

The Prelude (1824–1839)¹

BOOK FIRST

INTRODUCTION, CHILDHOOD, AND SCHOOL-TIME

O 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.
 Whate'er his mission, the soft breeze can come 5
 To none more grateful than to me; escaped
 From the vast City, where I long have pined
 A discontented Sojourner—Now free,
 Free as a bird to settle where I will.
 What dwelling shall receive me? in what vale 10
 Shall be my harbour? underneath what grove
 Shall I take up my home? and what clear stream
 Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?
 The earth is all before me: with a heart
 Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty, 15
 I look about; and should the chosen guide
 Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,
 I cannot miss my way. I breathe again;
 Trances of thought and mountings of the heart
 Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, 20
 That burthen of my own unnatural self,
 The heavy weight of many a weary day
 Not mine, and such as were not made for me.
 Long months of peace (if such bold word accord
 With any promises of human life), 25
 Long months of ease and undisturbed delight
 Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,
 By road or pathway, or through trackless field,
 Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing
 Upon the River point me out my course? 30
 Dear Liberty! Yet what would it avail,

¹ During the years 1824–1839, WW prepared his fourteen-book version of *The Prelude* for publication after his death. For the source of the reading text and the editor's commentary, see *The Fourteen-Book "Prelude,"* ed. W. J. B. Owen (1985).

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

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

Content, and not unwilling now to give
 A respite to this passion, I paced on 60
 With brisk and eager steps; and came at length
 To a green shady place where down I sate
 Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice,
 And settling into gentler happiness.
 'Twas Autumn, and a clear and placid day, 65
 With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun
 Two hours declined towards the west, a day
 With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,
 And, in the sheltered and the sheltering grove,
 A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts 70

Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made
 Of a known Vale whither my feet should turn,
 Nor rest till they had reached the very door
 Of the one Cottage which methought I saw.
 No picture of mere memory ever looked 75
 So fair; and while upon the fancied scene
 I gazed with growing love, a higher power
 Than Fancy gave assurance of some work
 Of glory, there forthwith to be begun,
 Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, 80
 Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,
 Save where, amid the stately grove of Oaks,
 Now here—now there—an acorn, from its cup
 Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once
 To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound. 85

From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun
 Had almost touched the horizon; casting then
 A backward glance upon the curling cloud
 Of city smoke, by distance ruralized,
 Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive, 90
 But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,
 Even with the chance equipment of that hour,
 The road that pointed tow'rd the chosen Vale.

It was a splendid evening: and my Soul
 Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked 95
 Eolian visitations; but the harp
 Was soon defrauded, and the banded host
 Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds;
 And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;
 Why think of any thing but present good?" 100
 So, like a Home-bound Labourer, I pursued
 My way, beneath the mellowing sun, that shed
 Mild influence; nor left in me one wish
 Again to bend the sabbath of that time
 To a servile yoke. What need of many words? 105
 A pleasant loitering journey, through three days
 Continued, brought me to my hermitage.
 I spare to tell of what ensued, the life
 In common things,—the endless store of things

Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 110
 Found all about me in one neighbourhood;
 The self-congratulation, and from morn
 To night unbroken cheerfulness serene.
 But speedily an earnest longing rose
 To brace myself to some determined aim, 115
 Reading or thinking; either to lay up
 New stores, or rescue from decay the old
 By timely interference: and therewith
 Came hopes still higher, that with outward life
 I might endue some airy phantasies 120
 That had been floating loose about for years;
 And to such Beings temperately deal forth
 The many feelings that oppressed my heart.
 That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light
 Dawns from the East, but dawns—to disappear 125
 And mock me with a sky that ripens not
 Into a steady morning: if my mind,
 Remembering the bold promise of the past,
 Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,
 Vain is her wish: where'er she turns, she finds 130
 Impediments from day to day renewed.
 And now it would content me to yield up
 Those lofty hopes awhile for present gifts
 Of humbler industry. But, O dear Friend!
 The Poet, gentle Creature as he is, 135
 Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times,
 His fits when he is neither sick nor well,
 Though no distress be near him but his own
 Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleas'd
 While she, as duteous as the Mother Dove, 140
 Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,
 But, like the innocent Bird, hath goadings on
 That drive her, as in trouble, through the groves:
 With me is now such passion, to be blamed
 No otherwise than as it lasts too long. 145
 When, as becomes a Man who would prepare
 For such an arduous Work, I through myself
 Make rigorous inquisition, the report

Is often chearing; for I neither seem
 To lack that first great gift, the vital Soul, 150
 Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort
 Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,
 Subordinate helpers of the living Mind:
 Nor am I naked of external things,
 Forms, images, nor numerous other aids 155
 Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil,
 And needful to build up a Poet's praise.
 Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these
 Are found in plenteous store, but no where such
 As may be singled out with steady choice: 160
 No little band of yet remembered names
 Whom I in perfect confidence might hope
 To summon back from lonesome banishment,
 And make them dwellers in the hearts of men
 Now living, or to live in future years. 165
 Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking
 Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,
 Will settle on some British theme, some old
 Romantic Tale by Milton left unsung:
 More often turning to some gentle place 170
 Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe
 To Shepherd Swains, or seated, harp in hand,
 Amid reposing knights by a River side
 Or fountain, listen to the grave reports
 Of dire enchantments faced, and overcome 175
 By the strong mind, and Tales of warlike feats
 Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword
 Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry
 That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;
 Whence inspiration for a song that winds 180
 Through ever changing scenes of votive quest,
 Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid
 To patient courage and unblemished truth,
 To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,
 And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves. 185
 Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate
 How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,

And, hidden in the cloud of years, became
 Odin, the Father of a Race by whom
 Perished the Roman Empire; how the friends 190
 And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain
 Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles;
 And left their usages, their arts, and laws
 To disappear by a slow gradual death;
 To dwindle and to perish, one by one, 195
 Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul
 Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years
 Survived, and, when the European came
 With skill and power that might not be withstood,
 Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold, 200
 And wasted down by glorious death that Race
 Of natural Heroes;—or I would record
 How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled Man,
 Unnamed among the chronicles of Kings,
 Suffered in silence for truth's sake: or tell 205
 How that one Frenchman, through continued force
 Of meditation on the inhuman deeds
 Of those who conquered first the Indian isles,
 Went, single in his ministry, across
 The Ocean;—not to comfort the Oppressed, 210
 But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about,
 Withering the Oppressor:—how Gustavus sought
 Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines:
 How Wallace fought for Scotland, left the name
 Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower, 215
 All over his dear Country, left the deeds
 Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,
 To people the steep rocks and river banks,
 Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul
 Of independence and stern liberty. 220
 Sometimes it suits me better to invent
 A Tale from my own heart, more near akin
 To my own passions, and habitual thoughts,
 Some variegated Story, in the main
 Lofty, but the unsubstantial Structure melts 225
 Before the very sun that brightens it,

Mist into air dissolving! Then, a wish,
 My last and favourite aspiration, mounts,
 With yearning, tow'rd some philosophic Song
 Of Truth that cherishes our daily life; 230
 With meditations passionate, from deep
 Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse
 Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;
 But from this awful burthen I full soon
 Take refuge, and beguile myself with trust 235
 That mellow 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,
 From paramount impulse—not to be withstood; 240
 A timorous capacity from prudence;
 From circumspection, infinite delay.
 Humility and modest awe themselves
 Betray me, serving often for a cloke
 To a more subtile selfishness; that now 245
 Locks every function up in blank reserve,
 Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
 That with intrusive restlessness beats off
 Simplicity, and self-presented truth.
 Ah! better far than this, to stray about 250
 Voluptuously, through fields and rural walks,
 And ask no record of the hours, resigned
 To vacant musing, unproved neglect
 Of all things, and deliberate holiday:
 Far better never to have heard the name 255
 Of zeal and just ambition, than to live
 Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour
 Turns recreant to her task, takes heart again,
 Then feels immediately some hollow thought
 Hang like an interdict upon her hopes. 260
 This is my lot; for either still I find
 Some imperfection in the chosen theme;
 Or see of absolute accomplishment
 Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself
 That I recoil and droop, and seek repose 265

In listlessness from vain perplexity;
 Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,
 Like a false Steward who hath much received,
 And renders nothing back.

Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved 270
 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,
 O Derwent! winding among grassy holms 275
 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,
 A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm 280
 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
 Of feudal sway, the bright blue River passed 285
 Along the margin of our Terrace Walk;
 A tempting Playmate whom we dearly loved.
 O many a time have I, a five years' Child,
 In a small mill-race severed from his stream,
 Made one long bathing of a summer's day; 290
 Basked in the sun, and plunged, and basked again,
 Alternate all a summer's day, or scoured
 The sandy fields, leaping through flow'ry groves
 Of yellow ragwort; or when rock and hill,
 The woods and distant Skiddaw's lofty height, 295
 Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone
 Beneath the sky, as if I had been born
 On Indian plains, and from my Mother's hut
 Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport,
 A naked Savage, in the thunder shower. 300

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
 Fostered alike by beauty and by fear;
 Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less'

In that beloved Vale to which erelong
 We were transplanted—there were we let loose 305
 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 Springes o'er my Shoulder slung, 310
 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, 315
 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 toil 320
 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. 325
 Nor less, when Spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
 Roved we as plunderers where the Mother-bird
 Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
 Our object, and inglorious, yet the end
 Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung 330
 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, 335
 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!
 Dust as we are, the immortal Spirit grows 340
 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
 The terrors, pains, and early miseries, 345
 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
 Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end! 350
 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
 Severer interventions, ministry 355
 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.
 Strait I unloosed her chain, and, stepping in, 360
 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,
 Small circles glittering idly in the moon, 365
 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
 Upon the summit of a craggy ridge, 370
 The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
 Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
 She was an elfin Pinnacle; lustily
 I dipped my oars into the silent Lake;
 And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat 375
 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,
 Upreared its head.—I struck, and struck again, 380
 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
 Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned, 385
 And through the silent water stole my way
 Back to the Covert of the Willow-tree;
 There, in her mooring-place, I left my Bark,—
 And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
 And serious mood; but after I had seen 390
 That spectacle, for many days, my brain
 Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
 Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
 There hung a darkness, call it solitude
 Or blank desertion. No familiar Shapes 395
 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
 By day, and were a trouble to my dreams. 400
 Wisdom and Spirit of the Universe!
 Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
 That giv'st to forms and images a breath
 And everlasting Motion! not in vain,
 By day or star-light, thus from my first dawn 405
 Of Childhood didst thou intertwine for me
 The passions that build up our human Soul,
 Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
 But with high objects, with enduring things,
 With life and nature, purifying thus 410
 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.
 Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me 415
 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,
 When, by the margin of the trembling Lake, 420

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.
 —And in the frosty season, when the sun 425
 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
 It was a time of rapture!—Clear and loud 430
 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,
 We hissed along the polished ice, in games
 Confederate, imitative of the chase 435
 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
 Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; 440
 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,
 Eastward, were sparkling clear, and in the west 445
 The orange sky of evening died away.
 Not seldom from the uproar I retired
 Into a silent bay,—or sportively
 Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng
 To cut across the reflex of a star 450
 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 455
 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 diurnal round! 460
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye presences of Nature, in the sky,
And on the earth! Ye visions of the hills! 465
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye, through many a year,
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills, 470
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?

Not uselessly employed, 475
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, 480
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, 485
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong
And unreprieved 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. 490

—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,
Pull at her rein, like an impatient Courser; 495
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,
 A ministration of your own was yours! 500
 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
 Ye dealt out your plain Comforts? Yet had ye 505
 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
 In square divisions parcelled out, and all 510
 With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er,
 We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head,
 In strife too humble to be named in verse;
 Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,
 Cherry, or maple, sate in close array, 515
 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,
 But husbanded through many a long campaign. 520
 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
 The Persons of departed Pontentates. 525
 Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!
 Ironical diamonds; Clubs, Hearts, Diamonds, Spades,
 A congregation piteously akin!
 Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,
 Those sooty Knaves, precipitated down 530
 With scoffs and taunts like Vulcan 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
 By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad 535
 Incessant rain was falling, or the frost

Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;
 And, interrupting oft that eager game,
 From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice
 The pent-up air, struggling to free itself, 540
 Gave out to meadow-grounds and hills, a loud
 Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves
 Howling in Troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace
 How Nature by extrinsic passion first 545
 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, 550
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense
 Which seem, in their simplicity, to own
 An intellectual charm;—that calm delight
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong
 To those first-born affinities that fit 555
 Our new existence to existing things,
 And, in our dawn of being, constitute
 The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth
 And twice five summers on my mind had stamped 560
 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 565
 Of waters, colored by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmorland, the creeks and bays
 Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell
 How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,
 And to the Shepherd's hut on distant hills 570
 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 575

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

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar 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 585

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
 (Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed 590
 Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain

Nor profitless, if haply they impressed
 Collateral objects and appearances,
 Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep
 Until maturer seasons called them forth 595
 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
 Remained, in their substantial lineaments 600
 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,
 So frequently repeated, and by force 605
 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
 Habitually dear; and all their forms 610
 And changeful colours by invisible links
 Were fastened to the affections.

I began

My Story early, not misled, I trust,

By an infirmity of love for days
 Disowned by memory, fancying flowers where none, 615
 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,
 With fond and feeble tongue, a tedious tale. 620
 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
 May spur me on, in manhood now mature, 625
 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
 Of him thou lovest, need I dread from thee 630
 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,
 And almost make remotest infancy 635
 A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?
 One end at least hath been attained—my mind
 Hath been revived; and, if this genial mood
 Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down
 Through later years the story of my life: 640
 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,
 Where I might be discomfited and lost; 645
 And certain hopes are with me that to thee
 This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

BOOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME CONTINUED

Thus far, O Friend! have we, though leaving much
 Unvisited, endeavoured to retrace

The simple ways in which my childhood walked,
 Those chiefly, that first led me to the love
 Of rivers, woods, and fields. The passion yet 5
 Was in its birth, sustained, as might befall,
 By nourishment that came unsought; for still,
 From week to week, from month to month, we lived
 A round of tumult. Duly were our games
 Prolonged in summer till the day-light failed; 10
 No chair remained before the doors, the bench
 And threshold steps were empty; fast asleep
 The Labourer, and the old Man who had sate,
 A later Lingerer, yet the revelry
 Continued, and the loud uproar; at last, 15
 When all the ground was dark, and twinkling stars
 Edged the black clouds, home and to bed we went,
 Feverish, with weary joints and beating minds.
 Ah! is there One who ever has been young
 Nor needs a warning voice to tame the pride 20
 Of intellect, and virtue's self-esteem?
 One is there, though the wisest and the best
 Of all mankind, who covets not at times
 Union that cannot be; who would not give,
 If so he might, to duty and to truth 25
 The eagerness of infantine desire?
 A tranquillizing spirit presses now
 On my corporeal frame, so wide appears
 The vacancy between me and those days,
 Which yet have such self-presence in my mind, 30
 That, musing on them, often do I seem
 Two consciousnesses, conscious of myself
 And of some other Being. A rude mass
 Of native rock, left midway in the Square
 Of our small market Village, was the goal 35
 Or centre of these sports; and, when, returned
 After long absence, thither I repaired,
 Gone was the old grey stone, and in its place
 A smart Assembly-room usurped the ground
 That had been ours. There let the fiddle scream, 40
 And be ye happy! Yet, my Friends, I know

That more than one of you will think with me
 Of those soft starry nights, and that old Dame
 From whom the Stone was named, who there had sate
 And watched her table with its huckster's wares 45
 Assiduous, through the length of sixty years.

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

When summer came,
 Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays, 55
 To sweep along the plain of Windermere
 With rival oars; and the selected bourne
 Was now an Island musical with birds

That sang and ceased not; now a sister isle,
 Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown 60
 With lilies of the valley like a field;

And now a third small island, where survived,
 In solitude, the ruins of a shrine
 Once to our Lady dedicate, and served
 Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race, 65
 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,
 And the vain-glory of superior skill, 70
 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,
 Ensued a diffidence and modesty; 75
 And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,
 The self-sufficing power of solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!
 More than we wished we knew the blessing then

Of vigorous hunger—hence corporeal strength 80
 Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude
 A little weekly stipend, and we lived
 Through three divisions of the quartered year
 In pennyless poverty. But now, to school
 From the half-yearly holidays returned, 85
 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,
 Or in the woods, or by a river side, 90
 Or shady fountains, while among the leaves
 Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun
 Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.
 Nor is my aim neglected if I tell
 How sometimes, in the length of those half years, 95
 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
 Sly subterfuges, if the Adventure's bound 100
 Were distant, some famed Temple where of yore
 The Druids worshipped, or the antique Walls
 Of that large Abbey which within the Vale
 Of Nightshade, to St Mary's honour built,
 Stands yet, a mouldering Pile, with fractured arch, 105
 Belfry, and Images, and living Trees;
 A holy Scene!—Along the smooth green Turf
 Our Horses grazed:—to more than inland peace
 Left by the west wind sweeping overhead
 From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers 110
 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.
 Our Steeds remounted, and the summons given, 115
 With whip and spur we through the Chauntry 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
 Of the old Church, that, though from recent Showers 120
 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
 So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible Bird 125
 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
 In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth 130
 We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,
 And that still Spirit shed from evening air!
 Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt
 Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed
 Along the sides of the steep hills, or when, 135
 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,
 A Tavern stood, no homely-featured House, 140
 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.
 In ancient times, or ere the Hall was built 145
 On the large Island, 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
 The threshold, and large golden characters 150
 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
 With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay 155
 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
 Refreshment, strawberries, and mellow cream. 160
 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,
 When in our pinnace we returned, at leisure 165
 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
 Alone upon the rock,—Oh then the calm 170
 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!
 Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus 175
 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
 And surety of our earthly life, a light 180
 Which we behold, and feel we are alive;
 Nor for his bounty to so many worlds,
 But for this cause, that I had seen him lay
 His beauty on the morning hills, had seen
 The western mountain touch his setting orb, 185
 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 190
 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, 195
 Yea, appertained by a peculiar right

To thee, and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached

My heart to rural objects, day by day

Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell 200

How Nature, intervenient till this time

And secondary, now at length was sought

For her own sake. But who shall parcel out

His intellect, by geometric rules,

Split like a province into round and square? 205

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 210

More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee

Science appears but what in truth she is,

Not as our glory and our absolute boast,

But as a succedaneum, and a prop

To our infirmity. No officious slave 215

Art thou of that false secondary power

By which we multiply distinctions, then

Deem that our puny boundaries are things

That we perceive, and not that we have made.

To thee, unblinded by these formal arts, 220

The unity of all hath been revealed;

And thou wilt doubt with me, less aptly skilled

Than many are to range the faculties

In scale and order, class the cabinet

Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase

Run through the history and birth of each 225

As of a single independent thing.

Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,

If each most obvious and particular thought,

Not in a mystical and idle sense,

But in the words of reason deeply weighed, 230

Hath no beginning.

Blest the infant Babe,

(For with my best conjecture I would trace

Our Being’s earthly progress) blest the Babe,

Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep 235
 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!
 For him, in one dear Presence, there exists
 A virtue which irradiates and exalts 240
 Objects through widest intercourse of sense.
 No outcast he, bewildered and depressed;
 Along his infant veins are interfused
 The gravitation and the filial bond
 Of nature that connect him with the world. 245
 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
 Of pity cast from inward tenderness 250
 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,
 An inmate of this active universe. 255
 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,
 Working but in alliance with the works 260
 Which it beholds.—Such, verily, is the first
 Poetic spirit of our human life,
 By uniform control of after years
 In most abated or suppressed, in some,
 Through every change of growth and of decay, 265
 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,
 I have endeavoured to display the means 270
 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
 That, in its broken windings, we shall need 275
 The chamois' 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.
 The props of my affections were removed, 280
 And yet the building stood, as if sustained
 By its own spirit! All that I beheld
 Was dear, and hence to finer influxes
 The mind lay open, to a more exact
 And close communion. Many are our joys 285
 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,
 And every season, wheresoe'er I moved, 290
 Unfolded transitory qualities
 Which, but for this most watchful power of love,
 Had been neglected, left a register
 Of permanent relations, else unknown.
 Hence life, and change, and beauty; solitude 295
 More active even than "best society,"
 Society made sweet as solitude
 By inward concords, silent, inobtrusive;
 And gentle agitations of the mind
 From manifold distinctions, difference 300
 Perceived in things where, to the unwatchful eye,
 No difference is, and hence, from the same source,
 Sublimar joy: for I would walk alone
 Under the quiet stars, and at that time
 Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound 305
 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
 The ghostly language of the ancient earth, 310
 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,
 That they are kindred to our purer mind 315
 And intellectual life; but that the soul,
 Remembering how she felt, but what she felt
 Remembering not, retains an obscure sense
 Of possible sublimity, whereto
 With growing faculties she doth aspire, 320
 With faculties still growing, feeling still
 That, whatsoever point they gain, they yet
 Have something to pursue.

And not alone
 'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair
 And tranquil scenes, that universal power 325
 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,
 A virtue not its own.—My morning walks 330
 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 Friend
 Then passionately loved; with heart how full 335
 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.
 Nor seldom did I lift our Cottage latch 340
 Far earlier, and ere one smoke-wreath had risen
 From human dwelling, or the thrush, high perched,
 Piped to the woods his shrill *reveillè*, sate
 Alone upon some jutting eminence
 At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale, 345
 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

Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes 350
 Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw
 Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
 A prospect in the mind.

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,
 And what the summer shade, what day and night, 355
 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
 Be not forgotten, that I still retained 360
 My first creative sensibility,
 That by the regular action of the world
 My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power
 Abode with me, a forming hand, at times
 Rebellious, acting in a devious mood, 365
 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
 Came from my mind which on the setting sun 370
 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
 Grew darker in the presence of my eye; 375
 Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,
 And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,
 Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved
 The exercise and produce of a toil
 Than analytic industry to me 380
 More pleasing, and whose character I deem
 Is more poetic, as resembling more
 Creative agency. The Song would speak
 Of that interminable building reared
 By observation of affinities 385
 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
 Of the great social principle of life 390
 Coercing all things into sympathy,
 To unorganic Natures were transferred
 My own enjoyments; or the Power of truth,
 Coming in revelation, did converse
 With things that really are; I, at this time, 395
 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
 Was steeped in feeling; I was only then 400
 Contented when with bliss ineffable
 I felt the sentiment of Being spread
 O'er all that moves, and all that seemeth still;
 O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought
 And human knowledge, to the human eye 405
 Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;
 O'er all that leaps, and runs, and shouts, and sings,
 Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides
 Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,
 And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not 410
 If high the transport, great the joy I felt,
 Communing in this sort through earth and Heaven
 With every form of Creature, as it looked
 Towards the Uncreated with a countenance
 Of adoration, with an eye of love. 415
 One song they sang, and it was audible,
 Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,
 O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain,
 Forgot her functions and slept undisturbed.
 If this be error, and another faith 420
 Find easier access to the pious mind,
 Yet were I grossly destitute of all
 Those human sentiments that make this earth
 So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
 To speak of you, Ye Mountains, and Ye Lakes, 425

And sounding Cataracts, Ye Mists and Winds
 That dwell among the Hills where I was born.
 If in my Youth I have been pure in heart,
 If, mingling with the world, I am content
 With my own modest pleasures, and have lived, 430
 With God and Nature communing, removed
 From little enmities and low desires,
 The gift is yours: if in these times of fear,
 This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
 If, 'mid indifference and apathy 435
 And wicked exultation, when good men,
 On every side, fall off, we know not how,
 To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
 Of peace and quiet and domestic love,
 Yet mingled, not unwillingly, with sneers 440
 On visionary minds; if, in this time
 Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
 Despair not of our Nature, but retain
 A more than Roman confidence, a faith
 That fails not, in all sorrow my support, 445
 The blessing of my life, the gift is yours,
 Ye Winds and sounding Cataracts, 'tis yours,
 Ye Mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
 My lofty speculations; and in thee,
 For this uneasy heart of ours, I find 450
 A never-failing principle of joy
 And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared
 In the great City, 'mid far other scenes;
 But we, by different roads, at length have gained
 The self-same bourne. And for this cause to Thee 455
 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,
 Blots from the human countenance all trace 460
 Of beauty and of love. For Thou hast sought
 The truth in solitude, and, since the days
 That gave thee liberty, full long desired,

To serve in Nature's Temple, thou hast been
 The most assiduous of her Ministers, 465
 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,
 And yet more often living with thyself 470
 And for thyself, so haply shall thy days
 Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

BOOK THIRD

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

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

Advancing, we espied upon the road
 A Student, clothed in Gown and tasselled Cap,
 Striding along, as if o'ertasked by Time
 Or covetous of exercise and air. 10

He passed—nor was I Master of my eyes
 Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
 As near and nearer to the Spot we drew,
 It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force;
 Onward we drove beneath the Castle, caught, 15
 While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam,
 And at the *Hoop* alighted, famous Inn!

My Spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
 Some friends I had, acquaintances who there
 Seemed friends, poor simple School-boys! now hung round 20
 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
 Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed 25
 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.

I was the Dreamer, they the dream: I roamed 30
 Delighted through the motley spectacle;

Gowns grave or gaudy, Doctors, Students, Streets,
 Courts, Cloisters, flocks of Churches, gateways, towers.

Migration strange for a Stripling of the Hills,
 A Northern Villager! As if the change 35

Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once

Behold me rich in monies; and attired

In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair

Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.

My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by, 40

With other signs of manhood that supplied

The lack of beard.— The weeks went roundly on

With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,

Smooth housekeeping within, and all without

Liberal, and suiting Gentleman's array! 45

The Evangelist St. John my Patron was;

Three gothic Courts are his, and in the first

Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure!

Right underneath, the College Kitchens made

A humming sound, less tuneable than bees, 50

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,

Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours 55

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

The Antechapel, where the Statue stood 60

Of Newton, with his prism, and silent face:

The marble index of a Mind for ever

Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labors, of the Lecturer's room

All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand, 65

With loyal Students faithful to their books,
 Half-and-half Idlers, hardy Recusants,
 And honest Dunces—of important days,
 Examinations when the man was weighed
 As in a balance! of excessive hopes, 70
 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
 And little won. Yet, from the first crude days 75
 Of settling time in this untried abode,
 I was disturbed at times by prudent thoughts,
 Wishing to hope, without a hope; some fears
 About my future worldly maintenance;
 And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind, 80
 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 85
 Bowing her head before her Sister Faith
 As one far mightier), hither I had come,
 Bear witness, Truth, endowed with holy powers
 And faculties, whether to work or feel.
 Oft when the dazzling shew no longer new 90
 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 95
 Drooped not, but there into herself returning
 With prompt rebound, seemed fresh as heretofore.
 At least I more distinctly recognized
 Her native instincts; let me dare to speak
 A higher language, say that now I felt 100
 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 105
 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; 110
 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; 115
 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, visitings
 Of the Upholder, of the tranquil Soul 120
 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 125
 To such community with highest truth.
 —A track pursuing, not untrod before,
 From strict analogies by thought supplied,
 Or consciousnesses not to be subdued,
 To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower, 130
 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 quickening soul, and all
 That I beheld respired with inward meaning. 135
 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
 To the sky's influence: in a kindred mood 140
 Of passion, was obedient as a lute
 That waits upon the touches of the wind.
 Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich;

I had a world about me; 'twas my own,
 I made it; for it only lived to me, 145
 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,
 If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy, 150
 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
 By the first men, earth's first inhabitants, 155
 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
 Was searching out the lines of difference 160
 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
 Spangled with kindred multitudes of Stars, 165
 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.
 And here, O friend! have I retraced my life 170
 Up to an eminence, and told a tale
 Of matters which not falsely may be called
 The glory of my Youth. Of genius, power,
 Creation, and Divinity itself,
 I have been speaking, for my theme has been 175
 What passed within me. Not of outward things
 Done visibly for other minds; words, signs,
 Symbols, or actions, but of my own heart
 Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
 O Heavens! how awful is the might of Souls 180
 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,
 This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch 185
 With hand however weak, 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
 Breathings for incommunicable powers. 190
 But is not each a memory to himself?
 And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,
 I am not heartless; for there's not a man
 That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,
 And feels not what an empire we inherit, 195
 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,
 So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt 200
 To follow, and if Thou, O honored Friend!
 Who in these thoughts art ever at my side,
 Support, as heretofore, my fainting steps.
 It hath been told, that when the first delight
 That flashed upon me from this novel shew 205
 Had failed, the mind returned into herself.
 Yet true it is, that I had made a change
 In climate, and my nature's outward coat
 Changed also slowly and insensibly.
 Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts 210
 Of loneliness gave way to empty noise,
 And superficial pastimes; now and then
 Forced labor, and more frequently forced hopes;
 And, worst of all, a treasonable growth
 Of indecisive judgments, that impaired 215
 And shook the mind's simplicity.—And yet
 This was a gladsome time. Could I behold—
 Who, less insensible than sodden clay
 In a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
 Could have beheld—with undelighted heart, 220
 So many happy Youths, so wide and fair

A congregation in its budding-time
 Of health and hope and beauty; all at once
 So many divers samples from the growth
 Of life's sweet season; could have seen unmoved 225
 That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
 Decking the matron temples of a Place
 So famous through the world? To me at least
 It was a goodly prospect: for, in sooth,
 Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped, 230
 And independent musings pleased me so,
 That spells seemed on me when I was alone;
 Yet could I only cleave to Solitude
 In lonely places; if a throng was near,
 That way I leaned by nature; for my heart 235
 Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

Not seeking those who might participate
 My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,
 Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
 Even with myself divided such delight, 240
 Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
 In human language), easily I passed
 From the remembrances of better things,
 And slipped into the ordinary works
 Of careless youth, unburdened, unalarmed. 245
Caverns there were within my mind, which sun
 Could never penetrate, yet did there not
 Want store of leafy *arbours* where the light
 Might enter in at will. Companionships,
 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all; 250
 We sauntered, played, or rioted, we talked
 Unprofitable talk at morning hours,
 Drifted about along the streets and walks,
 Read lazily in trivial books, went forth
 To gallop through the Country in blind zeal 255
 Of senseless horsemanship, or on the breast
 Of Cam sailed boisterously, and let the stars
 Come forth, perhaps without one quiet thought.

Such was the tenor of the second act
 In this new life. Imagination slept, 260

And yet not utterly: I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved; I could not always lightly pass
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept, 265
 Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
 Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of nobler feeling, that those spiritual men,
 Even the great Newton's own etherial Self, 270
 Seemed humbled in these precincts, thence to be
 The more endeared. Their several Memories here
 (Even like their Persons in their portraits, clothed
 With the accustomed garb of daily life)
 Put on a lowly and a touching grace 275
 Of more distinct humanity, that left
 All genuine admiration unimpaired.
 —Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington
 I laughed with Chaucer, in the hawthorn shade
 Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales 280
 Of amorous passion. And that gentle Bard,
 Chosen by the Muses for their Page of State,
 Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded Heaven
 With the Moon's beauty and the Moon's soft pace,
 I called him Brother, Englishman, and Friend! 285
 Yea, our blind Poet, who, in his later day,
 Stood almost single, uttering odious truth,
 Darkness before and danger's voice behind;
 Soul awful—if the earth hath ever lodged
 An awful Soul, I seemed to see him here 290
 Familiarly, and in his Scholar's dress
 Bounding before me, yet a Stripling Youth,
 A Boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
 Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
 And conscious step of purity and pride. 295

Among the Band of my Compeers was One
 Whom Chance had stationed in the very Room
 Honored by Milton's Name. O temperate Bard!
 Be it confest that, for the first time, seated

Within thy innocent Lodge and Oratory, 300
 One of a festive Circle, I poured out
 Libations, to thy memory drank, till pride
 And gratitude grew dizzy in a brain
 Never excited by the fumes of wine
 Before that hour, or since. Forth I ran, 305
 From that assembly through a length of streets
 Ran, Ostrich-like, to reach our Chapel door
 In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
 Albeit long after the importunate bell
 Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice 310
 No longer haunting the dark winter night.

Call back, O Friend! a moment to thy mind
 The place itself, and fashion of the Rites.
 With careless ostentation shouldering up
 My Surplice, through the inferior throng I clove 315
 Of the plain Burghers, who in audience stood
 On the last skirts of their permitted ground
 Under the pealing Organ. Empty thoughts!
 I am ashamed of them: and that great Bard
 And Thou, O friend! who in thy ample mind 320
 Hast placed me high above my best deserts,
 Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
 In some of its unworthy vanities
 Brother to many more.

In this mixed sort
 The months passed on, remissly, not given up 325
 To wilful alienation from the right,
 Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
 And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
 Of a low pitch,—duty and zeal dismissed,
 Yet Nature, or a happy course of things, 330
 Not doing, in their stead, the needful work.
 The memory languidly revolved, the heart
 Reposed in noontide rest; the inner pulse
 Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
 Such life might not inaptly be compared 335
 To a floating island, an amphibious Spot
 Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal

Not wanting a fair face of water weeds
 And pleasant flowers.— The thirst of living praise,
 Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the Sight 340
 Of those long Vistos, sacred Catacombs
 Where mighty *minds* lie visibly entombed,
 Have often stirred the heart of Youth, and bred
 A fervent love of rigorous discipline.
 Alas! such high emotion touched not me; 345
 Look was there none within these walls to shame
 My easy spirits, and discountenance
 Their light composure, far less to instil
 A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed
 To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame 350
 Of others, but my own: I should, in truth,
 As far as doth concern my single self,
 Misdeem most widely, lodging it elsewhere.—
 For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
 Was a spoiled Child; and rambling like the wind, 355
 As I had done in daily intercourse
 With those crystalline Rivers, solemn heights
 And mountains;—ranging like a fowl of the air,
 I was ill-tutored for captivity,
 To quit my pleasure, and from month to month 360
 Take up a station calmly on the perch
 Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
 Had also left less space within my mind,
 Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
 A freshness in those objects of her love, 365
 A winning power, beyond all other power.
 Not that I slighted Books—that were to lack
 All sense—but other passions in me ruled,
 Passions more fervent, making me less prompt
 To in-door study than was wise or well, 370
 Or suited to those years. Yet I, though used
 In magisterial liberty to rove—
 Culling such flowers of Learning as might tempt
 A random choice—could shadow forth a Place
 (If now I yield not to a flattering dream) 375
 Whose studious aspect should have bent me down

To instantaneous service, should at once
 Have made me pay to science and to arts,
 And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
 A homage frankly offered up, like that 380
 Which I had paid to Nature. Toil and pains,
 In this Recess by thoughtful Fancy built,
 Should spread from heart to heart; and stately groves,
 Majestic edifices, should not want
 A corresponding dignity within. 385
 The congregating temper, that pervades
 Our unripe years, not wasted, should be taught
 To minister to works of high attempt,
 Works which the enthusiast would perform with love.
 Youth should be awed, religiously possessed 390
 With a conviction of the power that waits
 On knowledge, when sincerely sought and prized
 For its own sake, on glory and on praise
 If but by labor won, and fit to endure.
 The passing day should learn to put aside 395
 Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed
 Before antiquity and stedfast truth
 And strong book-mindedness; and over all
 A healthy sound simplicity should reign,
 A seemingly plainness, name it what you will, 400
 Republican or pious.

If these thoughts
 Are a gratuitous emblazonry
 That mocks the recreant age *we* live in, then
 Be Folly and False-seeming free to affect
 Whatever formal gait of discipline 405
 Shall raise them highest in their own esteem;
 Let them parade among the Schools at will;
 But spare the house of God. Was ever known
 The witless Shepherd who persists to drive
 A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked? 410
 A weight must surely hang on days begun
 And ended with such mockery. Be wise,
 Ye Presidents, and Deans, and till the spirit
 Of ancient Times revive, and Youth be trained

At home in pious service, to your bells 415
 Give seasonable rest, for 'tis a sound
 Hollow as ever vexed the tranquil air;
 And your officious doings bring disgrace
 On the plain Steeples of our English Church,
 Whose worship, 'mid remotest Village trees, 420
 Suffers for this. Even Science, too, at hand,
 In daily sight of this irreverence,
 Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
 Loses her just authority, falls beneath
 Collateral suspicion, else unknown. 425
 This truth escaped me not, and I confess
 That, having 'mid my native hills given loose
 To a school-boy's vision, I had raised a pile
 Upon the basis of the coming time,
 That fell in ruins round me. Oh! what joy 430
 To see a Sanctuary for our Country's Youth,
 Informed with such a spirit as might be
 Its own protection; a primeval grove
 Where, though the shades with chearfulness were filled,
 Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds 435
 In under-coverts, yet the countenance
 Of the whole Place should wear a stamp of awe:
 A habitation sober and demure
 For ruminating Creatures; a domain
 For quiet things to wander in; a haunt 440
 In which the heron should delight to feed
 By the shy rivers, and the Pelican
 Upon the Cypress spire in lonely thought
 Might sit and sun himself. Alas! Alas!
 In vain for such solemnity I looked; 445
 Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed
 By chattering Popinjays; the inner heart
 Seemed trivial, and the impresses without
 Of a too gaudy region.
 Different sight
 Those venerable Doctors saw of old, 450
 When all who dwelt within these famous Walls
 Led in abstemiousness a studious life:

When, in forlorn and naked chambers, cooped
 And crowded, o'er their ponderous books they hung,
 Like caterpillars eating out their way 455
 In silence, or with keen devouring noise
 Not to be tracked or fathered. Princes then
 At matins froze, and couched at curfew-time,
 Trained up through piety and zeal to prize
 Spare diet, patient labor, and plain weeds. 460
 O Seat of Arts! renowned throughout the world!
 Far different service in those homely days
 The Muses' modest Nurslings underwent
 From their first childhood: in that glorious time
 When Learning, like a Stranger come from far, 465
 Sounding through Christian lands her Trumpet, roused
 Peasant and King, when Boys and Youths, the growth
 Of ragged villages and crazy huts,
 Forsook their homes; and, errant in the quest
 Of Patron, famous School, or friendly nook, 470
 Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down,
 From town to town, and through wide-scattered realms,
 Journeyed with ponderous folios in their hands;
 And often, starting from some covert place,
 Saluted the chance Comer in the road, 475
 Crying, "an obolus, a penny give
 To a poor Scholar": when illustrious Men,
 Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
 Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
 Before the doors or windows of their cells 480
 By moonshine, through mere lack of taper light.
 But peace to vain regrets! we see but darkly
 Even when we look behind us; and best things
 Are not so pure by nature that they needs
 Must keep to all, as fondly all believe, 485
 Their highest promise. If the Mariner,
 When at reluctant distance he hath passed
 Some tempting Island, could but know the ills
 That must have fallen upon him, had he brought
 His bark to land upon the wished-for shore, 490
 Good cause would oft be his to thank the surf

Whose white belt scared him thence, or wind that blew
Inexorably adverse! for myself
I grieve not; happy is the gowned Youth
Who only misses what I missed, who falls 495
No lower than I fell.

I did not love,
Judging not ill perhaps, the timid course
Of our scholastic studies, could have wished
To see the river flow with ampler range
And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved 500
To see displayed, among an eager few
Who in the field of contest persevered,
Passions unworthy of Youth's generous heart
And mounting spirit, pitiably repaid,
When so disturbed, whatever palms are won. 505
From these I turned to travel with the shoal
Of more unthinking Natures—easy Minds
And pillowy, yet not wanting love that makes
The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps
And wisdom, and the pledges interchanged 510
With our own inner being are forgot.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up
To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood
In my own mind remote from social life,
At least from what we commonly so name, 515
Like a lone shepherd on a promontory,
Who, lacking occupation, looks far forth
Into the boundless sea, and rather makes
Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is
That this first transit from the smooth delights 520
And wild outlandish walks of simple Youth
To something that resembled an approach
Towards human business; to a privileged world
Within a world, a midway residence
With all its intervenient imagery, 525
Did better suit my visionary mind,
Far better, than to have been bolted forth,
Thrust out abruptly into Fortune's way,
Among the conflicts of substantial life;

By a more just gradation did lead on 530
 To higher things, more naturally matured,
 For permanent possession, better fruits,
 Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.

In serious mood, but oftener, I confess,
 With playful zest of fancy, did we note 535
 (How could we less?) the manners and the ways
 Of those who lived distinguished by the badge
 Of good or ill report; or those with whom,
 By frame of academic discipline,
 We were perforce connected, men whose sway 540
 And known authority of office served
 To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
 Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind,
 Found every where; but chiefly in the ring
 Of the grave Elders—Men unscoured, grotesque 545
 In character; tricked out like aged trees
 Which, through the lapse of their infirmity,
 Give ready place to any random seed
 That chuses to be reared upon their trunks.

Here, on my view, confronting vividly 550
 Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left,
 Appeared a different aspect of old age;
 How different! yet both distinctly marked,
 Objects embossed, to catch the general eye,
 Or portraitures for special use designed, 555
 As some might seem, so aptly do they serve
 To illustrate Nature's book of rudiments,
 That book upheld as with maternal care
 When she would enter on her tender scheme
 Of teaching comprehension with delight 560
 And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

The surfaces of artificial life
 And manners finely wrought, the delicate race
 Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
 Through that state arras woven with silk and gold; 565
 This wily interchange of snaky hues,
 Willingly or unwillingly revealed,
 I neither knew nor cared for; and, as such

Were wanting here, I took what might be found
 Of less elaborate fabric. At this day 570
 I smile in many a mountain Solitude,
 Conjuring up scenes as obsolete in freaks
 Of character, in points of wit as broad,
 As aught by wooden Images performed
 For entertainment of the gaping crowd 575
 At Wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
 Remembrances before me of Old Men,
 Old Humorists who have been long in their graves,
 And, having almost in my mind put off
 Their human names, have into Phantoms passed 580
 Of texture midway between life and books.

I play the Loiterer; 'tis enough to note
 That here, in dwarf proportions, were expressed
 The limbs of the great world, its eager strifes
 Collaterally pourtrayed, as in mock fight; 585
 A Tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
 Though short of mortal combat; and whate'er
 Might in this pageant be supposed to hit
 An artless rustic's notice, this way less,
 More that way, was not wasted upon me. 590
 —And yet the spectacle may well demand
 A more substantial name, no mimic shew,
 Itself a living part of a live whole,
 A creek in the vast sea;—for all degrees
 And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise 595
 Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
 Retainers won away from solid good;
 And here was Labor his own bonds slave—Hope
 That never set the pains against the prize;
 Idleness, halting with his weary clog; 600
 And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
 And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
 Honor misplaced, and Dignity astray;
 Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile;
 Murmuring Submission, and bald Government; 605
 The Idol weak as the Idolater;
 And Decency and Custom starving Truth;

And blind Authority beating with his staff
 The Child that might have led him; Emptiness
 Followed as of good omen; and meek Worth 610
 Left to Herself, unheard of and unknown.

Of these and other kindred notices
 I cannot say what portion is in truth
 The naked recollection of that time,
 And what may rather have been called to life 615
 By after-meditation. But delight,
 That, in an easy temper lulled asleep,
 Is still with innocence its own reward,
 This was not wanting. Carelessly I roamed
 As through a wide Museum, from whose stores 620
 A casual rarity is singled out,
 And has its brief perusal, then gives way
 To others, all supplanted in their turn;
 Till 'mid this crowded neighbourhood of things
 That are, by nature, most unneighbourly, 625
 The head turns round—and cannot right itself;
 And though an aching and a barren sense
 Of gay confusion still be uppermost,
 With few wise longings and but little love,
 Yet to the memory something cleaves at last, 630
 Whence profit may be drawn in times to come.
Thus in submissive idleness, my Friend,
 The laboring time of Autumn, Winter, Spring,
 Eight months! rolled pleasingly away,—the ninth
 Came and returned me to my native hills. 635

BOOK FOURTH

SUMMER VACATION

Bright was the summer's noon when quick'ning steps
 Followed each other till a dreary moor
 Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top
 Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge
 I overlooked the bed of Windermere 5
 Like a vast river stretching in the sun!
 With exultation at my feet I saw
 Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,

A universe of Nature's fairest forms
 Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst, 10
 Magnificent and beautiful and gay.
 I bounded down the hill, shouting amain
 For the old Ferryman—to the shout the rocks
 Replied, and when the Charon of the flood
 Had staid his oars and touched the jutting pier 15
 I did not step into the well-known boat
 Without a cordial greeting. Thence, with speed
 Up the familiar hill I took my way
 Towards that sweet valley where I had been reared.
 'Twas but a short hour's walk ere, veering round, 20
 I saw the snow-white Church upon her hill
 Sit like a thronèd Lady, sending out
 A gracious look all over her domain.
 Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking Town;
 With eager footsteps I advance, and reach 25
 The Cottage threshold where my journey closed.
 Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,
 From my old Dame, so kind, and motherly!
 While she perused me with a Parent's pride.
 The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew 30
 Upon thy grave, good Creature! while my heart
 Can beat, never will I forget thy name.
 Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest,
 After thy innocent and busy stir
 In narrow cares, thy little daily growth 35
 Of calm enjoyments; after eighty years,
 And more than eighty, of untroubled life,
 Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
 Honored with little less than filial love.
 What joy was mine to see thee once again, 40
 Thee and thy dwelling; and a crowd of things
 About its narrow precincts, all beloved,
 And many of them seeming yet my own!
 Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts
 Have felt, and every man alive can guess? 45
 The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
 Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat

Round the stone table, under the dark Pine,
 Friendly to studious or to festive hours;
 Nor that unruly Child, of mountain birth, 50
 The froward Brook—who, soon as he was boxed
 Within our Garden, found himself at once,
 As if by trick insidious and unkind,
 Stripped of his voice, and left to dimple down
 (Without an effort, and without a will) 55
 A channel pav'd by Man's officious care.
 I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,
 And, in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,
 "Ha!" quoth I, "pretty Prisoner, are you there?"
 Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, 60
 "An emblem here behold of thy own life
 In its late course of even days, with all
 Their smooth enthrallment"—but the heart was full,
 Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame
 Walked proudly at my side; She guided me, 65
 I willing, nay—nay—wishing to be led.
 —The face of every neighbour whom I met
 Was like a volume to me; some were hailed
 Upon the road—some, busy at their work;
 Unceremonious greetings, interchanged 70
 With half the length of a long field between.
 Among my Schoolfellows I scattered round
 Like recognitions, but with some constraint
 Attended, doubtless from a little pride,
 But with more shame, for my habiliments, 75
 The transformation wrought by gay attire.
 Not less delighted did I take my place
 At our domestic table; and, dear Friend!
 In this endeavour simply to relate
 A Poet's history, may I leave untold 80
 The thankfulness with which I laid me down
 In my accustomed bed, more welcome now,
 Perhaps, than if it had been more desired,
 Or been more often thought of with regret?—
 That lowly bed, whence I had heard the wind 85
 Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft

Had lain awake, on summer nights, to watch
 The moon in splendor couched among the leaves
 Of a tall Ash, that near our Cottage stood;
 Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro, 90
 In the dark summit of the waving tree,
 She rocked, with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favorites whom it pleased me well
 To see again, was one, by ancient right
 Our Inmate, a rough terrier of the hills, 95
 By birth and call of nature pre-ordained
 To hunt the badger, and unearth the fox,
 Among the impervious crags; but having been
 From youth our own adopted, he had passed
 Into a gentler service. And when first 100
 The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
 Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
 The fermentation and the vernal heat
 Of poesy, affecting private shades
 Like a sick lover, then this Dog was used 105
 To watch me, an attendant and a friend
 Obsequious to my steps, early and late,
 Though often of such dilatory walk
 Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.
 A hundred times when, roving high and low, 110
 I have been 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;
 Then have I darted forwards and let loose 115
 My hand upon his back, with stormy joy;
 Caressing him again, and yet again.
 And when at evening on the public Way
 I sauntered, like a river murmuring
 And talking to itself, when all things else 120
 Are still, the Creature trotted on before—
 Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
 A passenger approaching, he would turn
 To give me timely notice; and, straitway,
 Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed 125

My voice, composed my gait, and with the air
 And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced
 To give and take a greeting, that might save
 My name from piteous rumours, such as wait
 On men suspected to be crazed in brain. 130

Those walks, well worthy to be prized and loved,
 Regretted! that word too was on my tongue,
 But they were richly laden with all good,
 And cannot be remembered but with thanks
 And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart; 135

Those walks, in all their freshness, now came back,
 Like a returning Spring. When first I made
 Once more the circuit of our little Lake,
 If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
 That day consummate happiness was mine, 140
 Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.

The sun was set, or setting, when I left
 Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on
 A sober hour,—not winning or serene,
 For cold and raw the air was, and untuned: 145

But as a face we love is sweetest then
 When sorrow damps it; or, whatever look
 It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
 Have fulness in herself, even so with me
 It fared that evening. Gently did my Soul 150
 Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
 Naked, as in the presence of her God.

While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
 A heart that had not been disconsolate;
 Strength came where weakness was not known to be, 155

At least not felt; and restoration came,
 Like an intruder, knocking at the door
 Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
 The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
 —Of that external scene which round me lay 160

Little, in this abstraction, did I see,
 Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
 And swellings of the Spirit: was rapt and soothed,
 Conversed with promises; had glimmering views

How life pervades the undecaying mind, 165
 How the immortal Soul with God-like power
 Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
 That time can lay upon her; how on earth,
 Man, if he do but live within the light
 Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad 170
 His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
 Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,
 Of innocence, and holiday repose;
 And more than pastoral quiet 'mid the stir
 Of boldest projects; and a peaceful end 175
 At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
 Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down,
 Alone, continuing there to muse; the slopes
 And heights, meanwhile, were slowly overspread
 With darkness; and before a rippling breeze 180
 The long lake lengthened out its hoary line:
 And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,
 Around me from among the hazel leaves,
 Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,
 Came ever and anon a breath-like sound, 185
 Quick as the pantings of the faithful Dog,
 The off and on Companion of my walk;
 And such, at times, believing them to be,
 I turned my head, to look if he were there;
 Then into solemn thought I passed once more. 190
 A freshness also found I at this time
 In human Life, the daily life of those
 Whose occupations really I loved.
 The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise,
 Changed like a garden in the heat of Spring 195
 After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit
 The things which were the same, and yet appeared
 Far otherwise) amid this rural Solitude,
 (A narrow Vale where each was known to all)
 'Twas not indifferent, to a youthful mind, 200
 To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook,
 Where an old Man had used to sit alone,
 Now vacant,—pale-faced Babes, whom I had left

In arms, now rosy Prattlers, at the feet
 Of a pleased Grandame, tottering up and down: 205
 And growing girls, whose beauty, filched away
 With all its pleasant promises, was gone
 To deck some slighted Playmate's homely cheek.
 —Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,
 And often, looking round, was moved to smiles, 210
 Such as a delicate Work of humor breeds.
 I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
 Of those plain-living people, now observed
 With clearer knowledge; with another eye
 I saw the quiet Woodman in the woods, 215
 The Shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,
 This chiefly, did I note my gray-haired Dame,
 Saw her go forth to Church, or other work
 Of state, equipped in monumental trim,
 Short velvet cloak (her bonnet of the like), 220
 A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers
 Wore in old time. Her smooth domestic life,
 Affectionate without disquietude,
 Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less
 Her clear, though shallow, stream of piety, 225
 That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course.
 With thoughts, unfelt till now, I saw her read
 Her Bible, on hot Sunday afternoons;
 And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep
 And made of it a pillow for her head. 230
 Nor less do I remember to have felt,
 Distinctly manifested at this time,
 A human-heartedness about my love
 For objects, hitherto the absolute wealth
 Of my own private being, and no more; 235
 Which I had loved, even as a blessed Spirit,
 Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,
 Might love, in individual happiness.
 But now there opened on me other thoughts,
 Of change, congratulation, or regret— 240
 A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;
 The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks;

The stars of heaven, now seen in their old haunts,
 White Sirius, glittering o'er the southern crags,
 Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven, 245
 Acquaintances of every little Child,
 And Jupiter, my own beloved Star!
 Whatever shadings of mortality,
 Whatever imports from the world of death
 Had come among these objects heretofore, 250
 Were, in the main, of mood less tender:—strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings
 Of awe, or tremulous dread, that had given way,
 In later youth, to yearnings of a love
 Enthusiastic, to delight and hope. 255
 As one who hangs down-bending from the side
 Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast
 Of a still water, solacing himself
 With such discoveries as his eye can make,
 Beneath him, in the bottom of the deep, 260
 Sees many beauteous sights, weeds, fishes, flowers,
 Grots, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more;
 Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part
 The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
 Mountains and clouds reflected in the depth 265
 Of the clear flood, from things which there abide
 In their true Dwelling: now is crossed by gleam
 Of his own image, by a sun-beam now,
 And wavering motions, sent he knows not whence,
 Impediments that make his task more sweet— 270
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued,
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time,
 With like success, nor often have appeared
 Shapes fairer, or less doubtfully discerned
 Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend! 275
 Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite
 Of pleasure won and knowledge not withheld,
 There was an inner falling-off. I loved,
 Loved deeply, all that had been loved before,
 More deeply even than ever: but a swarm 280
 Of heady schemes, jostling each other, gawds,

And feast, and dance, and public revelry;
 And sports, and games (too grateful in themselves,
 Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,
 Than as they were a badge, glossy and fresh, 285
 Of manliness and freedom) all conspired
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures; to depress the zeal
 And damp those daily yearnings which had once been mine—
 A wild unworldly-minded youth, given up 290
 To his own eager thoughts. It would demand
 Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
 To paint these vanities, and how they wrought
 In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.
 It seemed the very garments that I wore 295
 Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream
 Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase
 Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
 For books and nature at that early age.
 'Tis true some casual knowledge might be gained 300
 Of character or life; but at that time,
 Of manners put to School I took small note;
 And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
 Far better had it been to exalt the mind
 By solitary Study; to uphold 305
 Intense desire through meditative peace.
 And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
 The memory of one particular hour
 Doth here rise up against me.—'Mid a throng
 Of Maids and Youths, old Men and Matrons staid, 310
 A medley of all tempers, I had passed
 The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth;
 With din of instruments, and shuffling feet,
 And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,
 And unaimed prattle flying up and down— 315
 Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there
 Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,
 Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,
 And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired

The cock had crowed; and now the eastern sky 320
 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,
 Glorious as e'er I had beheld; in front 325
 The Sea lay laughing at a distance;—near,
 The solid mountains shone bright as the clouds,
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light:
 And, in the meadows and the lower grounds,
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn; 330
 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
 Were then made for me; bond unknown to me 335
 Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,
 A dedicated Spirit. On I walked
 In thankful blessedness which yet survives.

Strange rendezvous my mind was at that time,
 A party-colored shew of grave and gay, 340
 Solid and light, short-sighted and profound;
 Of inconsiderate habits and sedate,
 Consorting in one mansion, unreprieved.
 The worth I knew of powers that I possessed,
 Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides, 345
 That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
 Transient and idle, lacked not intervals
 When Folly from the frown of fleeting Time
 Shrunk, and the Mind experienced in herself
 Conformity as just as that of old 350
 To the end and written spirit of God's works,
 Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,
 Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long
 Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop, 355
 Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,
 How gracious, how benign is Solitude!
 How potent a mere image of her sway!

Most potent when impressed upon the mind
 With an appropriate human centre—Hermit 360
 Deep in the bosom of the Wilderness;
 Votary (in vast Cathedral, where no foot
 Is treading and no other face is seen)
 Kneeling at prayer; or Watchman on the top
 Of Lighthouse beaten by Atlantic Waves; 365
 Or as the soul of that great Power is met
 Sometimes embodied on a public road,
 When, for the night deserted, it assumes
 A character of quiet more profound
 Than pathless Wastes.

Once, when those summer Months 370
 Were flown, and Autumn brought its annual shew
 Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,
 Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced
 That—after I had left a flower-decked room
 (Whose in-door pastime, lighted-up, survived 375
 To a late hour) and spirits overwrought
 Were making night do penance for a day
 Spent in a round of strenuous idleness—
 My homeward course led up a long ascent
 Where the road's watery surface, to the top 380
 Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon
 And bore the semblance of another stream
 Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook
 That murmured in the Vale. All else was still;
 No living thing appeared in earth or air, 385
 And, save the flowing Water's peaceful voice,
 Sound was there none: but lo! an uncouth shape
 Shewn by a sudden turning of the road,
 So near, that, slipping back into the shade
 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, 390
 Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
 A span above man's *common* measure tall,
 Stiff, lank, and upright;—a more meagre man
 Was never seen before by night or day.
 Long were his arms, pallid his hands;—his mouth 395
 Looked ghastly in the moonlight. From behind,

A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken
 That he was clothed in military garb,
 Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,
 No dog attending, by no staff sustained 400
 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 405
 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, 410
 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 415
 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, 420
 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,
 And now was travelling towards his native home. 425
 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. 430
 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 435

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, 440
 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,
 But feeling it no longer. Our discourse 445
 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,
 And earnestly to charitable care 450
 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
 He would not linger in the public ways, 455
 But ask for timely furtherance and help,
 Such as his state required.—At this reproof,
 With the same ghastly mildness in his look,
 He said, “My trust is in the God of Heaven,
 And in the eye of him who passes me.” 460

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
 Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned 465
 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.

This passed, and He who deigns to mark with care 470
 By what rules governed, with what end in view
 This Work proceeds, *he* will not wish for more.

BOOK FIFTH

BOOKS

When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
 Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
 Into the Soul its tranquillizing power,
 Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
 Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes 5
 That thou endurest; heavy though that weight be,
 Cloud-like it mounts, or touched with light divine
 Doth melt away; but for those palms achieved
 Through length of time, by patient exercise
 Of study and hard thought—there, there it is 10
 That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
 In progress through this Work, my mind hath looked
 Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
 As her prime Teacher, intercourse with man
 Established by the sovereign Intellect 15
 Who through that bodily Image hath diffused,
 As might appear to the eye of fleeting Time,
 A deathless Spirit. Thou also, Man! hast wrought,
 For commerce of thy nature with herself,
 Things that aspire to unconquerable life: 20
 And yet we feel, we cannot chuse but feel
 That they must perish. Tremblings of the heart
 It gives, to think that our immortal being
 No more shall need such garments; and yet Man,
 As long as he shall be the Child of earth, 25
 Might almost “weep to have” what he may lose,
 Nor be himself extinguished; but survive
 Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
 A thought is with me sometimes, and I say—
 Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes 30
 Be wrenched, or fire come down from far to scorch
 Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
 Old Ocean in his bed, left singed and bare,
 Yet would the living Presence still subsist
 Victorious; and composure would ensue, 35
 And kindlings like the morning—presage sure
 Of day returning, and of life revived.

But all the meditations of mankind,
 Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth,
 By reason built, or passion, which itself 40
 Is highest reason in a soul sublime;
 The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
 Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
 Twin labourers, and heirs of the same hopes;
 Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind 45
 Some element to stamp her image on
 In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
 Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
 Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?
 One day, when from my lips a like complaint 50
 Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
 He with a smile made answer that in truth
 'Twas going far to seek disquietude,
 But, on the front of his reproof, confessed
 That he himself had oftentimes given way 55
 To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told
 That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
 While I was seated in a rocky cave
 By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
 The famous history of the errant Knight 60
 Recorded by Cervantes, these same thoughts
 Beset me, and to height unusual rose,
 While listlessly I sate, and, having closed
 The Book, had turned my eyes tow'rd the wide Sea.
 On Poetry, and geometric truth, 65
 And their high privilege of lasting life,
 From all internal injury exempt,
 I mused; upon these chiefly: and, at length,
 My senses yielding to the sultry air,
 Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream. 70
 I saw before me stretched a boundless plain,
 Of sandy wilderness, all blank and void;
 And as I looked around, distress and fear
 Came creeping over me, when at my side,
 Close at my side, an uncouth Shape appeared 75
 Upon a Dromedary, mounted high.

He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin Tribes:
 A Lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 A Stone; and, in the opposite hand, a Shell
 Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight 80
 Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a Guide
 Was present, one who with unerring skill
 Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
 I looked, and looked, self-questioned what this freight
 Which the New-comer carried through the Waste 85
 Could mean, the Arab told me that the Stone
 (To give it in the language of the Dream)
 Was Euclid's Elements; "and this," said he,
 "This other," pointing to the Shell, "this book
 Is something of more worth"; and, at the word, 90
 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,
 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds, 95
 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
 The Song than the Arab with calm look declared 100
 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,
 And wedded Soul to Soul in purest bond 105
 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,
 Through every clime, the heart of human kind. 110
 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;
 Having a perfect faith in all that passed. 115

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 of me: I followed, not unseen,
 For oftentimes he cast a backward look, 120
 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,
 But was an Arab of the desert, too, 125
 Of these was neither, and was both at once.
 His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed,
 And looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
 Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
 A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause. 130
 "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,—
 He heeded not; but with his twofold charge 135
 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;
 And saw the Sea before me, and the Book, 140
 In which I had been reading, at my side.
 Full often, taking from the world of Sleep
 This Arab Phantom, which I thus beheld,
 This semi-Quixote, I to him have given
 A substance, fancied him a living man, 145
 A gentle Dweller in the desert, crazed
 By love and feeling, and internal thought
 Protracted among endless solitudes;
 Have shaped him, in the oppression of his brain,
 And so equipped, wandering upon this quest! 150
 Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
 Reverence was due to a Being thus employed;
 And thought that, in the blind and awful lair
 Of such a madness, reason did lie couched.

Enow there are on earth to take in charge 155
 Their Wives, their Children, and their virgin Loves,
 Or whatsoever else the heart holds dear;
 Enow to stir for these;—yea, will I say,
 Contemplating in soberness the approach
 Of an event so dire, by signs, in earth 160
 Or heaven, made manifest,—that I could share
 That maniac's fond anxiety, and go
 Upon like errand. Oftentimes, at least,
 Me hath such strong entrancement overcome,
 When I have held a volume in my hand, 165
 Poor earthly casket of immortal Verse,
 Shakespear, or Milton, Labourers divine!
 Great and benign, indeed, must be the power
 Of living Nature, which could thus so long
 Detain me from the best of other Guides 170
 And dearest Helpers left unthanked, unpraised.
 Even in the time of lisping Infancy,
 And later down, in prattling Childhood, even,
 While I was travelling back among those days,
 How could I ever play an Ingrate's part? 175
 Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
 By intermingling strains of thankfulness
 With their own thoughtless melodies; at least,
 It might have well beseemed me to repeat
 Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again, 180
 In slender accents of sweet Verse, some tale
 That did bewitch me then, and soothes me now.
 O Friend! O Poet! Brother of my soul,
 Think not that I could pass along untouched
 By these remembrances. Yet wherefore speak? 185
 Why call upon a few weak words to say
 What is already written in the hearts
 Of all that breathe? what in the path of all
 Drops daily from the tongue of every Child,
 Wherever Man is found? The trickling tear 190
 Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
 Proclaims it, and the insuperable look
 That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my Story I shall leave
 There registered; whatever else of power 195
 Or pleasure, sown or fostered thus, may be
 Peculiar to myself, let that remain
 Where still it works, though hidden from all search,
 Among the depths of time. Yet is it just
 That here, in memory of all books which lay 200
 Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
 Whether by native prose, or numerous verse;
 That in the name of all inspired Souls,
 From Homer the great Thunderer, from the voice
 That roars along the bed of Jewish Song: 205
 And that more varied and elaborate,
 Those trumpet-tones of harmony that shake
 Our shores in England; from those loftiest notes
 Down to the low and wren-like warblings, made
 For Cottagers, and Spinners at the wheel, 210
 And sun-burnt Travellers resting their tired limbs,
 Stretched under way-side hedgerows, ballad tunes,
 Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
 And of old Men who have survived their joy;
 'Tis just that in behalf of these, the Works, 215
 And of the men that framed them, whether known,
 Or sleeping nameless in their scattered graves,
 That I should here assert their rights, attest
 Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
 Their benediction: speak of them as Powers 220
 For ever to be hallowed; only less,
 For what we are and what we may become,
 Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God;
 Or His pure Word by miracle revealed.
 Rarely, and with reluctance, would I stoop 225
 To transitory themes; yet I rejoice,
 And, by these thoughts admonished, will pour out
 Thanks with uplifted heart, that I was reared
 Safe from an evil which these days have laid
 Upon the Children of the Land, a pest 230
 That might have dried me up, body and soul.
 This Verse is dedicate to Nature's self

And things that teach as Nature teaches: then
 Oh! where had been the Man, the Poet where,
 Where had we been, we two, beloved Friend? 235
 If in the season of unperilous choice,
 In lieu of wandering, as we did, through Tales
 Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
 Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
 We had been followed, hourly watched,—and noosed 240
 Each in his several melancholy walk,
 Stringed like a poor-man's heifer, at its feed
 Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
 Or rather like a stalled Ox debarred
 From touch of growing grass, that may not taste 245
 A flower, till it have yielded up its sweets
 A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the Parent Hen amid her Brood,
 Though fledged and feathered and well-pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a Brood,— 250
 And she herself from the maternal bond
 Still undischarged; yet doth she little more
 Than move with them in tenderness and love,
 A centre to the circle which they make;
 And, now and then, alike from need of theirs, 255
 And call of her own natural appetites,
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food
 Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
 My honored Mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves; 260
 She left us destitute, and as we might
 Trooping together. Little suits it me
 To break upon the sabbath of her rest
 With any thought that looks at others' blame;
 Nor would I praise her but in perfect love; 265
 Hence am I checked; but let me boldly say,
 In gratitude, and for the sake of truth,
 Unheard by her, that she, not falsely taught,
 Fetching her goodness rather from times past
 Than shaping novelties for times to come, 270
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy;

Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
 Our Nature, but had virtual faith that He
 Who fills the Mother's breast with innocent milk,
 Doth also for our nobler part provide, 275
 Under His great correction and controul,
 As innocent instincts and as innocent food;
 Or draws for minds that are left free to trust
 In the simplicities of opening life
 Sweet honey out of spurned or dreaded weeds. 280
 This was her creed; and therefore she was pure
 From anxious fear of error or mishap,
 And evil,—overweeningly so called;
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes;
 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares; 285
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce—rather loved
 The hours for what they are than from regards
 Glanced on their promises, in restless pride.
 Such was she—not from faculties more strong 290
 Than others have, but from the times, perhaps,
 And spot in which she lived, and through a grace
 Of modest meekness, simple-mindedness,
 A heart that found benignity and hope,
 Being itself benign.

295

My drift, I fear,
 Is scarcely obvious; but, that Common sense
 May try this modern system by its fruits,
 Leave let me take to place before her sight
 A specimen pourtrayed with faithful hand.
 Full early trained to worship seemliness, 300
 This model of a Child is never known
 To mix in quarrels—that were far beneath
 His dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain; selfishness
 May not come near him, nor the little throng 305
 Of flitting pleasures tempt him from his path;
 The wandering beggars propagate his name,
 Dumb creatures find him tender as a Nun;
 And natural or supernatural fear,

Unless it leap upon him in a dream, 310
 Touches him not. To enhance the wonder, see
 How arch his notices, how nice his sense
 Of the ridiculous; not blind is he
 To the broad follies of the licenced world;
 Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd, 315
 And can read Lectures upon innocence.
 A miracle of scientific lore,
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
 And tell you all their cunning;—he can read
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars; 320
 He knows the policies of foreign Lands;
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
 Upon a gossamer thread; he sifts, he weighs;
 All things are put to question; he must live 325
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day
 Or else not live at all, and seeing, too,
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
 Into the dimpling Cistern of his heart.
 For this unnatural growth the Trainer blame, 330
 Pity the Tree.—Poor human Vanity!
 Wert thou extinguished, little would be left
 Which he could truly love; but how escape?
 For, ever as a thought of purer birth
 Rises to lead him toward a better clime, 335
 Some Intermeddler still is on the watch
 To drive him back, and pound him like a Stray
 Within the pinfold of his own conceit.
 Meanwhile old Grandame Earth is grieved to find
 The play-things which her love designed for him 340
 Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
 Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.
 Oh! give us once again the wishing-Cap
 Of Fortunatus, and the invisible Coat
 Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood, 345
 And Sabra in the Forest with St George!
 The Child, whose love is here, at least doth reap
 One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty Workmen of our later age
 Who with a broad highway have overbridged 350
 The froward chaos of futurity,
 Tamed to their bidding; they who have the skill
 To manage books and things, and make them act
 On Infant minds as surely as the sun
 Deals with a flower; the Keepers of our Time, 355
 The Guides and Wardens of our faculties,
 Sages who in their prescience would control
 All accidents, and to the very road
 Which they have fashioned would confine us down
 Like engines; when will their presumption learn 360
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world
 A wiser Spirit is at work for us,
 A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
 Of blessings and most studious of our good,
 Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours? 365

There was a Boy;—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,
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone, 370
 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,
 Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls 375
 That they might answer him.—And they would shout
 Across the watery Vale, and shout again,
 Responsive to his call,—with quivering peals,
 And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud
 Redoubled and redoubled; concourse wild 380
 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
 Has carried far into his heart the voice 385
 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
 Into the bosom of the steady lake. 390

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
 Upon a slope above the Village School; 395
 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!

Even now appears before the mind's clear eye 400
 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,
 Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves, 405
 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

With whom I herded! (easily, indeed, 410
 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, fresh,
 And bandied up and down by love and hate; 415
 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

Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight 420
 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!
 May books and nature be their early joy! 425
 And knowledge, rightly honored with that name,

Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first entrusted to the care
 Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores, 430
 And brooks were like a dream of novelty
 To my half-infant thoughts,—that very week,
 While I was roving up and down alone,
 Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
 One of those open fields, which, shaped like ears, 435
 Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's lake.
 Twilight was coming on, yet, through the gloom,
 Appeared distinctly on the opposite shore
 A heap of garments, as if left by One
 Who might have there been bathing. Long I watched, 440
 But no one owned them; meanwhile, the calm Lake
 Grew dark, with all the shadows on its breast,
 And, now and then, a fish upleaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,
 Those unclaimed garments, telling a plain tale, 445
 Drew to the spot an anxious Crowd; some looked
 In passive expectation from the shore,
 While from a boat others hung o'er the deep,
 Sounding with grappling irons and long poles.
 At last, the dead Man, 'mid that beauteous scene 450
 Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
 Rose with his ghastly face: a spectre shape
 Of terror, yet no soul-debasing fear,
 Young as I was, a Child not nine years old,
 Possessed me; for my inner eye had seen 455
 Such sights before, among the shining streams
 Of fairey land, the forests of romance;
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
 With decoration and ideal grace;
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the works 460
 Of Grecian Art, and purest Poesy.

A precious treasure I had long possessed,
 A little, yellow, canvas-covered book,
 A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
 And, from companions in a new abode, 465

When first I learnt that this dear prize of mine
 Was but a block hewn from a mighty quarry—
 That there were four large Volumes, laden all
 With kindred matter, 'twas to me, in truth,
 A promise scarcely earthly. Instantly, 470
 With one not richer than myself, I made
 A covenant that each should lay aside
 The monies he possessed, and hoard up more,
 Till our joint savings had amassed enough
 To make this Book our own. Through several months, 475
 In spite of all temptation, we preserved
 Religiously that vow, but firmness failed;
 Nor were we ever Masters of our wish.

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

A gracious Spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
 It comes, to works of unreprieved delight, 495
 And tendency benign, directing those
 Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
 The Tales that charm away the wakeful night
 In Araby,—romances, legends, penned
 For solace, by dim light of monkish lamps; 500
 Fictions, for Ladies of their Love, devised
 By youthful Squires; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled Warrior in old age
 Out of the bowels of those very schemes

In which his youth did first extravagate; 505
 These spread like day, and something in the shape
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.
 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites are ours,
 And *they* MUST *have their food*; our childhood sits,
 Our simple childhood sits upon a throne 510
 That hath more power than all the elements.
 I guess not what this tells of Being past,
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come,
 But so it is; and, in that dubious hour,
 That twilight when we first begin to see 515
 This dawning earth, to recognize, expect;
 And, in the long probation that ensues,
 The time of trial, ere we learn to live
 In reconcilment with our stinted powers,
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage; 520
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
 Uneasy and unsettled; yoke-fellows
 To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed
 And humbled down—Oh! then we feel, we feel,
 We know where we have friends.—Ye dreamers, then, 525
 Forgers of daring Tales! we bless you then,
 Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the Ape
 Philosophy will call you; *then* we feel
 With what, and how great might ye are in league,
 Who make our wish our power, our thought a deed, 530
 An empire, a possession; ye whom time
 And seasons serve; all faculties,—to whom
 Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,
 Space like a heaven filled up with Northern lights,
 Here, no where, there, and every where at once. 535
 Relinquishing this lofty eminence
 For ground, though humbler, not the less a tract
 Of the same isthmus which our Spirits cross
 In progress from their native Continent
 To earth and human life, the Song might dwell 540
 On that delightful time of growing Youth
 When craving for the marvellous gives way
 To strengthening love for things that we have seen;

When sober truth and steady sympathies
Offered to notice by less daring pens 545
Take firmer hold of us; and words themselves
Move us with conscious pleasure.

I am sad

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

And every thing encountered or pursued
 In that delicious world of poesy,
 Kept holiday; a never-ending shew,
 With music, incense, festival, and flowers! 585

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

Is stirred to extasy, as others are,
 By glittering verse; but, further, doth receive,
 In measure only dealt out to himself,
 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy 595
 From the great Nature that exists in works
 Of mighty Poets. Visionary Power
 Attends the motions of the viewless winds
 Embodied in the mystery of words:

There darkness makes abode, and all the host 600
 Of shadowy things work endless changes there,
 As in a mansion like their proper home.
 Even forms and substances are circumfused
 By that transparent veil with light divine;
 And, through the turnings intricate of verse, 605
 Present themselves as objects recognized,
 In flashes, and with glory not their own.

Thus far a scanty record is deduced
 Of what lowed to Books in early life;
 Their later influence yet remains untold; 610
 But as this work was taking in my mind
 Proportions that seemed larger than had first
 Been meditated, I was indisposed
 To any further progress, at a time
 When these acknowledgments were left unpaid. 615

BOOK SIXTH

CAMBRIDGE, AND THE ALPS

The leaves were fading, when to Esthwaite's banks
 And the simplicities of Cottage life

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

The bonds of indolent society 20
 Relaxing in their hold, henceforth I lived
 More to myself. Two winters may be passed
 Without a separate notice: many books
 Were skimmed, devoured, or studiously perused,
 But with no settled plan. I was detached 25
 Internally from academic cares;
 Yet independent study seemed a course
 Of hardy disobedience toward friends
 And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.
 This spurious virtue,—rather let it bear 30
 A name it more deserves,—this cowardise
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom, which encouraged me to turn
 From regulations even of my own,
 As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell, 35
 Who knows, what thus may have been gained both then
 And at a later season, or preserved;
 What love of Nature, what original strength
 Of contemplation, what intuitive truths,
 The deepest and the best, what keen research 40
 Unbiassed, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time,
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of present happiness, while future years
 Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams 45
 No few of which have since been realized;
 And some remain hopes for my future life.
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a Sojourner on earth,
 By sorrow not unsmitten, yet for me 50
 Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
 Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days
 Which also first emboldened me to trust
 With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched
 By such a daring thought, that I might leave 55
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Maintained even by the very name and thought
 Of printed books and authorship, began
 To melt away: and further, the dread awe 60
 Of mighty names was softened down, and seemed
 Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,
 Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
 Content to observe, to admire, and to enjoy. 65
 All winter long, whenever free to chuse,
 Did I by night frequent the College Groves
 And tributary Walks; the last and oft
 The only One who had been lingering there
 Through hours of silence; till the Porter's bell, 70
 A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
 Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
 Inexorable summons! Lofty Elms,
 Inviting shades of opportune recess,
 Bestowed composure on a neighbourhood 75
 Unpeaceful in itself. A single Tree,
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed,
 Grew there—an Ash which Winter for himself
 Decked as in pride, and with outlandish grace.
 Up from the ground, and almost to the top, 80

- The trunk and every master branch were green
 With clustering ivy, and the lightsome twigs
 And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
 That hung in yellow tassels, while the air
 Stirred them, not voiceless. Often have I stood 85
 Foot-bound, uplooking at this lovely Tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
 Of magic fiction, verse of mine perchance
 May never tread, but scarcely Spenser's Self
 Could have more tranquil visions in his Youth, 90
 Nor could more bright appearances create
 Of human Forms with superhuman powers,
 Than I beheld loitering on calm clear nights,
 Alone, beneath this fairy work of earth.
- On the vague Reading of a truant Youth 95
 'Twere idle to descant. My inner judgment
 Not seldom differed from my taste in books
 As if it appertained to another mind.
 And yet the books which then I valued most
 Are dearest to me *now*; for, having scanned, 100
 Not heedlessly, the laws, and watched the forms
 Of nature, in that knowledge I possessed
 A standard, often usefully applied,
 Even when unconsciously, to things removed
 From a familiar sympathy.—In fine, 105
 I was a better judge of thoughts than words;
 Misled, in estimating words, not only
 By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase 110
 From languages that want the living voice
 To carry meaning to the natural heart;
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense.
- Yet may we not entirely overlook 115
 The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
 Of geometric science. Though advanced
 In these enquiries, with regret I speak,
 No farther than the threshold, there I found

Both elevation and composed delight. 120
 With Indian awe and wonder, Ignorance pleased
 With its own struggles, did I meditate
 On the relation those abstractions bear
 To Nature's laws, and by what process led
 Those immaterial Agents bowed their heads 125
 Duly to serve the mind of earth-born Man
 From star to star, from kindred sphere to sphere,
 From system on to system without end.
 More frequently from the same source I drew
 A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense 130
 Of permanent and universal sway
 And paramount belief: there recognized
 A type, for finite natures, of the one
 Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
 Which, to the boundaries of space and time, 135
 Of melancholy space and doleful time,
 Superior, and incapable of change,
 Nor touched by welterings of passion, *is*,
 And hath the name of God. Transcendent peace
 And silence did await upon these thoughts 140
 That were a frequent comfort to my youth.
 'Tis told by One whom stormy waters threw
 With Fellow-sufferers, by the Shipwreck spared,
 Upon a desert Coast, that, having brought
 To land a single volume, saved by chance, 145
 A treatise of Geometry, he wont,
 Although of food and clothing destitute
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from Company, and take this Book
 (Then first a self-taught Pupil in its truths) 150
 To spots remote, and draw his diagrams
 With a long staff upon the sand, and thus
 Did oft beguile his sorrow, and almost
 Forget his feeling: so (if like effect
 From the same cause produced, 'mid outward things 155
 So different, may rightly be compared),
 So was it then with me, and so will be
 With Poets, ever. Mighty is the charm

Of those abstractions to a mind beset
With images, and haunted by herself; 160
And specially delightful unto me
Was that clear Synthesis, built up aloft
So gracefully! even then when it appeared
Not more than a mere play-thing, or a toy
To sense embodied; not the thing it is 165
In verity, an independent world
Created out of pure Intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine, unearned
By aught, I fear, of genuine desert,
Mine, through heaven's grace, and inborn aptitudes. 170
And, not to leave the story of that time
Imperfect, with these habits must be joined
Moods melancholy, fits of spleen, that loved
A pensive sky, sad days, and piping winds,
The twilight more than dawn, autumn than Spring, 175
A treasured and luxurious gloom, of choice
And inclination mainly, and the mere
Redundancy of Youth's contentedness.
— To time thus spent, add multitudes of hours
Pilfered away, by what the Bard, who sang 180
Of the Enchanter Indolence, hath called
“Good-natured lounging,” and behold a map
Of my Collegiate life,—far less intense
Than Duty called for, or, without regard
To Duty, *might* have sprung up of itself 185
By change of accidents,—or even, to speak
Without unkindness, in another place;
Yet why take refuge in that plea?—the fault,
This I repeat, was mine, mine be the blame.

In summer, making quest for works of Art 190
Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
That Streamlet whose blue current works its way
Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks,
Pryed into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
Of my own native region, and was blest 195
Between these sundry wanderings with a joy
Above all joys, that seemed another morn

Risen on mid noon; blest with the presence, Friend!
 Of that sole Sister, she who hath been long
 Dear to Thee also, thy true Friend, and mine, 200
 Now after separation desolate
 Restored to me, such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed. The varied banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in Song,
 And that monastic Castle 'mid tall trees 205
 Low-standing by the margin of the Stream,
 A mansion visited (as fame reports)
 By Sidney; where, in sight of our Helvellyn
 Or stormy Cross-fell, snatches he might pen
 Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love 210
 Inspired;—that River and those mouldering Towers
 Have seen us side by side when, having clomb
 The darksome windings of a broken stair,
 And crept along a ridge of fractured wall,
 Not without trembling, we in safety looked 215
 Forth through some gothic window's open space,
 And gathered with one mind a rich reward
 From the far-stretching landscape, by the light
 Of morning beautified, or purple eve:
 Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head, 220
 Catching from tufts of grass and hare-bell flowers
 Their faintest whisper, to the passing breeze
 Given out while mid-day heat oppressed the plains.
 —Another Maid there was, who also shed
 A gladness o'er that season, then to me, 225
 By her exulting outside look of Youth,
 And placid under countenance, first endeared;
 That other Spirit, Coleridge! who is now
 So near to us, that meek confiding Heart
 So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields 230
 In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
 Of eglantine, and through the shady woods,
 And o'er the Border Beacon, and the Waste
 Of naked pools, and common crags that lay
 Exposed on the bare Fell, were scattered love, 235
 The spirit of pleasure, and Youth's golden gleam.

O Friend! we had not seen thee at that time;
 And yet a power is on me, and a strong
 Confusion, and I seem to plant thee there.—
 Far art Thou wandered now in search of health, 240
 And milder breezes, melancholy lot!
 But Thou art with us, with us in the past,
 The present, with us in the times to come:
 There is no grief, no sorrow, no despair,
 No languor, no dejection, no dismay, 245
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
 With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,
 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
 Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift 250
 Of gales Etesian, or of tender thoughts.
 I too have been a Wanderer; but, alas!
 How different the fate of different Men!
 Though mutually unknown, yea nursed and reared
 As if in several elements, we were framed 255
 To bend at last to the same discipline,
 Predestined, if two Beings ever were,
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. Throughout this Narrative,
 Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind 260
 For whom it registers the birth, and marks the growth,
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,
 And groves, I speak to thee, my Friend: to thee 265
 Who, yet a liveried School-boy, in the depths
 Of the huge City, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide Edifice, thy School and home,
 Wert used to lie, and gaze upon the clouds
 Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired, 270
 To shut thine eyes, and by internal light
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native Stream
 Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
 Of a long exile. Nor could I forget,
 In this late portion of my argument, 275

That scarcely, as my term of pupilage
 Ceased, had I left those academic Bowers
 When Thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou cam'st,
 And didst sit down in temperance and peace, 280
 A rigorous Student. What a stormy course
 Then followed! Oh! it is a pang that calls
 For utterance, to think what easy change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 A world of pain, ripened a thousand hopes 285
 For ever withered. Through this retrospect
 Of my Collegiate life, I still have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes; have played with times
 And accidents as Children do with cards, 290
 Or as a Man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
 As impotent fancy prompts, by his fire-side
 Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
 Of Thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence, 295
 And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
 Thy subtile speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the Schoolmen, and platonic forms
 Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
 From things well-matched or ill, and words for things, 300
 The self-created sustenance of a Mind
 Debarred from Nature's living images,
 Compelled to be a life unto herself,
 And unrelentingly possessed by thirst
 Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone, 305
 Ah! surely not in singleness of heart,
 Should I have seen the light of evening fade
 From smooth Cam's silent waters, had we met
 Even at that early time: needs must I trust
 In the belief that my maturer age, 310
 My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed
 Or chased away the airy wretchedness
 That battened on thy youth. But thou hast trod,

In watchful meditation thou hast trod, 315
 A march of glory, which doth put to shame
 These vain regrets: health suffers in thee, else
 Such grief for Thee would be the weakest thought
 That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch 320
 On wanderings of my own, that now embraced,
 With livelier hope, a region wider far.
 When the third summer freed us from restraint,
 A youthful Friend, he too a Mountaineer,
 Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff, 325
 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;
 Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me 330
 Without uneasy forethought of the pain,
 The censures, and ill-omening of those
 To whom my worldly interests were dear.
 But Nature then was Sovereign in my mind,
 And mighty Forms, seizing a youthful fancy, 335
 Had given a charter 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, 340
 France standing on the top of golden hours,
 And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks
 Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore
 From the receding Vessel's deck, we chanced 345
 To land at Calais on the very Eve
 Of that great federal Day; and there we saw,
 In a mean City, and among a few,
 How bright a face is worn when joy of one
 Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence 350
 We held our way direct, through Hamlets, Towns,
 Gaudy with reliques of that Festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal Arcs,

And window-garlands. On the public roads,
 And, once, three days successively, through paths 355
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged,
 Among sequestered villages we walked,
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance every where, when Spring
 Hath left no corner of the land untouched. 360
 Where Elms for many and many a league in files
 With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads
 Of that great Kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,
 For ever near us as we paced along;
 How sweet at such a time, with such delights 365
 On every side, in prime of youthful strength,
 To feed a Poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound
 Of undulations varying as might please
 The wind that swayed them! once, and more than once, 370
 Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw
 Dances of liberty, and, in late hours
 Of darkness, dances in the open air
 Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers-on
 Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills, 375

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,
 Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone
 We glided forward with the flowing Stream;
 Swift Rhone! thou wert the *wings* on which we cut
 A winding passage with majestic ease 380
 Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting shew
 Those woods, and farms, and orchards did present,
 And single cottages, and lurking towns,
 Reach after reach, succession without end
 Of deep and stately Vales! A lonely Pair 385
 Of Strangers, till day closed, we sailed along,
 Clustered together with a merry crowd
 Of those emancipated; a blithe Host
 Of Travellers, chiefly Delegates, returning
 From the great Spousals newly solemnized 390
 At their chief City, in the sight of heaven.

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

—“Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!”—the voice
 Was Nature’s, uttered from her Alpine throne;
 I heard it then, and seem to hear it now:
 “Your impious work forbear; perish what may,
 Let this one Temple last, be this one spot 435
 Of earth devoted to Eternity!”
 She ceased to speak; but while St Bruno’s pines
 Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved;
 And while below, along their several beds,
 Murmured the Sister Streams of Life and Death, 440
 Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my Heart
 Responded, “Honor to the Patriot’s zeal!
 Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
 Hail to the mighty projects of the Time!
 Discerning Sword that Justice wields, do thou 445
 Go forth and prosper; and ye purging fires
 Up to the loftiest Towers of Pride ascend,
 Fanned by the breath of angry Providence;
 But Oh! if past and future be the wings
 On whose support harmoniously conjoined 450
 Moves the great Spirit of human Knowledge, spare
 These courts mysterious, where a step advanced
 Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
 Leaves far behind life’s treacherous vanities,
 For penitential tears and trembling hopes 455
 Exchanged—to equalize in God’s pure sight
 Monarch and Peasant: be the house redeemed
 With its unworldly Votaries, for the sake
 Of conquest over sense hourly atchieved
 Through faith and meditative reason, resting 460
 Upon the word of heaven-imparted Truth
 Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim
 Of that imaginative impulse sent
 From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,
 The untransmuted Shapes of many worlds, 465
 Cerulean Ether’s pure inhabitants;
 These forests unapproachable by death,
 That shall endure as long as man endures
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,

To struggle, to be lost within himself 470
 In trepidation; from the blank abyss
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled."
 Not seldom since that moment have I wished
 That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm
 Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart, 475
 In sympathetic reverence we trod
 The floor of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
 From their foundation, strangers to the presence
 Of unrestricted and unthinking Man.
 Abroad, how chearingly the sunshine lay 480
 Upon the open lawns! Vallombre's groves
 Entering, we fed the Soul with darkness, thence
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,
 In different quarters of the bending sky,
 The Cross of Jesus stand erect, as if 485
 Hands of angelic Powers had fixed it there,
 Memorial revered by a thousand Storms;
 Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep
 And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.
 'Tis not my present purpose to retrace 490
 That variegated journey step by step;
 A march it was of military speed,
 And earth did change her images and forms
 Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.
 Day after day, up early and down late, 495
 From hill to vale we dropped—from vale to hill
 Mounted,—from province on to province swept—
 Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,
 Eager as birds of prey, or as a Ship
 Upon the stretch when winds are blowing fair. 500
 Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life,
 Enticing Vallies, greeted them and left
 Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
 Of salutation were not passed away.
 Oh! sorrow for the Youth who could have seen 505
 Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
 To patriarchal dignity of mind
 And pure simplicity of wish and will,

Those sanctified Abodes of peaceful Man;
 Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round 510
 With danger, varying as the seasons change),
 Pleased with his daily tasks, or, if not pleased,
 Contented, from the moment that the Dawn,
 Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
 Of soul-illumination, calls him forth 515
 To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks
 Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.
 Well might a Stranger look with bounding heart
 Down on a green Recess, the first I saw
 Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal Vale, 520
 Quiet, and lorded over, and possessed
 By naked huts, wood-built and sown like tents,
 Or Indian Cabins over the fresh lawns
 And by the river side. That very day,
 From a bare ridge we also first beheld 525
 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. The wondrous Vale
 Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon 530
 With its dumb cataracts, and streams of ice,
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,
 And reconciled us to realities.
 There small birds warble from the leafy trees, 535
 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 540
 Among the Cottages by beds of flowers.
 Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,
 Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state
 Of intellect and heart. With such a book
 Before our eyes we could not chuse but read 545
 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, could we fail to abound 550
 In dreams and fictions pensively composed,
 Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,
 And gilded sympathies; the willow wreath,
 And sober posies of funereal flowers
 Gathered, among those solitudes sublime, 555
 From formal gardens of the Lady Sorrow,
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour.
 Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
 Mixed something of stern mood, an under thirst
 Of vigor seldom utterly allayed. 560
 And from that source how different a sadness
 Would issue, let one incident make known.
 When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb
 Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,
 Following a band of Muleteers, we reached 565
 A halting-place where all together took
 Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our Guide,
 Leaving *us* at the Board; awhile we lingered,
 Then paced the beaten downward way that led
 Right to a rough stream's edge and there broke off. 570
 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
 Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took 575
 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,
 A Peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned 580
 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,
 And that our future course, all plain to sight, 585
 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;
 But every word that from the Peasant's lips 590
 Came in reply, translated by our feelings,
 Ended in this, *that we had crossed the Alps*.

Imagination—here the Power so called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech—
 That awful Power rose from the Mind's abyss 595
 Like an unfathered vapour that enwraps
 At once some lonely Traveller. I was lost,
 Halted without an effort to break through;
 But to my conscious soul I now can say,
 "I recognize thy glory"; in such strength 600
 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;
 Our destiny, our being's heart and home, 605
 Is with infinitude, and only there;
 With hope it is, hope that can never die,
 Effort, and expectation, and desire,
 And something evermore about to be.
 Under such banners militant the Soul 610
 Seeks for no trophies, struggles for no spoils,
 That may attest her prowess, blest in thoughts
 That are their own perfection and reward,
 Strong in herself, and in beatitude
 That hides her like the mighty flood of Nile 615
 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
 Was soon dislodged; downwards we hurried fast 620
 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
 At a slow pace. The immeasurable height 625

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,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky, 630
 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,
 The unfettered clouds, and region of the Heavens, 635
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of Eternity, 640
 Of first and last, and midst, and without end.

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

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed, 650
 Led by the stream, ere noon-day magnified
 Into a lordly river, broad and deep,
 Dimpling along in silent majesty;
 With mountains for its neighbours, and in view
 Of distant mountains and their snowy tops; 655
 And thus proceeding to Locarna's Lake,
 Fit resting-place for such a Visitant.
 —Locarna, spreading out in width like Heaven,
 How dost Thou cleave to the poetic Heart,
 Bask in the sunshine of the memory! 660
 And Como, thou a treasure whom the earth
 Keeps to herself, confined as in a depth
 Of Abyssinian privacy! I spake
 Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden plots

Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed Maids, 665
 Thy lofty steep, and pathways roofed with vines
 Winding from house to house, from town to town,
 Sole link that binds them to each other, walks
 League after league, and cloistral avenues
 Where silence dwells, if music be not there; 670
 While yet a Youth undisciplined in verse,
 Through fond ambition of that hour, I strove
 To chaunt your praise, nor can approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious Song
 Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art 675
 May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze
 Or sunbeam, over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause, but Ye have left
 Your beauty with me, a serene accord
 Of forms and colors, passive, yet endowed 680
 In their submissiveness with power as sweet
 And gracious, almost might I dare to say,
 As virtue is, or goodness; sweet as love
 Or the remembrance of a generous deed,
 Or mildest visitations of pure thought 685
 When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
 Religiously, in silent blessedness,
 Sweet as this last herself, for such it is.
 With those delightful pathways we advanced
 For two days' space in presence of the Lake, 690
 That, stretching far among the Alps, assumed
 A character more stern. The second night,
 From sleep awakened, and misled by sound
 Of the Church clock telling the hours with strokes
 Whose import then we had not learned, we rose 695
 By moon-light, doubting not that day was nigh,
 And that, meanwhile, by no uncertain path
 Along the winding margin of the lake
 Led as before, we should behold the scene
 Hushed in profound repose. We left the Town 700
 Of Gravedona with this hope; but soon
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 And on a rock sate down, to wait for day.

An open place it was, and overlooked,
 From high, the sullen water far beneath, 705
 On which a dull red image of the moon
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
 Like an uneasy snake. From hour to hour
 We sate, and sate, wondering, as if the Night
 Had been ensnared by witchcraft. On the rock 710
 At last we stretched our weary limbs for sleep,
 But *could not* sleep,—tormented by the stings
 Of Insects, which with noise like that of noon
 Filled all the woods. The cry of unknown birds;
 The mountains, more by blackness visible 715
 And their own size, than any outward light;
 The breathless wilderness of clouds; the clock
 That told with unintelligible voice
 The widely-parted hours; the noise of streams;
 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand 720
 That did not leave us free from personal fear;
 And lastly the withdrawing moon, that set
 Before us while she still was high in heaven;
 These were our food; and such a summer night
 Followed that pair of golden days, that shed 725
 On Como's Lake and all that round it lay
 Their fairest, softest, happiest influence.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell
 To days each offering some new sight, or fraught
 With some untried adventure, in a course 730
 Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow
 Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not
 In hollow exultation, dealing out
 Hyperboles of praise comparative, 735
 Not rich one moment to be poor for ever,
 Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
 Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner
 On outward forms, did we in presence stand
 Of that magnificent region. On the front 740
 Of this whole Song is written, that my heart
 Must in such Temple needs have offered up

A different worship. Finally, whate'er
 I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
 That flowed into a kindred Stream; a gale 745
 Confederate with the current of the Soul
 To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,
 In its degree of power, administered
 To grandeur or to tenderness, to the one
 Directly, but to tender thoughts, by means 750
 Less often instantaneous in effect:
 Led me to these by paths that in the main
 Were more circuitous, but not less sure
 Duly to reach the point marked out by heaven.

Oh! most beloved Friend, a glorious time, 755
 A happy time that was; triumphant looks
 Were then the common language of all eyes:
 As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed
 Their great expectancy: the fife of War
 Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed, 760
 A black-bird's whistle in a budding grove.
 We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
 Of their near Neighbours: and, when shortening fast
 Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,
 We crossed the Brabant Armies, on the fret 765
 For battle in the cause of Liberty.

A Stripling, scarcely of the household then
 Of social life, I looked upon these things
 As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,
 Was touched, but with no intimate concern; 770
 I seemed to move among them, as a bird
 Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
 Its sport or feeds in its proper element;
 I wanted not that joy, I did not need
 Such help; the ever-living Universe, 775
 Turn where I might, was opening out its glories;
 And the independent Spirit of pure Youth
 Called forth, at every season, new delights
 Spread round my steps like sunshine o'er green fields.

BOOK SEVENTH
RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Six changeful years have vanished since I first
 Poured out (saluted by that quickening breeze
 Which met me issuing from the City's Walls)
 A glad preamble to this verse: I sang
 Aloud with fervour irresistible 5
 Of short-lived transport,—like a torrent bursting
 From a black thunder cloud, down Scafell's side
 To rush and disappear. But soon broke forth
 (So willed the Muse) a less impetuous Stream
 That flowed awhile with unabating strength, 10
 Then stopped for years; not audible again
 Before last primrose-time. Beloved Friend!
 The assurance which then cheered some heavy thoughts
 On thy departure to a foreign Land
 Has failed,—too slowly moves the promised Work; 15
 Through the whole Summer have I been at rest,
 Partly from voluntary holiday
 And part through outward hinderance. But I heard,
 After the hour of sunset yestereven,
 Sitting within doors between light and dark, 20
 A choir of redbreasts, gathered somewhere near
 My threshold, Minstrels from the distant woods
 Sent in on Winter's service, to announce,
 With preparation artful and benign,
 That the rough Lord had left the surly north 25
 On his accustomed journey. The delight
 Due to this timely notice unawares
 Smote me, and, listening, I in whispers said,
 "Ye heartsome Choristers, ye and I will be
 Associates, and unscared by blustering winds 30
 Will chaunt together." Thereafter, as the shades
 Of twilight deepened, going forth I spied
 A glow-worm underneath a dusky plume
 Or canopy of yet unwithered fern
 Clear-shining, like a Hermit's taper seen 35
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before; the Child

Of Summer, lingering, shining by herself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
 Seemed sent on the same errand with the Choir 40
 Of Winter that had warbled at my door;
 And the whole year breathed tenderness and love.

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

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

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

There was a time, when whatsoe'er is feigned
 Of airy palaces and gardens built
 By Genii of Romance; or hath in grave
 Authentic history been set forth of Rome, 80
 Alcairo, Babylon, or Persepolis,
 Or given upon report by Pilgrim Friars
 Of golden Cities ten months' journey deep
 Among Tartarean Wilds, fell short, far short,
 Of what my fond simplicity believed 85
 And thought of London; held me by a chain
 Less strong of wonder and obscure delight.
 Whether the bolt of childhood's Fancy shot
 For me beyond its ordinary mark,
 'Twere vain to ask, but in our flock of Boys 90
 Was one, a Cripple from his birth, whom Chance
 Summoned from School to London; fortunate
 And envied Traveller! When the Boy returned
 After short absence, curiously I scanned
 His mien and person, nor was free, in sooth, 95
 From disappointment, not to find some change
 In look and air, from that new region brought
 As if from fairy land. Much I questioned him,
 And every word he uttered, on my ears
 Fell flatter than a caged Parrot's note, 100
 That answers unexpectedly awry,
 And mocks the Prompter's listening. Marvellous things
 Had Vanity (quick Spirit that appears
 Almost as deeply seated and as strong
 In a Child's heart as Fear itself) conceived 105
 For my enjoyment. Would that I could now
 Recal what then I pictured to myself
 Of mitred Prelates, Lords in ermine clad,
 The King and the King's Palace, and, not last
 Nor least, heaven bless him! the renowned Lord Mayor; 110
 Dreams not unlike to those which once begot
 A change of purpose in young Whittington
 When he, a friendless and a drooping Boy,
 Sate on a Stone, and heard the bells speak out
 Articulate music. Above all, one thought 115

Baffled my understanding, how men lived
 Even next-door neighbours, as we say, yet still
 Strangers, nor knowing each the other's name.
 —Oh wondrous power of words, by simple faith
 Licenced to take the meaning that we love! 120
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh, I then had heard
 Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
 Dimming the stars, fire-works magical,
 And gorgeous Ladies under splendid Domes
 Floating in dance, or warbling high in air 125
 The Songs of Spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
 With less delight upon that other class
 Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent;
 The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top
 And Whispering Gallery of St Paul's; the Tombs 130
 Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
 Bedlam, and those carved Maniacs at her gates
 Perpetually recumbent; Statues, Man
 And the horse under him, in gilded pomp,
 Adorning flowery Gardens 'mid vast squares; 135
 The Monument, and that chamber of the Tower
 Where England's Sovereigns sit in long array
 Their Steeds bestriding, every mimic Shape
 Cased in the gleaming mail the Monarch wore,
 Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed 140
 Or life, or death, upon the battle field.
 Those bold Imaginations in due time
 Had vanished, leaving others in their stead;
 And now I looked upon the living scene,
 Familiarly perused it, oftentimes, 145
 In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right.
 Rise up, thou monstrous Ant-hill on the plain
 Of a too busy world! Before me flow, 150
 Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
 Thy every day appearance as it strikes—
 With wonder heightened or sublimed by awe—
 On Strangers, of all ages,—the quick dance

Of colors, lights, and forms; the deafening din; 155
 The comers and the goers face to face,
 Face after face; the String of dazzling wares,
 Shop after Shop, with Symbols, blazoned Names,
 And all the Tradesman's honors overhead;
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page, 160
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe:
 Stationed above the door, like guardian Saints,
There, allegoric shapes, female or male;
 Or physiognomies of real men,
 Land-Warriors, Kings, or Admirals of the Sea, 165
 Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton; or the attractive head
 Of some Quack-Doctor, famous in his day.
 Meanwhile the roar continues, till at length,
 Escaped as from an enemy, we turn
 Abruptly into some sequestered nook, 170
 Still as a sheltered place when winds blow loud!
 At leisure thence through tracts of thin resort,
 And sights and sounds that come at intervals,
 We take our way: a raree-shew is here,
 With Children gathered round; another street 175
 Presents a Company of dancing-dogs;
 Or Dromedary, with an antic pair
 Of Monkeys on his back,—a minstrel band
 Of Savoyards,—or, single and alone,
 An English ballad-singer. Private Courts, 180
 Gloomy as coffins; and unsightly lanes
 Thrilled by some female vendor's scream, belike
 The very shrillest of all London Cries,
 May then entangle our impatient steps
 Conducted through those labyrinths unawares 185
 To privileged Regions and inviolate,
 Where, from their airy lodges, studious Lawyers
 Look out on waters, walks, and gardens green.
 Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees, 190
 Some half-frequented scene where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.
 Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;

The absolute presence of reality,
 Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she hath to shew. 235
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft
 By means refined attaining purest ends,
 But imitations fondly made in plain
 Confession of Man's weakness and his loves;
 Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill 240
 Submits to nothing less than taking in
 A whole horizon's circuit, do, with power
 Like that of angels or commissioned Spirits,
 Fix us upon some lofty Pinnacle,
 Or in a Ship on Waters, with a World 245
 Of Life, and life-like mockery, beneath,
 Above, behind, far-stretching, and before;
 Or more mechanic Artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 From blended colors also borrowing help, 250
 Some miniature of famous Spots or Things,
 St Peter's Church, or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision Rome herself;
 Or haply some choice rural haunt, the Falls
 Of Tivoli, and high upon that Steep 255
 The Sybil's mouldering Temple! every Tree,
 Villa—or Cottage lurking among rocks
 Throughout the landscape, tuft, stone, scratch minute—
 All that the Traveller sees when he is there.
 Add to these exhibitions, mute and still, 260
 Others of wider scope, where living men,
 Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes
 Diversified the allurement. Need I fear
 To mention by its name, as in degree
 Lowest of these, and humblest in attempt, 265
 Yet richly graced with honors of her own,
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of Youth,
 Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
 Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add, 270
 With ample recompense) Giants and Dwarfs,

Clowns, Conjurers, Posture-masters, Harlequins,
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds; 275
 To note the laws and progress of belief;
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
 How willingly we travel, and how far!
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 The Champion Jack the Giant-Killer—Lo! 280
 He dons his Coat of darkness; on the Stage
 Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
 Of living mortal covert, as the moon
 “Hid in her vacant interlunar Cave.”
 Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought? 285
 The garb he wears is black as death, the word
Invisible flames forth upon his chest!
 Here too were “forms and pressures of the time,”
 Rough, bold, as Grecian Comedy displayed
 When Art was young, dramas of living Men; 290
 And recent things yet warm with life—a Sea-fight,
 Ship-wreck, or some domestic incident
 Divulged by Truth, and magnified by Fame,
 Such as the daring Brotherhood, of late,
 Set forth, too serious theme for that light place! 295
 I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
 From our own ground, the Maid of Buttermere,
 And how, unfaithful to a virtuous Wife
 Deserted and deceived, the Spoiler came,
 And wooed the artless Daughter of the Hills, 300
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee
 Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
 Ere the broad world rang with the Maiden’s name,
 Beheld her serving at the Cottage Inn, 305
 Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,
 With admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
 Not unfamiliarly we since that time
 Have seen her; her discretion have observed, 310

Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
 Her patience, and humility of mind
 Unspoiled by commendation, and the excess
 Of public notice—an offensive light
 To a meek spirit, suffering inwardly. 315

From this memorial Tribute, to my Theme
 I was returning, when with sundry Forms
 Commingled, Shapes which meet me in the way
 That we must tread, thy Image rose again,
 Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace, 320
 Upon the Spot where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination doth she live
 In quietness, without anxiety.

Beside the mountain Chapel sleeps in earth
 Her new-born Infant, fearless as a Lamb 325

That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,
 Rests underneath the little rock-like Pile
 When storms are raging. Happy are they both—
 Mother and Child! These feelings, in themselves
 Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think 330

On those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
 Are now my theme, and, foremost of the scenes
 Which yet survive in memory, appears 335

One at whose centre sate a lovely boy,
 A sportive Infant, who, for six months' space,
 Not more, had been of age to deal about
 Articulate prattle; Child as beautiful
 As ever clung around a Mother's neck, 340

Or Father fondly gazed upon with pride!
 There too, conspicuous for stature tall
 And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
 The Mother—but, upon her cheeks diffused,
 False tints too well accorded with the glare 345

From Play-house lustres thrown without reserve
 On every Object near. The Boy had been
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place; but seemed in this

A sort of Alien scattered from the clouds. 350
 Of lusty vigour, more than Infantine,
 He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
 Just three parts blown—a Cottage Child, if e'er
 By Cottage-door on breezy mountain side,
 Or in some sheltering Vale, was seen a Babe 355
 By Nature's gifts so favored. Upon a Board
 Decked with refreshments had this Child been placed,
His little Stage in the vast Theatre,
 And there he sate, surrounded with a Throng
 Of chance Spectators, chiefly dissolute Men 360
 And shameless women; treated and caressed,
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
 While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
 Were rife about him as the songs of birds
 Contending after showers. The Mother now 365
 Is fading out of memory, but I see
 The lovely Boy as I beheld him then,
 Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
 Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
 Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells 370
 Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
 Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths;
 Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
 Have been preferred, that this fair Creature, checked
 By special privilege of Nature's love, 375
 Should in his Childhood be detained for ever!
 But with its universal freight the tide
 Hath rolled along, and this bright Innocent,
 Mary! may now have lived till he could look
 With envy on thy nameless Babe, that sleeps, 380
 Beside the mountain Chapel, undisturbed!
 Four rapid years had scarcely then been told
 Since, travelling southward from our pastoral hills,
 I heard, and for the first time in my life,
 The voice of Woman utter blasphemy; 385
 Saw Woman as she is to open shame
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice.
 I shuddered, for a barrier seemed at once

Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
 Humanity, splitting the race of Man 390
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward Form.
 Distress of mind ensued upon the sight,
 And ardent meditation. Later years
 Brought to such spectacle a milder sadness,
 Feelings of pure commiseration, grief 395
 For the individual, and the overthrow
 Of her Soul's beauty; farther I was then
 But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
 The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.
 But let me now, less moved, in order take 400
 Our argument. Enough is said to shew
 How casual incidents of real life,
 Observed where pastime only had been sought,
 Outweighed, or put to flight, the set Events
 And measured Passions of the Stage, albeit 405
 By Siddons trod in the fullness of her power.
 Yet was the Theatre my dear delight;
 The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
 And all the mean upholstery of the place
 Wanted not animation when the tide 410
 Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
 With the ever shifting Figures of the scene,
 Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous Dame
 Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
 Of thick entangled forest, like the Moon 415
 Opening the clouds; or sovereign King, announced
 With flourishing Trumpet, came in full-blown State
 Of the World's greatness, winding round with Train
 Of Courtiers, Banners, and a length of Guards;
 Or Captive led in abject weeds, and jingling 420
 His slender manacles; or romping Girl
 Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling Sire,
 A scare-crow pattern of old Age, dressed up
 In all the tatters of infirmity
 All loosely put together, hobbled in 425
 Stumping upon a Cane, with which he smites,
 From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them

Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts
 Of one so overloaded with his years.
 But what of this? the laugh, the grin, grimace, 430
 The antics striving to outstrip each other,
 Were all received, the least of them not lost,
 With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
 Between the shew, and many-headed mass
 Of the Spectators, and each several nook 435
 Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly,
 And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
 Turned this way, that way! Sportive and alert,
 And watchful, as a kitten when at play
 While winds are eddying round her, among straws 440
 And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
 Romantic almost, looked at through a space
 How small of intervening years! For then,
 Though surely no mean progress had been made
 In meditations holy and sublime, 445
 Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
 Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
 Enjoyment haply handed down from times
 When at a Country-playhouse, some rude Barn
 Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance 450
 Caught on a summer evening, through a chink
 In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
 Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
 Gladdened me more than if I had been led
 Into a dazzling Cavern of Romance, 455
 Crowded with Genii busy among works
 Not to be looked at by the common sun.
 The matter that detains us now may seem
 To many neither dignified enough
 Nor arduous; yet will *not* be scorned by them 460
 Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
 That bind the perishable hours of life
 Each to the other, and the curious props
 By which the world of memory and thought
 Exists, and is sustained. More lofty themes, 465
 Such as at least do wear a prouder face,

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

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

Astonished; like a Hero in Romance,
He winds away his never-ending horn;
Words follow words, sense seems to follow sense;
What memory and what logic! till the Strain
Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed, 510
Grows tedious even in a young Man's ear.
—Genius of Burke! forgive the pen seduced
By specious wonders, and too slow to tell
Of what the ingenuous, what bewildered Men
Beginning to mistrust their boastful guides, 515
And wise men, willing to grow wiser, caught,
Rapt auditors! from thy most eloquent tongue—
Now mute, for ever mute, in the cold grave.
I see him, old but vigorous in age,
Stand, like an Oak whose stag-horn branches start 520
Out of its leafy brow, the more to awe
The younger brethren of the grove. But some—
While he forewarns, denounces, launches forth,
Against all systems built on abstract rights,
Keen ridicule; the majesty proclaims 525
Of Institutes and Laws hallowed by Time;
Declares the vital power of social ties
Endeared by Custom; and with high disdain
Exploding upstart Theory, insists
Upon the Allegiance to which Men are born— 530
Some—say at once a froward multitude—
Murmur (for truth is hated, where not loved)
As the winds fret within the Eolian cave,
Galled by their Monarch's chain. The times were big
With ominous change which, night by night, provoked 535
Keen struggles, and black clouds of passion raised;
But memorable moments intervened
When Wisdom, like the Goddess from Jove's brain,
Broke forth in armour of resplendent words,
Startling the Synod. Could a Youth, and one 540
In ancient story versed, whose breast had heaved
Under the weight of classic eloquence,
Sit, see, and hear, unthankful, uninspired?
Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail

To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt 545
 Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
 The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
 Endowed with various power to search the soul;
 Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
 Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place! 550
 There have I seen a comely Bachelor,
 Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
 His Rostrum, with seraphic glance look up;
 And, in a tone elaborately low
 Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze, 555
 A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
 From time to time, into an orifice
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small
 And only not invisible, again
 Open it out, diffusing thence a smile 560
 Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
 Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
 Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
 The Death of Abel, Shakespear, and the Bard
 Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme 565
 With fancies thick as his inspiring stars;
 And Ossian (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
 Summoned from streamy Morven, each and all
 Would in their turn lend ornaments and flowers
 To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped 570
 This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 To rule, and guide his captivated Flock.
 I glance but at a few conspicuous marks;
 Leaving a thousand others that in hall,
 Court, Theatre, Conventicle, or Shop, 575
 In public Room or Private, Park or Street,
 Each fondly reared on his own Pedestal,
 Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
 And all the strife of singularity; . 580
 Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense,
 Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
 There is no end. Such Candidates for regard,

Although well pleased to be where they were found,
 I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize, 585
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast
 Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
 But as a common produce, things that are
 Today—tomorrow will be, took of them
 Such willing note as, on some errand bound 590
 That asks not speed, a Traveller might bestow
 On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.
 But foolishness and madness in parade,
 Though most at home in this their dear domain, 595
 Are scattered every where; no rarities
 Even to the rudest novice of the Schools.
 Me rather it employed to note, and keep
 In memory, those individual sights
 Of courage, or integrity, or truth, 600
 Or tenderness, which, there set off by foil,
 Appeared more touching. One will I select,
 A Father—for he bore that sacred name!
 Him saw I sitting in an open Square,
 Upon a corner-stone of that low wall 605
 Wherein were fixed the iron pales that fenced
 A spacious Grass-plot: there in silence sate
 This one Man, with a sickly Babe outstretched
 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
 For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air. 610
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
 He took no heed; but in his brawny arms
 (The Artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)
 He held the Child, and, bending over it, 615
 As if he were afraid both of the sun
 And of the air which he had come to seek,
 Eyed the poor Babe with love unutterable.
 As the black storm upon the mountain top
 Sets off the sunbeam in the Valley, so 620
 That huge fermenting Mass of human-kind
 Serves as a solemn background or relief

To single forms and objects, whence they draw,
 For feeling and contemplative regard,
 More than inherent liveliness and power. 625
 How oft amid those overflowing streets
 Have I gone forward with the Crowd, and said
 Unto myself, "The face of every one
 That passes by me is a mystery!"
 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed 630
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the Shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams.
 And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond 635
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar who, with upright face,
 Stood propped against a Wall; upon his chest 640
 Wearing a written paper to explain
 His Story, whence he came, and who he was.
 Caught by the spectacle, my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; an apt type
 This Label seemed, of the utmost we can know 645
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 And on the Shape of that unmoving Man,
 His steadfast face, and sightless eyes, I gazed
 As if admonished from another world.
 Though reared upon the base of outward things, 650
 Structures like these the excited Spirit mainly
 Builds for herself. Scenes different there are,
 Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties—the peace
 That comes with night; the deep solemnity 655
 Of Nature's intermediate hours of rest,
 When the great tide of human life stands still,
 The business of the day to come—unborn,
 Of that gone by—locked up as in the grave;
 The blended calmness of the heavens and earth, 660
 Moonlight, and stars, and empty streets, and sounds

Unfrequent as in deserts: at late hours
 Of winter evenings when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
 The feeble salutation from the voice 665
 Of some unhappy woman, now and then
 Heard as we pass; when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
 Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,
 As the mind answers to them, or the heart 670
 Is prompt or slow to feel. What say you, then,
 To times when half the City shall break out
 Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
 To executions, to a Street on fire,
 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights 675
 Take one, that annual Festival, the Fair
 Holden where Martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St Bartholomew; there see
 A work completed to our hands, that lays,
 If any spectacle on earth can do, 680
 The whole creative powers of Man asleep!
 For once the Muse's help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the Crowd,
 Upon some Shewman's platform. What a shock 685
 For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din
 Barbarian and infernal—a phantasma
 Monstrous in color, motion, shape, sight, sound!
 Below, the open space, through every nook
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive 690
 With heads; the midway region and above
 Is thronged with staring pictures, and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies!
 With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
 And children whirling in their roundabouts; 695
 With those that stretch the neck, and strain the eyes;
 And crack the voice in rivalry, the crowd
 Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming, him who grinds
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves, 700

Rattles the salt-box, thumps the Kettle-drum;
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks;
 The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel;
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes. 705
 —All moveables of wonder from all parts
 Are here, Albinos, painted-Indians, Dwarfs,
 The Horse of Knowledge, and the learned Pig,
 The Stone-eater, the Man that swallows fire—
 Giants; Ventriloquists, the Invisible-girl, 710
 The Bust that speaks, and moves its goggling eyes,
 The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, Wild-beasts, Puppet-shews,
 All out-o'th'-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
 All freaks of Nature, all Promethean thoughts 715
 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,
 Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides, 720
 Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.
 Oh blank confusion! true epitome
 Of what the mighty City is herself
 To thousands upon thousands of her Sons,
 Living amid the same perpetual whirl 725
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences
 That have no law, no meaning, and no end;
 Oppression under which even highest minds
 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free! 730
 But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
 It is not wholly so to him who looks
 In steadiness, who hath among least things
 An undersense of greatest; sees the parts 735
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
 This, of all acquisitions first, awaits
 On sundry and most widely different modes
 Of education; nor with least delight

On that through which I passed. Attention springs, 740
 And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
 From early converse with the works of God,
 Among all regions; chiefly where appear
 Most obviously simplicity and power.
 Think, how the everlasting streams and woods, 745
 Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
 The roving Indian: on his desert sands
 What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
 Of beauty meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye!
 And as the Sea propels from Zone to Zone 750
 Its currents, magnifies its Shoals of life
 Beyond all compass spread, and sends aloft
 Armies of Clouds, even so, its powers and aspects
 Shape for Mankind, by principles as fixed,
 The views and aspirations of the Soul 755
 To majesty. Like Virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances
 Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
 However multitudinous, to move 760
 With order and relation. This, if still,
 As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
 And the same perfect *openness of mind*,
 Not violating any just restraint,
 As may be hoped, of real modesty, 765
 This did I feel in London's vast Domain;
 The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;
 The Soul of Beauty and enduring life
 Vouchsafed her inspiration; and diffused,
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press 770
 Of self-destroying transitory things,
 Composure, and ennobling harmony.

BOOK EIGHTH

RETROSPECT, LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO LOVE OF MAN

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
 Up to thy summit? Through the depth of air
 Ascending, as if distance had the power

To make the sounds more audible; what Crowd
 Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon Village green? 5
 Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
 Though but a little Family of Men,
 Shepherds and Tillers of the ground—betimes
 Assembled with their Children and their Wives,
 And here and there a Stranger interspersed. 10
 They hold a rustic Fair:—a festival
 Such as, on this side now and now on that,
 Repeated through his tributary Vales,
 Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
 Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean 15
 Blown from their favorite resting-place, or mists
 Dissolved have left him an unshrouded head.
 Delightful day it is for all who dwell
 In this secluded Glen, and eagerly
 They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon, 20
 From *Byre* or field the Kine were brought; the sheep
 Are penned in Cotes, the chaffering is begun.
 The Heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
 Of a new Master; bleat the Flocks aloud;
 Booths are there none; a Stall or two is here; 25
 A lame Man, or a blind, the one to beg,
 The other to make music; hither, too,
 From far, with Basket slung upon her arm
 Of Hawker's wares, books, pictures, combs, and pins,
 Some aged Woman finds her way again, 30
 Year after year, a punctual Visitant!
 There also stands a Speech-maker by rote,
 Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-shew;
 And in the lapse of many years may come
 Prouder Itinerant, Mountebank, or He 35
 Whose wonders in a covered Wain lie hid.
 But One there is, the loveliest of them all,
 Some sweet Lass of the Valley, looking out
 For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
 Fruits of her Father's Orchard are her wares, 40
 And with the ruddy produce she walks round
 Among the crowd, half-pleased with, half-ashamed

Of her new office, blushing restlessly.
 The Children now are rich, for the old today
 Are generous as the young, and if, content 45
 With looking on, some ancient wedded Pair
 Sit in the shade together, while they gaze,
 “A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
 The days departed start again to life,
 And all the scenes of Childhood reappear, 50
 Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
 To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve.”¹
 Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
 Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
 And no one seems to want his part.—Immense 55
 Is the Recess, the circumambient World
 Magnificent by which they are embraced.
 They move about upon the soft green turf:
 How little they, they and their doings seem,
 And all that they can further or obstruct! 60
 Through utter weakness pitiably dear,
 As tender Infants are: and yet how great!
 For all things serve them: them the morning light
 Loves as it glistens on the silent rocks,
 And them the silent rocks, which now from high 65
 Look down upon them: the reposing Clouds,
 The wild Brooks prattling from invisible haunts,
 And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
 Which animates this day their calm abode.
 With deep devotion, Nature, did I feel, 70
 In that enormous City’s turbulent world
 Of men and things, what benefit lowed
 To Thee and those Domains of rural peace
 Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair 75
 Than that famed Paradise of ten thousand trees,
 Or Gehol’s matchless Gardens, for delight
 Of the Tartarian Dynasty, composed
 (Beyond that mighty Wall, not fabulous,

1 “These lines are from a descriptive Poem—‘Malvern Hills’—by one of Mr. Wordsworth’s oldest friends, Mr. Joseph Cottle.” This note appears in the first edition of *The Prelude*, 1850, prepared for the press by his nephew Christopher Wordsworth, Jr.

China's stupendous mound) by patient toil 80
 Of myriads and boon Nature's lavish help;
 There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
 Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
 A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with Domes
 Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells 85
 For Eastern Monasteries, sunny Mounts
 With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
 Rocks, dens;—and groves of foliage taught to melt
 Into each other their obsequious hues,
 Vanished and vanishing in subtile chase, 90
 Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong
 And gorgeous as the colors side by side
 Bedded among rich plumes of Tropic birds;
 And mountains over all, embracing all; 95
 And all the Landscape endlessly enriched
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.
 But lovelier far than this the Paradise
 Where I was reared; in Nature's primitive gifts
 Favoured no less, and more to every sense 100
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
 The elements, and seasons as they change,
 Do find a worthy fellow-labourer there;
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants, 105
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,
 Cheerfully led to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train
 Unwooded, unthought-of even, simplicity
 And beauty, and inevitable grace. 110
 Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
 Would to a Child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks; 115
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth
 And ordinary interests of man
 Which they embosom, all without regard

As both may seem, are fastening on the heart
 Insensibly, each with the other's help. 120
 For me, when my affections first were led
 From kindred, friends, and playmates, to partake
 Love for the human creature's absolute self,
 That noticeable kindliness of heart
 Sprang out of fountains, there abounding most, 125
 Where sovereign Nature dictated the tasks
 And occupations which her beauty adorned;
 And Shepherds were the Men that pleased me first.
 Not such as Saturn ruled 'mid Latian wilds,
 With laws and arts so tempered, that their lives 130
 Left, even to us toiling in this late day,
 A bright tradition of the golden age;
 Not such as, 'mid Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequestered, handed down among themselves
 Felicity in Grecian song renowned;— 135
 Nor such as, when an adverse fate had driven
 From house and home the courtly Band, whose fortunes
 Entered, with Shakespeare's genius, the wild woods
 Of Arden, amid sunshine or in shade,
 Culled the best fruits of Time's uncounted hours, 140
 Ere Phœbe sighed for the false Ganymede;
 Or there, where Perdita and Florizel
 Together danced, Queen of the feast and King;
 Nor such as Spenser fabled.— True it is
 That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen) 145
 Of Maids at sunrise, bringing in from far
 Their May-bush, and along the street in flocks
 Parading with a Song of taunting rhymes
 Aimed at the Laggards slumbering within doors;
 Had also heard, from those who yet remembered, 150
 Tales of the May-pole dance, and wreaths that decked
 Porch, door-way, or Kirk-pillar; and of Youths,
 Each with his Maid, before the sun was up,
 By annual custom issuing forth in troops
 To drink the Waters of some sainted Well 155
 And hang it round with garlands. Love survives,
 But for such purpose flowers no longer grow.

The times too sage, perhaps too proud, have dropped
 These lighter graces; and the rural ways
 And manners which my childhood looked upon 160
 Were the unluxuriant produce of a life
 Intent on little but substantial needs,
 Yet rich in beauty, beauty that was felt.
 But images of danger and distress,
 Man suffering among awful Powers and Forms; 165
 Of this I heard and saw enough to make
 Imagination restless; nor was free
 Myself from frequent perils, nor were tales
 Wanting, the tragedies of former times,
 Hazards and strange escapes, of which the rocks 170
 Immutable, and everflowing streams,
 Where'er I roamed, were speaking monuments.

Smooth life had Flock and Shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus; and no less 175
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores;
 Smooth life had Herdsman, and his snow-white Herd,
 To triumphs and to sacrificial Rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable Stream
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the Goatherd lived 180
 As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, invisible God, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The Fold protecting. I myself, mature 185
 In manhood then, have seen a pastoral Tract
 Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous, less serene.
 There, for her own delight, had Nature framed
 A Pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse 190
 Of level pasture, islanded with groves
 And banked with woody risings; but the plain
 Endless; here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 And intricate recesses, creek, or bay 195
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large

The Shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
 Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
 All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 His flagelet to liquid notes of love 200
 Attuned, or spritely fife resounding far.
 Nook is there none, nor strait of that vast space
 Where passage opens, but the same shall have
 In turn its Visitant, telling there his hours
 In unlaborious pleasure, with no task 205
 More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
 For Spring or Fountain, which the Traveller finds
 When through the region he pursues at will
 His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life
 I saw when, from the melancholy walls 210
 Of Goslar, once Imperial! I renewed
 My daily walk along that wide Champaign,
 That, reaching to her Gates, spreads east and west,
 And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
 Of the Hercynian forest. Yet hail to You, 215
 Moors, mountains, headlands, and Ye hollow Vales,
 Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
 Powers of my native region.— Ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds 220
 That howl so dismally for him who treads,
 Companionless, your awful Solitudes!
 There 'tis the Shepherd's task, the winter long,
 To wait upon the Storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives 225
 His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
 A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
 And deals it out, their regular nourishment
 Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the Spring
 Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs, 230
 And when the Flock, with warmer weather, climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To watch their goings, whatsoever track
 The wanderers chuse. For this he quits his home
 At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun 235

Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat
 Than he lies down upon some shining rock
 And breakfasts with his Dog. When they have stolen,
 As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
 For rest, not needed, or exchange of love, 240
 Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
 Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
 Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
 In the wild turf: the lingering dew's of morn
 Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies, 245
 His staff portending like a Hunter's Spear,
 Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag
 And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
 Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call
 Might deign to follow him through what he does 250
 Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
 In those vast regions where his service lies,
 A Freeman; wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged
 With that majestic indolence so dear 255
 To native Man. A rambling School-boy, thus
 I felt his presence in his own domain
 As of a Lord and Master; or a Power
 Or Genius, under Nature, under God
 Presiding; and severest solitude 260
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.
 When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
 Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
 By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps, 265
 In size a Giant, stalking through thick fog,
 His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
 Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
 His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun: 270
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,
 A solitary object and sublime,
 Above all height! like an aerial cross
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock

Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was Man 275
Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
And thus my heart was early introduced
To an unconscious love and reverence
Of human nature; hence the human Form
To me became an index of delight, 280
Of grace, and honor, power, and worthiness.
Meanwhile this Creature, spiritual almost
As those of Books, but more exalted far;
Far more of an imaginative Form
Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives 285
For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour
In coronal, with Phillis in the midst—
Was, for the purposes of Kind, a Man
With the most common; husband, father; learned,
Could teach, admonish, suffered with the rest 290
From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
Of this I little saw, cared less for it;
But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances
Which I beheld of Shepherds in my youth,
This sanctity of Nature given to man— 295
A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
Instinct with vital functions, but a Block
Or waxen image which yourselves have made, 300
And ye adore. But blessed be the God
Of Nature and of Man, that this was so,
That men before my inexperienced eyes
Did first present themselves thus purified,
Removed, and to a distance that was fit. 305
And so we all of us in some degree
Are led to knowledge, whencesoever led
And howsoever; were it otherwise,
And we found evil fast as we find good
In our first years, or think that it is found, 310
How could the innocent heart bear up and live?
But doubly fortunate my lot; not here

Alone, that something of a better life
 Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
 Of most to move in, but that first I looked 315
 At Man through objects that were great or fair,
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
 Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in 320
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point,
 I had my face turned tow'rd the truth, began
 With an advantage furnished by that kind
 Of prepossession without which the soul 325
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
 No genuine insight ever comes to her.
 From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
 Preserved, I moved about, year after year
 Happy, and now most thankful, that my walk 330
 Was guarded from too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life,
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts
 Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
 With a due reverence on earth's rightful Lord, 335
 Here placed to be the Inheritor of heaven,
 Will not permit us; but pursue the mind
 That to devotion willingly would rise,
 Into the Temple, and the Temple's heart.
 Yet deem not, Friend, that human-kind with me 340
 Thus early took a place preeminent;
 Nature herself was at this unripe time
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
 Their trivial pleasures: and when these had drooped 345
 And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then—
 And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than two and twenty summers had been told—
 Was Man in my affections and regards 350
 Subordinate to her; her visible Forms

And viewless agencies: a passion she,
 A rapture often, and immediate love
 Ever at hand; *he* only a delight
 Occasional, an accidental grace, 355
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior Creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 (Though they had long been carefully observed)
 My Spirit to that gentleness of love,
 Won from me those minute obeisances 360
 Of tenderness, which I may number now
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless on these
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
 Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.
 But when that first poetic Faculty 365
 Of plain imagination and severe,
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,
 Ventured at some rash Muse's earnest call
 To try her strength among harmonious words,
 And to book-notions and the rules of art 370
 Did knowingly conform itself; there came
 Among the simple shapes of human life
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;
 And Nature and her objects beautified
 These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn, 375
 They burnished her. From touch of this new Power
 Nothing was safe: the Elder tree that grew
 Beside the well known charnel-house had then
 A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost
 That took his Station there, for ornament; 380
 The dignities of plain occurrence then
 Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
 Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
 Then if a Widow, staggering with the blow
 Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps 385
 To the cold grave in which her Husband slept,
 One night, or haply more than one, through pain
 Or half insensate impotence of mind,
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 She must be visitant the whole year through, 390

Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

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

A diamond light
 (Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
 A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
 Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose
 Fronting our Cottage. Oft beside the hearth 410
 Seated with open door, often and long
 Upon this restless lustre have I gazed
 That made my fancy restless as itself.
 'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
 Suspended over a Knight's tomb, who lay 415
 Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
 An entrance now into some magic cave
 Or Palace built by Fairies of the Rock.
 Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
 The Spectacle, by visiting the Spot. 420

Thus wilful fancy, in no hurtful mood,
 Engrafted far-fetched Shapes on feelings bred
 By pure imagination: busy Power
 She was, and with her ready Pupil turned
 Instinctively to human passions, then 425
 Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine was through the bounty of a grand

And lovely region, I had forms distinct
 To steady me: each airy thought revolved 430
 Round a substantial centre which at once
 Incited it to motion, and controlled.
 I did not pine like One in cities bred,
 As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend!
 Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams 435
 Of sickness, disjoining, joining things
 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm
 If, when the Woodman languished with disease
 Induced by sleeping nightly on the ground
 Within his sod-built Cabin, Indian-wise, 440
 I called the pangs of disappointed love
 And all the sad etcetera of the wrong
 To help him to his grave? Meanwhile the Man,
 If not already from the woods retired
 To die at home, was haply, as I knew, 445
 Withering by slow degrees, 'mid gentle airs,
 Birds, running Streams, and hills so beautiful
 On golden evenings, while the charcoal Pile
 Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
 Or spirit that full soon must take her flight. 450
 Nor shall we not be tending towards that point
 Of sound humanity to which our Tale
 Leads, though by sinuous ways, if here I shew
 How Fancy, in a season when she wove
 Those slender cords, to guide the unconscious Boy 455
 For the Man's sake, could feed at Nature's call
 Some pensive musings which might well beseem
 Maturer years.

A grove there is whose boughs
 Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,
 With length of shade so thick that whoso glides 460
 Along the line of low-roofed water moves
 As in a cloister. Once, while in that shade
 Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
 Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
 In silent beauty on the naked ridge 465
 Of a high eastern hill. Thus flowed my thoughts

In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart:
 "Dear native Region, wheresoe'er shall close
 My mortal course, there will I think on you:
 Dying, will cast on you a backward look, 470
 Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
 Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)
 Doth with the fond remains of his last power
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
 On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose." 475
 Enough of humble arguments! recal,
 My Song, those high emotions which thy voice
 Has heretofore made known, that bursting forth
 Of sympathy, inspiring and inspired,
 When every where a vital pulse was felt, 480
 And all the several frames of things, like stars
 Through every magnitude distinguishable,
 Shone mutually indebted, or half lost
 Each in the other's blaze, a galaxy
 Of life and glory. In the midst stood Man, 485
 Outwardly, inwardly contemplated,
 As of all visible natures crown, though born
 Of dust and Kindred to the worm, a Being,
 Both in perception and discernment, first
 In every capability of rapture, 490
 Through the divine effect of power and love,
 As, more than any thing we know, instinct
 With Godhead, and by reason and by will
 Acknowledging dependency sublime.
 Erelong, the lonely Mountains left, I moved 495
 Begirt from day to day with temporal shapes
 Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
 Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
 Manners and characters discriminate,
 And little bustling passions that eclipsed, 500
 As well they might, the impersonated thought,
 The Idea or abstraction of the Kind.
 An Idler among academic Bowers,
 Such was my new condition, as at large
 Has been set forth; yet here the vulgar light 505

Of present, actual, superficial life,
 Gleaming through coloring of other times,
 Old usages, and local privilege,
 Was welcome, softened, if not solemnized;
 This notwithstanding, being brought more near 510
 To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
 I trembled—thought at times of human life
 With an indefinite terror and dismay,
 Such as the storms and angry elements
 Had bred in me, but gloomier far, a dim 515
 Analogy to uproar and misrule,
 Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.
 —It might be told (but wherefore speak of things
 Common to all?) that, seeing, I was led
 Gravely to ponder, judging between good 520
 And evil, not as for the mind's delight
 But for her guidance, one who was to *act*,
 As sometimes to the best of feeble means
 I did, by human sympathy impelled: .
 And through dislike and most offensive pain 525
 Was to the truth conducted; of this faith
 Never forsaken, that by acting well
 And understanding, I should learn to love,
 The end of life, and every thing we know.
 Grave Teacher! stern Preceptress! for at times 530
 Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
 London, to thee I willingly return.
 Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
 Enwrought upon thy mantle, satisfied
 With that amusement, and a simple look 535
 Of child-like inquisition now and then
 Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
 But how could I in mood so light indulge,
 Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day 540
 When, having thridded the long labyrinth
 Of the suburban villages, I first
 Entered thy vast Dominion? On the roof
 Of an itinerant Vehicle I sate,

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

The curious Traveller who from open day 560
 Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
 The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
 In old time haunted by that Danish Witch
 Yordas, he looks around and sees the Vault
 Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees, 565
 Erelong the massy roof above his head,
 That instantly unsettles and recedes,—
 Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
 Commingled, making up a Canopy
 Of shapes and forms, and tendencies to shape 570
 That shift and vanish, change and interchange
 Like Spectres, ferment silent and sublime!
 That, after a short space, works less and less
 Till, every effort, every motion gone,
 The scene before him stands in perfect view 575
 Exposed, and lifeless as a written book!
 —But let him pause awhile, and look again,
 And a new quickening shall succeed, at first
 Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
 Till the whole Cave, so late a senseless mass, 580
 Busies the eye with images and forms
 Boldly assembled,—here is shadowed forth
 From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,

A variegated landscape, there the shape
 Of some gigantic Warrior clad in mail, 585
 The ghostly Semblance of a hooded Monk,
 Veiled Nun, or Pilgrim resting on his staff,—
 Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
 Eyes that perceive through Minds that can inspire.

Even in such sort had I at first been moved, 590
 Nor otherwise continued to be moved,
 As I explored the vast metropolis,
 Fount of my Country's destiny and the World's;
 That great Emporium, Chronicle at once
 And burial-place of passions, and their home 595
 Imperial, their chief living residence.

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

'Tis true the History of our native Land,
 With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
 And in our high-wrought modern Narratives
 Stript of their harmonizing soul, the life 620
 Of manners and familiar incidents,
 Had never much delighted me. And less

Than other Intellects had mine been used
 To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
 Of record or tradition: but a sense 625
 Of what in the great City had been done
 And suffered, and was doing, suffering still,
 Weighed with me, could support the test of thought,
 And, in despite of all that had gone by,
 Or was departing never to return, 630
 There I conversed with majesty and power
 Like independent Nature's. Hence the place
 Was thronged with Impregnations, like the *Wilds*,
 In which my early feelings had been nursed,
 Bare hills and vallies—full of caverns, rocks, 635
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
 Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
 That into music touch the passing wind.

Here then a young Imagination found
 No uncongenial element, could here 640
 Among new objects serve or give command
 Even as the heart's occasions might require
 To forward Reason's else too scrupulous march.
 The effect was still more elevated views
 Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt, 645
 Debasement undergone by body or mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
 Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
 Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
 In what we *may* become, induce belief 650
 That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A Solitary, who with vain conceits
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
 From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
 Lo! every thing that was indeed divine 655
 Retained its purity inviolate,
 Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
 Set off; such opposition as aroused
 The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise,
 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw 660
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light

More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow, with something heavenly fraught.

Add also that among the multitudes 665

Of that huge City, oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
 Is possible, the unity of man,

One spirit over ignorance and vice
 Predominant, in good and evil hearts 670

One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
 For the sun's light. The soul, when smitten thus
 By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er

Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
 On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God. 675

Thus, from a very early age, O Friend!

My thoughts, by slow gradations, had been drawn
 To human-kind, and to the good and ill

Of human life; Nature had led me on,
 And oft amid the "busy hum" I seemed 680

To travel independent of her help,
 As if I had forgotten her; but no,
 The world of human-kind outweighed not hers

In my habitual thoughts; the scale of love,
 Though filling daily, still was light compared 685

With that in which *her* mighty objects lay.

BOOK NINTH

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

Even as a River—partly (it might seem)

Yielding to old remembrances, and swayed

In part by fear to shape a way direct

That would engulf him soon in the ravenous Sea—

Turns, and will measure back his course, far back, 5

Seeking the very regions which he crossed

In his first outset; so have we, my Friend!

Turned and returned with intricate delay.

Or as a Traveller, who has gained the brow

Of some aerial Down, while there he halts 10

For breathing-time, is tempted to review

The region left behind him; and if aught
 Deserving notice have escaped regard,
 Or been regarded with too careless eye,
 Strives, from that height, with one, and yet one more 15
 Last look, to make the best amends he may,
 So have we lingered. Now we start afresh
 With courage, and new hope risen on our toil.
 Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
 Whene'er it comes! needful in work so long, 20
 Thrice needful to the argument which now
 Awaits us! Oh, how much unlike the past!

Free as a Colt, at pasture on the hill,
 I ranged at large through London's wide Domain
 Month after Month. Obscurely did I live, 25
 Not seeking frequent intercourse with men
 By literature, or elegance, or rank
 Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
 Ere I forsook the crowded Solitude;
 With less regret for its luxurious pomp 30
 And all the nicely-guarded shews of Art,
 Than for the humble Bookstalls in the Streets,
 Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.
 —France lured me forth, the realm that I had crossed
 So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps. 35
 But now relinquishing the scrip and staff
 And all enjoyment which the summer sun
 Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
 With motion constant as his own, I went
 Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant Town 40
 Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

Through Paris lay my readiest course, and there
 Sojourning a few days, I visited
 In haste each spot, of old or recent fame,
 The latter chiefly; from the field of Mars 45
 Down to the suburbs of St Anthony;
 And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
 Of Genevieve. In both her clamorous Halls,
 The National Synod and the Jacobins,
 I saw the Revolutionary Power 50

Toss like a Ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
 The Arcades I traversed, in the Palace huge
 Of Orleans, coasted round and round the line
 Of Tavern, Brothel, Gaming-house, and Shop,
 Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk 55
 Of all who had a purpose, or had not;
 I stared, and listened with a Stranger's ears
 To Hawkers and Haranguers, hubbub wild!
 And hissing Factionists, with ardent eyes,
 In knots, or pairs, or single. Not a look 60
 Hope takes, or Doubt or Fear are forced to wear,
 But seemed there present, and I scanned them all,
 Watched every gesture uncontrollable
 Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
 All side by side, and struggling face to face 65
 With Gaiety and dissolute Idleness.
 — Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
 Of the Bastille, I sate in the open sun,
 And from the rubbish gathered up a stone
 And pocketed the Relic in the guise 70
 Of an Enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 I looked for Something that I could not find,
 Affecting more emotion than I felt;
 For 'tis most certain that these various sights,
 However potent their first shock, with me 75
 Appeared to recompence the Traveller's pains
 Less than the painted Magdalene of Le Brun,
 A Beauty exquisitely wrought, with hair
 Dishevelled, gleaming eyes, and rueful cheek
 Pale, and bedropp'd with everflowing tears. 80
 But hence to my more permanent Abode
 I hasten; there by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused, 85
 I stood 'mid those concussions unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a green-house, or a Parlour shrub
 That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace

While every bush and tree, the country through, 90
 Is shaking to the roots; indifference this
 Which may seem strange; but I was unprepared
 With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
 Into a theatre whose stage was filled,
 And busy with an action far advanced. 95
 Like Others I had skimmed, and sometimes read
 With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
 Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
 Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
 And public news; but having never seen 100
 A Chronicle that might suffice to shew
 Whence the main Organs of the public Power
 Had sprung, their transmigrations when and how
 Accomplished, giving thus unto events
 A form and body; all things were to me 105
 Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
 Without a vital interest. At that time,
 Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
 And the strong hand of outward violence
 Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear 110
 Now, in connection with so great a Theme,
 To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
 Of one so unimportant; night by night
 Did I frequent the formal haunts of men
 Whom, in the City, privilege of birth 115
 Sequestered from the rest: societies
 Polished in Arts, and in punctilio versed;
 Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
 Of good and evil of the time was shunned
 With scrupulous care: but these restrictions soon 120
 Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
 Into a noisier world, and thus erelong
 Became a Patriot; and my heart was all
 Given to the People, and my love was theirs.
 A Band of military Officers 125
 Then stationed in the City were the chief
 Of my associates: some of these wore swords
 That had been seasoned in the Wars, and all

Were men well born; the Chivalry of France.
 In age and temper differing, they had yet 130
 One spirit ruling in each heart, alike
 (Save only one, hereafter to be named)
 Were bent upon undoing what was done:
 This was their rest and only hope, therewith
 No fear had they of bad becoming worse; 135
 For worst to them was come; nor would have stirred,
 Or deemed it worth a moment's thought to stir,
 In any thing, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile 140
 He had sate Lord in many tender hearts,
 Though heedless of such honors now, and changed:
 His temper was quite mastered by the times,
 And they had blighted him, had eat away
 The beauty of his person, doing wrong 145
 Alike to body and to mind: his port,
 Which once had been erect and open, now
 Was stooping and contracted, and a face
 Endowed by Nature with her fairest gifts
 Of symmetry, and light, and bloom, expressed 150
 As much as any that was ever seen
 A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
 Unhealthy and vexatious. With the hour
 That from the Press of Paris duly brought
 Its freight of public news, the fever came, 155
 A punctual Visitant, to shake this Man,
 Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
 Into a thousand colours: while he read
 Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
 Continually, like an uneasy place 160
 In his own body. 'Twas in truth an hour
 Of universal ferment; mildest men
 Were agitated; and commotions, strife
 Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
 Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds. 165
 The soil of common life was at that time
 Too hot to tread upon. Oft said I then,

And not then only, "What a mockery this
 Of history, the past and that to come!
 Now do I feel how all men are deceived, 170
 Reading of Nations and their works, in faith,
 Faith given to vanity and emptiness;
 Oh! laughter for the Page that would reflect
 To future times the face of what now is!"
 The Land all swarmed with passion, like a Plain 175
 Devoured by locusts;—Carra, Gorcas; add
 A hundred other names, forgotten now,
 Nor to be heard of more, yet they were Powers
 Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
 And felt through every nook of town and field. 180

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

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

But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity or law,
 And nice distinctions, then on every tongue, 200
 Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
 Of Nations and their passing interests
 (If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
 Almost indifferent, even the Historian's Tale
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized 205

Tales of the Poets, as it made the heart
 Beat high and filled the fancy with fair forms,
 Old Heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
 Yet in the regal Sceptre, and the pomp
 Of Orders and Degrees, I nothing found 210
 Then, or had ever, even in crudest Youth,
 That dazzled me: but rather what I mourned
 And ill could brook, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.
 For, born in a poor District, and which yet 215
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness
 Than any other nook of English ground,
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen
 Through the whole tenor of my School-day time
 The face of One, who, whether boy or man, 220
 Was vested with attention or respect
 Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
 Of many benefits, in later years
 Derived from academic institutes
 And rules, that they held something up to view 225
 Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground, that we were brothers all
 In honor, as in one community,
 Scholars and Gentlemen; where, furthermore,
 Distinction lay open to all that came, 230
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To Presences of God's mysterious power
 Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty, 235
 And fellowship with venerable books,
 To sanction the proud workings of the Soul
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus should look with awe
 Upon the faculties of man, receive 240
 Gladly the highest promises, and hail
 As best the government of equal rights
 And individual worth. And hence, O Friend,
 If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced

Less than might well befit my Youth, the cause 245
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of Nature's certain course,
 A gift that rather was come late than soon.
 No wonder then if Advocates like these,
 Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice, 250
 And stung with injury, at this riper day,
 Were impotent to make my hopes put on
 The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
 In honor to their honor,—zeal which yet
 Had slumbered, now in opposition burst 255
 Forth like a polar summer: every word
 They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
 Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
 Confusion-stricken by a higher Power
 Than human understanding, their discourse 260
 Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

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

Arguments sent from heaven, to prove the cause
 Good, pure, which no one could stand up against
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud, 285
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that Band of Officers, was One,
 Already hinted at, of other mold,
 A Patriot, thence rejected by the rest, 290
 And with an oriental loathing spurned,
 As of a different Cast. A meeker Man
 Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
 Meek, though enthusiastic. Injuries
 Made *Him* more gracious, and his nature then 295
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly
 As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf
 When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
 Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
 As through a Book, an old Romance or Tale 300
 Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
 Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
 With the most noble, but unto the Poor
 Among mankind he was in service bound
 As by some tie invisible, oaths professed 305
 To a religious order. Man he loved
 As Man; and, to the mean and the obscure
 And all the homely in their homely works,
 Transferred a courtesy which had no air
 Of condescension; but did rather seem 310
 A passion and a gallantry, like that
 Which he, a Soldier, in his idler day
 Had paid to Woman: somewhat vain he was,
 Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
 But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy 315
 Diffused around him while he was intent
 On works of love or freedom, or revolved
 Complacently the progress of a Cause
 Whereof he was a part; yet this was meek
 And placid, and took nothing from the man 320
 That was delightful: oft in solitude

With him did I discourse about the end
 Of civil government, and its wisest forms,
 Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
 Custom and habit, novelty and change, 325
 Of self-respect, and virtue in the Few
 For patrimonial honor set apart,
 And ignorance in the labouring Multitude.
 For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
 Balanced these contemplations in his mind; 330
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgement
 Than later days allowed; carried about me,
 With less alloy to its integrity,
 The experience of past ages, as through help 335
 Of Books and common life it makes sure way
 To youthful minds, by objects over near
 Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
 By struggling with the Crowd for present ends.
 But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find 340
 Error without excuse upon the side
 Of them who strove against us, more delight
 We took, and let this freely be confessed,
 In painting to ourselves the miseries
 Of royal Courts, and that voluptuous life 345
 Unfeeling, where the Man who is of Soul
 The meanest, thrives the most, where dignity,
 True personal dignity, abideth not;
 A light, a cruel, and vain world, cut off
 From the natural inlets of just sentiment, 350
 From lowly sympathy, and chastening truth;
 Where Good and Evil interchange their names,
 And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
 With vice at home. We added dearest themes,
 Man and his noble nature, as it is 355
 The gift which God has placed within his power,
 His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 On firm foundations, making social life, 360

Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure
 As individual in the wise and good.
 —We summoned up the honorable deeds
 Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot 365
 That could be found in all recorded time,
 Of truth preserved, and error passed away,
 Of single Spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
 And how the multitudes of men will feed
 And fan each other, thought of Sects, how keen 370
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, Country, love, and hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed,
 How far they travel, and how long endure, 375
 How quickly mighty Nations have been formed
 From least beginnings, how, together locked
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
 To aspirations then of our own minds 380
 Did we appeal; and finally beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us, in a People from the depth
 Of shameful imbecility upris'n,
 Fresh as the morning star: elate we looked 385
 Upon their virtues, saw in rudest men
 Self-sacrifice the firmest, generous love
 And continence of mind, and sense of right
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.
 Oh! sweet it is, in academic Groves 390
 Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
 In the green dales beside our Rotha's Stream,
 Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless Rill,
 To ruminate with interchange of talk
 On rational Liberty, and hope in Man, 395
 Justice and peace; but far more sweet such toil—
 Toil say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse—
 If nature then be standing on the brink
 Of some great trial, and we hear the voice

Of One devoted, One whom circumstance 400
 Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
 In action, give it outwardly a shape,
 And that of benediction to the world;
 Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,—
 A hope it is and a desire, a creed 405
 Of zeal, by an Authority divine
 Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.
 Such conversation under Attic Shades
 Did Dion hold with Plato, ripened thus
 For a Deliverer's glorious Task, and such 410
 He, on that ministry already bound,
 Held with Eudemus and Timonides,
 Surrounded by Adventurers in Arms,
 When those two vessels with their daring Freight,
 For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow 415
 Sailed from Zacynthus, philosophic War
 Led by Philosophers. With harder fate
 Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend!
 Of whom I speak, so Beaupuis (let the name
 Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity) 420
 Fashioned his life, and many a long discourse
 With like persuasion honored, we maintained;
 He, on his part, accoutred for the worst.
 He perished fighting in supreme command
 Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire, 425
 For Liberty, against deluded men,
 His fellow-countrymen, and yet most blessed
 In this, that he the Fate of later times
 Lived not to see, nor what we now behold
 Who have as ardent hearts as he had then. 430
 Along that very Loire, with festal mirth
 Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet
 Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;
 Or in wide Forests of continuous shade,
 Lofty and overarched, with open space 435
 Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile—
 A solemn region. Oft, amid those haunts,
 From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,

And let remembrance steal to other times,
 When o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad, 440
 And smooth as marble, or a waveless sea,
 Some Hermit, from his Cell forth-strayed, might pace
 In sylvan meditation, undisturbed;
 As on the pavement of a gothic Church
 Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired, 445
 In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,
 Heard though unseen, a devious Traveller
 Retiring, or approaching from afar,
 With speed, and echoes loud of trampling hoofs
 From the hard floor reverberated, then 450
 It was Angelica thundering through the woods
 Upon her Palfrey, or that gentle maid
 Erminia, fugitive as fair as She.
 Sometimes I saw, methought, a pair of Knights
 Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm 455
 Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din
 Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,
 In sudden proclamation! burst from haunt
 Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance
 Rejoicing o'er a Female in the midst, 460
 A mortal Beauty, their unhappy Thrall;
 The width of those huge Forests, unto me
 A novel scene, did often in this way
 Master my fancy, while I wandered on
 With that revered Companion. And sometimes— 465
 When to a Convent in a meadow green,
 By a brook-side, we came, a roofless Pile,
 And not by reverential touch of Time
 Dismantled, but by violence abrupt,
 In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies, 470
 In spite of real fervor, and of that
 Less genuine and wrought up within myself—
 I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
 And for the matin bell to sound no more
 Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the Cross 475
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 (How welcome to the weary Traveller's eyes!)

Of hospitality and peaceful rest.
 And when the Partner of those varied walks
 Pointed upon occasion to the Site 480
 Of Romorentin, home of ancient Kings,
 To the imperial Edifice of Blois,
 Or to that rural Castle, name now slipped
 From my remembrance, where a Lady lodged
 By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him 485
 In chains of mutual passion; from the Tower,
 As a tradition of the Country tells,
 Practised to commune with her royal Knight
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
 'Twixt her high-seated Residence and his 490
 Far off at Chambord on the Plain beneath;
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful House
 Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments
 Of Kings, their vices, and their better deeds,
 Imagination, potent to inflame, 495
 At times, with virtuous wrath, and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
 So call it, of a youthful Patriot's mind,
 And on these spots with many gleams I looked 500
 Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less
 Hatred of absolute rule, where will of One
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride
 In them who, by immunities unjust,
 Between the Sovereign and the People stand, 505
 His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
 Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
 And love; for where hope is, there love will be
 For the abject multitude. And when we chanced
 One day to meet a hunger-bitten Girl 510
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the Girl with pallid hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood 515
 Of solitude, and at the sight my Friend

In agitation said, "'Tis against *that*,
 That we are fighting," I with him believed
 That a benignant Spirit was abroad
 Which might not be withstood, that poverty, 520
 Abject as this, would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompence
 The meek, the lowly, patient Child of Toil,
 All institutes for ever blotted out 525
 That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual State and cruel Power,
 Whether by edict of the One or few;
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the People having a strong hand 530
 In framing their own Laws, whence better days
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
 Was not this single confidence enough
 To animate the mind that ever turned
 A thought to human welfare, that henceforth 535
 Captivity by mandate without law
 Should cease, and open accusation lead
 To sentence in the hearing of the world,
 And open punishment, if not the air
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of Man 540
 Dread nothing? From this height I shall not stoop
 To humbler matter that detained us oft
 In thought or conversation, public acts
 And public persons, and emotions wrought
 Within the breast, as ever varying winds 545
 Of record or report swept over us;
 But I will here, instead, repeat a Tale
 Told by my Patriot friend of sad events
 That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
 How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree 550
 Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
 And black dishonour, France was weary of.
 "Oh! happy time of youthful Lovers! (thus
 My Story may begin) O balmy time
 In which a Love-Knot on a Lady's brow 555

Is fairer than the fairest star in Heaven!"
 So might—and with that prelude *did* begin
 The Record; and in faithful Verse was given
 The doleful sequel. But our little Bark
 On a strong River boldly hath been launched, 560
 And from the driving current should we turn
 To loiter wilfully within a Creek,
 Howe'er attractive, Fellow Voyager!
 Wouldst thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost;
 For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named 565
 The ill-fated pair) in that plain Tale will draw
 Tears from the hearts of others when their own
 Shall beat no more. Thou also there may'st read
 At leisure, how the enamoured Youth was driven,
 By public Power abused, to fatal crime, 570
 Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;
 How between heart and heart oppression thrust
 Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
 Harrassing both; until he sank and pressed
 The couch his fate had made for him—supine, 575
 Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
 Trying their strength, forced him to start up,
 Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
 He fled to shun the haunts of human kind;
 There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more. 580
 Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
 Full speedily resounded, public hope,
 Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
 Rouse him, but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
 His days he wasted, an imbecile mind. 585

BOOK TENTH

FRANCE CONTINUED

It was a beautiful and silent day
 That overspread the countenance of earth,
 Then fading with unusual quietness—
 A day as beautiful as e'er was given
 To soothe regret, though deepening what it soothed, 5
 When by the gliding Loire I paused, and cast

Upon his rich domains, vineyard and tilth,
 Green meadow-ground and many-colored woods,
 Again, and yet again, a farewell look;
 Then from the quiet of that scene passed on, 10
 Bound to the fierce Metropolis. From his throne
 The King had fallen; and that invading Host,
 Presumptuous cloud on whose black front was written
 The tender mercies of the dismal wind
 That bore it, on the plains of Liberty 15
 Had burst innocuous. Say in bolder words,
 They who had come elate as eastern Hunters
 Banded beneath the great Mogul, when He
 Ere while went forth from Agra or Lahor,
 Rajas and Omras in his train, intent 20
 To drive their prey enclosed within a ring
 Wide as a Province, but, the signal given,
 Before the point of the life-threatening spear
 Narrowing itself by moments—they, rash Men,
 Had seen the anticipated Quarry turned 25
 Into Avengers, from whose wrath they fled
 In terror. Disappointment and dismay
 Remained for all whose fancies had run wild
 With evil expectations; confidence
 And perfect triumph for the better cause. 30
 — The State, as if to stamp the final seal
 On her security, and to the world
 Show what she was, a high and fearless Soul
 Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
 By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt 35
 With spiteful gratitude the baffled League
 That had stirred up her slackening faculties
 To a new transition, when the King was crushed,
 Spared not the empty Throne, and in proud haste
 Assumed the body and venerable name 40
 Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,
 'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
 Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
 Was prayed to as a Judge; but these were past,
 Earth free from them for ever, as was thought; 45

Ephemeral Monsters to be seen but once!
 Things that could only shew themselves and die.

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

And in this way I wrought upon myself 85
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
 To the whole City, "Sleep no more." The Trance
 Fled with the Voice to which it had given birth,
 But vainly comments of a calmer mind
 Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness. 90
 The place, all hushed and silent as it was,
 Appeared unfit for the repose of Night,
 Defenceless as a wood where Tygers roam.
 With early morning towards the Palace walk
 Of Orleans eagerly I turned; as yet 95
 The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
 There—'mid a peal of ill-matched Sounds and cries
 That greeted me on entering—I could hear
 Shrill voices from the Hawkers in the throng
 Bawling, "Denunciation of the crimes 100
 Of Maximilian Robespierre;" the hand,
 Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed Speech,
 The same that had been recently pronounced
 When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been 105
 Intended, rose in hardihood and dared
 The Man who had an ill-surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
 When a dead pause ensued and no one stirred,
 In silence of all present, from his seat 110
 Louvet walked single through the Avenue
 And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
 "I, Robespierre, accuse thee!" Well is known
 The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
 He who had launched the startling thunderbolt, 115
 The one bold Man whose voice the attack had sounded,
 Was left without a Follower to discharge
 His perilous duty and retire, lamenting
 That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon Men
 Who to themselves are false.
 But these are things 120
 Of which I speak only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind,

No further. Let me then relate that now,
 In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
 That Liberty, and Life, and Death would soon 125
 To the remotest corners of the Land
 Lie in the arbitrimment of those who ruled
 The capital City, what was struggled for,
 And by what Combatants victory must be won,
 The indecision on their part whose aim 130
 Seemed best, and the strait-forward path of those
 Who in attack or in defence were strong
 Through their impiety; my inmost soul
 Was agitated; yea, I could almost
 Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men, 135
 By patient exercise of reason made
 Worthy of Liberty, all Spirits filled
 With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
 The gift of tongues might fall, and Power arrive
 From the four quarters of the winds to do 140
 For France what without help she could not do,
 A work of honor; think not that to this
 I added work of safety: from all doubt
 Or trepidation for the end of things
 Far was I, far as Angels are from guilt. 145
 Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
 Of opposition and of remedies;
 An insignificant Stranger and obscure,
 And one, moreover, little graced with power
 Of eloquence even in my native speech, 150
 And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
 Yet would I at this time with willing heart
 Have undertaken for a cause so great
 Service however dangerous. I revolved
 How much the destiny of Man had still 155
 Hung upon single Persons, that there was,
 Transcendant to all local patrimony,
 One Nature as there is one Sun in Heaven,
 That Objects, even as they are great, thereby
 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes, 160
 That Man is only weak through his mistrust

And want of hope, where evidence divine
 Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure.
 Nor did the inexperience of my youth
 Preclude conviction that a spirit, strong 165
 In hope and trained to noble aspirations,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Is for Society's unreasoning herd
 A domineering instinct, serves at once
 For way and guide, a fluent receptacle 170
 That gathers up each petty straggling rill
 And vein of Water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind whose rest
 Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
 In circumspection and simplicity, 175
 Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
 Below its aim, or meets with from without
 A treachery that foils it or defeats;
 And lastly, if the means on human will,
 Frail human will, dependent should betray 180
 Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
 That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
 A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
 Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
 Of life and death, in majesty severe 185
 Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
 Of Truth and justice, either sacrifice,
 From whatsoever region of our cares
 Or our infirm affections nature pleads,
 Earnest and blind, against the stern decree. 190
 —On the other side I called to mind those truths
 That are the common-places of the Schools,
 A theme for Boys, too hackneyed for their Sires,
 Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
 In all their comprehensive bearings known 195
 And visible to Philosophers of old,
 Men who, to business of the world untrained,
 Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
 And his Compeer Aristogiton, known
 To Brutus, that tyrannic Power is weak, 200

Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 To trust in, that the Godhead which is ours
 Can never utterly be charmed or stilled,
 That nothing hath a natural right to last 205
 But equity and reason, that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
 Lives only by variety of disease.

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

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

Twice had the trees let fall
 Their leaves, as often Winter had put on

His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
 Had caught the accents of my native speech 240
 Upon our native Country's sacred ground.
 A Patriot of the World, how could I glide
 Into communion with her sylvan shades,
 Erewhile my tuneful haunt?—it pleased me more
 To abide in the great City, where I found 245
 The general Air still busy with the stir
 Of that first memorable onset made
 By a strong levy of Humanity
 Upon the Traffickers in Negro blood:
 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled 250
 To notice old forgotten principles
 And through the Nation spread a novel heat,
 Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
 That this particular strife had wanted power
 To rivet my affections, nor did now 255
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow, for I brought with me the faith
 That, if France prospered, good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 And this most rotten branch of human shame, 260
 Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
 Would fall together with its parent tree.
 What then were my emotions, when in Arms
 Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
 O pity and shame! with those confederate Powers? 265
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous Youth,
 Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
 Down to that very moment; neither lapse 270
 Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time;
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which, with a diversity of pace,
 I had been travelling: this a stride at once 275
 Into another region.—As a light

And pliant hare-bell swinging in the breeze
 On some gray rock, its birth-place, so had I
 Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
 Of my beloved Country, wishing not 280
 A happier fortune than to wither there.
 Now was I from that pleasant station torn
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
 Yea, afterwards, truth most painful to record!
 Exulted, in the triumph of my Soul, 285
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave hearts, to shameful flight. It was a grief,—
 Grief call it not, 'twas any thing but that,—
 A conflict of sensations without name, 290
 Of which *he* only who may love the sight
 Of a Village Steeple as I do can judge,
 When, in the Congregation bending all
 To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
 Or praises, for our Country's victories, 295
 And, 'mid the simple Worshippers, perchance
 I only, like an uninvited Guest,
 Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come?
 Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear 300
 By violence, at one decisive rent,
 From the best Youth in England, their dear pride,
 Their joy in England: this too at a time
 In which worst losses easily might wear
 The best of names, when patriotic love 305
 Did of itself in modesty give way,
 Like the Precursor when the Deity
 Is come whose Harbinger he was, a time
 In which apostasy from ancient faith
 Seemed but conversion to a higher creed; 310
 Withal a season dangerous and wild,
 A time when sage Experience would have snatched
 Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
 A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.
 When the proud Fleet that bears the red-cross Flag 315

In that unworthy service were prepared
 To mingle, I beheld the Vessels lie,
 A brood of gallant Creatures, on the Deep,
 I saw them in their rest, a Sojourner
 Through a whole month of calm and glassy days, 320
 In that delightful Island which protects
 Their place of convocation—there I heard,
 Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
 A monitory sound that never failed,—
 The sunset Cannon. While the orb went down 325
 In the tranquillity of Nature, came
 That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
 Without a spirit overcast by dark
 Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
 Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart. 330
 In France the men who, for their desperate ends,
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 In wicked pleas, were strong as Demons now;
 And thus, on every side beset with foes, 335
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many, blasts
 From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven;
 The sternness of the Just, the faith of those
 Who doubted not that Providence had times 340
 Of vengeful retribution;—theirs who throned
 The human understanding paramount
 And made of that their God, the hopes of men
 Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
 For a paradise of ages, the blind rage 345
 Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
 Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life were pressed
 Into one service, busy with one work. 350
 The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
 Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
 Her frenzy only active to extol
 Past outrages, and shape the way for new,

Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate. 355
 —Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
 With Feast-days; old Men from the Chimney-nook,
 The Maiden from the bosom of her Love,
 The Mother from the Cradle of her Babe,
 The Warrior from the Field, all perished, all, 360
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it, proudly eager as a Child
 (If like desires of innocent little ones 365
 May with such heinous appetites be compared),
 Pleased in some open field to exercise
 A toy that mimics with revolving wings
 The motion of a windmill, though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh and make the Vanes 370
 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.

'Mid the depth

Of those enormities, even thinking minds 375
 Forgot at seasons whence they had their being,
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As Liberty upon earth; yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,
 Nor could have been without her blessed name. 380
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour
 Of her composure, felt that agony
 And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!
 It was a lamentable time for man,
 Whether a hope had e'er been his or not, 385
 A woeful time for them whose hopes survived
 The shock—most woeful for those few who still
 Were flattered and had trust in human-kind:
 They had the deepest feeling of the grief.
 Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved: 390
 The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms
 And throttled with an infant Godhead's might

The snakes about her cradle: that was well
 And as it should be, yet no cure for them
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be 395
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.
 Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!
 Were my day-thoughts, my nights were miserable;
 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep 400
 To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,
 Such ghastly Visions had I of despair
 And tyranny, and implements of death,
 And innocent victims sinking under fear,
 And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer, 405
 Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds
 For sacrifice, and struggling with forced mirth
 And levity in dungeons where the dust
 Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene
 Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me 410
 In long orations which I strove to plead
 Before unjust tribunals—with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
 Death-like of treacherous desertion, felt
 In the last place of refuge, my own soul. 415
 When I began in Youth's delightful prime
 To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first,
 Nor day nor night, evening or morn, were free
 From its oppression. But, O Power supreme! 420
 Without whose care this world would cease to breathe,
 Who from the fountain of thy grace dost fill
 The veins that branch through every frame of life,
 Making man what he is, Creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence 425
 Above the rest raised infinite ascents
 When reason that enables him to be
 Is not sequestered, what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship!
 What countenance to promote this second love! 430
The first was service paid to things which lie

Guarded within the bosom of thy will.
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
 Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
 Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure, 435
 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.
 But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
 In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
 With them to take a troubled human heart,
 Wanted not consolations nor a creed 440
 Of reconciliation, then when they denounced
 On Towns and Cities wallowing in the abyss
 Of their offences punishment to come;
 Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
 Before them, in some desolated place, 445
 The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;
 So, with devout humility be it said,
 So did a portion of that spirit fall
 On me, uplifted from the vantage ground
 Of pity and sorrow to a state of being 450
 That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw
 Glimpses of retribution, terrible
 And in the order of sublime behests;
 But even if that were not, amid the awe
 Of unintelligible chastisement, 455
 Not only acquiescences of faith
 Survived, but daring sympathies with power,
 Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
 Within the folds of no ungentle breast
 Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? 460
 Wild blasts of music thus could find their way
 Into the midst of turbulent events,
 So that worst tempests might be listened to.
 Then was the truth received into my heart,
 That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring, 465
 If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
 Honor which could not else have been, a faith,
 An elevation, and a sanctity,
 If new strength be not given nor old restored,
 The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt 470

Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
 Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap
 From popular Government and Equality,"
 Clearly I saw that neither these, nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names 475
 By false philosophy, had caused the woe,
 But a terrific reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance, filled up from age to age,
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 But burst and spread in deluge through the Land. 480

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

To mock me under such a strange reverse. 510
 O Friend! few happier moments have been mine,
 Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
 So dreaded, so abhorr'd.— The day deserves
 A separate Record. Over the smooth Sands
 Of Leven's ample Æstuary lay 515
 My journey, and beneath a genial Sun,
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky,
 And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad,
 Creatures of one ethereal substance met 520
 In Consistory, like a diadem
 Or crown of burning Seraphs, as they sit
 In the Empyrean. Underneath that pomp
 Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral Vales
 Among whose happy fields I had grown up 525
 From Childhood. On the fulgent Spectacle,
 That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed
 Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
 Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
 As soon their pensive influence drew from mine. 530
 How could it otherwise? for not in vain
 That very morning had I turned aside
 To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of Graves,
 An honored Teacher of my Youth was laid.
 While we were School-boys, he had died among us, 535
 And was borne thither, as I knew, to rest
 With his own Family. A plain stone inscribed
 With name, date, office, pointed out the Spot,
 And on the Stone were graven, by his desire,
 Lines from the Churchyard Elegy of Gray. 540
 This faithful Guide, speaking from his death-bed,
 Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
 But said to me, "My head will soon lie low;"
 And when I saw the turf that covered him,
 After the lapse of full eight years, those words, 545
 With sound of voice, and countenance of the Man,
 Came back upon me, so that some few tears
 Fell from me in my own despite. But now

I thought, still traversing that wide-spread plain,
 With tender pleasure of the Verses graven 550
 Upon his Tomb-stone, whispering to myself:
 He loved the Poets, and if now alive
 Would have loved me, as One not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 That he had formed, when I, at his command, 555
 Began to spin with toil my earliest Songs.
 —As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 And rocky Island near, a fragment stood
 (Itself like a sea-rock), the low remains 560
 (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
 Of a dilapidated Structure, once
 A Romish Chapel, where the vested Priest
 Said matins at the hour that suited those
 Who crossed the Sands with ebb of morning-tide; 565
 Not far from that still Ruin all the Plain
 Lay spotted with a variegated Crowd
 Of Vehicles, and Travellers, horse and foot,
 Wading beneath the Conduct of their Guide
 In loose Procession through the shallow Stream 570
 Of Inland Waters: the Great Sea, meanwhile,
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
 And chearful—but the foremost of the Band
 As he approached, no salutation given, 575
 In the familiar language of the day
 Cried, “Robespierre is dead!”—nor was a doubt,
 After strict question, left within my mind
 That He and his Supporters all were fallen.
 Great was my transport, deep my gratitude 580
 To everlasting justice, by this fiat
 Made manifest. “Come now, Ye golden times,”
 Said I, forth-pouring on those open Sands
 A Hymn of triumph, “as the morning comes
 From out the bosom of the night, come Ye: 585
 Thus far our trust is verified; behold!
 They who with clumsy desperation brought

A river of blood, and preached that nothing else
 Could cleanse the Augean Stable, by the might
 Of their own Helper have been swept away; 590
 Their madness stands declared and visible;
 Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and Earth
 March firmly towards righteousness and peace.”
 — Then schemes I framed more calmly, when, and how,
 The madding Factions might be tranquillized, 595
 And how through hardships manifold and long
 The glorious renovation would proceed.
 Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
 Of exultation, I pursued my way
 Along that very Shore which I had skimmed 600
 In former days, when, spurring from the Vale
 Of Nightshade, and St Mary’s mouldering Fane,
 And the Stone Abbot, after circuit made
 In wantonness of heart, a joyous Band
 Of School-boys, hastening to their distant home, 605
 Along the margin of the moon-light Sea
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level Sand.

BOOK ELEVENTH

FRANCE, CONCLUDED

From that time forth Authority in France
 Put on a milder face; terror had ceased,
 Yet every thing was wanting that might give
 Courage to them who looked for good by light
 Of rational experience, for the shoots 5
 And hopeful blossoms of a second spring:
 Yet in me confidence was unimpaired;
 The Senate’s language and the public acts
 And measures of the Government, though both
 Weak, and of heartless omen, had not power 10
 To daunt me; in the People was my trust
 And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen.
 I knew that wound external could not take
 Life from the young Republic, that new foes
 Would only follow in the path of shame 15
 Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end

Great, universal, irresistible.
 This intuition led me to confound
 One victory with another, higher far,
 Triumphs of unambitious peace at home 20
 And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still
 Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
 That what was in degree the same was likewise
 The same in quality, that as the worse
 Of the two Spirits then at strife remained 25
 Untired, the better surely would preserve
 The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,
 In all conditions of society,
 Communion more direct and intimate
 With Nature—hence, oftentimes, with Reason too— 30
 Than Age or Manhood, even. To Nature then
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For her to move about in, uncontrolled.
 Hence could I see how Babel-like their task 35
 Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day
 Its petty promises, to build a tower
 For their own safety; laughed with my Compeers
 At gravest heads, by enmity to France 40
 Distempered, till they found, in every blast
 Forced from the Street-disturbing Newsman's horn,
 For her great cause Record or Prophecy
 Of utter ruin. How might we believe
 That wisdom could in any shape come near 45
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few
 Of our opinions had been just, We took
 Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
 And thought that other notions were as sound, 50
 Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
 That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,
 And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,

What in those days through Britain was performed 55
 To turn *all* judgments out of their right course;
 But this is passion overnear ourselves,
 Reality too close, and too intense,
 And intermixed with something in my mind
 Of scorn and condemnation personal 60
 That would profane the sanctity of Verse.
 —Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
 Acted, or seemed at least to act, like Men
 Thirsting to make the guardian crook of Law
 A tool of murder; they who ruled the State, 65
 Though with such awful proof before their eyes
 That he who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
 And can reap nothing better, child-like, longed
 To imitate, not wise enough to avoid;
 Or left (by mere timidity betrayed) 70
 The plain straight road for one no better chosen
 Than if their wish had been to undermine
 Justice, and make an end of Liberty.
 But from these bitter truths I must return
 To my own History. It hath been told 75
 That I was led to take an eager part
 In arguments of civil polity
 Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
 I had approached, like other Youth, the Shield
 Of human nature from the golden side, 80
 And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
 The quality of the metal which I saw.
 What there is best in individual man,
 Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,
 Benevolent in small societies, 85
 And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
 Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
 By Reason: nay, far from it, they were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 Not proof against the injuries of the day, 90
 Lodged only at the Sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,

And of the bounds which sever it from good,
 As books and common intercourse with life 95
 Must needs have given—to the inexperienced mind,
 When the World travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed—I began
 To meditate with ardour on the Rule
 And management of Nations, what it is 100
 And ought to be, and strove to learn how far
 Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
 Their happiness or misery, depend
 Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.
 O pleasant exercise of hope and joy! 105
 For mighty were the Auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in Love!
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways 110
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a Country in Romance!
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights,
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime Enchantress—to assist the work 115
 Which then was going forward in her name!
 Not favored spots alone, but the whole earth
 The beauty wore of promise—that which sets
 (As at some moments might not be unfelt
 Among the bowers of Paradise itself) 120
 The budding rose above the rose full blown.
 What Temper at the prospect did not wake
 To happiness unthought of? The inert
 Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
 They who had fed their Childhood upon dreams, 125
 The play-fellows of Fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
 Their ministers,—who in lordly wise had stirred
 Among the grandest objects of the Sense,
 And dealt with whatsoever they found there 130
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it;—they, too, who of gentle mood

Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
 And in the region of their peaceful selves;— 135
 Now was it that *both* found, the Meek and Lofty
 Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,
 And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish,—
 Were called upon to exercise their skill,
 Not in Utopia,—subterranean Fields,— 140
 Or some secreted Island, Heaven knows where!
 But in the very world, which is the world
 Of all of us,—the place where in the end
 We find our happiness, or not at all!

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

An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance
 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind 155
 With genial feelings still predominant;
 When erring, erring on the better part,
 And in the kinder spirit; placable,
 Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
 See as they have been taught, and that Antiquity 160
 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,
 Not caring if the wind did now and then 165
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity;
 In brief, a Child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 That from the cradle had grown up with me, 170
 And losing, in no other way than light

Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

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

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

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

Openly in the eye of Earth and Heaven, 210
 The scale of Liberty. I read her doom
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false Prophet. While resentment rose,
 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds 215
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind 220
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
 The very being of the immortal Soul.
 This was the time when, all things tending fast
 To depravation, speculative schemes
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man 225
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element,
 Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work, 230
 And never hear the sound of their own names:
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream
 Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
 With that which makes our Reason's naked self
 The object of its fervour: What delight! 235
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 Infirmities of Nature, time, and place,
 Build social upon personal Liberty, 240
 Which, to the blind restraints of general Laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.
 Thus expectation rose again; thus hope, 245
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
 Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
 I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst

Of a secure intelligence, and sick
 Of other longing, I pursued what seemed 250
 A more exalted nature, wished that Man
 Should start out of his earthy worm-like state
 And spread abroad the wings of liberty,
 Lord of himself in undisturbed delight;
 A noble aspiration! *yet* I feel 255
 (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
 The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
 To feel it; but return we to our course.
 Enough, 'tis true, could such a plea excuse
 Those aberrations, had the clamorous friends 260
 Of ancient Institutions said and done
 To bring disgrace upon their very names;
 Disgrace of which custom and written law,
 And sundry moral sentiments as props
 Or emanations of those institutes, 265
 Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
 Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
 'Twas even so; and sorrow for the Man
 Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
 Or, seeing, had forgotten; a strong shock 270
 Was given to old opinions; all Men's minds
 Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
 Already said of patriotic love,
 Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern 275
 In temperament, withal a happy man,
 And therefore bold to look on painful things,
 Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
 I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
 To anatomize the frame of social life, 280
 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
 Than suit the Work we fashion, might set forth 285
 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
 Out of a heart that had been turned aside 290
 From Nature's way by outward accidents,
 And which was thus confounded more and more,
 Misguided and misguiding. So I fared,
 Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind, 295
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honors, now believing,
 Now disbelieving, endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of obligation, what the rule and whence 300
 The sanction, till, demanding formal *proof*
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair. 305

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

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
 With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
 From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
 In reconciliation with an utter waste
 Of Intellect; such sloth I could not brook. 325
 (Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,

Pains-taking thoughts and truth, their dear reward),
 But turned to abstract science, and there sought
 Work for the reasoning faculty, enthroned
 Where the disturbances of space and time— 330
 Whether in matter's various properties
 Inherent, or from human will and power
 Derived—find no admission.— Then it was,
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good!
 That the beloved Woman in whose sight 335
 Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
 Of sudden admonition—like a brook
 That does but *cross* a lonely road, and now
 Seen, heard, and felt, and caught at every turn,
 Companion never lost through many a league— 340
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self: for, though bedimmed and changed
 Both as a clouded and a waning moon,
 She whispered still that brightness would return,
 She in the midst of all preserved me still 345
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth.
 And lastly, as hereafter will be shewn,
 If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
 By all varieties of human love 350
 Assisted, led me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge fraught with peace
 Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now 355
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less), when, finally to close
 And rivet down the gains of France, a Pope
 Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor:
 This last opprobrium, when we see a people 360
 That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
 For manna, take a lesson from the Dog
 Returning to his vomit; when the Sun
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation with a living pomp 365

Of clouds—his glory's natural retinue—
 Hath dropped all functions by the Gods bestowed,
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,
 Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus through times

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

But indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, O Friend! wilt be refreshed. There is
 One great Society alone on Earth,
 The noble Living, and the noble Dead.

Thine be such converse strong and sanative, 395
 A ladder for thy Spirit to reascend
 To health and joy and pure contentedness:
 To me the grief confined that Thou art gone
 From this last spot of earth where Freedom now
 Stands single in her only Sanctuary; 400
 A lonely Wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.

I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
 The sympathies erewhile in part discharged 405
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again;
 My own delights do scarcely seem to me
 My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
 Those rosy peaks, from which the morning looks
 Abroad on many Nations, for my mind 410
 Are not that image of pure gladness
 Which they were wont to be: through kindred scenes,
 For purpose, at a time how different!
 Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
 That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought 415
 Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
 Oh! wrap him in your Shades, Ye Giant woods
 On Etna's side, and thou, O flowery Field
 Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine
 From the first play-time of the infant world 420
 Kept sacred to restorative delight
 When from afar invoked by anxious love?
 Child of the Mountains, among Shepherds reared,
 Ere yet familiar with the Classic page,
 I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo! 425
 The gloom that, but a moment past, was deepened
 At her command, at her command gives way;
 Sensations changing as thoughts shift their ground,
 A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,
 Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold 430
 Her seas yet smiling, her once happy Vales,
 Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name
 Of note belonging to that honored Isle,
 Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes, pure abstracted Soul! 435
 That doth not yield a solace to my grief;
 And O Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth
 By their endowments good or great, that they
 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles 440
 Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved
 When thinking on my own beloved Friend,

I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his impious Lord
 Within a Chest imprisoned, how they came 445
 Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,
 And fed him there, alive month after month,
 Because the Goatherd, blessed Man! had lips
 Wet with the Muses' Nectar.

Thus I soothe
 The pensive moments by this calm fire side, 450
 And find a thousand bounteous images
 To cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine;
 Our prayers have been accepted, thou wilt stand
 On Etna's summit above earth and sea
 Triumphant, winning from the invaded heavens 455
 Thoughts without bound, magnificent designs
 Worthy of Poets who attuned the Harp
 In wood or echoing cave, for discipline
 Of Heroes; or, in reverence to the Gods,
 'Mid Temples served by sapient Priests and choirs 460
 Of Virgins crowned with roses. Not in vain
 Those temples, where they in their ruins yet
 Survive for inspiration, shall attract
 Thy solitary steps. And on the brink
 Thou wilt recline of pastoral Arethuse; 465
 Or, if that fountain be in truth no more,
 Then near some other Spring which by the name
 Thou gratest, willingly deceived,
 I see Thee linger, a glad Votary,
 And not a Captive pining for his home. 470

BOOK TWELFTH

IMAGINATION AND TASTE, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
 Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
 Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
 With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
 Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed, 5
 And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
 And things to hope for! Not with these began

Our Song, and not with these our Song must end.
 Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
 Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs, 10
 Whose subtile intercourse with breathing flowers,
 Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
 How without injury to take, to give
 Without offence; ye who, as if to shew
 The wondrous influence of power gently used, 15
 Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
 And with a touch shift the stupendous clouds
 Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks
 Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
 By day, a quiet sound in silent night; 20
 Ye waves that out of the great deep steal forth
 In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
 Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
 And you, ye Groves, whose ministry it is
 To interpose the covert of your shades, 25
 Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
 And outward troubles, between man himself,
 Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart!
 Oh that I had a music and a voice
 Harmonious as your own, that I might tell 30
 What Ye have done for me! The morning shines,
 Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,
 I saw the Spring return and could rejoice,
 In common with the Children of her love
 Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields, 35
 Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
 On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
 So neither were complacency nor peace
 Nor tender yearnings wanting for my good
 Through those distracted times; in Nature still 40
 Glorifying, I found a counterpoise in her,
 Which, when the Spirit of evil reached its height,
 Maintained for me a secret happiness.
 This Narrative, my Friend, hath chiefly told
 Of intellectual power, fostering love, 45
 Dispensing truth, and over men and things,

Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing
 Prophetic sympathies of genial faith.
 So was I favored, such my happy lot,
 Until that natural graciousness of mind 50
 Gave way to overpressure from the times
 And their disastrous issues. What availed,
 When spells forbade the Voyager to land,
 That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore
 Wafted at intervals from many a bower 55
 Of blissful gratitude and fearless peace?
 Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,
 And hope that future times *would* surely see,
 The man to come parted as by a gulph
 From him who had been, that I could no more 60
 Trust the elevation which had made me one
 With the great Family that still survives
 To illuminate the abyss of ages past,
 Sage, Warrior, Patriot, Hero?—for it seemed 65
 That their best virtues were not free from taint
 Of something false and weak, that could not stand
 The open eye of Reason. Then I said,
 “Go to the Poets; they will speak to thee
 More perfectly of purer Creatures; yet
 If Reason be nobility in Man, 70
 Can aught be more ignoble than the Man
 Whom they delight in, blinded as he is
 By prejudice, the miserable slave
 Of low ambition, or distempered love?”
 In such strange passion (if I may once more 75
 Review the past) I warred against myself,
 A Bigot to a New Idolatry;
 Like a cowed Monk who hath forsworn the world,
 Zealously labour’d to cut off my heart
 From all the sources of her former strength; 80
 And as by simple waving of a Wand
 The wizard instantaneously dissolves
 Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
 As readily by syllogistic words
 Those mysteries of being which have made, 85

And shall continue evermore to make,
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

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

Oh Soul of Nature, excellent and fair!
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too
Rejoiced, through early Youth, before the winds 95
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart 100
Employed, and Man's unfolding intellect!

Oh Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been 105
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies

Remissness and inaptitude of mind,
But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there 110

Liking; by rules of mimic Art transferred
To things above all Art, but more,—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene, 115

Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion, to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the Place, 120
Insensible. Nor only did the love

Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,

That almost seems inherent in the Creature, 125
 A twofold frame of body and of mind.
 I speak in recollection of a time
 When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
 The most despotic of our senses, gained
 Such strength in *me* as often held my mind 130
 In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
 Entering upon abstruser Argument,
 Could I endeavour to unfold the means
 Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
 This tyranny, summons all the senses each 135
 To counteract the other, and themselves,
 And makes them all, and the Objects with which all
 Are conversant, subservient in their turn
 To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
 But leave we this: enough that my delights 140
 (Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
 Vivid the transport, vivid, though not profound;
 I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
 Still craving combinations of new forms,
 New pleasure, wider empire for the sight, 145
 Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
 To lay the inner faculties asleep.
 Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
 And various trials of our complex being,
 As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense 150
 Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a Maid,
 A young Enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;
 Her eye was not the Mistress of her heart;
 Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties 155
 Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are
 When genial circumstance hath favoured them,
 She welcomed what was given and craved no more;
 Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
 That was the best, to that she was attuned 160
 By her benign simplicity of life
 And through a perfect happiness of Soul
 Whose variegated feelings were in this

Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
 Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field, 165
 Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
 Her very presence such a sweetness breathed
 That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
 And every thing she looked on should have had
 An intimation how she bore herself 170
 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
 In such a being; for her common thoughts
 Are piety, her life is gratitude.

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

Visitings of imaginative power
 For this to last: I shook the habit off
 Entirely and for ever, and again. 205
 In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
 A sensitive Being, a *creative* Soul.

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

In times long past, but still from year to year,
 By superstition of the neighbourhood,
 The grass is cleared away, and to that hour
 The characters were fresh and visible. 245
 A casual glance had shewn them, and I fled,
 Faultering and faint and ignorant of the road:
 Then, reascending the bare common, saw
 A naked Pool that lay beneath the hills,
 The Beacon on its summit, and, more near, 250
 A Girl who bore a Pitcher on her head,
 And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
 Against the blowing wind. It was in truth
 An ordinary sight; but I should need
 Colors and words that are unknown to man 255
 To paint the visionary dreariness
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost Guide,
 Invested Moorland waste and naked Pool,
 The Beacon crowning the lone eminence,
 The Female and her garments vexed and tossed 260
 By the strong wind.—When, in the blessed hours
 Of early love, the loved One at my side,
 I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
 Upon the naked Pool and dreary Crag,
 And on the melancholy Beacon, fell 265
 A spirit of pleasure, and Youth's golden gleam;
 And think ye not with radiance more sublime
 For these remembrances, and for the power
 They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength 270
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
 Oh! mystery of Man, from what a depth
 Proceed thy honors! I am lost, but see
 In simple child-hood something of the base
 On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel, 275
 That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by
 Return upon me almost from the dawn
 Of life: the hiding-places of Man's power
 Open; I would approach them, but they close. 280

I see by glimpses now; when age comes on
 May scarcely see at all, and I would give,
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,
 Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
 Such is my hope, the spirit of the past 285
 For future restoration.— Yet another
 Of these memorials.

One Christmas-time,
 On the glad Eve of its dear holidays,
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth 290
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight
 Of those led Palfreys that should bear us home,
 My Brothers and myself. There rose a Crag
 That, from the meeting point of two highways
 Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;
 Thither, uncertain on which road to fix 295
 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;
 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep, 300
 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
 And plain beneath. Ere we to School returned 305
 That dreary time, ere we had been ten days
 Sojourners in my Father's House, he died,
 And I and my three Brothers, Orphans then,
 Followed his Body to the Grave. The Event,
 With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared 310
 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,
 Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low 315
 To God, who thus corrected my desires;
 And afterwards, the wind and sleety rain
 And all the business of the Elements,

The single Sheep, and the one blasted tree,
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall, 320
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist
 That on the line of each of those two Roads
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes;
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink 325
 As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
 Down to this *very* time, when storm and rain
 Beat on my roof, or haply at noon-day,
 While in a grove I walk whose lofty trees,
 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock 330
 In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
 Some inward agitations, thence are brought,
 Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
 Thoughts over-busy in the course they took,
 Or animate an hour of vacant ease. 335

BOOK THIRTEENTH

SUBJECT CONCLUDED

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
 Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
 This is her glory; these two attributes
 Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
 Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange 5
 Of peace and excitation, finds in her
 His best and purest friend, from her receives
 That energy by which he seeks the truth,
 From her that happy stillness of the mind
 Which fits him to receive it, when unsought. 10
 Such benefit the humblest intellects
 Partake of, each in their degree: 'tis mine
 To speak of what myself have known and felt.
 Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
 By gratitude and confidence in truth. 15
 Long time in search of knowledge did I range
 The field of human life, in heart and mind
 Benighted, but the dawn beginning now
 To reappear, 'twas proved that not in vain

I had been taught to reverence a Power 20
 That is the visible quality and shape
 And image of right reason, that matures
 Her processes by steadfast laws, gives birth
 To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
 No heat of passion or excessive zeal, 25
 No vain conceits,—provokes to no quick turns
 Of self-applauding intellect,—but trains
 To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;
 Holds up before the mind, intoxicate
 With present objects, and the busy dance 30
 Of things that pass away, a temperate shew
 Of objects that endure; and by this course
 Disposes her, when over-fondly set
 On throwing off incumbrances, to seek
 In Man, and in the frame of social life, 35
 Whate'er there is desireable and good
 Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
 And function, or through strict vicissitude
 Of life and death revolving. Above all
 Were re-established now those watchful thoughts 40
 Which (seeing little worthy or sublime
 In what the Historian's pen so much delights
 To blazon, Power and Energy detached
 From moral purpose) early tutored me
 To look with feelings of fraternal love 45
 Upon the unassuming things that hold
 A silent station in this beauteous world.
 Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
 Once more in Man an object of delight,
 Of pure imagination, and of love; 50
 And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
 Again I took the intellectual eye
 For my Instructor, studious more to see
 Great Truths, than touch and handle little ones.
 Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust 55
 Became more firm in feelings that had stood
 The test of such a trial; clearer far
 My sense of excellence—of right and wrong:

The promise of the present time retired
 Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes, 60
 Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
 For present good in life's familiar face,
 And built thereon my hopes of good to come.
 With settling judgments now of what would last
 And what must disappear, prepared to find 65
 Presumption, folly, madness, in the Men
 Who thrust themselves upon the passive world
 As Rulers of the world, to see in these,
 Even when the public welfare is their aim,
 Plans without thought, or built on theories 70
 Vague and unsound, and having brought the Books
 Of modern Statists to their proper test,
 Life, human life with all its sacred claims
 Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights 75
 Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death;
 And having thus discerned how dire a thing
 Is worshipped in that Idol proudly named
 "The Wealth of Nations," where alone that wealth
 Is lodged, and how encreased; and having gained
 A more judicious knowledge of the worth 80
 And dignity of individual Man,
 No composition of the brain, but Man
 Of whom we read, the Man whom we behold
 With our own eyes—I could not but enquire,
 Not with less interest than heretofore, 85
 But greater, though in Spirit more subdued,
 Why is this glorious Creature to be found
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,
 Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown
 By Nature in the way of such a hope? 90
 Our animal appetites, and daily wants,
 Are these obstructions insurmountable?
 If not, then others vanish into air.
 "Inspect the basis of the social Pile:
 Enquire," said I, "how much of mental Power 95
 And genuine virtue they possess who live
 By bodily toil, labour exceeding far

Their due proportion, under all the weight
 Of that injustice which upon ourselves
 Ourselves entail." Such estimate to frame 100
 I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
 Among the natural Abodes of men,
 Fields with their rural works, recalled to mind
 My earliest notices, with these compared
 The observations made in later youth, 105
 And to that day continued.—For the time
 Had never been when throes of mightiest Nations
 And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
 How far soe'er transported and possessed,
 Full measure of content; but still I craved 110
 An intermingling of distinct regards
 And truths of individual sympathy
 Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned
 From the great City, else it must have proved
 To me a heart-depressing wilderness; 115
 But much was wanting; therefore did I turn
 To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;
 Sought you enriched with every thing I prized,
 With human kindnesses and simple joys.
 Oh! next to one dear State of bliss, vouchsafed 120
 Alas! to few in this untoward world,
 The bliss of walking daily in Life's prime
 Through field or forest with the Maid we love,
 While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
 Nothing but happiness; in some lone nook, 125
 Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,
 From which it would be misery to stir;
 Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,
 In my esteem, next to such dear delight
 Was that of wandering on from day to day 130
 Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
 Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
 To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a Bird
 Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
 Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves, 135
 Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn;

And when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,
 Converse with men, where if we meet a face
 We almost meet a friend: on naked heaths
 With long long ways before, by Cottage bench 140
 Or well-spring, where the weary Traveller rests.
 Who doth not love to follow with his eye
 The windings of a public way? the sight
 Hath wrought on my imagination since the morn
 Of childhood, when a disappearing line, 145
 One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
 The naked summit of a far-off hill
 Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,
 Was like an invitation into space
 Boundless, or guide into eternity! 150
 Yes, something of the grandeur which invests
 The Mariner who sails the roaring sea
 Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
 Surrounded, too, the Wanderers of the Earth—
 Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more. 155
 Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites,
 From many other uncouth Vagrants (passed
 In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why
 Take note of this? When I began to enquire,
 To watch and question those I met, and speak 160
 Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
 Were open Schools in which I daily read
 With most delight the passions of mankind,
 Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears revealed;
 There saw into the depth of human souls— 165
 Souls that appear to have no depth at all
 To careless eyes. And now—convinced at heart
 How little those formalities, to which
 With overweening trust alone we give
 The name of Education, have to do 170
 With real feeling and just sense, how vain
 A correspondence with the talking world
 Proves to the most, and called to make good search
 If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
 With toil, is therefore yoked with ignorance, 175

If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
 And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
 I prized such walks still more, for there I found
 Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
 And steadiness; and healing and repose 180
 To every angry passion. There I heard,
 From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
 Replete with honour; sounds in unison
 With loftiest promises of good and fair.
 There are who think that strong affections, love 185
 Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
 A gift, to use a term which they would use,
 Of vulgar nature, that its growth requires
 Retirement, leisure, language purified
 By manners studied and elaborate; 190
 That whoso feels such passion in its strength
 Must live within the very light and air
 Of courteous usages refined by Art.
 True is it where oppression worse than death
 Salutes the Being at his birth, where grace 195
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
 And poverty and labour in excess
 From day to day preoccupy the ground
 Of the affections, and to Nature's self
 Oppose a deeper Nature; there indeed 200
 Love cannot be, nor does it thrive with ease
 Among the close and overcrowded haunts
 Of cities, where the human heart is sick
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.
 —Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel 205
 How we mislead each other; above all,
 How Books mislead us, seeking their reward
 From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
 By artificial lights; how they debase
 The Many for the pleasure of those Few; 210
 Effeminately level down the truth
 To certain general notions for the sake
 Of being understood at once, or else
 Through want of better knowledge in the heads

That framed them, flattering self-conceit with words 215
 That, while they most ambitiously set forth
 Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
 Whereby Society has parted man
 From man, neglect the universal heart.
 Here, calling up to mind what then I saw, 220
 A youthful Traveller, and see daily now
 In the familiar circuit of my home,
 Here might I pause and bend in reverence
 To Nature, and the power of human minds,
 To Men as they are Men within themselves. 225
 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
 Its simple Worshippers from sun and shower. 230
 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
 And sanctity of passion speak of these, 235
 That justice may be done, obeisance paid
 Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
 Inspire, through unadulterated ears
 Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, my theme
 No other than the very heart of Man 240
 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
 Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight, 245
 And miserable love that is not pain
 To hear of, for the glory that redounds
 Therefrom to human kind and what we are.
 Be mine to follow with no timid step
 Where knowledge leads me; it shall be my pride 250
 That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
 Speaking no dream, but things oracular,
 Matter not lightly to be heard by those

Who to the letter of the outward promise
 Do read the invisible Soul, by Men adroit 255
 In speech, and for communion with the world
 Accomplished, minds whose faculties are then
 Most active when they are most eloquent,
 And elevated most, when most admired.
 Men may be found of other mold than these, 260
 Who are their own Upholders, to themselves
 Encouragement, and energy, and will,
 Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
 As native passion dictates. Others, too,
 There are, among the walks of homely life, 265
 Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
 Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase,
 Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
 Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
 Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power, 270
 The thought, the image, and the silent joy;
 Words are but under-agents in their Souls;
 When they are grasping with their greatest strength
 They do not breathe among them; this I speak
 In gratitude to God, who feeds our hearts 275
 For his own service; knoweth, loveth us
 When we are unregarded by the world.
 Also, about this time did I receive
 Convictions still more strong than heretofore
 Not only that the inner frame is good, 280
 And graciously composed, but that, no less,
 Nature for all conditions wants not power
 To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
 The outside of her Creatures, and to breathe
 Grandeur upon the very humblest face 285
 Of human life. I felt that the array
 Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
 Is mainly, to the pleasure of the mind,
 What passion makes them, that meanwhile the forms
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves 290
 That intermingles with those works of man
 To which she summons him; although the works

Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
 And that the Genius of the Poet hence
 May boldly take his way among mankind 295
 Wherever Nature leads, that he hath stood
 By Nature's side among the Men of old,
 And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend,
 If thou partake the animating faith
 That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each 300
 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
 The humblest of this band who dares to hope 305
 That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
 An insight, that in some sort he possesses
 A Privilege, whereby a Work of his,
 Proceeding from a source of untaught things,
 Creative and enduring, may become 310
 A Power like one of Nature's. To a hope
 Not less ambitious once among the Wilds
 Of Sarum's Plain my youthful Spirit was raised;
 There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs
 Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads 315
 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;
 Saw multitudes of men, and here and there 320
 A single Briton clothed in Wolf-skin vest,
 With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;
 The voice of Spears was heard, the rattling spear
 Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,
 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty. 325
 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;
 It is the Sacrificial Altar, fed 330
 With living Men—how deep the groans! the voice

Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
 The monumental hillocks, and the pomp
 Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
 At other moments (for through that wide waste 335
 Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plan
 Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
 That yet survive, a work, as some divine,
 Shaped by the Druids, so to represent
 Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth 340
 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
 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky 345
 Alternately, and Plain below, while breath
 Of music swayed their motions, and the Waste
 Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet Sounds.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed
 Or fancied, in the obscurity of years 350
 From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!
 Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
 That served those wanderings to beguile, hast sad
 That then and there my mind had exercised
 Upon the vulgar forms of present things, 355
 The actual world of our familiar days,
 Yet higher power, had caught from them a tone,
 An image, and a character, by books
 Not hitherto reflected. Call we this
 A partial judgement—and yet why? for *then* 360
 We were as Strangers; and I may not speak
 Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,
 Which on thy young imagination, trained
 In the great City, broke like light from far.
 Moreover, each man's mind is to herself 365
 Witness and judge; and I remember well
 That in Life's every-day appearances
 I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
 Of a new world, a world, too, that was fit
 To be transmitted and to other eyes 370
 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
Of action from without, and from within; 375
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

BOOK FOURTEENTH

CONCLUSION

In one of those Excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!), through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful Friend,
I left Bethgellert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun 5
Rise from the top of Snowdon. To the door
Of a rude Cottage at the Mountain's base
We came, and roused the Shepherd who attends
The adventurous Stranger's steps, a trusty Guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth. 10
—It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick, that covered all the sky.
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round, 15
And, after ordinary Travellers' talk
With our Conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked 20
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The Shepherd's Lurcher, who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a Hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up Prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed 25
In that wild place, and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up 30

With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
 Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,
 Ascending at loose distance each from each
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the Bard:
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten, 35
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
 Nor was time given to ask, or learn, the cause;
 For instantly a light upon the turf
 Fell like a flash; and lo! as I looked up,
 The Moon hung naked in a firmament 40
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheavd
 All over this still Ocean; and beyond,
 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched, 45
 In Headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
 Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
 To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
 Usurped upon far as the sight could reach
 Not so the ethereal Vault; encroachment none 50
 Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
 Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
 In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon;
 Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
 Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay 55
 All meek and silent, save that through a rift
 Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
 A fixed, abysmal, gloomy breathing-place,
 Mounted the roar of waters—torrents—streams
 Innumerable, roaring with one voice! 60
 Heard over earth and sea, and in that hour,
 For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.
 When into air had partially dissolved
 That Vision, given to Spirits of the night,
 And three chance human Wanderers, in calm thought 65
 Reflected, it appeared to me the type
 Of a majestic Intellect, its acts
 And its possessions, what it has and craves,
 What in itself it is, and would become.

There I beheld the emblem of a Mind 70
 That feeds upon infinity, that broods
 Over the dark abyss, intent to hear
 Its voices issuing forth to silent light
 In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
 By recognitions of transcendent power 75
 In sense, conducting to ideal form;
 In soul, of more than mortal privilege.
 One function, above all, of such a mind
 Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
 'Mid circumstances awful and sublime, 80
 That mutual domination which she loves
 To exert upon the face of outward things,
 So moulded, joined, abstracted; so endowed
 With interchangeable supremacy,
 That Men least sensitive see, hear, perceive, 85
 And cannot chuse but feel. The power which all
 Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
 To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
 Resemblance of that glorious faculty
 That higher minds bear with them as their own. 90
 This is the very spirit in which they deal
 With the whole compass of the universe:
 They, from their native selves, can send abroad
 Kindred mutations; for themselves create
 A like existence; and whene'er it dawns 95
 Created for them, catch it;—or are caught
 By its inevitable mastery,
 Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
 Of harmony from heaven's remotest spheres.
 Them the enduring and the transient both 100
 Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
 From least suggestions; ever on the watch,
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
 They need not extraordinary calls
 To rouse them, in a world of life they live; 105
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,
 But, by their quickening impulse, made more prompt
 To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,

And with the generations of mankind
 Spread over time, past, present, and to come, 110
 Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
 Such minds are truly from the Deity,
 For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
 That flesh can know is theirs,—the consciousness
 Of whom they are, habitually infused 115
 Through every image, and through every thought,
 And all affections by communion raised
 From earth to heaven, from human to divine.
 Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
 Whether discursive or intuitive; 120
 Hence chearfulness for acts of daily life,
 Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
 Most worthy then of trust when most intense:
 Hence, amid ills that vex, and wrongs that crush
 Our hearts, if here the words of holy Writ 125
 May with fit reverence be applied, that peace
 Which passeth understanding,—that repose
 In moral judgements which from this pure source
 Must come, or will by Man be sought in vain.
 Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long 130
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
 For this alone is genuine Liberty.
 Where is the favoured Being who hath held
 That course, unchecked, unerring, and untired,
 In one perpetual progress smooth and bright? 135
 —A humbler destiny have we retraced,
 And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
 And backward wanderings along thorny ways:
 Yet, compassed round by Mountain Solitudes
 Within whose solemn temple I received 140
 My earliest visitations, careless then
 Of what was given me; and which now I range
 A meditative, oft a suffering Man,
 Do I declare, in accents which, from truth
 Deriving chearful confidence, shall blend 145
 Their modulation with these vocal streams,
 That, whatsoever falls my better mind

Revolving with the accidents of life
 May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
 Never did I, in quest of right and wrong, 150
 Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
 Nor was in any public hope the dupe
 Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield,
 Wilfully, to mean cares or low pursuits;
 But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy 155
 From every combination which might aid
 The tendency, too potent in itself,
 Of use and custom to bow down the Soul
 Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
 And substitute a universe of death 160
 For that which moves with light and life informed,
 Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,
 To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
 Be this ascribed; to early intercourse
 In presence of sublime or beautiful forms 165
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
 Evil, as one is rashly named by men
 Who know not what they speak. By love subsists
 All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
 That gone, we are as dust.—Behold the fields 170
 In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
 And joyous Creatures; see that Pair, the lamb
 And the lamb's Mother, and their tender ways
 Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
 And not inaptly so, for love it is, 175
 Far as it carries thee. In some green Bower
 Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
 The One who is thy choice of all the world:
 There linger, listening, gazing with delight
 Impassioned, but delight how pitiable! 180
 Unless this love by a still higher love
 Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
 Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
 By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
 Bearing in union with the purest, best 185
 Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise,

A mutual tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual love acts not, nor can exist
 Without Imagination, which in truth
 Is but another name for absolute power 190
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
 And reason, in her most exalted mood.
 This faculty hath been the feeding source
 Of our long labor: we have traced the stream
 From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard 195
 Its natal murmur; followed it to light
 And open day; accompanied its course
 Among the ways of Nature; for a time
 Lost sight of it, bewildered and engulphed;
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more 200
 In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
 The works of man, and face of human life;
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
 Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
 Of human being, Eternity, and God. 205
 —Imagination having been our theme,
 So also hath that intellectual love,
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand
 Dividually.—Here must thou be, O Man!
 Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here; 210
 Here keepest thou in singleness thy state;
 No other can divide with thee this work;
 No secondary hand can intervene
 To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,
 The prime and vital principle is thine 215
 In the recesses of thy nature, far
 From any reach of outward fellowship,
 Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
 Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
 Here the foundation of his future years! 220
 For all that friendship, all that love can do,
 All that a darling countenance can look
 Or dear voice utter to complete the man,
 Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
 All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen 225

Up to the height of feeling intellect
 Shall want no humbler tenderness, his heart
 Be tender as a nursing Mother's heart;
 Of female softness shall his life be full,
 Of humble cares, and delicate desires, 230
 Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my Parents! Sister of my Soul!
 Thanks in sincerest Verse have been elsewhere
 Poured out for all the early tenderness
 Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis most true 235

That later seasons owed to thee no less;
 For spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
 Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
 Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
 Of all that, unassisted, I had marked, 240

In life or nature, of dose charms minute
 That win their way into the heart by stealth,
 Still, to the very going out of Youth,
 I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
 And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings, 245

Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down
 This over-sternness: rut for thee, dear Friend,
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
 In her original self too confident,
 Retained too long a countenance severe, 250

A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds
 Familiar, and a favorite of the Stars:
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
 And teach the little birds to build their nests 255

And warble in its chambers. At a time
 When Nature, destined to remain so long
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
 Into a second place, pleased to become
 A handmaid to a nobler than herself, 260

When every day brought with it some new sense
 Of exquisite regard for common things,
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts
 Of more refined humanity, thy breath,

Dear Sister, was a kind of gentler spring
That went before my steps. Thereafter came
One, whom with thee friendship had early paired;
She came, no more a Phantom to adorn
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a Spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;
Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
Couched in the dewy grass.

With such a theme, 275
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of? 280
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her overweening grasp, thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
More rational proportions; mystery, 285
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of Life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become 290
A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed, 295
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence;—and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace Life's humblest ground with herbs 300
At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this History is brought

To its appointed close: the discipline
 And consummation of a Poet's mind
 In every thing that stood most prominent 305
 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
 My knowledge, as to make me capable 310
 Of building up a Work that shall endure;
 Yet much hath been omitted, as need was,
 Of books how much! and even of the other wealth
 That is collected among woods and fields
 Far more: for Nature's secondary grace 315
 Hath hitherto been barely touched upon:
 The charm more superficial that attends
 Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice
 Apt illustrations of the moral world
 Caught at a glance or traced with curious pains. 320
 Finally, and above all, O Friend (I speak
 With due regret), how much is overlooked
 In human nature and her subtile ways
 As studied first in our own hearts, and then
 In life among the passions of mankind, 325
 Varying their composition and their hue,
 Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes
 That individual character presents
 To an attentive eye! For progress meet
 Along this intricate and difficult path, 330
 Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained
 As One of many School-fellows, compelled
 In hardy independance to stand up
 Amid conflicting interests, and the shock
 Of various tempers, to endure and note 335
 What was not understood though known to be:
 Among the mysteries of love and hate,
 Honour and shame, looking to right and left,
 Unchecked by innocence too delicate,
 And moral notions too intolerant, 340
 Sympathies too contracted. Hence when called

To take a station among Men, the step
 Was easier, the transition more secure,
 More profitable also; for the mind
 Learns from such timely exercise to keep 345
 In wholesome separation the two natures,
 The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern—
 Since I withdrew unwillingly from France
 I led an undomestic Wanderer's life, 350
 In London chiefly harboured; whence I roamed,
 Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
 Of rural England's cultivated Vales
 Or Cambrian solitudes.—

A Youth (he bore

The name of Calvert, it shall live if words 355
 Of mine can give it life) in firm belief
 That by endowments not from me withheld
 Good might be furthered, in his last decay
 Withdrawing, and from kindred whom he loved,
 A part of no redundant Patrimony, 360
 By a bequest sufficient for my needs
 Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
 At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
 By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet
 Far less a common Follower of the world, 365
 He deemed that my pursuits and labors lay
 Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
 A necessary maintenance ensures
 Without some hazard to the finer sense;
 —He cleared a passage for me, and the stream 370
 Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains
 Our present purpose seems not to require,
 And I have other tasks. Recall to mind
 The mood in which this labour was begun. 375
 O Friend! the termination of my course
 Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then,
 In that distraction, and intense desire,

I said unto the life which I had lived,
 Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee 380
 Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose
 As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
 Vast prospect of the world which I had been
 And was; and hence this Song, which like a Lark
 I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens 385
 Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
 To Earth attuned and her deep-drawn sighs,
 Yet centering all in love, and in the end
 All gratulant, if rightly understood.
 Whether to me shall be allotted life, 390
 And with life, power, to accomplish aught of worth
 That will be deemed no insufficient plea
 For having given this Story of myself,
 Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!
 When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view 395
 Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
 That summer under whose indulgent skies
 Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
 Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan Combs,
 Thou in bewitching words with happy heart 400
 Didst chaunt the Vision of that Ancient Man,
 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
 Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;
 And I, Associate with such labor, steeped
 In soft forgetfulness the live-long hours, 405
 Murmuring of Him who, joyous hap, was found,
 After the perils of his moonlight ride,
 Near the loud Waterfall; or her who sate
 In misery near the miserable Thorn;
 When Thou dost to that Summer turn thy thoughts, 410
 And hast before thee all which then we were,
 To thee, in memory of that happiness,
 It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend,
 Felt, that the History of a Poet's mind
 Is labour not unworthy of regard. 415
 To thee the Work shall justify itself.
 The last and later portions of this Gift

Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
 That were our daily portion when we first
 Together wantoned in wild Poesy, 420
 But under pressure of a private grief
 Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart
 That in this meditative History
 Have been laid open needs must make me feel
 More deeply, yet enable me to bear 425
 More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
 From hope that Thou art near, and wilt be soon
 Restored to us, in renovated health:
 When, after the first mingling of our tears,
 'Mong other consolations, we may draw 430
 Some pleasure from this Offering of my love.
 Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
 And all will be complete, thy race be run,
 Thy monument of glory will be raised;
 Then, though, too weak to tread the ways of truth, 435
 This Age fall back to old idolatry,
 Though Men return to servitude as fast
 As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
 By Nations sink together, we shall still
 Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know, 440
 Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
 Faithful alike in forwarding a day
 Of firmer trust, joint laborers in the Work
 (Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
 Of their deliverance, surely yet to come. 445
 Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified
 By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved
 Others will love, and we will teach them how,
 Instruct them how the mind of Man becomes 450
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
 On which he dwells, above this Frame of things
 (Which 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
 And fears of Men doth still remain unchanged)
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself 455
 Of quality and fabric more divine.