

How fast has brother followed brother,
From sunshine to the sunless land!

25 Yet I, whose lids from infant slumber
Were earlier raised, remain to hear
A timid voice, that asks in whispers,
"Who next will drop and disappear?"

Our haughty life is crowned with darkness,
30 Like London with its own black wreath,
On which with thee, O Crabbe!⁷ forth-looking,
I gazed from Hampstead's breezy heath.

As if but yesterday departed,
Thou too art gone before; but why,
35 O'er ripe fruit, seasonably gathered,
Should frail survivors heave a sigh?

Mourn rather for that holy Spirit,
Sweet as the spring, as ocean deep;
For Her⁸ who, ere her summer faded,
40 Has sunk into a breathless sleep.

No more of old romantic sorrows,
For slaughtered Youth or love-lorn Maid!
With sharper grief is Yarrow smitten,
And Ettrick mourns with her their Poet dead.

Nov. 21, 1835

1835

The Prelude *The Prelude*, now regarded as Wordsworth's crowning achievement, was unknown to the public at the time of his death in April 1850. When, three months later, it was published from manuscript by Wordsworth's literary executors, its title was given to it by the poet's wife, Mary. Wordsworth had referred to it variously as "the poem to Coleridge," "the poem on the growth of my own mind," and "the poem on my own poetical education."

For some seventy-five years this posthumous publication of 1850 was the only known text. Then in 1926 Ernest de Selincourt, working from manuscripts, printed an earlier version of the poem that Wordsworth had completed in 1805. Since that time other scholars have established the existence of a still earlier and much shorter version of *The Prelude*, in two parts, that Wordsworth had composed in 1798–99. The following seems to have been the process of composition that produced the three principal versions of the poem:

1. The *Two-Part Prelude* of 1799. Wordsworth originally planned, early in 1798, to include an account of his own development as a poet in his projected but never-completed philosophical poem *The Recluse*. While living in Germany during the autumn and winter of 1798–99, he composed a number of passages about his early experiences with nature. What had been intended to be part of *The Recluse*, however,

7. George Crabbe, the poet of rural and village life, with whom Wordsworth contrasts himself in his comment on "Lucy Gray" (see p. 277).

8. The poet Felicia Hemans, who died at forty-two.

quickly evolved into an independent autobiographical poem, and by late 1799, when Wordsworth settled with his sister, Dorothy, at Grasmere, he had written a two-part, 978-line poem which describes his life from infancy, through his years at Hawkshead School, to the age of seventeen. This poem corresponds, by and large, to the contents of books 1 and 2 of the later versions of *The Prelude*.

2. The 1805 *Prelude*. Late in 1801 Wordsworth began to expand the poem on his poetic life, and in 1804 he set to work intensively on the project. His initial plan was to write it in five books, but he soon decided to enlarge it to incorporate an account of his experiences in France and of his mental crisis after the failure of his hopes in the French Revolution, and to end the poem with his settlement at Grasmere and his taking up the great task of *The Recluse*. He completed the poem, in thirteen books, in May 1805. This is the version that Wordsworth read to Coleridge after the latter's return from Malta (see Coleridge's "To William Wordsworth," p. 471).

3. The 1850 *Prelude*. For the next thirty-five years, Wordsworth tinkered with the text. He polished the style and softened some of the challenges to religious orthodoxy that he had set out in his earlier statements about the godlike powers of the human mind in its communion with nature; he did not, however, in any essential way alter its subject matter or overall design. *The Prelude* that was published in July 1850 is in fourteen books, it incorporated Wordsworth's latest revisions, which had been made in 1839, as well as some alterations introduced by his literary executors. The selections printed here—from W. J. B. Owen's Cornell Wordsworth volume, *The Fourteen-Book Prelude* (1985)—are from the manuscript of this final version. Our reasons for choosing this version are set forth in Jack Stillinger's "Textual Primitivism and the Editing of Wordsworth," *Studies in Romanticism* 28 (1989): 3–28.

When Wordsworth enlarged the two-part *Prelude* of 1799, he not only made it a poem of epic length but also heightened the style and introduced various thematic parallels with earlier epics, especially *Paradise Lost*. The expanded poem, however, is a personal history that turns on a mental crisis and recovery, and for such a narrative design the chief prototype is not the classical or Christian epic but the spiritual autobiography of crisis. St. Augustine's *Confessions* established this central Christian form late in the fourth century. Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions*, published between 1780 and 1789, and quickly translated into English from French, renewed this autobiographical form for writers of Wordsworth's generation.

As in many versions of spiritual autobiography, Wordsworth's persistent metaphor is that of life as a circular journey whose end (as T. S. Eliot put it in *Four Quartets*, his adaptation of the traditional form) is "to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time" (*Little Gidding*, lines 241–42). Wordsworth's *Prelude* opens with a literal journey whose chosen goal (1.72, 106–07) is "a known Vale whither my feet should turn"—that is, the Vale of Grasmere. *The Prelude* narrates a number of later journeys, most notably the crossing of the Alps in book 6 and, at the beginning of the final book, the climactic ascent of Mount Snowdon. In the course of the poem, such literal journeys become the metaphoric vehicle for a spiritual journey—the quest, within the poet's memory, and in the very process of composing his poem, for his lost early self and his proper spiritual home. At its end the poem, rounding back on its beginning, leaves the poet at home in the Vale of Grasmere, ready finally to begin his great project *The Recluse* (14.302–11, 374–85). It is in this sense that the poem is a "prelude"—preparation for the "honorable toil" (1.626) for which, having discovered his vocation, the mature writer is ready at last.

Although the episodes of *The Prelude* are recognizable events from Wordsworth's life, they are interpreted in retrospect, reordered in sequence, and retold as dramas involving the interaction between the mind and nature and between the creative imagination and the force of history. And although the narrator is recognizably William Wordsworth, addressing the entire poem as a communication to his friend Coleridge, he adopts the prophetic persona, modeled on the poet-prophets of the Bible, which John Milton had adopted in narrating *Paradise Lost* (13.300–11). In this way

Wordsworth, like his great English predecessor, assumes the authority to speak as a national poet whose function is to reconstitute the grounds of hope in a dark time of postrevolutionary reaction and despair. As Wordsworth describes it (2.433—42), he speaks out

in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes overthrown,
. . . 'mid indifference and apathy
And wicked exultation, when good men,
On every side, fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love
. . . this time
Of dereliction and dismay. . . .

FROM THE PRELUDE
OR
GROWTH OF A POET'S MIND

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL POEM

Book First
Introduction, Childhood, and School-time

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

London

1. One of many echoes from *Paradise Lost*, where the line is applied to Adam and Eve as, at the conclusion of the poem, they begin their new life after

being expelled from Eden: "The world was all before them" (12.646).

- 25 With any promises of human life),
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn, *anticipation*
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
- 30 Upon the River point me out my course?
Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail,
But for a gift that consecrates the joy?
For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt, within,
- 35 A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue,² but is now become *abundant*
A tempest, a redundant³ energy,
Vexing its own creation. Thanks to both,
And their congenial⁴ powers that, while they join *kindred*
- 40 In breaking up a long continued frost,
Bring with them vernal⁵ promises, the hope *springtime*
Of active days urged on by flying hours;
Days of sweet leisure taxed with patient thought
Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
- 45 Matins and vespers, of harmonious verse!⁶
Thus far, O Friend!¹ did I, not used to make
A present joy the matter of a Song,⁵
Pour forth, that day, my soul in measured strains,
That would not be forgotten, and are here
- 50 Recorded:—to the open fields I told
A prophecy:—poetic numbers⁶ came *verse*
Spontaneously, to clothe in priestly robe
A renovated⁶ Spirit singled out, *renewed*
Such hope was mine, for holy services:
- 55 My own voice cheered me, and, far more, the mind's
Internal echo of the imperfect sound;
To both I listened, drawing from them both
A chearful confidence in things to come.
Content, and not unwilling now to give
- 60 A respite to this passion,⁶ I paced on
With brisk and eager steps; and came at length
To a green shady place where down I sate
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
And settling into gentler happiness.
- 65 'Twas Autumn, and a clear and placid day,

2. Revivifying power. ("To quicken" is to give or restore life.)

3. I.e., verses equivalent to morning prayers (matins) and evening prayers (vespers). The opening passage (lines 1–45), which Wordsworth calls in book 7, line 4, a "glad preamble," replaces the traditional epic device, such as Milton had adopted in *Paradise Lost*, of an opening prayer to the Muse for inspiration. To be "inspired," in the literal sense, is to be breathed or blown into by a divinity (in Latin *spirare* means both "to breathe" and "to blow"). Wordsworth begins his poem with a "blessing" from an outer "breeze," which (lines 34–45) is called the "breath of heaven" and evokes in him, in response, an inner, "correspondent" breeze, a burst of inspiration. The power of this revivifying

breeze and breath, at once material and spiritual, is represented in other Romantic poems, such as Coleridge's "The Eolian Harp" and Percy Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind" as well as in the opening letter of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

4. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, to whom Wordsworth addresses the whole of the *Prelude*. For Coleridge's response, after the poem was read to him, see "To William Wordsworth" (p. 471).

5. In the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth says that his poetry usually originates in "emotion recollected in tranquillity"; hence not, as in the preceding preamble, during the experience that it records.

6. I.e., "and willing to prolong the passion."

With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
Two hours declined towards the west, a day
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
And, in the sheltered and the sheltering grove,
70 A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
Of a known Vale: whither my feet should turn,
Nor rest till they had reached the very door
Of the one Cottage which methought I saw.
75 No picture of mere memory ever looked
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
I gazed with growing love, a higher power
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
Of glory, there forthwith to be begun,
80 Perhaps too there performed.⁷ Thus long I mused,
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
Save where, amid the stately grove of Oaks,
Now here—now there—an acorn, from its cup
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
85 To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
A backward glance upon the curling cloud
Of city smoke, by distance ruralized,
90 Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive,
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
The road that pointed tow'rd the chosen Vale.
It was a splendid evening: and my Soul
95 Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked
Eolian visitations;⁸ but the harp
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds;
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
100 Why think of any thing but present good?"
So, like a Home-bound Labourer, I pursued
My way, beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
Mild influence;⁹ nor left in me one wish
Again to bend the sabbath of that time:
105 To a servile yoke. What need of many words?
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
In common things,—the endless store of things
no Rare, or at least so seeming, every day
Found all about me in one neighbourhood;
The self-congratulation," and from morn

self-rejoicing

7. Grasmere, where Wordsworth settled with his sister, Dorothy, in December 1799.

8. I.e., *The Recluse*, which Wordsworth planned to be his major poetic work.

9. Influences to which his soul responded as an Eolian harp, placed in an open window, responds

with music to gusts of a breeze. For a description of this instrument, see Coleridge's *The Eolian Harp*, n. 1, p. 426.

1. An astrological term for the effect of stars on human life.

2. That time of rest.

To night unbroken cheerfulness serene.
But speedily an earnest longing rose
us To brace myself to some determined aim,
Reading or thinking; either to lay up
New stores, or rescue from decay the old
Ry timely interference: and therewith
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
120 I might endue" some airy phantasies *invest*
That had been floating loose about for years;
And to such Beings temperately deal forth
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
125 Dawns from the East, but dawns—to disappear
And mock me with a sky that ripens not
Into a steady morning: if my mind,
Remembering the bold promise of the past,
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
BO Vain is her wish: where'er she turns, she finds
Impediments from day to day renewed.
And now it would content me to yield up
Those lofty hopes awhile for present gifts
Of humbler industry. But, O dear Friend!
135 The Poet, gentle Creature as he is,
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times,
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
Though no distress be near him but his own
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleas'd
HO While she, as duteous as the Mother Dove,
Sits brooding,³ lives not always to that end,
But, like the innocent Bird, hath goadings on
That drive her, as in trouble, through the groves:
With me is now such passion, to be blamed
145 No otherwise than as it lasts too long.
When as becomes a Man who would prepare
For such an arduous Work, I through myself
Make rigorous inquisition, the report
Is often chearing; for I neither seem
150 To lack that first great gift, the vital Soul,
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
Subordinate helpers of the living Mind:
Nor am I naked of external things,
155 Forms, images, nor numerous other aids
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
Are found in plenteous store, but no where such
160 As may be singled out with steady choice:
No little band of yet remembered names
Whom I in perfect confidence might hope

3. An echo of Milton's reference in *Paradise Lost* to the original act of creation in his invocation to the Holy Spirit: Thou "Dovelike satst brooding on the vast Abyss / And mad'st it pregnant" (1.21—22).

To summon back from lonesome banishment,
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
165 Now living, or to live in future years.
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
Will settle on some British theme, some old
Romantic Tale by Milton left unsung:
170 More often turning to some gentle place
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
To Shepherd Swains, or seated, harp in hand,
Amid reposing knights by a River side
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
175 Of dire enchantments faced, and overcome
By the strong mind, and Tales of warlike feats
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
180 Whence inspiration for a song that winds
Through ever changing scenes of votive quest,
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
To patient courage and unblemished truth,
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
185 And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
Odin, the Father of a Race by whom
190 Perished the Roman Empire; how the friends
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles;
And left their usages, their arts, and laws
To disappear by a slow gradual death;
195 To dwindle and to perish, one by one,
Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
Survived, and, when the European came
With skill and power that might not be withstood,
200 Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold,
And wasted down by glorious death that Race
Of natural Heroes;—or I would record
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled Man,
Unnam'd among the chronicles of Kings,

4. In *Paradise Lost* 9.24-41 Milton relates that, in seeking a subject for his epic poem, he rejected "fabled Knights" and medieval romance.

5. A quest undertaken to fulfill a vow.

6. An echo of the prefatory statement to Spenser's *Faerie Qiteene*, line 9: "Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall moralize my song."

7. Mithridates VI, king of Pontus, was defeated by the Roman Pompey in 66 B.C.E. In his *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (published between 1776 and 1788), the historian Edward Gibbon had discussed Mithridates as a historical prototype for the legendary Norse god Odin. Mithridates' determination to found a family line that would take

revenge on the conquering Romans links him to other figures whom Wordsworth here considers as potential subjects for his poem, all of them battlers against tyranny.

8. Sertorius, a Roman general allied with Mithridates, fought off the armies of Pompey and others until he was assassinated in 72 B.C.E. There is a legend that after his death his followers, to escape Roman tyranny, fled from Spain to the Canary Islands (known in ancient times as "the Fortunate Isles," line 192), where their descendants flourished until subjugated and decimated by invading Spaniards late in the 15th century.

205 Suffered in silence for truth's sake: or tell
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force
 Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of those who conquered first the Indian isles,
 Went, single in his ministry, across
210 The Ocean;—not to comfort the Oppressed,
 But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about,
 Withering the Oppressor:—how Gustavus sought
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines:¹
 How Wallace² fought for Scotland, left the name
215 Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,
 All over his dear Country, left the deeds
 Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
220 Of independence and stern liberty.
 Sometimes it suits me better to invent
 A Tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions, and habitual thoughts,
 Some variegated Story, in the main
225 Lofty, but the unsubstantial Structure melts
 Before the very sun that brightens it,
 Mist into air dissolving! Then, a wish,
 My last and favourite aspiration, mounts,
 With yearning, tow'rds some philosophic Song
230 Of Truth³ that cherishes our daily life;
 With meditations passionate, from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;⁴
 But from this awful burthen I full soon
235 Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust
 That mellowed years will bring a riper mind
 And clearer insight. Thus my days are passed
 In contradiction; with no skill to part
 Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,
240 From paramount impulse—not to be withstood;
 A timorous capacity from prudence;
 From circumspection, infinite delay.⁵
 Humility and modest awe themselves
 Betray me, serving often for a cloke
245 To a more subtle selfishness; that now
 Locks every function up in blank⁶ reserve,⁶ *absolute / inaction*
 Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
 That with intrusive restlessness beats off

9. Dominique de Gourges, a French gentleman who went in 1568 to Florida to avenge the massacre of the French by the Spaniards there [footnote in *The Prelude* of 1850].

1. Gustavus I of Sweden (1496-1530) worked to advance Sweden's liberation from Danish rule while toiling in disguise as a miner in his country's Dalecarlia mines.

2. William Wallace, Scottish patriot, fought against the English until captured and executed in 1305. See Robert Burns's "Robert Bruce's March

to Bannockburn," p. 145.

3. I.e., *The Recluse*.

4. The lyre of Orpheus. In Greek myth Orpheus was able to enchant not only human listeners but also the natural world by his singing and playing.

5. The syntax is complex and inverted; in outline the sense of lines 238—42 seems to be: "With no ability ('skill') to distinguish between vague desire (perhaps, 'haply,' resulting from lack of power) and ruling impulse; between endless procrastination and carefulness ('circumspection')."

Simplicity, and self-presented truth.
250 Ah! better far than this, to stray about
Voluptuously,⁰ through fields and rural walks, *luxuriously*
And ask no record of the hours, resigned
To vacant musing, unreprieved neglect
Of all things, and deliberate holiday:
255 Far better never to have heard the name
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
Turns recreant⁰ to her task, takes heart again, *unfaithful*
Then feels immediately some hollow thought
260 Hang like an interdict⁰ upon her hopes. *prohibition*
This is my lot; for either still I find
Some imperfection in the chosen theme;
Or see of absolute accomplishment
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself
265 That I recoil and droop, and seek repose
In listlessness from vain perplexity;
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
Like a false Steward who hath much received,
And renders nothing back.⁶
Was it for this⁷
270 That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved
To blend his murmurs with my Nurse's song;
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice
That flowed along my dreams? For this didst Thou,
275 O Derwent! winding among grassy holms⁸
Where I was looking on, a Babe in arms,
Make ceaseless music, that composed my thoughts
To more than infant softness, giving me,
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind,
280 A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves?
When he had left the mountains, and received
On his smooth breast the shadow of those Towers
That yet survive, a shattered Monument
285 Of feudal sway, the bright blue River passed
Along the margin of our Terrace Walk;⁹
A tempting Playmate whom we dearly loved.
O many a time have I, a five years' Child,
In a small mill-race¹ severed from his stream,
290 Made one long bathing of a summer's day;
Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again,
Alternate all a summer's day, or scoured²
The sandy fields, leaping through flow'ry groves
Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,

6. The reference is to Christ's parable of the steward who fails to use his talents (literally, the coins his master has entrusted to him and, figuratively, his God-given abilities) in Matthew 25.14-30.

7. The two-part *Prelude* that Wordsworth wrote in 1798-99 begins at this point.

8. Flat ground next to a river.

9. The Derwent River flows by Cockermouth Castle and then past the garden terrace behind Wordsworth's father's house in Cockermouth, Cumberland.

1. The current that drives a mill wheel.

2. Run swiftly over.

The woods and distant Skiddaw's³ lofty height,
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
On Indian plains, and from my Mother's hut
Had run abroad in wantonness,⁰ to sport,
A naked Savage, in the thunder shower.

frolic

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;
Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less
In that beloved Vale⁴ to which erelong
We were transplanted – there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal Crocus, 'twas my joy,
With store of Springes⁰ o'er my Shoulder slung,
To range the open heights where woodcocks ran
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation; – moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head; I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befel,
In these night-wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the Bird
Which was the Captive of another's toil³
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard, among the solitary hills,
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

bird, snares

Nor less, when Spring had warmed the cultured⁰ Vale,
Roved we as plunderers where the Mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean⁰
Our object, and inglorious, yet the end⁰
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the Raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill-sustained; and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag; Oh, at that time,
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ears! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth, and with what motion moved the clouds!

cultivated

*of little value
outcome*

Dust as we are, the immortal Spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all

3. A mountain nine miles east of Cockermouth.

4. The valley of Esthwaite, the location of Hawks-

head, where Wordsworth attended school.

5. Snare or labor.

345 The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes, interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
350 Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ!
Whether her fearless visitings or those
That came with soft alarm like hurtless lightning
Opening the peaceful clouds, or she would use
355 Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.
One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little Boat tied to a Willow-tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
360 Straight I unloosed her chain, and, stepping in,
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my Boat move on,
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
365 Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows
(Proud of his skill) to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
370 Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin Pinnacle;⁰ lustily *small boat*
I dipped my oars into the silent lake;
375 And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the Water like a swan:
When, from behind that craggy Steep, till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct,⁰ *endowed*
380 Upreared its head.⁶—I struck, and struck again,
And, growing still in stature, the grim Shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion, like a living Thing
385 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the Covert⁰ of the Willow-tree; *shelter*
There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark, —
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
390 And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts

6. To direct his boat in a straight line, the rower (sitting facing the stern of the boat) has fixed his eye on a point on the ridge above the nearby shore, which blocks out the landscape behind. As he

moves farther out, the black peak rises into his altering angle of vision and seems to stride closer with each stroke of the oars.

There hung a darkness, call it solitude
395 Or blank desertion. No familiar Shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or Sky, no colours of green fields,
But huge and mighty Forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
400 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.
Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That giv'st to forms and images a breath
And everlasting Motion! not in vain,
405 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn
Of Childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human Soul,
Not with the mean" and vulgar" works of man, *inferior / commonplace*
But with high objects, with enduring things,
410 With life and nature, purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear; until we recognize
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
415 Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days
When vapours, rolling down the valley, made
A lonely scene more lonesome; among woods
At noon, and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
420 When, by the margin of the trembling Lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine:
Mine was it, in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.
425 – And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile,
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons, – happy time
It was indeed for all of us; for me
430 It was a time of rapture! – Clear and loud
The village Clock toll'd six – I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. – All shod with steel,^o *i.e., on skates*
We hissed along the polished ice, in games
435 Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures, – the resounding horn,
The Pack loud-chiming and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle: with the din
440 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy, not unnoticed while the stars,
445 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.

Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay,—or sportively
Glanced sideways,⁷ leaving the tumultuous throng
To cut across the reflex⁰ of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain: and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me—even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal⁰ round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,⁰
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

reflection

*daily
succession*

Ye presences of Nature, in the sky,
And on the earth! Ye visions of the hills!
And Souls⁸ of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye, through many a year,
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters⁰
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work⁰ like a sea?

signs

seethe

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

— We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours,
Nor saw a Band in happiness and joy
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.
I could record with no reluctant voice
The woods of Autumn, and their hazel bowers
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line,
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreproved enchantment led us on,
By rocks and pools shut out from every star
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.
— Unfading recollections! at this hour
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,
The paper-Kite, high among fleecy clouds,

7. Moved off obliquely.

8. Wordsworth refers both to a single "Spirit" or "Soul" of the universe as a whole (e.g., lines 401—

02) and to plural "Presences" and "Souls" animating the various parts of the universe.

495 Pull at her rein, like an impatient Courser;⁰ *swift horse*
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.
Ye lowly Cottages in which we dwelt,
500 A ministration of your own was yours!
Can I forget you, being as ye were
So beautiful among the pleasant fields
In which ye stood? or can I here forget
The plain and seemly countenance with which
505 Ye dealt out your plain Comforts? Yet had ye
Delights and exultations of your own.
Eager and never weary, we pursued
Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire
At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate
510 In square divisions parcelled out, and all
With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head,
In strife too humble to be named in verse;⁹
Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,⁰ *pine or fir*
515 Cherry, or maple, sate in close array,
And to the Combat, Lu or Whist, led on
A thick-ribbed Army, not as in the world
Neglected and ungratefully thrown by
Even for the very service they had wrought,
520 But husbanded through many a long campaign.
Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few
Had changed their functions; some, plebeian cards
Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,
Had dignified, and called to represent
525 The Persons of departed Potentates.¹
Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
Ironic diamonds; Clubs, Hearts, Diamonds, Spades,
A congregation piteously akin!
Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
530 Those sooty Knaves, precipitated down
With scoffs and taunts like Vulcan² out of heaven;
The paramount Ace, a moon in her eclipse,
Queens gleaming through their Splendor's last decay,
And Monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained
535 By royal visages.³ Meanwhile abroad
Incessant rain was falling, or the frost
Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
And, interrupting oft that eager game,

9. I.e., ticktacktoe. With his phrasing in this passage, Wordsworth pokes fun at 18th-century poetic diction, which avoided everyday terms by using elaborate paraphrases.

1. The cards have changed their functions in ways that remind us that the first version of *The Prelude* was begun soon after the downfall of the French monarchy during the Revolution. The "Potentate" cards—the kings, queens, and jacks—have over time been lost from the pack and so selected "ple-

beian," or commoner, cards have come to be used in their place.

2. Roman god of fire and forge. His mother, Juno, when he was born lame, threw him down from Olympus, the home of the gods.

3. Wordsworth implicitly parallels the boys' card games to the mock-epic description of the aristocratic game of ombre in Pope's *The Rape of the Lock* 3.37-98.

From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,
Gave out to meadow-grounds and hills, a loud
Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
Howling in Troops along the Bothnic Main.⁴

Nor, sedulous⁰ as I have been to trace
How Nature by extrinsic passion first
Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair
And made me love them, may I here omit
How other pleasures have been mine, and joys
Of subtler origin; how I have felt,
Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,
Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
An intellectual⁵ charm; – that calm delight
Which, if I err not, surely must belong
To those first-born⁰ affinities that
Our new existence to existing things,
And, in our dawn of being, constitute
The bond of union between life and joy.

diligent

fit

innate

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped
The faces of the moving year, even then
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty
Old as creation, drinking in a pure
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths
Of curling mist, or from the level plain
Of waters, colored by impending⁰ clouds.

overhanging

The sands of Westmorland, the creeks and bays
Of Cumbria's⁰ rocky limits, they can tell
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
And to the Shepherd's hut on distant hills
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,
How I have stood, to fancies such as these
A Stranger, linking with the Spectacle
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,
And bringing with me no peculiar sense
Of quietness or peace, yet have I stood,
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league⁶
Of shining water, gathering, as it seemed,
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,
New pleasure, like a bee among the flowers.

Cumberland's

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar⁷ joy
Which, through all seasons, on a Child's pursuits
Are prompt Attendants; 'mid that giddy bliss
Which like a tempest works along the blood
And is forgotten: even then I felt
Gleams like the flashing of a shield, – the earth
And common face of Nature spake to me
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,
By chance collisions and quaint accidents

4. A northern gulf of the Baltic Sea.

5. Spiritual, as opposed to sense perceptions.

6. A distance equal to approximately three miles.

7. Ordinary, commonplace.

590 (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
Collateral⁰ objects and appearances, *secondary*
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
595 Until maturer seasons called them forth
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.
— And, if the vulgar joy by its own weight
Wearied itself out of the memory,
The scenes which were a witness of that joy
600 Remained, in their substantial lineaments
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye
Were visible, a daily sight: and thus
By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness,
605 So frequently repeated, and by force
Of obscure feelings representative
Of things forgotten; these same scenes so bright,
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,
Though yet the day was distant, did become
610 Habitually dear; and all their forms
And changeful colours by invisible links
Were fastened to the affections.⁰ *feelings*
I began
My Story early, not misled, I trust,
By an infirmity of love for days
615 Disowned by memory,⁸ fancying flowers where none,
Not even the sweetest, do or can survive
For him at least whose dawning day they cheered;
Nor will it seem to Thee, O Friend! so prompt
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out,
620 With fond and feeble tongue, a tedious tale.
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch
Invigorating thoughts from former years;
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power
625 May spur me on, in manhood now mature,
To honorable toil. Yet should these hopes
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught
To understand myself, nor thou to know
With better knowledge how the heart was framed
630 Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee
Harsh judgments, if the Song be loth to quit
Those recollected hours that have the charm
Of visionary things, those lovely forms
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,
635 And almost make remotest infancy
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?
One end at least hath been attained — my mind
Hath been revived; and, if this genial⁹ mood
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down

8. I.e., he hopes that he has not mistakenly attributed his later thoughts and feelings to a time of life

he can no longer remember,
9. Productive, creative.

640 Through later years the story of my life:
The road lies plain before me, – tis a theme
Single, and of determined bounds; and hence
I chuse it rather, at this time, than work
Of ampler or more varied argument,
645 Where I might be discomfited and lost;
And certain hopes are with me that to thee
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

Book Second School-time continued

Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace
The simple ways in which my childhood walked,
Those chiefly, that first led me to the love
5 Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet
Was in its birth, sustained, as might befall,
By nourishment that came unsought; for still,
From week to week, from month to month, we lived
A round of tumult. Duly^o were our games *appropriately*
io Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed;
No chair remained before the doors, the bench
And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
The Labourer, and the old Man who had sate,
A later Lingerer, yet the revelry
15 Continued, and the loud uproar; at last,
When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
Feverish, with weary joints and beating minds.
Ah! is there One who ever has been young
20 Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride
Of intellect, and virtue's self-esteem?
One is there,¹ though the wisest and the best
Of all mankind, who covets not at times
Union that cannot be; who would not give,
25 If so he might, to duty and to truth
The eagerness of infantine desire?
A tranquillizing spirit presses now
On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
The vacancy between me and those days,
30 Which yet have such self-presence^o in my mind, *actuality*
That, musing on them, often do I seem
Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
And of some other Being. A rude mass
Of native rock, left midway in the Square
35 Of our small market Village, was the goal
Or centre of these sports; and, when, returned
After long absence, thither I repaired,

1. I.e., "Is there anyone ...?"

Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
40 That had been ours.² There let the fiddle scream,
And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends,³ I know
That more than one of you will think with me
Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
From whom the Stone was named, who there had sate
45 And watched her table with its huckster's wares⁰ *peddler's goods*
Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.
– We ran a boisterous course, the year span round
With giddy motion. But the time approached
That brought with it a regular desire
50 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms
Of Nature were collaterally attached⁴
To every scheme of holiday delight,
And every boyish sport, less grateful⁰ else *pleasing*
And languidly pursued.

When summer came,
55 Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,
To sweep along the plain of Windermere
With rival oars; and the selected bourne⁰ *destination*
Was now an Island musical with birds
That sang and ceased not; now a sister isle,
60 Beneath the oaks' umbrageous⁰ covert, sown *shaded*
With lilies of the valley like a field;
And now a third small island,⁵ where survived,
In solitude, the ruins of a shrine
Once to our Lady dedicate, and served
65 Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race,
So ended, disappointment could be none,
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy;
We rested in the Shade, all pleased alike,
Conquered and Conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,
70 And the vain-glory of superior skill,
Were tempered, thus was gradually produced
A quiet independence of the heart:
And, to my Friend who knows me, I may add,
Fearless of blame, that hence, for future days,
75 Ensued a diffidence and modesty;
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
The self-sufficing power of solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!⁶
More than we wished we knew the blessing then
so Of vigorous hunger – hence corporeal strength
Unsapped by delicate viands;⁰ for, exclude *food*
A little weekly stipend,⁷ and we lived
Through three divisions of the quartered year

2. The Hawkshead Town Hall, built in 1790.

3. Coleridge and John Wordsworth (William's brother), who had visited Hawkshead together with William in November 1799.

4. Associated as an accompaniment.

5. The island of Lady Holm, former site of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Marv.

6. Like the meals of the Roman poet Horace on his Sabine farm.

7. In his last year at school, Wordsworth had an allowance of sixpence a week; his younger brother Christopher, threepence. After the Midsummer and Christmas holidays (line 85), the boys received a larger sum, ranging up to a guinea.

In pennyless poverty. But now, to school
85 From the half-yearly holidays returned,
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame
Of the old grey stone, from her scanty board, supplied.
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,
90 Or in the woods, or by a river side,
Or shady fountains,⁰ while among the leaves *springs, streams*
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
95 How sometimes, in the length of those half years,
We from our funds drew largely—proud to curb,
And eager to spur on, the galloping Steed:
And with the cautious Inn-keeper, whose Stud
Supplied our want, we haply might employ
100 Sly subterfuges, if the Adventure's bound
Were distant, some famed Temple⁸ where of yore⁰ *long ago*
The Druids worshipped, or the antique Walls
Of that large Abbey which within the Vale
Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honour built,
105 Stands yet, a mouldering Pile,⁰ with fractured arch, *building in ruin*
Belfry, and Images, and living Trees;
A holy Scene!⁹—Along the smooth green Turf
Our Horses grazed:—to more than inland peace
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
i 10 From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers
In that sequestered Valley may be seen
Both silent and both motionless alike;
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such
The safeguard for repose and quietness.
115 Our Steeds remounted, and the summons given,
With whip and spur we through the Chantry¹ flew
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged Knight
And the Stone-abbot, and that single Wren
Which one day sang so sweetly in the Nave
120 Of the old Church, that, though from recent Showers
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place
And respirations, from the roofless walls
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops, yet still
125 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible Bird
Sang to herself, that there I could have made
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there
To hear such music. Through the Walls we flew,
And down the Valley, and, a circuit made
130 In wantonness⁰ of heart, through rough and smooth *playfulness*
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
And that still Spirit shed from evening air!

8. The stone circle at Swinside, on the lower Dud-
don River, mistakenly believed at the time to have
been a Druid temple.

9. Fumess Abbey, some twenty miles south of

Hawkshead.

1. A chapel endowed for masses to be sung for the
donor.

Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed²

135 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when,
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea,
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's Eastern shore,
Within the crescent of a pleasant Bay,
ho A Tavern³ stood, no homely-featured House,
Primeval like its neighbouring Cottages;
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset
With Chaises, Grooms, and Liveries,—and within
Decanters, Glasses, and the blood-red Wine.

145 In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built
On the large Island,⁴ had this Dwelling been
More worthy of a Poet's love, a Hut
Proud of its one bright fire and sycamore shade.
But, though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed

150 The threshold, and large golden characters⁰
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board had dislodged
The old Lion, and usurped his place in slight
And mockery of the rustic Painter's hand,
Yet to this hour the spot to me is dear

letters

155 With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay
Upon a slope surmounted by the plain
Of a small Bowling-green: beneath us stood
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees
And over the tree-tops; nor did we want
160 Refreshment, strawberries, and mellow cream.

There, while through half an afternoon we played
On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed
Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee
Made all the mountains ring. But ere night-fall,

165 When in our pinnacle⁰ we returned, at leisure
Over the shadowy Lake, and to the beach
Of some small Island steered our course with one,
The Minstrel of our Troop, and left him there,
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute

small boat

170 Alone upon the rock,—Oh then the calm
And dead still water lay upon my mind
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,
Never before so beautiful, sank down
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!

175 Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus
Daily the common range of visible things
Grew dear to me: already I began
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge

180 And surety of our earthly life, a light
Which we behold, and feel we are alive;
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds,

2. Slowed to let the horses catch their breath.
3. The White Lion at Bowness.

4. The Hall on Belle Isle in Lake Windermere had
been built in the early 1780s.

But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
The western mountain touch his setting orb,
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess
Of happiness, my blood appear'd to flow
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy;
And from like feelings, humble though intense,
To patriotic and domestic love
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;
For I would dream away my purposes,
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung
Midway between the hills, as if she knew
No other region; but belonged to thee,
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right
To thee, and thy grey huts,¹ thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached
My heart to rural objects, day by day
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell
How Nature, intervenient⁶ till this time
And secondary, now at length was sought
For her own sake. But who shall⁷ parcel out
His intellect, by geometric rules,
Split like a province into round and square?
Who knows the individual hour in which
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?
Who that shall point, as with a wand, and say,
"This portion of the river of my mind
Came from yon fountain"? Thou, my friend! art one
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee
Science⁸ appears but what in truth she is,
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,
But as a succedaneum,⁹ and a prop
To our infirmity. No officious⁰ slave
Art thou of that false secondary power¹
By which we multiply distinctions, then
Deem that our puny boundaries are things
That we perceive, and not that we have made.
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts,
The unity of all hath been revealed;
And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled
Than many are to range the faculties
In scale and order, class the cabinet²
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase³
Run through the history and birth of each
As of a single independent thing.
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,
If each most obvious and particular thought,

intrusive

5. Cottages built of gray stones.

6. I.e., entering incidentally into his other concerns.

7. Is able to.

8. In the old sense: learning.

9. In medicine a drug substituted for a different drug. Wordsworth, however, uses the term to sig-

nify a remedy, or palliative.

1. The analytic faculty of the mind, as contrasted with the power to apprehend "the unity of all" (line 221).

2. To classify, as if arranged in a display case.

3. In fluent words.

230 Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of reason deeply weighed,
Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe,
(For with my best conjecture I would trace
Our Being's earthly progress) blest the Babe,
235 Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who, when his soul
Claims manifest kindred with a human soul,
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!⁴
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
240 A virtue which irradiates and exalts
Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
Along his infant veins are interfused
The gravitation and the filial bond
245 Of nature that connect him with the world.
Is there a flower to which he points with hand
Too weak to gather it, already love
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him
Hath beautified that flower; already shades
250 Of pity cast from inward tenderness
Do fall around him upon aught that bears
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.
Emphatically such a Being lives,
Frail Creature as he is, helpless as frail,

255 An inmate of^o this active universe.
For feeling has to him imparted power
That through the growing faculties of sense
Doth, like an Agent of the one great Mind,
Create, creator and receiver both,
260 Working but in alliance with the works
Which it beholds.⁵—Such, verily, is the first
Poetic spirit of our human life,
By uniform control of after years
In most abated or suppressed, in some,
265 Through every change of growth and of decay,
Preeminent till death.

From early days,
Beginning not long after that first time
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch,
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,⁶
270 I have endeavoured to display the means
Whereby this infant sensibility,
Great birth-right of our being, was in me
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path
More difficult before me, and I fear

a dweller in

4. Like the modern psychologist, Wordsworth recognized the importance of earliest infancy in the development of the individual mind, although he had then to invent the terms with which to analyze the process.

5. The infant, in the sense of security and love shed by his mother's presence on outer things, per-

ceives what would otherwise be an alien world as a place to which he has a relationship like that of a son to a mother (lines 239–45). On such grounds Wordsworth asserts that the mind partially creates, by altering, the world it seems simply to perceive.

6. I.e., both infant and mother feel the pulse of the other's heart.

275 That, in its broken windings, we shall need
The chamois⁷ sinews, and the eagle's wing:
For now a trouble came into my mind
From unknown causes. I was left alone,
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.
280 The props of my affections were removed,⁸
And yet the building stood, as if sustained
By its own spirit! All that I beheld
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes⁰ *influences*
The mind lay open, to a more exact
285 And close communion. Many are our joys
In youth, but Oh! what happiness to live
When every hour brings palpable access
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,
And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,
290 And every season, wheresoe'er I moved,
Unfolded⁰ transitory qualities *revealed*
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
Had been neglected, left a register
Of permanent relations, else unknown.⁹
295 Hence life, and change, and beauty; solitude
More active even than "best society,"¹
Society made sweet as solitude
By inward concords, silent, inobtrusive;
And gentle agitations of the mind
300 From manifold distinctions, difference
Perceived in things where, to the unwatchful eye,
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
Sublimed joy: for I would walk alone
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
305 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound
To breathe an elevated mood, by form
Or Image unprofaned: and I would stand,
If the night blackened with a coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
310 The ghostly⁰ language of the ancient earth, *disembodied*
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence did I drink the visionary power;
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,
315 That they are kindred to our purer mind
And intellectual life;² but that the soul,
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
Of possible sublimity, whereto
320 With growing faculties she doth aspire,
With faculties still growing, feeling still

7. An agile species of antelope inhabiting mountainous regions of Europe.

8. Wordsworth's mother had died the month before his eighth birthday.

9. I.e., had it not been for the watchful power of love (line 292), the "transitory qualities" (291) would have been neglected, and the "permanent

relations" now recorded in his memory would have been unknown.

1. A partial quotation of a line spoken by Adam to Eve in *Paradise Lost* 9.249: "For solitude sometimes is best society."

2. I.e., not because they are related to the non-sensuous ("intellectual") aspect of our life.

That, whatsoever point they gain, they yet
Have something to pursue.

And not alone

'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
325 And tranquil scenes, that universal power
And fitness in the latent qualities
And essences of things, by which the mind
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me
Came strengthened with a superadded soul,
330 A virtue not its own. – My morning walks
Were early; – oft before the hours of School
I travelled round our little Lake, five miles
Of pleasant wandering; happy time! more dear
For this, that One was by my side, a Friend³
335 Then passionately loved; with heart how full
Would he peruse these lines! for many years
Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds
Both silent to each other, at this time
We live as if those hours had never been.
340 Nor seldom did I lift our Cottage latch
Far earlier, and ere one smoke-wreath had risen
From human dwelling, or the thrush, high perched,
Piped to the woods his shrill *reveille*,⁴ sate
Alone upon some jutting eminence
345 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.
How shall I seek the origin, where find
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?
Oft in those moments such a holy calm
350 Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes⁵
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect⁰ in the mind.

scene

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
355 And what the summer shade, what day and night,
Evening and morning, sleep and waking thought,
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth
To feed the spirit of religious love,
In which I walked with Nature- But let this
360 Be not forgotten, that I still retained
My first creative sensibility,
That by the regular action of the world
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic⁰ power
Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
365 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood,
A local Spirit of his own, at war
With general tendency, but, for the most,
Subservient strictly to external things
With which it communed. An auxiliar light

shaping

3. Identified as John Fleming in a note to the 1850 edition.

4. The signal given to awaken soldiers,

5. As opposed to the mind's eye, inner vision.

370 Came from my mind which on the setting sun
Bestowed new splendor; the melodious birds,
The fluttering breezes, fountains that ran on
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed
A like dominion; and the midnight storm
375 Grew darker in the presence of my eye;
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
And hence my transport.⁰ *exaltation*

Nor should this, perchance,
Pass unrecorded, that I still⁰ had loved *always*
The exercise and produce of a toil
380 Than analytic industry to me
More pleasing, and whose character I deem
Is more poetic, as resembling more
Creative agency. The Song would speak
Of that interminable building reared
385 By observation of affinities
In objects where no brotherhood exists
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come;
And, whether from this habit rooted now
So deeply in my mind, or from excess
390 Of the great social principle of life
Coercing all things into sympathy,
To unorganic Natures were transferred
My own enjoyments; or the Power of truth,
Coming in revelation, did converse
395 With things that really are;⁶ I, at this time,
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.
Thus while the days flew by and years passed on,
From Nature overflowing on my soul
I had received so much, that every thought
400 Was steeped in feeling; I was only then
Contented when with bliss ineffable
I felt the sentiment of Being spread
O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still;
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
405 And human knowledge, to the human eye
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
410 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not
If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
Communing in this sort through earth and Heaven
With every form of Creature, as it looked
Towards the Uncreated⁰ with a countenance *God*
415 Of adoration, with an eye of love.⁷
One song they sang, and it was audible,

6. Wordsworth is careful to indicate that there are alternative explanations for his sense that life pervades the inorganic as well as the organic world: it may be the result either of a way of perceiving that has been habitual since infancy or of a projection of his own inner life, or else it may be the percep-

tion of an objective truth.

7. Wordsworth did not add lines 412–14, which frame his experience of the "one life" in Christian terms, until the last revision of *The Prelude*, in 1839.

Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
Forgot her functions and slept undisturbed.
420 If this be error, and another faith
Find easier access to the pious mind,⁸
Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
425 To speak of you, Ye Mountains, and Ye Lakes,
And sounding Cataracts, Ye Mists and Winds
That dwell among the Hills where I was born.
If in my Youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
430 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived,
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires,
The gift is yours: if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste" of hopes o'erthrown, *wasteland*
435 If, 'mid indifference and apathy
And wicked exultation, when good men,
On every side, fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
440 Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay,⁹ I yet
Despair not of our Nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
445 That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life, the gift is yours,
Ye Winds and sounding Cataracts, 'tis yours,
Ye Mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
450 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.
Thou, my Friend! wert reared
In the great City, 'mid far other scenes;¹
But we, by different roads, at length have gained
455 The self-same bourne.⁰ And for this cause to Thee *destination*
I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,
And all that silent language which so oft,
In conversation between Man and Man,
460 Blots from the human countenance all trace
Of beauty and of love. For Thou hast sought
The truth in solitude, and, since the days
That gave thee liberty, full long desired,

8. Compare "Tintern Abbey" lines 43–50, ending with "If this / Be but a vain belief. . ." (p. 259).

9. The era, some ten years after the start of the French Revolution, was one of violent reaction. Many earlier sympathizers were abandoning their radical beliefs, and the British government was

clamping down on all forms of political expression that resembled, even faintly, French ideas.

1. A reminiscence of Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight," lines 51–52: "For I was reared / In the great city, pent 'mid cloisters dim."

To serve in Nature's Temple, thou hast been
465 The most assiduous of her Ministers,²
In many things my Brother, chiefly here
In this our deep devotion.

Fare Thee well!
Health, and the quiet of a healthful mind,
Attend Thee! seeking oft the haunts of Men,
470 And yet more often living with thyself
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

From Book Third
Residence at Cambridge

[ARRIVAL AT ST. JOHN'S COLLEGE. "THE GLORY OF MY YOUTH"]

It was a drear)' Morning when the Wheels
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw
The long-roof'd Chapel of King's College lift
5 Turrets, and pinnacles in answering files
Extended high above a dusky grove.
Advancing, we espied upon the road
A Student, clothed in Gown and tasselled Cap,
Striding along, as if o'ertasked by Time
10 Or covetous of exercise and air.
He passed – nor was I Master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the Spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force;
15 Onward we drove beneath the Castle, caught,
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam,¹
And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn!
My Spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
20 Seemed friends, poor simple School-boys! now hung round
With honor and importance: in a world
Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, warnings, and advice
Flowed in upon me, from all sides; fresh day
25 Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed
A man of business and expence, and went
From shop to shop, about my own affairs,
To Tutor or to Tailor, as befel,
From street to street, with loose and careless mind.
30 I was the Dreamer, they the dream: I roamed
Delighted through the motley spectacle;

2. Wordsworth may be recalling the conclusion of Coleridge's "France: An Ode" (1798), where, disillusioned about the promise of liberty by the French Revolution, he writes that, while standing

on a "sea-cliff's verge," "O Liberty! my spirit felt thee there." Wordsworth added lines 461–64 some years after Coleridge's death in 1834.

1. The river that flows through Cambridge.

Gowns grave or gaudy, Doctors, Students, Streets,
Courts, Cloisters, flocks of Churches, gateways, towers.
Migration strange for a Stripling⁰ of the Hills, *youngster*
35 A Northern Villager! As if the change
Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once
Behold me rich in monies; and attired
In splendid garb, with hose^o of silk, and hair *stockings*
Powdered like riny² trees, when frost is keen.
40 My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
With other signs of manhood that supplied⁰ *compensated for*
The lack of beard. — The weeks went roundly on
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without
45 Liberal,⁰ and suiting Gentleman's array! *generous*
The Evangelist St. John my Patron was;³
Three gothic Courts are his, and in the first
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure!
Right underneath, the College Kitchens made
50 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious Clock,
Who never let the quarters, night or day,
55 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
Twice over, with a male and female voice.
Her pealing Organ was my neighbour too;
And from my pillow, looking forth by light
Of moon or favoring stars, I could behold
60 The Antechapel, where the Statue stood
Of Newton, with his prism,⁴ and silent face:
The marble index of a Mind for ever
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.
Of College labors, of the Lecturer's room
65 All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
With loyal Students faithful to their books,
Half-and-half Idlers, hardy Recusants,⁵
And honest Dunces — of important days,
Examinations when the man was weighed
70 As in a balance! of excessive hopes,
Tremblings withal, and commendable fears;
Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad,
Let others, that know more, speak as they know.
Such glory was but little sought by me
75 And little won. Yet, from the first crude days
Of settling time in this untried abode,
I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,

2. Covered with rime, frosted over. Fashion required the late-18th-century gentleman to wear powder in his hair.

3. Wordsworth was a student at St. John's College, Cambridge University, in 1787–91. Book 3 deals with his first year there, when he was seventeen.

4. In the west end of Trinity Chapel, adjoining St.

John's College, stands Roubiliac's statue of Newton holding the prism with which he had conducted the experiments described in his *Optics* (1704).

5. Those who do not conform to college discipline, particularly regulations about religious observance.

Wishing to hope, without a hope; some fears
About my future worldly maintenance;⁶
And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,
A feeling that I was not for that hour,
Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
For (not to speak of Reason and her pure
Reflective acts to fix the moral law
Deep in the conscience; nor of Christian Hope
Bowing her head before her Sister Faith
As one far mightier),⁷ hither I had come,
Bear witness, Truth, endowed with holy powers
And faculties, whether to work or feel.
Oft when the dazzling shew no longer new
Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit
My Comrades, leave the Crowd, buildings and groves,
And as I paced alone the level fields
Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
With which I had been conversant, the mind
Drooped not, but there into herself returning
With prompt rebound, seemed fresh as heretofore.
At least I more distinctly recognized
Her native⁰ instincts; let me dare to speak
A higher language, say that now I felt
What independent solaces were mine
To mitigate the injurious sway of place
Or circumstance, how far soever changed
In youth, or *to* be changed in manhood's prime;
Or, for the few who shall be called to look
On the long shadows, in our evening years,
Ordained Precursors to the night of death.
As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
I looked for universal things, perused
The common countenance of earth and sky;
Earth no where unembellished by some trace
Of that first paradise whence man was driven;
And sky whose beauty and bounty are expressed
By the proud name she bears, the name of heaven.
I called on both to teach me what they might;
Or, turning the mind in upon herself,
Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
Incumbencies more awful,⁸ visitings
Of the Upholder, of the tranquil Soul
That tolerates the indignities of Time;
And, from his centre of eternity
All finite motions overruling, lives
In glory immutable. But peace!—enough
Here to record I had ascended now

6. Wordsworth was troubled by his family's expectation that his success at his studies would lead to his appointment as a fellow of St. John's College at the end of his degree.

7. This pious qualification, lines 83–87, was

added by Wordsworth in late revisions of *The Prelude*. In the version of 1805, he wrote: "I was a chosen son. / For hither I had come with holy powers / And faculties, whether to work or feel."

8. I.e., the weight of more awe-inspiring moods.

To such community with highest truth.
– A track pursuing, not untrod before,
From strict analogies by thought supplied,
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued,
no To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,
Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
I gave a moral life; I saw them feel,
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
Lay bedded in a quickening⁰ soul, and all *life-giving*
135 That I beheld respired with inward meaning.
Add, that whate'er of Terror or of Love
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on
From transitory passion, unto this
I was as sensitive as waters are
140 To the sky's influence: in a kindred mood
Of passion, was obedient as a lute
That waits upon the touches of the wind.⁹
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich;
I had a world about me; 'twas my own,
145 I made it; for it only lived to me,
And to the God who sees into the heart.
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed
By outward gestures and by visible looks:
Some called it madness – so, indeed, it was,
150 If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,
If steady moods of thoughtfulness, matured
To inspiration, sort with such a name;
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
By Poets in old time, and higher up
155 By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
May in these tutored days no more be seen
With undisordered sight. But, leaving this,
It was no madness: for the bodily eye
Amid my strongest workings evermore
160 Was searching out the lines of difference
As they lie hid in all external forms,
Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
Which from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
To the broad ocean, and the azure heavens
165 Spangled with kindred multitudes of Stars,
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my Soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings, even as in a chain.
170 And here, O friend! have I retraced my life
Up to an eminence,⁰ and told a tale *high ground, hill*
Of matters which not falsely may be called
The glory of my Youth. Of genius, power,
Creation, and Divinity itself,
175 I have been speaking, for my theme has been
What passed within me. Not of outward things

9. I.e., as an Eolian harp.

Done visibly for other minds; words, signs,
Symbols, or actions, but of my own heart
Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
180 O Heavens! how awful is the might of Souls
And what they do within themselves, while yet
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
This is, in truth, heroic argument,
185 This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
With hand however weak,¹ but in the main
It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
Points have we, all of us, within our Souls,
Where all stand single: this I feel, and make
190 Breathings for incommunicable powers.²
But is not each a memory to himself?
And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,
I am not heartless;⁰ for there's not a man *disheartened*
That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
195 And feels not what an empire we inherit,
As natural Beings, in the strength of Nature.
No more:—for now into a populous plain
We must descend.—A Traveller I am
Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
200 So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt
To follow, and if Thou, O honored Friend!
Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,
Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.³

*From Book Fourth
Summer Vacation¹*

[THE WALKS WITH HIS TERRIER. THE CIRCUIT OF THE LAKE]

Among the favorites whom it pleased me well
To see again, was one, by ancient right
95 Our Inmate, a rough terrier of the hills,
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
To hunt the badger, and unearth the fox,
Among the impervious crags; but having been
From youth our own adopted, he had passed
100 Into a gentler service. And when first
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
The fermentation and the vernal⁰ heat *springtime*
Of poesy, affecting² private shades

1. An echo of *Paradise Lost* 9.28-29, where Milton declares his subject to be as suitable for "heroic argument" as was the warfare that traditionally had been represented in epics.

2. This obscure assertion may mean that he tries, inadequately, to express the inexpressible.

3. The terms of this request to Coleridge suggest

the relation to Dante of Virgil, his guide in the *Inferno*.

1. Wordsworth returned to Hawkshead for his first summer vacation in 1788.

2. "Affecting" in the sense of "preferring," but also suggesting a degree of affectation.

105 Like a sick lover, then this Dog was used
To watch me, an attendant and a friend
Obsequious to my steps, early and late,
Though often of such dilatory walk
Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made,
no A hundred times when, roving high and low,
I have been harrassed with the toil of verse,
Much pains and little progress, and at once
Some lovely Image in the Song rose up
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the Sea;³
ii5 Then have I darted forwards and let loose
My hand upon his back, with stormy joy;
Caressing him again, and yet again.
And when at evening on the public Way
I sauntered, like a river murmuring
120 And talking to itself, when all things else
Are still, the Creature trotted on before –
Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
A passenger^o approaching, he would turn *foot traveler*
To give me timely notice; and, straitway,
125 Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed
My voice, composed my gait, and with the air
And mien^o of one whose thoughts are free, advanced *look*
To give and take a greeting, that might save
My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
bo On men suspected to be crazed in brain.
Those walks, well worthy to be prized and loved,
Regretted! that word too was on my tongue,
But they were richly laden with all good,
And cannot be remembered but with thanks
135 And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart;
Those walks, in all their freshness, now came back,
Like a returning Spring. When first I made
Once more the circuit of our little Lake,
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
no That day consummate^o happiness was mine, *perfect*
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.
The sun was set, or setting, when I left
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
A sober hour, – not winning or serene,
145 For cold and raw the air was, and untuned:
But as a face we love is sweetest then
When sorrow damps it; or, whatever look
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
Have fulness in herself, even so with me
150 It fared that evening. Gently did my Soul
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
Naked, as in the presence of her God.⁴
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch

Venus, goddess of love, was born from the foam
the sea.
In Exodus 34.30-34, when Moses descended

from Mount Sinai, he wore a veil to hide from the
Israelites the shining of his face, but removed the
veil when, in privacy, he talked to God.

A heart that had not been disconsolate;
155 Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
At least not felt; and restoration came,
Like an intruder, knocking at the door
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
160 – Of that external scene which round me lay
Little, in this abstraction, did I see,
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
And swellings of the Spirit: was rapt and soothed,
Conversed with promises; had glimmering views
165 How life pervades the undecaying mind,
How the immortal Soul with God-like power
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep⁵
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
Man, if he do but live within the light
170 Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
Of innocence, and holiday repose;
And more than pastoral quiet 'mid the stir
175 Of boldest projects; and a peaceful end
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down,
Alone, continuing there to muse; the slopes
And heights, meanwhile, were slowly overspread
180 With darkness; and before a rippling breeze
The long lake lengthened out its hoary^o line: *gray-white*
And in the sheltered coppice⁶ where I sate,
Around me from among the hazel leaves*
Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
185 Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,
Quick as the pantings of the faithful Dog,
The off and on Companion of my walk;
And such, at times, believing them to be,
I turned my head, to look if he were there;
190 Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

[THE WALK HOME FROM THE DANCE. THE DISCHARGED SOLDIER]

* * * 'Mid a throng
310 Of Maids and Youths, old Men and Matrons staid,
A medley of all tempers,⁷ I had passed
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth;
With din of instruments, and shuffling feet,
And glancing forms, and tapers" glittering, *candles*
315 And unaimed prattle flying up and down-
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,

5. "Informs" and "creates" are probably to be read as intransitive verbs, whereas "thaws" has "sleep" for its direct object.

6. A clump of small trees and underbrush,
7. Temperaments, types of character,

And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired
320 The cock had crowed; and now the eastern sky
Was kindling, not unseen from humble copse
And open field through which the pathway wound
That homeward led my steps. Magnificent
The Morning rose, in memorable pomp,
325 Glorious as e'er I had beheld; in front
The Sea lay laughing at a distance;—near,
The solid mountains shone bright as the clouds,
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;⁸
And, in the meadows and the lower grounds,
330 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn;
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds;
And Labourers going forth to till the fields.

Ah! need I say, dear Friend, that to the brim
My heart was full: I made no vows, but vows
335 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
In thankful blessedness which yet survives.

\$ a \$

370 Once, when those summer Months
Were flown, and Autumn brought its annual shew
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
Upon Winander's⁹ spacious breast, it chanced
That—after I had left a flower-decked room
375 (Whose in-door pastime, lighted-up, survived
To a late hour) and spirits overwrought¹
Were making night do penance for a day
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—
My homeward course led up a long ascent
380 Where the road's watery surface, to the top
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
And bore the semblance of another stream
Stealing with silent lapse² to join the brook
That murmured in the Vale. All else was still;
385 No living thing appeared in earth or air,
And, save the flowing Water's peaceful voice,
Sound was there none: but lo! an uncouth³ shape
Shewn by a sudden turning of the road,
So near, that, slipping back into the shade
390 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A span³ above man's *common* measure tall.

8. Celestial light, referring to the universe's outermost sphere, thought to be composed of fire.
"Grain-tinctured": as if dyed in the grain, dyed fast, by the dawn light.

9. Lake Windermere's.

1. Worked up to a high pitch. Wordsworth is describing a party at which the "pastime" had been dancing. The description of the meeting with the discharged soldier that follows was written in 1798

as an independent poem, which Wordsworth later incorporated in *The Prelude*.

2. Flowing. Wordsworth is remembering a description that his sister, Dorothy, had entered into her journal in January 1798, a few days before he composed this passage: "The road to the village of Holford glittered like another stream."

3. About nine inches (the distance between extended thumb and little finger).

Stiff, lank, and upright;—a more meagre⁴ man
Was never seen before by night or day.
Long were his arms, pallid his hands;—his mouth
Looked ghastly⁵ in the moonlight. From behind,
A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken⁶
That he was clothed in military garb,
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
No dog attending, by no staff sustained
He stood; and in his very dress appeared
A desolation, a simplicity
To which the trappings of a gaudy world
Make a strange background. From his lips erelong
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form
Kept the same awful steadiness;—at his feet
His shadow lay and moved not. From self-blame
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,⁷
I left the shady nook where I had stood,
And hailed him. Slowly, from his resting-place
He rose; and, with a lean and wasted arm
In measured gesture lifted to his head,
Returned my salutation: then resumed
His station as before; and when I asked
His history, the Veteran, in reply,
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,
A stately air of mild indifference,
He told, in few plain words, a Soldier's tale—
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,
Whence he had landed, scarcely three weeks past,
That on his landing he had been dismissed,⁸
And now was travelling towards his native home.
This heard, I said in pity, "Come with me."
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up
An oaken staff, by me yet unobserved—
A staff which must have dropped from his slack hand
And lay till now neglected in the grass.
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld,
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,
His ghastly figure moving at my side;
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear
To turn from present hardships to the past,
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,
On what he might himself have seen or felt.
He all the while was in demeanour calm,

emaciated

ghostly
SEE

4. I.e., he had been deceiving himself in thinking that the motive for his delay was not cowardice.

5. The Tropic Islands are the West Indies. During the 1790s tens of thousands of soldiers were stationed there to protect Britain's colonial holdings

from the French and to quell slave rebellions. Many contracted tropical diseases and died, or else were rendered unfit for further service and discharged.

Concise in answer; solemn and sublime
He might have seemed, but that in all he said
There was a strange half-absence, as of one
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,
445 But feeling it no longer. Our discourse
Soon ended, and together on we passed,
In silence, through a wood, gloomy and still.
Up-turning then along an open field,
We reached a Cottage. At the door I knocked,
450 And earnestly to charitable care
Commended him, as a poor friendless Man
Belated, and by sickness overcome.
Assured that now the Traveller would repose
In comfort, I entreated, that henceforth
455 He would not linger in the public ways,
But ask for timely furtherance⁰ and help,
Such as his state required.—At this reproof,
With the same ghastly mildness in his look,
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,
460 And in the eye of him who passes me."
The Cottage door was speedily unbarred,
And now the Soldier touched his hat once more
With his lean hand; and, in a faltering voice
Whose tone bespoke reviving interests
465 Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
The farewell blessing of the patient Man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space;
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

assistance

From- Book Fifth
Books

[THE DREAM OF THE ARAB]

45 * * 4 Oh! why hath not the Mind
Some element to stamp her image on
In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
Why gifted with such powers to send abroad
Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?¹
50 One day, when from my lips a like complaint
Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
He with a smile made answer that in truth
"Twas going far to seek disquietude,
But, on the front of his reproof, confessed
55 That he himself had oftentimes given way
To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told
That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
While I was seated in a rocky cave

1. Wordsworth is describing his recurrent fear that some holocaust might wipe out all books, the frail and perishable repositories of all human wisdom and poetry.

By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
60 The famous history of the errant Knight
Recovered by Cervantes,² these same thoughts
Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
The Book, had turned my eyes tow'rd the wide Sea.
65 On Poetry, and geometric truth,
And their high privilege of lasting life,
From all internal injury exempt,
I mused; upon these chiefly: and, at length,
My senses yielding to the sultry air,
70 Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
I saw before me stretched a boundless plain,
Of sandy wilderness, all blank and void;
And as I looked around, distress and fear
Came creeping over me, when at my side,
75 Close at my side, an uncouth⁰ Shape appeared *strange*
Upon a Dromedary,⁰ mounted high. *camel*
He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin Tribes:³
A Lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A Stone; and, in the opposite hand, a Shell
80 Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a Guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
I looked, and looked, self-questioned what this freight
85 Which the New-comer carried through the Waste
Could mean, the Arab told me that the Stone
(To give it in the language of the Dream)
Was Euclid's Elements;⁴ "and this," said he,
"This other," pointing to the Shell, "this book
90 Is something of more worth": and, at the word,
Stretched forth the Shell, so beautiful in shape,
In color so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so, –
And heard, that instant, in an unknown tongue,
95 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony –
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the Children of the Earth,
By Deluge now at hand. No sooner ceased
100 The Song than the Arab with calm look declared
That all would come to pass, of which the voice
Had given forewarning, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two Books:
The One that held acquaintance with the stars,
105 And wedded Soul to Soul in purest bond

2. I.e., *Don Quixote*, the 17th-century novel about a man unable to distinguish between books' romantic fictions and his own reality. In the 1805 *Prelude* the dream vision that follows is that of the friend mentioned in line 51. It is, in fact, closely modeled on a dream actually dreamt by the 17th-century French philosopher Descartes and recor-

ded by a biographer.

3. Mathematics had flourished among the Arabs – hence the Arab rider.

4. Celebrated book on plane geometry and the theory of numbers by the Greek mathematician Euclid; it continued to be used as a textbook into the 19th century.

Of Reason, undisturbed by space or time:
Th'other, that was a God, yea many Gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the Spirit, and to soothe,
no Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem,
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The One to be a Stone, the Other a Shell,
Nor doubted once but that they both were Books;
115 Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger now grew the desire I felt
To cleave unto this Man; but when I prayed
To share his enterprize, he hurried on,
Reckless^o of me: I followed, not unseen, *heedless*
120 For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his twofold treasure. Lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He to my fancy had become the Knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the Knight,
125 But was an Arab of the desert, too,
Of these was neither, and was both at once.
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed,
And looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
bo A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause.
"It is," said he, "the waters of the Deep
Gathering upon us"; quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldy Creature he bestrode,
He left me; I called after him aloud, —
135 He heeded not; but with his twofold charge
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable Waste
With the fleet waters of a drowning World
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror;
140 And saw the Sea before me, and the Book,
In which I had been reading, at my side.

[THE BOY OF WINANDER]

There was a Boy;⁵—ye knew him well, Ye Cliffs
And Islands of Winander!—many a time
At evening, when the earliest stars began
To move along the edges of the hills,
370 Rising or setting, would he stand alone,
Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake;
And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,
375 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
That they might answer him.—And they would shout

5. In an early manuscript version of this passage, Wordsworth uses the first-person pronoun. The experience he describes was thus apparently his own.

Across the watery Vale, and shout again,
Responsive to his call, – with quivering peals,
And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
380 Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild
Of jocund din! and when a lengthened pause
Of silence came, and baffled his best skill,
Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize
385 Has carried far into his heart⁶ the voice
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
Would enter unawares into his mind
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
390 Into the bosom of the steady lake.
This Boy was taken from his Mates, and died
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
Fair is the Spot, most beautiful the Vale
Where he was born: the grassy Church-yard hangs
395 Upon a slope above the Village School;
And through that Church-yard when my way has led
On summer evenings, I believe that there
A long half-hour together I have stood
Mute – looking at the grave in which he lies!
400 Even now appears before the mind's clear eye
That self-same Village Church; I see her sit
(The throned Lady whom erewhile we hailed)
On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy
Who slumbers at her feet, forgetful, too,
405 Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
And listening only to the gladsome sounds
That, from the rural School ascending, play
Beneath her, and about her. May she long
Behold a race of Young Ones like to those
410 With whom I herded! (easily, indeed,
We might have fed upon a fatter soil
Of Arts and Letters, but be that forgiven)
A race of *real* children; not too wise,
Too learned, or too good: but wanton,⁹ fresh,
415 And bandied up and down by love and hate;
Not unresentful where self-justified;
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds:
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
420 Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
Of pain, and doubt, and fear; yet yielding not
In happiness to the happiest upon earth.
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds!

playful

6. Thomas De Quincey responded to this line in *Recollections of the Lakes and the Lake Poets*: "This very expression, 'far,' by which space and its infinities are attributed to the human heart, and to its

capacities of re-echoing the sublimities of nature, has always struck me as with a flash of sublime revelation."

425 May books and nature be their early joy!
And knowledge, rightly honored with that name,
Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

["THE MYSTERY OF WORDS"]

Here must we pause; this only let me add,
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense
Of modesty, that he, who, in his youth,
A daily Wanderer among woods and fields,
500 With living Nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to extasy, as others are,
By glittering verse; but, further, doth receive,
In measure only dealt out to himself,
505 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
From the great Nature that exists in works
Of mighty Poets. Visionary Power
Attends the motions of the viewless^o winds *invisible*
Embodied in the mystery of words:
600 There darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes there,
As in a mansion like their proper home.
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine;
605 And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognized,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

From Book Sixth
Cambridge, and the Alps

["HUMAN NATURE SEEMING BORN AGAIN"]

When the third summer freed us from restraint,¹
A youthful Friend, he too a Mountaineer,
325 Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,
And, sallying forth, we journeyed, side by side,
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight
Did this unprecedented course imply
Of College studies and their set rewards;²
330 Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
The censures, and ill-omening of those

1. After reviewing briefly his second and third years at Cambridge. Wordsworth here describes his trip through France and Switzerland with a college friend, Robert Jones, during the succeeding summer vacation, in 1790. France was then in the "golden hours" of the early period of the Revolution; the fall of the Bastille had occurred on July

14 of the preceding year.

2. Universities in Britain allow longer vacations than those in North America, on the assumption that they will be used for study. In the upcoming term Wordsworth faces his final examinations. His ranking in those will determine his career prospects.

To whom my worldly interests were dear.
But Nature then was Sovereign in my mind,
And mighty Forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
Had given a charter³ to irregular hopes.
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,
And human nature seeming born again.

[CROSSING SIMPLON PASS]

° * ° That very day,
From a bare ridge we also first beheld
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
To have a soulless image on the eye
Which had usurped upon a living thought
That never more could be.⁴ The wondrous Vale
Of Chamouny⁵ stretched far below, and soon
With its dumb⁶ cataracts, and streams of ice,
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,
The eagle soars high in the element;
There doth the Reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
The Maiden spread the hay-cock 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.

silent

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 chuse but read
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
And universal reason of mankind,
The truths of Young and Old. Nor, side by side
Pacing, two social Pilgrims, or alone
Each with his humour,⁷ could we fail to abound
In dreams and fictions pensively composed,
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
And gilded sympathies; the willow wreath,⁸
And sober posies⁸ of funereal flowers
Gathered, among those solitudes sublime,
From formal gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries

3. Privileged freedom.

4. The "image" is the actual sight of Mont Blanc, as against what the poet has imagined the famous Swiss mountain to be.

5. Chamonix, a valley in eastern France, north of

Mont Blanc.

6. Temperament, or state of mind.

7. Clichéd symbol of sorrow. "Gilded": laid on like gilt; i.e., superficial.

8. Small bunches of flowers.

Mixed something of stern mood, an under thirst
560 Of vigor seldom utterly allayed.
And from that source how different a sadness
Would issue, let one incident make known.
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb^o *climbed*
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,⁹
565 Following a band of Muleteers, we reached
A halting-place where all together took
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our Guide,
Leaving *us* at the Board;⁹ awhile we lingered, *i.e., eating the meal*
Then paced the beaten downward way that led
570 Right to a rough stream's edge and there broke off.
The only track now visible was one
That from the torrent's further brink held forth
Conspicuous invitation to ascend
A lofty mountain. After brief delay
575 Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took
And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears
Intruded, for we failed to overtake
Our Comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
While every moment added doubt to doubt,
580 A Peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned
That to the Spot which had perplexed us first
We must descend, and there should find the road,
Which in the stony channel of the Stream
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks,
585 And that our future course, all plain to sight,
Was downwards, with the current of that Stream.
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,
We questioned him again, and yet again;
590 But every word that from the Peasant's lips
Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
Ended in this, *that we had crossed the Alps.*¹
Imagination—here the Power so called
Through sad incompetence of human speech—
595 That awful⁹ Power rose from the Mind's abyss *awe-inspiring*
Like an unfathered vapour: that enwraps
At once some lonely Traveller. I was lost,
Halted without an effort to break through;
But to my conscious soul I now can say,
600 "I recognize thy glory"; in such strength
Of usurpation, when the light of sense
Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed
The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode,
There harbours, whether we be young or old;
605 Our destiny, our being's heart and home,
Is with infinitude, and only there;

9. The Simplon Pass through the Alps.

1. As Dorothy Wordsworth baldly put it later on, "The ambition of youth was disappointed at these tidings." The visionary experience that follows (lines 593-617) occurred not in the Alps but at the

time of writing the passage, as the 1805 text explicitly says: "Imagination! lifting up itself / Before the eye and progress of my Song."

2. Sudden vapor from no apparent source,

With hope it is, hope that can never die,
Effort, and expectation, and desire,
And something evermore about to be.
610 Under such banners militant the Soul
Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils,
That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
That are their own perfection and reward,
Strong in herself, and in beatitude³
615 That hides her like the mighty flood of Nile
Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
To fertilize the whole Egyptian plain.
The melancholy slackening that ensued
Upon those tidings by the Peasant given
620 Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast
And, with the half-shaped road, which we had missed,
Entered a narrow chasm. The brook and road
Were fellow-Travellers in this gloomy Strait,
And with them did we journey several hours
625 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height
Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
And in the narrow rent at every turn
Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
630 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
635 The unfettered clouds, and region of the Heavens,
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light –
Were all like workings of one mind, the features
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
Characters of the great Apocalypse,
640 The types and symbols of Eternity,⁴
Of first and last, and midst, and without end.⁵

From Book Seventh
*Residence in London*¹

[THE BLIND BEGGAR. BARTHOLOMEW FAIR]

As the black storm upon the mountain top
620 Sets off the sunbeam in the Valley, so
That huge fermenting Mass of human-kind

3. The ultimate blessedness or happiness.

4. The objects in this natural scene are like the written words ("characters") of the Apocalypse – i.e., of the Book of Revelation, the last book of the New Testament. "Types": signs foreshadowing the future.

5. Cf. Revelation 1.8: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord." The

phrase is repeated in Revelation 21.6, after the fulfillment of the last things. In *Paradise Lost* 5.153–65 Milton says that the things created declare their Creator, and calls on all to extol "him first, him last, him midst, and without end."

1. Wordsworth spent three and a half months in London in 1791.

Serves as a solemn background or relief
To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
For feeling and contemplative regard,
625 More than inherent liveliness and power.
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!"
630 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
Until the Shapes before my eyes became
A second-sight procession, such as glides
Over still mountains, or appears in dreams.
635 And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
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,
640 Stood propped against a Wall; upon his chest
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
645 This Label seemed, of the utmost we can know
Both of ourselves and of the universe;
And on the Shape of that unmoving Man,
His steadfast face, and sightless eyes, I gazed
As if admonished from another world.
650 Though reared upon the base of outward things,
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
655 That comes with night; the deep solemnity
Of Nature's intermediate hours of rest,
When the great tide of human life stands still,
The business of the day to come – unborn,
Of that gone by – locked up as in the grave;²
660 The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,
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,
665 The feeble salutation from the voice
Of some unhappy woman,³ now and then
Heard as we pass; when no one looks about,
Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
Are falsely catalogued;⁴ things that are, are not,
670 As the mind answers to them, or the heart

2. The sonnet "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" describes a similar response to London when its "mighty heart is lying still."
3. Perhaps a prostitute.

4. Mistakenly classified, because what things *are* depends on the attitude with which they are perceived.

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,⁵ to a Street on fire,
675 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights
Take one, that annual Festival, the Fair
Holden where Martyrs suffered in past time,
And named of St. Bartholomew;⁶ there see
A work completed 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 Shewman's platform. What a shock
For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din
Barbarian and infernal—a phantasma⁷
Monstrous in color, 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!
With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
695 And children whirling in their roundabouts;⁸ *merry-go-rounds*
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,⁸ at the fiddle weaves,
Rattles the salt-box,⁹ thumps the Kettle-drum;
And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks;
The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel;¹⁰ *tambourine*
Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
705 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes.
—All moveables of wonder from all parts
And here, Albinos, painted-Indians, Dwarfs,
The Horse of Knowledge, and the learned Pig,¹
The Stone-eater, the Man that swallows fire—
710 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible-girl,
The Bust that speaks, and moves its goggling eyes,
The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
Of modern Merlins,² Wild-beasts, Puppet-shews,
All out-o'th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things,³

5. Executions were public events in England until 1868.

6. This huge fair was long held in Smithfield, the place where, on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24, Protestants had been executed in Queen Mary's reign (1553-58).

7. Fantasy of a disordered mind. Perhaps suggestive too of "phantasmagoria," the name given, starting in 1802, to the exhibition of optical illusions that showmen mounted by means of a kind of slide projector.

8. A stringed instrument, sounded by a turning wheel covered by rosin.

9. A wooden box, rattled and beaten with a stick.

1. Animals trained to tap out answers to arithmetic questions, etc.

2. Magicians. Merlin was the magician in Arthurian romance.

3. Cf. Milton's description of Hell as containing "Perverse, ail monstrous, all prodigious things" (*Paradise Lost* 2.625).

715 All freaks of Nature, all Promethean⁴ thoughts
Of man; 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,
720 Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
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,
725 Living amid the same perpetual whirl
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
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
In steadiness, who hath among least things
735 An undersense of greatest; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.

This did I feel in London's vast Domain;
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
The Soul of Beauty and enduring life
Vouchsafed⁰ her inspirations; and diffused,

granted.

770 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling harmony.

From Book Eighth
Retrospect, Love of Nature leading
to Love of Man¹

[THE SHEPHERD IN THE MIST]

* * * A rambling School-boy, thus
I felt his^o presence in his own domain *the shepherd's*
As of a Lord and Master; or a Power
Or Genius,⁰ under Nature, under God *presiding spirit*
260 Presiding; and severest solitude
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

4. Of daring creativity. In Greek mythology Prometheus made man out of clay and taught him the arts.

1. In this book Wordsworth reviews the first

twenty-one years of his life to trace the transfer of his earlier feelings for nature to the shepherds and other working people who inhabited the landscape he loved.

- 265 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
In size a Giant, stalking through thick fog,²
His sheep like Greenland bears;⁰ or, as he stepped *-polar bears*
Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
- 270 By the deep radiance of the setting sun:³
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
- 275 Of the Chartreuse,⁴ for worship. Thus was Man
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
- 280 To me became an index of delight,
Of grace, and honor, power, and worthiness.
Meanwhile this Creature, spiritual almost
As those of Books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative Form
- 285 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour
In coronal, with Phillis⁵ in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of Kind,⁶ a Man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
- 290 Could teach, admonish, suffered with the rest
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it;
But something must have felt. * * *

From Book Ninth
Residence in France¹

[PARIS AND ORLEANS. BECOMES A "PATRIOT"]

— France lured me forth, the realm that I had crossed

- 35 So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.
But now relinquishing the scrip⁰ and staff² *knapsack*
And all enjoyment which the summer sun
Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
With motion constant as his own, I went

2. Wordsworth borrows this image from James Thomson's *Autumn* (1730), lines 727–29.

3. A "glory" is a mountain phenomenon in which the enlarged figure of a person is seen projected by the sun on the mist, with a radiance about its head. Cf. Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode," line 54 (p. 467).

4. In his tour of the Alps, Wordsworth had been deeply impressed by the Chartreuse, a Carthusian monastery in France, with its soaring cross visible against the sky.

5. Corin and Phillis, shepherd and shepherdess

dancing in their coronals, or wreaths of flowers, were stock characters in earlier pastoral literature.

6. I.e., in carrying out the tasks of humankind.

1. Wordsworth's second visit to France, while he was twenty-one and twenty-two years of age (1791–92), came during a crucial period of the French Revolution. This book deals with his stay at Paris, Orleans, and Blois, when he developed his passionate partisanship for the French people and the revolutionary cause.

2. Emblems of the pilgrim traveling on foot.

40 Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant Town³
Washed by the current of the stately Loire.
Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
Sojourning a few days, I visited
In haste each spot, of old or recent fame,
45 The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars⁴
Down to the suburbs of St. Anthony;⁵
And from Mont Martyr⁶ southward to the Dome
Of Genevieve.⁷ In both her clamorous Halls,
The National Synod and the Jacobins,⁸
so I saw the Revolutionary Power
Toss like a Ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
Of Orleans,⁹ coasted round and round the line
Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
55 Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
I stared, and listened with a Stranger's ears
To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!
And hissing Factionists, with ardent eyes,
60 In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look
Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear are forced to wear,
But seemed there present, and I scanned them all,
Watched every gesture uncontrollable
Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
65 All side by side, and struggling face to face
With Gaiety and dissolute Idleness.
—Where silent zephyrs⁰ sported with the dust
Of the Bastille,¹ I sate in the open sun,
And from the rubbish gathered up a stone
70 And pocketed the Relic in the guise
Of an Enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
I looked for Something that I could not find,
Affecting more emotion than I felt;
For 'tis most certain that these various sights,
75 However potent their first shock, with me
Appeared to recompence the Traveller's pains
Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,²
A Beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
so Pale, and bedropp'd with everflowing tears.
But hence to my more permanent Abode³

breezes

3. Orleans, on the Loire River, where Wordsworth stayed from December 1791 until he moved to Blois early the next year.

4. The Champ de Mars, where during the Festival of the Federation in 1790 Louis XVI swore fidelity to the new constitution.

5. Faubourg St. Antoine, near the Bastille, a militant working-class district and center of revolutionary violence.

6. Montmartre, a hill on which revolutionary meetings were held.

7. Became the Pantheon, a burial place for heroes of the Revolution such as Voltaire and Rousseau.

8. The club of radical democratic revolutionists, named for the ancient convent of St. Jacques, their meeting place. "National Synod": the newly formed National Assembly.

9. The arcades in the courtyard of the Palais d'Orleans, a fashionable gathering place.

1. The political prison, which had been demolished after being stormed and sacked on July 14, 1789.

2. The painting of the weeping Mary Magdalen by Charles Le Brun (1619–1690) was a tourist attraction.

3. In Orleans.

I hasten; there by novelties in speech,
Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
And all the attire of ordinary life,
85 Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,
I stood 'mid those concussions unconcerned,
Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
Glassed in a green-house, or a Parlour shrub
That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace
90 While every bush and tree, the country through,
Is shaking to the roots; indifference this
Which may seem strange; but I was unprepared
With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
Into a theatre whose stage was filled,
95 And busy with an action far advanced.
Like Others I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;⁴
Nor wanted" such half-insight as grew wild *lacked*
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
100 And public news; but having never seen
A Chronicle that might suffice to shew
Whence the main Organs⁵ of the public Power
Had sprung, their transmigrations when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
105 A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
110 Locked up in quiet.⁶ For myself, I fear
Now, in connection with so great a Theme,
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men
115 Whom, in the City, privilege of birth
Sequestered from the rest: societies
Polished in Arts, and in punctilio⁰ versed; *social niceties*
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
120 With scrupulous care: but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus erelong
Became a Patriot;⁷ and my heart was all
Given to the People, and my love was theirs.

4. Wordsworth probably refers to the numerous English pamphlets (including Paines *Rights of Man*, part 1, and Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Men*) published in response to Edmund Burke's attack on the revolution, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

5. Institutions, instruments.

6. The peace that followed the storming of the Bastille in 1789 was dramatically broken when, between September 2 and 6, 1792, three thousand prisoners suspected of Royalist sympathies were summarily executed by a Paris mob.

7. I.e., became committed to the people's side in the Revolution.

From Book Tenth
France continued¹

[THE REVOLUTION: PARIS AND ENGLAND]

Cheared with this hope,² to Paris I returned;
And ranged, with ardor heretofore unfelt,
50 The spacious City, and in progress passed
The Prison³ where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associate with his Children and his Wife,
In Bondage; and the Palace⁴ lately stormed,
With roar of Cannon, by a furious Host.
55 I crossed the Square (an empty Area then!)
Of the Carousel, where so late had lain
The Dead, upon the Dying heaped; and gazed
On this and other Spots, as doth a Man
Upon a Volume whose contents he knows
60 Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read;
So that he questions the mute leaves⁰ with pain, *pages*
And half-upbraids their silence. But, that night,
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
65 What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
High was my Room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large Mansion or Hotel,⁰ a Lodge *town house*
That would have pleased me in more quiet times,
Nor was it wholly without pleasure, then.
70 With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
I thought of those September massacres,
Divided from me by one little month,
75 Saw them and touched;⁵ the rest was conjured up
From tragic fictions, or true history,
Remembrances and dim admonishments.
The Horse is taught his manage,⁶ and no Star
Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
80 For the spent hurricane the air provides
As fierce a Successor; the tide retreats
But to return out of its hiding place
In the great Deep; all things have second birth;
The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
85 And in this way I wrought upon myself

1. Book 10 deals with the period between October 1792 and August 1794.

2. I.e., hope that, with the Declaration of the Republic and the French army's recent defeat of an Austrian and Prussian invasion, there would be no more need for violence.

3. I.e., the "Temple" (it had once housed the religious Order of Templars), where starting in September 1792 the deposed king was held prisoner awaiting trial for his crimes against the people.

4. The Tuileries. On August 10, 1792, the palace was marched upon by a crowd intent on seizing Louis XVI, whose Swiss guards opened fire on the insurgents. The bodies of the thousands who died in the conflict were cremated in the great square of the "Carousel" (line 56), in front of the palace.

5. I.e., his imagination of the September massacres was so vivid as to be palpable.

6. The French *manage*, the prescribed action and paces of a trained horse.

Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
To the whole City, "Sleep no more."⁷ The Trance
Fled with the Voice to which it had given birth,
But vainly comments of a calmer mind
90 Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
Appeared unfit for the repose of Night,
Defenceless as a wood where Tygers roam.

* * * In this frame of mind,
Dragged by a chain of harsh necessity,
So seemed it,— now I thankfully acknowledge,
Forced by the gracious providence of Heaven—
225 To England I returned,⁸ else (though assured
That I both was, and must be, of small weight,
No better than a Landsman on the deck
Of a ship struggling with a hideous storm)
Doubtless I should have then made common cause
230 With some who perished, haply⁹ perished too,⁹
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering,
Should to the breast of Nature have gone back
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,
A Poet only to myself, to Men
235 Useless, and even, beloved Friend, a Soul
To thee unknown!

perhaps

« * *

What then were my emotions, when in Arms
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
265 O pity and shame! with those confederate Powers?²
Not in my single self alone I found,
But in the minds of all ingenuous Youth,
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
Given to my moral nature had I known
270 Down to that very moment; neither lapse
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
A revolution, save at this one time;
All else was progress on the self-same path
On which, with a diversity of pace,
275 I had been travelling: this a stride at once
Into another region.— As a light
And pliant hare-bell^o swinging in the breeze
On some gray rock, its birth-place, so had I
Wanted, fast rooted on the ancient tower
280 Of my beloved Country, wishing not
A happier fortune than to wither there.

bluebell

7. Macbeth's hallucination after his murder of the king. "Methought I heard a voice cry, 'Sleep no more, / Macbeth does murder sleep' " (Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 2.2.33–34). Louis XVI was guillotined on January 21, 1793.

8. Forced by the "harsh necessity" of a lack of money, Wordsworth returned to England late in 1792.

9. Wordsworth sympathized with the moderate party of the Girondins, almost all of whom were guillotined or committed suicide following Robespierre's rise to power in the National Convention.

1. Wordsworth did not meet Coleridge, the "beloved Friend," until 1795.

2. England joined Austria and Prussia in the war against France in February 1793.

Now was I from that pleasant station torn
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
Yea, afterwards, truth most painful to record!
285 Exulted, in the triumph of my Soul,
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
Left without glory on the field, or driven,
Brave hearts, to shameful flight.³ It was a grief, –
Grief call it not, 'twas any thing but that, –
290 A conflict of sensations without name,
Of which *he* only who may love the sight
Of a Village Steeple as I do can judge,
When, in the Congregation bending all
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
295 Or praises, for our Country's victories,
And, 'mid the simple Worshippers, perchance
I only, like an uninvited Guest,
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come?

* * *

[THE REIGN OF TERROR. NIGHTMARES]

– Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
With Feast-days;⁴ old Men from the Chimney-nook,
The Maiden from the bosom of her Love,
The Mother from the Cradle of her Babe,
360 The Warrior from the Field, all perished, all,
Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
Head after head, and never heads enough
For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
They made it, proudly eager as a Child
365 (If like desires of innocent little ones
May with such heinous appetites be compared),
Pleased in some open field to exercise
A toy that mimics with revolving wings
The motion of a windmill, though the air
370 Do of itself blow fresh and make the Vanes
Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
But, with the play-thing at arm's length, he sets
His front against the blast, and runs amain
That it may whirl the faster.

* * *

Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
Were my day-thoughts, my nights were miserable;
Through months, through years, long after the last beat
400 Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,

3. The French defeated the English in the battle of Hondschoote, September 6, 1793.

4. I.e., festivals celebrated by human slaughter ("carnage"). Wordsworth alludes ironically to the patriotic festivals created to replace Catholic feast

days within the new Republic's calendar. Lines 356–63 describe the Reign of Terror organized by Robespierre's Committee of Public Safety. In 1794 a total of 1,376 people were guillotined in Paris in forty-nine days.

Such ghastly Visions had I of despair
And tyranny, and implements of death,
And innocent victims sinking under fear,
405 And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
For sacrifice, and struggling with forced mirth
And levity in dungeons where the dust
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
410 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me
In long orations which I strove to plead
Before unjust tribunals – with a voice
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
Death-like of treacherous desertion, felt
415 In the last place of refuge, my own soul.

*From Book Eleventh
France, concluded¹*

[RETROSPECT: "BLISS WAS IT IN THAT DAWN." RECOURSE TO
"REASON'S NAKED SELF"]

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!²
For mighty were the Auxiliars⁰ which then stood *allies*
Upon our side, we who were strong in Love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
no In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a Country in Romance!
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
115 A prime Enchantress – to assist the work
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth
The beauty wore of promise – that which sets
(As at some moments might not be unfelt
120 Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What Temper⁰ at the prospect did not wake *temperament*
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!³
125 They who had fed their Childhood upon dreams,
The play-fellows of Fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
Their ministers, – who in lordly wise had stirred
Among the grandest objects of the Sense,

1. Book 11 deals with the year from August 1794 through September 1795: Wordsworth's growing disillusionment with the French Revolution, his recourse to abstract theories of politics, his despair and nervous breakdown, and the beginning of his recovery when he moved from London to Race-

down.

2. Wordsworth in this passage turns back to the summer of 1792, when his enthusiasm for the Revolution was at its height.

3. Enraptured; carried away by enthusiasm.

130 And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it;— they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
135 And in the region of their peaceful selves;—
Now was it that *both* found, the Meek and Lofty
Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic" as they could wish, — *malleable*
Were called upon to exercise their skill,
140 Not in Utopia, — subterranean Fields, —
Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where!
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us, — the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all!
145 Why should I not confess that Earth was then
To me what an Inheritance new-fallen
Seems, when the first time visited, to one
Who thither comes to find in it his home?
He walks about and looks upon the spot
150 With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
And is half-pleased with things that are amiss,
'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.
An active partisan, I thus convoked" *called up*
From every object pleasant circumstance
155 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
With genial feelings still" predominant; *always*
When erring, erring on the better part,
And in the kinder spirit; placable," *forgiving*
Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
160 See as they have been taught, and that Antiquity⁴
Gives rights to error; and aware no less
That throwing off oppression must be work
As well of licence as of liberty;
And above all, for this was more than all,
165 Not caring if the wind did now and then
Blow keen upon an eminence" that gave *elevated ground*
Prospect so large into futurity;
In brief, a Child of Nature, as at first,
Diffusing only those affections wider
170 That from the cradle had grown up with me,
And losing, in no other way than light
Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.
In the main outline, such, it might be said,
Was my condition, till with open war
175 Britain opposed the Liberties of France;⁵
This threw me first out of the pale" of love, *bounds*
Soured, and corrupted, upwards to the source,
My sentiments; was not,⁶ as hitherto,
A swallowing up of lesser things in great;

4. Tradition, long use.

5. On February 11, 1793, England declared war

against France.

6. I.e., there was not (in my sentiments).

180 But change of them into their contraries;
And thus a way was opened for mistakes
And false conclusions, in degree as gross,
In land more dangerous. What had been a pride
Was now a shame; my likings and my loves
185 Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry,
And hence a blow that in maturer age
Would but have touched the judgement, struck more deep
Into sensations near the heart; meantime,
As from the first, wild theories were afloat
190 To whose pretensions sedulously urged⁷
I had but lent a careless ear, assured
That time was ready to set all things right,
And that the multitude so long oppressed
Would be oppressed no more.

But when events

195 Brought less encouragement, and unto these
The immediate proof of principles no more
Could be entrusted, while the events themselves,
Worn out in greatness, stripped of novelty,
Less occupied the mind; and sentiments
200 Could through my understanding's natural growth
No longer keep their ground, by faith maintained
Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
Her hand upon her object; evidence
Safer, of universal application, such
205 As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.
But now, become Oppressors in their turn,
Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
For one of Conquest, losing sight of all
Which they had struggled for:⁸ and mounted up,
210 Openly in the eye of Earth and Heaven,
The scale of Liberty.⁹ I read her doom
With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
Of a false Prophet. While resentment rose,
215 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
Of mortified presumption, I adhered
More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove¹
Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
Of contest, did opinions every day
220 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
The very being of the immortal Soul.
This was the time when, all things tending fast
To depravation, speculative schemes
225 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth

7. Diligently argued for.

8. In late 1794 and early 1795, French troops had successes in Spain, Italy, Holland, and Germany – even though, in the constitution written in 1790, they had renounced all foreign conquest.

9. I.e., the desire for power now outweighed the love of liberty.

1. Test. The figure is that of testing a tempered steel sword,

For ever in a purer element,
Found ready welcome.² Tempting region *that*
For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
230 Where passions had the privilege to work,
And never hear the sound of their own names:
But, speaking more in charity, the dream
Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
With that which makes our Reason's naked self³
235 The object of its fervour. * 4 *

[CRISIS, BREAKDOWN, AND RECOVERY]

I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
280 To anatomize⁰ the frame of social life, *dissect*
Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
That some dramatic tale indued with shapes
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
285 Than suit the Work we fashion, might set forth
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
290 Out of a heart that had been turned aside
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded more and more,
Misguided and misguiding. So I fared,
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
295 Like culprits to the bar;⁰ calling the mind, *courtroom*
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
Her titles⁴ and her honors, now believing,
Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
300 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
The sanction, till, demanding formal *proof*
And seeking it in every thing, I lost
All feeling of conviction, and, in *fine,*⁰ *the end*
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
305 Yielded up moral questions in despair.
This was the crisis of that strong disease,
This the soul's last and lowest ebb; I drooped,
Deeming our blessed Reason of least use
Where wanted most. * * *

2. I.e., schemes that undertook to separate ("abstract") people's hopes for future happiness from reliance on the emotional part of human nature, and instead to ground those hopes on their rational natures ("a purer element"). The allusion is primarily to William Godwin's *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793), which proposed that humans' moral and political progress would be unstoppable if reason were allowed to function freely.

3. Cf. Edmund Burke's denunciation in *Reflec-*

tions on the Revolution in France (p. 152 above) of the new political theories founded on reason: "All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off. All the superadded ideas, furnished from the wardrobe of a moral imagination, which the heart owns, and the understanding ratifies, as necessary to cover the defects of our naked shivering nature . . . are to be exploded as a ridiculous, absurd, and antiquated fashion."

4. Deeds to prove legal entitlements.

* 4 ' Then it was,
Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!
That the beloved Woman⁵ in whose sight
Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
Of sudden admonition—like a brook
That does but *cross* a lonely road, and now
Seen, heard, and felt, and caught at every turn,
Companion never lost through many a league—
Maintained for me a saving intercourse⁰ *communion*
With my true self: for, though bedimmed and changed
Both as a clouded and a waning moon,
She whispered still that brightness would return,
She in the midst of all preserved me still
A Poet, made me seek beneath that name, *duty*
And that alone, my office⁰ upon earth.
And lastly, as hereafter will be shewn,
If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
By all varieties of human love
Assisted, led me back through opening day
To those sweet counsels between head and heart
Whence grew that genuine knowledge fraught with peace
Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now
In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
And nothing less), when, finally to close
And rivet down the gains of France, a Pope
Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor:⁶ *disgrace*
This last opprobrium,⁰ when we see a people
That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
For manna, take a lesson from the Dog
Returning to his vomit.⁷ * * *

Book Twelfth Imagination and Taste, how impaired and restored

[SPOTS OF TIME]

* * 4 I shook the habit off¹
⌘ Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive Being, a *creative* Soul.
There are in our existence spots of time,²

5. After a long separation Dorothy Wordsworth came to live with her brother at Racedown in 1795 and remained a permanent member of his household.

6. The ultimate blow to liberal hopes for France occurred when on December 2, 1804, Napoleon summoned Pope Pius VII to officiate at the ceremony elevating him to emperor. At the last moment Napoleon took the crown and donned it himself.

7. Allusion to Proverbs 26.11: "As a dog returneth to his vomit, a fool returneth to his folly."

1. The acquired habit of logical analysis, which had marred his earlier feelings for the natural world.

2. Wordsworth's account in the lines that follow of two memories from childhood was originally drafted for book 1 of the two-part *Prelude* of 1799. By transferring these early memories to the end of his completed autobiography, rather than presenting them in its opening books, he enacts his own theory about how remembrance of things past nourishes the mind. He shows that it does so, as he says, "down to this *very* time" (line 327): the

That with distinct pre-eminence retain
210 A renovating virtue,⁰ whence, depressed *power of renewal*
By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
215 Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious Spirit chiefly lurks
220 Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge how and to what point
The mind is lord and master – outward sense³
The obedient Servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered every where, taking their date
225 From our first Childhood. I remember well
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:
An ancient Servant of my Father's house
230 Was with me, my encourager and Guide.
We had not travelled long ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my Comrade, and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony Moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
235 Came to a bottom,⁰ where in former times *valley*
A Murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The Gibbet mast⁴ had mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone, but on the turf
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
240 Some unknown hand had carved the Murderer's name.
The monumental Letters were inscribed
In times long past, but still from year to year,
By superstition of the neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to that hour
245 The characters⁰ were fresh and visible. *letters*
A casual glance had shewn them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint and ignorant of the road:
Then, reascending the bare common,⁰ saw *field*
A naked Pool that lay beneath the hills,
250 The Beacon⁵ on its summit, and, more near,
A Girl who bore a Pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was in truth
An ordinary sight; but I should need
255 Colors and words that are unknown to man
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost Guide,

poetic imagination he brings to the composition of this book has been revived by recollections.
3. Perception of the external world.

4. The post with a projecting arm used for hanging criminals.

5. A signal beacon on a hill above Penrith.

Invested Moorland waste and naked Pool,
The Beacon crowning the lone eminence,
260 The Female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. – When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved One⁶ at my side,
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked Pool and dreary Crag,
265 And on the melancholy Beacon, fell
A spirit of pleasure, and Youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
270 Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of Man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honors! I am lost, but see
In simple child-hood something of the base
275 On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,
That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of Man's power
280 Open; I would approach them, but they close.
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on
May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
285 Such is my hope, the spirit of the past
For future restoration. – Yet another
Of these memorials.

One Christmas-time,⁷
On the glad Eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
290 Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led Palfreys⁸ that should bear us home,
My Brothers and myself. There rose a Crag
That, from the meeting point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;
295 Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate, half-sheltered by a naked wall;
300 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood:
With those Companions at my side, I sate,
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
305 And plain beneath. Ere we to School returned

6. Mary Hutchinson.

7. In 1783. Wordsworth, aged thirteen, was at

Hawkshead School with two of his brothers.

8. Small saddle horses.

That dreary time, ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my Father's House, he died,⁹
And I and my three Brothers, Orphans then,
Followed his Body to the Grave. The Event,
310 With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately passed, when from the Crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope,
With trite reflections of morality,
315 Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low
To God, who thus corrected my desires;
And afterwards, the wind and sleety rain
And all the business¹ of the Elements,
The single Sheep, and the one blasted tree,
320 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two Roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;²
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
325 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this *very* time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or haply⁰ at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk whose lofty trees,
330 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations, thence are brought,³
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over-busy in the course they took,
335 Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

perhaps

From Book Thirteenth
Subject concluded

[POETRY OF "UNASSUMING THINGS"]

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.¹
5 Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation, finds in her
His best and purest friend, from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind

9. John Wordsworth died on December 30, 1783. William's mother had died five years earlier.

1. Busy-ness; motions.

2. I.e., shapes one did not dare question. Cf. Hamlet's declaration to the ghost of his father: "Thou com'st in such questionable shape / That I will

speak to thee" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 1.4.24–25).

3. Another instance of Wordsworth's inner response to an outer breeze (cf. 1.33–38, p. 325).

1. In the Old Testament the horn of an animal signifies power.

10 Which fits him to receive it, when unsought.
Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree: 'tis mine
To speak of what myself have known and felt.
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
15 By gratitude and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted, but the dawn beginning now
To reappear,² 'twas proved that not in vain
20 I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason,³ that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws, gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
25 No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits, — provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect, — but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;⁴
Holds up before the mind, intoxicate
30 With present objects, and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate shew
Of objects that endure; and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set
On throwing off incumbrances,⁵ to seek *burdens*
35 In Man, and in the frame of social life,
Whate'er there is desireable and good
Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
And function, or through strict vicissitude
Of life and death revolving.⁵ Above all
40 Were re-established now those watchful thoughts
Which (seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon,⁶ Power and Energy detached *celebrate*
From moral purpose) early tutored me
45 To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.

[DISCOVERY OF HIS POETIC SUBJECT. SALISBURY PLAIN.
SIGHT OF "A NEW WORLD"]

220 Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful Traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause and bend in reverence

2. I.e., he is beginning to recover from the spiritual crisis recorded in 11.293–309.

3. Wordsworth follows Milton's use of the term "right reason" to denote a human faculty that is inherently attuned to truth.

4. In the text of 1805: "but lifts / The being into magnanimity."

5. Cf. the 1802 Preface to *Lyrical Ballads* and

Wordsworth's discussion of how the plain language of rural life that he draws on for his poetry expresses "the essential passions of the heart" and how, "arising out of repeated experience and regular feelings, [it] is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by poets" (p. 262 above).

To Nature, and the power of human minds,
225 To Men as they are Men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external Man is rude in shew!
Not like a Temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain Chapel that protects
230 Its simple Worshippers from sun and shower.
Of these, said I, shall be my song, of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making Verse
Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth
235 And sanctity of passion speak of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due: thus haply^o shall I teach,
Inspire, through unadulterated^o ears
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, my theme
240 No other than the very heart of Man
As found among the best of those who live
Not unexalted by religious faith,
Nor uninformed by Books, good books, though few,
In Nature's presence: thence may I select
245 Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight,
And miserable love that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind and what we are.

*perhaps
uncorrupted*

^ s #

* * " Dearest Friend,
If thou partake the animating faith
300 That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
305 The humblest of this band⁶ who dares to hope
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed^o
An insight, that in some sort he possesses
A Privilege, whereby a Work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
310 Creative and enduring, may become
A Power like one of Nature's. To a hope
Not less ambitious once among the Wilds
Of Sarum's Plain⁷ my youthful Spirit was raised;
There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs⁸
315 Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with his retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw
Our dim Ancestral Past in Vision clear;⁹

given

6. Wordsworth himself.

7. Salisbury Plain, which Wordsworth crossed alone on foot in the summer of 1793. The journey occasioned the poem *Adventures on Salisbury*

Plain.

8. Open hills used to pasture sheep.

9. Wordsworth shared the common, but mistaken, belief of his time that Stonehenge, the giant meg-

320 Saw multitudes of men, and here and there
A single Briton clothed in Wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;¹
The voice of Spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,
325 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
I called on Darkness—but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames;
330 It is the Sacrificial Altar, fed
With living Men—how deep the groans! the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
The monumental hillocks,² and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
335 At other moments (for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,³
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent
340 Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
The constellations; gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded Teachers with white wands
345 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky
Alternately, and Plain below, while breath
Of music swayed their motions, and the Waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet Sounds.⁴

s s s

365 Moreover, each man's mind is to herself
Witness and judge; and I remember well
That in Life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time⁵ to gain clear sight
Of a new world, a world, too, that was fit
370 To be transmitted and to other eyes
Made visible, as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange
375 Of action from without, and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

alithic structure on Salisbury¹ Plain, had been a temple of the Celtic priests, the Druids, and that the Druids had there performed the rite of human sacrifice; hence the imaginings and vision that he goes on to relate.

1. High open country.

2. The many Bronze Age burial mounds on Salisbury Plain. "Giant wicker": Aylett Sammes, in *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata* (1676), had described, as a rite of the ancient Britons, that they wove a huge

wicker structure in the shape of a man, filled it with living humans, and set it afire.

3. Conjecture (a verb).

4. Many 18th-century antiquarians believed the Druids to be the forerunners of the bards, the poets whose songs kept alive the nation's traditions in the era prior to the advent of writing.

5. 1797, the year of the start of his friendship with Coleridge.

From Book Fourteenth
Conclusion

[THE VISION ON MOUNT SNOWDON.]

In one of those Excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!), through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful Friend,
I left Bethgellert's huts at couching-time,
5 And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon.¹ To the door
Of a rude Cottage at the Mountain's base
We came, and roused the Shepherd who attends
The adventurous Stranger's steps, a trusty Guide;
10 Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.
— It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring,² with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick, that covered all the sky.
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
is The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
And, after ordinary Travellers' talk
With our Conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
20 Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The Shepherd's Lurcher,⁰ who, among the **Crags,** *hunting dog*
Had to his joy unearthed a Hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up Prey with barkings turbulent.
25 This small adventure, for even such it seemed
In that wild place, and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
30 Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the Band:
35 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask, or learn, the cause;
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash; and lo! as I looked up,
40 The Moon hung naked in a firmament

1. Wordsworth climbed Mount Snowdon—the highest peak in Wales ("Cambria"), and some ten miles from the sea—with Robert Jones, the friend with whom he had also tramped through the Alps (book 6). The climb started from the village of Bethgellert at "couching-time" (line 4), the time of night when the sheep lie down to sleep. This event had taken place in 1791 (or possibly 1793); Words-

worth presents it out of its chronological order to introduce at this point a great natural "type" or "emblem" (lines 66, 70) for the mind, and especially for the activity of the imagination, whose "restoration" he has described in the two preceding books.

2. In north of England dialect, *glairie*, applied to the weather, means dull, rainy.

Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still Ocean;³ and beyond,
45 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
In Headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
50 Not so the ethereal Vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss;⁴ only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon;
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
55 Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy breathing-place,
Mounted the roar of waters – torrents – streams
60 Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
Heard over earth and sea, and in that hour,
For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.
When into air had partially dissolved
That Vision, given to Spirits of the night,
65 And three chance human Wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic Intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
70 There I beheld the emblem of a Mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
75 By recognitions of transcendent power
In sense, conducting to ideal form;
In soul, of more than mortal privilege.⁵
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
so 'Mid circumstances awful⁰ and sublime, *awe-inspiring*
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted; so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
85 That Men least sensitive see, hear, perceive,
And cannot chuse but feel. The power which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express

3. In Milton's description of God's creation of the land from the waters, "the mountains huge appear / Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave / Into the clouds" (*Paradise Lost* 7.285-87).

4. The mist projected in various shapes over the Irish Sea, but did not "encroach" on the heavens

overhead.

5. The sense of lines 74–77 seems to be that the mind of someone who is gifted beyond the ordinary lot of mortals recognizes its power to transcend the senses by converting sensory objects into ideal forms.

Resemblance of that glorious faculty
90 That higher minds bear with them as their own.⁶
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They, from their native selves, can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
95 A like existence; and whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it;—or are caught
By its inevitable mastery,
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from heaven's remotest spheres.
100 Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
105 To rouse them, in a world of life they live;
By sensible⁰ impressions not enthralled, *sensory*
But, by their quickening impulse, made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
no Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs,—the consciousness
115 Of whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image, and through every thought,
And all affections⁰ by communion raised *emotions*
From earth to heaven, from human to divine.
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
120 Whether discursive or intuitive;⁷
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense:
Hence, amid ills that vex, and wrongs that crush
125 Our hearts, if here the words of holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied, that peace
Which passeth understanding,⁸—that repose
In moral judgements which from this pure source
Must come, or will by Man be sought in vain.

s . s

[CONCLUSION: "THE MIND OF MAN"]

And now, O Friend!⁹ this History is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline

6. The "glorious faculty" is the imagination, which transfigures and re-creates what is given to it by the senses, much as, in Wordsworth's account of this night on Snowdon, the moonlit mist transfigures the familiar landscape.

7. An echo of Archangel Raphael's account to Adam of the soul's powers of reason (*Paradise Lost* 5.488–89). Discursive reason, mainly a human

quality according to Raphael, undertakes to reach truths through a logical sequence of premises, observations, and conclusions; "intuitive" reason, mainly angelic, comprehends truths immediately.

8. Philippians 4.7: "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding." This passage of Christian piety was added by Wordsworth in a late revision.

9. Goleridge.

And consummation⁰ of a Poet's mind *completion*
305 In every thing that stood most prominent
Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached
The time (our guiding object from the first)
When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
310 My knowledge, as to make me capable
Of building up a Work that shall endure.

* * * Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains
Our present purpose seems not to require,
And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
375 The mood in which this labour was begun.
O Friend! the termination of my course
Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then,
In that distraction, and intense desire,
I said unto the life which I had lived,
380 Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 'tis reproach to hear?¹ Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which like a Lark
385 I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attempered⁰ and her deep-drawn sighs, *adapted*
Yet centering all in love, and in the end
All gratulant,⁰ if rightly understood.² *joyful*

* s s

Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy³ race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
435 Then, though, too weak to tread the ways of truth,
This Age fall back to old idolatry,
Though Men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By Nations sink together,⁴ we shall still
440 Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint laborers in the Work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe⁰) *grant*
445 Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved

1. As he approaches the end, Wordsworth recalls the beginning of *The Prelude*. The reproachful voice is that which asked the question, "Was it for this?" in 1.269ff.

2. The poet finds that suffering and frustration are justified when seen as part of the overall design of the life he has just reviewed. The passage echoes

the conclusion of Pope's *An Essay on Man* 1.291–92: "All discord, harmony not understood; / All partial evil, universal good."

3. Coleridge's.

4. I.e., though men—whole nations of them together—sink to ignominy (disgrace) and shame.

Others will love, and we will teach them how,
450 Instruct them how the mind of Man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
(Which 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of Men doth still remain unchanged)
45 In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.

1798-1839

1850

DOROTHY WORDSWORTH 1771-1855

Dorothy Wordsworth has an enduring place in English literature even though she wrote almost no word for publication. Not until long after her death did scholars gradually retrieve and print her letters, a few poems, and a series of journals that she kept sporadically between 1798 and 1828 because, she wrote, "I shall give William Pleasure by it." It has always been known, from tributes to her by her brother and Coleridge, that she exerted an important influence on the lives and writings of both these men. It is now apparent that she also possessed a power surpassing that of the two poets for precise observation of people and the natural world, together with a genius for terse, luminous, and delicately nuanced description in prose.

Dorothy was born on Christmas Day 1771, twenty-one months after William; she was the only girl of five Wordsworth children. From her seventh year, when her mother died, she lived with various relatives—some of them tolerant and affectionate, others rigid and tyrannical—and saw William and her other brothers only occasionally, during the boys' summer vacations from school. In 1795, when she was twenty-four, an inheritance that William received enabled her to carry out a long-held plan to join her brother in a house at Racedown, and the two spent the rest of their long lives together, first in Dorsetshire and Somersetshire, in the southwest of England, then in their beloved Lake District. She uncomplainingly subordinated her own talents to looking after her brother and his household. She also became William's secretary, tirelessly copying and recopying the manuscripts of his poems to ready them for publication. Despite the scolding of a great-aunt, who deemed "rambling about ... on foot" unladylike, she accompanied her brother, too, in vigorous cross-country walks in which they sometimes covered as much as thirty-three miles in a day.

All her adult life she was overworked; after a severe illness in 1835, she suffered a physical and mental collapse. She spent the rest of her existence as an invalid. Hardest for her family to endure was the drastic change in her temperament: from a high-spirited and compassionate woman she became (save for brief intervals of lucidity) querulous, demanding, and at times violent. In this half-life she lingered for twenty years, attended devotedly by William until his death five years before her own in 1855.

Our principal selections are from the journal Dorothy kept in 1798 at Alfoxden, Somersetshire, where the Wordsworths had moved from Racedown to be near Coleridge at Nether Stowey, as well as from her journals while at Grasmere (1800–03), with Coleridge residing some thirteen miles away at Greta Hall, Keswick. Her records cover the period when both men emerged as major poets, and in their achievements Dorothy played an indispensable role. In book 11 of *The Prelude*, William says that in the time of his spiritual crisis, Dorothy "maintained for me a saving intercourse /