

The Recluse – Part First William Wordsworth

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 prelusive songs
With cheerful heart, an unknown voice of joy
Among the silence of the woods and hills;
Silent to any gladsomeness 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,

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
 Pure and unsullied flowing from the heart 410
 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
 Yield not to scorn or sorrow, living men
 Are oftentimes to their fellow-men no more
 Than to the forest Hermit are the leaves
 That hang aloft in myriads; nay, far less,
 For they protect his walk from sun and shower,
 Swell his devotion with their voice in storms, 610
 And whisper while the stars twinkle among them
 His lullaby. From crowded streets remote,
 Far from the living and dead Wilderness
 Of the thronged world, Society is here
 A true community--a genuine frame
 Of many into one incorporate.
 'That' must be looked for here: paternal sway,
 One household, under God, for high and low,
 One family and one mansion; to themselves
 Appropriate, and divided from the world, 620
 As if it were a cave, a multitude
 Human and brute, possessors undisturbed
 Of this Recess--their legislative Hall,
 Their Temple, and their glorious Dwelling-place.
 Dismissing therefore all Arcadian dreams,
 All golden fancies of the golden age,
 The bright array of shadowy thoughts from times
 That were before all time, or are to be
 Ere time expire, the pageantry that stirs
 Or will be stirring, when our eyes are fixed 630
 On lovely objects, and we wish to part
 With all remembrance of a jarring world,
 --Take we at once this one sufficient hope,
 What need of more? that we shall neither droop
 Nor pine for want of pleasure in the life
 Scattered about us, nor through want of aught
 That keeps in health the insatiable mind.

--That we shall have for knowledge and for love
Abundance, and that feeling as we do
How goodly, how exceeding fair, how pure 640
From all reproach is yon ethereal vault,
And this deep Vale, its earthly counterpart,
By which and under which we are enclosed
To breathe in peace; we shall moreover find
(If sound, and what we ought to be ourselves,
If rightly we observe and justly weigh)
The inmates not unworthy of their home,
The Dwellers of their Dwelling.

And if this
Were otherwise, we have within ourselves
Enough to fill the present day with joy, 650
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, 740
 Bounds to be leapt, darkness to be explored;
 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 750
 The heroic trumpet with the Muse's breath!
 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