
To habits of devoutest sympathy.

395

Book Twelfth *Same Subject* (*Continued*)

FROM Nature doth emotion come, and moods³
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory—these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength;
This twofold influence is the sun and shower 5
Of all her bounties, both in origin
And end alike benignant. Hence it is
That genius, which exists by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend—from her receives 10
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
Is roused, aspires, grasps, struggles, wishes, craves
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit may souls of humblest frame 15
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine
To speak of what myself have known and felt—
Sweet task, for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge desperate, 20
I was benighted heart and mind, but now
On all sides day began to reappear,
And it was proved indeed that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a power

³Book Thirteenth begins here in 1850 version.

That is the very quality and shape 25
 And image of right reason, that matures
 Her processes by steady laws, gives birth
 To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
 No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
 No vain conceits, provokes to no quick turns 30
 Of self-applauding intellect, but lifts
 The being into magnanimity,
 Holds up before the mind, intoxicate
 With present objects and the busy dance
 Of things that pass away, a temperate shew 35
 Of objects that endure—and by this course
 Disposes her, when over-fondly set
 On leaving her incumbrances behind,
 To seek in man, and in the frame of life
 Social and individual, what there is 40
 Desirable, affecting, good or fair,
 Of kindred permanence, the gifts divine
 And universal, the pervading grace
 That hath been, is, and shall be. Above all
 Did Nature bring again this wiser mood, 45
 More deeply reestablished in my soul,
 Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
 In what we blazon with the pompous names
 Of power and action, early tutored me
 To look with feelings of fraternal love 50
 Upon those 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; 55
 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 60
 Was firmer in the feelings which had stood

The test of such a trial, clearer far
 My sense of what was excellent and right,
 The promise of the present time retired
 Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes, 65
 Ambitious virtues, pleased me less; I sought
 For good in the familiar face of life,
 And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgements now of what would last,
 And what would disappear; prepared to find 70
 Ambition, folly, madness, in the men
 Who thrust themselves upon this passive world
 As rulers of the world—to see in these
 Even when the public welfare is their aim
 Plans without thought, or bottomed on false thought 75
 And false philosophy; having brought to test
 Of solid life and true result the books
 Of modern statist, and thereby perceived
 The utter hollowness of what we name
 The wealth of nations, where alone that wealth 80
 Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained
 A more judicious knowledge of what makes
 The dignity of individual man—
 Of man, no composition of the thought,
 Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man 85
 Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
 With our own eyes—I could not but inquire,
 Not with less interest than heretofore,
 But greater, though in spirit more subdued,
 Why is this glorious creature to be found 90
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,
 Why may not many be? What bars are thrown
 By Nature in the way of such a hope?
 Our animal wants and the necessities
 Which they impose, are these the obstacles?— 95
 If not, then others vanish into air.
 Such meditations bred an anxious wish
 To ascertain how much of real worth,

And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind,
 Did at this day exist in those who lived 100
 By bodily labour, labour far exceeding
 Their due proportion, under all the weight
 Of that injustice which upon ourselves
 By composition of society
 Ourselves entail. To frame such estimate 105
 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 of my later youth 110
 Continued downwards to that very day.

For time had never been in which the throes
 And mighty hopes of nations, and the stir
 And tumult of the world, to me could yield—
 How far soe'er transported and possessed— 115
 Full measure of content, but still I craved
 An intermixture of distinct regards
 And truths of individual sympathy
 Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned
 From that great city—else it must have been 120
 A heart-depressing wilderness indeed,
 Full soon to me a wearisome abode—
 But much was wanting; therefore did I turn
 To you, ye pathways and ye lonely roads,
 Sought you enriched with every thing I prized, 125
 With human kindness and with Nature's joy.

Oh, next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed
 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 130
 While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
 Nothing but happiness, living in some place,
 Deep vale, or anywhere the home of both,
 From which it would be misery to stir—

Oh, next to such enjoyment of our youth, 135
In my esteem next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and find
The knowledge which I love, and teach the sound
Of poet's music to strange fields and groves, 140
Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked moors
With long, long ways before, by cottage bench,
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

I love a public road: few sights there are 145
That please me more—such object hath had power
O'er my imagination since the dawn
Of childhood, when its disappearing line
Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep
Beyond the limits which my feet had trod, 150
Was like a guide into eternity,
At least to things unknown and without bound.
Even something of the grandeur which invests
The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind 155
Surrounded too the wanderers of the earth—
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 160
Take note of this? When I began to inquire,
To watch and question those I met, and held
Familiar talk with them, the lonely roads
Were schools to me in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind, 165
There saw into the depth of human souls—
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To vulgar eyes. And now, convinced at heart
How little that to which alone we give
The name of education hath to do 170
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
 With toil, is therefore yoked with ignorance, 175
 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
 And steadiness, and healing and repose 180
 To every angry passion. There I heard,
 From mouths of lowly men and of obscure,
 A tale of honour—sounds in unison
 With loftiest promises of good and fair.
- There are who think that strong affections, love 185
 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
 By manners thoughtful and elaborate— 190
 That whoso feels such passion in excess
 Must live within the very light and air
 Of elegances that are made by man.
 True it is, where oppression worse than death
 Salutes the being at his birth, where grace 195
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
 And labour in excess and poverty
 From day to day pre-occupy the ground
 Of the affections, and to Nature's self
 Oppose a deeper nature—there indeed 200
 Love cannot be; nor does it easily thrive
 In cities, where the human heart is sick,
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed:
 Thus far, no further, is that inference good.
- Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel 205
 How we mislead each other, above all
 How books mislead us—looking for their fame

Sorrow that is not sorrow but delight, 245
 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
 Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride 250
 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
 Do read the invisible soul, by men adroit 255
 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.
 Men may be found of other mold than these, 260
 Who are their own upholders, to themselves
 Encouragement, and energy, and will,
 Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
 As native passion dictates. Others, too,
 There are among the walks of homely life 265
 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:
 Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power, 270
 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
 In gratitude to God, who feeds our hearts 275
 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
 Not only that the inner frame is good, 280
 And graciously composed, but that, no less,

Nature through all conditions hath a power
 To consecrate—if we have eyes to see—
 The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
 Grandeur upon the very humblest face 285
 Of human life. I felt that the array
 Of outward circumstance and visible form
 Is to the pleasure of the human mind
 What passion makes it; that meanwhile the forms
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves 290
 That intermingles with those works of man
 To which she summons him, although the works
 Be mean, having nothing lofty of their own;
 And that the genius of the poet hence
 May boldly take his way among mankind 295
 Wherever Nature leads—that he hath stood
 By Nature's side among the men of old,
 And so shall stand for ever. Dearest friend,
 Forgive me if I say that I, who long
 Had harboured reverentially a thought 300
 That poets, even as prophets, each with each
 Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
 Have each for his peculiar dower a sense
 By which he is enabled to perceive
 Something unseen before—forgive me, friend, 305
 If I, the meanest of this band, had hope
 That unto me had also been vouchsafed
 An influx, that in some sort I possessed
 A privilege, and that a work of mine,
 Proceeding from the depth of untaught things, 310
 Enduring and creative, might become
 A power like one of Nature's.

To such a mood,
 Once above all—a traveller at that time
 Upon the plain of Sarum—was I raised: 315
 There on the pastoral downs without a track
 To guide me, or along the bare white roads
 Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,

While through those vestiges of ancient times
 I ranged, and by the solitude o'ercome, 320
 I had a reverie and saw the past,
 Saw multitudes of men, and here and there
 A single Briton in his wolf-skin vest,
 With shield and stone-ax, stride across the wold;
 The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear 325
 Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength
 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
 I called upon the darkness, and it took—
 A midnight darkness seemed to come and take—
 All objects from my sight; and lo, again 330
 The desert visible by dismal flames!
 It is the sacrificial altar, fed
 With living men—how deep the groans!—the voice
 Of those in the gigantic wicker thrills
 Throughout the region far and near, pervades 335
 The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
 Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
 At other moments, for through that wide waste
 Three summer days I roamed, when 'twas my chance
 To have before me on the downy plain 340
 Lines, circles, mounts, a mystery of shapes
 Such as in many quarters yet survive,
 With intricate profusion figuring o'er
 The untilled ground (the work, as some divine,
 Of infant science, imitative forms 345
 By which the Druids covertly expressed
 Their knowledge of the heavens, and imaged forth
 The constellations), I was gently charmed,
 Albeit with an antiquarian's dream,
 And saw the bearded teachers, with white wands 350
 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
 Alternately, and plain below, while breath
 Of music seemed to guide them, and the waste
 Was cleared with stillness and a pleasant sound.

 This for the past, and things that may be viewed, 355

Or fancied, in the obscurities of time.
Nor is it, friend, unknown to thee; at least—
Thyself delighted—thou for my delight
Hast said, perusing some imperfect verse
Which in that lonesome journey was composed, 360
That also I must then have exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things
And actual world of our familiar days,
A higher power—have caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books 365
Not hitherto reflected. Call we this
But a persuasion taken up by thee
In friendship, yet the mind is to herself
Witness and judge, and I remember well
That in life's everyday appearances 370
I seemed about this period to have sight
Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base
That whence our dignity originates, 375
That which both gives it being, and maintains
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from within and from without:
The excellence, pure spirit, and best power,
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees. 380

Book Thirteenth *Conclusion*

IN one of these excursions, travelling then⁴
Through Wales on foot and with a youthful friend,
I left Bethkelet's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon. Having reached 5
The cottage at the mountain's foot, we there
Rouzed up the shepherd who by ancient right
Of office is the stranger's usual guide,
And after short refreshment sallied forth.

It was a summer's night, a close warm night, 10
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping mist
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky,
Half threatening storm and rain; but on we went
Unchecked, being full of heart and having faith
In our tried pilot. Little could we see, 15
Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp,
And, after ordinary travellers' chat
With our conductor, silently we sunk
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself 20
Was nothing either seen or heard the while
Which took me from my musings, save that once
The shepherd's cur did to his own great joy
Unearth a hedgehog in the mountain-crags,
Round which he made a barking turbulent. 25
This small adventure—for even such it seemed

⁴Book Fourteenth begins here in 1850 version.

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 30
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts,
Thus might we wear perhaps an hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band— 35
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo, 40
The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
Immense above my head, and on the shore
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved 45
All over this still ocean, and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed
To dwindle and give up its majesty, 50
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.
Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew
In single glory, and we stood, the mist
Touching our very feet; and from the shore
At distance not the third part of a mile 55
Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, steams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.
The universal spectacle throughout 60
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged

The soul, the imagination of the whole. 65

A meditation rose in me that night
 Upon the lonely mountain when the scene
 Had passed away, and it appeared to me
 The perfect image of a mighty mind,
 Of one that feeds upon infinity, 70
 That is exalted by an under-presence,
 The sense of God, or whatso'er is dim
 Or vast in its own being—above all,
 One function of such mind had Nature there
 Exhibited by putting forth, and that 75
 With circumstance most awful and sublime:
 That domination which she oftentimes
 Exerts upon the outward face of things,
 So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
 Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence 80
 Doth make one object so impress itself
 Upon all others, and pervades them so,
 That even the grossest minds must see and hear,
 And cannot chuse but feel. The power which these
 Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus 85
 Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
 Resemblance—in the fullness of its strength
 Made visible—a genuine counterpart
 And brother of the glorious faculty
 Which higher minds bear with them as their own. 90
 This is the very spirit in which they deal
 With all the objects of the universe:
 They from their native selves can send abroad
 Like transformation, for themselves create
 A like existence, and, when'er it is 95
 Created for them, catch it by an instinct.
 Them the enduring and the transient both
 Serve to exalt. They build up greatest things
 From least suggestions, ever on the watch,
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon. 100
 They need not extraordinary calls

To rouse them—in a world of life they live,
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,
 But quickened, roused, and made thereby more fit
 To hold communion with the invisible world. 105
 Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That can be known is theirs—the consciousness
 Of whom they are, habitually infused
 Through every image, and through every thought, 110
 And all impressions; hence religion, faith,
 And endless occupation for the soul,
 Whether discursive or intuitive;
 Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
 Emotion which best foresight need not fear, 115
 Most worthy then of trust when most intense;
 Hence cheerfulness in every act of life;
 Hence truth in moral judgements; and delight
 That fails not, in the external universe.

Oh, who is he that hath his whole life long 120
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?—
 For this alone is genuine liberty,
 Witness, ye solitudes, where I received
 My earliest visitations (careless then
 Of what was given me), and where now I roam, 125
 A meditative, oft a suffering man,
 And yet I trust with undiminished powers;
 Witness—whatever falls my better mind,
 Revolving with the accidents of life,
 May have sustained—that, howsoe'er misled, 130
 I never in the quest of right and wrong
 Did tamper with myself from private aims;
 Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
 Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully
 Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits; 135
 But rather did with jealousy shrink back
 From every combination that might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,

Of habit to enslave the mind—I mean
 Oppress it by the laws of vulgar sense, 140
 And substitute a universe of death,
 The falsest of all worlds, in place of that
 Which is divine and true. To fear and love
 (To love as first and chief, for there fear ends)
 Be this ascribed, to early intercourse 145
 In presence of sublime and lovely forms
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
 Evil as one is rashly named by those
 Who know not what they say. From love, for here
 Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes, 150
 All truth and beauty—from pervading love—
 That gone, we are as dust. Behold the fields
 In balmy springtime, full of rising flowers
 And happy creatures; see that pair, the lamb
 And the lamb’s mother, and their tender ways 155
 Shall touch thee to the heart; 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, lulled, and lost, and rapt away—
 Be happy to thy fill; thou call’st this love, 160
 And so it is, but there is higher love
 Than this, a love that comes into the heart
 With awe and a diffusive sentiment.
 Thy love is human merely: this proceeds
 More from the brooding soul, and is divine. 165

This love more intellectual cannot be
 Without imagination, which in truth
 Is but another name for absolute strength
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
 And reason in her most exalted mood. 170
 This faculty hath been the moving soul
 Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
 From darkness, and the very place of birth
 In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
 The sound of waters; followed it to light 175

And open day, accompanied its course
 Among the ways of Nature, afterwards
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed,
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more
 With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast 180
 The works of man, and face of human life;
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
 The feeling of life endless, the one thought
 By which we live, infinity and God.

Imagination having been our theme, 185
 So also hath that intellectual love,
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand
 Dividually. Here must thou be, O man,
 Strength to thyself—no helper hast thou here—
 Here keepest thou thy individual state: 190
 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
 In the recesses of thy nature, far 195
 From any reach of outward fellowship,
 Else 'tis not thine at all. But joy to him,
 O, joy to him who here hath sown—hath laid
 Here the foundations of his future years—
 For all that friendship, all that love can do, 200
 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
 Up to the height of feeling intellect 205
 Shall want no humbler tenderness, his heart
 Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
 Of female softness shall his life be full,
 Of little loves and delicate desires,
 Mild interests and gentlest sympathies. 210

Child of my parents, sister of my soul,

Elsewhere have strains of gratitude been breathed
 To thee for all the early tenderness
 Which I from thee imbibed. And true it is
 That later seasons owned to thee no less; 215
 For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
 Of other kindred hands that opened out
 The springs of tender thought in infancy,
 And spite of all which singly I had watched
 Of elegance, and each minuter charm 220
 In Nature or in life, still to the last—
 Even to the very going-out of youth,
 The period which our story now hath reached—
 I too exclusively esteemed that love,
 And sought that beauty, which as Milton sings 225
 Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
 This over-sternness; but for thee, sweet friend,
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had been
 Far longer what by Nature it was framed—
 Longer retained its countenance severe— 230
 A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
 Familiar, and a favorite of the stars;
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests 235
 And warble in its chambers. At a time
 When Nature, destined to remain so long
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
 Into a second place, well pleased to be
 A handmaid to a nobler than herself— 240
 When every day brought with it some new sense
 Of exquisite regard for common things,
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts
 Of more refined humanity—thy breath,
 Dear sister, was a kind of gentler spring 245
 That went before my steps.

With such a theme
 Coleridge—with this my argument—of thee

Shall I be silent? O most loving soul,
Placed on this earth to love and understand, 250
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of?
Thy gentle spirit to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way; and thus the life
Of all things and the mighty unity 255
In all which we behold, and feel, and are,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition, closelier gathering thoughts
Of man and his concerns, such as become
A human creature, be he who he may, 260
Poet, or destined to an humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed,
And balanced, by a reason which indeed 265
Is reason, duty, and pathetic truth—
And God and man divided, as they ought,
Between them the great system of the world,
Where man is sphered, and which God animates.

And now, O friend, this history is brought 270
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of the poet's mind
In every thing that stood most prominent
Have faithfully been pictured. We have reached
The time, which was our object from the first, 275
When we may (not presumptuously, I hope)
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
My knowledge, as to make me capable
Of building up a work that should endure.
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was— 280
Of books how much! and even of the other wealth
Which is collected among woods and fields,
Far more. For Nature's secondary grace,
That outward illustration which is hers,
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon: 285

The charm more superficial, and yet sweet,
 Which from her works finds way, contemplated
 As they hold forth a genuine counterpart
 And softening mirror of the moral world.

Yes, having tracked the main essential power— 290
 Imagination—up her way sublime,
 In turn might fancy also be pursued
 Through all her transmigrations, till she too
 Was purified, had learned to ply her craft
 By judgement steadied. Then might we return, 295
 And in the rivers and the groves behold
 Another face, might hear them from all sides
 Calling upon the more instructed mind
 To link their images—with subtle skill
 Sometimes, and by elaborate research— 300
 With forms and definite appearances
 Of human life, presenting them sometimes
 To the involuntary sympathy
 Of our internal being, satisfied
 And soothed with a conception of delight 305
 Where meditation cannot come, which thought
 Could never heighten. Above all, how much
 Still nearer to ourselves is overlooked
 In human nature and that marvellous world
 As studied first in my own heart, and then 310
 In life, among the passions of mankind
 And qualities commixed and modified
 By the infinite varieties and shades
 Of individual character. Herein
 It was for me (this justice bids me say) 315
 No useless preparation to have been
 The pupil of a public school, and forced
 In hardy independence to stand up
 Among conflicting passions and the shock
 Of various tempers, to endure and note 320
 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,
 And moral notions too intolerant, 325
 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
 Learns from such timely exercise to keep 330
 In wholesome separation the two natures—
 The one that feels, the other that observes.

Let one word more of personal circumstance—
 Not needless, as it seems—be added here.
 Since I withdrew unwillingly from France, 335
 The story hath demanded less regard
 To time and place; and where I lived and how,
 Hath been no longer scrupulously marked.
 Three years, until a permanent abode
 Received me with that sister of my heart 340
 Who ought by rights the dearest to have been
 Conspicuous through this biographic verse—
 Star seldom utterly concealed from view—
 I led an undomestic wanderer's life.
 In London chiefly was my home, and thence 345
 Excursively, as personal friendships, chance
 Or inclination led, or slender means
 Gave leave, I roamed about from place to place,
 Tarrying in pleasant nooks, wherever found,
 Through England or through Wales. A youth—he bore 350
 The name of Calvert; it shall live, if words
 Of mine can give it life—without respect
 To prejudice or custom, having hope
 That I had some endowments by which good
 Might be promoted, in his last decay 355
 From his own family withdrawing part
 Of no redundant patrimony, did
 By a bequest sufficient for my needs
 Enable me to pause for choice, and walk

At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon 360
 By mortal cares. Himself no poet, yet
 Far less a common spirit of the world,
 He deemed that my pursuits and labors lay
 Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
 Perhaps to necessary maintenance, 365
 Without some hazard to the finer sense,
 He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
 Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains 370
 Our present labour seems not to require,
 And I have other tasks. Call back to mind
 The mood in which this poem was begun,
 O friend—the termination of my course
 Is nearer now, much nearer, yet even then 375
 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
 Which ’tis reproach to hear?’ Anon I rose
 As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched 380
 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
 Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
 Attempered to the sorrows of the earth— 385
 Yet centring all in love, and in the end
 All gratulant if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
 And with life power to accomplish aught of worth
 Sufficient to excuse me in men’s sight 390
 For having given this record of myself,
 Is all uncertain, but, beloved friend,
 When looking back thou seest, in clearer view
 Than any sweetest sight of yesterday,
 That summer when on Quantock’s grassy hills 395

Far ranging, and among the sylvan coombs,
 Thou in delicious words, with happy heart,
 Didst speak the vision of that ancient man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
 Didst utter of the Lady Christabel; 400
 And I, associate in such labour, walked
 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; 405
 When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
 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 410
 Is labour not unworthy of regard:
 To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
 Which I for thee design have been prepared
 In times which have from those wherein we first 415
 Together wandered in wild poesy
 Differed thus far, that they have been, my friend,
 Times of much sorrow, of a private grief
 Keen and enduring, which the frame of mind
 That in this meditative history 420
 Hath been described, more deeply makes me feel,
 Yet likewise hath enabled me to bear
 More firmly; and a comfort now, a hope,
 One of the dearest which this life can give,
 Is mine: that thou art near, and wilt be soon 425
 Restored to us in renovated health—
 When, after the first mingling of our tears,
 'Mong other consolations, we may find
 Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh, yet a few short years of useful life, 430
 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,
 This age fall back to old idolatry,
 Though men return to servitude as fast 435
 As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
 By nations sink together, we shall still
 Find solace in the knowledge which we have,
 Blessed with true happiness if we may be
 United helpers forward of a day 440
 Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work—
 Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe—
 Of their redemption, surely yet to come.
 Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified 445
 By reason and by truth; what we have loved
 Others will love, and we may teach them how:
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
 On which he dwells, above this frame of things 450
 (Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
 And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself
 Of substance and of fabric more divine.