

Book Seventh

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

Five years are vanished since I first poured out,
Saluted by that animating breeze
Which met me issuing from the city's walls
A glad preamble to this verse. I sang
Aloud in dithyrambic fervour, deep
But short-lived uproar, like a torrent sent
Out of the bowels of a bursting cloud
Down Scafell or Blencathra's rugged sides,
A waterspout from heaven. But 'twas not long
10 Ere the interrupted stream broke forth once more
And flowed awhile in strength, then stopped for years –
Not heard again until a little space
Before last primrose-time. Belovèd friend,
The assurances then given unto myself
Which did beguile me of some heavy thoughts
At thy departure to a foreign land
Have failed; for slowly does this work advance.
Through the whole summer have I been at rest,
Partly from voluntary holiday
20 And part through outward hindrance. But I heard
After the hour of sunset yester-even,
Sitting within doors betwixt light and dark,
A voice that stirred me. 'Twas a little band,
A choir of redbreasts gathered somewhere near
My threshold – minstrels from the distant woods
And dells, sent in by Winter to bespeak
For the old man a welcome, to announce
With preparation artful and benign
(Yea the most gentle music of the year)
30 That their rough lord had left the surly north

Book Seventh

RESIDENCE IN LONDON

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

And has begun his journey.

A delight

At this unthought-of greeting unawares
 Smote me, a sweetness of the coming time,
 And, listening, I half whispered 'We will be,
 Ye heartsome choristers, ye and I will be
 Brethren, and in the hearing of bleak winds
 Will chant together.' And thereafter, walking
 By later twilight on the hills, I saw
 A glow-worm from beneath a dusky shade
 40 Or canopy of yet unwithered fern
 Clear-shining, like a hermit's taper seen
 Through a thick forest. Silence touched me here
 No less than sound had done before: the child
 Of summer, lingering, shining by itself,
 The voiceless worm on the unfrequented hills,
 Seemed sent on the same errand with the choir
 Of winter that had warbled at my door,
 And the whole year seemed tenderness and love.
 The last night's genial feeling overflowed
 50 Upon this morning, and my favourite grove –
 Now tossing its dark boughs in sun and wind –
 Spreads through me a commotion like its own,
 Something that fits me for the poet's task,
 Which we will now resume with cheerful hope,
 Nor checked by aught of tamer argument
 That lies before us, needful to be told.

Returned from that excursion, soon I bade
 Farewell for ever to the private bowers
 Of gowned students – quitted these, no more
 60 To enter them – and pitched my vagrant tent
 A casual dweller and at large among
 The unfenced regions of society.
 Yet undetermined to what plan of life
 I should adhere, and seeming thence to have
 A little space of intermediate time
 Loose and at full command, to London first

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

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

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

Yet, undetermined to what course of life
 I should adhere, and seeming to possess
 60 A little space of intermediate time
 At full command, to London first I turned,

I turned, if not in calmness, nevertheless
 In no disturbance of excessive hope –
 At ease from all ambition personal,
 70 Frugal as there was need, and though self-willed,
 Yet temperate and reserved, and wholly free
 From dangerous passions. 'Twas at least two years
 Before this season when I first beheld
 That mighty place, a transient visitant,
 And now it pleased me my abode to fix
 Single in the wide waste. To have a house
 It was enough (what matter for a home?)
 That owned me, living cheerfully abroad
 With fancy on the stir from day to day
 80 And all my young affections out of doors.

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

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

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

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

Oh, wondrous power of words! How sweet they are
 According to the meaning which they bring!
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh – I then had heard
 Of your green groves and wilderness of lamps,
 Your gorgeous ladies, fairy cataracts
 And pageant fireworks! Nor must we forget
 Those other wonders, different in kind
 Though scarcely less illustrious in degree:
 The river proudly bridged, the giddy top
 130 And Whispering Gallery of St Paul's, the tombs
 Of Westminster, the Giants of Guildhall,
 Bedlam and the two figures at its gates,
 Streets without end and churches numberless,
 Statues with flowery gardens in vast squares,

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

O, wond'rous power of words, by simple faith
 120 Licensed to take the meaning that we love!
 Vauxhall and Ranelagh! I then had heard
 Of your green groves, and wilderness of lamps
 Dimming the stars, and fireworks magical,
 And gorgeous ladies, under splendid domes,
 Floating in dance, or warbling high in air
 The songs of spirits! Nor had Fancy fed
 With less delight upon that other class
 Of marvels, broad-day wonders permanent:
 The River proudly bridged; the dizzy top
 130 And Whispering Gallery of St Paul's; the tombs
 Of Westminster; the Giants of Guildhall;
 Bedlam, and those carved maniacs at the gates,
 Perpetually recumbent; Statues – man,
 And the horse under him – in gilded pomp
 Adorning flowery gardens, 'mid vast squares;

The Monument and armoury of the Tower.
 These fond imaginations of themselves
 Had long before given way in season due,
 Leaving a throng of others in their stead;
 And now I looked upon the real scene,
 140 Familiarly perused it day by day,
 With keen and lively pleasure even there
 Where disappointment was the strongest, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right –
 A thing that ought to be.

Shall I give way,
 Copying the impression of the memory,
 (Though things remembered idly do half seem
 The work of fancy) shall I, as the mood
 Inclines me, here describe for pastime's sake
 150 Some portion of that motley imagery,
 A vivid pleasure of my youth, and now,
 Among the lonely places that I love,
 A frequent daydream for my riper mind?
 And first the look and aspect of the place,
 The broad highway appearance as it strikes
 On strangers of all ages; the quick dance
 Of colours, lights, and forms; the Babel din;
 The endless stream of men, and moving things;
 From hour to hour the illimitable walk
 160 Still among streets with clouds and sky above;
 The wealth, the bustle and the eagerness,
 The glittering chariots with their pampered steeds,
 Stalls, barrows, porters; midway in the street
 The scavenger, who begs with hat in hand;
 The labouring hackney-coaches, the rash speed
 Of coaches travelling far whirled on with horn
 Loud blowing, and the sturdy drayman's team
 Ascending from some alley of the Thames
 And striking right across the crowded Strand
 170 Till the fore-horse veer round with punctual skill;
 Here, there and everywhere a weary throng,

The Monument, and that Chamber of the Tower
 Where England's sovereigns sit in long array,
 Their steeds bestriding, — every mimic shape
 Cased in the gleaming mail the monarch wore,
 140 Whether for gorgeous tournament addressed,
 Or life or death upon the battle-field.
 Those bold imaginations in due time
 Had vanished, leaving others in their stead:
 And now I looked upon the living scene;
 Familiarly perused it; oftentimes,
 In spite of strongest disappointment, pleased
 Through courteous self-submission, as a tax
 Paid to the object by prescriptive right.

Rise up, thou monstrous ant-hill on the plain
 150 Of a too busy world! Before me flow,
 Thou endless stream of men and moving things!
 Thy every-day appearance, as it strikes —
 With wonder heightened, or sublimed by awe —
 On strangers, of all ages; the quick dance
 Of colours, lights, and forms; the deafening din;

The comers and the goers face to face,
 Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead –
 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe;
 Stationed above the door, like guardian saints,
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
 180 Or physiognomies of real men,
 Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
 Boyle, Shakespeare, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some Scotch doctor, famous in his day.

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

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 Following the tide that slackens by degrees,
 Some half-frequented scene where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.

The comers and the goers face to face,
 Face after face; the string of dazzling wares,
 Shop after shop, with symbols, blazoned names,
 And all the tradesman's honours overhead:
 160 Here, fronts of houses, like a title-page,
 With letters huge inscribed from top to toe,
 Stationed above the door, like guardian saints;
 There, allegoric shapes, female or male,
 Or physiognomies of real men,
 Land-warriors, kings, or admirals of the sea,
 Boyle, Shakspeare, Newton, or the attractive head
 Of some quack-doctor, famous in his day.

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

Thence back into the throng, until we reach,
 190 Following the tide that slackens by degrees,
 Some half-frequented scene, where wider streets
 Bring straggling breezes of suburban air.

Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls,
 210 Advertisements of giant-size from high
 Press forward in all colours on the sight:
 These, bold in conscious merit, lower down,
 That – fronted with a most imposing word –
 Is peradventure one in masquerade.
 As on the broadening causeway we advance
 Behold a face turned up towards us, strong
 In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
 'Tis one perhaps already met elsewhere,
 A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short
 220 And stumping with his arms. In sailor's garb
 Another lies at length beside a range
 Of written characters with chalk inscribed
 Upon the smooth flat stones. The nurse is here,
 The bachelor that loves to sun himself,
 The military idler, and the dame
 That field-ward takes her walk in decency.

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

Here files of ballads dangle from dead walls;
 Advertisements, of giant-size, from high
 Press forward, in all colours, on the sight;
 These, bold in conscious merit, lower down;
That, fronted with a most imposing word,
 Is, peradventure, one in masquerade.
 As on the broadening causeway we advance,
 200 Behold, turned upwards, a face hard and strong
 In lineaments, and red with over-toil.
 'Tis one encountered here and everywhere;
 A travelling cripple, by the trunk cut short,
 And stumping on his arms. In sailor's garb
 Another lies at length, beside a range
 Of well-formed characters, with chalk inscribed
 Upon the smooth flat stones: the Nurse is here,
 The Bachelor, that loves to sun himself,
 The military Idler, and the Dame,
 210 That field-ward takes her walk with decent steps.

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

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

At leisure let us view from day to day,
 As they present themselves, the spectacles
 Within doors: troops of wild beasts, birds and beasts
 Of every nature, from all climes convened,
 And, next to these, those mimic sights that ape
 The absolute presence of reality,
 250 Expressing as in mirror sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she has to show.
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft
 By means refined attaining purest ends,
 But imitations fondly made in plain
 Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
 Whether the painter – fashioning a work
 To nature's circumambient scenery,
 And with his greedy pencil taking in
 A whole horizon on all sides – with power
 260 Like that of angels or commissioned spirits
 Plant us upon some lofty pinnacle,
 Or in a ship on waters (with a world
 Of life, and life-like mockery, to east,
 To west, beneath, behind us, and before),
 Or more mechanic artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 From shading colours also borrowing help,
 Some miniature of famous spots and things,
 Domestic or the boast of foreign realms:
 270 The Firth of Forth, and Edinborough throned
 On crags, fit empress of that mountain land;
 St Peter's Church, or (more aspiring aim)
 In microscopic vision, Rome itself;
 Or else perhaps some rural haunt, the Falls
 Of Tivoli; and high upon that steep
 The Temple of the Sibyl – every tree
 Through all the landscape, tuft, stone, scratch minute,
 And every cottage lurking in the rocks –
 All that the traveller sees when he is there.
 280 Add to these exhibitions mute and still
 Others of wider scope, where living men,

At leisure, then, I viewed, from day to day,
 230 The spectacles within doors, — birds and beasts
 Of every nature, and strange plants convened
 From every clime; and, next, those sights that ape
 The absolute presence of reality,
 Expressing, as in mirror, sea and land,
 And what earth is, and what she has to shew.
 I do not here allude to subtlest craft,
 By means refined attaining purest ends,
 But imitations, fondly made in plain
 Confession of man's weakness and his loves.
 240 Whether the Painter, whose ambitious skill
 Submits to nothing less than taking in
 A whole horizon's circuit, do with power,
 Like that of angels or commissioned spirits,
 Fix us upon some lofty pinnacle,
 Or in a ship on waters, with a world
 Of life, and life-like mockery beneath,
 Above, behind, far stretching and before;
 Or more mechanic artist represent
 By scale exact, in model, wood or clay,
 250 From blended colours also borrowing help,
 Some miniature of famous spots or things, —
 St. Peter's Church; or, more aspiring aim,
 In microscopic vision, Rome herself;
 Or, haply, some choice rural haunt, — the Falls
 Of Tivoli; and, high upon that steep,
 The Sibyl's mouldering Temple! every tree,
 Villa, or cottage, lurking among rocks
 Throughout the landscape; tuft, stone scratch minute —
 All that the traveller sees when he is there.

260 And to these exhibitions, mute and still,
 Others of wider scope, where living men,

Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
 Together joined their multifarious aid
 To heighten the allurements. Need I fear
 To mention by its name (as in degree
 Lowest of these and humblest in attempt,
 Though richly graced with honours of its own)
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of youth
 290 Unless itself be pleased, I more than once
 Here took my seat, and mauger frequent fits
 Of irksomeness, with ample recompense
 Saw singers, rope-dancers, giants and dwarfs,
 Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 To watch crude nature work in untaught minds,
 To note the laws and progress of belief –
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
 300 How willingly we travel, and how far! –
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: lo!
 He dons his coat of darkness, on the stage
 Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
 Of living mortal safe as is the moon
 'Hid in her vacant interlunar cave'
 Delusion bold! – and faith must needs be coy –
 How is it wrought? His garb is black, the word
 '*Invisible*' flames forth upon his chest.
 310 Nor was it unamusing here to view
 Those samples as of ancient comedy
 And Thespian times, dramas of living men,
 And recent things yet warm with life: a sea-fight,
 Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
 The fame of which is scattered through the land;
 Such as of late this daring brotherhood
 Set forth (too holy theme for such a place,
 And doubtless treated with irreverence
 Albeit with their very best of skill),

Music, and shifting pantomimic scenes,
 Diversified the allurements. Need I fear
 To mention by its name, as in degree,
 Lowest of these and humblest in attempt,
 Yet richly graced with honours of her own,
 Half-rural Sadler's Wells? Though at that time
 Intolerant, as is the way of youth
 Unless itself be pleased, here more than once
 270 Taking my seat, I saw (nor blush to add,
 With ample recompense) giants and dwarfs,
 Clowns, conjurors, posture-masters, harlequins,
 Amid the uproar of the rabblement,
 Perform their feats. Nor was it mean delight
 To watch crude Nature work in untaught minds;
 To note the laws and progress of belief;
 Though obstinate on this way, yet on that
 How willingly we travel, and how far!
 To have, for instance, brought upon the scene
 280 The champion, Jack the Giant-killer: Lo!
 He dons his coat of darkness; on the stage
 Walks, and achieves his wonders, from the eye
 Of living Mortal covert, 'as the moon
 Hid in her vacant interlunar cave.'
 Delusion bold! and how can it be wrought?
 The garb he wears is black as death, the word
 '*Invisible*' flames forth upon his chest.

Here, too, were 'forms and pressures of the time,'
 Rough, bold, as Grecian comedy displayed
 290 When Art was young; dramas of living men,
 And recent things yet warm with life; a sea-fight,
 Shipwreck, or some domestic incident
 Divulged by Truth and magnified by Fame,
 Such as the daring brotherhood of late
 Set forth, too serious theme for that light place —

320 I mean, o distant friend, a story drawn
 From our own ground, *The Maid of Buttermere*,
 And how the spoiler came 'a bold bad man'
 To God unfaithful, children, wife, and home,
 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. O friend, I speak
 With tender recollection of that time
 When first we saw the maiden, then a name
 By us unheard of – in her cottage-inn
 330 Were welcomed and attended on by her,
 Both stricken with one feeling of delight,
 An admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
 Not unfamiliarly we since that time
 Have seen her, her discretion have observed,
 Her just opinions, female modesty,
 Her patience, and retirèdness of mind
 Unsoiled by commendation and the excess
 Of public notice. This memorial verse
 340 Comes from the poet's heart, and is her due –
 For we were nursed (as almost might be said)
 On the same mountains; children at one time,
 Must haply often on the self-same day
 Have from our several dwellings gone abroad
 To gather daffodils on Coker's stream.

These last words uttered, to my argument
 I was returning, when – with sundry forms
 Mingled, that in the way which I must tread
 Before me stand – thy image rose again,
 350 *Mary of Buttermere!* She lives in peace.
 Upon the ground where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination does she live
 In quietness, without anxiety.
 Beside the mountain-chapel sleeps in earth
 Her newborn infant, fearless as a lamb
 That thither comes from some unsheltered place
 To rest beneath the little rock-like pile

I mean, O distant Friend! a story drawn
 From our own ground, — the Maid of Buttermere, —
 And how, unfaithful to a virtuous wife
 Deserted and deceived, the spoiler came
 300 And wooed the artless daughter of the hills,
 And wedded her, in cruel mockery
 Of love and marriage bonds. These words to thee
 Must needs bring back the moment when we first,
 Ere the broad world rang with the maiden's name,
 Beheld her serving at the cottage inn,
 Both stricken, as she entered or withdrew,
 With admiration of her modest mien
 And carriage, marked by unexampled grace.
 We since that time not unfamiliarly
 310 Have seen her, — her discretion have observed,
 Her just opinions, delicate reserve,
 Her patience, and humility of mind
 Unspoiled by commendation and the excess
 Of public notice — an offensive light
 To a meek spirit suffering inwardly.

From this memorial tribute to my theme
 I was returning, when, with sundry forms
 Commingled — shapes which met me in the way
 That we must tread — thy image rose again,
 320 Maiden of Buttermere! She lives in peace
 Upon the spot where she was born and reared;
 Without contamination doth she live
 In quietness, without anxiety:
 Beside the mountain chapel, sleeps in earth
 Her new-born infant, fearless as a lamb
 That, thither driven from some unsheltered place,
 Rests underneath the little rock-like pile

When storms are blowing. Happy are they both,
 Mother and child! These feelings – in themselves
 360 Trite – do yet scarcely seem so when I think
 Of those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere yet by use we have learnt to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those days are now
 My theme, and, mid the numerous scenes which they
 Have left behind them, foremost I am crossed
 Here by remembrance of two figures, one
 A rosy babe, who for a twelvemonth's space
 Perhaps had been of age to deal about
 Articulate prattle, child as beautiful
 370 As ever sat upon a mother's knee;
 The other was the parent of that babe –
 But on the mother's cheek the tints were false,
 A painted bloom.

'Twas at a theatre
 That I beheld this pair; the boy had been
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
 A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.
 Of lusty vigour, more than infantine,
 He was in limbs, in face a cottage rose
 380 Just three parts blown – a cottage-child, but ne'er
 Saw I, by cottage or elsewhere, a babe
 By nature's gifts so honoured. Upon a board
 Whence an attendant of the theatre
 Served out refreshments, had this child been placed,
 And there he sat, environed with a ring
 Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men
 And shameless women – treated and caressed –
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
 While oaths, indecent speech, and ribaldry
 390 Were rife about him as are songs of birds
 In springtime after showers. The mother too
 Was present, but of her I know no more
 Than hath been said, and scarcely at this time
 Do I remember her. But I behold

When storms are raging. Happy are they both —
 Mother and child! — These feelings, in themselves
 330 Trite, do yet scarcely seem so when I think
 On those ingenuous moments of our youth
 Ere we have learnt by use to slight the crimes
 And sorrows of the world. Those simple days
 Are now my theme; and, foremost of the scenes,
 Which yet survive in memory, appears
 One, at whose centre sate a lovely Boy,
 A sportive infant, who, for six months' space,
 Not more, had been of age to deal about
 Articulate prattle — Child as beautiful
 340 As ever clung around a mother's neck,
 Or father fondly gazed upon with pride.
 There, too, conspicuous for stature tall
 And large dark eyes, beside her infant stood
 The mother; but, upon her cheeks diffused,
 False tints too well accorded with the glare
 From play-house lustres thrown without reserve
 On every object near. The Boy had been
 The pride and pleasure of all lookers-on
 In whatsoever place, but seemed in this
 350 A sort of alien scattered from the clouds.
 Of lusty vigour, more than infantine
 He was in limb, in cheek a summer rose
 Just three parts blown — a cottage-child — if e'er,
 By cottage-door on breezy mountain side,
 Or in some sheltering vale, was seen a babe
 By Nature's gifts so favoured. Upon a board
 Decked with refreshments had this child been placed,
 His little stage in the vast theatre,
 And there he sate surrounded with a throng
 360 Of chance spectators, chiefly dissolute men
 And shameless women, treated and caressed;
 Ate, drank, and with the fruit and glasses played,
 While oaths and laughter and indecent speech
 Were rife about him as the songs of birds
 Contending after showers. The mother now
 Is fading out of memory, but I see

The lovely boy as I beheld him then
 Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
 Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
 Amid the fiery furnace. He has since
 Appeared to me oftentimes as if embalmed
 400 By nature, through some special privilege
 Stopped at the growth he had – destined to live,
 To be, to have been, come and go, a child
 And nothing more, no partner in the years
 That bear us forward to distress and guilt,
 Pain and abasement – beauty in such excess
 Adorned him in that miserable place.
 So have I thought of him a thousand times,
 And seldom otherwise. But he perhaps,
 Mary, may now have lived till he could look
 410 With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps
 Beside the mountain-chapel undisturbed.

It was but little more than three short years
 Before the season which I speak of now
 When first, a traveller from our pastoral hills,
 Southward two hundred miles I had advanced
 And for the first time in my life did hear
 The voice of woman utter blasphemy –
 Saw woman as she is to open shame
 Abandoned, and the pride of public vice.
 420 Full surely from the bottom of my heart
 I shuddered, but the pain was almost lost,
 Absorbed and buried in the immensity
 Of the effect: a barrier seemed at once
 Thrown in, that from humanity divorced
 The human form, splitting the race of man
 In twain, yet leaving the same outward shape.
 Distress of mind ensued upon this sight
 And ardent meditation. Afterwards
 A milder sadness on such spectacles
 430 Attended – thought, commiseration, grief
 For the individual and the overthrow
 Of her soul's beauty – farther at that time

The lovely Boy as I beheld him then
Among the wretched and the falsely gay,
Like one of those who walked with hair unsinged
370 Amid the fiery furnace. Charms and spells
Muttered on black and spiteful instigation
Have stopped, as some believe, the kindest growths.
Ah, with how different spirit might a prayer
Have been preferred, that this fair creature, checked
By special privilege of Nature's love,
Should in his childhood be detained for ever!
But with its universal freight the tide
Hath rolled along, and this bright innocent,
Mary! may now have lived till he could look
380 With envy on thy nameless babe that sleeps,
Beside the mountain chapel, undisturbed:

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

Than this I was but seldom led. In truth
The sorrow of the passion stopped me here.

I quit this painful theme; enough is said
To show what thoughts must often have been mine
At theatres, which then were my delight —
A yearning made more strong by obstacles
Which slender funds imposed. Life then was new,
440 The senses easily pleased. The lustres, lights,
The carving and the gilding, paint and glare,
And all the mean upholstery of the place,
Wanted not animation in my sight,
Far less the living figures on the stage,
Solemn or gay — whether some beauteous dame
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
Of thick entangled forest, like the moon
Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
With flourishing trumpets, came in full-blown state
450 Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards,
Or captive led in abject weeds and jingling
His slender manacles; or romping girl
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
A scare-crow pattern of old age patched up
Of all the tatters of infirmity
All loosely put together, hobbled in,
Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
460 Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts
Of one so overloaded with his years.
But what of this? The laugh, the grin, grimace,
And all the antics and buffoonery,
The least of them not lost, were all received
With charitable pleasure. Through the night,
Between the show and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each little nook

But seldom led, or wished to go; in truth
The sorrow of the passion stopped me there.

400 But let me now, less moved, in order take
Our argument. Enough is said to show
How casual incidents of real life,
Observed where pastime only had been sought,
Outweighed, or put to flight, the set events
And measured passions of the stage, albeit
By Siddons trod in the fulness of her power.
Yet was the theatre my dear delight;
The very gilding, lamps and painted scrolls,
And all the mean upholstery of the place,
410 Wanted not animation, when the tide
Of pleasure ebbed but to return as fast
With the ever-shifting figures of the scene,
Solemn or gay: whether some beauteous dame
Advanced in radiance through a deep recess
Of thick entangled forest, like the moon
Opening the clouds; or sovereign king, announced
With flourishing trumpet, came in full-blown state
Of the world's greatness, winding round with train
Of courtiers, banners, and a length of guards;
420 Or captive led in abject weeds, and jingling
His slender manacles; or romping girl
Bounced, leapt, and pawed the air; or mumbling sire,
A scare-crow pattern of old age dressed up
In all the tatters of infirmity
All loosely put together, hobbled in,
Stumping upon a cane with which he smites,
From time to time, the solid boards, and makes them
Prate somewhat loudly of the whereabouts
Of one so overloaded with his years.
430 But what of this! the laugh, the grin, grimace,
The antics striving to outstrip each other,
Were all received, the least of them not lost,
With an unmeasured welcome. Through the night,
Between the show, and many-headed mass
Of the spectators, and each several nook

That had its fray or brawl; how eagerly
 And with what flashes (as it were) the mind
 470 Turned this way, that way – sportive and alert
 And watchful as a kitten when at play,
 While winds are blowing round her, among grass
 And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet –
 Romantic almost, looked at through a space,
 How small, of intervening years! For then,
 Though surely no mean progress had been made
 In meditations holy and sublime,
 Yet something of a girlish childlike gloss
 Of novelty survived for scenes like these –
 480 Pleasure that had been handed down from times
 When at a country-playhouse, having caught
 In summer through the fractured wall, a glimpse
 Of daylight, at the thought of where I was
 I gladdened more than if I had beheld
 Before me some bright cavern of romance,
 Or than we do when on our beds we lie
 At night, in warmth, when rains are beating hard.

The matter which detains me now will seem
 To many neither dignified enough
 490 Nor arduous, and is doubtless in itself
 Humble and low – yet not to be despised
 By those who have observed the curious props
 By which the perishable hours of life
 Rest on each other, and the world of thought
 Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes,
 Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
 Might here be spoken of, but when I think
 Of these I feel the imaginative power
 Languish within me. Even then it slept
 500 When wrought upon by tragic sufferings,
 The heart was full; amid my sobs and tears
 It slept even in the season of my youth.
 For though I was most passionately moved

Filled with its fray or brawl, how eagerly
And with what flashes, as it were, the mind
Turned this way – that way! sportive and alert
And watchful, as a kitten when at play,
440 While winds are eddying round her, among straws.
And rustling leaves. Enchanting age and sweet!
Romantic almost, looked at through a space,
How small, of intervening years! For then,
Though surely no mean progress had been made
In meditations holy and sublime,
Yet something of a girlish child-like gloss
Of novelty survived for scenes like these;
Enjoyment haply handed down from times
When at a country-playhouse, some rude barn
450 Tricked out for that proud use, if I perchance
Caught, on a summer evening through a chink
In the old wall, an unexpected glimpse
Of daylight, the bare thought of where I was
Gladdened me more than if I had been led
Into a dazzling cavern of romance,
Crowded with Genii busy among works
Not to be looked at by the common sun.

The matter that detains us now may seem,
To many, neither dignified enough
460 Nor arduous, yet will not be scorned by them,
Who, looking inward, have observed the ties
That bind the perishable hours of life
Each to the other, and the curious props
By which the world of memory and thought
Exists and is sustained. More lofty themes,
Such as at least do wear a prouder face,
Solicit our regard; but when I think
Of these, I feel the imaginative power
Languish within me; even then it slept,
470 When, pressed by tragic sufferings, the heart
Was more than full; amid my sobs and tears
It slept, even in the pregnant season of youth.
For though I was most passionately moved

Transcendent, superhuman as it is,
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

510 Transcendent, superhuman as it seemed,
Grows tedious even in a young man's ear.

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

Nor did the Pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve its higher triumph. Not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard

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

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving ten thousand others that do each –
 In hall or court, conventicle or shop,
 In public room or private, park or street –
 570 With fondness reared on his own pedestal,
 Look out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
 And all the strife of singularity
 (Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense),
 Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
 There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
 Although well pleased to be where they were found,

The awful truths delivered thence by tongues
 Endowed with various power to search the soul;
 Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
 550 Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place! —
 There have I seen a comely bachelor,
 Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
 His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
 And, in a tone elaborately low
 Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze
 A minuet course; and, winding up his mouth,
 From time to time, into an orifice
 Most delicate, a lurking eyelet, small,
 And only not invisible, again
 560 Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
 Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
 Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
 Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
 The Death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard
 Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
 With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
 And Ossian (doubt not, 'tis the naked truth)
 Summoned from streamy Morven — each and all
 570 Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
 To entwine the crook of eloquence that helped
 This pretty Shepherd, pride of all the plains,
 To rule and guide his captivated flock.

I glance but at a few conspicuous marks,
 Leaving a thousand others, that, in hall,
 Court, theatre, conventicle, or shop,
 In public room or private, park or street,
 Each fondly reared on his own pedestal,
 Looked out for admiration. Folly, vice,
 Extravagance in gesture, mien, and dress,
 580 And all the strife of singularity,
 Lies to the ear, and lies to every sense —
 Of these, and of the living shapes they wear,
 There is no end. Such candidates for regard,
 Although well pleased to be where they were found,

I did not hunt after or greatly prize,
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast
 580 Of reading them with quick and curious eye,
 But as a common produce – things that are
 Today, tomorrow will be – took of them
 Such willing note as, on some errand bound
 Of pleasure or of love, some traveller might
 (Among a thousand other images)
 Of sea-shells that bestud the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields in June.

But foolishness and madness in parade,
 Though most at home in this their dear domain,
 590 Are scattered everywhere, no rarities
 Even to the rudest novice of the schools.
 O friend, one feeling was there which belonged
 To this great city by exclusive right –

I did not hunt after, nor greatly prize,
 Nor made unto myself a secret boast
 Of reading them with quick and curious eye;
 But, as a common produce, things that are
 To-day, to-morrow will be, took of them
 590 Such willing note, as, on some errand bound
 That asks not speed, a Traveller might bestow
 On sea-shells that bestrew the sandy beach,
 Or daisies swarming through the fields of June.

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

As the black storm upon the mountain top
 620 Sets off the sunbeam in the valley, so

How often in the overflowing streets
 Have I gone forwards with the crowd, and said
 Unto myself 'The face of everyone
 That passes by me is a mystery!
 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 600 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams,
 And all the ballast of familiar life —
 The present and the past, hope, fear, all stays,
 All laws, of acting, thinking, speaking man —
 Went from me, neither knowing me, nor known.
 And once, far travelled in such mood, beyond
 The reach of common indications, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, 'twas my chance
 610 Abruptly to be smitten with the view
 Of a blind beggar, who, with upright face,
 Stood propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper to explain
 The story of the man and who he was.
 My mind did at this spectacle turn round
 As with the might of waters, and it seemed
 To me that in this label was a type
 Or emblem of the utmost that we know
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 620 And, on the shape of this unmoving man,
 His fixed face and sightless eyes, I looked
 As if admonished from another world.

Though reared upon the base of outward things,
 These chiefly are such structures as the mind
 Builds for itself. Scenes different there are,
 Full-formed, which take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties: the peace
 Of night, for instance, the solemnity
 Of nature's intermediate hours of rest
 630 When the great tide of human life stands still,

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

630 Thus have I looked, nor ceased to look, oppressed
 By thoughts of what and whither, when and how,
 Until the shapes before my eyes became
 A second-sight procession, such as glides
 Over still mountains, or appears in dreams;
 And once, far-travelled in such mood, beyond
 The reach of common indication, lost
 Amid the moving pageant, I was smitten
 Abruptly, with the view (a sight not rare)
 Of a blind Beggar, who, with upright face,

640 Stood, propped against a wall, upon his chest
 Wearing a written paper, to explain
 His story, whence he came, and who he was.
 Caught by the spectacle my mind turned round
 As with the might of waters; an apt type
 This label seemed of the utmost we can know,
 Both of ourselves and of the universe;
 And, on the shape of that unmoving man,
 His steadfast face and sightless eyes, I gazed,
 As if admonished from another world.

650 Though reared upon the base of outward things,
 Structures like these the excited spirit mainly
 Builds for herself; scenes different there are,
 Full-formed, that take, with small internal help,
 Possession of the faculties, — the peace
 That comes with night; the deep solemnity
 Of nature's intermediate hours of rest,
 When the great tide of human life stands still;

The business of the day to come unborn,
 Of that gone by locked up as in the grave;
 The calmness, beauty, of the spectacle,
 Sky, stillness, moonshine, empty streets, and sounds
 Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
 The feeble salutation from the voice
 Of some unhappy woman now and then
 640 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these I fear
 Are falsely catalogued – things that are, are not,
 Even as we give them welcome, or assist,
 Are prompt or are remiss. What say you then
 To times when half the city shall break out
 Full of one passion (vengeance, rage, or fear)
 To executions, to a street on fire,
 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From those sights
 Take one, an annual festival, the fair
 650 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St Bartholomew. There see
 A work that's finished to our hands, that lays –
 If any spectacle on earth can do –
 The whole creative powers of man asleep!
 For once the muse's help will we implore
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,
 Upon some showman's platform.

What a hell

For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din
 660 Barbarian and infernal – 'tis a dream
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
 Below, the open space, through every nook
 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
 With heads; the midway region and above
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the prodigies,

The business of the day to come, unborn,
 Of that gone by, locked up, as in the grave;
 660 The blended calmness of the heavens and earth,
 Moonlight and stars, and empty streets, and sounds
 Unfrequent as in deserts; at late hours
 Of winter evenings, when unwholesome rains
 Are falling hard, with people yet astir,
 The feeble salutation from the voice
 Of some unhappy woman, now and then
 Heard as we pass, when no one looks about,
 Nothing is listened to. But these, I fear,
 Are falsely catalogued; things that are, are not,
 670 As the mind answers to them, or the heart
 Is prompt, or slow, to feel. What say you, then,
 To times, when half the city shall break out
 Full of one passion, vengeance, rage, or fear?
 To executions, to a street on fire,
 Mobs, riots, or rejoicings? From these sights
 Take one, — that ancient festival, the Fair,
 Holden where martyrs suffered in past time,
 And named of St. Bartholomew; there, see
 A work completed to our hands, that lays,
 680 If any spectacle on earth can do,
 The whole creative powers of man asleep! —
 For once, the Muse's help will we implore,
 And she shall lodge us, wafted on her wings,
 Above the press and danger of the crowd,
 Upon some showman's platform. What a shock
 For eyes and ears! what anarchy and din,
 Barbarian and infernal, — a phantasma,
 Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!
 Below, the open space, through every nook
 690 Of the wide area, twinkles, is alive
 With heads; the midway region, and above,
 Is thronged with staring pictures and huge scrolls,
 Dumb proclamations of the Prodigies;

And chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
 And children whirling in their roundabouts;
 With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
 670 And crack the voice in rivalry (the crowd
 Inviting), with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming – him who grinds
 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
 Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
 The silver-collared negro with his timbrel,
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, and with towering plumes.
 All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
 680 Are here: albinos, painted Indians, dwarfs,
 The horse of knowledge and the learned pig,
 The stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
 Giants, ventriloquists, the invisible girl,
 The bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
 The wax-work, clock-work, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, wild beasts, puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
 All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
 Of man – his dulness, madness, and their feats –
 690 All jumbled up together to make up
 This parliament of monsters: Tents and booths
 Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
 Are vomiting, receiving, on all sides,
 Men, women, three-years' children, babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion, and a type not false
 Of what the mighty city is itself
 To all except a straggler here and there –
 To the whole swarm of its inhabitants –
 An undistinguishable world to men,
 700 The slaves unrespited of low pursuits
 Living amid the same perpetual flow
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity by differences

With chattering monkeys dangling from their poles,
 And children whirling in their roundabouts;
 With those that stretch the neck and strain the eyes,
 And crack the voice in rivalship, the crowd
 Inviting; with buffoons against buffoons
 Grimacing, writhing, screaming, — him who grinds
 700 The hurdy-gurdy, at the fiddle weaves,
 Rattles the salt-box, thumps the kettle-drum,
 And him who at the trumpet puffs his cheeks,
 The silver-collared Negro with his timbrel,
 Equestrians, tumblers, women, girls, and boys,
 Blue-breeched, pink-vested, with high-towering plumes. —
 All moveables of wonder, from all parts,
 Are here — Albinos, painted Indians, Dwarfs,
 The Horse of knowledge, and the learned Pig,
 The Stone-eater, the man that swallows fire,
 710 Giants, Ventriloquists, the Invisible Girl,
 The Bust that speaks and moves its goggling eyes,
 The Wax-work, Clock-work, all the marvellous craft
 Of modern Merlins, Wild Beasts, Puppet-shows,
 All out-o'-the-way, far-fetched, perverted things,
 All freaks of nature, all Promethean thoughts
 Of man, his dullness, madness, and their feats
 All jumbled up together, to compose
 A Parliament of Monsters. Tents and Booths
 Meanwhile, as if the whole were one vast mill,
 720 Are vomiting, receiving on all sides,
 Men, Women, three-years' Children, Babes in arms.

Oh, blank confusion! true epitome
 Of what the mighty City is herself,
 To thousands upon thousands of her sons,
 Living amid the same perpetual whirl
 Of trivial objects, melted and reduced
 To one identity, by differences

That have no law, no meaning, and no end –
 Oppression under which even highest minds
 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
 But though the picture weary out the eye,
 By nature an unmanageable sight,
 It is not wholly so to him who looks
 710 In steadiness, who hath among least things
 An under-sense of greatest – sees the parts
 As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
 This (of all acquisitions first) awaits
 On sundry and most widely different modes
 Of education; nor with least delight
 On that through which I passed. Attention comes,
 And comprehensiveness and memory,
 From early converse with the works of God
 Among all regions, chiefly where appear
 720 Most obviously simplicity and power.
 By influence habitual to the mind
 The mountain's outline and its steady form
 Gives a pure grandeur, and its presence shapes
 The measure and the prospect of the soul
 To majesty. Such virtue have the forms
 Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
 The changeful language of their countenances
 Gives movement to the thoughts, and multitude,
 With order and relation. This (if still
 730 As hitherto with freedom I may speak
 And the same perfect openness of mind,
 Not violating any just restraint,
 As I would hope, of real modesty),
 This did I feel in that vast receptacle.
 The spirit of nature was upon me here;

That have no law, no meaning, and no end —
Oppression, under which even highest minds
730 Must labour, whence the strongest are not free.
But though the picture weary out the eye,
By nature an unmanageable sight,
It is not wholly so to him who looks
In steadiness, who hath among least things
An under-sense of greatest; sees the parts
As parts, but with a feeling of the whole.
This, of all acquisitions, first awaits
On sundry and most widely different modes
Of education, nor with least delight
740 On that through which I passed. Attention springs,
And comprehensiveness and memory flow,
From early converse with the works of God
Among all regions; chiefly where appear
Most obviously simplicity and power.
Think, how the everlasting streams and woods,
Stretched and still stretching far and wide, exalt
The roving Indian, on his desert sands:
What grandeur not unfelt, what pregnant show
Of beauty, meets the sun-burnt Arab's eye:
750 And, as the sea propels, from zone to zone,
Its currents; magnifies its shoals of life
Beyond all compass; spreads, and sends aloft
Armies of clouds, — even so, its powers and aspects
Shape for mankind, by principles as fixed,
The views and aspirations of the soul
To majesty. Like virtue have the forms
Perennial of the ancient hills; nor less
The changeful language of their countenances
Quickens the slumbering mind, and aids the thoughts,
760 However multitudinous, to move
With order and relation. This, if still,
As hitherto, in freedom I may speak,
Not violating any just restraint,
As may be hoped, of real modesty, —
This did I feel, in London's vast domain.
The Spirit of Nature was upon me there;

The soul of beauty and enduring life
 Was present as a habit, and diffused —
 Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
 Of self-destroying, transitory things —
 740 Composure and ennobling harmony.

The soul of Beauty and enduring Life
Vouchsafed her inspiration, and diffused,
Through meagre lines and colours, and the press
Of self-destroying, transitory things,
Composure, and ennobling Harmony.

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Book Eighth

RETROSPECT - LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO
LOVE OF MANKIND

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, which are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Is yon, assembled in the gay green field?
Crowd seems it, solitary hill, to thee,
Though but a little family of men
(Twice twenty), with their children and their wives,
And here and there a stranger interspersed.
10 It is a summer festival, a fair,
Such as - on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales -
Helvellyn in the silence of his rest
Sees annually, if storms be not abroad
And mists have left him an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
They give it welcome.

Long ere heat of noon
Behold the cattle are driven down; the sheep
20 That have for traffic been culled out are penned
In cotes that stand together on the plain
Ranged side by side; the chaffering is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
Booths are there none: a stall or two is here,
A lame man or a blind (the one to beg,
The other to make music), hither too
From far, with basket slung upon her arm

Book Eighth

RETROSPECT - LOVE OF NATURE LEADING TO
LOVE OF MAN

What sounds are those, Helvellyn, that are heard
Up to thy summit, through the depth of air
Ascending, as if distance had the power
To make the sounds more audible? What crowd
Covers, or sprinkles o'er, yon village green?
Crowd seems it, solitary hill! to thee,
Though but a little family of men,
Shepherds and tillers of the ground - betimes
Assembled with their children and their wives,
10 And here and there a stranger interspersed.
They hold a rustic fair - a festival,
Such as, on this side now, and now on that,
Repeated through his tributary vales,
Helvellyn, in the silence of his rest,
Sees annually, if clouds towards either ocean
Blown from their favourite resting-place, or mists
Dissolved, have left him an unshrouded head.
Delightful day it is for all who dwell
In this secluded glen, and eagerly
20 They give it welcome. Long ere heat of noon,
From byre or field the kine were brought; the sheep
Are penned in cotes; the chaffering is begun.
The heifer lows, uneasy at the voice
Of a new master; bleat the flocks aloud.
Booths are there none; a stall or two is here;
A lame man or a blind, the one to beg,
The other to make music; hither, too,
From far, with basket, slung upon her arm,

Of hawker's wares — books, pictures, combs, and pins —
 30 Some aged woman finds her way again,
 Year after year a punctual visitant;
 The showman with his freight upon his back,
 And once perchance in lapse of many years
 Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he
 Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
 But one is here, the loveliest of them all,
 Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
 For gains — and who that sees her would not buy?
 Fruits of her father's orchard, apples, pears
 40 (On that day only to such office stooping),
 She carries in her basket, and walks round
 Among the crowd, half pleased with, half ashamed
 Of her new calling, blushing restlessly.
 The children now are rich, the old man now
 Is generous, so gaiety prevails
 Which all partake of, young and old.

Immense

Is the recess, the circumambient world
 Magnificent, by which they are embraced.
 They move about upon the soft green field;
 50 How little they (they and their doings) seem,
 Their herds and flocks about them, they themselves,
 And all which they can further or obstruct —
 Through utter weakness pitiably dear
 As tender infants are — and yet how great!
 For all things serve them: them the morning light
 Loves as it glistens on the silent rocks;
 And them the silent rocks, which now from high
 Look down upon them; the reposing clouds,

Of hawker's wares — books, pictures, combs, and pins —
 30 Some aged woman finds her way again,
 Year after year, a punctual visitant!
 There also stands a speech-maker by rote,
 Pulling the strings of his boxed raree-show;
 And in the lapse of many years may come
 Prouder itinerant, mountebank, or he
 Whose wonders in a covered wain lie hid.
 But one there is, the loveliest of them all,
 Some sweet lass of the valley, looking out
 For gains, and who that sees her would not buy?
 40 Fruits of her father's orchard, are her wares,
 And with the ruddy produce, she walks round
 Among the crowd, half pleased with half ashamed
 Of her new office, blushing restlessly.
 The children now are rich, for the old to-day
 Are generous as the young; and, if content
 With looking on, some ancient wedded pair
 Sit in the shade together, while they gaze,
 'A cheerful smile unbends the wrinkled brow,
 The days departed start again to life,
 50 And all the scenes of childhood reappear,
 Faint, but more tranquil, like the changing sun
 To him who slept at noon and wakes at eve.'
 Thus gaiety and cheerfulness prevail,
 Spreading from young to old, from old to young,
 And no one seems to want his share. — Immense
 Is the recess, the circumambient world
 Magnificent, by which they are embraced:
 They move about upon the soft green turf:
 How little they, they and their doings, seem,
 60 And all that they can further or obstruct
 Through utter weakness pitiablely dear,
 As tender infants are: and yet how great!
 For all things serve them: them the morning light
 Loves, as it glistens on the silent rocks;
 And them the silent rocks, which now from high
 Look down upon them; the reposing clouds;

The lurking brooks from their invisible haunts;
 60 And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir.
 And the blue sky that roofs their calm abode.

With deep devotion, nature, did I feel
 In that great city what I owed to thee:
 High thoughts of God and man, and love of man,
 Triumphant over all those loathsome sights
 Of wretchedness and vice, a watchful eye,
 Which, with the outside of our human life
 Not satisfied, must read the inner mind.
 For I already had been taught to love
 70 My fellow-beings, to such habits trained
 Among the woods and mountains, where I found
 In thee a gracious guide to lead me forth
 Beyond the bosom of my family,
 My friends and youthful playmates. 'Twas thy power
 That raised the first complacency in me
 And noticeable kindness of heart,
 Love human to the creature in himself
 As he appeared, a stranger in my path,
 Before my eyes a brother of this world –
 80 Thou first didst with those motions of delight
 Inspire me.

I remember, far from home
 Once having strayed while yet a very child,
 I saw a sight – and with what joy and love!
 It was a day of exhalations spread
 Upon the mountains, mists and steam-like fogs
 Redounding everywhere, not vehement
 But calm and mild, gentle and beautiful,
 With gleams of sunshine on the eyelet-spots
 And loopholes of the hills – wherever seen,
 90 Hidden by quiet process, and as soon
 Unfolded, to be huddled up again.
 Along a narrow valley and profound
 I journeyed, when, aloft above my head,
 Emerging from the silvery vapours, lo,

The wild brooks prattling from invisible haunts;
And old Helvellyn, conscious of the stir
Which animates this day their calm abode.

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

A shepherd and his dog, in open day!
 Girt round with mists they stood and looked about
 From that enclosure small, inhabitants
 Of an aerial island floating on,
 As seemed, with that abode in which they were,
 100 A little pendant area of grey rocks
 By the soft wind breathed forward. With delight
 As bland almost, one evening I beheld,
 And at as early age (the spectacle
 Is common, but by me was then first seen)
 A shepherd in the bottom of a vale,
 Towards the centre standing, who with voice,
 And hand waved to and fro as need required,
 Gave signal to his dog, thus teaching him
 To chase along the mazes of steep crags
 110 The flock he could not see. And so the brute
 (Dear creature!) with a man's intelligence
 Advancing, or retreating on his steps,
 Through every pervious strait to right or left
 Thridded a way unbaffled; while the flock
 Fled upwards from the terror of his bark
 Through rocks and seams of turf with liquid gold
 Irradiate – that deep farewell-light by which
 The setting sun proclaims the love he bears
 To mountain regions.

Beauteous the domain

120 Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened, tract more exquisitely fair
 Than is that paradise of ten thousand trees,
 Or Gehol's famous gardens, in a clime
 Chosen from widest empire, for delight
 Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
 Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous
 (China's stupendous mound), by patient skill
 Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help:
 Scene linked to scene, and evergrowing change,
 130 Soft, grand, or gay, with palaces and domes
 Of pleasure spangled over, shady dells

Where to the sense of beauty first my heart
 Was opened; tract more exquisitely fair
 Than that famed paradise of ten thousand trees,
 Or Gehol's matchless gardens, for delight
 Of the Tartarian dynasty composed
 (Beyond that mighty wall, not fabulous,
 80. China's stupendous mound) by patient toil
 Of myriads and boon nature's lavish help;
 There, in a clime from widest empire chosen,
 Fulfilling (could enchantment have done more?)
 A sumptuous dream of flowery lawns, with domes
 Of pleasure sprinkled over, shady dells

For eastern monasteries, sunny mounds
 With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
 Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
 Into each other their obsequious hues –
 Going and gone again, in subtle chase
 Too fine to be pursued – or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side
 140 Bedded among the plumes of tropic birds;
 And mountains over all, embracing all,
 And all the landscape endlessly enriched
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.

But lovelier far than this, the paradise
 Where I was reared; in nature's primitive gifts
 Favoured no less, and more to every sense
 Delicious, seeing that the sun and sky,
 The elements, and seasons in their change,
 Do find their dearest fellow-labourer there
 150 The heart of man – a district on all sides
 The fragrance breathing of humanity:
 Man free, man working for himself, with choice
 Of time, and place, and object; by his wants,
 His comforts, native occupations, cares,
 Conducted on to individual ends
 Or social, and still followed by a train
 Unwooded, unthought-of even – simplicity,
 And beauty, and inevitable grace.
 Yea, doubtless, at an age when but a glimpse
 160 Of those resplendent gardens, with their frame
 Imperial and elaborate ornaments,
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks,
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
 With the ordinary human interests
 Which they embosom (all without regard
 As both may seem) are fastening on the heart

For eastern monasteries, sunny mounts
 With temples crested, bridges, gondolas,
 Rocks, dens, and groves of foliage taught to melt
 Into each other their obsequious hues,
 90 Vanished and vanishing in subtle chase,
 Too fine to be pursued; or standing forth
 In no discordant opposition, strong
 And gorgeous as the colours side by side
 Bedded among rich plumes of tropic birds;
 And mountains over all, embracing all;
 And all the landscape, endlessly enriched
 With waters running, falling, or asleep.

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

Yea, when a glimpse of those imperial bowers
 Would to a child be transport over-great,
 When but a half-hour's roam through such a place
 Would leave behind a dance of images,
 That shall break in upon his sleep for weeks;
 Even then the common haunts of the green earth,
 And ordinary interests of man,
 Which they embosom, all without regard
 As both may seem, are fastening on the heart

170 Insensibly, each with the other's help,
 So that we love, not knowing that we love,
 And feel, not knowing whence our feeling comes.

Such league have these two principles of joy
 In our affections. I have singled out
 Some moments, the earliest that I could, in which
 Their several currents, blended into one —
 Weak yet, and gathering imperceptibly —
 Flowed in by gushes. My first human love,
 As has been mentioned, did incline to those
 180 Whose occupations and concerns were most
 Illustrated by nature and adorned,
 And shepherds were the men who pleased me first:
 Not such as in Arcadian fastnesses
 Sequestered handed down among themselves
 (So ancient poets sing) the golden age;
 Nor such — a second race, allied to these —
 As Shakespeare in the wood of Arden placed
 Where Phoebe sighed for the false Ganymede,
 Or there where Florizel and Perdita
 190 Together danced, queen of the feast and king;
 Nor such as Spenser fabled. True it is
 That I had heard (what he perhaps had seen)
 Of maids at sunrise bringing in from far
 Their maybush, and along the streets in flocks
 Parading with a song of taunting rhymes
 Aimed at the laggards slumbering within doors —
 Had also heard, from those who yet remembered,
 Tales of the maypole dance, and flowers that decked
 The posts and the kirk-pillars, and of youths,
 200 That each one with his maid at break of day
 By annual custom issued forth in troops
 To drink the waters of some favourite well,
 And hang it round with garlands.

This, alas,
 Was but a dream: the times had scattered all

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

These lighter graces, and the rural ways
 And manners which it was my chance to see
 In childhood were severe and unadorned,
 The unluxuriant produce of a life
 Intent on little but substantial needs –
 210 Yet beautiful – and beauty that was felt.
 But images of danger and distress
 And suffering, these took deepest hold of me:
 Man suffering among awful powers and forms.
 Of this I heard and saw enough to make
 The imagination restless, nor was free
 Myself from frequent perils. Nor were tales
 Wanting – the tragedies of former times,
 Or hazards and escapes, which in my walks
 I carried with me among crags and woods
 220 And mountains – and of these may here be told
 One, as recorded by my household dame.

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

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

Of old Helvellyn spread their arms abroad
 And make a stormy harbour for the winds.
 Far went those shepherds in their devious quest,
 From mountain ridges peeping as they passed
 Down into every glen; at length the boy
 Said 'Father, with your leave, I will go back
 And range the ground which we have searched before.'
 250 So speaking, southward down the hill the lad
 Sprang like a gust of wind, crying aloud
 'I know where I shall find him.'

'For take note',
 Said here my grey-haired dame, 'that though the storm
 Drive one of these poor creatures miles and miles,
 If he can crawl he will return again
 To his own hills, the spots where when a lamb
 He learnt to pasture at his mother's side.'
 After so long a labour, suddenly
 Bethinking him of this, the boy
 260 Pursued his way towards a brook whose course
 Was through that unfenced tract of mountain-ground
 Which to his father's little farm belonged,
 The home and ancient birthright of their flock.
 Down the deep channel of the stream he went,
 Prying through every nook; meanwhile the rain
 Began to fall upon the mountain-tops –
 Thick storm and heavy which for three hours' space
 Abated not – and all that time the boy
 Was busy in his search, until at length
 270 He spied the sheep upon a plot of grass,
 An island in the brook. It was a place
 Remote and deep, piled round with rocks where foot
 Of man or beast was seldom used to tread;
 But now, when everywhere the summer grass
 Had failed, this one adventurer, hunger-pressed,
 Had left his fellows and made his way alone
 To the green plot of pasture in the brook.
 Before the boy knew well what he had seen
 He leapt upon the island with proud heart

280 And with a prophet's joy. Immediately
 The sheep sprang forward to the further shore
 And was borne headlong by the roaring flood.
 At this the boy looked round him, and his heart
 Fainted with fear. Thrice did he turn his face
 To either brink, nor could he summon up
 The courage that was needful to leap back
 Cross the tempestuous torrent. So he stood,
 A prisoner on the island, not without
 More than one thought of death and his last hour.

290 Meanwhile the father had returned alone
 To his own house; and now at the approach
 Of evening he went forth to meet his son,
 Conjecturing vainly for what cause the boy
 Had stayed so long. The shepherd took his way
 Up his own mountain-grounds, where as he walked
 Along the steep that overhung the brook
 He seemed to hear a voice, which was again
 Repeated, like the whistling of a kite.
 At this, not knowing why (as oftentimes
 300 Long afterwards he has been heard to say)
 Down to the brook he went, and tracked its course
 Upwards among the o'erhanging rocks; nor thus
 Had he gone far ere he espied the boy
 Where on that little plot of ground he stood
 Right in the middle of the roaring stream,
 Now stronger every moment and more fierce.
 The sight was such as no one could have seen
 Without distress and fear. The shepherd heard
 The outcry of his son, he stretched his staff
 310 Towards him, bade him leap – which word scarce said,
 The boy was safe within his father's arms.

Smooth life had flock and shepherd in old time,
 Long springs and tepid winters on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus – and no less
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores –
 Smooth life the herdsman, and his snow-white herd

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 Long springs and tepid winters, on the banks
 Of delicate Galesus; and no less
 Those scattered along Adria's myrtle shores:
 Smooth life had herdsman, and his snow-white herd

To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
 Devoted, on the inviolable stream
 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goatherd lived
 320 As sweetly underneath the pleasant brows
 Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
 Of Pan, the invisible god, thrilling the rocks
 With tutelary music, from all harm
 The fold protecting. I myself (mature
 In manhood then) have seen a pastoral tract
 Like one of these, where fancy might run wild,
 Though under skies less generous and serene;
 Yet there, as for herself, had nature framed
 A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse
 330 Of level pasture, islanded with groves
 And banked with woody risings — but the plain
 Endless, here opening widely out, and there
 Shut up in lesser lakes or beds of lawn
 And intricate recesses, creek or bay
 Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
 The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
 Thither he comes with springtime, there abides
 All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
 His flute or flageolet resounding far.
 340 There's not a nook or hold of that vast space,
 Nor strait where passage is, but it shall have
 In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
 In unlaborious pleasure, with no task
 More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
 For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds
 When through the region he pursues at will
 His devious course.

A glimpse of such sweet life
 I saw when from the melancholy walls
 Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
 350 My daily walk along that cheerful plain
 Which, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west
 And northwards from beneath the mountainous verge
 Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you,

To triumphs and to sacrificial rites
Devoted, on the inviolable stream
180 Of rich Clitumnus; and the goat-herd lived
As calmly, underneath the pleasant brows
Of cool Lucretilis, where the pipe was heard
Of Pan, Invisible God, thrilling the rocks
With tutelary music, from all harm
The fold protecting. I myself, mature
In manhood then, have seen a pastoral tract
Like one of these, where Fancy might run wild,
Though under skies less generous, less serene:
There, for her own delight had Nature framed
190 A pleasure-ground, diffused a fair expanse
Of level pasture, islanded with groves
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And intricate recesses, creek or bay
Sheltered within a shelter, where at large
The shepherd strays, a rolling hut his home.
Thither he comes with spring-time, there abides
All summer, and at sunrise ye may hear
200 His flageolet to liquid notes of love
Attuned, or sprightly fife resounding far.
Nook is there none, nor tract of that vast space
Where passage opens, but the same shall have
In turn its visitant, telling there his hours
In unlaborious pleasure, with no task
More toilsome than to carve a beechen bowl
For spring or fountain, which the traveller finds,
When through the region he pursues at will
His devious course. A glimpse of such sweet life
210 I saw when, from the melancholy walls
Of Goslar, once imperial, I renewed
My daily walk along that wide champaign,
That, reaching to her gates, spreads east and west,
And northwards, from beneath the mountainous verge
Of the Hercynian forest. Yet, hail to you

Your rocks and precipices – ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp – your snows and streams
 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds
 That howled so dismally when I have been
 Companionless among your solitudes!
 There 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 360 To wait upon the storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, from the height he drives his flock
 Down into sheltering coves, and feeds them there
 Through the hard time, long as the storm is locked
 (So do they phrase it), bearing from the stalls
 A toilsome burden up the craggy ways
 To strew it on the snow. And when the spring
 Looks out, and all the mountains dance with lambs,
 He through the enclosures won from the steep waste,
 And through the lower heights, hath gone his rounds;
 370 And when the flock with warmer weather climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To range among them, through the hills dispersed,
 And watch their goings – whatsoever track
 Each wanderer chooses for itself – a work
 That lasts the summer through. He quits his home
 At day-spring, and no sooner does the sun
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat
 Than he lies down upon some shining place,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When he has stayed
 380 (As for the most he does) beyond his time,
 He springs up with a bound, and then away! –
 Ascending fast with his long pole in hand,
 Or winding in and out among the crags.

What need to follow him through what he does
 Or sees in his day's march? He feels himself,
 In those vast regions where his service is,
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged

Moors, mountains, headlands, and ye hollow vales,
 Ye long deep channels for the Atlantic's voice,
 Powers of my native region! Ye that seize
 The heart with firmer grasp! Your snows and streams
 220 Ungovernable, and your terrifying winds,
 That howl so dismally for him who treads
 Companionless your awful solitudes!
 There, 'tis the shepherd's task the winter long
 To wait upon the storms: of their approach
 Sagacious, into sheltering coves he drives
 His flock, and thither from the homestead bears
 A toilsome burden up the craggy ways,
 And deals it out, their regular nourishment
 Strewn on the frozen snow. And when the spring
 230 Looks out, and all the pastures dance with lambs,
 And when the flock, with warmer weather, climbs
 Higher and higher, him his office leads
 To watch their goings, whatsoever track
 The wanderers choose. For this he quits his home
 At day-spring, and no sooner doth the sun
 Begin to strike him with a fire-like heat,
 Than he lies down upon some shining rock,
 And breakfasts with his dog. When they have stolen,
 As is their wont, a pittance from strict time,
 240 For rest not needed or exchange of love,
 Then from his couch he starts; and now his feet
 Crush out a livelier fragrance from the flowers
 Of lowly thyme, by Nature's skill enwrought
 In the wild turf: the lingering dews of morn
 Smoke round him, as from hill to hill he hies,
 His staff protending like a hunter's spear,
 Or by its aid leaping from crag to crag,
 And o'er the brawling beds of unbridged streams.
 Philosophy, methinks, at Fancy's call,
 250 Might deign to follow him through what he does
 Or sees in his day's march; himself he feels,
 In those vast regions where his service lies,
 A freeman, wedded to his life of hope
 And hazard, and hard labour interchanged

With that majestic indolence so dear
 390 To native man. A rambling schoolboy, thus
 Have I beheld him, without knowing why
 Have felt his presence in his own domain
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius – under nature, under God,
 Presiding – and severest solitude
 Seemed more commanding oft when he was there.
 Seeking the raven's nest and suddenly
 Surprised with vapours, or on rainy days
 When I have angled up the lonely brooks,
 400 Mine eyes have glanced upon him few steps off,
 In size a giant, stalking through the fog,
 His sheep like Greenland bears. At other times,
 When round some shady promontory turning,
 His form hath flashed upon me glorified
 By the deep radiance of the setting sun;
 Or him have I descried in distant sky
 A solitary object and sublime
 Above all height, like an aërial cross
 As it is stationed on some spiry rock
 410 Of the Chartreuse for worship.

Thus was man
 Ennobled outwardly before mine eyes,
 And thus my heart at first was introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 To me was like an index of delight,
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 Meanwhile this creature (spiritual almost
 As those of books, but more exalted far,
 Far more of an imaginative form)
 420 Was not a Corin of the groves, who lives
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour
 In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst,
 But, for the purposes of kind, a man
 With the most common – husband, father – learnt,
 Could teach, admonish, suffered with the rest

With that majestic indolence so dear
 To native man. A rambling school-boy, thus
 I felt his presence in his own domain,
 As of a lord and master, or a power,
 Or genius, under Nature, under God,
 260 Presiding; and severest solitude
 Had more commanding looks when he was there.
 When up the lonely brooks on rainy days
 Angling I went, or trod the trackless hills
 By mists bewildered, suddenly mine eyes
 Have glanced upon him distant a few steps,
 In size a giant, stalking through thick fog,
 His sheep like Greenland bears; or, as he stepped
 Beyond the boundary line of some hill-shadow,
 His form hath flashed upon me, glorified
 270 By the deep radiance of the setting sun:
 Or him have I descried in distant sky,
 A solitary object and sublime,
 Above all height! like an aerial cross
 Stationed alone upon a spiry rock
 Of the Chartreuse, for worship. Thus was man
 Ennobled outwardly before my sight,
 And thus my heart was early introduced
 To an unconscious love and reverence
 Of human nature; hence the human form
 280 To me became an index of delight,
 Of grace and honour, power and worthiness.
 Meanwhile this creature — spiritual almost
 As those of books, but more exalted far;
 Far more of an imaginative form
 Than the gay Corin of the groves, who lives
 For his own fancies, or to dance by the hour,
 In coronal, with Phyllis in the midst —
 Was, for the purposes of kind, a man
 With the most common; husband, father; learned,
 290 Could teach, admonish; suffered with the rest

From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear.
 Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
 But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances

Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
 430 This sanctity of nature given to man,
 A shadow, a delusion – ye who are fed
 By the dead letter, not the spirit of things,
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 Or waxen image which yourselves have made
 And ye adore! But blessed be the God
 Of nature and of man that this was so,
 That men did at the first present themselves
 Before my untaught eyes thus purified,
 440 Removed, and at a distance that was fit.
 And so we all of us in some degree
 Are led to knowledge – whencesoever led,
 And howsoever – were it otherwise,
 And we found evil fast as we find good
 In our first years (or think that it is found),
 How could the innocent heart bear up and live?
 But doubly fortunate my lot: not here
 Alone, that something of a better life
 Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
 450 Of most to move in, but that first I looked
 At man through objects that were great and fair,
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
 Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point
 I had my face towards the truth, began
 With an advantage, furnished with that kind
 460 Of prepossession without which the soul
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good –
 No genuine insight ever comes to her –

From vice and folly, wretchedness and fear;
 Of this I little saw, cared less for it,
 But something must have felt.

Call ye these appearances –
 Which I beheld of shepherds in my youth,
 This sanctity of Nature given to man –
 A shadow, a delusion, ye who pore
 On the dead letter, miss the spirit of things;
 Whose truth is not a motion or a shape
 Instinct with vital functions, but a block
 300 Or waxen image which yourselves have made,
 And ye adore! But blessed be the God
 Of Nature and of Man that this was so;
 That men before my inexperienced eyes
 Did first present themselves thus purified,
 Removed, and to a distance that was fit:
 And so we all of us in some degree
 Are led to knowledge, wheresoever led,
 And howsoever; were it otherwise,
 And we found evil fast as we find good
 310 In our first years, or think that it is found,
 How could the innocent heart bear up and live!
 But doubly fortunate my lot; not here
 Alone, that something of a better life
 Perhaps was round me than it is the privilege
 Of most to move in, but that first I looked
 At Man through objects that were great or fair;
 First communed with him by their help. And thus
 Was founded a sure safeguard and defence
 Against the weight of meanness, selfish cares,
 320 Coarse manners, vulgar passions, that beat in
 On all sides from the ordinary world
 In which we traffic. Starting from this point
 I had my face turned toward the truth, began
 With an advantage furnished by that kind
 Of prepossession, without which the soul
 Receives no knowledge that can bring forth good,
 No genuine insight ever comes to her.

Happy in this, that I with nature walked,
 Not having a too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life,
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts
 Self-pleasing, which if we would wish to think
 With admiration and respect of man
 Will not permit us, but pursue the mind
 470 That to devotion willingly would be raised,
 Into the temple and the temple's heart.

Yet do not deem, my friend, though thus I speak
 Of man as having taken in my mind
 A place thus early which might almost seem
 Pre-eminent, that this was really so.
 Nature herself was at this unripe time
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
 Their trivial pleasures; and long afterwards
 480 When those had died away, and nature did
 For her own sake become my joy, even then
 (And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than three-and-twenty summers had been told)
 Was man in my affections and regards
 Subordinate to her, her awful forms
 And viewless agencies – a passion she,
 A rapture often, and immediate joy
 Ever at hand; he distant, but a grace
 Occasional, an accidental thought,
 490 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 My spirit to that gentleness of love,
 Won from me those minute obeisances
 Of tenderness which I may number now
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless on these
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
 Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

From the restraint of over-watchful eyes
 Preserved, I moved about, year after year,
 330 Happy, and now most thankful that my walk
 Was guarded from too early intercourse
 With the deformities of crowded life,
 And those ensuing laughters and contempts,
 Self-pleasing, which, if we would wish to think
 With a due reverence on earth's rightful lord,
 Here placed to be the inheritor of heaven,
 Will not permit us; but pursue the mind,
 That to devotion willingly would rise,
 Into the temple and the temple's heart.

340 Yet deem not, Friend! that human kind with me
 Thus early took a place pre-eminent;
 Nature herself was, at this unripe time;
 But secondary to my own pursuits
 And animal activities, and all
 Their trivial pleasures; and when these had drooped
 And gradually expired, and Nature, prized
 For her own sake, became my joy, even then –
 And upwards through late youth, until not less
 Than two-and-twenty summers had been told –
 350 Was Man in my affections and regards
 Subordinate to her, her visible forms
 And viewless agencies: a passion, she,
 A rapture often, and immediate love
 Ever at hand; he, only a delight
 Occasional, an accidental grace,
 His hour being not yet come. Far less had then
 The inferior creatures, beast or bird, attuned
 My spirit to that gentleness of love
 (Though they had long been carefully observed),
 360 Won from me those minute obeisances
 Of tenderness, which I may number now
 With my first blessings. Nevertheless, on these
 The light of beauty did not fall in vain,
 Or grandeur circumfuse them to no end.

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

But when that first poetic faculty
 Of plain imagination and severe —
 No longer a mute influence of the soul,
 An element of the nature's inner self —
 Began to have some promptings to put on
 A visible shape, and to the works of art;
 The notions and the images of books,
 Did knowingly conform itself (by these
 Inflamed, and proud of that her new delight),
 520 There came among these shapes of human life
 A wilfulness of fancy and conceit
 Which gave them new importance to the mind —
 And nature and her objects beautified
 These fictions as (in some sort) in their turn
 They burnished her. From touch of this new power
 Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
 Beside the well-known charnelhouse had then
 A dismal look, the yew-tree had its ghost
 That took its station there for ornament.
 530 Then common death was none, common mishap,
 But matter for this humour everywhere —
 The tragic, super-tragic, else left short.
 Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
 Of her distress, was known to have made her way
 To the cold grave in which her husband slept,

But when that first poetic faculty
Of plain Imagination and severe,
No longer a mute influence of the soul,
Ventured, at some rash Muse's earnest call,
To try her strength among harmonious words;
370 And to book-notions and the rules of art
Did knowingly conform itself; there came
Among the simple shapes of human life
A wilfulness of fancy and conceit;
And Nature and her objects beautified
These fictions, as in some sort, in their turn,
They burnished her. From touch of this new power
Nothing was safe: the elder-tree that grew
Beside the well-known charnel-house had then
A dismal look: the yew-tree had its ghost,
380 That took his station there for ornament:
The dignities of plain occurrence then
Were tasteless, and truth's golden mean, a point
Where no sufficient pleasure could be found.
Then, if a widow, staggering with the blow
Of her distress, was known to have turned her steps
To the cold grave in which her husband slept,

One night – or haply more than one – through pain
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 She was a visitant the whole year through
 540 Wetting the turf with never-ending tears,
 And all the storms of heaven must beat on her!

Through wild obliquities could I pursue
 Among all objects of the fields and groves
 These cravings: when the foxglove, one by one,
 Upwards through every stage of its tall stem
 Had shed its bells, and stood by the wayside
 Dismantled, with a single one perhaps
 Left at the ladder's top, with which the plant
 Appeared to stoop – as slender blades of grass
 550 Tipped with a bead of rain or dew – behold
 If such a sight were seen, would fancy bring
 Some vagrant thither with her babes and seat her
 Upon the turf beneath the stately flower.
 Drooping in sympathy, and making so
 A melancholy crest above the head
 Of the lorn creature while her little ones,
 (All unconcerned with her unhappy plight)
 Were sporting with the purple cups that lay
 Scattered upon the ground.

There was a copse,
 560 An upright bank of wood and woody rock
 That opposite our rural dwelling stood,
 In which a sparkling patch of diamond light
 Was in bright weather duly to be seen
 On summer afternoons, within the wood
 At the same place. 'Twas doubtless nothing more
 Than a black rock, which, wet with constant springs,
 Glistened far seen from out its lurking-place
 As soon as ever the declining sun
 Had smitten it. Beside our cottage hearth
 570 Sitting with open door, a hundred times
 Upon this lustre have I gazed, that seemed

One night, or haply more than one, through pain
 Or half-insensate impotence of mind,
 The fact was caught at greedily, and there
 390 She must be visitant the whole year through,
 Wetting the turf with never-ending tears.

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

A diamond light
 (Whene'er the summer sun, declining, smote
 A smooth rock wet with constant springs) was seen
 Sparkling from out a copse-clad bank that rose
 410 Fronting our cottage: Oft beside the hearth
 Seated, with open door, often and long
 Upon this restless lustre have I gazed,

To have some meaning which I could not find –
 And now it was a burnished shield, I fancied,
 Suspended over a knight's tomb who lay
 Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood;
 An entrance now into some magic cave
 Or palace for a fairy of the rock.
 Nor would I, though not certain whence the cause
 Of the effulgence, thither have repaired
 580 Without a precious bribe, and day by day
 And month by month I saw the spectacle,
 Nor ever once have visited the spot
 Unto this hour.

Thus sometimes were the shapes
 Of wilful fancy grafted upon feelings
 Of the imagination, and they rose
 In worth accordingly. My present theme
 Is to retrace the way that led me on
 Through nature to the love of human-kind;
 Nor could I with such object overlook
 590 The influence of this power which turned itself
 Instinctively to human passions, things
 Least understood – of this adulterate power –
 For so it may be called, and without wrong,
 When with that first compared. Yet in the midst
 Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
 As mine, through the chance (on me not wasted)
 Of having been brought up in such a grand
 And lovely region, I had forms distinct
 To steady me. These thoughts did oft revolve
 600 About some centre palpable, which at once
 Incited them to motion, and controlled;
 And whatsoever shape the fit might take,
 And whencesoever it might come, I still
 At all times had a real solid world
 Of images about me – did not pine
 As one in cities bred might do (as thou,
 Belovèd friend, hast told me that thou didst,
 Great spirit as thou art) in endless dreams

That made my fancy restless as itself.
'Twas now for me a burnished silver shield
Suspended over a knight's tomb, who lay
Inglorious, buried in the dusky wood:
An entrance now into some magic cave
Or palace built by fairies of the rock;
Nor could I have been bribed to disenchant
The spectacle, by visiting the spot.
420 Thus wilful Fancy, in no hurtful mood,
Engrafted far-fetched shapes on feelings bred
By pure Imagination: busy Power
She was, and with her ready pupil turned
Instinctively to human passions, then
Least understood. Yet, 'mid the fervent swarm
Of these vagaries, with an eye so rich
As mine was through the bounty of a grand
And lovely region, I had forms distinct
430 To steady me: each airy thought revolved
Round a substantial centre, which at once
Incited it to motion, and controlled.
I did not pine like one in cities bred,
As was thy melancholy lot, dear Friend!
Great Spirit as thou art, in endless dreams

Of sickness, disjoining, joining, things
 610 Without the light of knowledge. Where the harm
 If, when the woodman languished with disease
 From sleeping night by night among the woods
 Within his sod-built cabin, Indian-wise,
 I called the pangs of disappointed love
 And all the long etcetera of such thought
 To help him to his grave? Meanwhile the man,
 If not already from the woods retired
 To die at home, was haply (as I knew)
 Pining alone among the gentle airs,
 620 Birds, running streams, and hills so beautiful
 On golden evenings, while the charcoal-pile
 Breathed up its smoke, an image of his ghost
 Or spirit that was soon to take its flight.

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

A grove there is whose boughs
 Stretch from the western marge of Thurston-mere,
 460 With length of shade so thick, that whoso glides
 Along the line of low-roofed water, moves
 As in a cloister. Once – while, in that shade
 Loitering, I watched the golden beams of light
 Flung from the setting sun, as they reposed
 In silent beauty on the naked ridge
 Of a high eastern hill – thus flowed my thoughts
 In a pure stream of words fresh from the heart:
 Dear native Regions, wheresoe'er shall close
 My mortal course, there will I think on you;
 470 Dying, will cast on you a backward look;
 Even as this setting sun (albeit the Vale
 Is no where touched by one memorial gleam)

There came a time of greater dignity
 Which had been gradually prepared and now
 Rushed in as if on wings – the time in which
 The pulse of being everywhere was felt –
 When all the several frames of things, like stars
 Through every magnitude distinguishable,
 630 Were half confounded in each other's blaze,
 One galaxy of life and joy. Then rose
 Man, inwardly contemplated, and present
 In my own being, to a loftier height,
 As of all visible natures crown, and first
 In capability of feeling what
 Was to be felt – in being rapt away
 By the divine effect of power and love –
 As, more than anything we know, instinct
 With godhead, and by reason and by will
 640 Acknowledging dependency sublime.

Erelong, transported hence as in a dream,
 I found myself begirt with temporal shapes
 Of vice and folly thrust upon my view,
 Objects of sport, and ridicule, and scorn,
 Manners and characters discriminate,
 And little busy passions that eclipsed,
 As well they might, the impersonated thought,
 The idea, or abstraction of the kind.
 An idler among academic bowers,
 650 Such was my new condition (as at large
 Has been set forth) yet here the vulgar light
 Of present, actual, superficial life,
 Gleaming through colouring of other times,
 Old usages and local privilege,

Doth with the fond remains of his last power
 Still linger, and a farewell lustre sheds
 On the dear mountain-tops where first he rose.

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

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

An idler among academic bowers,
 Such was my new condition, as at large
 Has been set forth; yet here the vulgar light
 Of present, actual, superficial life,
 Gleaming through colouring of other times,
 Old usages and local privilege,

Thereby was softened, almost solemnized,
 And rendered apt and pleasing to the view.
 This notwithstanding, being brought more near
 As I was now to guilt and wretchedness,
 I trembled, thought of human life at times
 660 With an indefinite terror and dismay –
 Such as the storms and angry elements
 Had bred in me, but gloomier far, a dim
 Analogy to uproar and misrule,
 Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

It might be told – but wherefore speak of things
 Common to all? – that, seeing, I essayed
 To give relief, began to deem myself
 A moral agent (judging between good
 And evil, not as for the mind's delight
 670 But for her safety) one who was to *act*,
 As sometimes to the best of my weak means
 I did, by human sympathy impelled –
 And through dislike and most offensive pain
 Was to the truth conducted; of this faith
 Never forsaken, that by acting well,
 And understanding, I should learn to love
 The end of life and everything we know.

Preceptress stern that didst instruct me next,
 London, to thee I willingly return!
 680 Erewhile my verse played only with the flowers
 Enwrought upon thy mantle, satisfied
 With this amusement, and a simple look
 Of childlike inquisition now and then
 Cast upwards on thine eye to puzzle out
 Some inner meanings which might harbour there.
 Yet did I not give way to this light mood
 Wholly beguiled, as one incapable
 Of higher things, and ignorant that high things
 Were round me. Never shall I forget the hour,
 690 The moment rather say, when, having thridded
 The labyrinth of suburban villages,

Was welcome, softened, if not solemnised.

510 This notwithstanding, being brought more near
To vice and guilt, forerunning wretchedness,
I trembled, – thought, at times, of human life
With an indefinite terror and dismay,
Such as the storms and angry elements
Had bred in me; but gloomier far, a dim
Analogy to uproar and misrule,
Disquiet, danger, and obscurity.

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

530 Grave Teacher, stern Preceptress! for at times
Thou canst put on an aspect most severe;
London, to thee I willingly return.
Erewhile my verse played idly with the flowers
Enwrought upon thy mantle; satisfied
With that amusement, and a simple look
Of child-like inquisition now and then
Cast upwards on thy countenance, to detect
Some inner meanings which might harbour there:
But how could I in mood so light indulge,
540 Keeping such fresh remembrance of the day,
When, having thridded the long labyrinth
Of the suburban villages, I first

At length I did unto myself first seem
 To enter the great city. On the roof
 Of an itinerant vehicle I sat,
 With vulgar men about me, vulgar forms
 Of houses, pavements, streets, of men and things –
 Mean shapes on every side – but at the time
 When to myself it fairly might be said
 (The very moment that I seemed to know)
 700 ‘The threshold now is overpast’, great God
 That aught *external* to the living mind
 Should have such mighty sway, yet so it was!
 A weight of ages did at once descend
 Upon my heart – no thought embodied, no
 Distinct remembrances, but weight and power,
 Power growing with the weight! Alas, I feel
 That I am trifling; ’twas a moment’s pause,
 All that took place within me came and went
 As in a moment, and I only now
 710 Remember that it was a thing divine.

As when a traveller has from open day
 With torches passed into some vault of earth,
 The grotto of Antiparos or the den
 Of Yordas among Craven’s mountain tracts;
 He looks and sees the cavern spread and grow
 Widening itself on all sides, sees, or thinks
 He sees, erelong the roof above his head,
 Which instantly unsettles and recedes –
 Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
 720 Commingled, making up a canopy
 Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape
 That shift and vanish, change and interchange
 Like spectres – ferment quiet and sublime
 Which after a short space works less and less,
 Till, every effort, every motion gone,
 The scene before him lies in perfect view
 Exposed and lifeless as a written book!
 But let him pause awhile and look again
 And a new quickening shall succeed, at first

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

560 The curious traveller, who, from open day,
 Hath passed with torches into some huge cave,
 The Grotto of Antiparos, or the Den
 In old time haunted by that Danish Witch,
 Yordas; he looks around and sees the vault
 Widening on all sides; sees, or thinks he sees,
 Erelong, the massy roof above his head,
 That instantly unsettles and recedes, —
 Substance and shadow, light and darkness, all
 Commingled, making up a canopy
 570 Of shapes and forms and tendencies to shape
 That shift and vanish, change and interchange
 Like spectres, — ferment silent and sublime!
 That after a short space works less and less,
 Till, every effort, every motion gone,
 The scene before him stands in perfect view
 Exposed, and lifeless as a written book! —
 But let him pause awhile, and look again,
 And a new quickening shall succeed, at first

730 Beginning timidly, then creeping fast
 Through all which he beholds. The senseless mass,
 In its projections, wrinkles, cavities,
 Through all its surface, with all colours streaming
 Like a magician's airy pageant, parts,
 Unites, embodying everywhere some pressure
 Or image, recognized or new, some type
 Or picture of the world: forests and lakes,
 Ships, rivers, towers, the warrior clad in mail,
 The prancing steed, the pilgrim with his staff,
 740 The mitred bishop and the thronè king —
 A spectacle to which there is no end.

No otherwise had I at first been moved
 With such a swell of feeling, followed soon
 By a blank sense of greatness passed away —
 And afterwards continued to be moved —
 In presence of that vast metropolis,
 The fountain of my country's destiny
 And of the destiny of earth itself;
 That great emporium, chronicle at once
 750 And burial-place of passions, and their home
 Imperial and chief living residence.

With strong sensations teeming as it did
 Of past and present, such a place must needs
 Have pleased me in those times. I sought not then
 Knowledge, but craved for power — and power I found
 In all things. Nothing had a circumscribed
 And narrow influence, but all objects, being
 Themselves capacious, also found in me
 Capaciousness and amplitude of mind.
 760 Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
 The human nature unto which I felt
 That I belonged, and which I loved and revered,
 Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit

Beginning timidly, then creeping fast,
580 Till the whole cave, so late a senseless mass,
Busies the eye with images and forms
Boldly assembled, – here is shadowed forth
From the projections, wrinkles, cavities,
A variegated landscape, – there the shape
Of some gigantic warrior clad in mail,
The ghostly semblance of a hooded monk,
Veiled nun, or pilgrim resting on his staff:
Strange congregation! yet not slow to meet
Eyes that perceive through minds that can inspire.

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

With strong sensations teeming as it did
Of past and present, such a place must needs
Have pleased me, seeking knowledge at that time
600 Far less than craving power; yet knowledge came,
Sought or unsought, and influxes of power
Came, of themselves, or at her call derived
In fits of kindest apprehensiveness,
From all sides, when whate'er was in itself
Capacious found, or seemed to find, in me
A correspondent amplitude of mind;
Such is the strength and glory of our youth!
The human nature unto which I felt
That I belonged, and revered with love,
610 Was not a punctual presence, but a spirit

Living in time and space, and far diffused –
 In this my joy, in this my dignity
 Consisted. The external universe,
 By striking upon what is found within,
 Had given me this conception, with the help
 Of books and what they picture and record.

770 'Tis true, the history of my native land,
 With those of Greece compared and popular Rome
 (Events not lovely nor magnanimous,
 But harsh and unaffecting in themselves
 And in our high-wrought modern narratives
 Stripped of their humanizing soul, the life
 Of manners and familiar incidents)
 Had never much delighted me. And less
 Than other minds I had been used to owe
 The pleasure which I found in place or thing
 780 To extrinsic transitory accidents,
 To records or traditions; but a sense
 Of what had been here done, and suffered here
 Through ages – and was doing, suffering, still –
 Weighed with me, could support the test of thought,
 Was like the enduring majesty and power
 Of independent nature. And not seldom
 Even individual remembrances,
 By working on the shapes before my eyes,
 Became like vital functions of the soul;
 790 And out of what had been, what was, the place
 Was thronged with impregnations, like those wilds
 In which my early feelings had been nursed,
 And naked valleys full of caverns, rocks
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
 Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
 That into music touch the passing wind.

Thus here imagination also found
 An element that pleased her, tried her strength
 Among new objects – simplified, arranged,
 800 Impregnated my knowledge, made it live –

Diffused through time and space, with aid derived
 Of evidence from monuments, erect,
 Prostrate, or leaning towards their common rest
 In earth, the widely scattered wreck sublime
 Of vanished nations, or more clearly drawn
 From books and what they picture and record.

'Tis true, the history of our native land,
 With those of Greece compared and popular Rome,
 And in our high-wrought modern narratives
 620 Stript of their harmonising soul, the life
 Of manners and familiar incidents,
 Had never much delighted me. And less
 Than other intellects had mine been used
 To lean upon extrinsic circumstance
 Of record or tradition; but a sense
 Of what in the Great City had been done
 And suffered, and was doing, suffering, still,
 Weighed with me, could support the test of thought;
 And, in despite of all that had gone by,
 630 Or was departing never to return,
 There I conversed with majesty and power
 Like independent natures. Hence the place
 Was thronged with impregnations like the Wilds
 In which my early feelings had been nursed —
 Bare hills and valleys, full of caverns, rocks,
 And audible seclusions, dashing lakes,
 Echoes and waterfalls, and pointed crags
 That into music touch the passing wind.
 Here then my young imagination found
 640 No uncongenial element; could here
 Among new objects serve or give command,
 Even as the heart's occasions might require,
 To forward reason's else too scrupulous march.

And the result was elevating thoughts
 Of human nature. Neither guilt nor vice,
 Debasement of the body or the mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight
 (Which was not lightly passed, but often scanned
 Most feelingly) could overthrow my trust
 In what we may become, induce belief
 That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A solitary, who with vain conceits
 810 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
 When from that rueful prospect overcast
 And in eclipse my meditations turned,
 Lo, everything that was indeed divine
 Retained its purity inviolate
 And unencroached upon, nay, seemed brighter far
 For this deep shade in counterview, this gloom
 Of opposition, such as showed itself
 To the eyes of Adam (yet in Paradise
 Though fallen from bliss) when 'in the east he saw
 820 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught'.

Add also that among the multitudes
 Of that great city oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth – more than elsewhere
 Is possible – the unity of man,
 One spirit over ignorance and vice
 Predominant; in good and evil hearts
 830 One sense for moral judgements, as one eye
 For the sun's light. When strongly breathed upon
 By this sensation (whencesoe'er it comes,
 Of union or communion) does the soul
 Rejoice as in her highest joy; for there,
 There chiefly, has she feeling whence she is,
 And passing through all natures rests with God.

The effect was, still more elevated views
 Of human nature. Neither vice nor guilt,
 Debasement undergone by body or mind,
 Nor all the misery forced upon my sight,
 Misery not lightly passed, but sometimes scanned
 Most feelingly, could overthrow my trust
 650 In what we *may* become; induce belief
 That I was ignorant, had been falsely taught,
 A solitary, who with vain conceits
 Had been inspired, and walked about in dreams.
 From those sad scenes when meditation turned,
 Lo! every thing that was indeed divine
 Retained its purity inviolate,
 Nay brighter shone, by this portentous gloom
 Set off; such opposition as aroused
 The mind of Adam, yet in Paradise
 660 Though fallen from bliss, when in the East he saw
 Darkness ere day's mid course, and morning light
 More orient in the western cloud, that drew
 O'er the blue firmament a radiant white,
 Descending slow with something heavenly fraught.

Add also, that among the multitudes
 Of that huge city, oftentimes was seen
 Affectingly set forth, more than elsewhere
 Is possible, the unity of man,
 One spirit over ignorance and vice
 670 Predominant, in good and evil hearts;
 One sense for moral judgments, as one eye
 For the sun's light. The soul when smitten thus
 By a sublime *idea*, whencesoe'er
 Vouchsafed for union or communion, feeds
 On the pure bliss, and takes her rest with God.

And is not, too, that vast abiding-place
 Of human creatures, turn where'er we may,
 Profusely sown with individual sights
 840 Of courage, and integrity, and truth
 And tenderness, which, here set off by foil,
 Appears more touching? In the tender scenes
 Chiefly was my delight, and one of these
 Never will be forgotten. 'Twas a man
 Whom I saw sitting in an open square
 Close to the iron paling that fenced in
 The spacious grass-plot; on the corner-stone
 Of the low wall in which the pales were fixed
 Sat this one man, and with a sickly babe
 850 Upon his knee, whom he had thither brought
 For sunshine, and to breathe the fresher air.
 Of those who passed, and me who looked at him,
 He took no note; but in his brawny arms
 (The artificer was to the elbow bare,
 And from his work this moment had been stolen)
 He held the child, and, bending over it
 As if he were afraid both of the sun
 And of the air which he had come to seek,
 He eyed it with unutterable love.

860 Thus were my thoughts attracted more and more
 By slow gradations towards human-kind,
 And to the good and ill of human life.
 Nature had led me on, and now I seemed
 To travel independent of her help
 As if I had forgotten her — but no,
 My fellow beings still were unto me
 Far less than she was. Though the scale of love
 Were filling fast, 'twas light as yet compared
 With that in which her mighty objects lay.

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