

Book Sixth

Cambridge and the Alps

The leaves were yellow when to Furness Fells,¹
The haunt of shepherds, and to cottage life
I bade adieu, and, one among the flock
Who by that season are convened, like birds
[5] Trooping together at the fowler's lure, 5
Went back to Granta's cloisters²—not so fond
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In spirit, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
[10] Without repining from the mountain pomp 10
Of autumn and its beauty (entered in
With calmer lakes and louder streams);⁴ and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
[15] You and your not unwelcome days of mirth 15
I quitted, and your nights of revelry,
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth,
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

We need not linger o'er the ensuing time,
But let me add at once that now, the bonds 20
[20] Of indolent and vague society
Relaxing in their hold, I lived henceforth
More to myself, read more, reflected more,
Felt more, and settled daily into habits
More promising. Two winters may be passed 25
Without a separate notice;⁵ many books
Were read in process of this time—devoured,
Tasted or skimmed, or studiously perused—
[25] Yet with no settled plan. I was detached 30
Internally from academic cares,
From every hope of prowess and reward,
And wished to be a lodger in that house
Of letters, and no more—and should have been
Even such, but for some personal concerns
That hung about me in my own despite 35
Perpetually, no heavy weight, but still

1. The southwestern area of the Lake District, surrounding Coniston, and reaching across to Hawkshead and Windermere. "Fells": hills and mountains.

2. Wordsworth is being deliberately poetic in referring to Cambridge as "Granta," an old name for the River Cam, which flows through the town.

4. Wordsworth's revisions of this passage make it clear that it is the beauty of (late) autumn that has entered in, and that he associated this season with diminishing wind and increasing rain—hence calmer lakes, but louder streams.

5. The winters of 1788–89 and 1789–90.

Book Sixth

Cambridge and the Alps

THE leaves were fading when to Esthwaite's banks
And the simplicities of cottage life
I bade farewell; and, one among the youth
Who, summoned by that season, reunite
As scattered birds troop to the fowler's lure, 5
Went back to Granta's cloisters,² not so prompt
Or eager, though as gay and undepressed
In mind, as when I thence had taken flight
A few short months before. I turned my face
Without repining from the coves and heights 10
Clothed in the sunshine of the withering fern;³
Quitted, not loth, the mild magnificence
Of calmer lakes and louder streams; and you,
Frank-hearted maids of rocky Cumberland,
You and your not unwelcome days of mirth, 15
Relinquished, and your nights of revelry,
And in my own unlovely cell sate down
In lightsome mood—such privilege has youth
That cannot take long leave of pleasant thoughts.

The bonds of indolent society 20
Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
More to myself. Two winters may be passed
Without a separate notice:⁵ many books
Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,
But with no settled plan. I was detached 25
Internally from academic cares;

3. A magnificent line produced by successive revisions in *MS. D*, in 1832 and

1838/39. Wordsworth's first attempt was "In the soft sunshine of the golden fern."

- A baffling and a hindrance, a controul
 Which made the thought of planning for myself
 A course of independent study seem
 An act of disobedience towards them 40
 Who loved me, proud rebellion and unkind.⁶
- [30] This bastard virtue—rather let it have
 A name it more deserves, this cowardise—
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom planted in me from the very first, 45
 And indolence, by force of which I turned
 From regulations even of my own
- [35] As from restraints and bonds.⁷ And who can tell,
 Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
 And at a later season, or preserved— 50
 What love of Nature, what original strength
 Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,
- [40] The deepest and the best, and what research
 Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed?
- 55
- The poet's soul was with me at that time,
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of happiness and truth. A thousand hopes
- [45] Were mine, a thousand tender dreams, of which
 No few have since been realized, and some
 Do yet remain, hopes for my future life.⁸ 60
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
- [49] Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
 And yet the morning gladness is not gone
 Which then was in my mind.⁹ Those were the days
 Which also first encouraged me to trust 65
 With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
- [55] With such a daring thought, that I might leave
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Upheld even by the very name and thought 70
 Of printed books and authorship, began
- [60] To melt away; and further, the dread awe
 Of mighty names was softened down, and seemed

6. Wordsworth decided, at least by December 1789, not to read for Honors (1805, 29–31; 1850, 25–29), thus in effect rejecting the Fellowship that his relations intended for him; see 1805, III, 77n, above.

7. I.e., Wordsworth's actual motive for not pursuing an independent course of study is cowardice rather than a sense of letting his relations down.

8. Notably of course the plan to write the main section of *The Recluse*, shelved

again in March 1804 on Wordsworth's decision to abandon the five-Book *Prelude* and work towards a longer version; see Composition and Texts: 1805/1850, Introduction, below.

9. Wordsworth was thirty-four on April 7, 1804. Book VI was under way by March 29, and completed by April 29. The last stanzas of the *Intimations Ode* had recently defined the sense in which "morning gladness" (1805, 63) could be said to continue in his mind.

Yet independent study seemed a course
 Of hardy disobedience toward friends
 And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.⁶
 This spurious virtue, rather let it bear 30
 A name it more deserves, this cowardice,
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom which encouraged me to turn
 From regulations even of my own
 As from restraints and bonds.⁷ Yet who can tell— 35
 Who knows what thus may have been gained, both then
 And at a later season, or preserved;
 What love of nature, what original strength
 Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,
 The deepest and the best, what keen research, 40
 Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time;
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of present happiness, while future years 45
 Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams,
 No few of which have since been realised;
 And some remain, hopes for my future life.⁸
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a sojourner on earth, 50
 By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me
 Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
 Her dew is on the flowers.⁹ Those were the days
 Which also first emboldened me to trust
 With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched 55
 By such a daring thought, that I might leave
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Maintained even by the very name and thought
 Of printed books and authorship, began 60
 To melt away; and further, the dread awe
 Of mighty names was softened down and seemed

- Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now, 75
- [64] Though not familiarly, my mind put on;
 I loved and I enjoyed—that was my chief
 And ruling business, happy in the strength
 And loveliness of imagery and thought.¹
- All winter long, whenever free to take 80
 My choice, did I at nights frequent our groves
 And tributary walks—the last, and oft
 The only one, who had been lingering there
- [70] Through hours of silence till the porter's bell, 85
 A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
 Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
 Inexorable summons. Lofty elms,
 Inviting shades of opportune recess,
- [75] Did give composure to a neighbourhood 90
 Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
 There was, no doubt yet standing there, an ash,
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed:
- [80] Up from the ground and almost to the top
 The trunk and master branches everywhere 95
 Were green with ivy, and the lightsome twigs
 And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
- [84] That hung in yellow tassels and festoons,
 Moving or still—a favorite trimmed out
 By Winter for himself, as if in pride,
 And with outlandish grace. Oft have I stood 100
- [86] Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
 Of magic fiction, verse of mine perhaps
 May never tread,² but scarcely Spenser's self
- [90] Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, 105
 More bright appearances could scarcely see
 Of human forms and superhuman powers,
 Than I beheld standing on winter nights
 Alone beneath this fairy work of earth.

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

1. Wordsworth is opposing mental pictures to rational thought-processes. As both in this instance are set up by literature, his use of "imagery" is closer than usual to the modern critical term.

2. In the plan for *Lyrical Ballads*, as de-

scribed in *Biographia Literaria*, chapter xiv, Wordsworth's half of the poetic universe ("hemisphere") was to be the world of everyday, Coleridge's the supernatural (*Biographia*, pp. 168–69).

Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,
 Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
 Content to observe, to admire, and to enjoy. 65

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
 Did I by night frequent the College groves
 And tributary walks; the last, and oft
 The only one, who had been lingering there
 Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell, 70
 A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
 Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
 Inexorable summons! Lofty elms,
 Inviting shades of opportune recess,
 Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood 75
 Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,
 Grew there; an ash which Winter for himself
 Decked as in pride, and with outlandish grace:
 Up from the ground, and almost to the top, 80
 The trunk and every master branch were green
 With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs
 And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
 That hung in yellow tassels, while the air
 Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood 85
 Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
 Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
 May never tread;² but scarcely Spenser's self
 Could have more tranquil visions in his youth, 90
 Nor could more bright appearances create
 Of human forms with superhuman powers,
 Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights
 Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.

On the vague reading of a truant youth 95
 'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment
 Not seldom differed from my taste in books,

- And delicacy like another mind, 115
 Sequestered from my outward taste in books—
 And yet the books which then I loved the most
 [100] Are dearest to me now; for, being versed
 In living Nature, I had there a guide
 Which opened frequently my eyes, else shut, 120
 A standard which was usefully applied,
 Even when unconsciously, to other things
 Which less I understood. In general terms,
 [106] I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Misled as to these latter not alone 125
 By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 Delusion to young scholars incident—
 And old ones also—by that overprized
 [110] And dangerous craft of picking phrases out 130
 From languages that want the living voice
 To make of them a nature to the heart,
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense.³
- [115] Yet must I not entirely overlook 135
 The pleasure gathered from the elements
 Of geometric science. I had stepped
 In these inquiries but a little way,
 [119] No farther than the threshold—with regret
 Sincere I mention this—but there I found 140
 Enough to exalt, to cheer me and compose.
 With Indian⁴ awe and wonder, ignorance
 Which even was cherished, did I meditate
 Upon the alliance of those simple, pure
 Proportions and relations, with the frame 145
 And laws of Nature—how they could become
 Herein a leader to the human mind—
 And made endeavours frequent to detect
 The process by dark⁵ guesses of my own.
 Yet from this source more frequently I drew 150
 [130] A pleasure calm and deeper, a still sense
 Of permanent and universal sway
 And paramount endowment in the mind,
 An image not unworthy of the one
 [135] Surpassing life, which—out of space and time, 155

3. See *Biographia Literaria*, chapter i, where Coleridge refers to a particular conversation with Wordsworth about the style of poetry that consists in “translation of prose thoughts into poetic language.” In *1805*, 128, “incident” means “likely to befall”; it is a facetious refer-

ence to Shakespeare’s *Winter’s Tale*, IV, iv, 124–25, “a malady / Most incident to maids.”

4. American Indian, as at *1805*, I, 302, above.

5. Uninformed.

As if it appertained to another mind,
 And yet the books which then I valued most
 Are dearest to me *now*; for, having scanned, 100
 Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms
 Of Nature, in that knowledge I possessed
 A standard, often usefully applied,
 Even when unconsciously, to things removed
 From a familiar sympathy.—In fine, 105
 I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Misled in estimating words, not only
 By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase 110
 From languages that want the living voice
 To carry meaning to the natural heart;
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense.³

Yet may we not entirely overlook 115
 The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
 Of geometric science. Though advanced
 In these inquiries, with regret I speak,
 No farther than the threshold, there I found
 Both elevation and composed delight: 120
 With Indian⁴ awe and wonder, ignorance pleased
 With its own struggles, did I meditate
 On the relation those abstractions bear
 To Nature's laws, and by what process led,
 Those immaterial agents bowed their heads 125
 Duly to serve the mind of earth-born man;
 From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
 From system on to system without end.

More frequently from the same source I drew
 A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense 130
 Of permanent and universal sway,
 And paramount belief; there, recognised
 A type, for finite natures, of the one
 Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
 Which—to the boundaries of space and time, 135
 Of melancholy space and doleful time,
 Superior, and incapable of change,⁶

6. A passage that caused Wordsworth considerable trouble. Lines 134–37 belong to his earliest revisions, ca. January

1807; lines 120–33 were reworked chiefly in *MS. D*, but reach their final shape in corrections to *E*, in or after 1839.

Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
 And hath the name of, God. Transcendent peace
 [140] And silence did await upon these thoughts
 That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

And as I have read of one by shipwreck thrown 160
 With fellow sufferers whom the waves had spared
 Upon a region uninhabited,
 An island of the deep, who having brought
 [145] To land a single volume and no more— 165
 A treatise of geometry—was used,
 Although of food and clothing destitute,
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from company and take this book,
 [150] Then first a self-taught pupil in those truths, 170
 To spots remote and corners of the isle
 By the seaside, and draw his diagrams
 With a long stick upon the sand, and thus
 Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
 Forget his feeling:⁷ even so—if things
 [155] Producing like effect from outward cause 175
 So different may rightly be compared—
 So was it with me then, and so will be
 With poets ever. Mighty is the charm
 Of those abstractions to a mind beset
 [160] With images, and haunted by itself, 180
 And specially delightful unto me
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
 So gracefully, even then when it appeared
 No more than as a plaything, or a toy
 [165] Embodied to the sense—not what it is 185
 In verity, an independent world
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine, almost
 [170] Through grace of heaven and inborn tenderness.⁸ 190
 And not to leave the picture of that time
 Imperfect, with these habits I must rank
 A melancholy, from humours of the blood
 In part, and partly taken up, that loved
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
 [175] The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring— 195
 A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice

7. The mathematical castaway was John Newton, one-time captain of a slaving ship, who turned evangelical, became curate of Olney, and a close friend of Cowper. Wordsworth in *1805*, 160–74 (1850, 143–54) is recalling, at times ver-

batim, a paragraph from Newton's *Authentic Narrative* which Dorothy had copied into a notebook in 1798–99.

8. Susceptibility to impressions (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

Nor touched by welterings of passion—is,
 And hath the name of God. Transcendent peace
 And silence did await upon these thoughts 140
 That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

'Tis told by one whom stormy waters threw,
 With fellow-sufferers by the shipwreck spared,
 Upon a desert coast, that having brought
 To land a single volume, saved by chance, 145
 A treatise of Geometry, he went,
 Although of food and clothing destitute,
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from company and take this book
 (Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths) 150
 To spots remote, and draw his diagrams
 With a long staff upon the sand, and thus
 Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
 Forget his feeling:⁷ so (if like effect
 From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things 155
 So different, may rightly be compared),
 So was it then with me, and so will be
 With Poets ever. Mighty is the charm
 Of those abstractions to a mind beset
 With images, and haunted by herself, 160
 And specially delightful unto me
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
 So gracefully; even then when it appeared
 Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
 To sense embodied: not the thing it is 165
 In verity, an independent world,
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned
 By aught, I fear, of genuine desert—
 Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes. 170
 And not to leave the story of that time
 Imperfect, with these habits must be joined,
 Moods melancholy, fits of spleen,⁹ that loved
 A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
 The twilight more than dawn, autumn than spring; 175
 A treasured and luxurious gloom of choice

9. Gloominess, dejection; by the mid-nineteenth century an archaic and literary word.

And inclination mainly, and the mere
 Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
 Add unto this a multitude of hours
 [180] Pilfered away by what the bard who sang 200
 Of the enchanter Indolence hath called
 'Good-natured lounging',¹ and behold a map
 Of my collegiate life: far less intense
 Than duty called for, or, without regard
 [185] To duty, might have sprung up of itself 205
 By change of accidents; or even—to speak
 Without unkindness—in another place.

In summer among distant nooks I roved—
 Dovedale, or Yorkshire dales, or through bye-tracts
 [195] Of my own native region—and was blest 210
 Between those sundry wanderings with a joy
 Above all joys, that seemed another morn
 Risen on mid-noon:³ the presence, friend, I mean
 Of that sole sister, she who hath been long
 [200] Thy treasure also, thy true friend and mine, 215
 Now after separation desolate
 Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed.⁴ The gentle banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
 [205] And that monastic castle, on a flat, 220
 Low-standing by the margin of the stream,⁵
 A mansion not unvisited of old
 By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
 Some snatches he might pen for aught we know
 [210] Of his *Arcadia*, by fraternal love 225
 Inspired⁶—that river and that mouldering dome⁷
 Have seen us sit in many a summer hour,
 My sister and myself, when, having climbed
 In danger through some window's open space,
 We looked abroad, or on the turret's head 230

1. Thomson, *The Castle of Indolence* (1748), I, xv. Wordsworth had written an imitation of Thomson's poem in May 1802, and drawn upon it at 1805, III, 546–49, above.

3. Wordsworth's lines echo beautifully Adam's sense of the presence of Raphael, who in *Paradise Lost*, V, 310–11 "seems another morn / Ris'n on mid-noon."

4. "Now" in 1805, 216 (1850, 201), is summer 1787; for the previous nine years, since the death of their mother, Dorothy had been separated from her brothers, living with cousins in Halifax. Wordsworth puns on the name Dorothy, "gift

of God," as Coleridge had done in a letter of July 1803 (Griggs, II, p. 958).

5. Brougham Castle is situated on low ground ("a flat") where the rivers Emont and Lowther meet, just east of Penrith. It is not "monastic" in any normal sense—Wordsworth perhaps means secluded, or austere.

6. Sir Philip Sidney had written his prose romance, *Arcadia* (ca. 1581), for the pleasure of his sister. He was wrongly supposed to have visited Brougham Castle.

7. A building (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

And inclination mainly, and the mere
 Redundancy of youth's contentedness.
 —To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
 Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang 180
 Of the Enchanter Indolence hath called
 'Good-natured lounging',¹ and behold a map
 Of my collegiate life—far less intense
 Than duty called for, or, without regard
 To duty, might have sprung up of itself 185
 By change of accidents, or even, to speak
 Without unkindness, in another place.
 Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,
 This I repeat, was mine; mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of art, 190
 Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
 That streamlet whose blue current works its way
 Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;²
 Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
 Of my own native region, and was blest 195
 Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
 Above all joys, that seemed another morn
 Risen on mid noon;³ blest with the presence, Friend!
 Of that sole Sister, she who hath been long
 Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine, 200
 Now, after separation desolate,
 Restored to me—such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed.⁴ The varied banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
 And that monastic castle, 'mid tall trees, 205
 Low-standing by the margin of the stream,⁵
 A mansion visited (as fame reports)
 By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
 Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen
 Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love 210
 Inspired;⁶—that river and those mouldering towers
 Have seen us side by side, when, having clomb
 The darksome windings of a broken stair,
 And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,
 Not without trembling, we in safety looked 215
 Forth, through some Gothic window's open space,
 And gathered with one mind a rich reward
 From the far-stretching landscape, by the light
 Of morning beautified, or purple eve;
 Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head, 220

2. The rather exaggerated self-reproach of lines 188–89 belongs to 1838/39; for contrast, see 1805, III, 81–120. The

"works of art" of line 190 would be buildings, as opposed to natural scenery. Dovedale is a beauty spot in Derbyshire.

- Lay listening to the wild-flowers and the grass
 As they gave out their whispers to the wind.
 Another maid there was, who also breathed
- [225] A gladness o'er that season, then to me
 By her exulting outside look of youth 235
 And placid under-countenance first endeared⁸—
 That other spirit, Coleridge, who is now
 So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
- [230] So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields 240
 In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
 Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,
 And o'er the Border Beacon and the waste
 Of naked pools and common crags that lay
- [235] Exposed on the bare fell, was scattered love—
 A spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.⁹ 245
 O friend, we had not seen thee at that time,
 And yet a power is on me and a strong
 Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.¹
- [240] Far art thou wandered now in search of health,
 And milder breezes²—melancholy lot— 250
 But thou art with us, with us in the past,
 The present, with us in the times to come.
 There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
- [245] No languor, no dejection, no dismay,
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those 255
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
 Thy pleasure with us; thy returning strength,
 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
- [250] Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift
 Of gales Etesian³ or of loving thoughts. 260
- I too have been a wanderer, but, alas,
 How different is the fate of different men,
 Though twins almost in genius and in mind.
 Unknown unto each other, yea, and breathing
- [255] As if in different elements, we were framed 265
 To bend at last to the same discipline,

8. Mary Hutchinson, whom Wordsworth married fifteen years later on October 4, 1802.

9. Lines 242–45, written in late March 1804, draw on XI, 315–25, composed for the abandoned five-Book *Prelude* at the beginning of the month; see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below. The Border Beacon is the hill above Penrith, scene of 1799, I, 296–327 (1805, XI, 278–315).

1. Wordsworth and Coleridge seem to have met in August–September 1795, but

they did not come to know each other well—and Coleridge did not meet Dorothy—until June 1797.

2. Coleridge had set out for the Mediterranean in search of better health—and in the hope of breaking his addiction to opium. He was in fact still in London when these lines were written in late March 1804, but Wordsworth believed him to have sailed. He did not return to England until August 1806.

3. Northwesterly Mediterranean winds.

Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
 Their faintest whisper to the passing breeze,
 Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.

Another maid there was, who also shed
 A gladness o'er that season, then to me, 225
 By her exulting outside look of youth
 And placid under-countenance, first endeared;⁸
 That other spirit, Coleridge! who is now
 So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
 So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields 230
 In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
 Of eglantine, and through the shady woods
 And o'er the Border Beacon, and the waste
 Of naked pools, and common crags that lay
 Exposed on the bare fell, were scattered love, 235
 The spirit of pleasure, and youth's golden gleam.⁹
 O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time,
 And yet a power is on me, and a strong
 Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.¹
 Far art thou wandered now in search of health 240
 And milder breezes,²—melancholy lot!
 But thou art with us, with us in the past,
 The present, with us in the times to come.
 There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
 No languor, no dejection, no dismay, 245
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
 With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,
 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
 Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift 250
 Of gales Etesian³ or of tender thoughts.

I, too, have been a wanderer; but, alas!
 How different the fate of different men.
 Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared
 As if in several⁴ elements, we were framed 255
 To bend at last to the same discipline,

4. Separate, distinct.

Predestined, if two beings ever were,
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
 [265] Else sooner ended, I have known full well 270
 For whom I thus record the birth and growth
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
 [265] And groves, I speak to thee, my friend—to thee 275
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy in the depths
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide edifice, thy home and school,
 Wast used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
 [270] Moving in heaven, or haply, tired of this, 280
 To shut thine eyes and by internal light
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream⁵
 Far distant—thus beheld from year to year
 Of thy long exile.⁶ Nor could I forget
 [275] In this late portion of my argument 285
 That scarcely had I finally resigned
 My rights among those academic bowers
 When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou cam'st
 [280] And didst sit down in temperance and peace, 290
 A rigorous student. What a stormy course
 Then followed⁷—oh, it is a pang that calls
 For utterance, to think how small a change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 [285] A world of pain, ripened ten thousand hopes 295
 For ever withered. Through this retrospect
 Of my own college life I still⁸ have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes, have played with times
 (I speak of private business of the thought) 300
 [290] And accidents as children do with cards,
 Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still
 In impotence of mind by his fireside

5. The river Otter.

6. Coleridge was at "the blue-coat school," Christ's Hospital, in the center of London, 1782–91, and can very seldom have returned home to Devonshire during the holidays. Wordsworth's lines contain literary allusions to Coleridge's *Sonnet: to the River Otter* (1793), *Frost at Midnight* (1798), and *Dejection* (1802).

7. Coleridge entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in September 1791, Wordsworth having left St. John's the previous Jan-

uary. Despite Coleridge's prodigious reading, his university career was not a success. He offended the authorities and his family by becoming a Unitarian and a radical, contracted large debts, contemplated suicide, ran away to join the army, planned (with Robert Southey) to found a communist utopia on the banks of the Susquehanna River, and left in December 1794 without a degree.

8. Always.

Predestined, if two beings ever were,
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
 Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind 260
 For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves, that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
 And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee, 265
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
 Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
 Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired, 270
 To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,⁵
 Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
 Of a long exile.⁶ Nor could I forget,
 In this late portion of my argument, 275
 That scarcely, as my term of pupilage
 Ceased, had I left those academic bowers
 When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,
 And didst sit down in temperance and peace, 280
 A rigorous student. What a stormy course
 Then followed.⁷ Oh! it is a pang that calls
 For utterance, to think what easy change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes, 285
 For ever withered. Through this retrospect
 Of my collegiate life I still⁸ have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes, have played with times
 And accidents as children do with cards, 290
 Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
 As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,

- Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought 305
- [295] Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms⁹
Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out 310
- [300] From things well-matched, or ill, and words for things—
The self-created sustenance of a mind
Debarred from Nature's living images,
Compelled to be a life unto itself,
And unrelentingly possessed by thirst 315
- [305] Of greatness, love, and beauty.¹ Not alone,
Ah, surely not in singleness of heart
Should I have seen the light of evening fade
Upon the silent Cam, if we had met,
Even at that early time: I needs must hope, 320
- [310] Must feel, must trust, that my maturer age
And temperature less willing to be moved,
My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
Would with an influence benign have soothed
Or chased away the airy wretchedness 325
- That batted on² thy youth. But thou hast trod,
In watchful meditation thou hast trod,
- [315] A march of glory, which doth put to shame
These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought 330
That ever harboured in the breast of man.

- A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
- [320] On wanderings of my own, and now to these
My poem leads me with an easier mind.
The employments of three winters when I wore 335
A student's gown have been already told,
Or shadowed forth as far as there is need—
When the third summer brought its liberty
A fellow student and myself, he too
A mountaineer, together sallied forth, 340
- [326] Towards the distant Alps.³ An open slight
Of college cares and study was the scheme,

9. Wordsworth's allusion to Platonic forms, or Ideas, is made without reference to the complex details of Plato's philosophy. "Schoolmen": medieval scholastic philosophers.

1. Because it was starved of natural education and reassurance, Coleridge's mind turned inwards. Creating merely from within himself, he was given to fantasy and idealism, mixing elements that can-

not mix, and mistaking words for things.

2. Grew fat upon.

3. "We went staff in hand," Wordsworth recalled in 1847, "and carrying each his needments tied up in a pocket handkerchief, with about twenty pounds apiece in our pockets" (*Memoirs*, I, p. 14). The friend was Robert Jones, who came from a mountainous district of Wales.

Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
 Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence, 295
 And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
 Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms⁹
 Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
 From things well-matched or ill, and words for things, 300
 The self-created sustenance of a mind
 Debarred from Nature's living images,
 Compelled to be a life unto herself,
 And unrelentingly possessed by thirst
 Of greatness, love, and beauty.¹ Not alone, 305
 Ah! surely not in singleness of heart
 Should I have seen the light of evening fade
 From smooth Cam's silent waters: had we met,
 Even at that early time, needs must I trust
 In the belief, that my maturer age, 310
 My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed,
 Or chased away, the airy wretchedness
 That battened² on thy youth. But thou hast trod
 A march of glory, which doth put to shame 315
 These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
 Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
 That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
 On wanderings of my own, that now embraced 320
 With livelier hope a region wider far.

When the third summer freed us from restraint,
 A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,
 Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
 And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side, 325
 Bound to the distant Alps.³ A hardy slight
 Did this unprecedented course imply
 Of college studies and their set rewards;

- Nor entertained⁴ without concern for those
 [332] To whom my worldly interests were dear,⁵ 345
 But Nature then was sovereign in my heart,
 And mighty forms seizing a youthful fancy
 [335] Had given a charter to irregular hopes.⁶
 In any age, without an impulse sent
 From work of nations and their goings-on, 350
 I should have been possessed by like desire;
 But 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
 [340] France standing on the top of golden hours,
 And human nature seeming born again.⁷
 Bound, as I said, to the Alps, it was our lot 355
 [345] To land at Calais on the very eve
 Of that great federal day;⁸ and there we saw,
 In a mean city and among a few,
 How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy of tens of millions. Southward thence 360
 [350] We took our way, direct through hamlets, towns,
 Gaudy with reliques of that festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs
 And window-garlands.⁹ On the public roads—
 And once three days successively through paths 365
 [355] By which our toilsome journey was abridged—
 Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, like spring
 That leaves no corner of the land untouched. 370
 [360] Where elms for many and many a league in files,
 With their thin umbrage,¹ on the stately roads
 Of that great kingdom rustled o'er our heads,

4. Nor was it entertained.

5. For the concern Wordsworth's trip in fact caused his family, see *EY*, p. 37. Coleridge, whose notes on Book VI (only) of *The Prelude* are preserved in *MS. B*, found 1805, 342–45 at first "obscure" and later "awkwardly expressed." "Thinking dilatation better than awkwardness," he "venture[d] to propose" a verbose alternative, much of which was accepted (see 1850, 326–32).

6. With 1805, 346 (1850, 333) compare *Tintern Abbey*, 73–76, "For Nature then / * * * To me was all in all." The "mighty forms" that had seized Wordsworth's fancy (or imagination; no distinction is made here) are mental pictures of the Alps. "Charter": authority, sanction.

7. 1805, 353 (1850, 340) echoes Shakespeare, sonnet 16, "Now stand you on the top of happy hours." In its early phase the French Revolution was peaceful and constitutional (the king was not deposed for three years, until August

1792). In Britain even Tories assumed until the publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* in November 1790 that France was re-enacting the English "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, at which power had effectively been transferred from the monarchy to Parliament.

8. Wordsworth and Jones landed in France on July 13, 1790. The fall of the Bastille (July 14, 1789), and the king's acceptance of a new, more democratic, constitution, were celebrated next day at a massive Fête de la Fédération in Paris, and throughout the country; see 1805, 397*n*, below.

9. The journey was of more than 1,500 miles, through France, Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, largely on foot, though at times by water. For Wordsworth's earliest account of the tour, see *Descriptive Sketches* (1792), on which the *Prelude* narrative draws heavily at various points.

1. Foliage.

Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
 Without uneasy forethought of the pain, 330
 The censures, and ill-omening of those
 To whom my worldly interests were dear.⁵
 But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,
 And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
 Had given a charter to irregular hopes.⁶ 335
 In any age of uneventful calm
 Among the nations, surely would my heart
 Have been possessed by similar desire;
 But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,
 France standing on the top of golden hours, 340
 And human nature seeming born again.⁷

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
 Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
 From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced
 To land at Calais on the very eve 345
 Of that great federal day;⁸ and there we saw,
 In a mean city, and among a few,
 How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence
 We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns, 350
 Gaudy with reliques of that festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
 And window-garlands.⁹ On the public roads,
 And, once, three days successively, through paths
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged, 355
 Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
 Hath left no corner of the land untouched:
 Where elms for many and many a league in files 360
 With their thin umbrage,¹ on the stately roads
 Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,

- For ever near us as we paced along,
 'Twas sweet at such a time—with such delights 375
- [365] On every side, in prime of youthful strength—
 To feed a poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, to the noise
 And gentle undulation which they made.
- [370] Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 380
 Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
 Of darkness, dances in the open air.
- [375] Among the vine-clad hills of Burgundy,
 Upon the bosom of the gentle Soane 385
 We glided forward with the flowing stream:
 Swift Rhone, thou wert the wings on which we cut
- [380] Between thy lofty rocks.² Enchanting show
 Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
 And single cottages and lurking towns—
 Reach after reach, procession without end, 390
 Of deep and stately vales. A lonely pair
- [385] Of Englishmen we were, and sailed along
 Clustered together with a merry crowd
 Of those emancipated, with a host
 Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning 395
 From the great spousals newly solemnized
- [390] At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.³
 Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;
 Some vapoured⁴ in the unruliness of joy,
 And flourished with their swords as if to fight 400
 The saucy⁵ air. In this blithe company
- [395] We landed, took with them our evening meal,
 Guests welcome almost as the angels were
 To Abraham of old.⁶ The supper done,
 With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts 405
 We rose at signal given, and formed a ring,
- [400] And hand in hand danced round and round the board;
 All hearts were open, every tongue was loud
 With amity and glee. We bore a name
 Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen, 410
 And hospitably did they give us hail
- [405] As their forerunners in a glorious course;⁷
 And round and round the board they danced again.

2. Coleridge's doubts about the intransitive use of "cut" led to the inclusion of 1850, 379. Reed, I, p. 101, points out that Wordsworth and Jones cannot in fact have traveled with the *fédérés* down both the Rhône and the Saône.

3. The marriage ("spousals") in Wordsworth's metaphor is between the king, Louis XVI, and the people of France. Louis had sworn fidelity to the new con-

stitution on an altar erected in the Champs de Mars on July 14, 1790.

4. Boasted, bragged, talked fantastically.

5. Impudent.

6. Abraham entertains three angels in Genesis 18:1–15, who tell him that Sarah, though ninety years old and duly incredulous, will bear a son, Isaac.

7. A reference to the "Glorious Revolution" of 1688.

For ever near us as we paced along:
 How sweet at such a time, with such delight
 On every side, in prime of youthful strength, 365
 To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
 Of undulations varying as might please
 The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once,
 Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 370
 Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
 Of darkness, dances in the open air
 Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
 Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills—

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy, 375
 Upon the bosom of the gentle Soane
 We glided forward with the flowing stream.
 Swift Rhone! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut
 A winding passage with majestic ease
 Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show 380
 Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
 And single cottages and lurking towns,
 Reach after reach, succession without end
 Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair
 Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along, 385
 Clustered together with a merry crowd
 Of those emancipated, a blithe host
 Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning
 From the great spousals newly solemnised
 At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven.³ 390
 Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;
 Some vapoured⁴ in the unruliness of joy,
 And with their swords flourished as if to fight
 The saucy⁵ air. In this proud company
 We landed—took with them our evening meal, 395
 Guests welcome almost as the angels were
 To Abraham of old.⁶ The supper done,
 With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts
 We rose at signal given, and formed a ring
 And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board; 400
 All hearts were open, every tongue was loud
 With amity and glee; we bore a name
 Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
 And hospitably did they give us hail,
 As their forerunners in a glorious course;⁷ 405
 And round and round the board we danced again.

- With this same throng our voyage we pursued
 At early dawn; the monastery bells 415
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears—
 [410] The rapid river flowing without noise—
 And every spire we saw among the rocks
 Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
 [413] Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew 420
 With which we were environed. Having parted
 From this glad rout, the convent of Chartreuse⁸
 Received us two days afterwards, and there
 [419] We rested in an awful⁹ solitude—
 Thence onward to the country of the Swiss. 425

8. Wordsworth did not compose for *The Prelude* an account of the “convent” of Chartreuse, the Carthusian monastery near Grenoble, until 1816/1819. His earliest descriptions of the monastery, how-

ever, go back to *Descriptive Sketches* of 1792, from which the *Prelude* account finally draws many of its details.

9. Awesome, awe-inspiring.

With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed
 At early dawn. The monastery bells
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears;
 The rapid river flowing without noise, 410
 And each uprising or receding spire
 Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals
 Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew
 By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave
 Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side, 415
 Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued
 Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set
 Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse,⁸ and there
 Rested within an awful⁹ *solitude*:
 Yes, for even then no other than a place 420
 Of soul-affecting *solitude* appeared
 That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,
 As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,
 Arms flashing, and a military glare
 Of riotous men commissioned to expel 425
 The blameless inmates, and belike subvert
 That frame of social being, which so long
 Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things
 In silence visible and perpetual calm.¹
 —‘Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!’—The voice 430
 Was Nature’s, uttered from her Alpine throne;
 I heard it then and seem to hear it now—
 ‘Your impious work forbear, perish what may,
 Let this one temple last, be this one spot
 Of earth devoted to eternity!’ 435
 She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno’s pines
 Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,
 And while below, along their several beds,
 Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,²
 Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart 440
 Responded; ‘Honour to the patriot’s zeal!
 Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
 Hail to the mighty projects of the time!
 Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
 Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires, 445
 Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,
 Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.
 But oh! if Past and Future be the wings

1. Wordsworth and Jones were at the Grande Chartreuse on August 4 and 5, 1790, and the monks were not in fact expelled until May–October 1792. *Descriptive Sketches*, 60, refers to the expulsion, but does not claim that the poet was present. “Frame of social being” (line

427): in effect, “community.” “Bodied forth”: embodied. “Ghostliness”: spirituality.

2. A reference to actual rivers, the Guiers Vif and the Guiers Mort, that join below the monastery; but to be read as primarily symbolic.

On whose support harmoniously conjoined
 Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare 450
 These courts of mystery, where a step advanced
 Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
 Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
 For penitential tears and trembling hopes
 Exchanged—to equalise in God's pure sight 455
 Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed
 With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
 Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved³
 Through faith and meditative reason, resting
 Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth, 460
 Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim
 Of that imaginative impulse sent
 From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
 The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,
 Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,⁴ 465
 These forests unapproachable by death,
 That shall endure as long as man endures,
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,
 To struggle, to be lost within himself
 In trepidation, from the blank abyss 470
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled.
 Not seldom since that moment have I wished
 That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm
 Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,
 In sympathetic reverence we trod 475
 The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
 From their foundation, strangers to the presence
 Of unrestricted and unthinking man:
 Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay
 Upon the open lawns!⁵ Vallombre's groves 480
 Entering, we fed the soul with darkness; thence
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
 In different quarters of the bending sky,
 The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if
 Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,⁶ 485
 Memorial revered by a thousand storms;
 Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep
 And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

3. Lines 454–58 are an elaboration belonging to 1832; “Life’s treacherous vanities” (line 453) replaces “the vanities of life” in Wordsworth’s final revisions.

4. Probably a reference to mountaintops that have survived unchanged through many ages, and which inhabit the deep blue (“cerulean”) upper air. See 1805, 572*n*, below.

5. Lawn: an open space between woods

(Johnson’s *Dictionary*).

6. “Alluding to crosses seen on the tops of the spiry rocks of the Chartreuse, which have every appearance of being inaccessible” (Wordsworth’s note to *Descriptive Sketches*, 71). Vallombre (line 480) is a valley near the monastery—not to be confused with the more famous Vallombrosa, in Italy.

- 'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
 [490] That variegated journey step by step;
 A march it was of military speed,
 And earth did change her images and forms
 Before us fast as clouds are changed in heaven. 430
 Day after day, up early and down late,
 [495] From vale to vale, from hill to hill we went,
 From province on to province did we pass,
 Keen hunters in a chace of fourteen weeks—
 Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship 435
 Upon the stretch when winds are blowing fair.
 [500] Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
 Enticing vallies—greeted them, and left
 Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
 Of salutation were not passed away. 440
 Oh, sorrow for the youth who could have seen
 [505] Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
 To patriarchal dignity of mind
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,
 [508] Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man. 445
 My heart leaped up when first I did look down
 On that which was first seen of those deep haunts,
 A green recess, an aboriginal vale,
 [520] Quiet, and lorded over and possessed 450
 By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
 Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
 And by the river-side.⁷

- That day we first
- [525] Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved
 To have a soulless image on the eye
 Which had usurped upon a living thought 455
 That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
 Of Chamouny did, on the following dawn,
 [530] With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice—
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 Five rivers broad and vast—make rich amends, 460
 And reconciled us to realities.

7. Compare Dorothy's account in her *Tour of the Continent* (1820) of coming upon this same vale, "this shady

deep recess, the very image of pastoral life, stillness and seclusion" (*Journals*, II, p. 280).

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace
 That variegated journey step by step. 490
 A march it was of military speed,
 And Earth did change her images and forms
 Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
 Day after day, up early and down late,
 From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill 495
 Mounted—from province on to province swept,
 Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,
 Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship
 Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair:
 Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life, 500
 Enticing valleys, greeted them and left
 Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
 Of salutation were not passed away.
 Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised 505
 To patriarchal dignity of mind,
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,
 Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,
 Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round
 With danger, varying as the seasons change), 510
 Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,
 Contented, from the moment that the dawn
 (Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
 Of soul-illumination) calls him forth
 To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks, 515
 Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart
 Down on a green recess, the first I saw
 Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,
 Quiet and lorded over and possessed 520
 By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents
 Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns
 And by the river side.⁷

That very day,
 From a bare ridge we also first beheld
 Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved 525
 To have a soulless image on the eye
 That had usurped upon a living thought
 That never more could be. The wondrous Vale
 Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon
 With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice, 530
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,
 And reconciled us to realities;

There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
 [535] The eagle soareth in the element,
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun, 465
 While Winter like a tamèd lion walks,
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 [540] Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld
 Or heard was fitted to our unripe state 470
 Of intellect and heart. By simple strains
 Of feeling, the pure breath of real life,
 We were not left untouched. With such a book
 Before our eyes we could not chuse but read
 [545] A frequent lesson of sound tenderness, 475
 The universal reason of mankind,
 The truth of young and old. Nor, side by side
 Pacing, two brother pilgrims, or alone
 Each with his humour,⁸ could we fail to abound—
 Craft this which hath been hinted at before— 480
 [550] In dreams and fictions pensively composed:
 Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
 And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,⁹
 Even among those solitudes sublime, 485
 And sober posies of funereal flowers,
 [555] Culled from the gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
 Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
 [559] Of vigour, never utterly asleep. 490
 Far different dejection once was mine—
 A deep and genuine sadness then I felt—
 The circumstances I will here relate
 Even as they were. Upturning with a band
 Of travellers, from the Valais we had clomb¹ 495
 Along the road that leads to Italy;
 A length of hours, making of these our guides,
 Did we advance, and, having reached an inn
 [565] Among the mountains, we together ate 500
 Our noon's repast, from which the travellers rose
 Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
 Descending by the beaten road that led
 Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off;
 [570] The only track now visible was one

8. In the old sense: disposition, state of mind.

9. Willow: a tree [i.e., foliage] worn by

forsaken lovers (*Johnson's Dictionary*); here an emblem of luxuriant melancholy.

1. Climbed.

There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
 The eagle soars high in the element, 535
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
 While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 Among the cottages by beds of flowers. 540

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
 Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
 Of intellect and heart. With such a book
 Before our eyes, we could not choose but read
 Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain 545
 And universal reason of mankind,
 The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side
 Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone
 Each with his humour,⁸ could we fail to abound
 In dreams and fictions, pensively composed: 550
 Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
 And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,⁹
 And sober posies of funereal flowers,
 Gathered among those solitudes sublime
 From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow, 555
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
 Mixed something of stern mood, an under-thirst
 Of vigour seldom utterly allayed.
 And from that source how different a sadness 560
 Would issue, let one incident make known.
 When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb¹
 Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,
 Following a band of muleteers, we reached
 A halting-place, where all together took 565
 Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,
 Leaving *us* at the board; awhile we lingered,
 Then paced the beaten downward way that led
 Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;
 The only track now visible was one 570

Upon the further side, right opposite, 505
 And up a lofty mountain. This we took,
 After a little scruple² and short pause,
 [575] And climbed with eagerness—though not, at length,
 Without surprize and some anxiety
 On finding that we did not overtake 510
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment now encreased our doubts,
 A peasant met us, and from him we learned
 [580] That to the place which had perplexed us first
 We must descend, and there should find the road 515
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks—
 And further, that thenceforward all our course
 [585] Was downwards with the current of that stream. 520
 Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
 And all the answers which the man returned
 To our inquiries, in their sense and substance
 [590] Translated by the feelings which we had,
 Ended in this—that we had crossed the Alps.

Imagination!—lifting up itself 525
 Before the eye and progress of my song
 [595] Like an unfathered vapour, here that power,
 In all the might of its endowments, came
 Athwart me. I was lost as in a cloud,
 Halted without a struggle to break through,³ 530
 And now, recovering, to my soul I say
 'I recognise thy glory'. In such strength
 Of usurpation, in such visitings
 [600] Of awful promise, when the light of sense
 Goes out in flashes that have shewn to us 535
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
 There harbours whether we be young or old.
 Our destiny, our nature, and our home,
 [605] Is with infinitude—and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die, 540
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be.
 The mind beneath such banners militant
 [610] Thinks not of spoils or trophies, nor of aught 545
 That may attest its prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward—

2. Doubt, difficulty of determination (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

3. Wordsworth switches abruptly from past disappointment (August 1790) to a celebration of present creative power (March 1804). *MS WW* shows, however, that the impressive juxtaposition of 1805,

524 and 525 (1850, 591 and 592) is a second thought. In the original draft the lines are separated by the simile of the cave (finally 1805, VIII, 711–27; 1850, VIII, 560–76) in which Wordsworth sought to define his sense of anticlimax at having unknowingly crossed the Alps.

That from the torrent's further brink held forth
 Conspicuous invitation to ascend
 A lofty mountain. After brief delay
 Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,
 And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears 575
 Intruded, for we failed to overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment added doubt to doubt,
 A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
 That to the spot which had perplexed us first 580
 We must descend, and there should find the road,
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks;
 And, that our future course, all plain to sight,
 Was downwards, with the current of that stream. 585
 Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
 For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
 We questioned him again, and yet again;
 But every word that from the peasant's lips
 Came in reply, translated by our feelings, 590
 Ended in this,—*that we had crossed the Alps.*

Imagination—here the Power so called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech,
 That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss 595
 Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps,
 At once, some lonely traveller. I was lost;
 Halted without an effort to break through;³
 But to my conscious soul I now can say—
 'I recognise thy glory': in such strength
 Of usurpation, when the light of sense 600
 Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
 The invisible world, doth greatness make abode,
 There harbours, whether we be young or old.⁴
 Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
 Is with infinitude, and only there; 605
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be.
 Under such banners militant, the soul
 Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils 610
 That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward,

4. Wordsworth's revisions of 1805, 532–37—especially his elimination of “such visitings,” the plural “flashes,” and “shewn to us” (1805, 533–35)—make an impor-

tant difference. In 1805 the experience described is recurrent, and available to others; in 1850, the lines can be read as referring to a single apocalyptic event.

Strong in itself, and in the access of joy
Which hides it like the overflowing Nile.

- [617] The dull and heavy slackening which ensued
Upon those tidings by the peasant given 550
Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast,
[620] And entered with the road which we had missed
Into a narrow chasm. The brook and road
Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,
And with them did we journey several hours 555
At a slow step. The immeasurable height
[625] Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And everywhere along the hollow rent
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn, 560
The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
[630] The rocks that muttered close upon our ears—
Black drizzling crags that spake by the wayside
As if a voice were in them—the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,⁵ 565
The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
[635] Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light,
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great apocalypse, 570
The types and symbols of eternity,
[640] Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.⁶

- That night our lodging was an alpine house,
An inn, or hospital (as they are named),
Standing in that same valley by itself, 575
And close upon the confluence of two streams—
[645] A dreary mansion, large beyond all need,
With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
Lie melancholy among weary bones.⁷ 580

5. Compare *Descriptive Sketches*, 243–62, and the magnificent lines that Wordsworth inserted at this point ca. January 1807, but cut in 1832 or 1839: “And ever as we halted, or crept on, / Huge fragments of primaeval mountain spread / In powerless ruin, blocks as huge aloft / Impending, nor permitted yet to fall, / The sacred-death-cross, monument forlorn / Though frequent of the perished traveller * * *”

6. Wordsworth’s claims in *1805*, 570–72 (1850, 638–40) are less extravagant than perhaps they may seem. Contemporary geological theory held that all but the highest alpine peaks had been created by

the retreating waters of the Flood. The features of the landscape would have been engraved, “charactered,” by the first great apocalyptic event: they would also be in a different sense “characters,” or symbols, of the last—the millennium yet to come. *1805*, 572 (1850, 640) is drawn almost verbatim from Milton’s description of God in *Paradise Lost*, V, 165.

7. The Wordsworths visited this “dreary mansion” on their continental tour of 1820, but Dorothy could not persuade her brother to go inside (*Journals*, II, pp. 258–59). “Innocent sleep”: from *Macbeth*, II, ii, 36.

Strong in herself and in beatitude
 That hides her, like the mighty flood of Nile
 Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds 615
 To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
 And, with the half-shaped road which we had missed, 620
 Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy strait,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed, 625
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And in the narrow rent at every turn
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears, 630
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,⁵
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light— 635
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of Eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.⁶ 640

That night our lodging was a house that stood
 Alone within the valley, at a point
 Where, tumbling from aloft, a torrent swelled
 The rapid stream whose margin we had trod;
 A dreary mansion, large beyond all need, 645
 With high and spacious rooms, deafened and stunned
 By noise of waters, making innocent sleep
 Lie melancholy among weary bones.⁷

- Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,
 [650] Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified
 Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
 Dimpling along in silent majesty
 With mountains for its neighbours, and in view 585
 Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
 [655] And thus proceeding to Locarno's lake,
 Fit resting-place for such a visitant.⁸
 Locarno, spreading out in width like heaven,
 [660] And Como thou—a treasure by the earth 590
 Kept to itself, a darling bosomed up
 In Abyssinian privacy⁹—I spake
 Of thee, thy chestnut woods and garden plots
 Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids,
 [665] Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines 595
 Winding from house to house, from town to town
 (Sole link that binds them to each other), walks
 League after league, and cloistral avenues
 Where silence is if music be not there:
 [670] While yet a youth undisciplined in verse, 600
 Through fond ambition of my heart I told
 Your praises,¹ nor can I approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious song,
 Where tones of learned art and Nature mixed
 [675] May frame enduring language. Like a breeze 605
 Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause; but ye have left
 Your beauty with me, an impassioned sight
 [680] Of colours and of forms, whose power is sweet 610
 And gracious, almost, might I dare to say,
 As virtue is, or goodness—sweet as love,
 Or the remembrance of a noble deed,
 Or gentlest visitations of pure thought
 [685] When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked 615
 Religiously in silent blessedness—
 Sweet as this last itself, for such it is.²

Through those delightful pathways we advanced
 Two days, and still in presence of the lake,
 [690] Which winding up among the Alps now changed

8. The river Tusa finds its resting place in Lake Maggiore.

9. An allusion to Milton's description of Abyssinia as the place where Paradise was mistakenly supposed to have been located, in *Paradise Lost*, IV, 280–82: "Nor where Abassin kings their issue guard, / Mount Amara, though this by some supposed / True Paradise * * *"

1. A reference to *Descriptive Sketches*, 80–161, written when the poet was twenty-one or twenty-two.

2. "It" refers to beauty's "power" in 1805, 609 (1850, 680) which is as sweet as the silent prayer of thankfulness to God, because the power of such beauty in fact consists in drawing from the observer this prayerful response.

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed,
 Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified 650
 Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
 Dimpling along in silent majesty,
 With mountains for its neighbours, and in view
 Of distant mountains and their snowy tops,
 And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake, 655
 Fit resting-place for such a visitant.⁸
 Locarno! spreading out in width like Heaven,
 How dost thou cleave to the poetic heart,
 Bask in the sunshine of the memory;
 And Como! thou, a treasure whom the earth 660
 Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth
 Of Abyssinian privacy,⁹ I spake
 Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots
 Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids;
 Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines, 665
 Winding from house to house, from town to town,
 Sole link that binds them to each other; walks,
 League after league, and cloistral avenues,
 Where silence dwells if music be not there:
 While yet a youth undisciplined in verse, 670
 Through fond ambition of that hour, I strove
 To chant your praise;¹ nor can approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious Song,
 Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art
 May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze 675
 Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause; but ye have left
 Your beauty with me, a serene accord
 Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
 In their submissiveness with power as sweet 680
 And gracious, almost might I dare to say,
 As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love,
 Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
 Or mildest visitations of pure thought,
 When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked 685
 Religiously, in silent blessedness;
 Sweet is this last herself, for such it is.²

With those delightful pathways we advanced,
 For two days' space, in presence of the Lake,
 That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed 690

- Slowly its lovely countenance and put on
 A sterner character. The second night,
 In eagerness, and by report³ misled
 Of those Italian clocks that speak the time
 In fashion different from ours, we rose
 [695] By moonshine, doubting not that day was near,⁴ 625
 And that, meanwhile, coasting the water's edge
 As hitherto, and with as plain a track
 To be our guide, we might behold the scene
 In its most deep repose. We left the town
 [700] Of Gravedona with this hope, but soon 630
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 Where, having wandered for a while, we stopped
 And on a rock sate down to wait for day.
 An open place it was and overlooked
 From high the sullen water underneath,
 [705] On which a dull red image of the moon 635
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
 Like an uneasy snake. Long time we sate,
 For scarcely more than one hour of the night—
 Such was our error—had been gone when we
 Renewed our journey. On the rock we lay
 [711] And wished to sleep, but could not for the stings 640
 Of insects, which with noise like that of noon
 Filled all the woods. The cry of unknown birds,
 The mountains—more by darkness visible
 [715] And their own size, than any outward light⁵— 645
 The breathless wilderness of clouds, the clock
 That told with unintelligible voice
 The widely parted hours, the noise of streams,
 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand
 [720] Which did not leave us free from personal fear, 650
 And lastly, the withdrawing moon that set
 Before us while she still was high in heaven—
 These were our food, and such a summer night
 Did to that pair of golden days succeed,
 [725] With now and then a doze and snatch of sleep, 655
 On Como's banks, the same delicious lake.
- [727] But here I must break off, and quit at once,
 Though loth, the record of these wanderings,
 A theme which may seduce me else beyond
 All reasonable bounds. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not 660

3. Sound, message.

4. A single bell was used to mark the quarters; 1:45 A.M. (three bells for the quarters, one for the hour) could thus

have been mistaken for 4:00 A.M.

5. I.e., made visible more by their darkness and their size than by any light that fell upon them.

A character more stern. The second night,
 From sleep awakened, and misled by sound
 Of the church clock telling the hours with strokes
 Whose import then we had not learned, we rose
 By moonlight, doubting not that day was nigh,⁴ 695
 And that meanwhile, by no uncertain path,
 Along the winding margin of the lake,
 Led, as before, we should behold the scene
 Hushed in profound repose. We left the town
 Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon 700
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.
 An open place it was, and overlooked,
 From high, the sullen water far beneath,
 On which a dull red image of the moon 705
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
 Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour
 We sate and sate, wondering, as if the night
 Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock
 At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep, 710
 But *could not* sleep, tormented by the stings
 Of insects, which, with noise like that of noon,
 Filled all the woods. The cry of unknown birds;
 The mountains more by blackness visible
 And their own size, than any outward light;⁵ 715
 The breathless wilderness of clouds; the clock
 That told, with unintelligible voice,
 The widely parted hours; the noise of streams,
 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand,
 That did not leave us free from personal fear; 720
 And, lastly, the withdrawing moon, that set
 Before us, while she still was high in heaven;—
 These were our food; and such a summer's night
 Followed that pair of golden days that shed
 On Como's Lake, and all that round it lay, 725
 Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell
 To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught
 With some untried adventure, in a course
 Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow 730
 Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not

- In hollow exultation, dealing forth
Hyperboles of praise comparative;
- [735] Not rich one moment to be poor for ever; 665
Not prostrate, overborne—as if the mind
Itself were nothing, a mean pensioner
On outward forms—did we in presence stand
Of that magnificent region.⁶ On the front
- [740] Of this whole song is written that my heart 670
Must, in such temple, needs have offered up
A different worship. Finally, whate'er
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
- [744] That flowed into a kindred stream, a gale 675
That helped me forwards, did administer
To grandeur and to tenderness—to the one
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
- [750] Less often instantaneous in effect—
Conducted me to these along a path
Which, in the main, was more circuitous. 680

- Oh most belovèd friend, a glorious time,
[755] A happy time that was. Triumphant looks
Were then the common language of all eyes:
As if awaked from sleep, the nations hailed
Their great expectancy; the fife of war 685
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
- [760] A blackbird's whistle in a vernal grove.
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
Of their neighbours, and, when shortening fast
Our pilgrimage—nor distant far from home— 690
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret⁷
- [765] For battle in the cause of Liberty.⁸
A stripling, scarcely of the household then
Of social life,⁹ I looked upon these things
As from a distance—heard, and saw, and felt, 695
Was touched but with no intimate concern—
- [770] I seemed to move among them as a bird
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
Its business in its proper¹ element.
I needed not that joy, I did not need 700
- [774] Such help: the ever-living universe
And independent spirit of pure youth
Were with me at that season, and delight
Was in all places spread around my steps
As constant as the grass upon the fields. 705

6. An important restatement at the center of the poem of Wordsworth's continuing theme: the creative interplay between the mind and the forms of external ("outward") Nature.

7. Eagerly anticipating.

8. Republican troops of the short-lived États Beligiques Unis, which included Brabant. Leopold II restored Austrian rule two months later, in December 1790.

9. Scarcely initiated into adult life.

1. Own; French *propre*.

In hollow exultation, dealing out
 Hyperboles of praise comparative;
 Not rich one moment to be poor for ever; 735
 Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
 Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner
 On outward forms—did we in presence stand
 Of that magnificent region.⁶ On the front
 Of this whole Song is written that my heart 740
 Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up
 A different worship. Finally, whate'er
 I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
 That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,
 Confederate with the current of the soul, 745
 To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
 In its degree of power, administered
 To grandeur or to tenderness,—to the one
 Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
 Less often instantaneous in effect; 750
 Led me to these by paths that, in the main,
 Were more circuitous, but not less sure
 Duty to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most belovèd Friend! a glorious time,
 A happy time that was; triumphant looks 755
 Were then the common language of all eyes;
 As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
 Their great expectancy: the fife of war
 Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,
 A black-bird's whistle in a budding grove. 760
 We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
 Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening fast
 Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
 We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret⁷
 For battle in the cause of liberty.⁸ 765
 A stripling, scarcely of the household then
 Of social life,⁹ I looked upon these things
 As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
 Was touched, but with no intimate concern;
 I seemed to move among them, as a bird 770
 Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
 Its sport, or feeds in its proper¹ element;
 I wanted not that joy, I did not need
 Such help; the ever-living universe,
 Turn where I might, was opening out its glories, 775
 And the independent spirit of pure youth
 Called forth, at every season, new delights
 Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

Book Seventh

Residence in London

- Five years are vanished since I first poured out,
Saluted by that animating breeze
Which met me issuing from the city's walls,
A glad preamble to this verse.² I sang
[15] Aloud in dithyrambic fervour,³ deep 5
But short-lived uproar, like a torrent sent
Out of the bowels of a bursting cloud
Down Scawfell or Blencathara,⁴ rugged sides,
A waterspout from heaven. But 'twas not long
Ere the interrupted strain broke forth once more, 10
[10] And flowed awhile in strength; then stopped for years—
Not heard again until a little space
Before last primrose-time.⁵ Belovèd friend,
The assurances then given unto myself,
Which did beguile me of some heavy thoughts 15
At thy departure to a foreign land,
[15] Have failed; for slowly doth this work advance.
Through the whole summer have I been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday
And part through outward hindrance.⁶ But I heard 20
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
[20] Sitting within doors betwixt light and dark,
A voice that stirred me. 'Twas a little band,
A quire⁷ of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold, minstrels from the distant woods 25
And dells, sent in by Winter to bespeak

2. Writing in October 1804 (see *1805*, 50n, below), Wordsworth looks back five years to the composition of his "Glad Preamble" (*1805*, I, 1-54; *1850*, I, 1-51) ca. November 18, 1799. For comment on "the city's walls" (line 3), see *1805*, I, 8n, above.

3. Dithyrambic: wild, enthusiastick (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

4. Scafell and Blencathra are peaks in the Lake District.

5. The pattern of composition that Wordsworth describes in *1805*, 1-13 (*1850*, 1-12) is broadly accurate, but distorted by his implication—required, of course, by the structure of the poem—that the Preamble (*1805*, I, 1-54) was the first part of *The Prelude* to be written. The two early bursts of composition referred to in lines 4-11 are Parts I and II of 1799, separated by six months; and the new beginning after a silence of years (lines 12-13) is the start of the five-Book *Prelude* in January 1804. It is Wordsworth's incorporation of specific

dates that makes it clear that he is re-ordering the past. "Five years" (*1805*, line 1) refers the reader back correctly from October 1804 to the writing of the Preamble, November 1799, but obscures the true beginnings of *The Prelude* in October 1798; "Six changeful years" (the very late emendation found in *1850*, line 1) misdates the Preamble, but accurately reflects the dating of 1799, I.

6. Wordsworth in January—early March 1804 had assured himself that his poem could be completed in five Books before Coleridge left England; then in March, partly to distract himself as Coleridge's departure grew near (see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below) he had decided to create a new longer poem. Work had proceeded fast until mid-June, but then had been shelved. "Outward hindrance" had included visitors to Dove Cottage, and the birth of the poet's daughter Dora on August 16 (*EY*, p. 511).

7. Choir.

Book Seventh

Residence in London

Six changeful years¹ have vanished since I first
Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
Which met me issuing from the City's walls)
A glad preamble to this Verse:² I sang
Aloud, with fervour irresistible 5
Of short-lived transport, like a torrent bursting,
From a black thunder-cloud, down Scaffell's side
To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth
(So willed the Muse) a less impetuous stream,
That flowed awhile with unabating strength, 10
Then stopped for years; not audible again
Before last primrose-time.⁵ Belovèd Friend!
The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts
On thy departure to a foreign land
Has failed; too slowly moves the promised work. 15
Through the whole summer have I been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday,
And part through outward hindrance.⁶ But I heard,
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors between light and dark, 20
A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold,—ministrels from the distant woods

1. See 1805, line 13*n*, below.

- For the old man a welcome, to announce
 With preparation artful and benign—
 Yea, the most gentle music of the year—
- [25] That their rough lord had left the surly north, 30
 And hath begun his journey. A delight
 At this unthought-of greeting unawares
 Smote me, a sweetness of the coming time,
 And, listening, I half whispered, 'We will be,
 Ye heartsome choristers, ye and I will be 35
 [30] Brethren, and in the hearing of bleak winds
 Will chaunt together.' And, thereafter, walking
 By later twilight on the hills I saw
 A glow-worm, from beneath a dusky shade
 Or canopy of the yet unwithered fern 40
 [35] Clear shining, like a hermit's taper seen
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before: the child
 Of summer, lingering, shining by itself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills, 45
 [40] Seemed sent on the same errand with the quire
 Of winter that had warbled at my door,
 And the whole year seemed tenderness and love.
 The last night's genial feeling⁸ overflowed
 Upon this morning,⁹ and my favorite grove— 50
 [45] Now tossing its dark boughs in sun and wind—
 Spreads through me a commotion like its own,
 Something that fits me for the poet's task,¹
 Which we will now resume with chearful hope,
 [50] Nor checked by aught of tamer argument 55
 That lies before us, needful to be told.

- Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
 Farewell for ever to the private bowers
- [54] Of gowned students—quitted these, no more 60
 To enter them, and pitched my vagrant tent,
 A casual dweller and at large, among
 The unfenced regions of society.²

8. Warmth, cheerfulness, perhaps also with the implication of creativity (*NED*).

9. Lines 1–50 were originally written as the opening to Book VIII, the first Book to be composed when Wordsworth resumed work on *The Prelude* in early October 1804. For the original opening of VII, and the date at which the openings were transferred, see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below.

1. The grove of firs in Ladywood, half a mile from Dove Cottage, was Words-

worth's favorite, for the sake of his brother John, who had worn a path by walking there in 1800; see "When to the attractions of the busy world," *Poems on the Naming of Places*, VI.

2. Wordsworth took his B.A. in January 1791, three months after returning from his French "excursion" (1805, 57; 1850, 52), subject of Book VI. "Unfenced regions": commons, as opposed to the enclosed, and privileged, academic bowers of Cambridge.

Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,
 With preparation artful and benign,
 That the rough lord had left the surly North 25
 On his accustomed journey. The delight,
 Due to this timely notice, unawares
 Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,
 'Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
 Associates, and, unscared by blustering winds, 30
 Will chant together.' Thereafter, as the shades
 Of twilight deepened, going forth, I spied
 A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
 Or canopy of yet unwithered fern,
 Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen 35
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before; the child
 Of Summer, lingering, shining by herself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
 Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir 40
 Of Winter that had warbled at my door,
 And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

The last night's genial⁸ feeling overflowed
 Upon this morning, and my favourite grove,
 Tossing in sunshine its dark boughs aloft, 45
 As if to make the strong wind visible,
 Wakes in me agitations like its own,
 A spirit friendly to the Poet's task,¹
 Which we will now resume with lively hope,
 Nor checked by aught of tamer argument 50
 That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
 Farewell for ever to the sheltered seats
 Of gownèd students, quitted hall and bower,
 And every comfort of that privileged ground, 55
 Well pleased to pitch a vagrant tent among
 The unfenced regions of society.²

- Yet undetermined to what plan of life
 I should adhere, and seeming thence to have
 [60] A little space of intermediate time 65
 Loose and at full command, to London first
 I turned, if not in calmness, nevertheless
 In no disturbance of excessive hope—
 At ease from all ambition personal,
 Frugal as there was need, and though self-willed, 70
 Yet temperate and reserved, and wholly free
 [65] From dangerous passions. 'Twas at least two years
 Before this season when I first beheld
 That mighty place, a transient visitant,³
 And now it pleased me my abode to fix 75
 Single in the wide waste. To have a house,
 It was enough—what matter for a home?—
 That owned me, living cheerfully abroad
 [75] With fancy on the stir from day to day,
 And all my young affections out of doors. 80

- There was a time when whatso'er is feigned
 Of airy palaces and gardens built
 By genii of romance, or hath in grave
 [80] Authentic history been set forth of Rome,
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis, 85
 Or given upon report by pilgrim friars
 Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
 Among Tartarean wilds,⁴ fell short, far short,
 [85] Of that which I in simpleness believed
 And thought of London—held me by a chain 90
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
 I know not that herein I shot beyond
 The common mark of childhood, but I well
 [90] Remember that among our flock of boys
 Was one, a cripple from the birth, whom chance 95
 Summoned from school to London—fortunate
 And envied traveller—and when he returned,
 After short absence, and I first set eyes
 Upon his person, verily, though strange
 [95] The thing may seem, I was not wholly free 100
 From disappointment to behold the same
 Appearance, the same body, not to find
 Some change, some beams of glory brought away
 From that new region. Much I questioned him,

3. Wordsworth apparently visited London first in 1788.

4. Alcairo: Memphis, near the site of modern Cairo, mentioned with Babylon for its magnificence in *Paradise Lost*, I, 717–18. Persepolis: capital of the Per-

sian Empire, sacked by Alexander the Great in 331 B.C. In his reference to "pilgrim friars," "golden cities," and "Tartarean wilds," Wordsworth has in mind *Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625), source of the opening lines of *Kubla Khan*.

Yet undetermined to what course of life
 I should adhere, and seeming to possess 60
 A little space of intermediate time
 At full command, to London first I turned,
 In no disturbance of excessive hope,
 By personal ambition unenslaved,
 Frugal as there was need, and, though self-willed,
 From dangerous passions free. Three years had flown 65
 Since I had felt in heart and soul the shock
 Of the huge town's first presence, and had paced
 Her endless streets, a transient visitant:³
 Now, fixed amid that concourse of mankind
 Where Pleasure whirls about incessantly, 70
 Or life and labour seem but one, I filled
 An idler's place; an idler well content
 To have a house (what matter for a home?)
 That owned him; living cheerfully abroad
 With unchecked fancy ever on the stir, 75
 And all my young affections out of doors.

There was a time when whatso'er is feigned
 Of airy palaces, and gardens built
 By Genii of romance; or hath in grave
 Authentic history been set forth of Rome, 80
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis;
 Or given upon report by pilgrim friars,
 Of golden cities ten months' journey deep
 Among Tartarian wilds⁴—fell short, far short,
 Of what my fond simplicity believed 85
 And thought of London—held me by a chain
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
 Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot
 For me beyond its ordinary mark,
 'Twere vain to ask; but in our flock of boys 90
 Was One, a cripple from his birth, whom chance
 Summoned from school to London; fortunate
 And envied traveller! When the Boy returned,
 After short absence, curiously I scanned
 His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth, 95
 From disappointment, not to find some change
 In look and air, from that new region brought,
 As if from Fairy-land. Much I questioned him;

- And every word he uttered, on my ears 105
 [100] Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note,
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvellous things
 My fancy had shaped forth of sights and shows,
 Processions, equipages,⁵ lords and dukes, 110
 The King and the King's palace, and not last
 [110] Or least, heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor—
 Dreams hardly less intense than those which wrought
 A change of purpose in young Whittington
 When he in friendlessness, a drooping boy, 115
 Sate on a stone and heard the bells speak out
 [115] Articulate music.⁶ Above all, one thought
 Baffled my understanding, how men lived
 Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
 Strangers, and knowing not each other's names. 120

- Oh wondrous power of words, how sweet they are
 According to the meaning which they bring—
 [121] Vauxhall and Ranelagh, I then had heard
 Of your green groves and wilderness of lamps,
 [124] Your gorgeous ladies, fairy cataracts, 125
 And pageant fireworks.⁷ Nor must we forget
 Those other wonders, different in kind
 Though scarcely less illustrious in degree,
 The river proudly bridged, the giddy top
 [130] And Whispering Gallery of St Paul's, the tombs 130
 Of Westminster, the Giants of Guildhall,
 Bedlam and the two figures at its gates,⁸
 Streets without end and churches numberless,
 [135] Statues with flowery gardens in vast squares,
 The Monument, and Armoury of the Tower.⁹ 135
 These fond imaginations, of themselves,
 Had long before given way in season due,
 Leaving a throng of others in their stead;
 And now I looked upon the real scene,
 [145] Familiarly perused it day by day, 140

5. Carriages with attendant servants.

6. According to the legend of Dick Whittington, the bells' message was "Turn again Whittington, / Lord Mayor of London." The historical Richard Whittington was at no stage friendless; he was three times Lord Mayor, and died in 1423.

7. Vauxhall and Ranelagh were fashionable pleasure gardens on the Thames, which provided entertainments of many kinds. On fireworks nights there was an additional charge.

8. The Whispering Gallery goes around inside the dome of St. Paul's; the unusual acoustics mean that a whisper will travel the entire circumference of the

dome, returning to the point at which it was made. The Giants of Guildhall were carved wooden figures of Gog and Magog, who have a biblical source in Revelation 20:7-9 but have become a part of popular tradition. Bedlam, the Bethlehem hospital for the insane in Moorfields, was a popular tourist attraction, and had carved stone figures of maniacs lying at the gates (see 1850).

9. The London Monument was erected by Sir Christopher Wren in 1671-77, to commemorate the great fire of London in 1666. The "Armoury" (1805, 135) is one of the showpieces of the Tower of London.

And every word he uttered, on my ears
 Fell flatter than a caged parrot's note, 100
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the prompter's listening. Marvelous things
 Had vanity (quick Spirit that appears
 Almost as deeply seated and as strong
 In a Child's heart as fear itself) conceived 105
 For my enjoyment. Would that I could now
 Recal what then I pictured to myself
 Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,
 The King, and the King's Palace, and, not last,
 Nor least, Heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor: 110
 Dreams not unlike to those which once begot
 A change of purpose in young Whittington,
 When he, a friendless and a drooping boy,
 Sate on a stone, and heard the bells speak out
 Articulate music.⁶ Above (all, one thought 115
 Baffled my understanding: how men lived
 Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
 Strangers, nor knowing each the other's name.

O, wond'rous power of words, by simple faith 120
 Licensed to take the meaning that we love!
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh!⁷ I then had heard
 Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
 Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
 And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes, 125
 Floating in dance, or warbling high in air
 The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
 With less delight upon that other class
 Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent:
 The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top 130
 And Whispering Gallery of St. Paul's; the tombs
 Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
 Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates,
 Perpetually recumbent;⁸ Statues—man,
 And the horse under him—in gilded pomp 135
 Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares;
 The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower
 Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
 Their steeds bestriding,⁹—every mimic shape
 Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore, 140
 Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed,
 Or life or death upon the battlefield.
 Those bold imaginations in due time
 Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
 And now I looked upon the living scene;
 Familiarly perused it; oftentimes, 145

- With keen and lively pleasure even there
 Where disappointment was the strongest, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 [148] Paid to the object by prescriptive right,
 A thing that ought to be. Shall I give way, 145
 Copying the impression of the memory—
 Though things remembered idly do half seem
 The work of fancy—shall I, as the mood
 Inclines me, here describe for pastime's sake,
 Some portion of that motley imagery, 150
 A vivid pleasure of my youth, and now,
 Among the lonely places that I love,
 A frequent daydream for my riper mind?
 And first, the look and aspect of the place—
 The broad highway appearance, as it strikes 155
 On strangers of all ages, the quick dance
 [155] Of colours, lights and forms, the Babel din,
 The endless stream of men and moving things,
 From hour to hour the illimitable walk
 Still among streets, with clouds and sky above, 160
 The wealth, the bustle and the eagerness,
 The glittering chariots with their pampered steeds,
 Stalls, barrows, porters, midway in the street
 The scavenger that begs with hat in hand,
 The labouring hackney-coaches,¹ the rash speed 165
 Of coaches travelling far, whirled on with horn
 Loud blowing, and the sturdy drayman's team
 Ascending from some alley of the Thames
 And striking right across the crowded Strand
 Till the fore-horse veer round with punctual skill: 170
 Here, there, and everywhere, a weary throng,
 [156] The comers and the goers face to face—
 Face after face—the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead: 175
 [160] Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;
 Stationed above the door like guardian saints,
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
 Or physiognomies of real men, 180
 [165] Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
 Boyle, Shakespear, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.³

1. Coaches for hire, as opposed to the "chariots" of line 162, the carriages of the wealthy.

3. Robert Boyle (1627–91) was a chemist, founder-member of the Royal Society, and originator of "Boyle's Law." "Quack" is an early correction by Dorothy of "Scotch." The reference is spe-

cifically to John Graham (1745–94), handsome, Scottish, and an impudent pretender to remarkable medical cures, who set up a Temple of Health at the Adelphi in 1779, and is referred to in Wordsworth's *Imitation of Juvenal* (1796).

In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
 Of a too busy world! Before me flow, 150
 Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
 Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes—
 With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe—
 On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
 Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din;² 155
 The comers and the goers face to face,
 Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead:
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page, 160
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;
 Stationed above the door, like guardian saints,
There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
 Or physiognomies of real men,
 Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea, 165
 Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.³

2. Wordsworth's text of lines 149–55 reaches its final shape, after many revi-

sions, in 1839. 1805, lines 163–71 are cut by 1816/19.

- Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
Escaped as from an enemy, we turn 185
- [170] Abruptly into some sequestered nook,
Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud.
At leisure thence, through tracts of thin resort,⁴
And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
We take our way—a raree-show⁵ is here 190
- [175] With children gathered round, another street
Presents a company of dancing dogs,
Or dromedary with an antic⁶ pair
Of monkeys on his back, a minstrel-band
Of Savoyards,⁷ single and alone, 195
- [180] An English ballad-singer. Private courts,⁸
Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
Thrilled by some female vendor's scream—belike
The very shrillest of all London cries⁹—
May then entangle us awhile, 200
- [185] Conducted through those labyrinths unawares
To privileged regions and inviolate,
Where from their aery lodges studious lawyers
Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.¹
- Thence back into the throng, until we reach— 205
- [190] Following the tide that slackens by degrees—
Some half-frequented scene where wider streets
Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.²
Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;³
Advertisements of giant size, from high 210
- [195] Press forward in all colours on the sight—
These, bold in conscious merit—lower down,
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
Is peradventure one in masquerade.⁴
As on the broadening causeway we advance, 215
- [200] Behold a face turned up towards us, strong
In lineaments, and red with over-toil:
'Tis one perhaps already met elsewhere,

4. Places where few people went.

5. A peep show, carried about in a box.

6. Buffooning.

7. Traveling minstrel bands from Savoy, a region in southeast France.

8. Courtyards.

9. Hawkers' proclamation of wares to be sold in the street (*Johnson's Dictionary*). "Thrilled" (1805, 198; 1850, 182): pierced.

1. Wordsworth seems to have lived with his brother Richard at Staple Inn after his return from France at the end of 1792, and with Basil Montagu at Lincoln's Inn early in 1795 (Reed, I, pp.

138, 163). The inns of court are still remarkably secluded.

2. Fresh air from outside the city.

3. Walls without doors or windows, used by the ballad sellers to display their wares.

4. Wordsworth is pointing out advertisements: *these* on the one hand, *that* on the other. *MS. X* shows the "most imposing word" of 1805, 213 (1850, 197) to have been "Inviting." The poster was "in masquerade" (a "joker") in that it disguised the true nature of the goods on sale.

Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
 Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
 Abruptly into some sequestered nook, 170
 Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!
 At leisure, thence, through tracts of thin resort,⁴
 And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
 We take our way. A raree-show⁵ is here,
 With children gathered round; another street 175
 Presents a company of dancing dogs,
 Or dromedary, with an antic⁶ pair
 Of monkeys on his back; a minstrel band
 Of Savoyards;⁷ or, single and alone,
 An English ballad-singer. Private courts,⁸ 180
 Gloomy as coffins, and unsightly lanes
 Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
 The very shrillest of all London cries,⁹
 May then entangle our impatient steps;
 Conducted through those labyrinths, unawares, 185
 To privileged regions and inviolate,
 Where from their airy lodges studious lawyers
 Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.¹

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees, 190
 Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.²
 Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;³
 Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
 Press forward, in all colours, on the sight; 195
 These, bold in conscious merit, lower down
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
 Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.⁴
 As on the broadening causeway we advance,
 Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong 200
 In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
 'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;

- A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
 And stumping with his arms.⁵ In sailor's garb 220
 [205] Another lies at length beside a range
 Of written characters, with chalk inscribed
 Upon the smooth flat stones. The nurse is here,
 The bachelor that loves to sun himself,
 The military idler, and the dame 225
 [210] That field-ward takes her walk in decency.⁶

- Now homeward through the thickening hubbub,⁷ where
 See—among less distinguishable shapes—
 [215] The Italian, with his frame of images⁸ 230
 Upon his head; with basket at his waist,
 The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
 With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm.
 Briefly, we find (if tired of random sights,
 And haply to that search our thoughts should turn)
 [221] Among the crowd, conspicuous less or more 235
 As we proceed, all specimens of man
 Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
 And every character of form and face:
 The Swede, the Russian; from the genial⁹ south,
 [225] The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote 240
 America, the hunter Indian; Moors,
 Malays, Lascars,¹ the Tartar and Chinese,
 And Negro ladies in white muslin gowns.

- At leisure let us view from day to day,
 As they present themselves, the spectacles 245
 [230] Within doors: troops of wild beasts, birds and beasts
 Of every nature from all climes convened,
 And, next to these, those mimic sights that ape
 The absolute presence of reality,
 Expressing as in mirror sea and land, 250
 [235] And what earth is, and what she hath to shew—
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
 By means refined attaining purest ends,
 But imitations fondly made in plain
 Confession of man's weakness and his loves. 255
 [240] Whether the painter—fashioning a work
 To Nature's circumambient² scenery,

5. The cripple, as Maxwell points out, was Samuel Horsey, "King of the Beggars," described by Lamb in his essay, "A Complaint of the Decay of Beggars in the Metropolis," *Elia* (1823).

6. Modesty, propriety.

7. The "hubbub" of London is related in Wordsworth's mind to the "universal

hubbub wild" of Chaos (*Paradise Lost*, II, 951).

8. Statuettes.

9. Warm.

1. East Indian sailors (*NED*), but it is doubtful whether Wordsworth had anything so specific in mind.

2. Surrounding.

A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
 And stumping on his arms.⁵ In sailor's garb
 Another lies at length, beside a range 205
 Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
 Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,
 The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
 The military Idler, and the Dame,
 That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps. 210

Now homeward through the thickening hubbub,⁷ where
 See, among less distinguishable shapes,
 The begging scavenger, with hat in hand;
 The Italian, as he thrids his way with care,
 Steadying, far-seen, a frame of images⁸ 215
 Upon his head; with basket at his breast
 The Jew; the stately and slow-moving Turk,
 With freight of slippers piled beneath his arm!

Enough;—the mighty concourse I surveyed
 With no unthinking mind, well pleased to note 220
 Among the crowd all specimens of man,
 Through all the colours which the sun bestows,
 And every character of form and face:
 The Swede, the Russian; from the genial⁹ south,
 The Frenchman and the Spaniard; from remote 225
 America, the Hunter-Indian; Moors,
 Malays, Lascars,¹ the Tartar, the Chinese,
 And Negro Ladies in white muslin gowns.

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,
 The spectacles within doors,—birds and beasts 230
 Of every nature, and strange plants convened
 From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape
 The absolute presence of reality,
 Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she has to shew. 235
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
 By means refined attaining purest ends,
 But imitations, fondly made in plain
 Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
 Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill 240

- And with his greedy pencil³ taking in
 A whole horizon on all sides—with power
 Like that of angels or commissioned⁴ spirits, 260
 Plant us upon some lofty pinnacle
- [245] Or in a ship on waters, with a world
 Of life and lifelike mockery to east,
 To west, beneath, behind us, and before,⁵
 Or more mechanic artist represent 265
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
- [250] From shading colours also borrowing help,
 Some miniature of famous spots and things,
 Domestic, or the boast of foreign realms:
 The Firth of Forth, and Edinburgh, throned 270
 On crags, fit empress of that mountain land;
 St Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision, Rome itself;
 Or else, perhaps, some rural haunt, the Falls
- [255] Of Tivoli, and dim Frascati's bowers,
 And high upon the steep that mouldering fane, 275
 The Temple of the Sibyl⁶—every tree
 Through all the landscape, tuft, stone, scratch minute,
 And every cottage, lurking in the rocks—
 All that the traveller sees when he is there. 280
- [260] And to these exhibitions mute and still
 Others of wider scope, where living men,
 Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
 Together joined their multifarious aid
 To heighten the allurements. Need I fear 285
 To mention by its name, as in degree
- [265] Lowest of these, and humblest in attempt—
 Yet richly graced with honours of its own—
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells?⁷ Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of youth 290
- [269] Unless itself be pleased, I more than once
 Here took my seat, and, maugre⁸ frequent fits
 Of irksomeness, with ample recompense
 Saw singers, rope-dancers, giants and dwarfs,

3. Paintbrush (the primary meaning, in Johnson's *Dictionary*).

4. With commissions, tasks, to perform.

5. Panoramas were a novelty at the end of the eighteenth century, and frequently, as in Wordsworth's description, encompassed the view on all sides of the spectator. Thomas Girtin's *Eidometropolis*, a view of London, painted from Blackfriars Bridge, was 9 feet high and 216 in circumference. Wordsworth may well have seen it, as it was probably on exhibition when he and Dorothy were being

shown the sights of the town by Lamb in September 1802.

6. Tivoli and Frascati are towns respectively in the Sabine and Alban hills near Rome. The temple or "fane" of the Sybil at Tivoli was a very frequent subject for British painters of the eighteenth century.

7. Sadler's Wells was in Islington, a suburb in the 1790s; and it offered more popular entertainment than the central London theatres.

8. Despite; pronounced "maugër."

Submits to nothing less than taking in
 A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
 Like that of angels or commissioned⁴ spirits,
 Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
 Or in a ship on waters, with a world 245
 Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
 Above, behind, far stretching and before;⁵
 Or more mechanic artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 From blended colours also borrowing help, 250
 Some miniature of famous spots or things,—
 St. Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision, Rome herself;
 Or, haply, some choice rural haunt,—the Falls
 Of Tivoli; and, high upon that steep, 255
 The Sibyl's mouldering Temple!⁶ every tree,
 Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
 Throughout the landscape; tuft, stone, scratch minute—
 All that the traveller sees when he is there.

Add to these exhibitions, mute and still, 260
 Others of wider scope, where living men,
 Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
 Diversified the allurements. Need I fear
 To mention by its name, as in degree
 Lowest of these and humblest in attempt, 265
 Yet richly graced with honours of her own,
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells?⁷ Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of youth
 Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
 Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add, 270
 With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,

- Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,⁹ 295
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 [275] To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds,
 To note the laws and progress of belief—
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that 300
 How willingly we travel, and how far!—
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 [280] The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: lo,
 He dons his coat of darkness, on the stage
 Walks, and atchieves his wonders, from the eye 305
 Of living mortal safe as is the moon
 ‘Hid in her vacant interlunar cave’.¹
 [285] Delusion bold (and faith must needs be coy)²
 How is it wrought?—his garb is black, the word
 INVISIBLE flames forth upon his chest. 310

- Nor was it unamusing here to view
 Those samples, as of the ancient comedy
 [290] And Thespian times,⁴ dramas of living men
 And recent things yet warm with life: a sea-fight,
 Shipwreck, or some domestic incident 315
 The fame of which is scattered through the land,
 Such as this daring brotherhood of late
 [295] Set forth—too holy theme for such a place,
 And doubtless treated with irreverence,
 Albeit with their very best of skill— 320
 I mean, O distant friend, a story drawn
 From our own ground, the Maid of Buttermere,
 And how the spoiler came, ‘a bold bad man’
 To God unfaithful, children, wife, and home,
 [300] And wooed the artless daughter of the hills, 325
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds.⁵ O friend, I speak
 With tender recollection of that time
 When first we saw the maiden, then a name
 [305] By us unheard of—in her cottage-inn 330

9. “Posture-masters”: contortionists. “Harlequins”: clowns, traditionally in parti-colored costume.

1. Quoted from Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*, 89.

2. Wordsworth’s parenthesis, rightly discarded in 1850, is very difficult to construe. Either, faith, *as opposed to* the delusion being practiced, has to be modest (“coy”); or, faith *in* the delusion—the audience’s credulity—shows its modesty in the quiet acceptance of the trick.

4. Thespis was a Greek dramatist (in fact a tragedian) of the sixth century B.C. “Here” (line 311): at Sadler’s Wells.

5. A melodrama in rhyme called *Edward and Susan, or The Beauty of Buttermere* was performed in April–June 1803 by the actors of Sadler’s Wells (the “daring brotherhood” of 1805, 317; 1850, 299) based on the story of Mary Robinson, daughter of the innkeeper of Buttermere, who the previous October had been tricked into a bigamous marriage by a certain John Hatfield, posing as a Scottish M.P. Wordsworth and Coleridge were both extremely interested in the case, and Mary Lamb wrote describing the play in July 1803.

Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,⁹
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds; 275
 To note the laws and progress of belief;
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
 How willingly we travel, and how far!
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo! 280
 He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage
 Walks, and achieves his wonders from the eye
 Of living Mortal covert, as the moon
 Hid in her 'vacant interlunar cave'.¹
 Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought? 285
 The garb he wears is black as death, the word
 'Invisible' flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were 'forms and pressures of the time',³
 Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed
 When Art was young; dramas of living men, 290
 And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
 Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
 Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame,
 Such as the daring brotherhood of late
 Set forth, too serious theme for that light place— 295
 I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
 From our own ground,—the Maid of Buttermere,—
 And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife
 Deserted and deceived, the spoiler came
 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills, 300
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds.⁵ These words to thee
 Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
 Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
 Beheld her serving at the cottage inn, 305

3. An inexact quotation from *Hamlet*, III, ii, 24 ff., where the Players are being instructed: the "purpose of playing" is "to hold * * * the mirror up to nature;

to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure."

- Were welcomed, and attended on by her,
 Both stricken with one feeling of delight,
 An admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.⁶
 Not unfamiliarly we since that time 335
- [310] Have seen her, her discretion have observed,
 Her just opinions, female modesty,
 Her patience, and retiredness of mind
- [313] Unsoiled by commendation and excess 340
 Of public notice. This memorial verse
 Comes from the poet's heart, and is her due;
 For we were nursed—as almost might be said—
 On the same mountains, children at one time,
 Must haply often on the self-same day
 Have from our several dwellings gone abroad 345
 To gather daffodils on Coker's stream.⁷

- These last words uttered, to my argument
- [317] I was returning, when—with sundry forms 350
 Mingled, that in the way which I must tread
 Before me stand—thy image rose again,
- [320] Mary of Buttermere! She lives in peace
 Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination does she live
 In quietness, without anxiety.
 Beside the mountain chapel sleeps in earth 355
- [325] Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb
 That thither comes from some unsheltered place
 To rest beneath the little rock-like pile
 When storms are blowing. Happy are they both,
 Mother and child!⁸ These feelings, in themselves 360
- [330] Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think
 Of those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere yet by use we have learnt to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those days are now
 My theme, and, 'mid the numerous scenes which they 365
 Have left behind them, foremost I am crossed
 Here by remembrance of two figures: one
 A rosy babe, who for a twelvemonth's space
 Perhaps had been of age to deal about
- [339] Articulate prattle,⁹ child as beautiful 370

6. Wordsworth and Coleridge were at Buttermere during their walking tour of November 1799. "Mien": air, manner.

7. Mary Robinson was two years younger than Wordsworth. The river Cocker flows from Buttermere to his birthplace, Cockermouth. Lines 342–43 recall Milton's *Lycidas*, 23, "For we were nursed upon the selfsame hill." "Several" (line 345): different.

8. There are no records of Mary's having had a child by Hatfield, but Wordsworth presumably had local knowledge. Despite the seeming implication of "memorial" (1805, 340; 1850, 316), Mary lived on, and married a local farmer.

9. I.e., the child for the space of perhaps a year had been able to make himself understood.

Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,
 With admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.⁶
 Not unfamiliarly we since that time
 Have seen her,—her discretion have observed, 310
 Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
 Her patience, and humility of mind
 Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
 Of public notice—an offensive light
 To a meek spirit suffering inwardly. 315

From this memorial tribute to my theme
 I was returning, when, with sundry forms
 Commingled—shapes which met me in the way
 That we must tread—thy image rose again,
 Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace 320
 Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination doth she live
 In quietness, without anxiety:
 Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth
 Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb 325
 That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,
 Rests underneath the little rock-like pile
 When storms are raging. Happy are they both—
 Mother and child!⁸—These feelings, in themselves
 Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think 330
 On those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
 Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,
 Which yet survive in memory, appears 335
 One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,
 A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,
 Not more, had been of age to deal about
 Articulate prattle⁹—Child as beautiful

- As ever sate upon a mother's knee;
 The other was the parent of that babe—
 But on the mother's cheek the tints were false,
 A painted bloom. 'Twas at a theatre
 That I beheld this pair; the boy had been¹ 375
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
 [350] A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.
 Of lusty vigour, more than infantine,
 He was in limbs, in face a cottage rose 380
 Just three parts blown—a cottage-child, but ne'er
 [355] Saw I by cottage or elsewhere a babe
 By Nature's gifts so honored. Upon a board,
 Whence an attendant of the theatre
 Served out refreshments, had this child been placed, 385
 And there he sate environed with a ring
 [360] Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men
 And shameless women—treated² and caressed—
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
 While oaths, indecent speech, and ribaldry 390
 Were rife about him as are songs of birds
 [365] In springtime after showers. The mother, too,
 Was present, but of her I know no more
 Than hath been said, and scarcely at this time
 Do I remember her; but I behold 395
 The lovely boy as I beheld him then,
 Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
 Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
 [370] Amid the fiery furnace.³ He hath since
 Appeared to me ofttimes as if embalmed 400
 [375] By Nature—through some special privilege
 Stopped at the growth he had—destined to live,
 To be, to have been, come, and go, a child
 And nothing more, no partner in the years
 That bear us forward to distress and guilt, 405
 Pain and abasement; beauty in such excess
 Adorned him in that miserable place.
 So have I thought of him a thousand times—
 And seldom otherwise—but he perhaps,
 Mary, may now have lived till he could look 410
 [380] With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps
 Beside the mountain chapel undisturbed.

1. I.e., would have been.

2. Presumably, given treats of food.

3. Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego,

who had been cast by King Nebuchadnezzar into the fiery furnace but emerged unharmed: Daniel 3:23–26.

As ever clung around a mother's neck, 340
 Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.
 There, too, conspicuous for stature tall
 And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
 The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,
 False tints too well accorded with the glare 345
 From play-house lustres thrown without reserve
 On every object near. The Boy had been¹
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
 A sort of alien scattered from the clouds. 350
 Of lusty vigour, more than infantine,
 He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
 Just three parts blown—a cottage-child—if e'er,
 By cottage-door on breezy mountain side,
 Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe 355
 By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board
 Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,
 His little stage in the vast theatre,
 And there he sate surrounded with a throng
 Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men 360
 And shameless women; treated² and caressed,
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
 While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
 Were rife about him as the songs of birds
 Contending after showers. The mother now 365
 Is fading out of memory, but I see
 The lovely Boy as I beheld him then
 Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
 Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
 Amid the fiery furnace.³ Charms and spells 370
 Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
 Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths;
 Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
 Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked
 By special privilege of Nature's love, 375
 Should in his childhood be detained for ever!
 But with its universal freight the tide
 Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,⁴
 Mary! may now have lived till he could look
 With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps, 380
 Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed.

4. Wordsworth's 1805 vision of the child embalmed by imagination was replaced as early as 1816/19 by a version of

1850. "Preferred" (line 374): submitted, presented.

- It was but little more than three short years
 Before the season which I speak of now
 When first, a traveller from our pastoral hills, 415
 Southward two hundred miles I had advanced,⁵
 And for the first time in my life did hear
 [385] The voice of woman utter blasphemy—
 Saw woman as she is to open shame
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice. 420
 Full surely from the bottom of my heart
 I shuddered; but the pain was almost lost,
 Absorbed and buried in the immensity
 Of the effect: a barrier seemed at once
 Thrown in, that from humanity divorced 425
 [390] The human form, splitting the race of man
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward shape.
 Distress of mind ensued upon this sight,
 And ardent meditation—afterwards
 A milder sadness on such spectacles 430
 [395] Attended: thought, commiseration, grief,
 For the individual and the overthrow
 Of her soul's beauty—farther at that time
 Than this I was but seldom led; in truth
 The sorrow of the passion stopped me here. 435
- [400] I quit this painful theme, enough is said
 To shew what thoughts must often have been mine
 At theatres, which then were my delight—
 A yearning made more strong by obstacles
 Which slender funds imposed. Life then was new, 440
 The senses easily pleased; the lustres,⁶ lights,
 The carving and the gilding, paint and glare,
 And all the mean upholstery of the place,
 [410] Wanted not animation in my sight,
 Far less the living figures on the stage, 445
 Solemn or gay—whether some beauteous dame
 Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
 [415] Of thick-entangled forest, like the moon
 Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
 With flourishing trumpets, came in full-blown state 450
 Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
 Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
 [420] Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling
 His slender manacles; or romping girl
 Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire, 455
 A scarecrow pattern of old age, patched up
 Of all the tatters of infirmity,

5. Wordsworth journeyed south to Cambridge in October 1787. 6. Chandeliers.

Four rapid years had scarcely then been told
 Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,⁵
 I heard, and for the first time in my life,
 The voice of woman utter blasphemy— 385
 Saw woman as she is to open shame
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice;
 I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once
 Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
 Humanity, splitting the race of man 390
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward form.
 Distress of mind ensued upon the sight
 And ardent meditation. Later years
 Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness,
 Feelings of pure commiseration, grief 395
 For the individual and the overthrow
 Of her soul's beauty; farther I was then
 But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
 The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

But let me now, less moved, in order take 400
 Our argument. Enough is said to show
 How casual incidents of real life,
 Observed where pastime only had been sought,
 Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
 And measured passions of the stage, albeit 405
 By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.⁷
 Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
 The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
 And all the mean upholstery of the place,
 Wanted not animation, when the tide 410
 Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
 With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
 Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
 Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
 Of thick entangled forest, like the moon 415
 Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
 With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
 Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
 Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
 Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling 420
 His slender manacles; or romping girl
 Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
 A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
 In all the tatters of infirmity

7. Mrs. Siddons (1755–1831) was the most famous actress of her day; it is not certain that Wordsworth ever saw

her, but Dorothy did so twice when they were in London together in November 1797 (*EY*, p. 196).

- [425] All loosely put together, hobbled in
 Stumping upon a cane, with which he smites
 From time to time the solid boards and makes them
 Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts⁸ 460
 Of one so overloaded with his years.
- [430] But what of this?—the laugh, the grin, grimace,
 And all the antics and buffoonery,
 The least of them not lost, were all received 465
 With charitable pleasure. Through the night,
 Between the show, and many-headed mass
- [435] Of the spectators, and each little nook
 That had its fray or brawl, how eagerly
 And with what flashes, as it were, the mind 470
 Turned this way, that way—sportive and alert
 And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
- [440] While winds are blowing round her, among grass
 And rustling leaves.⁹ Enchanting age and sweet—
 Romantic almost, looked at through a space, 475
 How small, of intervening years! For then,
 Though surely no mean progress had been made
- [445] In meditations holy and sublime,
 Yet something of a girlish childlike gloss
 Of novelty survived for scenes like these— 480
 Pleasure that had been handed down from times
- [449] When at a country playhouse, having caught
 In summer through the fractured wall a glimpse
 Of daylight, at the thought of where I was
 I gladdened more than if I had beheld 485
- [455] Before me some bright cavern of romance,
 Or than we do when on our beds we lie
 At night, in warmth, when rains are beating hard.

- The matter which detains me now will seem
 To many neither dignified enough 490
 [460] Nor arduous, and is doubtless in itself
 Humble and low—yet not to be despised
 By those who have observed the curious props
 By which the perishable hours of life
 Rest on each other, and the world of thought 495
- [465] Exists and is sustained.¹ More lofty themes,
 Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
 Might here be spoken of; but when I think
 Of these I feel the imaginative power
 Languish within me. Even then it slept, 500

8. Compare *Macbeth*, II, i, 58: "Thy very stones prate of my whereabouts." "Prate": chatter.

9. Wordsworth's imagery shows a connection between *Book VII* and *Kitten*

and the *Falling Leaves*, probably also written in autumn 1804.

1. Lines 492–96 were written for *The Ruined Cottage* in February–March 1798.

All loosely put together, hobbled in, 425
 Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
 From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
 Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts⁸
 Of one so overloaded with his years.
 But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace, 430
 The antics striving to outstrip each other,
 Were all received, the least of them not lost,
 With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
 Between the show, and many-headed mass
 Of the spectators, and each several nook 435
 Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly
 And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
 Turned this way—that way! sportive and alert
 And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
 While winds are eddying round her, among straws 440
 And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
 Romantic almost,⁹ looked at through a space,
 How small, of intervening years! For then,
 Though surely no mean progress had been made
 In meditations holy and sublime, 445
 Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
 Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
 Enjoyment haply handed down from times
 When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn
 Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance 450
 Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
 In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
 Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
 Gladdened me more than if I had been led
 Into a dazzling cavern of romance, 455
 Crowded with Genii busy among works
 Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,
 To many, neither dignified enough
 Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them, 460
 Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
 That bind the perishable hours of life
 Each to the other, and the curious props
 By which the world of memory and thought
 Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes, 465
 Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
 Solicit our regard; but when I think
 Of these, I feel the imaginative power
 Languish within me; even then it slept,

- [470] When, wrought upon by tragic sufferings,
The heart was full—amid my sobs and tears
It slept, even in the season of my youth.
For though I was most passionately moved,
And yielded to the changes of the scene 505
- [475] With most obsequious feeling, yet all this
Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind.²
If aught there were of real grandeur here
'Twas only then when gross realities,
The incarnation of the spirits that moved 510
- [480] Amid the poet's beauteous world—called forth
With that distinctness which a contrast gives,
Or opposition—made me recognise
As by a glimpse, the things which I had shaped
And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen, 515
- [485] Had felt, and thought of in my solitude.³

- Pass we from entertainments that are such
Professedly, to others titled higher,
Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
More near akin to these than names imply— 520
- [490] I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts
Before the ermined judge, or that great stage
Where senators, tongue-favored men, perform,
Admired and envied. Oh, the beating heart,
When one among the prime of these rose up, 525
- [495] One of whose name from childhood we had heard
Familiarly, a household term, like those—
The Bedfords, Glocesters, Salisburys of old—
Which the fifth Harry talks of.⁴ Silence, hush,
This is no trifle, no short-flighted wit, 530
- [500] No stammerer of a minute, painfully
Delivered. No, the orator hath yoked
The hours, like young Aurora, to his car—
O presence of delight, can patience e'er
Grow weary of attending on a track 535
- [505] That kindles with such glory?⁵ Marvellous,

2. Compare "Dwell I but in the suburbs / Of your good pleasure?" (*Julius Caesar*, II, i, 285–86).

3. I.e., he was deeply moved only when the imaginative world of the poet (Shakespeare, no doubt, as at 1850, 484) enabled him to identify things half-pictured or half-articulated within his own mind. The "gross realities" of stage presentation draw attention to the spiritual quality of Shakespeare's imagination through the very clumsiness with which they embody, "incarnate," his ideal world.

4. The king in Shakespeare's *Henry V*, IV, iii, 51–55, predicts that Bedford, Salisbury, Gloucester, and others will be-

come "household words" for their part in the Battle of Agincourt. For Wordsworth's response to the play, see Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journal*, May 8, 1802. The orator with a household name (1805, 525–27; 1850, 495–96) is William Pitt the younger, prime minister (with one short break) from 1783 till his death in 1806.

5. Aurora, goddess of the dawn, was traditionally shown as rising from the sea in her chariot ("car"); her track would kindle with the morning light. The overall sense is that Pitt, unlike the "stammerer of a minute" (1805, 531; 1850, 500), is borne along by time, i.e., is capable of talking at length.

When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart 470
 Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
 It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
 For though I was most passionately moved
 And yielded to all changes of the scene
 With an obsequious promptness, yet the storm 475
 Passed not beyond the suburbs of the mind;²
 Save when realities of act and mien,
 The incarnation of the spirits that move
 In harmony amid the Poet's world,
 Rose to ideal grandeur, or, called forth 480
 By power of contrast, made me recognise,
 As at a glance, the things which I had shaped,
 And yet not shaped, had seen and scarcely seen,
 When, having closed the mighty Shakespear's page,
 I mused, and thought, and felt, in solitude.³ 485

Pass we from entertainments, that are such
 Professedly, to others titled higher,
 Yet, in the estimate of youth at least,
 More near akin to those than names imply,— 490
 I mean the brawls of lawyers in their courts
 Before the ermined judge, or that great stage
 Where senators, tongue-favoured men, perform,
 Admired and envied. Oh! the beating heart,
 When one among the prime of these rose up,—
 One, of whose name from childhood we had heard 495
 Familiarly, a household term, like those,
 The Bedfords, Glosters, Salisburys, of old
 Whom the fifth Harry talks of.⁴ Silence! hush!
 This is no trifler, no short-flighted wit,
 No stammerer of a minute, painfully 500
 Delivered. No! the Orator hath yoked
 The Hours, like young Aurora, to his car:
 Thrice welcome Presence! how can patience e'er
 Grow weary of attending on a track
 That kindles with such glory!⁵ All are charmed, 505

The enchantment spreads and rises—all are rapt
Astonished—like a hero in romance
He winds away his never-ending horn:
Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense—
What memory and what logic!—till the strain
[510] Transcendent, superhuman as it is,
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Astonished; like a hero in romance,
 He winds away his never-ending horn;
 Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense:
 What memory and what logic! till the strain
 Transcendent, superhuman, as it seemed, 510
 Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

Genius of Burke!⁶ forgive the pen seduced
 By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
 Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered men, 515
 Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides,
 And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
 Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—
 Now mute, for ever mute in the cold grave.
 I see him,—old, but vigorous in age,—
 Stand like an oak whose stag-horn branches start 520
 Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
 The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
 While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
 Against all systems built on abstract rights,
 Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims 525
 Of Institutes and Laws, hallowed by time;
 Declares the vital power of social ties
 Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain,
 Exploding upstart Theory, insists
 Upon the allegiance to which men are born— 530
 Some—say at once a froward multitude—
 Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
 As the winds fret within the Æolian cave,
 Galled by their monarch's chain.⁷ The times were big
 With ominous change, which, night by night, provoked 535
 Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
 But memorable moments intervened,
 When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
 Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,
 Startling the Synod.⁸ Could a youth, and one 540
 In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
 Under the weight of classic eloquence,
 Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
 To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt 545

6. Lines 512–43 appear in their earliest form in 1832. They record an admiration certainly not felt by the younger, republican Wordsworth for Edmund Burke (1729–97), whose *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) had been largely responsible for turning English political

opinion against the Revolution.

7. Aeolus, classical god of winds, kept them chained in a cave.

8. Athena was said to have sprung fully armed from the head of Zeus, and was on occasion allegorized as Wisdom. "Synod": assembly; here, Parliament.

- These are grave follies; other public shows
 The capital city teems with of a kind 545
 More light—and where but in the holy church?
 [551] There have I seen a comely bachelor,
 Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
 The pulpit, with seraphic glance look up,
 And in a tone elaborately low 550
 [555] Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
 A minuet course, and, winding up his mouth
 From time to time into an orifice
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small
 And only not invisible, again 555
 [560] Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
 Of rapt irradiation exquisite.¹
 Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
 Moses, and he who penned the other day
The Death of Abel, Shakespear, Doctor Young, 560
 And Ossian—doubt not, 'tis the naked truth—
 Summoned from streamy Morven, each and all
 Must in their turn lend ornament and flowers
 [570] To entwine the crook of eloquence with which
 This pretty shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 Leads up and down his captivated flock.² 565

- I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving ten thousand others that do each—
 [575] In hall or court, conventicle,³ or shop,
 In public room or private, park or street— 570
 With fondness reared on his own pedestal,⁴
 Look out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien and dress,
 [580] And all the strife of singularity—
 Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense— 575
 Of these and of the living shapes they wear
 There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
 Although well pleased to be where they were found,
 [585] I did not hunt after or greatly prize,
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast 580

1. Wordsworth has in mind Cowper's satirical portrait of a self-consciously theatrical preacher, *The Task*, II, 430–54.

2. The parson's eloquence is seen in Wordsworth's metaphor as a shepherd's crook entwined with "flowers" culled from other men's writings. *The Death of Abel* (1805, 560; 1850, 564), source of Coleridge's *Wanderings of Cain* (1797), was written in 1758 by the German Solomon Gessner, and went through many English editions. Edward Young ("The

Bard" of 1850, 564), wrote *Night Thoughts* (1742–45); the poem was immensely popular, and is footnoted in *Lyrical Ballads* as the source of *Tintern Abbey*, 107. "Morven" (1805, 562; 1850, 568) is Macpherson's name for the northwest coast of Scotland, over which Fingal rules in the spurious epics of "Ossian" (1762–63).

3. A place of worship for Protestant nonconformists.

4. I.e., raised on a pedestal by his self-love.

Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
 The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
 Endowed with various power to search the soul;
 Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
 Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place!—⁹ 550
 There have I seen a comely bachelor,
 Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
 His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
 And, in a tone elaborately low
 Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze 555
 A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
 From time to time, into an orifice
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
 And only not invisible, again
 Open it out, diffusing thence a smile 560
 Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.¹
 Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
 Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
 The Death of Abel, Shakespear, and the Bard
 Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme 565
 With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
 And Ossian (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
 Summoned from streamy Morven—each and all
 Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
 To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped 570
 His pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 To rule and guide his captivated flock.²

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,
 Court, theatre, conventicle,³ or shop, 575
 In public room or private, park or street,
 Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,⁴
 Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
 And all the strife of singularity, 580
 Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense—
 Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
 There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
 Although well pleased to be where they were found,
 I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize, 585
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast

9. Lines 544–50 were inserted in *MS. D*, in 1838/39, to replace 1805, lines 544–46, and to counterbalance the satirical por-

trait of the church that follows in both texts.

Of reading them with quick and curious eye,
 But as a common produce—things that are
 Today, tomorrow will be—took of them
 [595] Such willing note as, on some errand bound
 Of pleasure or of love, some traveller might, 585
 Among a thousand other images,
 Of sea-shells that bestud the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields in June.

But foolishness, and madness in parade,
 [595] Though most at home in this their dear domain, 590
 Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
 [597] Even to the rudest novice of the schools.
 O friend, one feeling was there which belonged
 To this great city by exclusive right:
 [626] How often in the overflowing streets 595
 Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, 'The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery.'
 [630] Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed 600
 By thoughts of what, and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains,⁶ or appears in dreams,

6. See the Lake District tradition of spectral horsemen recorded by Wordsworth in *Evening Walk*, 179–87.

Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
 But, as a common produce, things that are
 To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them
 Such willing note, as, on some errand bound 590
 That asks not speed, a traveller might bestow
 On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
 Though most at home in this their dear domain, 595
 Are scattered everywhere, no rarities,
 Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
 Me, rather it employed, to note, and keep
 In memory, those individual sights
 Of courage, or integrity, or truth, 600
 Or tenderness, which there, set off by foil,
 Appeared more touching. One will I select;
 A Father—for he bore that sacred name—
 Him saw I, sitting in an open square,
 Upon a corner-stone of that low wall, 605
 Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
 A spacious grass-plot; there, in silence, sate
 This One Man, with a sickly babe outstretched
 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
 For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air. 610
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
 He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
 (The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)
 He held the child, and, bending over it, 615
 As if he were afraid both of the sun
 And of the air, which he had come to seek,
 Eyed the poor babe with love unutterable.

As the black storm upon the mountain top
 Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so 620
 That huge fermenting mass of human-kind
 Serves as a solemn back-ground, or relief,
 To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
 For feeling and contemplative regard,
 More than inherent liveliness and power.⁵ 625
 How oft, amid those overflowing streets,
 Have I gone forward with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself, 'The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery!'

5. In their original form lines 598–618 are found at 1805, VIII, 837–59; they were transferred, and 619–25 added, in

Wordsworth's final revisions (1839 or later).

- And all the ballast of familiar life—
 The present, and the past, hope, fear, all stays, 605
 All laws of acting, thinking, speaking man—
 Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
- [635] And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond
 The reach of common indications, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance 610
 Abruptly to be smitten with the view
 Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
 [640] Stood propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 The story of the man, and who he was. 615
 My mind did at this spectacle turn round
 As with the might of waters, and it seemed
 To me that in this label was a type
- [645] Or emblem of the utmost that we know
 Both of ourselves and of the universe,⁷ 620
 And on the shape of this unmoving man,
 His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked,
 As if admonished from another world.⁸
- [650] Though reared upon the base of outward things,
 These chiefly are such structures as the mind 625
 Builds for itself. Scenes different there are—
 Full-formed—which take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties: the peace
- [655] Of night, for instance, the solemnity
 Of Nature's intermediate hours of rest 630
 When the great tide of human life stands still,
 The business of the day to come unborn,
 Of that gone by locked up as in the grave;⁹
- [660] The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle,
 Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds 635
 Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
- [665] The feeble salutation from the voice
 Of some unhappy woman now and then 640
 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these I fear
 Are falsely catalogued: things that are, are not,

7. Wordsworth's original version of lines 617–20 is preserved in *MS. X*: "and I thought / That even the very most of what we know / Both of ourselves and of the universe, / The whole of what is written to our view, / Is but a label on a blind man's chest."

8. Compare the Leech Gatherer of spring

1802, who was "like a man from some far region sent / To give me human strength by apt admonishment" (*Resolution and Independence*, 118–19).

9. For a comparable response to the beauty of London in its moments of calm, see *Sonnet Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*.

Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed 630
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
 And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond 635
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest 640
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 His story, whence he came, and who he was.
 Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; an apt type
 This label seemed of the utmost we can know, 645
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;⁷
 And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
 His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
 As if admonished from another world.⁸

Though reared upon the base of outward things, 650
 Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
 Builds for herself; scenes different there are,
 Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties,—the peace
 That comes with night; the deep solemnity 655
 Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
 When the great tide of human life stands still;
 The business of the day to come, unborn,
 Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;⁹
 The blended calmness of the heavens and earth, 660
 Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds
 Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
 The feeble salutation from the voice 665
 Of some unhappy woman, now and then
 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
 Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,

- [670] Even as we give them welcome, or assist—
 Are prompt, or are remiss. What say you then
 To times when half the city shall break out
 Full of one passion—vengeance, rage, or fear—
 To executions,¹ to a street on fire,
- [675] Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From those sights
 Take one, an annual festival, the fair
 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St Bartholomew,² there see
 A work that's finished to our hands, that lays,
- [680] If any spectacle on earth can do,
 The whole creative powers of man asleep.
 For once the Muse's help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us—wafted on her wings
 Above the press and danger of the crowd—
- [685] Upon some showman's platform. What a hell
 For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din
 Barbarian and infernal—'tis a dream
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound.
 Below, the open space, through every nook
- [690] Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
 With heads; the midway region and above
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the prodigies;
 And chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
- [695] And children whirling in their roundabouts;³
 With those that stretch the neck, and strain the eyes,
 And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd
 Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming; him who grinds
- [700] The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
 Rattles the salt-box,⁴ thumps the kettle-drum,
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks;
 The silver-collared negro with his timbrel,⁵
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
- [705] Blue-breeched, pink-vested, and with towering plumes.
 All moveables of wonder from all parts
 Are here, albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs,
 The horse of knowledge, and the learned pig,⁶

1. Public executions continued in England until 1868.

2. St. Bartholomew's Fair, largest of the London fairs, was held at Smithfield, where Protestant martyrs were burned in the reign of Queen Mary (1553–58). Wordsworth and Dorothy were taken to the fair by Charles Lamb in September 1802.

3. Merry-go-rounds.

4. "Hurdy-gurdy": originally a stringed instrument, resembling the lute or guitar, but "ground" by a rosined wheel turned

by the left hand. "Salt-box": A wooden box containing salt, that was rattled or beaten; apparently in common use among street musicians.

5. Tambourine.

6. Horses were trained to answer numerical questions by stamping out the answers. "Toby the Sapient Pig," who was exhibited in London in 1817, could allegedly spell, read, cast accounts, and play cards, not to mention reading people's thoughts.

As the mind answers to them, or the heart 670
 Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,
 To times, when half the city shall break out
 Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
 To executions,¹ to a street on fire,
 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights 675
 Take one,—that ancient festival, the Fair,
 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St. Bartholomew;² there, see
 A work completed to our hands, that lays,
 If any spectacle on earth can do, 680
 The whole creative powers of man asleep!—
 For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,
 Upon some showman's platform. What a shock 685
 For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
 Barbarian and infernal,—a phantasma,
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
 Below, the open space, through every nook
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive 690
 With heads; the midway region, and above,
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;
 With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
 And children whirling in their roundabouts;³ 695
 With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
 And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd
 Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming,—him who grinds
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves, 700
 Rattles the salt-box,⁴ thumps the kettle-drum,
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
 The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,⁵
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes. 705
 All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
 Are here—Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
 The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,⁶

The stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
 [710] Giants, ventriloquists, the invisible girl,
 The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes, 685
 The waxwork,⁷ clockwork, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, wild beasts, puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
 [715] All freaks of Nature, all Promethean thoughts
 Of man⁸—his dulness, madness, and their feats, 690
 All jumbled up together to make up
 This parliament of monsters. Tents and booths
 Meanwhile—as if the whole were one vast mill⁹—
 [720] Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
 Men, women, three-years' children, babes in arms. 695

O, blank confusion, and a type not false
 Of what the mighty city is itself
 To all, except a straggler here and there—
 To the whole swarm of its inhabitants—
 An undistinguishable world to men, 700
 The slaves unrespited¹ of low pursuits,
 [725] Living amid the same perpetual flow
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity by differences
 That have no law, no meaning, and no end— 705
 Oppression under which even highest minds
 [730] Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
 But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
 It is not wholly so to him who looks 710
 In steadiness, who hath among least things
 [735] An under-sense of greatest, sees the parts
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
 This, of all acquisitions first, awaits
 On sundry and most widely different modes 715
 Of education—nor with least delight
 [740] On that through which I passed. Attention comes,
 And comprehensiveness and memory,
 From early converse with the works of God
 Among all regions, chiefly where appear 720
 [744] Most obviously simplicity and power.
 By influence habitual to the mind

7. Madame Tussaud brought her collection of wax figures of the leaders and victims of the French Revolution to London in 1802.

8. Wordsworth has in mind Milton's Hell, where "nature breeds, / Perverse, all monstrous, all prodigious things" (*Paradise Lost*, II, 624–25). "Promethean": inventive; the Titan Prometheus,

in Greek myth, fashioned man out of clay. 9. Factory, as in Blake's "dark satanic mills."

1. Pronounced "ŭnréspittéd": carrying on with no respite—i.e., ceaselessly. Lines 701–5, with their disdain of city life, were originally written for *Michael* in 1800; they persist until Wordsworth's final revisions, in or after 1839.

The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl, 710
 The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
 The Wax-work,⁷ Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things, 715
 All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
 Of man,⁸ his dullness, madness, and their feats
 All jumbled up together, to compose
 A Parliament of Monsters, Tents and Booths
 Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,⁹
 Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides, 720
 Men, Women, three-years Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
 Of what the mighty City is herself
 To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
 Living amid the same perpetual whirl 725
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences
 That have no law, no meaning, and no end—
 Oppression, under which even highest minds
 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free. 730
 But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
 It is not wholly so to him who looks
 In steadiness, who hath among least things
 An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts 735
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
 This, of all acquisitions first, awaits
 On sundry and most widely different modes
 Of education, nor with least delight
 On that through which I passed. Attention springs, 740
 And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
 From early converse with the works of God
 Among all regions;² chiefly where appear
 Most obviously simplicity and power.
 Reflect how everlasting streams and woods, 745

2. It is difficult to know whether the words "Amid the mountains" penciled by Wordsworth at the foot of the page in *E* (in or after 1839) should be regarded as a firm correction. However, it

is interesting to know that in his old age Wordsworth really felt God to be most accessible to those who had shared his country upbringing.

- The mountain's outline and its steady form
 Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
 [755] The measure and the prospect³ of the soul 725
 To majesty: such virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills—nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances
 Gives movement to the thoughts, and multitude,
 [761] With order and relation.⁴ This (if still, 730
 As hitherto, with freedom I may speak,
 And the same perfect openness of mind,
 Not violating any just restraint,
 As I would hope, of real modesty),
 [765] This did I feel in that vast receptacle. 735
 The spirit of Nature was upon me here,
 The soul of beauty and enduring life
 Was present as a habit, and diffused—
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 [770] Of self-destroying, transitory things— 740
 Composure and ennobling harmony.

3. I.e., the external forms of Nature have the power to shape the internal "measure" (dimension) and "prospect" (landscape) of the human soul.

4. Lines 722–30 are drawn from the conclusion of "In storm and tempest," the

fragment of third-person narrative belonging to January/February 1798, of which the first twenty lines had already been incorporated in *The Prelude* as 1799, II, 352–71 (1805, II, 322–41).

Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
 The roving Indian. On his desert sands
 What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
 Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
 And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone, 750
 Its currents, magnifies its shoals of life
 Beyond all compass spread, and sends aloft
 Armies of clouds,—even so, its powers and aspects
 Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
 The views and aspirations of the soul 755
 To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances
 Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
 However multitudinous, to move 760
 With order and relation. This, if still,
 As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
 Not violating any just restraint,
 As may be hoped, of real modesty,—
 This did I feel, in London's vast domain. 765
 The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
 The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
 Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 Of self-destroying, transitory things, 770
 Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

Book Eighth

Retrospect: Love of Nature Leading to Love of Mankind

- What sounds are those, Helvellyn, which are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
- [15] Is yon, assembled in the gay green field? 5
Crowd seems it, solitary hill, to thee,
Though but a little family of men—
Twice twenty—with their children and their wives,
- [10] And here and there a stranger interspersed. 10
It is a summer festival, a fair,
Such as—on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales—
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest
- [15] Sees annually, if storms be not abroad 15
And mists have left him an unshrouded head.¹
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
- [20] They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon, 20
Behold the cattle are driven down; the sheep
That have for traffic been culled out are penned
In cotes that stand together on the plain
Ranged side by side; the chaffering³ is begun;
The heifer lows uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
- [25] Booths are there none: a stall or two is here, 25
A lame man, or a blind (the one to beg,
The other to make music); hither too
From far, with basket slung upon her arm
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
- [30] Some aged woman finds her way again, 30
Year after year a punctual visitant;
The showman with his freight upon his back,
And once perchance in lapse of many years,
- [35] Prouder itinerant—mountebank,⁵ or he 35
Whose wonders in a covered wain⁶ lie hid.
But one is here, the loveliest of them all,
Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
For gains—and who that sees her would not buy?

1. Helvellyn (3118 feet) is looking down on Grasmere Fair, then held annually in early September.

3. Bargaining. "Traffic" (1805, 20): sale.

5. Mountebank: a doctor that mounts a

bench in the market and boasts his infallible remedies and cures (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

6. Wagon.

Book Eighth

Retrospect.—Love of Nature Leading to Love of Man

WHAT sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green? 5
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground—betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed. 10
They hold a rustic fair—a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean 15
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.¹
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon, 20
From byre or field the kine² were brought; the sheep
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering³ is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
Booths are there none; a stall or two is here; 25
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
The other to make music; hither, too,
From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,
Of hawker's wares—books, pictures, combs, and pins—
Some aged woman finds her way again, 30
Year after year a punctual visitant!
There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;⁴
And in the lapse of many years may come
Prouder itinerant, mountebank,⁵ or he 35
Whose wonders in a covered wain⁶ lie hid.
But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?

2. Cowshed; "kine": cattle.

4. Peep show.

- [40] Fruits of her father's orchard, apples, pears
 (On that day only to such office^r stooping), 40
 She carries in her basket, and walks round
 Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
 Of her new calling, blushing restlessly.
 The children now are rich, the old man now
- [45] Is generous, so gaiety prevails 45
 Which all partake of, young and old.

Immense

- [56] Is the recess, the circumambient world
 Magnificent, by which they are embraced.
 They move about upon the soft green field;
 How little they, they and their doings, seem, 50
 Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves,
 [60] And all which they can further or obstruct—
 Through utter weakness pitifully dear,
 As tender infants are—and yet how great,
 For all things serve them: them the morning light 55
 Loves as it glistens on the silent rocks,
 [65] And them the silent rocks, which now from high
 Look down upon them, the reposing clouds,
 The lurking brooks from their invisible haunts,
 And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir, 60
 And the blue sky that roofs their calm abode.

- [70] With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel
 In that great city what I owed to thee:
 High thoughts of God and man, and love of man,
 Triumphant over all those loathsome sights 65
 Of wretchedness and vice, a watchful eye,
 Which, with the outside of our human life
 Not satisfied, must read the inner mind.
 For I already had been taught to love
 My fellow-beings, to such habits trained 70
 Among the woods and mountains, where I found
 In thee a gracious guide to lead me forth
 Beyond the bosom of my family,
 My friends and youthful playmates. 'Twas thy power¹
 That raised the first complacency² in me, 75
 [124] And noticeable kindness of heart,

7. Task.

1. Though the bulk of Book VIII was composed in October 1804, before the writing of Book VII, lines 1–74 belong to the period of reorganization after VII had been completed. Wordsworth's account of Grasmere Fair thus forms a deliberate link between London's Bar-

tholomew Fair (VII, 649–95) and the already existing studies of pastoral life in VIII. For details of the original opening of VIII, see *Composition and Texts: 1805/1850*, Introduction, below.

2. Contentedness, satisfaction—without the modern pejorative overtones.

Fruits of her father's orchard, are *her* wares, 40
 And with the ruddy produce, she walks round
 Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
 Of her new office,⁷ blushing restlessly.
 The children now are rich, for the old to-day
 Are generous as the young; and if content 45
 With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
 Sit in the shade together, while they gaze,
 'A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
 The days departed start again to life,
 And all the scenes of childhood reappear, 50
 Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
 To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve.'
 Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
 Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
 And no one seems to want his share.⁸—Immense 55
 Is the recess, the circumambient world
 Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
 They move about upon the soft green turf:
 How little they, they and their doings, seem,
 And all that they can further or obstruct! 60
 Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
 As tender infants are: and yet how great!
 For all things serve them: them the morning light
 Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
 And them the silent rocks, which now from high 65
 Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;
 The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;
 And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
 Which animates this day their calm abode.

 With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel 70
 In that enormous City's turbulent world
 Of men and things, what benefit I owed
 To thee, and those domains of rural peace,⁹

8. Lines 45–55 were added in Wordsworth's final revisions, in 1839 or later; he and his wife—the “ancient wedded pair” of line 46—were both born in 1770. Lines 48–52 are quoted from *Malvern Hills*, 952–56 (1798) by Joseph Cottle, publisher of *Lyrical Ballads*. Writing to

Cottle in 1829, Wordsworth said that the poem had always been a favorite of his, and singled out the last of the quoted lines as “super-excellent” (*LY*, I, p. 349). “Want” (line 55): lack.

9. After many attempts at revision, Wordsworth cut 1805, 64–119 in 1838/39.

Love human to the creature in himself
 As he appeared, a stranger in my path,
 Before my eyes a brother of this world—
 Thou first didst with those motions of delight 80
 Inspire me. I remember, far from home
 Once having strayed while yet a very child,
 I saw a sight—and with what joy and love!
 It was a day of exhalations spread
 Upon the mountains, mists and steam-like fogs 85
 Redounding everywhere, not vehement,³
 But calm and mild, gentle and beautiful,
 With gleams of sunshine on the eyelet spots
 And loopholes of the hills, wherever seen,
 Hidden by quiet process,⁴ and as soon 90
 Unfolded, to be huddled up again—
 Along a narrow valley and profound
 I journeyed, when aloft above my head,
 Emerging from the silvery vapours, lo,
 A shepherd and his dog, in open day. 95
 Girt round with mists they stood, and looked about
 From that enclosure small, inhabitants
 Of an aërial island floating on,
 As seemed, with that abode in which they were,
 A little pendant area of grey rocks, 100
 By the soft wind breathed forward. With delight
 As bland almost, one evening I beheld—
 And at as early age (the spectacle
 Is common, but by me was then first seen)—
 A shepherd in the bottom of a vale, 105
 Towards the centre standing, who with voice,
 And hand waved to and fro as need required,
 Gave signal to his dog, thus teaching him
 To chace along the mazes of steep crags
 The flock he could not see. And so the brute— 110
 Dear creature—with a man's intelligence,
 Advancing, or retreating on his steps,
 Through every pervious strait,⁵ to right or left,
 Thridded a way unbaffled, while the flock
 Fled upwards from the terror of his bark
 Through rocks and seams of turf with liquid gold 115
 Irradiate—that deep farewell light by which
 The setting sun proclaims the love he bears
 To mountain regions.⁶

3. Violent, perhaps "swirling." "Redounding": overflowing, eddying in abundance.

4. Change, flux.

5. A narrow place that allows a way through.

6. Lines 117–19 recollect the end of the Coniston episode, 1799, II, 140–78.

Beauteous the domain

- Where to the sense of beauty first my heart 120
- [75] Was opened—tract more exquisitely fair
Than is that paradise of ten thousand trees,
Or Gehol's famous gardens,⁷ in a clime
Chosen from widest empire, for delight
Of the Tartarian dynasty composed 125
Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous
- [80] (China's stupendous mound!)⁸ by patient skill
Of myriads, and boon Nature's lavish help:
Scene linked to scene, and ever-growing change,
Soft, grand, or gay, with palaces and domes 130
- [85] Of pleasure spangled over, shady dells
For eastern monasteries; sunny mounds
With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage, taught to melt
Into each other their obsequious⁹ hues— 135
- [90] Going and gone again, in subtile¹ chace,
Too fine to be pursued—or standing forth
In no discordant opposition, strong
And gorgeous as the colours side by side
Bedded among the plumes of tropic birds; 140
- [95] And mountains over all, embracing all,
And all the landscape endlessly enriched
With waters running, falling, or asleep.
But lovelier far than this the paradise
Where I was reared, in Nature's primitive gifts 145
- [100] Favored no less, and more to every sense
Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
The elements, and seasons in their change,
Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
The heart of man—a district on all sides 150
The fragrance breathing of humanity,
Man free, man working for himself, with choice
- [105] Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
His comforts, native occupations, cares,
Conducted on to individual ends 155
Or social, and still followed by a train,²
Unwooded, unthought-of even: simplicity,
- [110] And beauty, and inevitable grace.³

7. Pleasure gardens of the emperor at Gehol, called in Chinese the "paradise of innumerable trees"; described and illustrated in John Barrow's *Travels in China* (May 1804).

8. I.e., the Great Wall of China. "Mound": Anything raised to fortify or defend; usually a bank of earth or stone (Johnson's *Dictionary*).

9. Obedient, compliant.

1. Fine, delicate (an earlier—and still, in 1800, quite common—spelling of "subtle").

2. Succession.

3. For an important discussion of human development, "We live by admiration," preserved at this point in *MS. Y*, see *MS. Drafts and Fragments*, 4(a) below.

Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair 75
 Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees,
 Or Gehol's matchless gardens,⁷ for delight
 Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
 (Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous,
 China's stupendous mound)⁸ by patient toil 80
 Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help;
 There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
 Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
 A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes
 Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells 85
 For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts
 With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
 Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
 Into each other their obsequious⁹ hues,
 Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase, 90
 Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side
 Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds;
 And mountains over all, embracing all; 95
 And all the landscape endlessly enriched
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
 Where I was reared; in Nature's primitive gifts
 Favoured no less, and more to every sense 100
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
 The elements, and seasons as they change,
 Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there—
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants, 105
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,
 Cheerfully led to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train²
 Unwooded, unthought-of even—simplicity,
 And beauty, and inevitable grace.³ 110

- Yea, doubtless, at an age when but a glimpse
 Of those resplendent gardens, with their frame 160
 Imperial, and elaborate ornaments,
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images
- [115] That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks, 165
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth
 With the ordinary human interests
 Which they embosom—all without regard
 As both may seem—are fastening on the heart
- [120] Insensibly, each with the other's help, 170
 So that we love, not knowing that we love,
 And feel, not knowing whence our feeling comes.
 Such league have these two principles of joy⁴
 In our affections.⁵ I have singled out
 Some moments, the earliest that I could, in which 175
 Their several currents, blended into one—
 Weak yet, and gathering imperceptibly—
 Flowed in by gushes. My first human love,
 As hath been mentioned, did incline to those
 Whose occupations and concerns were most 180
 Illustrated by Nature, and adorned,
- [128] And shepherds were the men who pleased me first:
 Not such as, in Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequestered, handed down among themselves,
 So ancient poets sing, the golden age;⁷ 185
 Nor such—a second race, allied to these—
 As Shakespeare in the wood of Arden placed,
- [141] Where Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede,
 Or there where Florizel and Perdita
 Together danced, Queen of the feast and King; 190
 Nor such as Spenser fabled.⁸ True it is
- [145] That I had heard, what he perhaps had seen,
 Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
 Their May-bush,⁹ and along the streets in flocks
 Parading, with a song of taunting rhymes 195
 Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors—
- [150] Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,

4. The two "principles," or causes, of joy are "the common haunts of the green earth" (line 166) and "ordinary human interests" (line 167).

5. Emotions, feelings.

7. "Arcadian" (1805, 243; 1850, 133); Arcadia is the traditional setting of Greek and Latin pastoral that looks back to a golden age of innocence and happiness.

8. Wordsworth stresses the unreality of Shakespeare's pastoral world: "the false Ganymede" of *As You Like It* is Rosa-

lind, daughter of the Duke, in male disguise, with whom the shepherdess Phoebe fell in love; Florizel and Perdita in *The Winter's Tale* are heirs to the thrones of Bohemia and Sicilia, as well as king and queen of the sheep-shearing feast. For Spenser's idealization of pastoral life, see especially "May" in *The Shepheard's Calendar*.

9. A branch of hawthorn, or may, used in the May Day festivities.

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images,
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks; 115
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
 And ordinary interests of man,
 Which they embosom, all without regard
 As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
 Insensibly, each with the other's help. 120
 For me, when my affections⁵ first were led
 From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake
 Love for the human creature's absolute self,
 That noticeable kindliness of heart
 Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most 125
 Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
 And occupations which her beauty adorned,
 And Shepherds were the men that pleased me first;
 Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,⁶
 With arts and laws so tempered, that their lives 130
 Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
 A bright tradition of the golden age;
 Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequestered, handed down among themselves
 Felicity, in Grecian song renowned;⁷ 135
 Nor such as, when an adverse fate had driven,
 From house and home, the courtly band whose fortunes
 Entered, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods
 Of Arden, amid sunshine or in shade,
 Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours, 140
 Ere Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede;
 Or there where Perdita and Florizel
 Together danced, Queen of the feast, and King;
 Nor such as Spenser fabled.⁸ True it is,
 That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen) 145
 Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
 Their May-bush,⁹ and along the street in flocks
 Parading with a song of taunting rhymes,
 Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors;
 Had also heard, from those who yet remembered, 150

6. Traditionally, Saturn created the Golden Age in Latium (Italy) after being de-

posed by his son Jupiter; Latium was held to derive from *latio*, "to lie hid."

Tales of the maypole dance, and flowers that decked
 The posts and the kirk-pillars,¹ and of youths,
 That each one with his maid at break of day, 200
 By annual custom, issued forth in troops
 [155] To drink the waters of some favorite well,
 And hang it round with garlands. This, alas,
 Was but a dream: the times had scattered all
 These lighter graces, and the rural ways 205
 [160] And manners which it was my chance to see
 In childhood were severe and unadorned,
 The unluxuriant produce of a life
 Intent on little but substantial² needs,
 Yet beautiful—and beauty that was felt. 210
 But images of danger and distress
 And suffering, these took deepest hold of me,
 [165] Man suffering among awful powers and forms:
 Of this I heard and saw enough to make
 The imagination restless—nor was free 215
 Myself from frequent perils. Nor were tales
 Wanting, the tragedies of former times,
 [170] Or hazards and escapes, which in my walks
 I carried with me among crags and woods
 And mountains; and of these may here be told 220
 One as recorded by my household dame.³

‘At the first falling of autumnal snow
 A shepherd and his son one day went forth’,
 Thus did the matron’s tale begin, ‘to seek
 A straggler of their flock. They both had ranged 225
 Upon this service the preceding day
 All over their own pastures and beyond,
 And now, at sunrise sallying out again,
 Renewed their search, begun where from Dove Crag—
 Ill home for bird so gentle—they looked down 230
 On Deepdale Head, and Brothers Water (named
 From those two brothers that were drowned therein)
 Thence, northward, having passed by Arthur’s Seat,
 To Fairfield’s highest summit. On the right
 Leaving St Sunday’s Pike, to Grisedale Tarn 235
 They shot, and over that cloud-loving hill,
 Seat Sandal—a fond lover of the clouds—
 Thence up Helvellyn, a superior mount

1. Kirk: church.

2. Essential.

3. Ann Tyson; see *1805*, IV, 20*n*, above. The “Matron’s Tale,” told in lines 222–311, was written originally for *Michael* in October–December 1800. Wordsworthmade small cuts when incorporating the material in *The Prelude* (October 1804), and again when preparing the 1805 fair-copy, but changed it in no essential. The tale was cut in 1816/19.

Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
 Porch, door-way, or kirk-pillar;¹ and of youths,
 Each with his maid, before the sun was up,
 By annual custom, issuing forth in troops, 155
 To drink the waters of some sainted well,
 And hang it round with garlands. Love survives;
 But, for such purpose, flowers no longer grow:
 The times, too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
 These lighter graces; and the rural ways 160
 And manners which my childhood looked upon
 Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
 Intent on little but substantial² needs,
 Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
 But images of danger and distress,
 Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms; 165
 Of this I heard and saw enough to make
 Imagination restless; nor was free
 Myself from frequent perils; nor were tales
 Wanting,—the tragedies of former times,
 Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks 170
 Immutable and everflowing streams,
 Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

With prospect underneath of Striding Edge
 And Grisedale's houseless vale, along the brink 240
 Of Russet Cove, and those two other coves,
 Huge skeletons of crags, which from the trunk
 Of old Helvellyn spread their arms abroad
 And make a stormy harbour for the winds.⁴
 Far went those shepherds in their devious⁵ quest, 245
 From mountain ridges peeping as they passed
 Down into every glen; at length the boy
 Said, "Father, with your leave I will go back,
 And range the ground which we have searched before."
 So speaking, southward down the hill the lad 250
 Sprang like a gust of wind, crying aloud,
 "I know where I shall find him." "For take note",
 Said here my grey-haired dame, "that though the storm
 Drive one of these poor creatures miles and miles,
 If he can crawl he will return again 255
 To his own hills, the spots where when a lamb
 He learnt to pasture at his mother's side.
 After so long a labour suddenly
 Bethinking him of this, the boy
 Pursued his way towards a brook whose course 260
 Was through that unfenced tract of mountain ground
 Which to his father's little farm belonged,
 The home and ancient birthright of their flock.
 Down the deep channel of the stream he went,
 Prying through every nook. Meanwhile the rain 265
 Began to fall upon the mountain tops,
 Thick storm and heavy which for three hours' space
 Abated not, and all that time the boy
 Was busy in his search, until at length
 He spied the sheep upon a plot of grass, 270
 An island in the brook. It was a place
 Remote and deep, piled round with rocks, where foot
 Of man or beast was seldom used to tread;
 But now, when everywhere the summer grass
 Had failed, this one adventurer, hunger-pressed, 275
 Had left his fellows, and made his way alone
 To the green plot of pasture in the brook.
 Before the boy knew well what he had seen,
 He leapt upon the island with proud heart
 And with a prophet's joy. Immediately 280
 The sheep sprang forward to the further shore
 And was borne headlong by the roaring flood—
 At this the boy looked round him, and his heart

4. The mountains and lakes referred to in lines 229–44 are a little to the north and east of Grasmere. "Cove" (line

241): a sheltered recess formed by the hills.

5. Roving; as at line 347 below.

Fainted with fear. Thrice did he turn his face
 To either brink, nor could he summon up 285
 The courage that was needful to leap back
 Cross the tempestuous torrent: so he stood,
 A prisoner on the island, not without
 More than one thought of death and his last hour.
 Meanwhile the father had returned alone 290
 To his own house; and now at the approach
 Of evening he went forth to meet his son,
 Conjecturing vainly for what cause the boy
 Had stayed so long. The shepherd took his way
 Up his own mountain grounds, where, as he walked 295
 Along the steep that overhung the brook
 He seemed to hear a voice, which was again
 Repeated, like the whistling of a kite.⁶
 At this, not knowing why, as oftentimes
 Long afterwards he has been heard to say, 300
 Down to the brook he went, and tracked its course
 Upwards among the o'erhanging rocks—nor thus
 Had he gone far, ere he espied the boy,
 Where on that little plot of ground he stood
 Right in the middle of the roaring stream, 305
 Now stronger every moment and more fierce.
 The sight was such as no one could have seen
 Without distress and fear. The shepherd heard
 The outcry of his son, he stretched his staff
 Towards him, bade him leap—which word scarce said, 310
 The boy was safe within his father's arms.'

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters on the banks
 [175] Of delicate Galesus—and no less 315
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores—
 Smooth life the herdsman and his snow-white herd,
 To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable stream
 [180] Of rich Clitumnus; and the goatherd lived 320
 As sweetly underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, the invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 [185] The fold protecting.⁷ I myself, mature

6. Bird of prey, related to the falcon.

7. In *1805*, 312–24 (*1850*, 173–85) Wordsworth shows his love and knowledge of Latin poetry, especially that of Virgil and Horace. Galesus and Clitumnus are rivers in Calabria; the second, according to Virgil (*Georgics*, II, 146–8), was so pure that it whitened the herds feeding on its banks, thus making

them fit for sacrifice. Adria is the Adriatic coast of Italy, and Lucretilis the Latin name for Monte Gennaro, the hill above Horace's Sabine farm, mentioned in connection with Pan (Fanus) in Horace's *Odes*, I, xvii, 1–2. "Thrilling": piercing. "Tutelary music": music produced by Pan as guardian deity. "Fold": sheepfold, enclosure for sheep.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid waters, on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus; and no less 175
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores:
 Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd
 To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable stream
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goat-herd lived 180
 As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The fold protecting.⁷ I myself, mature 185

- In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract 325
 Like one of these, where fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous and serene;
 Yet there, as for herself, had Nature framed
 [1290] A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse
 Of level pasture, islanded with groves 330
 And banked with woody risings—but the plain
 Endless, here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 [195] And intricate recesses, creek or bay
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large 335
 The shepherd strays, a rolling hut⁸ his home:
 Thither he comes with springtime, there abides
 All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 [200] His flute or flagelet⁹ resounding far.
 There's not a nook or hold of that vast space, 340
 Nor strait where passage is, but it shall have
 In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
 [205] In unlaborious pleasure, with no task
 More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
 For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds, 345
 When through the region he pursues at will
 His devious course.¹

A glimpse of such sweet life

- [210] I saw when, from the melancholy walls
 Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
 My daily walk along that chearful plain, 350
 Which, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west
 And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
 [215] Of the Hercynian forest.² Yet hail to you,
 Your rocks and precipices, ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp, your snows and streams 355
 [220] Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
 That howled so dismally when I have been
 Companionless among your solitudes!
 There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms: of their approach 360
 [225] Sagacious, from the height he drives his flock

8. A small hut on wheels, used to enable the shepherd to stay near his flock, especially during lambing time.

9. A kind of recorder, or pipe.

1. 1805, 324–47 (1850, 185–209) apparently recall the scenery encountered by Wordsworth and Dorothy in Germany after leaving the city of Goslar on February 23, 1799 (see 353*n*, below). For seven weeks, between January 27 and ca. April 20, their movements are unknown.

2. 1805, 347–53 (1850, 209–15) have been

thought to identify the city walls referred to in the Preamble (1805, I, 7, above). It is not clear whether Wordsworth intended his readers to make such a connection, but the experience of being cooped up in Goslar during the winter of 1798–99 certainly contributed to his composite image of the city as a place of bondage. "Once imperial": Goslar had been the seat of Otto I (912–73), crowned emperor of the Franks in 962. "Hercynian": Hartz.

In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
 Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous, less serene:
 There, for her own delight had Nature framed
 A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse 190
 Of level pasture, islanded with groves
 And banked with woody risings; but the Plain
 Endless, here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 And intricate recesses, creek or bay 195
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
 The shepherd strays, a rolling hut⁸ his home.
 Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
 All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 His flageolet⁹ to liquid notes of love 200
 Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
 Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space
 Where passage opens, but the same shall have
 In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
 In unlaborious pleasure, with no task 205
 More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
 For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds,
 When through the region he pursues at will
 His devious course.¹ A glimpse of such sweet life
 I saw when, from the melancholy walls 210
 Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
 My daily walk along that wide champaign,
 That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
 And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
 Of the Hercynian forest.² Yet, hail to you 215
 Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
 Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
 Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds, 220
 That howl so dismally for him who treads
 Companionless your awful solitudes!
 There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives 225

- Down into sheltering coves, and feeds them there
 Through the hard time, long as the storm is 'locked'
 (So do they phrase it), bearing from the stalls
 A toilsome burthen up the craggy ways 365
 To strew it on the snow. And when the spring
 [230] Looks out, and all the mountains dance with lambs,
 He through the enclosures won from the steep waste,
 And through the lower heights hath gone his rounds;
 And when the flock with warmer weather climbs 370
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To range among them through the hills dispersed,
 And watch their goings, whatsoever track
 Each wanderer chuses for itself—a work
 That lasts the summer through. He quits his home 375
 [235] At dayspring, and no sooner doth the sun
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
 Than he lies down upon some shining place,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When he hath stayed—
 As for the most he doth—beyond this time, 380
 He springs up with a bound, and then away!
 Ascending fast with his long pole in hand,
 Or winding in and out among the crags.
 [250] What need to follow him through what he does
 Or sees in his day's march? He feels himself 385
 In those vast regions where his service is
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
 [255] With that majestic indolence so dear 390
 To native man.⁵

- A rambling schoolboy, thus
 Have I beheld him; without knowing why,
 Have felt his presence in his own domain
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,
 [260] Presiding—and severest solitude 395
 Seemed more commanding oft when he was there.
 Seeking the raven's nest and suddenly
 Surprized with vapours, or on rainy days
 When I have angled up the lonely brooks,
 [265] Mine eyes have glanced upon him, few steps off, 400
 In size a giant, stalking through the fog,⁶
 His sheep like Greenland bears. At other times,

5. To human nature.

6. Wordsworth has in mind Thomson's *Seasons*, III, 725–27, where, because of the mist, "Seen through the turbid air, beyond the life / Objects appear, and,

wildered, o'er the waste / The shepherd stalks gigantic * * *"
 The echo is strengthened in 1850, 264, "By mists bewildered" (added 1816/19).

His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
 A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
 And deals it out, their regular nourishment
 Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
 Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs, 230
 And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To watch their goings, whatsoever track
 The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
 At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun 235
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
 Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
 As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
 For rest not needed or exchange of love, 240
 Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
 Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
 Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
 In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
 Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies, 245
 His staff portending³ like a hunter's spear,
 Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
 And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
 Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
 Might deign to follow him through what he does 250
 Or sees in his day's march,⁴ himself he feels,
 In those vast regions where his service lies,
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
 With that majestic indolence so dear 255
 To native man.⁵ A rambling school-boy, thus
 I felt his presence in his own domain,
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,
 Presiding; and severest solitude 260
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.
 When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
 Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
 By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps, 265
 In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,⁶
 His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped

3. Stretching out.

4. Lines 238–51 are gratuitous poetic elaboration that goes back to ca. Janu-

ary 1807, though Wordsworth's final text is reached by successive revisions.

- When round some shady promontory turning,⁷
 His form hath flashed upon me glorified
 [270] By the deep radiance of the setting sun; 405
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,
 A solitary object and sublime,
 Above all height, like an aërial cross,
 As it is stationed on some spiry rock
 [275] Of the Chartreuse, for worship.⁸ Thus was man 410
 Ennobled outwardly before mine eyes,
 And thus my heart at first was introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 [280] To me was like an index of delight, 415
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 Meanwhile, this creature—spiritual almost
 As those of books, but more exalted far,
 Far more of an imaginative form—
 [285] Was not a Corin of the groves, who lives 420
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour
 In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst,⁹
 But, for the purposes of kind,¹ a man
 With the most common—husband, father—learned,
 [290] Could teach, admonish, suffered with the rest 425
 From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear.
 Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
 But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances

- Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
 [295] This sanctity of Nature given to man, 430
 A shadow, a delusion?—ye who are fed
 By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 [300] Or waxen image which yourselves have made, 435
 And ye adore. But blessèd be the God
 Of Nature and of man that this was so,
 That men did at the first present themselves
 Before my untaught eyes thus purified,
 [305] Removed, and at a distance that was fit. 440
 And so we all of us in some degree
 Are led to knowledge, whencesoever led,
 And howsoever—were it otherwise,
 And we found evil fast as we find good

7. The schoolboy, not the shepherd, is turning.

8. See *1850*, VI, 480–85 and note, above.

9. Corin and Phyllis are chosen as typi-

cal names from pastoral poetry. "Coronal": here a ring formed by the dancers.

1. I.e., "by nature."

Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
 His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun: 270
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,
 A solitary object and sublime,
 Above all height! like an aerial cross
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship.⁸ Thus was man 275
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
 And thus my heart was early introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 To me became an index of delight, 280
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 Meanwhile this creature—spiritual almost
 As those of books, but more exalted far;
 Far more of an imaginative form
 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives 285
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
 In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst⁹—
 Was, for the purposes of kind,¹ a man
 With the most common; husband, father; learned,
 Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest 290
 From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
 Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
 But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances—

Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
 This sanctity of Nature given to man— 295
 A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
 On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 Or waxen image which yourselves have made, 300
 And ye adore! But blessed be the God
 Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
 That men before my inexperienced eyes
 Did first present themselves thus purified,
 Removed, and to a distance that was fit: 305
 And so we all of us in some degree
 Are led to knowledge, whencesoever led,
 And howsoever; were it otherwise,
 And we found evil fast as we find good

- [310] In our first years, or think that it is found, 445
 How could the innocent heart bear up and live?
 But doubly fortunate my lot: not here
 Alone, that something of a better life
 Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
- [315] Of most to move in, but that first I looked 450
 At man through objects that were great and fair,
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
- [320] Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in 455
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point,
 I had my face towards the truth, began
 With an advantage, furnished with that kind
- [325] Of prepossession without which the soul 460
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good—
 No genuine insight ever comes to her—
- [330] Happy in this, that I with Nature walked,
 Not having a too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life, 465
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts
 Self-pleasing, which if we would wish to think
- [335] With admiration and respect of man
 Will not permit us, but pursue the mind
 That to devotion willingly would be raised, 470
 Into the temple and the temple's heart.²
- [340] Yet do not deem, my friend, though thus I speak
 Of man as having taken in my mind
 A place thus early which might almost seem 475
 Preeminent, that this was really so.
 Nature herself was at this unripe time
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
- [345] Their trivial pleasures. And long afterwards 480
 When those had died away, and Nature did
 For her own sake become my joy, even then,
 And upwards through late youth until not less
 Than three-and-twenty summers had been told,
- [350] Was man in my affections and regards 485
 Subordinate to her,³ her awful forms

2. Probably a metaphor for the innermost, sacred, recesses of the mind itself—though it might be those of Nature.

3. In tracing his own development Wordsworth's purpose is seldom to establish biographical fact; see his inept apology in *1805*, 472–75. Here, however, he is in broad agreement with the most reliable of his time schemes, that pre-

sented in *Tintern Abbey*, where the "music of humanity" becomes audible at some point after his first visit, aged twenty-three, to the river Wye. The reading of *1850*, "two-and-twenty summers," shifts the time back to take account of Beaupuy's humanizing influence in 1792; see especially *1805*, IX, 511–34 below.

In our first years, or think that it is found, 310
 How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
 But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
 Alone, that something of a better life
 Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
 Of most to move in, but that first I looked 315
 At Man through objects that were great or fair;
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
 Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in 320
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point
 I had my face turned toward the truth, began
 With an advantage furnished by that kind
 Of prepossession, without which the soul 325
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
 No genuine insight ever comes to her.
 From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
 Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
 Happy, and now most thankful that my walk 330
 Was guarded from too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life,
 And those ensuing laughs and contempts,
 Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
 With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord, 335
 Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
 Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
 That to devotion willingly would rise,
 Into the temple and the temple's heart.²

Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me 340
 Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
 Nature herself was, at this unripe time,
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
 Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped 345
 And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then—
 And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than two-and-twenty summers had been told—
 Was Man in my affections and regards 350
 Subordinate to her,³ her visible forms

- And viewless⁴ agencies—a passion, she,
 A rapture often, and immediate joy
 Ever at hand: he distant, but a grace
 [355] Occasional, and accidental thought, 490
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 My spirit to that gentleness of love,
 [360] Won from me those minute obeisances
 Of tenderness which I may number now 495
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
 [364] Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.⁵

Why should I speak of tillers of the soil?—
 The ploughman and his team; or men and boys
 In festive summer busy with the rake, 500
 Old men and ruddy maids, and little ones
 All out together, and in sun and shade
 Dispersed among the hay-grounds alder-fringed;
 The quarryman, far heard, that blasts the rock;
 The fishermen in pairs, the one to row, 505
 And one to drop the net, plying their trade
 ‘ ‘Mid tossing lakes and tumbling boats’ and winds
 Whistling; the miner, melancholy man,
 That works by taper-light, while all the hills
 Are shining with the glory of the day.⁶ 510

- [365] But when that first poetic faculty
 Of plain imagination and severe—
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,
 An element of the nature’s inner self—
 Began to have some promptings to put on 515
 A visible shape, and to the works of art,
 [370] The notions and the images of books,
 Did knowingly conform itself (by these
 Enflamed, and proud of that her new delight),
 There came among these shapes of human life 520
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit
 Which gave them new importance to the mind⁷—
 And Nature and her objects beautified
 [375] These fictions, as, in some sort, in their turn

4. Invisible. “Awful”: awe-inspiring.

5. For a passage, “Whether the whistling kite,” deleted in *MS. Y* at this point, see *MS. Drafts and Fragments*, 4(b), below.

6. Lines 498–510 were cut in 1832. The quotation in line 507 is from “I’ll never love thee more,” by James Graham, first Marquis of Montrose (1612–50), which Wordsworth probably read in James

Watson’s *A Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems*, 3 Parts (1706–11), Part III, p. 111. “Whistling wind” (cf. lines 507–8) occurs two lines earlier in Montrose’s poem.

7. For the role of the willful fancy, as opposed to the unifying imagination, see 1805, 586*n*, below.

And viewless⁴ agencies: a passion, she,
 A rapture often, and immediate love
 Ever at hand; *he*, only a delight
 Occasional, an accidental grace, 355
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 My spirit to that gentleness of love
 (Though they had long been carefully observed),
 Won from me those minute obeisances 360
 Of tenderness, which I may number now
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
 Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

But when that first poetic faculty 365
 Of plain Imagination and severe,
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,
 Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
 To try her strength among harmonious words;
 And to book-notions and the rules of art 370
 Did knowingly conform itself; there came
 Among the simple shapes of human life
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;⁷
 And Nature and her objects beautified
 These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn, 375

They burnished her. From touch of this new power 525
 Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
 Beside the well-known charnel-house⁸ had then
 A dismal look, the yew-tree had its ghost
 [380] That took its station there for ornament.
 Then common death was none, common mishap, 530
 But matter for this humour everywhere,
 The tragic super-tragic, else left short.⁹
 Then, if a widow staggering with the blow
 [385] Of her distress was known to have made her way
 To the cold grave in which her husband slept, 535
 One night, or haply more than one—through pain
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind—
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 [390] She was a visitant the whole year through,
 Wetting the turf with never-ending tears, 540
 And all the storms of heaven must beat on her.

Through wild obliquities could I pursue
 Among all objects of the fields and groves
 These cravings: when the foxglove, one by one,
 Upwards through every stage of its tall stem 545
 Had shed its bells, and stood by the wayside
 [395] Dismantled, with a single one perhaps
 Left at the ladder's top, with which the plant
 Appeared to stoop, as slender blades of grass
 Tipped with a bead of rain or dew, behold, 550
 If such a sight were seen, would fancy bring
 Some vagrant thither with her babes and seat her
 Upon the turf beneath the stately flower,
 Drooping in sympathy and making so
 A melancholy crest above the head 555
 Of the lorn creature, while her little ones,
 All unconcerned with her unhappy plight,
 [405] Were sporting with the purple cups that lay
 Scattered upon the ground.¹ There was a copse,
 An upright bank of wood and woody rock 560
 That opposite our rural dwelling stood,
 In which a sparkling patch of diamond light
 Was in bright weather duly to be seen
 On summer afternoons, within the wood
 At the same place. 'Twas doubtless nothing more 565
 Than a black rock, which, wet with constant springs,

8. The place where bones were piled when graves were reused.

9. I.e., "the tragic was super tragic"—it had to be, or it didn't satisfy.

1. Compare the super-tragic episode of the woman and her babes of *Evening*

Walk, 239–300. The juxtaposition in line 556 of the poeticism "lorn" (forlorn) and "creature" (as indulgently applied to a woman) has deliberate sentimental associations.

They burnished her. From touch of this new power
 Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
 Beside the well-known charnel-house⁸ had then
 A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,
 That took his station there for ornament: 380
 The dignities of plain occurrence then
 Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
 Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
 Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
 Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps 385
 To the cold grave in which her husband slept,
 One night, or haply more than one, through pain
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 She must be visitant the whole year through, 390
 Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

Through quaint obliquities I might pursue
 These cravings; when the fox-glove, one by one,
 Upwards through every stage of the tall stem,
 Had shed beside the public way its bells, 395
 And stood of all dismantled, save the last
 Left at the tapering ladder's top, that seemed
 To bend as doth a slender blade of grass
 Tipped with a rain-drop, Fancy loved to seat,
 Beneath the plant despoiled, but crested still 400
 With this last relic, soon itself to fall,
 Some vagrant mother; whose arch little ones,
 All unconcerned by her dejected plight,
 Laughed as with rival eagerness their hands
 Gathered the purple cups that round them lay, 405
 Strewing the turf's green slope.

A diamond light

(Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
 A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
 Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose

- Glistered far seen from out its lurking-place
 As soon as ever the declining sun
- [410] Had smitten it. Beside our cottage hearth
 Sitting with open door, a hundred times
 Upon this lustre have I gazed, that seemed 570
 To have some meaning which I could not find—
 And now it was a burnished shield, I fancied,
- [415] Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
 Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood; 575
 An entrance now into some magic cave,
 Or palace for a fairy of the rock.
 Nor would I, though not certain whence the cause
 Of the effulgence, thither have repaired
 Without a precious bribe, and day by day 580
 And month by month I saw the spectacle,
- [420] Nor ever once have visited the spot
 Unto this hour. Thus sometimes were the shapes
 Of wilful fancy grafted upon feelings
 Of the imagination, and they rose 585
 In worth accordingly.²

My present theme

- Is to retrace the way that led me on
 Through Nature to the love of human-kind;
 Nor could I with such object overlook
 The influence of this power which turned itself 590
- [425] Instinctively to human passions, things
 Least understood—of this adulterate power,
 For so it may be called, and without wrong,
 When with that first compared.³ Yet in the midst
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich 595
 As mine was—through the chance, on me not wasted,
 Of having been brought up in such a grand
 And lovely region—I had forms distinct
- [430] To steady me. These thoughts did oft revolve
 About some centre palpable, which at once 600
 Incited them to motion, and controlled,⁴
 And whatsoever shape the fit might take,
 And whencesoever it might come, I still

2. The imagination, in Wordsworth's horticultural image, is the root stock on which fancies have been grafted. The two faculties had been defined and opposed in his note to *The Thorn* in *Lyrical Ballads* (1800), and again in a Coleridge letter of September 1802 (Griggs, II, pp. 865–66), imagination being presented in each case as constructive in its perception of unity, whereas the fancy is capricious, yoking together ideas and

objects essentially dissimilar.

3. Fancy, though "adulterate" by comparison with the purity of imagination (because of its improper yoking of dissimilar elements) is important as an influence (lines 590–91) because of its connection with human emotion.

4. Thus in 1805, 559–86 (1850, 406–23) fancies are incited by the glistening black rock, and also controlled, because it remains a rock.

Fronting our cottage. Oft beside the hearth 410
 Seated, with open door, often and long
 Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,
 That made my fancy restless as itself.
 'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
 Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay 415
 Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
 An entrance now into some magic cave
 Or palace built by fairies of the rock;
 Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
 The spectacle, by visiting the spot. 420
 Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
 Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
 By pure Imagination:² busy Power
 She was, and with her ready pupil turned 425
 Instinctively to human passions, then
 Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine was through the bounty of a grand
 And lovely region, I had forms distinct
 To steady me: each airy thought revolved 430
 Round a substantial centre, which at once
 Incited it to motion, and controlled.⁴

- At all times had a real solid world
 Of images about me,⁵ did not pine 605
 As one in cities bred might do—as thou,
 Beloved friend, hast told me that thou didst,
 [435] Great spirit as thou art—in endless dreams
 Of sickness, disjoining, joining things,
 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm 610
 If when the woodman languished with disease
 From sleeping night by night among the woods
 [440] Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,
 I called the pangs of disappointed love
 And all the long etcetera of such thought 615
 To help him to his grave?—meanwhile the man,
 If not already from the woods retired
 [445] To die at home, was haply, as I knew,
 Pining alone among the gentle airs,
 Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful 620
 On golden evenings, while the charcoal-pile
 Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
 [450] Or spirit that was soon to take its flight.

5. Wordsworth is steadied by a world that is solid, objective, but of course subjectively perceived ("images" being land-

scape as it appears to the beholder, or as—at a secondary stage—it is stored up within the memory).

I did not pine like one in cities bred,
 As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend!
 Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams 435
 Of sickliness, disjoining, joining, things
 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm,
 If, when the woodman languished with disease
 Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground
 Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise, 440
 I called the pangs of disappointed love,
 And all the sad etcetera of the wrong,
 To help him to his grave. Meanwhile the man,
 If not already from the woods retired
 To die at home, was haply, as I knew, 445
 Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,
 Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
 On golden evenings, while the charcoal pile
 Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
 Or spirit that full soon must take her flight. 450
 Nor shall we not be tending towards that point
 Of sound humanity to which our Tale
 Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I shew
 How Fancy, in a season when she wove
 Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy 455
 For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call
 Some pensive musings which might well beseem
 Maturer years.

A grove there is whose boughs
 Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,⁶
 With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides 460
 Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
 As in a cloister. Once—while, in that shade
 Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
 Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
 In silent beauty on the naked ridge 465
 Of a high eastern hill—thus flowed my thoughts
 In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart;
 'Dear native Region, wheresoe'er shall close
 My mortal course, there will I think on you;
 Dying, will cast on you a backward look; 470
 Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
 Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)
 Doth with the fond remains of his last power
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
 On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.'⁷ 475

6. Coniston Water.

7. Lines 458–75 are a shortened version of 1799, II, 140–74, without the central

section (145–56). The episode had been omitted in 1805.

- There came a time of greater dignity,
Which had been gradually prepared, and now 625
Rushed in as if on wings—the time in which
[480] The pulse of being everywhere was felt,
When all the several frames of things, like stars
Through every magnitude distinguishable,
Were half confounded in each other's blaze, 630
[485] One galaxy of life and joy. Then rose
Man, inwardly contemplated, and present
In my own being, to a loftier height—
As of all visible natures crown, and first
In capability of feeling what 635
Was to be felt, in being rapt away
[491] By the divine effect of power and love—
As, more than any thing we know, instinct
With godhead, and by reason and by will
Acknowledging dependency sublime.⁹ 640
- [495] Erelong, transported hence as in a dream,
I found myself begirt with temporal shapes
Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
Objects of sport and ridicule and scorn,
Manners and characters discriminate, 645
[500] And little busy passions that eclipsed,
As well they might, the impersonated thought,
The idea or abstraction of the kind.¹
An idler among academic bowers,
Such was my new condition—as at large 650
[505] Hath been set forth²—yet here the vulgar light
Of present, actual, superficial life,
Gleaming through colouring of other times,
Old usages and local privilege,
Thereby was softened, almost solemnized, 655
And rendered apt and pleasing to the view.
[510] This notwithstanding, being brought more near
As I was now to guilt and wretchedness,
I trembled, thought of human life at times
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements 660
[515] Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

9. Man, though "instinct" (imbued) with the presence of God, acknowledges dependence upon Him—as, for instance, in *Tintern Abbey*. In so doing, he demonstrates both "reason in her most exalted mood" (equated in *1805*, XIII, 166–70 with imagination), and the conscious

will.

1. The idealized vision of mankind ("impersonated thought"), that Wordsworth had formed unchallenged by experience, is now eclipsed by living examples ("temporal shapes") of vice and folly.

2. In *Book III*.

Enough of humble arguments; recal,
 My Song! those high emotions which thy voice
 Has heretofore made known; that bursting forth
 Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,
 When everywhere a vital pulse was felt, 480
 And all the several frames of things, like stars,
 Through every magnitude distinguishable,
 Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
 Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
 Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man, 485
 Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
 As, of all visible natures, crown, though born
 Of dust, and kindred to the worm,⁸ a Being,
 Both in perception and discernment, first
 In every capability of rapture, 490
 Through the divine effect of power and love;
 As, more than anything we know, instinct
 With godhead, and, by reason and by will,
 Acknowledging dependency sublime.⁹

Ere long, the lonely mountains left, I moved, 495
 Begirt, from day to day, with temporal shapes
 Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
 Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
 Manners and characters discriminate,
 And little bustling passions that eclipsed, 500
 As well they might, the impersonated thought,
 The idea, or abstraction of the kind.¹

An idler among academic bowers,
 Such was my new condition, as at large
 Has been set forth;² yet here the vulgar light 505
 Of present, actual, superficial life,
 Gleaming through colouring of other times,
 Old usages and local privilege,
 Was welcome, softened, if not solemnised.
 This notwithstanding, being brought more near 510
 To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
 I trembled,—thought, at times, of human life
 With an indefinite terror and dismay,
 Such as the storms and angry elements
 Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim 515
 Analogy to uproar and misrule,
 Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

8. One of the most extreme of the Christian revisions of *The Prelude*, introduced in 1838/39.

- It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
Common to all?) that, seeing, I essayed
To give relief, began to deem myself
[520] A moral agent, judging between good
And evil not as for the mind's delight
But for her safety, one who was to *act*— 670
As sometimes to the best of my weak means
I did, by human sympathy impelled,
[525] And through dislike and most offensive pain
Was to the truth conducted—of this faith
Never forsaken, that by acting well, 675
And understanding, I should learn to love
The end³ of life and every thing we know.
- [530] Preceptress stern, that didst instruct me next,
London, to thee I willingly return.
Erewhile my verse played only with the flowers 680
Enwrought upon thy mantle,⁴ satisfied
[535] With this amusement, and a simple look
Of childlike inquisition now and then
Cast upwards on thine eye to puzzle out
[538] Some inner meanings which might harbour there. 685
Yet did I not give way to this light mood
Wholly beguiled, as one incapable
Of higher things, and ignorant that high things
Were round me. Never shall I forget the hour,
The moment rather say, when, having thridded 690
The labyrinth of suburban villages,
At length I did unto myself first seem
To enter the great city. On the roof
Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
[545] With vulgar men about me, vulgar forms 695
Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,
Mean shapes on every side; but, at the time,
When to myself it fairly might be said
(The very moment that I seemed to know)
"The threshold now is overpast", great God! 700
[550] That aught *external* to the living mind
Should have such mighty sway, yet so it was:
A weight of ages did at once descend
Upon my heart—no thought embodied, no
Distinct remembrances, but weight and power, 705
[555] Power growing with the weight. Alas, I feel
That I am trifling. 'Twas a moment's pause:
All that took place within me came and went

3. Purpose, intention.

4. A reminiscence of *Lycidas*, 104–5,
where Camus—the river Cam—has a

"mantle hairy * * * Inwrought with figures dim." "Mantle": cloak or covering.

It might be told (but whereof speak of things
 Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led
 Gravely to ponder—judging between good 520
 And evil, not as for the mind's delight
 But for her guidance—one who was to *act*,
 As sometimes to the best of feeble means
 I did, by human sympathy impelled:
 And, through dislike and most offensive pain, 525
 Was to the truth conducted; of this faith
 Never forsaken, that, by acting well,
 And understanding, I should learn to love
 The end³ of life, and every thing we know.

Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times 530
 Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
 London, to thee I willingly return.
 Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
 Enwrought upon thy mantle;⁴ satisfied
 With that amusement, and a simple look 535
 Of child-like inquisition now and then
 Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
 But how could I in mood so light indulge,
 Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day, 540
 When, having thridded the long labyrinth
 Of the suburban villages, I first
 Entered thy vast dominion? On the roof
 Of an itinerant vehicle I sate,
 With vulgar men about me, trivial forms 545
 Of houses, pavement, streets, of men and things,—
 Mean shapes on every side: but, at the instant,
 When to myself it fairly might be said,
 The threshold now is overpast (how strange
 That aught external to the living mind 550
 Should have such mighty sway! yet so it was),
 A weight of ages did at once descend
 Upon my heart; no thought embodied, no
 Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,—
 Power growing under weight: alas! I feel 555
 That I am trifling; 'twas a moment's pause,—
 All that took place within me came and went

As in a moment, and I only now
Remember that it was a thing divine.

710

- [560] As when a traveller hath from open day
With torches passed into some vault of earth,
The grotto of Antiparos, or the den
Of Yordas among Craven's mountain tracts,⁵
He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow,
- [565] Widening itself on all sides, sees, or thinks
He sees,⁶ erelong, the roof above his head,
Which instantly unsettles and recedes—
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
Commingled, making up a canopy
- [570] Of shapes, and forms, and tendencies to shape,
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like spectres—ferment quiet and sublime,
Which, after a short space, works less and less
Till, every effort, every motion gone,
- [575] The scene before him lies in perfect view
Exposed, and lifeless as a written book.⁷
But let him pause awhile and look again,
And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
Beginning timidly, then creeping fast
- [580] Through all which he beholds: the senseless mass,
In its projections, wrinkles, cavities,
Through all its surface, with all colours streaming,
Like a magician's airy pageant, parts,
Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure⁸
Or image, recognised or new, some type
Or picture of the world—forests and lakes,
- [585] Ships, rivers, towers, the warrior clad in mail,
The prancing steed, the pilgrim with his staff,
The mitred bishop and the thronèd king—
A spectacle to which there is no end.
- [590] No otherwise had I at first been moved—
With such a swell of feeling, followed soon
By a blank sense of greatness passed away—
And afterwards continued to be moved,

745

5. The grotto on the Aegean island of Antiparos was, according to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (3rd ed., 1797), 120 yards wide and 60 high, and "accounted one of the greatest natural curiosities in the world." Yordas is an impressive, though very much smaller, limestone cave near Ingleton in northwest Yorkshire, visited by Wordsworth and his brother John in May 1800 (*EY*, p. 298).

6. "Sees, or thinks / He sees": from Virgil's *Aeneid*, VI, 454, "*Aut videt, aut*

vidisse putat," copied by Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I, 783–84.

7. Lines 711–27 were drafted late in March 1804, in an attempt to define Wordsworth's sense of anticlimax at having unknowingly crossed the Alps in August 1790 (VI, 511–24). In this original position they precede drafts of the lines upon imagination (VI, 525–48).

8. Impression, an image that has been stamped onto a surface.

As in a moment; yet with Time it dwells,
And grateful memory, as a thing divine.

The curious traveller, who, from open day, 560
Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
In old time haunted by that Danish Witch,
Yordas;⁵ he looks around and sees the vault
Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees,⁶ 565
Erelong, the massy roof above his head,
That instantly unsettles and recedes,—
Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
Commingled, making up a canopy
Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape 570
That shift and vanish, change and interchange
Like spectres,—ferment silent and sublime!
That after a short space works less and less,
Till, every effort, every motion gone,
The scene before him stands in perfect view 575
Exposed, and lifeless as a written book!—
But let him pause awhile, and look again,
And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass, 580
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape,—there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail, 585
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff:
Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved, 590
Nor otherwise continued to be moved,

- In presence of that vast metropolis,
 The fountain of my country's destiny
 And of the destiny of earth itself,
 That great emporium,⁹ chronicle at once
 [595] And burial-place of passions, and their home 750
 Imperial, and chief living residence.
 With strong sensations teeming as it did
 Of past and present, such a place must needs
 Have pleased me in those times. I sought not then
 [600] Knowledge, but craved for power—and power I found 755
 In all things. Nothing had a circumscribed
 And narrow influence; but all objects, being
 [605] Themselves capacious, also found in me
 Capaciousness and amplitude of mind—
 Such is the strength and glory of our youth. 760
 The human nature unto which I felt
 That I belonged, and which I loved and revered,
 [610] Was not a punctual presence,¹ but a spirit
 Living in time and space, and far diffused.
 In this my joy, in this my dignity 765
 Consisted: the external universe,
 By striking upon what is found within,
 Had given me this conception, with the help
 [616] Of books and what they picture and record.
- "Tis true the history of my native land, 770
 With those of Greece compared and popular Rome—
 Events not lovely nor magnanimous,
 But harsh and unaffecting in themselves;
 And in our high-wrought modern narratives
 [620] Stript of their humanizing soul, the life 775
 Of manners and familiar incidents—
 Had never much delighted me.³ And less
 Than other minds I had been used to owe
 The pleasure which I found in place or thing
 To extrinsic transitory accidents, 780
 [625] To records or traditions; but a sense
 Of what had been here done, and suffered here
 Through ages, and was doing, suffering, still,
 Weighed with me, could support the test of thought—
 [631] Was like the enduring majesty and power 785

9. A major center of commerce, a market.

1. I.e., one restricted to a precise moment and place; compare *Paradise Lost*, VIII, 23.

3. I.e., English history (lines 770-77) had never much delighted Wordsworth (a) because it consisted of events which

by comparison with those of Greece and republican ("popular") Rome were not high-principled ("magnanimous"—literally, great of mind); and (b) because events had been stripped by historians of their "humanizing soul"—i.e., reference to ordinary human life.

As I explored the vast metropolis,
 Fount of my country's destiny and the world's;
 That great emporium,⁹ chronicle at once
 And burial-place of passions, and their home 595
 Imperial, their chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did
 Of past and present, such a place must needs
 Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time
 Far less than craving power; yet knowledge came, 600
 Sought or unsought, and influxes of power
 Came, of themselves, or at her call derived
 In fits of kindest apprehensiveness,
 From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
 Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me 605
 A correspondent amplitude of mind;
 Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
 The human nature unto which I felt
 That I belonged, and revered with love,
 Was not a punctual presence,¹ but a spirit 610
 Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
 Of evidence from monuments, erect,
 Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
 In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
 Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn 615
 From books and what they picture and record.²

'Tis true, the history of our native land,
 With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
 And in our high-wrought modern narratives
 Stript of their harmonising soul,⁴ the life 620
 Of manners and familiar incidents,
 Had never much delighted me. And less
 Than other intellects had mine been used
 To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
 Of record or tradition; but a sense 625
 Of what in the Great City had been done
 And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,
 Weighed with me, could support the test of thought;
 And, in despite of all that had gone by,
 Or was departing never to return, 630
 There I conversed with majesty and power

2. Lines 611–16 are introduced in a revision of 1838/39. The reference in 612–13 is to megalithic circles of standing stones; compare the reference inserted at 1850, II, 101–2, above, to the stone circle at Swinside, west of Duddon Bridge.

4. The cutting of 1805, lines 772–73 makes the plural pronoun “their” in line 620 ungrammatical. “Harmonising” in the same line is a return in *MS. C* (1816/19) to the original reading of *A* and *B*, “humanizing” (1805, 775) being an early and short-lived correction.

- Of independent nature. And not seldom
 Even individual remembrances,
 By working on the shapes before my eyes,
 Became like vital functions of the soul;
 And out of what had been, what was, the place 790
 Was thronged with impregnations, like those wilds
 In which my early feelings had been nursed,
 [635] And naked valleys full of caverns, rocks,
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
 Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags 795
 [638] That into music touch the passing wind.

- Thus here imagination also found
 An element that pleased her, tried her strength
 Among new objects, simplified, arranged,
 Impregnated my knowledge, made it live— 800
 And the result was elevating thoughts
 [645] Of human nature. Neither guilt nor vice,
 Debasement of the body or the mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
 Which was not lightly passed, but often scanned 805
 Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
 [650] In what we may become, induce belief
 That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A solitary, who with vain conceits
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.⁵ 810
 When from that rueful prospect, overcast
 And in eclipse, my meditations turned,
 [655] Lo, every thing that was indeed divine
 Retained its purity inviolate 815
 And unencroached upon, nay, seemed brighter far
 For this deep shade in counterview, the gloom
 Of opposition, such as shewed itself
 To the eyes of Adam, yet in Paradise
 [660] Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light 820
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 'O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.'⁶
 [665] Add also, that among the multitudes 825
 Of that great city oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
 Is possible, the unity of man,
 One spirit over ignorance and vice

5. A restatement of *Tintern Abbey*, 125–36, with reference to human, rather than external, nature.

6. Not just the last two lines (as implied by Wordsworth's quotation marks

in 1805) but the three previous lines as well, draw almost verbatim on *Paradise Lost*, XI, 203–7. "Orient": bright, as from the rising sun. "Fraught": burdened, loaded.

Like independent natures. Hence the place
 Was thronged with impregnations like the *Wilds*
 In which my early feelings had been nursed—
 Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks, 635
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
 Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
 That into music touch the passing wind.
 Here then my young imagination found
 No uncongenial element; could here 640
 Among new objects serve or give command,
 Even as the heart's occasions might require,
 To forward reason's else too scrupulous march.
 The effect was, still more elevated views
 Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt, 645
 Debasement undergone by body or mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
 Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
 Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
 In what we *may* become; induce belief 650
 That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A solitary, who with vain conceits
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.⁵
 From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
 Lo! every thing that was indeed divine 655
 Retained its purity inviolate,
 Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
 Set off; such opposition as aroused
 The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw 660
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.⁶

Add also, that among the multitudes 665
 Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
 Is possible, the unity of man,
 One spirit over ignorance and vice

- [670] Predominant, in good and evil hearts
 One sense for moral judgments, as one eye 830
 For the sun's light. When strongly breathed upon
 By this sensation—whencesoe'er it comes,
 Of union or communion—doth the soul
 Rejoice as in her highest joy; for there,
 There chiefly, hath she feeling whence she is, 835
- [675] And passing through all Nature rests with God.
- And is not, too, that vast abiding-place
 Of human creatures, turn where'er we may,
 Profusely sown with individual sights
- [VII, 600] Of courage, and integrity, and truth, 840
 And tenderness, which, here set off by foil,
 [VII, 602] Appears more touching?⁷ In the tender scenes
 Chiefly was my delight, and one of these
 Never will be forgotten. 'Twas a man,
 Whom I saw sitting in an open square 845
 Close to the iron paling that fenced in
 The spacious grass-plot: on the corner-stone
 Of the low wall in which the pales were fixed
 Sate this one man, and with a sickly babe
 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought 850
- [VII, 610] For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
 He took no note; but in his brawny arms
 (The artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen) 855
- [VII, 615] He held the child, and, bending over it
 As if he were afraid both of the sun
 And of the air which he had come to seek,
 He eyed it with unutterable love.
- [676] Thus from a very early age, O friend, 860
 My thoughts had been attracted more and more
 By slow gradations towards human-kind,
 And to the good and ill of human life.
 Nature had led me on, and now I seemed
- [681] To travel independent of her help, 865
 As if I had forgotten her—but no,
 My fellow-beings still were unto me
 Far less than she was: though the scale of love
- [685] Were filling fast, 'twas light as yet compared 870
 With that in which her mighty objects lay.⁹

7. The rarity of tenderness in London makes it conspicuous (sets it off by foil), but these lines nevertheless offer a view of the city that comes as a surprise after the satire of disunity in Book VII. It should be remembered that VIII was the

first of the two Books to be written.

9. A draft of lines 860–70 preserved in *MS. W* may well date from ca. January 1804—earlier than the material in the notebook written for the five-Book *Prelude*.

Predominant, in good and evil hearts; 670
 One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
 For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus
 By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er
 Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
 On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God. 675

Thus from a very early age, O Friend!
 My thoughts by slow gradations had been drawn
 To human-kind, and to the good and ill
 Of human life: Nature had led me on;
 And oft amid the 'busy hum'⁸ I seemed 680
 To travel independent of her help,
 As if I had forgotten her; but no,
 The world of human-kind outweighed not hers
 In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
 Though filling daily, still was light, compared 685
 With that in which *her* mighty objects lay.

8. An allusion to Milton's *L'Allegro*, 117–18: "Towered cities please us then / And the busy hum of men."