Book Eleventh

Imagination, How Impaired and Restored

Long time hath man's unhappiness and guilt
Detained us: with what dismal sights beset
For the outward view, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgement, zeal decayed—
And lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for. Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.[1]
Ye motions of delight, that through the fields
Stir gently, breezes and soft airs that breathe
The breath of paradise, and find your way
To the recesses of the soul; ye brooks
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet one in silent night;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, betwixt the heart of man
And the uneasy world—'twixt man himself,
Not seldom, and his own unquiet heart—
Oh, that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth man's perverseness; spring returns—
I saw the spring return, when I was dead
To deeper hope, yet had I joy for her
And welcomed her benevolence, rejoiced
In common with the children of her love,
Plants, insects, beasts in field, and birds in bower.
So neither were complacency, nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through those distracted times:[3] in Nature still

1. An allusion, which Coleridge would enjoy, to *The Idiot Boy*, 445–56, "And with the owls began my song, / And with the owls must end."

3. Wordsworth is referring to spring 1796, and the period of moral crisis described at the end of Book X; see *1805*, X, 904*n*, above.

Book Twelfth

Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored

Long time have human ignorance and guilt
Detained us, on what spectacles of woe
Compelled to look, and inwardly oppressed
With sorrow, disappointment, vexing thoughts,
Confusion of the judgment, zeal decayed,
And, lastly, utter loss of hope itself
And things to hope for! Not with these began
Our song, and not with these our song must end.[1]—
Ye motions of delight, that haunt the sides
Of the green hills; ye breezes and soft airs,
Whose subtle intercourse with breathing flowers,
Feelingly watched, might teach Man's haughty race
How without injury to take, to give
Without offence; ye who, as if to show
The wondrous influence of power gently used,
Bend the complying heads of lordly pines,
And, with a touch, shift the stupendous clouds
Through the whole compass of the sky; ye brooks,
Muttering along the stones, a busy noise
By day, a quiet sound in silent night;
Ye waves, that out of the great deep steal forth
In a calm hour to kiss the pebbly shore,
Not mute, and then retire, fearing no storm;
And you, ye groves, whose ministry it is
To interpose the covert of your shades,
Even as a sleep, between the heart of man
And outward troubles, between man himself,
Not seldom, and his own uneasy heart:
Oh! that I had a music and a voice
Harmonious as your own, that I might tell
What ye have done for me. The morning shines,
Nor heedeth Man's perverseness; Spring returns,—
I saw the Spring return, and could rejoice,
In common with the children of her love,
Piping on boughs, or sporting on fresh fields,
Or boldly seeking pleasure nearer heaven
On wings that navigate cerulean skies.
So neither were complacency,[2] nor peace,
Nor tender yearnings, wanting for my good
Through these distracted times;[3] in Nature still

2. Contentedness, satisfaction—as at *1850*, VIII, 75, above.

Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil was at height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.
Her I resorted to, and loved so much
I seemed to love as much as heretofore—
And yet this passion, fervent as it was,
Had suffered change; how could there fail to be
Some change, if merely hence, that years of life
Were going on, and with them loss or gain
Inevitable, sure alternative?

This history, my friend, hath chiefly told
[45] Of intellectual[5] power from stage to stage
Advancing hand in hand with love and joy,
And of imagination teaching truth
[50] Until that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to over-pressure of the times
And their disastrous issues. What availed,
When spells forbade the voyager to land,[7]
The fragrance which did ever and anon
[55] Give notice of the shore, from arbours breathed
Of blessèd sentiment and fearless love?
What did such sweet remembrances avail—
Perfidious then, as seemed—what served they then?
My business was upon the barren seas,
My errand was to sail to other coasts.[8]
Shall I avow that I had hope to see
(I mean that future times would surely see)
The man to come parted as by a gulph
[60] From him who had been?—that I could no more
Trust the elevation which had made me one
With the great family that here and there
Is scattered through the abyss of ages past,
Sage, patriot, lover, hero; for it seemed
[65] That their best virtues were not free from taint
Of something false and weak, which could not stand
The open eye of reason. Then I said,
'Go to the poets, they will speak to thee
More perfectly of purer creatures—yet

5. Spiritual—as at *1805*, 168 below, and elsewhere.
7. See *1805*, 67*n*, below.
8. The image of lines 48–56 is drawn from *Paradise Lost*, IV, 156–65, where the scents of Eden are compared to those blowing "from the spicy shore / Of Arabie the blest" to mariners who pass.
9. The arbors of "blessèd sentiment and fearless love" (lines 51–52) from which the poet cut himself off because they seemed perfidious, must be interpreted by reference to lines 57–67. The barren seas he sailed were those of Godwinian rationalism; he was tempted to think himself connected by emotion and love to the "great family" of man (line 62), but sailed on as if bound by a spell (line 49) because man's future behavior was to be so different that even that which seemed best in the past, and the present, was not to be trusted (seemed "perfidious," line 54).

Glorying, I found a counterpoise in her,
Which, when the spirit of evil reached its height,
Maintained for me a secret happiness.[4]

This narrative, my Friend! hath chiefly told
Of intellectual[5] power, fostering love,
Dispensing truth, and, over men and things,
Where reason yet might hesitate, diffusing
Prophetic sympathies of genial faith:
So was I favoured—such my happy lot[6]—
Until that natural graciousness of mind
Gave way to overpressure from the times
And their disastrous issues. What availed,
When spells forbade the voyager to land,[7]
That fragrant notice of a pleasant shore
Wafted, at intervals, from many a bower
Of blissful gratitude and fearless love?
Dare I avow that wish was mine to see,
And hope that future times *would* surely see,
The man to come, parted, as by a gulph,
From him who had been; that I could no more
Trust the elevation which had made me one
With the great family that still survives
To illuminate the abyss of ages past,
Sage, warrior, patriot, hero; for it seemed
That their best virtues were not free from taint
Of something false and weak, that could not stand
The open eye of Reason. Then I said,
'Go to the Poets; they will speak to thee
More perfectly of purer creatures;—yet

4. The final text of lines 1–43 is the result of many independent revisions, beginning in 1816/19, when the striking poetry of *1805*, 23–28 is reduced to *1850*, 31–34, and *1805*, 35–36 are cut.
6. Lines 45–49 are incorporated in Wordsworth's final revisions, in or after 1839.

[70] If reason be nobility in man,
Can aught be more ignoble than the man
Whom they describe, would fasten if they may
Upon our love by sympathies of truth?'

[76] Thus strangely did I war against myself;
A bigot to a new idolatry,
Did like a monk who hath forsworn the world
Zealously labour to cut off my heart
[80] From all the sources of her former strength;
And, as by simple waving of a wand,
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so did I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
(Some charm of logic, ever within reach)
[85] Those mysteries of passion which have made,
And shall continue evermore to make—
In spite of all that reason hath performed,
And shall perform, to exalt and to refine—
One brotherhood of all the human race,[1]
Through all the habitations of past years,
And those to come: and hence an emptiness
Fell on the historian's page, and even on that
Of poets, pregnant with more absolute truth.
The works of both withered in my esteem,
Their sentence was, I thought, pronounced—their rights
Seemed mortal, and their empire passed away.

What then remained in such eclipse, what light
To guide or chear? The laws of things which lie
Beyond the reach of human will or power,
The life of Nature, by the God of love
Inspired—celestial presence ever pure—
These left, the soul of youth must needs be rich
Whatever else be lost; and these were mine,
Not a deaf echo merely of the thought
(Bewildered recollections, solitary),
But living sounds. Yet in despite of this—
This feeling, which howe'er impaired or damped,
Yet having been once born can never die—
'Tis true that earth with all her appanage[3]
Of elements and organs, storm and sunshine,
With its pure forms and colours, pomp of clouds,

1. Wordsworth has in mind the wizardry of Prospero in *The Tempest*, IV, i, 148–56, as he evokes the power of rationalist language to "unsoul" the mysteries of passion.
3. Endowment.

If reason be nobility in man,
Can aught be more ignoble than the man
Whom they delight in, blinded as he is
By prejudice, the miserable slave
Of low ambition or distempered love?'

In such strange passion, if I may once more
Review the past, I warred against myself—
A bigot to a new idolatry—
Like a cowled monk who hath forsworn the world,
Zealously laboured to cut off my heart
From all the sources of her former strength;
And as, by simple waving of a wand,
The wizard instantaneously dissolves
Palace or grove, even so could I unsoul
As readily by syllogistic words
Those mysteries of being which have made,
And shall continue evermore to make,
Of the whole human race one brotherhood.[1]

What wonder, then, if, to a mind so far
Perverted, even the visible Universe
Fell under the dominion of a taste
Less spiritual, with microscopic view
Was scanned, as I had scanned the moral world?[2]

2. Wordsworth's final text of lines 44–92 is not reached until the corrections of *MS. E* in 1839 or later, but dissatisfaction with *1805*, 42–137 shows itself as early as ca. January 1807. There is extensive revision in 1816/19, and again in 1832, this time with an attempt to substitute a version of *1850*, XI, 333–52 for *1805*, 102–37.

Rivers, and mountains, objects among which
It might be thought that no dislike or blame,
No sense of weakness or infirmity
Or aught amiss, could possibly have come,
Yea, even the visible universe was scanned
With something of a kindred spirit,[4] fell
[90] Beneath the domination of a taste
Less elevated, which did in my mind
With its more noble influence interfere,
Its animation and its deeper sway.

There comes (if need be now to speak of this
After such long detail of our mistakes),
There comes a time when reason—not the grand
And simple reason, but that humbler power
Which carries on its no inglorious work
By logic and minute analysis—
Is of all idols that which pleases most
The growing mind.[5] A trifler would he be
Who on the obvious benefits should dwell
That rise out of this process; but to speak
Of all the narrow estimates of things
Which hence originate were a worthy theme
For philosophic verse. Suffice it here
To hint that danger cannot but attend
Upon a function rather proud to be
The enemy of falsehood, than the friend
Of truth—to sit in judgement than to feel.

Oh soul of Nature, excellent and fair,
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I too
[95] Rejoiced, through early youth, before the winds
And powerful waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, now all eye
[100] And now all ear, but ever with the heart
Employed, and the majestic intellect!
O soul of Nature, that dost overflow
With passion and with life, what feeble men
[105] Walk on this earth, how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,

4. I.e., kindred to the spirit described in lines 74–90.

5. The last two-thirds of Book XI—lines 123–388—must coincide almost exactly with the final part of Book V of the five-Book *Prelude*. For the passage used by Wordsworth to link the opening section of his original Book V—corresponding broadly to XIII, 1–165—into the materials now in XI, see MS. Drafts and Fragments, 3(b), below.

O Soul of Nature! excellent and fair!
That didst rejoice with me, with whom I, too,
Rejoiced through early youth, before the winds
And roaring waters, and in lights and shades
That marched and countermarched about the hills
In glorious apparition, Powers on whom
I daily waited, now all eye and now
All ear; but never long without the heart
Employed, and man's unfolding intellect:
O Soul of Nature! that, by laws divine
Sustained and governed, still dost overflow
With an impassioned life, what feeble ones
Walk on this earth! how feeble have I been
When thou wert in thy strength! Nor this through stroke
Of human suffering, such as justifies
Remissness and inaptitude of mind,

But through presumption,[6] even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there
Liking, by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art. But more—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion, to the moods
Of Nature, and the spirit of the place,
Less sensible.[7] Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature,
Sensuous and intellectual as he is,
A twofold frame of body and of mind:
The state to which I now allude was one
In which the eye was master of the heart,
When that which is in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses gained
Such strength in me as often held my mind
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Would I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of liberty and power.
But this is matter for another song;[8]
Here only let me add that my delights,
Such as they were, were sought insatiably.
Though 'twas a transport of the outward sense,
Not of the mind—vivid but not profound—
Yet was I often greedy in the chace,
And roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,

6. Arrogance, presumptuousness (Johnson's *Dictionary*).
7. Wordsworth moves on in *1805*, 138–63 (*1850*, 83–121) from his preceding discussion of reason as an idol to consider a different but equally destructive, and equally fashionable, form of sitting in judgment. He had not himself subscribed to the cult of the picturesque as defined by William Gilpin—"liking, by rules of mimic art transferred" to Nature (*1805*, 149–57; *1850*, 106–114) but had nevertheless indulged too much in aesthetic comparisons of landscape, and pleasure in transient effects.
"Sensible" (*1805*, 163): responsive; "insensible" (*1850*, 121): unresponsive.
8. Another reference to the prospective but never written philosophical section of *The Recluse*; not removed until Wordsworth's final revision, in 1839 or later.

But through presumption;[6] even in pleasure pleased
Unworthily, disliking here, and there
Liking, by rules of mimic art transferred
To things above all art; but more,—for this,
Although a strong infection of the age,
Was never much my habit—giving way
To a comparison of scene with scene,
Bent overmuch on superficial things,
Pampering myself with meagre novelties
Of colour and proportion; to the moods
Of time and season, to the moral power,
The affections and the spirit of the place,
Insensible.[7] Nor only did the love
Of sitting thus in judgment interrupt
My deeper feelings, but another cause,
More subtle and less easily explained,
That almost seems inherent in the creature,
A twofold frame of body and of mind.
I speak in recollection of a time
When the bodily eye, in every stage of life
The most despotic of our senses, gained
Such strength in *me* as often held my mind
In absolute dominion. Gladly here,
Entering upon abstruser argument,
Could I endeavour to unfold the means
Which Nature studiously employs to thwart
This tyranny, summons all the senses each
To counteract the other, and themselves,
And makes them all, and the objects with which all
Are conversant, subservient in their turn
To the great ends of Liberty and Power.
But leave we this: enough that my delights
(Such as they were) were sought insatiably.
Vivid the transport, vivid though not profound;
I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,

Still craving combinations of new forms,[9]
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of its own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.

Amid the turns and counter-turns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun; and yet I knew a maid,
Who, young as I was then, conversed with things
In higher style.[1] From appetites like these
She, gentle visitant, as well she might,
Was wholly free. Far less did critic rules
Or barren intermeddling subtleties
Perplex her mind,[2] but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance[3] hath favored them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more.
Whatever scene was present to her eyes,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
Through her humility and lowliness,
And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
For she was Nature's inmate:[4] her the birds,
And every flower she met with, could they but
Have known her, would have loved. Methought such charm
Of sweetness did her presence breathe around
That all the trees, and all the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being, for her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is blessedness.[5]

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills

9. For this phase of Wordsworth's development, compare *Tintern Abbey*, 68–71, "when like a roe / I bounded o'er the mountains"; and for a clearly deliberate verbal echo, see *To the Daisy* ("In youth from rock to rock"), 1–2.
1. Mary Hutchinson, whom Wordsworth married on October 4, 1802, but whom he had known since childhood (see *1805*, VI, 236*n*, above). "Young as I was then" (*1805*, 199) is an adjectival clause referring to Mary: she was as young as he was. The clause is emended in one of Wordsworth's earliest revisions, ca. January 1807.
2. Wordsworth is again alluding to one of his own earlier poems, *Tables Turned*, 26–28, "Our meddling intellect / Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things— / We murder to dissect."
3. Good fortune.
4. She lived as a companion with Nature.
5. Mary is presented here—as her sister Sara had been two years before in the first version of Coleridge's *Dejection* (April 1802)—as an emblem of innocence. Like Sara, the "conjugal and mother dove" of Coleridge's poem, she is capable of unquestioning responsiveness, the outgoing joy that both poets chiefly value, and that both at times feel themselves to have lost.

Still craving combinations of new forms,[9]
New pleasure, wider empire for the sight,
Proud of her own endowments, and rejoiced
To lay the inner faculties asleep.
Amid the turns and counterturns, the strife
And various trials of our complex being,
As we grow up, such thraldom of that sense
Seems hard to shun. And yet I knew a maid,
A young enthusiast, who escaped these bonds;[1]
Her eye was not the mistress of her heart;
Far less did rules prescribed by passive taste,
Or barren intermeddling subtleties,
Perplex her mind;[2] but, wise as women are
When genial circumstance[3] hath favoured them,
She welcomed what was given, and craved no more;
Whate'er the scene presented to her view,
That was the best, to that she was attuned
By her benign simplicity of life,
And through a perfect happiness of soul,
Whose variegated feelings were in this
Sisters, that they were each some new delight.
Birds in the bower, and lambs in the green field,
Could they have known her, would have loved; methought
Her very presence such a sweetness breathed,
That flowers, and trees, and even the silent hills,
And every thing she looked on, should have had
An intimation how she bore herself
Towards them and to all creatures. God delights
In such a being; for her common thoughts
Are piety, her life is gratitude.[5]

Even like this maid, before I was called forth
From the retirement of my native hills,

I loved whate'er I saw, nor lightly loved,
But fervently—did never dream of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed,
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
I worshipped then among the depths of things
As my soul bade me; could I then take part
In aught but admiration, or be pleased
With any thing but humbleness and love?
I felt, and nothing else; I did not judge,
I never thought of judging, with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied—
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart.[7]
In truth, this degradation[8]—howsoe'er
Induced, effect in whatsoe'er degree
Of custom that prepares such wantonness
As makes the greatest things give way to least,
Or any other cause that hath been named,
Or, lastly, aggravated by the times,
Which with their passionate sounds might often make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible—was transient. I had felt
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as I stand now,
A sensitive, and a *creative* soul.[9]
There are in our existence spots of time,[1]
Which with distinct preeminence retain
A renovating[2] virtue, whence, depressed

7. At the age of twenty, in summer 1790; see *1805*, VI, 428 ff., above.
8. I.e., the decline in responsiveness recorded in *1805*, 152–98 (*1850*, 109–51).
9. The original text of lines 242–56 (as composed for the five-Book *Prelude* in *MS. W*, March 1804) is briefer, and so muted as almost to suggest that Wordsworth had never been subject to the "malady" he describes: "In truth this malady of which I speak / Though aided by the times, whose deeper sound / Without my knowledge sometimes might perchance / Make rural Nature's milder minstrelsies / Inaudible, did never take in me / Deep root, or larger action. I had received / Impressions far too early, and too strong, / For this to last: I threw the habit off / Entirely and for ever, and again / In Nature's presence stood, as I do now, / A meditative and creative soul."
1. The original "spots of time" sequence (corresponding broadly to *1805*, 257–315, 342–88) was written ca. January 1799, and appears as *1799*, I, 288–374.
2. Wordsworth's third attempt at this highly important adjective, and certainly the neatest, though less striking in its implications than either "fructifying" (*1799*) or "vivifying" (the intermediate stage, printed in de Selincourt's text of *1805*, but in fact corrected very early to "renovating" in both faircopies).

I loved whate'er I saw: nor lightly loved,
But most intensely; never dreamt of aught
More grand, more fair, more exquisitely framed
Than those few nooks to which my happy feet
Were limited. I had not at that time
Lived long enough, nor in the least survived
The first diviner influence of this world,
As it appears to unaccustomed eyes.
Worshipping then among the depth of things,
As piety ordained;[6] could I submit
To measured admiration, or to aught
That should preclude humility and love?
I felt, observed, and pondered; did not judge,
Yea, never thought of judging; with the gift
Of all this glory filled and satisfied.
And afterwards, when through the gorgeous Alps
Roaming, I carried with me the same heart:[7]
In truth, the degradation[8]—howsoe'er
Induced, effect, in whatsoe'er degree,
Of custom that prepares a partial scale
In which the little oft outweighs the great;
Or any other cause that hath been named;
Or lastly, aggravated by the times
And their impassioned sounds, which well might make
The milder minstrelsies of rural scenes
Inaudible—was transient; I had known
Too forcibly, too early in my life,
Visitings of imaginative power
For this to last: I shook the habit off
Entirely and for ever, and again
In Nature's presence stood, as now I stand,
A sensitive being, a *creative* soul.

There are in our existence spots of time,[1]
That with distinct pre-eminence retain
A renovating virtue, whence, depressed

6. A small but significant emendation of 1816/19.

By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight
In trivial occupations and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired—
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life in which
We have had deepest feeling that the mind
Is lord and master, and that outward sense
Is but the obedient servant of her will.
Such moments, worthy of all gratitude,
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood—in our childhood even
Perhaps are most conspicuous. Life with me,
As far as memory can look back, is full
Of this beneficent influence.[3]
At a time
When scarcely (I was then not six years old)
My hand could hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we rode towards the hills:
We were a pair of horsemen—honest James
Was with me, my encourager and guide.[4]
We had not travelled long ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade, and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom[5] where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast was mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone, but on the turf
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,
Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.
The monumental writing was engraven
In times long past, and still from year to year
By superstition of the neighbourhood
The grass is cleared away; and to this hour
The letters are all fresh and visible.
Faltering, and ignorant where I was, at length
I chanced to espy those characters inscribed

3. Lines 257–78 should be compared with Wordsworth's much briefer original statement, *1799*, I, 288–96. The important new element in *1805* is the emphasis on mind as "lord and master" (line 271).

4. Wordsworth, probably aged five, was staying with his grandparents at Penrith. "Honest James" was presumably their servant.

5. Valley bottom.

By false opinion and contentious thought,
Or aught of heavier or more deadly weight,
In trivial occupations, and the round
Of ordinary intercourse, our minds
Are nourished and invisibly repaired;
A virtue, by which pleasure is enhanced,
That penetrates, enables us to mount,
When high, more high, and lifts us up when fallen.
This efficacious spirit chiefly lurks
Among those passages of life that give
Profoundest knowledge to what point, and how,
The mind is lord and master—outward sense
The obedient servant of her will. Such moments
Are scattered everywhere, taking their date
From our first childhood. I remember well,
That once, while yet my inexperienced hand
Could scarcely hold a bridle, with proud hopes
I mounted, and we journeyed towards the hills:
An ancient servant of my father's house
Was with me, my encourager and guide:[4]
We had not travelled long, ere some mischance
Disjoined me from my comrade; and, through fear
Dismounting, down the rough and stony moor
I led my horse, and, stumbling on, at length
Came to a bottom,[5] where in former times
A murderer had been hung in iron chains.
The gibbet-mast had mouldered down, the bones
And iron case were gone; but on the turf,
Hard by, soon after that fell deed was wrought,

On the green sod:[6] forthwith I left the spot,
And, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on the summit,[7] and more near,
A girl who bore a pitcher on her head
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight, but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Did at that time invest the naked pool,
The beacon on the lonely eminence,
The woman, and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in blessèd season,
With those two dear ones[8]—to my heart so dear—
When, in the blessèd time of early love,
Long afterwards I roamed about
In daily presence of this very scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon, fell
The spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam—
And think ye not with radiance more divine
From these remembrances, and from the power
They left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong,

Oh mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours! I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands—but this I feel,
That from thyself it is that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Come back upon me from the dawn almost
Of life; the hiding-places of my power
Seem open, I approach, and then they close;
I see by glimpses now, when age comes on
May scarcely see at all; and I would give

6. Wordsworth is conflating two separate murder stories, one belonging to Hawkshead, the other to Penrith; see *1799*, I, 310*n*, above. According to the anonymous *History of Penrith* (1858), the letters cut in the turf—an 1804 addition to the *Prelude* account—were "TPM," signifying "Thomas Parker Murdered." The interpretation is not very convincing, but Wordsworth's statement that the letters recorded the name of the murderer (Thomas Nicholson) is suspect too, as there is no particular reason to suppose he ever saw them.

7. The impressive stone signal-beacon, built in 1719 on the hill (737 feet) above Penrith. Nicholson was hanged a mile or so to the east, near the Edenhall road.

8. Wordsworth's companions in summer 1787 had been his future wife, Mary Hutchinson, and Dorothy; see *1805*, VI, 236*n*, above. Dorothy's presence is no longer mentioned in the *1850* text.

Some unknown hand had carved the murderer's name.[6]
The monumental letters were inscribed
In times long past; but still, from year to year,
By superstition of the neighbourhood,
The grass is cleared away, and to that hour
The characters were fresh and visible:
A casual glance had shown them, and I fled,
Faltering and faint, and ignorant of the road:
Then, reascending the bare common, saw
A naked pool that lay beneath the hills,
The beacon on its summit,[7] and, more near,
A girl, who bore a pitcher on her head,
And seemed with difficult steps to force her way
Against the blowing wind. It was, in truth,
An ordinary sight; but I should need
Colours and words that are unknown to man,
To paint the visionary dreariness
Which, while I looked all round for my lost guide,
Invested moorland waste, and naked pool,
The beacon crowning the lone eminence,
The female and her garments vexed and tossed
By the strong wind. When, in the blessed hours
Of early love, the loved one at my side,[8]
I roamed, in daily presence of this scene,
Upon the naked pool and dreary crags,
And on the melancholy beacon fell
A spirit of pleasure and youth's golden gleam;
And think ye not with radiance more sublime
For these remembrances, and for the power
They had left behind? So feeling comes in aid
Of feeling, and diversity of strength
Attends us, if but once we have been strong.
Oh! mystery of man, from what a depth
Proceed thy honours. I am lost, but see
In simple childhood something of the base
On which thy greatness stands; but this I feel,
That from thy self it comes, that thou must give,
Else never canst receive. The days gone by
Return upon me almost from the dawn
Of life: the hiding-places of man's power
Open; I would approach them, but they close.
I see by glimpses now; when age comes on,
May scarcely see at all; and I would give,

While yet we may, as far as words can give,
A substance and a life to what I feel:
I would enshrine the spirit of the past
For future restoration. Yet another
Of these to me affecting incidents,
With which we will conclude.[9]

One Christmas-time,
The day before the holidays began,
Feverish, and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those two horses which should bear us home,
My brothers and myself.[1] There was a crag,
An eminence, which from the meeting-point
Of two highways ascending overlooked
At least a long half-mile of those two roads,
By each of which the expected steeds might come—
The choice uncertain.[2] Thither I repaired
Up to the highest summit. 'Twas a day
Stormy, and rough, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half sheltered by a naked wall.
Upon my right hand was a single sheep,
A whistling hawthorn on my left, and there,
With those companions at my side, I watched,
Straining my eyes intensely as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the wood
And plain beneath. Ere I to school returned
That dreary time, ere I had been ten days
A dweller in my father's house, he died,
And I and my two brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave.[3] The event,
With all the sorrow which it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope,
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low

9. Lines 315–44 were written in early March 1804, just after the completion of the *Intimations Ode* and composition of the *Ode to Duty*; for their original context and different conclusion, see Composition and Texts: *1805/1850*, Introduction, below.
1. The date was almost certainly December 19, 1783; Wordsworth was thirteen. Two of his three brothers, Richard (born 1768) and John (born 1772), were also at Hawkshead Grammar School at this time. The horses of *1805*, 348, turn into the literary "palfreys" of *1850*, 291 as early as the 1816/19 revisions of *A*; the emendation "couched" for "was" in line 358 belongs to the same time, as does the recasting of line 359.
2. Wordsworth was waiting on the ridge north of Borwick Lodge, a mile and a half from the school.
3. John Wordsworth, Sr., died on December 30, 1783; Wordsworth's mother had died five years before. The *1805* reading "two brothers" is correct, as against *1850* "three." Richard and John Wordsworth were present (*MY*, I, p. 185).

While yet we may, as far as words can give,
Substance and life to what I feel, enshrining,
Such is my hope, the spirit of the Past
For future restoration.—Yet another
Of these memorials:—

One Christmas-time,
On the glad eve of its dear holidays,
Feverish and tired, and restless, I went forth
Into the fields, impatient for the sight
Of those led palfreys that should bear us home;
My brothers and myself.[1] There rose a crag,
That, from the meeting-point of two highways
Ascending, overlooked them both, far stretched;[2]
Thither, uncertain on which road to fix
My expectation, thither I repaired,
Scout-like, and gained the summit; 'twas a day
Tempestuous, dark, and wild, and on the grass
I sate half-sheltered by a naked wall;
Upon my right hand couched a single sheep,
Upon my left a blasted hawthorn stood;
With those companions at my side, I sate
Straining my eyes intensely, as the mist
Gave intermitting prospect of the copse
And plain beneath. Ere we to school returned,—
That dreary time,—ere we had been ten days
Sojourners in my father's house, he died,
And I and my three brothers, orphans then,
Followed his body to the grave.[3] The event,
With all the sorrow that it brought, appeared
A chastisement; and when I called to mind
That day so lately past, when from the crag
I looked in such anxiety of hope;
With trite reflections of morality,
Yet in the deepest passion, I bowed low

To God who thus corrected my desires.
And afterwards the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business[4] of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
[320] And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
Which on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes[5]—
All these were spectacles and sounds to which
[325] I often would repair, and thence would drink
As at a fountain. And I do not doubt
That in this later time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof at midnight, or by day
When I am in the woods, unknown to me
[331–32] The workings of my spirit thence are brought.

Thou wilt not languish here, O friend, for whom
I travel in these dim uncertain ways—
Thou wilt assist me, as a pilgrim gone
In quest of highest truth. Behold me then
Once more in Nature's presence, thus restored,
Or otherwise,[7] and strengthened once again
(With memory left of what had been escaped)
To habits of devoutest sympathy.

4. I.e., busy-ness, activity.
5. Scansion: Indíspūtáblĕ shápes."
7. I.e., "restored in this, or in other ways."

To God, Who thus corrected my desires;
And, afterwards, the wind and sleety rain,
And all the business[4] of the elements,
The single sheep, and the one blasted tree,
And the bleak music of that old stone wall,
The noise of wood and water, and the mist
That on the line of each of those two roads
Advanced in such indisputable shapes;[5]
All these were kindred spectacles and sounds
To which I oft repaired, and thence would drink,
As at a fountain; and on winter nights,
Down to this very time, when storm and rain
Beat on my roof, or, haply, at noon-day,
While in a grove I walk, whose lofty trees,
Laden with summer's thickest foliage, rock
In a strong wind, some working of the spirit,
Some inward agitations thence are brought,
Whate'er their office, whether to beguile
Thoughts over busy in the course they took,
Or animate an hour of vacant ease.[6]

6. Wordsworth's first expansion of *1805*, 386–88, belongs to 1832, and this final text to 1839 or later.

Book Twelfth

Same Subject (Continued)

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory—these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength;
This twofold influence is the sun and shower
Of all her bounties, both in origin
And end alike benignant.[1] Hence it is
That genius, which exists by interchange
Of peace and excitation,[2] finds in her
His best and purest friend—from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
Is rouzed, aspires, grasps, struggles, wishes, craves
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit may souls of humblest frame
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine
To speak of what myself have known and felt—
Sweet task, for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge desperate,
I was benighted heart and mind, but now
On all sides day began to reappear,[3]
And it was proved indeed that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a power
That is the very quality and shape
And image of right reason,[4] that matures
Her processes by steady laws, gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits, provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect, but lifts
The being into magnanimity,
Holds up before the mind, intoxicate
With present objects and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate shew
Of objects that endure—and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set

1. The horns which in line 4 suggest first twofoldness, and then strength, become in lines 5–6 "horns of plenty," cornucopias.
2. Stimulus, encouragement.
3. Wordsworth is referring to the period of rehabilitation that followed his moral crisis of spring 1796, described in *1805*, X, 888–904 (*1850*, XI, 293–333) above.
4. The power described is Nature, as in the opening line, above. The phrase "right reason" is used by Milton to signify reason that is attuned to intellectual, moral, and religious truth.

Book Thirteenth

Imagination and Taste, How Impaired and Restored—Concluded

From Nature doth emotion come, and moods
Of calmness equally are Nature's gift:
This is her glory; these two attributes
Are sister horns that constitute her strength.
Hence Genius, born to thrive by interchange
Of peace and excitation,[2] finds in her
His best and purest friend; from her receives
That energy by which he seeks the truth,
From her that happy stillness of the mind
Which fits him to receive it when unsought.

Such benefit the humblest intellects
Partake of, each in their degree; 'tis mine
To speak, what I myself have known and felt;
Smooth task! for words find easy way, inspired
By gratitude, and confidence in truth.
Long time in search of knowledge did I range
The field of human life, in heart and mind
Benighted; but, the dawn beginning now
To re-appear,[3] 'twas proved that not in vain
I had been taught to reverence a Power
That is the visible quality and shape
And image of right reason;[4] that matures
Her processes by steadfast laws; gives birth
To no impatient or fallacious hopes,
No heat of passion or excessive zeal,
No vain conceits; provokes to no quick turns
Of self-applauding intellect; but trains
To meekness, and exalts by humble faith;[5]
Holds up before the mind intoxicate
With present objects, and the busy dance
Of things that pass away, a temperate show
Of objects that endure; and by this course
Disposes her, when over-fondly set

5. Lines 27–28 belong to 1832, or 1838/39. The strength of *1805*, 31–32, is sacrificed to neatness and conventional piety.

On leaving her incumbrances behind,
To seek in man, and in the frame of life
Social and individual, what there is
Desirable, affecting, good or fair,
Of kindred permanence, the gifts divine
And universal, the pervading grace
That hath been, is, and shall be. Above all
Did Nature bring again this wiser mood,
More deeply reestablished in my soul,
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what we blazon with the pompous names
Of power and action, early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon those unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.
Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love;
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly: my trust
Was firmer in the feelings which had stood
The test of such a trial, clearer far
My sense of what was excellent and right,
The promise of the present time retired
Into its true proportion; sanguine[6] schemes,
Ambitious virtues, pleased me less; I sought
For good in the familiar face of life,
And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgements now of what would last,
And what would disappear; prepared to find
Ambition, folly, madness, in the men
Who thrust themselves upon this passive world
As rulers of the world—to see in these
Even when the public welfare is their aim
Plans without thought, or bottomed[7] on false thought
And false philosophy; having brought to test
Of solid life and true result the books
Of modern statists, and thereby perceived
The utter hollowness of what we name
The wealth of nations,[8] where alone that wealth

6. Hopeful.
7. Based.
8. A reference to the most influential of eighteenth-century "statists" (political theorists), Adam Smith, whose *Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776) not very surprisingly ignores the spiritual riches chiefly valued by the poet.

On throwing off incumbrances, to seek
In man, and in the frame of social life,
Whate'er there is desirable and good
Of kindred permanence, unchanged in form
And function, or, through strict vicissitude
Of life and death, revolving. Above all
Were re-established now those watchful thoughts
Which, seeing little worthy or sublime
In what the Historian's pen so much delights
To blazon—power and energy detached
From moral purpose—early tutored me
To look with feelings of fraternal love
Upon the unassuming things that hold
A silent station in this beauteous world.

Thus moderated, thus composed, I found
Once more in Man an object of delight,
Of pure imagination, and of love;
And, as the horizon of my mind enlarged,
Again I took the intellectual eye
For my instructor, studious more to see
Great truths, than touch and handle little ones.
Knowledge was given accordingly; my trust
Became more firm in feelings that had stood
The test of such a trial; clearer far
My sense of excellence—of right and wrong:
The promise of the present time retired
Into its true proportion; sanguine[6] schemes,
Ambitious projects, pleased me less; I sought
For present good in life's familiar face,
And built thereon my hopes of good to come.

With settling judgments now of what would last
And what would disappear; prepared to find
Presumption, folly, madness, in the men
Who thrust themselves upon the passive world
As Rulers of the world; to see in these,
Even when the public welfare is their aim,
Plans without thought, or built on theories
Vague and unsound; and having brought the books
Of modern statists to their proper test,
Life, human life, with all its sacred claims
Of sex and age, and heaven-descended rights,
Mortal, or those beyond the reach of death;
And having thus discerned how dire a thing
Is worshipped in that idol proudly named
'The Wealth of Nations',[8] *where* alone that wealth

Is lodged, and how encreased; and having gained
A more judicious knowledge of what makes
The dignity of individual man—
Of man, no composition of the thought,
Abstraction, shadow, image, but the man
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
With our own eyes—I could not but inquire,
Not with less interest than heretofore,
But greater, though in spirit more subdued,
Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,
Why may not many be? What bars are thrown
By Nature in the way of such a hope?
Our animal wants and the necessities
Which they impose, are these the obstacles?—
If not, then others vanish into air.
Such meditations bred an anxious wish
To ascertain how much of real worth,
And genuine knowledge, and true power of mind,
Did at this day exist in those who lived
By bodily labour, labour far exceeding
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
By composition of society
Ourselves entail. To frame such estimate
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works—recalled to mind
My earliest notices,[9] with these compared
The observations of my later youth
Continued downwards to that very day.

For time had never been in which the throes
And mighty hopes of nations, and the stir
And tumult of the world, to me could yield—
How far soe'er transported and possessed—
Full measure of content, but still I craved
An intermixture of distinct regards[1]
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves.[2] Such often might be gleaned

9. His earliest social observations.
1. Sights, or experiences. Wordsworth is saying that he can grasp the implications of major political events only if they are mixed with (or exemplified by) specific, local experience.
2. In their earliest form *1805*, 112–277 had been the conclusion of a sequence of 206 lines found at the end of *MS. Y* of October 1804, and were probably part of the original version of Book VIII, written before the full-scale treatment of London in VII. Wordsworth's subject in *MS. Y* had been the unity of man—more especially the human potential of unrefined and unpretentious man. The sequence had begun with the tenderness of the London artificer (VIII, 824–59), then moved, *via* lines that became XI, 9–14 to a consideration of the country poor whom he had met in his walks and travels.

Is lodged, and how increased; and having gained
A more judicious knowledge of the worth
And dignity of individual man,
No composition of the brain, but man
Of whom we read, the man whom we behold
With our own eyes—I could not but inquire—
Not with less interest than heretofore,
But greater, though in spirit more subdued—
Why is this glorious creature to be found
One only in ten thousand? What one is,
Why may not millions be? What bars are thrown
By Nature in the way of such a hope?
Our animal appetites and daily wants,
Are these obstructions insurmountable?
If not, then others vanish into air.
'Inspect the basis of the social pile:
Inquire,' said I, 'how much of mental power
And genuine virtue they possess who live
By bodily toil, labour exceeding far
Their due proportion, under all the weight
Of that injustice which upon ourselves
Ourselves entail.' Such estimate to frame
I chiefly looked (what need to look beyond?)
Among the natural abodes of men,
Fields with their rural works; recalled to mind
My earliest notices;[9] with these compared
The observations made in later youth,
And to that day continued.—For, the time
Had never been when throes of mighty Nations
And the world's tumult unto me could yield,
How far soe'er transported and possessed,
Full measure of content; but still I craved
An intermingling of distinct regards[1]
And truths of individual sympathy
Nearer ourselves. Such often might be gleaned

From that great city—else it must have been
A heart-depressing wilderness indeed,
Full soon to me a wearisome abode—
But much was wanting; therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways and ye lonely roads,
Sought you enriched with every thing I prized,
With human kindness and with Nature's joy.

Oh, next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed
Alas to few in this untoward[3] world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, living in some place,
Deep vale, or anywhere the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir—
Oh, next to such enjoyment of our youth,
In my esteem next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and find
The knowledge which I love, and teach the sound
Of poet's music to strange fields and groves,
Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked moors
With long, long ways before, by cottage bench,
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

I love a public road: few sights there are
That please me more—such object hath had power
O'er my imagination since the dawn
Of childhood, when its disappearing line
Seen daily afar off, on one bare steep
Beyond the limits which my feet had trod,[5]
Was like a guide into eternity,
At least to things unknown and without bound.
Even something of the grandeur which invests
The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
Surrounded too the wanderers of the earth—
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
Awed have I been by strolling bedlamites;[6]

3. Unfortunate, vexatious.
5. The road which the child Wordsworth could see from the garden at Cockermouth, leading over Hay Hill to the village of Isel.
6. Madmen; so called from the Bethlehem (pronounced "Bedlam") Hospital for the Insane in London.

From the great City, else it must have proved
To me a heart-depressing wilderness;
But much was wanting: therefore did I turn
To you, ye pathways, and ye lonely roads;
Sought you enriched with everything I prized,
With human kindnesses and simple joys.

Oh! next to one dear state of bliss, vouchsafed
Alas! to few in this untoward[3] world,
The bliss of walking daily in life's prime
Through field or forest with the maid we love,
While yet our hearts are young, while yet we breathe
Nothing but happiness, in some lone nook,
Deep vale, or any where, the home of both,
From which it would be misery to stir:
Oh! next to such enjoyment of our youth,
In my esteem, next to such dear delight,
Was that of wandering on from day to day
Where I could meditate in peace, and cull
Knowledge that step by step might lead me on
To wisdom; or, as lightsome as a bird
Wafted upon the wind from distant lands,
Sing notes of greeting to strange fields or groves,
Which lacked not voice to welcome me in turn:
And, when that pleasant toil had ceased to please,
Converse with men, where if we meet a face
We almost meet a friend, on naked heaths
With long long ways before, by cottage bench,
Or well-spring where the weary traveller rests.

Who doth not love to follow with his eye
The windings of a public way? the sight
Hath wrought on my imagination since the morn[4]
Of childhood, when a disappearing line,
One daily present to my eyes, that crossed
The naked summit of a far-off hill
Beyond the limits that my feet had trod,[5]
Was like an invitation into space
Boundless, or guide into eternity.
Yes, something of the grandeur which invests
The mariner who sails the roaring sea
Through storm and darkness, early in my mind
Surrounded, too, the wanderers of the earth;
Grandeur as much, and loveliness far more.
Awed have I been by strolling Bedlamites;[6]

4. The first edition conflates two versions present in *MS. D* in order to avoid the alexandrine (six-foot) line 144 created by Wordsworth in revision: "Familiar object as it is, hath wrought / On my imagination since the morn • • •."

From many other uncouth vagrants, passed
In fear, have walked with quicker step—but why
Take note of this? When I began to inquire,
To watch and question those I met, and held
Familiar talk with them, the lonely roads
Were schools to me in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
There saw into the depth of human souls—
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To vulgar[7] eyes. And now, convinced at heart
How little that to which alone we give
The name of education hath to do
With real feeling and just sense, how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most—and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
With toil, is therefore yoked with ignorance,
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more; for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of lowly men and of obscure,
A tale of honour—sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affections, love
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
A gift (to use a term which they would use)
Of vulgar Nature—that its growth requires
Retirement, leisure, language purified
By manners thoughtful and elaborate—
That whoso feels such passion in excess
Must live within the very light and air
Of elegances that are made by man.
True is it, where oppression worse than death
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And labour in excess and poverty
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature's self
Oppose a deeper nature—there indeed
Love cannot be; nor does it easily thrive
In cities, where the human heart is sick,

7. Common, ordinary.

From many other uncouth vagrants (passed
In fear) have walked with quicker step; but why
Take note of this? When I began to enquire,
To watch and question those I met, and speak
Without reserve to them, the lonely roads
Were open schools in which I daily read
With most delight the passions of mankind,
Whether by words, looks, sighs, or tears, revealed;
There saw into the depth of human souls,
Souls that appear to have no depth at all
To careless eyes. And—now convinced at heart
How little those formalities, to which
With overweening trust alone we give
The name of Education, hath to do
With real feeling and just sense; how vain
A correspondence with the talking world
Proves to the most; and called to make good search
If man's estate, by doom of Nature yoked
With toil, is therefore yoked with ignorance;
If virtue be indeed so hard to rear,
And intellectual strength so rare a boon—
I prized such walks still more, for there I found
Hope to my hope, and to my pleasure peace
And steadiness, and healing and repose
To every angry passion. There I heard,
From mouths of men obscure and lowly, truths
Replete with honour; sounds in unison
With loftiest promises of good and fair.

There are who think that strong affections, love
Known by whatever name, is falsely deemed
A gift, to use a term which they would use,
Of vulgar nature; that its growth requires
Retirement, leisure, language purified
By manners studied and elaborate;
That whoso feels such passion in its strength
Must live within the very light and air
Of courteous usages refined by art.
True is it, where oppression worse than death
Salutes the being at his birth, where grace
Of culture hath been utterly unknown,
And poverty and labour in excess
From day to day pre-occupy the ground
Of the affections, and to Nature's self
Oppose a deeper nature; there, indeed,
Love cannot be; nor does it thrive with ease
Among the close and overcrowded haunts
Of cities, where the human heart is sick,

And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed:
Thus far, no further, is that inference good.[8]

Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other, above all
How books mislead us—looking for their fame
To judgements of the wealthy few, who see
By artificial lights—how they debase
The many for the pleasure of those few,
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the men
Who frame them, flattering thus our self-conceit
With pictures that ambitiously set forth
The differences, the outside marks by which
Society has parted man from man,
Neglectful of the universal heart.[9]

Here calling up to mind what then I saw
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
Before me in my rural neighbourhood—
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within
When all the external man is rude in shew,
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain-chapel such as shields
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
'Of these,' said I, 'shall be my song. Of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse
Deal boldly with substantial things—in truth
And sanctity of passion speak of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due. Thus haply shall I teach,
Inspire, through unadulterated[1] ears
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope, my theme
No other than the very heart of man
As found among the best of those who live

8. Lines 185–204 go back to *MS. J* of October–December 1800, and like the Matron's Tale (VIII, 222–311, above) are surplus material written for *Michael*.
9. Wordsworth told the diarist, Crabb Robinson, in 1837 that "he did not expect or desire from posterity any other fame than that which would be given him for the way in which his poems exhibit man in his essentially human character and relations—as child, parent, husband, the qualities which are common to all men as opposed to those which distinguish one man from another" (*On Books and Their Writers*, ed. E. J. Morley, II, p. 535).
1. Uncorrupted, innocent.

And the eye feeds it not, and cannot feed.
—Yes, in those wanderings deeply did I feel
How we mislead each other; above all,
How books mislead us, seeking their reward
From judgments of the wealthy Few, who see
By artificial lights; how they debase
The Many for the pleasure of those Few;
Effeminately level down the truth
To certain general notions, for the sake
Of being understood at once, or else
Through want of better knowledge in the heads
That framed them; flattering self-conceit with words,
That, while they most ambitiously set forth
Extrinsic differences, the outward marks
Whereby society has parted man
From man, neglect the universal heart.[9]

Here, calling up to mind what then I saw,
A youthful traveller, and see daily now
In the familiar circuit of my home,
Here might I pause, and bend in reverence
To Nature, and the power of human minds,
To men as they are men within themselves.
How oft high service is performed within,
When all the external man is rude in show,—
Not like a temple rich with pomp and gold,
But a mere mountain chapel, that protects
Its simple worshippers from sun and shower.
Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these,
If future years mature me for the task,
Will I record the praises, making verse
Deal boldly with substantial things; in truth
And sanctity of passion, speak of these,
That justice may be done, obeisance paid
Where it is due: thus haply shall I teach,
Inspire, through unadulterated[1] ears
Pour rapture, tenderness, and hope,—my theme
No other than the very heart of man,
As found among the best of those who live,

Not unexalted by religious faith,
Nor uninformed by books (good books, though few),
In Nature's presence—thence may I select
Sorrow that is not sorrow but delight,
And miserable love that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human-kind and what we are.
Be mine to follow with no timid step
Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
Speaking no dream but things oracular,
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise
Do read the invisible soul,[2] by men adroit
In speech and for communion with the world
Accomplished, minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,
And elevated most when most admired.[3]
Men may be found of other mold[4] than these,

Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and will,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates.[5] Others, too,
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase,
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy;
Words are but under-agents in their souls—
When they are grasping with their greatest strength
They do not breathe among them.[6] This I speak
In gratitude to God, who feeds our hearts
For his own service, knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.'

2. I.e. those who judge a man's inner worth strictly on the evidence of outward appearances.
3. *1805*, 231–59 (*1850*, 232–60) contain several striking echoes of Wordsworth's poetic manifesto of 1800, the Prospectus to *The Recluse* (CW, III, pp. 100–106).
4. The earth from which the human body was regarded as having been formed, as at *1805*, IX, 295, above.
5. Wordsworth's thoughts have moved from the Prospectus to that other great statement of his belief (also of 1800), the Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*: "Low and rustic life was generally chosen because in that situation the essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restraint, and speak a plainer and more emphatic language . . ." (*Prose Works*, I, p. 124).
6. "Them" refers back to "words." Wordsworth almost certainly had in mind the deep but inarticulate response of Michael (described in *MS. J*, from which he had drawn lines 185–204, above; see *Oxford Wordsworth*, II, pp. 482–83), and of his own brother John, "the silent poet," who was drowned on February 5, 1805, three months after these lines were composed in *MS. Y*.

Not unexalted by religious faith,
Nor uninformed by books, good books, though few,
In Nature's presence: thence may I select
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;
And miserable love, that is not pain
To hear of, for the glory that redounds
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are.
Be mine to follow with no timid step
Where knowledge leads me: it shall be my pride
That I have dared to tread this holy ground,
Speaking no dream, but things oracular;
Matter not lightly to be heard by those
Who to the letter of the outward promise
Do read the invisible soul;[2] by men adroit
In speech, and for communion with the world
Accomplished; minds whose faculties are then
Most active when they are most eloquent,
And elevated most when most admired.[3]
Men may be found of other mould[4] than these,
Who are their own upholders, to themselves
Encouragement, and energy, and will,
Expressing liveliest thoughts in lively words
As native passion dictates.[5] Others, too,
There are among the walks of homely life
Still higher, men for contemplation framed,
Shy, and unpractised in the strife of phrase;
Meek men, whose very souls perhaps would sink
Beneath them, summoned to such intercourse:
Theirs is the language of the heavens, the power,
The thought, the image, and the silent joy:
Words are but under-agents in their souls;
When they are grasping with their greatest strength,
They do not breathe among them:[6] this I speak
In gratitude to God, Who feeds our hearts
For His own service; knoweth, loveth us,
When we are unregarded by the world.

Also about this time did I receive
Convictions still more strong than heretofore
Not only that the inner frame is good,
And graciously composed, but that, no less,
Nature through all conditions hath a power
To consecrate—if we have eyes to see—
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life. I felt that the array
Of outward circumstance and visible form
Is to the pleasure of the human mind
What passion makes it; that meanwhile the forms
Of Nature have a passion in themselves
That intermingles with those works of man
To which she summons him, although the works
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
And that the genius of the poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads—that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand for ever.[7] Dearest friend,
Forgive me if I say that I, who long
Had harboured reverentially a thought
That poets, even as prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each for his peculiar dower a sense
By which he is enabled to perceive
Something unseen before—forgive me, friend,
If I, the meanest of this band, had hope
That unto me had also been vouchsafed
An influx,[8] that in some sort I possessed
A privilege, and that a work of mine,
Proceeding from the depth of untaught things,
Enduring and creative, might become
A power like one of Nature's.

To such mood,
Once above all—a traveller at that time
Upon the plain of Sarum—was I raised:[9]

7. Wordsworth in this important passage, as in *1805*, 231–64 (*1850*, 232–65) is seen defining his rôle as a poet, and the nature of his subject-matter. As M. H. Abrams remarks, "*The Prelude* is a poem which incorporates the discovery of its own *ars poetica*" (*Natural Supernaturalism*, p. 78).
8. Inspiration.
9. Wordsworth crossed Salisbury Plain ("the plain of Sarum") alone and on foot, in a vividly imaginative frame of mind (see *1805*, 318–36 below) in late July or early August 1793 en route from the Isle of Wight to Wales. He was without money or prospects, was parted from Annette Vallon, and for the previous month had watched the British fleet off Portsmouth preparing for a war that went against all his deepest feelings, personal, patriotic, and political (see *1805*, X, 229–306, above).

Also, about this time did I receive
Convictions still more strong than heretofore,
Not only that the inner frame is good,
And graciously composed, but that, no less,
Nature for all conditions wants not power
To consecrate, if we have eyes to see,
The outside of her creatures, and to breathe
Grandeur upon the very humblest face
Of human life. I felt that the array
Of act and circumstance, and visible form,
Is mainly to the pleasure of the mind
What passion makes them; that meanwhile the forms
Of Nature have a passion in themselves,
That intermingles with those works of man
To which she summons him; although the works
Be mean, have nothing lofty of their own;
And that the Genius of the Poet hence
May boldly take his way among mankind
Wherever Nature leads; that he hath stood
By Nature's side among the men of old,
And so shall stand for ever.[7] Dearest Friend!
If thou partake the animating faith
That Poets, even as Prophets, each with each
Connected in a mighty scheme of truth,
Have each his own peculiar faculty,
Heaven's gift, a sense that fits him to perceive
Objects unseen before, thou wilt not blame
The humblest of this band who dares to hope
That unto him hath also been vouchsafed
An insight that in some sort he possesses,
A privilege whereby a work of his,
Proceeding from a source of untaught things
Creative and enduring, may become
A power like one of Nature's. To a hope
Not less ambitious once among the wilds
Of Sarum's Plain, my youthful spirit was raised;[9]

There on the pastoral downs[1] without a track
To guide me, or along the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
While through those vestiges of ancient times
I ranged, and by the solitude o'ercome,
I had a reverie and saw the past,
Saw multitudes of men, and here and there
A single Briton in his wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-ax, stride across the wold;[2]
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
I called upon the darkness, and it took—
A midnight darkness seemed to come and take—
All objects from my sight; and lo, again
The desart visible by dismal flames!
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men—how deep the groans![3]—the voice
Of those in the gigantic wicker thrills
Throughout the region far and near, pervades
The monumental hillocks,[4] and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
At other moments, for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed, when 'twas my chance
To have before me on the downy plain
Lines, circles, mounts, a mystery of shapes
Such as in many quarters yet survive,
With intricate profusion figuring o'er
The untilled ground (the work, as some divine,[5]
Of infant science,[6] imitative forms
By which the Druids covertly expressed
Their knowledge of the heavens, and imaged forth
The constellations), I was gently charmed,
Albeit with an antiquarian's dream,
And saw the bearded teachers, with white wands
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath

1. Open hills used only for grazing sheep.
2. A poetic, unspecific word for countryside, here meaning "plain."
3. Wordsworth is drawing heavily—verbatim in these last two lines—on his early poem *Salisbury Plain*, perhaps begun during his wanderings, and certainly completed by April 1794 (see *CW*, I, pp. 26–27). In both poems Wordsworth accepts the common, but false, beliefs that the Druids (*1805*, 345; *1850*, 340) performed human sacrifice, and that Stonehenge was a Druid temple.
4. "The gigantic wicker" (also referred to in *Salisbury Plain*) had been described by Aylett Sammes, *Britannia Antiqua Illustrata* (1676), p. 104: "They made a Statue or Image of a MAN in a vast proportion, whose limbs consisted of Twigs, weaved together in the nature of Basket-ware: These they fill'd with live Men, and after that, set it on fire, and so destroyed the poor Creatures in the smoak and flames."
"Monumental hillocks": Bronze Age burial mounds, of which there are many on the Plain.
5. Conjecture (a verb).
6. Science in its early stages.

There, as I ranged at will the pastoral downs[1]
Trackless and smooth, or paced the bare white roads
Lengthening in solitude their dreary line,
Time with his retinue of ages fled
Backwards, nor checked his flight until I saw
Our dim ancestral Past in vision clear;
Saw multitudes of men, and, here and there,
A single Briton clothed in wolf-skin vest,
With shield and stone-axe, stride across the wold;[2]
The voice of spears was heard, the rattling spear
Shaken by arms of mighty bone, in strength,
Long mouldered, of barbaric majesty.
I called on Darkness—but before the word
Was uttered, midnight darkness seemed to take
All objects from my sight; and lo! again
The Desert visible by dismal flames;
It is the sacrificial altar, fed
With living men—how deep the groans![3] the voice
Of those that crowd the giant wicker thrills
The monumental hillocks,[4] and the pomp
Is for both worlds, the living and the dead.
At other moments (for through that wide waste
Three summer days I roamed) where'er the Plain
Was figured o'er with circles, lines, or mounds,
That yet survive, a work, as some divine,[5]
Shaped by the Druids, so to represent
Their knowledge of the heavens, and image forth
The constellations; gently was I charmed
Into a waking dream, a reverie
That, with believing eyes, where'er I turned,
Beheld long-bearded teachers, with white wands
Uplifted, pointing to the starry sky,
Alternately, and plain below, while breath

Of music seemed to guide them, and the waste
Was cheared with stillness and a pleasant sound.[7]

[350] This for the past, and things that may be viewed,
Or fancied, in the obscurities of time.
Nor is it, friend, unknown to thee; at least—
Thyself delighted—thou for my delight
Hast said,[8] perusing some imperfect verse
Which in that lonesome journey was composed,
[355] That also I must then have exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things
And actual world of our familiar days,
A higher power—have caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
[360] Not hitherto reflected.[9] Call we this
But a persuasion taken up by thee
In friendship, yet the mind is to herself
Witness and judge, and I remember well
That in life's everyday appearances
I seemed about this period to have sight
[370] Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted and made visible
To other eyes, as having for its base
That whence our dignity originates,
That which both gives it being, and maintains
[375] A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from within and from without:
The excellence, pure spirit, and best power,
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

7. The transition from Wordsworth's creative reverie of *1805*, 312–36 (*1850*, 312–35) to the merely "antiquarian's dream" of *1805*, 337–53 (*1850*, 336–49) reproduces exactly the progression in Salisbury Plain (see *CW*, I, p. 27).
8. Lines 356–58 are very difficult to construe. "It" ("Nor is *it* * * * unknown to thee") has no antecedent, but presumably refers to the situation in general—"You know about *all this*." "At least / Thyself delighted" can be interpreted, "YOU, at least, were pleased"; but more probably "Thyself delighted" is in parenthesis: "You, being pleased yourself, gave me pleasure by saying." No version of *Salisbury Plain*, the "imperfect verse" of line 358, was published until 1842. See *1805*, 365*n*, below.
9. It is doubtful whether much of *Salisbury Plain* was composed during Wordsworth's journey in August 1793, but the extant faircopy belongs to the following April. In its revised and extended form, *Adventures on Salisbury Plain* of ca. November 1795, the poem was read to Coleridge, and *1805*, 360–65 (*1850*, 355–60) suggest that his early reaction was very similar to the famous assessment in *Biographia Literaria* (1817), chapter iv, where Coleridge recollects having been impressed above all by: "the original gift of spreading the tone, the *atmosphere* and with it the depth and height of the ideal world, around forms, incidents and situations of which, for the common view, custom had bedimmed all the lustre, had dried up the sparkle and the dew-drops" (*Biographia*, pp. 48–49).

Of music swayed their motions, and the waste
Rejoiced with them and me in those sweet sounds.[7]

This for the past, and things that may be viewed
Or fancied in the obscurity of years
From monumental hints: and thou, O Friend!
Pleased with some unpremeditated strains
That served those wanderings to beguile, hast said
That then and there my mind had exercised
Upon the vulgar forms of present things,
The actual world of our familiar days,
Yet higher power; had caught from them a tone,
An image, and a character, by books
Not hitherto reflected.[9] Call we this
A partial judgment—and yet why? for *then*
We were as strangers;[1] and I may not speak
Thus wrongfully of verse, however rude,
Which on thy young imagination, trained
In the great City, broke like light from far.
Moreover, each man's Mind is to herself
Witness and judge; and I remember well
That in life's every-day appearances
I seemed about this time to gain clear sight
Of a new world—a world, too, that was fit
To be transmitted, and to other eyes
Made visible; as ruled by those fixed laws
Whence spiritual dignity originates,
Which do both give it being and maintain
A balance, an ennobling interchange
Of action from without and from within;
The excellence, pure function, and best power
Both of the object seen, and eye that sees.

1. Wordsworth and Coleridge had met in September 1795, but did not come to know each other well until June 1797.

Book Thirteenth

Conclusion

In one of these excursions, travelling then
Through Wales on foot and with a youthful friend,
I left Bethkelet's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon.[1] Having reached
The cottage at the mountain's foot, we there
Rouzed up the shepherd who by ancient right
Of office is the stranger's usual guide,
And after short refreshment sallied forth.

It was a summer's night, a close warm night,
Wan, dull, and glaring,[2] with a dripping mist
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky,
Half threatening storm and rain; but on we went
Unchecked, being full of heart and having faith
In our tried pilot. Little could we see,
Hemmed round on every side with fog and damp,
And, after ordinary travellers' chat
With our conductor, silently we sunk
Each into commerce with his private thoughts.
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard the while
Which took me from my musings, save that once
The shepherd's cur did to his own great joy
Unearth a hedgehog in the mountain-crags,
Round which he made a barking turbulent.
This small adventure—for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night—
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts,
Thus might we wear perhaps an hour away,

1. The Ascent of Mount Snowdon(*1805*, 1–65; *1850*, 1–62), made when he was twenty-one, had a climactic importance for Wordsworth. In its original version the account was written for the five-Book *Prelude* at the end of February 1804, to form the opening of the last Book; and despite the rearrangement of other five-Book materials, it has the equivalent position in *1805*. The "youthful friend" was Robert Jones, with whom Wordsworth made a walking-tour of North Wales, June–August 1791, the year after their tour through France (see *1805*, VI, 342*n*, above).

"Cambria" (*1850*, 3): Wales. "Huts": "old rugged and tufted cottages," according to a letter of 1824, in which Wordsworth laments changes at Beddgelert (LY, I, p. 154). "Couching-time": bedtime.

2. Maxwell suggests that Wordsworth in his use of "glaring" was influenced by northern dialect "glairy," "glaurie," meaning (when applied to the weather) dull or rainy.

Book Fourteenth

Conclusion

In one of those excursions (may they ne'er
Fade from remembrance!) through the Northern tracts
Of Cambria ranging with a youthful friend,
I left Bethgelert's huts at couching-time,
And westward took my way, to see the sun
Rise from the top of Snowdon.[1] To the door
Of a rude cottage at the mountain's base
We came, and roused the shepherd who attends
The adventurous stranger's steps, a trusty guide;
Then, cheered by short refreshment, sallied forth.

It was a close, warm, breezeless summer night,
Wan, dull, and glaring,[2] with a dripping fog
Low-hung and thick that covered all the sky;
But, undiscouraged, we began to climb
The mountain-side. The mist soon girt us round,
And, after ordinary travellers' talk
With our conductor, pensively we sank
Each into commerce with his private thoughts:
Thus did we breast the ascent, and by myself
Was nothing either seen or heard that checked
Those musings or diverted, save that once
The shepherd's lurcher,[3] who, among the crags,
Had to his joy unearthed a hedgehog, teased
His coiled-up prey with barkings turbulent.
This small adventure, for even such it seemed
In that wild place and at the dead of night,
Being over and forgotten, on we wound
In silence as before. With forehead bent
Earthward, as if in opposition set
Against an enemy, I panted up
With eager pace, and no less eager thoughts.
Thus might we wear a midnight hour away,

3. Mongrel.

Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I, as chanced, the foremost of the band—
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor had I time to ask the cause of this,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash. I looked about, and lo,
The moon stood naked in the heavens at height
Immense above my head, and on the shore
I found myself of a huge sea of mist,
Which meek and silent rested at my feet.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean,[4] and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the vapours shot themselves
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the sea, the real sea, that seemed
To dwindle and give up its majesty,
Usurped upon as far as sight could reach.
Meanwhile, the moon looked down upon this shew
In single glory, and we stood, the mist
Touching our very feet; and from the shore
At distance not the third part of a mile
Was a blue chasm, a fracture in the vapour,
A deep and gloomy breathing-place, through which
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice.[5]
The universal spectacle throughout
Was shaped for admiration and delight,
Grand in itself alone, but in that breach
Through which the homeless voice of waters rose,
That dark deep thoroughfare, had Nature lodged
The soul, the imagination of the whole.

A meditation rose in me that night
Upon the lonely mountain when the scene
Had passed away, and it appeared to me
The perfect image of a mighty mind,
Of one that feeds upon infinity,
That is exalted by an under-presence,

4. Compare the account of the Creation, *Paradise Lost*, VII, 285–87, "the mountains huge appear / Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave / Into the clouds * * *"
5. For Wordsworth's first account of this scene (interestingly by sunlight), see *Descriptive Sketches*, 492–505, composed in summer 1792, a year after his walking tour in Wales. Almost all the details of the Snowdon landscape are present in this original picturesque scene. Their relationship to Wordsworth's personal experience, however, is not easy to assess, as *Descriptive Sketches* draws very heavily on a literary source, James Beattie's *Minstrel*, Book I (1771), stanza 23. A probable further source, in James Clarke's *Survey of the Lakes* (1787), p. 73, has been suggested by Z. S. Fink, *Early Wordsworthian Milieu*, pp. 45–48.

Ascending at loose distance each from each,
And I as chanced, the foremost of the band;
When at my feet the ground appeared to brighten,
And with a step or two seemed brighter still;
Nor was time given to ask or learn the cause,
For instantly a light upon the turf
Fell like a flash, and lo! as I looked up,
The Moon hung naked in a firmament
Of azure without cloud, and at my feet
Rested a silent sea of hoary mist.
A hundred hills their dusky backs upheaved
All over this still ocean;[4] and beyond,
Far, far beyond, the solid vapours stretched,
In headlands, tongues, and promontory shapes,
Into the main Atlantic, that appeared
To dwindle, and give up his majesty,
Usurped upon far as the sight could reach.
Not so the ethereal vault; encroachment none
Was there, nor loss; only the inferior stars
Had disappeared, or shed a fainter light
In the clear presence of the full-orbed Moon,
Who, from her sovereign elevation, gazed
Upon the billowy ocean, as it lay
All meek and silent, save that through a rift—
Not distant from the shore whereon we stood,
A fixed, abysmal, gloomy, breathing-place—
Mounted the roar of waters, torrents, streams
Innumerable, roaring with one voice
Heard over earth and sea, and, in that hour,
For so it seems, felt by the starry heavens.[6]

When into air had partially dissolved
That vision, given to spirits of the night
And three chance human wanderers, in calm thought
Reflected, it appeared to me the type
Of a majestic intellect, its acts
And its possessions, what it has and craves,
What in itself it is, and would become.
There I beheld the emblem of a mind
That feeds upon infinity, that broods
Over the dark abyss,[7] intent to hear

6. None of the other great passages of *The Prelude*—indeed of Wordsworth's poetry as a whole—suffered in revision as did the Ascent of Snowdon. From the earliest reworkings (*1850*, 50–53, e.g., belong to 1816/19) to the final concession to orthodoxy in 61–62 (1839 or later), alterations are consistently for the worse. Note also the elaboration of *1805*, 66–73 that results in *1850*, 63–77.
7. Lines 71–72 are a reminiscence of *Paradise Lost*, I, 20–22, in which the Holy Spirit brooding over Chaos makes it fruitful.

The sense of God, or whatsoe'er is dim
Or vast in its own being[8]—above all,
One function of such mind had Nature there
Exhibited by putting forth, and that
[80] With circumstance most awful and sublime:[9]
That domination which she oftentimes
Exerts upon the outward face of things,
So moulds them, and endues, abstracts, combines,
Or by abrupt and unhabitual influence
Doth make one object so impress itself
Upon all others, and pervades them so,
[85] That even the grossest minds must see and hear,
And cannot chuse but feel. The power which these
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
Thrusts forth upon the senses, is the express
Resemblance—in the fullness of its strength
Made visible—a genuine counterpart
And brother of the glorious faculty
[90] Which higher minds bear with them as their own.[1]
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With all the objects of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Like transformation, for themselves create
[95] A like existence, and, when'er it is
Created for them, catch it by an instinct.[2]
[100] Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt. They build up greatest things
From least suggestions,[3] ever on the watch,

8. The spatial quality of Wordsworth's language serves to link his "meditation" back into the central experience: the grandeur of Snowdon now evokes an inner vastness (see 96*n*, below), the "dark deep thoroughfare" (line 64) becomes an "under-presence" within the individual mind.

9. Lines 66–76 do not appear in *MS. W*, and belong probably to May 1805. For the series of six further analogies between the mind of man and Nature, written late February–early March 1804 to follow line 65, see MS. Drafts and Fragments, 3(a), below. The sequence appears to have been cut before the five-Book scheme was abandoned.

1. Nature, as the sea of mist, has transformed the Snowdon landscape, usurping upon the sovereignty of the "real sea," the Irish Channel (*1805*, 42–51; *1850*, 41–49). In the process she has demonstrated by analogy ("Exhibited by putting forth" (*1805*, 75) the power of the human imagination. Compare Coleridge's definition of the secondary imagination, which "dissolves, diffuses, dissipates, in order to re-create" (*Biographia*, chapter xiii, p. 167).

2. For Wordsworth and Coleridge imagination was at once creative and receptive of what is apprehended through sense experiences. Among many statements that emphasize this central belief, see especially the Infant Babe of *1805*, II, 267–75 above (*1799*, II, 297–305), who "as an agent of the one great mind" is "creator and receiver both," and Coleridge's definition of the primary imagination as "the living power and prime agent of all human perception" but also "a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation" (*Biographia*, chapter xiii; p. 167). In his imaginative acts, the individual who is endowed with a "higher" mind is at once godlike, and perceptive of the existence of God, draws on the dim and vast in his own being, and experiences "an under-presence, / The sense of God" (*1805*, 71–72, above).

3. "Imagination, by which word I mean the faculty which produces impressive effects out of simple elements" (note to *The Thorn, Lyrical Ballads*, 1800).

Its voices issuing forth to silent light
In one continuous stream; a mind sustained
By recognitions of transcendent power,
In sense conducting to ideal form,
In soul of more than mortal privilege.
One function, above all, of such a mind
Had Nature shadowed there, by putting forth,
'Mid circumstances awful and sublime,
That mutual domination which she loves
To exert upon the face of outward things,
So moulded, joined, abstracted, so endowed
With interchangeable supremacy,
That men, least sensitive, see, hear, perceive,
And cannot choose but feel. The power, which all
Acknowledge when thus moved, which Nature thus
To bodily sense exhibits, is the express
Resemblance of that glorious faculty
That higher minds bear with them as their own.[1]
This is the very spirit in which they deal
With the whole compass of the universe:
They from their native selves can send abroad
Kindred mutations; for themselves create
A like existence; and, whene'er it dawns
Created for them, catch it, or are caught
By its inevitable mastery.[2]
Like angels stopped upon the wing by sound
Of harmony from Heaven's remotest spheres.
Them the enduring and the transient both
Serve to exalt; they build up greatest things
From least suggestions;[3] ever on the watch,

Willing to work and to be wrought upon.
They need not extraordinary calls
[105] To rouze them—in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But quickened, rouzed, and made thereby more fit
To hold communion with the invisible world.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are powers; and hence the highest bliss
That can be known is theirs—the consciousness
[115] Of whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image,[4] and through every thought,
And all impressions; hence religion, faith,
And endless occupation for the soul,
[120] Whether discursive or intuitive;[5]
Hence sovereignty within and peace at will,
Emotion which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense;
Hence chearfulness in every act of life;
Hence truth in moral judgements; and delight
That fails not, in the external universe.

[130] Oh, who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?—
For this alone is genuine liberty.
Witness, ye solitudes, where I received
[141] My earliest visitations (careless then
Of what was given me), and where now I roam,
[143] A meditative, oft a suffering man,
And yet I trust with undiminished powers;[7]

4. I.e., through all they see. The "highest bliss" of *1805*, 107 (*1850*, 113) is self-awareness, "consciousness / Of whom they are."
5. Wordsworth is echoing a distinction made in *Paradise Lost*, V, 487–90, between "discursive" reason (belonging chiefly to man) and the higher "intuitive" reason to which man may aspire, but which is normally angelic.
7. Written in early March 1804, shortly after the completion of the *Intimations Ode*, with its similar concerns, and probably a day or two before XI, 335–36 ("the hiding-places of my power / Seem open, I approach, and then they close").

Willing to work and to be wrought upon,
They need not extraordinary calls
To rouse them; in a world of life they live,
By sensible impressions not enthralled,
But by their quickening impulse made more prompt
To hold fit converse with the spiritual world,
And with the generations of mankind
Spread over time, past, present, and to come,
Age after age, till Time shall be no more.
Such minds are truly from the Deity,
For they are Powers; and hence the highest bliss
That flesh can know is theirs—the consciousness
Of Whom they are, habitually infused
Through every image[4] and through every thought
And all affections, by communion raised
From earth to heaven, from human to divine;
Hence endless occupation for the Soul,
Whether discursive or intuitive;[5]
Hence cheerfulness for acts of daily life,
Emotions which best foresight need not fear,
Most worthy then of trust when most intense.
Hence, amid ills that vex and wrongs that crush
Our hearts—if here the words of Holy Writ
May with fit reverence be applied—that peace
Which passeth understanding, that repose
In moral judgments which from this pure source
Must come, or will by man be sought in vain.[6]

Oh! who is he that hath his whole life long
Preserved, enlarged, this freedom in himself?
For this alone is genuine liberty:
Where is the favoured being who hath held
That course unchecked, unerring, and untired,
In one perpetual progress smooth and bright?—
A humbler destiny have we retraced,
And told of lapse and hesitating choice,
And backward wanderings along thorny ways:
Yet—compassed round by mountain solitudes,
Within whose solemn temple I received
My earliest visitations, careless then
Of what was given me; and which now I range,
A meditative, oft a suffering man—
Do I declare—in accents which, from truth
Deriving cheerful confidence, shall blend
Their modulation with these vocal streams—

6. Lines 124–29 are produced by a revision of 1838/39, and the similarly pious phrasing of line 114, "That flesh can know," is probably 1832 (Wordsworth tried first "man," then "earth," before arriving at "flesh").

Witness—whatever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained—that, howsoe'er misled,
I never in the quest of right and wrong
Did tamper with myself from private aims;[8]
Nor was in any of my hopes the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did wilfully
Yield ever to mean cares and low pursuits;
But rather did with jealousy shrink back
From every combination that might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of habit to enslave the mind—I mean
Oppress it by the laws of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death,
The falsest of all worlds, in place of that
Which is divine and true.[9] To fear and love
(To love as first and chief, for there fear ends)
Be this ascribed, to early intercourse
In presence of sublime and lovely forms
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil as one is rashly named by those
Who know not what they say.[1] From love, for here
Do we begin and end, all grandeur comes,
All truth and beauty—from pervading love—
That gone, we are as dust. Behold the fields
In balmy springtime, full of rising flowers
And happy creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; in some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The one who is thy choice of all the world—
There linger, lulled, and lost, and rapt away—
Be happy to thy fill; thou call'st this love,
And so it is, but there is higher love
Than this, a love that comes into the heart
With awe and a diffusive sentiment.[2]

8. Wordsworth's meaning—that he never attempted to buy off his conscience—is established by *1850*, 151.
9. Wordsworth's "universe of death" (in *Paradise Lost*, II, 622, the phrase is used to describe Hell) is one in which the individual is enslaved by unimaginative reliance on the senses and on purely habitual perception.
1. A reference back to *1805*, I, 305–6, above: "Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up / Fostered alike by beauty and by fear • • •" In *1805*, 143–49 (*1850*, 162–68), "beauty" is assimilated to the principles of joy and love, and "fear" is related to pain. Wordsworth, however, denies that fear and pain are in themselves "evil," since, subordinated to the ultimate principle of love, these aspects of human experience are necessary to the formation of the mature and imaginative mind. Wordsworth's justification of pain and fear as ultimately serving love is parallel to Milton's justification of God's ways to men, *Paradise Lost*, XII, 469 ff: "goodness infinite, goodness immense! / That all this good of evil shall produce, / And evil turn to good."
2. Probably an emotion that is diffused —"Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart," *Tintern Abbey*, 29. "Diffusive" at times has the implication of bountiful dispensing (*NED*).

That, whatsoever falls my better mind,
Revolving with the accidents of life,
May have sustained, that, howsoe'er misled,
Never did I, in quest of right and wrong,
Tamper with conscience from a private aim;
Nor was in any public hope the dupe
Of selfish passions; nor did ever yield
Wilfully to mean cares or low pursuits,
But shrunk with apprehensive jealousy
From every combination which might aid
The tendency, too potent in itself,
Of use and custom to bow down the soul
Under a growing weight of vulgar sense,
And substitute a universe of death
For that which moves with light and life informed,
Actual, divine, and true.[9] To fear and love,
To love as prime and chief, for there fear ends,
Be this ascribed; to early intercourse,
In presence of sublime or beautiful forms,
With the adverse principles of pain and joy—
Evil as one is rashly named by men
Who know not what they speak.[1] By love subsists
All lasting grandeur, by pervading love;
That gone, we are as dust,—Behold the fields
In balmy spring-time full of rising flowers
And joyous creatures; see that pair, the lamb
And the lamb's mother, and their tender ways
Shall touch thee to the heart; thou callest this love,
And not inaptly so, for love it is,
Far as it carries thee. In some green bower
Rest, and be not alone, but have thou there
The One who is thy choice of all the world:
There linger, listening, gazing, with delight
Impassioned, but delight how pitiable!
Unless this love by a still higher love
Be hallowed, love that breathes not without awe;
Love that adores, but on the knees of prayer,
By heaven inspired; that frees from chains the soul,
Bearing, in union with the purest, best,

Thy love is human merely: this proceeds
More from the brooding soul, and is divine.[3]

This love more intellectual cannot be
Without imagination, which in truth
Is but another name for absolute strength
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And reason in her most exalted mood.[5]
This faculty hath been the moving soul
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From darkness, and the very place of birth
In its blind cavern, whence is faintly heard
The sound of waters; followed it to light
And open day, accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, afterwards
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed,
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
With strength, reflecting in its solemn breast
The works of man, and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
The feeling of life endless, the one thought
By which we live, infinity and God.[6]

Imagination having been our theme,
So also hath that intellectual love,
For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually.[7] Here must thou be, O man,
Strength to thyself—no helper hast thou here—
Here keepest thou thy individual state:
No other can divide with thee this work,
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability.[8] 'Tis thine,

3. At this point in the five-Book *Prelude* Wordsworth turned to consider the factors which in practice conspire to thwart the "divine" love of lines 161–65. The passage is not fully legible in *MS. W* (see MS. Drafts and Fragments, 3[b], below), but leads into a version of XI, 175–83 and on, through drafts that may never have reached a final shape, into the "spots of time" sequence that formed the climax of the five-Book poem; see Composition and Texts: *1805/1850*, Introduction, below, and XI, 128*n*, above.
5. I.e., the higher reason—as opposed to understanding—later to be associated with the primary imagination in *Biographia Literaria*, and already by 1805 reinforced for Coleridge (and thus presumably for Wordsworth): by the Kantian distinction between *Vernunft* and *Verstand*. "Intellectual" (*1805*, 166): spiritual, as elsewhere in *The Prelude*.
6. Wordsworth's use of the river to image the progress of his mind appears as early as *1799*, II, 247–49, and is recurrent in *1805*; see e.g., III, 10–12, IV, 39–55, VI, 672–80, IX, 1–9. "Life endless" (*1805*, 183; *1850*, 204): a reference to the afterlife which emerges very suddenly in the context of the poem as a whole, but which is explained by Wordsworth's urgent need to believe in the survival of his brother John, drowned on February 5, 1805, some three months before these lines were written (*EY*, p. 556).
7. Spiritual love for Wordsworth, as for Coleridge, is the principle which unites an individual man both to other men and to Nature; it is experienced as joy, and empowers the imagination. The point is made most clearly in *Dejection* (April 1802), 231–42, 296–323, but is everywhere implicit in the work of both poets. "Dividually": separately, apart; a reminiscence of *Paradise Lost*, XII, 85.
8. The reference in *1805*, 188–93 (*1850*, 209–14) is consistently to spiritual love, which the individual must develop within himself, and by himself.

Of earth-born passions, on the wings of praise
A mutual tribute to the Almighty's Throne.[4]

This spiritual Love acts not nor can exist
Without Imagination, which, in truth,
Is but another name for absolute power
And clearest insight, amplitude of mind,
And Reason in her most exalted mood.[5]
This faculty hath been the feeding source
Of our long labour: we have traced the stream
From the blind cavern whence is faintly heard
Its natal murmur; followed it to light
And open day; accompanied its course
Among the ways of Nature, for a time
Lost sight of it bewildered and engulphed:
Then given it greeting as it rose once more
In strength, reflecting from its placid breast
The works of man and face of human life;
And lastly, from its progress have we drawn
Faith in life endless, the sustaining thought
Of human Being, Eternity, and God.[6]

Imagination having been our theme,
So also hath that intellectual Love,
For they are each in each, and cannot stand
Dividually.[7]—Here must thou be, O Man!
Power to thyself; no Helper hast thou here;
Here keepest thou in singleness thy state:
No other can divide with thee this work:
No secondary hand can intervene
To fashion this ability;[8] 'tis thine,

4. Wordsworth's redefinition of the "higher love" of *1805*, 161, in specifically Christian terms takes place as early as 1816/19: "Passion from all disturbing influence pure, / Foretaste of beatific sentiment / Bestowed in mercy on a world condemned / To mutability, pain and grief, / Terrestrial nature's sure inheritance" (*A* revisions).

The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else 'tis not thine at all. But joy to him,
O, joy to him who here hath sown—hath laid
Here the foundations of his future years—
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his. And he whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness, his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,[9]
Of little loves and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents, sister of my soul,
Elsewhere have strains of gratitude been breathed
To thee for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed.[1] And true it is
That later seasons owed to thee no less;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of other kindred hands that opened out
The springs of tender thought in infancy,
And spite of all which singly I had watched
Of elegance, and each minuter charm
In Nature or in life, still to the last—
Even to the very going-out of youth,
The period which our story now hath reached[2]—
I too exclusively esteemed that love,
And sought that beauty, which as Milton sings
Hath terror in it.[3] Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness; but for thee, sweet friend,
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had been
Far longer what by Nature it was framed—
Longer retained its countenance severe—
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds

9. Compare *Michael*, 162–68, where the old shepherd is praised for doing "female service" to Luke when he was a baby.

1. Wordsworth had often expressed "strains of gratitude" to Dorothy—in *1805*, VI, 210–18, X, 908–15, above, for instance, as well as *Tintern Abbey* and *Home at Grasmere*—but the reference to imbibing early tenderness suggests that he has in mind the lyrics of spring 1802; see especially *The Sparrow's Nest* (quoted at *1850*, 230) and *To a Butterfly*.

2. Though the recent experience in the reader's mind will be the Ascent of Snowdon in 1791, and the journey across Salisbury Plain in 1793 (*1805*, XII, 312–53; *1850*, XIII, 312–49), Wordsworth regards his story as having reached the period of 1796–97; see 246*n*, below.

3. Rather surprisingly it is the serpent who, at *Paradise Lost*, IX, 490–91, remarks "though terror be in love / And beauty * * *."

The prime and vital principle is thine
In the recesses of thy nature, far
From any reach of outward fellowship,
Else is not thine at all. But joy to him,
Oh, joy to him who here hath sown, hath laid
Here, the foundation of his future years!
For all that friendship, all that love can do,
All that a darling countenance can look
Or dear voice utter, to complete the man,
Perfect him, made imperfect in himself,
All shall be his: and he whose soul hath risen
Up to the height of feeling intellect
Shall want no humbler tenderness; his heart
Be tender as a nursing mother's heart;
Of female softness shall his life be full,[9]
Of humble cares and delicate desires,
Mild interests and gentlest sympathies.

Child of my parents! Sister of my soul!
Thanks in sincerest verse have been elsewhere
Poured out for all the early tenderness
Which I from thee imbibed:[1] and 'tis most true
That later seasons owed to thee no less;
For, spite of thy sweet influence and the touch
Of kindred hands that opened out the springs
Of genial thought in childhood, and in spite
Of all that unassisted I had marked
In life or nature of those charms minute
That win their way into the heart by stealth
(Still to the very going-out of youth),[2]
I too exclusively esteemed *that* love,
And sought that beauty, which, as Milton sings,
Hath terror in it.[3] Thou didst soften down
This over-sternness; but for thee, dear Friend!
My soul, too reckless of mild grace, had stood
In her original self too confident,
Retained too long a countenance severe;
A rock with torrents roaring, with the clouds

Familiar, and a favorite of the stars;
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
[255] And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers. At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, well pleased to be
[260] A handmaid to a nobler than herself—
When every day brought with it some new sense
Of exquisite regard for common things,
And all the earth was budding with these gifts
Of more refined humanity—thy breath,
[265] Dear sister, was a kind of gentler spring
That went before my steps.[4]
[275] With such a theme
Coleridge—with this my argument—of thee
Shall I be silent? O most loving soul,
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
[280] Shall I be mute ere thou be spoken of?
Thy gentle spirit to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way; and thus the life
Of all things and the mighty unity
In all which we behold, and feel, and are,
[288] Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition, closelier gathering thoughts
[290] Of man and his concerns,[6] such as become
A human creature, be he who he may,
Poet, or destined to an humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent
[295] From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed,
And balanced, by a reason which indeed
Is reason, duty, and pathetic truth—[7]
And God and man divided, as they ought,
Between them the great system of the world,
Where man is sphered, and which God animates.

4. With *1805*, 236–46 (*1850*, 256–66), compare *Tintern Abbey*, 73–94, in which Nature, once "all in all," gives place to other gifts, among them the ability to hear "the still, sad music of humanity." Wordsworth's reference is to the period between his moral crisis (whatever its actual strength) in spring 1796, and July 1798 when he and Dorothy left Alfoxden. "Humanity" is more refined than the "common things," being quiet and serious ("sad"), and nobler than the mere handmaid Nature.

6. I.e., were gently and more habitually mediated to me, bringing more close to me thoughts of man and his concerns. Wordsworth had already paid tribute to Coleridge at *1805*, X, 904–7.

7. Reason in its most exalted mood may be imagination (lines 167–70, above), but in its chastening personal aspect, it is "duty, and pathetic truth"—truth, to, and of, the emotions.

Familiar, and a favourite of the stars:
But thou didst plant its crevices with flowers,
Hang it with shrubs that twinkle in the breeze,
And teach the little birds to build their nests
And warble in its chambers. At a time
When Nature, destined to remain so long
Foremost in my affections, had fallen back
Into a second place, pleased to become
A handmaid to a nobler than herself,
When every day brought with it some new sense
Of exquisite regard for common things,
And all the earth was budding with these gifts
Of more refined humanity, thy breath,
Dear Sister! was a kind of gentler spring
That went before my steps.[4] Thereafter came
One whom with thee friendship had early paired;
She came, no more a phantom to adorn
A moment, but an inmate of the heart,
And yet a spirit, there for me enshrined
To penetrate the lofty and the low;
Even as one essence of pervading light
Shines, in the brightest of ten thousand stars,
And, the meek worm that feeds her lonely lamp
Couched in the dewy grass.[5]

With such a theme,
Coleridge! with this my argument, of thee
Shall I be silent? O capacious Soul!
Placed on this earth to love and understand,
And from thy presence shed the light of love,
Shall I be mute, ere thou be spoken of?
Thy kindred influence to my heart of hearts
Did also find its way. Thus fear relaxed
Her overweening grasp; thus thoughts and things
In the self-haunting spirit learned to take
More rational proportions; mystery,
The incumbent mystery of sense and soul,
Of life and death, time and eternity,
Admitted more habitually a mild
Interposition—a serene delight
In closelier gathering cares, such as become
A human creature, howsoe'er endowed,
Poet, or destined for a humbler name;
And so the deep enthusiastic joy,
The rapture of the hallelujah sent

5. Wordsworth's tribute to his wife, with the allusion in lines 268–9 to "She was a phantom of delight," 1–4, was added in 1816/19, but later considerably revised. "Worm": glowworm.

And now, O friend, this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of the poet's mind
In every thing that stood most prominent
Have faithfully been pictured. We have reached
The time, which was our object from the first,
When we may (not presumptuously, I hope)
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
My knowledge, as to make me capable
Of building up a work that should endure.[9]
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was—
Of books how much![1] and even of the other wealth
Which is collected among woods and fields,
Far more. For Nature's secondary grace,
That outward illustration which is hers,
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon:
The charm more superficial, and yet sweet,
Which from her works finds way, contemplated[2]
As they hold forth a genuine counterpart
And softening mirror of the moral world.[3]

Yes, having tracked the main essential power—
Imagination—up her way sublime,
In turn might fancy also be pursued
Through all her transmigrations, till she too
Was purified, had learned to ply her craft
By judgement steadied. Then might we return,
And in the rivers and the groves behold
Another face, might hear them from all sides
Calling upon the more instructed mind
To link their images—with subtle skill
Sometimes, and by elaborate research—
With forms and definite appearances
Of human life, presenting them sometimes
To the involuntary sympathy
Of our internal being, satisfied
And soothed with a conception of delight
Where meditation cannot come, which thought
Could never heighten.[4] Above all, how much
Still nearer to ourselves is overlooked

9. Among Wordsworth's earlier statements of his poetic intention, see especially *1799*, I, 459–64, and *1805*, I, 123–271, written ca. December 1798 and January 1804 respectively.
1. A reference to the inadequacies of Book V, where scanty treatment is given to the influence of literature; see *1805*, V, 169*n*, above.
2. Scansion: cŏntemplātéd.
3. Wordsworth did not share Coleridge's fondness for viewing the objects of Nature as symbolic of moral truths. See, e.g., Coleridge's *Destiny of Nations*, 18–20: "For all that meets the bodily sense I deem / Symbolical, one mighty alphabet / For infant minds * * *."
4. The drift of Wordsworth's thought is clearer if one remembers that fancy (line 291) is described at VIII, 590–91 as the power that turns "itself / Instinctively to human passions."

From all that breathes and is, was chastened, stemmed
And balanced by pathetic truth, by trust
In hopeful reason, leaning on the stay
Of Providence; and in reverence for duty,
Here, if need be, struggling with storms, and there
Strewing in peace life's humblest ground with herbs,
At every season green, sweet at all hours![8]

And now, O Friend! this history is brought
To its appointed close: the discipline
And consummation of a Poet's mind,
In everything that stood most prominent,
Have faithfully been pictured; we have reached
The time (our guiding object from the first)
When we may, not presumptuously, I hope,
Suppose my powers so far confirmed, and such
My knowledge, as to make me capable
Of building up a Work that shall endure.[9]
Yet much hath been omitted, as need was;
Of books how much![1] and even of the other wealth
That is collected among woods and fields,
Far more: for Nature's secondary grace
Hath hitherto been barely touched upon,
The charm more superficial that attends
Her works, as they present to Fancy's choice
Apt illustrations of the moral world,
Caught at a glance, or traced with curious pains.[3]

8. This revised, and (especially in lines 285–87) far less accurate, assessment of Coleridge's influence belongs probably to 1838/39, nearly five years after his death in July 1834.

In human nature and that marvellous world
[325] As studied first in my own heart, and then
In life, among the passions of mankind
And qualities commixed and modified
By the infinite varieties and shades
Of individual character. Herein
It was for me (this justice bids me say)
No useless preparation to have been
The pupil of a public school,[5] and forced
In hardy independence to stand up
Among conflicting passions and the shock
[335] Of various tempers, to endure and note
What was not understood, though known to be—
Among the mysteries of love and hate,
Honour and shame, looking to right and left,
Unchecked by innocence too delicate,
[340] And moral notions too intolerant,
Sympathies too contracted. Hence, when called
To take a station among men, the step
Was easier, the transition more secure,
More profitable also; for the mind
[345] Learns from such timely exercise to keep
In wholesome separation the two natures—
The one that feels, the other that observes.

Let one word more of personal circumstance—
Not needless, as it seems—be added here.
[349] Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,
The story hath demanded less regard
To time and place; and where I lived, and how,
Hath been no longer scrupulously marked.
Three years, until a permanent abode
Received me with that sister of my heart
Who ought by rights the dearest to have been
Conspicuous through this biographic verse—
Star seldom utterly concealed from view—
I led an undomestic wanderer's life.
In London chiefly was my home, and thence
Excursively, as personal friendships, chance
Or inclination led, or slender means
Gave leave, I roamed about from place to place,
Tarrying in pleasant nooks, wherever found,
Through England or through Wales.[6] A youth—he bore

5. Hawkshead, where Wordsworth was a pupil May 1779–June 1787, was a Free Grammar School—i.e., an endowed foundation, open (theoretically at least) to able pupils, whether rich or poor. "Public" is thus used in its original (and logical) sense, which survives in American, but not in modern British usage.
6. Wales was the home of Robert Jones (see *1805*, VI, 342*n*, above). "Cambrian" (*1850*): "Welsh."

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

Yet one word more of personal concern—
Since I withdrew unwillingly from France,
I led an undomestic wanderer's life,
In London chiefly harboured, whence I roamed,
Tarrying at will in many a pleasant spot
Of rural England's cultivated vales
Or Cambrian solitudes.[6] A youth (he bore

The name of Calvert; it shall live, if words
Of mine can give it life—without respect
To prejudice or custom, having hope
That I had some endowments by which good
Might be promoted, in his last decay
From his own family withdrawing part
Of no redundant patrimony,[7] did
By a bequest sufficient for my needs
Enable me to pause for choice, and walk
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
By mortal cares.[8] Himself no poet, yet
Far less a common spirit of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labors lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
Perhaps to necessary maintenance,
Without some hazard to the finer sense,
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now
Told what best merits mention, further pains
Our present labour seems not to require,
And I have other tasks.[9] Call back to mind
The mood in which this poem was begun,
O friend—the termination of my course
Is nearer now, much nearer, yet even then
In that distraction and intense desire
I said unto the life which I had lived,
'Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 'tis reproach to hear?' Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
Vast prospect of the world which I had been,
And was; and hence this song, which like[1] a lark
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
Attempered to the sorrows of the earth—
Yet centring all in love, and in the end
All gratulant[2] if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
And with life power to accomplish aught of worth
Sufficient to excuse me in men's sight

7. I.e., an inheritance which was not in excess of his needs.
8. Raisley Calvert was the brother of the school friend, William Calvert, with whom Wordsworth spent a month on the Isle of Wight in July 1793 (see *1805*, X, 290–306, above). Raisley died of consumption in January 1795, leaving Wordsworth £900.
9. Primarily the philosophical section of *The Recluse*.
1. Unsupported alternative reading, "for."
2. Expressive of joy.

The name of Calvert—it shall live, if words
Of mine can give it life) in firm belief
That by endowments not from me withheld
Good might be furthered—in his last decay
Withdrawing, and from kindred whom he loved,
A part of no redundant patrimony,[7]
By a bequest sufficient for my needs
Enabled me to pause for choice, and walk
At large and unrestrained, nor damped too soon
By mortal cares.[8] Himself no Poet, yet
Far less a common follower of the world,
He deemed that my pursuits and labours lay
Apart from all that leads to wealth, or even
A necessary maintenance insures,
Without some hazard to the finer sense;
He cleared a passage for me, and the stream
Flowed in the bent of Nature.

Having now
Told what best merits mention, further pains
Our present purpose seems not to require,
And I have other tasks.[9] Recall to mind
The mood in which this labour was begun,
O Friend! The termination of my course
Is nearer now, much nearer; yet even then,
In that distraction and intense desire,
I said unto the life which I had lived,
Where art thou? Hear I not a voice from thee
Which 'tis reproach to hear? Anon I rose
As if on wings, and saw beneath me stretched
Vast prospect of the world which I had been
And was; and hence this Song, which like[1] a lark
I have protracted, in the unwearied heavens
Singing, and often with more plaintive voice
To earth attempered and her deep-drawn sighs,
Yet centring all in love, and in the end
All gratulant,[2] if rightly understood.

Whether to me shall be allotted life,
And, with life, power to accomplish aught of worth,
That will be deemed no insufficient plea

For having given this record of myself,
Is all uncertain;[3] but, belovèd friend,
When looking back thou seest, in clearer view
Than any sweetest sight of yesterday,
That summer when on Quantock's grassy hills
Far ranging, and among the sylvan coombs,
Thou in delicious words, with happy heart,
Didst speak the vision of that ancient man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter of the Lady Christabel;[4]
And I, associate in such labour, walked
Murmuring of him, who—joyous hap—was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall, or her who sate
In misery near the miserable thorn;[5]
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness,
It will be known—by thee at least, my friend,
Felt—that the history of a poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard:
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
Which I for thee design have been prepared
In times which have from those wherein we first
Together wandered in wild poesy
Differed thus far, that they have been, my friend,
Times of much sorrow, of a private grief
Keen and enduring, which the frame of mind
That in this meditative history
Hath been described, more deeply makes me feel,
Yet likewise hath enabled me to bear
More firmly; and a comfort now, a hope,
One of the dearest which this life can give,
Is mine: that thou art near, and wilt be soon
Restored to us in renovated health—

3. "This Poem will not be published these many years, and never during my lifetime, till I have finished a larger and more important work to which it is tributary," Wordsworth to De Quincey, March 1804 (*EY*, p. 454). He never changed the view that the egocentricity of *The Prelude* could be justified only by its position as part of *The Recluse*; hence the postponement of its publication until after his death in 1850.

4. Only Part I of *Christabel* was written among the "sylvan coombs" (wooded valleys) of the Quantocks. Wordsworth is looking back to the period of his and Coleridge's closest relationship, at Alfoxden in Somerset in the spring and early summer of 1798—the period of *Lyrical Ballads*, and of the drawing up of the scheme of *The Recluse* (*EY*, p. 212).

5. Coleridge would enjoy the humour and self-mockery of Wordsworth's allusion to *The Thorn*, and Martha Ray's "doleful cry": "Oh misery! oh misery! / Oh woe is me! oh misery!"

It was Johnny of *The Idiot Boy* (line 442) who was found "Near the loud waterfall."

For having given this story of myself,
Is all uncertain:[3] but, beloved Friend!
When, looking back, thou seest, in clearer view
Than any liveliest sight of yesterday,
That summer, under whose indulgent skies,
Upon smooth Quantock's airy ridge we roved
Unchecked, or loitered 'mid her sylvan coombs,
Thou in bewitching words, with happy heart,
Didst chaunt the vision of that Ancient Man,
The bright-eyed Mariner, and rueful woes
Didst utter the Lady Christabel;[4]
And I, associate with such labour, steeped
In soft forgetfulness the livelong hours,
Murmuring of him who, joyous hap, was found,
After the perils of his moonlight ride,
Near the loud waterfall; or her who sate
In misery near the miserable Thorn;[5]
When thou dost to that summer turn thy thoughts,
And hast before thee all which then we were,
To thee, in memory of that happiness,
It will be known, by thee at least, my Friend!
Felt, that the history of a Poet's mind
Is labour not unworthy of regard:
To thee the work shall justify itself.

The last and later portions of this gift
Have been prepared, not with the buoyant spirits
That were our daily portion when we first
Together wantoned in wild Poesy,
But under pressure of a private grief,
Keen and enduring, which the mind and heart,
That in this meditative history
Hath been laid open, needs must make me feel
More deeply, yet enable me to bear
More firmly; and a comfort now hath risen
From hope that thou art near, and wilt be soon
Restored to us in renovated health;

When, after the first mingling of our tears,
'Mong other consolations, we may find
Some pleasure from this offering of my love.[6]

Oh, yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete—thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised.
Then, though too weak to tread the ways of truth,
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace in the knowledge which we have,
Blessed with true happiness if we may be
United helpers forward of a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work—
Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe—
Of their redemption, surely yet to come.[7]
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason and by truth; what we have loved
Others will love, and we may teach them how:
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of substance and of fabric more divine.[9]

6. For the pleasure given to Coleridge by *The Prelude*, the "offering" of Wordsworth's love, see *To William Wordsworth*.
7. "Their redemption" (*1850*, "deliverance"): that of mankind. The millennial optimism of this passage is based on the conclusion of *1799*; see *1799*, II, 484*n*, above, for its original source.
9. Though speaking as "Prophets of Nature" (*1805*, 442; *1850*, 446), Wordsworth and Coleridge will instruct their readers about the mind of man, which is not just more beautiful than the natural world, but inherently more divine, in that it can—through an act of the creative and responsive imagination—perceive the existence of God. Compare Wordsworth's most deliberately challenging statement of this central theme, in the Prospectus to *The Recluse* (*CW*, III, 100 and 102, lines 973–90), where the mind of man is offered not only as "the main haunt and region" of the poet's song, but as a replacement of the subject-matter of Milton's Christian epic.

When, after the first mingling of our tears,
'Mong other consolations, we may draw
Some pleasure from this offering of my love.[6]

Oh! yet a few short years of useful life,
And all will be complete, thy race be run,
Thy monument of glory will be raised;
Then, though (too weak to tread the ways of truth)
This age fall back to old idolatry,
Though men return to servitude as fast
As the tide ebbs, to ignominy and shame
By nations sink together, we shall still
Find solace—knowing what we have learnt to know,
Rich in true happiness if allowed to be
Faithful alike in forwarding a day
Of firmer trust, joint labourers in the work
(Should Providence such grace to us vouchsafe)
Of their deliverance, surely yet to come.[7]
Prophets of Nature, we to them will speak
A lasting inspiration, sanctified
By reason, blest by faith:[8] what we have loved,
Others will love, and we will teach them how;
Instruct them how the mind of man becomes
A thousand times more beautiful than the earth
On which he dwells, above this frame of things
(Which, 'mid all revolutions in the hopes
And fears of men, doth still remain unchanged)
In beauty exalted, as it is itself
Of quality and fabric more divine.[9,1]

8. The last substantial change in the *Prelude* text, belonging probably to 1832.
1. Both *D* and *E* conclude in a statement, "The Composition of this Poem was finished early in the year *1805*—it having been begun about 1798." Below this in *E* is written: "The Life is brought up to the time of the Composition of the first Edition of the Lyrical Ballads."