

*Book Eleventh*

IMAGINATION, HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time has man's unhappiness and guilt  
Detained us: with what dismal sights beset  
For the outward view, and inwardly oppressed  
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,  
Confusion of opinion, zeal decayed –  
And lastly, utter loss of hope itself  
And things to hope for! Not with these began  
Our song, and not with these our song must end.  
Ye motions of delight that through the fields  
10 Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe  
The breath of paradise and find your way  
To the recesses of the soul; ye brooks  
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise  
By day, a quiet one in silent night;  
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
To interpose the covert of your shades,  
Even as a sleep, betwixt the heart of man  
And the uneasy world – 'twixt man himself  
Not seldom, and his own unquiet heart –  
20 Oh, that I had a music and a voice  
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell

*Book Twelfth*

IMAGINATION AND TASTE,  
HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED

Long time have human ignorance and guilt  
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe  
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed  
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,  
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,  
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself  
And things to hope for! Not with these began  
Our song, and not with these our song must end. —  
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides  
10 Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,  
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,  
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race  
How without injury to take, to give  
Without offence; ye who, as if to show  
The wondrous influence of power gently used,  
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,  
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds  
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,  
20 Muttering along the stones, a busy noise  
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;  
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth  
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,  
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;  
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
To interpose the covert of your shades,  
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man  
And outward troubles, between man himself,  
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:  
Oh! that I had a music and a voice  
30 Harmonious as your own, that I might tell

What ye have done for me. The morning shines,  
 Nor heedeth man's perverseness; spring returns –  
 I saw the spring return when I was dead  
 To deeper hope, yet had I joy for her  
 And welcomed her benevolence, rejoiced  
 In common with the children of her love,  
 Plants, insects, beast in field, and bird in bower.  
 So neither were complacency, nor peace,  
 30 Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good  
 Through those distracted times: in nature still  
 Glorifying, I found a counterpoise in her  
 Which, when the spirit of evil was at height,  
 Maintained for me a secret happiness.  
 Her I resorted to, and loved so much  
 I seemed to love as much as heretofore –  
 And yet this passion, fervent as it was,  
 Had suffered change, how could there fail to be  
 Some change, if merely hence, that years of life  
 40 Were going on, and with them loss or gain  
 Inevitable, sure alternative?

This history, my friend, has chiefly told  
 Of intellectual power from stage to stage  
 Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,  
 And of imagination teaching truth,  
 Until that natural graciousness of mind  
 Gave way to overpressure of the times  
 And their disastrous issues. What availed,  
 When spells forbade the voyager to land,  
 50 The fragrance which did ever and anon  
 Give notice of the shore, from arbours breathed  
 Of blessed sentiment and fearless love?  
 What did such sweet remembrances avail –  
 Perfidious then, as seemed – what served they then?  
 My business was upon the barren seas,  
 My errand was to sail to other coasts.  
 Shall I avow that I had hope to see –  
 I mean that future times would surely see –  
 The man to come parted as by a gulf

What ye have done for me. The morning shines,  
 Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns, —  
 I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,  
 In common with the children of her love,  
 Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,  
 Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven  
 On wings that navigate cerulean skies.  
 So neither were complacency, nor peace,  
 Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good  
 40 Through these distracted times; in Nature still  
 Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,  
 Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,  
 Maintained for me a secret happiness.

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told  
 Of intellectual power, fostering love,  
 Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,  
 Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing  
 Prophetic sympathies of genial faith:  
 So was I favoured — such my happy lot —  
 50 Until that natural graciousness of mind  
 Gave way to overpressure from the times  
 And their disastrous issues. What availed,  
 When spells forbade the voyager to land,  
 That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore  
 Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower  
 Of blissful gratitude and fearless love?  
 Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,  
 And hope that future times *would* surely see,  
 The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,

- 60 From him who had been; that I could no more  
 Trust the elevation which had made me one  
 With the great family that here and there  
 Is scattered through the abyss of ages past  
 (Sage, patriot, lover, hero), for it seemed  
 That their best virtues were not free from taint  
 Of something false and weak, which could not stand  
 The open eye of reason. Then I said  
 'Go to the poets; they will speak to thee  
 More perfectly of purer creatures! Yet  
 70 If reason be nobility in man  
 Can aught be more ignoble than the man  
 Whom they describe – would fasten if they may  
 Upon our love by sympathies of truth?'

- Thus strangely did I war against myself –  
 A bigot to a new idolatry,  
 Did like a monk who has forsworn the world  
 Zealously labour to cut off my heart  
 From all the sources of her former strength,  
 And, as by simple waving of a wand  
 80 The wizard instantaneously dissolves  
 Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul  
 As readily by syllogistic words  
 (Some charm of logic, ever within reach)  
 Those mysteries of passion which have made,  
 And shall continue evermore to make –  
 In spite of all that reason has performed  
 And shall perform to exalt and to refine –  
 One brotherhood of all the human race  
 Through all the habitations of past years  
 90 And those to come. And hence an emptiness  
 Fell on the historian's page, and even on that  
 Of poets, pregnant with more absolute truth:  
 The works of both withered in my esteem,  
 Their sentence was, I thought, pronounced – their rights  
 Seemed mortal, and their empire passed away.

60 From him who had been; that I could no more  
 Trust the elevation which had made me one  
 With the great family that still survives  
 To illuminate the abyss of ages past,  
 Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed  
 That their best virtues were not free from taint  
 Of something false and weak, that could not stand  
 The open eye of Reason. Then I said,  
 'Go to the Poets, they will speak to thee  
 More perfectly of purer creatures; — yet  
 70 If reason be nobility in man,  
 Can aught be more ignoble than the man  
 Whom they delight in, blinded as he is  
 By prejudice, the miserable slave  
 Of low ambition or distempered love?'

In such strange passion, if I may once more  
 Review the past, I warred against myself —  
 A bigot to a new idolatry —  
 Like a cowled monk who hath forsworn the world,  
 Zealously laboured to cut off my heart  
 80 From all the sources of her former strength;  
 And as, by simple waving of a wand,  
 The wizard instantaneously dissolves  
 Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul  
 As readily by syllogistic words  
 Those mysteries of being which have made,  
 And shall continue evermore to make,  
 Of the whole human race one brotherhood.

What then remained in such eclipse, what light  
 To guide or cheer? The laws of things which lie  
 Beyond the reach of human will or power,  
 The life of nature, by the God of love  
 100 Inspired – celestial presence ever pure –  
 These left, the soul of youth must needs be rich,  
 Whatever else be lost; and these were mine,  
 Not a deaf echo merely of the thought  
 (Bewildered recollections, solitary),  
 But living sounds. Yet in despite of this –  
 This feeling, which howe'er impaired or damped,  
 Yet having been once born can never die –  
 'Tis true that earth with all her appanage  
 Of elements and organs, storm and sunshine,  
 110 With its pure forms and colours, pomp of clouds,  
 Rivers and mountains, objects among which  
 It might be thought that no dislike or blame,  
 No sense of weakness or infirmity  
 Or aught amiss, could possibly have come,  
 Yea, even the visible universe was scanned  
 With something of a kindred spirit, fell  
 Beneath the domination of a taste  
 Less elevated, which did in my mind  
 With its more noble influence interfere,  
 120 Its animation and its deeper sway.

There comes (if need be now to speak of this  
 After such long detail of our mistakes),  
 There comes a time when reason – not the grand  
 And simple reason, but that humbler power  
 Which carries on its not inglorious work  
 By logic and minute analysis –  
 Is of all idols that which pleases most  
 The growing mind. A trifler would he be  
 Who on the obvious benefits should dwell.  
 130 That rise out of this process; but to speak  
 Of all the narrow estimates of things  
 Which hence originate were a worthy theme  
 For philosophic verse. Suffice it here

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



To hint that danger cannot but attend  
 Upon a function rather proud to be  
 The enemy of falsehood, than the friend  
 Of truth – to sit in judgement, than to feel.

O soul of nature, excellent and fair,  
 That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too  
 140 Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds  
 And powerful waters, and in lights and shades  
 That marched and countermarched about the hills  
 In glorious apparition – now all eye  
 And now all ear, but ever with the heart  
 Employed and the majestic intellect –  
 O soul of nature that dost overflow  
 With passion and with life, what feeble men  
 Walk on this earth, how feeble have I been  
 When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke  
 150 Of human suffering such as justifies  
 Remissness and inaptitude of mind,  
 But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased  
 Unworthily, disliking here, and there  
 Liking, by rules of mimic art transferred  
 To things above all art. But more – for this,  
 Although a strong infection of the age,  
 Was never much my habit – giving way  
 To a comparison of scene with scene,  
 Bent overmuch on superficial things,  
 160 Pampering myself with meagre novelties  
 Of colour and proportion, to the moods  
 Of nature and the spirit of the place  
 Less sensible. Nor only did the love  
 Of sitting thus in judgement interrupt  
 My deeper feelings, but another cause,  
 More subtle and less easily explained,  
 That almost seems inherent in the creature –  
 Sensuous and intellectual as he is,  
 A twofold frame of body and of mind.

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!  
 That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,  
 Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds  
 And roaring waters, and in lights and shades  
 That marched and countermarched about the hills  
 In glorious apparition, Powers on whom  
 I daily waited, now all eye and now  
 100 All ear; but never long without the heart  
 Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:  
 O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine  
 Sustained and governed; still dost overflow  
 With an impassioned life, what feeble ones  
 Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been  
 When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke  
 Of human suffering, such as justifies  
 Remissness and inaptitude of mind,  
 But through presumption; even in pleasure pleased  
 110 Unworthily, disliking here, and there  
 Liking; by rules of mimic art transferred  
 To things above all art; but more, — for this,  
 Although a strong infection of the age,  
 Was never much my habit — giving way  
 To a comparison of scene with scene,  
 Bent overmuch on superficial things,  
 Pampering myself with meagre novelties  
 Of colour and proportion; to the moods  
 Of time and season, to the moral power,  
 120 The affections and the spirit of the place,  
 Insensible. Nor only did the love  
 Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt  
 My deeper feelings, but another cause,  
 More subtle and less easily explained,  
 That almost seems inherent in the creature,  
 A twofold frame of body and of mind.

170 The state to which I now allude was one  
 In which the eye was master of the heart,  
 When that which is in every stage of life  
 The most despotic of our senses gained  
 Such strength in me as often held my mind  
 In absolute dominion

Gladly here,  
 Entering upon abstruser argument,  
 Would I endeavour to unfold the means  
 Which nature studiously employs to thwart  
 This tyranny, summons all the senses each  
 180 To counteract the other (and themselves)  
 And makes them all, and the objects with which all  
 Are conversant, subservient in their turn  
 To the great ends of liberty and power.  
 But this is matter for another song;  
 Here only let me add that my delights,  
 Such as they were, were sought insatiably,  
 Though 'twas a transport of the outward sense  
 Not of the mind — vivid but not profound —  
 Yet was I often greedy in the chase,  
 190 And roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,  
 Still craving combinations of new forms,  
 New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,  
 Proud of its own endowments, and rejoiced  
 To lay the inner faculties asleep.

Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife  
 And various trials of our complex being  
 As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense  
 Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid  
 Who, young as I was then, conversed with things  
 200 In higher style. From appetites like these  
 She, gentle visitant, as well she might,  
 Was wholly free. Far less did critic rules  
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties  
 Perplex her mind, but (wise as women are  
 When genial circumstance hath favoured them)

I speak in recollection of a time  
 When the bodily eye, in every stage of life  
 The most despotic of our senses, gained  
 130 Such strength in *me* as often held my mind  
 In absolute dominion. Gladly here,  
 Entering upon abstruser argument,  
 Could I endeavour to unfold the means  
 Which Nature studiously employs to thwart  
 This tyranny, summons all the senses each  
 To counteract the other, and themselves,  
 And makes them all, and the objects with which all  
 Are conversant, subservient in their turn  
 To the great ends of Liberty and Power:  
 140 But leave we this: enough that my delights  
 (Such as they were) were sought insatiably:  
 Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound;  
 I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,  
 Still craving combinations of new forms,  
 New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,  
 Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced  
 To lay the inner faculties asleep.  
 Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife  
 And various trials of our complex being,  
 150 As we grow up, such thralldom of that sense  
 Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,  
 A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;  
 Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;  
 Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,  
 Or barren intermeddling subtleties,  
 Perplex her mind; but, wise as women are  
 When genial circumstance hath favoured them,

She welcomed what was given, and craved no more.  
 Whatever scene was present to her eyes,  
 That was the best, to that she was attuned.  
 Through her humility and lowliness,  
 210 And through a perfect happiness of soul,  
 Whose variegated feelings were in this  
 Sisters, that they were each some new delight.  
 For she was nature's inmate: her the birds  
 And every flower she met with, could they but  
 Have known her, would have loved. Methought such  
 charm  
 Of sweetness did her presence breathe around  
 That all the trees, and all the silent hills,  
 And everything she looked on, should have had  
 An intimation how she bore herself  
 220 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights  
 In such a being, for her common thoughts  
 Are piety, her life is blessedness.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth  
 From the retirement of my native hills  
 I loved whate'er I saw – nor lightly loved,  
 But fervently – did never dream of aught  
 More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed,  
 Than those few nooks to which my happy feet  
 Were limited. I had not at that time  
 230 Lived long enough, nor in the least survived  
 The first diviner influence of this world  
 As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.  
 I worshipped then among the depths of things  
 As my soul bade me; could I then take part  
 In aught but admiration, or be pleased  
 With anything but humbleness and love?  
 I felt, and nothing else; I did not judge –  
 I never thought of judging – with the gift  
 Of all this glory filled and satisfied.  
 240 And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps  
 Roaming, I carried with me the same heart.  
 In truth, this degradation – howsoe'er

She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;  
 Whate'er the scene presented to her view,  
 160 That was the best, to that she was attuned.  
 By her benign simplicity of life,  
 And through a perfect happiness of soul,  
 Whose variegated feelings were in this  
 Sisters, that they were each some new delight:  
 Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,  
 Could they have known her, would have loved; methought  
 Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,  
 That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,  
 And every thing she looked on, should have had  
 170 An intimation how she bore herself  
 Towards them and to all creatures. God delights  
 In such a being; for her common thoughts  
 Are piety, her life is gratitude.

Even like this maid, before I was called forth  
 From the retirement of my native hills,  
 I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,  
 But most intensely; never dreamt of aught  
 More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed  
 Than those few nooks to which my happy feet  
 180 Were limited. I had not at that time  
 Lived long enough, nor in the least survived  
 The first diviner influence of this world,  
 As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.  
 Worshipping then among the depth of things,  
 As piety ordained; could I submit  
 To measured admiration, or to aught  
 That should preclude humility and love?  
 I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,  
 Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift  
 190 Of all this glory filled and satisfied.  
 And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps  
 Roaming, I carried with me the same heart:  
 In truth, the degradation — howsoe'er

Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,  
 Of custom that prepares such wantonness  
 As makes the greatest things give way to least,  
 Or any other cause which has been named,  
 Or, lastly, aggravated by the times  
 Which with their passionate sounds might often make  
 The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes  
 250 Inaudible – was transient. I had felt  
 Too forcibly, too early in my life,  
 Visitings of imaginative power  
 For this to last: I shook the habit off  
 Entirely and for ever, and again  
 In nature's presence stood, as I stand now,  
 A sensitive, and a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time  
 Which with distinct pre-eminence retain  
 A vivifying virtue, whence, depressed  
 260 By false opinion and contentious thought,  
 Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight  
 In trivial occupations and the round  
 Of ordinary intercourse, our minds  
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired –  
 A virtue by which pleasure is enhanced,  
 That penetrates, enables us to mount  
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
 This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
 Among those passages of life in which  
 270 We have had deepest feeling that the mind  
 Is lord and master, and that outward sense  
 Is but the obedient servant of her will.  
 Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,  
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date  
 From our first childhood – in our childhood even  
 Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,  
 As far as memory can look back, is full  
 Of this beneficent influence.

Induced, effect, in whatso'er degree,  
 Of custom that prepares a partial scale  
 In which the little oft outweighs the great;  
 Or any other cause that hath been named;  
 Or lastly, aggravated by the times  
 And their impassioned sounds, which well might make  
 200 The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes  
 Inaudible – was transient; I had known  
 Too forcibly, too early in my life,  
 Visitings of imaginative power  
 For this to last: I shook the habit off  
 Entirely and for ever, and again  
 In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,  
 A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,  
 That with distinct pre-eminence retain  
 210 A renovating virtue, whence, depressed  
 By false opinion and contentious thought,  
 Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,  
 In trivial occupations, and the round  
 Of ordinary intercourse, our minds  
 Are nourished and invisibly repaired;  
 A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,  
 That penetrates, enables us to mount,  
 When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
 This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
 220 Among those passages of life that give  
 Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,  
 The mind is lord and master – outward sense  
 The obedient servant of her will. Such moments  
 Are scattered everywhere, taking their date  
 From our first childhood. I remember well,



## At a time

When scarcely (I was then not six years old)  
 280 My hand could hold a bridle, with proud hopes  
 I mounted, and we rode towards the hills.  
 We were a pair of horsemen: honest James  
 Was with me, my encourager and guide.  
 We had not travelled long ere some mischance  
 Disjoined me from my comrade, and, through fear  
 Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
 I led my horse, and stumbling on, at length  
 Came to a bottom where in former times  
 A murderer had been hung in iron chains.  
 290 The gibbet-mast was mouldered down, the bones  
 And iron case were gone; but on the turf  
 Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,  
 Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.  
 The monumental writing was engraven  
 In times long past, and still from year to year  
 By superstition of the neighbourhood  
 The grass is cleared away, and to this hour  
 The letters are all fresh and visible.  
 Faltering, and ignorant where I was, at length  
 300 I chanced to espy those characters inscribed  
 On the green sod. Forthwith I left the spot  
 And reascending the bare common saw  
 A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,  
 The beacon on the summit, and more near,  
 A girl who bore a pitcher on her head  
 And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
 Against the blowing wind. It was in truth  
 An ordinary sight, but I should need  
 Colours and words that are unknown to man  
 310 To paint the visionary dreariness  
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
 Did at that time invest the naked pool,  
 The beacon on the lonely eminence,  
 The woman and her garments vexed and tossed  
 By the strong wind.

That once, while yet my inexperienced hand  
 Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes  
 I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:  
 An ancient servant of my father's house  
 230 Was with me, my encourager and guide:  
 We had not travelled long, ere some mischance  
 Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear  
 Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
 I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length  
 Came to a bottom, where in former times  
 A murderer had been hung in iron chains.  
 The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones  
 And iron case were gone; but on the turf,  
 Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,  
 240 Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.  
 The monumental letters were inscribed  
 In times long past; but still, from year to year,  
 By superstition of the neighbourhood,  
 The grass is cleared away, and to this hour  
 The characters are fresh and visible:  
 A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,  
 Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:  
 Then, reascending the bare common, saw  
 A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,  
 250 The beacon on the summit, and, more near,  
 A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,  
 And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
 Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,  
 An ordinary sight; but I should need  
 Colours and words that are unknown to man,  
 To paint the visionary dreariness  
 Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,  
 Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,  
 The beacon crowning the lone eminence,  
 260 The female and her garments vexed and tossed  
 By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours

When, in a blessed season  
 With those two dear ones – to my heart so dear –  
 When in the blessed time of early love,  
 Long afterwards I roamed about  
 In daily presence of this very scene,  
 320 Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,  
 And on the melancholy beacon, fell  
 The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam –  
 And think ye not with radiance more divine  
 From these remembrances, and from the power  
 They left behind? So feeling comes in aid  
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
 Attends us if but once we have been strong.  
 Oh, mystery of man, from what a depth  
 Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see  
 330 In simple childhood something of the base  
 On which thy greatness stands – but this I feel,  
 That from thyself it is that thou must give,  
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by  
 Come back upon me from the dawn almost  
 Of life; the hiding-places of my power  
 Seem open, I approach, and then they close;  
 I see by glimpses now, when age comes on  
 May scarcely see at all; and I would give  
 While yet we may (as far as words can give)  
 340 A substance and a life to what I feel –  
 I would enshrine the spirit of the past  
 For future restoration. Yet another  
 Of these to me affecting incidents,  
 With which we will conclude.

One Christmas-time,  
 The day before the holidays began,  
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth  
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight  
 Of those two horses which should bear us home,  
 My brothers and myself. There was a crag,  
 350 An eminence, which from the meeting-point  
 Of two highways ascending, overlooked

Of early love, the loved one at my side,  
 I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,  
 Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,  
 And on the melancholy beacon, fell  
 A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;  
 And think ye not with radiance more sublime  
 For these remembrances, and for the power  
 They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid  
 270 Of feeling, and diversity of strength  
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong:  
 Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth  
 Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see  
 In simple childhood something of the base  
 On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,  
 That from thyself it comes, that thou must give,  
 Else never canst receive. The days gone by  
 Return upon me almost from the dawn  
 280 Of life: the hiding-places of man's power  
 Open; I would approach them, but they close.  
 I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,  
 May scarcely see at all; and I would give,  
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
 Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,  
 Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past  
 For future restoration. — Yet another  
 Of these memorials: —

One Christmas-time,

On the glad eve of its dear holidays,  
 Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth  
 290 Into the fields, impatient for the sight  
 Of those led palfreys that should bear us home;  
 My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,  
 That, from the meeting-point of two highways  
 Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;

At least a long half-mile of those two roads,  
 By each of which the expected steeds might come —  
 The choice uncertain. Thither I repaired  
 Up to the highest summit. 'Twas a day  
 Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass  
 I sat half sheltered by a naked wall.  
 Upon my right hand was a single sheep,  
 A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,  
 360 With those companions at my side, I watched,  
 Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist  
 Gave intermitting prospect of the wood  
 And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned  
 That dreary time, ere I had been ten days  
 A dweller in my father's house, he died,  
 And I and my two brothers (orphans then)  
 Followed his body to the grave. The event,  
 With all the sorrow which it brought, appeared  
 370 A chastisement; and when I called to mind  
 That day so lately past, when from the crag  
 I looked in such anxiety of hope,  
 With trite reflections of morality,  
 Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low  
 To God who thus corrected my desires.  
 And afterwards the wind and sleety rain  
 And all the business of the elements,  
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
 And the bleak music of that old stone wall,  
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
 380 Which on the line of each of those two roads  
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes —  
 All these were spectacles and sounds to which  
 I often would repair, and thence would drink  
 As at a fountain. And I do not doubt  
 That in this later time, when storm and rain  
 Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day  
 When I am in the woods, unknown to me  
 The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

Thither, uncertain on which road to fix  
 My expectation, thither I repaired,  
 Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day  
 Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass  
 I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;  
 300 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,  
 Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;  
 With those companions at my side, I watched,  
 Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist  
 Gave intermitting prospect of the copse  
 And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned, —  
 That dreary time, — ere we had been ten days  
 Sojourners in my father's house, he died,  
 And I and my three brothers, orphans then,  
 Followed his body to the grave. The event,  
 310 With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared  
 A chastisement; and when I called to mind  
 That day so lately past, when from the crag  
 I looked in such anxiety of hope;  
 With trite reflections of morality,  
 Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low  
 To God, Who thus corrected my desires;  
 And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,  
 And all the business of the elements,  
 The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,  
 320 And the bleak music from that old stone wall,  
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
 That on the line of each of those two roads  
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes;  
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds  
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,  
 As at a fountain; and on winter nights,  
 Down to this very time, when storm and rain  
 Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,  
 While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,  
 330 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock  
 In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,  
 Some inward agitations thence are brought,

390     Thou wilt not languish here, o friend, for whom  
 I travel in these dim uncertain ways;  
 Thou wilt assist me as a pilgrim gone  
 In quest of highest truth. Behold me then  
 Once more in nature's presence, thus restored  
 Or otherwise, and strengthened once again  
 (With memory left of what had been escaped)  
 To habits of devoutest sympathy.

Whate'er their office, whether to beguile  
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,  
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.



*Book Twelfth*

SAME SUBJECT (CONTINUED)

From nature does emotion come, and moods  
Of calmness equally are nature's gift –  
This is her glory. These two attributes  
Are sister horns that constitute her strength;  
This twofold influence is the sun and shower  
Of all her bounties, both in origin  
And end alike benignant. Hence it is  
That genius, which exists by interchange  
Of peace and excitation, finds in her  
10 His best and purest friend – from her receives  
That energy by which he seeks the truth  
(Is roused, aspires, grasps, struggles, wishes, craves),  
From her, that happy stillness of the mind  
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit may souls of humblest frame  
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine  
To speak of what myself have known and felt.  
Sweet task! – for words find easy way, inspired  
By gratitude and confidence in truth.  
20 Long time in search of knowledge desperate  
I was benighted heart and mind, but now  
On all sides day began to reappear,  
And it was proved indeed that not in vain  
I had been taught to reverence a power  
That is the very quality and shape  
And image of right reason – that matures  
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth  
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,  
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,

*Book Thirteenth*

IMAGINATION AND TASTE,  
HOW IMPAIRED AND RESTORED - (CONCLUDED)

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

Such benefit the humblest intellects  
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine  
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;  
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired  
By gratitude, and confidence in truth.  
Long time in search of knowledge did I range  
The field of human life, in heart and mind  
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now  
To re-appear, 'twas proved that not in vain  
20 I had been taught to reverence a Power  
That is the visible quality and shape  
And image of right reason; that matures  
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth  
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,  
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,

30 No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns  
 Of self-applauding intellect, but lifts  
 The being into magnanimity;  
 Holds up before the mind intoxicate  
 With present objects, and the busy dance  
 Of things that pass away, a temperate show  
 Of objects that endure, and by this course  
 Disposes her, when over fondly set  
 On leaving her incumbrances behind,  
 To seek in man (and in the frame of life,  
 40 Social and individual) what there is  
 Desirable, affecting, good or fair,  
 Of kindred permanence – the gifts divine  
 And universal, the pervading grace  
 That has been, is, and shall be. Above all  
 Did nature bring again that wiser mood,  
 More deeply re-established in my soul,  
 Which – seeing little worthy or sublime  
 In what we blazon with the pompous names  
 Of power and action – early tutored me  
 50 To look with feelings of fraternal love  
 Upon those unassuming things that hold  
 A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found  
 Once more in man an object of delight,  
 Of pure imagination, and of love;  
 And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,  
 Again I took the intellectual eye  
 For my instructor, studious more to see  
 Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.  
 60 Knowledge was given accordingly: my trust  
 Was firmer in the feelings which had stood  
 The test of such a trial, clearer far  
 My sense of what was excellent and right;  
 The promise of the present time retired  
 Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes,  
 Ambitious virtues, pleased me less – I sought  
 For good in the familiar face of life,

No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns  
 Of self-applauding intellect; but trains  
 To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;  
 Holds up before the mind intoxicate  
 30 With present objects, and the busy dance  
 Of things that pass away, a temperate show  
 Of objects that endure; and by this course  
 Disposes her, when over-fondly set  
 On throwing off incumbrances, to seek  
 In man, and in the frame of social life,  
 Whate'er there is desirable and good  
 Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form  
 And function, or, through strict vicissitude  
 Of life and death, revolving. Above all  
 40 Were re-established now those watchful thoughts  
 Which, seeing little worthy or sublime  
 In what the Historian's pen so much delights  
 To blazon – power and energy detached  
 From moral purpose – early tutored me  
 To look with feelings of fraternal love  
 Upon the unassuming things that hold  
 A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found  
 Once more in Man an object of delight,  
 50 Of pure imagination, and of love;  
 And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,  
 Again I took the intellectual eye  
 For my instructor, studious more to see  
 Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.  
 Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust  
 Became more firm in feelings that had stood  
 The test of such a trial; clearer far  
 My sense of excellence – of right and wrong:  
 The promise of the present time retired  
 60 Into its true proportion; sanguine schemes,  
 Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought  
 For present good in life's familiar face,

And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgements now of what would last  
 70 And what would disappear; prepared to find  
 Ambition, folly, madness, in the men  
 Who thrust themselves upon this passive world  
 As rulers of the world (to see in these,  
 Even when the public welfare is their aim,  
 Plans without thought, or bottomed on false thought  
 And false philosophy); having brought to test  
 Of solid life and true result the books  
 Of modern statist, and thereby perceived  
 The utter hollowness of what we name  
 80 The wealth of nations, where alone that wealth  
 Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained  
 A more judicious knowledge of what makes  
 The dignity of individual man –  
 Of man, no composition of the thought,  
 Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man  
 Of whom we read, the man whom we behold  
 With our own eyes – I could not but enquire,  
 Not with less interest than heretofore  
 But greater, though in spirit more subdued,  
 90 Why is this glorious creature to be found  
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,  
 Why may not many be? What bars are thrown  
 By nature in the way of such a hope?  
 Our animal wants and the necessities  
 Which they impose, are these the obstacles? –  
 If not, then others vanish into air.

Such meditations bred an anxious wish  
 To ascertain how much of real worth,  
 And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind,  
 100 Did at this day exist in those who lived  
 By bodily labour – labour far exceeding  
 Their due proportion – under all the weight  
 Of that injustice which upon ourselves  
 By composition of society

And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last  
 And what would disappear; prepared to find  
 Presumption, folly, madness, in the men  
 Who thrust themselves upon the passive world  
 As Rulers of the world; to see in these,  
 Even when the public welfare is their aim,  
 70 Plans without thought, or built on theories  
 Vague and unsound; and having brought the books  
 Of modern statists to their proper test,  
 Life, human life, with all its sacred claims  
 Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,  
 Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death;  
 And having thus discerned how dire a thing  
 Is worshipped in that idol proudly named  
 'The Wealth of Nations,' *where* alone that wealth  
 Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained  
 80 A more judicious knowledge of the worth  
 And dignity of individual man,  
 No composition of the brain, but man  
 Of whom we read, the man whom we behold  
 With our own eyes – I could not but inquire –  
 Not with less interest than heretofore,  
 But greater, though in spirit more subdued –  
 Why is this glorious creature to be found  
 One only in ten thousand? What one is,  
 Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown  
 90 By Nature in the way of such a hope?  
 Our animal appetites and daily wants,  
 Are these obstructions insurmountable?  
 If not, then others vanish into air.  
 'Inspect the basis of the social pile:  
 Inquire,' said I, 'how much of mental power  
 And genuine virtue they possess who live  
 By bodily toil, labour exceeding far  
 Their due proportion, under all the weight  
 Of that injustice which upon ourselves

Ourselves entail. To frame such estimate  
 I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)  
 Among the natural abodes of men –  
 Fields with their rural works – recalled to mind  
 My earliest notices, with these compared  
 110 The observations of my later youth  
 Continued downwards to that very day.  
 For time had never been in which the throes  
 And mighty hopes of nations, and the stir  
 And tumult of the world, to me could yield  
 (How far soe'er transported and possessed)  
 Full measure of content, but still I craved  
 An intermixture of distinct regards  
 And truths of individual sympathy  
 Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned  
 120 From that great city, else it must have been  
 A heart-depressing wilderness indeed –  
 Full soon to me a wearisome abode –  
 But much was wanting; therefore did I turn  
 To you, ye pathways and ye lonely roads,  
 Sought you, enriched with everything I prized,  
 With human kindness and with nature's joy.

Oh, next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed,  
 Alas, to few in this untoward world –  
 The bliss of walking daily in life's prime  
 130 Through field or forest with the maid we love  
 While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe  
 Nothing but happiness, living in some place  
 (Deep vale, or anywhere, the home of both)  
 From which it would be misery to stir –  
 Oh, next to such enjoyment of our youth,  
 In my esteem, next to such dear delight,  
 Was that of wandering on from day to day  
 Where I could meditate in peace, and find  
 The knowledge which I love, and teach the sound  
 140 Of poet's music to strange fields and groves;

100 Ourselves entail.' Such estimate to frame  
 I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)  
 Among the natural abodes of men,  
 Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind  
 My earliest notices; with these compared  
 The observations made in later youth,  
 And to that day continued. – For, the time  
 Had never been when throes of mighty Nations  
 And the world's tumult unto me could yield,  
 How far soe'er transported and possessed,  
 110 Full measure of content; but still I craved  
 An intermingling of distinct regards  
 And truths of individual sympathy  
 Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned  
 From the great City, else it must have proved  
 To me a heart-depressing wilderness;  
 But much was wanting: therefore did I turn  
 To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;  
 Sought you enriched with everything I prized,  
 With human kindnesses and simple joys.

120 Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed  
 Alas! to few in this untoward world,  
 The bliss of walking daily in life's prime  
 Through field or forest with the maid we love,  
 While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe  
 Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,  
 Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,  
 From which it would be misery to stir:  
 Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,  
 In my esteem, next to such dear delight,  
 130 Was that of wandering on from day to day  
 Where I could meditate in peace, and cull  
 Knowledge that step by step might lead me on  
 To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird  
 Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,  
 Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves,



Converse with men, where if we meet a face  
 We almost meet a friend, on naked moors  
 With long long ways before, by cottage bench,  
 Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

I love a public road: few sights there are  
 That please me more — such object has had power  
 O'er my imagination since the dawn  
 Of childhood, when its disappearing line  
 Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep  
 150 Beyond the limits which my feet had trod,  
 Was like a guide into eternity,  
 At least to things unknown and without bound.  
 Even something of the grandeur which invests  
 The mariner who sails the roaring sea  
 Through storm and darkness, early in my mind  
 Surrounded too the wanderers of the earth —  
 Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.  
 Awed have I been by strolling bedlamites;  
 From many other uncouth vagrants (passed  
 160 In fear) have walked with quicker step — but why  
 Take note of this? When I began to enquire,  
 To watch and question those I met, and held  
 Familiar talk with them, the lonely roads  
 Were schools to me in which I daily read  
 With most delight the passions of mankind,  
 There saw into the depth of human souls —  
 Souls that appear to have no depth at all  
 To vulgar eyes. And now, convinced at heart  
 How little that to which alone we give  
 170 The name of education has to do  
 With real feeling and just sense, how vain  
 A correspondence with the talking world

Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:  
 And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,  
 Converse with men, where if we meet a face  
 We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths  
 140 With long long ways before, by cottage bench,  
 Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye  
 The windings of a public way? the sight,  
 Familiar object as it is, hath wrought  
 On my imagination since the morn  
 Of childhood, when a disappearing line,  
 One daily present to my eyes, that crossed  
 The naked summit of a far-off hill  
 Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,  
 150 Was like an invitation into space  
 Boundless, or guide into eternity.  
 Yes, something of the grandeur which invests  
 The mariner who sails the roaring sea  
 Through storm and darkness, early in my mind  
 Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth;  
 Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.  
 Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;  
 From many other uncouth vagrants (passed  
 In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why  
 160 Take note of this? When I began to enquire,  
 To watch and question those I met, and speak  
 Without reserve to them, the lonely roads  
 Were open schools in which I daily read  
 With most delight the passions of mankind,  
 Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed;  
 There saw into the depth of human souls,  
 Souls that appear to have no depth at all  
 To careless eyes. And – now convinced at heart  
 How little those formalities, to which  
 170 With overweening trust alone we give  
 The name of Education, have to do  
 With real feeling and just sense; how vain  
 A correspondence with the talking world

Proves to the most – and called to make good search  
 If man's estate, by doom of nature yoked  
 With toil, is therefore yoked with ignorance,  
 If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,  
 And intellectual strength so rare a boon –  
 I prized such walks still more. For there I found  
 Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace  
 180 And steadiness, and healing and repose  
 To every angry passion. There I heard,  
 From mouths of lowly men and of obscure,  
 A tale of honour – sounds in unison  
 With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affections, love  
 Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed  
 A gift (to use a term which they would use)  
 Of vulgar nature – that its growth requires  
 Retirement, leisure, language purified  
 190 By manners thoughtful and elaborate –  
 That whoso feels such passion in excess  
 Must live within the very light and air  
 Of elegances that are made by man.  
 True is it, where oppression worse than death  
 Salutes the being at his birth, where grace  
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,  
 And labour in excess and poverty  
 From day to day pre-occupy the ground  
 Of the affections, and to nature's self  
 200 Oppose a deeper nature – there indeed  
 Love cannot be. Nor does it easily thrive  
 In cities, where the human heart is sick,  
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.  
 Thus far – no further – is that inference good.

Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel  
 How we mislead each other, above all  
 How books mislead us – looking for their fame  
 To judgements of the wealthy few, who see  
 By artificial lights – how they debase

Proves to the most; and called to make good search  
 If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked  
 With toil, be therefore yoked with ignorance;  
 If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,  
 And intellectual strength so rare a boon —  
 I prized such walks still more, for there I found  
 180 Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace  
 And steadiness, and healing and repose  
 To every angry passion. There I heard,  
 From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths  
 Replete with honour; sounds in unison  
 With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affection, love  
 Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed  
 A gift, to use a term which they would use,  
 Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires  
 190 Retirement, leisure, language purified  
 By manners studied and elaborate;  
 That whoso feels such passion in its strength  
 Must live within the very light and air  
 Of courteous usages refined by art.  
 True is it, where oppression worse than death  
 Salutes the being at his birth, where grace  
 Of culture hath been utterly unknown,  
 And poverty and labour in excess  
 From day to day pre-occupy the ground  
 200 Of the affections, and to Nature's self  
 Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed,  
 Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease  
 Among the close and overcrowded haunts  
 Of cities, where the human heart is sick,  
 And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.  
 — Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel  
 How we mislead each other; above all,  
 How books mislead us, seeking their reward  
 From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see  
 210 By artificial lights; how they debase

210 The many for the pleasure of those few,  
 Effeminately level down the truth  
 To certain general notions for the sake  
 Of being understood at once (or else  
 Through want of better knowledge in the men  
 Who frame them), flattering thus our self-conceit  
 With pictures that ambitiously set forth  
 The differences, the outside marks by which  
 Society has parted man from man,  
 Neglectful of the universal heart.

220 Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,  
 A youthful traveller, and see daily now  
 Before me in my rural neighbourhood,  
 Here might I pause, and bend in reverence  
 To nature and the power of human minds,  
 To men as they are men within themselves.  
 How oft high service is performed within  
 When all the external man is rude in show –  
 Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,  
 But a mere mountain chapel such as shields  
 230 Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.  
 ‘Of these’, said I, ‘shall be my song. Of these,  
 If future years mature me for the task,  
 Will I record the praises, making verse  
 Deal boldly with substantial things – in truth  
 And sanctity of passion speak of these,  
 That justice may be done, obeisance paid  
 Where it is due. Thus haply shall I teach,  
 Inspire – through unadulterated ears  
 Pour rapture, tenderness and hope – my theme  
 240 No other than the very heart of man  
 As found among the best of those who live  
 Not unexalted by religious hope,  
 Nor uninformed by books (good books, though few)  
 In nature’s presence. Thence may I select  
 Sorrow that is not sorrow but delight,  
 And miserable love that is not pain  
 To hear of, for the glory that redounds

The Many for the pleasure of those Few;  
 Effeminately level down the truth  
 To certain general notions, for the sake  
 Of being understood at once, or else  
 Through want of better knowledge in the heads  
 That framed them; flattering self-conceit with words,  
 That, while they most ambitiously set forth  
 Extrinsic differences, the outward marks  
 Whereby society has parted man  
 220 From man, neglect the universal heart.

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,  
 A youthful traveller, and see daily now  
 In the familiar circuit of my home,  
 Here might I pause, and bend in reverence  
 To Nature, and the power of human minds,  
 To men as they are men within themselves.  
 How oft high service is performed within,  
 When all the external man is rude in show, —  
 Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,  
 230 But a mere mountain chapel, that protects  
 Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.  
 Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these,  
 If future years mature me for the task,  
 Will I record the praises, making verse  
 Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth  
 And sanctity of passion, speak of these,  
 That justice may be done, obeisance paid  
 Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,  
 Inspire, through unadulterated ears  
 240 Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, — my theme  
 No other than the very heart of man,  
 As found among the best of those who live,  
 Not unexalted by religious faith,  
 Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,  
 In Nature's presence: thence may I select  
 Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;  
 And miserable love, that is not pain  
 To hear of, for the glory that redounds

Therefrom to human-kind and what we are.'

Be mine to follow with no timid step  
 250 Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride  
 That I have dared to tread this holy ground  
 Speaking no dream, but things oracular,  
 Matter not lightly to be heard by those  
 Who to the letter of the outward promise  
 Do read the invisible soul – by men adroit  
 In speech, and for communion with the world  
 Accomplished – minds whose faculties are then  
 Most active when they are most eloquent,  
 And elevated most when most admired.  
 260 Men may be found of other mould than these  
 Who are their own upholders, to themselves  
 Encouragement, and energy, and will,  
 Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words  
 As native passion dictates. Others too  
 There are among the walks of homely life  
 Still higher, men for contemplation framed,  
 Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase,  
 Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink  
 Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse.  
 270 Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,  
 The thought, the image, and the silent joy.  
 Words are but under-agents in their souls;  
 When they are grasping with their greatest strength,  
 They do not breathe among them. This I speak  
 In gratitude to God, who feeds our hearts  
 For his own service – knoweth, loveth us,  
 When we are unregarded by the world.

Also about this time did I receive  
 Convictions still more strong than heretofore  
 280 Not only that the inner frame is good,  
 And graciously composed, but that, no less,  
 Nature through all conditions hath a power  
 To consecrate – if we have eyes to see –  
 The outside of her creatures, and to breathe

Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.  
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 Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride  
 That I have dared to tread this holy ground,  
 Speaking no dream, but things oracular;  
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 Encouragement, and energy, and will,  
 Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words  
 As native passion dictates. Others, too,  
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 Still higher, men for contemplation framed,  
 Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;  
 Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink  
 270 Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:  
 Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,  
 The thought, the image, and the silent joy:  
 Words are but under-agents in their souls;  
 When they are grasping with their greatest strength,  
 They do not breathe among them: this I speak  
 In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts  
 For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,  
 When we are unregarded by the world.

Also, about this time did I receive  
 280 Convictions still more strong than heretofore,  
 Not only that the inner frame is good,  
 And graciously composed, but that, no less,  
 Nature for all conditions wants not power  
 To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,  
 The outside of her creatures, and to breathe



Grandeur upon the very humblest face  
 Of human life. I felt that the array  
 Of outward circumstance and visible form  
 Is to the pleasure of the human mind  
 What passion makes it; that, meanwhile, the forms  
 290 Of nature have a passion in themselves  
 That intermingles with those works of man  
 To which she summons him (although the works  
 Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own),  
 And that the genius of the poet hence  
 May boldly take his way among mankind  
 Wherever nature leads – that he has stood  
 By nature's side among the men of old,  
 And so shall stand for ever. Dearest friend,  
 Forgive me if I say that I (who long  
 300 Had harboured reverentially a thought  
 That poets, even as prophets, each with each  
 Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
 Have each for his peculiar dower a sense  
 By which he is enabled to perceive  
 Something unseen before), forgive me, friend,  
 If I, the meanest of this band, had hope  
 That unto me had also been vouchsafed  
 An influx – that in some sort I possessed  
 A privilege, and that a work of mine,  
 310 Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,  
 Enduring and creative, might become  
 A power like one of nature's.

To such mood

Once above all (a traveller at that time  
 Upon the Plain of Sarum) was I raised:  
 There on the pastoral downs without a track  
 To guide me, or along the bare white roads  
 Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,  
 While through those vestiges of ancient times  
 I ranged, and by the solitude o'ercome,  
 320 I had a reverie and saw the past,  
 Saw multitudes of men, and here and there

Grandeur upon the very humblest face  
 Of human life. I felt that the array  
 Of act and circumstance, and visible form,  
 Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind  
 290 What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms  
 Of Nature have a passion in themselves,  
 That intermingles with those works of man  
 To which she summons him; although the works  
 Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;  
 And that the Genius of the Poet hence  
 May boldly take his way among mankind  
 Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood  
 By Nature's side among the men of old,  
 And so shall stand for ever. Dearest Friend!  
 300 If thou partake the animating faith  
 That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each  
 Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,  
 Have each his own peculiar faculty,  
 Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive  
 Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame  
 The humblest of this band who dares to hope  
 That unto him hath also been vouchsafed  
 An insight that in some sort he possesses,  
 A privilege whereby a work of his,  
 310 Proceeding from a source of untaught things,  
 Creative and enduring, may become  
 A power like one of Nature's. To a hope  
 Not less ambitious once among the wilds  
 Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised;  
 There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs  
 Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads  
 Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,  
 Time with his retinue of ages fled  
 Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw  
 320 Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear;  
 Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,

A single Briton in his wolf-skin vest,  
 With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;  
 The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear  
 Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength  
 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.  
 I called upon the darkness, and it took –  
 A midnight darkness seemed to come and take –  
 All objects from my sight; and lo, again  
 330 The desert visible by dismal flames!  
 It is the sacrificial altar, fed  
 With living men – how deep the groans! – the voice  
 Of those in the gigantic wicker thrills  
 Throughout the region far and near, pervades  
 The monumental hillocks, and the pomp  
 Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.

At other moments (for through that wide waste  
 Three summer days I roamed) when 'twas my chance  
 To have before me on the downy plain  
 340 Lines, circles, mounts, a mystery of shapes  
 Such as in many quarters yet survive,  
 With intricate profusion figuring o'er  
 The untilled ground – the work, as some divine,  
 Of infant science, imitative forms  
 By which the Druids covertly expressed  
 Their knowledge of the heavens, and imaged forth  
 The constellations – I was gently charmed,  
 Albeit with an antiquarian's dream,  
 And saw the bearded teachers, with white wands  
 350 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,  
 Alternately, and plain below, while breath  
 Of music seemed to guide them, and the waste  
 Was cheered with stillness and a pleasant sound.

This for the past, and things that may be viewed  
 Or fancied in the obscurities of time!  
 Nor is it, friend, unknown to thee: at least,  
 Thyself delighted, thou for my delight  
 Hast said (perusing some imperfect verse

A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,  
 With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;  
 The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear  
 Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,  
 Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.

I called on Darkness. — but before the word  
 Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take  
 All objects from my sight; and lo! again  
 330 The Desert visible by dismal flames;

It is the sacrificial altar, fed  
 With living men — how deep the groans! the voice  
 Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills  
 The monumental hillocks, and the pomp  
 Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.

At other moments (for through that wide waste  
 Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain  
 Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,  
 That yet survive, a work, as some divine,

340 Shaped by the Druids, so to represent  
 Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth  
 The constellations; gently was I charmed  
 Into a waking dream, a reverie

That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,  
 Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands  
 Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,  
 Alternately, and plain below, while breath  
 Of music swayed their motions, and the waste  
 Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.

350 This for the past, and things that may be viewed  
 Or fancied in the obscurity of years  
 From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!  
 Pleased with some unpremeditated strains

Which in that lonesome journey was composed)  
 360 That also I must then have exercised  
 Upon the vulgar forms of present things  
 And actual world of our familiar days,  
 A higher power – have caught from them a tone,  
 An image, and a character, by books  
 Not hitherto reflected. Call we this  
 But a persuasion taken up by thee  
 In friendship? Yet the mind is to herself  
 Witness and judge, and I remember well  
 That in life's everyday appearances  
 370 I seemed about this period to have sight  
 Of a new world – a world, too, that was fit  
 To be transmitted, and made visible  
 To other eyes, as having for its base  
 That whence our dignity originates,  
 That which both gives it being, and maintains  
 A balance, an ennobling interchange  
 Of action from within and from without:  
 The excellence, pure spirit, and best power,  
 Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said  
 That then and there my mind had exercised  
 Upon the vulgar forms of present things,  
 The actual world of our familiar days,  
 Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone,  
 An image, and a character, by books  
 360 Not hitherto reflected. Call we this  
 A partial judgment — and yet why? for *then*  
 We were as strangers; and I may not speak  
 Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,  
 Which on thy young imagination, trained  
 In the great City, broke like light from far.  
 Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself  
 Witness and judge; and I remember well  
 That in life's every-day appearances  
 I seemed about this time to gain clear sight  
 370 Of a new world — a world, too, that was fit  
 To be transmitted, and to other eyes  
 Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws  
 Whence spiritual dignity originates,  
 Which do both give it being and maintain  
 A balance, an ennobling interchange  
 Of action from without and from within;  
 The excellence, pure function, and best power  
 Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

### *Book Thirteenth*

#### CONCLUSION

In one of these excursions, travelling then  
Through Wales on foot and with a youthful friend,  
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time  
And westward took my way to see the sun  
Rise from the top of Snowdon. Having reached  
The cottage at the mountain's foot, we there  
Roused up the shepherd who by ancient right  
Of office is the stranger's usual guide,  
And after short refreshment sallied forth.

- 10 It was a summer's night, a close warm night,  
Wan, dull and glaring, with a dripping mist  
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky  
Half threatening storm and rain; but on we went  
Unchecked, being full of heart and having faith  
In our tried pilot. Little could we see  
Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp,  
And, after ordinary travellers' chat  
With our conductor, silently we sank  
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.
- 20 Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself  
Was nothing either seen or heard the while  
Which took me from my musings, save that once  
The shepherd's cur did to his own great joy  
Unearth a hedgehog in the mountain crags  
Round which he made a barking turbulent.  
This small adventure (for even such it seemed  
In that wild place and at the dead of night)  
Being over and forgotten, on we wound

## *Book Fourteenth*

### CONCLUSION

In one of those excursions (may they ne'er  
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts  
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,  
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,  
And westward took my way, to see the sun  
Rise from the top of Snowdon. To the door  
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base  
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends  
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;  
10 Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,  
Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog  
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;  
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb  
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,  
And, after ordinary travellers' talk  
With our conductor, pensively we sank  
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:  
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself  
20 Was nothing either seen or heard that checked  
Those musings or diverted, save that once  
The shepherd's lurcher, who, among the crags,  
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased  
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.  
This small adventure, for even such it seemed  
In that wild place and at the dead of night,  
Being over and forgotten, on we wound



In silence as before.

With forehead bent

- 30 Earthward, as if in opposition set  
 Against an enemy, I panted up  
 With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.  
 Thus might we wear perhaps an hour away,  
 Ascending at loose distance each from each,  
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band —  
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,  
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;  
 Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,  
 For instantly a light upon the turf
- 40 Fell like a flash! I looked about, and lo,  
 The moon stood naked in the heavens at height  
 Immense above my head, and on the shore  
 I found myself of a huge sea of mist,  
 Which meek and silent rested at my feet.  
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
 All over this still ocean; and beyond,  
 Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves  
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
 Into the sea — the real sea, that seemed
- 50 To dwindle and give up its majesty,  
 Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.  
 Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this show  
 In single glory, and we stood, the mist  
 Touching our very feet. And from the shore  
 At distance not the third part of a mile  
 Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,  
 A deep and gloomy breathing-place through which  
 Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams  
 Innumerable, roaring with one voice!
- 60 The universal spectacle throughout  
 Was shaped for admiration and delight,  
 Grand in itself alone, but in that breach  
 Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,  
 That dark deep thoroughfare, had nature lodged  
 The soul, the imagination of the whole.

In silence as before. With forehead bent  
 Earthward, as if in opposition set  
 30 Against an enemy, I panted up  
 With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.  
 Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,  
 Ascending at loose distance each from each,  
 And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band;  
 When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,  
 And with a step or two seemed brighter still;  
 Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,  
 For instantly a light upon the turf  
 Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,  
 40 The Moon hung naked in a firmament  
 Of azure without cloud, and at my feet  
 Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.  
 A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved  
 All over this still ocean; and beyond,  
 Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,  
 In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,  
 Into the main Atlantic, that appeared  
 To dwindle, and give up his majesty,  
 Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.  
 50 Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none  
 Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars  
 Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light  
 In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,  
 Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed  
 Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay  
 All meek and silent, save that through a rift —  
 Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,  
 A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place —  
 Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams  
 60 Innumerable, roaring with one voice!  
 Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,  
 For so it seemed, felt by the starry heavens.

A meditation rose in me that night  
 Upon the lonely mountain when the scene  
 Had passed away, and it appeared to me  
 The perfect image of a mighty mind,  
 70 Of one that feeds upon infinity,  
 That is exalted by an underpresence,  
 The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim  
 Or vast in its own being. Above all,  
 One function of such mind had nature there  
 Exhibited by putting forth, and that  
 With circumstance most awful and sublime:  
 That domination which she oftentimes  
 Exerts upon the outward face of things,  
 So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,  
 80 Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence  
 Does make one object so impress itself  
 Upon all others, and pervade them so,  
 That even the grossest minds must see and hear  
 And cannot choose but feel.

The power which these  
 Acknowledge when thus moved, which nature thus  
 Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express  
 Resemblance, in the fullness of its strength  
 Made visible – a genuine counterpart  
 And brother – of the glorious faculty  
 90 Which higher minds bear with them as their own.  
 This is the very spirit in which they deal  
 With all the objects of the universe:  
 They from their native selves can send abroad  
 Like transformation, for themselves create  
 A like existence, and, where'er it is  
 Created for them, catch it by an instinct.  
 Them the enduring and the transient both  
 Serve to exalt. They build up greatest things

When into air had partially dissolved  
 That vision, given to spirits of the night  
 And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought  
 Reflected, it appeared to me the type  
 Of a majestic intellect, its acts  
 And its possessions, what it has and craves,  
 What in itself it is, and would become.  
 70 There I beheld the emblem of a mind  
 That feeds upon infinity, that broods  
 Over the dark abyss, intent to hear  
 Its voices issuing forth to silent light  
 In one continuous stream; a mind sustained  
 By recognitions of transcendent power,  
 In sense conducting to ideal form,  
 In soul of more than mortal privilege.  
 One function, above all, of such a mind  
 Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,  
 80 'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,  
 That mutual domination which she loves  
 To exert upon the face of outward things,  
 So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed  
 With interchangeable supremacy,  
 That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,  
 And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all  
 Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus  
 To bodily sense exhibits, is the express  
 Resemblance of that glorious faculty  
 90 That higher minds bear with them as their own.  
 This is the very spirit in which they deal  
 With the whole compass of the universe:  
 They from their native selves can send abroad  
 Kindred mutations; for themselves create  
 A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns  
 Created for them, catch it, or are caught  
 By its inevitable mastery,  
 Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound  
 Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.  
 100 Them the enduring and the transient both  
 Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things

- From least suggestions, ever on the watch,  
 100 Willing to work and to be wrought upon.  
 They need not extraordinary calls  
 To rouse them: in a world of life they live,  
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,  
 But quickened, roused, and made thereby more fit  
 To hold communion with the invisible world.  
 Such minds are truly from the Deity,  
 For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss  
 That can be known is theirs – the consciousness  
 Of whom they are, habitually infused  
 110 Through every image and through every thought,  
 And all impressions. Hence religion, faith,  
 And endless occupation for the soul,  
 Whether discursive or intuitive;  
 Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,  
 Emotion which best foresight need not fear,  
 Most worthy then of trust when most intense;  
 Hence cheerfulness in every act of life;  
 Hence truth in moral judgements and delight  
 That fails not in the external universe.
- 120 Oh, who is he that has his whole life long  
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself? –  
 For this alone is genuine liberty.

From least suggestions; ever on the watch,  
 Willing to work and to be wrought upon,  
 They need not extraordinary calls  
 To rouse them; in a world of life they live,  
 By sensible impressions not enthralled,  
 But by their quickening impulse made more prompt  
 To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,  
 And with the generations of mankind  
 110 Spread over time, past, present, and to come,  
 Age after age, till Time shall be no more.  
 Such minds are truly from the Deity,  
 For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss  
 That flesh can know is theirs – the consciousness  
 Of Whom they are, habitually infused  
 Through every image and through every thought,  
 And all affections by communion raised  
 From earth to heaven, from human to divine;  
 Hence endless occupation for the Soul,  
 120 Whether discursive or intuitive;  
 Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,  
 Emotions which best foresight need not fear,  
 Most worthy then of trust when most intense.  
 Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush  
 Our hearts – if here the words of Holy Writ  
 May with fit reverence be applied – that peace  
 Which passeth understanding, that repose  
 In moral judgments which from this pure source  
 Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.

130 Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long  
 Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?  
 For this alone is genuine liberty:  
 Where is the favoured being who hath held  
 That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,  
 In one perpetual progress smooth and bright? –  
 A humbler destiny have we retraced,  
 And told of lapse and hesitating choice,  
 And backward wanderings along thorny ways:  
 Yet – compassed round by mountain solitudes,

Witness, ye solitudes where I received  
 My earliest visitations, careless then  
 Of what was given me, and where now I roam  
 A meditative, oft a suffering, man  
 And yet I trust with undiminished powers —  
 Witness, whatever falls my better mind  
 Revolving with the accidents of life  
 130 May have sustained, that howsoe'er misled  
 I never, in the quest of right and wrong,  
 Did tamper with myself from private aims;  
 Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe  
 Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully  
 Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;  
 But rather did with jealousy shrink back  
 From every combination that might aid  
 The tendency, too potent in itself,  
 Of habit to enslave the mind — I mean  
 140 Oppress it by the laws of vulgar sense  
 And substitute a universe of death,  
 The falsest of all worlds, in place of that  
 Which is divine and true

To fear and love  
 (To love as first and chief, for there fear ends)  
 Be this ascribed, to early intercourse  
 In presence of sublime and lovely forms  
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy —  
 Evil as one is rashly named by those  
 Who know not what they say. From love (for here  
 150 Do we begin and end) all grandeur comes,  
 All truth and beauty — from pervading love —  
 That gone, we are as dust.

Behold the fields  
 In balmy springtime full of rising flowers  
 And happy creatures! See that pair, the lamb  
 And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways  
 Shall touch thee to the heart! In some green bower  
 Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there

140 Within whose solemn temple I received  
 My earliest visitations, careless then  
 Of what was given me; and which now I range,  
 A meditative, oft a suffering man –  
 Do I declare – in accents which, from truth  
 Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend  
 Their modulation with these vocal streams –  
 That, whatsoever falls my better mind,  
 Revolving with the accidents of life,  
 May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,  
 150 Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,  
 Tamper with conscience from a private aim;  
 Nor was in any public hope the dupe  
 Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield  
 Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,  
 But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy  
 From every combination which might aid  
 The tendency, too potent in itself,  
 Of use and custom to bow down the soul  
 Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,  
 160 And substitute a universe of death  
 For that which moves with light and life informed,  
 Actual, divine, and true. To fear and love,  
 To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,  
 Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,  
 In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,  
 With the adverse principles of pain and joy –  
 Evil as one is rashly named by men  
 Who know not what they speak. By love subsists  
 All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;  
 170 That gone, we are as dust. – Behold the fields  
 In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers  
 And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb  
 And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways  
 Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,  
 And not inaptly so, for love it is,  
 Far as it carries thee. In some green bower  
 Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there



The one who is thy choice of all the world —  
 There linger, lulled and lost, and rapt away —  
 160 Be happy to thy fill! Thou callest this love  
 And so it is, but there is higher love  
 Than this, a love that comes into the heart  
 With awe and a diffusive sentiment —  
 Thy love is human merely; this proceeds  
 More from the brooding soul, and is divine.

This love more intellectual cannot be  
 Without imagination, which in truth  
 Is but another name for absolute strength  
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind  
 170 And reason in her most exalted mood.  
 This faculty has been the moving soul  
 Of our long labour: we have traced the stream  
 From darkness and the very place of birth  
 In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard  
 The sound of waters; followed it to light  
 And open day, accompanied its course  
 Among the ways of nature, afterwards  
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed,  
 Then given it greeting as it rose once more  
 180 With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast  
 The works of man and face of human life;  
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn  
 The feeling of life endless, the great thought  
 By which we live, infinity and God:

Imagination having been our theme,  
 So also has that intellectual love,  
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand  
 Dividually. Here must thou be, o man,  
 Strength to thyself — no helper hast thou here —  
 190 Here keepest thou thy individual state.  
 No other can divide with thee this work,  
 No secondary hand can intervene

The One who is thy choice of all the world:  
 There linger, listening, gazing, with delight  
 180 Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!  
 Unless this love by a still higher love  
 Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;  
 Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,  
 By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,  
 Lifted, in union with the purest, best,  
 Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise  
 Bearing a tribute to the Almighty's Throne.

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist  
 Without Imagination, which, in truth,  
 190 Is but another name for absolute power  
 And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,  
 And Reason in her most exalted mood.  
 This faculty hath been the feeding source  
 Of our long labour: we have traced the stream  
 From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard  
 Its natal murmur; followed it to light  
 And open day; accompanied its course  
 Among the ways of Nature, for a time  
 Lost sight of it bewildered and engulfed:  
 200 Then given it greeting as it rose once more  
 In strength, reflecting from its placid breast  
 The works of man and face of human life;  
 And lastly, from its progress have we drawn  
 Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought  
 Of human Being, Eternity, and God.

Imagination having been our theme,  
 So also hath that intellectual Love,  
 For they are each in each, and cannot stand  
 Dividually. — Here must thou be, O Man!  
 210 Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;  
 Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:  
 No other can divide with thee this work:  
 No secondary hand can intervene.

To fashion this ability. 'Tis thine,  
 The prime and vital principle is thine  
 In the recesses of thy nature, far  
 From any reach of outward fellowship,  
 Else 'tis not thine at all. But joy to him,  
 Oh, joy to him who here has sown – has laid  
 Here the foundations of his future years –  
 200 For all that friendship, all that love can do,  
 All that a darling countenance can look  
 Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,  
 Perfect him (made imperfect in himself),  
 All shall be his. And he whose soul has risen  
 Up to the height of feeling intellect  
 Shall want no humbler tenderness, his heart  
 Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;  
 Of female softness shall his life be full,  
 Of little loves and delicate desires,  
 210 Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents, sister of my soul,  
 Elsewhere have strains of gratitude been breathed  
 To thee for all the early tenderness  
 Which I from thee imbibed. And true it is  
 That later seasons owed to thee no less;  
 For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch  
 Of other kindred hands that opened out  
 The springs of tender thought in infancy,  
 And spite of all which singly I had watched  
 220 Of elegance, and each minuter charm  
 In nature and in life, still to the last –  
 Even to the very going-out of youth,  
 The period which our story now has reached –  
 I too exclusively esteemed that love,  
 And sought that beauty, which (as Milton sings)  
 Has terror in it. Thou didst soften down  
 This over-sternness; but for thee, sweet friend,  
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had been  
 Far longer what by nature it was framed –  
 230 Longer retained its countenance severe –

To fashion this ability; 'tis thine,  
 The prime and vital principle is thine  
 In the recesses of thy nature, far  
 From any reach of outward fellowship,  
 Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,  
 Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid  
 220 Here, the foundation of his future years!  
 For all that friendship, all that love can do,  
 All that a darling countenance can look  
 Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,  
 Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,  
 All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen  
 Up to the height of feeling intellect  
 Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart  
 Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;  
 Of female softness shall his life be full,  
 230 Of humble cares and delicate desires,  
 Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!  
 Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere  
 Poured out for all the early tenderness  
 Which I from thee imbibed: and 'tis most true  
 That later seasons owed to thee no less;  
 For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch  
 Of kindred hands that opened out the springs  
 Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite  
 240 Of all that unassisted I had marked  
 In life or nature of those charms minute  
 That win their way into the heart by stealth  
 (Still to the very going-out of youth),  
 I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,  
 And sought *that* beauty, which, as Milton sings,  
 Hath terror in it. Thou didst soften down  
 This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!  
 My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood  
 In her original self too confident,  
 250 Retained too long a countenance severe;

A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds  
 Familiar, and a favourite of the stars;  
 But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,  
 Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,  
 And teach the little birds to build their nests  
 And warble in its chambers. At a time  
 When nature, destined to remain so long  
 Foremost in my affections, had fallen back  
 Into a second place, well pleased to be  
 240 A handmaid to a nobler than herself –  
 When every day brought with it some new sense  
 Of exquisite regard for common things,  
 And all the earth was budding with these gifts  
 Of more refined humanity – thy breath,  
 Dear sister, was a kind of gentler spring  
 That went before my steps.

With such a theme,

Coleridge, with this my argument, of thee  
 Shall I be silent? O most loving soul,  
 Placed on this earth to love and understand  
 250 And from thy presence shed the light of love,  
 Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?  
 Thy gentle spirit to my heart of hearts  
 Did also find its way; and thus the life  
 Of all things and the mighty unity  
 In all which we behold, and feel, and are,

A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds  
Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:  
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,  
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,  
And teach the little birds to build their nests  
And warble in its chambers. At a time  
When Nature, destined to remain so long  
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back  
Into a second place, pleased to become  
260 A handmaid to a nobler than herself,  
When every day brought with it some new sense  
Of exquisite regard for common things,  
And all the earth was budding with these gifts  
Of more refined humanity, thy breath,  
Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring  
That went before my steps. Thereafter came  
One whom with thee friendship had early paired;  
She came, no more a phantom to adorn  
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,  
270 And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined  
To penetrate the lofty and the low;  
Even as one essence of pervading light  
Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars;  
And, the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp  
Couched in the dewy grass.

With such a theme,  
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee  
Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul!  
Placed on this earth to love and understand,  
And from thy presence shed the light of love,  
280 Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?  
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts  
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed  
Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things  
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take  
More rational proportions; mystery,  
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,  
Of life and death, time and eternity,

Admitted more habitually a mild  
 Interposition, closelier gathering thoughts  
 Of man and his concerns, such as become  
 A human creature, be he who he may,  
 260 Poet, or destined to an humbler name.  
 And so the deep enthusiastic joy,  
 The rapture of the hallelujah sent  
 From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed  
 And balanced by a reason which indeed  
 Is reason, duty and pathetic truth –  
 And God and man divided, as they ought,  
 Between them the great system of the world  
 Where man is sphered, and which God animates.

And now, o friend, this history is brought  
 270 To its appointed close. The discipline  
 And consummation of the poet's mind,  
 In everything that stood most prominent,  
 Have faithfully been pictured. We have reached  
 The time, which was our object from the first,  
 When we may (not presumptuously, I hope)  
 Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such  
 My knowledge, as to make me capable  
 Of building up a work that should endure.  
 Yet much has been omitted, as need was –  
 280 Of books how much! – and even of the other wealth  
 Which is collected among woods and fields,  
 Far more. For nature's secondary grace,  
 That outward illustration which is hers,  
 Has hitherto been barely touched upon:  
 The charm more superficial, and yet sweet,  
 Which from her works finds way, contemplated  
 As they hold forth a genuine counterpart  
 And softening mirror of the moral world.

Yes, having tracked the main essential power –  
 290 Imagination – up her way sublime,  
 In turn might fancy also be pursued

Admitted more habitually a mild  
 Interposition – a serene delight  
 290 In closelier gathering cares, such as become  
 A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,  
 Poet, or destined for a humbler name;  
 And so the deep enthusiastic joy,  
 The rapture of the hallelujah sent  
 From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed  
 And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust  
 In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay  
 Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,  
 Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there  
 300 Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,  
 At every season green, sweet at all hours.

And now, O Friend! this history is brought  
 To its appointed close: the discipline  
 And consummation of a Poet's mind,  
 In everything that stood most prominent,  
 Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached  
 The time (our guiding object from the first)  
 When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,  
 Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such  
 310 My knowledge as to make me capable  
 Of building up a Work that shall endure.  
 Yet much hath been omitted, as need was;  
 Of books how much! and even of the other wealth  
 That is collected among woods and fields,  
 Far more: for Nature's secondary grace  
 Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,  
 The charm more superficial that attends  
 Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice  
 Apt illustrations of the moral world,  
 320 Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.



Through all her transmigrations, till she too  
 Was purified, had learned to ply her craft  
 By judgement steadied. Then might we return  
 And in the rivers and the groves behold  
 Another face, might hear them from all sides  
 Calling upon the more instructed mind  
 To link their images – with subtle skill  
 Sometimes, and by elaborate research –  
 300 With forms and definite appearances  
 Of human life, presenting them sometimes  
 To the involuntary sympathy  
 Of our internal being, satisfied  
 And soothed with a conception of delight  
 Where meditation cannot come, which thought  
 Could never heighten.

Above all, how much  
 Still nearer to ourselves we overlook  
 In human nature and that marvellous world  
 As studied first in my own heart, and then  
 310 In life among the passions of mankind  
 And qualities commixed and modified  
 By the infinite varieties and shades  
 Of individual character. Herein  
 It was for me (this justice bids me say)  
 No useless preparation to have been  
 The pupil of a public school, and forced  
 In hardy independence to stand up  
 Among conflicting passions and the shock  
 Of various tempers – to endure and note  
 320 What was not understood, though known to be –  
 Among the mysteries of love and hate,  
 Honour and shame, looking to right and left,  
 Unchecked by innocence too delicate  
 And moral notions too intolerant,  
 Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called  
 To take a station among men, the step  
 Was easier, the transition more secure,  
 More profitable also; for the mind

Finally, and above all, O Friend! (I speak  
With due regret) how much is overlooked  
In human nature and her subtle ways,  
As studied first in our own hearts, and then  
In life among the passions of mankind,  
Varying their composition and their hue,  
Where'er we move, under the diverse shapes  
That individual character presents  
To an attentive eye. For progress meet,  
330 Along this intricate and difficult path,  
Whate'er was wanting, something had I gained,  
As one of many schoolfellows compelled,  
In hardy independence, to stand up  
Amid conflicting interests, and the shock  
Of various tempers; to endure and note  
What was not understood, though known to be;  
Among the mysteries of love and hate,  
Honour and shame, looking to right and left,  
Unchecked by innocence too delicate,  
340 And moral notions too intolerant,  
Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called  
To take a station among men, the step  
Was easier, the transition more secure,

Learns from such timely exercise to keep  
 330 In wholesome separation the two natures:  
 The one that feels, the other that observes.

Let one word more of personal circumstance –  
 Not needless, as it seems – be added here.  
 Since I withdrew unwillingly from France  
 The story has demanded less regard  
 To time and place; and where I lived, and how,  
 Has been no longer scrupulously marked.  
 Three years, until a permanent abode  
 Received me with that sister of my heart  
 340 Who ought by rights the dearest to have been  
 Conspicuous through this biographic verse –  
 Star seldom utterly concealed from view –  
 I led an undomestic wanderer's life.  
 In London chiefly was my home, and thence  
 Excursively, as personal friendships, chance  
 Or inclination led, or slender means  
 Gave leave, I roamed about from place to place,  
 Tarrying in pleasant nooks, wherever found,  
 Through England or through Wales. A youth – he bore  
 350 The name of Calvert; it shall live if words  
 Of mine can give it life – without respect  
 To prejudice or custom, having hope  
 That I had some endowments by which good  
 Might be promoted, in his last decay  
 From his own family withdrawing part  
 Of no redundant patrimony, did  
 By a bequest sufficient for my needs  
 Enable me to pause for choice, and walk  
 At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon  
 360 By mortal cares. Himself no poet, yet  
 Far less a common spirit of the world,  
 He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay  
 Apart from all that leads to wealth – or even  
 Perhaps to necessary maintenance,  
 Without some hazard to the finer sense –

More profitable also; for, the mind  
Learns from such timely exercise to keep  
In wholesome separation the two natures,  
The one that feels, the other that observes.

Yet one word more of personal concern —  
Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,  
350 I led an undomestic wanderer's life,  
In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,  
Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot  
Of rural England's cultivated vales  
Or Cambrian solitudes. A youth — (he bore  
The name of Calvert — it shall live, if words  
Of mine can give it life,) in firm belief  
That by endowments not from me withheld  
Good might be furthered — in his last decay  
360 By a bequest sufficient for my needs  
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk  
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon  
By mortal cares. Himself no Poet, yet  
Far less a common follower of the world,  
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay  
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even  
A necessary maintenance insures,  
Without some hazard to the finer sense;

He cleared a passage for me, and the stream  
 Flowed in the bent of nature.

Having now

Told what best merits mention, further pains  
 Our present labour seems not to require,  
 370 And I have other tasks. Call back to mind  
 The mood in which this poem was begun,  
 O friend – the termination of my course  
 Is nearer now, much nearer, yet even then  
 In that distraction and intense desire  
 I said unto the life which I had lived  
 ‘Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee  
 Which ’tis reproach to hear?’ Anon I rose  
 As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched  
 Vast prospect of the world which I had been  
 380 And was; and hence this song, which like a lark  
 I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens  
 Singing, and often with more plaintive voice  
 Attenuated to the sorrows of the earth –  
 Yet centring all in love, and in the end  
 All gratulant if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,  
 And with life power to accomplish aught of worth  
 Sufficient to excuse me in men’s sight  
 For having given this record of myself,  
 390 Is all uncertain. But, beloved friend,  
 When looking back thou seest, in clearer view  
 Than any sweetest sight of yesterday,  
 That summer when on Quantock’s grassy hills  
 Far ranging, and among the sylvan combs,  
 Thou in delicious words, with happy heart,  
 Didst speak the vision of that ancient man,  
 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes  
 Didst utter of the Lady Christabel,  
 And I, associate with such labour, walked

He cleared a passage for me, and the stream  
Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now

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

Whether to me shall be allotted life,  
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,  
390 That will be deemed no insufficient plea  
For having given the story of myself,  
Is all uncertain: but, beloved Friend!  
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view  
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,  
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,  
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved  
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan combs,  
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,  
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,  
400 The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes  
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;  
And I, associate with such labour, steeped  
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,

400 Murmuring of him who (joyous hap!) was found  
 After the perils of his moonlight ride  
 Near the loud waterfall, or her who sat  
 In misery near the miserable thorn –  
 When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts  
 And hast before thee all which then we were,  
 To thee, in memory of that happiness,  
 It will be known – by thee at least, my friend,  
 Felt – that the history of a poet's mind  
 Is labour not unworthy of regard:  
 410 To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift  
 Which I for thee design have been prepared  
 In times which have from those wherein we first  
 Together wantoned in wild poesy  
 Differed thus far, that they have been, my friend,  
 Times of much sorrow, of a private grief  
 Keen and enduring, which the frame of mind  
 That in this meditative history  
 Has been described, more deeply makes me feel –  
 420 Yet likewise has enabled me to bear  
 More firmly – and a comfort now, a hope,  
 One of the dearest which this life can give,  
 Is mine: that thou art near, and wilt be soon  
 Restored to us in renovated health,  
 When (after the first mingling of our tears)  
 'Mong other consolations we may find  
 Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

Oh, yet a few short years of useful life,  
 And all will be complete, thy race be run,  
 430 Thy monument of glory will be raised!  
 Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)  
 This age fall back to old idolatry,  
 Though men return to servitude as fast  
 As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame  
 By nations sink together, we shall still  
 Find solace in the knowledge which we have,

Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,  
After the perils of his moonlight ride,  
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate  
In misery near the miserable Thorn;  
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,  
And hast before thee all which then we were,  
410 To thee, in memory of that happiness,  
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!  
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind  
Is labour not unworthy of regard:  
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift  
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits  
That were our daily portion when we first  
Together wantoned in wild Poesy,  
But, under pressure of a private grief,  
420 Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,  
That in this meditative history  
Have been laid open, needs must make me feel  
More deeply, yet enable me to bear  
More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen  
From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon  
Restored to us in renovated health;  
When, after the first mingling of our tears,  
'Mong other consolations, we may draw  
Some pleasure from this offering of my love.

430 Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,  
And all will be complete, thy race be run.  
Thy monument of glory will be raised;  
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)  
This age fall back to old idolatry,  
Though men return to servitude as fast  
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame  
By nations sink together, we shall still  
Find solace – knowing what we have learnt to know,



Blest with true happiness if we may be  
 United helpers forward of a day  
 Of firmer trust, joint labourers in a work —  
 440 Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe —  
 Of their redemption, surely yet to come.  
 Prophets of nature, we to them will speak  
 A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
 By reason and by truth: What we have loved  
 Others will love, and we may teach them how —  
 Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
 A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
 On which he dwells, above this frame of things  
 450 (Which, mid all revolutions in the hopes  
 And fears of men, does still remain unchanged)  
 In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
 Of substance and of fabric more divine.

Rich in true happiness if allowed to be  
Faithful alike in forwarding a day  
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work  
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)  
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.  
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak  
A lasting inspiration, sanctified  
By reason, blest by faith: what we have loved,  
Others will love, and we will teach them how;  
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes  
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth  
450 On which he dwells, above this frame of things  
(Which, 'mid all revolution in the hopes  
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)  
In beauty exalted, as it is itself  
Of quality and fabric more divine.