

## Foundations of Western Culture II: Renaissance to Modernity

Lecture #12 - VIII. WORDSWORTH, *TINTERN ABBY* and excerpts from *THE PRELUDE*:

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**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH** (1770-1850)

## LINES

*Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey on  
Revisiting the Wye During a Tour. July 13, 1798*

Five years have past; five summers, with the length  
Of five long winters! and again I hear  
These waters, rolling from their mountain-springs  
With a soft inland murmur.--Once again  
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,  
That on a wild secluded scene impress  
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect  
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.  
The day is come when I again repose  
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view  
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts,  
Which at this season, with their unripe fruits,  
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves  
'Mid groves and copses. Once again I see  
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines  
Of sportive wood run wild: these pastoral farms,  
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke  
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!  
With some uncertain notice, as might seem  
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,  
Or of some Hermit's cave, where by his fire  
The Hermit sits alone.

These beauteous forms,  
Through a long absence, have not been to me  
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:  
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din  
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them  
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,  
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;  
And passing even into my purer mind,  
With tranquil restoration:--feelings too  
Of unremembered pleasure: such, perhaps,

As have no slight or trivial influence  
On that best portion of a good man's life,  
His little, nameless, unremembered, acts  
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,  
To them I may have owed another gift,  
Of aspect more sublime; that blessed mood,  
In which the burthen of the mystery,  
In which the heavy and the weary weight  
Of all this unintelligible world,  
Is lightened:--that serene and blessed mood,  
In which the affections gently lead us on,--  
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame  
And even the motion of our human blood  
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.

If this  
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh! how oft-  
In darkness and amid the many shapes  
Of joyless daylight; when the fretful stir  
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,  
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart-  
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,  
O sylvan Wye! thou wanderer thro' the woods,  
How often has my spirit turned to thee!

And now, with gleams of half-extinguished thought,  
With many recognitions dim and faint,  
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,  
The picture of the mind revives again:  
While here I stand, not only with the sense  
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts  
That in this moment there is life and food  
For future years. And so I dare to hope,  
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first  
I came among these hills; when like a roe  
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides  
Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,  
Wherever nature led: more like a man  
Flying from something that he dreads, than one  
Who sought the thing he loved. For nature then  
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,  
And their glad animal movements all gone by)  
To me was all in all.--I cannot paint  
What then I was. The sounding cataract  
Haunted me like a passion: the tall rock,  
The mountain, and the deep and gloomy wood,  
Their colours and their forms, were then to me

An appetite; a feeling and a love,  
That had no need of a remoter charm,  
By thought supplied, nor any interest  
Unborrowed from the eye.--That time is past,  
And all its aching joys are now no more,  
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this  
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur, other gifts  
Have followed; for such loss, I would believe,  
Abundant recompense. For I have learned  
To look on nature, not as in the hour  
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes  
The still, sad music of humanity,  
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power  
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt  
A presence that disturbs me with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;  
A motion and a spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,  
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still  
A lover of the meadows and the woods,  
And mountains; and of all that we behold  
From this green earth; of all the mighty world  
Of eye, and ear,--both what they half create,  
And what perceive; well pleased to recognise  
In nature and the language of the sense,  
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,  
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul  
Of all my moral being.

Nor perchance,  
If I were not thus taught, should I the more  
Suffer my genial spirits to decay:  
For thou art with me here upon the banks  
Of this fair river; thou my dearest Friend,  
My dear, dear Friend; and in thy voice I catch  
The language of my former heart, and read  
My former pleasures in the shooting lights  
Of thy wild eyes. Oh! yet a little while  
May I behold in thee what I was once,  
My dear, dear Sister! and this prayer I make,  
Knowing that Nature never did betray  
The heart that loved her; 'tis her privilege,  
Through all the years of this our life, to lead  
From joy to joy: for she can so inform  
The mind that is within us, so impress  
With quietness and beauty, and so feed  
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,



Shall with its murmur lull me into rest?  
The earth is all before me. With a heart  
Joyous, nor scared at its own liberty,  
I look about; and should the chosen guide  
Be nothing better than a wandering cloud,  
I cannot miss my way. I breathe again!  
Trances of thought and mountings of the mind  
Come fast upon me: it is shaken off, 20  
That burthen of my own unnatural self,  
The heavy weight of many a weary day  
Not mine, and such as were not made for me.  
Long months of peace (if such bold word accord  
With any promises of human life),  
Long months of ease and undisturbed delight  
Are mine in prospect; whither shall I turn,  
By road or pathway, or through trackless field,  
Up hill or down, or shall some floating thing  
Upon the river point me out my course? 30

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

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

Content and not unwilling now to give  
A respite to this passion, I paced on 60

With brisk and eager steps; and came, at length,  
To a green shady place, where down I sate  
Beneath a tree, slackening my thoughts by choice  
And settling into gentler happiness.  
'Twas autumn, and a clear and placid day,  
With warmth, as much as needed, from a sun  
Two hours declined towards the west; a day  
With silver clouds, and sunshine on the grass,  
And in the sheltered and the sheltering grove  
A perfect stillness. Many were the thoughts 70  
Encouraged and dismissed, till choice was made  
Of a known Vale, whither my feet should turn,  
Nor rest till they had reached the very door  
Of the one cottage which methought I saw.  
No picture of mere memory ever looked  
So fair; and while upon the fancied scene  
I gazed with growing love, a higher power  
Than Fancy gave assurance of some work  
Of glory there forthwith to be begun,  
Perhaps too there performed. Thus long I mused, 80  
Nor e'er lost sight of what I mused upon,  
Save when, amid the stately grove of oaks,  
Now here, now there, an acorn, from its cup  
Dislodged, through sere leaves rustled, or at once  
To the bare earth dropped with a startling sound.  
From that soft couch I rose not, till the sun  
Had almost touched the horizon; casting then  
A backward glance upon the curling cloud  
Of city smoke, by distance ruralised;  
Keen as a Truant or a Fugitive, 90  
But as a Pilgrim resolute, I took,  
Even with the chance equipment of that hour,  
The road that pointed toward the chosen Vale.  
It was a splendid evening, and my soul  
Once more made trial of her strength, nor lacked  
Aeolian visitations; but the harp  
Was soon defrauded, and the banded host  
Of harmony dispersed in straggling sounds,  
And lastly utter silence! "Be it so;  
Why think of anything but present good?" 100  
So, like a home-bound labourer, I pursued  
My way beneath the mellowing sun, that shed  
Mild influence; nor left in me one wish  
Again to bend the Sabbath of that time  
To a servile yoke. What need of many words?  
A pleasant loitering journey, through three days  
Continued, brought me to my hermitage.  
I spare to tell of what ensued, the life  
In common things--the endless store of things,  
Rare, or at least so seeming, every day 110  
Found all about me in one neighbourhood--

The self-congratulation, and, from morn  
To night, unbroken cheerfulness serene.  
But speedily an earnest longing rose  
To brace myself to some determined aim,  
Reading or thinking; either to lay up  
New stores, or rescue from decay the old  
By timely interference: and therewith  
Came hopes still higher, that with outward life  
I might endue some airy phantasies 120  
That had been floating loose about for years,  
And to such beings temperately deal forth  
The many feelings that oppressed my heart.  
That hope hath been discouraged; welcome light  
Dawns from the east, but dawns to disappear  
And mock me with a sky that ripens not  
Into a steady morning: if my mind,  
Remembering the bold promise of the past,  
Would gladly grapple with some noble theme,  
Vain is her wish; where'er she turns she finds 130  
Impediments from day to day renewed.

And now it would content me to yield up  
Those lofty hopes awhile, for present gifts  
Of humbler industry. But, oh, dear Friend!  
The Poet, gentle creature as he is,  
Hath, like the Lover, his unruly times;  
His fits when he is neither sick nor well,  
Though no distress be near him but his own  
Unmanageable thoughts: his mind, best pleased  
While she as duteous as the mother dove<sup>140</sup>  
Sits brooding, lives not always to that end,  
But like the innocent bird, hath goadings on  
That drive her as in trouble through the groves;  
With me is now such passion, to be blamed  
No otherwise than as it lasts too long.

When, as becomes a man who would prepare  
For such an arduous work, I through myself  
Make rigorous inquisition, the report  
Is often cheering; for I neither seem  
To lack that first great gift, the vital soul, 150  
Nor general Truths, which are themselves a sort  
Of Elements and Agents, Under-powers,  
Subordinate helpers of the living mind:  
Nor am I naked of external things,  
Forms, images, nor numerous other aids  
Of less regard, though won perhaps with toil  
And needful to build up a Poet's praise.  
Time, place, and manners do I seek, and these  
Are found in plenteous store, but nowhere such  
As may be singled out with steady choice; 160

No little band of yet remembered names  
Whom I, in perfect confidence, might hope  
To summon back from lonesome banishment,  
And make them dwellers in the hearts of men  
Now living, or to live in future years.  
Sometimes the ambitious Power of choice, mistaking  
Proud spring-tide swellings for a regular sea,  
Will settle on some British theme, some old  
Romantic tale by Milton left unsung;  
More often turning to some gentle place<sup>170</sup>  
Within the groves of Chivalry, I pipe  
To shepherd swains, or seated harp in hand,  
Amid reposing knights by a river side  
Or fountain, listen to the grave reports  
Of dire enchantments faced and overcome  
By the strong mind, and tales of warlike feats,  
Where spear encountered spear, and sword with sword  
Fought, as if conscious of the blazonry  
That the shield bore, so glorious was the strife;  
Whence inspiration for a song that winds      180  
Through ever-changing scenes of votive quest  
Wrongs to redress, harmonious tribute paid  
To patient courage and unblemished truth,  
To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,  
And Christian meekness hallowing faithful loves.  
Sometimes, more sternly moved, I would relate  
How vanquished Mithridates northward passed,  
And, hidden in the cloud of years, became  
Odin, the Father of a race by whom  
Perished the Roman Empire: how the friends      190  
And followers of Sertorius, out of Spain  
Flying, found shelter in the Fortunate Isles,  
And left their usages, their arts and laws,  
To disappear by a slow gradual death,  
To dwindle and to perish one by one,  
Starved in those narrow bounds: but not the soul  
Of Liberty, which fifteen hundred years  
Survived, and, when the European came  
With skill and power that might not be withstood,  
Did, like a pestilence, maintain its hold      200  
And wasted down by glorious death that race  
Of natural heroes: or I would record  
How, in tyrannic times, some high-souled man,  
Unnamed among the chronicles of kings,  
Suffered in silence for Truth's sake: or tell,  
How that one Frenchman, through continued force  
Of meditation on the inhuman deeds  
Of those who conquered first the Indian Isles,  
Went single in his ministry across  
The Ocean; not to comfort the oppressed,      210  
But, like a thirsty wind, to roam about

Withering the Oppressor: how Gustavus sought  
Help at his need in Dalecarlia's mines:  
How Wallace fought for Scotland; left the name  
Of Wallace to be found, like a wild flower,  
All over his dear Country; left the deeds  
Of Wallace, like a family of Ghosts,  
To people the steep rocks and river banks,  
Her natural sanctuaries, with a local soul  
Of independence and stern liberty. 220  
Sometimes it suits me better to invent  
A tale from my own heart, more near akin  
To my own passions and habitual thoughts;  
Some variegated story, in the main  
Lofty, but the unsubstantial structure melts  
Before the very sun that brightens it,  
Mist into air dissolving! Then a wish,  
My last and favourite aspiration, mounts  
With yearning toward some philosophic song  
Of Truth that cherishes our daily life; 230  
With meditations passionate from deep  
Recesses in man's heart, immortal verse  
Thoughtfully fitted to the Orphean lyre;  
But from this awful burthen I full soon  
Take refuge and beguile myself with trust  
That mellow years will bring a riper mind  
And clearer insight. Thus my days are past  
In contradiction; with no skill to part  
Vague longing, haply bred by want of power,  
From paramount impulse not to be withstood, 240  
A timorous capacity, from prudence,  
From circumspection, infinite delay.  
Humility and modest awe, themselves  
Betray me, serving often for a cloak  
To a more subtle selfishness; that now  
Locks every function up in blank reserve,  
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye  
That with intrusive restlessness beats off  
Simplicity and self-presented truth.  
Ah! better far than this, to stray about 250  
Voluptuously through fields and rural walks,  
And ask no record of the hours, resigned  
To vacant musing, unreprieved neglect  
Of all things, and deliberate holiday.  
Far better never to have heard the name  
Of zeal and just ambition, than to live  
Baffled and plagued by a mind that every hour  
Turns recreant to her task; takes heart again,  
Then feels immediately some hollow thought  
Hang like an interdict upon her hopes. 260  
This is my lot; for either still I find  
Some imperfection in the chosen theme,

Or see of absolute accomplishment  
Much wanting, so much wanting, in myself,  
That I recoil and droop, and seek repose  
In listlessness from vain perplexity,  
Unprofitably travelling toward the grave,  
Like a false steward who hath much received  
And renders nothing back.

Was it for this

That one, the fairest of all rivers, loved 270  
To blend his murmurs with my nurse's song,  
And, from his alder shades and rocky falls,  
And from his fords and shallows, sent a voice  
That flowed along my dreams? For this, didst thou,  
O Derwent! winding among grassy holms  
Where I was looking on, a babe in arms,  
Make ceaseless music that composed my thoughts  
To more than infant softness, giving me  
Amid the fretful dwellings of mankind  
A foretaste, a dim earnest, of the calm<sup>280</sup>  
That Nature breathes among the hills and groves.

When he had left the mountains and received  
On his smooth breast the shadow of those towers  
That yet survive, a shattered monument  
Of feudal sway, the bright blue river passed  
Along the margin of our terrace walk;  
A tempting playmate whom we dearly loved.  
Oh, many a time have I, a five years' child,  
In a small mill-race severed from his stream,  
Made one long bathing of a summer's day; 290  
Basked in the sun, and plunged and basked again  
Alternate, all a summer's day, or scoured  
The sandy fields, leaping through flowery groves  
Of yellow ragwort; or, when rock and hill,  
The woods, and distant Skiddaw's lofty height,  
Were bronzed with deepest radiance, stood alone  
Beneath the sky, as if I had been born  
On Indian plains, and from my mother's hut  
Had run abroad in wantonness, to sport  
A naked savage, in the thunder shower. 300

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up  
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:  
Much favoured in my birth-place, and no less  
In that beloved Vale to which erelong  
We were transplanted;--there were we let loose  
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told  
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain slopes  
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped  
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy  
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung 310

To range the open heights where woodcocks run  
Along the smooth green turf. Through half the night,  
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied  
That anxious visitation;--moon and stars  
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,  
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace  
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell  
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire  
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird  
Which was the captive of another's toil<sup>320</sup>  
Became my prey; and when the deed was done  
I heard among the solitary hills  
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds  
Of undistinguishable motion, steps  
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less, when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,  
Moved we as plunderers where the mother-bird  
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean  
Our object and inglorious, yet the end  
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung <sup>330</sup>  
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass  
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock  
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)  
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,  
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time  
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,  
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind  
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky  
Of earth--and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows <sup>340</sup>  
Like harmony in music; there is a dark  
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles  
Discordant elements, makes them cling together  
In one society. How strange, that all  
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,  
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused  
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,  
And that a needful part, in making up  
The calm existence that is mine when I  
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!<sup>350</sup>  
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;  
Whether her fearless visitings, or those  
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light  
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she would use  
Severer interventions, ministry  
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found  
A little boat tied to a willow tree

Within a rocky cave, its usual home.  
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in 360  
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth  
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice  
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;  
Leaving behind her still, on either side,  
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,  
Until they melted all into one track  
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,  
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point  
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view  
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge, 370  
The horizon's utmost boundary; far above  
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.  
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily  
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat  
Went heaving through the water like a swan;  
When, from behind that craggy steep till then  
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again, 380  
And growing still in stature the grim shape  
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,  
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own  
And measured motion like a living thing,  
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,  
And through the silent water stole my way  
Back to the covert of the willow tree;  
There in her mooring-place I left my bark,--  
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave  
And serious mood; but after I had seen 390  
That spectacle, for many days, my brain  
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense  
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts  
There hung a darkness, call it solitude  
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes  
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,  
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;  
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live  
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind  
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams. 400

Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!  
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought  
That givest to forms and images a breath  
And everlasting motion, not in vain  
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn  
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me  
The passions that build up our human soul;  
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,

But with high objects, with enduring things-  
nature--purifying thus 410  
The elements of feeling and of thought,  
And sanctifying, by such discipline,  
Both pain and fear, until we recognise  
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.  
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me  
With stinted kindness. In November days,  
When vapours rolling down the valley made  
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,  
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,  
When, by the margin of the trembling lake, 420  
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went  
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;  
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,  
And by the waters, all the summer long.

And in the frosty season, when the sun  
Was set, and visible for many a mile  
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,  
I heeded not their summons: happy time  
It was indeed for all of us--for me  
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud 430  
The village clock tolled six,--I wheeled about,  
Proud and exulting like an untired horse  
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,  
We hissed along the polished ice in games  
Confederate, imitative of the chase  
And woodland pleasures,--the resounding horn,  
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.  
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,  
And not a voice was idle; with the din  
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud; 440  
The leafless trees and every icy crag  
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills  
Into the tumult sent an alien sound  
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars  
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west  
The orange sky of evening died away.  
Not seldom from the uproar I retired  
Into a silent bay, or sportively  
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,  
To cut across the reflex of a star 450  
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed  
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,  
When we had given our bodies to the wind,  
And all the shadowy banks on either side  
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still  
The rapid line of motion, then at once  
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,  
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs

Wheeled by me--even as if the earth had rolled  
With visible motion her diurnal round! 460  
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,  
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched  
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

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

Not uselessly employed,  
Might I pursue this theme through every change  
Of exercise and play, to which the year  
Did summon us in his delightful round.

We were a noisy crew; the sun in heaven  
Beheld not vales more beautiful than ours;  
Nor saw a band in happiness and joy 480  
Richer, or worthier of the ground they trod.  
I could record with no reluctant voice  
The woods of autumn, and their hazel bowers  
With milk-white clusters hung; the rod and line,  
True symbol of hope's foolishness, whose strong  
And unreproved enchantment led us on  
By rocks and pools shut out from every star,  
All the green summer, to forlorn cascades  
Among the windings hid of mountain brooks.  
--Unfading recollections! at this hour 490  
The heart is almost mine with which I felt,  
From some hill-top on sunny afternoons,  
The paper kite high among fleecy clouds  
Pull at her rein like an impetuous courser;  
Or, from the meadows sent on gusty days,  
Beheld her breast the wind, then suddenly  
Dashed headlong, and rejected by the storm.

Ye lowly cottages wherein we dwelt,  
A ministration of your own was yours;  
Can I forget you, being as you were 500  
So beautiful among the pleasant fields  
In which ye stood? or can I here forget  
The plain and seemly countenance with which  
Ye dealt out your plain comforts? Yet had ye

Delights and exultations of your own.  
 Eager and never weary we pursued  
 Our home-amusements by the warm peat-fire  
 At evening, when with pencil, and smooth slate  
 In square divisions parcelled out and all  
 With crosses and with cyphers scribbled o'er, 510  
 We schemed and puzzled, head opposed to head  
 In strife too humble to be named in verse:  
 Or round the naked table, snow-white deal,  
 Cherry or maple, sate in close array,  
 And to the combat, Loo or Whist, led on  
 A thick-ribbed army; not, as in the world,  
 Neglected and ungratefully thrown by  
 Even for the very service they had wrought,  
 But husbanded through many a long campaign.  
 Uncouth assemblage was it, where no few 520  
 Had changed their functions: some, plebeian cards  
 Which Fate, beyond the promise of their birth,  
 Had dignified, and called to represent  
 The persons of departed potentates.  
 Oh, with what echoes on the board they fell!  
 Ironic diamonds,--clubs, hearts, diamonds, spades,  
 A congregation piteously akin!  
 Cheap matter offered they to boyish wit,  
 Those sooty knaves, precipitated down  
 With scoffs and taunts, like Vulcan out of heaven: 530  
 The paramount ace, a moon in her eclipse,  
 Queens gleaming through their splendour's last decay,  
 And monarchs surly at the wrongs sustained  
 By royal visages. Meanwhile abroad  
 Incessant rain was falling, or the frost  
 Raged bitterly, with keen and silent tooth;  
 And, interrupting oft that eager game,  
 From under Esthwaite's splitting fields of ice  
 The pent-up air, struggling to free itself,  
 Gave out to meadow grounds and hills a loud 540  
 Protracted yelling, like the noise of wolves  
 Howling in troops along the Bothnic Main.

Nor, sedulous as I have been to trace  
 How Nature by extrinsic passion first  
 Peopled the mind with forms sublime or fair,  
 And made me love them, may I here omit  
 How other pleasures have been mine, and joys  
 Of subtler origin; how I have felt,  
 Not seldom even in that tempestuous time,  
 Those hallowed and pure motions of the sense 550  
 Which seem, in their simplicity, to own  
 An intellectual charm; that calm delight  
 Which, if I err not, surely must belong  
 To those first-born affinities that fit

Our new existence to existing things,  
And, in our dawn of being, constitute  
The bond of union between life and joy.

Yes, I remember when the changeful earth,  
And twice five summers on my mind had stamped  
The faces of the moving year, even then<sup>560</sup>  
I held unconscious intercourse with beauty  
Old as creation, drinking in a pure  
Organic pleasure from the silver wreaths  
Of curling mist, or from the level plain  
Of waters coloured by impending clouds.

The sands of Westmoreland, the creeks and bays  
Of Cumbria's rocky limits, they can tell  
How, when the Sea threw off his evening shade,  
And to the shepherd's hut on distant hills  
Sent welcome notice of the rising moon,<sup>570</sup>  
How I have stood, to fancies such as these  
A stranger, linking with the spectacle  
No conscious memory of a kindred sight,  
And bringing with me no peculiar sense  
Of quietness or peace; yet have I stood,  
Even while mine eye hath moved o'er many a league  
Of shining water, gathering as it seemed,  
Through every hair-breadth in that field of light,  
New pleasure like a bee among the flowers.

Thus oft amid those fits of vulgar joy      580  
Which, through all seasons, on a child's pursuits  
Are prompt attendants, 'mid that giddy bliss  
Which, like a tempest, works along the blood  
And is forgotten; even then I felt  
Gleams like the flashing of a shield;--the earth  
And common face of Nature spake to me  
Rememberable things; sometimes, 'tis true,  
By chance collisions and quaint accidents  
(Like those ill-sorted unions, work supposed  
Of evil-minded fairies), yet not vain    590  
Nor profitless, if haply they impressed  
Collateral objects and appearances,  
Albeit lifeless then, and doomed to sleep  
Until maturer seasons called them forth  
To impregnate and to elevate the mind.  
--And if the vulgar joy by its own weight  
Wearied itself out of the memory,  
The scenes which were a witness of that joy  
Remained in their substantial lineaments  
Depicted on the brain, and to the eye    600  
Were visible, a daily sight; and thus  
By the impressive discipline of fear,

By pleasure and repeated happiness,  
So frequently repeated, and by force  
Of obscure feelings representative  
Of things forgotten, these same scenes so bright,  
So beautiful, so majestic in themselves,  
Though yet the day was distant, did become  
Habitually dear, and all their forms  
And changeful colours by invisible links      610  
Were fastened to the affections.

I began  
My story early--not misled, I trust,  
By an infirmity of love for days  
Disowned by memory--ere the breath of spring  
Planting my snowdrops among winter snows:  
Nor will it seem to thee, O Friend! so prompt  
In sympathy, that I have lengthened out  
With fond and feeble tongue a tedious tale.  
Meanwhile, my hope has been, that I might fetch  
Invigorating thoughts from former years;      620  
Might fix the wavering balance of my mind,  
And haply meet reproaches too, whose power  
May spur me on, in manhood now mature  
To honourable toil. Yet should these hopes  
Prove vain, and thus should neither I be taught  
To understand myself, nor thou to know  
With better knowledge how the heart was framed  
Of him thou lovest; need I dread from thee  
Harsh judgments, if the song be loth to quit      630  
Those recollected hours that have the charm  
Of visionary things, those lovely forms  
And sweet sensations that throw back our life,  
And almost make remotest infancy  
A visible scene, on which the sun is shining?

One end at least hath been attained; my mind  
Hath been revived, and if this genial mood  
Desert me not, forthwith shall be brought down  
Through later years the story of my life.  
The road lies plain before me;--'tis a theme      640  
Single and of determined bounds; and hence  
I choose it rather at this time, than work  
Of ampler or more varied argument,  
Where I might be discomfited and lost:  
And certain hopes are with me, that to thee  
This labour will be welcome, honoured Friend!

OOK SECOND

SCHOOL-TIME (continued)

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

We ran a boisterous course; the year span round  
 With giddy motion. But the time approached  
 That brought with it a regular desire  
 For calmer pleasures, when the winning forms 50

Of Nature were collaterally attached  
To every scheme of holiday delight  
And every boyish sport, less grateful else  
And languidly pursued.

When summer came,  
Our pastime was, on bright half-holidays,  
To sweep along the plain of Windermere  
With rival oars; and the selected bourne  
Was now an Island musical with birds  
That sang and ceased not; now a Sister Isle      60  
Beneath the oaks' umbrageous covert, sown  
With lilies of the valley like a field;  
And now a third small Island, where survived  
In solitude the ruins of a shrine  
Once to Our Lady dedicate, and served  
Daily with chaunted rites. In such a race  
So ended, disappointment could be none,  
Uneasiness, or pain, or jealousy:  
We rested in the shade, all pleased alike,  
Conquered and conqueror. Thus the pride of strength,  
And the vain-glory of superior skill,    70  
Were tempered; thus was gradually produced  
A quiet independence of the heart;  
And to my Friend who knows me I may add,  
Fearless of blame, that hence for future days  
Ensued a diffidence and modesty,  
And I was taught to feel, perhaps too much,  
The self-sufficing power of Solitude.

Our daily meals were frugal, Sabine fare!  
More than we wished we knew the blessing then  
Of vigorous hunger--hence corporeal strength    80  
Unsapped by delicate viands; for, exclude  
A little weekly stipend, and we lived  
Through three divisions of the quartered year  
In penniless poverty. But now to school  
From the half-yearly holidays returned,  
We came with weightier purses, that sufficed  
To furnish treats more costly than the Dame  
Of the old grey stone, from her scant board, supplied.  
Hence rustic dinners on the cool green ground,  
Or in the woods, or by a river side    90  
Or shady fountains, while among the leaves  
Soft airs were stirring, and the mid-day sun  
Unfelt shone brightly round us in our joy.  
Nor is my aim neglected if I tell  
How sometimes, in the length of those half-years,  
We from our funds drew largely;--proud to curb,  
And eager to spur on, the galloping steed;  
And with the courteous inn-keeper, whose stud  
Supplied our want, we haply might employ

Sly subterfuge, if the adventure's bound      100  
Were distant: some famed temple where of yore  
The Druids worshipped, or the antique walls  
Of that large abbey, where within the Vale  
Of Nightshade, to St. Mary's honour built,  
Stands yet a mouldering pile with fractured arch,  
Belfry, and images, and living trees;  
A holy scene!--Along the smooth green turf  
Our horses grazed. To more than inland peace,  
Left by the west wind sweeping overhead  
From a tumultuous ocean, trees and towers      110  
In that sequestered valley may be seen,  
Both silent and both motionless alike;  
Such the deep shelter that is there, and such  
The safeguard for repose and quietness.

Our steeds remounted and the summons given,  
With whip and spur we through the chantry flew  
In uncouth race, and left the cross-legged knight,  
And the stone-abbot, and that single wren  
Which one day sang so sweetly in the nave  
Of the old church, that--though from recent showers      120  
The earth was comfortless, and, touched by faint  
Internal breezes, sobbings of the place  
And respirations, from the roofless walls  
The shuddering ivy dripped large drops--yet still  
So sweetly 'mid the gloom the invisible bird  
Sang to herself, that there I could have made  
My dwelling-place, and lived for ever there  
To hear such music. Through the walls we flew  
And down the valley, and, a circuit made  
In wantonness of heart, through rough and smooth 130  
We scampered homewards. Oh, ye rocks and streams,  
And that still spirit shed from evening air!  
Even in this joyous time I sometimes felt  
Your presence, when with slackened step we breathed  
Along the sides of the steep hills, or when  
Lighted by gleams of moonlight from the sea  
We beat with thundering hoofs the level sand.

Midway on long Winander's eastern shore,  
Within the crescent of pleasant bay,  
A tavern stood; no homely-featured house,      140  
Primeval like its neighbouring cottages,  
But 'twas a splendid place, the door beset  
With chaises, grooms, and liveries, and within  
Decanters, glasses, and the blood-red wine.  
In ancient times, and ere the Hall was built  
On the large island, had this dwelling been  
More worthy of a poet's love, a hut,  
Proud of its own bright fire and sycamore shade.

But--though the rhymes were gone that once inscribed  
The threshold, and large golden characters, 150  
Spread o'er the spangled sign-board, had dislodged  
The old Lion and usurped his place, in slight  
And mockery of the rustic painter's hand-

o me is dear  
With all its foolish pomp. The garden lay  
Upon a slope surmounted by a plain  
Of a small bowling-green; beneath us stood  
A grove, with gleams of water through the trees  
And over the tree-tops; nor did we want  
Refreshment, strawberries and mellow cream. 160  
There, while through half an afternoon we played  
On the smooth platform, whether skill prevailed  
Or happy blunder triumphed, bursts of glee  
Made all the mountains ring. But, ere night-fall,  
When in our pinnace we returned at leisure  
Over the shadowy lake, and to the beach  
Of some small island steered our course with one,  
The Minstrel of the Troop, and left him there,  
And rowed off gently, while he blew his flute  
Alone upon the rock--oh, then, the calm 170  
And dead still water lay upon my mind  
Even with a weight of pleasure, and the sky,  
Never before so beautiful, sank down  
Into my heart, and held me like a dream!  
Thus were my sympathies enlarged, and thus  
Daily the common range of visible things  
Grew dear to me: already I began  
To love the sun; a boy I loved the sun,  
Not as I since have loved him, as a pledge  
And surety of our earthly life, a light 180  
Which we behold and feel we are alive;  
Nor for his bounty to so many worlds-  
ause, that I had seen him lay  
His beauty on the morning hills, had seen  
The western mountain touch his setting orb,  
In many a thoughtless hour, when, from excess  
Of happiness, my blood appeared to flow  
For its own pleasure, and I breathed with joy.  
And, from like feelings, humble though intense,  
To patriotic and domestic love 190  
Analogous, the moon to me was dear;  
For I could dream away my purposes,  
Standing to gaze upon her while she hung  
Midway between the hills, as if she knew  
No other region, but belonged to thee,  
Yea, appertained by a peculiar right  
To thee and thy grey huts, thou one dear Vale!

Those incidental charms which first attached

My heart to rural objects, day by day  
Grew weaker, and I hasten on to tell 200  
How Nature, intervenient till this time  
And secondary, now at length was sought  
For her own sake. But who shall parcel out  
His intellect by geometric rules,  
Split like a province into round and square?  
Who knows the individual hour in which  
His habits were first sown, even as a seed?  
Who that shall point as with a wand and say  
"This portion of the river of my mind  
Came from yon fountain?" Thou, my Friend! art one210  
More deeply read in thy own thoughts; to thee  
Science appears but what in truth she is,  
Not as our glory and our absolute boast,  
But as a succedaneum, and a prop  
To our infirmity. No officious slave  
Art thou of that false secondary power  
By which we multiply distinctions, then  
Deem that our puny boundaries are things  
That we perceive, and not that we have made.  
To thee, unblinded by these formal arts, 220  
The unity of all hath been revealed,  
And thou wilt doubt, with me less aptly skilled  
Than many are to range the faculties  
In scale and order, class the cabinet  
Of their sensations, and in voluble phrase  
Run through the history and birth of each  
As of a single independent thing.  
Hard task, vain hope, to analyse the mind,  
If each most obvious and particular thought,  
Not in a mystical and idle sense, 230  
But in the words of Reason deeply weighed,  
Hath no beginning.  
Blest the infant Babe,  
(For with my best conjecture I would trace  
Our Being's earthly progress,) blest the Babe,  
Nursed in his Mother's arms, who sinks to sleep  
Rocked on his Mother's breast; who with his soul  
Drinks in the feelings of his Mother's eye!  
For him, in one dear Presence, there exists  
A virtue which irradiates and exalts  
Objects through widest intercourse of sense. 240  
No outcast he, bewildered and depressed:  
Along his infant veins are interfused  
The gravitation and the filial bond  
Of nature that connect him with the world.  
Is there a flower, to which he points with hand  
Too weak to gather it, already love  
Drawn from love's purest earthly fount for him  
Hath beautified that flower; already shades

Of pity cast from inward tenderness  
Do fall around him upon aught that bears      250  
Unsightly marks of violence or harm.  
Emphatically such a Being lives,  
Frail creature as he is, helpless as frail,  
An inmate of this active universe:  
For, feeling has to him imparted power  
That through the growing faculties of sense  
Doth like an agent of the one great Mind  
Create, creator and receiver both,  
Working but in alliance with the works  
Which it beholds.--Such, verily, is the first      260  
Poetic spirit of our human life,  
By uniform control of after years,  
In most, abated or suppressed; in some,  
Through every change of growth and of decay,  
Pre-eminent till death.

    From early days,  
Beginning not long after that first time  
In which, a Babe, by intercourse of touch  
I held mute dialogues with my Mother's heart,  
I have endeavoured to display the means  
Whereby this infant sensibility,      270  
Great birthright of our being, was in me  
Augmented and sustained. Yet is a path  
More difficult before me; and I fear  
That in its broken windings we shall need  
The chamois' sinews, and the eagle's wing:  
For now a trouble came into my mind  
From unknown causes. I was left alone  
Seeking the visible world, nor knowing why.  
The props of my affections were removed,  
And yet the building stood, as if sustained      280  
By its own spirit! All that I beheld  
Was dear, and hence to finer influxes  
The mind lay open to a more exact  
And close communion. Many are our joys  
In youth, but oh! what happiness to live  
When every hour brings palpable access  
Of knowledge, when all knowledge is delight,  
And sorrow is not there! The seasons came,  
And every season wheresoe'er I moved  
Unfolded transitory qualities,      290  
Which, but for this most watchful power of love,  
Had been neglected; left a register  
Of permanent relations, else unknown.  
Hence life, and change, and beauty, solitude  
More active ever than "best society"--  
Society made sweet as solitude  
By silent inobtrusive sympathies,  
And gentle agitations of the mind

From manifold distinctions, difference  
Perceived in things, where, to the unwatchful eye, 300  
No difference is, and hence, from the same source,  
Sublimier joy; for I would walk alone,  
Under the quiet stars, and at that time  
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound  
To breathe an elevated mood, by form  
Or image unprofaned; and I would stand,  
If the night blackened with a coming storm,  
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are  
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,  
Or make their dim abode in distant winds. 310  
Thence did I drink the visionary power;  
And deem not profitless those fleeting moods  
Of shadowy exultation: not for this,  
That they are kindred to our purer mind  
And intellectual life; but that the soul,  
Remembering how she felt, but what she felt  
Remembering not, retains an obscure sense  
Of possible sublimity, whereto  
With growing faculties she doth aspire,  
With faculties still growing, feeling still 320  
That whatsoever point they gain, they yet  
Have something to pursue.

And not alone,  
'Mid gloom and tumult, but no less 'mid fair  
And tranquil scenes, that universal power  
And fitness in the latent qualities  
And essences of things, by which the mind  
Is moved with feelings of delight, to me  
Came strengthened with a superadded soul,  
A virtue not its own. My morning walks  
Were early;--oft before the hours of school 330  
I travelled round our little lake, five miles  
Of pleasant wandering. Happy time! more dear  
For this, that one was by my side, a Friend,  
Then passionately loved; with heart how full  
Would he peruse these lines! For many years  
Have since flowed in between us, and, our minds  
Both silent to each other, at this time  
We live as if those hours had never been.  
Nor seldom did I lift our cottage latch  
Far earlier, ere one smoke-wreath had risen 340  
From human dwelling, or the vernal thrush  
Was audible; and sate among the woods  
Alone upon some jutting eminence,  
At the first gleam of dawn-light, when the Vale,  
Yet slumbering, lay in utter solitude.  
How shall I seek the origin? where find  
Faith in the marvellous things which then I felt?  
Oft in these moments such a holy calm

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

'Twere long to tell

What spring and autumn, what the winter snows,  
And what the summer shade, what day and night,  
Evening and morning, sleep and waking, thought  
From sources inexhaustible, poured forth  
To feed the spirit of religious love  
In which I walked with Nature. But let this  
Be not forgotten, that I still retained  
My first creative sensibility; 360  
That by the regular action of the world  
My soul was unsubdued. A plastic power  
Abode with me; a forming hand, at times  
Rebellious, acting in a devious mood;  
A local spirit of his own, at war  
With general tendency, but, for the most,  
Subservient strictly to external things  
With which it communed. An auxiliar light  
Came from my mind, which on the setting sun  
Bestowed new splendour; the melodious birds, 370  
The fluttering breezes, fountains that run on  
Murmuring so sweetly in themselves, obeyed  
A like dominion, and the midnight storm  
Grew darker in the presence of my eye:  
Hence my obeisance, my devotion hence,  
And hence my transport.

Nor should this, perchance,  
Pass unrecorded, that I still had loved  
The exercise and produce of a toil,  
Than analytic industry to me  
More pleasing, and whose character I deem 380  
Is more poetic as resembling more  
Creative agency. The song would speak  
Of that interminable building reared  
By observation of affinities  
In objects where no brotherhood exists  
To passive minds. My seventeenth year was come  
And, whether from this habit rooted now  
So deeply in my mind, or from excess  
In the great social principle of life  
Coercing all things into sympathy, 390  
To unorganic natures were transferred  
My own enjoyments; or the power of truth  
Coming in revelation, did converse  
With things that really are; I, at this time,  
Saw blessings spread around me like a sea.  
Thus while the days flew by, and years passed on,  
From Nature and her overflowing soul,

I had received so much, that all my thoughts  
Were steeped in feeling; I was only then  
Contented, when with bliss ineffable 400  
I felt the sentiment of Being spread  
O'er all that moves and all that seemeth still;  
O'er all that, lost beyond the reach of thought  
And human knowledge, to the human eye  
Invisible, yet liveth to the heart;  
O'er all that leaps and runs, and shouts and sings,  
Or beats the gladsome air; o'er all that glides  
Beneath the wave, yea, in the wave itself,  
And mighty depth of waters. Wonder not  
If high the transport, great the joy I felt, 410  
Communing in this sort through earth and heaven  
With every form of creature, as it looked  
Towards the Uncreated with a countenance  
Of adoration, with an eye of love.  
One song they sang, and it was audible,  
Most audible, then, when the fleshly ear,  
O'ercome by humblest prelude of that strain  
Forgot her functions, and slept undisturbed.

If this be error, and another faith  
Find easier access to the pious mind, 420  
Yet were I grossly destitute of all  
Those human sentiments that make this earth  
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice  
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes  
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds  
That dwell among the hills where I was born.  
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,  
If, mingling with the world, I am content  
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived  
With God and Nature communing, removed 430  
From little enmities and low desires-  
yours; if in these times of fear,  
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,  
If, 'mid indifference and apathy,  
And wicked exultation when good men  
On every side fall off, we know not how,  
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names  
Of peace and quiet and domestic love  
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers  
On visionary minds; if, in this time 440  
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet  
Despair not of our nature, but retain  
A more than Roman confidence, a faith  
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,  
The blessing of my life--the gift is yours,  
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,  
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed

My lofty speculations; and in thee,  
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find  
A never-failing principle of joy 450  
And purest passion.

Thou, my Friend! wert reared  
In the great city, 'mid far other scenes;  
But we, by different roads, at length have gained  
The selfsame bourne. And for this cause to thee  
I speak, unapprehensive of contempt,  
The insinuated scoff of coward tongues,  
And all that silent language which so oft  
In conversation between man and man  
Blots from the human countenance all trace  
Of beauty and of love. For thou hast sought 460  
The truth in solitude, and, since the days  
That gave thee liberty, full long desired,  
To serve in Nature's temple, thou hast been  
The most assiduous of her ministers;  
In many things my brother, chiefly here  
In this our deep devotion.

Fare thee well!  
Health and the quiet of a healthful mind  
Attend thee! seeking oft the haunts of men,  
And yet more often living with thyself,  
And for thyself, so haply shall thy days 470  
Be many, and a blessing to mankind.

### BOOK THIRD

#### RESIDENCE AT CAMBRIDGE

IT was a dreary morning when the wheels  
Rolled over a wide plain o'erhung with clouds,  
And nothing cheered our way till first we saw  
The long-roofed chapel of King's College lift  
Turrets and pinnacles in answering files,  
Extended high above a dusky grove.

Advancing, we espied upon the road  
A student clothed in gown and tasselled cap,  
Striding along as if o'ertasked by Time,  
Or covetous of exercise and air; 10  
He passed--nor was I master of my eyes  
Till he was left an arrow's flight behind.  
As near and nearer to the spot we drew,  
It seemed to suck us in with an eddy's force.  
Onward we drove beneath the Castle; caught,  
While crossing Magdalene Bridge, a glimpse of Cam;  
And at the "Hoop" alighted, famous Inn.

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

I was the Dreamer, they the Dream; I roamed 30  
Delighted through the motley spectacle;  
Gowns grave, or gaudy, doctors, students, streets,  
Courts, cloisters, flocks of churches, gateways, towers:  
Migration strange for a stripling of the hills,  
A northern villager.

As if the change  
Had waited on some Fairy's wand, at once  
Behold me rich in monies, and attired  
In splendid garb, with hose of silk, and hair  
Powdered like rimy trees, when frost is keen.  
My lordly dressing-gown, I pass it by, 40  
With other signs of manhood that supplied  
The lack of beard.--The weeks went roundly on,  
With invitations, suppers, wine and fruit,  
Smooth housekeeping within, and all without  
Liberal, and suiting gentleman's array.

The Evangelist St. John my patron was:  
Three Gothic courts are his, and in the first  
Was my abiding-place, a nook obscure;  
Right underneath, the College kitchens made  
A humming sound, less tuneable than bees, 50  
But hardly less industrious; with shrill notes  
Of sharp command and scolding intermixed.  
Near me hung Trinity's loquacious clock,  
Who never let the quarters, night or day,  
Slip by him unproclaimed, and told the hours  
Twice over with a male and female voice.  
Her pealing organ was my neighbour too;  
And from my pillow, looking forth by light  
Of moon or favouring stars, I could behold  
The antechapel where the statue stood 60  
Of Newton with his prism and silent face,  
The marble index of a mind for ever  
Voyaging through strange seas of Thought, alone.

Of College labours, of the Lecturer's room



Incumbencies more awful, visitings  
Of the Upholder of the tranquil soul,  
That tolerates the indignities of Time,  
And, from the centre of Eternity  
All finite motions overruling, lives 120  
In glory immutable. But peace! enough  
Here to record that I was mounting now  
To such community with highest truth--  
A track pursuing, not untrod before,  
From strict analogies by thought supplied  
Or consciousnesses not to be subdued.  
To every natural form, rock, fruits, or flower,  
Even the loose stones that cover the highway,  
I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,  
Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass 130  
Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all  
That I beheld respired with inward meaning.  
Add that whate'er of Terror or of Love  
Or Beauty, Nature's daily face put on  
From transitory passion, unto this  
I was as sensitive as waters are  
To the sky's influence in a kindred mood  
Of passion; was obedient as a lute  
That waits upon the touches of the wind.  
Unknown, unthought of, yet I was most rich-- 140  
I had a world about me--'twas my own;  
I made it, for it only lived to me,  
And to the God who sees into the heart.  
Such sympathies, though rarely, were betrayed  
By outward gestures and by visible looks:  
Some called it madness--so indeed it was,  
If child-like fruitfulness in passing joy,  
If steady moods of thoughtfulness matured  
To inspiration, sort with such a name;  
If prophecy be madness; if things viewed 150  
By poets in old time, and higher up  
By the first men, earth's first inhabitants,  
May in these tutored days no more be seen  
With undisordered sight. But leaving this,  
It was no madness, for the bodily eye  
Amid my strongest workings evermore  
Was searching out the lines of difference  
As they lie hid in all external forms,  
Near or remote, minute or vast; an eye  
Which, from a tree, a stone, a withered leaf, 160  
To the broad ocean and the azure heavens  
Spangled with kindred multitudes of stars,  
Could find no surface where its power might sleep;  
Which spake perpetual logic to my soul,  
And by an unrelenting agency  
Did bind my feelings even as in a chain.

And here, O Friend! have I retraced my life  
 Up to an eminence, and told a tale  
 Of matters which not falsely may be called  
 The glory of my youth. Of genius, power, 170  
 Creation and divinity itself  
 I have been speaking, for my theme has been  
 What passed within me. Not of outward things  
 Done visibly for other minds, words, signs,  
 Symbols or actions, but of my own heart  
 Have I been speaking, and my youthful mind.  
 O Heavens! how awful is the might of souls,  
 And what they do within themselves while yet  
 The yoke of earth is new to them, the world  
 Nothing but a wild field where they were sown. 180  
 This is, in truth, heroic argument,  
 This genuine prowess, which I wished to touch  
 With hand however weak, but in the main  
 It lies far hidden from the reach of words.  
 Points have we all of us within our souls  
 Where all stand single; this I feel, and make  
 Breathings for incommunicable powers;  
 But is not each a memory to himself,  
 And, therefore, now that we must quit this theme,  
 I am not heartless, for there's not a man 190  
 That lives who hath not known his god-like hours,  
 And feels not what an empire we inherit  
 As natural beings in the strength of Nature.

#### BOOK FOURTH

#### SUMMER VACATION

BRIGHT was the summer's noon when quickening steps  
 Followed each other till a dreary moor  
 Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top  
 Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,  
 I overlooked the bed of Windermere,  
 Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.  
 With exultation, at my feet I saw  
 Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,  
 A universe of Nature's fairest forms  
 Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst, 10  
 Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.  
 I bounded down the hill shouting amain  
 For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks  
 Replied, and when the Charon of the flood  
 Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier,  
 I did not step into the well-known boat  
 Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed  
 Up the familiar hill I took my way

Towards that sweet Valley where I had been reared;  
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round 20  
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill  
Sit like a throned Lady, sending out  
A gracious look all over her domain.  
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;  
With eager footsteps I advance and reach  
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.  
Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,  
From my old Dame, so kind and motherly,  
While she perused me with a parent's pride.  
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew 30  
Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart  
Can beat never will I forget thy name.  
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest  
After thy innocent and busy stir  
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth  
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,  
And more than eighty, of untroubled life;  
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood  
Honoured with little less than filial love.  
What joy was mine to see thee once again, 40  
Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things  
About its narrow precincts all beloved,  
And many of them seeming yet my own!  
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts  
Have felt, and every man alive can guess?  
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left  
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat  
Round the stone table under the dark pine,  
Friendly to studious or to festive hours;  
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth, 50  
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed  
Within our garden, found himself at once,  
As if by trick insidious and unkind,  
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down  
(Without an effort and without a will)  
A channel paved by man's officious care.  
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,  
And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,  
"Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"  
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, 60  
"An emblem here behold of thy own life;  
In its late course of even days with all  
Their smooth enthrallment;" but the heart was full,  
Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame  
Walked proudly at my side: she guided me;  
I willing, nay--nay, wishing to be led.  
--The face of every neighbour whom I met  
Was like a volume to me; some were hailed  
Upon the road, some busy at their work,

Unceremonious greetings interchanged 70  
With half the length of a long field between.  
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round  
Like recognitions, but with some constraint  
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,  
But with more shame, for my habiliments,  
The transformation wrought by gay attire.  
Not less delighted did I take my place  
At our domestic table: and, dear Friend!  
In this endeavour simply to relate  
A Poet's history, may I leave untold 80  
The thankfulness with which I laid me down  
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now  
Perhaps than if it had been more desired  
Or been more often thought of with regret;  
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind  
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft  
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch  
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves  
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;  
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro 90  
In the dark summit of the waving tree  
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well  
To see again, was one by ancient right  
Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills;  
By birth and call of nature pre-ordained  
To hunt the badger and unearth the fox  
Among the impervious crags, but having been  
From youth our own adopted, he had passed  
Into a gentler service. And when first 100  
The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day  
Along my veins I kindled with the stir,  
The fermentation, and the vernal heat  
Of poesy, affecting private shades  
Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used  
To watch me, an attendant and a friend,  
Obsequious to my steps early and late,  
Though often of such dilatory walk  
Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.  
A hundred times when, roving high and low, 110  
I have been harassed with the toil of verse,  
Much pains and little progress, and at once  
Some lovely Image in the song rose up  
Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;  
Then have I darted forwards to let loose  
My hand upon his back with stormy joy,  
Caressing him again and yet again.  
And when at evening on the public way  
I sauntered, like a river murmuring

And talking to itself when all things else      120  
Are still, the creature trotted on before;  
Such was his custom; but whene'er he met  
A passenger approaching, he would turn  
To give me timely notice, and straightway,  
Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed  
My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air  
And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced  
To give and take a greeting that might save  
My name from piteous rumours, such as wait  
On men suspected to be crazed in brain. 130

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

me back

Like a returning Spring. When first I made  
Once more the circuit of our little lake,  
If ever happiness hath lodged with man,  
That day consummate happiness was mine, 140  
Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.  
The sun was set, or setting, when I left  
Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on  
A sober hour, not winning or serene,  
For cold and raw the air was, and untuned:  
But as a face we love is sweetest then  
When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look  
It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart  
Have fulness in herself; even so with me  
It fared that evening. Gently did my soul      150  
Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood  
Naked, as in the presence of her God.  
While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch  
A heart that had not been disconsolate:  
Strength came where weakness was not known to be,  
At least not felt; and restoration came  
Like an intruder knocking at the door  
Of unacknowledged weariness. I took  
The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.  
--Of that external scene which round me lay,      160  
Little, in this abstraction, did I see;  
Remembered less; but I had inward hopes  
And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,  
Conversed with promises, had glimmering views  
How life pervades the undecaying mind;  
How the immortal soul with God-like power  
Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep  
That time can lay upon her; how on earth,  
Man, if he do but live within the light

Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad      170  
His being armed with strength that cannot fail.  
Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,  
Of innocence, and holiday repose;  
And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir  
Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end  
At last, or glorious, by endurance won.  
Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down  
Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes  
And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread  
With darkness, and before a rippling breeze      180  
The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,  
And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,  
Around me from among the hazel leaves,  
Now here, now there, moved by the stragglings wind,  
Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,  
Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,  
The off and on companion of my walk;  
And such, at times, believing them to be,  
I turned my head to look if he were there;  
Then into solemn thought I passed once more.      190

A freshness also found I at this time  
In human Life, the daily life of those  
Whose occupations really I loved;  
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise  
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring  
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit  
The things which were the same and yet appeared  
Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,  
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,  
'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind      200  
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook  
Where an old man had used to sit alone,  
Now vacant; pale-faced babes whom I had left  
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet  
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down;  
And growing girls whose beauty, filched away  
With all its pleasant promises, was gone  
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,  
And often looking round was moved to smiles      210  
Such as a delicate work of humour breeds;  
I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,  
Of those plain-living people now observed  
With clearer knowledge; with another eye  
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,  
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,  
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;  
Saw her go forth to church or other work

Of state equipped in monumental trim;  
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like), 220  
A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers  
Wore in old times. Her smooth domestic life,  
Affectionate without disquietude,  
Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less  
Her clear though shallow stream of piety  
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course;  
With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read  
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,  
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep  
And made of it a pillow for her head. 230

Nor less do I remember to have felt,  
Distinctly manifested at this time,  
A human-heartedness about my love  
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth  
Of my own private being and no more;  
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit  
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,  
Might love in individual happiness.  
But now there opened on me other thoughts  
Of change, congratulation or regret, 240  
A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;  
The trees, the mountains shared it, and the brooks,  
The stars of Heaven, now seen in their old haunts-  
glittering o'er the southern crags,  
Orion with his belt, and those fair Seven,  
Acquaintances of every little child,  
And Jupiter, my own beloved star!  
Whatever shadings of mortality,  
Whatever imports from the world of death  
Had come among these objects heretofore, 250  
Were, in the main, of mood less tender: strong,  
Deep, gloomy were they, and severe; the scatterings  
Of awe or tremulous dread, that had given way  
In later youth to yearnings of a love  
Enthusiastic, to delight and hope.

As one who hangs down-bending from the side  
Of a slow-moving boat, upon the breast  
Of a still water, solacing himself  
With such discoveries as his eye can make  
Beneath him in the bottom of the deep, 260  
Sees many beauteous sights--weeds, fishes, flowers,  
Grotts, pebbles, roots of trees, and fancies more,  
Yet often is perplexed, and cannot part  
The shadow from the substance, rocks and sky,  
Mountains and clouds, reflected in the depth  
Of the clear flood, from things which there abide  
In their true dwelling; now is crossed by gleam

Of his own image, by a sunbeam now,  
And wavering motions sent he knows not whence,  
Impediments that make his task more sweet; 270  
Such pleasant office have we long pursued  
Incumbent o'er the surface of past time  
With like success, nor often have appeared  
Shapes fairer or less doubtfully discerned  
Than these to which the Tale, indulgent Friend!  
Would now direct thy notice. Yet in spite  
Of pleasure won, and knowledge not withheld,  
There was an inner falling off--I loved,  
Loved deeply all that had been loved before,  
More deeply even than ever: but a swarm<sup>280</sup>  
Of heady schemes jostling each other, gawds  
And feast and dance, and public revelry,  
And sports and games (too grateful in themselves,  
Yet in themselves less grateful, I believe,  
Than as they were a badge glossy and fresh  
Of manliness and freedom) all conspired  
To lure my mind from firm habitual quest  
Of feeding pleasures, to depress the zeal  
And damp those yearnings which had once been mine-  
rldly-minded youth, given up 290  
To his own eager thoughts. It would demand  
Some skill, and longer time than may be spared  
To paint these vanities, and how they wrought  
In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.  
It seemed the very garments that I wore  
Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream  
Of self-forgetfulness.

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

Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,  
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,  
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky 320  
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse  
And open field, through which the pathway wound,  
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent  
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld--in front,  
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,  
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,  
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;  
And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn-- 330  
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
And labourers going forth to till the fields.  
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim  
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me  
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked  
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

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

When from our better selves we have too long  
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,  
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,  
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;  
How potent a mere image of her sway;  
Most potent when impressed upon the mind  
With an appropriate human centre--hermit, 360  
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;  
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot  
Is treading, where no other face is seen)  
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top  
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;  
Or as the soul of that great Power is met

Sometimes embodied on a public road,  
When, for the night deserted, it assumes  
A character of quiet more profound  
Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months 370  
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show  
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,  
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced  
That--after I had left a flower-decked room  
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived  
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought  
Were making night do penance for a day  
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness-  
My homeward course led up a long ascent,  
Where the road's watery surface, to the top 380  
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon  
And bore the semblance of another stream  
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook  
That murmured in the vale. All else was still;  
No living thing appeared in earth or air,  
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,  
Sound there was none--but, lo! an uncouth shape,  
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,  
So near that, slipping back into the shade  
Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, 390  
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,  
A span above man's common measure, tall,  
Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man  
Was never seen before by night or day.  
Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth  
Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,  
A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken  
That he was clothed in military garb,  
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,  
No dog attending, by no staff sustained, 400  
He stood, and in his very dress appeared  
A desolation, a simplicity,  
To which the trappings of a gaudy world  
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,  
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain  
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form  
Kept the same awful steadiness--at his feet  
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame  
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length  
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice, 410  
I left the shady nook where I had stood  
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place  
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm  
In measured gesture lifted to his head  
Returned my salutation; then resumed  
His station as before; and when I asked

His history, the veteran, in reply,  
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,  
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,  
A stately air of mild indifference, 420  
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale-  
                  opic Islands he had served,  
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past;  
That on his landing he had been dismissed,  
And now was travelling towards his native home.  
This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."  
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up  
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved-  
                  must have dropped from his slack hand  
And lay till now neglected in the grass. 430  
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared  
To travel without pain, and I beheld,  
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,  
His ghostly figure moving at my side;  
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear  
To turn from present hardships to the past,  
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,  
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,  
On what he might himself have seen or felt.  
He all the while was in demeanour calm, 440  
Concise in answer; solemn and sublime  
He might have seemed, but that in all he said  
There was a strange half-absence, as of one  
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,  
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse  
Soon ended, and together on we passed  
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.  
Up-turning, then, along an open field,  
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,  
And earnestly to charitable care 450  
Commended him as a poor friendless man,  
Belated and by sickness overcome.  
Assured that now the traveller would repose  
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth  
He would not linger in the public ways,  
But ask for timely furtherance and help  
Such as his state required. At this reproof,  
With the same ghastly mildness in his look,  
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,  
And in the eye of him who passes me!" 460

The cottage door was speedily unbarred,  
And now the soldier touched his hat once more  
With his lean hand, and in a faltering voice,  
Whose tone bespoke reviving interests  
Till then unfelt, he thanked me; I returned  
The farewell blessing of the patient man,

And so we parted. Back I cast a look,  
And lingered near the door a little space,  
Then sought with quiet heart my distant home.

## BOOK FOURTH

### SUMMER VACATION

BRIGHT was the summer's noon when quickening steps  
Followed each other till a dreary moor  
Was crossed, a bare ridge clomb, upon whose top  
Standing alone, as from a rampart's edge,  
I overlooked the bed of Windermere,  
Like a vast river, stretching in the sun.  
With exultation, at my feet I saw  
Lake, islands, promontories, gleaming bays,  
A universe of Nature's fairest forms  
Proudly revealed with instantaneous burst,      10  
Magnificent, and beautiful, and gay.  
I bounded down the hill shouting amain  
For the old Ferryman; to the shout the rocks  
Replied, and when the Charon of the flood  
Had staid his oars, and touched the jutting pier,  
I did not step into the well-known boat  
Without a cordial greeting. Thence with speed  
Up the familiar hill I took my way  
Towards that sweet Valley where I had been reared;  
'Twas but a short hour's walk, ere veering round      20  
I saw the snow-white church upon her hill  
Sit like a throned Lady, sending out  
A gracious look all over her domain.  
Yon azure smoke betrays the lurking town;  
With eager footsteps I advance and reach  
The cottage threshold where my journey closed.  
Glad welcome had I, with some tears, perhaps,  
From my old Dame, so kind and motherly,  
While she perused me with a parent's pride.  
The thoughts of gratitude shall fall like dew      30  
Upon thy grave, good creature! While my heart  
Can beat never will I forget thy name.  
Heaven's blessing be upon thee where thou liest  
After thy innocent and busy stir  
In narrow cares, thy little daily growth  
Of calm enjoyments, after eighty years,  
And more than eighty, of untroubled life;  
Childless, yet by the strangers to thy blood  
Honoured with little less than filial love.  
What joy was mine to see thee once again,      40  
Thee and thy dwelling, and a crowd of things  
About its narrow precincts all beloved,

And many of them seeming yet my own!  
Why should I speak of what a thousand hearts  
Have felt, and every man alive can guess?  
The rooms, the court, the garden were not left  
Long unsaluted, nor the sunny seat  
Round the stone table under the dark pine,  
Friendly to studious or to festive hours;  
Nor that unruly child of mountain birth, 50  
The famous brook, who, soon as he was boxed  
Within our garden, found himself at once,  
As if by trick insidious and unkind,  
Stripped of his voice and left to dimple down  
(Without an effort and without a will)  
A channel paved by man's officious care.  
I looked at him and smiled, and smiled again,  
And in the press of twenty thousand thoughts,  
"Ha," quoth I, "pretty prisoner, are you there!"  
Well might sarcastic Fancy then have whispered, 60  
"An emblem here behold of thy own life;  
In its late course of even days with all  
Their smooth enthrallment;" but the heart was full,  
Too full for that reproach. My aged Dame  
Walked proudly at my side: she guided me;  
I willing, nay--nay, wishing to be led.  
--The face of every neighbour whom I met  
Was like a volume to me; some were hailed  
Upon the road, some busy at their work,  
Unceremonious greetings interchanged 70  
With half the length of a long field between.  
Among my schoolfellows I scattered round  
Like recognitions, but with some constraint  
Attended, doubtless, with a little pride,  
But with more shame, for my habiliments,  
The transformation wrought by gay attire.  
Not less delighted did I take my place  
At our domestic table: and, dear Friend!  
In this endeavour simply to relate  
A Poet's history, may I leave untold 80  
The thankfulness with which I laid me down  
In my accustomed bed, more welcome now  
Perhaps than if it had been more desired  
Or been more often thought of with regret;  
That lowly bed whence I had heard the wind  
Roar, and the rain beat hard; where I so oft  
Had lain awake on summer nights to watch  
The moon in splendour couched among the leaves  
Of a tall ash, that near our cottage stood;  
Had watched her with fixed eyes while to and fro 90  
In the dark summit of the waving tree  
She rocked with every impulse of the breeze.

Among the favourites whom it pleased me well  
 To see again, was one by ancient right  
 Our inmate, a rough terrier of the hills;  
 By birth and call of nature pre-ordained  
 To hunt the badger and unearth the fox  
 Among the impervious crags, but having been  
 From youth our own adopted, he had passed  
 Into a gentler service. And when first 100  
 The boyish spirit flagged, and day by day  
 Along my veins I kindled with the stir,  
 The fermentation, and the vernal heat  
 Of poesy, affecting private shades  
 Like a sick Lover, then this dog was used  
 To watch me, an attendant and a friend,  
 Obsequious to my steps early and late,  
 Though often of such dilatory walk  
 Tired, and uneasy at the halts I made.  
 A hundred times when, roving high and low, 110  
 I have been harassed with the toil of verse,  
 Much pains and little progress, and at once  
 Some lovely Image in the song rose up  
 Full-formed, like Venus rising from the sea;  
 Then have I darted forwards to let loose  
 My hand upon his back with stormy joy,  
 Caressing him again and yet again.  
 And when at evening on the public way  
 I sauntered, like a river murmuring  
 And talking to itself when all things else 120  
 Are still, the creature trotted on before;  
 Such was his custom; but whene'er he met  
 A passenger approaching, he would turn  
 To give me timely notice, and straightway,  
 Grateful for that admonishment, I hushed  
 My voice, composed my gait, and, with the air  
 And mien of one whose thoughts are free, advanced  
 To give and take a greeting that might save  
 My name from piteous rumours, such as wait  
 On men suspected to be crazed in brain. 130

Those walks well worthy to be prized and loved--  
 Regretted!--that word, too, was on my tongue,  
 But they were richly laden with all good,  
 And cannot be remembered but with thanks  
 And gratitude, and perfect joy of heart--  
 Those walks in all their freshness now came back  
 Like a returning Spring. When first I made  
 Once more the circuit of our little lake,  
 If ever happiness hath lodged with man,  
 That day consummate happiness was mine, 140  
 Wide-spreading, steady, calm, contemplative.  
 The sun was set, or setting, when I left

Our cottage door, and evening soon brought on  
 A sober hour, not winning or serene,  
 For cold and raw the air was, and untuned:  
 But as a face we love is sweetest then  
 When sorrow damps it, or, whatever look  
 It chance to wear, is sweetest if the heart  
 Have fulness in herself; even so with me  
 It fared that evening. Gently did my soul     150  
 Put off her veil, and, self-transmuted, stood  
 Naked, as in the presence of her God.  
 While on I walked, a comfort seemed to touch  
 A heart that had not been disconsolate:  
 Strength came where weakness was not known to be,  
 At least not felt; and restoration came  
 Like an intruder knocking at the door  
 Of unacknowledged weariness. I took  
 The balance, and with firm hand weighed myself.  
 --Of that external scene which round me lay,     160  
 Little, in this abstraction, did I see;  
 Remembered less; but I had inward hopes  
 And swellings of the spirit, was rapt and soothed,  
 Conversed with promises, had glimmering views  
 How life pervades the undecaying mind;  
 How the immortal soul with God-like power  
 Informs, creates, and thaws the deepest sleep  
 That time can lay upon her; how on earth,  
 Man, if he do but live within the light  
 Of high endeavours, daily spreads abroad     170  
 His being armed with strength that cannot fail.  
 Nor was there want of milder thoughts, of love,  
 Of innocence, and holiday repose;  
 And more than pastoral quiet, 'mid the stir  
 Of boldest projects, and a peaceful end  
 At last, or glorious, by endurance won.  
 Thus musing, in a wood I sate me down  
 Alone, continuing there to muse: the slopes  
 And heights meanwhile were slowly overspread  
 With darkness, and before a rippling breeze     180  
 The long lake lengthened out its hoary line,  
 And in the sheltered coppice where I sate,  
 Around me from among the hazel leaves,  
 Now here, now there, moved by the straggling wind,  
 Came ever and anon a breath-like sound,  
 Quick as the pantings of the faithful dog,  
 The off and on companion of my walk;  
 And such, at times, believing them to be,  
 I turned my head to look if he were there;  
 Then into solemn thought I passed once more.     190

A freshness also found I at this time  
 In human Life, the daily life of those

Whose occupations really I loved;  
The peaceful scene oft filled me with surprise  
Changed like a garden in the heat of spring  
After an eight-days' absence. For (to omit  
The things which were the same and yet appeared  
Far otherwise) amid this rural solitude,  
A narrow Vale where each was known to all,  
'Twas not indifferent to a youthful mind 200  
To mark some sheltering bower or sunny nook  
Where an old man had used to sit alone,  
Now vacant; pale-faced babes whom I had left  
In arms, now rosy prattlers at the feet  
Of a pleased grandame tottering up and down;  
And growing girls whose beauty, filched away  
With all its pleasant promises, was gone  
To deck some slighted playmate's homely cheek.

Yes, I had something of a subtler sense,  
And often looking round was moved to smiles 210  
Such as a delicate work of humour breeds;  
I read, without design, the opinions, thoughts,  
Of those plain-living people now observed  
With clearer knowledge; with another eye  
I saw the quiet woodman in the woods,  
The shepherd roam the hills. With new delight,  
This chiefly, did I note my grey-haired Dame;  
Saw her go forth to church or other work  
Of state equipped in monumental trim;  
Short velvet cloak, (her bonnet of the like), 220  
A mantle such as Spanish Cavaliers  
Wore in old times. Her smooth domestic life,  
Affectionate without disquietude,  
Her talk, her business, pleased me; and no less  
Her clear though shallow stream of piety  
That ran on Sabbath days a fresher course;  
With thoughts unfelt till now I saw her read  
Her Bible on hot Sunday afternoons,  
And loved the book, when she had dropped asleep  
And made of it a pillow for her head. 230

Nor less do I remember to have felt,  
Distinctly manifested at this time,  
A human-heartedness about my love  
For objects hitherto the absolute wealth  
Of my own private being and no more;  
Which I had loved, even as a blessed spirit  
Or Angel, if he were to dwell on earth,  
Might love in individual happiness.  
But now there opened on me other thoughts  
Of change, congratulation or regret, 240  
A pensive feeling! It spread far and wide;



Some skill, and longer time than may be spared  
To paint these vanities, and how they wrought  
In haunts where they, till now, had been unknown.  
It seemed the very garments that I wore  
Preyed on my strength, and stopped the quiet stream  
Of self-forgetfulness.

Yes, that heartless chase  
Of trivial pleasures was a poor exchange  
For books and nature at that early age.  
'Tis true, some casual knowledge might be gained 300  
Of character or life; but at that time,  
Of manners put to school I took small note,  
And all my deeper passions lay elsewhere.  
Far better had it been to exalt the mind  
By solitary study, to uphold  
Intense desire through meditative peace;  
And yet, for chastisement of these regrets,  
The memory of one particular hour  
Doth here rise up against me. 'Mid a throng  
Of maids and youths, old men, and matrons staid, 310  
A medley of all tempers, I had passed  
The night in dancing, gaiety, and mirth,  
With din of instruments and shuffling feet,  
And glancing forms, and tapers glittering,  
And unaimed prattle flying up and down;  
Spirits upon the stretch, and here and there  
Slight shocks of young love-liking interspersed,  
Whose transient pleasure mounted to the head,  
And tingled through the veins. Ere we retired,  
The cock had crowed, and now the eastern sky 320  
Was kindling, not unseen, from humble copse  
And open field, through which the pathway wound,  
And homeward led my steps. Magnificent  
The morning rose, in memorable pomp,  
Glorious as e'er I had beheld--in front,  
The sea lay laughing at a distance; near,  
The solid mountains shone, bright as the clouds,  
Grain-tinctured, drenched in empyrean light;  
And in the meadows and the lower grounds  
Was all the sweetness of a common dawn-- 330  
Dews, vapours, and the melody of birds,  
And labourers going forth to till the fields.  
Ah! need I say, dear Friend! that to the brim  
My heart was full; I made no vows, but vows  
Were then made for me; bond unknown to me  
Was given, that I should be, else sinning greatly,  
A dedicated Spirit. On I walked  
In thankful blessedness, which yet survives.

Strange rendezvous! My mind was at that time  
A parti-coloured show of grave and gay, 340

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

When from our better selves we have too long  
Been parted by the hurrying world, and droop,  
Sick of its business, of its pleasures tired,  
How gracious, how benign, is Solitude;  
How potent a mere image of her sway;  
Most potent when impressed upon the mind  
With an appropriate human centre--hermit, 360  
Deep in the bosom of the wilderness;  
Votary (in vast cathedral, where no foot  
Is treading, where no other face is seen)  
Kneeling at prayers; or watchman on the top  
Of lighthouse, beaten by Atlantic waves;  
Or as the soul of that great Power is met  
Sometimes embodied on a public road,  
When, for the night deserted, it assumes  
A character of quiet more profound  
Than pathless wastes.

Once, when those summer months 370  
Were flown, and autumn brought its annual show  
Of oars with oars contending, sails with sails,  
Upon Winander's spacious breast, it chanced  
That--after I had left a flower-decked room  
(Whose in-door pastime, lighted up, survived  
To a late hour), and spirits overwrought  
Were making night do penance for a day  
Spent in a round of strenuous idleness--  
homeward course led up a long ascent,  
Where the road's watery surface, to the top 380  
Of that sharp rising, glittered to the moon  
And bore the semblance of another stream  
Stealing with silent lapse to join the brook  
That murmured in the vale. All else was still;  
No living thing appeared in earth or air,  
And, save the flowing water's peaceful voice,  
Sound there was none--but, lo! an uncouth shape,  
Shown by a sudden turning of the road,  
So near that, slipping back into the shade

Of a thick hawthorn, I could mark him well, 390  
Myself unseen. He was of stature tall,  
A span above man's common measure, tall,  
Stiff, lank, and upright; a more meagre man  
Was never seen before by night or day.  
Long were his arms, pallid his hands; his mouth  
Looked ghastly in the moonlight: from behind,  
A mile-stone propped him; I could also ken  
That he was clothed in military garb,  
Though faded, yet entire. Companionless,  
No dog attending, by no staff sustained, 400  
He stood, and in his very dress appeared  
A desolation, a simplicity,  
To which the trappings of a gaudy world  
Make a strange back-ground. From his lips, ere long,  
Issued low muttered sounds, as if of pain  
Or some uneasy thought; yet still his form  
Kept the same awful steadiness--at his feet  
His shadow lay, and moved not. From self-blame  
Not wholly free, I watched him thus; at length  
Subduing my heart's specious cowardice, 410  
I left the shady nook where I had stood  
And hailed him. Slowly from his resting-place  
He rose, and with a lean and wasted arm  
In measured gesture lifted to his head  
Returned my salutation; then resumed  
His station as before; and when I asked  
His history, the veteran, in reply,  
Was neither slow nor eager; but, unmoved,  
And with a quiet uncomplaining voice,  
A stately air of mild indifference, 420  
He told in few plain words a soldier's tale--  
                  opic Islands he had served,  
Whence he had landed scarcely three weeks past;  
That on his landing he had been dismissed,  
And now was travelling towards his native home.  
This heard, I said, in pity, "Come with me."  
He stooped, and straightway from the ground took up  
An oaken staff by me yet unobserved--  
                  must have dropped from his slack hand  
And lay till now neglected in the grass. 430  
Though weak his step and cautious, he appeared  
To travel without pain, and I beheld,  
With an astonishment but ill suppressed,  
His ghostly figure moving at my side;  
Nor could I, while we journeyed thus, forbear  
To turn from present hardships to the past,  
And speak of war, battle, and pestilence,  
Sprinkling this talk with questions, better spared,  
On what he might himself have seen or felt.  
He all the while was in demeanour calm, 440

Concise in answer; solemn and sublime  
He might have seemed, but that in all he said  
There was a strange half-absence, as of one  
Knowing too well the importance of his theme,  
But feeling it no longer. Our discourse  
Soon ended, and together on we passed  
In silence through a wood gloomy and still.  
Up-turning, then, along an open field,  
We reached a cottage. At the door I knocked,  
And earnestly to charitable care 450  
Commended him as a poor friendless man,  
Belated and by sickness overcome.  
Assured that now the traveller would repose  
In comfort, I entreated that henceforth  
He would not linger in the public ways,  
But ask for timely furtherance and help  
Such as his state required. At this reproof,  
With the same ghastly mildness in his look,  
He said, "My trust is in the God of Heaven,  
And in the eye of him who passes me!" 460

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

There was a boy: ye knew him well, ye cliffs  
And islands of Winander!--many a time  
At evening, when the earliest stars began  
To move along the edges of the hills,  
Rising or setting, would he stand alone  
Beneath the trees or by the glimmering lake,

And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands 370  
Pressed closely palm to palm, and to his mouth  
Uplifted, he, as through an instrument,  
Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls,  
That they might answer him; and they would shout  
Across the watery vale, and shout again,  
Responsive to his call, with quivering peals,  
And long halloos and screams, and echoes loud,  
Redoubled and redoubled, concourse wild  
Of jocund din; and, when a lengthened pause  
Of silence came and baffled his best skill, 380  
Then sometimes, in that silence while he hung  
Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprise

Has carried far into his heart the voice  
Of mountain torrents; or the visible scene  
Would enter unawares into his mind,  
With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,  
Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, received  
Into the bosom of the steady lake.

This Boy was taken from his mates, and died  
In childhood, ere he was full twelve years old. 390  
Fair is the spot, most beautiful the vale  
Where he was born; the grassy churchyard hangs  
Upon a slope above the village school,  
And through that churchyard when my way has led  
On summer evenings, I believe that there  
A long half hour together I have stood  
Mute, looking at the grave in which he lies!  
Even now appears before the mind's clear eye  
That self-same village church; I see her sit  
(The throned Lady whom erewhile we hailed) 400  
On her green hill, forgetful of this Boy  
Who slumbers at her feet,--forgetful, too,  
Of all her silent neighbourhood of graves,  
And listening only to the gladsome sounds  
That, from the rural school ascending, play  
Beneath her and about her. May she long  
Behold a race of young ones like to those  
With whom I herded!--(easily, indeed,  
We might have fed upon a fatter soil  
Of arts and letters--but be that forgiven)-- 410  
A race of real children; not too wise,  
Too learned, or too good; but wanton, fresh,  
And bandied up and down by love and hate;  
Not unresentful where self-justified;  
Fierce, moody, patient, venturous, modest, shy;  
Mad at their sports like withered leaves in winds;  
Though doing wrong and suffering, and full oft  
Bending beneath our life's mysterious weight  
Of pain, and doubt, and fear, yet yielding not  
In happiness to the happiest upon earth. 420  
Simplicity in habit, truth in speech,  
Be these the daily strengtheners of their minds;  
May books and Nature be their early joy!  
And knowledge, rightly honoured with that name-  
by the loss of power!

Well do I call to mind the very week  
When I was first intrusted to the care  
Of that sweet Valley; when its paths, its shores,  
And brooks were like a dream of novelty  
To my half-infant thoughts; that very week, 430  
While I was roving up and down alone,



Of those glad respites, though a soft west wind  
Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,  
For a whole day together, have I lain  
Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,  
On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,  
And there have read, devouring as I read,  
Defrauding the day's glory, desperate!  
Till with a sudden bound of smart reproach,  
Such as an idler deals with in his shame,  
I to the sport betook myself again. 490

A gracious spirit o'er this earth presides,  
And o'er the heart of man; invisibly  
It comes, to works of unproved delight,  
And tendency benign, directing those  
Who care not, know not, think not, what they do.  
The tales that charm away the wakeful night  
In Araby, romances; legends penned  
For solace by dim light of monkish lamps;  
Fictions, for ladies of their love, devised  
By youthful squires; adventures endless, spun 500  
By the dismantled warrior in old age,  
Out of the bowels of those very schemes  
In which his youth did first extravagate;  
These spread like day, and something in the shape  
Of these will live till man shall be no more.  
Dumb yearnings, hidden appetites, are ours,  
And 'they must' have their food. Our childhood sits,  
Our simple childhood, sits upon a throne  
That hath more power than all the elements.  
I guess not what this tells of Being past, 510  
Nor what it augurs of the life to come;  
But so it is; and, in that dubious hour-  
t begin to see

This dawning earth, to recognise, expect,  
And, in the long probation that ensues,  
The time of trial, ere we learn to live  
In reconciliation with our stinted powers;  
To endure this state of meagre vassalage,  
Unwilling to forego, confess, submit,  
Uneasy and unsettled, yoke-fellows 520  
To custom, mettlesome, and not yet tamed  
And humbled down--oh! then we feel, we feel,  
We know where we have friends. Ye dreamers, then,  
Forgers of daring tales! we bless you then,  
Impostors, drivellers, dotards, as the ape  
Philosophy will call you: 'then' we feel  
With what, and how great might ye are in league,  
Who make our wish, our power, our thought a deed,  
An empire, a possession,--ye whom time  
And seasons serve; all Faculties to whom 530

Earth crouches, the elements are potter's clay,  
Space like a heaven filled up with northern lights,  
Here, nowhere, there, and everywhere at once.

Here must we pause: this only let me add,  
From heart-experience, and in humblest sense  
Of modesty, that he, who in his youth  
A daily wanderer among woods and fields  
With living Nature hath been intimate,  
Not only in that raw unpractised time  
Is stirred to ecstasy, as others are, 590  
By glittering verse; but further, doth receive,  
In measure only dealt out to himself,  
Knowledge and increase of enduring joy  
From the great Nature that exists in works  
Of mighty Poets. Visionary power  
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,  
Embodied in the mystery of words:  
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host  
Of shadowy things work endless changes,--there,  
As in a mansion like their proper home,600  
Even forms and substances are circumfused  
By that transparent veil with light divine,  
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,  
Present themselves as objects recognised,  
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

## BOOK SIXTH CAMBRIDGE AND THE ALPS

When the third summer freed us from restraint,  
A youthful friend, he too a mountaineer,  
Not slow to share my wishes, took his staff,  
And sallying forth, we journeyed side by side,  
Bound to the distant Alps. A hardy slight,  
Did this unprecedented course imply,  
Of college studies and their set rewards;  
Nor had, in truth, the scheme been formed by me  
Without uneasy forethought of the pain,330  
The censures, and ill-omening, of those  
To whom my worldly interests were dear.  
But Nature then was sovereign in my mind,  
And mighty forms, seizing a youthful fancy,  
Had given a charter to irregular hopes.  
In any age of uneventful calm  
Among the nations, surely would my heart  
Have been possessed by similar desire;  
But Europe at that time was thrilled with joy,  
France standing on the top of golden hours, 340

And human nature seeming born again.

Lightly equipped, and but a few brief looks  
Cast on the white cliffs of our native shore  
From the receding vessel's deck, we chanced  
To land at Calais on the very eve  
Of that great federal day; and there we saw,  
In a mean city, and among a few,  
How bright a face is worn when joy of one  
Is joy for tens of millions. Southward thence  
We held our way, direct through hamlets, towns, 350  
Gaudy with reliques of that festival,  
Flowers left to wither on triumphal arcs,  
And window-garlands. On the public roads,  
And, once, three days successively, through paths  
By which our toilsome journey was abridged,  
Among sequestered villages we walked  
And found benevolence and blessedness  
Spread like a fragrance everywhere, when spring  
Hath left no corner of the land untouched;  
Where elms for many and many a league in files 360  
With their thin umbrage, on the stately roads  
Of that great kingdom, rustled o'er our heads,  
For ever near us as we paced along:  
How sweet at such a time, with such delight  
On every side, in prime of youthful strength,  
To feed a Poet's tender melancholy  
And fond conceit of sadness, with the sound  
Of undulations varying as might please  
The wind that swayed them; once, and more than once,  
Unhoused beneath the evening star we saw 370  
Dances of liberty, and, in late hours  
Of darkness, dances in the open air  
Deftly prolonged, though grey-haired lookers on  
Might waste their breath in chiding.

Under hills-

The vine-clad hills and slopes of Burgundy,  
Upon the bosom of the gentle Saone  
We glided forward with the flowing stream.  
Swift Rhone! thou wert the 'wings' on which we cut  
A winding passage with majestic ease  
Between thy lofty rocks. Enchanting show 380  
Those woods and farms and orchards did present,  
And single cottages and lurking towns,  
Reach after reach, succession without end  
Of deep and stately vales! A lonely pair  
Of strangers, till day closed, we sailed along  
Clustered together with a merry crowd  
Of those emancipated, a blithe host  
Of travellers, chiefly delegates, returning  
From the great spousals newly solemnised

At their chief city, in the sight of Heaven. 390  
 Like bees they swarmed, gaudy and gay as bees;  
 Some vapoured in the unruliness of joy,  
 And with their swords flourished as if to fight  
 The saucy air. In this proud company  
 We landed--took with them our evening meal,  
 Guests welcome almost as the angels were  
 To Abraham of old. The supper done,  
 With flowing cups elate and happy thoughts  
 We rose at signal given, and formed a ring  
 And, hand in hand, danced round and round the board; 400  
 All hearts were open, every tongue was loud  
 With amity and glee; we bore a name  
 Honoured in France, the name of Englishmen,  
 And hospitably did they give us hail,  
 As their forerunners in a glorious course;  
 And round and round the board we danced again.  
 With these blithe friends our voyage we renewed  
 At early dawn. The monastery bells  
 Made a sweet jingling in our youthful ears;  
 The rapid river flowing without noise, 410  
 And each uprising or receding spire  
 Spake with a sense of peace, at intervals  
 Touching the heart amid the boisterous crew  
 By whom we were encompassed. Taking leave  
 Of this glad throng, foot-travellers side by side,  
 Measuring our steps in quiet, we pursued  
 Our journey, and ere twice the sun had set  
 Beheld the Convent of Chartreuse, and there  
 Rested within an awful 'solitude':  
 Yes, for even then no other than a place 420  
 Of soul-affecting 'solitude' appeared  
 That far-famed region, though our eyes had seen,  
 As toward the sacred mansion we advanced,  
 Arms flashing, and a military glare  
 Of riotous men commissioned to expel  
 The blameless inmates, and belike subvert  
 That frame of social being, which so long  
 Had bodied forth the ghostliness of things  
 In silence visible and perpetual calm.  
 --"Stay, stay your sacrilegious hands!"--The voice 430  
 Was Nature's, uttered from her Alpine throne;  
 I heard it then and seem to hear it now--  
     pious work forbear, perish what may,  
 Let this one temple last, be this one spot  
 Of earth devoted to eternity!"  
 She ceased to speak, but while St. Bruno's pines  
 Waved their dark tops, not silent as they waved,  
 And while below, along their several beds,  
 Murmured the sister streams of Life and Death,  
 Thus by conflicting passions pressed, my heart 440

Responded; "Honour to the patriot's zeal!  
 Glory and hope to new-born Liberty!  
 Hail to the mighty projects of the time!  
 Discerning sword that Justice wields, do thou  
 Go forth and prosper; and, ye purging fires,  
 Up to the loftiest towers of Pride ascend,  
 Fanned by the breath of angry Providence.  
 But oh! if Past and Future be the wings  
 On whose support harmoniously conjoined  
 Moves the great spirit of human knowledge, spare 450  
 These courts of mystery, where a step advanced  
 Between the portals of the shadowy rocks  
 Leaves far behind life's treacherous vanities,  
 For penitential tears and trembling hopes  
 Exchanged--to equalise in God's pure sight  
 Monarch and peasant: be the house redeemed  
 With its unworldly votaries, for the sake  
 Of conquest over sense, hourly achieved  
 Through faith and meditative reason, resting  
 Upon the word of heaven-imparted truth,460  
 Calmly triumphant; and for humbler claim  
 Of that imaginative impulse sent  
 From these majestic floods, yon shining cliffs,  
 The untransmuted shapes of many worlds,  
 Cerulean ether's pure inhabitants,  
 These forests unapproachable by death,  
 That shall endure as long as man endures,  
 To think, to hope, to worship, and to feel,  
 To struggle, to be lost within himself  
 In trepidation, from the blank abyss 470  
 To look with bodily eyes, and be consoled."  
 Not seldom since that moment have I wished  
 That thou, O Friend! the trouble or the calm  
 Hadst shared, when, from profane regards apart,  
 In sympathetic reverence we trod  
 The floors of those dim cloisters, till that hour,  
 From their foundation, strangers to the presence  
 Of unrestricted and unthinking man.  
 Abroad, how cheeringly the sunshine lay  
 Upon the open lawns! Vallombre's groves480  
 Entering, we fed the soul with darkness; thence  
 Issued, and with uplifted eyes beheld,  
 In different quarters of the bending sky,  
 The cross of Jesus stand erect, as if  
 Hands of angelic powers had fixed it there,  
 Memorial revered by a thousand storms;  
 Yet then, from the indiscriminating sweep  
 And rage of one State-whirlwind, insecure.

'Tis not my present purpose to retrace  
 That variegated journey step by step. 490

A march it was of military speed,  
And Earth did change her images and forms  
Before us, fast as clouds are changed in heaven.  
Day after day, up early and down late,  
From hill to vale we dropped, from vale to hill  
Mounted--from province on to province swept,  
Keen hunters in a chase of fourteen weeks,  
Eager as birds of prey, or as a ship  
Upon the stretch, when winds are blowing fair:  
Sweet coverts did we cross of pastoral life, 500  
Enticing valleys, greeted them and left  
Too soon, while yet the very flash and gleam  
Of salutation were not passed away.  
Oh! sorrow for the youth who could have seen,  
Unchastened, unsubdued, unawed, unraised  
To patriarchal dignity of mind,  
And pure simplicity of wish and will,  
Those sanctified abodes of peaceful man,  
Pleased (though to hardship born, and compassed round  
With danger, varying as the seasons change), 510  
Pleased with his daily task, or, if not pleased,  
Contented, from the moment that the dawn  
(Ah! surely not without attendant gleams  
Of soul-illumination) calls him forth  
To industry, by glistenings flung on rocks,  
Whose evening shadows lead him to repose.

Well might a stranger look with bounding heart  
Down on a green recess, the first I saw  
Of those deep haunts, an aboriginal vale,  
Quiet and lorded over and possessed 520  
By naked huts, wood-built, and sown like tents  
Or Indian cabins over the fresh lawns  
And by the river side.

That very day,  
From a bare ridge we also first beheld  
Unveiled the summit of Mont Blanc, and grieved  
To have a soulless image on the eye  
That had usurped upon a living thought  
That never more could be. The wondrous Vale  
Of Chamouny stretched far below, and soon  
With its dumb cataracts and streams of ice, 530  
A motionless array of mighty waves,  
Five rivers broad and vast, made rich amends,  
And reconciled us to realities;  
There small birds warble from the leafy trees,  
The eagle soars high in the element,  
There doth the reaper bind the yellow sheaf,  
The maiden spread the haycock in the sun,  
While Winter like a well-tamed lion walks,  
Descending from the mountain to make sport

Among the cottages by beds of flowers. 540

Whate'er in this wide circuit we beheld,  
Or heard, was fitted to our unripe state  
Of intellect and heart. With such a book  
Before our eyes, we could not choose but read  
Lessons of genuine brotherhood, the plain  
And universal reason of mankind,  
The truths of young and old. Nor, side by side  
Pacing, two social pilgrims, or alone  
Each with his humour, could we fail to abound  
In dreams and fictions, pensively composed: 550  
Dejection taken up for pleasure's sake,  
And gilded sympathies, the willow wreath,  
And sober posies of funereal flowers,  
Gathered among those solitudes sublime  
From formal gardens of the lady Sorrow,  
Did sweeten many a meditative hour.

Yet still in me with those soft luxuries  
Mixed something of stern mood, an underthirst  
Of vigour seldom utterly allayed:  
And from that source how different a sadness 560  
Would issue, let one incident make known.  
When from the Vallais we had turned, and clomb  
Along the Simplon's steep and rugged road,  
Following a band of muleteers, we reached  
A halting-place, where all together took  
Their noon-tide meal. Hastily rose our guide,  
Leaving us at the board; awhile we lingered,  
Then paced the beaten downward way that led  
Right to a rough stream's edge, and there broke off;  
The only track now visible was one 570  
That from the torrent's further brink held forth  
Conspicuous invitation to ascend  
A lofty mountain. After brief delay  
Crossing the unbridged stream, that road we took,  
And clomb with eagerness, till anxious fears  
Intruded, for we failed to overtake  
Our comrades gone before. By fortunate chance,  
While every moment added doubt to doubt,  
A peasant met us, from whose mouth we learned  
That to the spot which had perplexed us first 580  
We must descend, and there should find the road,  
Which in the stony channel of the stream  
Lay a few steps, and then along its banks;  
And, that our future course, all plain to sight,  
Was downwards, with the current of that stream.  
Loth to believe what we so grieved to hear,  
For still we had hopes that pointed to the clouds,  
We questioned him again, and yet again;



Characters of the great Apocalypse,  
The types and symbols of Eternity,  
Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.

But here I must break off, and bid farewell  
To days, each offering some new sight, or fraught  
With some untried adventure, in a course  
Prolonged till sprinklings of autumnal snow 730  
Checked our unwearied steps. Let this alone  
Be mentioned as a parting word, that not  
In hollow exultation, dealing out  
Hyperboles of praise comparative,  
Not rich one moment to be poor for ever;  
Not prostrate, overborne, as if the mind  
Herself were nothing, a mere pensioner  
On outward forms--did we in presence stand  
Of that magnificent region. On the front  
Of this whole Song is written that my heart 740  
Must, in such Temple, needs have offered up  
A different worship. Finally, whate'er  
I saw, or heard, or felt, was but a stream  
That flowed into a kindred stream; a gale,  
Confederate with the current of the soul,  
To speed my voyage; every sound or sight,  
In its degree of power, administered  
To grandeur or to tenderness,--to the one  
Directly, but to tender thoughts by means  
Less often instantaneous in effect; 750  
Led me to these by paths that, in the main,  
Were more circuitous, but not less sure  
Duly to reach the point marked out by Heaven.

Oh, most beloved Friend! a glorious time,  
A happy time that was; triumphant looks  
Were then the common language of all eyes;  
As if awaked from sleep, the Nations hailed  
Their great expectancy: the fife of war  
Was then a spirit-stirring sound indeed,  
A blackbird's whistle in a budding grove. 760  
We left the Swiss exulting in the fate  
Of their near neighbours; and, when shortening fast  
Our pilgrimage, nor distant far from home,  
We crossed the Brabant armies on the fret  
For battle in the cause of Liberty.  
A stripling, scarcely of the household then  
Of social life, I looked upon these things  
As from a distance; heard, and saw, and felt,  
Was touched, but with no intimate concern;  
I seemed to move along them, as a bird 770  
Moves through the air, or as a fish pursues  
Its sport, or feeds in its proper element;



For patrimonial honour set apart,  
And ignorance in the labouring multitude.  
For he, to all intolerance indisposed,  
Balanced these contemplations in his mind;  
And I, who at that time was scarcely dipped 330  
Into the turmoil, bore a sounder judgment  
Than later days allowed; carried about me,  
With less alloy to its integrity,  
The experience of past ages, as, through help  
Of books and common life, it makes sure way  
To youthful minds, by objects over near  
Not pressed upon, nor dazzled or misled  
By struggling with the crowd for present ends.

But though not deaf, nor obstinate to find  
Error without excuse upon the side 340  
Of them who strove against us, more delight  
We took, and let this freely be confessed,  
In painting to ourselves the miseries  
Of royal courts, and that voluptuous life  
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul  
The meanest thrives the most; where dignity,  
True personal dignity, abideth not;  
A light, a cruel, and vain world cut off  
From the natural inlets of just sentiment,  
From lowly sympathy and chastening truth; 350  
Where good and evil interchange their names,  
And thirst for bloody spoils abroad is paired  
With vice at home. We added dearest themes-  
noble nature, as it is  
The gift which God has placed within his power,  
His blind desires and steady faculties  
Capable of clear truth, the one to break  
Bondage, the other to build liberty  
On firm foundations, making social life,  
Through knowledge spreading and imperishable, 360  
As just in regulation, and as pure  
As individual in the wise and good.

We summoned up the honourable deeds  
Of ancient Story, thought of each bright spot,  
That would be found in all recorded time,  
Of truth preserved and error passed away;  
Of single spirits that catch the flame from Heaven,  
And how the multitudes of men will feed  
And fan each other; thought of sects, how keen  
They are to put the appropriate nature on, 370  
Triumphant over every obstacle  
Of custom, language, country, love, or hate,  
And what they do and suffer for their creed;  
How far they travel, and how long endure;

How quickly mighty Nations have been formed,  
From least beginnings; how, together locked  
By new opinions, scattered tribes have made  
One body, spreading wide as clouds in heaven.  
To aspirations then of our own minds  
Did we appeal; and, finally, beheld 380  
A living confirmation of the whole  
Before us, in a people from the depth  
Of shameful imbecility uprisen,  
Fresh as the morning star. Elate we looked  
Upon their virtues; saw, in rudest men,  
Self-sacrifice the firmest; generous love,  
And continence of mind, and sense of right,  
Uppermost in the midst of fiercest strife.

Oh, sweet it is, in academic groves,  
Or such retirement, Friend! as we have known 390  
In the green dales beside our Rotha's stream,  
Greta, or Derwent, or some nameless rill,  
To ruminate, with interchange of talk,  
On rational liberty, and hope in man,  
Justice and peace. But far more sweet such toil-  
r it leads to thoughts abstruse-  
be standing on the brink  
Of some great trial, and we hear the voice  
Of one devoted,--one whom circumstance 400  
Hath called upon to embody his deep sense  
In action, give it outwardly a shape,  
And that of benediction, to the world.  
Then doubt is not, and truth is more than truth,--  
A hope it is, and a desire; a creed  
Of zeal, by an authority Divine  
Sanctioned, of danger, difficulty, or death.  
Such conversation, under Attic shades,  
Did Dion hold with Plato; ripened thus  
For a Deliverer's glorious task,--and such  
He, on that ministry already bound, 410  
Held with Eudemus and Timonides,  
Surrounded by adventurers in arms,  
When those two vessels with their daring freight,  
For the Sicilian Tyrant's overthrow,  
Sailed from Zacynthus,--philosophic war,  
Led by Philosophers. With harder fate,  
Though like ambition, such was he, O Friend!  
Of whom I speak. So Beaupuis (let the name  
Stand near the worthiest of Antiquity)  
Fashioned his life; and many a long discourse, 420  
With like persuasion honoured, we maintained:  
He, on his part, accoutred for the worst,  
He perished fighting, in supreme command,  
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire,

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

Along that very Loire, with festal mirth 430  
Resounding at all hours, and innocent yet  
Of civil slaughter, was our frequent walk;  
Or in wide forests of continuous shade,  
Lofty and over-arched, with open space  
Beneath the trees, clear footing many a mile-  
n region. Oft amid those haunts,  
From earnest dialogues I slipped in thought,  
And let remembrance steal to other times,  
When, o'er those interwoven roots, moss-clad,  
And smooth as marble or a waveless sea, 440  
Some Hermit, from his cell forth-strayed, might pace  
In sylvan meditation undisturbed;  
As on the pavement of a Gothic church  
Walks a lone Monk, when service hath expired,  
In peace and silence. But if e'er was heard,--  
Heard, though unseen,--a devious traveller,  
Retiring or approaching from afar  
With speed and echoes loud of trampling hoofs  
From the hard floor reverberated, then  
It was Angelica thundering through the woods 450  
Upon her palfrey, or that gentle maid  
Erminia, fugitive as fair as she.  
Sometimes methought I saw a pair of knights  
Joust underneath the trees, that as in storm  
Rocked high above their heads; anon, the din  
Of boisterous merriment, and music's roar,  
In sudden proclamation, burst from haunt  
Of Satyrs in some viewless glade, with dance  
Rejoicing o'er a female in the midst,  
A mortal beauty, their unhappy thrall. 460  
The width of those huge forests, unto me  
A novel scene, did often in this way  
Master my fancy while I wandered on  
With that revered companion. And sometimes-  
eadow green,  
By a brook-side, we came, a roofless pile,  
And not by reverential touch of Time  
Dismantled, but by violence abrupt-  
ng colloquies,  
In spite of real fervour, and of that 470  
Less genuine and wrought up within myself-  
ot but bewail a wrong so harsh,  
And for the Matin-bell to sound no more  
Grieved, and the twilight taper, and the cross

High on the topmost pinnacle, a sign  
(How welcome to the weary traveller's eyes!)  
Of hospitality and peaceful rest.  
And when the partner of those varied walks  
Pointed upon occasion to the site  
Of Romorentin, home of ancient kings, 480  
To the imperial edifice of Blois,  
Or to that rural castle, name now slipped  
From my remembrance, where a lady lodged,  
By the first Francis wooed, and bound to him  
In chains of mutual passion, from the tower,  
As a tradition of the country tells,  
Practised to commune with her royal knight  
By cressets and love-beacons, intercourse  
'Twixt her high-seated residence and his  
Far off at Chambord on the plain beneath; 490  
Even here, though less than with the peaceful house  
Religious, 'mid those frequent monuments  
Of Kings, their vices and their better deeds,  
Imagination, potent to inflame  
At times with virtuous wrath and noble scorn,  
Did also often mitigate the force  
Of civic prejudice, the bigotry,  
So call it, of a youthful patriot's mind;  
And on these spots with many gleams I looked  
Of chivalrous delight. Yet not the less, 500  
Hatred of absolute rule, where will of one  
Is law for all, and of that barren pride  
In them who, by immunities unjust,  
Between the sovereign and the people stand,  
His helper and not theirs, laid stronger hold  
Daily upon me, mixed with pity too  
And love; for where hope is, there love will be  
For the abject multitude, And when we chanced  
One day to meet a hunger-bitten girl,  
Who crept along fitting her languid gait 510  
Unto a heifer's motion, by a cord  
Tied to her arm, and picking thus from the lane  
Its sustenance, while the girl with pallid hands  
Was busy knitting in a heartless mood  
Of solitude, and at the sight my friend  
In agitation said, "'Tis against 'that'  
That we are fighting," I with him believed  
That a benignant spirit was abroad  
Which might not be withstood, that poverty  
Abject as this would in a little time 520  
Be found no more, that we should see the earth  
Unthwarted in her wish to recompense  
The meek, the lowly, patient child of toil,  
All institutes for ever blotted out  
That legalised exclusion, empty pomp

Abolished, sensual state and cruel power  
Whether by edict of the one or few;  
And finally, as sum and crown of all,  
Should see the people having a strong hand  
In framing their own laws; whence better days 530  
To all mankind. But, these things set apart,  
Was not this single confidence enough  
To animate the mind that ever turned  
A thought to human welfare? That henceforth  
Captivity by mandate without law  
Should cease; and open accusation lead  
To sentence in the hearing of the world,  
And open punishment, if not the air  
Be free to breathe in, and the heart of man  
Dread nothing?

## BOOK TENTH

### RESIDENCE IN FRANCE (continued)

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

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

Effort which, though defeated, had recalled 250  
To notice old forgotten principles,  
And through the nation spread a novel heat  
Of virtuous feeling. For myself, I own  
That this particular strife had wanted power  
To rivet my affections; nor did now  
Its unsuccessful issue much excite  
My sorrow; for I brought with me the faith  
That, if France prospered, good men would not long  
Pay fruitless worship to humanity,  
And this most rotten branch of human shame, 260  
Object, so seemed it, of superfluous pains  
Would fall together with its parent tree.  
What, then, were my emotions, when in arms  
Britain put forth her free-born strength in league,  
Oh, pity and shame! with those confederate Powers!  
Not in my single self alone I found,  
But in the minds of all ingenuous youth,  
Change and subversion from that hour. No shock  
Given to my moral nature had I known  
Down to that very moment; neither lapse 270  
Nor turn of sentiment that might be named  
A revolution, save at this one time;  
All else was progress on the self-same path  
On which, with a diversity of pace,  
I had been travelling: this a stride at once  
Into another region. As a light  
And pliant harebell, swinging in the breeze  
On some grey rock--its birth-place--so had I  
Wantoned, fast rooted on the ancient tower  
Of my beloved country, wishing not 280  
A happier fortune than to wither there:  
Now was I from that pleasant station torn  
And tossed about in whirlwind. I rejoiced,  
Yea, afterwards--truth most painful to record!--  
Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,  
When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown,  
Left without glory on the field, or driven,  
Brave hearts! to shameful flight. It was a grief,--  
Grief call it not, 'twas anything but that,--  
A conflict of sensations without name, 290  
Of which 'he' only, who may love the sight  
Of a village steeple, as I do, can judge,  
When, in the congregation bending all  
To their great Father, prayers were offered up,  
Or praises for our country's victories;  
And, 'mid the simple worshippers, perchance  
I only, like an uninvited guest  
Whom no one owned, sate silent, shall I add,  
Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come.

Oh! much have they to account for, who could tear,      300  
By violence, at one decisive rent,  
From the best youth in England their dear pride,  
Their joy, in England; this, too, at a time  
In which worst losses easily might wean  
The best of names, when patriotic love  
Did of itself in modesty give way,  
Like the Precursor when the Deity  
Is come Whose harbinger he was; a time  
In which apostasy from ancient faith  
Seemed but conversion to a higher creed;      310  
Withal a season dangerous and wild,  
A time when sage Experience would have snatched  
Flowers out of any hedge-row to compose  
A chaplet in contempt of his grey locks.

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

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

And all the accidents of life--were pressed  
Into one service, busy with one work. 350  
The Senate stood aghast, her prudence quenched,  
Her wisdom stifled, and her justice scared,  
Her frenzy only active to extol  
Past outrages, and shape the way for new,  
Which no one dared to oppose or mitigate.

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

Amid the depth  
Of those enormities, even thinking minds  
Forgot, at seasons, whence they had their being  
Forgot that such a sound was ever heard  
As Liberty upon earth: yet all beneath  
Her innocent authority was wrought,  
Nor could have been, without her blessed name. 380  
The illustrious wife of Roland, in the hour  
Of her composure, felt that agony,  
And gave it vent in her last words. O Friend!  
It was a lamentable time for man,  
Whether a hope had e'er been his or not:  
A woful time for them whose hopes survived  
The shock; most woful for those few who still  
Were flattered, and had trust in human kind:  
They had the deepest feeling of the grief.  
Meanwhile the Invaders fared as they deserved: 390  
The Herculean Commonwealth had put forth her arms,  
And throttled with an infant godhead's might  
The snakes about her cradle; that was well,  
And as it should be; yet no cure for them  
Whose souls were sick with pain of what would be  
Hereafter brought in charge against mankind.  
Most melancholy at that time, O Friend!

Were my day-thoughts,--my nights were miserable;  
Through months, through years, long after the last beat  
Of those atrocities, the hour of sleep 400  
To me came rarely charged with natural gifts,  
Such ghastly visions had I of despair  
And tyranny, and implements of death;  
And innocent victims sinking under fear,  
And momentary hope, and worn-out prayer,  
Each in his separate cell, or penned in crowds  
For sacrifice, and struggling with fond mirth  
And levity in dungeons, where the dust  
Was laid with tears. Then suddenly the scene  
Changed, and the unbroken dream entangled me 410  
In long orations, which I strove to plead  
Before unjust tribunals,--with a voice  
Labouring, a brain confounded, and a sense,  
Death-like, of treacherous desertion, felt  
In the last place of refuge--my own soul.

When I began in youth's delightful prime  
To yield myself to Nature, when that strong  
And holy passion overcame me first,  
Nor day nor night, evening or morn, was free  
From its oppression. But, O Power Supreme! 420  
Without Whose call this world would cease to breathe  
Who from the fountain of Thy grace dost fill  
The veins that branch through every frame of life,  
Making man what he is, creature divine,  
In single or in social eminence,  
Above the rest raised infinite ascents  
When reason that enables him to be  
Is not sequestered--what a change is here!  
How different ritual for this after-worship,  
What countenance to promote this second love! 430  
The first was service paid to things which lie  
Guarded within the bosom of Thy will.  
Therefore to serve was high beatitude;  
Tumult was therefore gladness, and the fear  
Ennobling, venerable; sleep secure,  
And waking thoughts more rich than happiest dreams.

But as the ancient Prophets, borne aloft  
In vision, yet constrained by natural laws  
With them to take a troubled human heart,  
Wanted not consolations, nor a creed 440  
Of reconciliation, then when they denounced,  
On towns and cities, wallowing in the abyss  
Of their offences, punishment to come;  
Or saw, like other men, with bodily eyes,  
Before them, in some desolated place,  
The wrath consummate and the threat fulfilled;

So, with devout humility be it said,  
So, did a portion of that spirit fall  
On me uplifted from the vantage-ground  
Of pity and sorrow to a state of being 450  
That through the time's exceeding fierceness saw  
Glimpses of retribution, terrible,  
And in the order of sublime behests:  
But, even if that were not, amid the awe  
Of unintelligible chastisement,  
Not only acquiescences of faith  
Survived, but daring sympathies with power,  
Motions not treacherous or profane, else why  
Within the folds of no ungentle breast  
Their dread vibration to this hour prolonged? 460  
Wild blasts of music thus could find their way  
Into the midst of turbulent events;  
So that worst tempests might be listened to.  
Then was the truth received into my heart,  
That, under heaviest sorrow earth can bring,  
If from the affliction somewhere do not grow  
Honour which could not else have been, a faith,  
An elevation, and a sanctity,  
If new strength be not given nor old restored,  
The blame is ours, not Nature's. When a taunt 470  
Was taken up by scoffers in their pride,  
Saying, "Behold the harvest that we reap  
From popular government and equality,"  
I clearly saw that neither these nor aught  
Of wild belief engrafted on their names  
By false philosophy had caused the woe,  
But a terrific reservoir of guilt  
And ignorance filled up from age to age,  
That could no longer hold its loathsome charge,  
But burst and spread in deluge through the land.

## BOOK ELEVENTH

### FRANCE (concluded)

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

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

O pleasant exercise of hope and joy!  
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood  
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!  
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,  
But to be young was very Heaven! O times, 110  
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways  
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once  
The attraction of a country in romance!  
When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights  
When most intent on making of herself  
A prime enchantress--to assist the work,  
Which then was going forward in her name!  
Not favoured spots alone, but the whole Earth,  
The beauty wore of promise--that which sets  
(As at some moments might not be unfelt  
Among the bowers of Paradise itself) 120  
The budding rose above the rose full blown.  
What temper at the prospect did not wake  
To happiness unthought of? The inert  
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!  
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,  
The play-fellows of fancy, who had made  
All powers of swiftmess, subtilty, and strength  
Their ministers,--who in lordly wise had stirred  
Among the grandest objects of the sense,  
And dealt with whatsoever they found there 130  
As if they had within some lurking right  
To wield it;--they, too, who of gentle mood  
Had watched all gentle motions, and to these  
Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,  
And in the region of their peaceful selves;--



Was now a shame; my likings and my loves  
Ran in new channels, leaving old ones dry;  
And hence a blow that, in maturer age,  
Would but have touched the judgment, struck more deep  
Into sensations near the heart: meantime,  
As from the first, wild theories were afloat,  
To whose pretensions, sedulously urged, 190  
I had but lent a careless ear, assured  
That time was ready to set all things right,  
And that the multitude, so long oppressed,  
Would be oppressed no more.

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

This was the time, when, all things tending fast  
To depravation, speculative schemes-  
That promised to abstract the hopes of Man  
Out of his feelings, to be fixed thenceforth  
For ever in a purer element-  
Found ready welcome. Tempting region 'that'  
For Zeal to enter and refresh herself,  
Where passions had the privilege to work, 230  
And never hear the sound of their own names.  
But, speaking more in charity, the dream  
Flattered the young, pleased with extremes, nor least  
With that which makes our Reason's naked self  
The object of its fervour. What delight!  
How glorious! in self-knowledge and self-rule,  
To look through all the frailties of the world,  
And, with a resolute mastery shaking off  
Infirmities of nature, time, and place,  
Build social upon personal Liberty, 240  
Which, to the blind restraints of general laws,  
Superior, magisterially adopts  
One guide, the light of circumstances, flashed  
Upon an independent intellect.  
Thus expectation rose again; thus hope,  
From her first ground expelled, grew proud once more.  
Oft, as my thoughts were turned to human kind,  
I scorned indifference; but, inflamed with thirst  
Of a secure intelligence, and sick

Of other longing, I pursued what seemed<sup>250</sup>  
A more exalted nature; wished that Man  
Should start out of his earthy, worm-like state,  
And spread abroad the wings of Liberty,  
Lord of himself, in undisturbed delight--  
A noble aspiration! 'yet' I feel  
(Sustained by worthier as by wiser thoughts)  
The aspiration, nor shall ever cease  
To feel it;--but return we to our course.

Enough, 'tis true--could such a plea excuse  
Those aberrations--had the clamorous friends <sup>260</sup>  
Of ancient Institutions said and done  
To bring disgrace upon their very names;  
Disgrace, of which, custom and written law,  
And sundry moral sentiments as props  
Or emanations of those institutes,  
Too justly bore a part. A veil had been  
Uplifted; why deceive ourselves? in sooth,  
'Twas even so; and sorrow for the man  
Who either had not eyes wherewith to see,  
Or, seeing, had forgotten! A strong shock <sup>270</sup>  
Was given to old opinions; all men's minds  
Had felt its power, and mine was both let loose,  
Let loose and goaded. After what hath been  
Already said of patriotic love,  
Suffice it here to add, that, somewhat stern  
In temperament, withal a happy man,  
And therefore bold to look on painful things,  
Free likewise of the world, and thence more bold,  
I summoned my best skill, and toiled, intent  
To anatomise the frame of social life; <sup>280</sup>  
Yea, the whole body of society  
Searched to its heart. Share with me, Friend! the wish  
That some dramatic tale, endued with shapes  
Livelier, and flinging out less guarded words  
Than suit the work we fashion, might set forth  
What then I learned, or think I learned, of truth,  
And the errors into which I fell, betrayed  
By present objects, and by reasonings false  
From their beginnings, inasmuch as drawn  
Out of a heart that had been turned aside <sup>290</sup>  
From Nature's way by outward accidents,  
And which was thus confounded, more and more  
Misguided, and misguiding. So I fared,  
Dragging all precepts, judgments, maxims, creeds,  
Like culprits to the bar; calling the mind,  
Suspiciously, to establish in plain day  
Her titles and her honours; now believing,  
Now disbelieving; endlessly perplexed  
With impulse, motive, right and wrong, the ground

Of obligation, what the rule and whence<sup>300</sup>  
The sanction; till, demanding formal 'proof',  
And seeking it in every thing, I lost  
All feeling of conviction, and, in fine,  
Sick, wearied out with contrarities,  
Yielded up moral questions in despair.

## 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  
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs, 10  
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,  
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise  
By day, a quiet sound in silent night; 20  
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth  
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,  
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;  
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is  
To interpose the covert of your shades,  
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man  
And outward troubles, between man himself,  
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:  
Oh! that I had a music and a voice  
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell 30  
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,  
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,--  
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,  
In common with the children of her love,  
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,  
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven  
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.  
So neither were complacency, nor peace,  
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good

Through these distracted times; in Nature still 40  
Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,  
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,  
Maintained for me a secret happiness.

There are in our existence spots of time,  
That with distinct pre-eminence retain  
A renovating virtue, whence--depressed 210  
By false opinion and contentious thought,  
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,  
In trivial occupations, and the round  
Of ordinary intercourse--our minds  
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;  
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,  
That penetrates, enables us to mount,  
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.  
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks  
Among those passages of life that give 220  
Profoundest knowledge 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,  
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand  
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes  
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:  
An ancient servant of my father's house  
Was with me, my encourager and guide: 230  
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance  
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear  
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor  
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length  
Came to a bottom, where in former times  
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.  
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones  
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,  
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,  
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.240  
The monumental letters were inscribed  
In times long past; but still, from year to year  
By superstition of the neighbourhood,  
The grass is cleared away, and to 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,  
The beacon on the summit, and, more near, 250  
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,  
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way  
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,

An ordinary sight; but I should need  
 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,  
 The female and her garments vexed and tossed 260  
 By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours  
 Of early love, the loved one at my side,  
 I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,  
 Upon the naked pool and dreary 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  
 Of feeling, and diversity of strength 270  
 Attends us, if but once we have been strong.  
 Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth  
 Proceed thy 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  
 Of life: the hiding-places of man's power  
 Open; I would approach them, but they close. 280  
 I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,  
 May scarcely see at all; and I would give,  
 While yet we may, as far as words can give,  
 Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,  
 Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past  
 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  
 Into the fields, impatient for the sight 290  
 Of those led palfreys that should bear us home;  
 My brothers and myself. There rose a crag,  
 That, from the meeting-point of two highways  
 Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;  
 Thither, uncertain on which road to fix  
 My expectation, thither I repaired,  
 Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day  
 Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass  
 I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;  
 Upon my right hand couched a single sheep, 300  
 Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;  
 With those companions at my side, I 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,  
 With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared 310  
 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 from that old stone wall, 320  
 The noise of wood and water, and the mist  
 That on the line of each of those two roads  
 Advanced in such indisputable shapes;  
 All these were kindred spectacles and sounds  
 To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,  
 As at a fountain; and on winter nights,  
 Down to this very time, when storm and rain  
 Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,  
 While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,  
 Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock 330  
 In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,  
 Some inward agitations thence are brought,  
 Whate'er their office, whether to beguile  
 Thoughts over busy in the course they took,  
 Or animate an hour of vacant ease.

## 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;  
 Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.10

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,  
 Wan, dull, and glaring, with a dripping fog



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.  
There I beheld the emblem of a mind 70  
That feeds upon infinity, that broods  
Over the dark abyss, intent to hear  
Its voices issuing forth to silent light  
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained  
By recognitions of transcendent power,  
In sense conducting to ideal form,  
In soul of more than mortal privilege.  
One function, above all, of such a mind  
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,  
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime, 80  
That mutual domination which she loves  
To exert upon the face of outward things,  
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed  
With interchangeable supremacy,  
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,  
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  
That higher minds bear with them as their own. 90  
This is the very spirit in which they deal  
With the whole compass of the universe:  
They from their native selves can send abroad  
Kindred mutations; for themselves create  
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns  
Created for them, catch it, or are caught  
By its inevitable mastery,  
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound  
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.  
Them the enduring and the transient both 100  
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things  
From least suggestions; ever on the watch,  
Willing to work and to be wrought upon,  
They need not extraordinary calls  
To rouse them; in a world of life they live,  
By sensible impressions not enthralled,  
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt  
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,  
And with the generations of mankind  
Spread over time, past, present, and to come, 110  
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.  
Such minds are truly from the Deity,  
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss

That flesh can know is theirs--the consciousness  
Of Whom they are, habitually infused  
Through every image and through every thought,  
And all affections by communion raised  
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;  
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,  
Whether discursive or intuitive; 120  
Hence 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.