

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,
[5] 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.¹ But now we start afresh: I feel
An impulse to precipitate² my verse. 10
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
[20] Whene'er it comes, needful in work so long,
Thrice needful to the argument⁴ 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
[25] 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,⁵ this field, with small regret—
[32] 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
Led thither chiefly by a personal wish
To speak the language more familiarly,

1. The river is recurrent in *The Prelude* as a symbol both of the poet's mind, and of the form assumed by the poem itself in tracing the progress of that mind—see especially, 1799, II, 247–49, and the final retrospect, XIII, 171–84.

2. Hasten.

4. Theme.

5. Wordsworth in fact spent only four months in London at this early period, January–May 1791.

Book Ninth

Residence in France

EVEN as a river,—partly (it might seem)
Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed
In part by fear to shape a way direct,
That would engulf him soon in the ravenous sea—
Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, 5
Seeking the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset; so have we, my Friend!
Turned and returned with intricate delay.¹
Or as a traveller, who has gained the brow
Of some aerial Down, while there he halts 10
For breathing-time, is tempted to review
The region left behind him; and, if aught
Deserving notice have escaped regard,
Or been regarded with too careless eye,
Strives, from that height, with one and yet one more 15
Last look, to make the best amends he may:
So have we lingered.³ Now we start afresh
With courage, and new hope risen on our toil.
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes! needful in work so long, 20
Thrice needful to the argument⁴ which now
Awaits us! Oh, how much unlike the past!

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
Month after month. Obscurely did I live, 25
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
By literature, or elegance, or rank,
Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent⁵
Ere I forsook the crowded solitude, 30
With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed
So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps. 35
But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
And all enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day

3. The image of the backward-looking traveler in lines 9–17 is introduced in 1832.

With which intent I chose for my abode

[41] A city on the borders of the Loire.⁶

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—

[45] The latter chiefly—from the field of Mars

Down to the suburbs of St Anthony,
And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
Of Geneviève.⁷ In both her clamorous halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,

45

[50] I saw the revolutionary power

Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms,⁸
The Arcades I traversed in the Palace huge
Of Orleans,⁹ coasted round and round the line
Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house, and shop,

50

[55] 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,
To hawkers and haranguers, hubbub wild,¹
And hissing factionists with ardent eyes,

55

[60] In knots, or pairs, or single, ant-like swarms

Of builders and subverters, every face
That hope or apprehension could put on—
Joy, anger, and vexation, in the midst

60

[66] Of gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
Of the Bastile² I sate in the open sun

6. Orleans, which he reached December 6, 1791, and where almost certainly he met Annette Vallon (see *1805*, 555*n*, below), to whose home town of Blois he moved early in the new year. He had probably come to France chiefly to avoid family discussion of his career, centering at the time on "a paltry curacy" in Harwich (*EY*, p. 59). The scheme to perfect his French, and so qualify as a gentleman's traveling companion or tutor, is mentioned by Dorothy, *EY*, p. 66.

7. The places mentioned are all spots of "recent fame," associated with the still largely peaceful Revolution. The Field of Mars was the place where the Fête de la Fédération had been held, July 14, 1790, to commemorate the fall of the Bastille the previous year; the Faubourg St. Antoine was the militant working-class district next to the Bastille, and the northern suburb of Montmartre was a revolutionary meeting place. The Dome of Geneviève is the Panthéon, a church south of the Seine, chosen for the burial in April 1791 of the Comte de Mirabeau, the great

Revolutionary statesman and orator, and turned into a hall of fame by the re-burials there of Voltaire and Rousseau, both of whom had died in 1778, and were regarded as precursors of the Revolution.

8. First of the two "clamorous halls" was the constitutionally elected National Assembly of 750 deputies (to which Wordsworth was "introduced by a member," *EY*, p. 71); the second was the Jacobin Club (formally, the Society of Friends of the Revolution), which though it did not lay down specific policies, was immensely influential as a meeting place for radical opinion.

9. The arcades of the Palais d'Orleans were the fashionable shopping center and rendezvous of Paris.

1. The phrase "hubbub wild" is from Milton's description of Chaos, *Paradise Lost*, II, 951.

2. The Bastille, fortress-prison and symbol of royal oppression, had been sacked on July 14, 1789, and later demolished.

With motion constant as his own, I went
 Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town, 40
 Washed by the current of the stately Loire.⁶

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
 Sojourning a few days, I visited,
 In haste, each spot of old or recent fame,
 The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars 45
 Down to the suburbs of St. Anthony,
 And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
 Of Genevieve.⁷ In both her clamorous Halls,
 The National Synod and the Jacobins,
 I saw the Revolutionary Power 50
 Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;⁸
 The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
 Of Orleans;⁹ coasted round and round the line
 Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
 Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk 55
 Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
 I stared and listened, with a stranger's ears,
 To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!¹
 And hissing Factionists with ardent eyes,
 In knots and pairs, or single. Not a look 60
 Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear are forced to wear,
 But seemed there present; and I scanned them all,
 Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
 Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
 All side by side, and struggling face to face, 65
 With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
 Of the Bastile,² I sate in the open sun,

- And from the rubbish gathered up a stone, 65
 [70] And pocketed the relic in the guise
 Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 Though not without some strong incumbencies,³
 And glad—could living man be otherwise?—
 I looked for something which I could not find, 70
 Affecting more emotion than I felt.
- [74] 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
 [80] And rueful, with its ever-flowing tears.⁴ 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,
 [85] 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
 Glazed in a greenhouse, or a parlour-shrub,
 [90] 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
 [95] Was busy with an action far advanced. 95
 Like others I had read, and eagerly
 Sometimes, the master pamphlets of the day,⁵
 Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
 Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
 [100] 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 organs⁶ of the public power
 Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how

3. Spiritual broodings; as at 1805, III, 115, above.

4. A baroque picture of the weeping St. Mary Magdalene (repentant prostitute who washed Christ's feet with her tears, Luke 7:38). It was painted by Charles le Brun (1616–90). The picture, which is now in the Louvre, was displayed as a tourist attraction, apparently to the sound

of religious music (Legouis, p. 194n).

5. Wordsworth is presumably referring to English pamphlets such as Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man*, Part I, and James Mackintosh's *Vindiciae Gallicae*, both 1791, written in answer to Burke's attack on the Revolution.

6. Instruments.

And from the rubbish gathered up a stone,
 And pocketed the relic, in the guise 70
 Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 I looked for something that I could not find,
 Affecting more emotion than I felt;
 For 'tis most certain, that these various sights,
 However potent their first shock, with me 75
 Appeared to recompense the traveller's pains
 Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
 A beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
 Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
 Pale and bedropped with everflowing tears.⁴ 80

But hence to my more permanent abode
 I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused, 85
 I stood, 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub
 That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
 While every bush and tree, the country through, 90
 Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
 Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared
 With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
 Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
 And busy with an action far advanced. 95
 Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
 With care, the master pamphlets of the day;⁵
 Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
 Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
 And public news; but having never seen 100
 A chronicle that might suffice to show
 Whence the main organs⁶ 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.⁷ 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
 Routs,⁸ card-tables, the formal haunts of men
 [115] Whom in the city privilege of birth
 Sequestered from the rest, societies
 Where, through punctilios of elegance
 And deeper causes, all discourse, alike
 Of good and evil, in the time, was shunned
 [120] 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 patriot⁹—and my heart was all
 Given to the people, and my love was theirs. 125
- [125] A knot of military officers
 That to a regiment appertained which then
 Was stationed in the city were the chief
 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 chivalry¹ of France. 130
- [130] In age and temper differing, they had yet
 One spirit ruling in them all—alike
 (Save only one, hereafter to be named)²
 Were bent upon undoing what was done.
 This was their rest, and only hope; therewith
 [135] No fear had they of bad becoming worse,
 For worst to them was come—nor would have stirred,
 Or deemed it worth a moment's while to stir,
 In any thing, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 [140] Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
 He had sate lord in many tender hearts, 145

7. After a brief initial period of violence in summer 1789, the Revolution continued peaceful and constitutional until the massacre of royalist prisoners that followed the final suspension of the king in August 1792 (see 1805, X, 48*n*, below). The Reign of Terror did not begin until

July 1793.

8. Receptions, parties.

9. One who is committed to the Revolution.

1. Nobles.

2. A reference to Michel Beaupuy (see 1805, 296*n*, below, and lines 294–543).

Accomplished, giving thus unto events
 A form and body; all things were to me 105
 Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
 Without a vital interest. At that time,
 Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
 And the strong hand of outward violence
 Locked up in quiet.⁷ For myself, I fear 110
 Now in connection with so great a theme
 To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
 Of one so unimportant; night by night
 Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
 Whom, in the city, privilege of birth 115
 Sequestered from the rest; societies
 Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
 Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
 Of good and evil of the time was shunned
 With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon 120
 Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
 Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
 Became a patriot;⁹ and my heart was all
 Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers, 125
 Then stationed in the city, were the chief
 Of my associates: some of these wore swords
 That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
 Were men well-born; the chivalry¹ of France.
 In age and temper differing, they had yet 130
 One spirit ruling in each heart; alike
 (Save only one, hereafter to be named)²
 Were bent upon undoing what was done:
 This was their rest and only hope; therewith
 No fear had they of bad becoming worse, 135
 For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
 Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
 In any thing, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile 140
 He had sate lord in many tender hearts;

Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:

His temper was quite mastered by the times,

And they had blighted him, had eat away

- [145] The beauty of his person, doing wrong
Alike to body and to mind. His port,³ 150
Which once had been erect and open, now
Was stooping and contracted, and a face
By nature lovely in itself, expressed,
- [151] 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
- [155] 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
- [160] 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
- [165] 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!
- [170] 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!
- [175] The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
Devoured by locusts—Carra, Gorsas⁴—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,
- [180] And felt through every nook of town and field.

3. Bearing.

4. Gorsas and Carra were deputies of the National Assembly, and members of the idealistic and loosely connected Girondin group with which Wordsworth and Coleridge were in sympathy. They exercised considerable power as journalists, and were executed by Robespierre on October 7 and 31, 1793, respectively. According to Carlyle (*Reminiscences*, p. 532), Wordsworth told him ca. 1840 that he

had been present at the death of Gorsas, and it has been assumed (see especially Reed, I, p. 147) that Wordsworth made a brief trip to Paris at this time to see Annette and Caroline (see *1805*, 555*n*, below). Carlyle's account is backed by circumstantial detail, but only very tenuous evidence has been produced to support the claim that Wordsworth seems to have made.

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 145
 Alike to body and to mind: his port,³
 Which once had been erect and open, now
 Was stooping and contracted, and a face,
 Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
 Of symmetry and light and bloom, expressed, 150
 As much as any that was ever seen,
 A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
 Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour,
 That from the press of Paris duly brought
 Its freight of public news, the fever came, 155
 A punctual visitant, to shake this man,
 Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
 Into a thousand colours; while he read,
 Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
 Continually, like an uneasy place 160
 In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
 Of universal ferment; mildest men
 Were agitated; and commotions, strife
 Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
 Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds. 165
 The soil of common life, was, at that time,
 Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,
 And not then only, 'What a mockery this
 Of history, the past and that to come!
 Now do I feel how all men are deceived, 170
 Reading of nations and their works, in faith,
 Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
 Oh! laughter for the page that would reflect
 To future times the face of what now is!
 The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain 175
 Devoured by locusts,—Carra, Gorças,⁴—add
 A hundred other names, forgotten now,
 Nor to be heard of more; yet, they were powers,
 Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
 And felt through every nook of town and field. 180

- 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
 [185] 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.⁵ An Englishman,
 Born in a land the name of which appeared
 [190] 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
 [195] With these defenders of the crown, and talked,
 And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
 The wish to bring me over to their cause. 200
 But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity⁶ or law,
 [200] 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
 [205] Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
 Tales of the 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
 [210] 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.
- [215] 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
 [220] 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

5. By April 1792 more than half the 9,000 French army officers had deserted to join the émigrés who were mustering with Austrian and Prussian support at

Coblentz for an invasion intended to restore the *ancien régime*.

6. Government.

Such was the state of things. Meanwhile the chief
 Of my associates stood prepared for flight
 To augment the band of emigrants in arms
 Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
 With foreign foes mustered for instant war. 185
 This was their undisguised intent, and they
 Were waiting with the whole of their desires
 The moment to depart.⁵

An Englishman,

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

But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity⁶ or law,
 And nice distinctions, then on every tongue, 200
 Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
 Of nations and their passing interests,
 (If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
 Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized 205
 Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
 Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
 Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
 Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
 Of orders and degrees, I nothing found 210
 Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
 That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
 And ill could brook, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet 215
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
 Than any other nook of English ground,
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
 Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
 The face of one, who, whether boy or man, 220
 Was vested with attention or respect
 Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least

Of many debts which afterwards I owed
 To Cambridge and an academic life,
 [225] That something there was holden up to view 230
 Of a republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground, that they were brothers all
 In honour, as of one community—
 Scholars and gentlemen—where, furthermore,
 [230] Distinction lay open to all that came, 235
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents and successful industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 [235] To God and Nature's single sovereignty 240
 (Familiar presences of awful power),
 And fellowship with venerable books
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
 And mountain liberty.⁸ 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
 [240] Upon the faculties of man, receive
 Gladly the highest promises, and hail
 As best the government of equal rights
 And individual worth. And hence, O friend,
 If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced 250
 [245] Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course—
 A gift that rather was come late than soon.
 [249] 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
 [255] 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
 [260] 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,

8. To the alleged egalitarianism of the Lake District and Cambridge, Wordsworth adds three influences that disposed him to welcome the Revolution: subservience to God and Nature, fellowship with

books that confirm ("sanction") the workings of the soul, and finally, the freedom of spirit associated with mountains.

Of many benefits, in later years
 Derived from academic institutes
 And rules, that they held something up to view 225
 Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
 In honour, as in one community,
 Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
 Distinction lay open to all that came, 230
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To presences of God's mysterious power
 Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,⁷ 235
 And fellowship with venerable books,
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus should look with awe
 Upon the faculties of man, receive 240
 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
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause 245
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
 A gift that was rather come late than soon.
 No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
 Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice, 250
 And stung with injury,⁹ 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 255
 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 260
 Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,

7. Lines 233–35 show a careful removal, in 1832, of the pantheist implications of 1805.

9. As Havens points out, the addition of

lines 250–51 (in 1816/19) shows that Wordsworth's growing conservatism did not soften his contempt for the forces of reaction.

- Were crowded with the bravest youth of France
 And all the promptest of her spirits, linked 270
 [265] In gallant soldiership, and posting on
 To meet the war upon her frontier-bounds.¹
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 Into mine eyes—I do not say I weep,
 I wept not then, but tears have dimmed my sight— 275
 [270] In memory of the farewells of that time,
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope
 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence.² 280
 [275] Even files of strangers merely, seen but once
 And for a moment, men from far, with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city, here and there a face
 Or person singled out among the rest 285
 [280] Yet still a stranger, and beloved as such—
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Like arguments from Heaven that 'twas a cause
 Good, and which no one could stand up against 290
 [285] Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.
- Among that band of officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mold— 295
 [290] A patriot,³ thence rejected by the rest,
 And with an oriental loathing spurned
 As of a different cast.⁴ A meeker man
 Than this lived never, or a more benign—
 Meek, though enthusiastic to the height 300
 Of highest expectation. Injuries
 [295] Made *him* more gracious; and his nature then
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,⁵
 As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf
 When foot hath crushed them. He through the events 305
 Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
 [300] As through a book, an old romance, or tale

1. France declared war against Austria on April 20, 1792.

2. I.e., Hope for success on earth, supported by confidence such as the Christian martyrs showed. "Self-devotion": devotion of oneself to a cause.

3. Michel Beaupuy (1755–96) was nobly born, but came of a family distinguished for its interest in philosophy and sympathy with the Revolution (Legouis, pp.

201–4); with Coleridge, he is one of the two great influences on Wordsworth's intellectual life. "Mold": the earth from which the human body was regarded as having been formed.

4. I.e., he was spurned with the kind of loathing an Oriental might show for a member of a lower caste.

5. In a way that was particularly apparent to the senses.

And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
 In gallant soldiership, and posting on 265
 To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.¹
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 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, 270
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;²
 Even files of strangers merely, seen but once, 275
 And for a moment, men from far with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city, here and there a face,
 Or person singled out among the rest,
 Yet still a stranger and beloved as such; 280
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
 Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud, 285
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mould—
 A patriot,³ thence rejected by the rest, 290
 And with an oriental loathing spurned,
 As of a different caste.⁴ A meeker man
 Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
 Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
 Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then 295
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,⁵
 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 300

- Of Fairy,⁶ or some dream of actions wrought
 Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
 With the most noble, but unto the poor 310
 Among mankind he was in service bound
 [305] As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
 To a religious order. Man he loved
 As man, and to the mean and the obscure,
 And all the homely in their homely works, 315
 Transferred a courtesy which had no air
 [310] Of condescension, but did rather seem
 A passion and a gallantry, like that
 Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
 Had payed to woman. Somewhat vain he was, 320
 Or seemed so—yet it was not vanity,
 [315] But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
 That covered him about when he was bent
 On works of love or freedom, or revolved
 Complacently⁷ the progress of a cause 325
 Whereof he was a part—yet this was meek
 [320] And placid, and took nothing from the man
 That was delightful. Oft in solitude
 With him did I discourse about the end
 Of civil government, and its wisest forms, 330
 Of ancient prejudice and chartered rights,
 Allegiance, faith, and laws by time matured,
 [325] Custom and habit, novelty and change,
 Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
 For patrimonial honour set apart, 335
 And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
 For he, an upright man and tolerant,
 [330] Balanced these contemplations in his mind,
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 Into the turmoil, had a sounder judgement 340
 Than afterwards,⁸ carried about me yet
 With less alloy to its integrity
 [335] The experience of past ages, as through help
 Of books and common life it finds its way
 To youthful minds, by objects over near 345
 Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
 By struggling with the crowd for present ends.
- [340] But though not deaf and obstinate to find
 Error without apology on the side
 Of those who were against us, more delight 350
 We took, and let this freely be confessed,

6. Fairyland; Spenser is in Wordsworth's mind, as at lines 445–64, below.
 7. With enjoyment.

8. I.e., than during 1793–95, the period treated in Book X.

Of Fairy,⁶ or some dream of actions wrought
 Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
 With the most noble, but unto the poor
 Among mankind he was in service bound,
 As by some tie invisible, oaths professed 305
 To a religious order. Man he loved
 As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
 And all the homely in their homely works,
 Transferred a courtesy which had no air
 Of condescension; but did rather seem 310
 A passion and a gallantry, like that
 Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
 Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
 Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
 But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy 315
 Diffused around him, while he was intent
 On works of love or freedom, or revolved
 Complacently⁷ the progress of a cause,
 Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
 And placid, and took nothing from the man 320
 That was delightful. Oft in solitude
 With him did I discourse about the end
 Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
 Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
 Custom and habit, novelty and change; 325
 Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
 For patrimonial honour set apart,
 And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
 For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
 Balanced these contemplations in his mind; 330
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
 Than later days allowed;⁸ carried about me,
 With less alloy to its integrity,
 The experience of past ages, as, through help 335
 Of books and common life, it makes sure 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, nor obstinate to find 340
 Error without excuse upon the side
 Of them who strove against us, more delight
 We took, and let this freely be confessed,

- In painting to ourselves the miseries
 [345] Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
 Unfeeling where the man who is of soul
 The meanest thrives the most, where dignity, 355
 True personal dignity, abideth not—
 A light and cruel world, cut off from all
- [350] The natural inlets of just sentiment,
 From lowly sympathy, and chastening truth,
 When good and evil never have the name, 360
 That which they ought to have, but wrong prevails,
 And vice at home. We added dearest themes,
- [355] Man and his noble nature, as it is⁹
 The gift of God and lies in his own power,
 His blind desires and steady faculties 365
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
- [360] On firm foundations, making social life,
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure, 370
 As individual in the wise and good.¹
- We summoned up the honorable deeds
- [365] Of ancient story, thought of each bright spot
 That could be found in all recorded time,
 Of truth preserved and error passed away, 375
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from heaven,
 And how the multitude of men will feed
- [370] And fan each other—thought of sects, how keen
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle 380
 Of custom, language, country, love and hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed,
- [375] How far they travel, and how long endure—
 How quickly mighty nations have been formed
 From least beginnings, how, together locked 385
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
- [380] To aspirations then of our own minds
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole 390
 Before us in a people risen up
- [385] Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
 Upon their virtues, saw in rudest men
 Self-sacrifice the firmest, generous love

9. I.e., insofar as it is.

1. I.e., "making social life * * * as just

* * * and pure as individual life is in
the wise and good."

In painting to ourselves the miseries
 Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life 345
 Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
 The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
 True personal dignity, abideth not;
 A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
 From the natural inlets of just sentiment, 350
 From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
 Where good and evil interchange their names,
 And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
 With vice at home. We added dearest themes—
 Man and his noble nature, as it is⁹ 355
 The gift which God has placed within his 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, 360
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure,
 As individual in the wise and good.¹

We summoned up the honourable deeds
 Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot, 365
 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 multitudes of men will feed
 And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen 370
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed;
 How far they travel, and how long endure; 375
 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 380
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us, in a people from the depth
 Of shameful imbecility uprisen,²
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked 385
 Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,
 Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,

2. A revision of 1816/19, showing Wordsworth's continued emotional commitment to the Revolution.

And continence of mind,³ and sense of right
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

395

- [390] Oh, sweet it is in academic groves—
Or such retirement, friend, as we have known
Among the mountains by our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent,⁴ or some nameless rill—
To ruminare, with interchange of talk, 400
- [395] On rational liberty and hope in man,
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil
(Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse)
If Nature then be standing on the brink 405
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
- [400] Of one devoted, one whom circumstance
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
In action, give it outwardly a shape,
And that of benediction to the world. 410
Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth—
- [405] A hope it is and a desire, a creed
Of zeal by an authority divine
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death. 415
Such conversation under Attic⁵ shades
Did Dion hold with Plato, ripened thus
- [410] For a deliverer's glorious task, and such
He, on that ministry already bound,
Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
Surrounded by adventurers in arms, 420
When those two vessels with their daring freight
- [415] For the Sicilian tyrant's overthrow
Sailed from Zacynthus—philosophic war
Led by philosophers.⁶ With harder fate,
Though like ambition, such was he, O friend, 425
Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis—let the name
- [420] Stand near the worthiest of antiquity—
Fashioned his life, and many a long discourse
With like persuasion honored we maintained,
He on his part accoutred for the worst. 430
He perished fighting, in supreme command,

3. Restraint, self-possession. "Rudest" (1805, 393; 1850, 388): least refined, most ignorant.

4. Lake District rivers that were especially dear to Wordsworth and Coleridge, the Rothay at Grasmere, the Greta near Coleridge's house at Keswick, and the Derwent ("fairest of all rivers," 1799, I, 2; 1805, I, 270) at Wordsworth's birthplace, Cockermouth.

5. Greek.

6. 1805, 415–26 (1850, 407–17) are drawn from the *Life of Dion* in North's trans-

lation (1579) of Plutarch's *Lives of eminent Greeks and Romans*. Dion liberated Sicily in 357 B.C. from the tyrannical rule of his nephew Dionysius the Younger, after the failure of negotiations in which Plato had taken part. He was supported by "divers of them also that only gave their minds to the studie of Philosophie," among them Eudemus Cyprian and Timonides Leucadian. They sailed in "two great ships of burden" from the Ionian island of Zante—ancient Zacynthus (North, pp. 1038–39).

And continence of mind,³ and sense of right,
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves, 390
Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
Greta, or Derwent,⁴ or some nameless rill,
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
On rational liberty, and hope in man, 395
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 400
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 405
Of zeal, by an authority Divine
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
Such conversation, under Attic⁵ shades,
Did Dion hold with Plato; ripened thus
For a Deliverer's glorious task,—and such 410
He, on that ministry already bound,
Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
Surrounded by adventurers in arms,
When these two vessels with their daring freight,
For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow, 415
Sailed from Zacynthus,—philosophic war,
Led by Philosophers.⁶ 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) 420
Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse,
With like persuasion honoured, we maintained;
He on his part, accoutred for the worst.
He perished fighting, in supreme command,

- [425] Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,
 For liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow countrymen; and yet most blessed
 In this, that he the fate of later times 435
 Lived not to see, nor what we now behold
 [430] Who have as ardent hearts as he had then.⁷

- Along that very Loire, with festivals
 Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
 Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk, 440
 Or in wide forests of the neighbourhood,
 [435] High woods and over-arched,⁸ with open space
 On every side, and footing many a mile,
 Inwoven roots, and moss smooth as the sea—
 A solemn region. Often in such place 445
 From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
 [439] And let remembrance steal to other times
 When hermits, from their sheds and caves forth strayed,
 Walked by themselves, so met in shades like these,⁹
 And if a devious traveller was heard 450
 Approaching from a distance, as might chance,
 With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
 [450] From the hard floor reverberated, then
 It was Angelica thundering through the woods
 Upon her palfrey, or that gentler maid 455
 Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.¹
 Sometimes I saw methought a pair of knights
 [455] Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm
 Did rock above their heads, anon the din
 Of boisterous merriment and music's roar, 460
 With sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
 Of satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
 [460] Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,
 A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.²
 The width of those huge forests, unto me 465
 A novel scene, did often in this way
 Master my fancy while I wandered on
 [465] With that revered companion. And sometimes
 When to a convent in a meadow green

7. Beaupuy became chief of staff in the Republican army during the civil war in the Vendée, but he was in fact killed at Emmendingen on the eastern front, in October 1796. He thus lived to play a part in the wars of conquest which turned the Republic into an imperialist power, and which Wordsworth has in mind in *1805*, 434–37.

8. A reminiscence of *Paradise Lost*, IX, 1106–7: “a pillared shade / High over-

arched, and echoing walks between.”

9. I.e., met as we ourselves have done, in shades like these.

1. Angelica and Erminia were heroines respectively of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* (1532) and Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1580–81).

2. Wordsworth probably has in mind the stories of Una and Hellenore, *Faerie Queene*, I, vi, 13, and III, x, 43–44.

Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire, 425
 For liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow country-men; 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.⁷ 430

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
 Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
 Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;
 Or in wide forests of continuous shade,
 Lofty and over-arched,⁸ with open space 435
 Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—
 A solemn region. Oft amid those haunts,
 From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,
 And let remembrances steal to other times,
 When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad, 440
 And smooth as marble or a waveless sea,
 Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace
 In sylvan meditation undisturbed;
 As on the pavement of a Gothic church
 Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired, 445
 In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,—
 Heard, though unseen,—a devious traveller,
 Retiring or approaching from afar
 With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
 From the hard floor reverberated, then 450
 It was Angelica thundering through the woods
 Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid
 Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.¹
 Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights
 Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm 455
 Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din
 Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
 In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt
 Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
 Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst, 460
 A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall.²
 The width of those huge forests, unto me
 A novel scene, did often in this way
 Master my fancy while I wandered on
 With that revered companion. And sometimes— 465
 When to a convent in a meadow green,

- By a brook-side we came—a roofless pile, 470
 And not by reverential touch of time
 Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—
- [470] In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,
 In spite of real fervour, and of that
 Less genuine and wrought up within myself, 475
 I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
 And for the matin-bell—to sound no more—
- [475] Grieved, and the evening taper,³ and the cross
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 Admonitory to the traveller, 480
 First seen above the woods.⁴
- And when my friend
- [480] Pointed upon occasion to the site
 Of Romarentin,⁵ home of ancient kings,
 To the imperial edifice of Blois,
 Or to that rural castle, name now slipped 485
 From my remembrance, where a lady lodged
- [485] By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him
 In chains of mutual passion—from the tower,
 As a tradition of the country tells,
 Practised to commune with her royal knight 490
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
- [490] 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his
 Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath⁶—
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
 Religious, 'mid these frequent monuments 495
 Of kings, their vices and their better deeds,
- [495] Imagination, potent to enflame
 At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry, 500
 So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind,
- [500] And on these spots with many gleams I looked
 Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
 Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride 505
 In those who by immunities unjust
- [505] Betwixt the sovereign and the people stand,
 His helpers and not theirs, laid stronger hold

3. Candle.

4. For Wordsworth's regret at the expulsion of the monks from the Grande Chartreuse, see *Descriptive Sketches*, 53–79.

5. Romorantin, small town in the region of the Loire, once a provincial capital.

6. The attempt to identify a particular

mistress of Francis I (1514–57), and particular chateau (1805, 485; 1850, 483), is probably futile; the story that Wordsworth heard at Blois in 1792 need have had no basis in fact. "Cressets": torches, beacons. "Chambord": chateau in the Loire valley, built by Francis I.

By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,
 And not by reverential touch of Time
 Dismantled, but by violence abrupt—
 In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies, 470
 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
 Grieved, and the twilight taper,³ and the cross 475
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 (How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)
 Of hospitality and peaceful rest.⁴
 And when the partner of those varied walks
 Pointed upon occasion to the site 480
 Of *Romorentin*,⁵ 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,
 By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him 485
 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
 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his 490
 Far off at *Chambord* on the plain beneath;⁶
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
 Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments
 Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,
 Imagination, potent to inflame 495
 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;
 And on these spots with many gleams I looked 500
 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 them who, by immunities unjust,
 Between the sovereign and the people stand, 505
 His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold

- Daily upon me—mixed with pity too,
 And love, for where hope is, there love will be 510
 For the abject multitude. And when we chanced
- [510] 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 515
 Its sustenance, while the girl with her two hands
- [515] Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude⁷—and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, ' 'Tis against that
 Which we are fighting', I with him believed 520
 Devoutly that a spirit was abroad.
- [520] 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 525
 The industrious, and the lowly child of toil,
- [525] All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,⁸
 Whether by edict of the one or few— 530
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
- [530] 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 535
 To animate the mind that ever turned
- [535] A thought to human welfare?—that henceforth
 Captivity by mandate without law⁹
 Should cease, and open accusation lead
 To sentence in the hearing of the world, 540
 And open punishment, if not the air
- [540] Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
 Dread nothing.¹ Having touched this argument
 I shall not, as my purpose was, take note
 Of other matters which detained us oft 545
 In thought or conversation—public acts,
 And public persons, and the emotions wrought
- [545] Within our minds by the ever-varying wind
 Of record and report which day by day
 Swept over us—but I will here instead 550
 Draw from obscurity a tragic tale,

7. By an uneasy grammatical transition, the heifer has become the subject in Wordsworth's parenthesis. "Heartless": despondent.

8. I.e., empty pomp abolished, and with it, sensual state.

9. "*Lettres de cachets*"—orders for ar-

rest and imprisonment without trial—were a frequent weapon of the *ancien régime*.

1. Wordsworth's implication seems to be that total freedom and absence from fear are too much to hope for.

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
 One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl, 510
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless⁷ mood 515
 Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, ' 'Tis against *that*
 That we are fighting', I with him believed
 That a benignant spirit was abroad
 Which might not be withstood, that poverty 520
 Abject as this would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil.
 All institutes for ever blotted out 525
 That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,⁹
 Whether by edict of the one or few;
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the people having a strong hand 530
 In framing their own laws; whence better days
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
 Was not this single confidence enough
 To animate the mind that ever turned
 A thought to human welfare? That henceforth 535
 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
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man 540
 Dread nothing.¹ From this height I shall not stoop
 To humbler matter that detained us oft
 In thought or conversation, public acts,
 And public persons, and emotions wrought
 Within the breast, as ever-varying winds 545
 Of record or report swept over us;
 But I will here, instead, repeat a tale,

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.² 555

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers—thus
 My story may begin—oh, balmy time
 [555] In which a love-knot³ on a lady's brow
 Is fairer than the fairest star in heaven!
 To such inheritance of blessedness 560
 Young Vaudracour was brought by years that had
 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 565
 Not mean in their condition, but with rights
 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, 570
 With but a step between their several homes,
 The 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, 575
 Nor ever happy if they were apart.
 A basis this for deep and solid love,
 And endless constancy, and placid truth—
 But whatsoever of such treasures might,
 Beneath the outside⁵ of their youth, have lain 580
 Reserved for mellow years, his present mind
 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: 585
 Earth lived in one great presence of the spring,

2. There is good reason to believe that the events of *Vaudracour and Julia* took place at Blois, and that Wordsworth did hear the story on the spot. Within the context of his autobiography, *Vaudracour and Julia* stands in lieu of an account of his relationship with Annette Vallon, whom he met ca. January 1792, and by whom he had a child, christened in Orleans Cathedral on December 15 as Anne-Caroline Wordsworth. The stories cannot be expected to coincide in any detail, but Annette's two surviving letters, of March 1793 (Émile Legouis, *William*

Wordsworth and Annette Vallon, pp. 124–33), are full of tenderness, and it is not difficult to believe that Wordsworth's initial feelings at being separated from her and Caroline by the war of England against France (declared February 1793) were akin to those of Vaudracour. They almost certainly did not meet again till the Peace of Amiens in 1802, the year of Wordsworth's marriage to Mary Hutchinson.

3. A ribbon tied in a particular way and worn as a sign of love.

5. Surface.

Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
 That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
 How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree 550
 Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
 And black dishonour, France was weary of.

Oh, happy time of youthful lovers, (thus
 My story may begin) O balmy time,
 In which a love-knot,³ on a lady's brow,
 Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven! 555
 So might—and with that prelude *did* begin
 The record; and, in faithful verse, was given
 The doleful sequel.⁴

4. *Vaudracour and Julia* was published as a separate poem in 1820, and excluded from *The Prelude* in 1832, when lines

559–85 were composed and the awkward transition of lines 557–58 was inserted.

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 590
 The portals of the east, all paradise
 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.⁶ 595
 This state was theirs, till—whether through effect
 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, 600
 Without a certain knowledge of his own
 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 605
 Congenial to his loyal heart, with which
 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, 610
 Carried about her for a secret grief
 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 615
 She might remain shrouded in privacy
 Until the babe was born.⁷ 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, 620
 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. 625
 The sequel may be easily divined:
 Walks backwards, forwards, morning, noon, and night
 (When decency and caution would allow),

6. I.e., his life was blessed to a degree beyond endurance.

7. Annette, though not subject to the parental pressures described in this nar-

rative (her father was dead, her mother had remarried, and she herself was twenty-six), chose to have her child in Orleans, not in her home town, Blois.

And Julia, who, whenever to herself
 She happened to be left a moment's space, 630
 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.

I pass the raptures of the pair, such theme 635
 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,
 And of the lark's note heard before its time, 640
 And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds
 In the unrelenting east.⁸ 'Tis mine to tread
 The humbler province of plain history,
 And, without choice of circumstance, submissively
 Relate what I have heard. The lovers came 645
 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,
 A final portion even, if that might be; 650
 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.
 Immediately, and with this mission charged, 655
 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,
 In hearing of his father, Vaudracour 660
 Persisted openly that nothing less
 Than death should make him yield up hope to be
 A blessed husband of the maid he loved.

Incensed at such obduracy,⁹ and slight
 Of exhortations and remonstrances, 665
 The father threw out threats that by a mandate
 Bearing the private signet of the state¹
 He should be baffled of his mad intent—
 And that should cure him. From this time the youth
 Conceived a terror, and by night or day 670

8. See *Romeo and Juliet*, III, v, 1–8.
 "Unrelenting": relentless—not willing to
 delay the dawn for the sake of the lovers.

9. Scansion: öbdúrácý.

1. A "*lettre de cachet*," as at 541*n* above
 and 727–28 below; at 676–82 Vaudracour
 is therefore resisting arrest. "Signet":
 official seal.

Stirred nowhere without arms. Soon afterwards
 His parents to their country seat withdrew
 Upon some feigned occasion, and the son
 Was left with one attendant in the house. 675
 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
 Dead at his feet, and to the second gave 680
 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.

Through three weeks' space, by means which love devised, 685
 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
 Complete, and then a whole, and still the same 690
 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:
 So did she fare in her uncertainty. 695

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
 One step to reunite himself with her 700
 Of whom his parents disapproved—hard law,
 To which he gave consent only because
 His freedom else could nowise be procured.
 Back to his father's house he went, remained
 Eight days, and then his resolution failed— 705
 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
 An innocent woman. I behold thy face, 710
 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
 Checked her, nor would he hear of this, for thought 715
 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
 Days of dejection, sorrow and remorse 720
 For that ill deed of violence which his hand
 Had hastily committed—for the youth
 Was of a loyal spirit, a conscience nice,²
 And over tender for the trial which
 His fate had called him to. The father's mind 725
 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
 To the last moment of his time, and then, 730
 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,
 Until, the horseman bringing back report 735
 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
 The affection of the family, who loved him 740
 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
 In silence, though my memory could add
 Much how the youth, and in short space of time, 745
 Was traversed from without³—much, too, of thoughts
 By which he was employed in solitude
 Under privation and restraint, and what
 Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,
 And what through strong compunction for the past, 750
 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
 Of power, or through his negligence, ensued—
 That Vaudracour was suffered to remain, 755
 Though under guard and without liberty,
 In the same city with the unhappy maid
 From whom he was divided. So they fared,
 Objects of general concern, till, moved
 With pity for their wrongs, the magistrate 760

2. Fastidious.

3. Crossed, thwarted, by external events.

(The same who had placed the youth in custody)
 By application to the minister
 Obtained his liberty upon condition
 That to his father's house he should return.

He left his prison almost on the eve 765
 Of Julia's travail.⁴ She had likewise been,
 As from the time, indeed, when she had first
 Been brought for secrecy to this abode,
 Though treated with consoling tenderness,
 Herself a prisoner—a dejected one, 770
 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,
 And Julia with a low and plaintive voice 775
 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.
 A day or two before her childbed time 780
 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
 The household might be summoned, doubting not 785
 But that they might receive impressions then
 Friendly to human kindness.⁵ Vaudracour
 (This heard I from one present at the time)
 Held up the new-born infant in his arms
 And kissed, and blessed, and covered it with tears,
 Uttering a prayer that he might never be 790
 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,
 And, muttering something faintly afterwards,
 He gave the infant to the standers-by, 795
 And wept in silence upon Julia's neck.

Two months did he continue in the house,
 And often yielded up himself to plans
 Of future happiness. 'You shall return,
 Julia', said he, 'and to your father's house 800
 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.
 With ornaments the prettiest you shall dress

4. Labor.

5. I.e., that would stimulate kindness
 within the beholders.

Your boy, as soon as he can run about, 805
 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,
 So that it shall be softened, and our loves
 End happily, as they began.' These gleams 810
 Appeared but seldom; oftener he was seen
 Propping a pale and melancholy face
 Upon the mother's bosom, resting thus
 His head upon one breast, while from the other 815
 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
 Have cost me!' During daytime, when the child 820
 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
 Or window for a moment with his child 825
 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
 Requesting, since he knew that the consent 830
 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,
 A sanction to his nuptials. Vain request, 835
 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
 And last resolve, that, since all hope to move
 The old man's heart proved vain, she must retire 840
 Into a convent and be there immured.
 Julia was thunderstricken by these words,
 And she insisted on a mother's rights
 To take her child along with her—a grant
 Impossible, as she at last perceived. 845
 The persons of the house no sooner heard
 Of this decision upon Julia's fate
 Than everyone was overwhelmed with grief,
 Nor could they frame a manner soft enough
 To impart the tidings to the youth. But great 850
 Was their astonishment when they beheld him

Receive the news in calm despondency,
 Composed and silent, without outward sign
 Of even the least emotion. Seeing this,
 When Julia scattered⁶ some upbraiding words
 Upon his slackness, he thereto returned 855
 No answer, only took the mother's hand
 (Who loved him scarcely less than her own child)
 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 860
 For ever. In the city he remained
 A season after Julia had retired
 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 865
 Where now his little one was lodged he passed
 The day entire, and scarcely could at length
 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 870
 Whether the babe had gained sufficient strength
 To bear removal. He quitted this same town
 For the last time, attendant by the side
 Of a close chair, a litter or sedan,⁷
 In which the child was carried. To a hill 875
 Which rose at a league's distance from the town
 The family of the house where he had lodged
 Attended him, and parted from him there,
 Watching below until he disappeared
 On the hill-top. His eyes he scarcely took 880
 Through all that journey from the chair in which
 The babe was carried, and at every inn
 Or place at which they halted or reposed
 Laid him upon his knees, nor would permit
 The hands of any but himself to dress 885
 The infant, or undress. By one of those
 Who bore the chair these facts, at his return,
 Were told, and in relating them he wept.

This was the manner in which Vaudracour
 Departed with his infant, and thus reached 890
 His father's house, where to the innocent child
 Admittance was denied. The young man spake
 No words of indignation or reproof,
 But of his father begged, a last request,

6. I.e., when Julia, seeing this, scattered. behind. "Attendant": watchful, attentive
 7. An enclosed ("close") chair carried (the French present participle).
 on poles by two bearers, one in front, one

That a retreat might be assigned to him— 895
 A house where in the country he might dwell
 With such allowance as his wants required—
 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 900
 Of four and twenty summers he retired,
 And thither took with him his infant babe
 And one domestic for their common needs,
 An aged woman. It consoled him here
 To attend upon the orphan and perform 905
 The office of a nurse to his young child,
 Which, after a short time, by some mistake
 Or indiscretion of the father, died.
 The tale I follow to its last recess
 Of suffering or of peace, I know not which— 910
 Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine.

From that time forth he never uttered word
 To any living. An inhabitant
 Of that same town in which the pair had left
 So lively a remembrance of their griefs, 915
 By chance of business coming within reach
 Of his retirement, to the spot repaired
 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, 920
 For that her master never uttered word
 To living soul—not even to her. Behold,
 While they were speaking Vaudracour approached,
 But, seeing some one there, just as his hand
 Was stretched towards the garden-gate, he shrunk 925
 And like a shadow glided out of view.
 Shocked at his savage outside,⁸ from the place
 The visitor retired.

Thus lived the youth,
 Cut off from all intelligence with man,
 And shunning even the light of common day. 930
 Nor could the voice of freedom, which through France
 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 imbecile⁹ mind. 935

8. Wild (French *sauvage*) appearance.

9. Pronounced "ĩmbécĩl."

But our little bark
 On a strong river boldly hath been launched; 560
 And from the driving current should we turn
 To loiter wilfully within a creek,
 Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
 Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost:
 For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named) 565
 The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
 Tears from the hearts of others, when their own
 Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there mayst read,
 At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
 By public power abused, to fatal crime, 570
 Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
 How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust
 Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
 Harassing both; until he sank and pressed
 The couch his fate had made for him; supine, 575
 Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
 Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,
 Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
 He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind;
 There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more; 580
 Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
 Full speedily resounded, public hope,
 Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
 Rouse him; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
 His days he wasted,—an imbecile⁹ mind. 585

Book Tenth

Residence in France and French Revolution

- It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
[13] Then fading, with unusual quietness,
When from the Loire I parted, and through scenes
Of vineyard, orchard, meadow-ground and tilth,¹ 5
Calm waters, gleams of sun, and breathless trees,
Towards the fierce metropolis turned my steps
Their homeward way to England.² From his throne
[12] The King had fallen; the congregated host— 10
Dire cloud, upon the front of which was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
[15] That bore it—on the plains of Liberty
Had burst innocuously.³ 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 punctual⁴ spot of their despair,
A race of victims—so they seemed—themselves
Had shrunk from sight of their own task, and fled 20
In terror. Desolation and dismay
Remained for them whose fancies had grown rank
With evil expectations: confidence
[30] And perfect triumph to the better cause.
The state, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world 25
[33] 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

1. Ploughed (tilled) land.

2. Wordsworth left Orleans (where Annette had gone in early September, presumably to conceal her pregnancy) at the end of October 1792, but seems to have lingered in Paris until late November—early December, before returning to England.

3. Louis XVI was imprisoned, and ef-

fectively deposed, on August 10, 1792. The Coalition armies (1805: "congregated host") of Austrian and Prussian troops invaded France nine days later, but without doing harm ("innocuously") because on September 20 the French achieved a highly important victory at Valmy, and the invaders retreated to the Rhine.

4. Precise; as at VIII, 763, above.

Book Tenth

Residence in France—Continued

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth,
Then fading with unusual quietness,—
A day as beautiful as e'er was given
To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed, 5
When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast
Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,¹
Green meadow-ground, and many-coloured woods,
Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
Then from the quiet of that scene passed on, 10
Bound to the fierce Metropolis.² From his throne
The King had fallen, and that invading host—
Presumptuous cloud, on whose black front was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it—on the plains of Liberty 15
Had burst innocuous.³ Say in bolder words,
They—who had come elate as eastern hunters
Banded beneath the Great Mogul, when he
Erewhile went forth from Agra or Lahore,
Rajahs and Omrahs in his train,⁵ intent 20
To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
Wide as a province, but, the signal given,
Before the point of the life-threatening spear
Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash men,
Had seen the anticipated quarry turned 25
Into avengers, from whose wrath they fled
In terror. Disappointment and dismay
Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
With evil expectations; confidence
And perfect triumph for the better cause. 30

The State, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt. 35
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,
That had stirred up her slackening faculties
To a new transition, when the King was crushed,
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste

5. A direct reference to *Paradise Lost*, XI, 391, "To Agra and Lahor of great mogul," inserted in 1832. "Omrahs":

Mohammedan grandees. (associated frequently with the Mogul's court).

- [40] The body and the venerable name 30
 Of a republic.⁶ 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,
 [45] 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
- [50] 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
- [55] I crossed—a black and empty area then—
 The square of the Caroussel, few weeks back
 Heaped up with dead and dying,⁷ upon these
 And other sights looking as doth a man
 Upon a volume whose contents he knows 50
- [60] 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;
- [66] My room was high and lonely, near the roof
 Of a large mansion or hotel,⁸ a spot
 That would have pleased me in more quiet times—
 Nor was it wholly without pleasure then. 60
- [70] 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,

6. The Republic was proclaimed on September 22, two days after Valmy, but France was by now a muddled and divided country, and there was no widespread joy to compare with the optimism of 1789 and 1790.

7. The deposition of the king on August 10, 1792, was in effect a second revolution. Constitutional monarchy had failed, the Prussian and Austrian armies were ready to march on Paris, the National Assembly was unable to control the situation, and power passed into the hands of the republican *sections* of Paris. The king and his family sought protection in

the newly elected Assembly, leaving the Swiss guard to defend the Palace of the Tuileries; the guard killed some 400 of the attackers before being slaughtered themselves when they obeyed an order from the king to lay down their arms. In all an estimated 800 defenders and palace employees died in reprisals. To burn the corpses, fires were lit in the Place de Carrousel, a huge square in front of the Tuileries. Louis was imprisoned in the Temple until his execution on January 21, 1793.

8. Town house.

Assumed the body and venerable name 40
 Of a Republic.⁶ Lamentable crimes,
 'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
 Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
 Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
 Earth free from them for ever, as was thought,— 45
 Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once;
 Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
 And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
 The spacious city, and in progress passed 50
 The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
 Associate with his children and his wife
 In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
 With roar of cannon by a furious host.
 I crossed the square (an empty area then!) 55
 Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
 The dead, upon the dying heaped,⁷ and gazed
 On this and other spots, as doth a man
 Upon a volume whose contents he knows
 Are memorable, but from him locked up, 60
 Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
 So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
 And half upbraids their silence. But that night
 I felt most deeply in what world I was,
 What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed. 65
 High was my room and lonely, near the roof
 Of a large mansion or hotel,⁸ a lodge
 That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
 Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
 With unextinguished taper I kept watch, 70
 Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
 Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
 I thought of those September massacres,

- Divided from me by a little month,⁹ 65
- [75] And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
 (The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions,
 And mournful calendars¹ 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'²—
- [85] 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!'³ 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
- [92] 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
- [100] Bawling, *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
- [105] 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,
- [110] 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

9. The massacres of September 2–6, 1792 followed the news of the fall of Verdun. About half the prisoners in Paris—most of them in fact ordinary criminals, not royalists—were executed by the mob, after summary trials. "A little month": see *Hamlet*, I, ii, 147.

1. Registers.

2. In these magnificent apocalyptic lines

—spoiled in 1850—Wordsworth is talking to himself. "Manage": the action and paces to which a horse is trained in a riding school (*NED*).

3. "Methought I heard a voice cry 'Sleep no more; / Macbeth doth murder sleep' * * * Still it cried 'Sleep no more' to all the house" (*Macbeth*, II, ii, 35–36, 41).

Divided from me by one little month.⁹
 Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up 75
 From tragic fictions or true history,
 Remembrances and dim admonishments.
 The horse is taught his manage, and no star
 Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
 For the spent hurricane the air provides 80
 As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
 But to return out of its hiding-place
 In the great deep; all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once;²
 And in this way I wrought upon myself, 85
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
 To the whole city, 'Sleep no more'.³ The trance
 Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
 But vainly comments of a calmer mind
 Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness. 90
 The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
 Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
 Of Orleans eagerly I turned; as yet 95
 The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
 There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
 That greeted me on entering, I could hear
 Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,
 Bawling, 'Denunciation of the Crimes 100
 Of Maximilian Robespierre'; the hand,
 Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech,
 The same that had been recently pronounced,
 When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been 105
 Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
 The man who had an ill surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
 When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,
 In silence of all present, from his seat 110
 Louvet walked single through the avenue,
 And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
 'I, Robespierre, accuse thee!' Well is known
 The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
 He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt, 115
 The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,
 Was left without a follower to discharge

- [120] Of his irresolute friends;⁴ but these are things
Of which I speak only as they were storm
Or sunshine to my individual mind, 105
No further. Let me then relate that now—
In some sort seeing with my proper⁵ eyes
- [125] That liberty, and life, and death, would soon
To the remotest corners of the land
Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled 110
The capital city; what was struggled for,
And by what combatants victory must be won;
- [130] The indecision on their part whose aim
Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
Who in attack or in defence alike 115
Were strong through their impiety—greatly I
Was agitated. Yea, I could almost
- [135] 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,⁶ and men arrive
- [140] From the four quarters of the winds to do
For France what without help she could not do,
A work of honour—think not that to this
I added, work of safety: from such thought, 125
And the least fear about the end of things,
- [145] 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
- [150] 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
- [155] How much the destiny of man had still
Hung upon single persons; that there was,

4. The moderate Louvet denounced Robespierre as a would-be dictator on October 29, 1792, in the National Convention. Robespierre had challenged his enemies to clarify accusations against him made during the previous debate (in which Danton had been indicted as responsible for the September Massacres); Louvet responded, and his speech appeared as the pamphlet that Wordsworth apparently saw (1805, 87–90; 1850, 100–103). Each of the last six paragraphs opens “*Je l’accuse*,” and Louvet’s final words are, “*Je l’accuse d’avoir évidem-*

ment marché au suprême pouvoir” (“I accuse you of having clearly aimed at supreme power”). Robespierre asked time to prepare his reply, and produced an extremely skillful defense the following week. He achieved supreme power nine months later, in July 1793; see 1805, 312*n*, below.

5. Own.

6. God’s conferring of the power of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost showed itself in their sudden ability to prophesy in foreign tongues. See Acts 2:3–4.

His perilous duty,⁴ and retire lamenting
 That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men
 Who to themselves are false. 120

But these are things

Of which I speak, only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind,
 No further. Let me then relate that now—
 In some sort seeing with my proper⁵ eyes
 That Liberty, and Life, and Death would soon 125
 To the remotest corners of the land

Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
 The capital City; what was struggled for,
 And by what combatants victory must be won;

The indecision on their part whose aim 130
 Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those

Who in attack or in defence were strong
 Through their impiety—my inmost soul
 Was agitated; yea, I could almost

Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men, 135

By patient exercise of reason made
 Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled

With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
 The gift of tongues might fall,⁶ and power arrive 140
 From the four quarters of the winds to do

For France, what without help she could not do,

A work of honour; think not that to this

I added, work of safety: from all doubts

Or trepidation for the end of things 145

Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
 Of opposition and of remedies:

An insignificant stranger and obscure,

And one, moreover, little graced with power 150

Of eloquence even in my native speech,

And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,

Yet would I at this time with willing heart

Have undertaken for a cause so great

Service however dangerous. I revolved, 155

How much the destiny of Man had still

Hung upon single persons; that there was,

- Transcendent to all local patrimony,
 One nature as there is one sun in heaven; 140
 That objects, even as they are great, thereby
 [160] 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,
 [167] 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,
 [175] 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.
- [191] On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 Which are the commonplaces of the schools,
 A theme⁷ for boys, too trite even to be felt, 160
 Yet with a revelation's liveliness
 [195] 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
 [200] To Brutus⁸—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

7. I.e., essay topic.

8. Harmodius and Aristogiton, known as the Liberators, were Athenians of noble family who attempted in 504 B.C. to kill the tyrant Hippias; one died in the at-

tempt, the other was arrested and executed. Brutus was a more successful tyrannicide, playing a leading part in the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 B.C.

Transcendent to all local patrimony,
 One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
 That objects, even as they are great; thereby
 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes; 160
 That man is only weak through his mistrust
 And want of hope where evidence divine
 Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
 Nor did the inexperience of my youth
 Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong 165
 In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Is for Society's unreasoning herd
 A domineering instinct, serves at once
 For way and guide, a fluent receptacle 170
 That gathers up each petty straggling rill
 And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest
 Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
 In circumspection and simplicity, 175
 Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
 Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
 A treachery that foils it or defeats;
 And, lastly, if the means on human will,
 Frail human will, dependent should betray 180
 Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
 That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
 A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
 Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
 Of life and death, in majesty severe 185
 Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
 Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
 From whatsoever region of our cares
 Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
 Earnest and blind, against the stern decree. 190

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 That are the common-places of the schools—
 (A theme⁷ for boys, too hackneyed for their sires),
 Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
 In all their comprehensive bearings known 195
 And visible to philosophers of old,
 Men who, to business of the world untrained,
 Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
 And his compeer Aristogiton, known
 To Brutus⁸—that tyrannic power is weak, 200
 Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 To trust in; that the godhead which is ours

Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;⁹

- [205] 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
[210] Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time—
Creed which ten shameful years have not annulled—

But that the virtue of one paramount mind
Would have abashed those impious crests, have quelled
Outrage and bloody power, and in despite
Of what the people were through ignorance

180

- [216] And immaturity, and in the teeth
Of desperate opposition from without,
Have cleared a passage for just government,
And left a solid birthright to the state,

185

- [220] Redeemed according to example given
By ancient lawgivers.¹ In this frame of mind
Reluctantly to England I returned,
Compelled by nothing less than absolute want

190

Of funds for my support;² 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

- [230] With some who perished, haply perished too³—

195

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
Useless, and even, beloved friend, a soul

200

- [235] To thee unknown.

When to my native land,

After a whole year's absence, I returned,

- [246] I found the air yet busy with the stir
Of a contention which had been raised up
Against the traffickers in Negro blood,

205

9. I.e., that the divine quality in man can never be totally overpowered ("charmed") or subdued.

1. *1805*, 176–88 (*1850*, 209–21) form a preface to the account that follows of Wordsworth's political feelings 1793–95. Looking back across "ten shameful years" (*1805*, 178), he does not doubt the rightness of the Revolution, but regrets that its clear current should have been muddied and diverted by base men. With hindsight he can see what went wrong, but he remains vehemently com-

mitted to his original position—as indeed he does in *1850*, despite the cutting in 1816/19 of line 178.

2. A half-truth. Wordsworth returned to England in late November/early December 1792 looking for funds to support not just himself, but a wife and child (see *1805*, IX, 555*n*, above). "The land" in *1805*, 193, is England.

3. Almost all the Girondins, with whom Wordsworth was in sympathy, were guillotined or driven to suicide. "Haply": perhaps.

Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
 That nothing hath a natural right to last 205
 But equity and reason; that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
 Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
 Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time 210
 But that the virtue of one paramount mind
 Would have abashed those impious crests—have quelled
 Outrage and bloody power, and, in despite
 Of what the People long had been and were
 Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof 215
 Of immaturity, and in the teeth
 Of desperate opposition from without—
 Have cleared a passage for just government,
 And left a solid birthright to the State,
 Redeemed, according to example given 220
 By ancient lawgivers.¹

In this frame of mind,
 Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
 So seemed it,—now I thankfully acknowledge,
 Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven,—
 To England I returned,² else (though assured 225
 That I both was and must be of small weight,
 No better than a landsman on the deck
 Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)
 Doubtless, I should have then made common cause
 With some who perished; haply, perished too,³ 230
 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
 Useless, and even, beloved Friend! a soul
 To thee unknown! 235

Twice had the trees let fall
 Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
 His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
 Had caught the accents of my native speech 240

- [250] An effort which, though baffled, nevertheless
 Had called back old forgotten principles
 Dismissed from service, had diffused some truths,
 And more of virtuous feeling, through the heart
 Of the English people.⁵ And no few of those, 210
 So numerous—little less in verity
 Than a whole nation crying with one voice—
 Who had been crossed in this their just intent
 And righteous hope, thereby were well prepared
 To let that journey sleep awhile, and join 215
 Whatever other caravan appeared
 To travel forward towards Liberty
 With more success. For me that strife had ne'er
- [255] Fastened on my affections, nor did now
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite 220
 My sorrow, having laid this faith to heart,
 That if France prospered good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
- [260] And this most rotten branch of human shame
 (Object, as seemed, of superfluous pains) 225
 Would fall together with its parent tree.

Such was my then belief—that there was one,
 And only one, solicitude for all.

- And now the strength of Britain was put forth
- [265] In league with the confederated host;⁶ 230
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
 Change and subversion from this hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
- [270] Down to that very moment—neither lapse 235
 Nor turn of sentiment—that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time:
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which with a diversity of pace
- [275] I had been travelling; this, a stride at once 240
 Into another region. True it is,
 'Twas not concealed with what ungracious eyes
 Our native rulers from the very first

5. A Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade had been founded by William Wilberforce, Thomas Clarkson, and others, in 1787. A bill to prohibit slave trading under the British flag had been passed by the House of Commons while Wordsworth was in France, only to be rejected ("baffled," 1805, 206) by the

House of Lords. Success came finally in 1807.

6. France declared war on England and Holland on February 1, 1793. Over the spring and summer England built up a coalition with the various continental powers, notably Prussia and Austria.

Upon our native country's sacred ground:⁴
 A patriot of the world, how could I glide
 Into communion with her sylvan shades,
 Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
 To abide in the great City, where I found 245
 The general air still busy with the stir
 Of that first memorable onset made
 By a strong levy of humanity
 Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;
 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled 250
 To notice old forgotten principles,
 And through the nation spread a novel heat
 Of virtuous feeling.⁵ For myself, I own
 That this particular strife had wanted power
 To rivet my affections; nor did now 255
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith
 That, if France prospered, good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 And this most rotten branch of human shame, 260
 Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
 Would fall together with its parent tree.
 What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
 Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
 Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!⁶ 265
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
 Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
 Down to that very moment; neither lapse 270
 Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time;
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which, with a diversity of pace,
 I had been travelling: this a stride at once 275
 Into another region. As a light
 And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
 On some grey rock—its birth-place—so had I

4. The plain statement of 1805; "After a whole year's absence," is sacrificed in favour of poetic elaboration that is not even accurate. Wordsworth was in France late November 1791–November/December 1792.

- Had looked upon regenerated France;⁷
 Nor had I doubted that this day would come— 245
 But in such contemplation I had thought
 Of general interests only, beyond this
 Had never once foretasted the event.
 Now had I other business, for I felt
 The ravage of this most unnatural strife 250
 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
 Had played, a green leaf on the blessed tree
 [280] Of my beloved country—nor had wished 255
 For happier fortune than to wither there—
 Now from my pleasant station⁸ was cut off,
 And tossed about in whirlwinds. I rejoiced,
 Yes, afterwards, truth painful to record,
 [285] Exulted in the triumph of my soul 260
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave hearts, to shameful flight. It was a grief—
 Grief call it not, 'twas any thing but that—
 [290] A conflict of sensations without name, 265
 Of which he only who may love the sight
 Of a village steeple as I do can judge,
 When in the congregation, bending all
 To their great Father,⁹ prayers were offered up
 [295] Or praises for our country's victories, 270
 And, 'mid the simple worshippers perchance
 I only, like an uninvited guest
 Whom no one owned, sate silent—shall I add,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come!
- [300] Oh, much have they to account for, who could tear 275
 By violence at one decisive rent
 From the best youth in England their dear pride,
 Their joy, in England. This, too, at a time
 In which worst losses easily might wear
 [305] The best of names; when patriotic love 280
 Did of itself in modesty give way
 Like the precursor when the deity

7. The initial British response to the Revolution had been mistaken, but not in fact "ungracious"—see *1805*, VI, 352*n*, above. Publication of Burke's *Reflections* in November 1790 was followed by a stiffening of attitudes in the Establishment, but serious repression of left-wing opinion did not begin until 1793. For Wordsworth's vehement comments,

see *1805*, 645–56 below, and his *Letter to the Bishop of Llandaff* of February–March 1793 (*Prose Works*, I, pp. 17–66).

8. Position.

9. "While each to his great father bends," *Ancient Mariner*, 640; for Wordsworth, as for the Mariner, shared worship is symbolic of harmony.

Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
 Of my beloved country, wishing not 280
 A happier fortune than to wither there:
 Now was I from that pleasant station⁸ torn
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
 Yea, afterwards—truth most painful to record!—
 Exulted, in the triumph of my soul, 285
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
 Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,—
 A conflict of sensations without name, 290
 Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
 Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
 When, in the congregation bending all
 To their great Father,⁹ prayers were offered up, 295
 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,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear, 300
 By violence, at one decisive rent,
 From the best youth in England their dear pride,
 Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time
 In which worst losses easily might wear
 The best of names, when patriotic love 305
 Did of itself in modesty give way,
 Like the Precursor when the Deity

- Is come, whose harbinger he is—a time
 In which apostacy from ancient faith
 [310] Seemed but conversion to a higher creed; 285
 Withal a season dangerous and wild—
 A time in which Experience would have plucked
 Flowers out of any hedge to make thereof
 A chaplet, in contempt of his grey locks.¹
- [315] Ere yet the fleet of Britain had gone forth 290
 On this unworthy service, whereunto
 The unhappy counsel of a few weak men
 Had doomed it, I beheld the vessels lie—
 A brood of gallant creatures—on the deep
 I saw them in their rest, a sojourner 295
 [320] Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
 In that delightful island which protects
 Their place of convocation.³ There I heard
 Each evening, walking by the still sea-shore,
 A monitory sound which never failed— 300
 [325] The sunset cannon. When the orb went down
 In the tranquillity of Nature, came
 That voice—ill requiem—seldom heard by me
 Without a spirit overcast, a deep
 Imagination, thought of woes to come,
 [330] And sorrow for mankind, and pain of heart.⁴ 305
- In France, the men who for their desperate ends
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots were glad
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 In devilish pleas, were ten times stronger now, 310
 [335] And thus beset with foes on every side,
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts

1. Wordsworth makes four remarkably cryptic points in *1805*, 278–89 (*1850*, 303–14), all depending on the fact that he regarded government policy as a reversal of the true interests of the country: (1) *1805*, 278–80 (*1850*, 303–5) Losses could be called gains: i.e., defeats of the French—and thus of republicanism in England and elsewhere—could be described as English victories. (2) *1805*, 280–83 (*1850*, 305–8) In an incongruous image: the true love of one's country gives way to the falsely patriotic wish for victory, as John the Baptist gives place to Christ. (3) *1805*, 283–85 (*1850*, 308–10) Rejection of earlier true belief could thus seem to be conversion to a higher faith (Wordsworth's religious imagery does not link back to the previous lines). (4) *1805*,

286–89 (*1850*, 311–14) “Experience”—those who had grown gray in the service of an earlier ideal—would at this time have adopted any disguise, however inappropriate, so as to lay claim to political innocence.

3. Wordsworth saw the British fleet arming for war off Portsmouth, ca. late June–early August 1793, while staying in the Isle of Wight with William Calvert, who had been his school-mate at Hawkshead Grammar School.

4. Compare, “How sweet the walk along the woody steep,” written in 1793: “But hark from yon proud fleet in peal profound / Thunders the sunset cannon; at the sound / The star of life appears to set in blood” (lines 15–17).

Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time
 In which apostasy from ancient faith
 Seemed but conversion to a higher creed; 310
 Withal a season dangerous and wild,
 A time when sage Experience would have snatched
 Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
 A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.¹

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag² 315
 In that unworthy service was prepared
 To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
 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 320
 In that delightful island which protects
 Their place of convocation³—there I heard,
 Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
 A monitory sound that never failed,—
 The sunset cannon. While the orb went down 325
 In the tranquillity of nature, came
 That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
 Without a spirit overcast by dark
 Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
 Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.⁴ 330

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
 And thus, on every side beset with foes, 335
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts

2. The white ensign, bearing the red cross of St. George, with the union jack in the top left-hand quarter, although not adopted as the official flag of the Royal

Navy till 1864, was used in battle to avoid confusion with the tricolor (supplied to the French fleet in October 1794).

- From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.⁵
- The sternness of the just, the faith of those 315
- [340] Who doubted not that Providence had times
Of anger and of vengeance, theirs⁶ who throned
The human understanding paramount
And made of that their god,⁷ the hopes of those
Who were content to barter short-lived pangs 320
- [345] For a paradise of ages,⁸ the blind rage
Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
And all the accidents of life, were pressed 325
- [350] Into one service, busy with one work.
The Senate was heart-stricken, not a voice
- [355] Uplifted, none to oppose or mitigate.
Domestic carnage now filled all the year
With feast-days: the old man from the chimney-nook, 330
The maiden from the bosom of her love,
The mother from the cradle of her babe,
- [360] The warrior from the field—all perished, all—
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
Head after head, and never heads enough 335
For those who bade them fall.⁹ They found their joy,
They made it, ever thirsty, as a child—
- [365] If light desires of innocent little ones
May with such heinous appetites be matched—
Having a toy, a windmill, though the air 340
- [370] Do of itself blow fresh and makes the vane
Spin in his eyesight, he is not content,

5. July 1793 was the month in which Robespierre came to power. The Reign of Terror that followed was from the first justified as the means of saving France from her enemies. Royalist plots, or complicity with Pitt and Coburg (the Austrian commander), were standard pretexts for execution. In 1805, 309–10 (1850, 333–34) an echo of *Paradise Lost*, IV, 394, associates the tyranny of Robespierre in revolutionary France with that of Satan newly landed in Paradise; and 1805, 313–14 (1850, 337–38) draw on *Hamlet*, I, iv, 41: "Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell."

6. Read: "and theirs."

7. The faith of 315–17 is Christianity, that of 317–19 is Reason. Wordsworth's language is not metaphorical: in the summer and autumn of 1793 there was an attempt by certain members of the National Convention to replace Catholicism with a secular religion. Priests, including the Archbishop of Paris, were forced to abjure their faith, images were destroyed, chalices and furnishings confiscated, and

at a bizarre ceremony the Cathedral of Notre Dame was renamed the Temple of Reason. Robespierre, who was a deist and detested atheism, disapproved of the process, and brought the major supporters of the new religion to the guillotine during the following year. On June 8, 1794, seven weeks before he was himself executed, he presided at a Festival of the Supreme Being, scarcely less grotesque than the ceremonies of Reason.

8. A reference to patriots who regarded the Terror as a purging of the Revolution before its paradisaical future could be achieved.

9. In the Great Terror that followed the law of June 10, 1794, dispensing with defense lawyers and witnesses, and enabling the accused to be condemned in batches, 1,376 people were guillotined in Paris in forty-nine days—100 more than in the previous fifteen months. In other parts of the country the Terror was mainly used against counter-revolutionists, mass executions taking place at Lyons, at Toulon, and in the Vendée.

From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.⁵
 The sternness of the just, the faith of those
 Who doubted not that Providence had times 340
 Of vengeful retribution, theirs⁶ who throned
 The human Understanding paramount
 And made of that their God,⁷ the hopes of men
 Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
 For a paradise of ages,⁸ the blind rage 345
 Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
 Of intermeddlars, steady purposes
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life were pressed
 Into one service, busy with one work. 350
 The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
 Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
 Her frenzy only active to extol
 Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
 Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate. 355

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
 With feast-days; old men 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— 360
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those that bade them fall.⁹ They found their joy,
 They made it proudly, eager as a child,
 (If light desires of innocent little ones 365
 May with such heinous appetites be compared),
 Pleased in some open field to exercise
 A toy that mimics with revolving wings
 The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes 370
 Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,

But with the plaything at arm's length he sets
 His front against the blast, and runs amain
 To make it whirl the faster.

345

In the depth

[375] Of these enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot at seasons whence they had their being—
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As Liberty upon earth—yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,

350

[380] Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
 Of her composure, felt that agony
 And gave it vent in her last words.¹ O friend,
 It was a lamentable time for man,

355

[385] Whether a hope had e'er been his or not;
 A woeful time for them whose hopes did still
 Outlast the shock; most woeful for those few—
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief—
 Who still were flattered,² and had trust in man.

360

[390] Meanwhile the invaders fared as they deserved:
 The herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
 And throttled with an infant godhead's might
 The snakes about her cradle³—that was well,
 And as it should be, yet no cure for those

365

[395] Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
 Most melancholy at that time, O friend,
 Were my day-thoughts, my dreams were miserable;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat

370

[400] Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
 As if to thee alone in private talk)
 I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
 And tyranny, and implements of death,

375

[411] And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
 Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
 Of treachery and desertion in the place

[415] The holiest that I knew of—my own soul.

380

1. Madame Roland was a major influence behind the moderate Girondins. She was imprisoned in June 1793, and guillotined on November 9. Her last words are said to have been "Oh Liberty, what crimes are committed in thy name!"

2. "Flatter": to raise false hopes (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

3. Hercules was the son of Zeus by the mortal, Alcmene. Hera, wife of Zeus, sent two serpents to kill him in his cradle,

but he throttled them. French soil had been cleared of invaders, and the counter-revolution of the Vendée finally suppressed, in autumn 1793; in May–July 1794, the Republican armies turned to the attack. Belgium was taken in the east (Holland too before the end of the year), the Prussians were driven back to the Rhine, Turin was threatened, and Spain invaded at two separate points.

But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
 His front against the blast, and runs amain,
 That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth

Of those enormities, even thinking minds 375
 Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being;
 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. 380
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
 Of her composure, felt that agony,
 And gave it vent in her last words.¹ O Friend!
 It was a lamentable time for man,
 Whether a hope had e'er been his or not; 385
 A woful time for them whose hopes survived
 The shock; most woful for those few who still
 Were flattered,² and had trust in human kind:
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
 Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved: 390
 The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,
 And throttled with an infant godhead's might
 The snakes about her cradle;³ that was well,
 And as it should be; yet no cure for them
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be 395
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
 Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
 Were my day-thoughts,—my nights were miserable;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep 400
 To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair
 And tyranny, and implements of death;
 And innocent victims sinking under fear,
 And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer, 405
 Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
 For sacrifice, and struggling with forced mirth
 And levity in dungeons, where the dust
 Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me 410
 In long orations, which I strove to plead
 Before unjust tribunals,—with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,
 Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt
 In the last place of refuge—my own soul. 415

- When I began at first, in early youth,
 To yield myself to Nature—when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first—
 Neither day nor night, evening or morn,
 [420] Were free from the oppression,⁴ but, great God, 385
 Who send'st thyself into this breathing world
 Through Nature and through every kind of life,
 And mak'st man what he is, creature divine,
 [425] In single or in social eminence, 390
 Above all these raised infinite ascents
 When reason, which enables him to be,
 Is not sequestered—what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship,
 [430] What countenance to promote this second love!⁵ 395
 That first was service but to things which lie
 At rest, within the bosom of thy will:
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
 The tumult was a gladness, and the fear
 [435] Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure, 400
 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.
 But as the ancient prophets were enflamed,
 [440] Nor wanted consolations of their own
 And majesty of mind, when they denounced
 On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
 Of their offences, punishment to come; 405
 Or saw like other men with bodily eyes
 [445] Before them in some desolated place
 The consummation of the wrath of Heaven;
 So did some portion of that spirit fall
 On me to uphold me through those evil times, 410
 And in their rage and dog-day heat I found
 Something to glory in, as just and fit,
 And in the order of sublimest laws.
 And even if that were not, amid the awe
 [455] Of unintelligible chastisement 415
 I felt a kind of sympathy with power—
 Motions raised up within me, nevertheless,
 Which had relationship to highest things.
 [461] Wild blasts of music thus did find their way
 Into the midst of terrible events, 420

4. Dominance.

5. Wordsworth's opposition is between love of Nature, in *1805*, 381–85 (*1850*, 416–20)—and again in *1805*, 395–400 (*1850*, 431–36)—and the “second love,” that is far more difficult to achieve, the love of man. Either as an individual, or in social groups, man is potentially god-like (a “creature divine”); and when reason, which differentiates him from the

rest of creation, is not dispossessed, cut off (“sequestered”), he is raised infinitely high (“infinite ascents”) above other kinds of life. Despite this Wordsworth is led to exclaim at the change as one moves over from love of Nature—at the different form of worship that is implied, the different mode of conduct (“countenance”) that is appropriate, to furthering this second love.

When I began in youth's delightful prime
 To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first,
 Nor day nor night, evening or morn, were free
 From its oppression.⁴ But, O Power Supreme! 420
 Without Whose care this world would cease to breathe,
 Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
 The veins that branch through every frame of life,
 Making man what he is, creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence, 425
 Above the rest raised infinite ascents
 When reason that enables him to be
 Is not sequestered—what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship,
 What countenance to promote this second love!⁵ 430
 The first was service paid to things which lie
 Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
 Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
 Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure, 435
 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
 In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
 With them to take a troubled human heart,
 Wanted not consolations, nor a creed 440
 Of reconciliation, then 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, 445
 The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;
 So, with devout humility be it said,
 So, did a portion of that spirit fall
 On me uplifted from the vantage-ground
 Of pity and sorrow to a state of being 450
 That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw
 Glimpses of retribution, terrible,
 And in the order of sublime behests:
 But, even if that were not, amid the awe
 Of unintelligible chastisement, 455
 Not only acquiescences of faith
 Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
 Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
 Within the folds of no ungentle breast
 Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? 460
 Wild blasts of music thus could find their way
 Into the midst of turbulent events;

- So that worst tempests might be listened to:
Then was the truth received into my heart
- [465] That under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
Griefs bitterest of ourselves or of our kind,
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow 425
Honour which could not else have been—a faith,
An elevation, and a sanctity—
If new strength be not given, or old restored,
- [470] The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride, 430
Saying, 'Behold the harvest which we reap
From popular government and equality',
I saw that it was neither these nor aught
- [475] Of wild belief engrafted on their names
By false philosophy, that caused the woe, 435
But that it was a reservoir of guilt
And ignorance, filled up from age to age,
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
- [480] But burst and spread in deluge through the land.
- And as the desert hath green spots, the sea 440
Small islands in the midst of stormy waves,
So that disastrous period did not want
- [484] Such sprinklings of all human excellence
As were a joy to hear of. Yet—nor less 445
For those bright spots, those fair examples given
Of fortitude, and energy, and love,
And human nature faithful to itself
- [490] Under worst trials—was I impelled to think
Of the glad time when first I traversed France,
A youthful pilgrim; above all remembered 450
- [495] That day when through an arch that spanned the street,
A rainbow made of garish ornaments
(Triumphal pomp for Liberty confirmed)
We walked, a pair of weary travellers, 455
Along the town of Arras—place from which
Issued that Robespierre, who afterwards
- [502] Wielded the sceptre of the atheist crew.⁶
When the calamity spread far and wide,
And this same city, which had even appeared
- [505] To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned 460
Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
As Lear reproached the winds, I could almost

6. Wordsworth and his friend, Robert Jones, had spent the night at Arras on July 16, 1790 during their walking tour; for Wordsworth's impressions of France at that time see *1805*, VI, 352–425 above. Maximilien Robespierre had been born

at Arras on May 6, 1758; he became a lawyer and represented the town in the National Assembly from April 1789. For his year of power, July 1793–July 1794, see *1805*, 312*n*, above, and for his death, 535*n*, below.

So that worst tempests might be listened to.
 Then was the truth received into my heart,
 That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring, 465
 If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
 Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
 An elevation and a sanctity,
 If new strength be not given nor old restored,
 The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt 470
 Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
 Saying, 'Behold the harvest that we reap
 From popular government and equality',
 I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names 475
 By false philosophy had caused the woe,
 But a terrific reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance filled up from age to age,
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 But burst and spread in deluge through the land. 480

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea
 Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
 So *that* disastrous period did not want
 Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
 To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven 485
 Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less,
 For those examples in no age surpassed
 Of fortitude and energy and love,
 And human nature faithful to herself
 Under worst trials, was I driven to think 490
 Of the glad times when first I traversed France
 A youthful pilgrim; above all reviewed
 That eventide, when under windows bright
 With happy faces and with garlands hung,
 And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street, 495
 Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed,
 I paced, a dear companion at my side,
 The town of Arras, whence with promise high
 Issued, on delegation to sustain
 Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre, 500
 He who thereafter, and in how short a time!
 Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.⁶
 When the calamity spread far and wide—
 And this same city, that did then appear
 To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned 505
 Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
 As Lear reproached the winds—I could almost

Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
For being yet an image in my mind

[510] To mock me under such a strange reverse.⁷

465

O friend, few happier moments have been mine
Through my whole life than that when first I heard
That this foul tribe of Moloch was o'erthrown,
And their chief regent levelled with the dust.⁸

The day was one which haply⁹ may deserve
A separate chronicle. Having gone abroad
From a small village where I tarried then,
To the same far-secluded privacy

470

I was returning.¹ Over the smooth sands

[515] Of Leven's ample aestuary² lay

475

My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
With distant prospect among gleams of sky
And clouds, and intermingled mountain-tops,
In one inseparable glory clad³—

[520] Creatures of one ethereal substance, met

480

In consistory, like a diadem

Or crown of burning seraphs, as they sit
In the empyrean.⁴ Underneath this show

Lay, as I knew, the nest of pastoral vales

[525] Among whose happy fields I had grown up

485

From childhood. On the fulgent⁵ spectacle,
Which neither changed, nor stirred, nor passed away,
I gazed, and with a fancy more alive

On this account—that I had chanced to find

That morning, ranging through the churchyard graves

490

Of Cartmell's rural town, the place in which

[534] An honored teacher of my youth was laid.⁶

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

495

With name, date, office, pointed out the spot,

To which a slip of verses was subjoined—

7. See *King Lear*, III, ii, 16: "I tax not you, you elements, with unkindness." Arras suffered very greatly in the Terror.

8. De Selincourt points out how apt is

Wordsworth's allusion to "Moloch, horrid king besmeared with blood / Of human sacrifice" (*Paradise Lost*, I, 392-93).

9. Perhaps.

1. Wordsworth stayed with cousins, August-September 1794, at Rampside, a small village on the coast near Barrow-in-Furness, and opposite Piel Castle.

2. The broad sands of the estuary of the river Leven lie to the southwest of the Lake District.

3. 1805, 479-88 (1850, 519-23) are deliberately Miltonic in diction, containing references to *Paradise Regained* and *At a Solemn Music* as well as *Paradise Lost*.

4. "Creatures": creations. "Consistory": council. "Seraphs": the highest order of angels. "Empyrean": the highest heaven, which consists of the element of fire.

5. Shining, brilliant.

6. The Reverend William Taylor, headmaster of Hawkshead Grammar School, died aged thirty-two in June 1786. He is buried at Cartmel Priory, two miles east of Ulverston over Levens Sands, which Wordsworth had to cross in returning to Rampside along the coast.

Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
 For lingering yet an image in my mind
 To mock me under such a strange reverse.⁷ 510

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine
 Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
 So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
 A separate record.¹ Over the smooth sands
 Of Leven's ample estuary² lay 515

My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky
 And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad,³
 Creatures of one ethereal substance met 520

In consistory, like a diadem
 Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
 In the empyrean.⁴ Underneath that pomp
 Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales 525

Among whose happy fields I had grown up
 From childhood. On the fulgent⁵ spectacle,
 That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
 Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
 Sad opposites out of the inner heart, 530

As now their pensive influence drew from mine.
 How could it otherwise? for not in vain
 That very morning had I turned aside
 To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
 An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,⁶

By his desire, as afterwards I learned—

- [536] A fragment from the *Elegy* of Gray.⁷ 500
 A week, or little less, before his death
 He had said to me, 'My head will soon lie low';
- [540] And when I saw the turf that covered him,
 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 505
 Fell from me in my own despite. And now,
- [545] Thus travelling smoothly o'er the level sands,
 I thought with pleasure of the verses graven
 Upon his tombstone, saying to myself,
 'He loved the poets, and if now alive 510
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
- [550] Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 Which he had formed when I at his command
 Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs.'⁸

Without me and within as I advanced 515

- All that I saw, or felt, or communed with,
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 [555] And rocky island near, a fragment stood—
 Itself like a sea rock—of what had been
 A Romish chapel, where in ancient times 520
 [560] Masses were said at the hour which suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
 Not far from this still ruin all the plain
 Was spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of coaches, wains, and travellers, horse and foot, 525
 [565] Wading, beneath the conduct of their guide,
 In loose procession through the shallow stream
 Of inland water; the great sea meanwhile
 Was at safe distance, far retired.⁹ I paused,
 Unwilling to proceed, the scene appeared 530
 So gay and chearful—when a traveller
 Chancing to pass, I carelessly inquired
 If any news were stirring, he replied
- [572] In the familiar language of the day
 That, *Robespierre was dead*.¹ Nor was a doubt, 535

7. Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*, 125–28, with adapted first line.

8. Wordsworth's first extant poem is headed *Lines Written as a School Exercise at Hawkshead, Anno Aetatis 14*. Taylor was a man of learning and taste, who encouraged the study of poetry.

9. Wordsworth is describing the guided two-mile passage at low tide across Levens Sands, on the route from Cartmel to Ulverston. The tide goes out a long way,

but returns very fast. The oratory on Chapel Island ("Romish chapel") was built by the monks of Furness Abbey; the shallow stream is the Eau, which crosses the Sands, and which has to be waded. "Wains" (1805, 525): wagons.

1. Robespierre and twenty-one associates went to the guillotine on July 28, 1794. Though opposition to his policies had been growing, his fall was very sudden. The first report of his death appeared in the *Times* on August 16.

And on the stone were graven by his desire 535
 Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.⁷
 This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
 Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
 But said to me, 'My head will soon lie low';
 And when I saw the turf that covered him, 540
 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. But now
 I thought, still traversing that widespread plain, 545
 With tender pleasure of the verses graven
 Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:
 He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope 550
 That he had formed, when I, at his command,
 Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.⁸

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small 555
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood
 (Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
 (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
 Of a dilapidated structure, once
 A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
 Said matins at the hour that suited those 560
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
 Not far from that still ruin all the plain
 Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,
 Wading beneath the conduct of their guide 565
 In loose procession through the shallow stream
 Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired.⁹ I paused,
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
 And cheerful, but the foremost of the band 570
 As he approached, no salutation given,
 In the familiar language of the day,
 Cried, 'Robespierre is dead!'¹—nor was a doubt,

On further question, left within my mind
 But that the tidings were substantial truth—
 [575] That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my glee of spirit, great my joy
 In vengeance, and eternal justice, thus 540
 Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times',
 Said I, forth-breathing on those open sands
 [580] A hymn of triumph, 'as the morning comes
 Out of the bosom of the night, come ye.
 Thus far our trust is verified: behold, 545
 They who with clumsy desperation brought
 Rivers of blood, and preached that nothing else
 [585] Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
 Of their own helper have been swept away.²
 Their madness is declared and visible; 550
 Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
 March firmly towards righteousness and peace.'
 [590] Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
 The madding factions might be tranquillized,
 And—though through hardships manifold and long— 555
 The mighty renovation would proceed.
 Thus, interrupted by uneasy bursts
 [595] Of exultation, I pursued my way
 Along that very shore which I had skimmed
 In former times, when, spurring from the Vale 560
 Of Nightshade, and St Mary's mouldering fane,
 And the stone abbot, after circuit made
 [600] In wantonness of heart, a joyous crew
 Of schoolboys, hastening to their distant home,
 Along the margin of the moonlight sea, 565
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.³

2. Robespierre's desperate purging of the Republic in the name of "virtue" is compared to Hercules' cleansing of the stables of King Augeas, accomplished by diverting the rivers Alpheus and Peneus. The

"helper" is the guillotine.
 3. *1805*, 558–66 (*1850*, 595–603) refer the reader back to *1805*, II, 99–144 (*1799*, II, 98–139); the final line in the earlier texts is repeated verbatim.

After strict question, left within my mind
That he and his supporters all were fallen. 575

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude
To everlasting Justice, by this fiat
Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times',
Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
A hymn of triumph: 'as the morning comes 580
From out the bosom of the night, come ye:
Thus far our trust is verified; behold!

They who with clumsy desperation brought
A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might 585
Of their own helper have been swept away;²
Their madness stands declared and visible;

Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
March firmly towards righteousness and peace.'—
Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how 590

The madding factions might be tranquillised,
And how through hardships manifold and long
The glorious renovation would proceed.

Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
Of exultation, I pursued my way 595

Along that very shore which I had skimmed
In former days, when—spurring from the Vale
Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
And the stone abbot, after circuit made

In wantonness of heart, a joyous band 600
Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home
Along the margin of the moonlight sea—

We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.³

From this time forth in France, as is well known,
 Authority put on a milder face;⁵
 Yet every thing was wanting that might give
 Courage to those who looked for good, by light 570
 [XI, 5] Of rational experience—good I mean
 At hand, and in the spirit of past aims.
 The same belief I nevertheless retained:
 The language of the Senate, and the acts
 And public measures of the Government, 575
 [10] Though both of heartless omen,⁶ had not power
 To daunt me. In the people was my trust,
 And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
 And to the ultimate repose of things
 I looked with unabated confidence. 580
 I knew that wound external could not take
 Life from the young Republic, that new foes
 [15] Would only follow in the path of shame
 Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
 Great, universal, irresistible. 585
 This faith, which was an object in my mind
 Of passionate intuition, had effect
 Not small in dazzling me; for thus, through zeal,
 Such victory I confounded in my thoughts
 With one far higher and more difficult: 590
 [20] Triumphs of unambitious peace at home,
 And noiseless fortitude.⁷ Beholding still
 Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
 That what was in degree the same was likewise
 The same in quality, that as the worse 595
 [25] Of the two spirits then at strife remained
 Untired, the better surely would preserve
 The heart that first had roused him⁸—never dreamt
 That transmigration could be undergone,
 A fall of being suffered, and of hope, 600
 By creature⁹ that appeared to have received
 Entire conviction what a great ascent
 Had been accomplished, what high faculties
 It had been called to. Youth maintains, I knew,

5. A further eighty-six Robespierrists were guillotined after the execution of their leader and his closest associates on July 28, 1794, but the Terror ceased at once.

6. I.e., depressing in their implication for the future.

7. Wordsworth's faith, as at *1805*, 221–23 above, is that triumph for the Revolution in France would lead to peaceful transformation in Britain.

8. *1805*, 592–98 (*1850*, 21–27) offer two

mistaken reasons for assuming that the early idealistic commitment of the Revolution persisted in 1794: (1) that undiminished resistance in the war against Britain implied continuation of the original patriotism; (2) that if the worse "spirit" (Britain) remained tireless in the war, the better one (France) must surely preserve its initial strength of feeling.

9. I.e., the Republic. "Creature": a created being, animate or inanimate (*NED*).

Book Eleventh

France—Concluded.

FROM that time forth, Authority in France⁴
Put on a milder face;⁵ Terror had ceased,
Yet every thing was wanting that might give
Courage to them who looked for good by light
Of rational Experience, for the shoots 5
And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:
Yet, in me, confidence was unimpaired;
The Senate's language, and the public acts
And measures of the Government, though both
Weak, and of heartless omen,⁶ had not power 10
To daunt me; in the People was my trust,
And, in the virtues which mine eyes had seen.
I knew that wound external could not take
Life from the young Republic; that new foes
Would only follow, in the path of shame, 15
Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
Great, universal, irresistible.
This intuition led me to confound
One victory with another, higher far,—
Triumphs of unambitious peace at home, 20
And noiseless fortitude.⁷ Beholding still
Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
That what was in degree the same was likewise
The same in quality,—that, as the worse
Of the two spirits then at strife remained 25
Untired, the better, surely, would preserve
The heart that first had roused him.⁸ Youth maintains,

4. The division of 1805, X, into 1850, X and XI, occurs in *MS. D* of 1832, but on the evidence of *MS. Z* (April–May 1805) seems to be a return to the original pat-

tern of December 1805; see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below.

- In all conditions of society 605
 Communion more direct and intimate
 [30] With Nature, and the inner strength she has—
 And hence, oftentimes, no less with reason too—
 Than age, or manhood even. To Nature then,
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law, 610
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For her to stir about in, uncontrolled.¹
 The warmest judgments, and the most untaught,
 Found in events which every day brought forth
 Enough to sanction them—and far, far more 615
 To shake the authority of canons drawn
 From ordinary practice. I could see
 [35] How Babel-like the employment was of those
 Who, by the recent deluge stupefied,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day 620
 Its petty promises to build a tower
 For their own safety²—laughed at gravest heads,
 [40] Who, watching in their hate of France for signs
 Of her disasters, if the stream of rumour
 Brought with it one green branch, conceited thence³ 625
 That not a single tree was left alive
 In all her forests. How could I believe
 [45] That wisdom could in any shape come near
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few 630
 Of my opinions had been just, I took
 Like credit to myself where less was due,
 [50] And thought that other notions were as sound—
 Yea, could not but be right—because I saw
 That foolish men opposed them. 635

To a strain

- More animated I might here give way,
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
 [55] What in those days through Britain was performed
 To turn *all* judgements out of their right course;
 But this is passion over near ourselves, 640
 Reality too close and too intense,
 And mingled up with something, in my mind,
 [60] Of scorn and condemnation personal
 That would profane the sanctity of verse.

1. Habit, custom, law—the usual guides in political matters—having been dethroned by the Revolution, Nature (with whom youth is most closely in touch—1805, 604–9; 1850, 27–30) was left at this period as the basis of political judgment.

2. The allusion is to the Tower of Babel, which men built in the attempt to “reach unto heaven” (Genesis 9:3–9).

3. I.e., fancied on the strength of it; an obsolete usage that implies the poet's contempt.

In all conditions of society,
 Communion more direct and intimate
 With Nature,—hence, ofttimes, with reason too— 30
 Than age, or manhood even. To Nature, then,
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For *her* to move about in, uncontrolled.¹
 Hence could I see how Babel-like their task, 35
 Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day
 Its petty promises, to build a tower
 For their own safety;² laughed with my compeers
 At gravest heads, by enmity to France 40
 Distempered, till they found, in every blast
 Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn,
 For her great cause record or prophecy
 Of utter ruin. How might we believe
 That wisdom could, in any shape, come near 45
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few
 Of our opinions had been just, we took
 Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
 And thought that other notions were as sound, 50
 Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
 That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
 What in those days, through Britain, was performed 55
 To turn *all* judgements out of their right course;
 But this is passion over-near ourselves,
 Reality too close and too intense,
 And intermixed with something, in my mind,
 Of scorn and condemnation personal, 60
 That would profane the sanctity of verse.

- Our shepherds (this say merely) at that time 645
 Thirsted to make the guardian crook of law
 [65] A tool of murder. They who ruled the state,
 Though with such awful proof before their eyes
 That he who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
 And can reap nothing better, childlike longed 650
 [69] To imitate—not wise enough to avoid.
 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 655
 Justice, and make an end of liberty.⁴
- But from these bitter truths I must return
 [75] To my own history.⁵ It hath been told
 That I was led to take an eager part
 In arguments of civil polity 660
 Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
 I had approached, like other youth, the shield
 [80] Of human nature from the golden side,
 And would have fought even to the death to attest
 The quality of the metal which I saw.⁶ 665
 What there is best in individual man,
 Of wise in passion and sublime in power,
 What there is strong and pure in household love,
 [85] Benevolent in small societies, 670
 And great in large ones also, when called forth
 By great occasions—these were things of which
 I something knew; yet even these themselves,
 Felt deeply,⁷ were not thoroughly understood
 By reason. Nay, far from it; they were yet, 675
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 [90] Not proof against the injuries of the day—
 Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,
 And of the bounds which sever it from good, 680

4. Wordsworth's denunciation of Pitt and his government, though toned down for 1850, is not at all excessive. Like children they mimic the enormities of Robespierre, but they lack the stature to carry their murderous wishes into effect. The rats under the floor boards ("vermin working out of reach") are Home Office agents and informers. One of these—a Mr. Walsh—was sent to investigate Wordsworth and Coleridge at Alfoxden in 1797, on the suspicion that they were spies for the French.

5. Wordsworth returns in 1805, 657–756

(1850, 74–172) to the period in early summer 1792 (described in 1805, IX, 294–543 above) when firsthand experience, and the influence of Michel Beaulieu, deepened his interest in the Revolution.

6. In the fable that Wordsworth refers to, a two-sided shield—one side gold, one silver—hung up at a crossroads, leads knights approaching from opposite directions to fight "to attest / The quality of the metal" which they see.

7. I.e., "though felt deeply."

Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
 Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men
 Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law
 A tool of murder; they who ruled the State, 65
 Though with such awful proof before their eyes
 That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
 And can reap nothing better, child-like longed
 To imitate, not wise enough to avoid;
 Or left (by mere timidity betrayed) 70
 The plain straight road, for one no better chosen.
 Than if their wish had been to undermine
 Justice, and make an end of Liberty.⁴

But from these bitter truths I must return
 To my own history.⁵ It hath been told 75
 That I was led to take an eager part
 In arguments of civil polity,
 Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
 I had approached, like other youths, the shield
 Of human nature from the golden side, 80
 And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
 The quality of the metal which I saw.⁶
 What there is best in individual man,
 Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,
 Benevolent in small societies, 85
 And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
 Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
 By reason: nay, far from it; they were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 Not proof against the injuries of the day; 90
 Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,
 And of the bounds which sever it from good,

- [95] As books and common intercourse with life
Must needs have given (to the novice⁸ mind,
When the world travels in a beaten road,
Guide faithful as is needed), I began
To think with fervour upon management 685
- [100] Of nations—what it is and ought to be,
And how their worth depended on their laws,
And on the constitution of the state.⁹
- [105] O pleasant exercise of hope and joy,
For great were the auxiliars¹ which then stood 690
Upon our side, we who were strong in love.
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times,
- [110] In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways 695
Of custom, law, and statute took at once
The attraction of a country in romance—
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
- [115] A prime enchanter to assist the work 700
Which then was going forwards in her name.
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
(To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
- [120] Among the bowers of Paradise itself) 705
The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
What temper² at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away.³
- [125] They who had fed their childhood upon dreams— 710
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength
Their ministers, used to stir in lordly wise
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
- [130] And deal with whatsoever they found there 715
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it—they too, who, of gentle mood,
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts (schemers more mild,
- [135] And in the region of their peaceful selves), 720
Did now find helpers to their hearts' desire

8. Inexperienced, like a novice in a religious order.

9. Compare the account of conversations with Beaupuy, 1805, IX, 328–36 above.

1. Helpers, allies.

2. Temperament.

3. For a short while the French Revolu-

tion seemed to liberals and idealists of every kind to confirm a process towards freedom predicted by Rousseau, and begun in the establishment of the American republic in 1776. "Rapt away": enraptured.

As books and common intercourse with life 95
 Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,
 When the world travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed—I began
 To meditate with ardour on the rule
 And management of nations; what it is 100
 And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
 Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
 Their happiness or misery, depend
 Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.⁹

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy! 105
 For mighty were the auxiliars¹ which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
 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 110
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance!
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime enchantress—to assist the work, 115
 Which then was going forward in her name!
 Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
 The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
 (As at some moments might not be unfelt
 Among the bowers of Paradise itself) 120
 The budding rose above the rose full blown.
 What temper² at the prospect did not wake
 To happiness unthought of? The inert
 Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!³
 They who had fed their childhood upon dreams, 125
 The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
 Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
 Among the grandest objects of the sense,
 And dealt with whatsoever they found there 130
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood
 Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
 And in the region of their peaceful selves;— 135
 Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
 Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,

- And stuff at hand plastic as they could wish,⁴
 Were called upon to exercise their skill
 [140] Not in Utopia—subterraneous fields,
 Or some secreted island, heaven knows where—
 But in the very world which is the world 725
 Of all of us, the place in which, in the end,
 We find our happiness, or not at all.⁵
- [145] Why should I not confess that earth was then
 To me what an inheritance new-fallen
 Seems, when the first time visited, to one 730
 Who thither comes to find in it his home?
 He walks about and looks upon the place
 [150] With cordial transport—moulds it and remoulds—
 And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear. 735
- An active partisan, I thus convoked⁶
 From every object pleasant circumstance
 [155] To suit my ends. I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still⁷ predominant,
 When erring, erring on the better side, 740
 And in the kinder spirit—placable,
 Indulgent oftentimes to the worst desires,
 As, on one side, not uninformed that men
 [160] See as it hath been taught them, and that time
 Gives rights to error; on the other hand 745
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of licence as of liberty;
 And above all (for this was more than all),
 [165] Not caring if the wind did now and then
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity— 750
 In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 [170] That from the cradle had grown up with me,
 And losing, in no other way than light 755
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

4. As Wordsworth rather clumsily makes clear in *1850*, 136–37, temperaments of two distinct kinds—the grandly imaginative (lines 709–16; *1850*, 125–32), and the gently introspective (lines 716–21; *1850*, 132–35)—both found malleable or “plastic” material for their schemes in the new political situation.

5. Wordsworth is recollecting his Prospectus to *The Recluse* (1800), 38–43, where he had asked why “the very world which is the world / Of all of us”

should not, irrespective of political situation, transcend the creations of myth: “Paradise and groves / Elysian, fortunate islands, fields like those of old / In the deep ocean—wherefore should they be / A History, or but a dream, when minds / Once wedded to this outward frame of things / In love, find these the growth of common day?” (*CW*, III, lines 996–1001, p. 102).

6. Summoned.

7. Ever, always.

And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,⁴—
 Were called upon to exercise their skill,
 Not in Utopia,—subterranean fields,— 140
 Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
 But in the very world, which is the world
 Of all of us,—the place where, in the end,
 We find our happiness, or not at all!⁵

Why should I not confess that Earth was then 145
 To me, what an inheritance, new-fallen,
 Seems, when the first time visited, to one
 Who thither comes to find in it his home?
 He walks about and looks upon the spot
 With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds, 150
 And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.

An active partisan, I thus convoked⁶
 From every object pleasant circumstance 155
 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still⁷ predominant;
 When erring, erring on the better part,
 And in the kinder spirit; placable,
 Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
 See as they have been taught— and that Antiquity⁸ 160
 Gives rights to error; and aware, no less,
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of License as of Liberty;
 And above all—for this was more than all—
 Not caring if the wind did now and then 165
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity;
 In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 That from the cradle had grown up with me, 170
 And losing, in no other way than light
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

8. An alexandrine (six-foot line) in the manuscripts, but altered to a pentameter

by removal of "and that" in the first edition.

- In the main outline, such it might be said
 Was my condition, till with open war
- [175] Britain opposed the liberties of France.⁹ 760
 This threw me first out of the pale of love,
 Soured and corrupted upwards to the source,
 My sentiments; was not,¹ as hitherto,
 A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
- [180] But change of them into their opposites, 765
 And thus a way was opened for mistakes
 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
- [185] Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry; 770
 And thus a blow, which in maturer age
 Would but have touched the judgement, struck more deep
 Into sensations near the heart. Meantime,
- [189] As from the first, wild theories were afloat, 775
 Unto the subtleties of which at least,
 I had but lent a careless ear²—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
- [195] Brought less encouragement, and unto these 780
 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
- [200] Could through my understanding's natural growth 785
 No longer justify themselves through faith
 Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
 Its hand upon its object—evidence
 Safer, of universal application, such
- [205] As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere. 790

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;³ and mounted up,

9. On February 11, 1793; France had declared war ten days previously. In his backward glance (begun at 1805, 657; 1850, 74 above) Wordsworth has worked through to the period described in 1805, 227–306.

1. I.e., *there* was not.

2. A reference that has been taken to anticipate Wordsworth's discussion of Godwin's political theories in 1805, 805–29 below; the passage implies, however, that the "wild theories" were afloat before the publication of Godwin's *Politi-*

cal Justice in February 1793.

3. A decision renouncing all conquest of foreign territory had been written into the French constitution in May 1790. The occupation of Belgium in November 1792 could perhaps be regarded as part of a war of self-defense, but in May–July 1794 the Republican armies turned to the attack on a number of different fronts; see 1805, 364*n*, above. The death of Robespierre (July 1794) did not, as Wordsworth must have hoped, lead to a change of policy.

In the main outline, such it might be said
 Was my condition, till with open war
 Britain opposed the liberties of France.⁹ 175
 This threw me first out of the pale of love;
 Soured and corrupted, upwards to the source,
 My sentiments; was not,¹ as hitherto,
 A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
 But change of them into their contraries; 180
 And thus a way was opened for mistakes
 And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
 In kind more dangerous. What had been a pride,
 Was now a shame; my likings and my loves
 Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry; 185
 And hence a blow that, in maturer age,
 Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep
 Into sensations near the heart: meantime,
 As from the first, wild theories were afloat,
 To whose pretensions, sedulously urged, 190
 I had but lent a careless ear,² assured
 That time was ready to set all things right,
 And that the multitude, so long oppressed,
 Would be oppressed no more.

But when events

Brought less encouragement, and unto these 195
 The immediate proof of principles no more
 Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
 Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,
 Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
 Could through my understanding's natural growth 200
 No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
 Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
 Her hand upon her object—evidence
 Safer, of universal application, such
 As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere. 205

But 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:³ and mounted up,

- [210] Openly in the view of earth and heaven, 795
 The scale of Liberty.⁴ I read her doom,
 Vexed inly somewhat, it is true, and sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
- [214] Of a false prophet. But, roused up, I stuck. 800
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more;⁵ and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
- [220] 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 805
 To depravation, the philosophy
- [225] That promised to abstract the hopes of man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element, 810
 Found ready welcome.⁶ Tempting region that
 For zeal to enter and refresh herself,
- [230] Where passions had the privilege to work,
 And never hear the sound of their own names—
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream 815
 Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind:
 Pleased with extremes, and not the least with that
 Which makes the human reason's naked self
- [235] The object of its fervour. What delight!—
 How glorious!—in self-knowledge and self-rule
 To look through all the frailties of the world, 820
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 The accidents of nature, time, and place,
 That make up the weak being of the past,
- [240] Build social freedom on its only basis:
 The freedom of the individual mind, 825
 Which, to the blind restraint of general laws
 Superior, magisterially⁷ adopts
 One guide—the light of circumstances, flashed
- [244] Upon an independent intellect.⁸

4. The cause of Liberty is being weighed in the balance ("scale") of its own criteria and found to be lightweight.

5. A metaphor from the "proving" (i.e., testing) of tempered steel.

6. The reference is to Godwin's *Enquiry Concerning Political Justice*. By chance, the book came out just after the execution of Louis XVI and the declaration of war with France, and its appeal to British radicals was that it offered them a basis for optimism at a moment when things were going wrong. Godwin's philosophy undertakes to free ("abstract") man's hope—for a future condition of absolute happiness and benevolence—from reliance on his emotional nature, and to ground that hope instead on his

reason ("a purer element").

7. Masterfully (as at 1805, III, 380, above).

8. Despite his claim in 1805, 814, to be "speaking more in charity," lines 818–29 (1850, 235–44) are a mockery of Godwin's position. Wordsworth concludes, significantly, with a quotation from his own post-Godwinian play, *The Borderers*, of autumn 1796–spring 1797, in which the villain Rivers employs rationalism as a means of seducing "the young ingenuous mind" of the hero: "You have obeyed the only law that wisdom / Can ever recognize—the immediate law / Flashed from the light of circumstances / Upon an independent intellect" (*Oxford Wordsworth*, I, p. 187).

Openly in the eye of earth and heaven, 210
 The scale of liberty.⁴ I read her doom,
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds 215
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more;⁵ and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind 220
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
 The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
 To depravation, speculative schemes—
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man 225
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element—
 Found ready welcome.⁶ Tempting region *that*
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work, 230
 And never hear the sound of their own name.
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
 With that which makes our Reason's naked self
 The object of its fervour. What delight! 235
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule;
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
 Build social upon personal Liberty, 240
 Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
 Superior, magisterially⁷ adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.⁸

- For howsoe'er unsettled, never once
Had I thought ill of human-kind, or been
Indifferent to its welfare, but, enflamed
With thirst of a secure intelligence,
[250] And sick of other passion, I pursued
A higher nature—wished that man should start
Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight.⁹
[255] A noble aspiration!—yet I feel¹
The aspiration—but with other thoughts
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
That furnished out materials for a work
Of false imagination, placed beyond
The limits of experience and of truth.
- [259] Enough, no doubt, the advocates themselves
Of ancient institutions had performed
To bring disgrace upon their very names;²
Disgrace of which custom, and written law,
And sundry moral sentiments, as props
[265] And emanations of these institutes,
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
Uplifted. Why deceive ourselves?—'twas so,
'Twas even so—and sorrow for the man
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
[270] Or seeing hath forgotten. Let this pass,
Suffice it that a shock had then been given
To old opinions, and the minds of all men
Had felt it—that my mind was both let loose,
Let loose and goaded.³ After what hath been
[274] Already said of patriotic love,
And hinted at in other sentiments,
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,

9. Wordsworth's image of the caterpillar ("worm") turning into a butterfly is derived from Spenser's *Muiopotmos*, or, *The Tale of the Butterflie*, 209–11.

1. I.e., to this day, I feel.

2. I.e., the names of the institutions.

3. As the 1850 text makes clear, Wordsworth turns in 1805, 849–63 (1805, 259–73) to justification of his earlier radical views. Traditionalists have brought dis-

grace on the names of the institutions, legal and social, that they uphold, and as a result anything that supports these institutions (custom, law, certain individual emotions) appears tainted as well. In their refusal to acknowledge that the Revolution has lifted a veil, such men must bear responsibility for goading the minds of those who had been shocked out of old ways of thought.

Thus expectation rose again; thus hope, 245
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
 Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
 I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst
 Of a secure intelligence, and sick
 Of other longing, I pursued what seemed 250
 A more exalted nature; wished that Man
 Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
 Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight⁹—
 A noble aspiration! *yet* I feel¹ 255
 (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
 The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
 To feel it;—but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true—could such a plea excuse
 Those aberrations—had the clamorous friends 260
 Of ancient Institutions said and done
 To bring disgrace upon their very names,²
 Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,
 And sundry moral sentiments as props
 Or emanations of those institutes, 265
 Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
 Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
 'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man
 Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
 Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock 270
 Was given to old opinions; all men's minds
 Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded.³ After what hath been
 Already said of patriotic love,

- The other melancholy), and withal
 A happy man, and therefore bold to look 870
 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
 [281] The living body of society 875
 Even to the heart. I pushed without remorse
 My speculations forward, yea, set foot
 On Nature's holiest places.⁴
- Time may come
 When some dramatic story may afford
 Shapes livelier to convey to thee, my friend, 880
 [286] What then I learned—or think I learned—of truth,⁵
 And the errors into which I was betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn
 [290] Out of a heart which had been turned aside 885
 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,
 [295] Like culprits to the bar, suspiciously 890
 Calling the mind to establish in plain day
 Her titles⁶ and her honours, now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 [300] Of moral obligation—what the rule, 895
 And what the sanction—till, demanding proof,
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,⁷
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 [305] Yielded up moral questions in despair, 900

4. The heart (or mind, or soul) of the individual human being.

5. Wordsworth looks forward to writing *The Excursion*, the "dramatic"—or narrative—section of *The Recluse*, projected as early as March 1804 (*EY*, p. 454),

where the Solitary in Books III and IV embodies the failure of hopes in the French Revolution.

6. Deeds to prove legal entitlement.

7. In the end.

Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
 In temperament, withal a happy man,
 And therefore bold to look on painful things,
 Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
 I summoned my best skill, and toiled; intent
 To anatomise the frame of social life,
 Yea, the whole body of society
 Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
 That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
 Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
 Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
 What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,⁵
 And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
 Out of a heart that had been turned aside
 From Nature's way by outward accidents,
 And which was thus confounded more and more,
 Misguided and misguiding. So I fared,
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles⁶ and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof*,
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,⁷
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 Yielded up moral question in despair.

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

And for my future studies, as the sole
Employment of the inquiring faculty,
Turned towards mathematics, and their clear
And solid evidence.⁸

Ah, then it was

- That thou, most precious friend, about this time 905
First known to me, didst lend a living help
To regulate my soul.⁹ And then it was
[335] That the belovèd woman in whose sight
Those days were passed—now speaking in a voice 910
Of sudden admonition like a brook
That does but cross a lonely road; and now
Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
[340] Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse 915
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);
[345] She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
A poet, made me seek beneath that name 920
My office upon earth, and nowhere else.²
And lastly, Nature's self, by human love
Assisted, through the weary labyrinth
Conducted me again to open day,
Revived the feelings of my earlier life,
Gave me that strength and knowledge full of peace, 925
Enlarged, and never more to be disturbed,
Which through the steps of our degeneracy,
All degradation of this age, hath still
[355] Upheld me, and upholds me at this day 930
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—
[360] This last opprobrium, when we see the dog 935
Returning to his vomit, when the sun

8. Godwinism having failed to provide Wordsworth the support he needs after the destruction of his faith in the Revolution, he turns to mathematics as the one thing that does seem to provide objective certainty. Lines 888–904 (1850, 293–333) have great power, and a pivotal importance in the structure of *The Prelude*, but should probably be read as the dramatization of a process of discovery, not as the record of a single moment of crisis. Whatever the nature of the intellectual episode Wordsworth describes, its date must be spring 1796, at which time he was reading the second edition of *Political Justice* (*EY*, p. 170).

9. An inaccurate statement that is removed by 1816/19. Wordsworth met Coleridge (the "precious friend," line 905) in September 1795; they seem to have corresponded at times in the next two years, but can have exerted no great influence upon each other until June 1797. 2. Wordsworth and Dorothy (the "belovèd woman" of 1805, 908) moved into Racedown House in southwest Dorset on September 26, 1795. There is no doubt that through her faith in him, and her personal responsiveness to their shared surroundings, Dorothy helped to confirm her brother as a poet.

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
 With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
 From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
 In reconciliation with an utter waste
 Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook, 325
 (Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
 Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)
 But turned to abstract science, and there sought
 Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
 Where the disturbances of space and time— 330
 Whether in matter's various properties
 Inherent, or from human will and power
 Derived—find no admission.⁸ Then it was—
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!¹—
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight 335
 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— 340
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
 Both as a clouded and a waning moon,
 She whispered still that brightness would return,
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still 345
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth;²
 And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
 If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
 By all varieties of human love 350
 Assisted, led me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge, fraught with peace,
 Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now 355
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less), when, finally to close
 And rivet down³ the gains of France, a Pope
 Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor—
 This last opprobrium, when we see a people, 360
 That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
 For manna, take a lesson from the dog
 Returning to his vomit; when the sun

1. Lines 306–34 are inserted in an original form in 1816/19, but then much revised. For “matter's various properties / Inherent” (lines 331–32) the first edition, with no warrant from the manuscripts,

reads “matters various, properties / Inherent.”

3. With no warrant from the manuscripts, the first edition prints “And seal up all” for “And rivet down.”

- That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 [365] In exultation among living clouds,
 Hath put his function and his glory off,
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
 Sets like an opera phantom.⁴ 940
- Thus, O friend,
- [370] Through times of honour, and through times of shame,
 Have I descended, tracing faithfully
 The workings of a youthful mind, beneath
 The breath of great events—its hopes no less
 Than universal, and its boundless love— 945
 A story destined for thy ear,⁵ who now,
- [375] Among the basest and the lowest fallen
 Of all the race of men, dost make abode
 Where Etna looketh down on Syracuse,
 The city of Timoleon.⁶ Living God, 950
 How are the mighty prostrated!⁷—they first,
- [380] They first of all that breathe, should have awaked
 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 955
 A trifler only, in her proudest day—
- [385] Have been distressed to think of what she once
 Promised, now is—a far more sober cause
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land 960
- [388] Strewed with the wreck of loftiest years, a land
 Glorious indeed, substantially renowned
 Of simple virtue once, and manly praise,
 Now without one memorial hope, not even
 A hope to be deferred—for that would serve 965
 To cheer the heart in such entire decay.

But indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, O friend, wilt be refreshed. There is

4. Napoleon had been emperor since May 1804, but summoned Pope Pius VII to crown him (lines 930–33) on December 2. To Wordsworth's indignation the French people had not only returned to monarchy, vomited forth (the image is from 2 Peter: 22) in the execution of Louis XVI, but had called on the Church to ratify their backsliding. The glorious sun of the Revolution had declined into a piece of cheap theatrical machinery.

"Catastrophe" (1805, 930; 1850, 356): dramatic climax—not at this period necessarily tragic ("they", in Wordsworth's parenthesis, are Napoleon's supporters). "Opprobrium" (1805, 934; 1850, 360): disgrace. "Gewgaw" (1805, 939; 1850, 368): plaything, toy.

5. Wordsworth read aloud to Coleridge

the completed thirteen-Book *Prelude* at Coleorton, Christmas 1806; for Coleridge's response, see his poem *To William Wordsworth*.

6. Coleridge had stopped in Sicily on his way home from Malta. North's translation of Plutarch's *Lives* records how Timoleon in 343 B.C. drove the tyrant Dionysius the Younger out of Sicily, defeated the Carthaginians, and established peace and democracy. Sicily in 1804 was part of the kingdom of Naples; its people were regarded by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 3rd ed. (1797) as incapable of progress because of their ignorance, superstition and poverty.

7. Not an improvement on "How are the mighty fallen," of David's lament for Saul and Jonathan, 2 Samuel 1:19 ff.

That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation with a living pomp 365
 Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
 Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
 Sets like an Opera phantom.⁴

Thus, O Friend!

Through times of honour and through times of shame 370
 Descending, have I faithfully retraced
 The perturbations of a youthful mind
 Under a long-lived storm of great events—
 A story destined for thy ear,⁵ who now,
 Among the fallen of nations, dost abide 375
 Where Etna, over hill and valley, casts
 His shadow stretching towards Syracuse,
 The city of Timoleon!⁶ Righteous Heaven!
 How are the mighty prostrated!⁷ They first,
 They first of all that breathe should have awaked 380
 When the great voice was heard from out the tombs
 Of ancient heroes. If I suffered grief
 For ill-requited France, by many deemed
 A trifler only in her proudest day;
 Have been distressed to think of what she once 385
 Promised, now is; a far more sober cause
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land,
 Though with the wreck of loftier years bestrewn,
 To the reanimating influence lost
 Of memory, to virtue lost and hope. 390

But indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is

- One great society alone on earth:
 The noble living and the noble dead.⁸
 Thy consolation shall be there, and time 970
 And Nature shall before thee spread in store
 Imperishable thoughts, the place itself
 Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
 Sirocco air of its degeneracy
 Turn as thou mov'st into a healthful breeze 975
 To cherish and invigorate thy frame.⁹
- [395] Thine be those motions strong and sanative,¹
 A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
 To health and joy and pure contentedness:
 To me the grief confined that thou art gone 980
 From this last spot of earth where Freedom now
 [400] Stands single in her only sanctuary²—
 A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This heavy time of change for all mankind. 985
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel;
 [405] The sympathies, erewhile in part discharged,
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again.
 My own delights do scarcely seem to me
 My own delights: the lordly Alps themselves, 990
 Those rosy peaks from which the morning looks
 [410] Abroad on many nations, are not now
 Since thy migration and departure, friend,
 The gladsome image in my memory
 Which they were used to be. To kindred scenes, 995
 On errand—at a time how different—
 Thou tak'st thy way,³ carrying a heart more ripe
 For all divine enjoyment, with the soul
 [415] Which Nature gives to poets, now by thought 1000
 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
 Of Enna,⁴ is there not some nook of thine
 [420] From the first playtime of the infant earth 1005
 Kept sacred to restorative delight?

8. Echoed in *The Convention of Cintra* (1809): "There is a spiritual community binding together the living and the dead; the good, the brave, and the wise, of all ages. We would not be rejected from this community; and therefore do we hope" (*Prose Works*, I, p. 339).

9. The degeneracy of Sicily is seen in Wordsworth's metaphor as the sirocco (an oppressive wind blowing from the north coast of Africa), which will turn in Coleridge's presence to a life-giving breeze.

1. Healing.

2. Britain was for the moment carrying on alone the war against Napoleon.

3. Wordsworth contrasts his own visit to the Alps in 1790, when France seemed "standing on the top of golden hours" (1805, VI, 353), with the political atmosphere of 1804 evoked in 1805, 929–40 (1850, 365–69) above.

4. Where "Proserpine gathering flowers" was kidnapped by Pluto (*Paradise Lost*, IV, 268–71).

One great society alone on earth:
The noble Living and the noble Dead.⁸

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,¹ 395
 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;² 400
 A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
 The sympathies erewhile in part discharged, 405
 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 no more 410
 For me that image of pure gladness
 Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,
 For purpose, at a time, how different!
 Thou tak'st thy way,³ carrying the heart and soul
 That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought 415
 Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
 Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
 On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
 Of Enna!⁴ is there not some nook of thine,
 From the first play-time of the infant world 420
 Kept sacred to restorative delight,
 When from afar invoked by anxious love?

- Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Even from my earliest schoolday time, I loved
 To dream of Sicily; and now a sweet
 [428] And gladsome promise wafted from that land
 Comes o'er my heart. There's not a single name 1010
 Of note belonging to that honored isle,
 Philosopher or bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes—deep and tranquil soul—
 [435] That is not like a comfort to my grief.⁵ 1015
 And, O Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth
 By force of graces which were theirs, that they
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
 [440] Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved, 1020
 When thinking on my own beloved friend,
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his tyrant lord
 Within a chest imprisoned impiously—
 [445] 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 1025
 Wet with the Muse's nectar.⁶
- Thus I soothe
- The pensive moments by this calm fireside,
 [450] And find a thousand fancied images
 That cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine. 1030
 Our prayers have been accepted: thou wilt stand
 Not as an exile but a visitant
 On Etna's top; by pastoral Arethuse⁷—
 [465] Or if that fountain be indeed no more, 1035
 Then near some other spring which by the name
 Thou gratelest, willingly deceived—
 Shalt linger as a gladsome votary,⁸
 And not a captive pining for his home.

5. Empedocles (ca. 493—ca. 433 B.C.), variously considered a poet and a philosopher writing in verse, was supposed to have thrown himself into the crater of Mount Etna. Archimedes (ca. 287—212 B.C.), the greatest mathematician of the ancient world, was born at Syracuse in Sicily.

6. Theocritus (1805, 1015; 1850, 436),

ca. 310—250 B.C., the great Sicilian pastoral poet, tells the story of Comates in *Idyl*, VII, 78—83.

7. A spring at Syracuse, often alluded to in pastoral poetry.

8. Devotee, worshipper. "Thou gratelest": i.e., "you rejoice over"; a deliberate, and in context appropriate, poeticism.

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Ere yet familiar with the classic page, 425
 I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo,
 The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened
 At thy command, at her command gives way;
 A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,
 Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold 430
 Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales;
 Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name
 Of note belonging to that honoured isle,
 Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes, pure abstracted soul!
 That doth not yield a solace to my grief:⁵ 435
 And, O Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,
 By their endowments, good or great, that they
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
 Wrought for them in old time; yea, not unmoved, 440
 When thinking on my own beloved friend,
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his impious lord
 Within a chest imprisoned; how they came
 Laden from blooming grove or flowery field, 445
 And fed him there, alive, month after month,
 Because the goatherd, blessed man! had lips
 Wet with the Muses' nectar.⁶

Thus I soothe

The pensive moments by this calm fire-side,
 And find a thousand bounteous images 450
 To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
 Our prayers have been accepted; thou wilt stand
 On Ætna's summit, above earth and sea,
 Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens
 Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs, 455
 Worthy of poets who attuned their harps
 In wood or echoing cave, for discipline
 Of heroes; or, in reverence to the gods,
 'Mid temples, served by sapient priests, and choirs
 Of virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain 460
 Those temples, where they in their ruins yet
 Survive for inspiration, shall attract
 Thy solitary steps: and on the brink
 Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse;⁷
 Or, if that fountain be in truth no more, 465
 Then, near some other spring, which, by the name
 Thou gratelest, willingly deceived,
 I see thee linger a glad votary,⁸
 And not a captive pining for his home.