

## THE RECLUSE

### PART FIRST

#### BOOK FIRST—HOME AT GRASMERE

ONCE to the verge of yon steep barrier came  
A roving school-boy; what the adventurer's age  
Hath now escaped his memory—but the hour,  
One of a golden summer holiday,  
He well remembers, though the year be gone—  
Alone and devious from afar he came;  
And, with a sudden influx overpowered  
At sight of this seclusion, he forgot  
His haste, for hasty had his footsteps been  
As boyish his pursuits; and sighing said,           10  
“What happy fortune were it here to live!  
And, if a thought of dying, if a thought  
Of mortal separation, could intrude  
With paradise before him, here to die!”  
No Prophet was he, had not even a hope,  
Scarcely a wish, but one bright pleasing thought,  
A fancy in the heart of what might be  
The lot of others, never could be his.  
The station whence he looked was soft and green,  
Not giddy yet aerial, with a depth               20  
Of vale below, a height of hills above.  
For rest of body perfect was the spot,  
All that luxurious nature could desire;  
But stirring to the spirit; who could gaze  
And not feel motions there? He thought of clouds  
That sail on winds: of breezes that delight  
To play on water, or in endless chase  
Pursue each other through the yielding plain  
Of grass or corn, over and through and through,  
In billow after billow, evermore               30  
Disporting—nor unmindful was the boy  
Of sunbeams, shadows, butterflies and birds;  
Of fluttering sylphs and softly-gliding Fays,  
Genii, and winged angels that are Lords  
Without restraint of all which they behold.  
The illusion strengthening as he gazed, he felt  
That such unfettered liberty was his,  
Such power and joy; but only for this end,  
To flit from field to rock, from rock to field,  
From shore to island, and from isle to shore,           40  
From open ground to covert, from a bed

Of meadow-flowers into a tuft of wood;  
From high to low, from low to high, yet still  
Within the bound of this huge concave; here  
Must be his home, this valley be his world.

Since that day forth the Place to him— ‘to me’  
(For I who live to register the truth  
Was that same young and happy Being) became  
As beautiful to thought, as it had been  
When present, to the bodily sense; a haunt 50

Of pure affections, shedding upon joy  
A brighter joy; and through such damp and gloom  
Of the gay mind, as oftentimes splenetic youth  
Mistakes for sorrow, darting beams of light  
That no self-cherished sadness could withstand;  
And now ‘tis mine, perchance for life, dear Vale,  
Beloved Grasmere (let the wandering streams  
Take up, the cloud-capt hills repeat, the Name)  
One of thy lowly Dwellings is my Home.

And was the cost so great? and could it seem 60  
An act of courage, and the thing itself  
A conquest? who must bear the blame? Sage man  
Thy prudence, thy experience, thy desires,  
Thy apprehensions—blush thou for them all.

Yes the realities of life so cold,  
So cowardly, so ready to betray,  
So stinted in the measure of their grace  
As we pronounce them, doing them much wrong,  
Have been to me more bountiful than hope,  
Less timid than desire—but that is past. 70

On Nature’s invitation do I come,  
By Reason sanctioned. Can the choice mislead,  
That made the calmest fairest spot of earth  
With all its unappropriated good  
My own; and not mine only, for with me  
Entrenched, say rather peacefully embowered,  
Under yon orchard, in yon humble cot,  
A younger Orphan of a home extinct,  
The only Daughter of my Parents dwells.

Ay, think on that, my heart, and cease to stir, 80  
Pause upon that and let the breathing frame  
No longer breathe, but all be satisfied.

—Oh, if such silence be not thanks to God  
For what hath been bestowed, then where, where then  
Shall gratitude find rest? Mine eyes did ne’er  
Fix on a lovely object, nor my mind  
Take pleasure in the midst of happy thoughts,  
But either She whom now I have, who now

Divides with me this loved abode, was there,  
 Or not far off. Where'er my footsteps turned, 90  
 Her voice was like a hidden Bird that sang,  
 The thought of her was like a flash of light,  
 Or an unseen companionship, a breath  
 Of fragrance independent of the Wind.  
 In all my goings, in the new and old  
 Of all my meditations, and in this  
 Favourite of all, in this the most of all.  
 —What being, therefore, since the birth of Man  
 Had ever more abundant cause to speak  
 Thanks, and if favours of the Heavenly Muse 100  
 Make him more thankful, then to call on Verse  
 To aid him and in song resound his joy?  
 The boon is absolute; surpassing grace  
 To me hath been vouchsafed; among the bowers  
 Of blissful Eden this was neither given  
 Nor could be given, possession of the good  
 Which had been sighed for, ancient thought fulfilled,  
 And dear Imaginations realised,  
 Up to their highest measure, yea and more.  
 Embrace me then, ye Hills, and close me in; 110  
 Now in the clear and open day I feel  
 Your guardianship; I take it to my heart;  
 'Tis like the solemn shelter of the night.  
 But I would call thee beautiful, for mild,  
 And soft, and gay, and beautiful thou art  
 Dear Valley, having in thy face a smile  
 Though peaceful, full of gladness. Thou art pleased,  
 Pleased with thy crags and woody steeps, thy Lake,  
 Its one green island and its winding shores;  
 The multitude of little rocky hills, 120  
 Thy Church and cottages of mountain stone  
 Clustered like stars some few, but single most,  
 And lurking dimly in their shy retreats,  
 Or glancing at each other cheerful looks  
 Like separated stars with clouds between.  
 What want we? have we not perpetual streams,  
 Warm woods, and sunny hills, and fresh green fields,  
 And mountains not less green, and flocks and herds,  
 And thickets full of songsters, and the voice  
 Of lordly birds, an unexpected sound 130  
 Heard now and then from morn to latest eve,  
 Admonishing the man who walks below  
 Of solitude and silence in the sky?  
 These have we, and a thousand nooks of earth  
 Have also these, but nowhere else is found,

Nowhere (or is it fancy?) can be found  
The one sensation that is here; 'tis here,  
Here as it found its way into my heart  
In childhood, here as it abides by day,  
By night, here only; or in chosen minds 140  
That take it with them hence, where'er they go.

— 'Tis, but I cannot name it, 'tis the sense  
Of majesty, and beauty, and repose,  
A blended holiness of earth and sky,  
Something that makes this individual spot,  
This small abiding-place of many men,  
A termination, and a last retreat,  
A centre, come from wheresoe'er you will,  
A whole without dependence or defect,  
Made for itself, and happy in itself, 150  
Perfect contentment, Unity entire.

Bleak season was it, turbulent and bleak,  
When hitherward we journeyed side by side  
Through burst of sunshine and through flying showers;  
Paced the long vales—how long they were—and yet  
How fast that length of way was left behind,  
Wensley's rich Vale, and Sedbergh's naked heights.  
The frosty wind, as if to make amends  
For its keen breath, was aiding to our steps,  
And drove us onward like two ships at sea, 160  
Or like two birds, companions in mid-air,  
Parted and reunited by the blast.

Stern was the face of nature; we rejoiced  
In that stern countenance, for our souls thence drew  
A feeling of their strength. The naked trees,  
The icy brooks, as on we passed, appeared  
To question us. "Whence come ye, to what end?"  
They seemed to say, "What would ye," said the shower,  
"Wild Wanderers, whither through my dark domain?"  
The sunbeam said, "Be happy." When this vale 170

We entered, bright and solemn was the sky  
That faced us with a passionate welcoming,  
And led us to our threshold. Daylight failed  
Insensibly, and round us gently fell  
Composing darkness, with a quiet load  
Of full contentment, in a little shed  
Disturbed, uneasy in itself as seemed,  
And wondering at its new inhabitants.  
It loves us now, this Vale so beautiful  
Begins to love us! by a sullen storm, 180  
Two months unwearied of severest storm,  
It put the temper of our minds to proof,

And found us faithful through the gloom, and heard  
The poet mutter his prelude songs  
With cheerful heart, an unknown voice of joy  
Among the silence of the woods and hills;  
Silent to any gladness of sound  
With all their shepherds.

But the gates of Spring  
Are opened; churlish winter hath given leave  
That she should entertain for this one day,                    190  
Perhaps for many genial days to come,  
His guests, and make them jocund.—They are pleased,  
But most of all the birds that haunt the flood  
With the mild summons; inmates though they be  
Of Winter's household, they keep festival  
This day, who drooped, or seemed to droop, so long;  
They show their pleasure, and shall I do less?  
Happier of happy though I be, like them  
I cannot take possession of the sky,  
Mount with a thoughtless impulse, and wheel there            200  
One of a mighty multitude, whose way  
Is a perpetual harmony and dance  
Magnificent. Behold how with a grace  
Of ceaseless motion, that might scarcely seem  
Inferior to angelical, they prolong  
Their curious pastime, shaping in mid-air,  
And sometimes with ambitious wing that soars  
High as the level of the mountain tops,  
A circuit ampler than the lake beneath,  
Their own domain;—but ever, while intent                    210  
On tracing and retracing that large round,  
Their jubilant activity evolves  
Hundreds of curves and circlets, to and fro,  
Upwards and downwards; progress intricate  
Yet unperplexed, as if one spirit swayed  
Their indefatigable flight. 'Tis done,  
Ten times and more I fancied it had ceased,  
But lo! the vanished company again  
Ascending, they approach. I hear their wings  
Faint, faint at first; and then an eager sound                220  
Passed in a moment—and as faint again!  
They tempt the sun to sport among their plumes;  
Tempt the smooth water, or the gleaming ice,  
To show them a fair image,— 'tis themselves,  
Their own fair forms upon the glimmering plain  
Painted more soft and fair as they descend,  
Almost to touch,—then up again aloft,  
Up with a sally and a flash of speed,

As if they scorned both resting-place and rest!  
 —This day is a thanksgiving, 'tis a day                   230  
 Of glad emotion and deep quietness;  
 Not upon me alone hath been bestowed,  
 Me rich in many onward-looking thoughts,  
 The penetrating bliss; oh surely these  
 Have felt it, not the happy choirs of spring,  
 Her own peculiar family of love  
 That sport among green leaves, a blither train!  
 But two are missing, two, a lonely pair  
 Of milk-white Swans; wherefore are they not seen  
 Partaking this day's pleasure? From afar                   240  
 They came, to sojourn here in solitude,  
 Choosing this Valley, they who had the choice  
 Of the whole world. We saw them day by day,  
 Through those two months of unrelenting storm,  
 Conspicuous at the centre of the Lake  
 Their safe retreat, we knew them well, I guess  
 That the whole valley knew them; but to us  
 They were more dear than may be well believed,  
 Not only for their beauty, and their still  
 And placid way of life, and constant love                   250  
 Inseparable, not for these alone,  
 But that 'their' state so much resembled ours,  
 They having also chosen this abode;  
 They strangers, and we strangers, they a pair,  
 And we a solitary pair like them.  
 They should not have departed; many days  
 Did I look forth in vain, nor on the wing  
 Could see them, nor in that small open space  
 Of blue unfrozen water, where they lodged  
 And lived so long in quiet, side by side.                   260  
 Shall we behold them consecrated friends,  
 Faithful companions, yet another year  
 Surviving, they for us, and we for them,  
 And neither pair be broken? nay perchance  
 It is too late already for such hope;  
 The Dalesmen may have aimed the deadly tube,  
 And parted them; or haply both are gone  
 One death, and that were mercy given to both.  
 Recall, my song, the ungenerous thought; forgive,  
 Thrice favoured Region, the conjecture harsh                   270  
 Of such inhospitable penalty  
 Inflicted upon confidence so pure.  
 Ah! if I wished to follow where the sight  
 Of all that is before my eyes, the voice  
 Which speaks from a presiding spirit here,

Would lead me, I should whisper to myself:  
 They who are dwellers in this holy place  
 Must needs themselves be hallowed, they require  
 No benediction from the stranger's lips,  
 For they are blessed already; none would give           280  
 The greeting "peace be with you" unto them,  
 For peace they have; it cannot but be theirs,  
 And mercy, and forbearance—nay—not these—  
 'Their' healing offices a pure good-will  
 Precludes, and charity beyond the bounds  
 Of charity—an overflowing love;  
 Not for the creature only, but for all  
 That is around them; love for everything  
 Which in their happy Region they behold!  
 Thus do we soothe ourselves, and when the thought       290  
 Is passed, we blame it not for having come.  
 —What if I floated down a pleasant stream,  
 And now am landed, and the motion gone,  
 Shall I reprove myself? Ah no, the stream  
 Is flowing, and will never cease to flow,  
 And I shall float upon that stream again.  
 By such forgetfulness the soul becomes,  
 Words cannot say how beautiful: then hail,  
 Hail to the visible Presence, hail to thee,  
 Delightful Valley, habitation fair!                       300  
 And to whatever else of outward form  
 Can give an inward help, can purify,  
 And elevate, and harmonise, and soothe,  
 And steal away, and for a while deceive  
 And lap in pleasing rest, and bear us on  
 Without desire in full complacency,  
 Contemplating perfection absolute,  
 And entertained as in a placid sleep.  
 But not betrayed by tenderness of mind  
 That feared, or wholly overlooked the truth,           310  
 Did we come hither, with romantic hope  
 To find in midst of so much loveliness  
 Love, perfect love: of so much majesty  
 A like majestic-frame of mind in those  
 Who here abide, the persons like the place.  
 Not from such hope, or aught of such belief,  
 Hath issued any portion of the joy  
 Which I have felt this day. An awful voice  
 'Tis true hath in my walks been often heard,  
 Sent from the mountains or the sheltered fields,       320  
 Shout after shout—reiterated whoop,  
 In manner of a bird that takes delight

In answering to itself: or like a hound  
Single at chase among the lonely woods,  
His yell repeating; yet it was in truth  
A human voice—a spirit of coming night;  
How solemn when the sky is dark, and earth  
Not dark, nor yet enlightened, but by snow  
Made visible, amid a noise of winds  
And bleatings manifold of mountain sheep,           330  
Which in that iteration recognise  
Their summons, and are gathering round for food,  
Devoured with keenness, ere to grove or bank  
Or rocky bield with patience they retire.

That very voice, which, in some timid mood  
Of superstitious fancy, might have seemed  
Awful as ever stray demoniac uttered,  
His steps to govern in the wilderness;  
Or as the Norman Curfew's regular beat  
To hearths when first they darkened at the knell:           340

That shepherd's voice, it may have reached mine ear  
Debased and under profanation, made  
The ready organ of articulate sounds  
From ribaldry, impiety, or wrath,  
Issuing when shame hath ceased to check the brawls  
Of some abused Festivity—so be it.  
I came not dreaming of unruffled life,  
Untainted manners; born among the hills,  
Bred also there, I wanted not a scale  
To regulate my hopes; pleased with the good           350  
I shrink not from the evil with disgust,  
Or with immoderate pain. I look for Man,  
The common creature of the brotherhood,  
Differing but little from the Man elsewhere,  
For selfishness and envy and revenge,  
Ill neighbourhood—pity that this should be—  
Flattery and double-dealing, strife and wrong.

Yet is it something gained, it is in truth  
A mighty gain, that Labour here preserves  
His rosy face, a servant only here           360  
Of the fireside or of the open field,  
A Freeman therefore sound and unimpaired:  
That extreme penury is here unknown,  
And cold and hunger's abject wretchedness  
Mortal to body and the heaven-born mind:  
That they who want are not too great a weight  
For those who can relieve; here may the heart  
Breathe in the air of fellow-suffering  
Dreadless, as in a kind of fresher breeze

Of her own native element, the hand 370  
 Be ready and unwearied without plea,  
 From tasks too frequent or beyond its power,  
 For languor or indifference or despair.  
 And as these lofty barriers break the force  
 Of winds,—this deep Vale, as it doth in part  
 Conceal us from the storm, so here abides  
 A power and a protection for the mind,  
 Dispensed indeed to other solitudes  
 Favoured by noble privilege like this,  
 Where kindred independence of estate 380  
 Is prevalent, where he who tills the field,  
 He, happy man! is master of the field,  
 And treads the mountains which his Fathers trod.  
 Not less than halfway up yon mountain's side,  
 Behold a dusky spot, a grove of Firs  
 That seems still smaller than it is; this grove  
 Is haunted—by what ghost? a gentle spirit  
 Of memory faithful to the call of love;  
 For, as reports the Dame, whose fire sends up  
 Yon curling smoke from the grey cot below, 390  
 The trees (her first-born child being then a babe)  
 Were planted by her husband and herself,  
 That ranging o'er the high and houseless ground  
 Their sheep might neither want from perilous storm  
 Of winter, nor from summer's sultry heat,  
 A friendly covert; "and they knew it well,"  
 Said she, "for thither as the trees grew up  
 We to the patient creatures carried food  
 In times of heavy snow." She then began 400  
 In fond obedience to her private thoughts  
 To speak of her dead husband; is there not  
 An art, a music, and a strain of words  
 That shall be life, the acknowledged voice of life,  
 Shall speak of what is done among the fields,  
 Done truly there, or felt, of solid good  
 And real evil, yet be sweet withal,  
 More grateful, more harmonious than the breath,  
 The idle breath of softest pipe attuned  
 To pastoral fancies? Is there such a stream 410  
 Pure and unsullied flowing from the heart  
 With motions of true dignity and grace?  
 Or must we seek that stream where Man is not?  
 Methinks I could repeat in tuneful verse,  
 Delicious as the gentlest breeze that sounds  
 Through that aerial fir-grove—could preserve  
 Some portion of its human history

As gathered from the Matron's lips, and tell  
 Of tears that have been shed at sight of it,  
 And moving dialogues between this Pair  
 Who in their prime of wedlock, with joint hands 420  
 Did plant the grove, now flourishing, while they  
 No longer flourish, he entirely gone,  
 She withering in her loneliness. Be this  
 A task above my skill—the silent mind  
 Has her own treasures, and I think of these,  
 Love what I see, and honour humankind.  
 No, we are not alone, we do not stand,  
 My sister here misplaced and desolate,  
 Loving what no one cares for but ourselves,  
 We shall not scatter through the plains and rocks 430  
 Of this fair Vale, and o'er its spacious heights,  
 Unprofitable kindness, bestowed  
 On objects unaccustomed to the gifts  
 Of feeling, which were cheerless and forlorn  
 But few weeks past, and would be so again  
 Were we not here; we do not tend a lamp  
 Whose lustre we alone participate,  
 Which shines dependent upon us alone,  
 Mortal though bright, a dying, dying flame.  
 Look where we will, some human hand has been 440  
 Before us with its offering; not a tree  
 Sprinkles these little pastures, but the same  
 Hath furnished matter for a thought; perchance  
 For some one serves as a familiar friend.  
 Joy spreads, and sorrow spreads; and this whole Vale,  
 Home of untutored shepherds as it is,  
 Swarms with sensation, as with gleams of sunshine,  
 Shadows or breezes, scents or sounds. Nor deem  
 These feelings, though subservient more than ours  
 To every day's demand for daily bread, 450  
 And borrowing more their spirit and their shape  
 From self-respecting interests; deem them not  
 Unworthy therefore, and unhallowed—no,  
 They lift the animal being, do themselves  
 By nature's kind and ever-present aid  
 Refine the selfishness from which they spring,  
 Redeem by love the individual sense  
 Of anxiousness, with which they are combined.  
 And thus it is that fitly they become  
 Associates in the joy of purest minds: 460  
 They blend therewith congenially: meanwhile  
 Calmly they breathe their own undying life  
 Through this their mountain sanctuary; long

Oh long may it remain inviolate,  
Diffusing health and sober cheerfulness,  
And giving to the moments as they pass  
Their little boons of animating thought  
That sweeten labour, make it seen and felt  
To be no arbitrary weight imposed,  
But a glad function natural to man. 470

Fair proof of this, newcomer though I be,  
Already have I gained; the inward frame,  
Though slowly opening, opens every day  
With process not unlike to that which cheers  
A pensive stranger journeying at his leisure  
Through some Helvetian Dell; when low-hung mists  
Break up and are beginning to recede;  
How pleased he is where thin and thinner grows  
The veil, or where it parts at once, to spy  
The dark pines thrusting forth their spiky heads; 480  
To watch the spreading lawns with cattle grazed;  
Then to be greeted by the scattered huts  
As they shine out; and 'see' the streams whose murmur  
Had soothed his ear while 'they' were hidden; how pleased  
To have about him which way e'er he goes  
Something on every side concealed from view,  
In every quarter something visible  
Half seen or wholly, lost and found again,  
Alternate progress and impediment,  
And yet a growing prospect in the main. 490

Such pleasure now is mine, albeit forced,  
Herein less happy than the Traveller,  
To cast from time to time a painful look  
Upon unwelcome things which unawares  
Reveal themselves, not therefore is my heart  
Depressed, nor does it fear what is to come;  
But confident, enriched at every glance,  
The more I see the more delight my mind  
Receives, or by reflection can create:  
Truth justifies herself, and as she dwells 500  
With Hope, who would not follow where she leads?

Nor let me pass unheeded other loves  
Where no fear is, and humbler sympathies.  
Already hath sprung up within my heart  
A liking for the small grey horse that bears  
The paralytic man, and for the brute  
In Scripture sanctified—the patient brute  
On which the cripple, in the quarry maimed,  
Rides to and fro: I know them and their ways.  
The famous sheep-dog, first in all the vale, 510

Though yet to me a stranger, will not be  
A stranger long; nor will the blind man's guide,  
Meek and neglected thing, of no renown!  
Soon will peep forth the primrose, ere it fades  
Friends shall I have at dawn, blackbird and thrush  
To rouse me, and a hundred warblers more!  
And if those Eagles to their ancient hold  
Return, Helvellyn's Eagles! with the Pair  
From my own door I shall be free to claim  
Acquaintance, as they sweep from cloud to cloud. 520

The owl that gives the name to Owlet-Crag  
Have I heard whooping, and he soon will be  
A chosen one of my regards. See there  
The heifer in yon little croft belongs  
To one who holds it dear; with duteous care  
She reared it, and in speaking of her charge  
I heard her scatter some endearing words  
Domestic, and in spirit motherly,  
She being herself a mother; happy Beast,  
If the caresses of a human voice 530  
Can make it so, and care of human hands.

And ye as happy under Nature's care,  
Strangers to me and all men, or at least  
Strangers to all particular amity,  
All intercourse of knowledge or of love  
That parts the individual from his kind.  
Whether in large communities ye keep  
From year to year, not shunning man's abode,  
A settled residence, or be from far  
Wild creatures, and of many homes, that come 540

The gift of winds, and whom the winds again  
Take from us at your pleasure; yet shall ye  
Not want for this your own subordinate place  
In my affections. Witness the delight  
With which erewhile I saw that multitude  
Wheel through the sky, and see them now at rest,  
Yet not at rest upon the glassy lake:  
They 'cannot' rest—they gambol like young whelps;  
Active as lambs, and overcome with joy  
They try all frolic motions; flutter, plunge, 550  
And beat the passive water with their wings.  
Too distant are they for plain view, but lo!  
Those little fountains, sparkling in the sun,  
Betray their occupation, rising up  
First one and then another silver spout,  
As one or other takes the fit of glee,  
Fountains and spouts, yet somewhat in the guise

Of plaything fireworks, that on festal nights  
 Sparkle about the feet of wanton boys.  
 —How vast the compass of this theatre, 560  
 Yet nothing to be seen but lovely pomp  
 And silent majesty; the birch-tree woods  
 Are hung with thousand thousand diamond drops  
 Of melted hoar-frost, every tiny knot  
 In the bare twigs, each little budding-place  
 Cased with its several beads; what myriads these  
 Upon one tree, while all the distant grove,  
 That rises to the summit of the steep,  
 Shows like a mountain built of silver light:  
 See yonder the same pageant, and again 570  
 Behold the universal imagery  
 Inverted, all its sun-bright features touched  
 As with the varnish and the gloss of dreams.  
 Dreamlike the blending also of the whole  
 Harmonious landscape: all along the shore  
 The boundary lost—the line invisible  
 That parts the image from reality;  
 And the clear hills, as high as they ascend  
 Heavenward, so deep piercing the lake below.  
 Admonished of the days of love to come 580  
 The raven croaks, and fills the upper air  
 With a strange sound of genial harmony;  
 And in and all about that playful band,  
 Incapable although they be of rest,  
 And in their fashion very rioters,  
 There is a stillness, and they seem to make  
 Calm revelry in that their calm abode.  
 Them leaving to their joyous hours I pass,  
 Pass with a thought the life of the whole year  
 That is to come: the throng of woodland flowers 590  
 And lilies that will dance upon the waves.  
 Say boldly then that solitude is not  
 Where these things are: he truly is alone,  
 He of the multitude whose eyes are doomed  
 To hold a vacant commerce day by day  
 With Objects wanting life—repelling love;  
 He by the vast metropolis immured,  
 Where pity shrinks from unremitting calls,  
 Where numbers overwhelm humanity,  
 And neighbourhood serves rather to divide 600  
 Than to unite—what sighs more deep than his,  
 Whose nobler will hath long been sacrificed;  
 Who must inhabit under a black sky  
 A city, where, if indifference to disgust



And overspread the future years with hope,  
Our beautiful and quiet home, enriched  
Already with a stranger whom we love  
Deeply, a stranger of our Father's house,  
A never-resting Pilgrim of the Sea,  
Who finds at last an hour to his content  
Beneath our roof. And others whom we love  
Will seek us also, Sisters of our hearts,  
And one, like them, a Brother of our hearts,  
Philosopher and Poet, in whose sight 660  
These mountains will rejoice with open joy.  
—Such is our wealth! O Vale of Peace we are  
And must be, with God's will, a happy Band.

Yet 'tis not to enjoy that we exist,  
For that end only; something must be done:  
I must not walk in unreproved delight  
These narrow bounds, and think of nothing more,  
No duty that looks further, and no care.  
Each Being has his office, lowly some  
And common, yet all worthy if fulfilled 670  
With zeal, acknowledgment that with the gift  
Keeps pace a harvest answering to the seed.

Of ill-advised Ambition and of Pride  
I would stand clear, but yet to me I feel  
That an internal brightness is vouchsafed  
That must not die, that must not pass away.  
Why does this inward lustre fondly seek  
And gladly blend with outward fellowship?  
Why do 'they' shine around me whom I love?  
Why do they teach me, whom I thus revere? 680  
Strange question, yet it answers not itself.

That humble Roof embowered among the trees,  
That calm fireside, it is not even in them,  
Blest as they are, to furnish a reply  
That satisfies and ends in perfect rest.  
Possessions have I that are solely mine,  
Something within which yet is shared by none,  
Not even the nearest to me and most dear,  
Something which power and effort may impart;  
I would impart it, I would spread it wide: 690  
Immortal in the world which is to come—  
Forgive me if I add another claim—  
And would not wholly perish even in this,  
Lie down and be forgotten in the dust,  
I and the modest Partners of my days  
Making a silent company in death;  
Love, knowledge, all my manifold delights,

All buried with me without monument  
 Or profit unto any but ourselves!  
 It must not be, if I, divinely taught,                   700  
 Be privileged to speak as I have felt  
 Of what in man is human or divine.  
 While yet an innocent little one, with a heart  
 That doubtless wanted not its tender moods,  
 I breathed (for this I better recollect)  
 Among wild appetites and blind desires,  
 Motions of savage instinct my delight  
 And exaltation. Nothing at that time  
 So welcome, no temptation half so dear  
 As that which urged me to a daring feat,                   710  
 Deep pools, tall trees, black chasms, and dizzy crags,  
 And tottering towers: I loved to stand and read  
 Their looks forbidding, read and disobey,  
 Sometimes in act and evermore in thought.  
 With impulses, that scarcely were by these  
 Surpassed in strength, I heard of danger met  
 Or sought with courage; enterprise forlorn  
 By one, sole keeper of his own intent,  
 Or by a resolute few, who for the sake  
 Of glory fronted multitudes in arms.                   720  
 Yea, to this hour I cannot read a Tale  
 Of two brave vessels matched in deadly fight,  
 And fighting to the death, but I am pleased  
 More than a wise man ought to be; I wish,  
 Fret, burn, and struggle, and in soul am there.  
 But me hath Nature tamed, and bade to seek  
 For other agitations, or be calm;  
 Hath dealt with me as with a turbulent stream,  
 Some nursling of the mountains which she leads  
 Through quiet meadows, after he has learnt                   730  
 His strength, and had his triumph and his joy,  
 His desperate course of tumult and of glee.  
 That which in stealth by Nature was performed  
 Hath Reason sanctioned: her deliberate Voice  
 Hath said; be mild, and cleave to gentle things,  
 Thy glory and thy happiness be there.  
 Nor fear, though thou confide in me, a want  
 Of aspirations that have been—of foes  
 To wrestle with, and victory to complete,  
 Bounds to be leapt, darkness to be explored;                   740  
 All that inflamed thy infant heart, the love,  
 The longing, the contempt, the undaunted quest,  
 All shall survive, though changed their office, all  
 Shall live, it is not in their power to die.

Then farewell to the Warrior's Schemes, farewell  
 The forwardness of soul which looks that way  
 Upon a less incitement than the Cause  
 Of Liberty endangered, and farewell  
 That other hope, long mine, the hope to fill  
 The heroic trumpet with the Muse's breath! 750  
 Yet in this peaceful Vale we will not spend  
 Unheard-of days, though loving peaceful thought,  
 A voice shall speak, and what will be the theme?  
 On Man, on Nature, and on Human Life,  
 Musing in solitude, I oft perceive  
 Fair trains of imagery before me rise,  
 Accompanied by feelings of delight  
 Pure, or with no unpleasing sadness mixed;  
 And I am conscious of affecting thoughts  
 And dear remembrances, whose presence soothes 760  
 Or elevates the Mind, intent to weigh  
 The good and evil of our mortal state.  
 —To these emotions, whencesoe'er they come,  
 Whether from breath of outward circumstance,  
 Or from the Soul—an impulse to herself—  
 I would give utterance in numerous verse.  
 Of Truth, of Grandeur, Beauty, Love, and Hope,  
 And melancholy Fear subdued by Faith;  
 Of blessed consolations in distress;  
 Of moral strength, and intellectual Power; 770  
 Of joy in widest commonalty spread;  
 Of the individual Mind that keeps her own  
 Inviolate retirement, subject there  
 To Conscience only, and the law supreme  
 Of that Intelligence which governs all—  
 I sing:— “fit audience let me find though few!”  
 So prayed, more gaining than he asked, the Bard—  
 In holiest mood. Urania, I shall need  
 Thy guidance, or a greater Muse, if such  
 Descend to earth or dwell in highest heaven! 780  
 For I must tread on shadowy ground, must sink  
 Deep—and, aloft ascending, breathe in worlds  
 To which the heaven of heavens is but a veil.  
 All strength—all terror, single or in bands,  
 That ever was put forth in personal form—  
 Jehovah—with his thunder, and the choir  
 Of shouting Angels, and the empyreal thrones—  
 I pass them unalarmed. Not Chaos, not  
 The darkest pit of lowest Erebus,  
 Nor aught of blinder vacancy, scooped out 790  
 By help of dreams—can breed such fear and awe

As fall upon us often when we look  
 Into our Minds, into the Mind of Man—  
 My haunt, and the main region of my song  
 —Beauty—a living Presence of the earth,  
 Surpassing the most fair ideal Forms  
 Which craft of delicate Spirits hath composed  
 From earth's materials—waits upon my steps;  
 Pitches her tents before me as I move,  
 An hourly neighbour. Paradise, and groves                   800  
 Elysian, Fortunate Fields—like those of old  
 Sought in the Atlantic Main—why should they be  
 A history only of departed things,  
 Or a mere fiction of what never was?  
 For the discerning intellect of Man,  
 When wedded to this goodly universe  
 In love and holy passion, shall find these  
 A simple produce of the common day.  
 —I, long before the blissful hour arrives,  
 Would chant, in lonely peace, the spousal verse                   810  
 Of this great consummation:—and, by words  
 Which speak of nothing more than what we are,  
 Would I arouse the sensual from their sleep  
 Of Death, and win the vacant and the vain  
 To noble raptures; while my voice proclaims  
 How exquisitely the individual Mind  
 (And the progressive powers perhaps no less  
 Of the whole species) to the external World  
 Is fitted:—and how exquisitely, too—  
 Theme this but little heard of among men—                   820  
 The external World is fitted to the Mind;  
 And the creation (by no lower name  
 Can it be called) which they with blended might  
 Accomplish:—this is our high argument.  
 —Such grateful haunts foregoing, if I oft  
 Must turn elsewhere—to travel near the tribes  
 And fellowships of men, and see ill sights  
 Of madding passions mutually inflamed;  
 Must hear Humanity in fields and groves  
 Pipe solitary anguish; or must hang                   830  
 Brooding above the fierce confederate storm  
 Of sorrow, barricadoed evermore  
 Within the walls of cities—may these sounds  
 Have their authentic comment; that even these  
 Hearing, I be not downcast or forlorn!—  
Descend, prophetic Spirit! that inspir'st  
 The human Soul of universal earth,  
 Dreaming on things to come; and dost possess

A metropolitan temple in the hearts  
Of mighty Poets; upon me bestow 840  
A gift of genuine insight; that my Song  
With star-like virtue in its place may shine,  
Shedding benignant influence, and secure  
Itself from all malevolent effect  
Of those mutations that extend their sway  
Throughout the nether sphere!—And if with this  
I mix more lowly matter; with the thing  
Contemplated, describe the Mind and Man  
Contemplating; and who, and what he was—  
The transitory Being that beheld 850  
This Vision;—when and where, and how he lived;  
Be not this labour useless. If such theme  
May sort with highest objects, then—dread Power!  
Whose gracious favour is the primal source  
Of all illumination—may my Life  
Express the image of a better time,  
More wise desires, and simpler manners;—nurse  
My Heart in genuine freedom:—all pure thoughts  
Be with me;—so shall thy unfailing love  
Guide, and support, and cheer me to the end! 860