

Book Third

RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

It was a dreary morning when the chaise
Rolled over the flat plains of Huntingdon
And through the open windows first I saw
The long-backed chapel of King's College rear
His pinnacles above the dusky groves.
Soon afterwards, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap;
He passed – nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left a hundred yards behind.
10 The place, as we approached, seemed more and more
To have an eddy's force, and sucked us in
More eagerly at every step we took.
Onward we drove beneath the castle; down
By Magdalene Bridge we went and crossed the Cam,
And at the *Hoop* we landed, famous inn.

My spirit was up, my thoughts were full of hope;
Some friends I had – acquaintances who there
Seemed friends – poor simple schoolboys, now hung round
With honour and importance. In a world
20 Of welcome faces up and down I roved;
Questions, directions, counsel and advice,
Flowed in upon me from all sides. Fresh day
Of pride and pleasure! – To myself I seemed
A man of business and expense, and went
From shop to shop about my own affairs,
To tutors or to tailors as befell,

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-roofed chapel of King's College lift
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,
10 Or covetous of exercise and air;
He passed — nor was I master of my eyes
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,
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
20 Seemed friends, poor simple school-boys, now hung round
With honour 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
A man of business and expense, 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 heart.
 I was the dreamer, they the dream! I roamed
 Delighted through the motley spectacle:
 30 Gowns, grave or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,
 Lamps, gateways, flocks of churches, courts and towers –
 Strange transformation for a mountain youth,
 A northern villager. As if by word
 Of magic or some fairy's power, at once
 Behold me rich in moneys and attired
 In splendid clothes, with hose of silk, and hair
 Glittering like rimy trees when frost is keen –
 My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by,
 With other signs of manhood which supplied
 40 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.

The Evangelist St John my patron was:
 Three gloomy 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
 But hardly less industrious, with shrill notes
 50 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
 Near me was Trinity's loquacious clock
 Who never let the quarters, night or day,
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
 Twice over with a male and female voice.
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too,
 And from my bedroom I in moonlight nights
 Could see right opposite, a few yards off,
 The antechapel where the statue stood
 Of Newton with his prism and silent face.

From street to street with loose and careless mind.

30 I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed
 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

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

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
 50 A humming sound, less tuneable than bees,
 But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes
 Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.
 Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,
 Who never let the quarters, night or day,
 Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours
 Twice over with a male and female voice.
 Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;
 And from my pillow, looking forth by light
 Of noon or favouring stars, I could behold
 60 The antechapel where the statue stood
 Of Newton with his prism and silent face,
 The marble index of a mind for ever
 Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

- 60 Of College labours, of the lecturer's room
 (All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
 With loyal students faithful to their books,
 Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
 And honest dunces), of important days –
 Examinations, when the man was weighed
 As in the balance! – of excessive hopes,
 Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
 Small jealousies and triumphs good or bad,
 I make short mention. Things they were which then
 70 I did not love, nor do I love them now:
 Such glory was but little sought by me,
 And little won. But it is right to say
 That even so early, from the first crude days
 Of settling-time in this my new abode,
 Not seldom I had melancholy thoughts
 From personal and family regards
 (Wishing to hope without a hope), some fears
 About my future worldly maintenance,
 And, more than all, a strangeness in my mind,
 80 A feeling that I was not for that hour,
 Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
 Why should I grieve? I was a chosen son.
 For hither I had come with holy powers
 And faculties (whether to work or feel)
 To apprehend all passions and all moods
 Which time and place and season do impress
 Upon the visible universe, and work
 Like changes there by force of my own mind.
 I was a freeman – in the purest sense
 90 Was free – and to majestic ends was strong.
 I do not speak of learning, moral truth
 Or understanding, 'twas enough for me
 To know that I was otherwise endowed.

When the first glitter of the show was passed,
 And the first dazzle of the taper-light,
 As if with a rebound my mind returned
 Into its former self. Oft did I leave

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room
 All studded round, as thick as chairs could stand,
 With loyal students faithful to their books,
 Half-and-half idlers, hardy recusants,
 And honest dunces – of important days,
 Examinations, when the man was weighed
 70 As in a balance! of excessive hopes,
 Tremblings withal and commendable fears,
 Small jealousies, and triumphs good or bad,
 Let others that know more speak as they know.
 Such glory was but little sought by me,
 And little won. Yet from the first crude days
 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,
 80 And, more than all, a strangeness in the mind,
 A feeling that I was not for that hour,
 Nor for that place. But wherefore be cast down?
 For (not to speak of Reason and her pure
 Reflective acts to fix the moral law
 Deep in the conscience, nor of Christian Hope,
 Bowing her head before her sister Faith
 As one far mightier), hither I had come,
 Bear witness Truth, endowed with holy powers
 And faculties, whether to work or feel.
 90 Oft when the dazzling show no longer new
 Had ceased to dazzle, oftentimes did I quit

My comrades, and the crowd, buildings and groves,
 And walked along the fields, the level fields,
 100 With heaven's blue concave reared above my head.
 And now it was that, through such change entire
 And this first absence from those shapes sublime
 Wherewith I had been conversant, my mind
 Seemed busier in itself than heretofore —
 At least I more directly recognized
 My powers and habits. Let me dare to speak
 A higher language, say that now I felt
 The strength and consolation which were mine,
 As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
 110 I looked for universal things, perused
 The common countenance of earth and heaven,
 And turning the mind in upon itself
 Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
 And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
 Incumbencies more awful, visitings
 Of the upholder of the tranquil soul,
 Which underneath all passion lives secure
 A steadfast life. But peace, it is enough
 To notice that I was ascending now
 120 To such community with highest truth.

A track pursuing not untrod before,
 From deep analogies by thought supplied
 Or consciousnesses not to be subdued,
 To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,

My comrades, leave the crowd, buildings and groves,
 And as I paced alone the level fields
 Far from those lovely sights and sounds sublime
 With which I had been conversant, the mind
 Drooped not; but there into herself returning,
 With prompt rebound seemed fresh as heretofore.
 At least I more distinctly recognised
 Her native instincts: let me dare to speak
 100 A higher language, say that now I felt
 What independent solaces were mine,
 To mitigate the injurious sway of place
 Or circumstance, how far soever changed
 In youth, or *to* be changed in manhood's prime;
 Or for the few who shall be called to look
 On the long shadows in our evening years,
 Ordained precursors to the night of death.
 As if awakened, summoned, roused, constrained,
 I looked for universal things; perused
 110 The common countenance of earth and sky:
 Earth, nowhere unembellished by some trace
 Of that first Paradise whence man was driven;
 And sky, whose beauty and bounty are expressed
 By the proud name she bears — the name of Heaven.
 I called on both to teach me what they might;
 Or turning the mind in upon herself
 Pored, watched, expected, listened, spread my thoughts
 And spread them with a wider creeping; felt
 Incumbencies more awful, visitings
 120 Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,
 That tolerates the indignities of Time,
 And, from the centre of Eternity
 All finite motions overruling, lives
 In glory immutable. But peace! enough
 Here to record that I was mounting now
 To such community with highest truth —
 A track pursuing, not untrod before,
 From strict analogies by thought supplied
 Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.
 130 To every natural form, rock, fruit or flower,

Even the loose stones that cover the highway,
 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.
 130 Thus much for the one presence, and the life
 Of the great whole; suffice it here to add
 That whatsoe'er of terror or of love
 Or beauty, nature's daily face put on
 From transitory passion, unto this
 I was as wakeful even as waters are
 To the sky's motion, in a kindred sense
 Of passion was obedient as a lute
 That waits upon the touches of the wind.
 So was it with me in my solitude:
 140 So, often among multitudes of men.
 Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich,
 I had a world about me — 'twas my own,
 I made it; for it only lived to me
 And to the God who looked into my mind.

Such sympathies would sometimes show themselves
 By outward gestures and by visible looks —
 Some called it madness — such indeed it was,
 If childlike fruitfulness in passing joy,
 If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
 150 To inspiration, sort with such a name;
 If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
 By poets of old time, and higher up
 By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
 May in these tutored days no more be seen
 With undisordered sight. But leaving this,
 It was no madness; for I had an eye
 Which in my strongest workings evermore
 Was looking for the shades of difference
 As they lie hid in all exterior forms,
 160 Near or remote, minute or vast — an eye
 Which from a stone, a tree, a withered leaf,
 To the broad ocean and the azure heavens

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.
 Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love
 Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on
 From transitory passion, unto this
 I was as sensitive as waters are
 140 To the sky's influence in a kindred mood
 Of passion; was obedient as a lute
 That waits upon the touches of the wind:
 Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich —
 I had a world about me — 'twas my own;
 I made it, for it only lived to me,
 And to the God who sees into the heart.
 Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed
 By outward gestures and by visible looks:
 Some called it madness — so indeed it was,
 150 If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,
 If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured
 To inspiration, sort with such a name;
 If prophecy be madness; if things viewed
 By poets in old time, and higher up
 By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,
 May in these tutored days no more be seen
 With undisordered sight. But leaving this,
 It was no madness, for the bodily eye
 Amid my strongest workings evermore
 160 Was searching out the lines of difference
 As they lie hid in all external forms,
 Near or remote, minute or vast, an eye
 Which from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf,
 To the broad ocean and the azure heavens

Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
 Could find no surface where its power might sleep,
 Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
 And by an unrelenting agency
 Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, o friend, have I retraced my life
 Up to an eminence, and told a tale
 170 Of matters which not falsely I may call
 The glory of my youth. Of genius, power,
 Creation and divinity itself
 I have been speaking, for my theme has been
 What passed within me! Not of outward things
 Done visibly for other minds – words, signs,
 Symbols or actions – but of my own heart
 Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.
 O heavens, how awful is the might of souls,
 And what they do within themselves while yet
 180 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
 And genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
 With hand however weak, but in the main
 It lies far hidden from the reach of words.
 Points have we all of us within our souls
 Where all stand single; this I feel, and make
 Breathings for incommunicable powers.
 Yet each man is a memory to himself,
 190 And therefore, now that I must quit this theme,
 I am not heartless, for there's not a man
 That lives who hath not had his godlike hours,
 And knows not what majestic sway we have
 As natural beings in the strength of nature.

Enough, for now into a populous plain
 We must descend. A traveller I am,
 And all my tale is of myself – even so –
 So be it, if the pure in heart delight
 To follow me, and thou, o honoured friend,

Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,
And by an unrelenting agency
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

- 170 And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life
Up to an eminence, 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
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.
- 180 O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls,
And what they do within themselves while yet
The yoke of earth is new to them, the world
Nothing but a wild field where they were sown.
This is, in truth, heroic argument,
This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch
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
- 190 Breathings for incommunicable powers;
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
As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

- No more: for now into a populous plain
We must descend. A Traveller I am,
Whose tale is only of himself; even so,
200 So be it, if the pure of heart be prompt
To follow, and if thou, my honoured Friend!

200 Who in my thoughts art ever at my side,
Uphold as heretofore my fainting steps.

It has been told already how my sight
Was dazzled by the novel show, and how
Erelong I did into myself return.

So did it seem, and so in truth it was —
Yet this was but short lived. Thereafter came
Observance less devout: I had made a change
In climate, and my nature's outward coat
Changed also, slowly and insensibly.

210 To the deep quiet and majestic thoughts
Of loneliness succeeded empty noise
And superficial pastimes, now and then
Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes,
And (worse than all) a treasonable growth
Of indecisive judgements that impaired
And shook the mind's simplicity. And yet
This was a gladsome time. Could I behold —
Who, less insensible than sodden clay

220 On a sea-river's bed at ebb of tide,
Could have beheld — with undelighted heart
So many happy youths (so wide and fair
A congregation in its budding-time
Of health, and hope, and beauty), all at once
So many divers samples of the growth
Of life's sweet season — could have seen unmoved
That miscellaneous garland of wild flowers
Upon the matron temples of a place

230 So famous through the world? To me at least
It was a goodly prospect; for, through youth,
Though I had been trained up to stand unpropped,
And independent musings pleased me so
That spells seemed on me when I was alone,
Yet could I only cleave to solitude
In lonesome places. If a throng was near,
That way I leaned by nature, for my heart
Was social and loved idleness and joy.

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 show
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.

210 Full oft the quiet and exalted thoughts
Of loneliness gave way to empty noise
And superficial pastimes; now and then
Forced labour, and more frequently forced hopes;
And, worst of all, a treasonable growth
Of indecisive judgments, that impaired
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,
220 Could have beheld, — with undelighted heart,
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
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 godly prospect: for, in sooth,
230 Though I had learnt betimes to stand unpropped,
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
Was social, and loved idleness and joy.

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

Such was the tenor of the opening act
 260 In this new life. Imagination slept,
 And yet not utterly. I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
 Wake where they waked, range that enclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
 Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of nobler feeling, that those spiritual men,
 270 Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
 Seemed humbled in these precincts, thence to be
 The more beloved – invested here with tasks
 Of life's plain business, as a daily garb

Not seeking those who might participate
 My deeper pleasures (nay, I had not once,
 Though not unused to mutter lonesome songs,
 240 Even with myself divided such delight,
 Or looked that way for aught that might be clothed
 In human language), easily I passed
 From the remembrances of better things,
 And slipped into the ordinary works
 Of careless youth, unburthened, unalarmed.
Caverns there were within my mind which sun
 Could never penetrate, yet did there not
 Want store of leafy *arbours* where the light
 Might enter in at will. Companionships,
 250 Friendships, acquaintances, were welcome all.
 We sauntered, played, 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
 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
 260 In this new life. Imagination slept,
 And yet not utterly. I could not print
 Ground where the grass had yielded to the steps
 Of generations of illustrious men,
 Unmoved. I could not always lightly pass
 Through the same gateways, sleep where they had slept,
 Wake where they waked, range that inclosure old,
 That garden of great intellects, undisturbed.
 Place also by the side of this dark sense
 Of noble feeling, that those spiritual men,
 270 Even the great Newton's own ethereal self,
 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)

(Dictators at the plough), a change that left
All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant mills of Trumpington
I laughed with Chaucer; in the hawthorn-shade
Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
Of amorous passion. And that gentle bard,
280 Chosen by the muses for their page of state —
Sweet Spenser, moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace —
I called him brother, Englishman, and friend!
Yea, our blind poet, who in his later day
Stood almost single, uttering odious truth
(Darkness before, and danger's voice behind),
Soul awful, if the earth has ever lodged
An awful soul, I seemed to see him here
Familiarly, and in his scholar's dress
290 Bounding before me, yet a stripling youth —
A boy, no better, with his rosy cheeks
Angelical, keen eye, courageous look,
And conscious step of purity and pride.

Among the band of my compeers was one,
My class-fellow at school, whose chance it was
To lodge in the apartments which had been,
Time out of mind, honoured by Milton's name —
The very shell reputed of the abode
Which he had tenanted. O temperate bard!
300 One afternoon, the first time I set foot
In this thy innocent nest and oratory,
Seated with others in a festive ring
Of commonplace convention, I to thee
Poured out libations, to thy memory drank
Within my private thoughts, till my brain reeled,
Never so clouded by the fumes of wine
Before that hour, or since. Thence forth I ran
From that assembly, through a length of streets
Ran ostrich-like, to reach our chapel-door

Put on a lowly and a touching grace
 Of more distinct humanity, that left
 All genuine admiration unimpaired.

Beside the pleasant Mill of Trompington
 I laughed with Chaucer in the hawthorn shade;
 280 Heard him, while birds were warbling, tell his tales
 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!
 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 has ever lodged
 290 An awful soul – I seemed to see him here
 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.
 Among the band of my compeers was one
 Whom chance had stationed in the very room
 Honoured by Milton's name. O temperate Bard!
 Be it confest that, for the first time, seated
 300 Within thy innocent lodge and oratory,
 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. Then, forth I ran
 From the assembly; through a length of streets,
 Ran, ostrich-like, to reach our chapel door

310 In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
 Albeit long after the importunate bell
 Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra-voice
 No longer haunting the dark winter night.
 (Call back, o friend, a moment to thy mind,
 The place itself and fashion of the rites.)
 Upshouldering in a dislocated lump
 With shallow ostentatious carelessness
 My surplice, gloried in and yet despised,
 I clove in pride through the inferior throng
 320 Of the plain burghers, who in audience stood
 On the last skirts of their permitted ground,
 Beneath the pealing organ. Empty thoughts! —
 I am ashamed of them; and that great bard,
 And thou, o friend, who in thy ample mind
 Has stationed me for reverence and love,
 Ye will forgive the weakness of that hour,
 In some of its unworthy vanities
 Brother of many more.

In this mixed sort

330 The months passed on, remissly, not given up
 To wilful alienation from the right,
 Or walks of open scandal, but in vague
 And loose indifference, easy likings, aims
 Of a low pitch — duty and zeal dismissed,
 Yet nature, or a happy course of things,
 Not doing in their stead the needful work.
 The memory languidly revolved, the heart
 Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
 Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
 Rotted as by a charm, my life became
 340 A floating island, an amphibious thing,
 Unsound, of spongy texture, yet withal
 Not wanting a fair face of water weeds
 And pleasant flowers. The thirst of living praise,
 A reverence for the glorious dead, the sight
 Of those long vistas, catacombs in which
 Perennial minds lie visibly entombed,

In not a desperate or opprobrious time,
 Albeit long after the importunate bell
 310 Had stopped, with wearisome Cassandra voice
 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
 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,
 320 And thou, O Friend! who in thy ample mind
 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
 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,
 330 Yet Nature, or a happy course of things
 Not doing in their stead the needful work.
 The memory languidly revolved, the heart
 Reposed in noontide rest, the inner pulse
 Of contemplation almost failed to beat.
 Such life might not inaptly be compared
 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,
 340 Fit reverence for the glorious Dead, the sight
 Of those long vistas, 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 commotion touched not me!
 350 No look was in these walls to put to shame
 My easy spirits and discountenance
 Their light composure, far less to instil
 A calm resolve of mind, firmly addressed
 To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame
 Of others but my own; I should in truth
 As far as doth concern my single self,
 Misdemean most widely, lodging it elsewhere.
 For I, bred up in nature's lap, was even
 As a spoiled child, and (rambling like the wind
 360 As I had done in daily intercourse
 With those delicious rivers, solemn heights
 And mountains, ranging like a fowl of the air)
 I was ill-tutored for captivity –
 To quit my pleasure, and from month to month
 Take up a station calmly on the perch
 Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
 Had also left less space within my mind,
 Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
 A freshness in those objects of its love,
 370 A winning power beyond all other power.
 Not that I slighted books – that were to lack
 All sense – but other passions had been mine,
 More fervent, making me less prompt perhaps
 To indoor study than was wise or well,
 Or suited to my years.

Yet I could shape

The image of a place which – soothed and lulled
 As I had been, trained up in paradise
 Among sweet garlands and delightful sounds,
 Accustomed in my loneliness to walk
 380 With nature magisterially – yet I
 Methinks could shape the image of a place
 Which with its aspect should have bent me down
 To instantaneous service, should at once

Have often stirred the heart of youth, and bred
 A fervent love of rigorous discipline. —
 Alas! such high emotion touched not me.
 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
 350 To puissant efforts. Nor was this the blame
 Of others but my own; I should, in truth,
 As far as doth concern my single self,
 Misdemean most widely, lodging it elsewhere:
 For I, bred up 'mid Nature's luxuries,
 Was a spoiled child, and rambling like the wind,
 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;
 360 To quit my pleasure, and, from month to month,
 Take up a station calmly on the perch
 Of sedentary peace. Those lovely forms
 Had also left less space within my mind,
 Which, wrought upon instinctively, had found
 A freshness in those objects of her love,
 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
 370 To in-door study than was wise or well,
 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)
 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
 Which I had paid to nature. Toil and pains
 In this recess which I have bodied forth
 Should spread from heart to heart, and stately groves,
 390 Majestic edifices, should not want
 A corresponding dignity within.
 The congregating temper which pervades
 Our unripe years, not wasted, should be made
 To minister to works of high attempt,
 Which the enthusiast would perform with love.
 Youth should be awed, possessed, as with a sense
 Religious, of what holy joy there is
 In knowledge, if it be sincerely sought
 For its own sake — in glory, and in praise,
 400 If but by labour won, and to endure.
 The passing day should learn to put aside
 Her trappings here, should strip them off abashed
 Before antiquity and steadfast truth
 And strong book-mindedness; and over all
 Should be a healthy sound simplicity,
 A seemly plainness — name it as you will,
 Republican, or pious.

If these thoughts

Be a gratuitous emblazonry
 That does but mock this recreant age, at least
 410 Let folly and false-seeming (we might say)
 Be free to affect whatever formal gait
 Of moral or scholastic discipline
 Shall raise them highest in their own esteem —
 Let them parade among the schools at will,
 But spare the house of God. Was ever known
 The witless shepherd who would drive his flock
 With serious repetition to a pool
 Of which 'tis plain to sight they never taste?
 A weight must surely hang on days begun
 420 And ended with worst mockery. Be wise,

Have made me pay to science and to arts
 And written lore, acknowledged my liege lord,
 380 A homage frankly offered up, like that
 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.
 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.
 390 Youth should be awed, religiously possessed
 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 labour won, and fit to endure
 The passing day; should learn to put aside
 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,
 400 A seemly plainness, name it what you will,
 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
 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
 410 A flock that thirsts not to a pool disliked?
 A weight must surely hang on days begun
 And ended with such mockery. Be wise,

Ye presidents and deans, and to your bells
 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
 Suffers for this. Even science too, at hand
 In daily sight of such irreverence,
 Is smitten thence with an unnatural taint,
 430 Loses her just authority, falls beneath
 Collateral suspicion, else unknown.
 This obvious truth did not escape me then,
 Unthinking as I was, and I confess
 That, having in my native hills given loose
 To a schoolboy's dreaming, I had raised a pile
 Upon the basis of the coming time,
 Which now before me melted fast away –
 Which could not live, scarcely had life enough
 To mock the builder

Oh, what joy it were
 440 To see a sanctuary for our country's youth
 With such a spirit in it as might be
 Protection for itself, a virgin grove
 Primeval in its purity and depth,
 Where, though the shades were filled with cheerfulness,
 Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds
 In under-coverts, yet the countenance
 Of the whole place should wear a stamp of awe –
 A habitation sober and demure
 For ruminating creatures, a domain
 450 For quiet things to wander in, a haunt
 In which the heron might 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 we look!
 Our eyes are crossed by butterflies, our ears
 Hear chattering popinjays – the inner heart

Ye Presidents and Deans, and, till the spirit
 Of ancient times revive, and youth be trained
 At home in pious service, to your bells
 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.
 This truth escaped me not, and I confess,
 That having 'mid my native hills given loose
 To a schoolboy's vision, I had raised a pile
 Upon the basis of the coming time,
 430 That fell in ruins round me. Oh, what joy
 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 cheerfulness were filled,
 Nor indigent of songs warbled from crowds
 In under-coverts, yet the countenance
 Of the whole place should bear a stamp of awe;
 A habitation sober and demure
 For ruminating creatures; a domain
 440 For quiet things to wander in; a haunt
 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;
 Mine eyes were crossed by butterflies, ears vexed
 By chattering popinjays; the inner heart

Is trivial, and the impresses without
Are of a gaudy region.

Different sight

- 460 Those venerable doctors saw of old,
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 sat
Like caterpillars eating out their way
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
470 Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.
O seat of arts, renowned throughout the world,
Far different service in those homely days
The nurslings of the muses underwent
From their first childhood – in that glorious time
When learning, like a stranger come from far,
Sounding through Christian lands her trumpet, roused
The peasant and the king; when boys and youths,
The growth of ragged villages and huts,
Forsook their homes, and (errant in the quest
480 Of patron, famous school or friendly nook
Where, pensioned, they in shelter might sit down)
From town to town and through wide scattered realms
Journeyed with their huge folios in their hands,
And often, starting from some covert place,
Saluted the chance comer on the road
Crying, 'An obolus, a penny give
To a poor scholar'; when illustrious men,
Lovers of truth by penury constrained –
Bucer, Erasmus, or Melanchthon – read
490 Before the doors and windows of their cells
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

Seemed trivial, and the impresses without
Of a too gaudy region.

Different sight

- 450 Those venerable Doctors saw of old,
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 the ponderous books they hung
Like caterpillars eating out their way
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
460 Spare diet, patient labour, and plain weeds.
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,
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
470 Of Patron, famous school or friendly nook,
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 on the road,
Crying, 'An obolus, a penny give
To a poor scholar!' – when illustrious men,
Lovers of truth, by penury constrained,
Bucer, Erasmus, or Melancthon, read
480 Before the doors or windows of their cells
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)
 Their highest promise. If the mariner,
 When at reluctant distance he has passed
 Some fair enticing island, did but know
 What fate might have been his, could he have brought
 500 His bark to land upon the wished-for spot,
 Good cause full often would he have to bless
 The belt of churlish surf that scared him thence,
 Or haste of the inexorable wind.
 For me, I grieve not; happy is the man
 Who only misses what I missed, who falls
 No lower than I fell.

I did not love

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

To books, our daily fare prescribed, I turned
 With sickly appetite, and when I went
 At other times in quest of my own food
 I chased not steadily the manly deer,
 But laid me down to any casual feast
 Of wild wood-honey, or, with truant eyes

Are not so pure by nature that they needs
 Must keep to all, as fondly all believe,
 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
 490 His bark to land upon the wished-for shore,
 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
 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
 500 And freer pace; but more, far more, I grieved
 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.
 From these I turned to travel with the shoal
 Of more unthinking natures, easy minds
 And pillow; yet not wanting love that makes
 The day pass lightly on, when foresight sleeps,
 510 And wisdom and the pledges interchanged
 With our own inner being are forgot.

530 Unruly, peeped about for vagrant fruit.
 And as for what pertains to human life,
 The deeper passions working round me here
 (Whether of envy, jealousy, pride, shame,
 Ambition, emulation, fear, or hope,
 Or those of dissolute pleasure) were by me
 Unshared, and only now and then observed —
 So little was their hold upon my being,
 As outward things that might administer
 To knowledge or instruction. Hushed, meanwhile,
 540 Was the under-soul, locked up in such a calm
 That not a leaf of the great nature stirred.

Yet was this deep vacation not given up
 To utter waste. Hitherto I had stood
 In my own mind remote from human life —
 At least from what we commonly so name —
 Even as a shepherd on a promontory
 Who lacking occupation looks far forth
 Into the endless sea, and rather makes
 Than finds what he beholds. And sure it is
 550 That this first transit from the smooth delights
 And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
 To something that resembled an approach
 Towards mortal business (to a privileged world
 Within a world, a midway residence
 With all its intervenient imagery)
 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 —
 560 By a more just gradation did lead on
 To higher things, more naturally matured
 For permanent possession, better fruits,
 Whether of truth or virtue, to ensue.

In playful zest of fancy did we note
 (How could we less?) the manners and the ways
 Of those who in the livery were arrayed

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,)

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,

520 That this first transit from the smooth delights
 And wild outlandish walks of simple youth
 To something that resembles an approach
 Towards human business, to a privileged world
 Within a world, a midway residence
 With all its intervenient imagery,
 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;

530 By a more just gradation did lead on
 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
 (How could we less?) the manners and the ways
 Of those who lived distinguished by the badge

Of good or evil fame – of those with whom
 By frame of academic discipline
 Perforce we were connected, men whose sway
 570 And whose authority of office served
 To set our minds on edge, and did no more.
 Nor wanted we rich pastime of this kind,
 Found everywhere but chiefly in the ring
 Of the grave elders, men unscoured, grotesque
 In character, tricked out like aged trees
 Which through the lapse of their infirmity
 Give ready place to any random seed
 That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.
 Here on my view, confronting as it were
 580 Those shepherd swains whom I had lately left,
 Did flash a different image of old age
 (How different!) yet both withal alike
 A book of rudiments for the unpractised sight –
 Objects embossed, and which with sedulous care
 Nature holds up before the eye of youth
 In her great school, with further view perhaps
 To enter early on her tender scheme
 Of teaching comprehension with delight
 And mingling playful with pathetic thoughts.

590 The surfaces of artificial life
 And manners finely spun, the delicate race
 Of colours, lurking, gleaming up and down
 Through that state arras woven with silk and gold –
 This wily interchange of snaky hues,
 Willingly and unwillingly revealed –
 I had not learned to watch; and at this time,
 Perhaps, had such been in my daily sight
 I might have been indifferent thereto
 As hermits are to tales of distant things.
 600 Hence for these rarities elaborate
 Having no relish yet, I was content
 With the more homely produce rudely piled

Of good or ill report; or those with whom
By frame of Academic discipline

540 We were perforce connected, men whose sway
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 everywhere, but chiefly in the ring
Of the grave Elders, men unscoured, grotesque
In character, tricked out like aged trees
Which through the lapse of their infirmity
Give ready place to any random seed
That chooses to be reared upon their trunks.

550 Here on my view, confronting vividly
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,
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
560 Of teaching comprehension with delight,
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;
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

In this our coarser warehouse. At this day
 I smile in many a mountain-solitude
 At passages and fragments that remain
 Of that inferior exhibition, played
 By wooden images, a theatre
 For wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
 Remembrances before me of old men,
 610 Old humourists, who have been long in their graves,
 And having almost in my mind put off
 Their human names, have into phantoms passed
 Of texture midway betwixt life and books.

I play the loiterer, 'tis enough to note
 That here in dwarf proportions were expressed
 The limbs of the great world – its goings-on
 Collaterally portrayed as in mock fight,
 A tournament of blows, some hardly dealt
 Though short of mortal combat – and whate'er
 620 Might of this pageant be supposed to hit
 A simple rustic's notice, this way less,
 More that way, was not wasted upon me.
 And yet this spectacle may well demand
 A more substantial name: no mimic show,
 Itself a living part of a live whole,
 A creek of the vast sea. For all degrees
 And shapes of spurious fame and short-lived praise
 Here sat in state, and, fed with daily alms,
 Retainers won away from solid good.
 630 And here was labour, his own bond-slave; hope,
 That never set the pains against the prize;
 Idleness halting with his weary clog,
 And poor misguided shame, and witless fear,
 And simple pleasure, foraging for death;
 Honour misplaced, and dignity astray;
 Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile;
 Murmuring submission, and bald government
 (The idol weak as the idolator),
 And decency and custom starving truth,

570 Of less elaborate fabric. At this day
 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
 At wake or fair. And oftentimes do flit
 Remembrances before me of old men —
 Old humourists, who have been long in their graves,
 And having almost in my mind put off
 580 Their human names, have into phantoms passed
 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,
 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,
 590 More that way, was not wasted upon me —
 And yet the spectacle may well demand
 A more substantial name, no mimic show,
 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
 Here sate in state, and fed with daily alms
 Retainers won away from solid good;
 And here was Labour, his own bond-slave; Hope,
 That never set the pains against the prize;
 600 Idleness halting with his weary clog,
 And poor misguided Shame, and witless Fear,
 And simple Pleasure foraging for Death;
 Honour misplaced, and Dignity astray;
 Feuds, factions, flatteries, enmity, and guile
 Murmuring submission, and bald government,
 (The idol weak as the idolator,)
 And Decency and Custom starving Truth,

Book Fourth

SUMMER VACATION

A pleasant sight it was when, having clomb
The Heights of Kendal, and that dreary moor
Was crossed, at length as from a rampart's edge
I overlooked the bed of Windermere.
I bounded down the hill, shouting amain
A lusty summons to the farther shore
For the old ferryman, and when he came
I did not step into the well-known boat
Without a cordial welcome. Thence right forth
10 I took my way, now drawing towards home,
To that sweet valley where I had been reared;
'Twas but a short hour's walk ere, veering round,
I saw the snow-white church upon its hill
Sit like a thronèd lady, sending out
A gracious look all over its domain.
Glad greetings had I, and some tears perhaps,
From my old dame, so motherly and good,
While she perused me with a parent's pride.
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew

Book Fourth

SUMMER VACATION

Bright was the summer's noon when quickening 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,

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

10 Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst,

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,

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;

20 'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round

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

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.

30 The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew

20 Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart
 Can beat I never will forget thy name.
 Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest
 After thy innocent and busy stir
 In narrow cares, thy little daily growth
 Of calm enjoyments – after eighty years,
 And more than eighty, of untroubled life –
 Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
 Honoured with little less than filial love.
 Great joy was mine to see thee once again,
 30 Thee and thy dwelling, and a throng 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?
 The rooms, the court, the garden were not left
 Long unsaluted, and the spreading pine
 And broad stone table underneath its boughs –
 Our summer seat in many a festive hour –
 And that unruly child of mountain birth,
 40 The froward brook, which, 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
 A channel paved by the hand of man.
 I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,
 And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,
 'Ha', quoth I, 'pretty prisoner, are you there?'
 And now (reviewing soberly that hour)
 50 I marvel that a fancy did not flash
 Upon me, and a strong desire, straightway –
 At sight of such an emblem that showed forth
 So aptly my late course of even days
 And all their smooth enthrallment – to pen down
 A satire on myself. My aged dame
 Was with me, at my side; she guided me,
 I willing – nay, nay, wishing – to be led.

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
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,
And more than eighty, of untroubled life,
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood
Honoured with little less than filial love.
40 What joy was mine to see thee once again,
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?
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;
50 Nor that unruly child of mountain birth,
The famous 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)
A channel paved 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?'
60 Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered,
'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;
I willing, nay — nay, wishing to be led.

The face of every neighbour whom I met
 Was as a volume to me; some I hailed
 60 Far off, upon the road or at their work,
 Unceremonious greetings interchanged
 With half the length of a long field between.
 Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
 A salutation that was more constrained,
 Though earnest – doubtless with a little pride,
 But with more shame, for my habiliments,
 The transformation and the gay attire.

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

Among the faces which it pleased me well
 To see again was one by ancient right
 Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills,
 By birth and call of nature preordained
 To hunt the badger and unearth the fox
 Among the impervious crags, but having been
 90 From youth our own adopted, he had passed
 Into a gentler service. And when first
 The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day
 Along my veins I kindled with the stir,
 The fermentation, and the vernal heat

– 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,
 70 Unceremonious greetings interchanged
 With half the length of a long field between.
 Among my schoolfellows I scattered round
 Like recognitions; but with some constraint
 Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,
 But with more shame, for my habiliments,
 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
 80 A Poet's history, may I leave untold
 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
 Roar and the rain beat hard, where I so oft
 Had lain awake on summer nights to watch
 The moon in splendour couched among the leaves
 Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;
 90 Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro
 In the dark summit of the waving tree
 She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

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

Of poesy, affecting private shades
 Like a sick lover, then this dog was used
 To watch me, an attendant and a friend,
 Obsequious to my steps early and late —
 Though often of such dilatory walk
 100 Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.
 A hundred times, when in these wanderings
 I have been busy with the toil of verse
 (Great pains and little progress) and at once
 Some fair enchanting image in my mind
 Rose up full-formed like Venus from the sea,
 Have I sprung forth towards him and let loose
 My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
 Caressing him again and yet again.
 And when in the public roads at eventide
 110 I sauntered, like a river murmuring
 And talking to itself, at such a season
 It was his custom to jog on before;
 But duly, whensoever he had met
 A passenger approaching, would he turn
 To give me timely notice, and straightway,
 Punctual to such admonishment, I hushed
 My voice, composed my gait, and shaped myself
 To give and take a greeting that might save
 My name from piteous rumours such as wait
 120 On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved —
 Regretted, that word too was on my tongue,
 But they were richly laden with all good
 And cannot be remembered but with thanks
 And gratitude and perfect joy of heart —
 Those walks did now like a returning spring
 Come back on me again. When first I made
 Once more the circuit of our little lake,
 If ever happiness hath lodged with man
 130 That day consummate happiness was mine,
 Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.

Of poesy, affecting private shades
 Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used
 To watch me, an attendant and a friend,
 Obsequious to my steps early and late,
 Though often of such dilatory walk
 Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.
 110 A hundred times when, roving high and low,
 I have been harassed 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 to let loose
 My hand upon his back with stormy joy,
 Caressing him again and yet again.
 And when at evening on the public way
 I sauntered, like a river murmuring
 120 And talking to itself when all things else
 Are still, the creature trotted on before;
 Such was his custom; but whene'er he met
 A passenger approaching, he would turn
 To give me timely notice, and straightway,
 Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed
 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
 130 On men suspected to be crazed in brain.

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved —
 Regretted! — that word, too, was on my tongue,
 But they were richly laden with all good,
 And cannot be remembered but with thanks
 And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart —
 Those walks in all their freshness now came back
 Like a returning Spring. When first I made
 Once more the circuit of our little lake,
 If ever happiness hath lodged with man,
 140 That day consummate happiness was mine,
 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 –
 But as a face we love is sweetest then
 When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
 It chance to wear is sweetest if the heart
 Have fulness in itself, even so with me
 140 It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
 Put off her veil, and self-transmuted stood
 Naked as in the presence of her God.
 As on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch
 A heart that had not been disconsolate;
 Strength came where weakness was not known to be,
 At least not felt; and restoration came
 Like an intruder knocking at the door
 Of unacknowledged weariness.

I took

The balance in my hand and weighed myself.
 150 I saw but little, and thereat was pleased! –
 Little did I remember, and even this
 Still pleased me more. But I had hopes and peace
 And swellings of the spirits, was rapt and soothed,
 Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
 How life pervades the undecaying mind –
 How the immortal soul with godlike power
 Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep
 That time can lay upon her – how, on earth,
 Man, if he do but live within the light
 160 Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
 His being with a strength that cannot fail.
 Nor was there want of milder thoughts: of love,
 Of innocence and holiday repose,
 And more than pastoral quiet in the heart
 Of amplest projects, and a peaceful end
 At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
 Thus musing, in a wood I sat me down
 Alone, continuing there to muse; meanwhile

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;
 But as a face we love is sweetest then
 When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look
 It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart
 Have fulness in herself; even so with me
 150 It fared that evening. Gently did my soul
 Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood
 Naked, as in the presence of her God.
 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,
 At least not felt; and restoration came
 Like an intruder knocking at the door
 Of unacknowledged weariness. I took
 The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.
 160 — Of that external scene which round me lay,
 Little, in this abstraction, did I see;
 Remembered less; but I had inward hopes
 And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,
 Conversed with promises, had glimmering views
 How life pervades the undecaying mind;
 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
 170 Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad
 His being armed with strength that cannot fail.
 Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love
 Of innocence, and holiday repose;
 And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir
 Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end
 At last, or glorious, by endurance won.
 Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down
 Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes

The mountain-heights were slowly overspread
 170 With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
 The long lake lengthened out its hoary line.
 And in the sheltered coppice where I sat,
 Around me from among the hazel leaves
 (Now here, now there, stirred by the straggling wind)
 Came intermittingly a breath-like sound,
 A respiration short and quick, which oft –
 Yea, might I say, again and yet again –
 Mistaking for the panting of my dog,
 The off-and-on companion of my walk,
 180 I turned my head to look if he were there.

A freshness also found I at this time
 In human life – the life I mean of those
 Whose occupations really I loved –
 The prospect often touched me with surprise,
 Crowded and full and changed, as seemed to me,
 Even as a garden in the heat of spring
 After an eight-days' absence. For – to omit
 The things which were the same and yet appeared
 So different – amid this solitude,
 190 The little vale where was my chief abode,
 'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind
 To note perhaps some sheltered seat in which
 An old man had been used to sun himself,
 Now empty; pale-faced babes whom I had left
 In arms, known children of the neighbourhood,
 Now rosy prattlers tottering up and down;
 And growing girls whose beauty, filched away
 With all its pleasant promises, was gone
 To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

200 Yes, I had something of another eye,
 And often looking round was moved to smiles
 Such as a delicate work of humour breeds.
 I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts
 Of those plain-living people, in a sense
 Of love and knowledge; with another eye

And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread
 180 With darkness, and before a rippling breeze
 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,
 Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,
 The off and on companion of my walk;
 And such, at times, believing them to be,
 I turned my head to look if he were there;
 190 Then into solemn thought I passed once more.

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
 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,
 200 'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind
 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;
 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,
 210 And often looking round was moved to smiles
 Such as a delicate work of humour breeds;
 I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,
 Of those plain-living people now observed
 With clearer knowledge; with another eye

I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,
 The shepherd on the hills. With new delight
 (This chiefly) did I view my grey-haired dame,
 Saw her go forth to church or other work
 210 Of state, equipped in monumental trim:
 Short velvet cloak, her bonnet of the like,
 A mantle such as Spanish cavaliers
 Wore in old time. Her smooth domestic life –
 Affectionate without uneasiness –
 Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less
 Her clear though shallow stream of piety
 That ran on sabbath days a fresher course.
 With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read
 Her bible on the Sunday afternoons,
 220 And loved the book when she had dropped asleep
 And made of it a pillow for her head.

Nor less do I remember to have felt
 Distinctly manifested at this time
 A dawning, even as of another sense:
 A human-heartedness about my love
 For objects hitherto the gladsome air
 Of my own private being and no more –
 Which I had loved even as a blessed spirit
 Or angel if he were to dwell on earth
 230 Might love, in individual happiness.
 But now there opened on me other thoughts
 Of change, congratulation and regret,
 A new-born feeling! It spread far and wide:
 The trees, the mountains, shared it, and the brooks,
 The stars of heaven – now seen in their old haunts –
 White Sirius glittering o'er the southern crags,
 Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven
 (Acquaintances of every little child)
 And Jupiter, my own beloved star!
 240 Whatever shadings of mortality
 Had fallen upon these objects heretofore
 Were different in kind – not tender (strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they and severe, the scatterings

I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,
 The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,
 This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;
 Saw her go forth to church or other work
 Of state, equipped in monumental trim;
 220 Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like),
 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
 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
 230 And made of it a pillow for her head.

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:
 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
 240 Of change, congratulation or regret,
 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,
 Acquaintances of every little child,
 And Jupiter, my own beloved star!
 Whatever shadings of mortality,
 Whatever imports from the world of death
 250 Had come among these objects heretofore,
 Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,
 Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings

Of childhood) – and moreover had given way
 In later youth to beauty, and to love
 Enthusiastic, to delight and joy.

As one who hangs down-bending from the side
 Of a slow-moving boat upon the breast
 Of a still water, solacing himself
 250 With such discoveries as his eye can make
 Beneath him in the bottom of the deeps,
 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, from that which is indeed
 The region, and the things which there abide
 In their true dwelling – now is crossed by gleam
 Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,
 260 And motions that are sent he knows not whence,
 Impediments that make his task more sweet;
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
 With like success. Nor have we often looked
 On more alluring shows (to me, at least),
 More soft, or less ambiguously descried,
 Than those which now we have been passing by,
 And where we still are lingering.

Yet in spite
 Of all these new employments of the mind,
 270 There was an inner falling off. I loved,
 Loved deeply, all that I had loved before –
 More deeply even than ever – but a swarm
 Of heady thoughts jostling each other, gauds
 And feast and dance and public revelry
 And sports and games (less pleasing in themselves,
 Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh
 Of manliness and freedom), these did now
 Seduce me from the firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures, from that eager zeal,

Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way
 In later youth to yearnings of a love
 Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

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
 260 Beneath him in the bottom of the deep,
 Sees many beauteous sights – weeds, fishes, flowers,
 Grotts, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,
 Yet often is perplexed and cannot part
 The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,
 Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth
 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,
 270 Impediments that make his task more sweet;
 Such pleasant office have we long pursued
 Incumbent o'er the surface of past time
 With like success, nor often have appeared
 Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned
 Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend!
 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,
 280 More deeply even than ever: but a swarm
 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
 Of manliness and freedom) all conspired
 To lure my mind from firm habitual quest
 Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal

280 Those yearnings, which had every day been mine —
 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
 To nature and to books, or, at the most,
 From time to time, by inclination shipped
 One among many in societies
 That were, or seemed, as simple as myself.
 But now was come a change. It would demand
 Some skill, and longer time than may be spared,
 To paint even to myself these vanities,
 And how they wrought. But sure it is that now
 290 Contagious air did oft environ me,
 Unknown among these haunts in former days.
 The very garments that I wore appeared
 To prey upon my strength, and stopped the course
 And quiet stream of self-forgetfulness.
 Something there was about me that perplexed
 The authentic sight of reason, pressed too closely
 On that religious dignity of mind
 That is the very faculty of truth —
 Which wanting (either from the very first
 300 A function never lighted up, or else
 Extinguished), man, a creature great and good,
 Seems but a pageant plaything with vile claws,
 And this great frame of breathing elements,
 A senseless idol.

This vague heartless chase
 Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange
 For books and nature at that early age.
 'Tis true some casual knowledge might be gained
 Of character or life; but at that time,
 Of manners put to school I took small note,
 310 And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
 Far better had it been to exalt the mind
 By solitary study, to uphold
 Intense desire by thought and quietness —
 And yet, in chastisement of these regrets,
 The memory of one particular hour

And damp those yearnings which had once been mine —
290 A wild, unworldly-minded youth, given up
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
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.
300 'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained
Of character or life; but at that time,
Of manners put to school I took small note,
And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.
Far better had it been to exalt the mind
By solitary study, to uphold
Intense desire through meditative peace;
And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,
The memory of one particular hour

Does here rise up against me!

In a throng,

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

Strange rendezvous my mind was at that time,
 A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,
 Solid and light, short-sighted and profound —
 Of inconsiderate habits and sedate
 350 Consorting in one mansion unreprieved.
 I knew the worth of that which I possessed,

Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng
 310 Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid,
 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;
 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,
 320 The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky
 Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse
 And open field, through which the pathway wound,
 And homeward led my steps. Magnificent
 The morning rose, in memorable pomp,
 Glorious as e'er I had beheld – in front,
 The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,
 The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,
 Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;
 330 And in the meadows and the lower grounds
 Was all the sweetness of a common dawn –
 Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,
 And labourers going forth 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
 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
 340 A parti-coloured show of grave and gay,
 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 misused. Besides in truth
 That summer, swarming as it did with thoughts
 Transient and loose, yet wanted not a store
 Of primitive hours, when – by these hindrances
 Unthwarted – I experienced in myself
 Conformity as just as that of old
 To the end and written spirit of God's works,
 Whether held forth in nature or in man.

- 360 From many wanderings that have left behind
 Remembrances not lifeless, I will here
 Single out one, then pass to other themes.
 A favourite pleasure hath it been with me
 From time of earliest youth to walk alone
 Along the public way, when, for the night
 Deserted, in its silence it assumes
 A character of deeper quietness
 Than pathless solitudes. At such an hour
 Once, ere these summer months were passed away,
 370 I slowly mounted up a steep ascent
 Where the road's watery surface, to the ridge

Though slighted and too oft misused. Besides,
 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
 350 Conformity as just as that of old
 To the end and written spirit of God's works,
 Whether held forth in Nature or in Man,
 Through pregnant vision, separate or conjoined.

When from our better selves we have too long
 Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,
 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
 360 With an appropriate human centre – hermit,
 Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;
 Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot
 Is treading, where no other face is seen)
 Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top
 Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;
 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
 370 Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months
 Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show
 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
 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,
 380 Where the road's watery surface, to the top

Of that sharp rising, glittered in the moon
 And seemed before my eyes another stream
 Creeping with silent lapse to join the brook
 That murmured in the valley.

On I went

Tranquil, receiving in my own despite
 Amusement, as I slowly passed along,
 From such near objects as from time to time
 Perforce intruded on the listless sense
 380 Quiescent and disposed to sympathy,
 With an exhausted mind worn out by toil
 And all unworthy of the deeper joy
 Which waits on distant prospect – cliff or sea,
 The dark blue vault and universe of stars.
 Thus did I steal along that silent road,
 My body from the stillness drinking in
 A restoration like the calm of sleep,
 But sweeter far. Above, before, behind,
 Around me, all was peace and solitude:
 390 I looked not round, nor did the solitude
 Speak to my eye, but it was heard and felt.
 Oh happy state – what beauteous pictures now
 Rose in harmonious imagery! They rose
 As from some distant region of my soul
 And came along like dreams; yet such as left
 Obscurely mingled with their passing forms
 A consciousness of animal delight,
 A self-possession felt in every pause
 And every gentle movement of my frame.

400 While thus I wandered, step by step led on,
 It chanced a sudden turning of the road
 Presented to my view an uncouth shape,
 So near that, slipping back into the shade
 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
 Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
 A foot above man's common measure tall,

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,
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,
Sound there was none — but, lo! an uncouth shape,
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,
So near that, slipping back into the shade
390 Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well,
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,
A span above man's common measure, tall,

Stiff in his form, and upright, lank and lean —
 A man more meagre, as it seemed to me,
 Was never seen abroad by night or day.
 410 His arms were long, and bare his hands; his mouth
 Showed ghastly in the moonlight; from behind,
 A milestone propped him, and his figure seemed
 Half sitting, and half standing. I could mark
 That he was clad in military garb,
 Though faded yet entire. He was alone,
 Had no attendant, neither dog, nor staff,
 Nor knapsack; in his very dress appeared
 A desolation, a simplicity,
 That seemed akin to solitude. Long time
 420 Did I peruse him with a mingled sense
 Of fear and sorrow. From his lips meanwhile
 There issued murmuring sounds, as if of pain
 Or of uneasy thought; yet still his form
 Kept the same steadiness, and at his feet
 His shadow lay, and moved not. In a glen
 Hard by, a village stood, whose roofs and doors
 Were visible among the scattered trees,
 Scarce distant from the spot an arrow's flight.
 I wished to see him move, but he remained
 430 Fixed to his place, and still from time to time
 Sent forth a murmuring voice of dead complaint,
 Groans scarcely audible.

Without self-blame

I had not thus prolonged my watch; and now,
 Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,
 I left the shady nook where I had stood
 And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place
 He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm
 In measured gesture lifted to his head
 Returned my salutation, then resumed
 440 His station as before. And when erelong
 I asked his history, he in reply
 Was neither slow nor eager, but unmoved
 And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,

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
 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 back-ground. From his lips, ere long,
 Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain
 Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form
 Kept the same awful steadiness — at his feet
 His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame
 Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length
 410 Subduing my heart's specious cowardice,
 I left the shady nook where I had stood
 And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place
 He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm
 In measured gesture lifted to his head
 Returned my salutation; then resumed
 His station as before; and when I asked
 His history, the veteran, in reply,
 Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,
 And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,

A stately air of mild indifference,
 He told in simple words a soldier's tale —
 That in the tropic islands he had served,
 Whence he had landed scarcely ten days past;
 That on his landing he had been dismissed,
 And now was travelling to his native home.
 450 At this, I turned and looked towards the village
 But all were gone to rest, the fires all out,
 And every silent window to the moon
 Shone with a yellow glitter. 'No one there',
 Said I, 'is waking; we must measure back
 The way which we have come. Behind yon wood
 A labourer dwells, and (take it on my word)
 He will not murmur should we break his rest,
 And with a ready heart will give you food
 And lodging for the night.' At this he stooped
 460 And from the ground took up an oaken staff
 By me yet unobserved — a traveller's staff
 Which I suppose from his slack hand had dropped,
 And lain till now neglected in the grass.

Towards the cottage without more delay
 We shaped our course. As it appeared to me
 He travelled without pain, and I beheld
 With ill-suppressed astonishment his tall
 And ghastly figure moving at my side;
 Nor, while we journeyed thus, could I forbear
 470 To question him of what he had endured
 From hardship, battle, or the pestilence.
 He all the while was in demeanour calm,
 Concise in answer. Solemn and sublime
 He might have seemed, but that in all he said
 There was a strange half-absence, and a tone
 Of weakness and indifference, as of one
 Remembering the importance of his theme
 But feeling it no longer. We advanced
 Slowly, and ere we to the wood were come
 480 Discourse had ceased. Together on we passed
 In silence through the shades gloomy and dark;

- 420 A stately air of mild indifference,
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale —
That in the Tropic Islands he had served,
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past;
That on his landing he had been dismissed,
And now was travelling towards his native home.
This heard, I said, in pity, 'Come with me.'
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved —
A staff which must have dropt from his slack hand
430 And lay till now neglected in the grass.
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared
To travel without pain, and I beheld,
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,
His ghostly figure moving at my side;
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear
To turn from present hardships to the past,
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,
On what he might himself have seen or felt.
440 He all the while was in demeanour calm,
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
Soon ended, and together on we passed
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.

Then, turning up along an open field,
We gained the cottage. At the door I knocked,
Calling aloud 'My friend, here is a man
By sickness overcome. Beneath your roof
This night let him find rest, and give him food,
If food he need, for he is faint and tired.'
Assured that now my comrade would repose
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth
490 He would not linger in the public ways
But ask for timely furtherance, and help
Such as his state required. At this reproof,
With the same ghastly mildness in his look
He said 'My trust is in the God of Heaven,
And in the eye of him that passes me!'

The cottage door was speedily unlocked;
And now the soldier touched his hat again
With his lean hand, and in a voice that seemed
To speak with a reviving interest
500 Till then unfelt, he thanked me. I returned
The blessing of the poor unhappy man,
And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
And lingered near the door a little space,
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

Up-turning, then, along an open field,
 We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,
 450 And earnestly to charitable care
 Commended him as a poor friendless man,
 Belated and by sickness overcome.
 Assured that now the traveller would repose
 In comfort, I entreated that henceforth
 He would not linger in the public ways,
 But ask for timely furtherance and help
 Such as his state required. At this reproof,
 With the same ghastly mildness in his look,
 He said, 'My trust is in the God of Heaven,
 460 And in the eye of him who passes me!'

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,
 And now the soldier touched his hat once more
 With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,
 Whose tone bespoke reviving interests
 Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned
 The farewell blessing of the patient man,
 And so we parted. Back I cast a look,
 And lingered near the door a little space,
 Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

Book Fifth

BOOKS

Even in the steadiest mood of reason, when
All sorrow for thy transitory pains
Goes out, it grieves me for thy state, o man,
Thou paramount creature, and thy race, while ye
Shall sojourn on this planet – not for woes
Which thou endurest (that weight, albeit huge,
I charm away), but for those palms achieved
Through length of time, by study and hard thought,
The honours of thy high endowments. There
10 My sadness finds its fuel.

Hitherto

In progress through this verse my mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign intellect,
Who through that bodily image has diffused
A soul divine which we participate,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man, hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with itself,
Things worthy of unconquerable life;
20 And yet we feel – we cannot choose but feel –
That these must perish. Tremblings of the heart
It gives to think that the immortal being
No more shall need such garments. And yet man,
As long as he shall be the child of earth,
Might almost 'weep to have' what he may lose,
Nor be himself extinguished, but survive
Abject, depressed, forlorn, disconsolate.
A thought is with me sometimes, and I say

Book Fifth

BOOKS

When Contemplation, like the night-calm felt
Through earth and sky, spreads widely, and sends deep
Into the soul its tranquillising power,
Even then I sometimes grieve for thee, O Man,
Earth's paramount Creature! not so much for woes
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
10 Of study and hard thought; there, there, it is
That sadness finds its fuel. Hitherto,
In progress through this Verse, my mind hath looked
Upon the speaking face of earth and heaven
As her prime teacher, intercourse with man
Established by the sovereign Intellect,
Who through that bodily image hath diffused,
As might appear to the eye of fleeting time,
A deathless spirit. Thou also, man! hast wrought,
For commerce of thy nature with herself,
20 Things that aspire to unconquerable life;
And yet we feel – we cannot choose 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,
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 earth by inward throes be wrenched throughout,
 30 Or fire be sent from far to wither all
 Her pleasant habitations, and dry up
 Old ocean in his bed, left singed and bare,
 Yet would the living presence still subsist
 Victorious, and composure would ensue,
 And kindlings like the morning – presage sure,
 Though slow perhaps, of a returning day.
 But all the meditations of mankind,
 Yea, all the adamantine holds of truth
 By reason built; or passion (which itself
 40 Is highest reason in a soul sublime),
 The consecrated works of bard and sage,
 Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
 Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes –
 Where would they be? Oh, why has not the mind
 Some element to stamp her image on
 In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
 Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
 Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?'

One day, when in the hearing of a friend
 50 I had given utterance to thoughts like these,
 He answered with a smile that in plain truth
 'Twas going far to seek disquietude;
 But on the front of his reproof confessed
 That he at sundry seasons had himself
 Yielded to kindred hauntings – and forthwith
 Added that once upon a summer's noon
 While he was sitting in a rocky cave
 By the sea-side (perusing, as it chanced,
 The famous history of the errant knight
 60 Recorded by Cervantes) these same thoughts
 Came to him, and to height unusual rose
 While listlessly he sat, and having closed
 The book, had turned his eyes towards the sea.
 On poetry and geometric truth
 (The knowledge that endures), upon these two
 And their high privilege of lasting life

30 Should the whole frame of earth by inward throes
 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,
 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
 40 By reason built, or passion, which itself
 Is highest reason in a soul sublime;
 The consecrated works of Bard and Sage,
 Sensuous or intellectual, wrought by men,
 Twin labourers and heirs of the same hopes;
 Where would they be? Oh! why hath not the Mind
 Some element to stamp her image on
 In nature somewhat nearer to her own?
 Why, gifted with such powers to send abroad
 Her spirit, must it lodge in shrines so frail?

50 One day, when from my lips a like complaint
 Had fallen in presence of a studious friend,
 He with a smile made answer, that in truth
 'Twas going far to seek disquietude;
 But on the front of his reproof confessed
 That he himself had oftentimes given way
 To kindred hauntings. Whereupon I told,
 That once in the stillness of a summer's noon,
 While I was seated in a rocky cave
 By the sea-side, perusing, so it chanced,
 60 The famous history of the errant knight
 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 toward the wide sea.
 On poetry and geometric truth,
 And their high privilege of lasting life,

Exempt from all internal injury,
 He mused – upon these chiefly – and at length,
 His senses yielding to the sultry air,
 70 Sleep seized him and he passed into a dream.

He saw before him an arabian waste,
 A desert, and he fancied that himself
 Was sitting there in the wide wilderness
 Alone upon the sands. Distress of mind
 Was growing in him when, behold, at once
 To his great joy a man was at his side,
 Upon a dromedary mounted high!
 He seemed an arab of the Bedouin tribes;
 A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 80 A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
 Of a surpassing brightness. Much rejoiced
 The dreaming man that he should have a guide
 To lead him through the desert, and he thought –
 While questioning himself what this strange freight
 Which the newcomer carried through the waste
 Could mean – the arab told him that the stone
 (To give it in the language of the dream)
 Was Euclid's *Elements*. 'And this', said he,
 'This other', pointing to the shell, 'this book
 90 Is something of more worth.' And at the word
 The stranger, said my friend continuing,
 Stretched forth the shell towards me, with command
 That I should hold it to my ear. I did so
 And heard that instant in an unknown tongue,
 Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
 A loud prophetic blast of harmony,
 An ode in passion uttered, which foretold
 Destruction to the children of the earth
 By deluge now at hand.

No sooner ceased
 100 The song, but with calm look the arab said
 That all was true, that it was even so
 As had been spoken, and that he himself

From all internal injury exempt,
 I mused, upon these chiefly: and at length,
 My senses yielding to the sultry air,
 70 Sleep seized me, and I passed into a dream.
 I saw before me stretched a boundless plain
 Of sandy wilderness, all black 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
 Upon a dromedary, mounted high.
 He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes:
 A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
 A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
 80 Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight
 Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
 Was present, one who with unerring skill
 Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
 I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
 Which the new-comer carried through the waste
 Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
 (To give it in the language of the dream)
 Was 'Euclid's Elements;' and 'This,' said he,
 'Is something of more worth;' and at the word
 90 Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,
 In colour 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,
 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 man to man by purest bond
 Of nature, undisturbed by space or time;
 The other that was a god, yea many gods,
 Had voices more than all the winds, and was
 A joy, a consolation, and a hope.
 110 My friend continued, 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.

A wish was now engendered in my fear
 To cleave unto this man, and I begged leave
 To share his errand with him. On he passed
 Not heeding me; I followed, and took note
 That he looked often backward with wild look,
 120 Grasping his twofold treasure to his side.
 Upon a dromedary, lance in rest
 He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
 I fancied that he was the very knight
 Whose tale Cervantes tells, yet not the knight,
 But was an arab of the desert too —
 Of these was neither, and was both at once.
 His countenance meanwhile grew more disturbed,
 And, looking backwards when he looked, I saw
 A glittering light, and asked him whence it came.
 130 'It is', said he, 'the waters of the deep
 Gathering upon us.' Quickening then his pace,
 He left me. I called after him aloud;
 He heeded not, but with his twofold charge
 Beneath his arm, before me, full in view,
 I saw him riding o'er the desert sands
 With the fleet waters of the drowning world
 In chase of him. Whereat I waked in terror,
 And saw the sea before me, and the book
 In which I had been reading at my side.

Was going then to bury those two books:
 The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
 And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
 Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
 The 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.
 Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt
 To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
 To share his enterprise, 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;
 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
 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.

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

Mighty, indeed supreme, must be the power
 Of living nature, which could thus so long
 Detain me from the best of other thoughts.
 Even in the lispng time of infancy
 170 And (later down) in prattling childhood — even
 While I was travelling back among those days —
 How could I ever play an ingrate's part?
 Once more should I have made those bowers resound,
 And intermingled strains of thankfulness
 With their own thoughtless melodies. At least
 It might have well beseemed me to repeat

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,
 A gentle dweller in the desert, crazed
 By love and feeling, and internal thought
 Protracted among endless solitudes;
 Have shaped him wandering upon this quest!
 Nor have I pitied him; but rather felt
 150 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
 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
 Or heaven made manifest, that I could share
 160 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,
 Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
 Shakespeare, 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
 And dearest helpers, left unthanked, unpraised,
 170 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?
 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 beseeemed me to repeat

Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again
 In slender accents of sweet verse some tale
 That did bewitch me then and soothes me now.
 180 O friend, o poet, brother of my soul,
 Think not that I could ever pass along
 Untouched by these remembrances – no, no,
 But I was hurried forward by a stream
 And could not stop. Yet wherefore should I speak?
 Why call upon a few weak words to say
 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
 Tells it, and the insuperable look
 That drinks as if it never could be full.

That portion of my story I shall leave
 There registered. Whatever else there be
 Of power or pleasure, sown or fostered thus,
 Peculiar to myself, let that remain
 Where it lies hidden in its endless home
 Among the depths of time. And yet it seems
 That here, in memory of all books which lay
 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
 Which roars along the bed of Jewish song,
 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 weary travellers when they rest themselves
 By the highways and hedges, ballad tunes,
 Food for the hungry ears of little ones
 And of old men who have survived their joy –
 It seemeth, in behalf of these, the works,

Some simply fashioned tale, to tell again,
 In slender accents of sweet verse, some tale
 180 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?
 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
 Upon the cheek of listening Infancy
 190 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
 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
 Their sure foundations in the heart of man,
 200 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,
 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,
 And sun-burnt travellers resting their tired limbs,
 210 Stretched under wayside hedge-rows, ballad tunes,
 Food for the hungry ears of little ones,
 And of old men who have survived their joys:
 'Tis just that in behalf of these, the works,

And of the men who 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 may become and what we need,
 Than nature's self, which is the breath of God.

Rarely and with reluctance would I stoop
 To transitory themes, yet I rejoice –
 And, by these thoughts admonished, must speak out
 Thanksgivings from my heart – that I was reared
 Safe from an evil which these days have laid
 Upon the children of the land, a pest
 That might have dried me up body and soul.
 230 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 –
 If we, in lieu of wandering as we did
 Through heights and hollows and bye-spots of tales
 Rich with indigenous produce (open ground
 Of fancy, happy pastures ranged at will)
 Had been attended, followed, watched, and noosed,
 Each in his several melancholy walk
 240 Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
 Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude –
 Or rather, like a stalled ox shut out
 From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
 A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
 A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood –
 Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
 And she herself from the maternal bond
 250 Still undischarged. Yet does she little more

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
 For ever to be hallowed; only less,
 220 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
 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
 That might have dried me up, body and soul.
 230 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!
 If in the season of unperilous choice,
 In lieu of wandering, as we did, through vales
 Rich with indigenous produce, open ground
 Of Fancy, happy pastures ranged at will,
 We had been followed, hourly watched, and noosed,
 Each in his several melancholy walk
 240 Stringed like a poor man's heifer at its feed,
 Led through the lanes in forlorn servitude;
 Or rather like a stallèd ox debarred
 From touch of growing grass, that may not taste
 A flower till it have yielded up its sweets
 A prelibation to the mower's scythe.

Behold the parent hen amid her brood,
 Though fledged and feathered, and well pleased to part
 And straggle from her presence, still a brood,
 And she herself from the maternal bond
 250 Still undischarged; yet doth she little more

Than move with them in tenderness and love,
 A centre of the circle which they make;
 And now and then – alike from need of theirs
 And call of her own natural appetites –
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,
 Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
 My honoured mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves;
 She left us destitute and, as we might,
 260 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.
 Hence am I checked, but I will 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 from those to come)
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
 270 Nor did by habit of her thoughts mistrust
 Our nature, but had virtual faith that he
 Who fills the mother's breasts with innocent milk
 Does also for our nobler part provide,
 Under his great correction and control,
 As innocent instincts, and as innocent food.
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 From feverish dread of error and mishap
 And evil (overweeningly so called)
 Was not puffed up by false unnatural hopes,
 280 Nor selfish with unnecessary cares,
 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
 Than others have; but from the times perhaps

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
 And call of her own natural appetites,
 She scratches, ransacks up the earth for food,
 Which they partake at pleasure. Early died
 My honoured Mother, she who was the heart
 And hinge of all our learnings and our loves:
 She left us destitute, and, as we might,
 260 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.
 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,
 Had no presumption, no such jealousy,
 270 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,
 Under His great correction and control,
 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.
 This was her creed, and therefore she was pure
 280 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,
 Nor with impatience from the season asked
 More than its timely produce, rather loved
 The hours for what they are, than from regard
 Glanced on their promises in restless pride.
 Such was she – not from faculties more strong
 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,
 290 Being itself benign.

My drift has scarcely

I fear been obvious, for I have recoiled
 From showing as it is the monster birth
 Engendered by these too industrious times.
 Let few words paint it! 'Tis a child – no child,
 But a dwarf man! – in knowledge, virtue, skill,
 In what he is not and in what he is,
 The noontide shadow of a man complete.
 A worshipper of worldly seemliness,
 Not quarrelsome (for that were far beneath
 300 His dignity), with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain. Selfishness
 May not come near him, gluttony or pride;
 The wandering beggars propagate his name,
 Dumb creatures find him tender as a nun.
 Yet deem him not for this a naked dish
 Of goodness merely, he is garnished out.
 Arch are his notices, and nice his sense
 Of the ridiculous; deceit and guile,
 Meanness and falsehood, he detects, can treat
 310 With apt and graceful laughter; nor is blind
 To the broad follies of the licensed world;
 Though shrewd, yet innocent himself withal,
 And can read lectures upon innocence!

He is fenced round (nay armed, for aught we know,
 In panoply complete) and fear itself,
 Natural or supernatural alike,
 Unless it leap upon him in a dream,
 Touches him not. Briefly, the moral part
 Is perfect, and in learning and in books
 320 He is a prodigy. His discourse moves slow,
 Massy and ponderous as a prison door,
 Tremendously embossed with terms of art;

290 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.

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,
 This model of a child is never known
 300 To mix in quarrels; that were far beneath
 Its dignity; with gifts he bubbles o'er
 As generous as a fountain; selfishness
 May not come near him, nor the little throng
 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,
 Touches him not. To enhance the wonder; see
 310 How arch his notices, how nice his sense
 Of the ridiculous; not blind is he
 To the broad follies of the licensed world,
 Yet innocent himself withal, though shrewd,
 And can read lectures upon innocence;

Rank growth of propositions overruns
 The stripling's brain; the path in which he treads
 Is choked with grammars; cushion of divine
 Was never such a type of thought profound
 As is the pillow where he rests his head.
 The ensigns of the empire which he holds,
 The globe and sceptre of his royalties,
 330 Are telescopes and crucibles and maps.
 Ships he can guide across the pathless sea,
 And tell you all their cunning; he can read
 The inside of the earth, and spell the stars;
 He knows the policies of foreign lands,
 Can string you names of districts, cities, towns,
 The whole world over, tight as beads of dew
 Upon a gossamer thread! He sifts, he weighs,
 Takes nothing upon trust: his teachers stare,
 The country people pray for God's good grace
 340 And tremble at his deep experiments.
 All things are put to question. He must live
 Knowing that he grows wiser every day
 Or else not live at all – and seeing too
 Each little drop of wisdom as it falls
 Into the dimpling cistern of his heart.
 Meanwhile old grandame earth is grieved to find
 The playthings which her love designed for him
 Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
 Weep, and the riversides are all forlorn.

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

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;
 He knows the policies of foreign lands;
 320 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
 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,
 Pity the tree. — Poor human vanity,
 330 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,
 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 playthings, which her love designed for him,
 Unthought of: in their woodland beds the flowers
 340 Weep, and the river sides are all forlorn.

To drive him back, and pound him like a stray
 Within the pinfold of his own conceit,
 Which is his home, his natural dwelling place.
 Oh, give us once again the wishing-cap
 Of Fortunatus and the invisible coat
 Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood
 And Sabra in the forest with St George!
 The child whose love is here, at least does reap
 One precious gain – that he forgets himself.

370 These mighty workmen of our later age
 Who with a broad highway have overbridged
 The froward chaos of futurity,
 Tamed to their bidding; they who have the art
 To manage books, and things, and make them work
 Gently on infant minds as does the sun
 Upon a flower – the tutors of our youth,
 The guides, the wardens of our faculties
 And stewards of our labour, watchful men
 And skilful in the usury of time,
 380 Sages who in their prescience would control
 All accidents, and to the very road
 Which they have fashioned would confine us down
 Like engines – when will they be taught
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world
 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?

390 There was a boy – ye knew him well, ye cliffs
 And islands of Winander! – many a time
 At evening, when the stars had just begun
 To move along the edges of the hills,
 Rising or setting, would he stand alone
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
 Pressed closely palm to palm and to his mouth
 Uplifted, he as through an instrument

Oh! give us once again the wishing cap
 Of Fortunatus, and the invisible coat
 Of Jack the Giant-killer, Robin Hood,
 And Sabra in the forest with St. George!
 The child, whose love is here, at least, doth reap
 One precious gain, that he forgets himself.

These mighty workmen of our later age,
 Who, with a broad highway, have overbridged
 The froward chaos of futurity,
 350 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,
 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,
 That in the unreasoning progress of the world
 360 A wiser spirit is at work for us,
 A better eye than theirs, most prodigal
 Of blessings, and most studious of our good,
 Even in what seem our most unfruitful hours?

There was a Boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs
 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
 Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,
 370 And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands
 Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth
 Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls
 That they might answer him. And they would shout
 400 Across the 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
 Of mirth and jocund din. And when it chanced
 That pauses of deep silence mocked his skill,
 Then sometimes in that silence while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
 410 Would enter unawares into his mind
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This boy was taken from his mates, and died
 In childhood ere he was full ten years old.
 Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot,
 The vale where he was born. The churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village-school,
 And there, along that bank, when I have passed
 420 At evening, I believe that oftentimes
 A full half-hour together I have stood
 Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies.
 Even now, methinks, I have before my sight
 That self-same village church; I see her sit
 (The thronèd lady spoken of erewhile)
 On her green hill, forgetful of this boy
 Who slumbers at her feet – forgetful too
 Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,
 And listening only to the gladsome sounds
 430 That, from the rural school ascending, play
 Beneath her and about her. May she long
 Behold a race of young ones like to those
 With whom I herded! – easily indeed
 We might have fed upon a fatter soil
 Of arts and letters, but be that forgiven –

Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,
 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
 Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause
 380 Of silence came and baffled his best skill,
 Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung
 Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise
 Has carried far into his heart the voice
 Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene
 Would enter unawares into his mind,
 With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,
 Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received
 Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died
 390 In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old.
 Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale
 Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs
 Upon a slope above the village school,
 And through that churchyard 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
 That self-same village church; I see her sit
 400 (The thronèd 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,
 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,
 We might have fed upon a fatter soil
 410 Of arts and letters – but be that forgiven) –

A race of real children, not too wise,
 Too learned, or too good, but wanton, fresh,
 And bandied up and down by love and hate;
 Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy,
 440 Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;
 Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft
 Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight
 Of pain and fear, yet still in happiness
 Not yielding to the happiest upon earth.
 Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,
 Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;
 May books and nature be their early joy,
 And knowledge rightly honoured with that name —
 Knowledge not purchased with the loss of power!

450 Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first entrusted to the care
 Of that sweet valley — when its paths, its shores
 And brooks, were like a dream of novelty
 To my half-infant thoughts — that very week,
 While I was roving up and down alone
 Seeking I knew not what, I chanced to cross
 One of those open fields which, shaped like ears,
 Make green peninsulas on Esthwaite's Lake.
 Twilight was coming on, yet through the gloom
 460 I saw distinctly on the opposite shore
 A heap of garments, left, as I supposed,
 By one who there was bathing. Long I watched,
 But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
 Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,
 And now and then a fish up-leaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day
 (Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale)
 Went there a company, and in their boat
 Sounded with grappling irons and long poles.
 470 At length, the dead man, mid that beauteous scene

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;
 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
 Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not
 420 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!
 And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name —
 Knowledge not purchased by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week
 When I was first intrusted to the care
 Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,
 And brooks were like a dream of novelty
 430 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,
 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,
 But no one owned them; meanwhile the calm lake
 440 Grew dark with all the shadows on its breast,
 And, now and then, a fish up-leaping snapped
 The breathless stillness. The succeeding day,
 Those unclaimed garments telling a plain tale
 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

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

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

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

Of trees and hills and water, bolt upright
 450 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
 Such sights before, among the shining streams
 Of faëry land, the forest of romance.
 Their spirit hallowed the sad spectacle
 With decoration of ideal grace;
 A dignity, a smoothness, like the works
 Of Grecian art, and purest poesy.

460 A precious treasure had I long possessed,
 A little yellow, canvas-covered book,
 A slender abstract of the Arabian tales;
 And, from companions in a new abode,
 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 moneys he possessed, and hoard up more,
 Till our joint savings had amassed enough
 To make this book our own. Through several months,
 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
 That golden store of books which I had left,
 480 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, I have lain
 Down by thy side, o Derwent, murmuring stream,
 510 On the hot stones and in the glaring sun,
 And there have read, devouring as I read,
 Defrauding the day's glory – desperate –
 Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach
 Such as an idler deals with in his shame
 I to my sport betook myself again.

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,
 And o'er the heart of man: invisibly
 It comes, directing those to works of love
 Who care not, know not, think not what they do.
 520 The tales that charm away the wakeful night
 In Araby, romances, legends penned
 For solace by the light of monkish lamps;
 Fictions for ladies, of their love, devised
 By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun
 By the dismantled warrior in old age
 Out of the bowels of those very thoughts
 In which his youth did first extravagante –
 These spread like day, and something in the shape
 Of these will live till man shall be no more.
 530 Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,
 And they must have their food. Our childhood sits,
 Our simple childhood sits, upon a throne
 That has 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
 This dawning earth, to recognize, expect,
 And, in the long probation that ensues
 540 (The time of trial, ere we learn to live
 In reconcilment with our stinted powers),
 To endure this state of meagre vassalage,
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
 Uneasy and unsettled – yoke-fellows

For a whole day together, have I lain
 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,
 Such as an idler deals with in his shame,
 490 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,
 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;
 Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised
 500 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 extravagates;
 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
 That hath more power than all the elements.
 510 I guess not what this tells of Being past,
 Nor what it augurs of the life to come;
 But so it is, and, in that dubious hour,
 That twilight when we first begin to see
 This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,
 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,
 Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,
 520 Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows

To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed
 And humbled down – oh, then we feel, we feel,
 We know, when we have friends! Ye dreamers, then –
 Forgers of lawless tales! – we bless you then
 (Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape
 550 Philosopher will call you), then we feel
 With what, and how great might ye are in league,
 Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,
 An empire, a possession; ye whom time
 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, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

It might demand a more impassioned strain
 To tell of later pleasures, linked to these,
 560 A tract of the same isthmus which we cross
 In progress from our native continent
 To earth and human life – I mean to speak
 Of that delightful time of growing youth
 When cravings for the marvellous relent,
 And we begin to love what we have seen;
 And sober truth, experience, sympathy,
 Take stronger hold of us, and words themselves
 Move us with conscious pleasure. I am sad
 At thought of raptures now for ever flown;
 570 Even unto tears I sometimes could be sad
 To think of, to read over, many a page –
 Poems withal of name – which at the time
 Did never fail to entrance me, and are now
 Dead in my eyes as is a theatre
 Fresh emptied of spectators. Thirteen years,
 Or haply less, I might have seen when first
 My ears began to open to the charm
 Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
 For *their own sakes* – a passion and a power –

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,
 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,
 An empire, a possession, — ye whom time
 530 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, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

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
 On that delightful time of growing youth,
 540 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,
 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,
 Poems withal of name, which at that time
 550 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
 With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
 Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
 For their own *sakes*, a passion, and a power;

580 And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
For pomp, or love.

Oft in the public roads,
Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
Was yellowing the hill-tops, with that dear friend
(The same whom I have mentioned heretofore)
I went abroad, and for the better part
Of two delightful hours we strolled along
By the still borders of the misty lake
Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
Or conning more, as happy as the birds
590 That round us chanted. Well might we be glad,
Lifted above the ground by airy fancies
More bright than madness or the dreams of wine.
And though full oft the objects of our love
Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
Yet surely at such time no vulgar power
Was working in us — nothing less in truth
Than that most noble attribute of man
(Though yet untutored and inordinate),
That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
600 Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
Of human life. What wonder then if sounds
Of exultation echoed through the groves!
For images, and sentiments, and words,
And everything with which we had to do
In that delicious world of poesy,
Kept holiday, a never-ending show
With music, incense, festival, and flowers!

Here must I pause: this only will I add,
From heart-experience and in humblest sense
610 Of modesty, that he who in his youth
A wanderer among the woods and fields
With living nature hath been intimate,
Not only in that raw unpractised time
Is stirred to ecstasy (as others are)
By glittering verse, but he does furthermore,

And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
 For pomp, or love. Oft, in the public roads
 Yet unfrequented, while the morning light
 560 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,
 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;
 And, though full oft the objects of our love
 570 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,
 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!
 For, images, and sentiments, and words,
 580 And everything encountered or pursued
 In that delicious world of poesy,
 Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
 With music, incense, festival, and flowers!

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,
 Not only in that raw unpractised time
 590 Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are,
 By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,

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

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

In measure only dealt out to himself,
 Knowledge and increase of enduring joy
 From the great Nature that exists in works
 Of mighty Poets. Visionary power
 Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
 Embodied in the mystery of words:
 There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
 Of shadowy things work endless changes, — there,
 600 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,
 Present themselves as objects recognised,
 In flashes, and with glory not their own.

Book Sixth

CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

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

We need not linger o'er the ensuing time,
20 But let me add at once that now, the bonds
Of indolent and vague society
Relaxing in their hold, I lived henceforth
More to myself, read more, reflected more,
Felt more, and settled daily into habits
More promising. Two winters may be passed
Without a separate notice; many books
Were read in process of this time – devoured,
Tasted or skimmed, or studiously perused –
Yet with no settled plan. I was detached

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,
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
10 Without repining from the coves and heights
Clothed in the sunshine of the 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,
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.

20 The bonds of indolent society
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

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

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

Internally from academic cares;
 Yet independent study seemed a course
 Of hardy disobedience toward friends
 And kindred, proud rebellion and unkind.
 30 This spurious virtue, rather let it bear
 A name it now deserves, this cowardice,
 Gave treacherous sanction to that over-love
 Of freedom which encouraged me to turn
 From regulations even of my own
 As from restraints and bonds. Yet who can tell—
 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,
 40 The deepest and the best, what keen research,
 Unbiased, unbewildered, and unawed?

The Poet's soul was with me at that time;
 Sweet meditations, the still overflow
 Of present happiness, while future years
 Lacked not anticipations, tender dreams,
 No few of which have since been realised;
 And some remain, hopes for my future life.
 Four years and thirty, told this very week,
 Have I been now a sojourner on earth,
 50 By sorrow not unsmitten; yet for me
 Life's morning radiance hath not left the hills,
 Her dew is on the flowers. Those were the days
 Which also first emboldened me to trust
 With firmness, hitherto but lightly touched

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

80 All winter long, whenever free to take
 My choice, did I at nights frequent our groves
 And tributary walks – the last, and oft
 The only one, who had been lingering there
 Through hours of silence till the porter's bell,
 A punctual follower on the stroke of nine,
 Rang with its blunt unceremonious voice,
 Inexorable summons! Lofty elms,
 Inviting shades of opportune recess,
 Did give composure to a neighbourhood
 90 Unpeaceful in itself. A single tree
 There was (no doubt yet standing there), an ash
 With sinuous trunk, boughs exquisitely wreathed.
 Up from the ground and almost to the top
 The trunk and master branches everywhere
 Were green with ivy, and the lightsome twigs
 And outer spray profusely tipped with seeds
 That hung in yellow tassels and festoons,
 Moving or still – a favourite trimmed out
 By winter for himself, as if in pride,
 100 And with outlandish grace. Oft have I stood
 Foot-bound uplooking at this lovely tree
 Beneath a frosty moon. The hemisphere
 Of magic fiction, verse of mine perhaps
 May never tread, but scarcely Spenser's self

By such a daring thought, that I might leave
 Some monument behind me which pure hearts
 Should reverence. The instinctive humbleness,
 Maintained even by the very name and thought
 Of printed books and authorship, began
 60 To melt away; and further, the dread awe
 Of mighty names was softened down and seemed
 Approachable, admitting fellowship
 Of modest sympathy. Such aspect now,
 Though not familiarly, my mind put on,
 Content to observe, to achieve, and to enjoy.

All winter long, whenever free to choose,
 Did I by night frequent the College groves
 And tributary walks; the last, and oft
 The only one, who had been lingering there
 70 Through hours of silence, till the porter's bell,
 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
 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:
 80 Up from the ground; and almost to the top,
 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
 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 —
 More bright appearances could scarcely see
 Of human forms and superhuman powers —
 Than I beheld standing on winter nights
 Alone beneath this fairy-work of earth.

110 'Twould be a waste of labour to detail
 The rambling studies of a truant youth —
 Which further may be easily divined,
 What, and what kind they were. My inner knowledge
 (This barely will I note) was oft in depth
 And delicacy like another mind
 Sequestered from my outward taste in books.
 And yet the books which then I loved the most
 Are dearest to me now; for, being versed
 In living nature, I had there a guide
 120 Which opened frequently my eyes, else shut,
 A standard which was usefully applied,
 Even when unconsciously, to other things
 Which less I understood. In general terms
 I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Misled as to these latter, not alone
 By common inexperience of youth
 But by the trade in classic niceties
 (Delusion to young scholars incident,
 And old ones also) by that overprized
 130 And dangerous craft of picking phrases out
 From languages that want the living voice
 To make of them a nature to the heart —
 To tell us what is passion, what is truth,
 What reason, what simplicity and sense.

Yet must I not entirely overlook
 The pleasure gathered from the elements
 Of geometric science. I had stepped
 In these enquiries but a little way,
 No farther than the threshold (with regret
 140 Sincere I mention this), but there I found
 Enough to exalt, to cheer me, and compose.

90 Could have more tranquil visions in his youth,
 Or 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
 '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
 100 Are dearest to me *now*; for, having scanned,
 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,
 I was a better judge of thoughts than words,
 Mised in estimating words, not only
 By common inexperience of youth,
 But by the trade in classic niceties,
 110 The dangerous craft of culling term and phrase
 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
 The pleasure gathered from the rudiments
 Of geometric science. Though advanced
 In these inquiries, with regret I speak,
 No farther than the threshold, there I found
 120 Both elevation and composed delight:

With Indian awe and wonder, ignorance
 Which even was cherished, did I meditate
 Upon the alliance of those simple, pure
 Proportions and relations with the frame
 And laws of nature – how they could become
 Herein a leader to the human mind –
 And made endeavours frequent to detect
 The process by dark guesses of my own.
 150 Yet from this source more frequently I drew
 A pleasure calm and deeper, a still sense
 Of permanent and universal sway
 And paramount endowment in the mind,
 An image not unworthy of the one
 Surpassing life which – out of space and time,
 Nor touched by welterings of passion – is,
 And has the name of, God. Transcendent peace
 And silence did await upon these thoughts
 That were a frequent comfort to my youth.

160 And as I have read of one by shipwreck thrown
 With fellow-sufferers whom the waves had spared
 Upon a region uninhabited,
 An island of the deep, who, having brought
 To land a single volume and no more –
 A treatise of geometry – was used,
 Although of food and clothing destitute
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from company and take this book
 (Then first a self-taught pupil in those truths)
 170 To spots remote and corners of the isle
 By the sea-side, and draw his diagrams
 With a long stick upon the sand, and thus
 Did oft beguile his sorrow and almost
 Forget his feeling – even so (if things
 Producing like effect, from outward cause

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
 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
 130 A pleasure quiet and profound, a sense
 Of permanent and universal sway,
 And paramount belief; there, recognised
 A type, for finite natures, of the one
 Supreme Existence, the surpassing life
 Which – to the boundaries of space and time,
 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
 140 And silence did await upon these thoughts
 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,
 A treatise of Geometry, he went,
 Although of food and clothing destitute,
 And beyond common wretchedness depressed,
 To part from company and take this book
 150 (Then first a self-taught pupil in its truths)
 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

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

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

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
 160 With images, and haunted by herself,
 And specially delightful unto me
 Was that clear synthesis built up aloft
 So gracefully; even then when it appeared
 Not more than a mere plaything, or a toy
 To sense embodied: not the thing it is
 In verity, an independent world,
 Created out of pure intelligence.

Such dispositions then were mine unearned
 By aught, I fear, of genuine desert —
 170 Mine, through heaven's grace and inborn aptitudes.
 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;
 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
 180 Pilfered away, by what the Bard who sang
 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
 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 among distant nooks I roved
 (Dovedale, or Yorkshire dales, or through bye-tracts
 210 Of my own native region) and was blest
 Between those sundry wanderings with a joy
 Above all joys, that seemed another morn
 Risen on mid noon: the presence, friend, I mean
 Of that sole sister, she who has been long
 Thy treasure also, thy true friend and mine,
 Now after separation desolate
 Restored to me – such absence that she seemed
 A gift then first bestowed. The gentle banks
 Of Emont, hitherto unnamed in song,
 220 And that monastic castle, on a flat
 Low-standing by the margin of the stream,
 A mansion not unvisited of old
 By Sidney, where, in sight of our Helvellyn,
 Some snatches he might pen, for aught we know,
 Of his *Arcadia*, by fraternal love
 Inspired – that river and that mouldering dome
 Have seen us sit in many a summer hour,
 My sister and myself, when, having climbed
 In danger through some window's open space,
 230 We looked abroad, or on the turret's head
 Lay listening to the wild flowers and the grass
 As they gave out their whispers to the wind.

Another maid there was, who also breathed
 A gladness o'er that season, then to me
 By her exulting outside look of youth
 And placid under-countenance first endeared –

190 In summer, making quest for works of art,
 Or scenes renowned for beauty, I explored
 That streamlet whose blue current works its way
 Between romantic Dovedale's spiry rocks;
 Pried into Yorkshire dales, or hidden tracts
 Of my own native region, and was blest
 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, her who hath been long
 200 Dear to thee also, thy true friend and mine,
 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,
 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
 210 Of his Arcadia, by fraternal love
 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
 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;
 220 Or, not less pleased, lay on some turret's head,
 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,
 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
 240 In all that neighbourhood, through narrow lanes
 Of eglantine and through the shady woods,
 And o'er the Border Beacon and the waste
 Of naked pools and common crags that lay
 Exposed on the bare fell, was scattered love,
 A 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
 250 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,
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! Divide
 Thy pleasure with us; thy returning strength,
 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
 Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift
 260 Of gales Etesian or of loving thoughts.

I too have been a wanderer – but alas,
 How different is the fate of different men
 Though twins almost in genius and in mind!
 Unknown unto each other (yea, and breathing
 As if in different elements) we were framed
 To bend at last to the same discipline,
 Predestined if two beings ever were
 To seek the same delights, and have one health,
 One happiness. Throughout this narrative,
 270 Else sooner ended, I have known full well
 For whom I thus record the birth and growth
 Of gentleness, simplicity, and truth,
 And joyous loves that hallow innocent days
 Of peace and self-command. Of rivers, fields,

That other spirit, Coleridge! who is now
 So near to us, that meek confiding heart,
 230 So revered by us both. O'er paths and fields
 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,
 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.
 240 Far art thou wandered now in search of health
 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,
 No absence scarcely can there be, for those
 Who love as we do. Speed thee well! divide
 With us thy pleasure; thy returning strength,
 250 Receive it daily as a joy of ours;
 Share with us thy fresh spirits, whether gift
 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
 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,
 260 Else sooner ended, I have borne in mind
 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
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy in the depths
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide edifice, thy home and school,
 Wast used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
 280 Moving in heaven, or haply, tired of this,
 To shut thine eyes and by internal light
 See trees, and meadows, and thy native stream,
 Far distant, thus beheld from year to year
 Of thy long exile. Nor could I forget
 In this late portion of my argument
 That scarcely had I finally resigned
 My rights among those academic bowers
 When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,
 290 And didst sit down in temperance and peace,
 A rigorous student. What a stormy course
 Then followed! Oh, it is a pang that calls
 For utterance to think how small a change
 Of circumstances might to thee have spared
 A world of pain, ripened ten thousand hopes
 For ever withered.

Through this retrospect
 Of my own college life I still have had
 Thy after-sojourn in the self-same place
 Present before my eyes, have played with times
 300 (I speak of private business of the thought)
 And accidents as children do with cards,
 Or as a man who when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still
 In impotence of mind by his fireside
 Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
 Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
 And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
 Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms
 310 Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
 From things well-matched or ill, and words for things –

And groves I speak to thee, my Friend! to thee,
 Who, yet a liveried schoolboy, in the depths
 Of the huge city, on the leaded roof
 Of that wide edifice, thy school and home,
 Wert used to lie and gaze upon the clouds
 270 Moving in heaven; or, of that pleasure tired,
 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,
 That scarcely, as my term of pupilage
 Ceased, had I left those academic bowers
 When thou wert thither guided. From the heart
 Of London, and from cloisters there, thou camest,
 280 And didst sit down in temperance and peace,
 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,
 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
 290 And accidents as children do with cards,
 Or as a man, who, when his house is built,
 A frame locked up in wood and stone, doth still,
 As impotent fancy prompts, by his fireside,
 Rebuild it to his liking. I have thought
 Of thee, thy learning, gorgeous eloquence,
 And all the strength and plumage of thy youth,
 Thy subtle speculations, toils abstruse
 Among the schoolmen, and Platonic forms
 Of wild ideal pageantry, shaped out
 300 From things well-matched or ill, and words for things,

The self-created sustenance of a mind
 Debarred from nature's living images,
 Compelled to be a life unto itself,
 And unrelentingly possessed by thirst
 Of greatness, love, and beauty. Not alone,
 Ah, surely not in singleness of heart,
 Should I have seen the light of evening fade
 Upon the silent Cam, if we had met
 320 Even at that early time. I needs must hope,
 Must feel, must trust, that my maturer age
 And temperature less willing to be moved,
 My calmer habits and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed
 Or chased away the airy wretchedness
 That battered on thy youth. But thou hast trod,
 In watchful meditation thou hast trod
 A march of glory, which does put to shame
 These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
 330 Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
 That ever harboured in the breast of man.

A passing word erewhile did lightly touch
 On wanderings of my own, and now to these
 My poem leads me with an easier mind.
 The employments of three winters when I wore
 A student's gown have been already told,
 Or shadowed forth as far as there is need;
 When the third summer brought its liberty,
 A fellow student and myself (he too
 340 A mountaineer) together sallied forth
 And, staff in hand, on foot pursued our way
 Towards the distant Alps. An open slight
 Of college cares and study was the scheme,
 Nor entertained without concern for those
 To whom my worldly interests were dear.
 But nature then was sovereign in my heart,
 And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,
 Had given a charter to irregular hopes.

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,
 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
 310 In the belief, that my maturer age,
 My calmer habits, and more steady voice,
 Would with an influence benign have soothed,
 Or chased away, the airy wretchedness
 That battered on thy youth. But thou hast trod
 A march of glory, which doth put to shame
 These vain regrets; health suffers in thee, else
 Such grief for thee would be the weakest thought
 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,
 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,
 Had given a charter to irregular hopes.

In any age, without an impulse sent
 350 From work of nations and their goings-on,
 I should have been possessed by like desire,
 But 'twas a time when Europe was rejoiced,
 France standing on the top of golden hours,
 And human nature seeming born again.

Bound, as I said, to the Alps, it was our lot
 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
 360 Is joy of tens of millions. Southward thence
 We took our way, direct through hamlets, towns,
 Gaudy with relics of that festival,
 Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,
 And window-garlands. On the public roads –
 And once, three days successively, through paths
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged –
 Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, like spring
 370 That leaves no corner of the land untouched.
 Where elms for many and many a league in files
 With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads
 Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads
 For ever near us as we paced along,
 'Twas sweet at such a time (with such delights
 On every side, in prime of youthful strength)
 To feed a poet's tender melancholy
 And fond conceit of sadness, to the noise
 And gentle undulation which they made.
 380 Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw
 Dances of liberty, and in late hours

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
 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
 By which our toilsome journey was abridged,
 Among sequestered villages we walked
 And found benevolence and blessedness
 Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring
 Hath left no corner of the land untouched:
 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 delight
 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.

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

With this same throng our voyage we pursued
 At early dawn. The monastery bells

Of darkness, dances in the open air
 Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on
 Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills –

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,
 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 show
 Those woods and farms and orchards did present,
 And single cottages and lurking towns,
 Reach after reach, succession without end
 Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair
 Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along,
 Clustered together with a merry crowd
 Of those emancipated, a blithe host
 Of travellers, chiefly delegates returning
 From the great spousals newly solemnised
 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
 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
 Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,
 And hospitably did they give us hail,
 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;
The rapid river, flowing without noise,
And every spire we saw among the rocks,
Spoke with a sense of peace – at intervals
420 Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew.
With which we were environed: Having parted
From this glad rout, the Convent of Chartreuse
Received us two days afterwards, and there
We rested in an awful solitude –
Thence onward to the country of the Swiss.

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
 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
 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
 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; ‘Honour to the patriot’s zeal!
 Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!
 Hail to the mighty projects of the time!
 Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou
 Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires,
 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 of mystery, where a step advanced
Between the portals of the shadowy rocks
Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,
For penitential tears and trembling hopes
Exchanged – to equalise in God's pure sight
Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed
With its unworldly votaries, for the sake
Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved
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,
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,
In sympathetic reverence we trod
The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,
From their foundation, strangers to the presence
Of unrestricted and unthinking man.
Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay
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
Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,
Memorial revered by a thousand storms;

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

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,
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 valleys, greeted them and left
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam
Of salutation were not passed away.
Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised
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 task, or, if not pleased,
Contented, from the moment that the dawn
(Ah! surely not without attendant gleams
Of soul-illumination) calls him forth
To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,
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 day we first
 Beheld 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 did on the following dawn,
 With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice,
 A motionless array of mighty waves,
 460 Five rivers broad and vast, make rich amends,
 And reconciled us to realities.
 There small birds warble from the leafy trees,
 The eagle soareth in the element;
 There does the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
 While winter like a tamed lion walks,
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 Among the cottages by beds of flowers.

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

That very day,
 From a bare ridge we also first beheld
 Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved
 To have a soulless image on the eye
 That 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,
 The eagle soars high in the element,
 There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,
 The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,
 While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,
 Descending from the mountain to make sport
 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 choose but read
 Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain
 And universal reason of mankind,
 The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side
 Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone
 Each with his humour, 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
 From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,
 Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me, mingling with these delights,
 Was something of stern mood, an under-thirst
 490 Of vigour never utterly asleep.
 Far different dejection once was mine –
 A deep and genuine sadness then I felt –
 The circumstances I will here relate
 Even as they were. Upturning with a band
 Of travellers, from the Valais we had clomb
 Along the road that leads to Italy;
 A length of hours, making of these our guides
 Did we advance, and having reached an inn
 500 Among the mountains, we together ate
 Our noon's repast, from which the travellers rose
 Leaving us at the board. Erelong we followed,
 Descending by the beaten road that led
 Right to a rivulet's edge, and there broke off.
 The only track now visible was one
 Upon the further side, right opposite,
 And up a lofty mountain. This we took
 After a little scruple, and short pause,
 And climbed with eagerness, though not at length
 Without surprise and some anxiety
 510 On finding that we did not overtake
 Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,
 While every moment now increased our doubts,
 A peasant met us, and from him we learned
 That to the place which had perplexed us first
 We must descend, and there should find the road,
 Which in the stony channel of the stream
 Lay a few steps, and then along its banks –
 And further, that thenceforward all our course
 Was downwards with the current of that stream.
 520 Hard of belief, we questioned him again,
 And all the answers which the man returned
 To our inquiries – in their sense and substance,
 Translated by the feelings which we had –
 Ended in this, that we had crossed the Alps.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries
 Mixed something of stern mood; an under-thirst
 Of vigour 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
 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,
 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,
 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 – lifting up itself

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

The dull and heavy slackening which ensued
 550 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
 And entered with the road which we had missed
 Into a narrow chasm. The brook and road
 Were fellow-travellers in this gloomy pass,
 And with them did we journey several hours
 At a slow step. The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And everywhere along the hollow rent
 560 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,

Imagination – here the Power so called
 Through sad incompetence of human speech,
 That awful Power rose from the mind's abyss
 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 recognise 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,
 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
 Poured from his fount of Abyssinian clouds
 To fertilise the whole Egyptian plain.

The melancholy slackening that ensued
 Upon those tidings by the peasant given
 Was soon dislodged. Downwards we hurried fast,
 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
 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,

The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black drizzling crags that spoke by the wayside
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light –
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,
 570 Characters of the great apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

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

Uprisen betimes, our journey we renewed
 Led by the stream, ere noonday 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 –
 And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake,
 Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
 Locarno, spreading out in width like heaven,
 590 And Como – thou, a treasure by the earth
 Kept to itself, a darling bosomed up
 In Abyssinian privacy – I spoke
 Of thee, thy chestnut woods, and garden-plots
 Of Indian corn tended by dark-eyed maids,
 Thy lofty steps, and pathways roofed with vines
 Winding from house to house, from town to town

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,
 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;
 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,
 And thus proceeding to Locarno's Lake,
 Fit resting-place for such a visitant.
 Locarno! 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;
 Thy lofty steeps, and pathways roofed with vines,
 Winding from house to house, from town to town,

(Sole link that binds them to each other), walks,
 League after league, and cloistral avenues
 Where silence is if music be not there:
 600 While yet a youth undisciplined in verse,
 Through fond ambition of my heart I told
 Your praises, nor can I approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious song,
 Where tones of learned art and nature mixed
 May frame enduring language. Like a breeze
 Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause; but ye have left
 Your beauty with me, an impassioned sight
 Of colours and of forms, whose power is sweet
 610 And gracious, almost (might I dare to say?)
 As virtue is, or goodness – sweet as love,
 Or the remembrance of a noble deed,
 Or gentlest visitations of pure thought
 When God, the giver of all joy, is thanked
 Religiously in silent blessedness –
 Sweet as this last itself, for such it is.

Through those delightful pathways we advanced
 Two days, and still in presence of the lake,
 Which winding up among the Alps now changed
 620 Slowly its lovely countenance and put on
 A sterner character. The second night,
 In eagerness, and by report misled
 Of those Italian clocks that speak the time
 In fashion different from ours, we rose
 By moonshine, doubting not that day was near
 And that meanwhile, coasting the water's edge
 As hitherto, and with as plain a track
 To be our guide, we might behold the scene
 In its most deep repose. We left the town
 630 Of Gravedona with this hope, but soon
 Were lost, bewildered among woods immense,
 Where, having wandered for a while, we stopped
 And on a rock sat down to wait for day.

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 chant your praise; nor can approach you now
 Ungreeted by a more melodious Song,
 Where tones of Nature smoothed by learned Art
 May flow in lasting current. Like a breeze
 Or sunbeam over your domain I passed
 In motion without pause; but ye have left
 Your beauty with me, a serene accord
 Of forms and colours, passive, yet endowed
 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,
 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
 By moonlight, 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 underneath
 On which a dull red image of the moon
 Lay bedded, changing oftentimes its form
 Like an uneasy snake. Long time we sat,
 For scarcely more than one hour of the night
 640 (Such was our error) had been gone when we
 Renewed our journey. On the rock we lay
 And wished to sleep but could not for the stings
 Of insects which with noise like that of noon
 Filled all the woods. The cry of unknown birds,
 The mountains – more by darkness visible
 And their own size, than any outward light –
 The breathless wilderness of clouds, the clock
 That told with unintelligible voice
 The widely parted hours, the noise of streams
 650 And sometimes rustling motions nigh at hand
 Which did not leave us free from personal fear,
 And lastly the withdrawing moon, that set
 Before us while she yet was high in heaven –
 These were our food, and such a summer night
 Did to that pair of golden days succeed,
 With now and then a doze and snatch of sleep
 On Como's banks, the same delicious lake.

But here I must break off, and quit at once
 (Though loth) the record of these wanderings,
 660 A theme which may seduce me else beyond
 All reasonable bounds. Let this alone
 Be mentioned as a parting word, that not
 In hollow exultation, dealing forth
 Hyperboles of praise comparative,
 Not rich one moment to be poor for ever,
 Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind
 Itself were nothing, a mean pensioner
 On outward forms – did we in presence stand
 Of that magnificent region. On the front
 670 Of this whole song is written that my heart

An open place it was, and overlooked,
 From high, the sullen water far beneath,
 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
 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's night
 Followed that pair of golden days that shed
 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;
 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
 740 Of that magnificent region. On the front
 Of this whole Song is written that my heart

Must in such temple needs have offered up
 A different worship. Finally whate'er
 I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
 That flowed into a kindred stream, a gale
 That helped me forwards, did administer
 To grandeur and to tenderness – to the one
 Directly, but to tender thoughts by means
 Less often instantaneous in effect –
 Conducted me to these along a path
 680 Which in the main was more circuitous.

Oh, most beloved friend, a glorious time,
 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,
 A blackbird's whistle in a vernal grove.
 We left the Swiss exulting in the fate
 Of their near neighbours, and, when shortening fast
 690 Our pilgrimage – nor distant far from home –
 We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret
 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),
 I seemed to move among them as a bird
 Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues
 Its business in its proper element.
 700 I needed not that joy, I did not need
 Such help: the ever-living universe
 And independent spirit of pure youth
 Were with me at that season, and delight
 Was in all places spread around my steps
 As constant as the grass upon the fields.

Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up
 A different worship. Finally, whate'er
 I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream
 That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,
 Confederate with the current of the soul,
 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 belovèd Friend! a glorious time,
 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
 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 along 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,
 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.