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## Phantastes Chapter 11: The Excursion

William Wordsworth

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# The Excursion

By William Wordsworth

## Book One: The Wanderer

'TWAS summer, and the sun had mounted high:  
Southward the landscape indistinctly glared  
Through a pale steam; but all the northern downs,  
In clearest air ascending, showed far off  
A surface dappled o'er with shadows flung  
From brooding clouds; shadows that lay in spots  
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams  
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed;  
To him most pleasant who on soft cool moss  
Extends his careless limbs along the front 10  
Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts  
A twilight of its own, an ample shade,  
Where the wren warbles, while the dreaming man,  
Half conscious of the soothing melody,  
With side-long eye looks out upon the scene,  
By power of that impending covert, thrown  
To finer distance. Mine was at that hour  
Far other lot, yet with good hope that soon  
Under a shade as grateful I should find  
Rest, and be welcomed there to livelier joy. 20  
Across a bare wide Common I was toiling  
With languid steps that by the slippery turf  
Were baffled; nor could my weak arm disperse  
The host of insects gathering round my face,  
And ever with me as I paced along.

Upon that open moorland stood a grove,  
The wished-for port to which my course was bound.  
Thither I came, and there, amid the gloom  
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms,  
Appeared a roofless Hut; four naked walls 30  
That stared upon each other!--I looked round,  
And to my wish and to my hope espied  
The Friend I sought; a Man of reverend age,  
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.  
There was he seen upon the cottage-bench,  
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;  
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

Him had I marked the day before--alone  
And stationed in the public way, with face

Turned toward the sun then setting, while that staff      40  
Afforded, to the figure of the man  
Detained for contemplation or repose,  
Graceful support; his countenance as he stood  
Was hidden from my view, and he remained  
Unrecognised; but, stricken by the sight,  
With slackened footsteps I advanced, and soon  
A glad congratulation we exchanged  
At such unthought-of meeting.--For the night  
We parted, nothing willingly; and now  
He by appointment waited for me here,              50  
Under the covert of these clustering elms.

We were tried Friends: amid a pleasant vale,  
In the antique market-village where was passed  
My school-time, an apartment he had owned,  
To which at intervals the Wanderer drew,  
And found a kind of home or harbour there.  
He loved me, from a swarm of rosy boys  
Singled out me, as he in sport would say,  
For my grave looks, too thoughtful for my years.  
As I grew up, it was my best delight              60  
To be his chosen comrade. Many a time,  
On holidays, we rambled through the woods:  
We sate--we walked; he pleased me with report  
Of things which he had seen; and often touched  
Abstrusest matter, reasonings of the mind  
Turned inward; or at my request would sing  
Old songs, the product of his native hills;  
A skilful distribution of sweet sounds,  
Feeding the soul, and eagerly imbibed  
As cool refreshing water, by the care              70  
Of the industrious husbandman, diffused  
Through a parched meadow-ground, in time of drought.  
Still deeper welcome found his pure discourse;  
How precious, when in riper days I learned  
To weigh with care his words, and to rejoice  
In the plain presence of his dignity!

Oh! many are the Poets that are sown  
By Nature; men endowed with highest gifts,  
The vision and the faculty divine;  
Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse,              80  
(Which, in the docile season of their youth,  
It was denied them to acquire, through lack  
Of culture and the inspiring aid of books,

Or haply by a temper too severe,  
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame)  
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led  
By circumstance to take unto the height  
The measure of themselves, these favoured Beings,  
All but a scattered few, live out their time,  
Husbanding that which they possess within,                   90  
And go to the grave, unthought of. Strongest minds  
Are often those of whom the noisy world  
Hears least; else surely this Man had not left  
His graces unrevealed and unproclaimed.  
But, as the mind was filled with inward light,  
So not without distinction had he lived,  
Beloved and honoured--far as he was known.  
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,  
And something that may serve to set in view  
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,                   100  
His observations, and the thoughts his mind  
Had dealt with--I will here record in verse;  
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink  
Or rise as venerable Nature leads,  
The high and tender Muses shall accept  
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,  
And listening Time reward with sacred praise.

Among the hills of Athol he was born;  
Where, on a small hereditary farm,  
An unproductive slip of rugged ground,                   110  
His Parents, with their numerous offspring, dwelt;  
A virtuous household, though exceeding poor!  
Pure livers were they all, austere and grave,  
And fearing God; the very children taught  
Stern self-respect, a reverence for God's word,  
And an habitual piety, maintained  
With strictness scarcely known on English ground.

From his sixth year, the Boy of whom I speak,  
In summer, tended cattle on the hills;  
But, through the inclement and the perilous days           120  
Of long-continuing winter, he repaired,  
Equipped with satchel, to a school, that stood  
Sole building on a mountain's dreary edge,  
Remote from view of city spire, or sound  
Of minster clock! From that bleak tenement  
He, many an evening, to his distant home  
In solitude returning, saw the hills

Grow larger in the darkness; all alone  
Beheld the stars come out above his head,  
And travelled through the wood, with no one near      130  
To whom he might confess the things he saw.

So the foundations of his mind were laid.  
In such communion, not from terror free,  
While yet a child, and long before his time,  
Had he perceived the presence and the power  
Of greatness; and deep feelings had impressed  
So vividly great objects that they lay  
Upon his mind like substances, whose presence  
Perplexed the bodily sense. He had received  
A precious gift; for, as he grew in years,      140  
With these impressions would he still compare  
All his remembrances, thoughts, shapes, and forms;  
And, being still unsatisfied with aught  
Of dimmer character, he thence attained  
An active power to fasten images  
Upon his brain; and on their pictured lines  
Intensely brooded, even till they acquired  
The liveliness of dreams. Nor did he fail,  
While yet a child, with a child's eagerness  
Incessantly to turn his ear and eye      150  
On all things which the moving seasons brought  
To feed such appetite--nor this alone  
Appeased his yearning:--in the after-day  
Of boyhood, many an hour in caves forlorn,  
And 'mid the hollow depths of naked crags  
He sate, and even in their fixed lineaments,  
Or from the power of a peculiar eye,  
Or by creative feeling overborne,  
Or by predominance of thought oppressed,  
Even in their fixed and steady lineaments      160  
He traced an ebbing and a flowing mind,  
Expression ever varying!

Thus informed,  
He had small need of books; for many a tale  
Traditionary, round the mountains hung,  
And many a legend, peopling the dark woods,  
Nourished Imagination in her growth,  
And gave the Mind that apprehensive power  
By which she is made quick to recognise  
The moral properties and scope of things.  
But eagerly he read, and read again,      170  
Whate'er the minister's old shelf supplied;

The life and death of martyrs, who sustained,  
With will inflexible, those fearful pangs  
Triumphantly displayed in records left  
Of persecution, and the Covenant--times  
Whose echo rings through Scotland to this hour!  
And there, by lucky hap, had been preserved  
A straggling volume, torn and incomplete,  
That left half-told the preternatural tale,  
Romance of giants, chronicle of fiends,                   180  
Profuse in garniture of wooden cuts  
Strange and uncouth; dire faces, figures dire,  
Sharp-kneed, sharp-elbowed, and lean-ankled too,  
With long and ghostly shanks--forms which once seen  
Could never be forgotten!

                                  In his heart,  
Where Fear sate thus, a cherished visitant,  
Was wanting yet the pure delight of love  
By sound diffused, or by the breathing air,  
Or by the silent looks of happy things,  
Or flowing from the universal face                       190  
Of earth and sky. But he had felt the power  
Of Nature, and already was prepared,  
By his intense conceptions, to receive  
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he,  
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught  
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

Such was the Boy--but for the growing Youth  
What soul was his, when, from the naked top  
Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun  
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked--       200  
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth  
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay  
Beneath him:--Far and wide the clouds were touched,  
And in their silent faces could he read  
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,  
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank  
The spectacle: sensation, soul, and form,  
All melted into him; they swallowed up  
His animal being; in them did he live,  
And by them did he live; they were his life.           210  
In such access of mind, in such high hour  
Of visitation from the living God,  
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.  
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;  
Rapt into still communion that transcends

The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,  
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power  
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

A Herdsman on the lonely mountain tops,  
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort 220  
Was his existence oftentimes 'possessed'.

O then how beautiful, how bright, appeared  
The written promise! Early had he learned  
To reverence the volume that displays  
The mystery, the life which cannot die;  
But in the mountains did he 'feel' his faith.  
All things, responsive to the writing, there  
Breathed immortality, revolving life,  
And greatness still revolving; infinite:

There littleness was not; the least of things 230  
Seemed infinite; and there his spirit shaped  
Her prospects, nor did he believe,--he 'saw'.

What wonder if his being thus became  
Sublime and comprehensive! Low desires,  
Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart  
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,  
Oft as he called those ecstasies to mind,  
And whence they flowed; and from them he acquired  
Wisdom, which works through patience; thence he learned  
In oft-recurring hours of sober thought 240  
To look on Nature with a humble heart.  
Self-questioned where it did not understand,  
And with a superstitious eye of love.

So passed the time; yet to the nearest town  
He duly went with what small overplus  
His earnings might supply, and brought away  
The book that most had tempted his desires  
While at the stall he read. Among the hills  
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song,  
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind, 250  
The annual savings of a toilsome life,  
His Schoolmaster supplied; books that explain  
The purer elements of truth involved  
In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe,  
(Especially perceived where nature droops  
And feeling is suppressed) preserve the mind  
Busy in solitude and poverty.  
These occupations oftentimes deceived  
The listless hours, while in the hollow vale,

Hollow and green, he lay on the green turf                    260  
In pensive idleness. What could he do,  
Thus daily thirsting, in that lonesome life,  
With blind endeavours? Yet, still uppermost,  
Nature was at his heart as if he felt,  
Though yet he knew not how, a wasting power  
In all things that from her sweet influence  
Might tend to wean him. Therefore with her hues,  
Her forms, and with the spirit of her forms,  
He clothed the nakedness of austere truth.  
While yet he lingered in the rudiments                    270  
Of science, and among her simplest laws,  
His triangles--they were the stars of heaven,  
The silent stars! Oft did he take delight  
To measure the altitude of some tall crag  
That is the eagle's birth-place, or some peak  
Familiar with forgotten years, that shows,  
Inscribed upon its visionary sides,  
The history of many a winter storm,  
Or obscure records of the path of fire.

And thus before his eighteenth year was told,                    280  
Accumulated feelings pressed his heart  
With still increasing weight; he was o'er-powered  
By Nature; by the turbulence subdued  
Of his own mind; by mystery and hope,  
And the first virgin passion of a soul  
Communing with the glorious universe.  
Full often wished he that the winds might rage  
When they were silent: far more fondly now  
Than in his earlier season did he love  
Tempestuous nights--the conflict and the sounds                    290  
That live in darkness. From his intellect  
And from the stillness of abstracted thought  
He asked repose; and, failing oft to win  
The peace required, he scanned the laws of light  
Amid the roar of torrents, where they send  
From hollow clefts up to the clearer air  
A cloud of mist that, smitten by the sun,  
Varies its rainbow hues. But vainly thus,  
And vainly by all other means, he strove  
To mitigate the fever of his heart.                    300

In dreams, in study, and in ardent thought,  
Thus was he reared; much wanting to assist  
The growth of intellect, yet gaining more,



And every moral feeling of his soul  
Strengthened and braced, by breathing in content  
The keen, the wholesome, air of poverty,  
And drinking from the well of homely life.  
--But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,  
He now was summoned to select the course  
Of humble industry that promised best                   310  
To yield him no unworthy maintenance.  
Urged by his Mother, he essayed to teach  
A village-school--but wandering thoughts were then  
A misery to him; and the Youth resigned  
A task he was unable to perform.

That stern yet kindly Spirit, who constrains  
The Savoyard to quit his naked rocks,  
The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales,  
(Spirit attached to regions mountainous  
Like their own stedfast clouds) did now impel                   320  
His restless mind to look abroad with hope.  
--An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,  
Through hot and dusty ways, or pelting storm,  
A vagrant Merchant under a heavy load,  
Bent as he moves, and needing frequent rest;  
Yet do such travellers find their own delight;  
And their hard service, deemed debasing now  
Gained merited respect in simpler times;  
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt  
In rustic sequestration--all dependent                   330  
Upon the PEDLAR'S toil--supplied their wants,  
Or pleased their fancies, with the wares he brought.  
Not ignorant was the Youth that still no few  
Of his adventurous countrymen were led  
By perseverance in this track of life  
To competence and ease:--to him it offered  
Attractions manifold;--and this he chose.  
--His Parents on the enterprise bestowed  
Their farewell benediction, but with hearts  
Foreboding evil. From his native hills                   340  
He wandered far; much did he see of men,[1]  
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,  
Their passions and their feelings; chiefly those  
Essential and eternal in the heart,  
That, 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,  
Exist more simple in their elements,  
And speak a plainer language. In the woods,  
A lone Enthusiast, and among the fields,

Itinerant in this labour, he had passed  
 The better portion of his time; and there 350  
 Spontaneously had his affections thriven  
 Amid the bounties of the year, the peace  
 And liberty of nature; there he kept  
 In solitude and solitary thought  
 His mind in a just equipoise of love.  
 Serene it was, unclouded by the cares  
 Of ordinary life; unvexed, unwarped  
 By partial bondage. In his steady course,  
 No piteous revolutions had he felt,  
 No wild varieties of joy and grief. 360  
 Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,  
 His heart lay open; and, by nature tuned  
 And constant disposition of his thoughts  
 To sympathy with man, he was alive  
 To all that was enjoyed where'er he went,  
 And all that was endured; for, in himself  
 Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,  
 He had no painful pressure from without  
 That made him turn aside from wretchedness  
 With coward fears. He could 'afford' to suffer 370  
 With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came  
 That in our best experience he was rich,  
 And in the wisdom of our daily life.  
 For hence, minutely, in his various rounds,  
 He had observed the progress and decay  
 Of many minds, of minds and bodies too;  
 The history of many families;  
 How they had prospered; how they were o'erthrown  
 By passion or mischance, or such misrule  
 Among the unthinking masters of the earth 380  
 As makes the nations groan.

This active course  
 He followed till provision for his wants  
 Had been obtained;--the Wanderer then resolved  
 To pass the remnant of his days, untasked  
 With needless services, from hardship free.  
 His calling laid aside, he lived at ease:  
 But still he loved to pace the public roads  
 And the wild paths; and, by the summer's warmth  
 Invited, often would he leave his home  
 And journey far, revisiting the scenes 390  
 That to his memory were most endeared.  
 --Vigorous in health, of hopeful spirits, undamped  
 By worldly-mindedness or anxious care;

Observant, studious, thoughtful, and refreshed  
By knowledge gathered up from day to day;  
Thus had he lived a long and innocent life.

The Scottish Church, both on himself and those  
With whom from childhood he grew up, had held  
The strong hand of her purity; and still  
Had watched him with an unrelenting eye. 400

This he remembered in his riper age  
With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.  
But by the native vigour of his mind,  
By his habitual wanderings out of doors,  
By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,  
Whate'er, in docile childhood or in youth,  
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought  
Was melted all away; so true was this,  
That sometimes his religion seemed to me  
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods; 410  
Who to the model of his own pure heart  
Shaped his belief, as grace divine inspired,  
And human reason dictated with awe.

--And surely never did there live on earth  
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports  
And teasing ways of children vexed not him;  
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue  
Of garrulous age; nor did the sick man's tale,  
To his fraternal sympathy addressed,  
Obtain reluctant hearing.

Plain his garb; 420  
Such as might suit a rustic Sire, prepared  
For sabbath duties; yet he was a man  
Whom no one could have passed without remark.  
Active and nervous was his gait; his limbs  
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.  
Time had compressed the freshness of his cheek  
Into a narrower circle of deep red,  
But had not tamed his eye; that, under brows  
Shaggy and grey, had meanings which it brought  
From years of youth; which, like a Being made 430  
Of many Beings, he had wondrous skill  
To blend with knowledge of the years to come,  
Human, or such as lie beyond the grave.

---

So was He framed; and such his course of life  
Who now, with no appendage but a staff,

The prized memorial of relinquished toils,  
Upon that cottage-bench reposed his limbs,  
Screened from the sun. Supine the Wanderer lay,  
His eyes as if in drowsiness half shut,  
The shadows of the breezy elms above 440  
Dappling his face. He had not heard the sound  
Of my approaching steps, and in the shade  
Unnoticed did I stand some minutes' space.  
At length I hailed him, seeing that his hat  
Was moist with water-drops, as if the brim  
Had newly scooped a running stream. He rose,  
And ere our lively greeting into peace  
Had settled, "'Tis," said I, "a burning day:  
My lips are parched with thirst, but you, it seems  
Have somewhere found relief." He, at the word, 450  
Pointing towards a sweet-briar, bade me climb  
The fence where that aspiring shrub looked out  
Upon the public way. It was a plot  
Of garden ground run wild, its matted weeds  
Marked with the steps of those, whom, as they passed,  
The gooseberry trees that shot in long lank slips,  
Or currants, hanging from their leafless stems,  
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap  
The broken wall. I looked around, and there,  
Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs 460  
Joined in a cold damp nook, espied a well  
Shrouded with willow-flowers and plummy fern.  
My thirst I slaked, and, from the cheerless spot  
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade returned  
Where sate the old Man on the cottage-bench;  
And, while, beside him, with uncovered head,  
I yet was standing, freely to respire,  
And cool my temples in the fanning air,  
Thus did he speak. "I see around me here  
Things which you cannot see: we die, my Friend, 470  
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved  
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth  
Dies with him, or is changed; and very soon  
Even of the good is no memorial left.  
--The Poets, in their elegies and songs  
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,  
They call upon the hills and streams, to mourn,  
And senseless rocks; nor idly; for they speak,  
In these their invocations, with a voice  
Obedient to the strong creative power 480  
Of human passion. Sympathies there are

More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,  
 That steal upon the meditative mind,  
 And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,  
 And eyed its waters till we seemed to feel  
 One sadness, they and I. For them a bond  
 Of brotherhood is broken: time has been  
 When, every day, the touch of human hand  
 Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up  
 In mortal stillness; and they ministered 490  
 To human comfort. Stooping down to drink,  
 Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied  
 The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,  
 Green with the moss of years, and subject only  
 To the soft handling of the elements:  
 There let it lie--how foolish are such thoughts!  
 Forgive them;--never--never did my steps  
 Approach this door but she who dwelt within  
 A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her  
 As my own child. Oh, Sir! the good die first, 500  
 And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust  
 Burn to the socket. Many a passenger  
 Hath blessed poor Margaret for her gentle looks,  
 When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn  
 From that forsaken spring; and no one came  
 But he was welcome; no one went away  
 But that it seemed she loved him. She is dead,  
 The light extinguished of her lonely hut,  
 The hut itself abandoned to decay,  
 And she forgotten in the quiet grave. 550

I speak," continued he, "of One whose stock  
 Of virtues bloomed beneath this lonely roof.  
 She was a Woman of a steady mind,  
 Tender and deep in her excess of love;  
 Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy  
 Of her own thoughts: by some especial care  
 Her temper had been framed, as if to make  
 A Being, who by adding love to peace  
 Might live on earth a life of happiness.  
 Her wedded Partner lacked not on his side 560  
 The humble worth that satisfied her heart:  
 Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal  
 Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell  
 That he was often seated at his loom,  
 In summer, ere the mower was abroad  
 Among the dewy grass,--in early spring,

Ere the last star had vanished.--They who passed  
At evening, from behind the garden fence  
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,  
After his daily work, until the light 570  
Had failed, and every leaf and flower were lost  
In the dark hedges. So their days were spent  
In peace and comfort; and a pretty boy  
Was their best hope, next to the God in heaven.

Not twenty years ago, but you I think  
Can scarcely bear it now in mind, there came  
Two blighting seasons, when the fields were left  
With half a harvest. It pleased Heaven to add  
A worse affliction in the plague of war:  
This happy Land was stricken to the heart! 580  
A Wanderer then among the cottages,  
I, with my freight of winter raiment, saw  
The hardships of that season: many rich  
Sank down, as in a dream, among the poor;  
And of the poor did many cease to be,  
And their place knew them not. Meanwhile, abridged  
Of daily comforts, gladly reconciled  
To numerous self-denials, Margaret  
Went struggling on through those calamitous years  
With cheerful hope, until the second autumn, 590  
When her life's Helpmate on a sick-bed lay,  
Smitten with perilous fever. In disease  
He lingered long; and, when his strength returned,  
He found the little he had stored, to meet  
The hour of accident or crippling age,  
Was all consumed. A second infant now  
Was added to the troubles of a time  
Laden, for them and all of their degree,  
With care and sorrow; shoals of artisans  
From ill-requited labour turned adrift 600  
Sought daily bread from public charity,  
They, and their wives and children--happier far  
Could they have lived as do the little birds  
That peck along the hedge-rows, or the kite  
That makes her dwelling on the mountain rocks!

A sad reverse it was for him who long  
Had filled with plenty, and possessed in peace,  
This lonely Cottage. At the door he stood,  
And whistled many a snatch of merry tunes  
That had no mirth in them; or with his knife 610







Unutterably helpless, and a look  
That seemed to cling upon me, she enquired  
If I had seen her husband. As she spake  
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,  
Nor had I power to answer ere she told  
That he had disappeared--not two months gone. 700  
He left his house: two wretched days had past,  
And on the third, as wistfully she raised  
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,  
Like one in trouble, for returning light,  
Within her chamber-casement she espied  
A folded paper, lying as if placed  
To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly  
She opened--found no writing, but beheld  
Pieces of money carefully enclosed,  
Silver and gold. 'I shuddered at the sight,' 710  
Said Margaret, 'for I knew it was his hand  
That must have placed it there; and ere that day  
Was ended, that long anxious day, I learned,  
From one who by my husband had been sent  
With the sad news, that he had joined a troop  
Of soldiers, going to a distant land.  
--He left me thus--he could not gather heart  
To take a farewell of me; for he feared  
That I should follow with my babes, and sink  
Beneath the misery of that wandering life.' 720

This tale did Margaret tell with many tears:  
And, when she ended, I had little power  
To give her comfort, and was glad to take  
Such words of hope from her own mouth as served  
To cheer us both. But long we had not talked  
Ere we built up a pile of better thoughts,  
And with a brighter eye she looked around  
As if she had been shedding tears of joy.  
We parted.--'Twas the time of early spring;  
I left her busy with her garden tools; 730  
And well remember, o'er that fence she looked,  
And, while I paced along the foot-way path,  
Called out, and sent a blessing after me,  
With tender cheerfulness, and with a voice  
That seemed the very sound of happy thoughts.

I roved o'er many a hill and many a dale,  
With my accustomed load; in heat and cold,  
Through many a wood and many an open ground,

In sunshine and in shade, in wet and fair,  
Drooping or blithe of heart, as might befall;           740  
My best companions now the driving winds,  
And now the 'trotting brooks' and whispering trees,  
And now the music of my own sad steps,  
With many a short-lived thought that passed between,  
And disappeared.

    I journeyed back this way,  
When, in the warmth of midsummer, the wheat  
Was yellow; and the soft and bladed grass,  
Springing afresh, had o'er the hay-field spread  
Its tender verdure. At the door arrived,  
I found that she was absent. In the shade,           750  
Where now we sit, I waited her return.

Her cottage, then a cheerful object, wore  
Its customary look,--only, it seemed,  
The honeysuckle, crowding round the porch,  
Hung down in heavier tufts; and that bright weed,  
The yellow stone-crop, suffered to take root  
Along the window's edge, profusely grew,  
Blinding the lower panes. I turned aside,  
And strolled into her garden. It appeared  
To lag behind the season, and had lost           760  
Its pride of neatness. Daisy-flowers and thrift  
Had broken their trim border-lines, and straggled  
O'er paths they used to deck: carnations, once  
Prized for surpassing beauty, and no less  
For the peculiar pains they had required,  
Declined their languid heads, wanting support.  
The cumbrous bind-weed, with its wreaths and bells,  
Had twined about her two small rows of peas,  
And dragged them to the earth.

    Ere this an hour  
Was wasted.--Back I turned my restless steps;           770  
A stranger passed; and, guessing whom I sought,  
He said that she was used to ramble far.--  
The sun was sinking in the west; and now  
I sate with sad impatience. From within  
Her solitary infant cried aloud;  
Then, like a blast that dies away self-stilled,  
The voice was silent. From the bench I rose;  
But neither could divert nor soothe my thoughts.  
The spot, though fair, was very desolate--  
The longer I remained, more desolate:           780  
And, looking round me, now I first observed  
The corner stones, on either side the porch,

With dull red stains discoloured, and stuck o'er  
 With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,  
 That fed upon the Common, thither came  
 Familiarly, and found a couching-place  
 Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell  
 From these tall elms; the cottage-clock struck eight;--  
 I turned, and saw her distant a few steps.  
 Her face was pale and thin--her figure, too,                   790  
 Was changed. As she unlocked the door, she said,  
 'It grieves me you have waited here so long,  
 But, in good truth, I've wandered much of late;  
 And sometimes--to my shame I speak--have need  
 Of my best prayers to bring me back again.  
 While on the board she spread our evening meal,  
 She told me--interrupting not the work  
 Which gave employment to her listless hands--  
 That she had parted with her elder child;  
 To a kind master on a distant farm                               800  
 Now happily apprenticed.--'I perceive  
 You look at me, and you have cause; today  
 I have been travelling far; and many days  
 About the fields I wander, knowing this  
 Only, that what I seek I cannot find;  
 And so I waste my time: for I am changed;  
 And to myself,' said she, 'have done much wrong  
 And to this helpless infant. I have slept  
 Weeping, and weeping have I waked; my tears  
 Have flowed as if my body were not such                       810  
 As others are; and I could never die.  
 But I am now in mind and in my heart  
 More easy; and I hope,' said she, 'that God  
 Will give me patience to endure the things  
 Which I behold at home.'

                                  It would have grieved  
 Your very soul to see her. Sir, I feel  
 The story linger in my heart; I fear  
 'Tis long and tedious; but my spirit clings  
 To that poor Woman:--so familiarly  
 Do I perceive her manner, and her look,                       820  
 And presence; and so deeply do I feel  
 Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks  
 A momentary trance comes over me;  
 And to myself I seem to muse on One  
 By sorrow laid asleep; or borne away,  
 A human being destined to awake  
 To human life, or something very near

To human life, when he shall come again  
For whom she suffered. Yes, it would have grieved  
Your very soul to see her: evermore 830  
Her eyelids drooped, her eyes downward were cast;  
And, when she at her table gave me food,  
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,  
Her body was subdued. In every act  
Pertaining to her house-affairs, appeared  
The careless stillness of a thinking mind  
Self-occupied; to which all outward things  
Are like an idle matter. Still she sighed,  
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,  
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire 840  
We sate together, sighs came on my ear,  
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

Ere my departure, to her care I gave,  
For her son's use, some tokens of regard,  
Which with a look of welcome she received;  
And I exhorted her to place her trust  
In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.  
I took my staff, and, when I kissed her babe,  
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then  
With the best hope and comfort I could give: 850  
She thanked me for my wish;--but for my hope  
It seemed she did not thank me.

I returned,  
And took my rounds along this road again  
When on its sunny bank the primrose flower  
Peeped forth, to give an earnest of the Spring.  
I found her sad and drooping: she had learned  
No tidings of her husband; if he lived,  
She knew not that he lived; if he were dead,  
She knew not he was dead. She seemed the same  
In person and appearance; but her house 860  
Bespake a sleepy hand of negligence;  
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth  
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,  
Which, in the cottage-window, heretofore  
Had been piled up against the corner panes  
In seemly order, now, with stragglings leaves  
Lay scattered here and there, open or shut,  
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant Babe  
Had from his Mother caught the trick of grief,  
And sighed among its playthings. I withdrew, 870  
And once again entering the garden saw,

More plainly still, that poverty and grief  
Were now come nearer to her: weeds defaced  
The hardened soil, and knots of withered grass:  
No ridges there appeared of clear black mould,  
No winter greenness; of her herbs and flowers,  
It seemed the better part was gnawed away  
Or trampled into earth; a chain of straw,  
Which had been twined about the slender stem  
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root; 880  
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.

--Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,  
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,  
She said, 'I fear it will be dead and gone  
Ere Robert come again.' When to the House  
We had returned together, she enquired  
If I had any hope:--but for her babe  
And for her little orphan boy, she said,  
She had no wish to live, that she must die  
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom 890  
Still in its place; his Sunday garments hung  
Upon the self-same nail; his very staff  
Stood undisturbed behind the door.

And when,  
In bleak December, I retraced this way,  
She told me that her little babe was dead,  
And she was left alone. She now, released  
From her maternal cares, had taken up  
The employment common through these wilds, and gained,  
By spinning hemp, a pittance for herself;  
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy 900  
To give her needful help. That very time  
Most willingly she put her work aside,  
And walked with me along the miry road,  
Heedless how far; and, in such piteous sort  
That any heart had ached to hear her, begged  
That, wheresoe'er I went, I still would ask  
For him whom she had lost. We parted then--  
Our final parting; for from that time forth  
Did many seasons pass ere I returned  
Into this tract again.

Nine tedious years; 910  
From their first separation, nine long years,  
She lingered in unquiet widowhood;  
A Wife and Widow. Needs must it have been  
A sore heart-wasting! I have heard, my Friend,  
That in yon arbour oftentimes she sate

Alone, through half the vacant sabbath day;  
 And, if a dog passed by, she still would quit  
 The shade, and look abroad. On this old bench  
 For hours she sate; and evermore her eye  
 Was busy in the distance, shaping things           920  
 That made her heart beat quick. You see that path,  
 Now faint,--the grass has crept o'er its grey line;  
 There, to and fro, she paced through many a day  
 Of the warm summer, from a belt of hemp  
 That girt her waist, spinning the long-drawn thread  
 With backward steps. Yet ever as there passed  
 A man whose garments showed the soldier's red,  
 Or crippled mendicant in sailor's garb,  
 The little child who sate to turn the wheel  
 Ceased from his task; and she with faltering voice       930  
 Made many a fond enquiry; and when they,  
 Whose presence gave no comfort, were gone by,  
 Her heart was still more sad. And by yon gate,  
 That bars the traveller's road, she often stood,  
 And when a stranger horseman came, the latch  
 Would lift, and in his face look wistfully;  
 Most happy, if, from aught discovered there  
 Of tender feeling, she might dare repeat  
 The same sad question. Meanwhile her poor Hut  
 Sank to decay; for he was gone, whose hand,           940  
 At the first nipping of October frost,  
 Closed up each chink, and with fresh bands of straw  
 Chequered the green-grown thatch. And so she lived  
 Through the long winter, reckless and alone;  
 Until her house by frost, and thaw, and rain,  
 Was sapped; and while she slept, the nightly damps  
 Did chill her breast; and in the stormy day  
 Her tattered clothes were ruffled by the wind,  
 Even at the side of her own fire. Yet still  
 She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds       950  
 Have parted hence; and still that length of road,  
 And this rude bench, one torturing hope endeared,  
 Fast rooted at her heart: and here, my Friend,--  
 In sickness she remained; and here she died;  
 Last human tenant of these ruined walls!"

The old Man ceased: he saw that I was moved;  
 From that low bench, rising instinctively  
 I turned aside in weakness, nor had power  
 To thank him for the tale which he had told.  
 I stood, and leaning o'er the garden wall           960

Reviewed that Woman's sufferings; and it seemed  
To comfort me while with a brother's love  
I blessed her in the impotence of grief.  
Then towards the cottage I returned; and traced  
Fondly, though with an interest more mild,  
That secret spirit of humanity  
Which, 'mid the calm oblivious tendencies  
Of nature, 'mid her plants, and weeds, and flowers,  
And silent overgrowings, still survived.  
The old Man, noting this, resumed, and said,           970  
"My Friend! enough to sorrow you have given,  
The purposes of wisdom ask no more:  
Nor more would she have craved as due to One  
Who, in her worst distress, had oftentimes felt  
The unbounded might of prayer; and learned, with soul  
Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs,  
From sources deeper far than deepest pain,  
For the meek Sufferer. Why then should we read  
The forms of things with an unworthy eye?  
She sleeps in the calm earth, and peace is here.           980  
I well remember that those very plumes,  
Those weeds, and the high spear-grass on that wall,  
By mist and silent rain-drops silvered o'er,  
As once I passed, into my heart conveyed  
So still an image of tranquillity,  
So calm and still, and looked so beautiful  
Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind,  
That what we feel of sorrow and despair  
From ruin and from change, and all the grief  
That passing shows of Being leave behind,           990  
Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain,  
Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit  
Whose meditative sympathies repose  
Upon the breast of Faith. I turned away,  
And walked along my road in happiness."

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot  
A slant and mellow radiance, which began  
To fall upon us, while, beneath the trees,  
We sate on that low bench: and now we felt,  
Admonished thus, the sweet hour coming on.           1000  
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,  
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,  
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.  
The old Man rose, and, with a sprightly mien  
Of hopeful preparation, grasped his staff;

Together casting then a farewell look  
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade;  
And, ere the stars were visible, had reached  
A village-inn,--our evening resting-place.

## Book Two: The Solitary

IN days of yore how fortunately fared  
The Minstrel! wandering on from hall to hall,  
Baronial court or royal; cheered with gifts  
Munificent, and love, and ladies' praise;  
Now meeting on his road an armed knight,  
Now resting with a pilgrim by the side  
Of a clear brook;--beneath an abbey's roof  
One evening sumptuously lodged; the next,  
Humbly in a religious hospital;  
Or with some merry outlaws of the wood;                   10  
Or haply shrouded in a hermit's cell.  
Him, sleeping or awake, the robber spared;  
He walked--protected from the sword of war  
By virtue of that sacred instrument  
His harp, suspended at the traveller's side;  
His dear companion wheresoe'er he went  
Opening from land to land an easy way  
By melody, and by the charm of verse.  
Yet not the noblest of that honoured Race  
Drew happier, loftier, more empassioned, thoughts           20  
From his long journeyings and eventful life,  
Than this obscure Itinerant had skill  
To gather, ranging through the tamer ground  
Of these our unimaginative days;  
Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise  
Accoutred with his burthen and his staff;  
And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite school  
Hath been the fields, the roads, and rural lanes,  
Looked on this guide with reverential love?                   30  
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued  
Our journey, under favourable skies.  
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light  
Unfailing: not a hamlet could we pass,  
Rarely a house, that did not yield to him  
Remembrances; or from his tongue call forth  
Some way-beguiling tale. Nor less regard



Accompanied those strains of apt discourse,  
Which nature's various objects might inspire;  
And in the silence of his face I read 40  
His overflowing spirit. Birds and beasts,  
And the mute fish that glances in the stream,  
And harmless reptile coiling in the sun,  
And gorgeous insect hovering in the air,  
The fowl domestic, and the household dog--  
In his capacious mind, he loved them all:  
Their rights acknowledging he felt for all.  
Oft was occasion given me to perceive  
How the calm pleasures of the pasturing herd  
To happy contemplation soothed his walk; 50  
How the poor brute's condition, forced to run  
Its course of suffering in the public road,  
Sad contrast! all too often smote his heart  
With unavailing pity. Rich in love  
And sweet humanity, he was, himself,  
To the degree that he desired, beloved.  
Smiles of good-will from faces that he knew  
Greeted us all day long; we took our seats  
By many a cottage-hearth, where he received  
The welcome of an Inmate from afar, 60  
And I at once forgot, I was a Stranger.  
--Nor was he loth to enter ragged huts,  
Huts where his charity was blest; his voice  
Heard as the voice of an experienced friend.  
And, sometimes--where the poor man held dispute  
With his own mind, unable to subdue  
Impatience through inaptness to perceive  
General distress in his particular lot;  
Or cherishing resentment, or in vain  
Struggling against it; with a soul perplexed, 70  
And finding in herself no steady power  
To draw the line of comfort that divides  
Calamity, the chastisement of Heaven,  
From the injustice of our brother men--  
To him appeal was made as to a judge;  
Who, with an understanding heart, allayed  
The perturbation; listened to the plea;  
Resolved the dubious point; and sentence gave  
So grounded, so applied, that it was heard  
With softened spirit, even when it condemned. 80

Such intercourse I witnessed, while we roved,  
Now as his choice directed, now as mine;

Or both, with equal readiness of will,  
Our course submitting to the changeful breeze  
Of accident. But when the rising sun  
Had three times called us to renew our walk,  
My Fellow-traveller, with earnest voice,  
As if the thought were but a moment old,  
Claimed absolute dominion for the day.  
We started--and he led me toward the hills,                   90  
Up through an ample vale, with higher hills  
Before us, mountains stern and desolate;  
But, in the majesty of distance, now  
Set off, and to our ken appearing fair  
Of aspect, with aerial softness clad,  
And beautified with morning's purple beams.

The wealthy, the luxurious, by the stress  
Of business roused, or pleasure, ere their time,  
May roll in chariots, or provoke the hoofs  
Of the fleet coursers they bestride, to raise                   100  
From earth the dust of morning, slow to rise;  
And they, if blest with health and hearts at ease,  
Shall lack not their enjoyment:--but how faint  
Compared with ours! who, pacing side by side,  
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all  
That we beheld; and lend the listening sense  
To every grateful sound of earth and air;  
Pausing at will--our spirits braced, our thoughts  
Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,  
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.                   110

Mount slowly, sun! that we may journey long,  
By this dark hill protected from thy beams!  
Such is the summer pilgrim's frequent wish;  
But quickly from among our morning thoughts  
'Twas chased away: for, toward the western side  
Of the broad vale, casting a casual glance,  
We saw a throng of people; wherefore met?  
Blithe notes of music, suddenly let loose  
On the thrilled ear, and flags uprising, yield                   120  
Prompt answer; they proclaim the annual Wake,  
Which the bright season favours.--Tabor and pipe  
In purpose join to hasten or reprove  
The laggard Rustic; and repay with boons  
Of merriment a party-coloured knot,  
Already formed upon the village-green.  
--Beyond the limits of the shadow cast

By the broad hill, glistened upon our sight  
That gay assemblage. Round them and above,  
Glitter, with dark recesses interposed,  
Casement, and cottage-roof, and stems of trees                   130  
Half-veiled in vapoury cloud, the silver steam  
Of dews fast melting on their leafy boughs  
By the strong sunbeams smitten. Like a mast  
Of gold, the Maypole shines; as if the rays  
Of morning, aided by exhaling dew,  
With gladsome influence could re-animate  
The faded garlands dangling from its sides.

Said I, "The music and the sprightly scene  
Invite us; shall we quit our road, and join  
These festive matins?"--He replied, "Not loth                   140  
To linger I would here with you partake,  
Not one hour merely, but till evening's close,  
The simple pastimes of the day and place.  
By the fleet Racers, ere the sun be set,  
The turf of yon large pasture will be skimmed;  
There, too, the lusty Wrestlers shall contend:  
But know we not that he, who intermits  
The appointed task and duties of the day,  
Untunes full oft the pleasures of the day;  
Checking the finer spirits that refuse                   150  
To flow when purposes are lightly changed?  
A length of journey yet remains untraced:  
Let us proceed." Then, pointing with his staff  
Raised toward those craggy summits, his intent  
He thus imparted:--

                  "In a spot that lies  
Among yon mountain fastnesses concealed,  
You will receive, before the hour of noon,  
Good recompense, I hope, for this day's toil,  
From sight of One who lives secluded there,  
Lonesome and lost: of whom, and whose past life,                   160  
(Not to forestall such knowledge as may be  
More faithfully collected from himself)  
This brief communication shall suffice.

Though now sojourning there, he, like myself,  
Sprang from a stock of lowly parentage  
Among the wilds of Scotland, in a tract  
Where many a sheltered and well-tended plant,  
Bears, on the humblest ground of social life,  
Blossoms of piety and innocence.

Such grateful promises his youth displayed: 170  
And, having shown in study forward zeal,  
He to the Ministry was duly called;  
And straight, incited by a curious mind  
Filled with vague hopes, he undertook the charge  
Of Chaplain to a military troop  
Cheered by the Highland bagpipe, as they marched  
In plaided vest,--his fellow-countrymen.  
This office filling, yet by native power  
And force of native inclination made  
An intellectual ruler in the haunts 180  
Of social vanity, he walked the world,  
Gay, and affecting graceful gaiety;  
Lax, buoyant--less a pastor with his flock  
Than a soldier among soldiers--lived and roamed  
Where Fortune led:--and Fortune, who oft proves  
The careless wanderer's friend, to him made known  
A blooming Lady--a conspicuous flower,  
Admired for beauty, for her sweetness praised;  
Whom he had sensibility to love,  
Ambition to attempt, and skill to win. 190

For this fair Bride, most rich in gifts of mind,  
Nor sparingly endowed with worldly wealth,  
His office he relinquished; and retired  
From the world's notice to a rural home.  
Youth's season yet with him was scarcely past,  
And she was in youth's prime. How free their love,  
How full their joy! 'Till, pitiable doom!  
In the short course of one undreaded year  
Death blasted all. Death suddenly o'erthrew  
Two lovely Children--all that they possessed! 200  
The Mother followed:--miserably bare  
The one Survivor stood; he wept, he prayed  
For his dismissal, day and night, compelled  
To hold communion with the grave, and face  
With pain the regions of eternity.  
An uncomplaining apathy displaced  
This anguish; and, indifferent to delight,  
To aim and purpose, he consumed his days,  
To private interest dead, and public care.  
So lived he; so he might have died.

But now, 210  
To the wide world's astonishment, appeared  
A glorious opening, the unlooked-for dawn,  
That promised everlasting joy to France!

Her voice of social transport reached even him!  
He broke from his contracted bounds, repaired  
To the great City, an emporium then  
Of golden expectations, and receiving  
Freights every day from a new world of hope.  
Thither his popular talents he transferred;  
And, from the pulpit, zealously maintained           220  
The cause of Christ and civil liberty,  
As one, and moving to one glorious end.  
Intoxicating service! I might say  
A happy service; for he was sincere  
As vanity and fondness for applause,  
And new and shapeless wishes, would allow.

That righteous cause (such power hath freedom) bound,  
For one hostility, in friendly league,  
Ethereal natures and the worst of slaves;  
Was served by rival advocates that came           230  
From regions opposite as heaven and hell.  
One courage seemed to animate them all:  
And, from the dazzling conquests daily gained  
By their united efforts, there arose  
A proud and most presumptuous confidence  
In the transcendent wisdom of the age,  
And her discernment; not alone in rights,  
And in the origin and bounds of power  
Social and temporal; but in laws divine,  
Deduced by reason, or to faith revealed.           240  
An overweening trust was raised; and fear  
Cast out, alike of person and of thing.  
Plague from this union spread, whose subtle bane  
The strongest did not easily escape;  
And He, what wonder! took a mortal taint.  
How shall I trace the change, how bear to tell  
That he broke faith with them whom he had laid  
In earth's dark chambers, with a Christian's hope!  
An infidel contempt of holy writ  
Stole by degrees upon his mind; and hence           250  
Life, like that Roman Janus, double-faced;  
Vilest hypocrisy--the laughing, gay  
Hypocrisy, not leagued with fear, but pride.  
Smooth words he had to wheedle simple souls;  
But, for disciples of the inner school,  
Old freedom was old servitude, and they  
The wisest whose opinions stooped the least  
To known restraints; and who most boldly drew

Hopeful prognostications from a creed,  
That, in the light of false philosophy,                   260  
Spread like a halo round a misty moon,  
Widening its circle as the storms advance.

His sacred function was at length renounced;  
And every day and every place enjoyed  
The unshackled layman's natural liberty;  
Speech, manners, morals, all without disguise.  
I do not wish to wrong him; though the course  
Of private life licentiously displayed  
Unhallowed actions--planted like a crown  
Upon the insolent aspiring brow                                 270

Of spurious notions--worn as open signs  
Of prejudice subdued--still he retained,  
'Mid much abasement, what he had received  
From nature, an intense and glowing mind.  
Wherefore, when humbled Liberty grew weak,  
And mortal sickness on her face appeared,  
He coloured objects to his own desire  
As with a lover's passion. Yet his moods  
Of pain were keen as those of better men,  
Nay keener, as his fortitude was less:                         280

And he continued, when worse days were come,  
To deal about his sparkling eloquence,  
Struggling against the strange reverse with zeal  
That showed like happiness. But, in despite  
Of all this outside bravery, within,  
He neither felt encouragement nor hope:  
For moral dignity, and strength of mind,  
Were wanting; and simplicity of life;  
And reverence for himself; and, last and best,  
Confiding thoughts, through love and fear of Him             290  
Before whose sight the troubles of this world  
Are vain, as billows in a tossing sea.

The glory of the times fading away--  
The splendour, which had given a festal air  
To self-importance, hallowed it, and veiled  
From his own sight--this gone, he forfeited  
All joy in human nature; was consumed,  
And vexed, and chafed, by levity and scorn,  
And fruitless indignation; galled by pride;  
Made desperate by contempt of men who throve             300  
Before his sight in power or fame, and won,  
Without desert, what he desired; weak men,

Too weak even for his envy or his hate!  
Tormented thus, after a wandering course  
Of discontent, and inwardly opprest  
With malady--in part, I fear, provoked  
By weariness of life--he fixed his home,  
Or, rather say, sate down by very chance,  
Among these rugged hills; where now he dwells,  
And wastes the sad remainder of his hours, 310  
Steeped in a self-indulging spleen, that wants not  
Its own voluptuousness;--on this resolved,  
With this content, that he will live and die  
Forgotten,--at safe distance from 'a world  
Not moving to his mind."

These serious words  
Closed the preparatory notices  
That served my Fellow-traveller to beguile  
The way, while we advanced up that wide vale.  
Diverging now (as if his quest had been 320  
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall  
Of water, or some lofty eminence,  
Renowned for splendid prospect far and wide)  
We scaled, without a track to ease our steps,  
A steep ascent; and reached a dreary plain,  
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill tops  
Before us; savage region! which I paced  
Dispirited: when, all at once, behold!  
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,  
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high 330  
Among the mountains; even as if the spot  
Had been from eldest time by wish of theirs  
So placed, to be shut out from all the world!  
Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn;  
With rocks encompassed, save that to the south  
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge  
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close;  
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,  
A liquid pool that glittered in the sun,  
And one bare dwelling; one abode, no more!  
It seemed the home of poverty and toil, 340  
Though not of want: the little fields, made green  
By husbandry of many thrifty years,  
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.  
--There crows the cock, single in his domain:  
The small birds find in spring no thicket there  
To shroud them; only from the neighbouring vales  
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,

Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

Ah! what a sweet Recess, thought I, is here!  
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease 350  
Upon a bed of heath;--full many a spot  
Of hidden beauty have I chanced to espy  
Among the mountains; never one like this;  
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure;  
Not melancholy--no, for it is green,  
And bright, and fertile, furnished in itself  
With the few needful things that life requires.  
--In rugged arms how softly does it lie,  
How tenderly protected! Far and near  
We have an image of the pristine earth, 360  
The planet in its nakedness: were this  
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,  
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,  
It could not be more quiet; peace is here  
Or nowhere; days unruffled by the gale  
Of public news or private; years that pass  
Forgetfully; uncalled upon to pay  
The common penalties of mortal life,  
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.

On these and kindred thoughts intent I lay 370  
In silence musing by my Comrade's side,  
He also silent; when from out the heart  
Of that profound abyss a solemn voice,  
Or several voices in one solemn sound,  
Was heard ascending; mournful, deep, and slow  
The cadence, as of psalms--a funeral dirge!  
We listened, looking down upon the hut,  
But seeing no one: meanwhile from below  
The strain continued, spiritual as before;  
And now distinctly could I recognise 380  
These words:--"Shall in the grave thy love be known,  
In death thy faithfulness?"--"God rest his soul!"  
Said the old man, abruptly breaking silence,--  
"He is departed, and finds peace at last!"

This scarcely spoken, and those holy strains  
Not ceasing, forth appeared in view a band  
Of rustic persons, from behind the hut  
Bearing a coffin in the midst, with which  
They shaped their course along the sloping side  
Of that small valley, singing as they moved; 390



A sober company and few, the men  
Bare-headed, and all decently attired!  
Some steps when they had thus advanced, the dirge  
Ended; and, from the stillness that ensued  
Recovering, to my Friend I said, "You spake,  
Methought, with apprehension that these rites  
Are paid to Him upon whose shy retreat  
This day we purposed to intrude."--"I did so,  
But let us hence, that we may learn the truth:  
Perhaps it is not he but some one else                   400  
For whom this pious service is performed;  
Some other tenant of the solitude."

So, to a steep and difficult descent  
Trusting ourselves, we wound from crag to crag,  
Where passage could be won; and, as the last  
Of the mute train, behind the heathy top  
Of that off-sloping outlet, disappeared,  
I, more impatient in my downward course,  
Had landed upon easy ground; and there  
Stood waiting for my Comrade. When behold                   410  
An object that enticed my steps aside!  
A narrow, winding, entry opened out  
Into a platform--that lay, sheepfold-wise,  
Enclosed between an upright mass of rock  
And one old moss-grown wall;--a cool recess,  
And fanciful! For where the rock and wall  
Met in an angle, hung a penthouse, framed  
By thrusting two rude staves into the wall  
And overlaying them with mountain sods;  
To weather-fend a little turf-built seat                   420  
Whereon a full-grown man might rest, nor dread  
The burning sunshine, or a transient shower;  
But the whole plainly wrought by children's hands!  
Whose skill had thronged the floor with a proud show  
Of baby-houses, curiously arranged;  
Nor wanting ornament of walks between,  
With mimic trees inserted in the turf,  
And gardens interposed. Pleased with the sight,  
I could not choose but beckon to my Guide,  
Who, entering, round him threw a careless glance,                   430  
Impatient to pass on, when I exclaimed,  
"Lo! what is here?" and, stooping down, drew forth  
A book, that, in the midst of stones and moss  
And wreck of party-coloured earthen-ware,  
Aptly disposed, had lent its help to raise

One of those petty structures. "His it must be!"  
Exclaimed the Wanderer, "cannot but be his,  
And he is gone!" The book, which in my hand  
Had opened of itself (for it was swoln  
With searching damp, and seemingly had lain 440  
To the injurious elements exposed  
From week to week,) I found to be a work  
In the French tongue, a Novel of Voltaire,  
His famous Optimist. "Unhappy Man!"  
Exclaimed my Friend: "here then has been to him  
Retreat within retreat, a sheltering-place  
Within how deep a shelter! He had fits,  
Even to the last, of genuine tenderness,  
And loved the haunts of children: here, no doubt,  
Pleasing and pleased, he shared their simple sports, 450  
Or sate companionless; and here the book,  
Left and forgotten in his careless way,  
Must by the cottage-children have been found:  
Heaven bless them, and their inconsiderate work!  
To what odd purpose have the darlings turned  
This sad memorial of their hapless friend!"

"Me," said I, "most doth it surprise, to find  
Such book in such a place!"--"A book it is,"  
He answered, "to the Person suited well,  
Though little suited to surrounding things: 460  
'Tis strange, I grant; and stranger still had been  
To see the Man who owned it, dwelling here,  
With one poor shepherd, far from all the world!--  
Now, if our errand hath been thrown away,  
As from these intimations I forebode,  
Grieved shall I be--less for my sake than yours,  
And least of all for him who is no more."

By this, the book was in the old Man's hand;  
And he continued, glancing on the leaves  
An eye of scorn:--"The lover," said he, "doomed 470  
To love when hope hath failed him--whom no depth  
Of privacy is deep enough to hide,  
Hath yet his bracelet or his lock of hair,  
And that is joy to him. When change of times  
Hath summoned kings to scaffolds, do but give  
The faithful servant, who must hide his head  
Henceforth in whatsoever nook he may,  
A kerchief sprinkled with his master's blood,  
And he too hath his comforter. How poor,

Beyond all poverty how destitute, 480  
Must that Man have been left, who, hither driven,  
Flying or seeking, could yet bring with him  
No dearer relique, and no better stay,  
Than this dull product of a scoffer's pen,  
Impure conceits discharging from a heart  
Hardened by impious pride!--I did not fear  
To tax you with this journey;"--mildly said  
My venerable Friend, as forth we stepped  
Into the presence of the cheerful light--  
"For I have knowledge that you do not shrink 490  
From moving spectacles;--but let us on."

So speaking, on he went, and at the word  
I followed, till he made a sudden stand:  
For full in view, approaching through a gate  
That opened from the enclosure of green fields  
Into the rough uncultivated ground,  
Behold the Man whom he had fancied dead!  
I knew from his deportment, mien, and dress,  
That it could be no other; a pale face,  
A meagre person, tall, and in a garb 500  
Not rustic--dull and faded like himself!  
He saw us not, though distant but few steps;  
For he was busy, dealing, from a store  
Upon a broad leaf carried, choicest strings  
Of red ripe currants; gift by which he strove,  
With intermixture of endearing words,  
To soothe a Child, who walked beside him, weeping  
As if disconsolate.--"They to the grave  
Are bearing him, my Little-one," he said,  
"To the dark pit; but he will feel no pain; 510  
His body is at rest, his soul in heaven."

More might have followed--but my honoured Friend  
Broke in upon the Speaker with a frank  
And cordial greeting.--Vivid was the light  
That flashed and sparkled from the other's eyes;  
He was all fire: no shadow on his brow  
Remained, nor sign of sickness on his face.  
Hands joined he with his Visitant,--a grasp,  
An eager grasp; and many moments' space--  
When the first glow of pleasure was no more, 520  
And, of the sad appearance which at once  
Had vanished, much was come and coming back--  
An amicable smile retained the life



Ashes to ashes, dust bequeathed to dust,  
 Is raised from the church-aisle, and forward borne      570  
 Upon the shoulders of the next in love,  
 The nearest in affection or in blood;  
 Yea, by the very mourners who had knelt  
 Beside the coffin, resting on its lid  
 In silent grief their unuplifted heads,  
 And heard meanwhile the Psalmist's mournful plaint,  
 And that most awful scripture which declares  
 We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed!  
 --Have I not seen--ye likewise may have seen--  
 Son, husband, brothers--brothers side by side,      580  
 And son and father also side by side,  
 Rise from that posture:--and in concert move,  
 On the green turf following the vested Priest,  
 Four dear supporters of one senseless weight,  
 From which they do not shrink, and under which  
 They faint not, but advance towards the open grave  
 Step after step--together, with their firm  
 Unhidden faces: he that suffers most,  
 He outwardly, and inwardly perhaps,  
 The most serene, with most undaunted eye!--      590  
 Oh! blest are they who live and die like these,  
 Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourned!"

"That poor Man taken hence to-day," replied  
 The Solitary, with a faint sarcastic smile  
 Which did not please me, "must be deemed, I fear,  
 Of the unblest; for he will surely sink  
 Into his mother earth without such pomp  
 Of grief, depart without occasion given  
 By him for such array of fortitude.  
 Full seventy winters hath he lived, and mark!      600  
 This simple Child will mourn his one short hour,  
 And I shall miss him: scanty tribute! yet,  
 This wanting, he would leave the sight of men,  
 If love were his sole claim upon their care,  
 Like a ripe date which in the desert falls  
 Without a hand to gather it."

At this  
 I interposed, though loth to speak, and said,  
 "Can it be thus among so small a band  
 As ye must needs be here? in such a place  
 I would not willingly, methinks, lose sight      610  
 Of a departing cloud."--"Twas not for love"--  
 Answered the sick Man with a careless voice--

"That I came hither; neither have I found  
Among associates who have power of speech,  
Nor in such other converse as is here,  
Temptation so prevailing as to change  
That mood, or undermine my first resolve."  
Then, speaking in like careless sort, he said  
To my benign Companion,--"Pity 'tis  
That fortune did not guide you to this house           620  
A few days earlier; then would you have seen  
What stuff the Dwellers in a solitude,  
That seems by Nature hollowed out to be  
The seat and bosom of pure innocence,

Are made of; an ungracious matter this!  
Which, for truth's sake, yet in remembrance too  
Of past discussions with this zealous friend  
And advocate of humble life, I now  
Will force upon his notice; undeterred  
By the example of his own pure course,           630  
And that respect and deference which a soul  
May fairly claim, by niggard age enriched  
In what she most doth value, love of God  
And his frail creature Man;--but ye shall hear.  
I talk--and ye are standing in the sun  
Without refreshment!"

                    Quickly had he spoken,  
And, with light steps still quicker than his words,  
Led toward the Cottage. Homely was the spot;  
And, to my feeling, ere we reached the door,  
Had almost a forbidding nakedness;           640  
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,  
Than it appeared when from the beetling rock  
We had looked down upon it. All within,  
As left by the departed company,  
Was silent; save the solitary clock  
That on mine ear ticked with a mournful sound.--  
Following our Guide we clomb the cottage-stairs  
And reached a small apartment dark and low,  
Which was no sooner entered than our Host  
Said gaily, "This is my domain, my cell,           650  
My hermitage, my cabin, what you will--  
I love it better than a snail his house.  
But now ye shall be feasted with our best."

So, with more ardour than an unripe girl  
Left one day mistress of her mother's stores,

He went about his hospitable task.  
My eyes were busy, and my thoughts no less,  
And pleased I looked upon my grey-haired Friend,  
As if to thank him; he returned that look,  
Cheered, plainly, and yet serious. What a wreck           660  
Had we about us! scattered was the floor,  
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,  
With books, maps, fossils, withered plants and flowers,  
And tufts of mountain moss. Mechanic tools  
Lay intermixed with scraps of paper, some  
Scribbled with verse: a broken angling-rod  
And shattered telescope, together linked  
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook;  
And instruments of music, some half-made,  
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.           670  
But speedily the promise was fulfilled;  
A feast before us, and a courteous Host  
Inviting us in glee to sit and eat.  
A napkin, white as foam of that rough brook  
By which it had been bleached, o'erspread the board;  
And was itself half-covered with a store  
Of dainties,--oaten bread, curd, cheese, and cream;  
And cakes of butter curiously embossed,  
Butter that had imbibed from meadow-flowers  
A golden hue, delicate as their own           680  
Faintly reflected in a lingering stream.  
Nor lacked, for more delight on that warm day,  
Our table, small parade of garden fruits,  
And whortle-berries from the mountain side.  
The Child, who long ere this had stilled his sobs,  
Was now a help to his late comforter,  
And moved, a willing Page, as he was bid,  
Ministering to our need.

                  In genial mood,  
While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate  
Fronting the window of that little cell,           690  
I could not, ever and anon, forbear  
To glance an upward look on two huge Peaks  
That from some other vale peered into this.  
"Those lusty twins," exclaimed our host, "if here  
It were your lot to dwell, would soon become  
Your prized companions.--Many are the notes  
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth  
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;  
And well those lofty brethren bear their part  
In the wild concert--chiefly when the storm           700

Rides high; then all the upper air they fill  
With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow,  
Like smoke, along the level of the blast,  
In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song  
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;  
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,  
Methinks that I have heard them echo back  
The thunder's greeting. Nor have nature's laws  
Left them ungifted with a power to yield  
Music of finer tone; a harmony, 710  
So do I call it, though it be the hand  
Of silence, though there be no voice;--the clouds,  
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,  
Motions of moonlight, all come thither--touch,  
And have an answer--thither come, and shape  
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts  
And idle spirits:--there the sun himself,  
At the calm close of summer's longest day,  
Rests his substantial orb;--between those heights  
And on the top of either pinnacle, 720  
More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,  
Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.  
Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man  
Than the mute agents stirring there:--alone  
Here do I sit and watch----"

A fall of voice,

Regretted like the nightingale's last note,  
Had scarcely closed this high-wrought strain of rapture  
Ere with inviting smile the Wanderer said:  
"Now for the tale with which you threatened us!"  
"In truth the threat escaped me unawares: 730  
Should the tale tire you, let this challenge stand  
For my excuse. Dissevered from mankind,  
As to your eyes and thoughts we must have seemed  
When ye looked down upon us from the crag,  
Islanders 'mid a stormy mountain sea,  
We are not so;--perpetually we touch  
Upon the vulgar ordinances of the world;  
And he, whom this our cottage hath to-day  
Relinquished, lived dependent for his bread  
Upon the laws of public charity. 740  
The Housewife, tempted by such slender gains  
As might from that occasion be distilled,  
Opened, as she before had done for me,  
Her doors to admit this homeless Pensioner;  
The portion gave of coarse but wholesome fare



Which appetite required--a blind dull nook,  
 Such as she had, the 'kennel' of his rest!  
 This, in itself not ill, would yet have been  
 Ill borne in earlier life; but his was now  
 The still contentedness of seventy years. 750  
 Calm did he sit under the wide-spread tree  
 Of his old age: and yet less calm and meek,  
 Winningly meek or venerably calm,  
 Than slow and torpid; paying in this wise  
 A penalty, if penalty it were,  
 For spendthrift feats, excesses of his prime.  
 I loved the old Man, for I pitied him!  
 A task it was, I own, to hold discourse  
 With one so slow in gathering up his thoughts,  
 But he was a cheap pleasure to my eyes; 760  
 Mild, inoffensive, ready in 'his' way,  
 And helpful to his utmost power: and there  
 Our housewife knew full well what she possessed!  
 He was her vassal of all labour, tilled  
 Her garden, from the pasture fetched her kine;  
 And, one among the orderly array  
 Of hay-makers, beneath the burning sun  
 Maintained his place; or heedfully pursued  
 His course, on errands bound, to other vales,  
 Leading sometimes an inexperienced child 770  
 Too young for any profitable task.  
 So moved he like a shadow that performed  
 Substantial service. Mark me now, and learn  
 For what reward!--The moon her monthly round  
 Hath not completed since our dame, the queen  
 Of this one cottage and this lonely dale,  
 Into my little sanctuary rushed--  
 Voice to a rueful treble humanized,  
 And features in deplorable dismay.  
 I treat the matter lightly, but, alas! 780  
 It is most serious: persevering rain  
 Had fallen in torrents; all the mountain tops  
 Were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides;  
 This had I seen, and saw; but, till she spake,  
 Was wholly ignorant that my ancient Friend--  
 Who at her bidding, early and alone,  
 Had clomb aloft to delve the moorland turf  
 For winter fuel--to his noontide meal  
 Returned not, and now, haply, on the heights  
 Lay at the mercy of this raging storm. 790  
 'Inhuman!--said I 'was an old Man's life

Not worth the trouble of a thought?--alas!  
This notice comes too late.' With joy I saw  
Her husband enter--from a distant vale.  
We sallied forth together; found the tools  
Which the neglected veteran had dropped,  
But through all quarters looked for him in vain.  
We shouted--but no answer! Darkness fell  
Without remission of the blast or shower,  
And fears for our own safety drove us home. 800

I, who weep little, did, I will confess,  
The moment I was seated here alone,  
Honour my little cell with some few tears  
Which anger and resentment could not dry.  
All night the storm endured; and, soon as help  
Had been collected from the neighbouring vale,  
With morning we renewed our quest: the wind  
Was fallen, the rain abated, but the hills  
Lay shrouded in impenetrable mist;  
And long and hopelessly we sought in vain: 810  
Till, chancing on that lofty ridge to pass  
A heap of ruin--almost without walls  
And wholly without roof (the bleached remains  
Of a small chapel, where, in ancient time,  
The peasants of these lonely valleys used  
To meet for worship on that central height)--  
We there espied the object of our search,  
Lying full three parts buried among tufts  
Of heath-plant, under and above him strewn,  
To baffle, as he might, the watery storm: 820  
And there we found him breathing peaceably,  
Snug as a child that hides itself in sport  
'Mid a green hay-cock in a sunny field.  
We spake--he made reply, but would not stir  
At our entreaty; less from want of power  
Than apprehension and bewildering thoughts.

So was he lifted gently from the ground,  
And with their freight homeward the shepherds moved  
Through the dull mist, I following--when a step,  
A single step, that freed me from the skirts 830  
Of the blind vapour, opened to my view  
Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!  
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city--boldly say

A wilderness of building, sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,  
Far sinking into splendour--without end!  
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes, and silver spires, 840  
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high  
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright,  
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt  
With battlements that on their restless fronts  
Bore stars--illumination of all gems!  
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought  
Upon the dark materials of the storm  
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves  
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto  
The vapours had receded, taking there 850  
Their station under a cerulean sky.  
Oh, 'twas an unimaginable sight!  
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks and emerald turf,  
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,  
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,  
Molten together, and composing thus,  
Each lost in each, that marvellous array  
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge  
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,  
In fleecy folds voluminous, enwrapped. 860  
Right in the midst, where interspace appeared  
Of open court, an object like a throne  
Under a shining canopy of state  
Stood fixed; and fixed resemblances were seen  
To implements of ordinary use,  
But vast in size, in substance glorified;  
Such as by Hebrew Prophets were beheld  
In vision--forms uncouth of mightiest power  
For admiration and mysterious awe.  
This little Vale, a dwelling-place of Man, 870  
Lay low beneath my feet; 'twas visible--  
I saw not, but I felt that it was there.  
That which I 'saw' was the revealed abode  
Of Spirits in beatitude: my heart  
Swelled in my breast--'I have been dead,' I cried,  
'And now I live! Oh! wherefore 'do' I live?'  
And with that pang I prayed to be no more!--  
--But I forget our Charge, as utterly  
I then forgot him:--there I stood and gazed:  
The apparition faded not away, 880  
And I descended.

Having reached the house,  
I found its rescued inmate safely lodged,  
And in serene possession of himself,  
Beside a fire whose genial warmth seemed met  
By a faint shining from the heart, a gleam,  
Of comfort, spread over his pallid face.  
Great show of joy the housewife made, and truly  
Was glad to find her conscience set at ease;  
And not less glad, for sake of her good name,  
That the poor Sufferer had escaped with life. 890  
But, though he seemed at first to have received  
No harm, and uncomplaining as before  
Went through his usual tasks, a silent change  
Soon showed itself: he lingered three short weeks;  
And from the cottage hath been borne to-day.

So ends my dolorous tale, and glad I am  
That it is ended." At these words he turned--  
And, with blithe air of open fellowship,  
Brought from the cupboard wine and stouter cheer,  
Like one who would be merry. Seeing this, 900  
My grey-haired Friend said courteously--"Nay, nay,  
You have regaled us as a hermit ought;  
Now let us forth into the sun!"--Our Host  
Rose, though reluctantly, and forth we went.

### Book Three: Despondency

A HUMMING BEE--a little tinkling rill--  
A pair of falcons wheeling on the wing,  
In clamorous agitation, round the crest  
Of a tall rock, their airy citadel--  
By each and all of these the pensive ear  
Was greeted, in the silence that ensued,  
When through the cottage-threshold we had passed,  
And, deep within that lonesome valley, stood  
Once more beneath the concave of a blue  
And cloudless sky.--Anon exclaimed our Host-- 10  
Triumphantly dispersing with the taunt  
The shade of discontent which on his brow  
Had gathered,--"Ye have left my cell,--but see  
How Nature hems you in with friendly arms!  
And by her help ye are my prisoners still.  
But which way shall I lead you?--how contrive,  
In spot so parsimoniously endowed,  
That the brief hours, which yet remain, may reap

Some recompense of knowledge or delight?"  
So saying, round he looked, as if perplexed; 20  
And, to remove those doubts, my grey-haired Friend  
Said--"Shall we take this pathway for our guide?--  
Upward it winds, as if, in summer heats,  
Its line had first been fashioned by the flock  
Seeking a place of refuge at the root  
Of yon black Yew-tree, whose protruded boughs  
Darken the silver bosom of the crag,  
From which she draws her meagre sustenance.  
There in commodious shelter may we rest.  
Or let us trace this streamlet to its source; 30  
Feebly it tinkles with an earthy sound,  
And a few steps may bring us to the spot  
Where, haply, crowned with flowerets and green herbs,  
The mountain infant to the sun comes forth,  
Like human life from darkness."--A quick turn  
Through a strait passage of encumbered ground,  
Proved that such hope was vain:--for now we stood  
Shut out from prospect of the open vale,  
And saw the water, that composed this rill,  
Descending, disembodied, and diffused 40  
O'er the smooth surface of an ample crag,  
Lofty, and steep, and naked as a tower.  
All further progress here was barred;--And who,  
Thought I, if master of a vacant hour,  
Here would not linger, willingly detained?  
Whether to such wild objects he were led  
When copious rains have magnified the stream  
Into a loud and white-robed waterfall,  
Or introduced at this more quiet time.

Upon a semicirque of turf-clad ground, 50  
The hidden nook discovered to our view  
A mass of rock, resembling, as it lay  
Right at the foot of that moist precipice,  
A stranded ship, with keel upturned, that rests  
Fearless of winds and waves. Three several stones  
Stood near, of smaller size, and not unlike  
To monumental pillars: and, from these  
Some little space disjoined a pair were seen,  
That with united shoulders bore aloft  
A fragment, like an altar, flat and smooth: 60  
Barren the tablet, yet thereon appeared  
A tall and shining holly, that had found  
A hospitable chink, and stood upright,

As if inserted by some human hand  
In mockery, to wither in the sun,  
Or lay its beauty flat before a breeze,  
The first that entered. But no breeze did now  
Find entrance;--high or low appeared no trace  
Of motion, save the water that descended,  
Diffused adown that barrier of steep rock, 70  
And softly creeping, like a breath of air,  
Such as is sometimes seen, and hardly seen,  
To brush the still breast of a crystal lake.

"Behold a cabinet for sages built,  
Which kings might envy!"--Praise to this effect  
Broke from the happy old Man's reverend lip;  
Who to the Solitary turned, and said,  
"In sooth, with love's familiar privilege,  
You have decried the wealth which is your own.  
Among these rocks and stones, methinks, I see 80  
More than the heedless impress that belongs  
To lonely nature's casual work: they bear  
A semblance strange of power intelligent,  
And of design not wholly worn away.  
Boldest of plants that ever faced the wind,  
How gracefully that slender shrub looks forth  
From its fantastic birth-place! And I own,  
Some shadowy intimations haunt me here,  
That in these shows a chronicle survives  
Of purposes akin to those of Man, 90  
But wrought with mightier arm than now prevails.  
--Voiceless the stream descends into the gulf  
With timid lapse;--and lo! while in this strait  
I stand--the chasm of sky above my head  
Is heaven's profoundest azure; no domain  
For fickle, short-lived clouds to occupy,  
Or to pass through; but rather an abyss  
In which the everlasting stars abide;  
And whose soft gloom, and boundless depth, might tempt  
The curious eye to look for them by day. 100  
--Hail Contemplation! from the stately towers,  
Reared by the industrious hand of human art  
To lift thee high above the misty air  
And turbulence of murmuring cities vast;  
From academic groves, that have for thee  
Been planted, hither come and find a lodge  
To which thou mayst resort for holier peace,--  
From whose calm centre thou, through height or depth,



That an appearance which hath raised your minds  
 To an exalted pitch (the self-same cause  
 Different effect producing) is for me  
 Fraught rather with depression than delight,  
 Though shame it were, could I not look around,  
 By the reflection of your pleasure, pleased.  
 Yet happier in my judgment, even than you  
 With your bright transports fairly may be deemed, 160  
 The wandering Herbalist,--who, clear alike  
 From vain, and, that worse evil, vexing thoughts,  
 Casts, if he ever chance to enter here,  
 Upon these uncouth Forms a slight regard  
 Of transitory interest, and peeps round  
 For some rare floweret of the hills, or plant  
 Of craggy fountain; what he hopes for wins,  
 Or learns, at least, that 'tis not to be won:  
 Then, keen and eager, as a fine-nosed hound,  
 By soul-engrossing instinct driven along 170  
 Through wood or open field, the harmless Man  
 Departs, intent upon his onward quest!--  
 Nor is that Fellow-wanderer, so deem I,  
 Less to be envied, (you may trace him oft  
 By scars which his activity has left  
 Beside our roads and pathways, though, thank Heaven!  
 This covert nook reports not of his hand)  
 He who with pocket-hammer smites the edge  
 Of luckless rock or prominent stone, disguised 180  
 In weather-stains or crusted o'er by Nature  
 With her first growths, detaching by the stroke  
 A chip or splinter--to resolve his doubts;  
 And, with that ready answer satisfied,  
 The substance classes by some barbarous name,  
 And hurries on; or from the fragments picks  
 His specimen, if but haply interveined  
 With sparkling mineral, or should crystal cube  
 Lurk in its cells--and thinks himself enriched,  
 Wealthier, and doubtless wiser, than before!  
 Intrusted safely each to his pursuit, 190  
 Earnest alike, let both from hill to hill  
 Range; if it please them, speed from clime to clime;  
 The mind is full--and free from pain their pastime."

"Then," said I, interposing, "One is near,  
 Who cannot but possess in your esteem  
 Place worthier still of envy. May I name,  
 Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy?



Dame Nature's pupil of the lowest form,  
Youngest apprentice in the school of art!  
Him, as we entered from the open glen, 200  
You might have noticed, busily engaged,  
Heart, soul, and hands,--in mending the defects  
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam  
Raised for enabling this penurious stream  
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)  
For his delight--the happiest he of all!"

"Far happiest," answered the desponding Man,  
"If such as now he is, he might remain!  
Ah! what avails imagination high 210  
Or question deep? what profits all that earth,  
Or heaven's blue vault, is suffered to put forth  
Of impulse or allurement, for the Soul  
To quit the beaten track of life, and soar  
Far as she finds a yielding element  
In past or future; far as she can go  
Through time or space--if neither in the one,  
Nor in the other region, nor in aught  
That Fancy, dreaming o'er the map of things,  
Hath placed beyond these penetrable bounds, 220  
Words of assurance can be heard; if nowhere  
A habitation, for consummate good,  
Or for progressive virtue, by the search  
Can be attained,--a better sanctuary  
From doubt and sorrow, than the senseless grave?"

"Is this," the grey-haired Wanderer mildly said,  
"The voice, which we so lately overheard,  
To that same child, addressing tenderly  
The consolations of a hopeful mind?  
'His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.'  
These were your words; and, verily, methinks 230  
Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop  
Than when we soar."--

The Other, not displeased,  
Promptly replied--"My notion is the same.  
And I, without reluctance, could decline  
All act of inquisition whence we rise,  
And what, when breath hath ceased, we may become.  
Here are we, in a bright and breathing world.  
Our origin, what matters it? In lack  
Of worthier explanation, say at once  
With the American (a thought which suits 240

The place where now we stand) that certain men  
Leapt out together from a rocky cave;  
And these were the first parents of mankind:  
Or, if a different image be recalled  
By the warm sunshine, and the jocund voice  
Of insects chirping out their careless lives  
On these soft beds of thyme-besprinkled turf,  
Choose, with the gay Athenian, a conceit  
As sound--blithe race! whose mantles were bedecked  
With golden grasshoppers, in sign that they 250  
Had sprung, like those bright creatures, from the soil  
Whereon their endless generations dwelt.  
But stop!--these theoretic fancies jar  
On serious minds: then, as the Hindoos draw  
Their holy Ganges from a skiey fount,  
Even so deduce the stream of human life  
From seats of power divine; and hope, or trust,  
That our existence winds her stately course  
Beneath the sun, like Ganges, to make part  
Of a living ocean; or, to sink engulfed, 260  
Like Niger, in impenetrable sands  
And utter darkness: thought which may be faced,  
Though comfortless!--

Not of myself I speak;  
Such acquiescence neither doth imply,  
In me, a meekly-bending spirit soothed  
By natural piety; nor a lofty mind,  
By philosophic discipline prepared  
For calm subjection to acknowledged law;  
Pleased to have been, contented not to be.  
Such palms I boast not;--no! to me, who find 270  
Reviewing my past way, much to condemn,  
Little to praise, and nothing to regret,  
(Save some remembrances of dream-like joys  
That scarcely seem to have belonged to me)  
If I must take my choice between the pair  
That rule alternately the weary hours,  
Night is than day more acceptable; sleep  
Doth, in my estimate of good, appear  
A better state than waking; death than sleep:  
Feelingly sweet is stillness after storm, 280  
Though under covert of the wormy ground!

Yet be it said, in justice to myself,  
That in more genial times, when I was free  
To explore the destiny of human kind

(Not as an intellectual game pursued  
 With curious subtilty, from wish to cheat  
 Irsome sensations; but by love of truth  
 Urged on, or haply by intense delight  
 In feeding thought, wherever thought could feed)  
 I did not rank with those (too dull or nice,                   290  
 For to my judgment such they then appeared,  
 Or too aspiring, thankless at the best)  
 Who, in this frame of human life, perceive  
 An object whereunto their souls are tied  
 In discontented wedlock; nor did e'er,  
 From me, those dark impervious shades, that hang  
 Upon the region whither we are bound,  
 Exclude a power to enjoy the vital beams  
 Of present sunshine.--Deities that float  
 On wings, angelic Spirits! I could muse                   300  
 O'er what from eldest time we have been told  
 Of your bright forms and glorious faculties,  
 And with the imagination rest content,  
 Not wishing more; repining not to tread  
 The little sinuous path of earthly care,  
 By flowers embellished, and by springs refreshed.  
 --'Blow winds of autumn!--let your chilling breath  
 'Take the live herbage from the mead, and strip  
 'The shady forest of its green attire,--  
 'And let the bursting clouds to fury rouse                   310  
 'The gentle brooks!--Your desolating sway,  
 'Sheds,' I exclaimed, 'no sadness upon me,  
 'And no disorder in your rage I find.  
 'What dignity, what beauty, in this change  
 'From mild to angry, and from sad to gay,  
 'Alternate and revolving! How benign,  
 'How rich in animation and delight,  
 'How bountiful these elements--compared  
 'With aught, as more desirable and fair,                   320  
 'Devised by fancy for the golden age;  
 'Or the perpetual warbling that prevails  
 'In Arcady, beneath unaltered skies,  
 'Through the long year in constant quiet bound,  
 'Night hushed as night, and day serene as day!  
 --But why this tedious record?--Age, we know  
 Is garrulous; and solitude is apt  
 To anticipate the privilege of Age,  
 From far ye come; and surely with a hope  
 Of better entertainment:--let us hence!"

Loth to forsake the spot, and still more loth 330  
To be diverted from our present theme,  
I said, "My thoughts, agreeing, Sir, with yours,  
Would push this censure farther;--for, if smiles  
Of scornful pity be the just reward  
Of Poesy thus courteously employed  
In framing models to improve the scheme  
Of Man's existence, and recast the world,  
Why should not grave Philosophy be styled,  
Herself, a dreamer of a kindred stock,  
A dreamer yet more spiritless and dull? 340  
Yes, shall the fine immunities she boasts  
Establish sounder titles of esteem  
For her, who (all too timid and reserved  
For onset, for resistance too inert,  
Too weak for suffering, and for hope too tame)  
Placed, among flowery gardens curtained round  
With world-excluding groves, the brotherhood  
Of soft Epicureans, taught--if they  
The ends of being would secure, and win  
The crown of wisdom--to yield up their souls 350  
To a voluptuous unconcern, preferring  
Tranquillity to all things. Or is she,"  
I cried, "more worthy of regard, the Power,  
Who, for the sake of sterner quiet, closed  
The Stoic's heart against the vain approach  
Of admiration, and all sense of joy?"

His countenance gave notice that my zeal  
Accorded little with his present mind;  
I ceased, and he resumed.--"Ah! gentle Sir,  
Slight, if you will, the 'means'; but spare to slight 360  
The 'end' of those, who did, by system, rank,  
As the prime object of a wise man's aim,  
Security from shock of accident,  
Release from fear; and cherished peaceful days  
For their own sakes, as mortal life's chief good,  
And only reasonable felicity.  
What motive drew, what impulse, I would ask,  
Through a long course of later ages, drove,  
The hermit to his cell in forest wide;  
Or what detained him, till his closing eyes 370  
Took their last farewell of the sun and stars,  
Fast anchored in the desert?--Not alone  
Dread of the persecuting sword, remorse,  
Wrongs unredressed, or insults unavenged

And unavengeable, defeated pride,  
Prosperity subverted, maddening want,  
Friendship betrayed, affection unreturned,  
Love with despair, or grief in agony;--  
Not always from intolerable pangs  
He fled; but, compassed round by pleasure, sighed       380  
For independent happiness; craving peace,  
The central feeling of all happiness,  
Not as a refuge from distress or pain,  
A breathing-time, vacation, or a truce,  
But for its absolute self; a life of peace,  
Stability without regret or fear;  
That hath been, is, and shall be evermore!--  
Such the reward he sought; and wore out life,  
There, where on few external things his heart  
Was set, and those his own; or, if not his,       390  
Subsisting under nature's stedfast law.

What other yearning was the master tie  
Of the monastic brotherhood, upon rock  
Aerial, or in green secluded vale,  
One after one, collected from afar,  
An undissolving fellowship?--What but this,  
The universal instinct of repose,  
The longing for confirmed tranquillity,  
Inward and outward; humble, yet sublime:  
The life where hope and memory are as one;       400  
Where earth is quiet and her face unchanged  
Save by the simplest toil of human hands  
Or seasons' difference; the immortal Soul  
Consistent in self-rule; and heaven revealed  
To meditation in that quietness!--  
Such was their scheme: and though the wished-for end  
By multitudes was missed, perhaps attained  
By none, they for the attempt, and pains employed,  
Do, in my present censure, stand redeemed  
From the unqualified disdain, that once       410  
Would have been cast upon them by my voice  
Delivering her decisions from the seat  
Of forward youth--that scruples not to solve  
Doubts, and determine questions, by the rules  
Of inexperienced judgment, ever prone  
To overweening faith; and is inflamed,  
By courage, to demand from real life  
The test of act and suffering, to provoke  
Hostility--how dreadful when it comes,

Whether affliction be the foe, or guilt! 420

A child of earth, I rested, in that stage  
Of my past course to which these thoughts advert,  
Upon earth's native energies; forgetting  
That mine was a condition which required  
Nor energy, nor fortitude--a calm  
Without vicissitude; which, if the like  
Had been presented to my view elsewhere,  
I might have even been tempted to despise.  
But no--for the serene was also bright;  
Enlivened happiness with joy o'erflowing, 430  
With joy, and--oh! that memory should survive  
To speak the word--with rapture! Nature's boon,  
Life's genuine inspiration, happiness  
Above what rules can teach, or fancy feign;  
Abused, as all possessions 'are' abused  
That are not prized according to their worth.  
And yet, what worth? what good is given to men,  
More solid than the gilded clouds of heaven?  
What joy more lasting than a vernal flower?--  
None! 'tis the general plaint of human kind 440  
In solitude: and mutually addressed  
From each to all, for wisdom's sake:--This truth  
The priest announces from his holy seat:  
And, crowned with garlands in the summer grove,  
The poet fits it to his pensive lyre.  
Yet, ere that final resting-place be gained,  
Sharp contradictions may arise, by doom  
Of this same life, compelling us to grieve  
That the prosperities of love and joy  
Should be permitted, oft-times, to endure 450  
So long, and be at once cast down for ever.  
Oh! tremble, ye, to whom hath been assigned  
A course of days composing happy months,  
And they as happy years; the present still  
So like the past, and both so firm a pledge  
Of a congenial future, that the wheels  
Of pleasure move without the aid of hope:  
For Mutability is Nature's bane;  
And slighted Hope 'will' be avenged; and, when  
Ye need her favours, ye shall find her not; 460  
But in her stead--fear--doubt--and agony!"

This was the bitter language of the heart:



Of gay companions, to the natal roof,  
 And all known places and familiar sights  
 (Resigned with sadness gently weighing down  
 Her trembling expectations, but no more 510  
 Than did to her due honour, and to me  
 Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime  
 In what I had to build upon)--this Bride,  
 Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led  
 To a low cottage in a sunny bay,  
 Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,  
 And the sea breeze as innocently breathes,  
 On Devon's leafy shores;--a sheltered hold,  
 In a soft clime encouraging the soil  
 To a luxuriant bounty!--As our steps 520  
 Approach the embowered abode--our chosen seat--  
 See, rooted in the earth, her kindly bed,  
 The unendangered myrtle, decked with flowers,  
 Before the threshold stands to welcome us!  
 While, in the flowering myrtle's neighbourhood,  
 Not overlooked but courting no regard,  
 Those native plants, the holly and the yew,  
 Gave modest intimation to the mind  
 How willingly their aid they would unite  
 With the green myrtle, to endear the hours 530  
 Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.  
 --Wild were the walks upon those lonely Downs,  
 Track leading into track; how marked, how worn  
 Into bright verdure, between fern and gorse  
 Winding away its never-ending line  
 On their smooth surface, evidence was none;  
 But, there, lay open to our daily haunt,  
 A range of unappropriated earth,  
 Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large;  
 Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld 540  
 The shining giver of the day diffuse  
 His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land  
 Gay as our spirits, free as our desires;  
 As our enjoyments, boundless.--From those heights  
 We dropped, at pleasure, into sylvan combs;  
 Where arbours of impenetrable shade,  
 And mossy seats, detained us side by side,  
 With hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts  
 'That all the grove and all the day was ours.'  
  
 O happy time! still happier was at hand; 550  
 For Nature called my Partner to resign



Her share in the pure freedom of that life,  
Enjoyed by us in common.--To my hope,  
To my heart's wish, my tender Mate became  
The thankful captive of maternal bonds;  
And those wild paths were left to me alone.  
There could I meditate on follies past;  
And, like a weary voyager escaped  
From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace  
A course of vain delights and thoughtless guilt,       560  
And self-indulgence--without shame pursued.  
There, undisturbed, could think of and could thank  
Her whose submissive spirit was to me  
Rule and restraint--my guardian--shall I say  
That earthly Providence, whose guiding love  
Within a port of rest had lodged me safe;  
Safe from temptation, and from danger far?  
Strains followed of acknowledgment addressed  
To an authority enthroned above  
The reach of sight; from whom, as from their source       570  
Proceed all visible ministers of good  
That walk the earth--Father of heaven and earth,  
Father, and king, and judge, adored and feared!  
These acts of mind, and memory, and heart,  
And spirit--interrupted and relieved  
By observations transient as the glance  
Of flying sunbeams, or to the outward form  
Cleaving with power inherent and intense,  
As the mute insect fixed upon the plant  
On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup       580  
It draws its nourishment imperceptibly--  
Endeared my wanderings; and the mother's kiss  
And infant's smile awaited my return.

In privacy we dwelt, a wedded pair,  
Companions daily, often all day long;  
Not placed by fortune within easy reach  
Of various intercourse, nor wishing aught  
Beyond the allowance of our own fire-side,  
The twain within our happy cottage born,  
Inmates, and heirs of our united love;       590  
Graced mutually by difference of sex,  
And with no wider interval of time  
Between their several births than served for one  
To establish something of a leader's sway;  
Yet left them joined by sympathy in age;  
Equals in pleasure, fellows in pursuit.

On these two pillars rested as in air  
Our solitude.

    It soothes me to perceive,  
Your courtesy withholds not from my words  
Attentive audience. But, oh! gentle Friends,           600  
As times of quiet and unbroken peace,  
Though, for a nation, times of blessedness,  
Give back faint echoes from the historian's page;  
So, in the imperfect sounds of this discourse,  
Depressed I hear, how faithless is the voice  
Which those most blissful days reverberate.  
What special record can, or need, be given  
To rules and habits, whereby much was done,  
But all within the sphere of little things;  
Of humble, though, to us, important cares,           610  
And precious interests? Smoothly did our life  
Advance, swerving not from the path prescribed;  
Her annual, her diurnal, round alike!  
Maintained with faithful care. And you divine  
The worst effects that our condition saw  
If you imagine changes slowly wrought,  
And in their progress unperceivable;  
Not wished for; sometimes noticed with a sigh,  
(Whate'er of good or lovely they might bring)  
Sighs of regret, for the familiar good           620  
And loveliness endeared which they removed.

    Seven years of occupation undisturbed  
Established seemingly a right to hold  
That happiness; and use and habit gave,  
To what an alien spirit had acquired,  
A patrimonial sanctity. And thus,  
With thoughts and wishes bounded to this world,  
I lived and breathed; most grateful--if to enjoy  
Without repining or desire for more,  
For different lot, or change to higher sphere,           630  
(Only except some impulses of pride  
With no determined object, though upheld  
By theories with suitable support)--  
Most grateful, if in such wise to enjoy  
Be proof of gratitude for what we have;  
Else, I allow, most thankless.--But, at once,  
From some dark seat of fatal power was urged  
A claim that shattered all.--Our blooming girl,  
Caught in the gripe of death, with such brief time  
To struggle in as scarcely would allow           640

Her cheek to change its colour, was conveyed  
From us to inaccessible worlds, to regions  
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach  
Of living man, though longing to pursue.  
--With even as brief a warning--and how soon,  
With what short interval of time between,  
I tremble yet to think of--our last prop,  
Our happy life's only remaining stay--  
The brother followed; and was seen no more!

Calm as a frozen lake when ruthless winds                   650  
Blow fiercely, agitating earth and sky,  
The Mother now remained; as if in her,  
Who, to the lowest region of the soul,  
Had been erewhile unsettled and disturbed,  
This second visitation had no power  
To shake; but only to bind up and seal;  
And to establish thankfulness of heart  
In Heaven's determinations, ever just.  
The eminence whereon her spirit stood,  
Mine was unable to attain. Immense                   660  
The space that severed us! But, as the sight  
Communicates with heaven's ethereal orbs  
Incalculably distant; so, I felt  
That consolation may descend from far  
(And that is intercourse, and union, too,)  
While, overcome with speechless gratitude,  
And, with a holier love inspired, I looked  
On her--at once superior to my woes  
And partner of my loss.--O heavy change,  
Dimness o'er this clear luminary crept                   670  
Insensibly;--the immortal and divine  
Yielded to mortal reflux; her pure glory,  
As from the pinnacle of worldly state  
Wretched ambition drops astounded, fell  
Into a gulf obscure of silent grief,  
And keen heart-anguish--of itself ashamed,  
Yet obstinately cherishing itself:  
And, so consumed, she melted from my arms;  
And left me, on this earth, disconsolate!

What followed cannot be reviewed in thought;                   680  
Much less, retraced in words. If she, of life  
Blameless, so intimate with love and joy  
And all the tender motions of the soul,  
Had been supplanted, could I hope to stand--

Infirm, dependent, and now destitute?  
I called on dreams and visions, to disclose  
That which is veiled from waking thought; conjured  
Eternity, as men constrain a ghost  
To appear and answer; to the grave I spake  
Imploringly;--looked up, and asked the Heavens 690  
If Angels traversed their cerulean floors,  
If fixed or wandering star could tidings yield  
Of the departed spirit--what abode  
It occupies--what consciousness retains  
Of former loves and interests. Then my soul  
Turned inward,--to examine of what stuff  
Time's fetters are composed; and life was put  
To inquisition, long and profitless!  
By pain of heart--now checked--and now impelled--  
The intellectual power, through words and things, 700  
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way!  
And from those transports, and these toils abstruse,  
Some trace am I enabled to retain  
Of time, else lost;--existing unto me  
Only by records in myself not found.

From that abstraction I was roused,--and how?  
Even as a thoughtful shepherd by a flash  
Of lightning startled in a gloomy cave  
Of these wild hills. For, lo! the dread Bastile,  
With all the chambers in its horrid towers, 710  
Fell to the ground:--by violence overthrown  
Of indignation; and with shouts that drowned  
The crash it made in falling! From the wreck  
A golden palace rose, or seemed to rise,  
The appointed seat of equitable law  
And mild paternal sway. The potent shock  
I felt: the transformation I perceived,  
As marvellously seized as in that moment  
When, from the blind mist issuing, I beheld  
Glory--beyond all glory ever seen, 720  
Confusion infinite of heaven and earth,  
Dazzling the soul. Meanwhile, prophetic harps  
In every grove were ringing, 'War shall cease;  
'Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured?  
'Bring garlands, bring forth choicest flowers, to deck  
'The tree of Liberty.'--My heart rebounded;  
My melancholy voice the chorus joined;  
--'Be joyful all ye nations; in all lands,  
'Ye that are capable of joy be glad!

'Henceforth, whate'er is wanting to yourselves           730  
'In others ye shall promptly find;--and all,  
'Enriched by mutual and reflected wealth,  
'Shall with one heart honour their common kind.'

Thus was I reconverted to the world;  
Society became my glittering bride,  
And airy hopes my children.--From the depths  
Of natural passion, seemingly escaped,  
My soul diffused herself in wide embrace  
Of institutions, and the forms of things;  
As they exist, in mutable array,                               740  
Upon life's surface. What, though in my veins  
There flowed no Gallic blood, nor had I breathed  
The air of France, not less than Gallic zeal  
Kindled and burnt among the sapless twigs  
Of my exhausted heart. If busy men  
In sober conclave met, to weave a web  
Of amity, whose living threads should stretch  
Beyond the seas, and to the farthest pole,  
There did I sit, assisting. If, with noise  
And acclamation, crowds in open air                               750  
Expressed the tumult of their minds, my voice  
There mingled, heard or not. The powers of song  
I left not uninvoked; and, in still groves,  
Where mild enthusiasts tuned a pensive lay  
Of thanks and expectation, in accord  
With their belief, I sang Saturnian rule  
Returned,--a progeny of golden years  
Permitted to descend, and bless mankind.  
--With promises the Hebrew Scriptures teem:  
I felt their invitation; and resumed                               760  
A long-suspended office in the House  
Of public worship, where, the glowing phrase  
Of ancient inspiration serving me,  
I promised also,--with undaunted trust  
Foretold, and added prayer to prophecy;  
The admiration winning of the crowd;  
The help desiring of the pure devout.

Scorn and contempt forbid me to proceed!  
But History, time's slavish scribe, will tell                       770  
How rapidly the zealots of the cause  
Disbanded--or in hostile ranks appeared;  
Some, tired of honest service; these, outdone,  
Disgusted therefore, or appalled, by aims

Of fiercer zealots--so confusion reigned,  
And the more faithful were compelled to exclaim,  
As Brutus did to Virtue, 'Liberty,  
'I worshipped thee, and find thee but a Shade!'

Such recantation had for me no charm,  
Nor would I bend to it; who should have grieved  
At aught, however fair, that bore the mien                   780  
Of a conclusion, or catastrophe.

Why then conceal, that, when the simply good  
In timid selfishness withdrew, I sought  
Other support, not scrupulous whence it came;  
And, by what compromise it stood, not nice?  
Enough if notions seemed to be high-pitched,  
And qualities determined.--Among men  
So charactered did I maintain a strife  
Hopeless, and still more hopeless every hour;  
But, in the process, I began to feel                   790

That, if the emancipation of the world  
Were missed, I should at least secure my own,  
And be in part compensated. For rights,  
Widely--inveterately usurped upon,  
I spake with vehemence; and promptly seized  
All that Abstraction furnished for my needs  
Or purposes, nor scrupled to proclaim,  
And propagate, by liberty of life,  
Those new persuasions. Not that I rejoiced,  
Or even found pleasure, in such vagrant course,                   800  
For its own sake; but farthest from the walk  
Which I had trod in happiness and peace,  
Was most inviting to a troubled mind;  
That, in a struggling and distempered world,  
Saw a seductive image of herself.

Yet, mark the contradictions of which Man  
Is still the sport! Here Nature was my guide,  
The Nature of the dissolute; but thee,  
O fostering Nature! I rejected--smiled  
At others' tears in pity; and in scorn                   810  
At those, which thy soft influence sometimes drew  
From my unguarded heart.--The tranquil shores  
Of Britain circumscribed me; else, perhaps  
I might have been entangled among deeds,  
Which, now, as infamous, I should abhor--  
Despise, as senseless: for my spirit relished  
Strangely the exasperation of that Land,  
Which turned an angry beak against the down

Of her own breast; confounded into hope  
Of disencumbering thus her fretful wings. 820

But all was quieted by iron bonds  
Of military sway. The shifting aims,  
The moral interests, the creative might,  
The varied functions and high attributes  
Of civil action, yielded to a power  
Formal, and odious, and contemptible.  
--In Britain, ruled a panic dread of change;  
The weak were praised, rewarded, and advanced;  
And, from the impulse of a just disdain,  
Once more did I retire into myself. 830  
There feeling no contentment, I resolved  
To fly, for safeguard, to some foreign shore,  
Remote from Europe; from her blasted hopes;  
Her fields of carnage, and polluted air.

Fresh blew the wind, when o'er the Atlantic Main  
The ship went gliding with her thoughtless crew;  
And who among them but an Exile, freed  
From discontent, indifferent, pleased to sit  
Among the busily-employed, not more  
With obligation charged, with service taxed, 840  
Than the loose pendant--to the idle wind  
Upon the tall mast streaming. But, ye Powers  
Of soul and sense mysteriously allied,  
Oh, never let the Wretched, if a choice  
Be left him, trust the freight of his distress  
To a long voyage on the silent deep!  
For, like a plague, will memory break out;  
And, in the blank and solitude of things,  
Upon his spirit, with a fever's strength,  
Will conscience prey.--Feebly must they have felt 850  
Who, in old time, attired with snakes and whips  
The vengeful Furies. 'Beautiful' regards  
Were turned on me--the face of her I loved;  
The Wife and Mother pitifully fixing  
Tender reproaches, insupportable!  
Where now that boasted liberty? No welcome  
From unknown objects I received; and those,  
Known and familiar, which the vaulted sky  
Did, in the placid clearness of the night,  
Disclose, had accusations to prefer 860  
Against my peace. Within the cabin stood  
That volume--as a compass for the soul--

Revered among the nations. I implored  
Its guidance; but the infallible support  
Of faith was wanting. Tell me, why refused  
To One by storms annoyed and adverse winds;  
Perplexed with currents; of his weakness sick;  
Of vain endeavours tired; and by his own,  
And by his nature's, ignorance, dismayed!

Long-wished-for sight, the Western World appeared;      870  
And, when the ship was moored, I leaped ashore  
Indignantly--resolved to be a man,  
Who, having o'er the past no power, would live  
No longer in subjection to the past,  
With abject mind--from a tyrannic lord  
Inviting penance, fruitlessly endured:  
So, like a fugitive, whose feet have cleared  
Some boundary, which his followers may not cross  
In prosecution of their deadly chase,  
Respiring I looked round.--How bright the sun,      880  
The breeze how soft! Can anything produced  
In the old World compare, thought I, for power  
And majesty with this gigantic stream,  
Sprung from the desert? And behold a city  
Fresh, youthful, and aspiring! What are these  
To me, or I to them? As much at least  
As he desires that they should be, whom winds  
And waves have wafted to this distant shore,  
In the condition of a damaged seed,  
Whose fibres cannot, if they would, take root.      890  
Here may I roam at large;--my business is,  
Roaming at large, to observe, and not to feel,  
And, therefore, not to act--convinced that all  
Which bears the name of action, howsoe'er  
Beginning, ends in servitude--still painful,  
And mostly profitless. And, sooth to say,  
On nearer view, a motley spectacle  
Appeared, of high pretensions,--unreproved  
But by the obstreperous voice of higher still;  
Big passions strutting on a petty stage;      900  
Which a detached spectator may regard  
Not unamused.--But ridicule demands  
Quick change of objects; and, to laugh alone,  
At a composing distance from the haunts  
Of strife and folly, though it be a treat  
As choice as musing Leisure can bestow;  
Yet, in the very centre of the crowd,



To keep the secret of a poignant scorn,  
Howe'er to airy Demons suitable,  
Of all unsocial courses, is least fit                    910  
For the gross spirit of mankind,--the one  
That soonest fails to please, and quickliest turns  
Into vexation.

Let us, then, I said,  
Leave this unknit Republic to the scourge  
Of her own passions; and to regions haste,  
Whose shades have never felt the encroaching axe,  
Or soil endured a transfer in the mart  
Of dire rapacity. There, Man abides,  
Primeval Nature's child. A creature weak  
In combination, (wherefore else driven back                    920  
So far, and of his old inheritance  
So easily deprived?) but, for that cause,  
More dignified, and stronger in himself;  
Whether to act, judge, suffer, or enjoy.  
True, the intelligence of social art  
Hath overpowered his forefathers, and soon  
Will sweep the remnant of his line away;  
But contemplations, worthier, nobler far  
Than her destructive energies, attend  
His independence, when along the side                    930  
Of Mississippi, or that northern stream<sup>[2]</sup>  
That spreads into successive seas, he walks;  
Pleased to perceive his own unshackled life,  
And his innate capacities of soul,  
There imaged: or when, having gained the top  
Of some commanding eminence, which yet  
Intruder ne'er beheld, he thence surveys  
Regions of wood and wide savannah, vast  
Expanse of unappropriated earth,  
With mind that sheds a light on what he sees;                    940  
Free as the sun, and lonely as the sun,  
Pouring above his head its radiance down  
Upon a living and rejoicing world!

So, westward, tow'rd the unviolated woods  
I bent my way; and, roaming far and wide,  
Failed not to greet the merry Mocking-bird;  
And, while the melancholy Muccawiss  
(The sportive bird's companion in the grove)  
Repeated, o'er and o'er, his plaintive cry,  
I sympathised at leisure with the sound;                    950  
But that pure archetype of human greatness,

I found him not. There, in his stead, appeared  
A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure;  
Remorseless, and submissive to no law  
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.

Enough is told! Here am I--ye have heard  
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek;  
What from my fellow-beings I require,  
And either they have not to give, or I  
Lack virtue to receive; what I myself, 960  
Too oft by wilful forfeiture, have lost  
Nor can regain. How languidly I look  
Upon this visible fabric of the world,  
May be divined--perhaps it hath been said:--  
But spare your pity, if there be in me  
Aught that deserves respect: for I exist,  
Within myself, not comfortless.--The tenor  
Which my life holds, he readily may conceive  
Whoe'er hath stood to watch a mountain brook  
In some still passage of its course, and seen, 970  
Within the depths of its capacious breast,  
Inverted trees, rocks, clouds, and azure sky;  
And, on its glassy surface, specks of foam,  
And conglobated bubbles undissolved,  
Numerous as stars; that, by their onward lapse,  
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,  
Else imperceptible. Meanwhile, is heard  
A softened roar, or murmur; and the sound  
Though soothing, and the little floating isles  
Though beautiful, are both by Nature charged 980  
With the same pensive office; and make known  
Through what perplexing labyrinths, abrupt  
Precipitations, and untoward straits,  
The earth-born wanderer hath passed; and quickly,  
That respite o'er, like traverses and toils  
Must he again encounter.--Such a stream  
Is human Life; and so the Spirit fares  
In the best quiet to her course allowed;  
And such is mine,--save only for a hope 990  
That my particular current soon will reach  
The unfathomable gulf, where all is still!"

#### Book Four: Despondency Corrected

HERE closed the Tenant of that lonely vale  
His mournful narrative--commenced in pain,

In pain commenced, and ended without peace:  
Yet tempered, not unfrequently, with strains  
Of native feeling, grateful to our minds;  
And yielding surely some relief to his,  
While we sate listening with compassion due.  
A pause of silence followed; then, with voice  
That did not falter though the heart was moved,  
The Wanderer said:--

                  "One adequate support                   10  
For the calamities of mortal life  
Exists--one only; an assured belief  
That the procession of our fate, howe'er  
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being  
Of infinite benevolence and power;  
Whose everlasting purposes embrace  
All accidents, converting them to good.  
--The darts of anguish 'fix' not where the seat  
Of suffering hath been thoroughly fortified  
By acquiescence in the Will supreme                   20  
For time and for eternity; by faith,  
Faith absolute in God, including hope,  
And the defence that lies in boundless love  
Of his perfections; with habitual dread  
Of aught unworthily conceived, endured  
Impatiently, ill-done, or left undone,  
To the dishonour of his holy name.  
Soul of our Souls, and safeguard of the world!  
Sustain, thou only canst, the sick of heart;  
Restore their languid spirits, and recall                   30  
Their lost affections unto thee and thine!"

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,  
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes  
To heaven:--"How beautiful this dome of sky;  
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fixed  
At thy command, how awful! Shall the Soul,  
Human and rational, report of thee  
Even less than these?--Be mute who will, who can,  
Yet I will praise thee with impassioned voice:  
My lips, that may forget thee in the crowd,                   40  
Cannot forget thee here; where thou hast built,  
For thy own glory, in the wilderness!  
Me didst thou constitute a priest of thine,  
In such a temple as we now behold  
Reared for thy presence: therefore, am I bound  
To worship, here, and everywhere--as one

Not doomed to ignorance, though forced to tread,  
From childhood up, the ways of poverty;  
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,  
And from debasement rescued.--By thy grace 50  
The particle divine remained unquenched;  
And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,  
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,  
From paradise transplanted: wintry age  
Impends; the frost will gather round my heart;  
If the flowers wither, I am worse than dead!  
--Come, labour, when the worn-out frame requires  
Perpetual sabbath; come, disease and want;  
And sad exclusion through decay of sense;  
But leave me unabated trust in thee-- 60  
And let thy favour, to the end of life,  
Inspire me with ability to seek  
Repose and hope among eternal things--  
Father of heaven and earth! and I am rich,  
And will possess my portion in content!

And what are things eternal?--powers depart,"  
The grey-haired Wanderer stedfastly replied,  
Answering the question which himself had asked,  
"Possessions vanish, and opinions change,  
And passions hold a fluctuating seat: 70  
But, by the storms of circumstance unshaken,  
And subject neither to eclipse nor wane,  
Duty exists;--immutably survive,  
For our support, the measures and the forms,  
Which an abstract intelligence supplies;  
Whose kingdom is, where time and space are not.  
Of other converse which mind, soul, and heart,  
Do, with united urgency, require,  
What more that may not perish?--Thou, dread source,  
Prime, self-existing cause and end of all 80  
That in the scale of being fill their place;  
Above our human region, or below,  
Set and sustained;--thou, who didst wrap the cloud  
Of infancy around us, that thyself,  
Therein, with our simplicity awhile  
Might'st hold, on earth, communion undisturbed;  
Who from the anarchy of dreaming sleep,  
Or from its death-like void, with punctual care,  
And touch as gentle as the morning light,  
Restor'st us, daily, to the powers of sense 90  
And reason's stedfast rule--thou, thou alone



Conceptions equal to the soul's desires;  
 And the most difficult of tasks to 'keep'  
 Heights which the soul is competent to gain.  
 --Man is of dust: ethereal hopes are his, 140  
 Which, when they should sustain themselves aloft,  
 Want due consistence; like a pillar of smoke,  
 That with majestic energy from earth  
 Rises; but, having reached the thinner air,  
 Melts, and dissolves, and is no longer seen.  
 From this infirmity of mortal kind  
 Sorrow proceeds, which else were not; at least,  
 If grief be something hallowed and ordained,  
 If, in proportion, it be just and meet,  
 Yet, through this weakness of the general heart, 150  
 Is it enabled to maintain its hold  
 In that excess which conscience disapproves.  
 For who could sink and settle to that point  
 Of selfishness; so senseless who could be  
 As long and perseveringly to mourn  
 For any object of his love, removed  
 From this unstable world, if he could fix  
 A satisfying view upon that state  
 Of pure, imperishable, blessedness,  
 Which reason promises, and holy writ 160  
 Ensures to all believers?--Yet mistrust  
 Is of such incapacity, methinks,  
 No natural branch; despondency far less;  
 And, least of all, is absolute despair.  
 --And, if there be whose tender frames have drooped  
 Even to the dust; apparently, through weight  
 Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power  
 An agonizing sorrow to transmute;  
 Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld  
 When wanted most; a confidence impaired 170  
 So pitiably, that, having ceased to see  
 With bodily eyes, they are borne down by love  
 Of what is lost, and perish through regret.  
 Oh! no, the innocent Sufferer often sees  
 Too clearly; feels too vividly; and longs  
 To realize the vision, with intense  
 And over-constant yearning,--there--there lies  
 The excess, by which the balance is destroyed.  
 Too, too contracted are these walls of flesh,  
 This vital warmth too cold, these visual orbs, 180  
 Though inconceivably endowed, too dim  
 For any passion of the soul that leads

To ecstasy; and, all the crooked paths  
Of time and change disdain, takes its course  
Along the line of limitless desires.  
I, speaking now from such disorder free,  
Nor rapt, nor craving, but in settled peace,  
I cannot doubt that they whom you deplore  
Are glorified; or, if they sleep, shall wake  
From sleep, and dwell with God in endless love.       190  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In mercy, carried infinite degrees  
Beyond the tenderness of human hearts:  
Hope, below this, consists not with belief  
In perfect wisdom, guiding mightiest power,  
That finds no limits but her own pure will.

Here then we rest; not fearing for our creed  
The worst that human reasoning can achieve,  
To unsettle or perplex it: yet with pain  
Acknowledging, and grievous self-reproach,       200  
That, though immovably convinced, we want  
Zeal, and the virtue to exist by faith  
As soldiers live by courage; as, by strength  
Of heart, the sailor fights with roaring seas.  
Alas! the endowment of immortal power  
Is matched unequally with custom, time,  
And domineering faculties of sense  
In 'all'; in most, with superadded foes,  
Idle temptations; open vanities,  
Ephemeral offspring of the unblushing world;       210  
And, in the private regions of the mind,  
Ill-governed passions, ranklings of despite,  
Immoderate wishes, pining discontent,  
Distress and care. What then remains?--To seek  
Those helps for his occasions ever near  
Who lacks not will to use them; vows, renewed  
On the first motion of a holy thought;  
Vigils of contemplation; praise; and prayer--  
A stream, which, from the fountain of the heart  
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows       220  
Without access of unexpected strength.  
But, above all, the victory is most sure  
For him, who, seeking faith by virtue, strives  
To yield entire submission to the law  
Of conscience--conscience revered and obeyed,  
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,  
And his most perfect image in the world.

--Endeavour thus to live; these rules regard;  
These helps solicit; and a stedfast seat  
Shall then be yours among the happy few 230  
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air  
Sons of the morning. For your nobler part,  
Ere disencumbered of her mortal chains,  
Doubt shall be quelled and trouble chased away;  
With only such degree of sadness left  
As may support longings of pure desire;  
And strengthen love, rejoicing secretly  
In the sublime attractions of the grave."

While, in this strain, the venerable Sage  
Poured forth his aspirations, and announced 240  
His judgments, near that lonely house we paced  
A plot of greensward, seemingly preserved  
By nature's care from wreck of scattered stones,  
And from encroachment of encircling heath:  
Small space! but, for reiterated steps,  
Smooth and commodious; as a stately deck  
Which to and fro the mariner is used  
To tread for pastime, talking with his mates,  
Or haply thinking of far-distant friends,  
While the ship glides before a steady breeze. 250  
Stillness prevailed around us: and the voice  
That spake was capable to lift the soul  
Toward regions yet more tranquil. But, methought,  
That he, whose fixed despondency had given  
Impulse and motive to that strong discourse,  
Was less upraised in spirit than abashed;  
Shrinking from admonition, like a man  
Who feels that to exhort is to reproach.  
Yet not to be diverted from his aim,  
The Sage continued:--

"For that other loss, 260  
The loss of confidence in social man,  
By the unexpected transports of our age  
Carried so high, that every thought, which looked  
Beyond the temporal destiny of the Kind,  
To many seemed superfluous--as, no cause  
Could e'er for such exalted confidence  
Exist; so, none is now for fixed despair:  
The two extremes are equally disowned  
By reason: if, with sharp recoil, from one  
You have been driven far as its opposite, 270  
Between them seek the point whereon to build



Sound expectations. So doth he advise  
 Who shared at first the illusion; but was soon  
 Cast from the pedestal of pride by shocks  
 Which Nature gently gave, in woods and fields;  
 Nor unreprieved by Providence, thus speaking  
 To the inattentive children of the world:  
 'Vainglorious Generation! what new powers  
 'On you have been conferred? what gifts, withheld  
 'From your progenitors, have ye received,                   280  
 'Fit recompense of new desert? what claim  
 'Are ye prepared to urge, that my decrees  
 'For you should undergo a sudden change;  
 'And the weak functions of one busy day,  
 'Reclaiming and extirpating, perform  
 'What all the slowly-moving years of time,  
 'With their united force, have left undone?  
 'By nature's gradual processes be taught;  
 'By story be confounded! Ye aspire  
 'Rashly, to fall once more; and that false fruit,           290  
 'Which, to your overweening spirits, yields  
 'Hope of a flight celestial, will produce  
 'Misery and shame. But Wisdom of her sons  
 'Shall not the less, though late, be justified.'

Such timely warning," said the Wanderer, "gave  
 That visionary voice; and, at this day,  
 When a Tartarean darkness overspreads  
 The groaning nations; when the impious rule,  
 By will or by established ordinance,  
 Their own dire agents, and constrain the good           300  
 To acts which they abhor; though I bewail  
 This triumph, yet the pity of my heart  
 Prevents me not from owning, that the law,  
 By which mankind now suffers, is most just.  
 For by superior energies; more strict  
 Affiance in each other; faith more firm  
 In their unhallowed principles; the bad  
 Have fairly earned a victory o'er the weak,  
 The vacillating, inconsistent good.  
 Therefore, not unconsolated, I wait--in hope           310  
 To see the moment, when the righteous cause  
 Shall gain defenders zealous and devout  
 As they who have opposed her; in which Virtue  
 Will, to her efforts, tolerate no bounds  
 That are not lofty as her rights; aspiring  
 By impulse of her own ethereal zeal.



Upon his care, from whom he also looks  
For signs and tokens of a mutual bond;  
But others, far beyond this narrow sphere,  
Whom, for the very sake of love, he loves.  
Nor is it a mean praise of rural life  
And solitude, that they do favour most,  
Most frequently call forth, and best sustain,  
These pure sensations; that can penetrate  
The obstreperous city; on the barren seas  
Are not unfelt; and much might recommend, 370  
How much they might inspire and endear,  
The loneliness of this sublime retreat!"

"Yes," said the Sage, resuming the discourse  
Again directed to his downcast Friend,  
"If, with the forward will and grovelling soul  
Of man, offended, liberty is here,  
And invitation every hour renewed,  
To mark 'their' placid state, who never heard  
Of a command which they have power to break,  
Or rule which they are tempted to transgress: 380  
These, with a soothed or elevated heart,  
May we behold; their knowledge register;  
Observe their ways; and, free from envy, find  
Complacency there:--but wherefore this to you?  
I guess that, welcome to your lonely hearth,  
The redbreast, ruffled up by winter's cold  
Into a 'feathery bunch,' feeds at your hand:  
A box, perchance, is from your casement hung  
For the small wren to build in;--not in vain,  
The barriers disregarding that surround 390  
This deep abiding place, before your sight  
Mounts on the breeze the butterfly; and soars,  
Small creature as she is, from earth's bright flowers,  
Into the dewy clouds. Ambition reigns  
In the waste wilderness: the Soul ascends  
Drawn towards her native firmament of heaven,  
When the fresh eagle, in the month of May,  
Upborne, at evening, on replenished wing,  
This shaded valley leaves; and leaves the dark  
Empurpled hills, conspicuously renewing 400  
A proud communication with the sun  
Low sunk beneath the horizon!--List!--I heard,  
From yon huge breast of rock, a voice sent forth  
As if the visible mountain made the cry.  
Again!--The effect upon the soul was such

As he expressed: from out the mountain's heart  
The solemn voice appeared to issue, startling  
The blank air--for the region all around  
Stood empty of all shape of life, and silent  
Save for that single cry, the unanswered bleat       410  
Of a poor lamb--left somewhere to itself,  
The plaintive spirit of the solitude!  
He paused, as if unwilling to proceed,  
Through consciousness that silence in such place  
Was best, the most affecting eloquence.  
But soon his thoughts returned upon themselves,  
And, in soft tone of speech, thus he resumed.

"Ah! if the heart, too confidently raised,  
Perchance too lightly occupied, or lulled  
Too easily, despise or overlook       420  
The vassalage that binds her to the earth,  
Her sad dependence upon time, and all  
The trepidations of mortality,  
What place so destitute and void--but there  
The little flower her vanity shall check;  
The trailing worm reprove her thoughtless pride?

These craggy regions, these chaotic wilds,  
Does that benignity pervade, that warms  
The mole contented with her darksome walk  
In the cold ground; and to the emmet gives       430  
Her foresight, and intelligence that makes  
The tiny creatures strong by social league;  
Supports the generations, multiplies  
Their tribes, till we behold a spacious plain  
Or grassy bottom, all, with little hills--  
Their labour, covered, as a lake with waves;  
Thousands of cities, in the desert place  
Built up of life, and food, and means of life!  
Nor wanting here, to entertain the thought,  
Creatures that in communities exist,       440

Less, as might seem, for general guardianship  
Or through dependence upon mutual aid,  
Than by participation of delight  
And a strict love of fellowship, combined.  
What other spirit can it be that prompts  
The gilded summer flies to mix and weave  
Their sports together in the solar beam,  
Or in the gloom of twilight hum their joy?

More obviously the self-same influence rules  
The feathered kinds; the fieldfare's pensive flock,      450  
The cawing rooks, and sea-mews from afar,  
Hovering above these inland solitudes,  
By the rough wind unscattered, at whose call  
Up through the trenches of the long-drawn vales  
Their voyage was begun: nor is its power  
Unfelt among the sedentary fowl  
That seek yon pool, and there prolong their stay  
In silent congress; or together roused  
Take flight; while with their clang the air resounds:  
And, over all, in that ethereal vault,                      460  
Is the mute company of changeful clouds;  
Bright apparition, suddenly put forth,  
The rainbow smiling on the faded storm;  
The mild assemblage of the starry heavens;  
And the great sun, earth's universal lord!

How bountiful is Nature! he shall find  
Who seeks not; and to him, who hath not asked,  
Large measure shall be dealt. Three sabbath-days  
Are scarcely told, since, on a service bent  
Of mere humanity, you clomb those heights;                      470  
And what a marvellous and heavenly show  
Was suddenly revealed!--the swains moved on,  
And heeded not: you lingered, you perceived  
And felt, deeply as living man could feel.  
There is a luxury in self-dispraise;  
And inward self-disparagement affords  
To meditative spleen a grateful feast.  
Trust me, pronouncing on your own desert,  
You judge unthankfully: distempered nerves  
Infect the thoughts: the languor of the frame                      480  
Depresses the soul's vigour. Quit your couch--  
Cleave not so fondly to your moody cell;  
Nor let the hallowed powers, that shed from heaven  
Stillness and rest, with disapproving eye  
Look down upon your taper, through a watch  
Of midnight hours, unseasonably twinkling  
In this deep Hollow, like a sullen star  
Dimly reflected in a lonely pool.  
Take courage, and withdraw yourself from ways  
That run not parallel to nature's course.                      490  
Rise with the lark! your matins shall obtain  
Grace, be their composition what it may,  
If but with hers performed; climb once again,

Climb every day, those ramparts; meet the breeze  
Upon their tops, adventurous as a bee  
That from your garden thither soars, to feed  
On new-blown heath; let yon commanding rock  
Be your frequented watch-tower; roll the stone  
In thunder down the mountains; with all your might  
Chase the wild goat; and if the bold red deer       500  
Fly to those harbours, driven by hound and horn  
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit;  
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,  
And sink at evening into sound repose."

The Solitary lifted toward the hills  
A kindling eye:--accordant feelings rushed  
Into my bosom, whence these words broke forth:  
"Oh! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,  
To have a body (this our vital frame  
With shrinking sensibility endued,       510  
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood)  
And to the elements surrender it  
As if it were a spirit!--How divine,  
The liberty, for frail, for mortal, man  
To roam at large among unpeopled glens  
And mountainous retirements, only trod  
By devious footsteps; regions consecrate  
To oldest time! and, reckless of the storm  
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,  
Be as a presence or a motion--one       520  
Among the many there; and while the mists  
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes  
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth  
As fast as a musician scatters sounds  
Out of an instrument; and while the streams  
(As at a first creation and in haste  
To exercise their untried faculties)  
Descending from the region of the clouds,  
And starting from the hollows of the earth  
More multitudinous every moment, rend       530  
Their way before them--what a joy to roam  
An equal among mightiest energies;  
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,  
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard  
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,  
'Rage on ye elements! let moon and stars  
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn  
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)

From day to night, from night to day, prolonged!"

"Yes," said the Wanderer, taking from my lips                    540  
The strain of transport, "whosoe'er in youth  
Has, through ambition of his soul, given way  
To such desires, and grasped at such delight,  
Shall feel congenial stirrings late and long,  
In spite of all the weakness that life brings,  
Its cares and sorrows; he, though taught to own  
The tranquillizing power of time, shall wake,  
Wake sometimes to a noble restlessness--  
Loving the sports which once he gloried in.

Compatriot, Friend, remote are Garry's hills,                    550  
The streams far distant of your native glen;  
Yet is their form and image here expressed  
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps  
Wherever fancy leads; by day, by night,  
Are various engines working, not the same  
As those with which your soul in youth was moved,  
But by the great Artificer endowed  
With no inferior power. You dwell alone;  
You walk, you live, you speculate alone;  
Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,                    560  
For you a stately gallery maintain  
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,  
Have acted, suffered, travelled far, observed  
With no incurious eye; and books are yours,  
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies  
Preserved from age to age; more precious far  
Than that accumulated store of gold  
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,  
The Sultan hides deep in ancestral tombs.  
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will:                    570  
And music waits upon your skilful touch,  
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights  
Hears, and forgets his purpose;--furnished thus,  
How can you droop, if willing to be upraised?

A piteous lot it were to flee from Man--  
Yet not rejoice in Nature. He, whose hours  
Are by domestic pleasures uncaressed  
And unenlivened; who exists whole years  
Apart from benefits received or done  
'Mid the transactions of the bustling crowd;                    580  
Who neither hears, nor feels a wish to hear,

Of the world's interests--such a one hath need  
 Of a quick fancy, and an active heart,  
 That, for the day's consumption, books may yield  
 Food not unwholesome; earth and air correct  
 His morbid humour, with delight supplied  
 Or solace, varying as the seasons change.  
 --Truth has her pleasure-grounds, her haunts of ease  
 And easy contemplation; gay parterres,  
 And labyrinthine walks, her sunny glades                   590  
 And shady groves in studied contrast--each,  
 For recreation, leading into each:  
 These may he range, if willing to partake  
 Their soft indulgences, and in due time  
 May issue thence, recruited for the tasks  
 And course of service Truth requires from those  
 Who tend her altars, wait upon her throne,  
 And guard her fortresses. Who thinks, and feels,  
 And recognises ever and anon  
 The breeze of nature stirring in his soul,                   600  
 Why need such man go desperately astray,  
 And nurse 'the dreadful appetite of death?'  
 If tired with systems, each in its degree  
 Substantial, and all crumbling in their turn,  
 Let him build systems of his own, and smile  
 At the fond work, demolished with a touch;  
 If unreligious, let him be at once,  
 Among ten thousand innocents, enrolled  
 A pupil in the many-chambered school,  
 Where superstition weaves her airy dreams.                   610

Life's autumn past, I stand on winter's verge;  
 And daily lose what I desire to keep:  
 Yet rather would I instantly decline  
 To the traditionary sympathies  
 Of a most rustic ignorance, and take  
 A fearful apprehension from the owl  
 Or death-watch: and as readily rejoice,  
 If two auspicious magpies crossed my way;--  
 To this would rather bend than see and hear  
 The repetitions wearisome of sense,                   620  
 Where soul is dead, and feeling hath no place;  
 Where knowledge, ill begun in cold remark  
 On outward things, with formal inference ends;  
 Or, if the mind turn inward, she recoils  
 At once--or, not recoiling, is perplexed--  
 Lost in a gloom of uninspired research;



Meanwhile, the heart within the heart, the seat  
Where peace and happy consciousness should dwell,  
On its own axis restlessly revolving,  
Seeks, yet can nowhere find, the light of truth.           630

Upon the breast of new-created earth  
Man walked; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,  
Alone or mated, solitude was not.  
He heard, borne on the wind, the articulate voice  
Of God; and Angels to his sight appeared  
Crowning the glorious hills of paradise;  
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist  
Enkindled by the sun. He sate--and talked  
With winged Messengers; who daily brought  
To his small island in the ethereal deep           640  
Tidings of joy and love.--From those pure heights  
(Whether of actual vision, sensible  
To sight and feeling, or that in this sort  
Have condescendingly been shadowed forth  
Communications spiritually maintained,  
And intuitions moral and divine)  
Fell Human-kind--to banishment condemned  
That flowing years repealed not: and distress  
And grief spread wide; but Man escaped the doom  
Of destitution;--solitude was not.           650  
--Jehovah--shapeless Power above all Powers,  
Single and one, the omnipresent God,  
By vocal utterance, or blaze of light,  
Or cloud of darkness, localised in heaven;  
On earth, enshrined within the wandering ark;  
Or, out of Sion, thundering from his throne  
Between the Cherubim--on the chosen Race  
Showered miracles, and ceased not to dispense  
Judgments, that filled the land from age to age  
With hope, and love, and gratitude, and fear;           660  
And with amazement smote;--thereby to assert  
His scorned, or unacknowledged, sovereignty.  
And when the One, ineffable of name,  
Of nature indivisible, withdrew  
From mortal adoration or regard,  
Not then was Deity engulfed; nor Man,  
The rational creature, left, to feel the weight  
Of his own reason, without sense or thought  
Of higher reason and a purer will,  
To benefit and bless, through mightier power:--           670  
Whether the Persian--zealous to reject

Altar and image, and the inclusive walls  
 And roofs of temples built by human hands--  
 To loftiest heights ascending, from their tops,  
 With myrtle-wreathed tiara on his brow,  
 Presented sacrifice to moon and stars,  
 And to the winds and mother elements,  
 And the whole circle of the heavens, for him  
 A sensitive existence, and a God,  
 With lifted hands invoked, and songs of praise:         680  
 Or, less reluctantly to bonds of sense  
 Yielding his soul, the Babylonian framed  
 For influence undefined a personal shape;  
 And, from the plain, with toil immense, upreared  
 Tower eight times planted on the top of tower,  
 That Belus, nightly to his splendid couch  
 Descending, there might rest; upon that height  
 Pure and serene, diffused--to overlook  
 Winding Euphrates, and the city vast  
 Of his devoted worshippers, far-stretched,         690  
 With grove and field and garden interspersed;  
 Their town, and foodful region for support  
 Against the pressure of beleaguering war.

Chaldean Shepherds, ranging trackless fields,  
 Beneath the concave of unclouded skies  
 Spread like a sea, in boundless solitude,  
 Looked on the polar star, as on a guide  
 And guardian of their course, that never closed  
 His stedfast eye. The planetary Five  
 With a submissive reverence they beheld;         700  
 Watched, from the centre of their sleeping flocks,  
 Those radiant Mercuries, that seemed to move  
 Carrying through ether, in perpetual round,  
 Decrees and resolutions of the Gods;  
 And, by their aspects, signifying works  
 Of dim futurity, to Man revealed.  
 --The imaginative faculty was lord  
 Of observations natural; and, thus  
 Led on, those shepherds made report of stars  
 In set rotation passing to and fro,         710  
 Between the orbs of our apparent sphere  
 And its invisible counterpart, adorned  
 With answering constellations, under earth,  
 Removed from all approach of living sight  
 But present to the dead; who, so they deemed,  
 Like those celestial messengers beheld

All accidents, and judges were of all.

The lively Grecian, in a land of hills,  
Rivers and fertile plains, and sounding shores,--  
Under a cope of sky more variable, 720  
Could find commodious place for every God,  
Promptly received, as prodigally brought,  
From the surrounding countries, at the choice  
Of all adventurers. With unrivalled skill,  
As nicest observation furnished hints  
For studious fancy, his quick hand bestowed  
On fluent operations a fixed shape;  
Metal or stone, idolatrously served.  
And yet--triumphant o'er this pompous show  
Of art, this palpable array of sense, 730  
On every side encountered; in despite  
Of the gross fictions chanted in the streets  
By wandering Rhapsodists; and in contempt  
Of doubt and bold denial hourly urged  
Amid the wrangling schools--a SPIRIT hung,  
Beautiful region! o'er thy towns and farms,  
Statues and temples, and memorial tombs;  
And emanations were perceived; and acts  
Of immortality, in Nature's course,  
Exemplified by mysteries, that were felt 740  
As bonds, on grave philosopher imposed  
And armed warrior; and in every grove  
A gay or pensive tenderness prevailed,  
When piety more awful had relaxed.  
--'Take, running river, take these locks of mine'--  
Thus would the Votary say--'this severed hair,  
'My vow fulfilling, do I here present,  
'Thankful for my beloved child's return.  
'Thy banks, Cephisus, he again hath trod,  
'Thy murmurs heard; and drunk the crystal lymph 750  
'With which thou dost refresh the thirsty lip,  
'And, all day long, moisten these flowery fields!'  
And doubtless, sometimes, when the hair was shed  
Upon the flowing stream, a thought arose  
Of Life continuous, Being unimpaired;  
That hath been, is, and where it was and is  
There shall endure,--existence unexposed  
To the blind walk of mortal accident;  
From diminution safe and weakening age;  
While man grows old, and dwindles, and decays; 760  
And countless generations of mankind

Depart; and leave no vestige where they trod.

We live by Admiration, Hope and Love;  
And, even as these are well and wisely fixed,  
In dignity of being we ascend.  
But what is error?"--"Answer he who can!"  
The Sceptic somewhat haughtily exclaimed:  
"Love, Hope, and Admiration,--are they not  
Mad Fancy's favourite vassals? Does not life  
Use them, full oft, as pioneers to ruin, 770  
Guides to destruction? Is it well to trust  
Imagination's light when reason's fails,  
The unguarded taper where the guarded faints?  
--Stoop from those heights, and soberly declare  
What error is; and, of our errors, which  
Doth most debase the mind; the genuine seats  
Of power, where are they? Who shall regulate,  
With truth, the scale of intellectual rank?"

"Methinks," persuasively the Sage replied,  
"That for this arduous office you possess 780  
Some rare advantages. Your early days  
A grateful recollection must supply  
Of much exalted good by Heaven vouchsafed  
To dignify the humblest state.--Your voice  
Hath, in my hearing, often testified  
That poor men's children, they, and they alone,  
By their condition taught, can understand  
The wisdom of the prayer that daily asks  
For daily bread. A consciousness is yours  
How feelingly religion may be learned 790  
In smoky cabins, from a mother's tongue--  
Heard where the dwelling vibrates to the din  
Of the contiguous torrent, gathering strength  
At every moment--and, with strength, increase  
Of fury; or, while snow is at the door,  
Assaulting and defending, and the wind,  
A sightless labourer, whistles at his work--  
Fearful; but resignation tempers fear,  
And piety is sweet to infant minds.  
--The Shepherd-lad, that in the sunshine carves, 800  
On the green turf, a dial--to divide  
The silent hours; and who to that report  
Can portion out his pleasures, and adapt,  
Throughout a long and lonely summer's day  
His round of pastoral duties, is not left

With less intelligence for 'moral' things  
 Of gravest import. Early he perceives,  
 Within himself, a measure and a rule,  
 Which to the sun of truth he can apply,  
 That shines for him, and shines for all mankind.        810  
 Experience daily fixing his regards  
 On nature's wants, he knows how few they are,  
 And where they lie, how answered and appeased.  
 This knowledge ample recompense affords  
 For manifold privations; he refers  
 His notions to this standard; on this rock  
 Rests his desires; and hence, in after life,  
 Soul-strengthening patience, and sublime content.  
 Imagination--not permitted here  
 To waste her powers, as in the worldling's mind,        820  
 On fickle pleasures, and superfluous cares,  
 And trivial ostentation--is left free  
 And puissant to range the solemn walks  
 Of time and nature, girded by a zone  
 That, while it binds, invigorates and supports.  
 Acknowledge, then, that whether by the side  
 Of his poor hut, or on the mountain top,  
 Or in the cultured field, a Man so bred  
 (Take from him what you will upon the score  
 Of ignorance or illusion) lives and breathes        830  
 For noble purposes of mind: his heart  
 Beats to the heroic song of ancient days;  
 His eye distinguishes, his soul creates.  
 And those illusions, which excite the scorn  
 Or move the pity of unthinking minds,  
 Are they not mainly outward ministers  
 Of inward conscience? with whose service charged  
 They came and go, appeared and disappear,  
 Diverting evil purposes, remorse  
 Awakening, chastening an intemperate grief,        840  
 Or pride of heart abating: and, whene'er  
 For less important ends those phantoms move,  
 Who would forbid them, if their presence serve--  
 On thinly-peopled mountains and wild heaths,  
 Filling a space, else vacant--to exalt  
 The forms of Nature, and enlarge her powers?

Once more to distant ages of the world  
 Let us revert, and place before our thoughts  
 The face which rural solitude might wear  
 To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.        850

--In that fair clime, the lonely herdsman, stretched  
 On the soft grass through half a summer's day,  
 With music lulled his indolent repose:  
 And, in some fit of weariness, if he,  
 When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear  
 A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds  
 Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetched,  
 Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,  
 A beardless Youth, who touched a golden lute,  
 And filled the illumined groves with ravishment.           860  
 The nightly hunter, lifting a bright eye  
 Up towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart  
 Called on the lovely wanderer who bestowed  
 That timely light, to share his joyous sport:  
 And hence, a beaming Goddess with her Nymphs,  
 Across the lawn and through the darksome grove,  
 Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes  
 By echo multiplied from rock or cave,  
 Swept in the storm of chase; as moon and stars  
 Glance rapidly along the clouded heaven,           870  
 When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked  
 His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thanked  
 The Naiad. Sunbeams, upon distant hills  
 Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,  
 Might, with small help from fancy, be transformed  
 Into fleet Oreads sporting visibly.  
 The Zephyrs fanning, as they passed, their wings,  
 Lacked not, for love, fair objects whom they wooed  
 With gentle whisper. Withered boughs grotesque,  
 Stripped of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,           880  
 From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth  
 In the low vale, or on steep mountain side;  
 And, sometimes, intermixed with stirring horns  
 Of the live deer, or goat's depending beard,--  
 These were the lurking Satyrs, a wild brood  
 Of gamesome Deities; or Pan himself,  
 The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring God!"

The strain was aptly chosen; and I could mark  
 Its kindly influence, o'er the yielding brow  
 Of our Companion, gradually diffused;           890  
 While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,  
 Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream  
 Detains; but tempted now to interpose,  
 He with a smile exclaimed:--

"Tis well you speak

At a safe distance from our native land,  
 And from the mansions where our youth was taught.  
 The true descendants of those godly men  
 Who swept from Scotland, in a flame of zeal,  
 Shrine, altar, image, and the massy piles  
 That harboured them,--the souls retaining yet           900  
 The churlish features of that after-race  
 Who fled to woods, caverns, and jutting rocks,  
 In deadly scorn of superstitious rites,  
 Or what their scruples construed to be such--  
 How, think you, would they tolerate this scheme  
 Of fine propensities, that tends, if urged  
 Far as it might be urged, to sow afresh  
 The weeds of Romish phantasy, in vain  
 Uprooted; would re-consecrate our wells  
 To good Saint Fillan and to fair Saint Anne;           910  
 And from long banishment recall Saint Giles,  
 To watch again with tutelary love  
 O'er stately Edinburgh throned on crags?  
 A blessed restoration, to behold  
 The patron, on the shoulders of his priests,  
 Once more parading through her crowded streets,  
 Now simply guarded by the sober powers  
 Of science, and philosophy, and sense!"

This answer followed.--"You have turned my thoughts  
 Upon our brave Progenitors, who rose           920  
 Against idolatry with warlike mind,  
 And shrunk from vain observances, to lurk  
 In woods, and dwell under impending rocks  
 Ill-sheltered, and oft wanting fire and food;  
 Why?--for this very reason that they felt,  
 And did acknowledge, wheresoe'er they moved,  
 A spiritual presence, oft-times misconceived,  
 But still a high dependence, a divine  
 Bounty and government, that filled their hearts  
 With joy, and gratitude, and fear, and love;           930  
 And from their fervent lips drew hymns of praise,  
 That through the desert rang. Though favoured less,  
 Far less, than these, yet such, in their degree,  
 Were those bewildered Pagans of old time.  
 Beyond their own poor natures and above  
 They looked; were humbly thankful for the good  
 Which the warm sun solicited, and earth  
 Bestowed; were gladsome,--and their moral sense  
 They fortified with reverence for the Gods;

And they had hopes that overstepped the Grave. 940

Now, shall our great Discoverers," he exclaimed,  
Raising his voice triumphantly, "obtain  
From sense and reason, less than these obtained,  
Though far misled? Shall men for whom our age  
Unbaffled powers of vision hath prepared,  
To explore the world without and world within,  
Be joyless as the blind? Ambitious spirits--  
Whom earth, at this late season, hath produced  
To regulate the moving spheres, and weigh  
The planets in the hollow of their hand; 950  
And they who rather dive than soar, whose pains  
Have solved the elements, or analysed  
The thinking principle--shall they in fact  
Prove a degraded Race? and what avails  
Renown, if their presumption make them such?  
Oh! there is laughter at their work in heaven!  
Inquire of ancient Wisdom; go, demand  
Of mighty Nature, if 'twas ever meant  
That we should pry far off yet be unraised;  
That we should pore, and dwindle as we pore, 960  
Viewing all objects unremittingly  
In disconnection dead and spiritless;  
And still dividing, and dividing still,  
Break down all grandeur, still unsatisfied  
With the perverse attempt, while littleness  
May yet become more little; waging thus  
An impious warfare with the very life  
Of our own souls!

And if indeed there be  
An all-pervading Spirit, upon whom  
Our dark foundations rest, could he design 970  
That this magnificent effect of power,  
The earth we tread, the sky that we behold  
By day, and all the pomp which night reveals;  
That these--and that superior mystery  
Our vital frame, so fearfully devised,  
And the dread soul within it--should exist  
Only to be examined, pondered, searched,  
Probed, vexed, and criticised? Accuse me not  
Of arrogance, unknown Wanderer as I am,  
If, having walked with Nature threescore years, 980  
And offered, far as frailty would allow,  
My heart a daily sacrifice to Truth,  
I now affirm of Nature and of Truth,



Whom I have served, that their DIVINITY  
Revolts, offended at the ways of men  
Swayed by such motives, to such ends employed;  
Philosophers, who, though the human soul  
Be of a thousand faculties composed,  
And twice ten thousand interests, do yet prize  
This soul, and the transcendent universe,                   990  
No more than as a mirror that reflects  
To proud Self-love her own intelligence;  
That one, poor, finite object, in the abyss  
Of infinite Being, twinkling restlessly!

Nor higher place can be assigned to him  
And his compeers--the laughing Sage of France.--  
Crowned was he, if my memory do not err,  
With laurel planted upon hoary hairs,  
In sign of conquest by his wit achieved  
And benefits his wisdom had conferred;                   1000  
His stooping body tottered with wreaths of flowers  
Opprest, far less becoming ornaments  
Than Spring oft twines about a mouldering tree;  
Yet so it pleased a fond, a vain, old Man,  
And a most frivolous people. Him I mean  
Who penned, to ridicule confiding faith,  
This sorry Legend; which by chance we found  
Piled in a nook, through malice, as might seem,  
Among more innocent rubbish."--Speaking thus,  
With a brief notice when, and how, and where,                   1010  
We had espied the book, he drew it forth;  
And courteously, as if the act removed,  
At once, all traces from the good Man's heart  
Of unbenign aversion or contempt,  
Restored it to its owner. "Gentle Friend,"  
Herewith he grasped the Solitary's hand,  
"You have known lights and guides better than these.  
Ah! let not aught amiss within dispose  
A noble mind to practise on herself,  
And tempt opinion to support the wrongs                   1020  
Of passion: whatsoever be felt or feared,  
From higher judgment-seats make no appeal  
To lower: can you question that the soul  
Inherits an allegiance, not by choice  
To be cast off, upon an oath proposed  
By each new upstart notion? In the ports  
Of levity no refuge can be found,  
No shelter, for a spirit in distress.

He, who by wilful disesteem of life  
And proud insensibility to hope,                   1030  
Affronts the eye of Solitude, shall learn  
That her mild nature can be terrible;  
That neither she nor Silence lack the power  
To avenge their own insulted majesty.

O blest seclusion! when the mind admits  
The law of duty; and can therefore move  
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,  
Linked in entire complacency with her choice;  
When youth's presumptuousness is mellowed down,  
And manhood's vain anxiety dismissed;                   1040  
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,  
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung  
In sober plenty; when the spirit stoops  
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream  
Of unproved enjoyment; and is pleased  
To muse, and be saluted by the air  
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents  
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride  
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.  
O, calm contented days, and peaceful nights!                   1050  
Who, when such good can be obtained, would strive  
To reconcile his manhood to a couch  
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,  
Stuffed with the thorny substance of the past  
For fixed annoyance; and full oft beset  
With floating dreams, black and disconsolate,  
The vapoury phantoms of futurity?

Within the soul a faculty abides,  
That with interpositions, which would hide  
And darken, so can deal that they become                   1060  
Contingencies of pomp; and serve to exalt  
Her native brightness. As the ample moon,  
In the deep stillness of a summer even  
Rising behind a thick and lofty grove,  
Burns, like an unconsuming fire of light,  
In the green trees; and, kindling on all sides  
Their leafy umbrage, turns the dusky veil  
Into a substance glorious as her own,  
Yea, with her own incorporated, by power  
Capacious and serene. Like power abides                   1070  
In man's celestial spirit; virtue thus  
Sets forth and magnifies herself; thus feeds

A calm, a beautiful, and silent fire,  
From the encumbrances of mortal life,  
From error, disappointment--nay, from guilt;  
And sometimes, so relenting justice wills,  
From palpable oppressions of despair."

The Solitary by these words was touched  
With manifest emotion, and exclaimed;  
"But how begin? and whence?--'The Mind is free-- 1080  
Resolve,' the haughty Moralist would say,  
'This single act is all that we demand.'

Alas! such wisdom bids a creature fly  
Whose very sorrow is, that time hath shorn  
His natural wings!--To friendship let him turn  
For succour, but perhaps he sits alone  
On stormy waters, tossed in a little boat  
That holds but him, and can contain no more!  
Religion tells of amity sublime  
Which no condition can preclude; of One 1090  
Who sees all suffering, comprehends all wants,  
All weakness fathoms, can supply all needs:  
But is that bounty absolute?--His gifts,  
Are they not, still, in some degree, rewards  
For acts of service? Can his love extend  
To hearts that own not him? Will showers of grace,  
When in the sky no promise may be seen,  
Fall to refresh a parched and withered land?  
Or shall the groaning Spirit cast her load  
At the Redeemer's feet?"

In rueful tone, 1100

With some impatience in his mien, he spake:  
Back to my mind rushed all that had been urged  
To calm the Sufferer when his story closed;  
I looked for counsel as unbending now;  
But a discriminating sympathy  
Stooped to this apt reply:--

"As men from men

Do, in the constitution of their souls,  
Differ, by mystery not to be explained;  
And as we fall by various ways, and sink  
One deeper than another, self-condemned, 1110  
Through manifold degrees of guilt and shame;  
So manifold and various are the ways  
Of restoration, fashioned to the steps  
Of all infirmity, and tending all  
To the same point, attainable by all--

Peace in ourselves, and union with our God.  
For you, assuredly, a hopeful road  
Lies open: we have heard from you a voice  
At every moment softened in its course  
By tenderness of heart; have seen your eye, 1120  
Even like an altar lit by fire from heaven,  
Kindle before us.--Your discourse this day,  
That, like the fabled Lethe, wished to flow  
In creeping sadness, through oblivious shades  
Of death and night, has caught at every turn  
The colours of the sun. Access for you  
Is yet preserved to principles of truth,  
Which the imaginative Will upholds  
In seats of wisdom, not to be approached  
By the inferior Faculty that moulds, 1130  
With her minute and speculative pains,  
Opinion, ever changing!

I have seen

A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract  
Of inland ground, applying to his ear  
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;  
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul  
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon  
Brightened with joy; for from within were heard  
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed  
Mysterious union with its native sea. 1140  
Even such a shell the universe itself  
Is to the ear of Faith; and there are times,  
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart  
Authentic tidings of invisible things;  
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;  
And central peace, subsisting at the heart  
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,  
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;  
Pious beyond the intention of your thought;  
Devout above the meaning of your will. 1150  
--Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.  
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn  
If false conclusions of the reasoning power  
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages  
Through which the ear converses with the heart.  
Has not the soul, the being of your life,  
Received a shock of awful consciousness,  
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks  
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky,  
To rest upon their circumambient walls; 1160

A temple framing of dimensions vast,  
And yet not too enormous for the sound  
Of human anthems,--choral song, or burst  
Sublime of instrumental harmony,  
To glorify the Eternal! What if these  
Did never break the stillness that prevails  
Here,--if the solemn nightingale be mute,  
And the soft woodlark here did never chant  
Her vespers,--Nature fails not to provide  
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air 1170  
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,  
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;  
The little rills, and waters numberless,  
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes  
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour  
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,  
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,  
One voice--the solitary raven, flying  
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,  
Unseen, perchance above all power of sight-- 1180  
An iron knell! with echoes from afar  
Faint--and still fainter--as the cry, with which  
The wanderer accompanies her flight  
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,  
Diminishing by distance till it seemed  
To expire; yet from the abyss is caught again,  
And yet again recovered!

But descending  
From these imaginative heights, that yield  
Far-stretching views into eternity,  
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power 1190  
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend  
Even here, where her amenities are sown  
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad  
To range her blooming bowers, and spacious fields,  
Where on the labours of the happy throng  
She smiles, including in her wide embrace  
City, and town, and tower,--and sea with ships  
Sprinkled;--be our Companion while we track  
Her rivers populous with gliding life;  
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march, 1200  
Or pierce the gloom of her majestic woods;  
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade  
In peace and meditative cheerfulness;  
Where living things, and things inanimate,  
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,

And speak to social reason's inner sense,  
With inarticulate language.

For, the Man--

Who, in this spirit, communes with the Forms  
Of nature, who with understanding heart  
Both knows and loves such objects as excite           1210  
No morbid passions, no disquietude,  
No vengeance, and no hatred--needs must feel  
The joy of that pure principle of love  
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught  
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose  
But seek for objects of a kindred love  
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.

Accordingly he by degrees perceives  
His feelings of aversion softened down;  
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.           1220

His sanity of reason not impaired,  
Say rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,  
From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round  
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks:  
Until abhorrence and contempt are things  
He only knows by name; and, if he hear,  
From other mouths, the language which they speak,  
He is compassionate; and has no thought,  
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

And further; by contemplating these Forms           1230  
In the relations which they bear to man,  
He shall discern, how, through the various means  
Which silently they yield, are multiplied  
The spiritual presences of absent things.

Trust me, that for the instructed, time will come  
When they shall meet no object but may teach  
Some acceptable lesson to their minds  
Of human suffering, or of human joy.  
So shall they learn, while all things speak of man,  
Their duties from all forms; and general laws,           1240  
And local accidents, shall tend alike  
To rouse, to urge; and, with the will, confer  
The ability to spread the blessings wide  
Of true philanthropy. The light of love  
Not failing, perseverance from their steps  
Departing not, for them shall be confirmed  
The glorious habit by which sense is made  
Subservient still to moral purposes,  
Auxiliar to divine. That change shall clothe



A passionate intuition; whence the Soul,  
Though bound to earth by ties of pity and love,  
From all injurious servitude was free.

The Sun, before his place of rest were reached,  
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,  
To us who stood low in that hollow dell, 1300

He had become invisible,--a pomp  
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread  
Over the mountain sides, in contrast bold  
With ample shadows, seemingly, no less  
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest;  
A dispensation of his evening power.

--Adown the path that from the glen had led  
The funeral train, the Shepherd and his Mate  
Were seen descending:--forth to greet them ran  
Our little Page: the rustic pair approach; 1310

And in the Matron's countenance may be read  
Plain indication that the words, which told  
How that neglected Pensioner was sent  
Before his time into a quiet grave,  
Had done to her humanity no wrong:  
But we are kindly welcomed--promptly served  
With ostentatious zeal.--Along the floor  
Of the small Cottage in the lonely Dell  
A grateful couch was spread for our repose;  
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we lay, 1320  
Stretched upon fragrant heath, and lulled by sound  
Of far-off torrents charming the still night,  
And, to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,  
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

#### Book Five: The Pastor

"FAREWELL, deep Valley, with thy one rude House,  
And its small lot of life-supporting fields,  
And guardian rocks!--Farewell, attractive seat!  
To the still influx of the morning light  
Open, and day's pure cheerfulness, but veiled  
From human observation, as if yet  
Primeval forests wrapped thee round with dark  
Impenetrable shade; once more farewell,  
Majestic circuit, beautiful abyss,  
By Nature destined from the birth of things 10  
For quietness profound!"



Upon the side

Of that brown ridge, sole outlet of the vale  
Which foot of boldest stranger would attempt,  
Lingering behind my comrades, thus I breathed  
A parting tribute to a spot that seemed  
Like the fixed centre of a troubled world.  
Again I halted with reverted eyes;  
The chain that would not slacken, was at length  
Snapt,--and, pursuing leisurely my way,  
How vain, thought I, is it by change of place           20  
To seek that comfort which the mind denies;  
Yet trial and temptation oft are shunned  
Wisely; and by such tenure do we hold  
Frail life's possessions, that even they whose fate  
Yields no peculiar reason of complaint  
Might, by the promise that is here, be won  
To steal from active duties, and embrace  
Obscurity, and undisturbed repose.  
--Knowledge, methinks, in these disordered times,  
Should be allowed a privilege to have           30  
Her anchorites, like piety of old;  
Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstained  
By war, might, if so minded, turn aside  
Uncensured, and subsist, a scattered few  
Living to God and nature, and content  
With that communion. Consecrated be  
The spots where such abide! But happier still  
The Man, whom, furthermore, a hope attends  
That meditation and research may guide           40  
His privacy to principles and powers  
Discovered or invented; or set forth,  
Through his acquaintance with the ways of truth,  
In lucid order; so that, when his course  
Is run, some faithful eulogist may say,  
He sought not praise, and praise did overlook  
His unobtrusive merit; but his life,  
Sweet to himself, was exercised in good  
That shall survive his name and memory.

Acknowledgments of gratitude sincere  
Accompanied these musings; fervent thanks           50  
For my own peaceful lot and happy choice;  
A choice that from the passions of the world  
Withdrew, and fixed me in a still retreat;  
Sheltered, but not to social duties lost,  
Secluded, but not buried; and with song

Cheering my days, and with industrious thought;  
With the ever-welcome company of books;  
With virtuous friendship's soul-sustaining aid,  
And with the blessings of domestic love.

Thus occupied in mind I paced along, 60  
Following the rugged road, by sledge or wheel  
Worn in the moorland, till I overtook  
My two Associates, in the morning sunshine  
Halting together on a rocky knoll,  
Whence the bare road descended rapidly  
To the green meadows of another vale.

Here did our pensive Host put forth his hand  
In sign of farewell. "Nay," the old Man said,  
"The fragrant air its coolness still retains;  
The herds and flocks are yet abroad to crop 70  
The dewy grass; you cannot leave us now,  
We must not part at this inviting hour."  
He yielded, though reluctant; for his mind  
Instinctively disposed him to retire  
To his own covert; as a billow, heaved  
Upon the beach, rolls back into the sea.  
--So we descend: and winding round a rock  
Attain a point that showed the valley--stretched  
In length before us; and, not distant far,  
Upon a rising ground a grey church-tower, 80  
Whose battlements were screened by tufted trees.  
And towards a crystal Mere, that lay beyond  
Among steep hills and woods embosomed, flowed  
A copious stream with boldly-winding course;  
Here traceable, there hidden--there again  
To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.  
On the stream's bank, and everywhere, appeared  
Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots;  
Some scattered o'er the level, others perched  
On the hill sides, a cheerful quiet scene, 90  
Now in its morning purity arrayed.

"As 'mid some happy valley of the Alps,"  
Said I, "once happy, ere tyrannic power,  
Wantonly breaking in upon the Swiss,  
Destroyed their unoffending commonwealth,  
A popular equality reigns here,  
Save for yon stately House beneath whose roof  
A rural lord might dwell."--"No feudal pomp,



A grateful coolness fell, that seemed to strike  
The heart, in concert with that temperate awe  
And natural reverence which the place inspired.  
Not raised in nice proportions was the pile,  
But large and massy; for duration built;  
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld  
By naked rafters intricately crossed,  
Like leafless underboughs, in some thick wood,  
All withered by the depth of shade above.  
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls, 150  
Each, in its ornamental scroll, enclosed;  
Each also crowned with winged heads--a pair  
Of rudely-painted Cherubim. The floor  
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,  
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged  
In seemly rows; the chancel only showed  
Some vain distinctions, marks of earthly state  
By immemorial privilege allowed;  
Though with the Encincture's special sanctity  
But ill according. An heraldic shield, 160  
Varying its tincture with the changeful light,  
Imbued the altar-window; fixed aloft  
A faded hatchment hung, and one by time  
Yet undiscoloured. A capacious pew  
Of sculptured oak stood here, with drapery lined;  
And marble monuments were here displayed  
Thronging the walls; and on the floor beneath  
Sepulchral stones appeared, with emblems graven  
And foot-worn epitaphs, and some with small  
And shining effigies of brass inlaid. 170

The tribute by these various records claimed,  
Duly we paid, each after each, and read  
The ordinary chronicle of birth,  
Office, alliance, and promotion--all  
Ending in dust; of upright magistrates,  
Grave doctors strenuous for the mother-church,  
And uncorrupted senators, alike  
To king and people true. A brazen plate,  
Not easily deciphered, told of one  
Whose course of earthly honour was begun 180  
In quality of page among the train  
Of the eighth Henry, when he crossed the seas  
His royal state to show, and prove his strength  
In tournament, upon the fields of France.  
Another tablet registered the death,

And praised the gallant bearing, of a Knight  
Tried in the sea-fights of the second Charles.  
Near this brave Knight his Father lay entombed;  
And, to the silent language giving voice,  
I read,--how in his manhood's earlier day                   190  
He, 'mid the afflictions of intestine war  
And rightful government subverted, found  
One only solace--that he had espoused  
A virtuous Lady tenderly beloved  
For her benign perfections; and yet more  
Endeared to him, for this, that, in her state  
Of wedlock richly crowned with Heaven's regard,  
She with a numerous issue filled his house,  
Who throve, like plants, uninjured by the storm  
That laid their country waste. No need to speak           200  
Of less particular notices assigned  
To Youth or Maiden gone before their time,  
And Matrons and unwedded Sisters old;  
Whose charity and goodness were rehearsed  
In modest panegyric.

    "These dim lines,  
What would they tell?" said I,--but, from the task  
Of puzzling out that faded narrative,  
With whisper soft my venerable Friend  
Called me; and, looking down the darksome aisle,  
I saw the Tenant of the lonely vale                   210  
Standing apart; with curved arm reclined  
On the baptismal font; his pallid face  
Upturned, as if his mind were rapt, or lost  
In some abstraction;--gracefully he stood,  
The semblance bearing of a sculptured form  
That leans upon a monumental urn  
In peace, from morn to night, from year to year.

    Him from that posture did the Sexton rouse;  
Who entered, humming carelessly a tune,  
Continuation haply of the notes                   220  
That had beguiled the work from which he came,  
With spade and mattock o'er his shoulder hung;  
To be deposited, for future need,  
In their appointed place. The pale Recluse  
Withdrew; and straight we followed,--to a spot  
Where sun and shade were intermixed; for there  
A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms  
From an adjoining pasture, overhung  
Small space of that green churchyard with a light

And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall                   230  
My ancient Friend and I together took  
Our seats; and thus the Solitary spake,  
Standing before us:--

                  "Did you note the mien  
Of that self-solaced, easy-hearted churl,  
Death's hireling, who scoops out his neighbour's grave,  
Or wraps an old acquaintance up in clay,  
All unconcerned as he would bind a sheaf,  
Or plant a tree. And did you hear his voice?  
I was abruptly summoned by the sound  
From some affecting images and thoughts,                   240  
Which then were silent; but crave utterance now.

                  Much," he continued, with dejected look,  
"Much, yesterday, was said in glowing phrase,  
Of our sublime dependencies, and hopes  
For future states of being; and the wings  
Of speculation, joyfully outspread,  
Hovered above our destiny on earth:  
But stoop, and place the prospect of the soul  
In sober contrast with reality,  
And man's substantial life. If this mute earth                   250  
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave  
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable  
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,  
We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,  
To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill  
That which is done accords with what is known  
To reason, and by conscience is enjoined;  
How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,  
To this conclusion, deviates from the line,  
Or of the end stops short, proposed to all                   260  
At her aspiring outset.

                  Mark the babe  
Not long accustomed to this breathing world;  
One that hath barely learned to shape a smile,  
Though yet irrational of soul, to grasp  
With tiny finger--to let fall a tear;  
And, as the heavy cloud of sleep dissolves,  
To stretch his limbs, bemocking, as might seem,  
The outward functions of intelligent man;  
A grave proficient in amusive feats                   270  
Of puppetry, that from the lap declare  
His expectations, and announce his claims  
To that inheritance which millions rue

That they were ever born to! In due time  
A day of solemn ceremonial comes;  
When they, who for this Minor hold in trust  
Rights that transcend the loftiest heritage  
Of mere humanity, present their Charge,  
For this occasion daintily adorned,  
At the baptismal font. And when the pure  
And consecrating element hath cleansed                   280  
The original stain, the child is there received  
Into the second ark, Christ's church, with trust  
That he, from wrath redeemed, therein shall float  
Over the billows of this troublesome world  
To the fair land of everlasting life.  
Corrupt affections, covetous desires,  
Are all renounced; high as the thought of man  
Can carry virtue, virtue is professed;  
A dedication made, a promise given  
For due provision to control and guide,                   290  
And unremitting progress to ensure  
In holiness and truth."

                                  "You cannot blame,"  
Here interposing fervently I said,  
"Rites which attest that Man by nature lies  
Bedded for good and evil in a gulf  
Fearfully low; nor will your judgment scorn  
Those services, whereby attempt is made  
To lift the creature toward that eminence  
On which, now fallen, erewhile in majesty  
He stood; or if not so, whose top serene                   300  
At least he feels 'tis given him to descry;  
Not without aspirations, evermore  
Returning, and injunctions from within  
Doubt to cast off and weariness; in trust  
That what the Soul perceives, if glory lost,  
May be, through pains and persevering hope,  
Recovered; or, if hitherto unknown,  
Lies within reach, and one day shall be gained."

                                  "I blame them not," he calmly answered--"no;  
The outward ritual and established forms                   310  
With which communities of men invest  
These inward feelings, and the aspiring vows  
To which the lips give public utterance  
Are both a natural process; and by me  
Shall pass uncensured; though the issue prove,  
Bringing from age to age its own reproach,

Incongruous, impotent, and blank.--But, oh!  
If to be weak is to be wretched--miserable,  
As the lost Angel by a human voice  
Hath mournfully pronounced, then, in my mind, 320  
Far better not to move at all than move  
By impulse sent from such illusive power,--  
That finds and cannot fasten down; that grasps  
And is rejoiced, and loses while it grasps;  
That tempts, emboldens--for a time sustains,  
And then betrays; accuses and inflicts  
Remorseless punishment; and so retreads  
The inevitable circle: better far  
Than this, to graze the herb in thoughtless peace,  
By foresight or remembrance, undisturbed! 330

Philosophy! and thou more vaunted name  
Religion! with thy statelier retinue,  
Faith, Hope, and Charity--from the visible world  
Choose for your emblems whatsoever ye find  
Of safest guidance or of firmest trust--  
The torch, the star, the anchor; nor except  
The cross itself, at whose unconscious feet  
The generations of mankind have knelt  
Ruefully seized, and shedding bitter tears,  
And through that conflict seeking rest--of you, 340  
High-titled Powers, am I constrained to ask,  
Here standing, with the unvoyageable sky  
In faint reflection of infinitude  
Stretched overhead, and at my pensive feet  
A subterraneous magazine of bones,  
In whose dark vaults my own shall soon be laid,  
Where are your triumphs? your dominion where?  
And in what age admitted and confirmed?  
--Not for a happy land do I enquire,  
Island or grove, that hides a blessed few 350  
Who, with obedience willing and sincere,  
To your serene authorities conform;  
But whom, I ask, of individual Souls,  
Have ye withdrawn from passion's crooked ways,  
Inspired, and thoroughly fortified?--If the heart  
Could be inspected to its inmost folds  
By sight undazzled with the glare of praise,  
Who shall be named--in the resplendent line  
Of sages, martyrs, confessors--the man  
Whom the best might of faith, wherever fixed, 360  
For one day's little compass, has preserved



From painful and discreditable shocks  
Of contradiction, from some vague desire  
Culpably cherished, or corrupt relapse  
To some unsanctioned fear?"

"If this be so,  
And Man," said I, "be in his noblest shape  
Thus pitiably infirm; then, he who made,  
And who shall judge the creature, will forgive.  
--Yet, in its general tenor, your complaint  
Is all too true; and surely not misplaced: 370

For, from this pregnant spot of ground, such thoughts  
Rise to the notice of a serious mind  
By natural exhalation. With the dead  
In their repose, the living in their mirth,  
Who can reflect, unmoved, upon the round  
Of smooth and solemnized complacencies,  
By which, on Christian lands, from age to age  
Profession mocks performance. Earth is sick,  
And Heaven is weary, of the hollow words  
Which States and Kingdoms utter when they talk 380  
Of truth and justice. Turn to private life  
And social neighbourhood; look we to ourselves;  
A light of duty shines on every day  
For all; and yet how few are warmed or cheered!  
How few who mingle with their fellow-men  
And still remain self-governed, and apart,  
Like this our honoured Friend; and thence acquire  
Right to expect his vigorous decline,  
That promises to the end a blest old age!"

"Yet," with a smile of triumph thus exclaimed 390  
The Solitary, "in the life of man,  
If to the poetry of common speech  
Faith may be given, we see as in a glass  
A true reflection of the circling year,

With all its seasons. Grant that Spring is there,  
In spite of many a rough untoward blast,  
Hopeful and promising with buds and flowers;  
Yet where is glowing Summer's long rich day,  
That 'ought' to follow faithfully expressed?  
And mellow Autumn, charged with bounteous fruit, 400  
Where is she imaged? in what favoured clime  
Her lavish pomp, and ripe magnificence?  
--Yet, while the better part is missed, the worse  
In man's autumnal season is set forth

With a resemblance not to be denied,  
And that contents him; bowers that hear no more  
The voice of gladness, less and less supply  
Of outward sunshine and internal warmth;  
And, with this change, sharp air and falling leaves,  
Foretelling aged Winter's desolate sway. 410

How gay the habitations that bedeck  
This fertile valley! Not a house but seems  
To give assurance of content within;  
Embosomed happiness, and placid love;  
As if the sunshine of the day were met  
With answering brightness in the hearts of all  
Who walk this favoured ground. But chance-regards,  
And notice forced upon incurious ears;  
These, if these only, acting in despite  
Of the encomiums by my Friend pronounced 420  
On humble life, forbid the judging mind  
To trust the smiling aspect of this fair  
And noiseless commonwealth. The simple race  
Of mountaineers (by nature's self removed  
From foul temptations, and by constant care  
Of a good shepherd tended as themselves  
Do tend their flocks) partake man's general lot  
With little mitigation. They escape,  
Perchance, the heavier woes of guilt; feel not  
The tedium of fantastic idleness: 430  
Yet life, as with the multitude, with them  
Is fashioned like an ill-constructed tale;  
That on the outset wastes its gay desires,  
Its fair adventures, its enlivening hopes,  
And pleasant interests--for the sequel leaving  
Old things repeated with diminished grace;  
And all the laboured novelties at best  
Imperfect substitutes, whose use and power  
Evince the want and weakness whence they spring."

While in this serious mood we held discourse, 440  
The reverend Pastor toward the churchyard gate  
Approached; and, with a mild respectful air  
Of native cordiality, our Friend  
Advanced to greet him. With a gracious mien  
Was he received, and mutual joy prevailed.  
Awhile they stood in conference, and I guess  
That he, who now upon the mossy wall  
Sate by my side, had vanished, if a wish

Could have transferred him to the flying clouds,  
Or the least penetrable hiding-place 450  
In his own valley's rocky guardianship.  
--For me, I looked upon the pair, well pleased:  
Nature had framed them both, and both were marked  
By circumstance, with intermixture fine  
Of contrast and resemblance. To an oak  
Hardy and grand, a weather-beaten oak,  
Fresh in the strength and majesty of age,  
One might be likened: flourishing appeared,  
Though somewhat past the fulness of his prime,  
The other--like a stately sycamore, 460  
That spreads, in gentle pomp, its honied shade.

A general greeting was exchanged; and soon  
The Pastor learned that his approach had given  
A welcome interruption to discourse  
Grave, and in truth too often sad.--"Is Man  
A child of hope? Do generations press  
On generations, without progress made?  
Halts the individual, ere his hairs be grey,  
Perforce? Are we a creature in whom good  
Preponderates, or evil? Doth the will 470  
Acknowledge reason's law? A living power  
Is virtue, or no better than a name,  
Fleeting as health or beauty, and unsound?  
So that the only substance which remains,  
(For thus the tenor of complaint hath run)  
Among so many shadows, are the pains  
And penalties of miserable life,  
Doomed to decay, and then expire in dust!  
--Our cogitations, this way have been drawn,  
These are the points," the Wanderer said, "on which 480  
Our inquest turns.--Accord, good Sir! the light  
Of your experience to dispel this gloom:  
By your persuasive wisdom shall the heart  
That frets, or languishes, be stilled and cheered."

"Our nature," said the Priest, in mild reply,  
"Angels may weigh and fathom: they perceive,  
With undistempered and unclouded spirit,  
The object as it is; but, for ourselves,  
That speculative height 'we' may not reach.  
The good and evil are our own; and we 490  
Are that which we would contemplate from far.  
Knowledge, for us, is difficult to gain--

Is difficult to gain, and hard to keep--  
As virtue's self; like virtue is beset  
With snares; tried, tempted, subject to decay.  
Love, admiration, fear, desire, and hate,  
Blind were we without these: through these alone  
Are capable to notice or discern  
Or to record; we judge, but cannot be  
Indifferent judges. 'Spite of proudest boast,           500  
Reason, best reason, is to imperfect man  
An effort only, and a noble aim;  
A crown, an attribute of sovereign power,  
Still to be courted--never to be won.  
--Look forth, or each man dive into himself;  
What sees he but a creature too perturbed;  
That is transported to excess; that yearns,  
Regrets, or trembles, wrongly, or too much;  
Hopes rashly, in disgust as rash recoils;  
Battens on spleen, or moulders in despair;           510  
Thus comprehension fails, and truth is missed;  
Thus darkness and delusion round our path  
Spread, from disease, whose subtle injury lurks  
Within the very faculty of sight.

Yet for the general purposes of faith  
In Providence, for solace and support,  
We may not doubt that who can best subject  
The will to reason's law, can strictliest live  
And act in that obedience, he shall gain           520  
The clearest apprehension of those truths,  
Which unassisted reason's utmost power  
Is too infirm to reach. But, waiving this,  
And our regards confining within bounds  
Of less exalted consciousness, through which  
The very multitude are free to range,  
We safely may affirm that human life  
Is either fair and tempting, a soft scene  
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,  
Or a forbidden tract of cheerless view;  
Even as the same is looked at, or approached.           530  
Thus, when in changeful April fields are white  
With new-fallen snow, if from the sullen north  
Your walk conduct you hither, ere the sun  
Hath gained his noontide height, this churchyard, filled  
With mounds transversely lying side by side  
From east to west, before you will appear  
An unillumined, blank, and dreary plain,

With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom  
Saddening the heart. Go forward, and look back;  
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light, 540  
Of life, of love, and gladness doth dispense  
His beams; which, unexcluded in their fall,  
Upon the southern side of every grave  
Have gently exercised a melting power;  
'Then' will a vernal prospect greet your eye,  
All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,  
Hopeful and cheerful:--vanished is the pall  
That overspread and chilled the sacred turf,  
Vanished or hidden; and the whole domain, 550  
To some, too lightly minded, might appear  
A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.  
--This contrast, not unsuitable to life,  
Is to that other state more apposite,  
Death and its two-fold aspect! wintry--one,  
Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out;  
The other, which the ray divine hath touched,  
Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring."

"We see, then, as we feel," the Wanderer thus  
With a complacent animation spake,  
"And in your judgment, Sir! the mind's repose 560  
On evidence is not to be ensured  
By act of naked reason. Moral truth  
Is no mechanic structure, built by rule;  
And which, once built, retains a stedfast shape  
And undisturbed proportions; but a thing  
Subject, you deem, to vital accidents;  
And, like the water-lily, lives and thrives,  
Whose root is fixed in stable earth, whose head  
Floats on the tossing waves. With joy sincere  
I re-salute these sentiments confirmed 570  
By your authority. But how acquire  
The inward principle that gives effect  
To outward argument; the passive will  
Meek to admit; the active energy,  
Strong and unbounded to embrace, and firm  
To keep and cherish? how shall man unite  
With self-forgetting tenderness of heart  
An earth-despising dignity of soul?  
Wise in that union, and without it blind!"

"The way," said I, "to court, if not obtain 580  
The ingenuous mind, apt to be set aright;

This, in the lonely dell discoursing, you  
Declared at large; and by what exercise  
From visible nature, or the inner self  
Power may be trained, and renovation brought  
To those who need the gift. But, after all,  
Is aught so certain as that man is doomed  
To breathe beneath a vault of ignorance?  
The natural roof of that dark house in which  
His soul is pent! How little can be known-- 590  
This is the wise man's sigh; how far we err--  
This is the good man's not unfrequent pang!  
And they perhaps err least, the lowly class  
Whom a benign necessity compels  
To follow reason's least ambitious course;  
Such do I mean who, unperplexed by doubt,  
And unincited by a wish to look  
Into high objects farther than they may,  
Pace to and fro, from morn till eventide,  
The narrow avenue of daily toil 600  
For daily bread."

"Yes," buoyantly exclaimed  
The pale Recluse--"praise to the sturdy plough,  
And patient spade; praise to the simple crook,  
And ponderous loom--resounding while it holds  
Body and mind in one captivity;  
And let the light mechanic tool be hailed  
With honour; which, encasing by the power  
Of long companionship, the artist's hand,  
Cuts off that hand, with all its world of nerves,  
From a too busy commerce with the heart! 610  
--Inglorious implements of craft and toil,  
Both ye that shape and build, and ye that force,  
By slow sollicitation, earth to yield  
Her annual bounty, sparingly dealt forth  
With wise reluctance; you would I extol,  
Not for gross good alone which ye produce,  
But for the impertinent and ceaseless strife  
Of proofs and reasons ye preclude--in those  
Who to your dull society are born,  
And with their humble birthright rest content. 620  
--Would I had ne'er renounced it!"

A slight flush  
Of moral anger previously had tinged  
The old Man's cheek; but, at this closing turn  
Of self-reproach, it passed away. Said he,  
"That which we feel we utter; as we think

So have we argued; reaping for our pains  
No visible recompense. For our relief  
You," to the Pastor turning thus he spake,  
"Have kindly interposed. May I entreat  
Your further help? The mine of real life                   630  
Dig for us; and present us, in the shape  
Of virgin ore, that gold which we, by pains  
Fruitless as those of aery alchemists,  
Seek from the torturing crucible. There lies  
Around us a domain where you have long  
Watched both the outward course and inner heart:  
Give us, for our abstractions, solid facts;  
For our disputes, plain pictures. Say what man  
He is who cultivates yon hanging field;  
What qualities of mind she bears, who comes,                   640  
For morn and evening service, with her pail,  
To that green pasture; place before our sight  
The family who dwell within yon house  
Fenced round with glittering laurel; or in that  
Below, from which the curling smoke ascends.  
Or rather, as we stand on holy earth,  
And have the dead around us, take from them  
Your instances; for they are both best known,  
And by frail man most equitably judged.  
Epitomise the life; pronounce, you can,                   650  
Authentic epitaphs on some of these  
Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,  
Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet:  
So, by your records, may our doubts be solved;  
And so, not searching higher we may learn  
'To prize the breath we share with human kind;  
And look upon the dust of man with awe!'"

The Priest replied--"An office you impose  
For which peculiar requisites are mine;  
Yet much, I feel, is wanting--else the task                   660  
Would be most grateful. True indeed it is  
That they whom death has hidden from our sight  
Are worthiest of the mind's regard; with these  
The future cannot contradict the past:  
Mortality's last exercise and proof  
Is undergone; the transit made that shows  
The very Soul, revealed as she departs.  
Yet, on your first suggestion, will I give,  
Ere we descend into these silent vaults,  
One picture from the living.

You behold, 670  
 High on the breast of yon dark mountain, dark  
 With stony barrenness, a shining speck  
 Bright as a sunbeam sleeping till a shower  
 Brush it away, or cloud pass over it;  
 And such it might be deemed--a sleeping sunbeam;  
 But 'tis a plot of cultivated ground,  
 Cut off, an island in the dusky waste;  
 And that attractive brightness is its own.  
 The lofty site, by nature framed to tempt  
 Amid a wilderness of rocks and stones 680  
 The tiller's hand, a hermit might have chosen,  
 For opportunity presented, thence  
 Far forth to send his wandering eye o'er land  
 And ocean, and look down upon the works,  
 The habitations, and the ways of men,  
 Himself unseen! But no tradition tells  
 That ever hermit dipped his maple dish  
 In the sweet spring that lurks 'mid yon green fields;  
 And no such visionary views belong  
 To those who occupy and till the ground, 690  
 High on that mountain where they long have dwelt  
 A wedded pair in childless solitude.  
 A house of stones collected on the spot,  
 By rude hands built, with rocky knolls in front.  
 Backed also by a ledge of rock, whose crest  
 Of birch-trees waves over the chimney top;  
 A rough abode--in colour, shape, and size,  
 Such as in unsafe times of border-war  
 Might have been wished for and contrived, to elude  
 The eye of roving plunderer--for their need 700  
 Suffices; and unshaken bears the assault  
 Of their most dreaded foe, the strong Southwest  
 In anger blowing from the distant sea.  
 --Alone within her solitary hut;  
 There, or within the compass of her fields,  
 At any moment may the Dame be found,  
 True as the stock-dove to her shallow nest  
 And to the grove that holds it. She beguiles  
 By intermingled work of house and field  
 The summer's day, and winter's; with success 710  
 Not equal, but sufficient to maintain,  
 Even at the worst, a smooth stream of content,  
 Until the expected hour at which her Mate  
 From the far-distant quarry's vault returns;  
 And by his converse crowns a silent day



With evening cheerfulness. In powers of mind,  
In scale of culture, few among my flock  
Hold lower rank than this sequestered pair:  
But true humility descends from heaven;  
And that best gift of heaven hath fallen on them;       720  
Abundant recompense for every want.  
--Stoop from your height, ye proud, and copy these!  
Who, in their noiseless dwelling-place, can hear  
The voice of wisdom whispering scripture texts  
For the mind's government, or temper's peace;  
And recommending for their mutual need,  
Forgiveness, patience, hope, and charity!"

"Much was I pleased," the grey-haired Wanderer said,  
"When to those shining fields our notice first  
You turned; and yet more pleased have from your lips       730  
Gathered this fair report of them who dwell  
In that retirement; whither, by such course  
Of evil hap and good as oft awaits  
A tired way-faring man, once 'I' was brought  
While traversing alone yon mountain pass.  
Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell,  
And night succeeded with unusual gloom,  
So hazardous that feet and hands became  
Guides better than mine eyes--until a light  
High in the gloom appeared, too high, methought,       740  
For human habitation; but I longed  
To reach it, destitute of other hope.  
I looked with steadiness as sailors look  
On the north star, or watch-tower's distant lamp,  
And saw the light--now fixed--and shifting now--  
Not like a dancing meteor, but in line  
Of never-varying motion, to and fro.  
It is no night-fire of the naked hills,  
Thought I--some friendly covert must be near.  
With this persuasion thitherward my steps       750  
I turn, and reach at last the guiding light;  
Joy to myself! but to the heart of her  
Who there was standing on the open hill,  
(The same kind Matron whom your tongue hath praised)  
Alarm and disappointment! The alarm  
Ceased, when she learned through what mishap I came,  
And by what help had gained those distant fields.  
Drawn from her cottage, on that aery height,  
Bearing a lantern in her hand she stood,  
Or paced the ground--to guide her Husband home,       760

By that unwearied signal, kenned afar;  
An anxious duty! which the lofty site,  
Traversed but by a few irregular paths,  
Imposes, whensoever untoward chance  
Detains him after his accustomed hour  
Till night lies black upon the ground. 'But come,  
Come,' said the Matron, 'to our poor abode;  
Those dark rocks hide it!' Entering, I beheld  
A blazing fire--beside a cleanly hearth  
Sate down; and to her office, with leave asked, 770  
The Dame returned.

Or ere that glowing pile  
Of mountain turf required the builder's hand  
Its wasted splendour to repair, the door  
Opened, and she re-entered with glad looks,  
Her Helpmate following. Hospitable fare,  
Frank conversation, made the evening's treat:  
Need a bewildered traveller wish for more?  
But more was given; I studied as we sate  
By the bright fire, the good Man's form, and face  
Not less than beautiful; an open brow 780  
Of undisturbed humanity; a cheek  
Suffused with something of a feminine hue;  
Eyes beaming courtesy and mild regard;  
But, in the quicker turns of the discourse,  
Expression slowly varying, that evinced  
A tardy apprehension. From a fount  
Lost, thought I, in the obscurities of time,  
But honoured once, those features and that mien  
May have descended, though I see them here.  
In such a man, so gentle and subdued, 790  
Withal so graceful in his gentleness,  
A race illustrious for heroic deeds,  
Humbled, but not degraded, may expire.  
This pleasing fancy (cherished and upheld  
By sundry recollections of such fall  
From high to low, ascent from low to high,  
As books record, and even the careless mind  
Cannot but notice among men and things)  
Went with me to the place of my repose.

Roused by the crowing cock at dawn of day, 800  
I yet had risen too late to interchange  
A morning salutation with my Host,  
Gone forth already to the far-off seat  
Of his day's work. 'Three dark mid-winter months

'Pass,' said the Matron 'and I never see,  
 'Save when the sabbath brings its kind release,  
 'My Helpmate's face by light of day. He quits  
 'His door in darkness, nor till dusk returns.  
 'And, through Heaven's blessing, thus we gain the bread  
 'For which we pray; and for the wants provide           810  
 'Of sickness, accident, and helpless age.  
 'Companions have I many; many friends,  
 'Dependants, comforters--my wheel, my fire,  
 'All day the house-clock ticking in mine ear,  
 'The cackling hen, the tender chicken brood,  
 'And the wild birds that gather round my porch.  
 'This honest sheep-dog's countenance I read;  
 'With him can talk; nor blush to waste a word  
 'On creatures less intelligent and shrewd.  
 'And if the blustering wind that drives the clouds       820  
 'Care not for me, he lingers round my door,  
 'And makes me pastime when our tempers suit;--  
 'But, above all, my thoughts are my support,  
 'My comfort:--would that they were oftener fixed  
 'On what, for guidance in the way that leads  
 'To heaven, I know, by my Redeemer taught.'  
 The Matron ended--nor could I forbear  
 To exclaim--'O happy! yielding to the law  
 Of these privations, richer in the main!--  
 While thankless thousands are opprest and clogged       830  
 By ease and leisure; by the very wealth  
 And pride of opportunity made poor;  
 While tens of thousands falter in their path,  
 And sink, through utter want of cheering light;  
 For you the hours of labour do not flag;  
 For you each evening hath its shining star,  
 And every sabbath-day its golden sun.'"

"Yes!" said the Solitary with a smile  
 That seemed to break from an expanding heart,  
 "The untutored bird may found, and so construct,       840  
 And with such soft materials line, her nest  
 Fixed in the centre of a prickly brake,  
 That the thorns wound her not; they only guard,  
 Powers not unjustly likened to those gifts  
 Of happy instinct which the woodland bird  
 Shares with her species, nature's grace sometimes  
 Upon the individual doth confer,  
 Among her higher creatures born and trained  
 To use of reason. And, I own that, tired



To the confiding spirit of his own  
Experienced faith, the reverend Pastor said,  
Around him looking; "Where shall I begin?  
Who shall be first selected from my flock  
Gathered together in their peaceful fold?"  
He paused--and having lifted up his eyes                   900  
To the pure heaven, he cast them down again  
Upon the earth beneath his feet; and spake:--

"To a mysteriously-united pair  
This place is consecrate; to Death and Life,  
And to the best affections that proceed  
From their conjunction; consecrate to faith  
In him who bled for man upon the cross;  
Hallowed to revelation; and no less  
To reason's mandates: and the hopes divine  
Of pure imagination;--above all,                   910  
To charity, and love, that have provided,  
Within these precincts, a capacious bed  
And receptacle, open to the good  
And evil, to the just and the unjust;  
In which they find an equal resting-place:  
Even as the multitude of kindred brooks  
And streams, whose murmur fills this hollow vale,  
Whether their course be turbulent or smooth,  
Their waters clear or sullied, all are lost  
Within the bosom of yon crystal Lake,                   920  
And end their journey in the same repose!

And blest are they who sleep; and we that know,  
While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,  
That all beneath us by the wings are covered  
Of motherly humanity, outspread  
And gathering all within their tender shade,  
Though loth and slow to come! A battlefield,  
In stillness left when slaughter is no more,  
With this compared, makes a strange spectacle!  
A dismal prospect yields the wild shore strewn                   930  
With wrecks, and trod by feet of young and old  
Wandering about in miserable search  
Of friends or kindred, whom the angry sea  
Restores not to their prayer! Ah! who would think  
That all the scattered subjects which compose  
Earth's melancholy vision through the space  
Of all her climes--these wretched, these depraved,  
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,

From the delights of charity cut off,  
 To pity dead, the oppressor and the opprest;                    940  
 Tyrants who utter the destroying word,  
 And slaves who will consent to be destroyed--  
 Were of one species with the sheltered few,  
 Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,  
 Lodged, in a dear appropriated spot,  
 This file of infants; some that never breathed  
 The vital air; others, which, though allowed  
 That privilege, did yet expire too soon,  
 Or with too brief a warning, to admit  
 Administration of the holy rite                                    950  
 That lovingly consigns the babe to the arms  
 Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.  
 These that in trembling hope are laid apart;  
 And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired  
 Till he begins to smile upon the breast  
 That feeds him; and the tottering little-one  
 Taken from air and sunshine when the rose  
 Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek;  
 The thinking, thoughtless, school-boy; the bold youth  
 Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid                    960  
 Smitten while all the promises of life  
 Are opening round her; those of middle age,  
 Cast down while confident in strength they stand,  
 Like pillars fixed more firmly, as might seem,  
 And more secure, by very weight of all  
 That, for support, rests on them; the decayed  
 And burthensome; and lastly, that poor few  
 Whose light of reason is with age extinct;  
 The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,  
 The earliest summoned and the longest spared--            970  
 Are here deposited, with tribute paid  
 Various, but unto each some tribute paid;  
 As if, amid these peaceful hills and groves,  
 Society were touched with kind concern,  
 And gentle 'Nature grieved, that one should die;'  
 Or, if the change demanded no regret,  
 Observed the liberating stroke--and blessed.

And whence that tribute? wherefore these regards?  
 Not from the naked 'Heart' alone of Man  
 (Though claiming high distinction upon earth            980  
 As the sole spring and fountain-head of tears,  
 His own peculiar utterance for distress  
 Or gladness)--No," the philosophic Priest

Continued, "'tis not in the vital seat  
Of feeling to produce them, without aid  
From the pure soul, the soul sublime and pure;  
With her two faculties of eye and ear,  
The one by which a creature, whom his sins  
Have rendered prone, can upward look to heaven;  
The other that empowers him to perceive                    990  
The voice of Deity, on height and plain,  
Whispering those truths in stillness, which the WORD,  
To the four quarters of the winds, proclaims.  
Not without such assistance could the use  
Of these benign observances prevail:  
Thus are they born, thus fostered, thus maintained;  
And by the care prospective of our wise  
Forefathers, who, to guard against the shocks  
The fluctuation and decay of things,  
Embodied and established these high truths                    1000  
In solemn institutions:--men convinced  
That life is love and immortality,  
The being one, and one the element.  
There lies the channel, and original bed,  
From the beginning, hollowed out and scooped  
For Man's affections--else betrayed and lost  
And swallowed up 'mid deserts infinite!  
This is the genuine course, the aim, and end  
Of prescient reason; all conclusions else  
Are abject, vain, presumptuous, and perverse.                    1010  
The faith partaking of those holy times,  
Life, I repeat, is energy of love  
Divine or human; exercised in pain,  
In strife, and tribulation; and ordained,  
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,  
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy."

Book Six: The Churchyard among the Mountains

HAIL to the crown by Freedom shaped--to gird  
An English Sovereign's brow! and to the throne  
Whereon he sits! Whose deep foundations lie  
In veneration and the people's love;  
Whose steps are equity, whose seat is law.  
--Hail to the State of England! And conjoin  
With this a salutation as devout,  
Made to the spiritual fabric of her Church;  
Founded in truth; by blood of Martyrdom

Cemented; by the hands of Wisdom reared 10  
In beauty of holiness, with ordered pomp,  
Decent and unreprieved. The voice, that greets  
The majesty of both, shall pray for both;  
That, mutually protected and sustained,  
They may endure long as the sea surrounds  
This favoured Land, or sunshine warms her soil.

And O, ye swelling hills, and spacious plains  
Besprent from shore to shore with steeple-towers,  
And spires whose 'silent finger points to heaven;[\[1\]](#)  
Nor wanting, at wide intervals, the bulk 20  
Of ancient minster lifted above the cloud  
Of the dense air, which town or city breeds  
To intercept the sun's glad beams--may ne'er  
That true succession fail of English hearts,  
Who, with ancestral feeling, can perceive  
What in those holy structures ye possess  
Of ornamental interest, and the charm  
Of pious sentiment diffused afar,  
And human charity, and social love.  
--Thus never shall the indignities of time 30  
Approach their reverend graces, unopposed;  
Nor shall the elements be free to hurt  
Their fair proportions; nor the blinder rage  
Of bigot zeal madly to overturn;  
And, if the desolating hand of war  
Spare them, they shall continue to bestow  
Upon the thronged abodes of busy men  
(Depraved, and ever prone to fill the mind  
Exclusively with transitory things)  
An air and mien of dignified pursuit; 40  
Of sweet civility, on rustic wilds.

The Poet, fostering for his native land  
Such hope, entreats that servants may abound  
Of those pure altars worthy; ministers  
Detached from pleasure, to the love of gain  
Superior, insusceptible of pride,  
And by ambitious longings undisturbed;  
Men, whose delight is where their duty leads  
Or fixes them; whose least distinguished day  
Shines with some portion of that heavenly lustre 50  
Which makes the sabbath lovely in the sight  
Of blessed angels, pitying human cares.  
--And, as on earth it is the doom of truth



To be perpetually attacked by foes  
Open or covert, be that priesthood still,  
For her defence, replenished with a band  
Of strenuous champions, in scholastic arts  
Thoroughly disciplined; nor (if in course  
Of the revolving world's disturbances  
Cause should recur, which righteous Heaven avert! 60  
To meet such trial) from their spiritual sires  
Degenerate; who, constrained to wield the sword  
Of disputation, shrunk not, though assailed  
With hostile din, and combating in sight  
Of angry umpires, partial and unjust;  
And did, thereafter, bathe their hands in fire,  
So to declare the conscience satisfied:  
Nor for their bodies would accept release;  
But, blessing God and praising him, bequeathed  
With their last breath, from out the smouldering flame, 70  
The faith which they by diligence had earned,  
Or, through illuminating grace, received,  
For their dear countrymen, and all mankind.  
O high example, constancy divine!

Even such a Man (inheriting the zeal  
And from the sanctity of elder times  
Not deviating,--a priest, the like of whom  
If multiplied, and in their stations set,  
Would o'er the bosom of a joyful land  
Spread true religion and her genuine fruits) 80  
Before me stood that day; on holy ground  
Fraught with the relics of mortality,  
Exalting tender themes, by just degrees  
To lofty raised; and to the highest, last;  
The head and mighty paramount of truths,--  
Immortal life, in never-fading worlds,  
For mortal creatures, conquered and secured.

That basis laid, those principles of faith  
Announced, as a preparatory act  
Of reverence done to the spirit of the place, 90  
The Pastor cast his eyes upon the ground;  
Not, as before, like one oppressed with awe  
But with a mild and social cheerfulness;  
Then to the Solitary turned, and spake.

"At morn or eve, in your retired domain,  
Perchance you not unfrequently have marked

A Visitor--in quest of herbs and flowers;  
Too delicate employ, as would appear,  
For one, who, though of drooping mien, had yet  
From nature's kindness received a frame 100  
Robust as ever rural labour bred."

The Solitary answered: "Such a Form  
Full well I recollect. We often crossed  
Each other's path; but, as the Intruder seemed  
Fondly to prize the silence which he kept,  
And I as willingly did cherish mine,  
We met, and passed, like shadows. I have heard,  
From my good Host, that being crazed in brain  
By unrequited love, he scaled the rocks,  
Dived into caves, and pierced the matted woods, 110  
In hope to find some virtuous herb of power  
To cure his malady!"

The Vicar smiled,--  
"Alas! before to-morrow's sun goes down  
His habitation will be here: for him  
That open grave is destined."

"Died he then  
Of pain and grief?" the Solitary asked,  
"Do not believe it; never could that be!"

"He loved," the Vicar answered, "deeply loved,  
Loved fondly, truly, fervently; and dared  
At length to tell his love, but sued in vain; 120  
Rejected, yea repelled; and, if with scorn  
Upon the haughty maiden's brow, 'tis but  
A high-prized plume which female Beauty wears  
In wantonness of conquest, or puts on  
To cheat the world, or from herself to hide  
Humiliation, when no longer free.

'That' he could brook, and glory in;--but when  
The tidings came that she whom he had wooed  
Was wedded to another, and his heart  
Was forced to rend away its only hope; 130  
Then, Pity could have scarcely found on earth  
An object worthier of regard than he,  
In the transition of that bitter hour!  
Lost was she, lost; nor could the Sufferer say  
That in the act of preference he had been  
Unjustly dealt with; but the Maid was gone!  
Had vanished from his prospects and desires;  
Not by translation to the heavenly choir

Who have put off their mortal spoils--ah no!  
She lives another's wishes to complete,-- 140  
'Joy be their lot, and happiness,' he cried,  
'His lot and hers, as misery must be mine!'

Such was that strong concussion; but the Man,  
Who trembled, trunk and limbs, like some huge oak  
By a fierce tempest shaken, soon resumed  
The stedfast quiet natural to a mind  
Of composition gentle and sedate,  
And, in its movements, circumspect and slow.  
To books, and to the long-forsaken desk, 150  
O'er which enchained by science he had loved  
To bend, he stoutly re-addressed himself,  
Resolved to quell his pain, and search for truth  
With keener appetite (if that might be)  
And closer industry. Of what ensued  
Within the heart no outward sign appeared  
Till a betraying sickliness was seen  
To tinge his cheek; and through his frame it crept  
With slow mutation unconcealable;  
Such universal change as autumn makes  
In the fair body of a leafy grove, 160  
Discoloured, then divested.

'Tis affirmed  
By poets skilled in nature's secret ways  
That Love will not submit to be controlled  
By mastery:--and the good Man lacked not friends  
Who strove to instil this truth into his mind,  
A mind in all heart-mysteries unversed.

'Go to the hills,' said one, 'remit a while  
'This baneful diligence:--at early morn  
'Court the fresh air, explore the heaths and woods;  
'And, leaving it to others to foretell, 170  
'By calculations sage, the ebb and flow  
'Of tides, and when the moon will be eclipsed,  
'Do you, for your own benefit, construct  
'A calendar of flowers, plucked as they blow  
'Where health abides, and cheerfulness, and peace.'  
The attempt was made;--'tis needless to report  
How hopelessly; but innocence is strong,  
And an entire simplicity of mind  
A thing most sacred in the eye of Heaven;  
That opens, for such sufferers, relief 180  
Within the soul, fountains of grace divine;

And doth commend their weakness and disease  
To Nature's care, assisted in her office  
By all the elements that round her wait  
To generate, to preserve, and to restore;  
And by her beautiful array of forms  
Shedding sweet influence from above; or pure  
Delight exhaling from the ground they tread."

"Impute it not to impatience, if," exclaimed  
The Wanderer, "I infer that he was healed                   190  
By perseverance in the course prescribed."

"You do not err: the powers, that had been lost  
By slow degrees, were gradually regained;  
The fluttering nerves composed; the beating heart  
In rest established; and the jarring thoughts  
To harmony restored.--But yon dark mould  
Will cover him, in the fulness of his strength,  
Hastily smitten by a fever's force;  
Yet not with stroke so sudden as refused  
Time to look back with tenderness on her                   200  
Whom he had loved in passion; and to send  
Some farewell words--with one, but one, request;  
That, from his dying hand, she would accept  
Of his possessions that which most he prized;  
A book, upon whose leaves some chosen plants,  
By his own hand disposed with nicest care,  
In undecaying beauty were preserved;  
Mute register, to him, of time and place,  
And various fluctuations in the breast;  
To her, a monument of faithful love                   210  
Conquered, and in tranquillity retained!

Close to his destined habitation, lies  
One who achieved a humbler victory,  
Though marvellous in its kind. A place there is  
High in these mountains, that allured a band  
Of keen adventurers to unite their pains  
In search of precious ore: they tried, were foiled--  
And all desisted, all, save him alone.  
He, taking counsel of his own clear thoughts,  
And trusting only to his own weak hands,                   220  
Urged unremittingly the stubborn work,  
Unseconded, uncountenanced; then, as time  
Passed on, while still his lonely efforts found  
No recompense, derided; and at length,

By many pitied, as insane of mind;  
By others dreaded as the luckless thrall  
Of subterranean Spirits feeding hope  
By various mockery of sight and sound;  
Hope after hope, encouraged and destroyed.  
--But when the lord of seasons had matured                   230  
The fruits of earth through space of twice ten years,  
The mountain's entrails offered to his view  
And trembling grasp the long-deferred reward.  
Not with more transport did Columbus greet  
A world, his rich discovery! But our Swain,  
A very hero till his point was gained,  
Proved all unable to support the weight  
Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he looked  
With an unsettled liberty of thought,  
Wishes and endless schemes; by daylight walked                   240  
Giddy and restless; ever and anon  
Quaffed in his gratitude immoderate cups;  
And truly might be said to die of joy!  
He vanished; but conspicuous to this day  
The path remains that linked his cottage-door  
To the mine's mouth; a long and slanting track,  
Upon the rugged mountain's stony side,  
Worn by his daily visits to and from  
The darksome centre of a constant hope.  
This vestige, neither force of beating rain,                   250  
Nor the vicissitudes of frost and thaw  
Shall cause to fade, till ages pass away;  
And it is named, in memory of the event,  
The PATH OF PERSEVERANCE."

    "Thou from whom  
Man has his strength," exclaimed the Wanderer, "oh!  
Do thou direct it! To the virtuous grant  
The penetrative eye which can perceive  
In this blind world the guiding vein of hope;  
That, like this Labourer, such may dig their way,  
'Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified;'                   260  
Grant to the wise 'his' firmness of resolve!"

    "That prayer were not superfluous," said the Priest,  
"Amid the noblest relics, proudest dust,  
That Westminster, for Britain's glory, holds  
Within the bosom of her awful pile,  
Ambitiously collected. Yet the sigh,  
Which wafts that prayer to heaven, is due to all,  
Wherever laid, who living fell below

Their virtue's humbler mark; a sigh of 'pain'  
 If to the opposite extreme they sank. 270  
 How would you pity her who yonder rests;  
 Him, farther off; the pair, who here are laid;  
 But, above all, that mixture of earth's mould  
 Whom sight of this green hillock to my mind  
 Recalls!  
 'He' lived not till his locks were nipped  
 By seasonable frost of age; nor died  
 Before his temples, prematurely forced  
 To mix the manly brown with silver grey,  
 Gave obvious instance of the sad effect  
 Produced, when thoughtless Folly hath usurped 280  
 The natural crown that sage Experience wears.  
 Gay, volatile, ingenious, quick to learn,  
 And prompt to exhibit all that he possessed  
 Or could perform; a zealous actor, hired  
 Into the troop of mirth, a soldier, sworn  
 Into the lists of giddy enterprise--  
 Such was he; yet, as if within his frame  
 Two several souls alternately had lodged,  
 Two sets of manners could the Youth put on;  
 And, fraught with antics as the Indian bird 290  
 That writhes and chatters in her wiry cage,  
 Was graceful, when it pleased him, smooth and still  
 As the mute swan that floats adown the stream,  
 Or, on the waters of the unruffled lake,  
 Anchors her placid beauty. Not a leaf,  
 That flutters on the bough, lighter than he;  
 And not a flower, that droops in the green shade,  
 More winningly reserved! If ye enquire  
 How such consummate elegance was bred  
 Amid these wilds, this answer may suffice; 300  
 'Twas Nature's will; who sometimes undertakes,  
 For the reproof of human vanity,  
 Art to outstrip in her peculiar walk.  
 Hence, for this Favourite--lavishly endowed  
 With personal gifts, and bright instinctive wit,  
 While both, embellishing each other, stood  
 Yet farther recommended by the charm  
 Of fine demeanour, and by dance and song,  
 And skill in letters--every fancy shaped  
 Fair expectations; nor, when to the world's 310  
 Capacious field forth went the Adventurer, there  
 Were he and his attainments overlooked,  
 Or scantily rewarded; but all hopes,

Cherished for him, he suffered to depart,  
Like blighted buds; or clouds that mimicked land  
Before the sailor's eye; or diamond drops  
That sparkling decked the morning grass; or aught  
That 'was' attractive, and hath ceased to be!

Yet, when this Prodigal returned, the rites  
Of joyful greeting were on him bestowed,                    320  
Who, by humiliation undeterred,  
Sought for his weariness a place of rest  
Within his Father's gates.--Whence came he?--clothed  
In tattered garb, from hovels where abides  
Necessity, the stationary host  
Of vagrant poverty; from rifted barns  
Where no one dwells but the wide-staring owl  
And the owl's prey; from these bare haunts, to which  
He had descended from the proud saloon,  
He came, the ghost of beauty and of health,                    330  
The wreck of gaiety! But soon revived  
In strength, in power refitted, he renewed  
His suit to Fortune; and she smiled again  
Upon a fickle Ingrate. Thrice he rose,  
Thrice sank as willingly. For he--whose nerves  
Were used to thrill with pleasure, while his voice  
Softly accompanied the tuneful harp,  
By the nice finger of fair ladies touched  
In glittering halls--was able to derive  
No less enjoyment from an abject choice.                    340  
Who happier for the moment--who more blithe  
Than this fallen Spirit? in those dreary holds  
His talents lending to exalt the freaks  
Of merry-making beggars,--nor provoked  
To laughter multiplied in louder peals  
By his malicious wit; then, all enchained  
With mute astonishment, themselves to see  
In their own arts outdone, their fame eclipsed,  
As by the very presence of the Fiend  
Who dictates and inspires illusive feats,                    350  
For knavish purposes! The city, too,  
(With shame I speak it) to her guilty bowers  
Allured him, sunk so low in self-respect  
As there to linger, there to eat his bread,  
Hired minstrel of voluptuous blandishment;  
Charming the air with skill of hand or voice,  
Listen who would, be wrought upon who might,  
Sincerely wretched hearts, or falsely gay.

--Such the too frequent tenor of his boast  
In ears that relished the report;--but all 360  
Was from his Parents happily concealed;  
Who saw enough for blame and pitying love.  
They also were permitted to receive  
His last, repentant breath; and closed his eyes,  
No more to open on that irksome world  
Where he had long existed in the state  
Of a young fowl beneath one mother hatched,  
Though from another sprung, different in kind:  
Where he had lived, and could not cease to live,  
Distracted in propensity; content 370  
With neither element of good or ill;  
And yet in both rejoicing; man unblest;  
Of contradictions infinite the slave,  
Till his deliverance, when Mercy made him  
One with himself, and one with them that sleep."

"'Tis strange," observed the Solitary, "strange  
It seems, and scarcely less than pitiful,  
That in a land where charity provides  
For all that can no longer feed themselves,  
A man like this should choose to bring his shame 380  
To the parental door; and with his sighs  
Infect the air which he had freely breathed  
In happy infancy. He could not pine,  
Through lack of converse; no--he must have found  
Abundant exercise for thought and speech,  
In his dividual being, self-reviewed,  
Self-catechised, self-punished.--Some there are  
Who, drawing near their final home, and much  
And daily longing that the same were reached,  
Would rather shun than seek the fellowship 390  
Of kindred mould.--Such haply here are laid?"

"Yes," said the Priest, "the Genius of our hills--  
Who seems, by these stupendous barriers cast  
Round his domain, desirous not alone  
To keep his own, but also to exclude  
All other progeny--doth sometimes lure,  
Even by his studied depth of privacy,  
The unhappy alien hoping to obtain  
Concealment, or seduced by wish to find, 400  
In place from outward molestation free,  
Helps to internal ease. Of many such  
Could I discourse; but as their stay was brief,



So their departure only left behind  
Fancies, and loose conjectures. Other trace  
Survives, for worthy mention, of a pair  
Who, from the pressure of their several fates,  
Meeting as strangers, in a petty town  
Whose blue roofs ornament a distant reach  
Of this far-winding vale, remained as friends  
True to their choice; and gave their bones in trust 410  
To this loved cemetery, here to lodge  
With unescutcheoned privacy interred  
Far from the family vault.--A Chieftain one  
By right of birth; within whose spotless breast  
The fire of ancient Caledonia burned:  
He, with the foremost whose impatience hailed  
The Stuart, landing to resume, by force  
Of arms, the crown which bigotry had lost,  
Aroused his clan; and, fighting at their head,  
With his brave sword endeavoured to prevent 420  
Culloden's fatal overthrow. Escaped  
From that disastrous rout, to foreign shores  
He fled; and when the lenient hand of time  
Those troubles had appeased, he sought and gained,  
For his obscured condition, an obscure  
Retreat, within this nook of English ground.

The other, born in Britain's southern tract,  
Had fixed his milder loyalty, and placed  
His gentler sentiments of love and hate,  
There, where 'they' placed them who in conscience prized 430  
The new succession, as a line of kings  
Whose oath had virtue to protect the land  
Against the dire assaults of papacy  
And arbitrary rule. But launch thy bark  
On the distempered flood of public life,  
And cause for most rare triumph will be thine  
If, spite of keenest eye and steadiest hand,  
The stream, that bears thee forward, prove not, soon  
Or late, a perilous master. He--who oft,  
Beneath the battlements and stately trees 440  
That round his mansion cast a sober gloom,  
Had moralised on this, and other truths  
Of kindred import, pleased and satisfied--  
Was forced to vent his wisdom with a sigh  
Heaved from the heart in fortune's bitterness,  
When he had crushed a plentiful estate  
By ruinous contest, to obtain a seat

In Britain's senate. Fruitless was the attempt;  
 And while the uproar of that desperate strife  
 Continued yet to vibrate on his ear, 450  
 The vanquished Whig, under a borrowed name,  
 (For the mere sound and echo of his own  
 Haunted him with sensations of disgust  
 That he was glad to lose) slunk from the world  
 To the deep shade of those untravelled Wilds;  
 In which the Scottish Laird had long possessed  
 An undisturbed abode. Here, then, they met,  
 Two doughty champions; flaming Jacobite  
 And sullen Hanoverian! You might think  
 That losses and vexations, less severe 460  
 Than those which they had severally sustained,  
 Would have inclined each to abate his zeal  
 For his ungrateful cause; no,--I have heard  
 My reverend Father tell that, 'mid the calm  
 Of that small town encountering thus, they filled,  
 Daily, its bowling-green with harmless strife;  
 Plagued with uncharitable thoughts the church;  
 And vexed the market-place. But in the breasts  
 Of these opponents gradually was wrought,  
 With little change of general sentiment, 470  
 Such leaning towards each other, that their days  
 By choice were spent in constant fellowship;  
 And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke,  
 Those very bickerings made them love it more.

A favourite boundary to their lengthened walks  
 This Churchyard was. And, whether they had come  
 Treading their path in sympathy and linked  
 In social converse, or by some short space  
 Discreetly parted to preserve the peace,  
 One spirit seldom failed to extend its sway 480  
 Over both minds, when they awhile had marked  
 The visible quiet of this holy ground,  
 And breathed its soothing air:--the spirit of hope  
 And saintly magnanimity; that--spurning  
 The field of selfish difference and dispute,  
 And every care which transitory things,  
 Earth and the kingdoms of the earth, create--  
 Doth, by a rapture of forgetfulness,  
 Preclude forgiveness, from the praise debarred,  
 Which else the Christian virtue might have claimed. 490

There live who yet remember here to have seen

Their courtly figures, seated on the stump  
 Of an old yew, their favourite resting-place.  
 But as the remnant of the long-lived tree  
 Was disappearing by a swift decay,  
 They, with joint care, determined to erect,  
 Upon its site, a dial, that might stand  
 For public use preserved, and thus survive  
 As their own private monument: for this  
 Was the particular spot, in which they wished       500  
 (And Heaven was pleased to accomplish the desire)  
 That, undivided, their remains should lie.  
 So, where the mouldered tree had stood, was raised  
 Yon structure, framing, with the ascent of steps  
 That to the decorated pillar lead,  
 A work of art more sumptuous than might seem  
 To suit this place; yet built in no proud scorn  
 Of rustic homeliness; they only aimed  
 To ensure for it respectful guardianship.  
 Around the margin of the plate, whereon       510  
 The shadow falls to note the stealthy hours,  
 Winds an inscriptive legend."--At these words  
 Thither we turned; and gathered, as we read,  
 The appropriate sense, in Latin numbers couched:  
 'Time flies; it is his melancholy task,  
 To bring, and bear away, delusive hopes,  
 And re-produce the troubles he destroys.  
 But, while his blindness thus is occupied,  
 Discerning Mortal! do thou serve the will  
 Of Time's eternal Master, and that peace,       520  
 Which the world wants, shall be for thee confirmed!'

"Smooth verse, inspired by no unlettered Muse,"  
 Exclaimed the Sceptic, "and the strain of thought  
 Accords with nature's language;--the soft voice  
 Of yon white torrent falling down the rocks  
 Speaks, less distinctly, to the same effect.  
 If, then, their blended influence be not lost  
 Upon our hearts, not wholly lost, I grant,  
 Even upon mine, the more are we required  
 To feel for those among our fellow-men,       530  
 Who, offering no obeisance to the world,  
 Are yet made desperate by 'too quick a sense  
 Of constant infelicity,' cut off  
 From peace like exiles on some barren rock,  
 Their life's appointed prison; not more free  
 Than sentinels, between two armies, set,

With nothing better, in the chill night air,  
Than their own thoughts to comfort them. Say why  
That ancient story of Prometheus chained  
To the bare rock on frozen Caucasus; 540  
The vulture, the inexhaustible repast  
Drawn from his vitals? Say what meant the woes  
By Tantalus entailed upon his race,  
And the dark sorrows of the line of Thebes?  
Fictions in form, but in their substance truths,  
Tremendous truths! familiar to the men  
Of long-past times, nor obsolete in ours.  
Exchange the shepherd's frock of native grey  
For robes with regal purple tinged; convert  
The crook into a sceptre; give the pomp 550  
Of circumstance; and here the tragic Muse  
Shall find apt subjects for her highest art.  
Amid the groves, under the shadowy hills,  
The generations are prepared; the pangs,  
The internal pangs, are ready; the dread strife  
Of poor humanity's afflicted will  
Struggling in vain with ruthless destiny."

"Though," said the Priest in answer, "these be terms  
Which a divine philosophy rejects,  
We, whose established and unfailling trust 560  
Is in controlling Providence, admit  
That, through all stations, human life abounds  
With mysteries;--for, if Faith were left untried,  
How could the might, that lurks within her, then  
Be shown? her glorious excellence--that ranks  
Among the first of Powers and Virtues--proved?  
Our system is not fashioned to preclude  
That sympathy which you for others ask;  
And I could tell, not travelling for my theme  
Beyond these humble graves, of grievous crimes 570  
And strange disasters; but I pass them by,  
Loth to disturb what Heaven hath hushed in peace.  
--Still less, far less, am I inclined to treat  
Of Man degraded in his Maker's sight  
By the deformities of brutish vice:  
For, in such portraits, though a vulgar face  
And a coarse outside of repulsive life  
And unaffected manners might at once  
Be recognised by all"--"Ah! do not think,"  
The Wanderer somewhat eagerly exclaimed, 580  
"Wish could be ours that you, for such poor gain,

(Gain shall I call it?--gain of what?--for whom?)  
Should breathe a word tending to violate  
Your own pure spirit. Not a step we look for  
In slight of that forbearance and reserve  
Which common human-heartedness inspires,  
And mortal ignorance and frailty claim,  
Upon this sacred ground, if nowhere else."

"True," said the Solitary, "be it far  
From us to infringe the laws of charity. 590  
Let judgment here in mercy be pronounced;  
This, self-respecting Nature prompts, and this  
Wisdom enjoins; but if the thing we seek  
Be genuine knowledge, bear we then in mind  
How, from his lofty throne, the sun can fling  
Colours as bright on exhalations bred  
By weedy pool or pestilential swamp,  
As by the rivulet sparkling where it runs,  
Or the pellucid lake."

"Small risk," said I,  
"Of such illusion do we here incur; 600  
Temptation here is none to exceed the truth;  
No evidence appears that they who rest  
Within this ground, were covetous of praise,  
Or of remembrance even, deserved or not.  
Green is the Churchyard, beautiful and green,  
Ridge rising gently by the side of ridge,  
A heaving surface, almost wholly free  
From interruption of sepulchral stones,  
And mantled o'er with aboriginal turf  
And everlasting flowers. These Dalesmen trust 610  
The lingering gleam of their departed lives  
To oral record, and the silent heart;  
Depositories faithful and more kind  
Than fondest epitaph: for, if those fail,  
What boots the sculptured tomb? And who can blame,  
Who rather would not envy, men that feel  
This mutual confidence; if, from such source,  
The practice flow,--if thence, or from a deep  
And general humility in death?  
Nor should I much condemn it, if it spring 620  
From disregard of time's destructive power,  
As only capable to prey on things  
Of earth, and human nature's mortal part.

Yet--in less simple districts, where we see

Stone lift its forehead emulous of stone  
In courting notice; and the ground all paved  
With commendations of departed worth;  
Reading, where'er we turn, of innocent lives,  
Of each domestic charity fulfilled,  
And sufferings meekly borne--I, for my part,           630  
Though with the silence pleased that here prevails,  
Among those fair recitals also range,  
Soothed by the natural spirit which they breathe.  
And, in the centre of a world whose soil  
Is rank with all unkindness, compassed round  
With such memorials, I have sometimes felt,  
It was no momentary happiness  
To have 'one' Enclosure where the voice that speaks  
In envy or detraction is not heard;  
Which malice may not enter; where the traces           640  
Of evil inclinations are unknown;  
Where love and pity tenderly unite  
With resignation; and no jarring tone  
Intrudes, the peaceful concert to disturb  
Of amity and gratitude."

                                  "Thus sanctioned,"  
The Pastor said, "I willingly confine  
My narratives to subjects that excite  
Feelings with these accordant; love, esteem,  
And admiration; lifting up a veil,  
A sunbeam introducing among hearts                   650  
Retired and covert; so that ye shall have  
Clear images before your gladdened eyes  
Of nature's unambitious underwood,  
And flowers that prosper in the shade. And when  
I speak of such among my flock as swerved  
Or fell, those only shall be singled out  
Upon whose lapse, or error, something more  
Than brotherly forgiveness may attend;  
To such will we restrict our notice, else  
Better my tongue were mute.

                                  And yet there are,           660  
I feel, good reasons why we should not leave  
Wholly untraced a more forbidding way.  
For, strength to persevere and to support,  
And energy to conquer and repel--  
These elements of virtue, that declare  
The native grandeur of the human soul--  
Are oft-times not unprofitably shown  
In the perverseness of a selfish course:

Truth every day exemplified, no less  
In the grey cottage by the murmuring stream                   670  
Than in fantastic conqueror's roving camp,  
Or 'mid the factious senate, unappalled  
Whoe'er may sink, or rise--to sink again,  
As merciless proscription ebbs and flows.

There," said the Vicar, pointing as he spake,  
"A woman rests in peace; surpassed by few  
In power of mind, and eloquent discourse.  
Tall was her stature; her complexion dark  
And saturnine; her head not raised to hold  
Converse with heaven, nor yet deprest towards earth,           680  
But in projection carried, as she walked  
For ever musing. Sunken were her eyes;  
Wrinkled and furrowed with habitual thought  
Was her broad forehead; like the brow of one  
Whose visual nerve shrinks from a painful glare  
Of overpowering light.--While yet a child,  
She, 'mid the humble flowerets of the vale,  
Towered like the imperial thistle, not unfurnished  
With its appropriate grace, yet rather seeking  
To be admired, than coveted and loved.                       690  
Even at that age she ruled, a sovereign queen,  
Over her comrades; else their simple sports,  
Wanting all relish for her strenuous mind,  
Had crossed her only to be shunned with scorn,  
--Oh! pang of sorrowful regret for those  
Whom, in their youth, sweet study has enthralled,  
That they have lived for harsher servitude,  
Whether in soul, in body, or estate!  
Such doom was hers; yet nothing could subdue  
Her keen desire of knowledge, nor efface                       700  
Those brighter images by books imprest  
Upon her memory, faithfully as stars  
That occupy their places, and, though oft  
Hidden by clouds, and oft bedimmed by haze,  
Are not to be extinguished, nor impaired.

Two passions, both degenerate, for they both  
Began in honour, gradually obtained  
Rule over her, and vexed her daily life;  
An unremitting, avaricious thrift;  
And a strange thralldom of maternal love,                   710  
That held her spirit, in its own despite,  
Bound--by vexation, and regret, and scorn,





Enough;--I fear, too much.--One vernal evening,  
While she was yet in prime of health and strength,  
I well remember, while I passed her door  
Alone, with loitering step, and upward eye 760  
Turned towards the planet Jupiter that hung  
Above the centre of the Vale, a voice  
Roused me, her voice; it said, 'That glorious star  
'In its untroubled element will shine  
'As now it shines, when we are laid in earth  
'And safe from all our sorrows.' With a sigh  
She spake, yet, I believe, not unsustained  
By faith in glory that shall far transcend  
Aught by these perishable heavens disclosed 770  
To sight or mind. Nor less than care divine  
Is divine mercy. She, who had rebelled,  
Was into meekness softened and subdued;  
Did, after trials not in vain prolonged,  
With resignation sink into the grave;  
And her uncharitable acts, I trust,  
And harsh unkindnesses are all forgiven,  
Tho', in this Vale, remembered with deep awe."

---

THE Vicar paused; and toward a seat advanced,  
A long stone-seat, fixed in the Churchyard wall;  
Part shaded by cool sycamore, and part 780  
Offering a sunny resting-place to them  
Who seek the House of worship, while the bells  
Yet ring with all their voices, or before  
The last hath ceased its solitary knoll.  
Beneath the shade we all sate down; and there,  
His office, uninvited, he resumed.

"As on a sunny bank, a tender lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screened by its parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbour; the small heap 790  
Speaks for itself; an Infant there doth rest;  
The sheltering hillock is the Mother's grave.  
If mild discourse, and manners that conferred  
A natural dignity on humblest rank;  
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks,  
That for a face not beautiful did more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do;  
And if religious tenderness of heart,  
Grieving for sin, and penitential tears

Shed when the clouds had gathered and distained 800  
The spotless ether of a maiden life;  
If these may make a hallowed spot of earth  
More holy in the sight of God or Man;  
Then, o'er that mould, a sanctity shall brood  
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom.

Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man,  
Could field or grove, could any spot of earth,  
Show to his eye an image of the pangs  
Which it hath witnessed; render back an echo 810  
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod!  
There, by her innocent Baby's precious grave,  
And on the very turf that roofs her own,  
The Mother oft was seen to stand, or kneel  
In the broad day, a weeping Magdalene.  
Now she is not; the swelling turf reports  
Of the fresh shower, but of poor Ellen's tears  
Is silent; nor is any vestige left  
Of the path worn by mournful tread of her  
Who, at her heart's light bidding, once had moved 820  
In virgin fearlessness, with step that seemed  
Caught from the pressure of elastic turf  
Upon the mountains gemmed with morning dew,  
In the prime hour of sweetest scents and airs.  
--Serious and thoughtful was her mind; and yet,  
By reconciliation exquisite and rare,  
The form, port, motions, of this Cottage-girl  
Were such as might have quickened and inspired  
A Titian's hand, addrest to picture forth  
Oread or Dryad glancing through the shade  
What time the hunter's earliest horn is heard 830  
Startling the golden hills.

A wide-spread elm  
Stands in our valley, named THE JOYFUL TREE;  
From dateless usage which our peasants hold  
Of giving welcome to the first of May  
By dances round its trunk.--And if the sky  
Permit, like honours, dance and song, are paid  
To the Twelfth Night, beneath the frosty stars  
Or the clear moon. The queen of these gay sports,  
If not in beauty yet in sprightly air,  
Was hapless Ellen.--No one touched the ground 840  
So deftly, and the nicest maiden's locks  
Less gracefully were braided;--but this praise,  
Methinks, would better suit another place.

She loved, and fondly deemed herself beloved.  
 --The road is dim, the current unperceived,  
 The weakness painful and most pitiful,  
 By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,  
 May be delivered to distress and shame.  
 Such fate was hers.--The last time Ellen danced,  
 Among her equals, round THE JOYFUL TREE, 850  
 She bore a secret burthen; and full soon  
 Was left to tremble for a breaking vow,--  
 Then, to bewail a sternly-broken vow,  
 Alone, within her widowed Mother's house.  
 It was the season of unfolding leaves,  
 Of days advancing toward their utmost length,  
 And small birds singing happily to mates  
 Happy as they. With spirit-saddening power  
 Winds pipe through fading woods; but those blithe notes  
 Strike the deserted to the heart; I speak 860  
 Of what I know, and what we feel within.  
 --Beside the cottage in which Ellen dwelt  
 Stands a tall ash-tree; to whose topmost twig  
 A thrush resorts, and annually chants,  
 At morn and evening from that naked perch,  
 While all the undergrove is thick with leaves,  
 A time-beguiling ditty, for delight  
 Of his fond partner, silent in the nest.  
 --'Ah why,' said Ellen, sighing to herself,  
 'Why do not words, and kiss, and solemn pledge; 870  
 'And nature that is kind in woman's breast,  
 'And reason that in man is wise and good,  
 'And fear of him who is a righteous judge;  
 'Why do not these prevail for human life,  
 'To keep two hearts together, that began  
 'Their spring-time with one love, and that have need  
 'Of mutual pity and forgiveness, sweet  
 'To grant, or be received; while that poor bird--  
 'O come and hear him! Thou who hast to me  
 'Been faithless, hear him, though a lowly creature, 880  
 'One of God's simple children that yet know not  
 'The universal Parent, how he sings  
 'As if he wished the firmament of heaven  
 'Should listen, and give back to him the voice  
 'Of his triumphant constancy and love;  
 'The proclamation that he makes, how far  
 'His darkness doth transcend our fickle light!'

Such was the tender passage, not by me  
Repeated without loss of simple phrase,  
Which I perused, even as the words had been 890  
Committed by forsaken Ellen's hand  
To the blank margin of a Valentine,  
Bedropped with tears. 'Twill please you to be told  
That, studiously withdrawing from the eye  
Of all companionship, the Sufferer yet  
In lonely reading found a meek resource:  
How thankful for the warmth of summer days,  
When she could slip into the cottage-barn,  
And find a secret oratory there;  
Or, in the garden, under friendly veil 900  
Of their long twilight, pore upon her book  
By the last lingering help of the open sky  
Until dark night dismissed her to her bed!  
Thus did a waking fancy sometimes lose  
The unconquerable pang of despised love.

A kindlier passion opened on her soul  
When that poor Child was born. Upon its face  
She gazed as on a pure and spotless gift  
Of unexpected promise, where a grief  
Or dread was all that had been thought of,--joy 910  
Far livelier than bewildered traveller feels,  
Amid a perilous waste that all night long  
Hath harassed him toiling through fearful storm,  
When he beholds the first pale speck serene  
Of day-spring, in the gloomy east, revealed,  
And greets it with thanksgiving. 'Till this hour,'  
Thus, in her Mother's hearing Ellen spake,  
'There was a stony region in my heart;  
'But He, at whose command the parched rock  
'Was smitten, and poured forth a quenching stream, 920  
'Hath softened that obduracy, and made  
'Unlooked-for gladness in the desert place,  
'To save the perishing; and, henceforth, I breathe  
'The air with cheerful spirit, for thy sake  
'My infant! and for that good Mother dear,  
'Who bore me; and hath prayed for me in vain;--  
'Yet not in vain; it shall not be in vain.'  
She spake, nor was the assurance unfulfilled;  
And if heart-rending thoughts would oft return,  
They stayed not long.--The blameless Infant grew 930  
The Child whom Ellen and her Mother loved  
They soon were proud of; tended it and nursed;



Of anger never seen in her before,  
'Nay, ye must wait my time!' and down she sate,  
And by the unclosed coffin kept her seat  
Weeping and looking, looking on and weeping, 980  
Upon the last sweet slumber of her Child,  
Until at length her soul was satisfied.

You see the Infant's Grave; and to this spot,  
The Mother, oft as she was sent abroad,  
On whatsoever errand, urged her steps:  
Hither she came; here stood, and sometimes knelt  
In the broad day, a rueful Magdalene!  
So call her; for not only she bewailed  
A mother's loss, but mourned in bitterness 990  
Her own transgression; penitent sincere  
As ever raised to heaven a streaming eye?  
--At length the parents of the foster-child,  
Noting that in despite of their commands  
She still renewed and could not but renew  
Those visitations, ceased to send her forth;  
Or, to the garden's narrow bounds, confined.  
I failed not to remind them that they erred;  
For holy Nature might not thus be crossed,  
Thus wronged in woman's breast: in vain I pleaded--  
But the green stalk of Ellen's life was snapped, 1000  
And the flower drooped; as every eye could see,  
It hung its head in mortal languishment.  
--Aided by this appearance, I at length  
Prevailed; and, from those bonds released, she went  
Home to her mother's house.

The Youth was fled;  
The rash betrayer could not face the shame  
Or sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused;  
And little would his presence, or proof given  
Of a relenting soul, have now availed;  
For, like a shadow, he was passed away 1010  
From Ellen's thoughts; had perished to her mind  
For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,  
Save only those which to their common shame,  
And to his moral being appertained:  
Hope from that quarter would, I know, have brought  
A heavenly comfort; there she recognised  
An unrelaxing bond, a mutual need;  
There, and, as seemed, there only.

She had built,  
Her fond maternal heart had built, a nest

In blindness all too near the river's edge;                   1020  
 That work a summer flood with hasty swell  
 Had swept away; and now her Spirit longed  
 For its last flight to heaven's security.  
 --The bodily frame wasted from day to day;  
 Meanwhile, relinquishing all other cares,  
 Her mind she strictly tutored to find peace  
 And pleasure in endurance. Much she thought,  
 And much she read; and brooded feelingly  
 Upon her own unworthiness. To me,  
 As to a spiritual comforter and friend,                   1030  
 Her heart she opened; and no pains were spared  
 To mitigate, as gently as I could,  
 The sting of self-reproach, with healing words.  
 Meek Saint! through patience glorified on earth!  
 In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sate,  
 The ghastly face of cold decay put on  
 A sun-like beauty, and appeared divine!  
 May I not mention--that, within those walls,  
 In due observance of her pious wish,  
 The congregation joined with me in prayer                   1040  
 For her soul's good? Nor was that office vain.  
 --Much did she suffer: but, if any friend,  
 Beholding her condition, at the sight  
 Gave way to words of pity or complaint,  
 She stilled them with a prompt reproof, and said,  
 'He who afflicts me knows what I can bear;  
 'And, when I fail, and can endure no more,  
 'Will mercifully take me to himself.'  
 So, through the cloud of death, her Spirit passed  
 Into that pure and unknown world of love                   1050  
 Where injury cannot come:--and here is laid  
 The mortal Body by her Infant's side."

The Vicar ceased; and downcast looks made known  
 That each had listened with his inmost heart.  
 For me, the emotion scarcely was less strong  
 Or less benign than that which I had felt  
 When seated near my venerable Friend,  
 Under those shady elms, from him I heard  
 The story that retraced the slow decline  
 Of Margaret, sinking on the lonely heath                   1060  
 With the neglected house to which she clung.  
 --I noted that the Solitary's cheek  
 Confessed the power of nature.--Pleased though sad,  
 More pleased than sad, the grey-haired Wanderer sate;

Thanks to his pure imaginative soul  
Capacious and serene; his blameless life,  
His knowledge, wisdom, love of truth, and love  
Of human kind! He was it who first broke  
The pensive silence, saying:--

"Blest are they

Whose sorrow rather is to suffer wrong                   1070  
Than to do wrong, albeit themselves have erred.  
This tale gives proof that Heaven most gently deals  
With such, in their affliction.--Ellen's fate,  
Her tender spirit, and her contrite heart,  
Call to my mind dark hints which I have heard  
Of one who died within this vale, by doom  
Heavier, as his offence was heavier far.  
Where, Sir, I pray you, where are laid the bones  
Of Wilfrid Armathwaite?"

The Vicar answered,

"In that green nook, close by the Churchyard wall,           1080  
Beneath yon hawthorn, planted by myself  
In memory and for warning, and in sign  
Of sweetness where dire anguish had been known,  
Of reconciliation after deep offence--  
There doth he rest. No theme his fate supplies  
For the smooth glozings of the indulgent world;  
Nor need the windings of his devious course  
Be here retraced;--enough that, by mishap  
And venial error, robbed of competence,                   1090  
And her obsequious shadow, peace of mind,  
He craved a substitute in troubled joy;  
Against his conscience rose in arms, and, braving  
Divine displeasure, broke the marriage-vow.  
That which he had been weak enough to do  
Was misery in remembrance; he was stung,  
Stung by his inward thoughts, and by the smiles  
Of wife and children stung to agony.  
Wretched at home, he gained no peace abroad;  
Ranged through the mountains, slept upon the earth,  
Asked comfort of the open air, and found                   1100  
No quiet in the darkness of the night,  
No pleasure in the beauty of the day.  
His flock he slighted: his paternal fields  
Became a clog to him, whose spirit wished  
To fly--but whither! And this gracious Church,  
That wears a look so full of peace and hope  
And love, benignant mother of the vale,  
How fair amid her brood of cottages!



She was to him a sickness and reproach.  
Much to the last remained unknown: but this           1110  
Is sure, that through remorse and grief he died;  
Though pitied among men, absolved by God,  
He could not find forgiveness in himself;  
Nor could endure the weight of his own shame.

Here rests a Mother. But from her I turn  
And from her grave.--Behold--upon that ridge,  
That, stretching boldly from the mountain side,  
Carries into the centre of the vale  
Its rocks and woods--the Cottage where she dwelt  
And where yet dwells her faithful Partner, left           1120  
(Full eight years past) the solitary prop  
Of many helpless Children. I begin  
With words that might be prelude to a tale  
Of sorrow and dejection; but I feel  
No sadness, when I think of what mine eyes  
See daily in that happy family.

--Bright garland form they for the pensive brow  
Of their undrooping Father's widowhood,  
Those six fair Daughters, budding yet--not one,  
Not one of all the band, a full-blown flower.           1130

Depest, and desolate of soul, as once  
That Father was, and filled with anxious fear,  
Now, by experience taught, he stands assured,  
That God, who takes away, yet takes not half  
Of what he seems to take; or gives it back,  
Not to our prayer, but far beyond our prayer;  
He gives it--the boon produce of a soil  
Which our endeavours have refused to till,  
And hope hath never watered. The Abode,           1140  
Whose grateful owner can attest these truths,  
Even were the object nearer to our sight,  
Would seem in no distinction to surpass  
The rudest habitations. Ye might think  
That it had sprung self-raised from earth, or grown  
Out of the living rock, to be adorned  
By nature only; but, if thither led,  
Ye would discover, then, a studious work  
Of many fancies, prompting many hands.

Brought from the woods the honeysuckle twines           1150  
Around the porch, and seems, in that trim place,  
A plant no longer wild; the cultured rose  
There blossoms, strong in health, and will be soon

Roof-high; the wild pink crowns the garden-wall,  
 And with the flowers are intermingled stones  
 Sparry and bright, rough scatterings of the hills.  
 These ornaments, that fade not with the year,  
 A hardy Girl continues to provide;  
 Who, mounting fearlessly the rocky heights,  
 Her Father's prompt attendant, does for him  
 All that a boy could do, but with delight           1160  
 More keen and prouder daring; yet hath she,  
 Within the garden, like the rest, a bed  
 For her own flowers and favourite herbs, a space,  
 By sacred charter, holden for her use.  
 --These, and whatever else the garden bears  
 Of fruit or flower, permission asked or not,  
 I freely gather; and my leisure draws  
 A not unfrequent pastime from the hum  
 Of bees around their range of sheltered hives  
 Busy in that enclosure; while the rill,           1170  
 That sparkling thrids the rocks, attunes his voice  
 To the pure course of human life which there  
 Flows on in solitude. But, when the gloom  
 Of night is falling round my steps, then most  
 This Dwelling charms me; often I stop short,  
 (Who could refrain?) and feed by stealth my sight  
 With prospect of the company within,  
 Laid open through the blazing window:--there  
 I see the eldest Daughter at her wheel  
 Spinning amain, as if to overtake           1180  
 The never-halting time; or, in her turn,  
 Teaching some Novice of the sisterhood  
 That skill in this or other household work,  
 Which, from her Father's honoured hand, herself,  
 While she was yet a little-one, had learned.  
 Mild Man! he is not gay, but they are gay;  
 And the whole house seems filled with gaiety.  
 --Thrice happy, then, the Mother may be deemed,  
 The Wife, from whose consolatory grave  
 I turned, that ye in mind might witness where,           1190  
 And how, her Spirit yet survives on earth!"

Book Seven: The Churchyard among the Mountains

WHILE thus from theme to theme the Historian passed,  
 The words he uttered, and the scene that lay  
 Before our eyes, awakened in my mind

Vivid remembrance of those long-past hours;  
When, in the hollow of some shadowy vale,  
(What time the splendour of the setting sun  
Lay beautiful on Snowdon's sovereign brow,  
On Cader Idris, or huge Penmanmaur)  
A wandering Youth, I listened with delight  
To pastoral melody or warlike air,                   10  
Drawn from the chords of the ancient British harp  
By some accomplished Master, while he sate  
Amid the quiet of the green recess,  
And there did inexhaustibly dispense  
An interchange of soft or solemn tunes,  
Tender or blithe; now, as the varying mood  
Of his own spirit urged,--now, as a voice  
From youth or maiden, or some honoured chief  
Of his compatriot villagers (that hung  
Around him, drinking in the impassioned notes           20  
Of the time-hallowed minstrelsy) required  
For their heart's ease or pleasure. Strains of power  
Were they, to seize and occupy the sense;  
But to a higher mark than song can reach  
Rose this pure eloquence. And, when the stream  
Which overflowed the soul was passed away,  
A consciousness remained that it had left,  
Deposited upon the silent shore  
Of memory, images and precious thoughts,  
That shall not die, and cannot be destroyed.           30

"These grassy heaps lie amicably close,"  
Said I, "like surges heaving in the wind  
Along the surface of a mountain pool:  
Whence comes it, then, that yonder we behold  
Five graves, and only five, that rise together  
Unsociably sequestered, and encroaching  
On the smooth playground of the village-school?"

The Vicar answered,--"No disdainful pride  
In them who rest beneath, nor any course  
Of strange or tragic accident, hath helped           40  
To place those hillocks in that lonely guise.  
--Once more look forth, and follow with your sight  
The length of road that from yon mountain's base  
Through bare enclosures stretches, 'till its line  
Is lost within a little tuft of trees;  
Then, reappearing in a moment, quits  
The cultured fields; and up the heathy waste,



'When the next village hears the show announced  
'By blast of trumpet?' Plenteous was the growth  
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen  
On many a staring countenance portrayed  
Of boor or burgher, as they marched along.  
And more than once their steadiness of face  
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied  
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,                   100  
And questions in authoritative tone,  
From some staid guardian of the public peace,  
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,  
In his suspicious wisdom; oftener still,  
By notice indirect, or blunt demand  
From traveller halting in his own despite,  
A simple curiosity to ease:  
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheered  
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,  
With undiminished glee, in hoary age.                   110

A Priest he was by function; but his course  
From his youth up, and high as manhood's noon,  
(The hour of life to which he then was brought)  
Had been irregular, I might say, wild;  
By books unsteadied, by his pastoral care  
Too little checked. An active, ardent mind;  
A fancy pregnant with resource and scheme  
To cheat the sadness of a rainy day;  
Hands apt for all ingenious arts and games;  
A generous spirit, and a body strong                   120  
To cope with stoutest champions of the bowl--  
Had earned for him sure welcome, and the rights  
Of a prized visitant, in the jolly hall  
Of country 'squire; or at the statelier board  
Of duke or earl, from scenes of courtly pomp  
Withdrawn,--to while away the summer hours  
In condescension among rural guests.

With these high comrades he had revelled long,  
Frolicked industriously, a simple Clerk  
By hopes of coming patronage beguiled                   130  
Till the heart sickened. So, each loftier aim  
Abandoning and all his showy friends,  
For a life's stay (slender it was, but sure)  
He turned to this secluded chapelry;  
That had been offered to his doubtful choice  
By an unthought-of patron. Bleak and bare

They found the cottage, their allotted home;  
 Naked without, and rude within; a spot  
 With which the Cure not long had been endowed:  
 And far remote the chapel stood,--remote, 140  
 And, from his Dwelling, unapproachable,  
 Save through a gap high in the hills, an opening  
 Shadeless and shelterless, by driving showers  
 Frequented, and beset with howling winds.  
 Yet cause was none, whate'er regret might hang  
 On his own mind, to quarrel with the choice  
 Or the necessity that fixed him here;  
 Apart from old temptations, and constrained  
 To punctual labour in his sacred charge.  
 See him a constant preacher to the poor! 150  
 And visiting, though not with saintly zeal,  
 Yet, when need was, with no reluctant will,  
 The sick in body, or distress in mind;  
 And, by a salutary change, compelled  
 To rise from timely sleep, and meet the day  
 With no engagement, in his thoughts, more proud  
 Or splendid than his garden could afford,  
 His fields, or mountains by the heath-cock ranged  
 Or the wild brooks; from which he now returned  
 Contented to partake the quiet meal 160  
 Of his own board, where sat his gentle Mate  
 And three fair Children, plentifully fed  
 Though simply, from their little household farm;  
 Nor wanted timely treat of fish or fowl  
 By nature yielded to his practised hand;--  
 To help the small but certain comings-in  
 Of that spare benefice. Yet not the less  
 Theirs was a hospitable board, and theirs  
 A charitable door.

So days and years

Passed on;--the inside of that rugged house 170  
 Was trimmed and brightened by the Matron's care,  
 And gradually enriched with things of price,  
 Which might be lacked for use or ornament.  
 What, though no soft and costly sofa there  
 Insidiously stretched out its lazy length,  
 And no vain mirror glittered upon the walls,  
 Yet were the windows of the low abode  
 By shutters weather-fenced, which at once  
 Repelled the storm and deadened its loud roar.  
 There snow-white curtains hung in decent folds; 180  
 Tough moss, and long-enduring mountain plants,

That creep along the ground with sinuous trail,  
Were nicely braided; and composed a work  
Like Indian mats, that with appropriate grace  
Lay at the threshold and the inner doors;  
And a fair carpet, woven of homespun wool  
But tintured daintily with florid hues,  
For seemliness and warmth, on festal days,  
Covered the smooth blue slabs of mountain-stone  
With which the parlour-floor, in simplest guise       190  
Of pastoral homesteads, had been long inlaid.

Those pleasing works the Housewife's skill produced:  
Meanwhile the unседentary Master's hand  
Was busier with his task--to rid, to plant,  
To rear for food, for shelter, and delight;  
A thriving covert! And when wishes, formed  
In youth, and sanctioned by the riper mind,  
Restored me to my native valley, here  
To end my days; well pleased was I to see  
The once-bare cottage, on the mountainside,       200  
Screened from assault of every bitter blast;  
While the dark shadows of the summer leaves  
Danced in the breeze, chequering its mossy roof.  
Time, which had thus afforded willing help  
To beautify with nature's fairest growths  
This rustic tenement, had gently shed,  
Upon its Master's frame, a wintry grace;  
The comeliness of unenfeebled age.

But how could I say, gently? for he still  
Retained a flashing eye, a burning palm,       210  
A stirring foot, a head which beat at nights  
Upon its pillow with a thousand schemes.  
Few likings had he dropped, few pleasures lost;  
Generous and charitable, prompt to serve;  
And still his harsher passions kept their hold--  
Anger and indignation. Still he loved  
The sound of titled names, and talked in glee  
Of long-past banquetings with high-born friends:  
Then, from those lulling fits of vain delight  
Uproused by recollected injury, railed       220  
At their false ways disdainfully,--and oft  
In bitterness, and with a threatening eye  
Of fire, incensed beneath its hoary brow.  
--Those transports, with staid looks of pure good-will,  
And with soft smile, his consort would reprove.

She, far behind him in the race of years,  
Yet keeping her first mildness, was advanced  
Far nearer, in the habit of her soul,  
To that still region whither all are bound,  
Him might we liken to the setting sun                   230  
As seen not seldom on some gusty day,  
Struggling and bold, and shining from the west  
With an inconstant and unmellowed light;  
She was a soft attendant cloud, that hung  
As if with wish to veil the restless orb;  
From which it did itself imbibe a ray  
Of pleasing lustre.--But no more of this;  
I better love to sprinkle on the sod  
That now divides the pair, or rather say,  
That still unites them, praises, like heaven's dew,           240  
Without reserve descending upon both.

Our very first in eminence of years  
This old Man stood, the patriarch of the Vale!  
And, to his unmolested mansion, death  
Had never come, through space of forty years;  
Sparing both old and young in that abode.  
Suddenly then they disappeared: not twice  
Had summer scorched the fields; not twice had fallen,  
On those high peaks, the first autumnal snow,  
Before the greedy visiting was closed,                   250  
And the long-privileged house left empty--swept  
As by a plague. Yet no rapacious plague  
Had been among them; all was gentle death,  
One after one, with intervals of peace.  
A happy consummation! an accord  
Sweet, perfect, to be wished for! save that here  
Was something which to mortal sense might sound  
Like harshness,--that the old grey-headed Sire,  
The oldest, he was taken last; survived  
When the meek Partner of his age, his Son,                   260  
His Daughter, and that late and high-prized gift,  
His little smiling Grandchild, were no more.

'All gone all vanished! he deprived and bare,  
'How will he face the remnant of his life?  
'What will become of him?' we said, and mused  
In sad conjectures--'Shall we meet him now  
'Haunting with rod and line the craggy brooks?  
'Or shall we overhear him, as we pass,  
'Striving to entertain the lonely hours



'With music?' (for he had not ceased to touch                    270  
The harp or viol which himself had framed,  
For their sweet purposes, with perfect skill.)  
'What titles will he keep? will he remain  
'Musician, gardener, builder, mechanist,  
'A planter, and a rearer from the seed?  
'A man of hope and forward-looking mind  
'Even to the last!'--Such was he, unsubdued.  
But Heaven was gracious; yet a little while,  
And this Survivor, with his cheerful throng  
Of open projects, and his inward hoard                    280  
Of unsunned griefs, too many and too keen,  
Was overcome by unexpected sleep,  
In one blest moment. Like a shadow thrown  
Softly and lightly from a passing cloud,  
Death fell upon him, while reclined he lay  
For noontide solace on the summer grass,  
The warm lap of his mother earth: and so,  
Their lenient term of separation past,  
That family (whose graves you there behold)  
By yet a higher privilege once more                    290  
Were gathered to each other."

Calm of mind

And silence waited on these closing words;  
Until the Wanderer (whether moved by fear  
Lest in those passages of life were some  
That might have touched the sick heart of his Friend  
Too nearly, or intent to reinforce  
His own firm spirit in degree deprest  
By tender sorrow for our mortal state)  
Thus silence broke:--"Behold a thoughtless Man  
From vice and premature decay preserved                    300  
By useful habits, to a fitter soil  
Transplanted ere too late.--The hermit, lodged  
Amid the untrodden desert, tells his beads,  
With each repeating its allotted prayer,  
And thus divides and thus relieves the time;  
Smooth task, with 'his' compared, whose mind could string,  
Not scantily, bright minutes on the thread  
Of keen domestic anguish; and beguile  
A solitude, unchosen, unprofessed;  
Till gentlest death released him.

Far from us                    310

Be the desire--too curiously to ask  
How much of this is but the blind result  
Of cordial spirits and vital temperament,

And what to higher powers is justly due.  
But you, Sir, know that in a neighbouring vale  
A Priest abides before whose life such doubts  
Fall to the ground; whose gifts of nature lie  
Retired from notice, lost in attributes  
Of reason, honourably effaced by debts  
Which her poor treasure-house is content to owe, 320  
And conquest over her dominion gained,  
To which her frowardness must needs submit.  
In this one Man is shown a temperance--proof  
Against all trials; industry severe  
And constant as the motion of the day;  
Stern self-denial round him spread, with shade  
That might be deemed forbidding, did not there  
All generous feelings flourish and rejoice;  
Forbearance, charity in deed and thought,  
And resolution competent to take 330  
Out of the bosom of simplicity  
All that her holy customs recommend,  
And the best ages of the world prescribe.  
--Preaching, administering, in every work  
Of his sublime vocation, in the walks  
Of worldly intercourse between man and man,  
And in his humble dwelling, he appears  
A labourer, with moral virtue girt,  
With spiritual graces, like a glory, crowned."

"Doubt can be none," the Pastor said, "for whom 340  
This portraiture is sketched. The great, the good,  
The well-beloved, the fortunate, the wise,--  
These titles emperors and chiefs have borne,  
Honour assumed or given: and him, the WONDERFUL,  
Our simple shepherds, speaking from the heart,  
Deservedly have styled.--From his abode  
In a dependent chapelry that lies  
Behind yon hill, a poor and rugged wild,  
Which in his soul he lovingly embraced,  
And, having once espoused, would never quit; 350  
Into its graveyard will ere long be borne  
That lowly, great, good Man. A simple stone  
May cover him; and by its help, perchance,  
A century shall hear his name pronounced,  
With images attendant on the sound;  
Then, shall the slowly-gathering twilight close  
In utter night; and of his course remain  
No cognizable vestiges, no more

Than of this breath, which shapes itself in words  
To speak of him, and instantly dissolves." 360

The Pastor, pressed by thoughts which round his theme  
Still lingered, after a brief pause, resumed;  
"Noise is there not enough in doleful war,  
But that the heaven-born poet must stand forth,  
And lend the echoes of his sacred shell,  
To multiply and aggravate the din?  
Pangs are there not enough in hopeless love--  
And, in requited passion, all too much  
Of turbulence, anxiety, and fear--  
But that the minstrel of the rural shade 370  
Must tune his pipe, insidiously to nurse  
The perturbation in the suffering breast,  
And propagate its kind, far as he may?  
--Ah who (and with such rapture as befits  
The hallowed theme) will rise and celebrate  
The good man's purposes and deeds; retrace  
His struggles, his discomfitures deplore,  
His triumphs hail, and glorify his end;  
That virtue, like the fumes and vapoury clouds  
Through fancy's heat redounding in the brain, 380  
And like the soft infections of the heart,  
By charm of measured words may spread o'er field,  
Hamlet, and town; and piety survive  
Upon the lips of men in hall or bower;  
Not for reproof, but high and warm delight,  
And grave encouragement, by song inspired?  
--Vain thought! but wherefore murmur or repine?  
The memory of the just survives in heaven:  
And, without sorrow, will the ground receive  
That venerable clay. Meanwhile the best 390  
Of what lies here confines us to degrees  
In excellence less difficult to reach,  
And milder worth: nor need we travel far  
From those to whom our last regards were paid,  
For such example.

Almost at the root  
Of that tall pine, the shadow of whose bare  
And slender stem, while here I sit at eve,  
Oft stretches towards me, like a long straight path  
Traced faintly in the greensward; there, beneath  
A plain blue stone, a gentle Dalesman lies, 400  
From whom, in early childhood, was withdrawn  
The precious gift of hearing. He grew up

From year to year in loneliness of soul;  
And this deep mountain-valley was to him  
Soundless, with all its streams. The bird of dawn  
Did never rouse this Cottager from sleep  
With startling summons; not for his delight  
The vernal cuckoo shouted; not for him  
Murmured the labouring bee. When stormy winds  
Were working the broad bosom of the lake           410  
Into a thousand thousand sparkling waves,  
Rocking the trees, or driving cloud on cloud  
Along the sharp edge of yon lofty crags,  
The agitated scene before his eye  
Was silent as a picture: evermore  
Were all things silent, wheresoe'er he moved.  
Yet, by the solace of his own pure thoughts  
Upheld, he duteously pursued the round  
Of rural labours; the steep mountain-side  
Ascended, with his staff and faithful dog;           420  
The plough he guided, and the scythe he swayed;  
And the ripe corn before his sickle fell  
Among the jocund reapers. For himself,  
All watchful and industrious as he was,  
He wrought not: neither field nor flock he owned:  
No wish for wealth had place within his mind;  
Nor husband's love, nor father's hope or care.

Though born a younger brother, need was none  
That from the floor of his paternal home  
He should depart, to plant himself anew.           430  
And when, mature in manhood, he beheld  
His parents laid in earth, no loss ensued  
Of rights to him; but he remained well pleased,  
By the pure bond of independent love,  
An inmate of a second family;  
The fellow-labourer and friend of him  
To whom the small inheritance had fallen.  
--Nor deem that his mild presence was a weight  
That pressed upon his brother's house; for books  
Were ready comrades whom he could not tire;           440  
Of whose society the blameless Man  
Was never satiate. Their familiar voice,  
Even to old age, with unabated charm  
Beguiled his leisure hours; refreshed his thoughts;  
Beyond its natural elevation raised  
His introverted spirit; and bestowed  
Upon his life an outward dignity

Which all acknowledged. The dark winter night,  
The stormy day, each had its own resource;  
Song of the muses, sage historic tale,                   450  
Science severe, or word of holy Writ  
Announcing immortality and joy  
To the assembled spirits of just men  
Made perfect, and from injury secure.  
--Thus soothed at home, thus busy in the field,  
To no perverse suspicion he gave way,  
No languor, peevishness, nor vain complaint:  
And they, who were about him, did not fail  
In reverence, or in courtesy; they prized  
His gentle manners: and his peaceful smiles,                   460  
The gleams of his slow-varying countenance,  
Were met with answering sympathy and love.

At length, when sixty years and five were told,  
A slow disease insensibly consumed  
The powers of nature: and a few short steps  
Of friends and kindred bore him from his home  
(Yon cottage shaded by the woody crags)  
To the profounder stillness of the grave.  
--Nor was his funeral denied the grace  
Of many tears, virtuous and thoughtful grief;                   470  
Heart-sorrow rendered sweet by gratitude.  
And now that monumental stone preserves  
His name, and unambitiously relates  
How long, and by what kindly outward aids,  
And in what pure contentedness of mind,  
The sad privation was by him endured.  
--And yon tall pine-tree, whose composing sound  
Was wasted on the good Man's living ear,  
Hath now its own peculiar sanctity;  
And, at the touch of every wandering breeze,                   480  
Murmurs, not idly, o'er his peaceful grave.

Soul-cheering Light, most bountiful of things!  
Guide of our way, mysterious comforter!  
Whose sacred influence, spread through earth and heaven,  
We all too thanklessly participate,  
Thy gifts were utterly withheld from him  
Whose place of rest is near yon ivied porch.  
Yet, of the wild brooks ask if he complained;  
Ask of the channelled rivers if they held  
A safer, easier, more determined, course.                   490  
What terror doth it strike into the mind

To think of one, blind and alone, advancing  
Straight toward some precipice's airy brink!  
But, timely warned, 'He' would have stayed his steps,  
Protected, say enlightened, by his ear;  
And on the very edge of vacancy  
Not more endangered than a man whose eye  
Beholds the gulf beneath.--No floweret blooms  
Throughout the lofty range of these rough hills,  
Nor in the woods, that could from him conceal           500  
Its birth-place; none whose figure did not live  
Upon his touch. The bowels of the earth  
Enriched with knowledge his industrious mind;  
The ocean paid him tribute from the stores  
Lodged in her bosom; and, by science led,  
His genius mounted to the plains of heaven.  
--Methinks I see him--how his eye-balls rolled,  
Beneath his ample brow, in darkness paired,--  
But each instinct with spirit; and the frame  
Of the whole countenance alive with thought,           510  
Fancy, and understanding; while the voice  
Discoursed of natural or moral truth  
With eloquence, and such authentic power,  
That, in his presence, humbler knowledge stood  
Abashed, and tender pity overawed."

"A noble--and, to unreflecting minds,  
A marvellous spectacle," the Wanderer said,  
"Beings like these present! But proof abounds  
Upon the earth that faculties, which seem  
Extinguished, do not, 'therefore', cease to be.           520  
And to the mind among her powers of sense  
This transfer is permitted,--not alone  
That the bereft their recompense may win;  
But for remoter purposes of love  
And charity; nor last nor least for this,  
That to the imagination may be given  
A type and shadow of an awful truth;  
How, likewise, under sufferance divine,  
Darkness is banished from the realms of death,  
By man's imperishable spirit, quelled.           530  
Unto the men who see not as we see  
Futurity was thought, in ancient times,  
To be laid open, and they prophesied.  
And know we not that from the blind have flowed  
The highest, holiest, raptures of the lyre;  
And wisdom married to immortal verse?"

Among the humbler Worthies, at our feet  
Lying insensible to human praise,  
Love, or regret,--'whose' lineaments would next  
Have been portrayed, I guess not; but it chanced 540  
That, near the quiet churchyard where we sate,  
A team of horses, with a ponderous freight  
Pressing behind, adown a rugged slope,  
Whose sharp descent confounded their array,  
Came at that moment, ringing noisily.

"Here," said the Pastor, "do we muse, and mourn  
The waste of death; and lo! the giant oak  
Stretched on his bier--that massy timber wain;  
Nor fail to note the Man who guides the team."

He was a peasant of the lowest class: 550  
Grey locks profusely round his temples hung  
In clustering curls, like ivy, which the bite  
Of winter cannot thin; the fresh air lodged  
Within his cheek, as light within a cloud;  
And he returned our greeting with a smile.  
When he had passed, the Solitary spake;  
"A Man he seems of cheerful yesterdays  
And confident to-morrows; with a face  
Not worldly-minded, for it bears too much  
Of Nature's impress,--gaiety and health, 560  
Freedom and hope; but keen, withal, and shrewd.  
His gestures note,--and hark! his tones of voice  
Are all vivacious as his mien and looks."

The Pastor answered: "You have read him well.  
Year after year is added to his store  
With 'silent' increase: summers, winters--past,  
Past or to come; yea, boldly might I say,  
Ten summers and ten winters of a space  
That lies beyond life's ordinary bounds,  
Upon his sprightly vigour cannot fix 570  
The obligation of an anxious mind,  
A pride in having, or a fear to lose;  
Possessed like outskirts of some large domain,  
By any one more thought of than by him  
Who holds the land in fee, its careless lord!  
Yet is the creature rational, endowed  
With foresight; hears, too, every sabbath day,  
The christian promise with attentive ear;

Nor will, I trust, the Majesty of Heaven  
Reject the incense offered up by him, 580  
Though of the kind which beasts and birds present  
In grove or pasture; cheerfulness of soul,  
From trepidation and repining free.  
How many scrupulous worshippers fall down  
Upon their knees, and daily homage pay  
Less worthy, less religious even, than his!

This qualified respect, the old Man's due,  
Is paid without reluctance; but in truth,"  
(Said the good Vicar with a fond half-smile)  
"I feel at times a motion of despite 590  
Towards one, whose bold contrivances and skill,  
As you have seen, bear such conspicuous part  
In works of havoc; taking from these vales,  
One after one, their proudest ornaments.  
Full oft his doings leave me to deplore  
Tall ash-tree, sown by winds, by vapours nursed,  
In the dry crannies of the pendent rocks;  
Light birch, aloft upon the horizon's edge,  
A veil of glory for the ascending moon;  
And oak whose roots by noontide dew were damped, 600  
And on whose forehead inaccessible  
The raven lodged in safety.--Many a ship  
Launched into Morecamb-bay to 'him' hath owed  
Her strong knee-timbers, and the mast that bears  
The loftiest of her pendants; He, from park  
Or forest, fetched the enormous axle-tree  
That whirls (how slow itself!) ten thousand spindles:  
And the vast engine labouring in the mine,  
Content with meaner prowess, must have lacked  
The trunk and body of its marvellous strength, 610  
If his undaunted enterprise had failed  
Among the mountain coves.

Yon household fir,  
A guardian planted to fence off the blast,  
But towering high the roof above, as if  
Its humble destination were forgot--  
That sycamore[1], which annually holds  
Within its shade, as in a stately tent  
On all sides open to the fanning breeze,  
A grave assemblage, seated while they shear  
The fleece-encumbered flock--the JOYFUL ELM, 620  
Around whose trunk the maidens dance in May--  
And the LORD'S OAK--would plead their several rights



In vain, if he were master of their fate;  
His sentence to the axe would doom them all.  
But, green in age and lusty as he is,  
And promising to keep his hold on earth  
Less, as might seem, in rivalry with men  
Than with the forest's more enduring growth,  
His own appointed hour will come at last;  
And, like the haughty Spoilers of the world,           630  
This keen Destroyer, in his turn, must fall.

Now from the living pass we once again:  
From Age," the Priest continued, "turn your thoughts;  
From Age, that often unlamented drops,  
And mark that daisied hillock, three spans long!  
--Seven lusty Sons sate daily round the board  
Of Gold-rill side; and, when the hope had ceased  
Of other progeny, a Daughter then  
Was given, the crowning bounty of the whole;  
And so acknowledged with a tremulous joy           640  
Felt to the centre of that heavenly calm  
With which by nature every mother's soul  
Is stricken in the moment when her throes  
Are ended, and her ears have heard the cry  
Which tells her that a living child is born;  
And she lies conscious, in a blissful rest,  
That the dread storm is weathered by them both.

The Father--him at this unlooked-for gift  
A bolder transport seizes. From the side           650  
Of his bright hearth, and from his open door,  
Day after day the gladness is diffused  
To all that come, almost to all that pass;  
Invited, summoned, to partake the cheer  
Spread on the never-empty board, and drink  
Health and good wishes to his new-born girl,  
From cups replenished by his joyous hand.  
--Those seven fair brothers variously were moved  
Each by the thoughts best suited to his years:  
But most of all and with most thankful mind  
The hoary grandsire felt himself enriched;           660  
A happiness that ebbed not, but remained  
To fill the total measure of his soul!  
--From the low tenement, his own abode,  
Whither, as to a little private cell,  
He had withdrawn from bustle, care, and noise,  
To spend the sabbath of old age in peace,

Once every day he duteously repaired  
To rock the cradle of the slumbering babe:  
For in that female infant's name he heard  
The silent name of his departed wife;                   670  
Heart-stirring music! hourly heard that name;  
Full blest he was, 'Another Margaret Green,'  
Oft did he say, 'was come to Gold-rill side.'

Oh! pang unthought of, as the precious boon  
Itself had been unlooked-for; oh! dire stroke  
Of desolating anguish for them all!  
--Just as the Child could totter on the floor,  
And, by some friendly finger's help up-stayed,  
Range round the garden walk, while she perchance  
Was catching at some novelty of spring,                   680  
Ground-flower, or glossy insect from its cell  
Drawn by the sunshine--at that hopeful season  
The winds of March, smiting insidiously,  
Raised in the tender passage of the throat  
Viewless obstruction; whence, all unforewarned,  
The household lost their pride and soul's delight.  
--But time hath power to soften all regrets,  
And prayer and thought can bring to worst distress  
Due resignation. Therefore, though some tears  
Fail not to spring from either Parent's eye                   690  
Oft as they hear of sorrow like their own,  
Yet this departed Little-one, too long  
The innocent troubler of their quiet, sleeps  
In what may now be called a peaceful bed.

On a bright day--so calm and bright, it seemed  
To us, with our sad spirits, heavenly-fair--  
These mountains echoed to an unknown sound;  
A volley, thrice repeated o'er the Corse  
Let down into the hollow of that grave,  
Whose shelving sides are red with naked mould.                   700  
Ye rains of April, duly wet this earth!  
Spare, burning sun of midsummer, these sods,  
That they may knit together, and therewith  
Our thoughts unite in kindred quietness!  
Nor so the Valley shall forget her loss.  
Dear Youth, by young and old alike beloved,  
To me as precious as my own!--Green herbs  
May creep (I wish that they would softly creep)  
Over thy last abode, and we may pass  
Reminded less imperiously of thee;--                   710

The ridge itself may sink into the breast  
Of earth, the great abyss, and be no more;  
Yet shall not thy remembrance leave our hearts,  
Thy image disappear!

The Mountain-ash

No eye can overlook, when 'mid a grove  
Of yet unfaded trees she lifts her head  
Decked with autumnal berries, that outshine  
Spring's richest blossoms; and ye may have marked,  
By a brook-side or solitary tarn,  
How she her station doth adorn: the pool 720

Glow at her feet, and all the gloomy rocks  
Are brightened round her. In his native vale  
Such and so glorious did this Youth appear;  
A sight that kindled pleasure in all hearts  
By his ingenuous beauty, by the gleam  
Of his fair eyes, by his capacious brow,  
By all the graces with which nature's hand  
Had lavishly arrayed him. As old bards  
Tell in their idle songs of wandering gods,  
Pan or Apollo, veiled in human form: 730

Yet, like the sweet-breathed violet of the shade  
Discovered in their own despite to sense  
Of mortals (if such fables without blame  
May find chance-mention on this sacred ground)  
So, through a simple rustic garb's disguise,  
And through the impediment of rural cares,  
In him revealed a scholar's genius shone;  
And so, not wholly hidden from men's sight,  
In him the spirit of a hero walked  
Our unpretending valley.--How the quoit 740

Whizzed from the Stripling's arm! If touched by him,  
The inglorious foot-ball mounted to the pitch  
Of the lark's flight,--or shaped a rainbow curve,  
Aloft, in prospect of the shouting field!  
The indefatigable fox had learned  
To dread his perseverance in the chase.  
With admiration would he lift his eyes  
To the wide-ruling eagle, and his hand  
Was loth to assault the majesty he loved:  
Else had the strongest fastnesses proved weak 750  
To guard the royal brood. The sailing glead,  
The wheeling swallow, and the darting snipe;  
The sportive sea-gull dancing with the waves,  
And cautious water-fowl, from distant climes,  
Fixed at their seat, the centre of the Mere;

Were subject to young Oswald's steady aim,  
And lived by his forbearance.

From the coast

Of France a boastful Tyrant hurled his threats;  
Our Country marked the preparation vast  
Of hostile forces; and she called--with voice           760  
That filled her plains, that reached her utmost shores,  
And in remotest vales was heard--to arms!  
--Then, for the first time, here you might have seen  
The shepherd's grey to martial scarlet changed,  
That flashed uncouthly through the woods and fields.  
Ten hardy Striplings, all in bright attire,  
And graced with shining weapons, weekly marched,  
From this lone valley, to a central spot  
Where, in assemblage with the flower and choice  
Of the surrounding district, they might learn           770  
The rudiments of war; ten--hardy, strong,  
And valiant; but young Oswald, like a chief  
And yet a modest comrade, led them forth  
From their shy solitude, to face the world,  
With a gay confidence and seemly pride;  
Measuring the soil beneath their happy feet  
Like Youths released from labour, and yet bound  
To most laborious service, though to them  
A festival of unencumbered ease;  
The inner spirit keeping holiday,                   780  
Like vernal ground to sabbath sunshine left.

Oft have I marked him, at some leisure hour,  
Stretched on the grass, or seated in the shade,  
Among his fellows, while an ample map  
Before their eyes lay carefully outspread,  
From which the gallant teacher would discourse,  
Now pointing this way, and now that.--'Here flows,'  
Thus would he say, 'the Rhine, that famous stream!  
'Eastward, the Danube toward this inland sea,  
'A mightier river, winds from realm to realm;           790  
'And, like a serpent, shows his glittering back  
'Bespotted--with innumerable isles:  
'Here reigns the Russian, there the Turk; observe  
'His capital city!' Thence, along a tract  
Of livelier interest to his hopes and fears,  
His finger moved, distinguishing the spots  
Where wide-spread conflict then most fiercely raged;  
Nor left unstigmatized those fatal fields  
On which the sons of mighty Germany

Were taught a base submission.--'Here behold 800  
'A nobler race, the Switzers, and their land,  
'Vales deeper far than these of ours, huge woods,  
'And mountains white with everlasting snow!'  
--And, surely, he, that spake with kindling brow,  
Was a true patriot, hopeful as the best  
Of that young peasantry, who, in our days,  
Have fought and perished for Helvetia's rights--  
Ah, not in vain!--or those who, in old time,  
For work of happier issue, to the side 810  
Of Tell came trooping from a thousand huts,  
When he had risen alone! No braver Youth  
Descended from Judean heights, to march  
With righteous Joshua; nor appeared in arms  
When grove was felled, and altar was cast down,  
And Gideon blew the trumpet, soul-inflamed,  
And strong in hatred of idolatry."

The Pastor, even as if by these last words  
Raised from his seat within the chosen shade,  
Moved toward the grave;--instinctively his steps  
We followed; and my voice with joy exclaimed: 820  
"Power to the Oppressors of the world is given,  
A might of which they dream not. Oh! the curse,  
To be the awakener of divinest thoughts,  
Father and founder of exalted deeds;  
And, to whole nations bound in servile straits,  
The liberal donor of capacities  
More than heroic! this to be, nor yet  
Have sense of one connatural wish, nor yet  
Deserve the least return of human thanks;  
Winning no recompense but deadly hate 830  
With pity mixed, astonishment with scorn!"

When this involuntary strain had ceased,  
The Pastor said: "So Providence is served;  
The forked weapon of the skies can send  
Illumination into deep, dark holds,  
Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce.  
Ye Thrones that have defied remorse, and cast  
Pity away, soon shall ye quake with 'fear'!  
For, not unconscious of the mighty debt  
Which to outrageous wrong the sufferer owes, 840  
Europe, through all her habitable bounds,  
Is thirsting for 'their' overthrow, who yet  
Survive, as pagan temples stood of yore,

By horror of their impious rites, preserved;  
Are still permitted to extend their pride,  
Like cedars on the top of Lebanon  
Darkening the sun.

But less impatient thoughts,  
And love 'all hoping and expecting all,'  
This hallowed grave demands, where rests in peace  
A humble champion of the better cause, 850  
A Peasant-youth, so call him, for he asked  
No higher name; in whom our country showed,  
As in a favourite son, most beautiful.

In spite of vice, and misery, and disease,  
Spread with the spreading of her wealthy arts,  
England, the ancient and the free, appeared  
In him to stand before my swimming eyes,  
Unconquerably virtuous and secure.  
--No more of this, lest I offend his dust:  
Short was his life, and a brief tale remains. 860

One day--a summer's day of annual pomp  
And solemn chase--from morn to sultry noon  
His steps had followed, fleetest of the fleet,  
The red-deer driven along its native heights  
With cry of hound and horn; and, from that toil  
Returned with sinews weakened and relaxed,  
This generous Youth, too negligent of self,  
Plunged--'mid a gay and busy throng convened  
To wash the fleeces of his Father's flock--  
Into the chilling flood. Convulsions dire 870  
Seized him, that self-same night; and through the space  
Of twelve ensuing days his frame was wrenched,  
Till nature rested from her work in death.  
To him, thus snatched away, his comrades paid  
A soldier's honours. At his funeral hour  
Bright was the sun, the sky a cloudless blue--  
A golden lustre slept upon the hills;  
And if by chance a stranger, wandering there,  
From some commanding eminence had looked  
Down on this spot, well pleased would he have seen 880  
A glittering spectacle; but every face  
Was pallid: seldom hath that eye been moist  
With tears, that wept not then; nor were the few,  
Who from their dwellings came not forth to join  
In this sad service, less disturbed than we.  
They started at the tributary peal  
Of instantaneous thunder, which announced,

Through the still air, the closing of the Grave;  
And distant mountains echoed with a sound  
Of lamentation, never heard before!" 890

The Pastor ceased.--My venerable Friend  
Victoriously upraised his clear bright eye;  
And, when that eulogy was ended, stood  
Enrapt, as if his inward sense perceived  
The prolongation of some still response,  
Sent by the ancient Soul of this wide land,  
The Spirit of its mountains and its seas,  
Its cities, temples, fields, its awful power,  
Its rights and virtues--by that Deity  
Descending, and supporting his pure heart 900  
With patriotic confidence and joy.

And, at the last of those memorial words,  
The pining Solitary turned aside;  
Whether through manly instinct to conceal  
Tender emotions spreading from the heart  
To his worn cheek; or with uneasy shame  
For those cold humours of habitual spleen  
That, fondly seeking in dispraise of man  
Solace and self-excuse, had sometimes urged  
To self-abuse a not ineloquent tongue. 910

--Right toward the sacred Edifice his steps  
Had been directed; and we saw him now  
Intent upon a monumental stone,  
Whose uncouth form was grafted on the wall,  
Or rather seemed to have grown into the side  
Of the rude pile; as oft-times trunks of trees,  
Where nature works in wild and craggy spots,  
Are seen incorporate with the living rock--  
To endure for aye. The Vicar, taking note  
Of his employment, with a courteous smile 920  
Exclaimed--

"The sagest Antiquarian's eye  
That task would foil;" then, letting fall his voice  
While he advanced, thus spake: "Tradition tells  
That, in Eliza's golden days, a Knight  
Came on a war-horse sumptuously attired,  
And fixed his home in this sequestered vale.  
'Tis left untold if here he first drew breath,  
Or as a stranger reached this deep recess,  
Unknowing and unknown. A pleasing thought  
I sometimes entertain, that haply bound 930  
To Scotland's court in service of his Queen,

Or sent on mission to some northern Chief  
Of England's realm, this vale he might have seen  
With transient observation; and thence caught  
An image fair, which, brightening in his soul  
When joy of war and pride of chivalry  
Languished beneath accumulated years,  
Had power to draw him from the world, resolved  
To make that paradise his chosen home  
To which his peaceful fancy oft had turned. 940

Vague thoughts are these; but, if belief may rest  
Upon unwritten story fondly traced  
From sire to son, in this obscure retreat  
The Knight arrived, with spear and shield, and borne  
Upon a Charger gorgeously bedecked  
With broidered housings. And the lofty Steed--  
His sole companion, and his faithful friend,  
Whom he, in gratitude, let loose to range  
In fertile pastures--was beheld with eyes  
Of admiration and delightful awe, 950  
By those untravelled Dalesmen. With less pride,  
Yet free from touch of envious discontent,  
They saw a mansion at his bidding rise,  
Like a bright star, amid the lowly band  
Of their rude homesteads. Here the Warrior dwelt;  
And, in that mansion children of his own,  
Or kindred, gathered round him. As a tree  
That falls and disappears, the house is gone;  
And, through improvidence or want of love  
For ancient worth and honourable things, 960  
The spear and shield are vanished, which the Knight  
Hung in his rustic hall. One ivied arch  
Myself have seen, a gateway, last remains  
Of that foundation in domestic care  
Raised by his hands. And now no trace is left  
Of the mild-hearted Champion, save this stone,  
Faithless memorial! and his family name  
Borne by yon clustering cottages, that sprang  
From out the ruins of his stately lodge:  
These, and the name and title at full length,-- 970  
'Sir Alfred Irthing', with appropriate words  
Accompanied, still extant, in a wreath  
Or posy, girding round the several fronts  
Of three clear-sounding and harmonious bells,  
That in the steeple hang, his pious gift."



"So fails, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,"  
The grey-haired Wanderer pensively exclaimed,  
"All that this world is proud of. From their spheres  
The stars of human glory are cast down;  
Perish the roses and the flowers of kings,<sup>[2]</sup> 980  
Princes, and emperors, and the crowns and palms  
Of all the mighty, withered and consumed!  
Nor is power given to lowliest innocence  
Long to protect her own. The man himself  
Departs; and soon is spent the line of those  
Who, in the bodily image, in the mind,  
In heart or soul, in station or pursuit,  
Did most resemble him. Degrees and ranks,  
Fraternities and orders--heaping high  
New wealth upon the burthen of the old, 990  
And placing trust in privilege confirmed  
And re-confirmed--are scoffed at with a smile  
Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand  
Of Desolation, aimed: to slow decline  
These yield, and these to sudden overthrow:  
Their virtue, service, happiness, and state  
Expire; and nature's pleasant robe of green,  
Humanity's appointed shroud, enwraps  
Their monuments and their memory. The vast Frame  
Of social nature changes evermore 1000  
Her organs and her members, with decay  
Restless, and restless generation, powers  
And functions dying and produced at need,--  
And by this law the mighty whole subsists:  
With an ascent and progress in the main;  
Yet, oh! how disproportioned to the hopes  
And expectations of self-flattering minds!

The courteous Knight, whose bones are here interred,  
Lived in an age conspicuous as our own  
For strife and ferment in the minds of men; 1010  
Whence alteration in the forms of things,  
Various and vast. A memorable age!  
Which did to him assign a pensive lot--  
To linger 'mid the last of those bright clouds  
That, on the steady breeze of honour, sailed  
In long procession calm and beautiful.  
He who had seen his own bright order fade,  
And its devotion gradually decline,  
(While war, relinquishing the lance and shield,  
Her temper changed, and bowed to other laws) 1020

Had also witnessed, in his morn of life,  
 That violent commotion, which o'erthrew,  
 In town and city and sequestered glen,  
 Altar, and cross, and church of solemn roof,  
 And old religious house--pile after pile;  
 And shook their tenants out into the fields,  
 Like wild beasts without home! Their hour was come;  
 But why no softening thought of gratitude,  
 No just remembrance, scruple, or wise doubt?  
 Benevolence is mild; nor borrows help,                   1030  
 Save at worst need, from bold impetuous force,  
 Fitliest allied to anger and revenge.  
 But Human-kind rejoices in the might  
 Of mutability; and airy hopes,  
 Dancing around her, hinder and disturb  
 Those meditations of the soul that feed  
 The retrospective virtues. Festive songs  
 Break from the maddened nations at the sight  
 Of sudden overthrow; and cold neglect  
 Is the sure consequence of slow decay.                   1040

Even," said the Wanderer, "as that courteous Knight,  
 Bound by his vow to labour for redress  
 Of all who suffer wrong, and to enact  
 By sword and lance the law of gentleness,  
 (If I may venture of myself to speak,  
 Trusting that not incongruously I blend  
 Low things with lofty) I too shall be doomed  
 To outlive the kindly use and fair esteem  
 Of the poor calling which my youth embraced  
 With no unworthy prospect. But enough;                   1050  
 --Thoughts crowd upon me--and 'twere seemlier now  
 To stop, and yield our gracious Teacher thanks  
 For the pathetic records which his voice  
 Hath here delivered; words of heartfelt truth,  
 Tending to patience when affliction strikes;  
 To hope and love; to confident repose  
 In God; and reverence for the dust of Man."

#### Book Eight: The Parsonage

THE pensive Sceptic of the lonely vale  
 To those acknowledgments subscribed his own,  
 With a sedate compliance, which the Priest  
 Failed not to notice, inly pleased, and said:--

"If ye, by whom invited I began  
These narratives of calm and humble life,  
Be satisfied, 'tis well,--the end is gained;  
And, in return for sympathy bestowed  
And patient listening, thanks accept from me.  
--Life, death, eternity! momentous themes           10  
Are they--and might demand a seraph's tongue,  
Were they not equal to their own support;  
And therefore no incompetence of mine  
Could do them wrong. The universal forms  
Of human nature, in a spot like this,  
Present themselves at once to all men's view:  
Ye wished for act and circumstance, that make  
The individual known and understood;  
And such as my best judgment could select  
From what the place afforded, have been given;           20  
Though apprehensions crossed me that my zeal  
To his might well be likened, who unlocks  
A cabinet stored with gems and pictures--draws  
His treasures forth, soliciting regard  
To this, and this, as worthier than the last,  
Till the spectator, who awhile was pleased  
More than the exhibitor himself, becomes  
Weary and faint, and longs to be released.  
--But let us hence! my dwelling is in sight,  
And there--"

At this the Solitary shrunk           30  
With backward will; but, wanting not address  
That inward motion to disguise, he said  
To his Compatriot, smiling as he spake;  
--"The peaceable remains of this good Knight  
Would be disturbed, I fear, with wrathful scorn,  
If consciousness could reach him where he lies  
That one, albeit of these degenerate times,  
Deploring changes past, or dreading change  
Foreseen, had dared to couple, even in thought,  
The fine vocation of the sword and lance           40  
With the gross aims and body-bending toil  
Of a poor brotherhood who walk the earth  
Pitied, and, where they are not known, despised.

Yet, by the good Knight's leave, the two estates  
Are graced with some resemblance. Errant those,  
Exiles and wanderers--and the like are these;  
Who, with their burthen, traverse hill and dale,  
Carrying relief for nature's simple wants.



As that of war, which rests not night or day,  
Industrious to destroy! With fruitless pains  
Might one like me 'now' visit many a tract  
Which, in his youth, he trod, and trod again,  
A lone pedestrian with a scanty freight,  
Wished-for, or welcome, wheresoe'er he came--  
Among the tenantry of thorpe and vill;                   100  
Or straggling burgh, of ancient charter proud,  
And dignified by battlements and towers  
Of some stern castle, mouldering on the brow  
Of a green hill or bank of rugged stream.  
The foot-path faintly marked, the horse-track wild,  
And formidable length of plashy lane,  
(Prized avenues ere others had been shaped  
Or easier links connecting place with place)  
Have vanished--swallowed up by stately roads                   110  
Easy and bold, that penetrate the gloom  
Of Britain's farthest glens. The Earth has lent[1]  
Her waters, Air her breezes; and the sail  
Of traffic glides with ceaseless intercourse,  
Glistening along the low and woody dale;  
Or, in its progress, on the lofty side,  
Of some bare hill, with wonder kened from far.

Meanwhile, at social Industry's command,  
How quick, how vast an increase! From the germ  
Of some poor hamlet, rapidly produced  
Here a huge town, continuous and compact,                   120  
Hiding the face of earth for leagues--and there,  
Where not a habitation stood before,  
Abodes of men irregularly massed  
Like trees in forests,--spread through spacious tracts,  
O'er which the smoke of unremitting fires  
Hangs permanent, and plentiful as wreaths  
Of vapour glittering in the morning sun.  
And, wheresoe'er the traveller turns his steps,  
He sees the barren wilderness erased,  
Or disappearing; triumph that proclaims                   130  
How much the mild Directress of the plough  
Owes to alliance with these new-born arts!  
--Hence is the wide sea peopled,--hence the shores  
Of Britain are resorted to by ships  
Freighted from every climate of the world  
With the world's choicest produce. Hence that sum  
Of keels that rest within her crowded ports,  
Or ride at anchor in her sounds and bays;

That animating spectacle of sails  
That, through her inland regions, to and fro 140  
Pass with the respirations of the tide,  
Perpetual, multitudinous! Finally,  
Hence a dread arm of floating power, a voice  
Of thunder daunting those who would approach  
With hostile purposes the blessed Isle,  
Truth's consecrated residence, the seat  
Impregnable of Liberty and Peace.

And yet, O happy Pastor of a flock  
Faithfully watched, and, by that loving care  
And Heaven's good providence, preserved from taint! 150  
With you I grieve, when on the darker side  
Of this great change I look; and there behold  
Such outrage done to nature as compels  
The indignant power to justify herself;  
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,  
For England's bane.--When soothing darkness spreads  
O'er hill and vale," the Wanderer thus expressed  
His recollections, "and the punctual stars,  
While all things else are gathering to their homes,  
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven 160  
Glitter--but undisturbing, undisturbed;  
As if their silent company were charged  
With peaceful admonitions for the heart  
Of all-beholding Man, earth's thoughtful lord;  
Then, in full many a region, once like this  
The assured domain of calm simplicity  
And pensive quiet, an unnatural light  
Prepared for never-resting Labour's eyes  
Breaks from a many-windowed fabric huge;  
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard-- 170  
Of harsher import than the curfew-knoll  
That spake the Norman Conqueror's stern behest--  
A local summons to unceasing toil!  
Disgorged are now the ministers of day;  
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,  
A fresh band meets them, at the crowded door--  
And in the courts--and where the rumbling stream,  
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,  
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed  
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths, 180  
Mother and little children, boys and girls,  
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes  
Within this temple, where is offered up

To Gain, the master idol of the realm,  
Perpetual sacrifice. Even thus of old  
Our ancestors, within the still domain  
Of vast cathedral or conventual church,  
Their vigils kept; where tapers day and night  
On the dim altar burned continually,  
In token that the House was evermore                   190  
Watching to God. Religious men were they;  
Nor would their reason, tutored to aspire  
Above this transitory world, allow  
That there should pass a moment of the year,  
When in their land the Almighty's service ceased.

Triumph who will in these profaner rites  
Which we, a generation self-extolled,  
As zealously perform! I cannot share  
His proud complacency:--yet do I exult,  
Casting reserve away, exult to see                   200  
An intellectual mastery exercised  
O'er the blind elements; a purpose given,  
A perseverance fed; almost a soul  
Imparted--to brute matter. I rejoice,  
Measuring the force of those gigantic powers  
That, by the thinking mind, have been compelled  
To serve the will of feeble-bodied Man.  
For with the sense of admiration blends  
The animating hope that time may come  
When, strengthened, yet not dazzled, by the might           210  
Of this dominion over nature gained,  
Men of all lands shall exercise the same  
In due proportion to their country's need;  
Learning, though late, that all true glory rests,  
All praise, all safety, and all happiness,  
Upon the moral law. Egyptian Thebes,  
Tyre, by the margin of the sounding waves,  
Palmyra, central in the desert, fell;  
And the Arts died by which they had been raised.  
--Call Archimedes from his buried tomb                   220  
Upon the grave of vanished Syracuse,  
And feelingly the Sage shall make report  
How insecure, how baseless in itself,  
Is the Philosophy whose sway depends  
On mere material instruments;--how weak  
Those arts, and high inventions, if unpropped  
By virtue.--He, sighing with pensive grief,  
Amid his calm abstractions, would admit

That not the slender privilege is theirs  
To save themselves from blank forgetfulness!" 230

When from the Wanderer's lips these words had fallen,  
I said, "And, did in truth those vaunted Arts  
Possess such privilege, how could we escape  
Sadness and keen regret, we who revere,  
And would preserve as things above all price,  
The old domestic morals of the land,  
Her simple manners, and the stable worth  
That dignified and cheered a low estate?  
Oh! where is now the character of peace,  
Sobriety, and order, and chaste love, 240  
And honest dealing, and untainted speech,  
And pure good-will, and hospitable cheer;  
That made the very thought of country-life  
A thought of refuge, for a mind detained  
Reluctantly amid the bustling crowd?  
Where now the beauty of the sabbath kept  
With conscientious reverence, as a day  
By the almighty Lawgiver pronounced  
Holy and blest? and where the winning grace  
Of all the lighter ornaments attached 250  
To time and season, as the year rolled round?"

"Fled!" was the Wanderer's passionate response,  
"Fled utterly! or only to be traced  
In a few fortunate retreats like this;  
Which I behold with trembling, when I think  
What lamentable change, a year--a month--  
May bring; that brook converting as it runs  
Into an instrument of deadly bane  
For those, who, yet untempted to forsake  
The simple occupations of their sires, 260  
Drink the pure water of its innocent stream  
With lip almost as pure.--Domestic bliss  
(Or call it comfort, by a humbler name,)  
How art thou blighted for the poor Man's heart!  
Lo! in such neighbourhood, from morn to eve,  
The habitations empty! or perchance  
The Mother left alone,--no helping hand  
To rock the cradle of her peevish babe;  
No daughters round her, busy at the wheel,  
Or in dispatch of each day's little growth 270  
Of household occupation; no nice arts  
Of needle-work; no bustle at the fire,



Where once the dinner was prepared with pride;  
Nothing to speed the day, or cheer the mind;  
Nothing to praise to teach, or to command!

The Father, if perchance he still retain  
His old employments, goes to field or wood,  
No longer led or followed by the Sons;  
Idlers perchance they were,--but in 'his' sight;  
Breathing fresh air, and treading the green earth: 280  
'Till their short holiday of childhood ceased,  
Ne'er to return! That birthright now is lost.  
Economists will tell you that the State  
Thrives by the forfeiture--unfeeling thought,  
And false as monstrous! Can the mother thrive  
By the destruction of her innocent sons  
In whom a premature necessity  
Blocks out the forms of nature, preconsumes  
The reason, famishes the heart, shuts up  
The infant Being in itself, and makes 290  
Its very spring a season of decay!  
The lot is wretched, the condition sad,  
Whether a pining discontent survive,  
And thirst for change; or habit hath subdued  
The soul deprest, dejected--even to love  
Of her close tasks, and long captivity.

Oh, banish far such wisdom as condemns  
A native Briton to these inward chains,  
Fixed in his soul, so early and so deep;  
Without his own consent, or knowledge, fixed! 300  
He is a slave to whom release comes not,  
And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,  
Is still a prisoner; when the wind is up  
Among the clouds, and roars through the ancient woods;  
Or when the sun is shining in the east,  
Quiet and calm. Behold him--in the school  
Of his attainments? no; but with the air  
Fanning his temples under heaven's blue arch.  
His raiment, whitened o'er with cotton-flakes  
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes. 310  
Creeping his gait and cowering, his lip pale,  
His respiration quick and audible;  
And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam  
Could break from out those languid eyes, or a blush  
Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,  
Is that the countenance, and such the port,

Of no mean Being? One who should be clothed  
 With dignity befitting his proud hope;  
 Who, in his very childhood, should appear  
 Sublime from present purity and joy! 320  
 The limbs increase; but liberty of mind  
 Is gone for ever; and this organic frame,  
 So joyful in its motions, is become  
 Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead;  
 And even the touch, so exquisitely poured  
 Through the whole body, with a languid will  
 Performs its functions; rarely competent  
 To impress a vivid feeling on the mind  
 Of what there is delightful in the breeze,  
 The gentle visitations of the sun, 330  
 Or lapse of liquid element--by hand,  
 Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth--perceived.  
 --Can hope look forward to a manhood raised  
 On such foundations?"  
     "Hope is none for him!"  
 The pale Recluse indignantly exclaimed,  
 "And tens of thousands suffer wrong as deep.  
 Yet be it asked, in justice to our age,  
 If there were not, before those arts appeared,  
 These structures rose, commingling old and young,  
 And unripe sex with sex, for mutual taint; 340  
 If there were not, 'then', in our far-famed Isle,  
 Multitudes, who from infancy had breathed  
 Air unimprisoned, and had lived at large;  
 Yet walked beneath the sun, in human shape,  
 As abject, as degraded? At this day,  
 Who shall enumerate the crazy huts  
 And tottering hovels, whence do issue forth  
 A ragged Offspring, with their upright hair  
 Crowned like the image of fantastic Fear;  
 Or wearing, (shall we say?) in that white growth 350  
 An ill-adjusted turban, for defence  
 Or fierceness, wreathed around their sunburnt brows,  
 By savage Nature? Shrivelled are their lips,  
 Naked, and coloured like the soil, the feet  
 On which they stand; as if thereby they drew  
 Some nourishment, as trees do by their roots,  
 From earth, the common mother of us all.  
 Figure and mien, complexion and attire,  
 Are leagued to strike dismay; but outstretched hand  
 And whining voice denote them supplicants 360  
 For the least boon that pity can bestow.

Such on the breast of darksome heaths are found;  
And with their parents occupy the skirts  
Of furze-clad commons; such are born and reared  
At the mine's mouth under impending rocks;  
Or dwell in chambers of some natural cave;  
Or where their ancestors erected huts,  
For the convenience of unlawful gain,  
In forest purlieus; and the like are bred,  
All England through, where nooks and slips of ground 370  
Purloined, in times less jealous than our own,  
From the green margin of the public way,  
A residence afford them, 'mid the bloom  
And gaiety of cultivated fields.

Such (we will hope the lowest in the scale)  
Do I remember oft-times to have seen  
'Mid Buxton's dreary heights. In earnest watch,  
Till the swift vehicle approach, they stand;  
Then, following closely with the cloud of dust,  
An uncouth feat exhibit, and are gone 380  
Heels over head, like tumblers on a stage.

--Up from the ground they snatch the copper coin,  
And, on the freight of merry passengers  
Fixing a steady eye, maintain their speed;  
And spin--and pant--and overhead again,  
Wild pursuivants! until their breath is lost,  
Or bounty tires--and every face, that smiled  
Encouragement, hath ceased to look that way.  
--But, like the vagrants of the gipsy tribe,  
These, bred to little pleasure in themselves, 390  
Are profitless to others.

Turn we then  
To Britons born and bred within the pale  
Of civil polity, and early trained  
To earn, by wholesome labour in the field,  
The bread they eat. A sample should I give  
Of what this stock hath long produced to enrich  
The tender age of life, ye would exclaim,  
'Is this the whistling plough-boy whose shrill notes  
Impart new gladness to the morning air!'  
Forgive me if I venture to suspect 400  
That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,  
Are of no finer frame. Stiff are his joints;  
Beneath a cumbrous frock, that to the knees  
Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,  
Fellows to those that lustily upheld  
The wooden stools for everlasting use,

Whereon our fathers sate. And mark his brow  
 Under whose shaggy canopy are set  
 Two eyes--not dim, but of a healthy stare--  
 Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange-- 410  
 Proclaiming boldly that they never drew  
 A look or motion of intelligence  
 From infant-conning of the Christ-crossrow,  
 Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,  
 Till perfect mastery crown the pains at last.  
 --What kindly warmth from touch of fostering hand,  
 What penetrating power of sun or breeze,  
 Shall e'er dissolve the crust wherein his soul  
 Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheathed in ice?  
 This torpor is no pitiable work 420  
 Of modern ingenuity; no town  
 Nor crowded city can be taxed with aught  
 Of sottish vice or desperate breach of law,  
 To which (and who can tell where or how soon?)  
 He may be roused. This Boy the fields produce:  
 His spade and hoe, mattock and glittering scythe,  
 The carter's whip that on his shoulder rests  
 In air high-towering with a boorish pomp,  
 The sceptre of his sway; his country's name,  
 Her equal rights, her churches and her schools-- 430  
 What have they done for him? And, let me ask,  
 For tens of thousands uninformed as he?  
 In brief, what liberty of 'mind' is here?"

This ardent sally pleased the mild good Man,  
 To whom the appeal couched in its closing words  
 Was pointedly addressed; and to the thoughts  
 That, in assent or opposition, rose  
 Within his mind, he seemed prepared to give  
 Prompt utterance; but the Vicar interposed  
 With invitation urgently renewed. 440  
 --We followed, taking as he led, a path  
 Along a hedge of hollies dark and tall,  
 Whose flexile boughs low bending with a weight  
 Of leafy spray, concealed the stems and roots  
 That gave them nourishment. When frosty winds  
 Howl from the north, what kindly warmth, methought,  
 Is here--how grateful this impervious screen!  
 --Not shaped by simple wearing of the foot  
 On rural business passing to and fro  
 Was the commodious walk: a careful hand 450  
 Had marked the line, and strewn its surface o'er

With pure cerulean gravel, from the heights  
Fetched by a neighbouring brook.--Across the vale  
The stately fence accompanied our steps;  
And thus the pathway, by perennial green  
Guarded and graced, seemed fashioned to unite,  
As by a beautiful yet solemn chain,  
The Pastor's mansion with the house of prayer.

Like image of solemnity, conjoined  
With feminine allurements soft and fair,                   460  
The mansion's self displayed;--a reverend pile  
With bold projections and recesses deep;  
Shadowy, yet gay and lightsome as it stood  
Fronting the noontide sun. We paused to admire  
The pillared porch, elaborately embossed;  
The low wide windows with their mullions old;  
The cornice, richly fretted, of grey stone;  
And that smooth slope from which the dwelling rose,  
By beds and banks Arcadian of gay flowers  
And flowering shrubs, protected and adorned:                   470  
Profusion bright! and every flower assuming  
A more than natural vividness of hue,  
From unaffected contrast with the gloom  
Of sober cypress, and the darker foil  
Of yew, in which survived some traces, here  
Not unbecoming, of grotesque device  
And uncouth fancy. From behind the roof  
Rose the slim ash and massy sycamore,  
Blending their diverse foliage with the green  
Of ivy, flourishing and thick, that clasped                   480  
The huge round chimneys, harbour of delight  
For wren and redbreast,--where they sit and sing  
Their slender ditties when the trees are bare.  
Nor must I leave untouched (the picture else  
Were incomplete) a relique of old times  
Happily spared, a little Gothic niche  
Of nicest workmanship; that once had held  
The sculptured image of some patron-saint,  
Or of the blessed Virgin, looking down  
On all who entered those religious doors.                   490

But lo! where from the rocky garden-mount  
Crowned by its antique summer-house--descends,  
Light as the silver fawn, a radiant Girl;  
For she hath recognised her honoured friend,  
The Wanderer ever welcome! A prompt kiss



Not, doubtless, without help of female taste  
And female care.--"A blessed lot is yours!"  
The words escaped his lip, with a tender sigh  
Breathed over them: but suddenly the door  
Flew open, and a pair of lusty Boys  
Appeared, confusion checking their delight.  
--Not brothers they in feature or attire,  
But fond companions, so I guessed, in field,  
And by the river's margin--whence they come,  
Keen anglers with unusual spoil elated. 550  
One bears a willow-pannier on his back,  
The boy of plainer garb, whose blush survives  
More deeply tinged. Twin might the other be  
To that fair girl who from the garden-mount  
Bounded:--triumphant entry this for him!  
Between his hands he holds a smooth blue stone,  
On whose capacious surface see outspread  
Large store of gleaming crimson-spotted trouts;  
Ranged side by side, and lessening by degrees  
Up to the dwarf that tops the pinnacle. 560  
Upon the board he lays the sky-blue stone  
With its rich freight; their number he proclaims;  
Tells from what pool the noblest had been dragged;  
And where the very monarch of the brook,  
After long struggle, had escaped at last--  
Stealing alternately at them and us  
(As doth his comrade too) a look of pride:  
And, verily, the silent creatures made  
A splendid sight, together thus exposed;  
Dead--but not sullied or deformed by death, 570  
That seemed to pity what he could not spare.

But oh, the animation in the mien  
Of those two boys! yea in the very words  
With which the young narrator was inspired,  
When, as our questions led, he told at large  
Of that day's prowess! Him might I compare,  
His looks, tones, gestures, eager eloquence,  
To a bold brook that splits for better speed,  
And at the self-same moment, works its way  
Through many channels, ever and anon 580  
Parted and re-united: his compeer  
To the still lake, whose stillness is to sight  
As beautiful--as grateful to the mind.  
--But to what object shall the lovely Girl  
Be likened? She whose countenance and air

Unite the graceful qualities of both,  
Even as she shares the pride and joy of both.

My grey-haired Friend was moved; his vivid eye  
Glistened with tenderness; his mind, I knew,  
Was full; and had, I doubted not, returned,                   590  
Upon this impulse, to the theme--erewhile  
Abruptly broken off. The ruddy boys  
Withdrew, on summons to their well-earned meal;  
And He--to whom all tongues resigned their rights  
With willingness, to whom the general ear  
Listened with readier patience than to strain  
Of music, lute or harp, a long delight  
That ceased not when his voice had ceased--as One  
Who from truth's central point serenely views  
The compass of his argument--began                   600  
Mildly, and with a clear and steady tone.

Book Nine: Discourse of the Wanderer, and an Evening Visit to the Lake

"TO every Form of being is assigned,"  
Thus calmly spake the venerable Sage,  
"An 'active' Principle:--howe'er removed  
From sense and observation, it subsists  
In all things, in all natures; in the stars  
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,  
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone  
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,  
The moving waters, and the invisible air.  
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread                   10  
Beyond itself, communicating good  
A simple blessing, or with evil mixed;  
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,  
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link  
It circulates, the Soul of all the worlds.  
This is the freedom of the universe;  
Unfolded still the more, more visible,  
The more we know; and yet is revered least,  
And least respected in the human Mind,  
Its most apparent home. The food of hope                   20  
Is meditated action; robbed of this  
Her sole support, she languishes and dies.  
We perish also; for we live by hope  
And by desire; we see by the glad light  
And breathe the sweet air of futurity;



And so we live, or else we have no life.  
To-morrow--nay perchance this very hour  
(For every moment hath its own to-morrow!)  
Those blooming Boys, whose hearts are almost sick  
With present triumph, will be sure to find 30  
A field before them freshened with the dew  
Of other expectations;--in which course  
Their happy year spins round. The youth obeys  
A like glad impulse; and so moves the man  
'Mid all his apprehensions, cares, and fears,--  
Or so he ought to move. Ah! why in age  
Do we revert so fondly to the walks  
Of childhood--but that there the Soul discerns  
The dear memorial footsteps unimpaired  
Of her own native vigour; thence can hear 40  
Reverberations; and a choral song,  
Commingle with the incense that ascends,  
Undaunted, toward the imperishable heavens,  
From her own lonely altar?

Do not think

That good and wise ever will be allowed,  
Though strength decay, to breathe in such estate  
As shall divide them wholly from the stir  
Of hopeful nature. Rightly is it said  
That Man descends into the VALE of years;  
Yet have I thought that we might also speak, 50  
And not presumptuously, I trust, of Age,  
As of a final EMINENCE; though bare  
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point  
On which 'tis not impossible to sit  
In awful sovereignty; a place of power,  
A throne, that may be likened unto his,  
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks  
Down from a mountain-top,--say one of those  
High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.  
Faint, and diminished to the gazing eye, 60  
Forest and field, and hill and dale appear,  
With all the shapes over their surface spread:  
But, while the gross and visible frame of things  
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,  
Yea almost on the Mind herself, and seems  
All unsubstantialized,--how loud the voice  
Of waters, with invigorated peal  
From the full river in the vale below,  
Ascending! For on that superior height  
Who sits, is disencumbered from the press 70

Of near obstructions, and is privileged  
To breathe in solitude, above the host  
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air  
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves  
Many and idle, visits not his ear:  
This he is freed from, and from thousand notes  
(Not less unceasing, not less vain than these,)  
By which the finer passages of sense  
Are occupied; and the Soul, that would incline  
To listen, is prevented or deterred. 80

And may it not be hoped, that, placed by age  
In like removal, tranquil though severe,  
We are not so removed for utter loss;  
But for some favour, suited to our need?  
What more than that the severing should confer  
Fresh power to commune with the invisible world,  
And hear the mighty stream of tendency  
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,  
A clear sonorous voice, inaudible  
To the vast multitude; whose doom it is 90  
To run the giddy round of vain delight,  
Or fret and labour on the Plain below.

But, if to such sublime ascent the hopes  
Of Man may rise, as to a welcome close  
And termination of his mortal course;  
Them only can such hope inspire whose minds  
Have not been starved by absolute neglect;  
Nor bodies crushed by unremitting toil;  
To whom kind Nature, therefore, may afford  
Proof of the sacred love she bears for all; 100  
Whose birthright Reason, therefore, may ensure.  
For me, consulting what I feel within  
In times when most existence with herself  
Is satisfied, I cannot but believe,  
That, far as kindly Nature hath free scope  
And Reason's sway predominates; even so far,  
Country, society, and time itself,  
That saps the individual's bodily frame,  
And lays the generations low in dust,  
Do, by the almighty Ruler's grace, partake 110  
Of one maternal spirit, bringing forth  
And cherishing with ever-constant love,  
That tires not, nor betrays. Our life is turned  
Out of her course, wherever man is made

An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool  
Or implement, a passive thing employed  
As a brute mean, without acknowledgment  
Of common right or interest in the end;  
Used or abused, as selfishness may prompt.  
Say, what can follow for a rational soul                   120  
Perverted thus, but weakness in all good,  
And strength in evil? Hence an after-call  
For chastisement, and custody, and bonds,  
And oft-times Death, avenger of the past,  
And the sole guardian in whose hands we dare  
Entrust the future.--Not for these sad issues  
Was Man created; but to obey the law  
Of life, and hope, and action. And 'tis known  
That when we stand upon our native soil,  
Unelbowed by such objects as oppress                   130  
Our active powers, those powers themselves become  
Strong to subvert our noxious qualities:  
They sweep distemper from the busy day,  
And make the chalice of the big round year  
Run o'er with gladness; whence the Being moves  
In beauty through the world; and all who see  
Bless him, rejoicing in his neighbourhood."

"Then," said the Solitary, "by what force  
Of language shall a feeling heart express  
Her sorrow for that multitude in whom                   140  
We look for health from seeds that have been sown  
In sickness, and for increase in a power  
That works but by extinction? On themselves  
They cannot lean, nor turn to their own hearts  
To know what they must do; their wisdom is  
To look into the eyes of others, thence  
To be instructed what they must avoid:  
Or rather, let us say, how least observed,  
How with most quiet and most silent death,  
With the least taint and injury to the air                   150  
The oppressor breathes, their human form divine,  
And their immortal soul, may waste away."

The Sage rejoined, "I thank you--you have spared  
My voice the utterance of a keen regret,  
A wide compassion which with you I share.  
When, heretofore, I placed before your sight  
A Little-one, subjected to the arts  
Of modern ingenuity, and made

The senseless member of a vast machine,  
Serving as doth a spindle or a wheel; 160  
Think not, that, pitying him, I could forget  
The rustic Boy, who walks the fields, untaught;  
The slave of ignorance, and oft of want,  
And miserable hunger. Much, too much,  
Of this unhappy lot, in early youth  
We both have witnessed, lot which I myself  
Shared, though in mild and merciful degree:  
Yet was the mind to hindrances exposed,  
Through which I struggled, not without distress  
And sometimes injury, like a lamb enthralled 170  
'Mid thorns and brambles; or a bird that breaks  
Through a strong net, and mounts upon the wind,  
Though with her plumes impaired. If they, whose souls  
Should open while they range the richer fields  
Of merry England, are obstructed less  
By indigence, their ignorance is not less,  
Nor less to be deplored. For who can doubt  
That tens of thousands at this day exist  
Such as the boy you painted, lineal heirs  
Of those who once were vassals of her soil, 180  
Following its fortunes like the beasts or trees  
Which it sustained. But no one takes delight  
In this oppression; none are proud of it;  
It bears no sounding name, nor ever bore;  
A standing grievance, an indigenous vice  
Of every country under heaven. My thoughts  
Were turned to evils that are new and chosen,  
A bondage lurking under shape of good,--  
Arts, in themselves beneficent and kind,  
But all too fondly followed and too far;-- 190  
To victims, which the merciful can see  
Nor think that they are victims--turned to wrongs,  
By women, who have children of their own,  
Beheld without compassion, yea with praise!  
I spake of mischief by the wise diffused  
With gladness, thinking that the more it spreads  
The healthier, the securer, we become;  
Delusion which a moment may destroy!  
Lastly, I mourned for those whom I had seen  
Corrupted and cast down, on favoured ground, 200  
Where circumstance and nature had combined  
To shelter innocence, and cherish love;  
Who, but for this intrusion, would have lived,  
Possessed of health, and strength, and peace of mind;

Thus would have lived, or never have been born.

Alas! what differs more than man from man!  
And whence that difference? whence but from himself?  
For see the universal Race endowed  
With the same upright form!--The sun is fixed,  
And the infinite magnificence of heaven                   210  
Fixed, within reach of every human eye;  
The sleepless ocean murmurs for all ears;  
The vernal field infuses fresh delight  
Into all hearts. Throughout the world of sense,  
Even as an object is sublime or fair,  
That object is laid open to the view  
Without reserve or veil; and as a power  
Is salutary, or an influence sweet,  
Are each and all enabled to perceive  
That power, that influence, by impartial law.                   220  
Gifts nobler are vouchsafed alike to all;  
Reason, and, with that reason, smiles and tears;  
Imagination, freedom in the will;  
Conscience to guide and check; and death to be  
Foretasted, immortality conceived  
By all,--a blissful immortality,  
To them whose holiness on earth shall make  
The Spirit capable of heaven, assured.  
Strange, then, nor less than monstrous, might be deemed  
The failure, if the Almighty, to this point                   230  
Liberal and undistinguishing, should hide  
The excellence of moral qualities  
From common understanding; leaving truth  
And virtue, difficult, abstruse, and dark;  
Hard to be won, and only by a few;  
Strange, should He deal herein with nice respects,  
And frustrate all the rest! Believe it not:  
The primal duties shine aloft--like stars;  
The charities that soothe, and heal, and bless,  
Are scattered at the feet of Man--like flowers.                   240  
The generous inclination, the just rule,  
Kind wishes, and good actions, and pure thoughts--  
No mystery is here! Here is no boon  
For high--yet not for low; for proudly graced--  
Yet not for meek of heart. The smoke ascends  
To heaven as lightly from the cottage hearth  
As from the haughtiest palace. He, whose soul  
Ponders this true equality, may walk  
The fields of earth with gratitude and hope;



"O for the coming of that glorious time  
 When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth  
 And best protection, this imperial Realm,  
 While she exacts allegiance, shall admit  
 An obligation, on her part, to 'teach'  
 Them who are born to serve her and obey;  
 Binding herself by statute[1] to secure  
 For all the children whom her soil maintains                    300  
 The rudiments of letters, and inform  
 The mind with moral and religious truth,  
 Both understood and practised,--so that none,  
 However destitute, be left to droop  
 By timely culture unsustained; or run  
 Into a wild disorder; or be forced  
 To drudge through a weary life without the help  
 Of intellectual implements and tools;  
 A savage horde among the civilised,  
 A servile band among the lordly free!                    310  
 This sacred right, the lisping babe proclaims  
 To be inherent in him, by Heaven's will,  
 For the protection of his innocence;  
 And the rude boy--who, having overpast  
 The sinless age, by conscience is enrolled,  
 Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,  
 And lifts his wilful hand on mischief bent,  
 Or turns the godlike faculty of speech  
 To impious use--by process indirect  
 Declares his due, while he makes known his need.                    320  
 --This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,  
 This universal plea in vain addressed,  
 To eyes and ears of parents who themselves  
 Did, in the time of their necessity,  
 Urge it in vain; and, therefore, like a prayer  
 That from the humblest floor ascends to heaven,  
 It mounts to meet the State's parental ear;  
 Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart,  
 And be not most unfeelingly devoid  
 Of gratitude to Providence, will grant                    330  
 The unquestionable good--which, England, safe  
 From interference of external force,  
 May grant at leisure; without risk incurred  
 That what in wisdom for herself she doth,  
 Others shall e'er be able to undo.

Look! and behold, from Calpe's sun-burnt cliffs  
 To the flat margin of the Baltic sea,

Long-reverenced titles cast away as weeds;  
Laws overturned; and territory split,  
Like fields of ice rent by the polar wind,                   340  
And forced to join in less obnoxious shapes  
Which, ere they gain consistence, by a gust  
Of the same breath are shattered and destroyed.  
Meantime the sovereignty of these fair Isles  
Remains entire and indivisible:  
And, if that ignorance were removed, which breeds  
Within the compass of their several shores  
Dark discontent, or loud commotion, each  
Might still preserve the beautiful repose  
Of heavenly bodies shining in their spheres.                   350  
--The discipline of slavery is unknown  
Among us,--hence the more do we require  
The discipline of virtue; order else  
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.  
Thus, duties rising out of good possess,  
And prudent caution needful to avert  
Impending evil, equally require  
That the whole people should be taught and trained.  
So shall licentiousness and black resolve  
Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take                   360  
Their place; and genuine piety descend,  
Like an inheritance, from age to age.

With such foundations laid, avaunt the fear  
Of numbers crowded on their native soil,  
To the prevention of all healthful growth  
Through mutual injury! Rather in the law  
Of increase and the mandate from above  
Rejoice!--and ye have special cause for joy.  
--For, as the element of air affords  
An easy passage to the industrious bees                   370  
Fraught with their burthens; and a way as smooth  
For those ordained to take their sounding flight  
From the thronged hive, and settle where they list  
In fresh abodes--their labour to renew;  
So the wide waters, open to the power,  
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs  
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off  
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth;  
Bound to establish new communities  
On every shore whose aspect favours hope                   380  
Or bold adventure; promising to skill  
And perseverance their deserved reward.



Yes," he continued, kindling as he spake,  
 "Change wide, and deep, and silently performed,  
 This Land shall witness; and as days roll on,  
 Earth's universal frame shall feel the effect;  
 Even till the smallest habitable rock,  
 Beaten by lonely billows, hear the songs  
 Of humanised society; and bloom  
 With civil arts, that shall breathe forth their fragrance, 390  
 A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.  
 From culture, unexclusively bestowed  
 On Albion's noble Race in freedom born,  
 Expect these mighty issues: from the pains  
 And faithful care of unambitious schools  
 Instructing simple childhood's ready ear:  
 Thence look for these magnificent results!  
 --Vast the circumference of hope--and ye  
 Are at its centre, British Lawgivers;  
 Ah! sleep not there in shame! Shall Wisdom's voice       400  
 From out the bosom of these troubled times  
 Repeat the dictates of her calmer mind,  
 And shall the venerable halls ye fill  
 Refuse to echo the sublime decree?  
 Trust not to partial care a general good;  
 Transfer not to futurity a work  
 Of urgent need.--Your Country must complete  
 Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,  
 Now, when oppression, like the Egyptian plague  
 Of darkness, stretched o'er guilty Europe, makes       410  
 The brightness more conspicuous that invests  
 The happy Island where ye think and act;  
 Now, when destruction is a prime pursuit,  
 Show to the wretched nations for what end  
 The powers of civil polity were given."

Abruptly here, but with a graceful air,  
 The Sage broke off. No sooner had he ceased  
 Than, looking forth, the gentle Lady said,  
 "Behold the shades of afternoon have fallen  
 Upon this flowery slope; and see--beyond--       420  
 The silvery lake is streaked with placid blue;  
 As if preparing for the peace of evening.  
 How temptingly the landscape shines! The air  
 Breathes invitation; easy is the walk  
 To the lake's margin, where a boat lies moored  
 Under a sheltering tree."--Upon this hint



Like that reflected in yon quiet pool,  
Seems but a fleeting sunbeam's gift, whose peace,  
The sufferance only of a breath of air!"

More had she said--but sportive shouts were heard  
Sent from the jocund hearts of those two Boys,  
Who, bearing each a basket on his arm,  
Down the green field came tripping after us.  
With caution we embarked; and now the pair  
For prouder service were address; but each,  
Wishful to leave an opening for my choice, 480  
Dropped the light oar his eager hand had seized.  
Thanks given for that becoming courtesy,  
Their place I took--and for a grateful office  
Pregnant with recollections of the time  
When, on thy bosom, spacious Windermere!  
A Youth, I practised this delightful art;  
Tossed on the waves alone, or 'mid a crew  
Of joyous comrades. Soon as the reedy marge  
Was cleared, I dipped, with arms accordant, oars 490  
Free from obstruction; and the boat advanced  
Through crystal water, smoothly as a hawk,  
That, disentangled from the shady boughs  
Of some thick wood, her place of covert, cleaves  
With correspondent wings the abyss of air.  
--"Observe," the Vicar said, "yon rocky isle  
With birch-trees fringed; my hand shall guide the helm,  
While thitherward we shape our course; or while  
We seek that other, on the western shore;  
Where the bare columns of those lofty firs,  
Supporting gracefully a massy dome 500  
Of sombre foliage, seem to imitate  
A Grecian temple rising from the Deep."

"Turn where we may," said I, "we cannot err  
In this delicious region."--Cultured slopes,  
Wild tracts of forest-ground, and scattered groves,  
And mountains bare, or clothed with ancient woods,  
Surrounded us; and, as we held our way  
Along the level of the glassy flood,  
They ceased not to surround us; change of place  
From kindred features diversely combined, 510  
Producing change of beauty ever new.  
--Ah! that such beauty, varying in the light  
Of living nature, cannot be portrayed  
By words, nor by the pencil's silent skill;

But is the property of him alone  
Who hath beheld it, noted it with care,  
And in his mind recorded it with love!  
Suffice it, therefore, if the rural Muse  
Vouchsafe sweet influence, while her Poet speaks  
Of trivial occupations well devised, 520  
And unsought pleasures springing up by chance;  
As if some friendly Genius had ordained  
That, as the day thus far had been enriched  
By acquisition of sincere delight,  
The same should be continued to its close.

One spirit animating old and young,  
A gipsy-fire we kindled on the shore  
Of the fair Isle with birch-trees fringed--and there,  
Merrily seated in a ring, partook  
A choice repast--served by our young companions 530  
With rival earnestness and kindred glee.  
Launched from our hands the smooth stone skimmed the lake;  
With shouts we raised the echoes:--stiller sounds  
The lovely Girl supplied--a simple song,  
Whose low tones reached not to the distant rocks  
To be repeated thence, but gently sank  
Into our hearts; and charmed the peaceful flood.  
Rapaciously we gathered flowery spoils  
From land and water; lilies of each hue--  
Golden and white, that float upon the waves, 540  
And court the wind; and leaves of that shy plant,  
(Her flowers were shed) the lily of the vale,  
That loves the ground, and from the sun withholds  
Her pensive beauty; from the breeze her sweets.

Such product, and such pastime, did the place  
And season yield; but, as we re-embarked,  
Leaving, in quest of other scenes, the shore  
Of that wild spot, the Solitary said  
In a low voice, yet careless who might hear,  
"The fire, that burned so brightly to our wish, 550  
Where is it now?--Deserted on the beach--  
Dying, or dead! Nor shall the fanning breeze  
Revive its ashes. What care we for this,  
Whose ends are gained? Behold an emblem here  
Of one day's pleasure, and all mortal joys!  
And, in this unpremeditated slight  
Of that which is no longer needed, see  
The common course of human gratitude!"

This plaintive note disturbed not the repose  
Of the still evening. Right across the lake 560  
Our pinnacle moves; then, coasting creek and bay,  
Glades we behold, and into thickets peep,  
Where couch the spotted deer; or raised our eyes  
To shaggy steeps on which the careless goat  
Browsed by the side of dashing waterfalls;  
And thus the bark, meandering with the shore,  
Pursued her voyage, till a natural pier  
Of jutting rock invited us to land.

Alert to follow as the Pastor led,  
We clomb a green hill's side; and, as we clomb, 570  
The Valley, opening out her bosom, gave  
Fair prospect, intercepted less and less,  
O'er the flat meadows and indented coast  
Of the smooth lake, in compass seen:--far off,  
And yet conspicuous, stood the old Church-tower,  
In majesty presiding over fields  
And habitations seemingly preserved  
From all intrusion of the restless world  
By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

Soft heath this elevated spot supplied, 580  
And choice of moss-clad stones, whereon we couched  
Or sate reclined; admiring quietly  
The general aspect of the scene; but each  
Not seldom over anxious to make known  
His own discoveries; or to favourite points  
Directing notice, merely from a wish  
To impart a joy, imperfect while unshared.  
That rapturous moment never shall I forget  
When these particular interests were effaced  
From every mind!--Already had the sun, 590  
Sinking with less than ordinary state,  
Attained his western bound; but rays of light--  
Now suddenly diverging from the orb  
Retired behind the mountain tops or veiled  
By the dense air--shot upwards to the crown  
Of the blue firmament--aloft, and wide:  
And multitudes of little floating clouds,  
Through their ethereal texture pierced--ere we,  
Who saw, of change were conscious--had become  
Vivid as fire; clouds separately poised,-- 600  
Innumerable multitude of forms

Scattered through half the circle of the sky;  
And giving back, and shedding each on each,  
With prodigal communion, the bright hues  
Which from the unapparent fount of glory  
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.  
That which the heavens displayed, the liquid deep  
Repeated; but with unity sublime!

While from the grassy mountain's open side  
We gazed, in silence hushed, with eyes intent           610  
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused  
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,  
The Priest in holy transport thus exclaimed:  
"Eternal Spirit! universal God!  
Power inaccessible to human thought,  
Save by degrees and steps which thou hast deigned  
To furnish; for this effluence of thyself,  
To the infirmity of mortal sense  
Vouchsafed; this local transitory type  
Of thy paternal splendours, and the pomp           620  
Of those who fill thy courts in highest heaven,  
The radiant Cherubim;--accept the thanks  
Which we, thy humble Creatures, here convened,  
Presume to offer; we, who--from the breast  
Of the frail earth, permitted to behold  
The faint reflections only of thy face--  
Are yet exalted, and in soul adore!  
Such as they are who in thy presence stand  
Unsullied, incorruptible, and drink  
Imperishable majesty streamed forth           630  
From thy empyreal throne, the elect of earth  
Shall be--divested at the appointed hour  
Of all dishonour, cleansed from mortal stain.  
--Accomplish, then, their number; and conclude  
Time's weary course! Or if, by thy decree,  
The consummation that will come by stealth  
Be yet far distant, let thy Word prevail,  
Oh! let thy Word prevail, to take away  
The sting of human nature. Spread the law,  
As it is written in thy holy book,           640  
Throughout all lands; let every nation hear  
The high behest, and every heart obey;  
Both for the love of purity, and hope  
Which it affords, to such as do thy will  
And persevere in good, that they shall rise,  
To have a nearer view of thee, in heaven.

--Father of good! this prayer in bounty grant,  
In mercy grant it, to thy wretched sons.  
Then, not till then, shall persecution cease,  
And cruel wars expire. The way is marked, 650  
The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.  
Alas! the nations, who of yore received  
These tidings, and in Christian temples meet  
The sacred truth to knowledge, linger still;  
Preferring bonds and darkness to a state  
Of holy freedom, by redeeming love  
Proffered to all, while yet on earth detained.

So fare the many; and the thoughtful few,  
Who in the anguish of their souls bewail  
This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask, 660  
Shall it endure?--Shall enmity and strife,  
Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed;  
And the kind never perish? Is the hope  
Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain  
A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,  
And ne'er to fail? Shall that blest day arrive  
When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell  
In crowded cities, without fear shall live  
Studious of mutual benefit; and he,  
Whom Morn awakens, among dews and flowers 670  
Of every clime, to till the lonely field,  
Be happy in himself?--The law of faith  
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,  
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?  
Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart!  
And with that help the wonder shall be seen  
Fulfilled, the hope accomplished; and thy praise  
Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

Once," and with mild demeanour, as he spake,  
On us the venerable Pastor turned 680  
His beaming eye that had been raised to Heaven,  
"Once, while the Name, Jehovah, was a sound  
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle  
Unheard, the savage nations bowed the head  
To Gods delighting in remorseless deeds;  
Gods which themselves had fashioned, to promote  
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.  
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain-cove,  
To those inventions of corrupted man  
Mysterious rites were solemnised; and there-- 690

Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods--  
Of those terrific Idols some received  
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice  
Of the swoln cataracts (which now are heard  
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,  
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks  
Of human victims, offered up to appease  
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes  
Had visionary faculties to see  
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,           700  
Aghast we might behold this crystal Mere  
Bedimmed with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,  
Flung from the body of devouring fires,  
To Taranis erected on the heights  
By priestly hands, for sacrifice performed  
Exultingly, in view of open day  
And full assemblage of a barbarous host;  
Or to Andates, female Power! who gave  
(For so they fancied) glorious victory.  
--A few rude monuments of mountain-stone           710  
Survive; all else is swept away.--How bright  
The appearances of things! From such, how changed  
The existing worship; and with those compared,  
The worshippers how innocent and blest!  
So wide the difference, a willing mind  
Might almost think, at this affecting hour,  
That paradise, the lost abode of man,  
Was raised again: and to a happy few,  
In its original beauty, here restored.

Whence but from thee, the true and only God,           720  
And from the faith derived through Him who bled  
Upon the cross, this marvellous advance  
Of good from evil; as if one extreme  
Were left, the other gained.--O ye, who come  
To kneel devoutly in yon reverend Pile,  
Called to such office by the peaceful sound  
Of sabbath bells; and ye, who sleep in earth,  
All cares forgotten, round its hallowed walls!  
For you, in presence of this little band  
Gathered together on the green hill-side,           730  
Your Pastor is emboldened to prefer  
Vocal thanksgivings to the eternal King;  
Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands, have made  
Your very poorest rich in peace of thought  
And in good works; and him, who is endowed



With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth  
 Which the salvation of his soul requires.  
 Conscious of that abundant favour showered  
 On you, the children of my humble care,  
 And this dear land, our country, while on earth       740  
 We sojourn, have I lifted up my soul,  
 Joy giving voice to fervent gratitude.  
 These barren rocks, your stern inheritance;  
 These fertile fields, that recompense your pains;  
 The shadowy vale, the sunny mountain-top;  
 Woods waving in the wind their lofty heads,  
 Or hushed; the roaring waters and the still--  
 They see the offering of my lifted hands,  
 They hear my lips present their sacrifice,  
 They know if I be silent, morn or even:               750  
 For, though in whispers speaking, the full heart  
 Will find a vent; and thought is praise to him,  
 Audible praise, to thee, omniscient Mind,  
 From whom all gifts descend, all blessings flow!"

This vesper-service closed, without delay,  
 From that exalted station to the plain  
 Descending, we pursued our homeward course,  
 In mute composure, o'er the shadowy lake,  
 Under a faded sky. No trace remained  
 Of those celestial splendours; grey the vault--       760  
 Pure, cloudless, ether; and the star of eve  
 Was wanting; but inferior lights appeared  
 Faintly, too faint almost for sight; and some  
 Above the darkened hills stood boldly forth  
 In twinkling lustre, ere the boat attained  
 Her mooring-place; where, to the sheltering tree,  
 Our youthful Voyagers bound fast her prow,  
 With prompt yet careful hands. This done, we paced  
 The dewy fields; but ere the Vicar's door  
 Was reached, the Solitary checked his steps;       770  
 Then, intermingling thanks, on each bestowed  
 A farewell salutation; and, the like  
 Receiving, took the slender path that leads  
 To the one cottage in the lonely dell:  
 But turned not without welcome promise made  
 That he would share the pleasures and pursuits  
 Of yet another summer's day, not loth  
 To wander with us through the fertile vales,  
 And o'er the mountain-wastes. "Another sun,"  
 Said he, "shall shine upon us, ere we part;       780

Another sun, and peradventure more;  
If time, with free consent, be yours to give,  
And season favours."

To enfeebled Power,  
From this communion with uninjured Minds,  
What renovation had been brought; and what  
Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,  
Dejected, and habitually disposed  
To seek, in degradation of the Kind,  
Excuse and solace for her own defects;  
How far those erring notions were reformed;  
And whether aught, of tendency as good  
And pure, from further intercourse ensued;  
This--if delightful hopes, as heretofore,  
Inspire the serious song, and gentle Hearts  
Cherish, and lofty Minds approve the past--  
My future labours may not leave untold.

790

1795-1814.