

Book Ninth

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

As oftentimes a river (it might seem)
Yielding in part to old remembrances,
Part swayed by fear to tread an onward road
That leads direct to the devouring sea,
Turns and will measure back his course – far back,
Towards the very regions which he crossed
In his first outset – so have we long time
Made motions retrograde, in like pursuit
Detained. But now we start afresh: I feel
10 An impulse to precipitate my verse.
Fair greetings to this shapeless eagerness,
Whene'er it comes, needful in work so long,
Thrice needful to the argument which now
Awaits us – oh, how much unlike the past! –
One which, though bright the promise, will be found
Ere far we shall advance, ungenial, hard
To treat of, and forbidding in itself.

Free as a colt at pasture on the hills
I ranged at large through the metropolis,
20 Month after month. Obscurely did I live,
Not courting the society of men
By literature, or elegance, or rank,

Book Ninth

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE

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

Free as a colt at pasture on the hill,
I ranged at large, through London's wide domain,
Month after month. Obscurely did I live,
Not seeking frequent intercourse with men,
By literature, or elegance, or rank,

Distinguished – in the midst of things, it seemed,
 Looking as from a distance on the world
 That moved about me. Yet insensibly
 False preconceptions were corrected thus
 And errors of the fancy rectified
 (Alike with reference to men and things),
 And sometimes from each quarter were poured in
 30 Novel imaginations and profound.
 A year thus spent, this field (with small regret
 Save only for the bookstalls in the streets,
 Wild produce, hedgerow fruit, on all sides hung
 To lure the sauntering traveller from his track)
 I quitted, and betook myself to France,
 Led thither chiefly by a personal wish
 To speak the language more familiarly,
 With which intent I chose for my abode
 A city on the borders of the Loire.

40 Through Paris lay my readiest path, and there
 I sojourned a few days and visited
 In haste each spot of old and recent fame –
 The latter chiefly – from the Field of Mars
 Down to the suburbs of St Antony,
 And from Mont Martyr southward to the Dome
 Of Geneviève. In both her clamorous halls
 (The National Synod and the Jacobins)
 I saw the revolutionary power
 Toss like a ship at anchor, rocked by storms;
 50 The Arcades I traversed in the Palace huge
 Of Orleans, coasted round and round the line
 Of tavern, brothel, gaming-house and shop,
 Great rendezvous of worst and best, the walk
 Of all who had a purpose, or had not.
 I stared, and listened with a stranger's ears
 To hawkers and haranguers (hubbub wild!)
 And hissing factionists with ardent eyes,
 In knots, or pairs, or single – ant-like swarms
 Of builders and subverters, every face

Distinguished. Scarcely was a year thus spent
 Ere I forsook the crowded solitude,
 30 With less regret for its luxurious pomp,
 And all the nicely-guarded shows of art,
 Than for the humble book-stalls in the streets,
 Exposed to eye and hand where'er I turned.

France lured me forth; the realm that I had crossed
 So lately, journeying toward the snow-clad Alps.
 But now, relinquishing the scrip and staff,
 And all enjoyment which the summer sun
 Sheds round the steps of those who meet the day
 With motion constant as his own, I went
 40 Prepared to sojourn in a pleasant town,
 Washed by the current of the stately Loire.

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

60 That hope or apprehension could put on –
 Joy, anger and vexation, in the midst
 Of gaiety and dissolute idleness.

Where silent zephyrs sported with the dust
 Of the Bastille I sat in the open sun,
 And from the rubbish gathered up a stone
 And pocketed the relic in the guise
 Of an enthusiast; yet, in honest truth,
 Though not without some strong incumbences,
 And glad – could living man be otherwise? –
 70 I looked for something which I could not find,
 Affecting more emotion than I felt.
 For 'tis most certain, that the utmost force
 Of all these various objects which may show
 The temper of my mind as then it was
 Seemed less to recompense the traveller's pains –
 Less moved me, gave me less delight – than did
 A single picture merely, hunted out
 Among other sights: the *Magdalen* of Le Brun,
 A beauty exquisitely wrought, fair face
 80 And rueful, with its ever-flowing tears.

But hence to my more permanent residence
 I hasten. There, by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was at first engrossed, and thus
 Amused and satisfied I scarcely felt
 The shock of these concussions, unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a greenhouse – or a parlour-shrub
 90 When every bush and tree, the country through,
 Is shaking to the roots – indifference this
 Which may seem strange; but I was unprepared
 With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
 Into a theatre of which the stage
 Was busy with an action far advanced.

Watched every gesture uncontrollable,
 Of anger, and vexation, and despite,
 All side by side, and struggling face to face,
 With gaiety and dissolute idleness.

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

But hence to my more permanent abode
 I hasten; there, by novelties in speech,
 Domestic manners, customs, gestures, looks,
 And all the attire of ordinary life,
 Attention was engrossed; and, thus amused,
 I stood, 'mid those concussions, unconcerned,
 Tranquil almost, and careless as a flower
 Glassed in a green-house, or a parlour shrub
 That spreads its leaves in unmolested peace,
 90 While every bush and tree, the country through,
 Is shaking to the roots: indifference this
 Which may seem strange: but I was unprepared
 With needful knowledge, had abruptly passed
 Into a theatre, whose stage was filled
 And busy with an action far advanced.

Like others I had read, and eagerly
 Sometimes, the master pamphlets of the day,
 Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
 Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
 100 And public news; but having never chanced
 To see a regular chronicle which might show
 (If any such indeed existed then)
 Whence the main organs of the public power
 Had sprung – their transmigrations, when and how
 Accomplished – giving thus unto events
 A form and body, all things were to me
 Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
 Without a vital interest. At that time,
 Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
 110 And the strong hand of outward violence
 Locked up in quiet. For myself (I fear
 Now in connection with so great a theme
 To speak, as I must be compelled to do,
 Of one so unimportant), a short time
 I loitered, and frequented night by night
 Routs, card-tables, the formal haunts of men
 Whom in the city privilege of birth
 Sequestered from the rest, societies
 Where, through punctilios of elegance
 120 And deeper causes, all discourse – alike
 Of good and evil – of the time was shunned
 With studious care. But 'twas not long ere this
 Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
 Into a noisier world, and thus did soon
 Become a patriot – and my heart was all
 Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A knot of military officers
 That to a regiment appertained which then
 Was stationed in the city were the chief
 130 Of my associates; some of these wore swords
 Which had been seasoned in the wars, and all
 Were men well-born – at least laid claim to such
 Distinction, as the chivalry of France.

Like others, I had skimmed, and sometimes read
With care, the master pamphlets of the day;
Nor wanted such half-insight as grew wild
Upon that meagre soil, helped out by talk
100 And public news; but having never seen
A chronicle that might suffice to show
Whence the main organs of the public power
Had sprung, their transmigrations, when and how
Accomplished, giving thus unto events
A form and body; all things were to me
Loose and disjointed, and the affections left
Without a vital interest. At that time,
Moreover, the first storm was overblown,
And the strong hand of outward violence
110 Locked up in quiet. For myself, I fear
Now in connection with so great a theme
To speak (as I must be compelled to do)
Of one so unimportant; night by night
Did I frequent the formal haunts of men,
Whom, in the city, privilege of birth
Sequestered from the rest, societies
Polished in arts, and in punctilio versed;
Whence, and from deeper causes, all discourse
Of good and evil of the time was shunned
120 With scrupulous care; but these restrictions soon
Proved tedious, and I gradually withdrew
Into a noisier world, and thus ere long
Became a patriot; and my heart was all
Given to the people, and my love was theirs.

A band of military Officers,
Then stationed in the city, were the chief
Of my associates: some of these wore swords
That had been seasoned in the wars, and all
Were men well-born; the chivalry of France.

In age and temper differing, they had yet
 One spirit ruling in them all, alike
 (Save only one, hereafter to be named)
 Were bent upon undoing what was done.
 This was their rest, and only hope; therewith
 No fear had they of bad becoming worse,
 140 For worst to them was come — nor would have stirred,
 Or deemed it worth a moment's while to stir,
 In anything, save only as the act
 Looked thitherward. One, reckoning by years,
 Was in the prime of manhood, and erewhile
 He had sat lord in many tender hearts,
 Though heedless of such honours now, and changed:
 His temper was quite mastered by the times,
 And they had blighted him, had eat away
 The beauty of his person, doing wrong
 150 Alike to body and to mind. His port,
 Which once had been erect and open, now
 Was stooping and contracted; and a face,
 By nature lovely in itself, expressed
 As much as any that was ever seen
 A ravage out of season, made by thoughts
 Unhealthy and vexatious. At the hour,
 The most important of each day, in which
 The public news was read, the fever came
 A punctual visitant to shake this man,
 160 Disarmed his voice and fanned his yellow cheek
 Into a thousand colours. While he read,
 Or mused, his sword was haunted by his touch
 Continually, like an uneasy place
 In his own body.

'Twas in truth an hour
 Of universal ferment. Mildest men
 Were agitated, and commotions, strife
 Of passion and opinion, filled the walls
 Of peaceful houses with unquiet sounds.
 The soil of common life was at that time
 170 Too hot to tread upon! Oft said I then,

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

And not then only, 'What a mockery this
 Of history, the past and that to come!
 Now do I feel how I have been deceived
 Reading of nations and their works in faith –
 Faith given to vanity and emptiness –
 Oh, laughter for the page that would reflect
 To future times the face of what now is!
 The land all swarmed with passion, like a plain
 Devoured by locusts – Carra, Gorsas – add
 180 A hundred other names forgotten now,
 Nor to be heard of more. Yet were they powers
 Like earthquakes, shocks repeated day by day,
 And felt through every nook of town and field.
 The men already spoken of as chief
 Of my associates were prepared for flight
 To augment the band of emigrants in arms
 Upon the borders of the Rhine, and leagued
 With foreign foes mustered for instant war.
 This was their undisguised intent, and they
 190 Were waiting with the whole of their desires
 The moment to depart.

An Englishman,

Born in a land the name of which appeared
 To license some unruliness of mind –
 A stranger, with youth's further privilege,
 And that indulgence which a half-learnt speech
 Wins from the courteous – I, who had been else
 Shunned and not tolerated, freely lived
 With these defenders of the Crown, and talked,
 And heard their notions; nor did they disdain
 200 The wish to bring me over to their cause.
 But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity or law,
 And nice distinctions – then on every tongue –
 Of natural rights and civil, and to acts
 Of nations and their passing interests

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

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

An Englishman,

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

200 But though untaught by thinking or by books
 To reason well of polity or law,
 And nice distinctions, then on every tongue,
 Of natural rights and civil; and to acts
 Of nations and their passing interests,

(I speak comparing these with other things)
 Almost indifferent – even the historian's tale
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
 Tales of the poets: as it made my heart
 210 Beat high and filled my fancy with fair forms,
 Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds –
 Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
 Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
 Then, or had ever even in crudest youth,
 That dazzled me; but rather what my soul
 Mourned for, or loathed, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district (and which yet
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
 220 Manners erect, and frank simplicity,
 Than any other nook of English land),
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen
 Through the whole tenor of my school-day time
 The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
 Was vested with attention or respect
 Through claims of wealth or blood. Nor was it least
 Of many debts which afterwards I owed
 To Cambridge and an academic life
 That something there was holden up to view
 230 Of a republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground, that they were brothers all
 In honour, as of one community –
 Scholars and gentlemen – where, furthermore,
 Distinction lay open to all that came,
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents and successful industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To God and nature's single sovereignty
 (Familiar presences of awful power),
 240 And fellowship with venerable books
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus, who had been formed

(If with unworldly ends and aims compared)
 Almost indifferent, even the historian's tale
 Prizing but little otherwise than I prized
 Tales of the poets, as it made the heart
 Beat high, and filled the fancy with fair forms,
 Old heroes and their sufferings and their deeds;
 Yet in the regal sceptre, and the pomp
 210 Of orders and degrees, I nothing found
 Then, or had ever, even in crudest youth,
 That dazzled me, but rather what I mourned
 And ill could brook, beholding that the best
 Ruled not, and feeling that they ought to rule.

For, born in a poor district, and which yet
 Retaineth more of ancient homeliness,
 Than any other nook of English ground,
 It was my fortune scarcely to have seen,
 Through the whole tenor of my school-day time,
 220 The face of one, who, whether boy or man,
 Was vested with attention or respect
 Through claims of wealth or blood; nor was it least
 Of many benefits, in later years
 Derived from academic institutes
 And rules, that they held something up to view
 Of a Republic, where all stood thus far
 Upon equal ground; that we were brothers all
 In honour, as in one community,
 Scholars and gentlemen; where, furthermore,
 230 Distinction open lay to all that came,
 And wealth and titles were in less esteem
 Than talents, worth, and prosperous industry.
 Add unto this, subservience from the first
 To presences of God's mysterious power
 Made manifest in Nature's sovereignty,
 And fellowship with venerable books,
 To sanction the proud workings of the soul,
 And mountain liberty. It could not be
 But that one tutored thus should look with awe

To thought and moral feeling in the way
 This story hath described, should look with awe
 Upon the faculties of man, receive
 Gladly the highest promises, and hail
 As best the government of equal rights
 And individual worth. And hence, o friend,
 250 If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
 A gift that rather was come late than soon.
 No wonder then if advocates like these
 Whom I have mentioned, at this riper day
 Were impotent to make my hopes put on
 The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
 In honour to their honour. Zeal, which yet
 260 Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
 Forth like a polar summer: every word
 They uttered was a dart by counter-winds
 Blown back upon themselves. Their reason seemed
 Confusion-stricken by a higher power
 Than human understanding, their discourse
 Maimed, spiritless – and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

Meantime day by day the roads,
 While I consorted with these royalists,
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
 270 And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
 In gallant soldiership, and posting on
 To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 Into mine eyes (I do not say I weep –
 I wept not then – but tears have dimmed my sight)
 In memory of the farewells of that time,
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope
 280 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence.

240 Upon the faculties of man, receive
 Gladly the highest promises, and hail,
 As best, the government of equal rights
 And individual worth. And hence, O Friend!
 If at the first great outbreak I rejoiced
 Less than might well befit my youth, the cause
 In part lay here, that unto me the events
 Seemed nothing out of nature's certain course,
 A gift that was come rather late than soon.
 No wonder, then, if advocates like these,
 250 Inflamed by passion, blind with prejudice,
 And stung with injury, at this riper day,
 Were impotent to make my hopes put on
 The shape of theirs, my understanding bend
 In honour to their honour: zeal, which yet
 Had slumbered, now in opposition burst
 Forth like a Polar summer: every word
 They uttered was a dart, by counter-winds
 Blown back upon themselves; their reason seemed
 Confusion-stricken by a higher power
 260 Than human understanding, their discourse
 Maimed, spiritless; and, in their weakness strong,
 I triumphed.

Meantime, day by day, the roads
 Were crowded with the bravest youth of France,
 And all the promptest of her spirits, linked
 In gallant soldiership, and posting on
 To meet the war upon her frontier bounds.
 Yet at this very moment do tears start
 Into mine eyes: I do not say I weep —
 I wept not then, — but tears have dimmed my sight,
 270 In memory of the farewells of that time,
 Domestic severings, female fortitude
 At dearest separation, patriot love
 And self-devotion, and terrestrial hope,
 Encouraged with a martyr's confidence;

Even files of strangers merely, seen but once
 And for a moment, men from far with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city – here and there a face
 Or person singled out among the rest,
 Yet still a stranger and beloved as such –
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Like arguments from Heaven that 'twas a cause
 290 Good, and which no one could stand up against
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully depraved,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mould –
 A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
 And with an oriental loathing spurned
 As of a different caste. A meeker man
 Than this lived never, or a more benign –
 300 Meek, though enthusiastic to the height
 Of highest expectation. Injuries
 Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
 As aromatic flowers on alpine turf
 When foot has crushed them. He through the events
 Of that great change wandered in perfect faith
 As through a book, an old romance, or tale
 Of fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
 Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
 310 With the most noble, but unto the poor
 Among mankind he was in service bound
 As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
 To a religious order. Man he loved
 As man, and to the mean and the obscure,
 And all the homely in their homely works,
 Transferred a courtesy which had no air
 Of condescension, but did rather seem
 A passion and a gallantry, like that

Even files of strangers merely seen but once,
 And for a moment, men from far with sound
 Of music, martial tunes, and banners spread,
 Entering the city, here and there a face,
 Or person singled out among the rest,
 280 Yet still a stranger and beloved as such;
 Even by these passing spectacles my heart
 Was oftentimes uplifted, and they seemed
 Arguments sent from Heaven to prove the cause
 Good, pure, which no one could stand up against,
 Who was not lost, abandoned, selfish, proud,
 Mean, miserable, wilfully deprived,
 Hater perverse of equity and truth.

Among that band of Officers was one,
 Already hinted at, of other mould —
 290 A patriot, thence rejected by the rest,
 And with an oriental loathing spurned,
 As of a different caste. A meeker man
 Than this lived never, nor a more benign,
 Meek though enthusiastic. Injuries
 Made *him* more gracious, and his nature then
 Did breathe its sweetness out most sensibly,
 As aromatic flowers on Alpine turf,
 When foot hath crushed them. He through the events
 Of that great change wandered in perfect faith,
 300 As through a book, an old romance, or tale
 Of Fairy, or some dream of actions wrought
 Behind the summer clouds. By birth he ranked
 With the most noble, but unto the poor
 Among mankind he was in service bound,
 As by some tie invisible, oaths professed
 To a religious order. Man he loved
 As man; and, to the mean and the obscure,
 And all the homely in their homely works,
 Transferred a courtesy which had no air
 310 Of condescension; but did rather seem
 A passion and a gallantry, like that

Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
 320 Had paid to woman. Somewhat vain he was,
 Or seemed so; yet it was not vanity
 But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
 That covered him about when he was bent
 On works of love or freedom, or revolved
 Complacently the progress of a cause
 Whereof he was a part – yet this was meek
 And placid, and took nothing from the man
 That was delightful. Oft in solitude
 With him did I discourse about the end
 330 Of civil government, and its wisest forms,
 Of ancient prejudice and chartered rights,
 Allegiance, faith, and laws by time matured,
 Custom and habit, novelty and change –
 Of self-respect and virtue in the few
 For patrimonial honour set apart,
 And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
 For he, an upright man and tolerant,
 Balanced these contemplations in his mind,
 And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
 340 Into the turmoil, had a sounder judgement
 Than afterwards, carried about me yet
 With less alloy to its integrity
 The experience of past ages, as (through help
 Of books and common life) it finds its way
 To youthful minds, by objects over-near
 Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
 By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf and obstinate to find
 Error without apology on the side
 350 Of those who were against us, more delight
 We took (and let this freely be confessed)
 In painting to ourselves the miseries
 Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
 Unfeeling where the man who is of soul
 The meanest thrives the most, where dignity,
 True personal dignity, abideth not –

Which he, a soldier, in his idler day
Had paid to woman: somewhat vain he was,
Or seemed so, yet it was not vanity,
But fondness, and a kind of radiant joy
Diffused around him, while he was intent
On works of love or freedom, or revolved
Complacently the progress of a cause,
Whereof he was a part: yet this was meek
320 And placid, and took nothing from the man
That was delightful. Oft in solitude
With him did I discourse about the end
Of civil government, and its wisest forms;
Of ancient loyalty, and chartered rights,
Custom and habit, novelty and change;
Of self-respect, and virtue in the few
For patrimonial honour set apart,
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,
330 Balanced these contemplations in his mind;
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment
Than later days allowed; carried about me,
With less alloy to its integrity,
The experience of past ages, as, through help
Of books and common life, it makes sure way
To youthful minds, by objects over near
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

340 But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find
Error without excuse upon the side
Of them who strove against us, more delight
We took, and let this freely be confessed,
In painting to ourselves the miseries
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,
True personal dignity, abideth not;

A light and cruel world, cut off from all
 The natural inlets of just sentiment,
 From lowly sympathy and chastening truth –
 360 Where good and evil never have that name,
 That which they ought to have, but wrong prevails,
 And vice at home. We added dearest themes:
 Man and his noble nature (as it is
 The gift of God and lies in his own power),
 His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth – the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 On firm foundations, making social life
 (Through knowledge spreading and imperishable)
 370 As just in regulation and as pure,
 As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds
 Of ancient story, thought of each bright spot
 That could be found in all recorded time
 Of truth preserved and error passed away;
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
 And how the multitude of men will feed
 And fan each other – thought of sects, how keen
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 380 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, country, love and hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed,
 How far they travel, and how long endure;
 How quickly mighty nations have been formed
 From least beginnings; how, together locked
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
 To aspirations then of our own minds
 Did we appeal, and, finally, beheld
 390 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us in a people risen up
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
 Upon their virtues, saw in rudest men

A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off
 350 From the natural inlets of just sentiment,
 From lowly sympathy and chastening truth;
 Where good and evil interchange their names,
 And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired
 With vice at home. We added dearest themes —
 Man and his noble nature, as it is
 The gift which God has placed within his power,
 His blind desires and steady faculties
 Capable of clear truth, the one to break
 Bondage, the other to build liberty
 360 On firm foundations, making social life,
 Through knowledge spreading and imperishable,
 As just in regulation, and as pure
 As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds
 Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,
 That would be found in all recorded time,
 Of truth preserved and error passed away;
 Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,
 And how the multitudes of men will feed
 370 And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen
 They are to put the appropriate nature on,
 Triumphant over every obstacle
 Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,
 And what they do and suffer for their creed;
 How far they travel, and how long endure;
 How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,
 From least beginnings; how, together locked
 By new opinions, scattered tribes have made
 One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.
 380 To aspirations then of our own minds
 Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld
 A living confirmation of the whole
 Before us, in a people from the depth
 Of shameful imbecility uprisen,
 Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked
 Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,

Self-sacrifice the firmest, generous love
 And continence of mind, and sense of right
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

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

Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,
 And continence of mind, and sense of right,
 Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

- 390 Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,
 Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known
 In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,
 Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,
 To ruminate, with interchange of talk,
 On rational liberty, and hope in man,
 Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil —
 Toil, say I, for it leads to thoughts abstruse —
 If nature then be standing on the brink
 Of some great trial, and we hear the voice
 400 Of one devoted, — one whom circumstance
 Hath called upon to embody his deep sense
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 Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis (let the name
 420 Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)
 Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse,
 With like persuasion honoured, we maintained:
 He, on his part, accoutred for the worst.
 He perished fighting, in supreme command,

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

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

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

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

A novel scene, did often in this way
 Master my fancy while I wandered on
 With that revered companion. And sometimes,
 When to a convent in a meadow green
 470 By a brookside we came – a roofless pile,
 And not by reverential touch of time
 Dismantled, but by violence abrupt –
 In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,
 In spite of real fervour, and of that
 Less genuine and wrought up within myself,
 I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
 And for the matin-bell (to sound no more)
 Grieved, and the evening taper, and the cross
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 480 Admonitory, by the traveller
 First seen above the woods.

And when my friend
 Pointed upon occasion to the site
 Of Romorantin, home of ancient kings;
 To the imperial edifice of Blois;
 Or to that rural castle, name now slipped
 From my remembrance (where a lady lodged,
 By the first Francis wooed, and, bound to him
 In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,
 As a tradition of the country tells,
 490 Practised to commune with her royal knight
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his
 Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath) –
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
 Religious, mid these frequent monuments
 Of kings, their vices or their better deeds,
 Imagination, potent to inflame
 At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 500 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry
 (So call it) of a youthful patriot's mind;
 And on these spots with many gleams I looked

A novel scene, did often in this way
 Master my fancy while I wandered on
 With that revered companion. And sometimes —
 When to a convent in a meadow green,
 By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,
 And not by reverential touch of Time
 Dismantled, but by violence abrupt —
 470 In spite of those heart-bracing colloquies,
 In spite of real fervour, and of that
 Less genuine and wrought up within myself —
 I could not but bewail a wrong so harsh,
 And for the *Matin*-bell to sound no more
 Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross
 High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign
 (How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)
 Of hospitality and peaceful rest.
 And when the partner of those varied walks
 480 Pointed upon occasion to the site
 Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings,
 To the imperial edifice of Blois,
 Or to that rural castle, name now slipped
 From my remembrance, where a lady lodged,
 By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him
 In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,
 As a tradition of the country tells,
 Practised to commune with her royal knight
 By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse
 490 'Twixt her high-seated residence and his
 Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath;
 Even here, though less than with the peaceful house
 Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments
 Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,
 Imagination, potent to inflame
 At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,
 Did also often mitigate the force
 Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,
 So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind;
 500 And on these spots with many gleams I looked

Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
 Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride
 In those who, by immunities unjust,
 Betwixt the sovereign and the people stand
 (His helpers and not theirs) laid stronger hold
 Daily upon me – mixed with pity too
 510 And love, for where hope is, there love will be
 For the abject multitude.

And when we chanced

One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
 Who crept along fitting her languid self
 Unto a heifer's motion – by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the girl with her two hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude – and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said "Tis against *that*
 520 Which we are fighting!" I with him believed
 Devoutly that a spirit was abroad
 Which could not be withstood; that poverty,
 At least like this, would in a little time
 Be found no more; that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The industrious and the lowly child of toil
 (All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalized exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
 530 Whether by edict of the one or few);
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In making their own laws – whence better days
 To all mankind.

But, these things set apart,
 Was not the single confidence enough
 To animate the mind that ever turned
 A thought to human welfare: that henceforth

Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less,
 Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one
 Is law for all, and of that barren pride
 In them who, by immunities unjust,
 Between the sovereign and the people stand,
 His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold
 Daily upon me, mixed with pity too
 And love; for where hope is, there love will be
 For the abject multitude. And when we chanced
 510 One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,
 Who crept along fitting her languid gait
 Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord
 Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane
 Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands
 Was busy knitting in a heartless mood
 Of solitude, and at the sight my friend
 In agitation said, 'Tis against *that*
 That we are fighting,' I with him believed
 That a benignant spirit was abroad
 520 Which might not be withstood, that poverty
 Abject as this would in a little time
 Be found no more, that we should see the earth
 Unthwarted in her wish to recompense
 The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,
 All institutes for ever blotted out
 That legalised exclusion, empty pomp
 Abolished, sensual state and cruel power,
 Whether by edict of the one or few;
 And finally, as sum and crown of all,
 530 Should see the people having a strong hand
 In framing their own laws; whence better days
 To all mankind. But, these things set apart,
 Was not this single confidence enough
 To animate the mind that ever turned
 A thought to human welfare? That henceforth

Captivity by mandate without law
 Should cease, and open accusation lead
 540 To sentence in the hearing of the world,
 And open punishment – if not the air
 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
 Dread nothing. Having touched this argument
 I shall not (as my purpose was) take note
 Of other matters which detained us oft
 In thought or conversation – public acts,
 And public persons, and the emotions wrought
 Within our minds by the ever-varying wind
 Of record and report which day by day
 550 Swept over us – but I will here instead
 Draw from obscurity a tragic tale,
 Not in its spirit singular indeed .
 But haply worth memorial, as I heard
 The events related by my patriot friend
 And others who had borne a part therein.

Oh happy time of youthful lovers – thus
 My story may begin – oh balmy time
 In which a love-knot on a lady's brow
 Is fairer than the fairest star in heaven!
 560 To such inheritance of blessedness
 Young Vaudracour was brought by years that had
 A little overstepped his stripling prime.
 A town of small repute in the heart of France
 Was the youth's birthplace; there he vowed his love
 To Julia, a bright maid, from parents sprung
 Not mean in their condition, but with rights
 Unhonoured of nobility – and hence
 The father of the young man, who had place
 Among that order, spurned the very thought
 570 Of such alliance. From their cradles up,
 With but a step between their several homes,
 The pair had thriven together year by year,
 Friend, playmates, twins in pleasure – after strife
 And petty quarrels had grown fond again –
 Each other's advocate, each other's help,

Captivity by mandate without law
 Should cease; and open accusation lead
 To sentence in the hearing of the world,
 And open punishment, if not the air
 540 Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man
 Dread nothing. From this height I shall not stoop
 To humbler matter that detained us oft
 In thought or conversation, public acts,
 And public persons, and emotions wrought
 Within the breast, as ever-varying winds
 Of record or report swept over us;
 But I might here, instead, repeat a tale,
 Told by my Patriot friend, of sad events,
 That prove to what low depth had struck the roots,
 550 How widely spread the boughs, of that old tree
 Which, as a deadly mischief, and a foul
 And black dishonour, France was weary of.

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

But our little bark
 560 On a strong river boldly hath been launched;
 And from the driving current should we turn
 To loiter wilfully within a creek,
 Howe'er attractive, Fellow voyager!
 Would'st thou not chide? Yet deem not my pains lost:
 For Vaudracour and Julia (so were named
 The ill-fated pair) in that plain tale will draw
 Tears from the hearts of others, when their own
 Shall beat no more. Thou, also, there mayst read,
 At leisure, how the enamoured youth was driven,
 570 By public power abased, to fatal crime,
 Nature's rebellion against monstrous law;

Nor ever happy if they were apart.
 A basis this for deep and solid love,
 And endless constancy, and placid truth;
 But – whatsoever of such treasures might,
 580 Beneath the outside of their youth, have lain
 Reserved for mellow years – his present mind
 Was under fascination: he beheld
 A vision, and he loved the thing he saw.

Arabian fiction never filled the world
 With half the wonders that were wrought for him.
 Earth lived in one great presence of the spring,
 Life turned the meanest of her implements
 Before his eyes to price above all gold,
 The house she dwelt in was a sainted shrine,
 590 Her chamber-window did surpass in glory
 The portals of the east! All paradise
 Could by the simple opening of a door
 Let itself in upon him! Pathways, walks,
 Swarmed with enchantment, till his spirit sank
 Beneath the burden, overblessed for life.
 This state was theirs, till – whether through effect
 Of some delirious hour, or that the youth,
 Seeing so many bars betwixt himself
 And the dear haven where he wished to be
 600 In honourable wedlock with his love,
 Without a certain knowledge of his own
 Was inwardly prepared to turn aside
 From law and custom, and entrust himself
 To nature for a happy end of all
 (And thus abated of that pure reserve
 Congenial to his loyal heart, with which
 It would have pleased him to attend the steps
 Of maiden so divinely beautiful),
 I know not – but reluctantly must add
 610 That Julia, yet without the name of wife,
 Carried about her for a secret grief
 The promise of a mother.

How, between heart and heart, oppression thrust
Her mandates, severing whom true love had joined,
Harassing both; until he sank and pressed
The couch his fate had made for him; supine,
Save when the stings of viperous remorse,
Trying their strength, enforced him to start up,
Aghast and prayerless. Into a deep wood
He fled, to shun the haunts of human kind;
580 There dwelt, weakened in spirit more and more;
Nor could the voice of Freedom, which through France
Full speedily resounded, public hope,
Or personal memory of his own worst wrongs,
Rouse him; but, hidden in those gloomy shades,
His days he wasted, — an imbecile mind.

To conceal

The threatened shame the parents of the maid
 Found means to hurry her away by night
 And unforewarned, that in a distant town
 She might remain shrouded in privacy
 Until the babe was born. When morning came
 The lover, thus bereft, stung with his loss
 And all uncertain whither he should turn,
 620 Chafed like a wild beast in the toils. At length,
 Following as his suspicions led, he found –
 Oh joy! – sure traces of the fugitives,
 Pursued them to the town where they had stopped,
 And lastly to the very house itself
 Which had been chosen for the maid's retreat.
 The sequel may be easily divined:
 Walks backwards, forwards, morning, noon and night
 (When decency and caution would allow),
 And Julia, who, whenever to herself
 630 She happened to be left a moment's space,
 Was busy at her casement, as a swallow
 About its nest, ere long did thus spy
 Her lover – thence a stolen interview
 By night accomplished, with a ladder's help.

I pass the raptures of the pair; such theme
 Hath by a hundred poets been set forth
 In more delightful verse than skill of mine
 Could fashion – chiefly by that darling bard
 Who told of Juliet and her Romeo,
 640 And of the lark's note heard before its time,
 And of the streaks that laced the severing clouds
 In the unrelenting east. 'Tis mine to tread
 The humbler province of plain history,
 And, without choice of circumstance, submissively
 Relate what I have heard. The lovers came
 To this resolve (with which they parted, pleased
 And confident) that Vaudracour should hie
 Back to his father's house, and there employ
 Means aptest to obtain a sum of gold –

650 A final portion even, if that might be –
 Which done, together they could then take flight
 To some remote and solitary place
 Where they might live with no one to behold
 Their happiness, or to disturb their love.
 Immediately, and with this mission charged,
 Home to his father's house did he return
 And there remained a time without hint given
 Of his design; but if a word were dropped
 Touching the matter of his passion, still,
 660 In hearing of his father, Vaudracour
 Persisted openly that nothing less
 Than death should make him yield up hope to be
 A blessed husband of the maid he loved.

Incensed at such obduracy and slight
 Of exhortations and remonstrances
 The father threw out threats that by a mandate
 Bearing the private signet of the state
 He should be baffled of his mad intent –
 And that should cure him. From this time the youth
 670 Conceived a terror, and by night or day
 Stirred nowhere without arms. Soon afterwards
 His parents to their country seat withdrew
 Upon some feigned occasion, and the son
 Was left with one attendant in the house.
 Retiring to his chamber for the night,
 While he was entering at the door, attempts
 Were made to seize him by three armed men,
 The instruments of ruffian power. The youth,
 In the first impulse of his rage, laid one
 680 Dead at his feet, and to the second gave
 A perilous wound – which done, at sight
 Of the dead man, he peacefully resigned
 His person to the law, was lodged in prison,
 And wore the fetters of a criminal.

Through three weeks' space (by means which love
 devised)

The maid in her seclusion had received
 Tidings of Vaudracour, and how he sped
 Upon his enterprize. Thereafter came
 A silence; half a circle did the moon
 690 Complete, and then a whole, and still the same
 Silence. A thousand thousand fears and hopes
 Stirred in mind – thoughts waking, thoughts of sleep,
 Entangled in each other – and at last
 Self-slaughter seemed her only resting-place.
 So did she fare in her uncertainty.

At length, by interference of a friend
 (One who had sway at court) the youth regained
 His liberty, on promise to sit down
 Quietly in his father's house, nor take
 700 One step to reunite himself with her
 Of whom his parents disapproved – hard law,
 To which he gave consent only because
 His freedom else could nowise be procured.
 Back to his father's house he went, remained
 Eight days, and then his resolution failed.
 He fled to Julia, and the words with which
 He greeted her were these: 'All right is gone –
 Gone from me! Thou no longer now art mine,
 I thine! A murderer, Julia, cannot love
 710 An innocent woman – I behold thy face,
 I see thee, and my misery is complete!
 She could not give him answer; afterwards
 She coupled with his father's name some words
 Of vehement indignation; but the youth
 Checked her, nor would he hear of this; for thought
 Unfilial, or unkind, had never once
 Found harbour in his breast. The lovers, thus
 United once again, together lived
 For a few days, which were to Vaudracour
 720 Days of dejection, sorrow and remorse
 For that ill deed of violence which his hand
 Had hastily committed; for the youth
 Was of a loyal spirit, a conscience nice,

And over tender for the trial which
 His fate had called him to. The father's mind,
 Meanwhile, remained unchanged, and Vaudracour
 Learned that a mandate had been newly issued
 To arrest him on the spot. Oh pain it was
 To part! He could not — and he lingered still
 730 To the last moment of his time, and then
 (At dead of night with snow upon the ground)
 He left the city, and in villages
 The most sequestered of the neighbourhood
 Lay hidden for the space of several days,
 Until, the horseman bringing back report
 That he was nowhere to be found, the search
 Was ended. Back returned the ill-fated youth,
 And from the house where Julia lodged (to which
 He now found open ingress, having gained
 740 The affection of the family, who loved him
 Both for his own, and for the maiden's sake)
 One night retiring, he was seized.

But here

A portion of the tale may well be left
 In silence, though my memory could add
 Much how the youth (and in short space of time)
 Was traversed from without; much, too, of thoughts
 By which he was employed in solitude
 Under privation and restraint, and what
 Through dark and shapeless fear of things to come,
 750 And what through strong compunction for the past,
 He suffered, breaking down in heart and mind.
 Such grace (if grace it were) had been vouchsafed —
 Or such effect had through the father's want
 Of power, or through his negligence, ensued —
 That Vaudracour was suffered to remain,
 Though under guard and without liberty,
 In the same city with the unhappy maid
 From whom he was divided. So they fared,
 Objects of general concern, till, moved
 760 With pity for their wrongs, the magistrate

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

He left his prison almost on the eve
Of Julia's travail. She had likewise been
(As from the time indeed, when she had first
Been brought for secrecy to this abode),
Though treated with consoling tenderness,
770 Herself a prisoner — a dejected one,
Filled with a lover's and a woman's fears —
And whensoever the mistress of the house
Entered the room for the last time at night
And Julia with a low and plaintive voice
Said 'You are coming then to lock me up!'
The housewife when these words (always the same)
Were by her captive languidly pronounced
Could never hear them uttered without tears.

A day or two before her childbed time
780 Was Vaudracour restored to her, and soon
As he might be permitted to return
Into her chamber after the child's birth,
The master of the family begged that all
The household might be summoned, doubting not
But that they might receive impressions then
Friendly to human kindness. Vaudracour
(This heard I from one present at the time)
Held up the newborn infant in his arms
And kissed, and blessed, and covered it with tears,
790 Uttering a prayer that he might never be
As wretched as his father. Then he gave
The child to her who bore it, and she too
Repeated the same prayer — took it again
And, muttering something faintly afterwards,
He gave the infant to the standers-by,
And wept in silence upon Julia's neck.

Two months did he continue in the house,
 And often yielded up himself to plans
 Of future happiness. 'You shall return,
 800 Julia', said he, 'and to your father's house
 Go with your child. You have been wretched, yet
 It is a town where both of us were born —
 None will reproach you, for our loves are known.
 With ornaments the prettiest you shall dress
 Your boy, as soon as he can run about,
 And when he thus is at his play my father
 Will see him from the window, and the child
 Will by his beauty move his grandsire's heart,
 So that it will be softened, and our loves
 810 End happily, as they began.' These gleams
 Appeared but seldom; oftener he was seen
 Propping a pale and melancholy face
 Upon the mother's bosom, resting thus
 His head upon one breast, while from the other
 The babe was drawing in its quiet food.
 At other times, when he in silence long
 And fixedly had looked upon her face,
 He would exclaim, 'Julia, how much thine eyes
 Have cost me!' During daytime when the child
 820 Lay in its cradle, by its side he sat,
 Not quitting it an instant. The whole town
 In his unmerited misfortunes now
 Took part, and if he either at the door
 Or window for a moment with his child
 Appeared, immediately the street was thronged;
 While others, frequently without reserve,
 Passed and repassed before the house to steal
 A look at him.

Oft at this time he wrote
 Requesting, since he knew that the consent
 830 Of Julia's parents never could be gained
 To a clandestine marriage, that his father
 Would from the birthright of an eldest son
 Exclude him, giving but (when this was done)

A sanction to his nuptials. Vain request,
 To which no answer was returned! And now
 From her own home the mother of his love
 Arrived to apprise the daughter of her fixed
 And last resolve, that, since all hope to move
 The old man's heart proved vain, she must retire
 840 Into a convent, and be there immured.
 Julia was thunderstricken by these words,
 And she insisted on a mother's rights
 To take her child along with her – a grant
 Impossible, as she at last perceived.
 The persons of the house no sooner heard
 Of this decision upon Julia's fate
 Than everyone was overwhelmed with grief,
 Nor could they frame a manner soft enough
 To impart the tidings to the youth. But great
 850 Was their astonishment when they beheld him
 Receive the news in calm despondency,
 Composed and silent, without outward sign
 Of even the least emotion. Seeing this,
 When Julia scattered some upbraiding words
 Upon his slackness, he thereto returned
 No answer, only took the mother's hand
 (Who loved him scarcely less than her own child)
 And kissed it, without seeming to be pressed
 By any pain that 'twas the hand of one
 860 Whose errand was to part him from his love
 For ever.

In the city he remained
 A season after Julia had retired
 And in the convent taken up her home,
 To the end that he might place his infant babe
 With a fit nurse; which done, beneath the roof
 Where now his little one was lodged, he passed
 The day entire, and scarcely could at length
 Tear himself from the cradle to return
 Home to his father's house – in which he dwelt
 870 Awhile, and then came back that he might see

Whether the babe had gained sufficient strength
To bear removal. He quitted this same town
For the last time, attendant by the side
Of a close-chair – a litter or sedan –
In which the child was carried. To a hill
Which rose at a league's distance from the town
The family of the house where he had lodged
Attended him, and parted from him there,
Watching below until he disappeared
880 On the hilltop. His eyes he scarcely took,
Through all that journey, from the chair in which
The babe was carried; and at every inn
Or place at which they halted or reposed
Laid him upon his knees, nor would permit
The hands of any but himself to dress
The infant or undress. By one of those
Who bore the chair these facts, at his return,
Were told, and in relating them he wept.

This was the manner in which Vaudracour
890 Departed with his infant, and thus reached
His father's house, where to the innocent child
Admittance was denied. The young man spoke
No word of indignation or reproof,
But of his father begged (a last request)
That a retreat might be assigned to him,
A house where in the country he might dwell
With such allowance as his wants required –
And the more lonely that the mansion was
'Twould be more welcome. To a lodge that stood
900 Deep in a forest, with leave given, at the age
Of four-and-twenty summers he retired;
And thither took with him his infant babe,
And one domestic for their common needs,
An aged woman. It consoled him here
To attend upon the orphan and perform
The office of a nurse to his young child,
Which, after a short time, by some mistake
Or indiscretion of the father, died.

The tale I follow to its last recess
 910 Of suffering or of peace, I know not which –
 Theirs be the blame who caused the woe, not mine.

From that time forth he never uttered word
 To any living. An inhabitant
 Of that same town in which the pair had left
 So lively a remembrance of their griefs
 By chance of business coming within reach
 Of his retirement, to the spot repaired
 With the intent to visit him; he reached
 The house and only found the matron there,
 920 Who told him that his pains were thrown away,
 For that her master never uttered word
 To living soul – not even to her. Behold
 While they were speaking, Vaudracour approached,
 But, seeing someone there, just as his hand
 Was stretched towards the garden-gate, he shrunk,
 And like a shadow glided out of view.
 Shocked at his savage outside, from the place
 The visitor retired.

Thus lived the youth,
 Cut off from all intelligence with man,
 930 And shunning even the light of common day.
 Nor could the voice of freedom, which through France
 Soon afterwards resounded, public hope,
 Or personal memory of his own deep wrongs,
 Rouse him; but in those solitary shades
 His days he wasted – an imbecile mind.

Book Tenth

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE AND FRENCH REVOLUTION

It was a beautiful and silent day
That overspread the countenance of earth
(Then fading) with unusual quietness,
When from the Loire I parted, and through scenes
Of vineyard, orchard, meadow-ground and tilth,
Calm waters, gleams of sun, and breathless trees,
Towards the fierce metropolis turned my steps
Their homeward way to England. From his throne
The King had fallen; the congregated host –
10 Dire cloud, upon the front of which was written
The tender mercies of the dismal wind
That bore it – on the plains of liberty
Had burst innocuously. Say more, the swarm
That came elate and jocund, like a band
Of eastern hunters, to enfold in ring
Narrowing itself by moments, and reduce
To the last punctual spot of their despair
A race of victims (so they deemed), *themselves*
Had shrunk from sight of their own task, and fled
20 In terror. Desolation and dismay
Remained for them whose fancies had grown rank
With evil expectations: confidence
And perfect triumph to the better cause.

Book Tenth

RESIDENCE IN FRANCE - (CONTINUED)

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

The state, as if to stamp the final seal
 On her security, and to the world
 Show what she was, a high and fearless soul –
 Or rather in a spirit of thanks to those
 Who had stirred up her slackening faculties
 To a new transition – had assumed with joy
 30 The body and the venerable name
 Of a republic. Lamentable crimes,
 'Tis true, had gone before this hour, the work
 Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
 Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
 Earth free from them for ever, as was thought –
 Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once,
 Things that could only show themselves and die!

This was the time in which, inflamed with hope,
 To Paris I returned. Again I ranged,
 40 More eagerly than I had done before,
 Through the wide city, and in progress passed
 The prison where the unhappy monarch lay,
 Associate with his children and his wife
 In bondage, and the palace, lately stormed
 With roar of cannon and a numerous host.
 I crossed (a black and empty area then)
 The Square of the Carrousel, few weeks back
 Heaped up with dead and dying – upon these
 And other sights looking as doth a man
 50 Upon a volume whose contents he knows
 Are memorable but from him locked up,
 Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
 So that he questions the mute leaves with pain
 And half unbraids their silence. But that night
 When on my bed I lay, I was most moved
 And felt most deeply in what world I was.
 My room was high and lonely, near the roof
 Of a large mansion or hotel, a spot

The State, as if to stamp the final seal
On her security, and to the world
Show what she was, a high and fearless soul,
Exulting in defiance, or heart-stung
By sharp resentment, or belike to taunt
With spiteful gratitude the baffled League,
That had stirred up her slackening faculties
To a new transition, when the King was crushed,
Spared not the empty throne, and in proud haste
40 Assumed the body and venerable name
Of a Republic. Lamentable crimes,
'Tis true, had gone before this hour, dire work
Of massacre, in which the senseless sword
Was prayed to as a judge; but these were past,
Earth free from them for ever, as was thought, —
Ephemeral monsters, to be seen but once!
Things that could only show themselves and die.

Cheered with this hope, to Paris I returned,
And ranged, with ardour heretofore unfelt,
50 The spacious city, and in progress passed
The prison where the unhappy Monarch lay,
Associate with his children and his wife
In bondage; and the palace, lately stormed
With roar of cannon by a furious host.
I crossed the square (an empty area then!)
Of the Carrousel, where so late had lain
The dead, upon the dying heaped, and gazed
On this and other spots, as doth a man
Upon a volume whose contents he knows
60 Are memorable, but from him locked up,
Being written in a tongue he cannot read,
So that he questions the mute leaves with pain,
And half upbraids their silence. But that night
I felt most deeply in what world I was,
What ground I trod on, and what air I breathed.
High was my room and lonely, near the roof
Of a large mansion or hotel, a lodge

That would have pleased me in more quiet times —
 60 Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
 With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
 Reading at intervals. The fear gone by
 Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
 I thought of those September massacres,
 Divided from me by a little month,
 And felt and touched them, a substantial dread
 (The rest was conjured up from tragic fictions
 And mournful calendars of true history,
 Remembrances and dim admonishments):
 70 'The horse is taught his manage, and the wind
 Of heaven wheels round and treads in his own steps;
 Year follows year, the tide returns again,
 Day follows day, all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once!
 And in such way I wrought upon myself
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried
 To the whole city 'Sleep no more!' To this
 Add comments of a calmer mind, from which
 I could not gather full security,
 80 But at the best it seemed a place of fear
 Unfit for the repose of night,
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

Betimes next morning to the Palace Walk
 Of Orleans I repaired, and entering there
 Was greeted (among divers other notes)
 By voices of the hawkers in the crowd
 Bawling 'Denunciation of the crimes
 Of Maximilian Robespierre'. The speech
 Which in their hands they carried was the same
 90 Which had been recently pronounced, the day
 When Robespierre (well knowing for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been

That would have pleased me in more quiet times;
 Nor was it wholly without pleasure then.
 70 With unextinguished taper I kept watch,
 Reading at intervals; the fear gone by
 Pressed on me almost like a fear to come.
 I thought of those September massacres,
 Divided from me by one little month,
 Saw them and touched: the rest was conjured up
 From tragic fictions or true history,
 Remembrances and dim admonishments.
 The horse is taught his manage, and no star
 Of wildest course but treads back his own steps;
 80 For the spent hurricane the air provides
 As fierce a successor; the tide retreats
 But to return out of its hiding-place
 In the great deep; all things have second birth;
 The earthquake is not satisfied at once;
 And in this way I wrought upon myself,
 Until I seemed to hear a voice that cried,
 To the whole city, 'Sleep no more.' The trance
 Fled with the voice to which it had given birth;
 But vainly comments of a calmer mind
 90 Promised soft peace and sweet forgetfulness.
 The place; all hushed and silent as it was,
 Appeared unfit for the repose of night,
 Defenceless as a wood where tigers roam.

With early morning towards the Palace-walk
 Of Orleans eagerly I turned; as yet
 The streets were still; not so those long Arcades;
 There, 'mid a peal of ill-matched sounds and cries,
 That greeted me on entering, I could hear
 Shrill voices from the hawkers in the throng,
 100 Bawling, 'Denunciation of the Crimes
 Of Maximilian Robespierre'; the hand,
 Prompt as the voice, held forth a printed speech,
 The same that had been recently pronounced,
 When Robespierre, not ignorant for what mark
 Some words of indirect reproof had been

Intended) rose in hardihood, and dared
 The man who had an ill surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness. Whereat,
 When a dead pause ensued and no one stirred,
 In silence of all present, from his seat
 Louvet walked singly through the avenue
 And took his station in the tribune; saying
 100 'I, Robespierre, accuse thee!' 'Tis well known
 What was the issue of that charge, and how
 Louvet was left alone without support
 Of his irresolute friends. But these are things
 Of which I speak only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind,
 No further.

Let me then relate that now,
 In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
 That liberty, and life, and death would soon
 To the remotest corners of the land
 110 Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
 The capital city (what was struggled for,
 And by what combatants victory must be won;
 The indecision on their part whose aim
 Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
 Who in attack or in defence alike
 Were strong through their impiety), greatly I
 Was agitated. Yea, I could almost
 Have prayed that throughout earth upon all souls
 Worthy of liberty – upon every soul
 120 Matured to live in plainness and in truth –
 The gift of tongues might fall, and men arrive
 From the four quarters of the winds to do
 For France what without help she could not do,
 A work of honour. Think not that to this

Intended, rose in hardihood, and dared
 The man who had an ill surmise of him
 To bring his charge in openness; whereat,
 When a dead pause ensued, and no one stirred,
 110 In silence of all present, from his seat
 Louvet walked single through the avenue,
 And took his station in the Tribune, saying,
 'I, Robespierre, accuse thee!' Well is known
 The inglorious issue of that charge, and how
 He, who had launched the startling thunderbolt,
 The one bold man, whose voice the attack had sounded,
 Was left without a follower to discharge
 His perilous duty, and retire lamenting
 That Heaven's best aid is wasted upon men
 120 Who to themselves are false.

But these are things

Of which I speak, only as they were storm
 Or sunshine to my individual mind,
 No further. Let me then relate that now –
 In some sort seeing with my proper eyes
 That Liberty, and Life, and Death would soon
 To the remotest corners of the land
 Lie in the arbitrement of those who ruled
 The capital City; what was struggled for,
 And by what combatants victory must be won;
 130 The indecision on their part whose aim
 Seemed best, and the straightforward path of those
 Who in attack or in defence were strong
 Through their impiety – my inmost soul
 Was agitated; yea, I could almost
 Have prayed that throughout earth upon all men,
 By patient exercise of reason made
 Worthy of liberty, all spirits filled
 With zeal expanding in Truth's holy light,
 The gift of tongues might fall, and power arrive
 140 From the four quarters of the winds to do
 For France, what without help she could not do,
 A work of honour; think not that to this

I added, work of safety: from such thought,
 And the least fear about the end of things,
 I was as far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve – nor only grieved – but thought
 Of opposition and of remedies.

- 130 An insignificant stranger and obscure,
 Mean as I was, and little graced with powers
 Of eloquence even in my native speech,
 And all unfit for tumult and intrigue,
 Yet would I willingly have taken up
 A service at this time for cause so great,
 However dangerous. Inly I revolved
 How much the destiny of man had still
 Hung upon single persons – that there was,
 Transcendent to all local patrimony,
 140 One nature as there is one sun in heaven;
 That objects, even as they are great, thereby
 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
 That man was only weak through his mistrust
 And want of hope, where evidence divine
 Proclaimed to him that hope should be most sure;
 That, with desires heroic and firm sense,
 A spirit thoroughly faithful to itself,
 Unquenchable, unsleeping, undismayed,
 Was as an instinct among men, a stream
 150 That gathered up each petty straggling rill
 And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind whose rest
 Was where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
 In circumspection and simplicity,
 Fell rarely in entire discomforture
 Below its aim, or met with from without
 A treachery that defeated it or foiled.

I added, work of safety: from all doubt
 Or trepidation for the end of things
 Far was I, far as angels are from guilt.

Yet did I grieve, nor only grieved, but thought
 Of opposition and of remedies:
 An insignificant stranger and obscure,
 And one, moreover, little graced with power
 150 Of eloquence even in my native speech,
 And all unfit for tumult or intrigue,
 Yet would I at this time with willing heart
 Have undertaken for a cause so great
 Service however dangerous. I revolved,
 How much the destiny of Man had still
 Hung upon single persons; that there was,
 Transcendent to all local patrimony,
 One nature, as there is one sun in heaven;
 That objects, even as they are great, thereby
 160 Do come within the reach of humblest eyes;
 That Man is only weak through his mistrust
 And want of hope where evidence divine
 Proclaims to him that hope should be most sure;
 Nor did the inexperience of my youth
 Preclude conviction, that a spirit strong
 In hope, and trained to noble aspirations,
 A spirit throughly faithful to itself,
 Is for Society's unreasoning herd
 A domineering instinct, serves at once
 170 For way and guide, a fluent receptacle
 That gathers up each petty straggling rill
 And vein of water, glad to be rolled on
 In safe obedience; that a mind, whose rest
 Is where it ought to be, in self-restraint,
 In circumspection and simplicity,
 Falls rarely in entire discomfiture
 Below its aim, or meets with, from without,
 A treachery that foils it or defeats;
 And, lastly, if the means on human will,
 180 Frail human will, dependent should betray

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 Which are the commonplaces of the schools,
 160 A theme for boys, too trite even to be felt,
 Yet, with a revelation's liveliness
 In all their comprehensive bearings known
 And visible to philosophers of old,
 Men who (to business of the world untrained)
 Lived in the shade – and to Harmodius known
 And his compeer Aristogiton; known
 To Brutus – that tyrannic power is weak,
 Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 170 To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
 Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
 That nothing has a natural right to last
 But equity and reason; that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
 Does live but by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
 Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time –
 Creed which ten shameful years have not annulled –
 But that the virtue of one paramount mind
 180 Would have abashed those impious crests, have quelled
 Outrage and bloody power, and, in despite
 Of what the people were through ignorance
 And immaturity (and in the teeth
 Of desperate opposition from without),

Him who too boldly trusted them, I felt
 That 'mid the loud distractions of the world
 A sovereign voice subsists within the soul,
 Arbiter undisturbed of right and wrong,
 Of life and death, in majesty severe
 Enjoining, as may best promote the aims
 Of truth and justice, either sacrifice,
 From whatsoever region of our cares
 Or our infirm affections Nature pleads,
 190 Earnest and blind, against the stern decree.

On the other side, I called to mind those truths
 That are the common-places of the schools –
 (A theme for boys, too hackneyed for their sires,)
 Yet, with a revelation's liveliness,
 In all their comprehensive bearings known
 And visible to philosophers of old,
 Men who, to business of the world untrained,
 Lived in the shade; and to Harmodius known
 And his compeer Aristogiton, known
 200 To Brutus – that tyrannic power is weak
 Hath neither gratitude, nor faith, nor love,
 Nor the support of good or evil men
 To trust in; that the godhead which is ours
 Can never utterly be charmed or stilled;
 That nothing hath a natural right to last
 But equity and reason; that all else
 Meets foes irreconcilable, and at best
 Lives only by variety of disease.

Well might my wishes be intense, my thoughts
 210 Strong and perturbed, not doubting at that time
 But that the virtue of one paramount mind
 Would have abashed those impious crests – have quelled
 Outrage and bloody power, and, in despite
 Of what the People long had been and were
 Through ignorance and false teaching, sadder proof
 Of immaturity, and in the teeth
 Of desperate opposition from without –

Have cleared a passage for just government
And left a solid birthright to the state,
Redeemed according to example given
By ancient lawgivers. In this frame of mind
Reluctantly to England I returned,
190 Compelled by nothing less than absolute want
Of funds for my support; else (well assured
That I both was and must be of small worth,
No better than an alien in the land),
I doubtless should have made a common cause
With some who perished, haply perished too —
A poor mistaken and bewildered offering
Should to the breast of nature have gone back
With all my resolutions, all my hopes,
A poet only to myself, to men
200 Useless, and even, beloved friend; a soul
To thee unknown!

When to my native land
(After a whole year's absence) I returned
I found the air yet busy with the stir
Of a contention which had been raised up
Against the traffickers in negro blood,
An effort which though baffled nevertheless
Had called back old forgotten principles
Dismissed from service, had diffused some truths

Have cleared a passage for just government,
 And left a solid birthright to the State,
 220 Redeemed, according to example given
 By ancient lawgivers.

In this frame of mind,

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

Twice had the trees let fall

Their leaves, as often Winter had put on
 His hoary crown, since I had seen the surge
 Beat against Albion's shore, since ear of mine
 240 Had caught the accents of my native speech
 Upon our native country's sacred ground.
 A patriot of the world, how could I glide
 Into communion with her sylvan shades,
 Erewhile my tuneful haunt? It pleased me more
 To abide in the great City, where I found
 The general air still busy with the stir
 Of that first memorable onset made
 By a strong levy of humanity
 Upon the traffickers in Negro blood;
 250 Effort which, though defeated, had recalled
 To notice old forgotten principles,
 And through the nation spread a novel heat

And more of virtuous feeling through the heart
 210 Of the English people. And no few of those
 So numerous (little less in verity
 Than a whole nation crying with one voice)
 Who had been crossed in this their just intent
 And righteous hope, thereby were well prepared
 To let that journey sleep awhile, and join
 Whatever other caravan appeared
 To travel forward towards liberty
 With more success. For me that strife had ne'er
 Fastened on my affections, nor did now
 220 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow, having laid this faith to heart,
 That if France prospered good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 And this most rotten branch of human shame
 (Object, as seemed, of a superfluous pains)
 Would fall together with its parent tree.

Such was my then belief – that there was one,
 And only one, solicitude for all.
 And now the strength of Britain was put forth
 230 In league with the confederated host;
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
 Change and subversion from this hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
 Down to that very moment – neither lapse
 Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time.
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which, with a diversity of pace,
 240 I had been travelling: this a stride at once
 Into another region. True it is,
 'Twas not concealed with what ungracious eyes
 Our native rulers from the very first
 Had looked upon regenerated France,
 Nor had I doubted that this day would come;
 But in such contemplation I had thought

Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own
 That this particular strife had wanted power
 To rivet my affections; nor did now
 Its unsuccessful issue much excite
 My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith
 That, if France prospered, good men would not long
 Pay fruitless worship to humanity,
 260 And this most rotten branch of human shame,
 Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains,
 Would fall together with its parent tree.
 What, then, were my emotions, when in arms
 Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,
 Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!
 Not in my single self alone I found,
 But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,
 Change and subversion from that hour. No shock
 Given to my moral nature had I known
 270 Down to that very moment; neither lapse
 Nor turn of sentiment that might be named
 A revolution, save at this one time;
 All else was progress on the self-same path
 On which, with a diversity of pace,
 I had been travelling: this a stride at once
 Into another region. As a light

Of general interests only, beyond this
 Had never once foretasted the event.
 Now had I other business, for I felt
 250 The ravage of this most unnatural strife
 In my own heart; there lay it like a weight
 At enmity with all the tenderest springs
 Of my enjoyments. I who with the breeze
 Had played, a green leaf on the blessed tree
 Of my belovèd country – nor had wished
 For happier fortune than to wither there –
 Now from my pleasant station was cut off
 And tossed about in whirlwinds. I rejoiced,
 Yes, afterwards (truth painful to record)
 260 Exulted in the triumph of my soul
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave hearts, to shameful flight. It was a grief –
 Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that –
 A conflict of sensations without name,
 Of which he only who may love the sight
 Of a village-steeple as I do can judge,
 When in the congregation bending all
 To their great Father, prayers were offered up
 270 Or praises for our country's victories,
 And, mid the simple worshippers perchance
 I only, like an uninvited guest
 Whom no one owned, sat silent – shall I add,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come!

Oh, much have they to account for who could tear
 By violence, at one decisive rent,
 From the best youth in England their dear pride,
 Their joy in England. This, too, at a time
 In which worst losses easily might wear
 280 The best of names, when patriotic love
 Did of itself in modesty give way
 Like the precursor when the Deity
 Is come whose harbinger he is – a time
 In which apostasy from ancient faith

And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze
 On some grey rock — its birth-place — so had I
 Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower
 280 Of my beloved country, wishing not
 A happier fortune than to wither there:
 Now was I from that pleasant station torn
 And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,
 Yea, afterwards — truth most painful to record! —
 Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
 When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,
 Left without glory on the field, or driven,
 Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief, —
 Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that, —
 290 A conflict of sensations without name,
 Of which *he* only, who may love the sight
 Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,
 When, in the congregation bending all
 To their great Father, prayers were offered up,
 Or praises for our country's victories;
 And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance
 I only, like an uninvited guest
 Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,
 Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

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

Seemed but conversion to a higher creed –
 Withal a season dangerous and wild,
 A time in which Experience would have plucked
 Flowers out of any hedge to make thereof
 A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

290 Ere yet the fleet of Britain had gone forth
 On this unworthy service whereunto
 The unhappy counsel of a few weak men
 Had doomed it, I beheld the vessels lie,
 A brood of gallant creatures – on the deep
 I saw them in their rest – a sojourner
 Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
 In that delightful island which protects
 Their place of convocation. There I heard
 Each evening, walking by the still seashore,
 300 A monitory sound which never failed –
 The sunset cannon. When the orb went down
 In the tranquillity of nature, came
 That voice (ill requiem!), seldom heard by me
 Without a spirit overcast, a deep
 Imagination, thought of woes to come,
 And sorrow for mankind, and pain of heart.

In France the men who for their desperate ends
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots were glad
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 310 In devilish pleas, were ten times stronger now;
 And thus, beset with foes on every side,
 The goaded land waxed mad! The crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts
 From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
 The sternness of the just, the faith of those
 Who doubted not that Providence had times
 Of anger and of vengeance, theirs who throned
 The human understanding paramount
 And made of that their god, the hopes of those
 320 Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
 For a paradise of ages, the blind rage

310 Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;
 Withal a season dangerous and wild,
 A time when sage Experience would have snatched
 Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose
 A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

When the proud fleet that bears the red-cross flag
 In that unworthy service was prepared
 To mingle, I beheld the vessels lie,
 A brood of gallant creatures, on the deep;
 I saw them in their rest, a sojourner
 320 Through a whole month of calm and glassy days
 In that delightful island which protects
 Their place of convocation – there I heard,
 Each evening, pacing by the still sea-shore,
 A monitory sound that never failed, –
 The sunset cannon. While the orb went down
 In the tranquillity of nature, came
 That voice, ill requiem! seldom heard by me
 Without a spirit overcast by dark
 Imaginations, sense of woes to come,
 330 Sorrow for human kind, and pain of heart.

In France, the men, who, for their desperate ends,
 Had plucked up mercy by the roots, were glad
 Of this new enemy. Tyrants, strong before
 In wicked pleas, were strong as demons now;
 And thus, on every side beset with foes,
 The goaded land waxed mad; the crimes of few
 Spread into madness of the many; blasts
 From hell came sanctified like airs from heaven.
 The sternness of the just, the faith of those
 340 Who doubted not that Providence had times
 Of vengeful retribution, theirs who throned
 The human Understanding paramount
 And made of that their God, the hopes of men
 Who were content to barter short-lived pangs
 For a paradise of ages, the blind rage

Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
 Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life, were pressed
 Into one service, busy with one work.
 The Senate was heart-stricken, not a voice
 Uplifted, none to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled all the year
 330 With feastdays: the old man from the chimney-nook,
 The maiden from the bosom of her love,
 The mother from the cradle of her babe,
 The warrior from the field – all perished, all –
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those who bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it, ever thirsty, as a child
 (If light desires of innocent little ones
 May with such heinous appetites be matched)
 340 Having a toy, a windmill, though the air
 Do of itself blow fresh and makes the vane
 Spin in his eyesight, he is not content,
 But with the plaything at arm's length he sets
 His front against the blast, and runs amain
 To make it whirl the faster.

In the depth
 Of these enormities even thinking minds
 Forgot at seasons whence they had their being –
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As liberty upon earth; yet all beneath
 350 Her innocent authority was wrought
 Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour

Of insolent tempers, the light vanity
 Of intermeddlers, steady purposes
 Of the suspicious, slips of the indiscreet,
 And all the accidents of life were pressed
 350 Into one service, busy with one work:
 The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,
 Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,
 Her frenzy only active to extol
 Past outrages, and shape the way for new,
 Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

Domestic carnage now filled the whole year
 With feast-days; old men from the chimney-nook,
 The maiden from the bosom of her love,
 The mother from the cradle of her babe,
 360 The warrior from the field – all perished, all –
 Friends, enemies, of all parties, ages, ranks,
 Head after head, and never heads enough
 For those that bade them fall. They found their joy,
 They made it proudly, eager as a child,
 (If like desires of innocent little ones
 May with such heinous appetites be compared),
 Pleased in some open field to exercise
 A toy that mimics with revolving wings
 The motion of a wind-mill; though the air
 370 Do of itself blow fresh, and make the vanes
 Spin in his eyesight, *that* contents him not,
 But, with the plaything at arm's length, he sets
 His front against the blast, and runs amain,
 That it may whirl the faster.

Amid the depth
 Of those enormities, even thinking minds
 Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being;
 Forgot that such a sound was ever heard
 As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath
 Her innocent authority was wrought,
 380 Nor could have been, without her blessed name.
 The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour

Of her composure, felt that agony
 And gave it vent in her last words. O friend,
 It was a lamentable time for man,
 Whether a hope had e'er been his or not —
 A woeful time for them whose hopes did still
 Outlast the shock; most woeful for those few
 (They had the deepest feeling of the grief)
 360 Who still were flattered, and had trust in man.
 Meanwhile, the invaders fared as they deserved!
 The Herculean commonwealth had put forth her arms
 And throttled with an infant godhead's might
 The snakes about her cradle — that was well,
 And as it should be, yet no cure for those
 Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be
 Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.

Most melancholy at the time, o friend,
 Were my day-thoughts, my dreams were miserable.
 370 Through months, through years, long after the last beat
 Of those atrocities (I speak bare truth,
 As if to thee alone in private talk)
 I scarcely had one night of quiet sleep,
 Such ghastly visions had I of despair,
 And tyranny, and implements of death,
 And long orations which in dreams I pleaded
 Before unjust tribunals, with a voice
 Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense
 Of treachery and desertion in the place
 380 The holiest that I knew of — my own soul.

When I began at first in early youth
 To yield myself to nature, when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first,
 Neither the day nor night, evening or morn,

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

When I began in youth's delightful prime
 To yield myself to Nature, when that strong
 And holy passion overcame me first,
 Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free

Were free from the oppression. But, great God,
 Who sendest thyself into this breathing world
 Through nature and through every kind of life,
 And makest man what he is — creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence,
 390 Above all these raised infinite ascents
 When reason which enables him to be
 Is not sequestered — what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship,
 What countenance to promote this second love!
 That first was service but to things which lie
 At rest within the bosom of thy will;
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude,
 The tumult was a gladness, and the fear
 Ennobling, venerable — sleep secure,
 400 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient prophets were inflamed,
 Nor wanted consolations of their own
 And majesty of mind when they denounced
 On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
 Of their offences, punishment to come;
 Or saw like other men, with bodily eyes,
 Before them in some desolated place
 The consummation of the wrath of Heaven;
 So did some portions of that spirit fall
 410 On me, to uphold me through those evil times,
 And in their rage and dog-day heat I found
 Something to glory in, as just and fit
 And in the order of sublimest laws.
 And even if that were not, amid the awe
 Of unintelligible chastisement
 I felt a kind of sympathy with power —

420 From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme!
 Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe,
 Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill
 The veins that branch through every frame of life,
 Making man what he is, creature divine,
 In single or in social eminence,
 Above the rest raised infinite ascents
 When reason that enables him to be
 Is not sequestered – what a change is here!
 How different ritual for this after-worship,
 430 What countenance to promote this second love!
 The first was service paid to things which lie
 Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.
 Therefore to serve was high beatitude;
 Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear
 Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,
 And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft
 In vision, yet constrained by natural laws
 With them to take a troubled human heart,
 440 Wanted not consolations, nor a creed
 Of reconcilment, then when they denounced,
 On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss
 Of their offences, punishment to come;
 Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,
 Before them, in some desolated place,
 The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;
 So, with devout humility be it said,
 So, did a portion of that spirit fall
 On me uplifted from the vantage-ground
 450 Of pity and sorrow to a state of being
 That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw
 Glimpses of retribution, terrible,
 And in the order of sublime behests:
 But, even if that were not, amid the awe
 Of unintelligible chastisement,
 Not only acquiescences of faith
 Survived, but daring sympathies with power,

Motions raised up within me nevertheless
 Which had relationship to highest things.
 Wild blasts of music thus did find their way
 420 Into the midst of terrible events,
 So that worst tempests might be listened to.
 Then was the truth received into my heart
 That under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
 Griefs bitterest of ourselves or of our kind,
 If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
 Honour which could not else have been — a faith,
 An elevation and a sanctity —
 If new strength be not given or old restored,
 The blame is ours, not nature's. When a taunt
 430 Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
 Saying 'Behold the harvest which we reap
 From popular government and equality!'
 I saw that it was neither these nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names
 By false philosophy that caused the woe,
 But that it was a reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance filled up from age to age
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

440 And as the desert has green spots, the sea
 Small islands in the midst of stormy waves,
 So that disastrous period did not want
 Such sprinklings of all human excellence
 As were a joy to hear of. Yet (nor less
 For those bright spots, those fair examples given
 Of fortitude and energy and love,
 And human nature faithful to itself
 Under worst trials) was I impelled to think
 Of the glad time when first I traversed France
 450 A youthful pilgrim — above all remembered
 That day when through an arch that spanned the street,
 A rainbow made of garish ornaments

Motions not treacherous or profane, else why
 Within the folds of no ungentle breast
 460 Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged?
 Wild blasts of music thus could find their way
 Into the midst of turbulent events;
 So that worst tempests might be listened to.
 Then was the truth received into my heart,
 That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,
 If from the affliction somewhere do not grow
 Honour which could not else have been, a faith,
 An elevation and a sanctity,
 If new strength be not given nor old restored,
 470 The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt
 Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,
 Saying, 'Behold the harvest that we reap
 From popular government and equality,'
 I clearly saw that neither these nor aught
 Of wild belief engrafted on their names
 By false philosophy had caused the woe,
 But a terrific reservoir of guilt
 And ignorance filled up from age to age,
 That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,
 480 But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

And as the desert hath green spots, the sea
 Small islands scattered amid stormy waves,
 So *that* disastrous period did not want
 Bright sprinklings of all human excellence,
 To which the silver wands of saints in Heaven
 Might point with rapturous joy. Yet not the less,
 For those examples in no age surpassed
 Of fortitude and energy and love,
 And human nature faithful to herself
 490 Under worst trials, was I driven to think
 Of the glad times when first I traversed France
 A youthful pilgrim; above all reviewed
 That eventide, when under windows bright
 With happy faces and with garlands hung,
 And through a rainbow-arch that spanned the street,

(Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed),
 We walked, a pair of weary travellers,
 Along the town of Arras, place from which
 Issued that Robespierre who afterwards
 Wielded the sceptre of the atheist crew.
 When the calamity spread far and wide,
 And this same city, which had even appeared
 460 To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
 Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
 As Lear reproached the winds I could almost
 Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
 For being yet an image in my mind
 To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O friend, few happier moments have been mine
 Through my whole life than that when first I heard
 That this foul tribe of Moloch was o'erthrown
 And their chief regent levelled with the dust.
 470 The day was one which haply may deserve
 A separate chronicle. Having gone abroad
 From a small village where I tarried then,
 To the same far-secluded privacy
 I was returning. Over the smooth sands
 Of Leven's ample estuary lay
 My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky
 And clouds, and intermingled mountain-tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad –
 480 Creatures of one ethereal substance met
 In consistory, like a diadem
 Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
 In the empyrean. Underneath this show
 Lay, as I knew, the nest of pastoral vales
 Among whose happy fields I had grown up
 From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
 Which neither changed nor stirred nor passed away,
 I gazed, and with a fancy more alive

Triumphal pomp for liberty confirmed,
 I paced, a dear companion at my side,
 The town of Arras, whence with promise high
 Issued, on delegation to sustain
 500 Humanity and right, *that* Robespierre,
 He who thereafter, and in how short time!
 Wielded the sceptre of the Atheist crew.
 When the calamity spread far and wide –
 And this same city, that did then appear
 To outrun the rest in exultation, groaned
 Under the vengeance of her cruel son,
 As Lear reproached the winds – I could almost
 Have quarrelled with that blameless spectacle
 For lingering yet an image in my mind
 510 To mock me under such a strange reverse.

O Friend! few happier moments have been mine
 Than that which told the downfall of this Tribe
 So dreaded, so abhorred. The day deserves
 A separate record. Over the smooth sands
 Of Leven's ample estuary lay
 My journey, and beneath a genial sun,
 With distant prospect among gleams of sky
 And clouds, and intermingling mountain tops,
 In one inseparable glory clad,
 520 Creatures of one ethereal substance met
 In consistory, like a diadem
 Or crown of burning seraphs as they sit
 In the empyrean. Underneath that pomp
 Celestial, lay unseen the pastoral vales
 Among whose happy fields I had grown up
 From childhood. On the fulgent spectacle,
 That neither passed away nor changed, I gazed

On this account – that I had chanced to find
 490 That morning, ranging through the churchyard graves
 Of Cartmel's rural town, the place in which
 An honoured teacher of my youth was laid.
 While we were schoolboys he had died among us,
 And was borne hither, as I knew, to rest
 With his own family. A plain stone, inscribed
 With name, date, office, pointed out the spot,
 To which a slip of verses was subjoined
 (By his desire, as afterwards I learnt),
 A fragment from the *Elegy* of Gray.
 500 A week, or little less, before his death
 He said to me 'My head will soon lie low!
 And when I saw the turf that covered him
 After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
 With sound of voice and countenance of the man,
 Came back upon me, so that some few tears
 Fell from me in my own despite. And now,
 Thus travelling smoothly o'er the level sands,
 I thought with pleasure of the verses graven
 Upon his tombstone, saying to myself
 510 'He loved the poets, and if now alive
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 Which he had formed when I at his command
 Began to spin, at first, my toilsome songs.'

Without me and within, as I advanced
 All that I saw, or felt, or communed with,
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood
 (Itself like a sea-rock) of what had been
 520 A Romish chapel, where in ancient times
 Masses were said at the hour which suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
 Not far from this still ruin all the plain
 Was spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of coaches, wains, and travellers, horse and foot,

Enrapt; but brightest things are wont to draw
 Sad opposites out of the inner heart,
 530 As even their pensive influence drew from mine.
 How could it otherwise? for not in vain
 That very morning had I turned aside
 To seek the ground where, 'mid a throng of graves,
 An honoured teacher of my youth was laid,
 And on the stone were graven by his desire
 Lines from the churchyard elegy of Gray.
 This faithful guide, speaking from his death-bed,
 Added no farewell to his parting counsel,
 But said to me, 'My head will soon lie low;
 540 And when I saw the turf that covered him,
 After the lapse of full eight years, those words,
 With sound of voice and countenance of the Man,
 Came back upon me, so that some few tears
 Fell from me in my own despite. But now
 I thought, still traversing that widespread plain,
 With tender pleasure of the verses graven
 Upon his tombstone, whispering to myself:
 He loved the Poets, and, if now alive,
 Would have loved me, as one not destitute
 550 Of promise, nor belying the kind hope
 That he had formed, when I at his command,
 Began to spin, with toil, my earliest songs.

As I advanced, all that I saw or felt
 Was gentleness and peace. Upon a small
 And rocky island near, a fragment stood
 (Itself like a sea rock) the low remains
 (With shells encrusted, dark with briny weeds)
 Of a dilapidated structure, once
 A Romish chapel, where the vested priest
 560 Said matins at the hour that suited those
 Who crossed the sands with ebb of morning tide.
 Not far from that still ruin all the plain
 Lay spotted with a variegated crowd
 Of vehicles and travellers, horse and foot,

Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
 In loose procession through the shallow stream
 Of inland water; the great sea meanwhile
 Was at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 530 Unwilling to proceed, the scene appeared
 So gay and cheerful, when – a traveller
 Chancing to pass – I carelessly inquired
 If any news were stirring. He replied
 In the familiar language of the day
 That *Robespierre was dead*. Nor was a doubt,
 On further question, left within my mind
 But that the tidings were substantial truth –
 That he and his supporters all were fallen.

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

Wading beneath the conduct of their guide
 In loose procession through the shallow stream
 Of inland waters; the great sea meanwhile
 Heaved at safe distance, far retired. I paused,
 Longing for skill to paint a scene so bright
 570 And cheerful, but the foremost of the band
 As he approached, no salutation given
 In the familiar language of the day,
 Cried, 'Robespierre is dead!' – nor was a doubt,
 After strict question, left within my mind
 That he and his supporters all were fallen.

Great was my transport, deep my gratitude
 To everlasting Justice, by this fiat
 Made manifest. 'Come now, ye golden times,'
 Said I forth-pouring on those open sands
 580 A hymn of triumph: 'as the morning comes
 From out the bosom of the night, come ye:
 Thus far our trust is verified; behold!
 They who with clumsy desperation brought
 A river of Blood, and preached that nothing else
 Could cleanse the Augean stable, by the might
 Of their own helper have been swept away;
 Their madness stands declared and visible;
 Elsewhere will safety now be sought, and earth
 March firmly towards righteousness and peace.' –
 590 Then schemes I framed more calmly, when and how
 The madding factions might be tranquillised,
 And how through hardships manifold and long
 The glorious renovation would proceed:
 Thus interrupted by uneasy bursts
 Of exultation, I pursued my way
 Along that very shore which I had skimmed
 In former days, when – spurring from the Vale
 Of Nightshade, and St. Mary's mouldering fane,
 And the stone abbot, after circuit made
 600 In wantonness of heart, a joyous band

Of schoolboys hastening to their distant home
 Along the margin of the moonlight sea,
 We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

From this time forth in France, as is well known,
 Authority put on a milder face,
 Yet everything was wanting that might give
 570 Courage to those who looked for good by light
 Of rational experience – good I mean
 At hand, and in the spirit of past aims.
 The same belief I, nevertheless, retained:
 The language of the Senate, and the acts
 And public measures of the Government,
 Though both of heartless omen, had not power
 To daunt me. In the people was my trust
 And in the virtues which mine eyes had seen,
 And to the ultimate repose of things
 580 I looked with unabated confidence.
 I knew that wound external could not take
 Life from the young Republic – that new foes
 Would only follow in the path of shame
 Their brethren, and her triumphs be in the end
 Great, universal, irresistible.
 This faith (which was an object in my mind
 Of passionate intuition) had effect
 Not small in dazzling me; for thus, through zeal,
 Such victory I confounded in my thoughts
 590 With one far higher and more difficult –
 Triumphs of unambitious peace at home
 And noiseless fortitude. Beholding still
 Resistance strong as heretofore, I thought
 That what was in degree the same was likewise
 The same in quality, that as the worse
 Of the two spirits then at strife remained

Book Eleventh

FRANCE - (CONCLUDED)

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

Untired, the better surely would preserve
 The heart that first had roused him – never dreamt
 That transmigration could be undergone,
 600 A fall of being suffered, and of hope,
 By creature that appeared to have received
 Entire conviction what a great ascent
 Had been accomplished, what high faculties
 It had been called to.

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

Untired, the better, surely, would preserve
 The heart that first had roused him. Youth maintains,
 In all conditions of society,
 Communion more direct and intimate
 30 With Nature, — hence, oftentimes, with reason too —
 Than age or manhood, even. To Nature, then,
 Power had reverted: habit, custom, law,
 Had left an interregnum's open space
 For *her* to move about in, uncontrolled.
 Hence could I see how Babel-like their task,
 Who, by the recent deluge stupified,
 With their whole souls went culling from the day
 Its petty promises, to build a tower
 For their own safety; laughed with my compeers
 40 At gravest heads, by enmity to France
 Distempered, till they found, in every blast
 Forced from the street-disturbing newsman's horn,
 For her great cause record or prophecy
 Of utter ruin. How might we believe
 That wisdom could, in any shape, come near
 Men clinging to delusions so insane?
 And thus, experience proving that no few
 Of our opinions had been just, we took
 Like credit to ourselves where less was due,
 50 And thought that other notions were as sound,

Yea, could not but be right – because I saw
That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way
And tell (since juvenile errors are my theme)
What in those days through Britain was performed
To turn *all* judgements out of their right course;
640 But this is passion over-near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And mingled up with something, in my mind,
Of scorn and condemnation personal
That would profane the sanctity of verse.
Our shepherds – this say merely – at that time
Thirsted to make the guardian-crook of law
A tool of murder. They who ruled the state
(Though with such awful proof before their eyes
That he who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
650 And can reap nothing better) child-like longed
To imitate – not wise enough to avoid.
Giants in their impiety alone,
But in their weapons and their warfare base
As vermin working out of reach, they leagued
Their strength perfidiously to undermine
Justice and make an end of liberty.

But from these bitter truths I must return
To my own history. It hath been told
That I was led to take an eager part
660 In arguments of civil polity
Abruptly, and indeed before my time.
I had approached, like other youth, the shield
Of human nature from the golden side,
And would have fought even to the death to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw.
What there is best in individual man,
Of wise in passion and sublime in power,
What there is strong and pure in household love,
Benevolent in small societies

Yea, could not but be right, because we saw
That foolish men opposed them.

To a strain

More animated I might here give way,
And tell, since juvenile errors are my theme,
What in those days, through Britain, was performed
To turn *all* judgments out of their right course;
But this is passion over-near ourselves,
Reality too close and too intense,
And intermixed with something, in my mind,
60 Of scorn and condemnation personal,
That would profane the sanctity of verse.
Our Shepherds, this say merely, at that time
Acted, or seemed at least to act, like men
Thirsting to make the guardian crook of law
A tool of murder; they who ruled the State,
Though with such awful proof before their eyes
That he, who would sow death, reaps death, or worse,
And can reap nothing better, child-like longed
To imitate, not wise enough to avoid;
70 Or left (by mere timidity betrayed)
The plain straight road, for one no better chosen
Than if their wish had been to undermine
Justice, and make an end of Liberty.

But from these bitter truths I must return
To my own history. It hath been told
That I was led to take an eager part
In arguments of civil polity,
Abruptly, and indeed before my time:
I had approached, like other youths, the shield
80 Of human nature from the golden side,
And would have fought, even to the death, to attest
The quality of the metal which I saw.
What there is best in individual man,
Of wise in passion, and sublime in power,
Benevolent in small societies,

670 And great in large ones also when called forth
 By great occasions – these were things of which
 I something knew, yet even these (themselves
 Felt deeply) were not thoroughly understood
 By reason. Nay, far from it! They were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 Not proof against the injuries of the day –
 Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,
 680 And of the bounds which sever it from good,
 As books and common intercourse with life
 Must needs have given (to the novice mind,
 When the world travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed), I began
 To think with fervour upon management
 Of nations, what it is and ought to be,
 And how their worth depended on their laws
 And on the constitution of the state.

Oh pleasant exercise of hope and joy –
 690 For great were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very heaven! Oh times,
 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance –
 When reason seemed the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime enchanter to assist the work
 700 Which then was going forwards in her name!
 Not favoured spots alone, but the whole earth,
 The beauty wore of promise, that which sets
 (To take an image which was felt, no doubt,
 Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
 The budding rose above the rose full-blown.
 What temper at the prospect did not wake
 To happiness unthought of? The inert

And great in large ones, I had oft revolved,
 Felt deeply, but not thoroughly understood
 By reason: nay, far from it; they were yet,
 As cause was given me afterwards to learn,
 90 Not proof against the injuries of the day;
 Lodged only at the sanctuary's door,
 Not safe within its bosom. Thus prepared,
 And with such general insight into evil,
 And of the bounds which sever it from good,
 As books and common intercourse with life
 Must needs have given – to the inexperienced mind,
 When the world travels in a beaten road,
 Guide faithful as is needed – I began
 To meditate with ardour on the rule
 100 And management of nations; what it is
 And ought to be; and strove to learn how far
 Their power or weakness, wealth or poverty,
 Their happiness or misery, depends
 Upon their laws, and fashion of the State.

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
 For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
 Upon our side, us who were strong in love!
 Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
 But to be young was very Heaven! O times,
 110 In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
 Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
 The attraction of a country in romance!
 When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
 When most intent on making of herself
 A prime enchantress – to assist the work,
 Which then was going forward in her name!
 Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,
 The beauty wore of promise – that which sets
 (As at some moments might not be unfelt
 120 Among the bowers of Paradise itself)
 The budding rose above the rose full blown.
 What temper at the prospect did not wake
 To happiness unthought of? The inert

Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
 They who had fed their childhood upon dreams —
 710 The playfellows of fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtlety, and strength
 Their ministers, used to stir in lordly wise
 Among the grandest objects of the sense
 And deal with whatsoever they found there
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it — they too, who, of gentle mood,
 Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts (schemers more mild,
 And in the region of their peaceful selves),
 720 Did now find helpers to their hearts' desire
 And stuff at hand plastic as they could wish,
 Were called upon to exercise their skill,
 Not in Utopia — subterraneous fields,
 Or some secreted island, heaven knows where! —
 But in the very world which is the world
 Of all of us, the place in which in the end
 We find our happiness, or not at all.

Why should I not confess that earth was then
 To me what an inheritance new-fallen
 730 Seems, when the first time visited, to one
 Who thither comes to find in it his home?
 He walks about and looks upon the place
 With cordial transport, moulds it and remoulds,
 And is half pleased with things that are amiss,
 'Twill be such joy to see them disappear.
 An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance
 To suit my ends. I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still predominant,
 740 When erring, erring on the better part
 And in the kinder spirit; placable,
 Indulgent oftentimes to the worst desires
 (As, on one side, not uninformed that men
 See as it has been taught them, and that time

Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
 They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
 The play-fellows of fancy, who had made
 All powers of swiftness, subtilty, and strength
 Their ministers, — who in lordly wise had stirred
 Among the grandest objects of the sense,
 130 And dealt with whatsoever they found there
 As if they had within some lurking right
 To wield it; — they, too, who of gentle mood
 Had watched all gentle motions, and to these
 Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
 And in the region of their peaceful selves; —
 Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
 Did both find helpers to their hearts' desire,
 And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish, —
 Were called upon to exercise their skill,
 140 Not in Utopia, — subterranean fields, —
 Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where!
 But in the very world, which is the world
 Of all of us, — the place where, in the end,
 We find our happiness, or not at all!

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

An active partisan, I thus convoked
 From every object pleasant circumstance
 To suit my ends; I moved among mankind
 With genial feelings still predominant;
 When erring, erring on the better part,
 And in the kinder spirit; placable,
 Indulgent, as not uninformed that men
 160 See as they have been taught — Antiquity

Gives rights to error, on the other hand,
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of licence as of liberty);
 And above all – for this was more than all –
 Not caring if the wind did now and then
 750 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity; happy,
 In brief a child of nature as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 That from the cradle had grown up with me,
 And losing, in no other way than light
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

In the main outline such it might be said
 Was my condition, till with open war
 Britain opposed the liberties of France.
 760 This threw me first out of the pale of love,
 Soured and corrupted upwards to the source
 My sentiments (was not, as hitherto,
 A swallowing up of lesser things in great,
 But change of them into their opposites),
 And thus a way was opened for mistakes
 And false conclusions of the intellect,
 As gross in their degree, and in their kind
 Far, far more dangerous. What had been a pride,
 Was now a shame. My likings and my loves
 770 Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry,
 And thus a blow, which in maturer age
 Would but have touched the judgement, struck more deep
 Into sensations near the heart. Meantime
 As from the first wild theories were afloat,
 Unto the subtleties of which at least
 I had but lent a careless ear, assured
 Of this, that time would soon set all things right –
 Prove that the multitude had been oppressed,
 And would be so no more.

But when events
 780 Brought less encouragement, and unto these

Gives rights to error; and aware, no less,
 That throwing off oppression must be work
 As well of License as of Liberty;
 And above all – for this was more than all –
 Not caring if the wind did now and then
 Blow keen upon an eminence that gave
 Prospect so large into futurity;
 In brief, a child of Nature, as at first,
 Diffusing only those affections wider
 170 That from the cradle had grown up with me,
 And losing, in no other way than light
 Is lost in light, the weak in the more strong.

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

But when events
 Brought less encouragement, and unto these

The immediate proof of principles no more
 Could be entrusted (while the events themselves,
 Worn out in greatness and in novelty,
 Less occupied the mind, and sentiments
 Could through my understanding's natural growth
 No longer justify themselves through faith
 Of inward consciousness, and hope that laid
 Its hand upon its object), evidence
 Safer, of universal application, such
 790 As could not be impeached, was sought elsewhere.

And now, become oppressors in their turn,
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
 For one of conquest, losing sight of all
 Which they had struggled for – and mounted up,
 Openly in the view of earth and heaven,
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
 Vexed inly somewhat, it is true, and sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false prophet; but, roused up, I stuck
 800 More firmly to old tenets, and to prove
 Their temper strained them more. And thus in heat
 Of contest did opinions every day
 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
 They clung as if they were the life of it.

This was the time when all things tended fast
 To depravation; the philosophy
 That promised to abstract the hopes of man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element,
 810 Found ready welcome. Tempting region that
 For zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 Where passions had the privilege to work,
 And never hear the sound of their own names!
 But (speaking more in charity) the dream

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

But now, become oppressors in their turn,
 Frenchmen had changed a war of self-defence
 For one of conquest, losing sight of all
 Which they had struggled for: now mounted up,
 210 Openly in the eye of earth and heaven,
 The scale of liberty. I read her doom,
 With anger vexed, with disappointment sore,
 But not dismayed, nor taking to the shame
 Of a false prophet. While resentment rose
 Striving to hide, what nought could heal, the wounds
 Of mortified presumption, I adhered
 More firmly to old tenets, and, to prove
 Their temper, strained them more; and thus, in heat
 Of contest, did opinions every day
 220 Grow into consequence, till round my mind
 They clung, as if they were its life, nay more,
 The very being of the immortal soul.

This was the time, when, all things tending fast
 To depravation, speculative schemes —
 That promised to abstract the hopes of Man
 Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth
 For ever in a purer element —
 Found ready welcome. Tempting region *that*
 For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,
 230 Where passions had the privilege to work,
 And never hear the sound of their own names.
 But, speaking more in charity, the dream

Was flattering to the young ingenuous mind,
 Pleased with extremes, and not the least with that
 Which makes the human reason's naked self
 The object of its fervour. What delight! –
 How glorious! – in self-knowledge and self-rule
 820 To look through all the frailties of the world
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 The accidents of nature, time and place,
 That make up the weak being of the past,
 Build social freedom on its only basis,
 The freedom of the individual mind,
 Which (to the blind restraint of general laws
 Superior) magisterially adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.

830 For, howsoe'er unsettled, never once
 Had I thought ill of human-kind, or been
 Indifferent to its welfare; but, inflamed
 With thirst of a secure intelligence,
 And sick of other passion, I pursued
 A higher nature – wished that man should start
 Out of the worm-like state in which he is,
 And spread abroad the wings of liberty,
 Lord of himself in undisturbed delight.
 – A noble aspiration! – yet I feel

840 The aspiration – but with other thoughts
 And happier. For I was perplexed, and sought
 To accomplish the transition by such means
 As did not lie in nature – sacrificed
 The exactness of a comprehensive mind
 To scrupulous and microscopic views
 That furnished out materials for a work
 Of false imagination, placed beyond
 The limits of experience and of truth.

850 Enough, no doubt, the advocates themselves
 Of ancient institutions had performed
 To bring disgrace upon their very names –

Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least
 With that which makes our Reason's naked self
 The object of its fervour. What delight!
 How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,
 To look through all the frailties of the world,
 And, with a resolute mastery shaking off
 Infirmities of nature, time, and place,
 240 Build social upon personal Liberty,
 Which, to the blind restraints of general laws
 Superior, magisterially adopts
 One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed
 Upon an independent intellect.
 Thus expectation rose again; thus hope,
 From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.
 Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,
 I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst
 Of a secure intelligence, and sick
 250 Of other longing, I pursued what seemed
 A more exalted nature; wished that Man
 Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,
 And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,
 Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight —
 A noble aspiration! yet I feel
 (Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)
 The aspiration, nor shall ever cease
 To feel it; — but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true — could such a plea excuse
 260 Those aberrations — had the clamorous friends
 Of ancient Institutions said and done
 To bring disgrace upon their very names;

Disgrace, of which custom, and written law,
 And sundry moral sentiments, as props
 And emanations of these institutes,
 Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
 Uplifted. Why deceive ourselves? – 'twas so,
 'Twas even so – and sorrow for the man
 Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
 Or, seeing, hath forgotten! Let this pass,
 860 Suffice it that a shock had then been given
 To old opinions, and the minds of all men
 Had felt it – that my mind was both let loose,
 Let loose and goaded. After what has been
 Already said of patriotic love,
 And hinted at in other sentiments,
 We need not linger long upon this theme.
 This only may be said, that from the first
 Having two natures in me (joy the one,
 The other melancholy), and withal
 870 A happy man, and therefore bold to look
 On painful things – slow, somewhat, too, and stern
 In temperament – I took the knife in hand
 And, stopping not at parts less sensitive,
 Endeavoured with my best of skill to probe
 The living body of society
 Even to the heart. I pushed without remorse
 My speculations forward, yea, set foot
 On nature's holiest places.

Time may come

880 When some dramatic story may afford
 Shapes livelier to convey to thee, my friend,
 What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
 And the errors into which I was betrayed
 By present objects, and by reasonings false
 From the beginning, inasmuch as drawn
 Out of a heart which had been turned aside
 From nature by external accidents,
 And which was thus confounded more and more,
 Misguiding and misguided. Thus I fared,

Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,
And sundry moral sentiments as props
Or emanations of those institutes,
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been
Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,
'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,
270 Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock
Was given to old opinions; all men's minds
Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,
Let loose and goaded. After what hath been
Already said of patriotic love,
Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern
In temperament, withal a happy man,
And therefore bold to look on painful things,
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent
280 To anatomise the frame of social life,
Yea, the whole body of society
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed
By present objects, and by reasonings false
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn
290 Out of a heart that had been turned aside
From Nature's way by outward accidents,
And which was thus confounded, more and more
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,

Dragging all passions, notions, shapes of faith,
 890 Like culprits to the bar; suspiciously
 Calling the mind to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 Of moral obligation — what the rule
 And what the sanction — till, demanding proof,
 And seeking it in everything, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and (in fine)
 Sick, wearied out with contrarities,
 900 Yielded up moral questions in despair
 And for my future studies, as the sole
 Employment of the enquiring faculty,
 Turned towards mathematics, and their clear
 And solid evidence.

Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,
 Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,
 Suspiciously, to establish in plain day
 Her titles and her honours; now believing,
 Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed
 With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground
 300 Of obligation, what the rule and whence
 The sanction; till, demanding formal *proof*,
 And seeking it in every thing, I lost
 All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,
 Sick, wearied out with contrarieties,
 Yielded up moral questions in despair.

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

Depressed, bewildered thus, I did not walk
 With scoffers, seeking light and gay revenge
 From indiscriminate laughter, nor sate down
 In reconciliation with an utter waste
 Of intellect; such sloth I could not brook,
 (Too well I loved, in that my spring of life,
 Pains-taking thoughts, and truth, their dear reward)
 But turned to abstract science, and there sought
 Work for the reasoning faculty enthroned
 330 Where the disturbances of space and time —

Ah, then it was
 That thou, most precious friend – about this time
 First known to me – didst lend a living help
 To regulate my soul. And then it was
 That the belovèd woman in whose sight
 Those days were passed (now speaking in a voice
 910 Of sudden admonition, like a brook
 That does but cross a lonely road; and now
 Seen, heard and felt, and caught at every turn,
 Companion never lost through many a league)
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self. For, though impaired and changed
 Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
 Than as a clouded, not a waning moon.
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
 A poet, made me seek beneath that name
 920 My office upon earth, and nowhere else.
 And lastly, nature's self, by human love
 Assisted, through the weary labyrinth
 Conducted me again to open day,
 Revived the feelings of my earlier life,
 Gave me that strength and knowledge full of peace,
 Enlarged and never more to be disturbed,
 Which through the steps of our degeneracy,
 All degradation of this age, hath still
 Upheld me, and upholds me at this day
 930 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less) when, finally to close
 And rivet up the gains of France, a Pope
 Is summoned in to crown an Emperor –
 This last opprobrium, when we see the dog
 Returning to his vomit; when the sun
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation among living clouds,
 Hath put his function and his glory off,
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,

Whether in matters various, properties
 Inherent, or from human will and power
 Derived — find no admission. Then it was —
 Thanks to the bounteous Giver of all good! —
 That the beloved Sister in whose sight
 Those days were passed, now speaking in a voice
 Of sudden admonition — like a brook
 That did but *cross* a lonely road, and now
 Is seen, heard, felt, and caught at every turn,
 340 Companion never lost through many a league —
 Maintained for me a saving intercourse
 With my true self; for, though bedimmed and changed
 Much, as it seemed, I was no further changed
 Than as a clouded and a waning moon:
 She whispered still that brightness would return,
 She, in the midst of all, preserved me still
 A Poet, made me seek beneath that name,
 And that alone, my office upon earth;
 And, lastly, as hereafter will be shown,
 350 If willing audience fail not, Nature's self,
 By all varieties of human love
 Assisted, led me back through opening day
 To those sweet counsels between head and heart
 Whence grew that genuine knowledge; fraught with peace,
 Which, through the later sinkings of this cause,
 Hath still upheld me, and upholds me now
 In the catastrophe (for so they dream,
 And nothing less), when, finally to close
 And seal up all the gains of France, a Pope
 360 Is summoned in, to crown an Emperor —
 This last opprobrium, when we see a people,
 That once looked up in faith, as if to Heaven
 For manna, take a lesson from the dog:
 Returning to his vomit; when the sun
 That rose in splendour, was alive, and moved
 In exultation with a living pomp
 Of clouds — his glory's natural retinue —
 Hath dropped all functions by the gods bestowed,
 And, turned into a gewgaw, a machine,

940 Sets like an opera phantom.

Thus, o friend,
 Through times of honour and through times of shame
 Have I descended, tracing faithfully
 The workings of a youthful mind beneath
 The breath of great events – its hopes no less
 Than universal, and its boundless love –
 A story destined for thy ear, who now
 Among the basest and the lowest fallen
 Of all the race of men dost make abode,
 Where Etna looketh down on Syracuse,
 950 The city of Timoleon. Living God,
 How are the mighty prostrated! They first,
 They first of all that breathe, should have awaked
 When the great voice was heard out of the tombs
 Of ancient heroes. If for France I have grieved,
 Who in the judgement of no few hath been
 A trifler only in her proudest day –
 Have been distressed to think of what she once
 Promised, now is – a far more sober cause
 Thine eyes must see of sorrow in a land
 960 Strewed with the wreck of loftiest years, a land
 Glorious indeed, substantially renowned
 Of simple virtue once and manly praise,
 Now without one memorial hope; not even
 A hope to be deferred, for that would serve
 To cheer the heart in such entire decay.

But indignation works where hope is not,
 And thou, o friend, wilt be refreshed. There is
 One great society alone on earth,
 The noble living and the noble dead.
 970 Thy consolation shall be there, and time
 And nature shall before thee spread in store
 Imperishable thoughts, the place itself
 Be conscious of thy presence, and the dull
 Sirocco air of its degeneracy
 Turn as thou movest into a healthful breeze

370 Sets like an Opera phantom.

Thus, O Friend!

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

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

To cherish and invigorate thy frame.

Thine be those motions strong and sanative,
 A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
 To health and joy and pure contentedness;
 980 To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
 From this last spot of earth where freedom now
 Stands single in her only sanctuary –
 A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This heavy time of change for all mankind.
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
 The sympathies erewhile in part discharged
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again.
 My own delights do scarcely seem to me
 990 My own delights! The lordly Alps themselves
 (Those rosy peaks, from which the morning looks
 Abroad on many nations) are not now
 Since thy migration and departure, friend,
 The gladsome image in my memory
 Which they were used to be. To kindred scenes,
 On errand (at a time, how different!)
 Thou takest thy way, carrying a heart more ripe
 For all divine enjoyment, with the soul
 Which nature gives to poets, now by thought
 1000 Matured and in the summer of its strength.
 Oh, wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods
 On Etna's side; and thou, o flowery vale
 Of Enna, is there not some nook of thine
 From the first playtime of the infant earth
 Kept sacred to restorative delight?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Even from my earliest schoolday time I loved
 To dream of Sicily, and now a strong
 And vital promise wafted from that land

Thine be such converse strong and sanative,
 A ladder for thy spirit to reascend
 To health and joy and pure contentedness;
 To me the grief confined, that thou art gone
 400 From this last spot of earth, where Freedom now
 Stands single in her only sanctuary;
 A lonely wanderer art gone, by pain
 Compelled and sickness, at this latter day,
 This sorrowful reverse for all mankind.
 I feel for thee, must utter what I feel:
 The sympathies erewhile in part discharged,
 Gather afresh, and will have vent again:
 My own delights do scarcely seem to me
 My own delights; the lordly Alps themselves,
 410 Those rosy peaks, from which the Morning looks
 Abroad on many nations, are no more
 For me that image of pure gladness
 Which they were wont to be. Through kindred scenes,
 For purpose, at a time, how different!
 Thou tak'st thy way, carrying the heart and soul
 That Nature gives to Poets, now by thought
 Matured, and in the summer of their strength.
 Oh! wrap him in your shades, ye giant woods,
 On Etna's side; and thou, O flowery field
 420 Of Enna! is there not some nook of thine,
 From the first play-time of the infant world
 Kept sacred to restorative delight,
 When from afar invoked by anxious love?

Child of the mountains, among shepherds reared,
 Ere yet familiar with the classic page,
 I learnt to dream of Sicily; and lo,
 The gloom, that, but a moment past, was deepened
 At thy command, at her command gives way;
 A pleasant promise, wafted from her shores,

1010 Comes o'er my heart! There's not a single name
 Of note belonging to that honoured isle —
 Philosopher or bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes, deep and tranquil soul —
 That is not like a comfort to my grief.
 And, o Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth
 By force of graces which were theirs, that they
 Have had (as thou reportest) miracles
 Wrought for them in old time. Yea, not unmoved,
 1020 When thinking of my own belovèd friend,
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his tyrant lord
 Within a chest imprisoned impiously —
 How with their honey from the fields they came
 And fed him there, alive, from month to month,
 Because the goatherd, blessèd man, had lips
 Wet with the muse's nectar.

Thus I soothe
 The pensive moments by this calm fireside,
 And find a thousand fancied images
 1030 That cheer the thoughts of those I love, and mine.
 Our prayers have been accepted: thou wilt stand,
 Not as an exile but a visitant
 On Etna's top; by pastoral Arethuse
 (Or if that fountain be indeed no more,

430 Comes o'er my heart: in fancy I behold
 Her seas yet smiling, her once happy vales;
 Nor can my tongue give utterance to a name
 Of note belonging to that honoured isle,
 Philosopher or Bard, Empedocles,
 Or Archimedes, pure-abstracted soul!
 That doth not yield a solace to my grief:
 And, O Theocritus, so far have some
 Prevailed among the powers of heaven and earth,
 By their endowments, good or great, that they
 440 Have had, as thou reportest, miracles
 Wrought for them in old time: yea, not unmoved,
 When thinking on my own beloved friend,
 I hear thee tell how bees with honey fed
 Divine Comates, by his impious lord
 Within a chest imprisoned; how they came
 Laden from blooming grove or flowery field,
 And fed him there, alive, month after month,
 Because the goatherd, blessed man! had lips
 Wet with the Muses' nectar.

Thus I soothe

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

Then near some other spring, which by the name
 Thou gratelest, willingly deceived)
 Shalt linger as a gladsome votary,
 And not a captive pining for his home.

Then, near some other spring, which, by the name
 Thou gratest, willingly deceived,
 I see thee linger a glad votary,
 470 And not a captive pining for his home.